



### Top five albums of 2007: Dana Leong

*'Hybrid architect' blends cello, trombone with hip-hop and jazz in 'Anthems of Life'*

Published: January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008

By Joe Nguyen

Cellos and trombones aren't exactly instruments that are typically associated with hip-hop, but Dana Leong isn't one to stay inside the box.

The self-described "sonic hybrid architect's" sophomore full-length album, *Anthems of Life*, is a unique blend of hip-hop and jazz that's infused with horns and strings – something I call storns-infused jip-jop. The album's socially conscious rhymes add depth to Leong's masterfully woven melodies, creating a collection aurally pleasing tracks.



"One Life" carries a serene tone as a deep bassline plays behind Leong's trombone and a gentle piano. Subdued snares carry the beat as MC Baba Isreal's lyrical flow floats over the music.

**Anthems of Life**  
(Tateo Sound, 2007)



Three out of four stars

"Opus 1 Why I Cry" opens with harmonizing electric "ahhs" and "oohs." An organ enters with Leong's rich cello before head-nodding beats drop and Core Rhythm lays down his poignant lyrics.

The best and most interesting song on the album is "Another Perfect Catastrophe." Leong's begins with a folksy cello arrangement accompanied by deep, grainy vocals. An accordion-like instrument enters and gives the song a gypsy-carnival-esque sound.

*Anthems of Life* is a wonderful mix of talent, imagination and creativity from Leong. His reinvention of the stereotypically "dull" cello and trombone gives hope to a new generation of Asian-American children who are taking lessons.