

8. KIN

LESBIAN HIP-HOP DUO PROVES SEXY AND CREDIBLE.

When lesbian rappers Nor and IQ, collectively known as KIN, achieved a much sought-after meeting with a major record label executive in 2001, they thought their chance at mainstream stardom had arrived. Their beats were applauded, but the executive passed, instead focusing on the superficial: Shockingly, he told them they weren't "fuckable."

"Once we left that office, we changed our hair a little bit and put on some makeup—it was just real forced," says Nor (right). "We started to change ourselves and when we got onstage [the next day], we thought, *What are we doing?* We never did that again."

Proving success is the best revenge, the 20-something duo recently tapped Pharrell (of the Neptunes) for their new EP's infectious first single, "Good Foot," and appeared on PBS's *In the Life*—all while they continued to play to loyal fans on both coasts. "Years later, we saw [that same label exec] in a club," notes IQ, with Nor quickly adding, "We were once chasing him down, and then he comes up to us. He was blown away. You know—missed opportunities."

Anyone who's seen KIN perform knows they ooze confident sexiness. But as they've matured, they've realized a greater potential in being role models—a lost attribute of rap amid the genre's increasing demand for hypersexual female images. "A lot of the reasons we [restructured] our music was because we had fans that are 8 years old who write us letters in pink envelopes, saying that when they grow up they want to be like us," says IQ. "And then they say, 'But don't curse so much in your songs.'" **CORY ALBERTSON**

Hear new tracks from KIN at MySpace.com/Kin4Life.



STYLING BY BRIST COOPER. HAIR BY KAMELE AND MERRICK. MAKEUP BY AN BAILEY.