

Eulogy for Roland 'ROJOE' Bascombe. May 21, 2021.

Prepared and Delivered X Rhaj Paul.

.....

Though I am still reeling from the sudden death of my dear friend and mentor, Rojoe, I am humbled and touched by his time here with us. For those of you who don't know me I am Roland's protégé and comrade in fashion design, Rhaj Paul, and I am honoured to be able to share a few words about this amazing and wonderful homegrown vessel of immense creative talent.

More than a year ago, Ro and I were sitting in his beautiful garden at his home just chilling, talking design and fashion as we loved to, and talking about life and god as he loved to. And out of the blue Ro said to me, Rhaj, when I die I want you to do the eulogy at my funeral. To which I said die?? 😬 Man what the hells are u talking about die! Nobody is dying here bro, we got way too much work to do B, nah fam we got too much dopeness and originality to pour into this world, so you can forget about that for a long time to come big man! Ro smiled his beautiful smile and laughed his hearty laugh - u know the laugh 😄, nodding his head back and forth - you right tho Rhaj u right!

I thought we had a deal ya know - Live long, be brilliant and prosper.

But Lord Jesus man here we are today....trying to make a memento out of memories, celebrating the life of our friend, our family, and the humblest superstar you may have ever met!

Yesterday at the viewing someone said to me - but who is gonna fill Rojoe's shoes? That questions reminds me of the kind that emerges when we encounter brilliance of a startling magnitude, like who will be the next Rihanna, the next Bolt u know, the next Malcolm X.

The answer is plainly and painfully obvious - No one will! No one can.

But what these stars do is shine so brightly that we see not only them in their glory, but we see ourselves in them, we see our very own potential for greatness, we feel inspired to become the best version of ourselves that our minds can hold.

And that is something powerful. That is something divine.

Family, friends and loved ones, we are privileged to have known Rojoe.

My Dude was not without fault, we wasn't a saint - if "saint" means sinless, but he was as godly as they come!

Now I know everyone here has a dope story about Rojoe.

And mine started in 1999, when I wanted to properly learn how to use my mums sewing machine that she had brought to Barbados all the way from Sri Lanka - a classic blackhead Singer machine with the foot pedal and all, u know the kind that most grannies surely had.

I was at BCC then, doing a lil engineering and my friend was rocking out some super dope green denim jeans 🍷 with the wide leg cut! Ish was fire fam and I'm like B, where u get them from bro?

And John was like yo this tailor from St. Philip name Roland made these for me!

Hold on what!!! A tailor made them jeans bro?? Well I'm gonna need to meet this dude fam! Hook me up!

The day Ro and I met, it was a Thursday in Queens Park and Ro had a black duffle bag full of gear. As he opened it up and took one piece out after another, it was like in the movies u know, when the explorer guy with the treasures of gold and diamonds opens his carrying case and a glow shines out u know like OMMM 😊. Ye just like that, sound effects and everything lol 😊.

I could not believe my eyes.

All the clothes were so immaculately made! So perfect, so extraordinary.

This guy is not a tailor I thought, he's a gawdamn magician!

Man I was floored.

People make clothes, but this was something different.

Somehow I was bearing witness to the closing of the gap between tailor-made and factory-produced, between 'dat get mek' and 'this is store-bought'.

Our guy Mr. Husbands from downstairs Cave Shepherd knows this all too well I'm sure as he recounts the encounter he had with Rojoe bringing him a shirt he had made bearing all the carefully-placed Tommy Hilfiger labels and thinking Rojoe was returning a piece he had bought, only to learn that no, Ro had made it from scratch with a keen eye for all the details of the original product.

But It was just incredible and little did I know I was about to receive my first and most important lesson in beautiful tailoring - a lesson that would serve as a guiding light moving into and throughout my own career in fashion design and craftsmanship.

I asked Ro 'man how do I do this, how can I ever make clothes at this level man?'

And Roland said to me these beautiful, inspiring and deceptively simple words - words that encapsulate the attitude of excellence of a boss. He said Rhaj if u gonna make clothes well, u gonna have to learn to stitch straight.

"Stitch straight" - how simple how obvious how brilliant, but how often overlooked in our industry. Much like the man himself...

Ro was a simple man, a brilliant creative and a magnanimous individual with a heart of gold.

I don't think BIM quite fully knows who we lost in Rojoe. But the outpouring of love from BARBADOS and beyond tells me we have an idea.

Ro used to say to me very cryptically "A seed is a tree, but not yet."

Hallo! You get me Rhaj or u ain get me? He would say scrutinising my facial expression.

The seed has all the potential inside but is nothing mighty until it is deeply buried in the dark soil where it can germinate into its full nature. The seed must be planted. It must die and be born into the newness of its full self.

I am comforted tho by the words of the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard: "the tyrant dies and his rule is over, the martyr dies and his rule begins."

Today we bury the body but celebrate the life and rulership of an icon.

Today we say farewell to The Sicilian. To The Style Boss. To Roli Poli. To Texas. To Ro. A genius in talent and a giant in spirit, he leaves our world a better place for having been here.

Goodbye friend, brother, father, husband, son.

You were a beast, a boss, and a brand. But most of all, despite all your shortcomings, you were a beautiful man.

We have you so deeply set in our hearts that your memory, your voice, your legacy and your legend lives on in and thru us.

Thank you for your presence with us fam.

Love and light to you in the celestial realms.

We love and honour you sir.

Salute.