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Chi Kaliwata

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“It’s not about where you came from, it’s about what you’re doing about it now,” Says Chi Kaliwata, who hails from South Africa, but is now an Iowa Stater.

Back in 2006, when Kaliwata and his friends were in high school, their goal was simple. They just wanted to record their lives. The music was meant to be a kind of diary of existence.

“In the beginning, it was real ghetto, but then I learned how to produce music.” Kaliwata, who majors in music at Iowa State, admits to being a self-taught producer. What started with the very basics – a low-tech computer microphone – has since evolved into his own studio. Fully equipped with professional tools including Fruity Loop, a music recording software, he has come a long way since his baby microphone days. His studio is set up in his room, allowing him to spontaneously produce songs that he terms as ‘real stuff.’ For him, music is an escape. “I don’t stick to one genre. Hip-hop, rock, whatever appeals to what we’re trying to make, whatever best gets the message through.”

The creative mind is inspired by everything around it, and Kaliwata’s is no different. Ordinary, everyday occurrences in his life aren’t immune to musical remix: “random stuff happens, and then we make songs about it.”

Lupe Fiasco and Kanye West are his two main sources of stylistic inspiration, but he listens to a wide variety of music. Bob Marley, Regina Spektor, Bob Sinclar, even Carla Bruni who sings in French. “I take elements I like and put them in my own music,” says Kaliwata.

Not only does he produce and write music, he also freestyles and plays piano. The albums he produces use instrumental snippets he creates himself, as well as words with meaning straight from the heart. From start to finish, a song will take him three days maximum to complete.

This artist’s love and need for music has grown into an international producing company. He is a co-owner and producer of Crownwood_Ent, based in the US and in South Africa.

The various members work on separate projects but all work towards the goal of spreading music. They stay connected with Skype and collaborate during the summers. Members include: Winston Kangwa, Brandon Blackbeard, Kurt Reihmann, Jarrid Paulsen, Godfrey Rwechungura, and Dumi Mbulo. ALLISON BUTLER

Download Chi Kaliwata’s mixtapes on http://www.datpiff.com/profile/crownwood and be sure to listen to his latest album titled MixeD Emotions.