

HARRY SHOTTA



TWELVE MONTHS

LOVE AND PAIN IN THE FAST LANE

PREFACE BY D.J. SEMTEX

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Love and Pain in the Fast Lane

Harry Shotta

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Preface

Hip Hop is the voice of the voiceless, it's the CNN or World Service of the youth, stories are spoken in tongues in intricate ways that defy scientific studies.

The concept of the MC is actually an enigma when you consider that the human brain can correlate syllables and synonyms in time, on beat with frequently changing erratic rhythmic patterns. The lyrics make sense, stories are told, souls are touched. This kind of artistic ability isn't going to be streamed, downloaded, or replicated by any kind of artificial intelligence any time soon.

A lot of rappers rap, it's nothing new, but Harry Shotta is very different to everyone else.

I have had the fortunate experience of spinning for him live on air, and it's baffling to see how he manipulates words. It's actually hard to comprehend the speed of the thought processes that takes place when he freestyles, how he effortlessly slips between rapid fire flows, veraciously tearing apart the traditional use of the English language. No mistakes allowed, constantly moving the crowd, constantly ahead of the beat, calculating, constructing rhymes that decimate any style or tempo of track placed before him.

Whether you manage to see him perform live within a Hip Hop, D&B, or studio environment just appreciate that moment. Be glad you got to witness that moment because there isn't anyone else like him. He is a living enigma, a truly unique artist, an ever evolving work in progress.

A lot of Rappers rap, but very few can stand next to him in the booth, and those very few are constantly on their toes whilst in that booth.

A lot of Rappers rap, but no one else can do what Harry Shotta does.

DJ Semtex 1extra

Foreword

When I first sat down to write this book I didn't know if I could pull it off. The challenge of writing eighteen chapters not only giving insights into the background of my recent mixtape 'Twelve Months' but deeper glimpses into my life would be a tough task. I didn't think detailing how the tracks were made, inspiration for beats and how the studio sessions went down would be hard to detail. It was more of a case of if I really wanted to share the more emotional side of my last year with the public. It had been a hectic time, full of love and pain in the fast lane.

Sitting down and writing the first chapter was a wakeup call. If I was really going to write this book and take it seriously I had to unearth memories from times when I wasn't as stable and level headed as I am now. I had to revisit parts of my childhood that I would rather forget. I would have to go back to connect with feelings that I had let go of to give readers a real insight into my reasons for writing some of the tracks on the mixtape. I would also have to be openly honest about my current relationship and not be afraid to express all of my emotions. It wasn't going to be easy but as I wrote the first chapter which details a lot of the hardships of a certain part of my childhood, I found that it felt good to get the words down onto the page. Much in the same way I used the writing of the songs in the first place in a therapeutic sense, I found explaining how the songs came about and the background story of why I wrote them helpful to me as an individual.

Some people would ask 'why write a book?' I'm a man who likes challenges. If they say it can't be done I actively go out to prove the non-believers wrong. At first it was a good idea that turned into so much more. I found I enjoyed writing the chapters much in the same way I enjoyed writing bars. It wasn't a chore or something that was forced. I felt inspired to get all my feelings onto the pages and share them with my audience. I wanted to show the general public and the media all the thought and hard work that goes into writing a

mixtape. I sometimes feel that the art of what we do as rappers isn't respected so I wanted to give people the keys to our world, invite them in the house for a while and let them kick back and take in the complexities of what we do.

Of course the content of this particular mixtape is what gives the book that emotional substance and a deeper look at me as a person. I decided to embrace this and not only tell you how tracks were made but more importantly why they were made. I haven't held back in terms of detail or kept any aspects of the good and bad parts of my hectic year a secret. It's all here, an open book for you to decipher and enjoy.

Much love to all my supporters, friends and family...

This is my Twelve Months...

Shotz

Month One

My Story (F64)

'Once bitten forever smitten this one was written before it was written'

I've always loved autobiographical raps that insight into a rapper's life, their pain, their hopes, dreams and regrets all wrapped into one incredible poetic piece. It often becomes more of a statement than a song and you feel that one bit closer to the individual. You don't get this same kind of affinity with singers especially those in the pop market. Usually talented songwriters will write very catchy hits aimed at daytime radio and pitch them to publishers and labels with the hope of whoever is selling the most at the time fronting that record. It's true that some songwriters write with a particular vocalist in mind, but whether this is because they love that artist's work or because they are selling a truckload of records at the time is debatable.

No one else but Jay Z could have written the verse on You Must Love Me when he talks about shooting his brother for stealing from him. Running straight to Jaz's house and being shocked and humbled that his brother asked to see him in the hospital the next day. No one but Eminem could have put the emotional depth into records he made about the complex relationship between himself and his on/off wife Kim and his unconditional love for his daughter Halie. And no one else but me could have written My Story...

I've had a good relationship with Jamal Edwards the mastermind and founder of SBTv for a while now. I fully respect the media force he built from nothing, his sharp business sense and have actually been inspired by how far he has come from the estate he grew up in in Acton to where he is now. I never wanted to beg to be on SBTv though; I wanted Jamal to holler at me. I remember where I was when I got the direct message on Twitter simply saying Warm Up Session? I was sitting in the Parrocks Street Dentist in Gravesend where I was just about to go and have some bloody painful treatment we all know and hate as root canal surgery. The idea of being hollered to record a warm up session with the You Tube channel I was glued to day and night made the surgery that bit sweeter. I immediately went home and pulled up a Z Dot track and wrote some of the maddest double time verbal acrobatics that I could think of at the time, practiced it over and over and shot it with Jamal a couple weeks after. If you get a good reaction on your Warm Up Session your normally asked to shoot an F64 with the channel, this is where the idea of 'My Story' was born.

I wanted my F64 to have a powerful impact so I thought about records that had resonated with me most over the years. Immediately I was thinking of autobiographical, deeply personal records so decided to give the listener that insight into my life with my F64. On a trip to Paris for a show I came up with the intro bars sitting on the Eurostar. 'Once Bitten, forever smitten, this one was written before it was written'. From there I started to think of this record as a therapy. I was going to clean out the closet so to speak on a song. I'm not great at expressing my innermost thoughts face to face in a conversation with someone, but when I have the right beat to write to I can release it all on a track. I sat in the hotel in Paris and scribbled lines out but nothing was really working, I had to find the perfect beat to let loose on.

As a fan of the Kampaign mix tape by Mic Righteous and Preston Play I was exposed to Preston's music as a fan rather than an introduction from an industry insider or someone telling me

his buzz is hot. I just loved the sound he provided Mic with on tracks like 'Try My Best' and the title track itself and wanted to work with this guy. The weirdest thing was how we didn't realize that we lived fifteen minutes down the road from each other. When we met up we immediately clicked and recorded two songs within a week. As I listened deeper into the beat vaults of Preston Play I realized he was the man I wanted to provide the inspiration for my story and my F64.

I can remember the moment I heard the opening eight bars of the beat that became 'My Story'. Sitting in Preston's studio on a winter afternoon, I was 'looking for the perfect beat' to coin a phrase from the old school and amazingly I found it. When your looking for perfection it usually comes when you least expect it, almost by accident. In this case I went to Preston's, told him what I wanted to do and ten minutes later he was playing me the beat. I wanted to run home then and there and pour my soul all over the music, but I chilled at his and heard some other great beats and waited till nightfall. Sitting in my front room lights dimmed laptop out, I started to think about my life, the highs and the lows and everything in between. My childhood was for the most part a normal and enjoyable one, but after my parents break up I did go through a few very painful years. My mother and father had split up and my dad had remarried quite quickly. My life seemed to be changing so much and I wasn't coping very well. The idea that my father could remarry someone so quickly didn't sit too well with me at all. To add insult to injury instead of us keeping our home in Essex and my dad's new partner and her children moving in with us I was told we had to move up to Aylesbury where they lived. I hated the idea of this. I was seven years old at the time and I was really struggling with the breakup of my family unit. I missed my mum enough when she was just down the road at my nan's house. I couldn't bare the thought of living in a strange new place, moving away from my friends, my sisters and of course my mum. Everything was alien to me. I suddenly had to make new

friends and start a whole new life. For those first couple of years of living in Aylesbury I felt very much alone.

This was where I was going to start my story, use the more painful years as my launch pad to lyrically show where you can go from a very negative and soul-destroying situation. So on My Story I speak of the mental abuse I was subjected to on a day-to-day basis. I can't really go into much detail here but if you are familiar with the lyrical content of the song you will understand and perhaps connect with the emotional state I was in at the time. I wasn't a happy child at all.

So for years, I went through and saw a lot of madness and experienced manipulation on a daily basis. When you're so young you don't see it and especially when it happens everyday it almost becomes the norm, but for an adult to do that to a child is most certainly not the norm and shouldn't be tolerated on any level.

So on the song I talk about the times I began to realize my home life wasn't normal. I would visit my friends all the time and eventually I tried to stay out as much as I could. I made loads of good friends and I stayed closest to one called 'Hip Hop'. Even when everything was closing in on me and I felt I couldn't take anymore, I would play music and I felt good about myself. It wasn't long before I started to rap along to the words and found that I could memorize whole rap songs very quickly. Before long I was rapping in the playground, selling my toys to buy whatever Rap records I could get my hands on and I was a dedicated follower of the scene. I never sat in the front room at home; I preferred to be alone upstairs in my own little world taking in whatever the Hip Hop world had to offer at the time. Funnily enough I can remember being about nine years of age jumping up and down on my bed reciting lyrics, pretending like I was on stage. Who would have thought years on I would actually be on those big stages with crowds from the UK, to Canada to Russia screaming my bars back at me.

It was when I turned eleven that I got a little bit more confident. I had stayed at my mum's with her partner David and had had

one of the best weekends celebrating my birthday with them and my sisters. When it came to Sunday and time to drive back to Aylesbury I refused to go. A police car pulled up at my mum's house, two officers came in and told my mum she would have to take me home as my father had legal custody of me. So yeah, I went home but I went home with a whole different attitude.

I wasn't as scared anymore, I was punished for my insolence with the threat of not being able to see any of my friends anymore and was made to stay in the house constantly. I answered back by going mad at school, kicking the head teacher running out and swearing at anyone who tried to stop me. I had had enough. Social Workers were called in and my father finally decided to let me live with my mum. From the moment I moved in there my whole life changed.

That's why I pretty much talk about the negatives and the heartache before the drums come in on my F64. Because although I went through the same drama's and hard situations that everyone has to deal with in life I was no longer this tiny kid with no voice, going through a very painful period. Music gave me the voice that others tried to rob me of and although I've always been a shorty it made me feel tall inside. At this point I was becoming pretty good at rapping too and when I went to my new school in Kent it was like being reborn with a whole new world ahead of me. I made friends really quickly and I was like a new person.

And this is the whole ethos behind my personal story and my F64. I wanted to show the listeners that no matter what you go through in life there is light at the end of the tunnel. This is why I start to rap about things in a broader way as the song builds to its crescendo. When I say 'who are they to judge what average is, kids in garage's writing modern day poetry, want my analysis, the weak become the strongest overcoming their paralysis' I'm using my own personal story to show that no matter what anyone tries to do to bring you down, and tower over you, you can eventually turn those weakness's into great strengths. So yeah, I use some crass language in the song aimed at an individual who tried to

break my spirit, but to me that's empowering. I'm talking about someone who mentally abused me for years; I'm entitled to say 'Fuck You' back.

At the same time I don't want to seem bitter and I also explain that being that 'kid in the dark, gave me the spark to make my mark'. Even the most negative and horrible things in life can make you who you are and bring out things in you that you never knew you had. I guess with me, I'm always weary of people trying to control me or use me for their own benefits. This probably comes from my childhood, but it can be pretty handy in the music business which is one of the most cutthroat sports known to man.

So as 'My Story' builds I let the listener know there have been others that have abused my friendship, tried to hold me back or in some cases take advantage of me, but 'they ain't worth one line' I'd rather tell you how I turned the rain to sunshine'.

And that is the bottom line, I don't finish my story with anything negative, I talk about the positives that have been born from the negatives. I thank the young people who I have worked with in my MC Workshops over the years for everything they have taught me and given me on a personal level. I thank Funsta for bringing me into the DNB scene, Jamal for putting me on the world stage that is SBTv and I thank my long-time manager Dave for all the years of dedication and encouragement.

It was hard to write at times, sometimes listening to the bars I am taken back to those days living in Southcourt in Aylesbury, the fights in the street, police and social workers at the house and all the arguments. But any feelings of sadness don't actually last long as it reminds me how far I've come from those days.

This was my F64, my story, everything I had hidden away and everything that I had to get out. I often have to use my music as therapy and this was the ultimate tool. With that out of my system I began to analyse the last twelve months and construct my new mixtape which was to become my most honest and personal work to date...

Month Two

Twelve Months

'In the last 12 months, been a lot going on, and it go on top, but I stayed on top of the grind, played out non-stop, never shut down shop, no I never did'

It's funny that the title track to my new mixtape was one of the last ones I wrote. I can remember having a good fifteen tracks finished so I had a meeting with my manager to play him some of the new bits. He listened intently and didn't say too much as we ran through the tracks. When it was time for some much needed feedback he felt that the track's I played were a musical representation of the last twelve months of my life. And it had been a pretty crazy twelve month's if I'm honest.

I put out my Rap mixtape 'Moonlight Hustle' in September 2012. I was thrilled to be writing and recording regularly for my own project as I hadn't actually recorded original material for quite some time. The reason behind this was throughout 2011 and the early part of 2012, I was writing a weekly rap news report for Semtex's show entitled 'The Rap Round Up'. I would take the week's news and flip it into bars over a variety of beats and Sem would spin it at midnight on his show on BBC 1extra. Now, I am known to be someone who really pushes things to the limits and tries to elevate my own personal levels so with the Rap Round Up this is exactly what I did. I didn't make it easy for myself, it would be simple to take the hottest beat of the week and flip a thirty two bar lyric over it every seven days. What I did was