



THE ANTHOLOGY of

EDITED BY

**ADAM BRADLEY
ANDREW DuBOIS**

FOREWORD BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.
AFTERWORDS BY CHUCK D + COMMON

RAP

THE ANTHOLOGY OF RAP

Edited by

ADAM BRADLEY
ANDREW DUBOIS

Foreword by **Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**

Afterwords by **Chuck D** and **Common**

Yale UNIVERSITY PRESS
New Haven and London

Copyright © 2010 by Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois.

All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Yale University Press books may be purchased in quantity for educational, business, or promotional use. For information, please e-mail sales.press@yale.edu (U.S. office) or sales@yaleup.co.uk (U.K. office).

Designed by Mary Valencia

Set in Minion, Nobel, American Typewriter, and Franklin Gothic type by Technologies 'N Typography.

Interior art and photography by Justin Francis Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data The anthology of rap / edited by Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois; foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.; afterwords by Chuck D and Common.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-300-14190-0 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Rap (Music)—History and criticism.

2. Rap (Music)—Texts. I. Bradley, Adam. II. DuBois, Andrew (Andrew Lee)

ML3531.A57 2010

782.42164909—dc22

2010023316

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Advisory Board

Foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Introduction

PART I: 1978-1984–THE OLD SCHOOL

Afrika Bambaataa

Zulu Nation Throwdown

Planet Rock

Kurtis Blow

Rappin Blow (Part 2)

The Breaks

If I Ruled the World

Brother D with Collective Effort

How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise?

Eddie Cheba

Live at the Armory 1979 (1)

Cold Crush Brothers

Live at Harlem World 1981

Live at the Dixie 1982

Weekend

Fresh Wild Fly and Bold

DJ Hollywood

Live at the Armory 1979 (2)

Funky Four + 1

from Rappin and Rockin the House

from That's the Joint

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five

from Live at the Audubon Ballroom (12/23/78)

from Superrappin

The Message

White Lines (Don't Don't Do It)

Lady B

To the Beat, Y'all

Sequence

from Funk You Up

from And You Know That

from Simon Says

Spoonie Gee

from Spoonin Rap

Love Rap

(See also "The New Rap Language" [Treacherous Three])

Sugarhill Gang

from Rapper's Delight

Treacherous Three

The New Rap Language

from Kool Moe Dee's Battle with Busy Bee (1981)

Tanya ("Sweet Tee") Winley

Rhymin and Rappin

Vicious Rap

PART II: 1985-1992—THE GOLDEN AGE

Beastie Boys

Paul Revere

Sure Shot

Shadrach

Big Daddy Kane

Raw

Wrath of Kane

Ain't No Half Steppin'

(See also “ ’95 Freestyle” [The Notorious B.I.G.])

Boogie Down Productions

Poetry

Criminal Minded

My Philosophy

South Bronx

Blackman in Effect

De La Soul

My Brother's a Basehead

Millie Pulled a Pistol on Santa

Stakes Is High

Eric B. & Rakim

Eric B. Is President

Paid in Full

My Melody

I Ain't No Joke

Microphone Fiend

Lyrics of Fury

Gang Starr

Step in the Arena

Just to Get a Rep

Words I Manifest (Remix)

Ice-T

6 'N the Mornin'

Colors

Kool G Rap

Road to the Riches

Streets of New York

Rikers Island

Kool Moe Dee

Go See the Doctor

How Ya Like Me Now

I Go to Work

(See also Treacherous Three)

LL Cool J

Rock the Bells

I Can't Live Without My Radio

I'm Bad

I Need Love

I'm That Type of Guy

Mama Said Knock You Out

MC Lyte

10% Dis

I Gnam to Understand U

Cappuccino

NWA

Dopeman (Remix)

Fuck tha Police

Gangsta Gangsta

Straight Outta Compton

Public Enemy

Miuzi Weighs a Ton

Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos

Rebel Without a Pause

Fight the Power

Welcome to the Terrordome

Queen Latifah

Evil That Men Do

Elements I'm Among

Run-DMC

Sucker MC's

It's Like That

Peter Piper

Proud to Be Black

Salt-N-Pepa

Tramp

Let's Talk About Sex

Schoolly D

P.S.K. What Does It Mean

Saturday Night

Roxanne Shanté

Roxanne's Revenge

Independent Woman

Slick Rick

La Di Da Di

Children's Story

I Shouldn't Have Done It

(See also "Auditorium" [Mos Def])

Too \$hort

Cusswords

The Ghetto

A Tribe Called Quest

I Left My Wallet in El Segundo

Check the Rhime

Award Tour

Ultramagnetic MCs

Ego Trippin

Critical Beatdown

X-Clan

Grand Verbalizer

A.D.A.M.

PART III: 1993-1999—RAP GOES MAINSTREAM

Arrested Development

Tennessee

Bahamadia

Spontaneity

Big L

Ebonics (Criminal Slang)

Big Punisher

from Capital Punishment

'95 Freestyle (feat. Fat Joe)

Bone Thugs-N-Harmony

Tha Crossroads

Busta Rhymes

from Scenario (A Tribe Called Quest)

Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Could See

Canibus

Poet Laureate Infinity 3

Chino XL

What Am I?

Wordsmith

Common

I Used to Love H.E.R.

The 6th Sense

The Light

A Song for Assata (feat. Cee-Lo)

(See also "Act Too ... The Love of My Life" [The Roots])

Digable Planets

Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)

DMX

Damien

Who We Be

E-40

Sprinkle Me (feat. Suga T)

Foxy Brown

My Life

BK Anthem

Freestyle Fellowship

Can You Find the Level of Difficulty in This?

The Guidelines (Aceyalone)

The Fugees

Vocab

Fu-Gee-La

Ready or Not

Goodie Mob

Cell Therapy

Hieroglyphics

Cab Fare

Classic

Virus (Del)

Lauryn Hill

Doo Wop (That Thing)

Lost Ones

Final Hour

(See also The Fugees)

Ice Cube

The Nigga Ya Love to Hate

It's a Man's World (feat. Yo-Yo)

A Bird in the Hand

It Was a Good Day

(See also NWA)

Jay-Z

Dead Presidents II

Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)

Renegade (feat. Eminem)

December 4th

99 Problems

My President Is Black (D.C. Mix)

KRS-One

Sound of Da Police

MCs Act Like They Don't Know

(See also Boogie Down Productions)

The Lady of Rage

Afro Puffs

Unfucwitable

Lil' Kim

Queen Bitch (feat. The Notorious B.I.G.)

(See also "Quiet Storm" [Remix] [Mobb Deep])

Mia X

Hoodlum Poetry

Mobb Deep

Shook Ones, Pt. II

Quiet Storm (Remix) (feat. Lil' Kim)

Nas

from Live at the BBQ (Main Source)

N.Y. State of Mind

Life's a Bitch (feat. AZ)

from The World Is Yours

Ether

Black President

(See also "My President" [Young Jeezy])

The Notorious B.I.G.

'95 Freestyle (feat. Scoob, 2Pac, Shyheim, and Big Daddy Kane)

One More Chance (Remix)

Ten Crack Commandments

I Got a Story to Tell

Outkast

Ras Kass

Ordo Ab Chao (Order Out of Chaos)

Interview with a Vampire

The Roots

The Next Movement

from Act Too ... The Love of My Life (feat. Common)

You Got Me (feat. Eve and Erykah Badu)

Web

Scarface

Mind Playing Tricks on Me (Geto Boys)

I Seen a Man Die

Snoop Dogg

Nuthin but a G Thang (feat. Dr. Dre)

Gin and Juice

from Freestyle Conversation

2Pac

Brenda's Got a Baby

Dear Mama

So Many Tears

from All Eyez on Me

Changes

How Long Will They Mourn Me (feat. Nate Dogg, Big Syke, Rated R, and Macadoshis)

(See also "95 Freestyle" [The Notorious B.I.G.])

Twista

Emotions

UGK

Murder

Dirty Money

The Wu-Tang Clan

Protect Ya Neck

C.R.E.A.M.

from Bring the Pain (Method Man)

Duel of the Iron Mic (GZA)

Incarcerated Scarfaces (Raekwon)
Brooklyn Zoo (Ol' Dirty Bastard)
Daytona 500 (Ghostface Killah)
The M.G.M. (Ghostface Killah and Raekwon)
Triumph
Shakey Dog (Ghostface Killah)

PART IV: 2000-2010-NEW MILLENNIUM RAP

Aesop Rock

9–5ers Anthem
No Regrets

Atmosphere

Fuck You Lucy
Sunshine

Beanie Sigel

The Truth

Blackalicious

Alphabet Aerobics
My Pen & Pad

Brother Ali

Room with a View
Picket Fence

Cam'ron

Get It in Ohio

Cee-Lo

Childz Play (feat. Ludacris)
(See also “Cell Therapy” [Goodie Mob])
(See also “Benzi Box” [DOOM])

The Clipse

Grindin
Zen (feat. Roscoe P. Coldchain and Ab Liva)

dead prez

Police State

Hip-Hop

Devin the Dude

Briarpatch

DOOM

Benzi Box (feat. Cee-Lo)

Saliva (as Viktor Vaughn)

Figaro

Eminem

Just Don't Give a Fuck

The Way I Am

Stan

Lose Yourself

Mockingbird

When I'm Gone

(See also "Renegade" [Jay-Z])

Eve

Love Is Blind

(See also "You Got Me" [The Roots])

Eyedea & Abilities

Bottle Dreams (as Oliver Hart)

Now

Lupe Fiasco

Dumb It Down

Hip-Hop Saved My Life

50 Cent

50 Shot Ya

Ghetto Qua'ran

(See also "Hate It or Love It" [The Game])

Jean Grae

Lovesong

Hater's Anthem

Don't Rush Me

Immortal Technique

Dance with the Devil

Industrial Revolution

K'Naan

What's Hardcore?

My Old Home

Talib Kweli

RE:DEFinition (Black Star w/Mos Def)

For Women

Give 'Em Hell

Lil Wayne

from Tha Block Is Hot

I Feel Like Dying

Live from the 504

Dr. Carter

Little Brother

All for You

Ludacris

Southern Hospitality

Hip Hop Quotables

(See also "Childz Play" [Cee-Lo])

M.I.A.

Sunshowers

Paper Planes

Pharoahe Monch

Releasing Hypnotical Gases (Organized Konfusion w/Prince
Poetry)

Simon Says

Desire

Mos Def

Hip Hop

Mathematics

Dollar Day for New Orleans (Katrina Klap)

Auditorium (feat. Slick Rick)

(See also “RE:DEFinition” [Black Star w/Talib Kweli])

T.I.

T.I. vs. T.I.P.

U Don’t Know Me

Kanye West

All Falls Down

Jesus Walks

Homecoming

Can’t Tell Me Nothing

Young Jeezy

from Put On

My President (feat. Nas)

LYRICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

David Banner/Cadillac on 22’s [2003]

Binary Star/Reality Check [2000]

Biz Markie/Vapors [1988]

Black Sheep/The Choice Is Yours (Revisited) [1991]

Camp Lo/Luchini [1997]

Crooked I/Grindin (Freestyle) [2003]

Das EFX/They Want EFX [1992]

Deep Dickollective/For Colored Boys [2007]

DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince/Summertime [1991]

Drake/Say What’s Real [2009]

Edan/Fumbling Over Words That Rhyme [2005]

Missy Elliott/The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly) [1997]

EPMD/Strictly Business [1988]

The Fatback Band (feat. King Tim III)/King Tim III (Personality Jock)
[1979]
The Game (feat. 50 Cent)/Hate It or Love It [2005]
Jadakiss/Why [2004]
Jay Electronica/Exhibit C [2009]
Jedi Mind Tricks (feat. R.A. the Rugged Man)/Uncommon Valor: A Vietnam Story [2006]
Jeru the Damaja/Come Clean [1993]
Joell Ortiz/Letter to Obama [2008]
Juvenile/Ha [1998]
Kardinal Offishall/BaKardi Slang [2000]
Medusa/*from* This Pussy's a Gangsta [2007]
Naughty By Nature/Everything's Gonna Be Alright (Ghetto Bastard)
[1991]
Nelly/Country Grammar (Hot Shit) [2000]
Nice & Smooth/Sometimes I Rhyme Slow [1991]
O.C./Time's Up [1994]
Pete Rock & C.L. Smooth/They Reminisce over You (T.R.O.Y.) [1992]
The Pharcyde/Passin Me By [1993]
Poor Righteous Teachers/Rock Dis Funky Joint [1990]
Sage Francis/Makeshift Patriot [2003]
Smoothe da Hustler & Trigga da Gambler/Broken Language [1995]
Special Ed/I Got It Made [1989]
Stetsasonic/Talkin All That Jazz [1998]

Afterword by Chuck D

Afterword by Common

Acknowledgments

Notes

Index of Songs, Albums, Movies, and Books

Index of Artists, Authors, and Labels

Credits

ADVISORY BOARD

Jeff Chang

Brian Coleman David “Davey D” Cook Kevin Coval Kyle Dargan Annette Debo Dawn-Elissa Fischer R. Scott Heath Major Jackson Shani Jamila Angelica LeMinh Adam Mansbach Joan Morgan Imani Perry James Braxton Peterson Marcus Reeves Ivan Rott

Susan B. A. Somers-Willett James G. Spady Ebony Utley Oliver Wang

FOREWORD

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

The first person I ever heard “rap” was a man born in 1913, my father, Henry Louis Gates, Sr. Daddy’s generation didn’t call the rhetorical games they played “rapping;” they signified, they played the Dozens. But this was rapping just the same, rapping by another name. Signifying is the grandparent of Rap; and Rap is signifying in a postmodern way. The narratives that my father recited in rhyme told the tale of defiant heroes named Shine or Stagolee or, my absolute favorite, the Signifying Monkey. They were linguistically intricate, they were funny and spirited, and they were astonishingly profane.

Soon the stories became familiar to me and I started memorizing parts of them, especially striking couplets and sometimes an entire resonant stanza. But every time my dad recited a version of one of these tales, he somehow made it new again, reminding me of all that a virtuosic performer possessed: an excellent memory, a mastery of pace and timing, the capacity to inflect and gesture, the ability to summon the identities of different characters simply through the nuances of their voices.

My father and his friends called their raps “signifying” or “playing the Dozens,” a younger generation named them Toasts, and an even younger generation called it “rapping.” But regardless of the name, much about the genre remained the same. Since anthropologists tend to call them “Toasts,” we will employ that term here. Toasts are long oral poems that had emerged by World War I, shortly after the sinking of the *Titanic*, judging by the fact that one of the earliest surviving examples of the genre was called “Shine and the *Titanic*.” And the fact that the French words for “monkey” and “sign” are a bit of a visual pun (*singe* and *signe*, respectively) also points to a World War I origin of the genre as it would have been revised by returning black veterans from the European theater of war. (My father recalls meeting southern black soldiers at the beginning of World War II at Camp Lee, Virginia, who were barely literate but who could recite “acres of verses” of “The Signifying Monkey,” underscoring the role of the military and war as a cross-pollinating mechanism for black cultural practices. And of these various forms, none would be more compelling, more popular, more shared than signifying.)

All of these subgenres emerged out of the African American rhetorical practice of signifying. Signifying is the defining rhetorical principle of all African American discourse, the language game of black language games, both sacred and secular, from the preacher's call-and-response to the irony and indirection of playing the Dozens. These oral poets practiced their arts in ritual settings such as the street corner or the barbershop, sometimes engaging in verbal duels with contenders like a linguistic boxing match. These recitations were a form of artistic practice and honing, but they were also the source of great entertainment displayed before an audience with a most sophisticated ear. And though certain poems, such as "Shine and the *Titanic*" and "The Signifying Monkey," had a familiar, repeated narrative content, poets improvised through and around this received content, with improvised stanzas and lyrics that might address a range of concerns from social and political issues to love, loneliness, heartbreak, and even death. The Dozens and the Toasts were, first and foremost, forms of art, and everyone on the street or sitting around the barbershop knew this. Rapping was a performance, rappers were to be judged, and the judges were the people on the corner or in the shop. Everyone, it seemed to me as I watched these performances unfolding even as a child, was literate in the fine arts of signification.

As I listened to my father delighting us in the late fifties with tales of the Monkey and old Shine, I knew at once that there was something sublime, something marvelous and forbidden and dangerous about them. And it was easy to recognize variations on rapping that started emerging in rhythm and blues and soul music in the sixties. I am thinking of James Brown's nine-minute rendition of "Lost Someone" on his *Live at the Apollo* album in 1963, or Isaac Hayes's paradigm-shifting version of "By the Time I Get to Phoenix" from his *Hot Buttered Soul* album of 1969. And H. Rap Brown's emergence as one of the leaders of the younger black militants of the Black Power movement brought the word "Rap" and the lyrics of the Dozens to a generation of black students because he included his most original raps, as a point of pride in his own artistry, in his autobiography, *Die, Nigger, Die*. (Unfortunately, Mr. Brown did not write as well as he rapped!)

A few years later, I would hear echoes of all of these formal antecedents in the early Rap songs hitting the airwaves in the late seventies and early eighties. Melle Mel's verse on "The Message":

A child is born with no state of mind

**Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through**

echoes across the decades back to these lines from the toast called "Life's a Funny Old Proposition":

**A man comes to birth on this funny old earth
With not a chance in a million to win
To find that he's through and his funeral is due
Before he can even begin**

Despite all that is different about them, these two verses are bound together by both sound and sense. They each insist upon an unstinting and unflinching confrontation with reality, while somehow staving off despair. Great art so often does this, offering expiation and transcendence all at once. As an art form, Rap is defined, like the Toasts before it, by a set of formal qualities, an iconoclastic spirit, and a virtuosic sense of wordplay. It extends the long-standing practice in the African American oral tradition of language games. Simply put, Rap is a contemporary form of signifying.

By the time I began my first job teaching at Yale while still a graduate student in the mid-1970s, I began to hear about a new music coming out of the Bronx. It was simply called Rap—an old word for those familiar with black slang, but a new form that combined rhythm and rhyme in a style all its own. Like all art—vernacular or high art—it took the familiar and made it unfamiliar again. Rap's signature characteristic is the parody and pastiche of its lyrics, including "sampling," which is just another word for intertextuality. Rap is the art form par excellence of synthesis and recombination. No one could say that Afrika Bambaataa or Grandmaster Flash was not creating something new, but each would be quick to acknowledge his formal debts to other artists, especially to old school musicians from the past.

As we have seen, Rap is the postmodern version of an African American vernacular tradition that stretches back to chants, Toasts, and trickster tales. It connects through its percussive sensibility, its riffs, and its penchant for rhyme, with a range of forms including scat singing, radio DJ patter, and Black Arts movement poets like Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, and Jayne Cortez. Its sense of musicality, both in voice and

beat, owes a great deal to performers like Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets, as well as to funk and soul artists like James Brown, Isaac Hayes, George Clinton, and Sly Stone. Rap is, in other words, a multifarious, multifaceted tradition imbedded within an African American oral culture that itself shares in the rich history of human expression across the ages.

At its best, Rap, though a most serious genre, doesn't take itself too self-consciously or try to overburden its lines with rehearsed wisdom, or the cant of ideology. It complicates or even rejects literal interpretation. It demands fluency in the recondite codes of African American speech. Just like the Dozens before it, Rap draws strength by shattering taboos, sending up stereotype, and relishing risqué language and subject matter.

I learned this last lesson firsthand more than two decades ago. In the spring of 1990, after I had published an editorial on the case in the *New York Times*, I was called to testify as an expert witness before a Florida court in the obscenity trial of the 2 Live Crew. The group's 1989 album, *As Nasty as They Wanna Be*, with its provocative single "Me So Horny," had inspired such heated response from civic leaders that copies were burned in the streets. At stake was not simply the songs of one group of young black men, but the very freedom of expression at the core of all artistic creation. In my testimony, I stated that in the very lyrics that some found simply crass and pornographic, "what you hear is great humor, great joy, and great boisterousness. It's a joke. It's a parody and parody is one of the most venerated forms of art."

Rap has always been animated by this complexity of meaning and intention. This is by no means to absolve artists of the ethics of form, particularly in the artist's capacity as a role model for young people, but rather to point out that there's an underlying value worth fighting for in defending Rap—or any other form of art for that matter—against those who would silence its voice. One of the hallmarks of a democratic society should be ensuring the space for all citizens to express themselves in art, whether we like what they have to say or not. After all, censorship is to art as lynching is to justice.

As we have seen, it is not difficult to trace a straight line between the marvelously formulaic oral tales like "Shine and the *Titanic*" and "The Signifying Monkey" and Rap, and, in terms of literary history, it is a short line, too. Rappers often make direct allusions to vernacular culture, as we see on songs like Schoolly D's "Signifying Rapper" and Devin the Dude's "Briarpatch." Even when the connection is less explicit, it is no less apparent. It's impossible not to hear echoes of H. Rap Brown's signifying

virtuosity when reading the lyrics to Smoothe da Hustler and Trigga da Gambler's "Broken Language." And there is undoubtedly something of that swaggering folk hero Stagolee in someone like 2Pac, or of that trickster the Signifying Monkey in someone like Ol' Dirty Bastard.

Given Rap's close connection to the African American oral tradition, it should come as no surprise that it also carries with it much of the same baggage. Misogyny and homophobia, which we must critique, often mar the effectiveness of the music. But as with practices like the Toasts and the Dozens, these influences are by no means absolute. Perhaps one of the most bracing things about reading this anthology is the way that it complicates our assumptions about what Rap is and what Rap does, who makes it and who consumes it. In this anthology, we see Yo-Yo going head to head against Ice Cube in a battle of the sexes, or female MCs like Eve and Jean Grae calling attention to issues like domestic violence and abortion that often get left out of Hip-Hop discourse, and artists often associated with gangsta personas or "conscious" perspectives revealing the full range and complexity of their subjectivity.

The Anthology of Rap is an essential contribution to our living literary tradition. It calls attention to the artistry, sense of craft, and striking originality of an art form born of young black and brown men and women who found their voices in rhyme, and chanted a poetic discourse to the rhythm of the beat. This groundbreaking anthology masterfully assembles part of a new vanguard of American poetry. One of its greatest virtues is that it focuses attention, often for the first time, upon Rap's lyrics alone. This is not a rejection of the music, but rather a reminder that the words are finally the best reason for the beat.

One finds in this anthology many lyrics that complicate common assumptions about Rap music. And as we might expect, the reader encounters the brutal diction of Gangsta Rap, but also its leavening humor and parody. One finds instances of sexism and homophobia, but also resistance to them. One finds words seemingly intended to offend, but also, sometimes, the deeper meanings of and motives for this sort of conscious provocation. Rap's tradition is as broad and as deep as any other form of poetry, but like any other literary tradition, it contains its shallows, its whirlpools, and its muddy waters. Our task as active, informed readers is to navigate through the tributaries of Rap's canon, both for the pleasure that comes from the journey as readers, but also for the wisdom born of traveling to any uncharted destinations of the mind. Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois's superbly edited, pioneering

anthology makes such a journey possible.

Rap and *hip-hop* are not synonymous, though they are so closely associated that some use the terms interchangeably. Others invest them with distinct values—either *rap* describes commercialized music and *hip-hop* the sounds of the underground; or *rap* suggests a gritty style (as in *gangsta rap*) and *hip-hop* a more politically and socially conscious approach (as in *backpack hip-hop*). At the end of his song “HipHop Knowledge,” legendary rap artist and producer KRS-One succinctly explains the distinction: “Rap music is something we do, but hip hop is something we live.” Hip-hop, in other words, is an umbrella term to describe the multifaceted culture of which rap is but a part. MCs, hip-hop’s masters of ceremonies, are its literary artists. They are the poets and rap is the poetry of hip-hop culture.

Hip-hop emerged out of the impoverished South Bronx in the mid-1970s. In defiance of circumstance, a generation of young people—mostly black and brown—crafted a rich culture of words and song, of art and movement. Rap was the voice of this culture, the linguistic analog of hyperkinetic dance moves, vividly painted subway cars, and skillfully mixed break beats. “Rap was the final conclusion of a generation of creative people oppressed with the reality of lack,” KRS-One explains. ¹ Hip-hop’s pioneers fashioned in rap an art form that draws not only from the folk idioms of the African diaspora but from the legacy of Western verse and the musical traditions of jazz, blues, funk, gospel, and reggae. These young artists commandeered the English language, bending it to their own expressive purposes. Over time, the poetry they set to beats would command the ears of their block, their borough, their nation, and eventually the world.

Rap today bears the legacy of this inaugural generation and, as a consequence, is rightly associated with African American culture. Equally, it is a form of expression governed by a set of conventions available to all and vivified by the creativity of anyone who learns rap’s history and masters rap’s craft. This helps explain how rap—and hip-hop culture in general—has come to be embraced by people of all races and nations. It is now the lingua franca of global youth culture, varied in its expressions but rooted in a common past.

At the same time, rap has inspired heated debate concerning its explicit speech and subjects. For some, rap constitutes a chorus of welcome voices, previously suppressed; for others, it presents a troubling sign of cultural disarray. Beyond its controversy, however, a hip-hop lyrical tradition has taken shape through poetic gestures and forms that rappers developed

over time. The substantial body of literature that has emerged is both related to and distinct from the poetry of the past. In the past thirty years rap has led a renaissance of the word, driving a return to poetry in public life.

Though rap is now widely disseminated in American culture, it has yet to attain adequate recognition as poetry even as universities incorporate it into English, African American studies, and music curricula. Only a few poetry anthologies contain rap lyrics. Those that do, like the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* and Ishmael Reed's *From Totems to Hip Hop*, do so in a representative fashion. Books like Flocabulary's *Shakespeare Is Hip Hop* and Alan Sitomer and Michael Cirelli's *Hip Hop Poetry and the Classics* offer effective and entertaining tools for using rap to teach canonical poetry to middle school and high school students, but don't illuminate rap's distinct poetic tradition.

This volume treats rap as a body of lyrics that responds to transcription, explication, and analysis as poetry. The lyrics included offer a kind of laboratory of language for those interested in the principles of poetics. Indeed, the study of rap is an effective means of introducing the key forms and concepts that define the poetic tradition: rappers embrace the clear sonic qualities of rhythm and rhyme, make ample use of figures and forms such as simile and metaphor, make storytelling a key component of their art, and emphasize the spirit of competition once central to poetry.

Just as any body of poetry can be studied from many angles, so too can rap. Viable approaches to the aesthetics of rap abound. From a formal perspective, one might look at a song's rhetorical figures, at its local sonic qualities, or at its revisions of conventions of genre. An interest in cultural studies will likely lead one to situate rap in relation to its sociological, geographical, or racial contexts. A range of historical approaches seems relevant in considering rap as an art, whether that means focusing on a song's relationship to African American oral poetry of the distant or recent past, or to English-language lyric poetry from *Beowulf* until now, or to the vast range of commercial popular song lyrics in general—all bodies of poetry with rich and various histories, of which rap is also a part. As the lyrics in this book attest, rap has been and remains many things for many people; perhaps the wisest approach is one as capacious as the art form itself.

Rap's Poetic Form

Raps are lyric poems organized into verses, the standard length of

which is sixteen lines. They are performed most often in rhythm to a beat with a vocal delivery that ranges from sing-song to conversational. Their most distinguishing poetic feature is rhyme, which rappers employ in full and slant, monosyllabic and multisyllabic forms at the end of and in the midst of the line. Rap verses make ample use of figurative language, most especially the simile, though other less common rhetorical figures and forms are also used. The dominant poetic voice is the first-person singular, the “I” not only of the MC, but of a range of invented identities that the MC takes on. As poetic practice, rap verses are often confrontational, composed either in competition with an actual rhyme adversary or in mock battle with an imagined one. A dominant theme, therefore, is the elevation of the self and the denigration of the opponent. That said, rap has also developed a complex expressive range, driven by narratives of everything from the street life to the good life and by treatments of themes ranging from love to heartache to speculative projections of alternative realities.

Rap is sometimes conflated with spoken word or slam poetry. In fact, each is a distinct form with a disparate history. Rap grew out of African American oral expressions and took shape in the pressure cooker of the South Bronx in the 1970s. Slam poetry, on the other hand, emerged out of audience-judged competitions held in white working-class Chicago bars during the mid-1980s. The term *spoken word*—which over the years has been used to describe everything from radio broadcasts to beatnik poetry readings—loosely encompasses both modes of expression. Though they differ in their ancestral roots, rap and slam poetry have grown together in creative cross-pollination. HBO’s 2002–2007 series *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry*, for instance, included many performers who drew heavily from rap influences; the series was hosted by the rapper Mos Def, and MCs occasionally came on the show to deliver their lyrics a cappella (for one such example see Talib Kweli’s “Give ’Em Hell”). At the same time, poets such as Saul Williams, Jessica Care Moore, and Sage Francis reflect the aesthetics of rap in the poetry they have performed at slams.

One of the greatest misconceptions about rap lyrics is that they consist entirely of couplets ending with heavy-handed, simplistic rhymes. Certainly, rap in its infancy favored predictable patterns of straightforward rhymes, but this soon gave way to an expanding body of lyrical innovations that would come to define rap in its mature form. The parody of rap as doggerel does not touch truly on much of the music and cannot account for the range and formal dexterity of Rakim, Lauryn Hill,

Jay-Z, Nas, and other rap lyricists too numerous to name.

To understand the difference between relative simplicity and sonic density in rap lyrics, consider a couplet from Vanilla Ice's much-maligned but doggedly enduring 1990 hit "Ice Ice Baby," with its infectious energy and rudimentary rhymes:

Will it ever stop? Yo, I don't know

Turn off the lights and I'll glow

The rhyme of "know" and "glow" is fairly obvious; though it forges a perfect connection between the two lines in sound, it does little to develop that connection in sense. Certainly, though, there is something of interest in the metaphorical content since Ice, as a white rapper, will "glow" in the dark. Compare that, however, to what Big Pun does with the same end word ("know") in these more complex lines from "Twinz (Deep Cover '98)":

Dead in the middle of Little Italy little did we know

That we riddled some middleman who didn't do diddly

Both lyrics share a common end-word in their first line, but where Vanilla Ice employs a plain perfect rhyme, Big Pun eschews end rhyme entirely, instead satisfying the listener's formal expectations with a tongue-twisting series of internal rhymes, assonance, and alliteration. The result is an unexpected and energizing lyric in which the swerves of sound mimic the active confusion of the scene Pun paints. Vanilla Ice's song was the first rap single to top the Billboard charts, selling eleven million copies and helping to launch hip-hop into the mainstream. Yet Big Pun's line is the one rap fans have been repeating now for more than a decade. Both lyrics coexist within the broad expanse of rap's aesthetics.

Rap, like other artistic forms, thrives on constraint as much as it does freedom. Every rap lyric must fulfill certain demands, the dominant ones being the listener's expectation of rhyme and the rhythmic strictures of the beat. In unskilled hands, rap's requirements can prove too much, leading to insipid lyrics that confuse meaning to find rhyme and strain syntax to satisfy rhythm. But in the hands of a skilled MC, rap's formal limitations are a means to eloquence. As David Foster Wallace and Mark Costello observe in their offbeat but visionary 1990 book, *Signifying Rappers*, "The limitations [of rhythm and rhyme in rap] are the invaluable constraints of form that all good new art helps define itself by struggling against from

inside them—the formal Other all ‘fresh’ speech needs.” ²

The MC not only must craft a coherent poetic narrative or create a compelling persona, but must do so while rhyming with some regularity and without ever losing the beat. To quote Foster Wallace and Costello again, “This all means that the rapper’s lyric, to succeed, must function simultaneously: as the quickest, interval-inhabiting part, the human part, of the many-gear rhythmic machine that comprises most serious raps; as a powerful, shocking, repulsive or witty monologue, as a deftness-in-motion; and as a formally clean and to-the-rhyme’s-bone-hewing arrangement of verse.” ³ The success of the lyrics in this anthology testifies to rap’s lyrical possibilities and to the estimable body of contemporary poetry to be found in its rhythms and rhymes.

Rap as Music, Rap as Poetry

Like most music, rap appeals to the ear and to the human desire for song and celebration. By their very nature, lyrics rely on music to achieve their full effect. The synergy of driving beats and ingenious vocal cadences largely accounts for rap’s popularity. When hip-hop was born in the early 1970s, the DJ, not the MC, dominated. DJs spun records and captured break beats, the funky drum sections the DJ isolated and repeated to motivate a dancing crowd. The MC’s cadence developed in emulation of these flowing instrumentals, with the rapping voice eventually supplanting the DJ’s mix as the centerpiece of hip-hop performance. *Flow* is the word MCs use for synching their voice in rhythm to the beat—a fitting term given that *rhythm* comes from the Greek *rheo*, meaning flow. Certainly, the development of rap’s musicality is a subject worthy of attention. This anthology, however, centers upon rap as lyrical craft.

Rap’s identity as music reaffirms its connection to the ancestral traditions from which all poetry emerged. Two turntables and a digital sampler have simply taken the place of the lute and the lyre of the bardic past and the freestyle songs of West African griots. Rap’s oral poetry expresses itself in sound through performance even as it retains its connection to the page. In hip-hop culture, lyrics are a form of currency, a means by which to exchange ideas about value and meaning in the music. Memorizing, reciting, analyzing, and being able to call upon a mental catalog of verses are the measures of one’s knowledge of rap and dedication to hip-hop culture. Rap’s lyrics, in other words, are already invested with value distinct from their place in the music; often, they are

the most enduring part.

Rap songs almost always begin the same way: as lyrics written in an MC's book of rhymes—the journals many rappers keep for composing their verses. To read rap lyrics in print, therefore, is most often to restore them to their original form. Whether MCs are scribbling in a rhyme book, tapping out lyrics on a Blackberry or iPhone, or just composing in the mental journal in their heads, rap expresses itself as a fusion of the written and the oral. When Jay-Z boasts on his 2009 single “D.O.A. (Death of AutoTune)” that “my raps don’t have melodies,” he is celebrating rap’s difference from most other musical genres—and, by implication, its added capacity for direct expression. The very qualities that leave rap open to criticism as music—heavy reliance on 4/4 beats, limited use of melody and harmony—are precisely what make it such an effective vehicle for poetry. Good rap lyrics are poetically interesting because they have to be; they have little in the way of melody or harmony to compensate for a poor lyrical line.

Certainly rap has its share of weak lyrics. Some even form part of popular and otherwise pleasurable songs. The difference is that when rap fails poetically, listeners cannot help but hear it because the rapping voice is so clearly in the foreground. Hip-hop’s community of MCs and its discerning audience pass swift judgment on such lyrical failure; a predictable rhyme or an overused phrase can get an unwitting rapper booed off the stage or booted from a cipher, a collaborative and competitive circle of lyricists that often forms spontaneously wherever rap is heard. As Harvard scholar Marcyliena Morgan observes, hip-hop culture demands of its adherents “attention to the art and role of practice, critical evaluation, and performance in order to develop artistic and technical skills. Evaluation in the [hip-hop] underground is a thing of great value.”

⁴ Hip-hop’s reliance on the word means that its terms of lyrical evaluation are often more rigorous than those of other musical genres.

The rhythm-driven beats of hip-hop are more than accommodating of poetic expression; they provide the perfect sonic climate for poetically sophisticated lyrics to flourish. The regularity of the beat, the limited melody and harmony, and a vocal delivery that falls closer to speech than to song mean that rap has the freedom to explore language in an infinite number of ways. Rap lyrics generally retain much of their resonance and meaning when isolated from their music. This is because so much of rap’s meaning and even its sound are embedded in the language.

Reading rap lyrics, one comes to understand a rap song not simply as

music, but also as a lyric poem, or what William Carlos Williams called a “small machine of words.” Just as a mechanic might take apart an engine in order to understand how its constituent parts fit together before returning it to its functional form, this anthology encourages readers to focus upon the discrete elements of rap’s poetic form in isolation before returning them to the whole performance. When a rap lyric appears on the page, aspects like rhyme schemes and enjambment suddenly become apparent; our attention is heightened to the point of awareness of similes and metaphors and other species of figurative language. It can be a remarkable aesthetic experience on its own, and one that carries over when the song is heard again in full. Cultivating knowledge of rap’s poetic craft stimulates greater appreciation for rap music than one might otherwise gain from listening to the recordings alone.

This anthology treats rap as a literary form, albeit one primarily experienced as music. Langston Hughes made the same case for the blues, celebrating the poetry inherent in the music he would use as a model for his own verse. Far from denying rap’s value as music, the comparison suggests that readers stand to gain a renewed appreciation for rap’s music by considering the poetry of its lyrics. To study rap as poetry is to pause in contemplation before returning to the beats and rhymes of the music itself.

The Language of Rap

Rap’s influence on the English language is palpable in the currents of contemporary, everyday speech. It is a vivid vocabulary, stylish and often explicit. Reading rap lyrics rather than simply hearing them underscores both their originality and, occasionally, their offensiveness. It calls attention to the fact that rap is often intended to confuse and even to affront many members of the listening public.

Readers of this anthology will undoubtedly come across lyrics with unclear meanings, whether in a slang term or an obscure reference. It is important to remember that such lack of comprehension is often by design. Slang is born of the desire to find new and compelling ways to speak about familiar things, but it also emerges out of the desire for coded communication. The young hope to confound the old; the poor, the rich; the black, the white; the people from one part of town want to distinguish themselves from the people in another. When confronted with uncertainty in rap lyrics, it is constructive to bear in mind the following: (1) not even hip-hop insiders are likely to understand everything in every song; (2)

meaning changes over time, depending upon the particular circumstance of the language's use; and (3) obfuscation is often the point, suggesting coded meanings worth puzzling over.

Even the names rappers assume for themselves are a kind of coding, a way of transforming identity through language. A handful of MCs go by their given names—Kanye West, Keith Murray, Lauryn Hill—but the vast majority take on one or more rap aliases. Names in rap help define a persona, allowing for the necessary distance between person and performer and announcing certain defining qualities of the artist before he or she has said a word. They can suggest criminal personas: Capone (like Al) or Noreaga (like Manuel) or Rick Ross (like “Freeway Ricky” Ross, the drug dealer responsible for introducing crack cocaine to Los Angeles). They can suggest linguistic virtuosity and erudition: Punchline or Wordsworth or Saukrates. In short, they can suggest a range of meanings that help define an MC's style and persona.

MCs with multiple aliases often flow differently depending on the lyrical identity they choose to inhabit. The RZA rhymes one way, but as Bobby Digital he rhymes another. Kool Keith has a certain style, which changes when he becomes Dr. Octagon, Dr. Doom, or Black Elvis. Eminem is a study in persona; he embodies three distinct poetic identities in his work: Slim Shady, Eminem, and Marshall Mathers, the latter his given name. “When does Slim Shady kick in, when does Eminem step in, where does Marshall begin?” Eminem asks.⁵ His rhymes provide the answer. Rap aliases are a means of linguistic transformation; like slang, they fashion new expressive possibilities.

When rap first emerged, most of the slang that MCs employed could be puzzled out in context. When Biz Markie, on 1988's “Vapors,” describes his friend TJ Swan's stylish attire as “fly Bally boots / Rough leather fashions and tough silk suits,” we can glean that “fly,” “rough,” and “tough” are all superlatives. As rap spread across the United States in the 1990s, the varieties of slang often served as geographical markers, sometimes with quite specific relevance. Consider, for example, the different ways that rappers in the early-to-mid-1990s would refer to their friends: 2Pac's “homies,” DMX's “dawgs,” Mobb Deep's “duns,” the Wu-Tang Clan's “gods,” Mac Dre's “cuddies,” E-40's “pardners.” These differences in terminology reflect both regional and individual styles. They speak to the artists' identities and to their communities.

At the other extreme from these regional variations are those terms that have left hip-hop culture to become part of the general American lexicon,

thereby undoing their value as coded speech. The word *dis* (for dismiss, disrespect, or insult) is now so prevalent that many are unaware that the term was popularized in rap. The source of such crossover words is often impossible to isolate, but occasionally it can be traced back to a specific point of origin. The term *bling bling*, or simply *bling* (to describe diamonds or any other form of jewelry that glints in the light), was popularized by the New Orleans rapper B.G. and a teenaged Lil Wayne on their 1999 hit “Bling Bling.” Now suburban grandmothers use the term.

The lifespan of a given slang word is fleeting, as new ways of saying the same thing evolve and gain popularity. Thus certain words and phrases can become markers of particular historical moments. When Malice of The Clipse rhymes on “Zen” that “I’m from the old school when the gat was a jammy,” he is calling attention not only to the shifting street terminology for firearms, but also to the power of words to define time and place. (This example is especially ironic since “gat” as used in hip-hop is itself a slang term more than a century old derived from the Gatling gun.) Using the term *def*, for instance, to say that something is great means that you are most likely somewhere in New York in the 1980s. *Def* waned in popularity as other terms (*phat*, *dope*, *fly*, *official*) took over, only to fade out as well; back in 1993, Rick Rubin, co-founder of Def Jam Records with Russell Simmons, even held a mock funeral for “def”—complete with casket. Just like “gat,” it will probably be resurrected.

Slang is so prevalent in rap that it supports a cottage industry of online and even print lexicons, the most prominent of which is the Web-based “Urban Dictionary.” The Web site Rap Genius offers line-by-line analysis of rap lyrics, interpreting slang and uncovering nuances of expression. We encourage readers who may be unfamiliar with some of the words in the lyrics to use such resources to explicate these poems of the present, just as one might use the *Oxford English Dictionary* to discern shades of meaning in poems of the past.

Most of rap’s language, though, is quite plain and often explicit. Rap, after all, was the first musical genre to make cursing a customary practice. Because it emerged out of an underground scene, at first relatively heedless of commercial considerations, rap was free to stick more closely to the ways people actually speak. Ironically, this renegade attitude contributed to rap’s commercial success. NWA went platinum in the early 1990s despite the fact that almost none of their songs were suitable for airplay. Music video viewers have often found themselves

subjected to the farce of rap songs made incomprehensible by bleeped and edited lyrics. The Recording Industry Association of America essentially invented the parental advisory sticker in response to rap artists like 2 Live Crew and Ice-T.

But rap's explicit language and content is about more than simply causing a stir. Rap was born as a form of necessary speech. It provided young people, many of whom were from difficult and impoverished backgrounds, with a voice and a means of vivid expression. "When I was young," the pioneering rapper MC Lyte remembers, "I was like, how else can a young black girl of my age be heard all around the world? I gotta rap." ⁶ This new art form would be passionate, plainspoken, and at times profane. The young artists would take as their themes both the hardscrabble realities of everyday life as well as the aspirational imaginings of wealth, comfort, and success. In his memoir, *From Pieces to Weight* (2005), 50 Cent describes what rapping meant to him when he was just beginning: "I wrote about the things I had seen in my life and what was going on in the 'hood. I was able to express myself in rhyme better than I ever had in a regular conversation." ⁷ The fact that rap's rhymed expression is often blunt and confrontational, aggressive and offensive, makes profanity a necessary, even defining, element of its art.

This anthology is filled with explicit language, from garden-variety curse words to terms of more specific offense (the n-word and the b-word being most prominent). Rap's early years offer surprisingly little in the way of curse words; indeed, it wasn't until the early 1990s that explicit language and content became commonplace in the music. Set to a beat, such words endow rap with transgressive power rarely matched in popular music. But rap's most incendiary element may be its subject matter. Rap lyrics contain violence, misogyny, sexism, and homophobia. One must come to terms with these qualities when studying the formal elements of rap's poetry. As Tricia Rose observes in *The Hip Hop Wars* (2008), discussions of rap's content are increasingly reductive and politicized, with neither detractors nor defenders willing to engage in fruitful debate. "The hyperbolic and polarized public conversation about hip hop that has emerged over the past decade," she writes, "discourages progressive and nuanced consumption, participation, and critique, thereby contributing to the very crisis that is facing hip hop." ⁸ The purpose of this anthology is not to adjudicate such matters, but to present rap's lyrics in such a way that these discussions about content and value might be better grounded and contextualized.

Rap is a reflection of a broader culture that too often sanctions the same sexism, homophobia, and violence found in the music. By including lyrics with such content, we present occasions to challenge pernicious influences by confronting them directly rather than simply pretending they aren't there. At the same time, studying lyrics of targeted offense offers occasions to underscore the often-overlooked fact that hip-hop has formulated its own critiques of sexism, misogyny, and violence. "Most successful female MCs recognize that for them the only place where they can negotiate race, class, gender, and sexuality with relative freedom is the hip-hop world," writes Marcyliena Morgan, describing one such homegrown response to hip-hop's own failings. "It is not an ideal space but rather one populated by those searching for discourse that confronts power." ⁹

In addition to instances of sexism and misogyny, readers are urged to consider ways that rap's default tone of aggression might promote harmful attitudes toward women. Is hip-hop inherently unwelcoming to women, even when the lyrics are not specifically targeting them? Is there something in the very spirit or attitude of rap that can be identified as misogynist? These are important questions to ask as we seek to expand the discussion of gender in rap beyond the conventional critique of rap's overt sexism and use of derogatory language. In addition, we should explore how women artists have expanded rap to embody their own voices. Are artists like Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown, who flaunt their sexuality in a manner similar to their male counterparts, doing subversive and revolutionary work or are they simply succumbing to commercial pressures or adhering to the template established by many young men who've made rap their own? "It's up to female rappers to stand strong to create the yin and yang in this music," says Medusa, the Los Angeles-based underground MC. "There's a lack of connection with the male and female energy." ¹⁰

Similarly, hip-hop culture is often hostile to the very idea of homosexuality. Though there are openly gay MCs in hip-hop's underground (e.g., Medusa, Deep Dickollective), to date there are no openly gay rappers who have made it into the mainstream. That said, rap lyrics offer rich ground for discussions of sexuality, particularly in its relation to masculinity. What are the broader implications of a hip-hop culture that sanctions, supports, and extends certain negative characteristics of young male behavior? What progressive futures suggest themselves that might redress rap's wrongs?

Such questions are crucial, but they are not the only ones to be asked; nor should the heated debates, deep concerns, and political posturing that often revolve around hip-hop culture obscure the music's other sides. The lyrics in this book were selected to demonstrate beyond a doubt that rap embodies the full range of human experience, not simply the brash and offensive content often associated with hip-hop in the public imagination. Rap is more than the sum of its offenses; it is a testament to human creativity at work.

Principles of Selection

The Anthology of Rap documents the tradition of rap written and performed in English, most often in the United States, over the course of four decades. Though it is not the first collection of rap lyrics, it is the first anthology of rap compiled with the specific intention of studying the lyrics as poetry. We have endeavored to include those indispensable lyrics that define the body of rap at the present time, lyrics whose formal virtuosity, thematic interest, or both merit preservation and sustained study.

The publication of an anthology is a potential moment of danger for any art form because it necessitates categorization and containment. For a tradition as dynamic as rap, this is a particular concern. Rap inherently resists such categorization; it denies our best efforts to define it and fix it under our critical gaze. As sociologist and cultural critic Oliver Wang observes, "So much of hip-hop's history has involved crushing canons." ¹¹ We offer this anthology, therefore, fully aware of the limitations of any effort to render rap's lyrical legacy. Its publication is by no means the last word on rap's poetry but rather is the inauguration of a dialogue about what matters in rap lyrics.

Selecting lyrics for this anthology required a different set of criteria from, say, compiling the greatest mix tape in hip-hop history or naming the hundred most influential rap songs of all time. A collection of the greatest *songs* in rap history would differ substantially from the contents of an anthology that looks at rap *lyrics* as poetry and at rappers as poets. Great songs are more than just lyrics; indeed, sometimes great songs rely on the lyrics being unobtrusive and unremarkable.

Our lyrical selections aim to strike a balance among several competing interests. The most difficult challenge was in establishing the final table of contents. To do so, we began with a set of selection criteria. Each lyric included had to meet at least one of the following standards: (1) Does the

song contribute to an accurate representation of hip-hop's lyrical history? (2) Does the song display lyrical excellence that is observable on the page? (3) Does the song help contribute to the fuller understanding of an individual artist's poetic range and development?

In terms of the first category, well-known and rightfully celebrated songs like Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" or Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five's "The Message" have a place in this anthology both on their merits as poetry and for their wide-ranging influence on hip-hop culture. The anthology also includes songs whose historical import necessitates their inclusion even if their lyrical quality or explicit language and subject matter might render their selection controversial, such as Lil' Kim's "Queen Bitch" or Too \$hort's "Cusswords." In addition, we have included lyrics to songs that are representative of particular historical moments, regional styles, themes, or elements of poetic form. The Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" has playful and even rudimentary lyrics that might not distinguish it as cutting-edge poetry, but its broader cultural influence as rap's first mainstream hit makes it indispensable to the story of rap poetics.

Since this is an anthology that considers rap as poetry, it places heightened emphasis on those songs that distinguish themselves for their poetic interest. The second criterion, therefore, is observable excellence—granting, of course, that excellence in lyric poetry comes in a wide variety of forms as defined by a wide range of people. A song like Common's "I Used to Love H.E.R.," for instance, is notable for its ambitious extended metaphor. Lauryn Hill's "Lost Ones" stands out for the sharpness and innovation of her rhymes. Juvenile's "Ha" calls attention to itself in the incantatory nature of its repetition. The quality of these lyrics is apparent on the page alone, without even hearing their superb performances. This evaluative category also explains the inclusion of certain songs that never achieved widespread popularity, but that we believe merit close consideration.

The third category underscores the importance of encompassing the full range of a given artist's work. This means that certain songs might be included for their representative significance at the expense of other songs of perhaps greater aesthetic achievement. For example, one could make the argument for including every song from Nas's classic debut album, *Illmatic*. That said, the anthology has a more compelling interest in representing a comprehensive selection of Nas's lyrics from across his long career. So though we might wish to include "One Love" over, say, "Black

President” on lyrical merit alone, the more recent song tells a fuller story of Nas’s stylistic development.

Generally, artists with long careers garner more lyrics. Yet there are special cases in which the importance of an artist to the tradition demands what might be considered a disproportionate emphasis on that artist’s work. For instance, though the Notorious B.I.G. recorded only two studio albums before his death, his impact on hip-hop and popular culture exceeds many artists who have enjoyed longer careers and greater total output; thus the number of his songs that are included is meant to be roughly commensurate with his contribution.

Though the majority of the MCs featured in this anthology are the authors of their own lyrics, in some instances the writer and performer are distinct. Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five’s “The Message,” for instance, includes lyrics by the song’s performer, Melle Mel, and by a songwriter, Duke Bootee. Big Daddy Kane began his rap career writing lyrics for his label mates Biz Markie and Roxanne Shanté. Run-DMC wrote some of the verses on the Beastie Boys’ debut album. The importance of these artists to rap’s history is undiminished by the fact that they did not author all of their rhymes.

Ghostwriting, the practice of one artist supplying lyrics for another to perform, has been around since rap’s beginnings. However, given the audience’s expectation that rappers’ words should be their own, it has almost always been transacted behind the scenes. Rap lyrics are so closely associated with the identity of the artist that the idea of a distinction between writer and performer seems counterintuitive. Nonetheless, rap is in its essence a collaborative art form, from the tapestry of its densely layered samples to its borrowed lyrical riffs and references. For the purposes of this anthology, we have elected to include all lyrics under the names of their performers. We do this for both practical and aesthetic reasons. Practically, we recognize the impossibility of discerning with absolute certainty which artists wrote their own lyrics and which did not. Aesthetically, we believe that the act of performance constitutes a kind of composition; though the Beastie Boys, for instance, did not compose all the verses on “Paul Revere,” their distinctive voices and deliveries shape the song and remain in our memory, even when the lyrics are brought back to the page.

As a rule, however, this anthology emphasizes poetry over performance. This is not, after all, a collection of lyrics from rap’s greatest hits, but rather a collection of rap’s best poetry. Some of the

biggest hits in hip-hop history include lyrics that are undistinguished. MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This" had one of the most infectious hooks of the 1990s; anyone listening to the radio at that time undoubtedly can recite the lyrics, no matter how much they might now distance themselves from the song. Hammer's album went platinum many times over and helped launch hip-hop into the realm of popular music, but considering "U Can't Touch This" for its poetic merits misses the point of the song. Many hit songs derive their appeal from performance rather than language; the substance and structure of the lyrics play a secondary role to the pop-ready hooks, catchy samples, and banging beats. To offer the lyrics alone in such cases would do an injustice to the songs themselves, to sap them of their vitality and value as popular entertainment. It would also do a disservice to the songs included in this anthology, whose lyrics better reward close attention.

For every song we include, there are likely a dozen others that we might also have selected. The purpose of this anthology, however, is not to be exhaustive, but rather to represent in a readable fashion the full depth and quality of rap from its roots to the present. We encourage readers to consider these selections as a starting point for further discussions of rap's poetry. And we hope that this anthology inspires others to compile their own collections of rap lyrics.

We regret that limitations of space and focus do not allow us to delve into the rich territory of rap outside the United States. Though we include a few lyrics by Canadian and British MCs, we have consciously chosen not to include artists from other parts of the world—continental Europe, Asia, Africa, the countries of the African diaspora, and South America among them. Only an anthology dedicated to global hip-hop could do justice to these rich traditions of innovation. Indeed, much of hip-hop culture today thrives outside the United States. We hope that such a collection will soon emerge.

One of the challenges in compiling an anthology of this scale is the practical matter of acquiring lyric permissions. Artists and labels maintain a financial interest in the song lyrics and command compensation. Acquiring permissions can become a costly, time-consuming, sometimes Kafkaesque process. A single song may have as many as a half dozen or more copyright holders, each of whom is owed some percentage of the total compensation. Often, these individuals are difficult if not impossible to contact. We have made every effort to reach all individual copyright holders for each of the songs we include. Some readers may bemoan the

absence of certain classic songs, songs that logically should belong in this anthology. In such cases, there is a good chance that the reasons for not including the lyric have something to do with the practical matter of being denied the proper permissions. We are grateful to those artists and labels that facilitated our attempt to honor their impact on rap.

The Anthology's Structure

This anthology is structured to encourage a historical understanding of rap's development even as it underscores the importance of rap's distinguishing formal qualities and dominant themes. The book is divided into four historical sections, each with an introduction describing the major developments of that period. These four periods are simply a practical means of organizing the material; rap's artistic development is organic, defying attempts at periodization.

Within each section, lyrics are organized alphabetically by artist, with brief headnotes for each MC or group outlining stylistic characteristics and thematic concerns. Artists whose careers span multiple periods—such as LL Cool J, who has released music in all but the earliest period—are situated in the time period in which they were most visible and productive. The lyrics of MCs with careers both as part of a group and as solo artists are situated in the period in which most of the work appeared.

Part One contains lyrics dating from 1978 to 1984, rap's formative years, in which the art of MCing began taking shape and rap made its first appearance on radio. This is the period of rap's pioneers, particularly the founding triumvirate of DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash, the style shapers and taste makers who helped guide an organic cultural movement into an emerging popular form.

Part Two, spanning 1985 to 1992, is described by many as rap's "golden age," a term the anthology holds up to scrutiny even as it celebrates the unquestionable innovation and excellence of the artists of this period. This is the period when rap began spreading from East Coast to West Coast and also when it first pierced the consciousness of most of the country. Some of the best-known and most-respected artists in rap's history emerged in these years, from Run-DMC to Rakim, Public Enemy to De La Soul, Ice-T to NWA. This period ends with the emergence of what was popularly termed "gangsta rap," which sparked the first national controversies about rap's explicit content.

Part Three, from 1993 to 1999, encompasses rap's emergence as the

dominant genre in American popular music and the rapid spread of rap music and hip-hop culture around the globe. It is punctuated by the rise and fall of two of rap's most important voices, 2Pac and the Notorious B.I.G. It also includes classic contributions from some of rap's distinctive figures, including Nas, Jay-Z, The Fugees, and The Roots.

The final section, Part Four, follows rap's development from 2000 to 2010. This period has witnessed the effects brought upon rap by rapid changes in the music industry, the influence of digital technology, and the cementing of rap as a multinational commercial force even as its domestic popularity seems to have reached a plateau. Together, these four periods serve as approximations of rap's historical course.

Editorial Procedures

Making an anthology is a collective effort. We began by putting together an advisory board of some of the leading figures in hip-hop culture and poetry—journalists, scholars, poets, and DJs (see page xxi). After assembling a provisional table of contents, we solicited suggestions from these advisers concerning the collection's form and content. They provided a rich array of suggestions, even down to particular lines in particular songs. We set to collating and digesting all of this feedback, ultimately arriving at a radically revised and expanded table of contents that we circulated again for final comment.

The most significant change that came directly as a result of the advisory board's suggestions was the conscious expansion of the coverage and commentary on the role of women in the rise of rap lyricism. This meant not simply giving due credit to the major female artists in hip-hop's history, but also considering more broadly the role of women in the culture, in both the introductory essays and the artist headnotes. The result, we believe, is a rendering of women in rap that doesn't distort their contribution, but rather acknowledges their fundamental influence in shaping the culture.

This anthology reflects hip-hop's gender imbalance inasmuch as the vast majority of the artists it includes are men. We highlight the vital contributions of key female MCs, but we believe it would be cynical to make a show of equity where none exists. The relative dearth of recognized women MCs is a troubling fact, particularly when one considers that, if anything, the place of female artists in the hip-hop mainstream may actually have diminished over the past decade. Hip-hop's future lies in the expansion rather than retraction of its voices; women

must play a central role in this future development, not simply as consumers but as creators of the music.

Another significant change brought on by the advisory board was the decision to include as many full lyrical transcriptions as possible for the selected songs. The verse, more than the song, is rap's basic unit of poetic expression. That said, there is often significant value to the contextual understanding that a full transcription provides.

On Transcription

Studying rap's poetic form necessitates the existence of carefully transcribed lyrics from across hip-hop's tradition. Only with an accurate transcription, attentive to everything from deciphering individual words to establishing formal matters like line breaks and punctuation, is it possible to glean the poetic structure of a lyric.

The most significant effort to record rap lyrics to date is not in a book but online, in the numerous user-generated lyric databases launched in recent years. The [OHHLA](#) is the most comprehensive. One can find nearly every rap song imaginable with a few keystrokes. However, these transcriptions are often so flawed that they are of limited use for anything more than a casual perusal. This volume responds to an unmet need for accurate transcriptions, voiced so clearly by the thousands of people who care enough about rap to post lyrics, however imperfect, online. Of course, flawless transcriptions are nearly impossible to achieve; undoubtedly small errors remain in even the most scrupulous efforts, ours included. However, readers can rest assured that the lyrics included here have been meticulously vetted, sometimes by the artists themselves.

Though often starting as lyrics written in a book of rhymes, rap's final form as oral poetry makes for a number of challenges when it comes to presenting words on the page. Rap lyrics share with medieval ballads the pattern of first being performed before being presented for public consumption in written form. Those who wish to transcribe a song face the immediate challenge of comprehension: Can you decipher all the words? Particularly for rap, can you comprehend the slang? Next is the challenge of orthography: How do you represent the distinctive sound and accent of someone's speech? Do you resort to deliberate misspellings to capture, for instance, the difference between the artist saying "singin" rather than "singing"? The final matter for transcription is one of form: Where do you break the line? What are the basic structures upon which

rap songs are forged?

Many of the transcriptions found online tend to follow a practice in which the line break signals a pause in the rapper's delivery. Whenever the flow stops, the line breaks. Another method involves transcribing as one would with musical notation—with the eighth note, quarter note, half note, and whole note. Both of these methods have a certain intuitive logic, but both go against the method most MCs employ when writing their lyrics to a beat.

Most MCs compose their lines with beat and song structure in mind. This anthology follows a principle of transcription that takes its cue from rap's lyrical relationship in rhythm to the beat. Each measure (or bar) in a typical rap song consists of four beats, and a lyric line consists of the words one can deliver in the space of that bar. Therefore, one musical bar is equal to one line of verse. This description fits the way that rappers themselves most often talk about their lyrics. "I used to get the legal pad," the Long Beach MC Crooked I recalls, "and I used to write each bar as one line, so at the end, 16 lines, 16 bars." ¹² When rappers say they're going to "spit sixteen," they mean that they are going to rap for sixteen bars, or sixteen written lines. Preserving this fundamental relationship makes it possible to discern a host of formal qualities in the verse. It allows us to distinguish between end rhymes and internal rhymes, to appreciate effective enjambment, to note the caesural pauses within lines, and to perceive a host of formal elements that might otherwise escape notice.

When MCs talk among themselves, they often talk about matters of poetic and musical craft—about syllables and bars, varieties of rhyme and rhythmic cadences, breath control and vocal intonation, metaphors and similes. As Mos Def rhymes on "Hip Hop," "I write a rhyme, sometimes won't finish for days / Scrutinize my literature from the large to the miniature / I mathematically add-minister, subtract the wack." This consciousness of craft is apparent in recent books such as Paul Edwards's *How to Rap*, with its rich array of interviews with old school and new school artists; stic.man of dead prez's *The Art of Emceeing*, in which the rapper breaks down the tools of his lyrical trade; and Brian Coleman's *Check the Technique*, in which rappers address their artistic process in creating particular albums. These and other books like them testify to the attention MCs direct to matters of language and sound, discussions that often get drowned out by the more controversial elements of hip-hop culture. Reading them reminds us that whatever else rap is, it is also poetic expression.

Reading rap will never be the same as listening to it, but it retains an essential value all its own. “Rap lyrics are important to analyze and dissect,” Chuck D explains, “because they offer a way to look at society from a perspective rarely taken seriously. ... Many Hip Hop lyricists have jewels woven deep down in the meanings of certain songs, but the whole duty of Hip Hop is firstly, writing, and secondly, to get the song across, and a lot of times artists are more focused on how to get it across so that the substance, reasoning, and metaphors that have been written into the rhymes get overlooked.” ¹³ The goal of this anthology is to ensure that these lyrical jewels are not overlooked but instead are allowed to shine.



1978–1984

The Old School

The term *old school* has been applied to almost anything with a hint of history. For all of its applications, though, the term resonates most loudly in hip-hop. The old school is always audible when listening to rap. We hear it in direct references and recycled verses, or in glancing lyrical gestures and tendencies of rhyme.

No art is likely to survive without assimilating, critiquing, and transforming its past. It advances itself in time and in its range of

aesthetic strategies with constant reference to what has come before. Rap has a particular genius for handling its own history. Even so, aging hip-hop heads sometimes decry just how little younger listeners know about the music's foundations. But since the current incarnation of rap music always contains those foundations, however submerged, it would be more accurate to say that rap's youngest listeners often don't *know* that they already know a lot about the old school.

To activate this knowledge, one need do only a little digging to discover the original recordings. Listen to Common's 2008 single "Universal Mind Control" and hear Afrika Bambaataa's 1983 old school classic "Looking for the Perfect Beat." Listen to Wale's 2009 single "Chillin'" and hear the Audio Two's 1987 hit "Top Billin'." Whether or not we are aware of it, examples abound in which the old school lives on in the new.

Through overuse and nostalgia, the term *old school* can congeal into an abstraction that distances us from the immediacy of the actual music. Those artists who created the first rap recordings, of course, saw themselves as far from "old," either in age (most were in their teens or early twenties) or in art. Quite the contrary, the rap we now call "old school" was avant-garde. As Spoonie Gee and the Treacherous Three put it in the title of a 1980 song, what they were creating was the "New Rap Language."

When hip-hop culture as we know it was first stirring in the early 1970s, it was activated not by MCs, but by DJs spinning records and by dancers (later called b-boys and b-girls) responding to the music. The man most often mentioned as the sonic originator of hip-hop is DJ Kool Herc. In 1967, a twelve-year-old Herc immigrated to New York City from Jamaica. By 1973 he was spinning new sounds—most notably for the future of hip-hop, soulful tracks with powerful instrumental breaks—at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx. Because this first, humble venue was the recreation room at the community center in his apartment building, it wasn't long before the increasingly popular DJ found his chosen space too crowded. That's when Herc packed up and moved the gatherings outside to the block party. Around 1974–75 he began playing at a Bronx club called the Twilight Zone and continued his career by headlining shows and parties across the city as the burgeoning hip-hop underground took shape around him.

Kool Herc had a great impact on several of the figures who would make the first rap recordings, especially on such foundational DJs as Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash. Unlike Bambaataa and Flash,

however—both of whom, while cutting their chops as young DJs and group leaders, were associated with a crew of talented MCs—Kool Herc began before the MC had become a well-defined figure in the hip-hop sound. Herc himself would sometimes voice a few phrases, having been influenced both by the tradition of Jamaican toasting and by the on-air patter of New York radio DJs such as Cousin Brucie. But the main man on the microphone at a Kool Herc show was Coke La Rock. For many members of the first generation of hip-hop artists who went to a Kool Herc party, their initial exposure to the rudiments of the MC's art was hearing Coke La Rock's minimalist phrases and rhymes. Kool DJ Red Alert, who was a DJ in Bambaataa's Zulu Nation crew before becoming an important hip-hop radio DJ, remembers La Rock saying such phrases as "You rock and you don't stop" and "Rock on, my mellow." ¹

In addition to Coke La Rock, Herc's crew included Clark Kent and Timmy Tim. Kid Creole of the Furious Five recalls such phrases used by the so-called Herculoids as "On down to the last stop" and "More than what you paid at the door," ² while Creole's brother and fellow Furious Five member Melle Mel recalls two yet more extended verses by Timmy Tim, one incorporating an echo effect and the other matching the words to the music being mixed by his DJ:

The sounds that you hear-hear-hear

Def to your ear-ear-ear

'Cause you have no fear-fear-fear

'Cause Herc is here-here-here

We're going to give you a little taste of the bass

We're going to hit you with the highs

"They all rapped but not on the beat," Mel recalls. ³ Nevertheless, the impact of the Herculoids crew on future rappers was formative. When asked who was the first performer he saw who rapped in the sense that we now know the term, Kool Herc named Kid Creole and Melle Mel. Yet these pioneers acknowledge their early lyrical work as an extension of the Herculoid sound. "We used to listen to Kool Herc and them," Mel has said of himself and Creole. "They used to say things like 'And yes, y'all, the sound that you hear ...' They were always saying 'and yes, y'all.' We really liked that, so we used it. So we would take that and lengthen it, and say it to the beat. So it would be, 'A yes, yes, y'all, to the beat, y'all, freak, freak, y'all.' We went to all of Herc's parties and studied their

shit[.] We studied their format just like people would later study us; that's how we studied Herc.” ⁴

Along with their first partner in rhyme—Cowboy (the late Keith Wiggins), especially skilled at stoking crowd participation—Kid Creole and Melle Mel took the collective “y’all” and made it both more collective and more connective. That is, they brought the crowd into the proceedings even more by developing techniques of call and response; they initiated intrasong lyrical interplay among the group; and they shifted discrete phraseology into “flow,” a virtually nonstop movement of responsive rhyming and syncopated lyricism. This latter innovation was an organic response to the music that both acknowledged the DJ’s centrality and elevated the MC to an equal partner in sound.

Like any DJ, the hip-hop DJ mixed together a variety of sounds in a more or less continuous chain. However, for the most part he was playing instrumental sections of songs—and often instrumentally sparse sections at that, extending the part of the song called the “break” that was most rhythmically pronounced and least lyrically packed, by mixing together two copies of the same record. The MCs thus had ample space to fill and an impetus to fill it in a way that made musical sense in relation to the sonic environment. The MC’s continuity of rhymes mimicked the continuous flow of the DJ, whose musical selections gave the MC an instrumental space to occupy. This fashioned a dual rhythmic relationship of beat and voice, the fundamental relationship in all rap music.

The block party, community center, and school gymnasium-based movement in the Bronx that spurred Cowboy, Kid Creole, Melle Mel, and, simultaneously or soon thereafter, dozens of others to start to rap had another genealogical line—namely, in twenty-one-and-over dance clubs that catered to a slightly older and more “upscale” black clientele. In the early to mid-1970s, several DJs who played disco primarily in parts of the city other than the Bronx developed elaborate spiels for their sets—indeed, they elevated the DJ’s patter to the status of rap. Names such as Pete DJ Jones and Grandmaster Flowers were known throughout the boroughs, and there was much cross-pollination between the musical lines—Jones played in midtown Manhattan but also had a following in the Bronx; Flowers was from Brooklyn but was renowned for a sound system that often played Central Park.

Other DJs such as Lovebug Starski, Eddie Cheba, and DJ Hollywood began to mix into their disco and R & B sets the nascent hip-hop sound. None of these men went on to have a substantial recording career,

accounting for about half a dozen singles among them, but they were popular as professional DJs. Cheba and Hollywood played for several years at Club 371, one of the most profitable Bronx dance clubs of the era, and Hollywood shared the marquee at the Apollo Theater with such acts as The Spinners and Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes.

Until fall 1979, when the first rap songs were released commercially on records, the only way to hear the music, aside from attending a live show, was to listen to a cassette tape recording of a live show. These tapes were passed around and even sold in a kind of underground art economy. In fact, several years after the release of rap records began in 1979, the live tape was still popular with listeners who wanted to experience the raw event of real-time music being made in front of a crowd. For some, the very idea of a rap record was inconceivable given the nature of the rap performance. “I’m like, a record?” recalls Eddie Cheba. “Fuck, how you gon’ put hip-hop onto a record? ’Cause it was a whole gig, you know? How you gon’ put *three hours* on a record?” ⁵ One tape that serves as a hinge between eras and that illustrates early style in rap is a recording of a performance late in 1979 at the Armory in Jamaica, Queens, that featured, among other performers, Cheba and DJ Hollywood. Such shows had multiple participants and the goal was to last for hours into the night. Although they were more than a half-decade into their careers at this stage, and thus the transcriptions included in this volume cannot be taken as representative of their earliest phases (which are unavailable on tape), Cheba and Hollywood in their lyrics still give us a strong sense of how the dance club DJ in a disco era handled the mic.

The first excerpt from the Armory tape (see “Live at the Armory 1979 [1]”) transcribes four minutes of Cheba’s performance. In the recording, his rap is backed by the break from Cheryl Lynn’s “Got to Be Real.” The reminder at the end of the excerpt, which pertains to Cheba’s show the following night at the Manhattan club Harlem World, is a telling moment. At the time of the Armory performance, Sugarhill Gang’s record “Rapper’s Delight” had been out for only a few weeks yet it already had changed the landscape of rap. The Sugarhill Gang were not regarded by most practicing rappers as totally authentic, given that they had not honed their skills in public performance in the parks and the clubs. Yet their record, which contained rhymes that had been used in public by such MCs as Cheba, Hollywood, and especially Grandmaster Caz of the Cold Crush Brothers, was surprisingly popular with the record-buying public. A combination of artistic proprietary rights, skepticism about the

technological shift to professional recording, and maybe even a touch of resentment over another artist's success can be read into the warning that "we got some unfinished business with Sugarhill"—which is also a reminder that art among artists is a competitive business.

Rap would take creative competition to elaborate and impressive levels. Cheba, however, is no battle rapper, and his performance is less about challenging another MC's name than it is about asserting his own; in under four minutes he repeats it fifteen times. There are also other forms of self-identification—such as his height (five feet nine and one-half inches) and the sexually inflected fact that he is "bowlegged"—as he tells us "who I am and what I do." There is little figurative language aside from the initial simile comparing the dancers to an eel and from Cheba's name itself, which (since "cheeba" is a synonym for marijuana) lets us know that the man means to get the crowd high. He employs several methods in trying to do so. For instance, he connects what he is saying to the music, announcing the record being played like the good DJ he also is. (The first four lines of the excerpt are a cappella and only after he says "It's time for you to be real" does his DJ begin playing "Got to Be Real.") He acknowledges the crowd in terms of location—the Armory was in Jamaica, Queens—and with a little bit of flattery: "Jamaica, y'all sound real good." He urges the crowd to do a new dance (the "Jack Benny") and peppers his patter with pedagogical pushes ("while I tell you how," "I'll tell you when") and the kinds of urging that would not be out of place from an aerobics instructor or drill sergeant ("Do it, do it, do-do-do it").

The rhyming that becomes synonymous with rap is here still rudimentary. Cheba has two ways to distribute his rhymes against the four-beat measures (or bars). One way is to have a rhyming couplet in which the two lines of the couplet correspond to two four-beat bars. Two such couplets that Cheba raps are familiar to any fan of hip-hop:

You can dip, dive, or socialize

Either way we gonna make your nature rise

Raise your hands in the air

Wave 'em like you just don't care

In one extended passage, Cheba connects his couplets not only by the final rhymes, but also by a repetitive structure at the beginning of the bars that further accentuates the couplets and links them in a rhetorical relationship of cause and effect:

When the Cheba-Cheba's doing the do
I'll work your body black and blue
When the Cheba-Cheba's in the house
I'll talk mo' shit than Mickey Mouse
When the Cheba-Cheba decides to quit
Everybody in the house would just say
Awwwwww—
Shiiiiiiiiit!

After setting up an expectation with the “When/I’ll—When/I’ll” pattern, he extends the anticipated two-bar couplet into four bars before closing the stanzaic unit (with the “shit” that rhymes with “quit”). Because Cheba begins with bar-filling lines that contain between eight and ten syllables in the initial couplets, the effect, when he fills the final two bars with only one syllable each, is to slow us down; for although the musical backing has not changed its tempo, the less propulsive (and thus variable) play of onrushing syllables at the end operates against the regularity of the musical beat. This change in *lyrical* tempo also marks a change in the total flow of the performance, before segueing into the next run of rhyming and call-and-response.

Cheba's other pattern is similar in its rhyme scheme to a standard ballad stanza—that is, a quatrain in which the second and fourth lines are rhymed and the first and third lines are unrhymed (designated *abcb* in prosodic terms). As opposed to his rhyming couplets, Cheba's *abcb* arrangement gives the listener a less dense sonic texture. Because most of the poetic work in this early rap is being done by the end rhymes, to distribute those rhymes at half the frequency as occurs in a string of couplets is also to alter the lyrical tempo. Thus, by alternating between the couplets and the ballad style, Cheba gives the crowd some formal and temporal variety despite the uniform simplicity of the content.

The next excerpt from the Armory show (see “Live at the Armory 1979 [2]”) transcribes eight minutes of Hollywood's performance. In the recording, while Hollywood raps, Lovebug Starski serves as DJ and is mixing “Good Times,” by Chic. Hollywood shares with Cheba several techniques: self-naming and self-description, the exhortation of the crowd, the introduction of a current dance, and the integration of his lyrics with the specific song being played by the DJ. This latter aspect of the MC's art reminds us of the close relationship between the MC and the DJ, as does

Hollywood's first spoken interlude, which refers to the best known of the pre-hip-hop radio DJs whose patter was proto-rap: "If Wolfman Jack was here, he'd try to tell you to get one of those fine, foxy mamas, something like this, he might say: "That's right, Clyde, got something good for your hide, something to keep you satisfied, talking about some heavy ... medicine.'" Hollywood delivers these final lines in gravelly voiced and vowel-stretched imitation of the "Wolfman" (whose real name was Robert Smith), a rock and roll DJ who developed his hip-talking persona in the 1960s. Radio DJs with a wide listenership such as Jack, Cousin Brucie, and Frankie Crocker—a flamboyant and influential R & B DJ at New York's WBLS, whose nicknames included "Hollywood" and "Chief Rocker"—as well as numerous lesser known local on-air DJs, served as early examples for the hip-hop world of how to integrate music and words.

As in the Cheba excerpt, we find in the Hollywood excerpt a few different patterns of rhyme distribution. There are the couplets in the form of old standbys—"I said dippy-dippy-dive, so-socialize *Just-a come on and make my nature rise*"; "*Just throw your hands up in the air Wave 'em around like you just don't care*"—as well as the *abcb* pattern distributed over four bars:

Said the disco lights and boogie nights

Are really here to stay

Sexy mamas and fancy papas

Always want to play

Here is a variation on the ballad stanza as Hollywood, in addition to the end rhymes in lines two and four, brings internal rhyme to lines one and three: "lights/nights," "mamas/papas." The internal rhymes are balanced so that the lines in which they occur are split into two parallel parts, with "and" serving as a hinge. Hollywood at first seems to continue this pattern of an internally rhymed line *a* that will lead to the *abcb* pattern; he then resists the expectation he has established in order to move with one variation back into a series of couplets:

With iron nerves I'm prepared to serve—

A sugar-coated, red electric

Super-freaky crumb off a disco cake

To make you shake and bake

By leading us to expect a rhyme scheme that never develops, while stringing us along with a series of adjectives that move us across one line

and into the next, Hollywood gives us the sense of a run-on line, of enjambment, meaning that a line-ending lacks any strong pause or clear stopping point. This is especially interesting given that almost all the lines in early rap are essentially “end-stopped” either by a rhyme or by the completion of a unit of meaning; in rap’s later stages, MCs are more adept at varying between end-stopped and enjambed lines.

There is also in the Hollywood excerpt a fair amount of figurative language: the “disco cake” metaphor, the “battery” metaphor (“not a Duracell” but “an alkaline”), the “bowl of soup” simile, and the comparison to “the hot butter on your morning toast.” This latter simile is a variation on another comparison that is ubiquitous in early rap in which the MC compares himself to hot butter on popcorn. This comparison, which Cheba claims to have invented, is doubtless derived from James Brown, who recorded a number of songs—“The Popcorn,” “Mother Popcorn,” “Mashed Potato Popcorn,” “Popcorn with a Feeling,” and “Let a Man Come In and Do the Popcorn” among them—meant both to illustrate and to provide musical backing for a once-popular dance called “The Popcorn” and variations thereon. The popcorn/butter simile is so ubiquitous in early rap that it became a tool for crowd participation, as everyone listening knew how the simile would end. When the MC would begin a couplet with a line like, “Rock on, to the break of dawn,” and then start the next line with, “Like hot butter on the what?” the crowd would respond, “Popcorn!”

Another pronounced pattern in the nascent hip-hop scene was the growth of multimember groups centered around one or two DJs. We might call this not the radio or disco DJ model, but the DJ Kool Herc model. Initially the DJ was a bigger star than the MC and thus the MCs orbited around him. Some groups, like Cold Crush Brothers and the Funky Four + 1, had two DJs and a host of supporting MCs; some, like Afrika Bambaataa’s various collectives, centered around one charismatic figure who also made space for younger DJs and a rotating crew of MCs. Another familiar model was groups consisting of one virtuoso DJ and a crew of MCs usually ranging in number from three to five, as in Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five or Grand Wizard Theodore and the Fantastic Five.

This model of the rap group was both star-centered (the DJ) and collective (the MCs). That arrangement began to shift somewhat as standout MCs developed within the groups. For the most part, it is true, the various MCs within a group were not easily distinguishable in terms of

lyrical content. Perhaps slightly different personas would be put on, such as that of the Fantastic Five's Kevie Kev, who also went by "Waterbed Kevie Kev" to signify his prowess as a lover; or perhaps a particular member would be considered especially good at a bedrock skill, such as Furious Five member Cowboy's strength at crowd exhortation. But a more significant development in terms of lyrical artistry in rap was the rise of certain virtuoso MCs within the group context—one thinks especially of Melle Mel of the Furious Five, Kool Moe Dee of the Treacherous Three, and Caz of the Cold Crush Brothers. The fact that Mel and Caz both took the honorific "grandmaster," the likes of which had previously been reserved only for DJs such as Flash and Theodore, is one sign of a subtle but significant shift in focus from the DJ to the MC in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The biggest shift, however, was the advent of commercially recorded rap in 1979. Everything changed once rap made the move to studio recordings that could then be pressed onto vinyl and widely distributed. The first such release was Fatback's "King Tim III (Personality Jock)." When the funk band Fatback asked a radio DJ from Harlem, Tim Washington, whose handle was King Tim the Third, to rhyme over a track that in its nascent stages was called "Catch the Beat," the result was a song released late in the summer of 1979 and now credited as the first commercial, studio-recorded rap release. But it was the Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," released a few weeks later, that truly marked rap's emergence as a commercially viable recorded art form. The song became so wildly successful that it was soon followed by a host of others.

The template of these songs only partially followed what had heretofore happened during a rap performance. For although many of the recorded rhymes were the same as their stage-show versions, the figure who before had been central—the DJ—was now relegated to a leader mainly in name. The DJ was not recorded in his element doing his mix-and-scratch thing. (The one major exception, "Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" [1980], proves the rule.) Rather, in-house studio funk bands recreated the extension of a break. Whereas before a DJ would have mixed the break from between two copies of, say, Chic's "Good Times," now a band would lay down in the studio a ten-minute backing track consisting of an instrumental version approximating the extended break. Over this the rappers would rap, which, while hardly making the DJ obsolete, did shift attention to the MC.

The change also shifted attention to the commercial possibilities of rap.

Established independent label owners began to release rap records, while many more new labels sprang up like mushrooms after a rain. Many lived only briefly, while some—like Sugar Hill Records, with its eye-catching candy-cane logo and ever-increasing stable of artists—thrived. Even major labels such as Mercury and Polydor got into the act. The story of production and distribution is an important one in understanding the eventual global reach of hip-hop. In a sense, rap ceased to be an “underground” phenomenon as soon as “Rapper’s Delight” began selling hundreds of thousands of copies and as its immediate successors, if not always quite as successful, continued to disseminate the new sound.

And, despite its almost decade-long gestation period in the parks and clubs of New York, rap was a new sound indeed for the world at large. One way to measure the freshness of the music for the record-buying public is by the song titles of the first wave of record releases. Anything that is going to be sold needs to be categorized, and if the music is of a new genre, categorization is all the more imperative. The listener (and potential buyer) wants to know—or at least, initially, *name*—what he or she is listening to. The song titles helped the listener categorize what must have sounded like a mélange of disco, funk, poetry, and pop—something called “rap.” The word had appeared sporadically in titles before, mostly to signify a soulful, spoken interlude in a song that was otherwise sung, but when rap music began to take commercially viable form on record, the word began its journey toward ubiquity. In the sixteen months between September 1979 and the end of 1980, dozens of songs were self-defined in their titles as “rap”—from admired tracks like Jimmy Spicer’s “Adventures of Super Rhyme (Rap)” and Kurtis Blow’s “Christmas Rappin’” to lesser-known recordings like Frederick Davies and Lewis Anton’s “Astrology Rap” and Super Jay’s “Santa’s Rap Party.”

This development follows patterns of popularization found in other kinds of music. The matter of whether to spell the new music’s name “rap” or “rapp” in some titles reminds one of the occasional fluctuation early on between “jazz” and “jass,” just as rock and roll was constantly naming itself as it began to get popular—“Jailhouse Rock,” “Rock Around the Clock”—to categorize and attempt to distinguish it as a discrete musical entity.

As a new music comes into being, its status as “new” also leads to questions of whether songs in the new manner are essentially “novelty” songs. Anyone who was around to listen to rap in the early 1980s will remember the frequent claims that the music was a fad, a gimmick, a

cheap trend destined to die a quick death. After more than thirty years of studio-recorded history, no reasonable person can hold this opinion; for while three decades is not so long in the great evolutionary scheme of things, it is a run of Methuselah-like persistence in the world of popular music. Still, something of the early anxiety over the seriousness and potential longevity of rap can be seen in the initial prevalence of rap novelty tracks. There were songs impersonating Jackie Gleason (“Honeymooner’s Rap”), Sylvester Stallone (“Hambo—First Rap Part II”), and John Wayne (“Rappin’ Duke”). There were songs about the National Basketball Association, ABC’s *Monday Night Football*, the Los Angeles Lakers, and the Washington Redskins, as well as one performed in 1985 by the eventual Super Bowl champion Chicago Bears (“Super Bowl Shuffle”). There were songs that took their titles from puppets, video games, and cartoon characters such as Alf, E.T., Pac-Man, and the Smurfs. There was a “Haunted House of Rock” (in fact, a rap) and a “Groovy Ghost Party” rapped in the persona of Casper the Friendly Ghost. There were Fat Boys, Skinny Boys, and a ventriloquist rap duo called Wayne and Charlie (The Rapping Dummy). Even the comedian and director Mel Brooks recorded a rap called “It’s Good to Be the King,” which provoked a response record called “It’s Good to Be the Queen” by Sugar Hill label owner Sylvia Robinson.

The epitome of the novelty trend in its most decadent phase remains the so-called Roxanne Wars of the mid-1980s, which began with a 12-inch B-side called “Roxanne, Roxanne,” by the group UTFO. That song spawned an answer from a teenager named Roxanne Shanté, after which the floodgates opened and more answer songs appeared. There were songs about Roxanne’s parents, her sister, her baby, her boyfriend, and her doctor. There were songs that described Roxanne as fat, as a cross-dresser, and as the inspiration for a dance. Some of these songs are fun and the whole saga is intriguing as a concept, but the only rapper involved to have a substantial career as a lyricist proved to be Roxanne Shanté.

The early 1980s also saw a profusion of space-based songs. Although a high percentage of these can be called novelty songs in a more or less pejorative sense, they were inspired by a song that certainly elevates itself above mere novelty—namely, “Planet Rock,” by Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force. Bambaataa’s song had a more computer-age sound than most of its rap predecessors and was evidence of the eclectic taste Bambaataa had been displaying live as a DJ for almost a decade.

Influenced by the German electro-funk band Kraftwerk, “Planet Rock” was faster even than the brisk light funk that backed most early releases. Its edges were sharper and its underlying message was Utopian. (And to be genuinely Utopian, it took the sunlike presence of Afrika Bambaataa to keep the “planet rock” in orbit; most immediate attempts by others to follow the song’s path were sonically apt but politically vacant.) The interstellar conceit also elevated the seriousness of what is simultaneously one of the most perpetually playful songs in rap. Bambaataa was working with sonic and lyrical tropes that figured African Americans as alienated and thus as aliens, as people from another planet or galaxy—as had (among musicians) Sun-Ra before him, as would Outkast and many others after him. That this theme, and especially its electronic backdrop, spoke to people in a period of rapid technological, computer-based growth is not surprising. Its staying power perhaps has been surprising, as the sonic template Bambaataa crafted has made its mark on styles of music as diverse as house and Miami bass, and in more recent productions by producers such as Pharrell and Timbaland.

The interesting case of “Planet Rock” raises several more general questions about the status of the political in early rap. Is music made by a socially marginalized group necessarily political? Does popular music as a commercial medium tend to be inimical to political critique? Is all social critique political, and does description equal action? Certainly the reputation of rap’s first years is that all of its songs were about dancing, parties, and having a good time, and there is much truth there. Whether this is good, bad, or something more ambiguous depends on one’s perspective. A prosecutorial case is made in the lyrics of the most explicitly political of early rap songs, Brother D with Collective Effort’s “How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise?” (1980), which critiqued the effects of the new music:

Just move your body to the beat

While it takes you on a disco ride

Get high until you’re pacified

Now you’re actin like the living dead

Talkin ’bout the body, talkin ’bout the head

Space out, y’all, to the disco rhyme

You’re movin to the rhythm but you’re wastin time

Not all songs were without political content, although none at first were as definitive in their message as the words of Brother D. Songs such as

Kurtis Blow's "Hard Times" or "The Breaks" did paint pictures in glimpses of the hardships of the urban poor, but their overtly didactic or corrective content was minimal. The best-known example of politicized early rap, "The Message," by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, had a more powerful cumulative impact. The best-known verses in the song are these classic lines by Melle Mel:

**A child is born with no state of mind
Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too
Because only God knows what you'll go through
You'll grow in the ghetto living second rate
And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate
The places you play and where you stay
Looks like one great big alleyway**

Melle Mel had been rapping these lines for years as a set piece in the Furious Five live show; they also appeared near the end of the group's first release, 1979's "Superrappin'." Perhaps the sonic environment of that earlier track was not right for these bars to stick in the public's mind, and the replacement of a light funk with a harder, darker, more metallic sound on "The Message" buttressed the strength of the lines. Nevertheless, Melle Mel took a set of virtuoso verses and on "The Message" made them an organic part of a coherent and brilliant poem. There each set of verses paints a different but developing and related picture. The movement from inside a ghetto apartment, to outside on the apartment's stoop, to vignettes involving the narrator's brother, mother, wife, and son, to a formally looser dramatic finale that portrays the arrest under false pretenses of the Furious Five themselves—all this is cut through with the double refrain:

**Don't push me 'cause
I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to
Lose my head
Uh-huh-huh-huh-huh**

**It's like a jungle sometimes, it makes me wonder
How I keep from going under**

A warning, a description, a meditation—the art was growing in nuance and implication as its poetic power grew and as its formal, rhetorical, and thematic possibilities became more strongly manifest. A new kind of music was becoming the nesting ground for a new kind of poetry.

AFRIKA BAMBAATAA AND THE COSMIC FORCE, SOUL SONIC FORCE, AND ZULU NATION

Among hip-hop's pioneers, Afrika Bambaataa's only equals are his immediate progenitor Kool Herc and his contemporary Grandmaster Flash. Bambaataa, a resident of the South Bronx, is an artist of rich paradoxes: a onetime Black Spade gang member who inspired peace among fans who once were rivals; a bear of a man beloved among his collaborators for his caring ways; a devotee of African American culture and community who opened up that culture to other constituencies; a party-rocking DJ whose taste had pedagogical intent; a streetwise realist who through his eclectic music envisioned Utopia.

Bambaataa began to DJ in 1970, even before he had two turntables and a mixer. He would set up a record player on one side of a gymnasium and another DJ would do the same on the gym's other side. When his record was almost finished playing, one DJ would shine a flashlight across to the other, who would then begin to play his cued-up record, and back and forth it went.

Like many of his Bronx-based peers, Bambaataa ran with the Black Spades, a powerful gang in a gang-heavy era. Inspired by a trip to Africa and Europe, by the story of the Zulu warriors who fought the British, and by messages of black power that could be heard on record (James Brown, Sly Stone) and on the street (the Nation of Islam), Bambaataa essentially became a community organizer. In 1973 he founded the Mighty Zulu Nation as a conglomerate of friends, fans, and fellow travelers whose inclinations tended not toward intraborough violence but toward an appreciation for music and its thought-provoking, self-sustaining, community-based pleasures.

Bambaataa took younger DJs under his tutelage and founded crews like Soul Sonic Force and Cosmic Force that were chockfull of MCs. As Kool DJ Red Alert, one of those DJs who (along with his cousin Jazzy Jay) cut his chops under Bambaataa's mentorship, put it: "Bam was the type of person that if he liked you, he brought you in. He didn't care how many people there was. A lot of people don't know that at one time Bam had ten MCs!"

⁶ These included MCs like Hutch Hutch, Pow Wow, Mr. Biggs, G.L.O.B.E., and, fittingly for Bambaataa's message of inclusivity, one of the first female MCs, the self-proclaimed "Miss Lisa Lee, from the top of the key."

After almost a decade spent building up the beginnings of hip-hop culture and his Zulu Nation offshoot, Bambaataa was poised to carry his message of party-going and community-building to wax when the record phase of rap began. Early songs such as “Zulu Nation Throwdown” and “Zulu Nation Throwdown Pt. 2” (both from 1980) replicated to some degree what would happen at a Zulu Nation event. Bambaataa moved to Tommy Boy Records and in 1981 made “Jazzy Sensation” with another Zulu Nation group, the Jazzy Five.

As a DJ, Bambaataa’s greatest strength was his eclectic taste and collector’s mentality. Known as the “Master of Records,” he dug for beats in the strangest of places, using his pulpit behind the tables to turn his congregation on to new sounds, without neglecting the popular breaks of the period. In 1982, having heard the German electro-funk band Kraftwerk, Bambaataa (working with producers Arthur Baker and John Robie) released “Planet Rock” with his group Soul Sonic Force. The song marked a sonic revolution in hip-hop. The studio funk band was gone, replaced on record by electronic keyboards and the bass-heavy sound of the Roland 808 drum-machine. The tempo was fast, clocking in at 130 beats per minute. The theme was interstellar (the vocoder-ized, robotic-sounding voices could have come from another planet) and international, for this was a call to everyone around the globe, “all men, women, boys, and girls.” That call would bear fruit in the eventual global reach of hip-hop, but at the time it was impressive enough that “Planet Rock” spawned dozens of songs on the space theme and began hip-hop’s turn toward being a producer-influenced art.

Bambaataa’s music was undeniably futuristic, but it also had a considerable respect for the past. His tendencies as an inventive DJ were part archeological and part alchemical; he would take bits of the past undiscovered by his peers and transform them into gold. While admitting the newness of the music he was making and facilitating, he also acknowledged that it hadn’t come out of nowhere. Bambaataa’s historical consciousness applied to the lyrics as well: “Rap always has been here in history. They say when God talked to the prophets, he was rappin’ to them. You could go and pick up the old Shirley Ellis records, ‘The Name Game,’ ‘The Clapping Song,’ Moms Mabley, Pigmeat Markham, when he made ‘Here Comes the Judge.’ You could pick up Barry White with his love type of rap, or Isaac Hayes. You could get your poetry rap from Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, the Last Poets, the Watts Prophets. You could get your militancy message rap coming from Malcolm X, Minister

Louis Farrakhan, Muhammad Ali. A lot of the time, the black people used to play this game called The Dozens on each other, rappin' about your mama or your father, and stuff. And you could go back to the talks of Murray the K, Cousin Brucie, and all the other radio stations that was pushing the rap on the air or pushing the rock and roll. So rap was always here.” ⁷

ZULU NATION THROWDOWN

[All]

Say, what's the name of this nation?

Zulus, Zulus

And who's gonna get on down?

The Cosmic Force, the Cosmic Force [Lisa Lee] Chitty-chitty-bang-bang,
we are your main thing [All three men] You listen to the song that she
is gonna sing-sing [Lisa Lee] We party all night to the people's delight
'Cause everybody knows that we rock out of sight Say, we are the best
in the creation [All] We go by the name of the mighty Zulu Nation
We're the mighty Zulus, we're one of a crew We're [Chubby Chub]
coming by, [All] we're [Chubby Chub] coming through [All] We're
[Chubby Chub] worldwide and [All] we're [Chubby Chub] super divine
[All] 'Cause we [Chubby Chub] shock the house, [All] we [Chubby
Chub] shock it right [Chubby Chub] We'll say a little something to let
you know That my mellow Smitty D is on the echo We do a routine
and put on a show And dedicate it to the people we know We're one of
a kind, we're easing the mind The Zulu Nation, say time after time
.....

[All] She's [Lisa Lee] Lisa Lee and from the top of the key You know I'm
guaranteed to be the queen of MCs [All] He's [Chubby Chub] MC
Chubby Chub from the heavens above No, I ain't never met a girl that
I couldn't shook up [All] And he's [Ice-Ice] MC Ice-Ice, the shocker-
rocker on the mic And doin it on, doin it high power, doin it right [All]
And he's [Ikey C] Little Ikey C and I'm the melody Now all you young
ladies get sexy—do it!

[Chubby Chub] This is a story from the yesteryear [Ice-Ice] Said before it
was the wack but now the ladies cheer [Ikey C] Until we climb the
ladder, say one by one [Chubby Chub] And while we did it we
spreaded some fun [Ice-Ice] Say, we change the tempo so you can clap

your hands [Ikey C] And then we add a little music so y'all can dance
[Chubby Chub] And you like our style [Ice-Ice] which is just our voice
[Ikey C] So young ladies [All three men] come and pick your choice
Chubby Chub, Ice-Ice

I'm Little Ikey C, we are the three MCs Lisa Lee, you're the queen—go
girl!

Just get on the mic and do your own thing [Lisa Lee]

So put your hands in the air and listen to me 'Cause you listen to the voice
of MC Lisa Lee Don't play no games, don't bite no style When you
came through the door we gave you a smile We want you to get loose,
get ready to rock We're gonna paralyze your mind and put you in
shock We're gonna make you wanna yell, scream, and shout We're
gonna let you know without a doubt exactly what we be about
Rocking to the sounds that make you dance Make the ants crawl in
your pants, put you in a music trance Listen to the beat and let
yourself go 'Cause everybody knows this is nothing but a disco Rock,
shock the sure shot

This ain't a Broadway play or a high school plot It's the real deal that
makes you feel Like, like you got sex appeal

Now party people in the place, you feel the bass Can you check out the
highs, check out the grace?

So wallflowers in the house, this is your chance To show everybody that
you can dance Punk rock to the left and Patty Duke it to the right
Move your body now, you can do it all night These are the devastating
words that you never heard before I'm Lisa Lee—ha!—I got rhymes
galore So young ladies out there, he's from the heavens above [Chubby
Chub]

That's right, never met a girl that I couldn't shook up So won't you clap
your hands and have some fun It's the super dynamite—huh!—MC
Chubby Chub You don't stop—ha!—you don't stop—ha-ha!

Get it all together, girl, because we're starting to rock And to all the
young ladies, yes, his name is Chub Say, I didn't come here to ask for
your love 'Cause I'm a cool, cool kid with a healthy mind And I figure
that ballin will always take time I'm looking for a girl that I can call
mines When she walk down the street, the sun will shine And to all the
young ladies, I'm talking 'bout me 'Cause I'm lookin for a girl that's so
unique I'm not lookin for a girl that drives a car To me she'll always be
my superstar 'Cause I'm a-lookin for a girl with a beautiful smile And a

young lady that's worth my while Young ladies out there, don't you get
uptight [Ice-Ice]

'Cause it's me, baby doll, MC Ice-Ice Just like a bike got wheels, sweet
lemon peel Now the MCs, they know the deal

That we always rock and we can't be stopped Wherever we rock and hit
the latest spot I said the other MCs are standing tall But the taller they
are, the harder they fall 'Cause we the Funkadelic of the microphone
Because we are the MCs that's all alone And when we get on the mic
it's back to back I said that we're the crew that leads the pack And
we'll teach you lessons that you'll never forget Because we are the MCs
that ever testify We're on to the crack of dawn

We're on to the crack of dawn

And young ladies, he's from the top [Ikey C]

He's Little Ikey C and I'm the master rock You don't stop, you don't stop
Told you 'bout the ding-d'-d'-ding-d'-ding-dingy-ding That thing that you
call that body rock Now let me tell you something that caught my eye
It was a real jazzy lady, she was so fly She had long hair and clothes so
fine I said, "I'ma keep rappin until you're mine"

I said, "I'ma rap for just about an hour"

'Cause I knew the young lady was surely high power And the way she
moved was like a graceful swan And we can make love to the break of
dawn And the way she move is like a graceful dove Say, could it be I'm
falling in love?

"Will you be mine?" is what I say Why don't you chill out, just give me a
play You don't stop, you don't stop

[All]

Say, what's the name of this nation?

Zulus, Zulus

And who's gonna get on down?

Bambaataa, Bambaataa

.....

PLANET ROCK

Party people—Party people—Can y'all get funky? Soul Sonic Force—can y'all

get funky? The Zulu Nation—can y'all get funky? Yaaaahhhh!—Just hit me. Just taste the funk and hit me. Just get on down and hit me. Bambaataa's getting so funky, now, hit me. Yaaaahhhh!—Just hit me...

It's time to chase your dreams

Up out the seats, make your body sway Socialize, get down, let your soul lead the way Shake it now—go, ladies!—it's a living dream Love—life—live

Come play the game, our world is free Do what you want but scream

We know a place where the nights are hot It is a house of funk

Females and males, both young and old For the disco

The DJ plays your favorite blasts Takes it back to the past, music's magic—poof Hump-bump-bump, get bump with some class, people Rock, rock to the Planet Rock, don't stop [2x]

The Soul Sonic Force—Mr. Biggs, Pow Wow, and MC G.L.O.B.E.

We emphasize to show we got ego

Make this your night, just slip it right in by day As the people say, live it up, shucks For work or play, our world is free Be what you be—be

Rock, rock to the Planet Rock, don't stop [2x]

You're in a place where the nights are hot Where nature's children dance and stand a chance On this Mother Earth, which is our rock The time has come and work for soul—to show you really got soul Are you ready—hump-bump-bump—get bump—now let's go—house Twist and turn, then you let your body slide You got the body rock and pop, bounce and pounce Everybody just rock and don't stop it You gotta rock it, don't stop

You keep ticking and tocking, working all around the clock Everybody keep rockin and clockin and shockin and rockin—go house Everybody say, rock and don't stop it—“rock and don't stop it!”

Well, hit me, Mr. Biggs—“Mr. Biggs!”

Pow Wow—“Pow Wow!”

G-L-O-B-E—“G-L-O-B-E!”

The Soul Sonic Force

You gotta rock this poppin, 'cause in the century There is such a place

that creates such a melody Our world is by the plan of a master jam,
get up and dance It's time to chase your dream

Up out your seats, make your body sway Socialize, get down, let your soul
lead the way Shake it now—go ladies!—it's a living dream Love—life
—live

Everybody say, rock it, don't stop it—"rock it, don't stop it"

Everybody say, shockin and clockin—"shockin and clockin"

Everybody say, ichi ni san shi—"ichi ni san shi"

Say, Planet Rock—"Planet Rock"

It's the sure shot—"it's the sure shot"

Say, Planet Rock—"Planet Rock"

It's the sure shot—"it's the sure shot"

So twist and turn, then you let your Body glide, you got the body
Rock and pop

Bounce and pounce—so hit me

Just taste the funk and hit me

Just get on down and hit me

Bambaataa's getting so funky, now hit me Every piece of the world

Rate the message of our words

All men, women, boys, and girls

Hey, our Planet Rock is superb—Get on it You got the groove, move

Feel the groove—feel it

Do what you want to but you know you got to be Cool and boogie

Out on the floor, go down

Bring it low

Close to the ground

Everybody just rock and don't stop it Gotta rock it, don't stop

Keep ticking and tocking

Workin all around the clock

Everybody just rock and don't stop it Gotta rock it, don't stop

KURTIS BLOW

Kurtis Blow was one of the first rappers to make a career of the art and is often heralded as rap's first solo artist of note. Adaptable, personable, and good-looking, Blow had crossover appeal before rap really knew what crossover appeal was, paving the way for figures like LL Cool J and Will Smith. Most important, though, Kurtis Blow brought into the studio setting the bona fides of early hip-hop's prerecorded days—he began as “Son of [DJ] Hollywood”—while also advancing rap songcraft.

By most measures, Blow's rhymes are straightforward. More striking are his consistency and his range. Having honed his craft on rap's early stages, Blow—a native of Harlem who was managed at the start of his recording career by Russell Simmons and who was the first rapper signed to a major label—brings all of the old school crowd-pleasing tricks to bear on “Rappin Blow (Part 2).” The song is a classic exercise in crowd exhortation, as is “The Breaks,” the second track on his first album.

“The Breaks” was a gold record for Blow and the song that led Kool Moe Dee to describe him as “the inventor of the hook for rap songs.”⁸ The song works through as many meanings of the title term as possible: “Brakes in a bus, brakes on a car *Breaks to make you a superstar* Breaks to win and breaks to lose / But these here breaks will rock your shoes.” Blow's lyrics are in constant contact with the music, as the periodic call throughout the song to “break it up” or “break down” is punctuated by a percussive “break.” If the hook serves not just a musical but a marketing purpose—since it usually drills into the listener's head the title of the song—“The Breaks” is a superlative self-advertisement, for even in extended series of verses every other line is an eponymous refrain that tells us what we are listening to.

The follow-up albums to Blow's self-titled debut, *Deuce* (1981) and *Tough* (1982), are less memorable than their predecessor, but *Ego Trip* (1984) remains a compelling collection on which Blow's versatility pays dividends. “I Can't Take It No More” gives us a Kurtis Blow on the edge of snapping (one hears echoes of “The Message”) while the title track simply reminds us that, despite the in-your-face, first-person nature of rap, “You can't dance to my ego, you dance to my beat.” A collaboration with Run-DMC, “8 Million Stories,” continues the growing trend toward

representing urban blight and the plight of big-city poor, while “Basketball” is more lighthearted and remains a favorite of hoops fans, recreating as it does at the end the kinds of debates fans have among themselves. The most memorable track on *America* (1985) is “If I Ruled the World,” which once again exhibits Blow’s talent for the catchy hook, but also his skills as a storyteller, as he embarks on a fantasia in which, almost a quarter-century before Barack Obama, a black man leads the free world.

RAPPIN BLOW (PART 2) “*What did you say your name was?*”

I see that it’s not clear

For you, good buddy, so clean out your ears Listen very close while I pop
more game ’Cause my name’s in the hall of fame The K-U-R, the T-I-S
The first to the best I must confess The B-L-O and the W

I make you wanna catch the boogaloo flu Now if your name is Annie get
up off your fanny If your name is Clyde get off your backside If your
name is Pete you don’t need a seat ’Cause I’m Kurtis Blow and I’m on
the go I’m rocking to the rhythms in ster-e-er-e-o Now just throw your
hands in the air And wave ’em like you just don’t care If you’re ready
like Freddy to rock real steady Somebody say, “Oh yeah”

Oh yeah—Young ladies

All the ladies in the house say, “Oww”

Oww—And you don’t stop, come on Come on, come on, let me see you
rock Get down, stop messing around

When Kurtis Blow is in your town I’m Kurtis Blow on the microphone A
place called Harlem was my home I was rockin one day, it started to
shake It sounded to me like a earthquake I packed my bags, I said
goodbye I kissed my woman and I started to fly I came to Earth by a
meteorite To rock you all on the mic

So just kick off your shoes, let your fingers pop ’Cause Kurtis Blow just
about ready to rock Now, the people in the back, if you’re not the
wack, say *Don’t stop the body rock*

The people in the front, if you want to bump, say *Don’t stop the body rock*

The people in the middle, if you wanna wiggle, say *Don’t stop the body
rock*

And the people on the side, if you wanna slide, say *Don’t stop the body rock*

Not a preacher or a teacher or a electrician A fighter or a writer or a
politician The man with the key to your ignition Kurtis Blow is
competition

Young ladies, shock the house, jazzy Young ladies, shock the house
Now just throw your hands in the air And wave 'em like you just don't
care If y'all really ready to rock the house this morning Somebody say,
"Oh yeah"

Oh yeah

Somebody scream ...

.....

Keep on rockin on

Keep-keep on, rock the hip, the hop on Like a little boy blue blowin on a
horn The needle on the record tryin to play a song It's been that way
since the day he was born I like a twenty-five-cent bag of popcorn Dip-
dip-dab, so-socialize

Clean out your ears and open up your eyes So you goin here can realize
That I'm here to tranquilize

Got the knack of Cool Jack, better than Baretta Casanova Brown because
I'm down Get down, stop messing around

When Kurtis Blow is in your town I'm a one of a kind, I'll wreck your
mind Put a wiggle-double-wiggle in your behind Twice as nice, I'm
skatin on ice When my mama gave birth she named me the baddest
MC on Earth, y'all

To the beat that makes you freak Get out of your seat and freak to the
beat The weather is cold so catch some heat THE BREAKS

Clap your hands, everybody

If you got what it takes

'Cause I'm Kurtis Blow and I want you to know That these are the breaks

Brakes in a bus, brakes on a car Breaks to make you a superstar Breaks to
win and breaks to lose But these here breaks will rock your shoes And
these are the breaks

Break it up, break it up, break it up If your woman steps out with another
man *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

And she runs off with him to Japan *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

And the IRS says they want to chat *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*
And you can't explain why you claimed your cat *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*
And Ma Bell sends you a whopping bill *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*
With eighteen phone calls to Brazil *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*
And you borrowed money from the Mob *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*
And yesterday you lost your job *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*
Well, these are the breaks
Break it up, break it up, break it up Throw your hands up in the sky And
wave 'em round from side to side And if you deserve a break tonight
Somebody say, "Alright"
Alright! Say, "Ho"
Ho! You don't stop
Keep on, somebody scream
Oh! Break down

Breaks on a stage, breaks on a screen Breaks to make your wallet lean
Breaks run cold and breaks run hot Some folks got 'em and some have
not But these are the breaks
Break it up, break it up, break it up, break down To the girl in brown,
stop messin around *Break it up, break it up*
To the guy in blue, what you gon' do *Break it up, break it up*
And to the girl in green, don't be so mean *Break it up, break it up*
And the guy in red, say what I said *Break it up, break it up*
Break down

Brakes on a plane, brakes on a train Breaks to make you go insane
Breaks in love, breaks in war
But we got the breaks to get you on the floor And these are the breaks
Break it up, break it up, break it up, break down Just do it, just do it
Just do it, do it, do it [4x]

You say last week you met the perfect guy *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*
And he promised you the stars in the sky *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

He said his Cadillac was gold

That's the breaks, that's the breaks

But he didn't say it was ten years old *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

He took you out to the Red Coach Grill *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

But he forgot the cash and you paid the bill *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

And he told you the story of his life *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

But he forgot the part about his wife *That's the breaks, that's the breaks*

Well, these are the breaks

Break it up, break it up, break it up, break down **IF I RULED THE WORLD**

If I ruled the world, was king on the throne I'd make peace in every culture, build the homeless a home I'm not running for Congress or the President I'm just here to tell the world how my story went You see, first it was a dream, I was living in Rome And then I moved to London, bought a brand new home And everywhere I went I drew lots of attention Like a stretch limousine, one of those new inventions It took a few years 'fore the day had come But I was ruler of the world, ranked number one So I headed toward Washington to claim the crown Let the whole world know that the king was in town As I arrived the crowd started to cheer And then someone yelled out, "The king is here!"

So I headed toward a stage to make a speech About the new style of living
I was going to teach [Chorus]

If I ruled the world

I'd love all the girls

Wear diamonds and pearls

If I ruled the world

People started flowing as they reached for my hand I said, "Thank you for bringing me to the promised land But now I must go, say goodbye to everybody Tonight I'll see you all at my super dinner party"

And late that night at my super dinner party I was dancing to the beat and entertaining, la-di-da-di The music started ending, it was time for a speech The crowd started sitting as I rose from my feet "And this was once a dream," I explained to the crowd "But now I rule the world and I feel so very proud Excuse me, please, for stopping this show I just

had to thank you all for helpin me, so ...”

My first day in office, the king on the throne I spent my first three hours
on the telephone You know, with newsmen, reporters, and voters too I
had so many calls, I didn't know what to do You know, out that office
I continued to work I signed so many papers my fingers started to hurt
Then I shook off the pain, say this ain't no thing 'Cause there's nothing
in the world like being number one king!

[Chorus]

Now I rule the world and now I'm on top And I'm rollin with folks that
could never be stopped And I'm here to let you know this is where I
belong And to you sucker MCs, this is my song And it's a song that's
strong about right and wrong And I'ma rock it to your butt, baby, all
night long And it's a song about love and happiness In a world of
peace and you know that's fresh Now I'm the king and I want you to
know That I'm the master blaster rapper who's running the show And
to all of you rappers in every country You better stop what you're
doing and listen to me 'Cause we gotta stop war and use unity To fight
crime and hunger and poverty 'Cause the African babies dying
overseas While you sucker metro-politicians busting out Z's Twenty
million people all unemployed While the rich man try to play Pretty
Boy Floyd While the working class just struggles hard Try to make
ends meet against all odds While the poor man can't even deal with
life You know he tried to escape and smoked the coke on the pipe
Well, it's time for a change to a better way 'Cause the sun has gotta
shine through the cloudy day So listen up, world, while I teach this
class And take heed to the message or we ain't gonna last 'Cause I
know the solution is a contribution Of woman and man to just join my
revolution That'll take your brain to a higher plane And help you deal
in a world that's gone insane With the problems that I know we can
stop From the ruler of the world and the man on top But the years
went by and time was up And then the ruler of the world had ran out
of luck And all the people at the time who said they were my friends
Didn't know me when my job had come to an end They came up to my
face as happy as can be He was running his mouth like Muhammad Ali
So I shook his hand calmly as I headed to the door On my way to the
ghetto to treat once more [Chorus]

BROTHER D WITH COLLECTIVE EFFORT

The first rap record to be explicitly political both in its lyrical content and in its methods of production and distribution, “How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise?,” released in 1980 on Clappers Records, is an example of a song practicing what it preaches. Brother D, otherwise known as a teacher named Daryl Aamaa Nubyahn, “recorded a hip-hop tune to reflect the philosophy of a political and cultural organization called National Black Science.”⁹ On top of Cheryl Lynn’s “Got to Be Real” rhythm, Brother D and his aptly named rhyming partners Collective Effort—a group of MCs not named individually in the song, but which includes both male and female members—urge their listeners to consider the disjunction between good time music and the actual times from which it derives. The lyrics, against their ironic sonic backdrop, diagnose the danger of becoming “pacified” to the point of living death and outline a litany of social problems.

Meant to serve as an antidote to pleasure addiction and as a call to arms against economic and racist oppression, “How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise?” is more aggressive, sustained, and specific in its politics than any rap songs that precede it. Much of this can be attributed not only to Brother D and Collective Effort but also to the fact that their independent label not only welcomed but initiated the project. “I got revved up and excited about the possibilities of forming a record company that had a Maoist approach instead of a capitalist approach,” recalls label founder Lister Hewan-Lowe, “and I was obsessed with the fact that the shareholders should be the people who made the music.” Deciding to make a “revolutionary hip-hop record,” he put out the word, after which Brother D came knocking.¹⁰ Follow-ups to that initial release included a solo 12-inch by Brother D called “Clappers Power/Mao Dub,” as well as “Ms. DJ Rap It Up!” by She.

HOW WE GONNA MAKE THE BLACK NATION RISE?

If you want to know the truth and that’s a fact Let me hear you say, “And
you know that”

And you know that

[Brother D]

You dippy-dippy-dive, you so-socialize But how we gonna make the black nation rise?

While you party down yelling, shock the house Get down, rock-shock the house The Ku Klux Klan is on the loose Training their kids in machine gun use Obey everything has its place and time We can rock the house, too, as we shock your mind [Collective Effort]

We can brag and we can boast

Because you're neither bread nor butter for our breakfast toast [Brother D]

Look at all the things that can prove the point Sisters in the distance, brothers in the joint [Collective Effort]

As you dippy-dippy-dive, you so-socialize But how we gonna make the black nation rise?

[Brother D]

The people call me Brother D

And I'm here to shed some light To bring the truth right on down to earth From where it once was out of sight But before I continue just let me say This is not my ego soup

I sat down and thought and I wrote this verse In the interest of the group —come on [Collective Effort]

People, people, can't you see

What's really going on?

Unemployment's high, the housing's bad And the schools are teaching wrong Cancer from the water, pollution in the air But you partyin hard like you just don't care Wake up, y'all, you know that ain't right 'Cause that hurts everybody, black or white Winter's cold, there is no heat Just move your body to the beat While it takes you on a disco ride Get high until you're pacified Now you actin like the livin dead Talkin 'bout the body, talkin 'bout the head [Brother D]

Space out, y'all, to the disco rhyme You're movin to the rhythm but you're wastin time Stop and think—do you know what's real?

Well, let me educate you to the real deal The media is tellin lies

Devil takin off his disguise

They're killin us in the street While we pay more for food that's cheap And all you want to do is so-socialize [Collective Effort]

How you gonna make the black nation rise?

[Brother D]

Remember the so-called Indian

Look what they did to him

Maybe they'll do that to us

Dare to struggle, dare to win

.....

The story might give you stomach cramps Like America's got
concentration camps [Collective Effort]

People like that come, live, and die Warning us about genocide

[Brother D]

While you're partying on-on-on-on and on The ovens may be hot by the
break of dawn The party may end one day soon When they round the
niggers up in the afternoon [Collective Effort]

And you're starting to wonder are the people dumb Well, Martin Luther
King said we'll overcome How we gonna make the black nation rise?

All you wanna do is dippy-dippy-dippy dive No, no, brothers, it's not like
that You gonna rap for the people, tell them where it's at Elijah's told
us how to build our wealth Collectively we must do for ourselves

.....

Service for our people who we must redeem Like Coltrane's horn blowing
Love Supreme You heard what Marcus Garvey said And we can't stand
still—He said Up you mighty nation, you can

Accomplish what you will

Rising up, won't take no more Rising up, won't take no more

[Brother D]

America was built, understand

By stolen labor on stolen land Take a second thought as you clap and
stamp Can you rock the house from inside the camp?

As you movin to the beat to the early light The country movin to, movin
to the right Prepare now, all, get high and wait 'Cause it ain't no party
in a police state [Collective Effort]

Blessed are we who dare to be free We gotta change the way we behave
You gotta sacrifice for our righteous cause Or remain a passive slave

We're not anti-any other racial group Just understand we're pro-black
And we're against any one or thing That tries to hold us back
So think but don't take too long The time is getting late
And DJs if you got a mic
It's your job to educate

[Brother D]

Well, I know my voice is not rated X
We didn't talk about money or talk about sex We didn't talk about clothes
and cars and things And you might be tired of my lecturing So while
you dance and while you sing All we wanna do is ask just one thing
While you dippy-dippy dive and so-socialize Are you gonna help the
black nation rise?

[Collective Effort]

You dippy-dippy dive, you so-socialize How we gonna make the black
nation rise?

[Brother D]

How we gonna make the black nation rise?
Gotta agitate, educate, and organize How we gonna make the black
nation rise?

Agitate, educate, organize

[repeat to fade]

EDDIE CHEBA

A Harlem-based DJ who also rhymed, Eddie Cheba is the kind of often overlooked forefather whose actual contribution is under-remembered because his live sets never translated to record. Chuck D of Public Enemy remarks that “Eddie Cheba was as important to hip-hop/rap as Ike Turner was to rock and roll.” ¹¹ Kurtis Blow recalls that Cheba “was a master of the crowd response. He had routines, he had girls—the Cheba Girls—he had little routines, and he did it with a little rhythm, you know.” ¹² See the introduction to Part One for a discussion of Cheba’s lyrical repertoire in relation to the verses below.

LIVE AT THE ARMORY 1979 (1)

Just keep your body, stay on the floor We gonna do a little like an eel We
gonna continue on with the music, y’all It’s time for you to be real—
you see A while ago, but I want you to know Just who you’ve been
listening to Just listen to me now while I tell you how Who I am and
what I do

Five-nine-and-a-half, bowlegged as You ever want to see

Just look up on the stage, baby doll Talking ’bout little old me It’s Cheba,
girl, and I’m so glad That you came on down

So we can spend some time together Maybe even mess around—you see
You look so good, you look so fine You make me shake and shiver But
in the end when it all goes down You know Cheba’s gonna be the
winner I’m mean, I’m mad, I’m cool and smooth I know you do it with
me

Guess that’s why I ran my game On WFUB

You’ve heard the rest who fail the test So I guess now you know

Just who’s the man with the master plan That’ll always steal your show
When the Cheba-Cheba’s doing the do I’ll work your body black and
blue When the Cheba-Cheba’s in the house I’ll talk mo’ shit than
Mickey Mouse When the Cheba-Cheba decides to quit Everybody in the
house would just say Awwwwwww— Shiiiiiiiiit!

*Once again, we gonna have a little fun, so let me hear everybody one time,
come on, say, “Ooh ah, ooh-ooh ah”*

Ooh ah, ooh-ooh ah

Somebody say, “oh la, oh la”

Oh la, oh la

Somebody say, “wake-a, wake-a”

Wake-a, wake-a

Everybody—well, how you feel?

How you feel?

Well, how you feel? Mighty real With the Cheba, Cheba, Chee-chee-che-
che-cheba Cheba-cheba-cheba

You can dip, dive, or socialize Either way we gonna make your nature
rise With the good music and funky vibe It’ll be Cheba keeping you
satisfied Raise your hands in the air Wave ’em like you just don’t care
If y’all think Jamaica is number one Let me hear you say, “oh yeah”

Oh yeah

Jamaica, y’all sound real good, everybody Come on—*let’s go to work*

Come on—*let’s go to work*

Don’t stop, don’t stop, don’t stop, don’t stop Say what—I’ll tell you when
Just kick off the shoes, relax the feet Then you freak to the funky beat
On and on and on and on

If we can’t get you up then we don’t belong Do it, do it, do-do-do do it, do
it Do it, do it, do it

But if yo’ name is Kenny

Jack Benny—Jack ...

How many people know about the Jack Benny?

Say, “oh yeah”—*oh yeah*

So if yo’ name is Kenny

Jack Benny, Jack Benny

Say, “ho”—*ho*

Once again, get ready, girlfriend, we gonna have a little fun at the place to be.

*I mean, if y’all really ready for a funky beat tonight, everybody put your
hands up real high. Come on, now, let me hear somebody scream. Come
on, keep in step. Once again, don’t forget—we got some unfinished
business with Sugarhill in Harlem World tomorrow night. We gonna show
’em about the bang-bang-the-boogie. Once again, if y’all having a good time
I want y’all to put your hands together, everybody clap your hands ...*

COLD CRUSH BROTHERS

The Cold Crush Brothers came from the Bronx. Consisting of six members—the DJs Charlie Chase and Tony Tone and the MCs JDL, Easy AD, “The Almighty” KG, and Grandmaster Caz—the group got together in 1978. Their live shows are legendary in the annals of hip-hop, and many of them were widely circulated on tape. They were not just popular, but also influential—for instance, Run-DMC credits the Cold Crush Brothers with inspiring them to shape their sound, which in turn shaped much rap that followed.

If the setting was a battle, as on the excerpt below from 1981 of a show that pitted the Cold Crush Brothers against the Fantastic Five, the four MCs would sometimes rap a series of verses alone, sometimes rap a series together, sometimes trade verses, sometimes rhyme by passing the baton from one to the next as in a relay; they also sang, or would rap in a sing-songy way to the melody of popular hits of the day. And all the while they told you who you were listening to, the better to earn your support in the contest.

Although remembered more for their work on the stage, they recorded some strong and representative records in the studio. “Weekend” marches us through the days of the workweek to bring us to the moment of release, which the song both describes and enacts. “Fresh Wild Fly and Bold” brings to the studio setting a sense of the group communication that characterized their tapes, as well as a sense of their combativeness.

The CC4 were one of the first groups to elaborate the trope of the “biter,” or the rapper who stole rather than wrote his own rhymes. On the one hand, it is a mark of the group’s strength and influence that they had to be concerned with being “robbed.” On the other hand, it is a mark of the fact that the art form was growing enough that problems of lineage, imitation, originality, and influence were increasingly in play.

Maybe it is also a mark of the perception of actual theft. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the rhymes from the Sugarhill Gang’s “Rapper’s Delight,” delightful as that song is, were purloined from Grandmaster Caz. If so, the Cold Crush Brothers in a sense went platinum and had their words heard early and often; in another, common sense, they didn’t get credit for their contribution. One of their strengths is that there isn’t a weak member in the group. That said, Grandmaster Caz (who

was a DJ before he was an MC) is the acknowledged leader, the “captain.” If Sugarhill’s Big Bank Hank did pilfer Caz’s rhymes, he at least put them to good use and, through a strange twist of fate, gave them maximum exposure—which might not be much consolation if you were the man who wrote the rhymes:

I’m mad as hell ’cause it’s bound to sell

And you be biting what I’m writing and people can’t tell

You change it around, disguise the sound

With no prior desire to write, that’s why I frown

The subject matter is one thing here, the form another; the interlocking internal rhymes suggest why the group was attended to by fellow rappers

hell		sell	a		a
biting	writing	tell	b	b	a
around		sound	c		c
back in the day: prior	desire	frown	d	d	c

Arrangements such as these are more associated with lyricists from several years later, such as Rakim and Big Daddy Kane. It was advanced for the time and it still sounds fresh.

LIVE AT HARLEM WORLD 1981

What’s up, fly guys? Hello, fly girls It’s the big throw-down at Harlem
 World The Cold Crush Four versus Fantastic Five They ain’t no comp,
 we’ll eat ’em alive Because we’re the best when it comes to rapping
 And like the flier said, it was bound to happen Well the time has come
 and let the battle begin And let the crowd be the judge of who wins....

Hey, y’all, yes it’s true

The four got a brand new song for you We got routines, rhymes, and
 dancing, too So what you wanna do?

Chase, Tone, and the Four

You never heard a crew like this before And the way we rock a crowd
 should be against the law We got much more

Grandmaster Caz raising hell

And I’m the hut-maker called JDL

And I’m easy A, don’t forget the D

And I’m KG—the Almighty

No doubt we’re the best

With the CC4 you do not mess
And if there's a battle the four won't fess So let's go west
Against the very best
So get it off your chest
And you'll be so impressed
Cold Crush
Cold-cold Crush
And it's like that, because we're never wack We don't believe in that
zodiac
Now throw your hands in the air
And wave 'em like you just don't care Just throw your hands in the air
And wave 'em like you just don't care
One for the bass, two for the treble Come on Chase, yo, let's go level Ah
yeah, yeah, somebody
Somebody say, "Ho"—*Ho!*
Say, "Ho"—*Ho!*
Now it's thirteen, fourteen
No, it's fifteen—no, it's sixteen It's seventeen, eight-eight eighteen Say,
nineteen-eighty-one
And the former year is done
Everybody's gonna know that we're on the go Like Reggie Joe on the
seven-oh
And when eighty-two rolls around We'll still be getting down
With a funky dance that put you in a trance You got to see it to believe it
We'll put on a show and you know We can't be beaten
We proved that we could make you move Our rhymes are bitten, chewed,
and eaten But we keep rocking on
And making up new songs
So here we go ...

.....

*Now how many of y'all know about other MCs? How many of y'all know about
other MCs? How many of y'all know other MCs? If y'all know about other
MCs, raise your hands in the air. Throw your hands in the air. How many
of y'all know other MCs? All right, you don't know about other MCs?*

Charlie Chase, Charlie Chase, keep the rocket in the pocket. We gonna let 'em know a little something about other MCs.

Now, first of all, we're not talking 'bout your sister—*your sister*
We're not talking 'bout your uncle—*your uncle*
We're not talking 'bout your father—*your father*
And not your mother or other or other-other-other-other Other MCs can't deal with us

Because we are the four known as the Cold Crush Putting fellas on the job, making girls blush You know we got a funky song
So won't you come and sing and dance along We got the two DJs on the wheels of steel Charlie Chase and Tony Tone at the top of the field
Message to the competition, better be for real We rock the party to the break of day And this is how it sounds when we play We are the four MCs with the most success And if you wanna cold crush you better come correct We might have to take you out and put your crew in check Because the CC4's number one

And you got to walk before you run **LIVE AT THE DIXIE 1982**

[Grandmaster Caz]

It was a long time ago but I'll never forget I got caught in a bed with a girl named Yvette Well, I was scared like hell but I got away That's why I'm here telling you today I was outside of school hooking up to rock A crowd of people all around listening to my box Just me and my fans and some guys from the crew Chilling hard 'cause we had nothing better to do It was me, the L, the A, and the All And then I slipped away to make a phone call To this very day it was a move I regret But I didn't know then, so I called Yvette I said, "Hello pretty mama, it's your lover man"

She said, "Baby, come on over as quick as you can"

I said, "I can't come now, someone's coming to get me"

Then she said, "I'm all alone, there's nobody with me"

I thought for a second, "Oh shit! She's alone"

Then I was knocking at her door before she hung up the phone She let me in the house and gave me a kiss And said, "Give me that thing that you know I miss"

So we went into her room and we got high But she couldn't keep her hand

from off my fly So I made her lock the door and went to check it When
I came back in the girl was naked That was my cue to do the do
I took my clothes off and started on the proof Well, I was tearing shit up
and 'bout a quarter to three She said, "Caz, somebody's coming." I
said, "Yeah, me"
Then the door bust open and there was her folks I thought, "Damn, they
coulda waited—say, damn—they coulda waited Say, damn—they
coulda waited 'til I finished my stroke"
Her mother was in shock, her father reached on the shelf Pulled down the
.45, I almost shit on myself Said, "Please, don't shoot!" and pleaded
my case Said, "You'd have done the same thing if you was in my place
But if you spare my life, believe me, friend You'll never see me round
your daughter again"
Don't ask me why, but he let me leave I ran twenty-six blocks then I
stopped to breathe Gave thanks to God he wasn't too upset Went home
and thought about poor Yvette He must have beat her ass with
everything, I assume 'Cause I could hear the girl screaming all the way
in my room Even though I don't see Yvette no more Well, I know she
ain't as fine—I know she ain't as fine I know, ain't half as fine as she
was before So JDL—ha—you know my voice is sore Therefore get on
the mic and rock once more [JDL]
Well, I'm here to be known and I'm known to be As an electrified prince
of poetry ... [Fade]

WEEKEND

[All] Everybody listen to this

The weekend's coming so don't you dare miss You're gonna regret if
you're not on the scene And then you get so mad it'll make you scream
[Grandmaster Caz] Everyone give us your attention please [JDL]
Especially those of you who like parties [Easy AD] It's a message that
we will like to extend [Almighty KG] About why everybody love the
what? [All] Weekend!

[Caz] 'Cause there's a time to work and a time to play [JDL] But you can't
do both effectively in one day [AD] So without delay, without further
ado [KG] Let the four run down this week for you [All] We're the Cold
Crush Four, giving, giving you more And we just came to say

Ooh-ah, what a relief it is

When the weekend comes your way
So grab a chair from anywhere
And listen while we speak

'Cause the Four's gonna start this record off With the first day of the week
—Monday [Caz] The train was late and you hardly ate Plus you wish
you'd stayed in bed—[All] Tuesday [JDL] You ran a game on your
favorite dame And then she messed up your head—[All] Wednesday
[AD] You try to be cool and stay out of school Yeah, you're fronting
and showboating—[All] Thursday [KG] Now your mind's in doubt, you
can't figure out Why you're not gonna get promoted—[All] Friday
[All] After work is through, you sleep for a few Until you hear
somebody say

[Caz] Wake up, wake up, now don't you know [All] The weekend's when
we play *This is Chase with the bass*
Tone, leave the girl alone

[Caz] Friday and Saturday night, everybody's gonna show [JDL] At the
place where all the fly people go [AD] You been working at school or
your occupation [KG] Now it's about time for some recreation [Caz]
Slip on your shirt and designer jeans [JDL] Say the ones that are tight
at the hip and the seams [AD] Then you shoot out the door like you're
running a race [KG] And then you finally arrive at the Cold Crush
place [All] And ...

[Caz] You can't [JDL] believe [AD] your eyes, [KG] 'cause [Sung]
The party's packed and jumping
That funky bass is thumping
And the way the music rocks your mind Ooh girl, it's really something
It's a place where you can dance You can even find romance
And I know you can do it if you
Give yourself a chance

.....

[Caz] Now the lights are flashin, the people are dancing [JDL] The guys
are looking out for some serious action [AD] It's richer than a
diamond, finer than a pearl [KG] And this is what happens when boy
meets girl [Caz] Introduce yourself as whoever you are [JDL] Then you
grab her by the hand and lead her to the bar [AD] Offer her a drink,

maybe a cigarette [KG] 'Til she insists conversation is all you're gonna get [Caz] Try another approach and ask her for a dance [JDL] Your time is runnin out, this is your last chance [AD] And then you sweep her off her feet with your prowess [KG] And then you know you got it made—finally, success [Caz] 'Cause we rock the best [All] and the Four is fresh [Caz] When the jam is over you head for the stairs [JDL] All the girls and the guys are leaving in pairs [AD] You had such a good time, you wish you could stay [KG] Now it's time to catch the bus, train, or OJ

[Caz] You get to your house and pull out your key [JDL] You're tired as hell, you want to sleep 'til three [AD] Wake up Sunday, wipe the sleep from your eyes [KG] And go out in the sun for some exercise [Caz] Play ball, [JDL] roller skate, [AD] or visit a friend [KG] And go home and think about [All] the next weekend **FRESH WILD FLY AND BOLD**

[Grandmaster Caz] Well, I'm fresh 'cause I'm the best [JDL] And I get wild when I'm riled [Easy AD] I never get passed by 'cause I'm fly [Almighty KG] And I'ma put you on hold 'cause I'm bold [All] And Charlie Chase will last 'cause he's fast And Tony Tone got pull 'cause he's original [Caz] The Cold Crush is on [JDL] 'cause we perform [AD] And even in a storm [KG] we'll keep you warm [Caz] Hey Crew! [All] Yeah, Cap!

[Caz] We gonna need a little scratch for the rap now [All] Tone and Chase! [Tone and Chase] Yeah, Crew!

[All] You're the DJs, what ya gonna do?

[Caz] Guess what, y'all? I'm fresh [All] What makes you think so, Cap?

[Caz] Because I look so good and I'm the Lord of Rap [All] How fresh?

[Caz] So fresh that when I was young I learned to drive women crazy with my tongue [All] Now that's fresh

[JDL] Well, I get wild. [All] What makes you say that, L?

[JDL] Because it don't take much to make me yell [All] How wild? [JDL] So wild that when I start to break, hey You better step back and let me flake [All] Now that's wild

[AD] Well, I'm fly. [All] Who told you that, Easy?

[AD] Your girl, his mother, and my lady [All] How fly? [AD] So fly sometimes it seems All I got to do is smile and I get screams [All] Now that's fly

[KG] I'm bold. [All] What gives you that impression, K?

[KG] Because I don't care what nobody say [All] How bold? [KG] So bold I
smack a man with his gun And kiss his woman, dis his mother, and
don't even run [All] Now that's bold

[All]

Fresh, wild, fly, and bold

We'll be that way 'til we grow old For the rest of our life as long as we
live We'll keep using those adjectives [Caz] That do describe the heart-
breaking tribe [JDL] That do permit us to go with AD] A musical flow
that makes you say, "Ho!"

[KG] With a fresh rap style to make you go wild [Caz] Cold Crush—[JDL]
us—[AD] good in the clutch [KG] And if you don't believe we're real,
[All] then touch Us—The Cold Crush

[All] Fresh, wild, fly, and bold Yes, we're what makes the Crush so Cold
Our rhymes'll freeze all fake MCs That don't say please before they
seize [Caz] Rhymes and routines that we make up [JDL] You can't
pour juice in a fake cup [AD] They cannot break [KG] so they just rob
[All] But a biter can't do a real rapper's job [Caz] But if you're hard-
headed and you still think so Grab your rhymes and your mic [All] and
go for what you know Kick it, kick it, kick it, kick it [KG] My name is
KG, [All] better known as the Al-

[KG] Mighty and with the three [All] I'm sure you'll call [KG] On us when
your ear [All] is in need for a treat [KG] And if you don't know the K
[All] that's who you've got to meet [KG] I'm fourth in line [All] and in
due time [KG] Every rapper in the business [All] will know that I'm
[KG] Serious about this [All] and I don't play [KG] I told a sucker MC
that [All] just the other day [KG] 'Cause I learnt the ropes [All] and
paid my dues [KG] I'm going for the gold, [All] no way that I can lose
[AD]

It's Easy AD that you wanted to be Ever since you saw me MC

You wanted to be fine and learn how to rhyme Even wanted your braids
as long as mine But the rhymes I write are a real delight If you're a
true MC you would not bite On me or them, just sit down and Write a
rhyme with your mind, paper, or pen But you can't so you don't, you
will and you won't Take heed with speed and read what I wrote [JDL]

When I'm on the stage I go a little berserk Start breaking, flaking, you

know I do work I try to get you on mine when I deliver my line 'Cause
it's about making rhymes like no one else can design I do everything I
can to make myself better Live on a steady diet of stages and metal
Know all the celebs and when I'm in the crowd They surround me like
the prince, scream my name out loud [All] Say, yo! JDL! [Caz] What's
happening?

[AD] Where have you been? [KG] When are you rocking again?

[JDL] And when I'm boppin away I hear a lot of them say [KG] Goddamn,
I wanna be like the L one day [Grandmaster Caz]

So many biting MCs, you're all a pain in my neck, huh!

They should be sending me your royalty check You just bit my rhyme,
didn't pay no tax Copied the music from someone else, put it on wax
I'm mad as hell 'cause it's bound to sell And you be biting what I'm
writing and people can't tell You change it around, disguise the sound
With no prior desire to write, that's why I frown On those of you that
don't strive try to be Original and write like the Captain do So put
your teeth away and try someday And you can quote it 'cause I wrote
it only yesterday [All] Fresh, [Caz] and unless I missed my guess I'm
the best, oh yes, because I wrote the test [All] Wild, [JDL] honey-child
on the top of the pile Once in a while I crack a smile

[All] Fly, [AD] know why? 'Cause 'til the day I die I'll always be the guy
you won't pass by [All] Bold, [KG] so cold and so hard to hold [All]
And when they made the Cold Crush they broke the mold

DJ HOLLYWOOD

Like Eddie Cheba, DJ Hollywood was a disco-style DJ who played primarily at clubs with an older and more middle-class clientele than one would associate with early hip-hop. Nevertheless, his influence was extensive because of the rhymes he developed to supplement his sets. One artist who was greatly influenced by Hollywood, Kurtis Blow, sums up this pioneer's status: "His voice was golden like a god, almost—that's why I wanted to be an MC! ... [He had] the first rhythmic rhymes I ever heard a cat say during the hip-hop days—we're talking about the 70s." ¹³ A discussion of his contribution and of the following verses can be found in the introduction to Part One.

LIVE AT THE ARMORY 1979 (2)

Clap your hands, everybody

Everybody, clap your hands

We want to hear you clap your hands, everybody Everybody, clap your hands

Now I don't mean to brag or boast I'm like the hot butter on your morning toast I'm not a Duracell, I'm an alkaline So let's have a ... [good times]

That's right, y'all, and you don't stop, keep on *Now we want everybody to get somebody, come on, let's have a little fun out here. We gonna give you forty seconds to find you a fine young lady and bring her to the dance floor—everybody, come on! And you don't stop, keep on. Yes, it's Hollywood, turn out, because that is all I be about. We gonna see if we can't get everybody dancing—come on, fellas, don't stand around, get a fine, foxy mama. Uh! If Wolfman Jack was here, he'd try to tell you to get one of those fine, foxy mamas, something like this, he might say: "That's right, Clyde, got something good for your hide, something to keep you satisfied, talking about some heavy [good times] ... medicine."*

And you don't stop, keep on

Just hip-hip, you hop-a, don't stop Everybody, come on, let's body rock
Now I rock the freak and I freak the rock Now I'm playing the music
and I just can't stop Once again with a feeling that's so divine Let's
have a—Let's have a [good times]

That's right, yo, let's do it, let's do it *Alright, now, we got all the people in*

the house in the back, they ready to rock, all you people in the front, just turn around and get somebody and kind of punk rock, to the beat, come on down, let's punk rock a little bit ... Oh shit ... punk rock! There's a few dances we do at the Kool, we change it up a little bit, sometimes we might say ... double up. Sometimes we get down, mama.... Having a good time, we say, how many people out here know about the Macho Man meeting the Patty Duke? Well, if you know anything about the Macho Man meeting Patty Duke, somebody say, "Macho"—Macho

Say, "mucho-macho"—*Mucho-macho*

Say, "ooh-ah, ooh-ooh-ah"—*Ooh-ah, ooh-ooh-ah*

Double up

Come on and let's go to work Let's do it, let's do it

Said the disco lights and the boogie nights Are really here to stay

Sexy mamas and fancy papas

Always want to play

With iron nerves I'm prepared to serve A sugar-coated, red electric

Super-freaky crumb off a disco cake To make you shake and bake

To enhance your mind and de-lighten your kind To the feeling that's so
divine It's music, so use it

And don't you dare abuse it

Let's do it

Right now, I know y'all didn't spend your money to come in tonight and stand around and look. I want y'all to get on the floor and kind of cook. To all the lovely ladies in the house—and we see some fine, foxy mamas out here this morning—come on ...

I love the way you walk

I love the way you talk

Oh girl, the way you look

Like somethin out a picture book Let's do it, let's do it

Do, do it, do it

The wheels of steel's being turned by my main man DJ Starski, girl Just
hip-hip-the-hop, but don't stop Everybody, come on, let's body rock

Just throw your hands in the air Wave 'em like you just don't care And
if you came out to work your body this morning Somebody say, "Oh
yeah"—*Oh yeah*

Alright, now we want all the good-feeling people in the house to feel good
Somebody say, "Sex"—*Sex*

"And more sex"—*And more sex*

Say, "Sex is good"—*Sex is good*

"Like Hollywood"—*Like Hollywood*

Then it's up my back, it's around my neck Woo-hah! I got the girls in
check And you don't stop, a-keep on Just clap your hands, everybody
I'ma tell you about Hollywood Just clap your hands, everybody As
your feeling's got to be good *Alright, we want Larry to come over by the
door. Larry, you come over by the door. Everybody else, I wanna know,
how many people out here in Jamaica know how to do the world-famous
Patty Duke dance? If you can Patty Duke, let me hear you say, "Patty
Duke"—Patty Duke*

Say, "Patty Duke"—*Patty Duke*

Somebody say, "Yes, yes y'all"—*Yes, yes y'all*

"Yes, yes y'all"—*Yes, yes y'all*

*Alright now, for those of y'all who don't know how to Patty Duke, we gonna
explain it to you, mama, come on ...*

You just wiggle your hips and you rock your knees And you Patty Duke
any way you please Now the best way to get into the swing Is to act
like you're doing the Shing-a-ling Then, mama, let your body work
Then you wave your arms like you're doing the Jerk Then you turn it
on loose like a bowl of soup Now you lookin real good doing the Patty
Duke Hey girl, don't you lose your stride Just Patty Duke a little to the
side Then you give your partner a laugh and grin And then you Patty
Duke right back up to him Come on—*Let's go to work*

Come on—*Let's go to work*

Get the bone out your back, boy Get the bone out your back, girl Just
throw your hands up in the air Wave 'em around like you just don't
care If you feelin the groove that makes you move Somebody say, "Oh
yeah"—*Oh yeah*

The music of Starski, we gonna get kinda mellow, we want everybody to put their hands together right here. Everybody put your hands together, we want to hear everybody right here, come on, y'all. Just a little bit—clap your hands. Stomp your feet. Clap your hands. Stomp your feet—come on, Starski. That's right, y'all, and you don't stop, you keep on. For all the lovely ladies in the house, I'd just like to say, [Sung]

I got a word for the wise

Just to tranquilize

Your mind, your body and soul We got a brand new rhythm now And we gonna let it take control Come on, let's do it

Let's do it, let's do it, let's do it We can do it, now

There's nothing to it, now

Come on, let me see you work it out to the music Come on, let's do it

Let's do it, let's do it, uh-huh That's right, y'all, and you don't stop, a-keep on I said dippy-dippy-dive, so-socialize Just-a come on and make my nature rise When I come in the door, what did I see?

Too many people trying to freak with me So I started to dance, I had a little fun And all of a sudden it was four on one So I started to freak, I did my best And all of a sudden I had to grab my chest Then my knees start to bend and I fall back And to my surprise I caught a heart attack Let's do it, let's do it

Starski, what you got for me?

What you say? Starski

That's right, y'all, and you don't stop now Just hip-hip-the-hop, the hop, the hop Dippy-dippy dip-dip-dop, but don't stop From the coast of California to the shores of Maine I said all the girls love the way I run my game Because I got style and I got class And I don't talk my shit too fast Now your body's moving to the rhythm and the rhyme And your feet keep stepping right on time As you listen to the voice that's so divine Just Hollywood in your mind

Said the bass is in your face And the highs are in your eyes It's the music of the Hollywood that'll Definitely tranquilize

You see, I got the neck of gold, better than Baretta I'm a Casanova Brown because I'm down To the hip-hop, the hip-hip-hop, the hop To the dippy-dippy dip-dip dop To the hip-hop, you don't stop Let's rock, y'all, to the beat *Right now, once again, to all the people out there dancing to the music, we want you to put your hands together one more time. Come*

on—just clap your hands, everybody; everybody, clap your hands ...

FUNKY FOUR + 1

Like many of the groups that made their names as live performers before the advent of recorded rap, the Funky Four + 1 has a tangled history. Originally known simply as the Funky Four, the group consisted of four MCs—KK Rockwell, Keith-Keith, Rahiem, and Sha-Rock—and two DJs, Breakout and Baron, who pumped their music through a sound system known as “Sasquatch.” In a competitive realm where volume mattered, having a sound that couldn’t be drowned out was as important for ensuring success as was skill in the finer points of moving a crowd.

The Funky Four was highly regarded but not every battle turned in the group’s favor. After an unsuccessful contest versus Grandmaster Flash and (the then) Furious Four, the Funky Four lost Rahiem, who defected and joined Flash’s crew. His move prompted Sha-Rock—one of the first and best female MCs—to leave the group. Since you can’t have a Funky Four with only two MCs, two replacements—Jazzy Jeff and Lil’ Rodney Cee—were recruited. After seeing the new incarnation of the group perform, Sha-Rock got back with the guys and The Funky Four + 1 was born.

Having honed their show in the gyms and the parks, the Funky Four + 1 found recording to be both a blessing and a curse. Their first single, released on Enjoy Records in 1979, was a fourteen-minute song called “Rappin and Rockin the House.” As was the case for all rap records released in 1979 and 1980 (and for most records in the immediate years thereafter), the track featured not the group’s DJs Breakout and Baron, but a backing band—in this case, one led by the percussionist and producer Pumpkin, who was the man in the studio behind many early rap recordings. The success of their Enjoy single led to an offer from Sugar Hill impresario Sylvia Robinson, who bought out the group’s contract from Enjoy owner Bobby Robinson and took them on tour with other Sugar Hill groups. They released several singles for the label, including 1981’s “That’s the Joint,” and also became—after Blondie’s Debbie Harry saw them perform at a club in Greenwich Village—the first rap group to appear on national TV, coming on at the end of an episode of *Saturday Night Live*.

These positive developments were balanced by the unfortunate fact that the shift to studio work left their DJs in the lurch. The Funky Four + 1 now had the instrumental versions of their own records to rap to in

performance, and Baron and Breakout no longer anchored the group. The change in emphasis led to fissures and the group disbanded. What remains on record, however, is a good representation of the nonstop, almost interminable flow of a multimember group, of interplay of verses among group members, and of the contribution to early rap of a dope female MC.

FROM RAPPIN AND ROCKIN THE HOUSE

[All]

This is the way we rock the house

Sure enough, everybody, gonna turn it out [KK Rockwell]

Well, I'm KK Rockwell 'cause I rock so swell Every time you hear my
name it rings a bell [Rodney Cee]

Well, I'm Lil Rodney Cee, making history With all the fly girls yelling,
"take me"

[Sha-Rock]

Well, I'm Sha-Rock and I can't be stopped For all the fly guys, gonna hit
the top [Keith-Keith]

Well, I'm Keith-Keith but you can call me Keith Caesar The reason why
'cause I'm the women pleaser [Jazzy Jeff]

Well, I'm Jazzy Jeff with the most finesse Now I do it to the rhythm 'til I
do it the best [All four guys] Now we're the Funky Four [Sha-Rock] and
I'm the plus one more

[All] And this is the way we go back and forth [KK Rockwell]

We're the five MCs that are too much And we rock the mics with the
magical touch [Rodney Cee]

We're on time, we're masterminds

We hypnotize when we run down the rhymes [Sha-Rock]

They're four fly guys and the best female I'm telling the truth, not a fairy
tale [Keith-Keith]

Now listen to the story that the five put down And it's guaranteed, so let
them travel around [Jazzy Jeff]

We said it once, we said it twice

That we're proving to you that we're better than nice

[Sha-Rock]

'Cause the sun won't shine, the rain won't stop We got a style called punk
rock

Just get up out your chair, start to have some fun We're two DJs, Funky
Four plus one

To the people out there, we want you to know We are the ones with the
magical show We're two DJs and five MCs

Four of them fellas, plus one is me

We're here to please everybody out there Forget about your problems, get
'em out your hair So just get on the floor, don't you be shy You can do
it too, just give it a try To the people out there, we want the best
Satisfaction guaranteed is what we possess We can rock on the mic
with a master plan We do it for the girl, woman, boy, or man Most
people go around just thinking anyway We want you to hear what we
say

The things we say, the things we do

It's like runnin a race and along comes you There's a lot of competition to
beat But we are the ones, they are the ones I am the one with the most
unique

Funky Four got rhymes galore, they got the Best female, Sha-Rock—I'm
down by law ...

FROM THAT'S THE JOINT

.....

[All four guys] To the beat that makes you wanna rap Come on, Sha-Rock,
cut out the crap

Just turn on your mic and start to rap And let everybody know you can
never be the wack [Sha-Rock] You know that. [All] And you know that
[Sha-Rock] And I know [All] and she knows and we know that We
know what, Sha-Rock? [Sha-Rock] When I rap Funky Four I can never
be the wack. [All] And we hear you, Sha-Rock She's the joint

[Sha-Rock] Do it up, y'all—do, do it up Sha-Rock is gonna show you how
you get real rough I'm Sha-Rock and I can't be stopped

For all the fly guys I will hit the top Well, I can do it for the ones, for
weak or strong And I can do it for the ones that are right or wrong
Well, I'm listed in the column that's classified I can be your nurse and

I'm qualified To talk about respect, I won't neglect My strategy is for you to see

So don't turn away by what I say

'Cause I'm on, I'm bad when I'm talking to you They're four fly brothers who can do it too The party people in the place, it's just for you So get down—get, get, get on down

I'm the plus one more and I'm throwin down [All four guys] She's the best female in this here town [Sha-Rock] And everybody know that I'm golden brown And you know [All] she's the joint

[Jazzy Jeff] I can pull a young lady with nice fine thighs I'm the kind of MC to make women just sigh I'm Jazzy Jeff with the most finesse I'm down with the five that rock the mic the best 'Cause I move the groove and I do it cool Now rockin you and you I'm sure to prove 'Cause I want a young lady with a lot of finesse And she's got to be on, [Sha-Rock] 'cause he's Jazzy Jeff [Jazzy Jeff] She's got to be sweet, [All] yes, [Jazzy Jeff] fine and kind And that's just the kind of woman I want to be mine You know [All] he's the joint

[Keith-Keith] Now what you see is what you get You say, I am bad and that you can bet I have a quality for you and me

And to all the young ladies, this is what it be [All] Say, his name is Keith-Keith, [Keith-Keith] as my rhymes go down To all the young ladies, just gather around With the rhymes I possess, the words I protest And I can put together, I can call it finesse Now listen up, young ladies, and listen up good I'm gonna rock on the mic like I know I could [All] Like you know he should. [Keith-Keith] Like I know I would [All] He's Keith-Keith—[Keith-Keith] I rock the house [All] He's Keith-Keith—[Keith-Keith] I rock, shock, rock, turn it out And you know that [All] and he got [Keith-Keith] the finesse To behold that [All] he's the joint

[Jazzy Jeff] Keepin on to, to the crack of dawn Party people in the place, you got to keep on If you like the beat and you want some more
Scream it out and say, "Funky Four"

[All] Funky Four! [Jazzy Jeff] "Plus one more"

[All] And the plus one more! [Jazzy Jeff] Now you don't stop You said, the beat goes on [Keith-Keith] and it's high-powered stuff [Rodney Cee] We won't stop rockin' [KK] 'til you all get enough [Sha-Rock]

Other— [All four guys] ooh, ah—ooh, ooh, [Sha-Rock] ah, ah [All]
Ooh, ah and don't stop—[Keith-Keith] hit it [All] That's the joint

[Jazzy Jeff] We have an obligation that we must fulfill [Keith-Keith] Like
a .357 we are the kill [Rodney Cee] We're like Machine Gun Kelly and
Bonnie and Clyde [KK] And when we shock the house we stand side by
side [Sha-Rock] We on top of the world, we're looking down [All]
We're going straight ahead, we never turning around [Keith-Keith]
Because we are so close but yet so far [Rodney Cee] And to all the
party people, [KK] you know who we are [Sha-Rock] Get the point?
[Keith-Keith] And if you don't we want y'all to know [Rodney Cee] We're
down, [KK] we rock, [All guys] we're the Funky Four [Sha-Rock] Plus
one

[Rodney Cee] I was sitting in my house watching my TV
When all of a sudden it dawned on me That I was all alone just wasting
my time So I grabbed the pen and paper and wrote down a rhyme And
I thought to myself how nice it would be To be on top making cash
money
To go on a tour all around the world To tell little stories to all the fly girls
To sit on my throne, to command my own To be number one on the
microphone
Just telling a tale about how it's gonna be For the Funky Four plus one
MC
We'll be busting in and we'll be turning it out While we rock to any beat
without a doubt Just chillin hard, livin in luxury
And being very proud to be an MC
[All] He's the joint

[KK] I'm KK Rockwell 'cause I raise a lot of hell And I like to make love to
the jazzy female And I'm down with the crew from off the Hill Now
just walk through my door, you pose on my floor First thing I touch is
hips galore—[All] and then he— [KK] Move her up—[All] and then he
—[KK] kiss your lips—[All] and then he— [KK] Hold on tight so I
never slip—[All] and then he— [KK] Tongue you down on to the
ground If any love is there it will be found By the man you all can tell
Rockwell, to the depths of hell
And every time you hear my name, girl, it rings a bell When the bell rings

it goes, “Ding, dong”

Then I rock her and I shock her to the break of dawn Like a hot butter on
a bag of popcorn Like Rockwell, just singing your song And you know
—[All] he’s the joint

[Sha-Rock]

Come on, let’s go to work (Go on, girl!) Say, I got money and I can jerk

Let’s go to work, let’s go to work

We gave a lot of parties and we got jerked But that’s alright because we
be good sports ’Cause we know some day we get the big [All] Payoff

GRANDMASTER FLASH AND THE FURIOUS FIVE

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five are the best known of the groups of rap's first phase. Few groups can boast both one of the all-time greatest DJs (Grandmaster Flash) and one of the all-time greatest MCs (Melle Mel), as well as four other skilled MCs (Cowboy, Kid Creole, Mr. Ness/Scorpio, and Rahiem).

Grandmaster Flash was a DJ prodigy from the South Bronx whose claim to fame in the mid-1970s was being the fastest to mix from break to break, a skill he also helped refine by designing his own mixers. Realizing, as he puts it, that he “was not going to be an MC” since he was “totally wack on the mic,” Flash endeavored “to find someone able to put a vocal entertainment on top of this rearrangement of music.”¹⁴ The first MC he enlisted was a gregarious and tough crowd-pleaser named Keith Wiggins, who went by the name Cowboy because of his bowed legs. He was soon followed by Kid Creole and Melle Mel, two brothers whose birth names were Nathaniel and Melvin Glover. Eventually to these three MCs were added Scorpio, a.k.a. Mr. Ness, and Rahiem (who came from the Funky Four)—thus bringing the total of the group to a furious five.

They played everywhere, amassing a major reputation as live performers. The many tapes of their shows suggest how deserved that reputation was. Although they released a 12-inch under the name The Younger Generation, under their own name their first release was “Superrappin” (1979). Given that the center of the group had always been Flash, the record revealed the kinds of changes that would quickly occur. Jeff Chang describes how Flash was relegated to the role of spectator, with a house band performing the instrumentals. “For the length of ‘Superrappin,’” he writes, “the tension between what rap was—a live performance medium dominated by the DJ—and what it would become—a recorded medium dominated by the rappers—is suspended.”¹⁵

Of the group's MCs, Melle Mel is the acknowledged master. His best effort under Flash's name is undoubtedly “The Message,” a dystopian series of urban vignettes that remains one of the most affecting raps ever recorded. Under his own name he also recorded widely, with perhaps his best track being “White Lines (Don't Don't Do It),” the double-negative subtitle of which suggests what an ambivalent antidrug song it is, if it can finally be called “antidrug” at all.

FROM LIVE AT THE AUDUBON BALLROOM (12/23/78)

Keep on

Keep on to the break of dawn

Like this, y'all, like that

Let the funk machine cause a heart attack

Don't stop

Keep on to the heart drop

Fly girls, rock the house

Fly kids, rock the house

Let's rock, y'all, you don't stop Keep on to the break of dawn

Grandmaster's in the house

Cooling out, turn the motherfucker out Audubon, rock on

To the beat, y'all, freak freak December twenty-third

Audubon, rock on

December twenty-third

Audubon, rock on

December twenty-third

Audubon, rock on

To the beat, y'all, freak freak And you don't stop, you keep on And then
you rock to the rhythm of the rhythm of the rock You can rock the
hands right off the damn clock You rock to the rhythm, you just don't
quit Because the music is on that be the serious shit

He's the Jimmy Dean of the mean machine Cutting a side with a gangster
lean Though his name is not found in the hall of fame He'll shock and
amaze and make you feel ashamed Grandmaster's number one,
Grandmaster's number one

To the beat that makes you want to freak To the highs that make your
nature rise To the sound that makes you want to get down Is a song
that makes you want to go on Like hot butter on—say what? The
popcorn Females, what you want to do?

Go on, go on, because the beat don't stop 'til the break of dawn
Everybody, are you with me?

To the beat, y'all, freak freak And I'm Melle Mel and I rock so well From
the World Trade to the depths of hell I rock with the best with the most

finesse I took the top, I left the rest So rock, y'all, and don't stop Keep
on to the break of dawn

You say Napoleon lost at Waterloo And Custer lost and Lee did too But
Flash is a man that can't be beat Because he never ever heard the word
"defeat"

.....

You say unh, I like it

You say unh, I love it

So what the fuck of it?

To the beat, y'all, it don't stop You say, sex is good, sex is on If it wasn't
for sex you wouldn't be born Think about it

.....

One time, two time

Three times for your mind

Kick off your shoes and relax your feet And dance to the rhythm of the
sure shot beat

He'll rock you high, he'll rock you low He'll tell a sucker-nigger right
where to go Rock, rock, y'all, you don't stop And then you dip dip
dive, so-socialize You clean out your ears, you open your eyes You pay
at the door as a donation To hear the best sounds in creation

.....

Yes, yes, y'all—freak, freak, y'all To the beat, y'all, it don't stop We're
bona fide, we're qualified To hypnotize and tranquilize

And transact and double back

So we can keep the wack from off our track

You go on and on and on-on and on 'Cause the beat won't stop 'til
everybody's gone Rock the spot to the crack of dawn Like hot butter
on the popcorn

And when you rock the hip and when you rock the hop Then you hip-hop
and don't you dare stop *FROM SUPERRAPPIN*

[All]

It was a party night, everybody was breakin The highs was screamin and
the bass was shakin And it won't be long 'til everybody knowin that
Flash was on the beat box goin, that Flash was on the beat box goin,
that Flash was on the beat box goin And ...

And ...

And ...

And ... Sha-na-na

[Melle Mel] Italian, Caucasian, Japanese Spanish, Indian, Negro,
Vietnamese MCs, disc jockeys

To all the fly kids and the young ladies Introducing the crew you gotta see
to believe We're [All in succession] one, two, three, four, five [All]
MCs [Mel] I'm Melle Mel and I rock so well [Mr. Ness] And I'm Mr.
Ness because I rocks the best [Rahiem] Rahiem, in all the ladies'
dreams [Cowboy] And I'm Cowboy to make you jump for joy [Kid
Creole] I'm Creole—[All] solid gold The Kid Creole, [All] playing the
role—[Mel] dig this— [Mel] We're the Furious Five plus Grandmaster
Flash Giving you a blast and sho' nuf' class So to prove to you all we're
second to none [All] We're gonna make five MCs sound like one [Mel]
You gotta dip-dip-dive, [Ness] so-so-socialize [Rahiem] Clean out your
ears [Cowboy] and then open your eyes [Creole] And then pay at the
door as a donation [All] To hear the best sounds in creation [Mel] He's
a disco dream [Ness] of a mean machine [Rahiem] And when he cuts
the sides [Cowboy] you see what we mean [Creole] You see his name
is not found in the hall of fame [All] But he'll shock and amaze and
make you feel ashamed [Mel] He'll mix a lime from a lemon [Ness]
from a lemon to a lime [Rahiem] He cuts the beat [Cowboy] in half the
time [Creole] And as sure as three times two is six [All] You say Flash
is the king of the quick mix [Mel] We're five MCs [Ness] and we're on
our own [Rahiem] And we're the most well-known [Cowboy] on the
microphone [Creole] And we throw down hard and we aim to please
[All] With finesse to impress all the young ladies [Mel] We got rhymes
galore [Ness] and that's a fact Rahiem] And the satisfaction's
guaranteed [Cowboy] to cause a heart attack [Creole] We are the best
as you can see [All] So eliminate the possibility [Mel] That to be an
[All in succession] E-M-C-E-E

[All] Is not a threat to society [Mel] Say, step by step, [All] stride by stride
[Mel] I know the fly young ladies would like to ride [Mel] In my
Mercedes, [All] young ladies [Mel] In my Mercedes, [All] young ladies
[Mel] If my Mercedes break down and dull my grill Well I [All] drive
up in a new Seville [Mel] If my Seville break down I take it all back
Well I [All] dull my grill in a new Cadillac [Mel] If my Cadillac break
down, it's just too much Well I [All] shock your mind in a new Stutz-

Stutz Mel] And if my Stutz break down I make another choice Well I
[All] dull my grill in a new Rolls-Royce Mel] And if my Royce break
down I'll be out in the rain [All in succession] And then forget it,
forget it, forget it, forget it Take the train, take the train,
take the train [All]

Can't, won't, don't stop rockin to the rhythm 'Cause I get down, 'cause I
get down, 'cause I get down [Kid Creole]

Ladies who don't know my name And you fellas who don't know my
game Yes, I'm called the Prince of Soul But others call me the Kid
Creole The MC delight, young ladies bite When I'm on the mic I rock
the house right I'm the dedicated prince, heart of solid gold Rockin to
the rhythm while I'm playin the role A cool calm customer, the master
plan It takes a sucker's man to try to jump my hand And the things I
do and what I say Affect a lot of people in the strangest way Makes
them clap their hands and say "all right"

It's Creole to the broad daylight Mister Ness, my mellow, what it look like
With you on the mic

[Mr. Ness]

Let's a-rock, y'all, let's a-rock the house Because the Furious Five are
gonna turn it out So young ladies, if you think you heard You heard
the best rap, you heard the best word Yes, it's true that we got the fuss
Because it can't be the best unless it came from us There's five of us
and we take no stuff We comin through the city, we comin through
rough We number one—ain't nothing you can do And if you wanna
get down we'll rock you too So freak for me, y'all, ya don't stop Come
on, come on, and let me see ya rock-rock Cowboy, they say you're
from the Bronx So why don't you rock the beat and add a little spunk
[Cowboy]

Yes, yes, y'all, you don't stop A-come on fly girls, I wanna hit the top I am
the C-O-W-B-O-Y

Why, the man so bad that you can't deny You better watch your woman
'cause I'll tell you why 'Cause I'm Cowboy, I might give her a try They
call me Keith-Keith, the young ladies' relief Known as the man of
romance to make you dance Can any of you ladies stand a chance?

I'm Cowboy and I'm shocking the house, you say You say one, two, one
more is three And Melle Mel, come on, what you got for me?

[Melle Mel]

To the hip-hop, a hip-hop

A-don't stop, don't stop that body rock Just get up out your seat, get ready
to clap Because Melle Mel is starting to rap Ever since the top at my
very first party I felt I could make myself somebody It was something
in my heart from the very start I could see myself at the top of the
chart Rapping on the mic, making cold, cold cash With a jock spinnin
for me called DJ Flash Signin autographs for the young and old
Wearing big time silver and solid gold My name on the radio and in
the magazine My picture on the TV screen

It ain't like that yet but—huh!—you'll see I got potential and you will
agree I'm comin up and I gotta step above the rest 'Cause I'm using the
ladder they call success You say 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

Rap like hell and make it sound like heaven 7-6-4-5-3-2-1

A-come on, Rahiem, come and get some [Rahiem]

Yes, yes, y'all, ya don't stop—come on Come on—huh—I wanna hit the
top I'm a one of a kind, a man supreme I know I'm in all of the ladies'
dreams I'm the R-A-H to the I-E-M

I put a wiggle in your butt if you tell me when I'm the son of a gun with a
hell of a fire Fly girls can mess around and take you all higher My
clientele climb the great big boost I'ma give it up and turn it loose—
huh!

All you fly girls that don't know my game Come up and talk to me and
we'll tell you all the same When you wake up in the night in a hell of a
dream You know you been possessed by the voice of Rahiem, in all the
ladies' dreams [Melle Mel]

And making more currency than any MC

If your dream will turn to reality

THE MESSAGE

[Chorus 2x]

It's like a jungle, sometimes it makes me wonder How I keep from going
under

[Melle Mel]

Broken glass everywhere

People pissing on the stairs, you know they just don't care I can't take the
smell, can't take the noise Got no money to move out, I guess I got no
choice Rats in the front room, roaches in the back Junkies in the alley
with a baseball bat I tried to get away but I couldn't get far 'Cause a
man with a tow truck repossessed my car Don't push me 'cause

I'm close to the edge

I'm trying not to

Lose my head

Uh-huh-huh-huh-huh

[Chorus]

Standing on the front stoop, hanging out the window Watching all the
cars go by, roaring as the breezes blow Crazy lady, living in a bag

Eating out of garbage cans, used to be a fag hag Says she danced the
tango, skip the light fandango A zircon princess seemed to lost her
senses Down at the peep show watching all the creeps So she could tell
the stories to the girls back home She went to the city and got so-so-
siditty She had to get a pimp, she couldn't make it on her own Don't
push me 'cause

I'm close to the edge

I'm trying not to

Lose my head

Huh-huh-huh-huh

[Chorus 2x]

My brother's doing bad, stole my mother's TV

Says she watches too much, it's just not healthy *All My Children* in the
daytime, *Dallas* at night Can't even see the game or the Sugar Ray fight
The bill collectors, they ring my phone And scare my wife when I'm
not home Got a bum education, double-digit inflation Can't take a
train to the job, there's a strike at the station Neon King Kong standing
on my back Can't stop to turn around, broke my sacroiliac A mid-
range migraine, cancered membrane Sometimes I think I'm going
insane, I swear, I might highjack a plane Don't push me 'cause

I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to
Lose my head

[Chorus 2x]

My son said, "Daddy, I don't wanna go to school 'Cause the teacher's a jerk, he must think I'm a fool And all the kids smoke reefer, I think it'd be cheaper If I just got a job, learned to be a street sweeper Dance to the beat, shuffle my feet Wear a shirt and tie and run with the creeps 'Cause it's all about money, ain't a damn thing funny You got to have a con in this land of milk and honey"

They pushed that girl in front of the train Took her to the doctor, sewed her arm on again Stabbed that man right in his heart Gave him a transplant for a brand new start I can't walk through the park 'cause it's crazy after dark Keep my hand on my gun 'cause they got me on the run I feel like an outlaw, broke my last glass jaw Hear them say, "You want some more?" Living on a seesaw Don't push me 'cause

I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to
Lose my head—say what?

[Chorus 4x]

A child is born with no state of mind Blind to the ways of mankind
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too Because only God knows what you'll go through You'll grow in the ghetto living second rate And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate The places you play and where you stay Looks like one great big alleyway You'll admire all the number book-takers Thugs, pimps, and pushers and the big money-makers Driving big cars, spending twenties and tens And you wanna grow up to be just like them—huh Smugglers, scramblers, burglars, gamblers Pickpockets, peddlers, even panhandlers You say, "I'm cool, huh, I'm no fool"

But then you wind up dropping out of high school Now you're unemployed, all non-void Walking round like you're Pretty Boy Floyd Turned stickup kid but look what you done did Got sent up for a eight-year bid Now your manhood is took and you're a Maytag Spend the

next two years as an undercover fag Being used and abused, served
like hell 'Til one day you was found hung dead in a cell It was plain to
see that your life was lost You was cold and your body swung back
and forth But now your eyes sing the sad, sad song Of how you lived
so fast and died so young, so Don't push me 'cause

I'm close to the edge

I'm trying not to

Lose my head

Huh-huh-huh-huh

[Chorus 2x]

[All]

Yo, Mel, you see that girl, man?

Yeah, man

—Cowboy!

Yo, that sound like Cowboy, man

That's cool

Yo, what's up, money

Yo

Hey, where's Creole and Rahiem at, man?

They upstairs cooling out

So, what's up for tonight, y'all?

Yo, we could go down to the Fever, man

Let's go check out Junebug, man

Hey, yo, you know that girl Betty?

Yeah, man

Her mom's got robbed, man

What?

Not again!

She got hurt bad

When this happen? When this happen?

[Screeching tires—Police enter scene]

Freeze! Don't nobody move nothing, y'all know what this is! Get 'em up!
What?
Get 'em up!
Man, we down with Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five
What is that? A gang?
Naw, man!
Look, shut up! I don't want to hear your mouth
Excuse me, officer, officer, what's the problem?
Ain't no—you the problem! You the problem!
You ain't got to push me, man
Get in the car! Get in the car! Get in the godda—I said get in the car!

WHITE LINES (DON'T DON'T DO IT)

White lines
Vision dreams of passion
Blowin through my mind
And all the while I think of you *Pipe cries*
A very strange reaction
For us to unwind
The more I see the more I do
Something like a phenomenon—Baby Tellin your body to come along
But white lines...
Blow away...

Ticket to ride, white line highway Tell all your friends they can go my
way Pay your toll, sell your soul Pound for pound, costs more than
gold The longer you stay the more you pay My white lines go a long
way

Either up your nose or through your vein With nothing to gain except
killing your brain [4x]

Freeze!
Rock!
Blow!

High—higher, baby

*High—get higher, baby High—get higher, baby And don't ever come down
—Freebase!*

Pipe line

Pure as the driven snow

Connected to my mind

And now I'm having fun, baby

Pipe cries

It's getting kind of low

'Cause it makes you feel so nice

I need some one-on-one, baby

Don't let it blow your mind away—Baby And go into your little hideaway

'Cause white lines

Blow away...

A million magic crystals

Painted pure and white

A multimillion dollars

Almost over night

Twice as sweet as sugar

Twice as bitter as salt

And if you get hooked, baby

It's nobody else's fault—so don't do it!

[4x]

Freeze!

Rock!

Blow!

High—higher, baby

*High—get higher, baby High—get higher, baby And don't ever come down
—Freebase!*

Don't you get too high
Don't you get too high, baby
Turns you on
You really turn me on and on
'Cause you gotta come down
My temperature is rising
When the thrill is gone
No, I don't want you to go

A street kid gets arrested
Gonna do some time
He got out three years from now Just to commit more crime
A businessman is caught
With twenty-four kilos
He's out on bail and out of jail And that's the way it goes

Cane!
Sugar!
Cane!
Sugar!
Cane!

Athletes reject it
Governors correct it
Gangsters, thugs, and smugglers Are thoroughly respected
The money gets divided
The women get excited
Now I'm broke and it's no joke It's hard as hell to fight it—don't buy it
[4x]
Freeze!
Rock!
Blow!

High—get higher, baby High—get higher, girl High—get higher, baby High
—c'mon! Hu-rah!

White lines

Vision dreams of passion

Blowin through my mind

And all the while I think of you *Pipe cries*

A very strange reaction

For us to unwind

The more I see the more I do

Something like a phenomenon—Baby Tellin your body to come along

But white lines ... blow away...

Little Jack Horner sittin on the corner With no shoes and clothes

This ain't funny but he took his money And sniffed it up his nose

[Spoken]

Hey, man, you wanna cop some blow?

Sure, whatcha got? Dust, flakes, or rocks?

I got China White, Mother of Pearl, Ivory Flake—what you need?

Well yeah, well, let me check it out, man, just let me get a freeze Go
ahead, man. The stuff I got should kill ya.

Yeah, man. That's ... that's raw ...

LADY B

Beginning her career as a DJ in Philadelphia, where she continues to spin on the radio, Lady B also wrote rhymes and was among the first handful of female rappers to record. She was also one of the earliest artists to break hip-hop outside of New York. In addition to showing that artists outside of the five boroughs had a stake in the burgeoning art, Lady B in her role as DJ apparently knew a sure-shot when she heard one: Mister Biggs of Soul Sonic Force claims that she was the first to play “Planet Rock” on the radio. In 2002 she received the Philly Urban Legend Award.

Known for her own “To the Beat, Y’all” the title of which is still a stock phrase of rap, Lady B is lyrically versatile, sliding from set pieces and stories (“From the age of one,” “Jack and Jill went up a hill,” “Me and Superman had a fight”), to propulsive crowd-moving, to self-aggrandizement. The final image of being buried with two turntables and a mixer could be updated from a Leadbelly blues tune. She even drops in a glancing interpolation of Bill Withers (“Put your foot on the rock and pat your foot / Don’t stop—put your foot on the rock”). Her more direct references include Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, John Travolta, Farrah Fawcett, Tony Dorsett, Alex Haley, Clark Gable, Reverend Ike, Perry Johnson, and Butterball. Her range of reference and various formal tactics suggest the versatility of the DJ, who must remember that the crowd is also a bunch of particular individuals.

TO THE BEAT, Y’ALL

I say clap your hands, everybody Everybody, clap your hands Just clap
your hands, everybody Everybody, clap your hands Allow me to
introduce myself They call me Ms. DJ

I’ve got my name in the hall of fame By the DJ rhymes I say

Now parental discretion is advised We’re gonna take this trip aloud Say,
the words I speak are very true They’re recommended by Triple
Crown, you see If you wanna know what moves my soul Or shakes
inside my brain

I got this beast I can’t control And it’s driving me insane I got eighteen
years’ experience I’m the master of karate

Said don’t nobody mess with me And I don’t mess with nobody At the age

of one, I was having fun I was listening to the disco beat At the age of
two, I was doing to you On turntables one and two
I've been number one all my life And I've always played the dozens Said
I've got more rhymes in the back of my mind Than Alex Haley's got
cousins To the mack, to the mack
To the front, to the back
Put your foot on the rock and pat your foot Don't stop, put your foot on
the rock I've got a style that's all my own You got Lady B on the
microphone I'm no Perry Johnson or Butterball I just stopped by to
freak out you all I got a little black book with a thousand pages With a
listing of men that rank from all ages To the beat, y'all, check it out,
y'all Don't stop

I said Jack and Jill went up the hill To have a little fun
But stupid Jill forgot the pill And now they have a son
The pot wasn't hot, the corn wasn't on The butter didn't melt 'til the crack
of dawn I say, you bring the butter and I'll bring the salt If you don't
freak then it ain't my fault

Said north, east, south, west Said Lady B gonna rock the best To the beat
To the DJ's funky beat
Lady B, as you know
Will rock you on your stereo I'm no John Travolta, no Farrah Fawcett I'll
run more miles than Tony Dorsett To the beat
To the DJ's funky beat

I said take out your ballpoint pen And jot down these lines again Said the
beat's so fine it'll blow your mind Way up your back and down your
spine Just do it
Just do it

I know a man with a golden voice He has everything he needs He's got
two limousines and one Rolls-Royce That travels at the fastest speed
Say Reverend Ike's on the mic Clark Gable's on the turntable Mickey
Mouse gon' build a house And Donald Duck don't give a— Say what?
To the beat, y'all
I say hip hip-a-dop, oh-socialize Come on, boy, and make my nature rise
Let's freak
Let's freak

Rock your body, rock it faster I got a friend, he's the grand master He'll
rock your soul, control your mind Said this is one of them master lines
Me and Superman had a fight I hit him in the head with some
kryptonite I hit him so hard he went insane Guess who's bustin out
Lois Lane It's him, y'all, yes yes, y'all He's bustin out Lois Lane
I said hip-hop bop be bop be bop bop I said uh-ah, I got it like that To the
beat, y'all, yes yes, y'all Don't stop
I'm saying when I die, bury me deep Plant two turntables at my feet Put
my mixer near my head
So when you close the casket I can rock the dead To the beat, y'all, yes
yes, y'all Let's freak

SEQUENCE

When Sugar Hill Records owner Sylvia Robinson took the Sugarhill Gang on tour in the fall of 1979 on the strength of their single “Rapper’s Delight,” a stop in Columbia, South Carolina, produced an unexpected discovery. Three young women—Angela Brown (Angie B), Gwendolyn Chisholm (Blondie), and Cheryl Cook (Cheryl the Pearl)—made their way backstage and asked to perform for the independent-label leader. Shortly thereafter Robinson had the group fly north to cut what would be the second-ever release on Sugar Hill, “Funk You Up,” which went gold in three weeks.

This unlikely story yielded two firsts: Sequence became both the first all-female rap group signed to a label and the first group from the South to get attention. After the success of “Funk You Up,” Sequence went on to record such songs as “And You Know That,” “Monster Jam” (a collaboration with Spoonie Gee), and “Funky Jam (Tear the Roof Off).” In all, they recorded three full-length LPs. Unlike some of the Sugar Hill performers, the women from Sequence wrote their own rhymes; in fact, they often wrote rhymes for their label mates. Cheryl Cook was especially active as a ghostwriter, penning verses for “8th Wonder,” “Apache,” and “Livin in the Fast Lane” by the Sugarhill Gang. Angie B has since found success as a soul singer under the stage name Angie Stone.

In an interview with JayQuan on his Web site “The Foundation,” Blondie recalls that “it took us a while to get with the pace and how things moved up North,” but it didn’t take long in musical terms. ¹⁶ Sequence not only “got with” but helped set the pace in rap’s early days.

FROM FUNK YOU UP

[Blondie]

My name is Gwen, but they call me Blondie I’m better known as the one
and only I’m five foot two, built so fine 36-26-36 down

I’m better known as freak and tan A Sequence freak with all the fans

When I clap my hands and I stomp my feet I jam to the sound of the
Sequence beat Wave your hands in the air

And wave ’em like you just don’t care Like Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire
My main man Yogi Bear

I said I hip-ma-jazz and a raz-ma-jazz And I jam to the disco beat

And if you can move your body like you move your hands Then I'm sure
you can move your feet 'Cause I'm supersonic, I'm a 3X tonic When
I'm not down, I'm up

When I get real hungry I run to the store And get my Reese's Cup
I watch TV on my own

You gotta yabba-dabba-doo with Fred Flintstone I'm sweeter than candy,
I'm sweeter than honey That's why they call me Blondie I'm supercool
and I'm superfine And I'm one of a kind to shock your mind And you
can ring my bell all through the night You can rock my body 'til the
early light Don't ring my bell, sayin please If you cannot fulfill my
needs I don't mean to brag, I don't mean to boast But they call my
name from coast to coast From the coast of California to the shore of
Maine Everybody loves the way I play my game Say, I got more
rhymes in the back of my mind Than Billy Dee got lovers

I say I got style and I got class I don't talk my stuff too fast See, I'm cold
as ice, I'm twice as nice I get more sex than a cat chase mice Blondie,
hey, that's me

I'm rappin in the key of R-A-P

.....

[Cheryl the Pearl]

They call me Cheryl and I'll tell you why 'Cause I got such sexy bedroom
eyes When I pop 'em out and you look surprised I got you and you're
hypnotized My love is strong if you can stand To be within my sexy
trance

But don't let this tell you all about me I'm a jealous lady and that you'll
see If I don't get the things that I mention That's when I start crying
for attention (Attention) That's what I say And things just always go
my way Well, I talk a lot but I'm really shy My loving ways just get
me by I write the baddest sounds around I'm guaranteed to throw
down

The only difference between you and me And that is that I'm sexy
I'm an angel possessed with some devilish eyes With the curvy hips to
make your nature rise

[Angie B]

I said Angie B is what they say I got chocolate hips and a Milky Way And
I feel like a millionaire in space Flying on a gold kite with the silver
lace Everybody calls me "never wrong"

'Cause I'm a freestyle freak with a funky song Do you hear me talkin, do you hear me singin On the microphone, won't you sing along (You go do it, you go do it, you go do it, do it, do it) I got two great partners standin by me That's guaranteed to jam to the beat One is Blondie and she's right on time She calls herself Miss Super Fine I said Cheryl the Pearl is the one with the eyes She's guaranteed to hypnotize Said Angie B, hey, that's me

I can rock you so dangerously (You go do it, you go do it, you go do it, do it, do it) At a quarter to six you got in a fix And you called on Angie B And you look surprised as I arrive To see me dressed to a tee (You go do it, you go do it, you go do it, do it, do it) **FROM AND YOU KNOW THAT**

We rock you high and we rock you well We rock you better than Southern Belles When I say ring-ding-dong

Come on, Cheryl the Pearl, get on the microphone [Ring-ding-dong]

[Cheryl the Pearl]

I'm Cheryl the Pearl and I'm ready to go I'm gonna shock the house like Kurtis Blow I came to earth to freak and make you groove 'Cause all I wanna do is see your body move Like Magic Johnson, young Casanova Fly Hitting forty-two points with tears in his eyes MVP 'cause he rocked the game And now his name'll go down in the hall of fame I went back to heaven when I got the news All the people on earth was hip to my groove I came back down to shock the world 'Cause I'm better known as the wonder girl Like a pow-pow shoot-'em-up, have you any guns?

I'm the deputy of love and they call me number one Baa-baa black sheep, have you any lambs?

I'm Cheryl the Pearl, I rock Superman Eeny meeny miny moe, which way you wanna go?

I'm going straight to the top, check it out, I can't be stopped **FROM SIMON SAYS**

We're not like Jack or stupid Jill Before we get punked we'll take the pill The fellas wanna make love every day But when you get punked they run away You know it's something that you did But he say, "Huh, it's not my kid"

You sit right there and you start to cry And to your Moms you lie, lie, lie

But before you know it the kid is born The man you love, check it out,
he's gone You sit there and you have to smile You're wondering how
you're gon' feed the child But remember you're young, gifted, and
black And that your kid could never be the wack

SPOONIE GEE

Spoonie Gee is the smoothest-talking ladies' man from the early days of rap, a native of Harlem who dubbed himself the "metropolitician" and "Spoonie-Spoon, the medicine man." Befitting someone who grew up two blocks from the Apollo Theater, a soulful sophistication comes through in his delivery, which is characterized by a thick but silky timbre and an old school knack for keeping the rhymes coming, bar after bar. His lyrics are lightly lascivious, self-aggrandizing, and playful; the occasional flashes of humor find their lyrical flipside in serious moments such as those found on "Street Girl" (1984), where financial strains and psychosexual pressures mount. In addition to the singular strength of his player persona, he demonstrated an ability to give up solo status without diminishing rap returns in collaborations with Sequence ("Monster Jam") and the Treacherous Three ("The New Rap Language"). Whether with other artists or by himself, Spoonie has one of the most recognized voices from the early days of recorded rap.

Spoonie's first record, 1979's "Spoonin Rap," was produced by Peter Brown and released on his label Sound of New York—ironic, because Spoonie was raised by his uncle Bobby Robinson, owner of the label Enjoy Records. After hearing his nephew's song, Robinson released Spoonie's second, 1980's "Love Rap," which had "The New Rap Language" on the other side. These tracks alone would have cemented Spoonie's reputation as what Tuff City founder Aaron Fuchs calls "the first man, if man-child, in a world previously populated by boys ... the first rapper whose content, style and character was R and X-rated." ¹⁷ Spoonie went on to record his only full-length album, *The Godfather* (1987), for Fuchs's label. His mid-1980s songs show no decrease in skill and formal sophistication, but it is for the songs of his earliest period that Spoonie is represented here, establishing as they did the basic template for the player persona in rap.

FROM SPOONIN RAP

You say one for the trouble, two for the time Come on, y'all, let's rock the
— Yes, yes, y'all, freak, freak, y'all

Funky beat, y'all

Then you rock and roll, then you roll and rock And then you rock to the

beat that just don't want you to stop 'Cause I'm the S to the P, double
O-N-Y

The one MC who you can't deny

'Cause I'm the baby maker, I'm the woman taker I'm the cold-crushin
lover, the heartbreaker So come on, fly girls, and please don't stop
'Cause I'm MC Spoonie Gee, wanna hit the top And young ladies, rock
on

Say, I was driving down the street on a stormy night Say, up ahead there
was this terrible fright There was a big fine lady, she was crossing the
street She had a box with the disco beat

So I hit my brakes, but they're not all there I missed the young lady by
only a hair

And then I took me a look, I said, "La-di-da-di"

A big fine girl, she had a hell of a body Then she looked at me and then
she started switchin So I took my key out of the ignition

Got out the car and kept my mouth shut

'Cause my 20-20 vision was right on her butt I caught up with her, I said,
"You look so fine I swear to God I wish you was mine"

She said, "Hey boy, you're Spoonie Gee"

"That's right, honey, how do you know me?"

She said, "Spoonie Gee, you're all the same And everybody who disco
know your name"

I said, "Come on, baby, it's not too far We gonna take a little walk to my
car"

As soon as we got to the car, then we sat in the seat And then the box was
rockin to the funky beat And then I looked at her and pushed the seat
back Turned off her box and put on my 8-track And then I started
rappin without no pause 'Cause my mind was just gettin in those
drawers And then I got in the straw, we start to do it to the beat And
started doing like this, started doing the freak Yes, yes, y'all, freak,
freak, y'all

'Cause I'm MC Spoonie Gee, I wanna be known As the metropolitian of
the microphone 'Cause I'm a man's threat and I'm a woman's pet And
I'm known as the mademoiselle's joy And I'm a man who fights on the
microphone And who all the people enjoy, y'all

Yes, yes, y'all, freak, freak, y'all
And don't stop, keep on

Say, I was cranking and a-freaking at a disco place I met a fine girl, she
had a pretty face And then she took me home, you say, "The very same
night?"

The girl was on and she was outta sight And then I got the girl for three
hours straight But I had to go to work, so I couldn't be late I said,
"Where's your man?" She said, "He's in jail"

I said, "Come on baby, 'cause you're tellin a tale 'Cause if he comes at me
and then he wants to fight See, I'ma get the man good and I'ma get
him right See, I'ma roll my barrel and keep the bullets still And when I
shoot my shot, I'm gonna shoot to kill 'Cause I'm the Spoonie-Spoon, I
don't mess around I drop a man where he stand right into the ground
You say from Africa to France, say to Germany Because you can't get a
man tryin to mess with me 'Cause I'm a smooth talker, I'm the
midnight stalker I'm the image of the man they call the J. D. Walker If
you're gonna be my girl, just come along And just-a clap your hands to
my funky song I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't gamble neither And
most people call me a woman pleaser 'Cause I keep their phone
numbers on the shelf I go to make love and then I keep it to myself So
no one's gonna know what I'm doing to you Not your sister, brother,
niece, nor your mother, father too"

.....

And for you sucker-sucker dudes who commit the crime You wanna do
bad, but don't do the time I say you wanna be this and then you
wanna be a crook You find a old lady, take her pocketbook And then
you steal your mother's, father's money on the sly You can run, but
you can't hide

When the cops crashed through, your face turned pale I'ma tell you a little
story about the jail 'Cause see, in jail there's a game and it's called
survival And they run it down to you on your first arrival They tell you
what you can and cannot do But if you go to jail, watch yours for a
crew 'Cause when you go in the shower, he's a-pulling his meat And
he's looking at you and say you look real sweet And at first there was
one, now ten walked in Now how in the hell did you expect to win?

I said you better look alive, not like you take dope And please, my
brother, don't drop the soap And if you get out the bathroom and

you're alive Just remember only a man can survive

.....

LOVE RAP

From the south to the west to the east to the north Come on, Spoonie Gee,
and go off and go off Yes yes, y'all, freak freak, y'all

To the beat, y'all, so unique, y'all

Well, I was speedin down the street and then I pushed my brakes Because
I seen a fine girl make me shiver and shake Then I blew my horn and
she turned her head And to the young lady this is what I said I said,
"Baby, baby, come on over to my car And tell me your name so I can
know who you are And just give me your number, address and all I
might wanna see you, I might wanna call Your friend's house, your
house, wherever you be But meanwhile, baby doll, just come with me"

So I opened my door, she got into my car She looked into my face, said, "I
know who you are"

She said, "I seen you once, I can't forget your face You got style, got class,
finesse and taste"

I said, "I'm glad you think so, I'm glad we met 'Cause I haven't met a girl
nothing like you yet Just lay on back and relax your head

Because my seats are soft just like a bed"

Then she looked at me and started to smile She said, "Baby, let's have a
little fun for a while I know every move from A to Z

But if it's alright with you, it's alright with me But if we do it in the car,
that's no respect"

"So let's go to my house." She said, "It's a bet"

And when I got into my house it drove the female wild The first thing she
said is "let's have a child"

I said, "No, no, baby, I only got time

To make a lot of money and to say my rhyme And if I had a baby I might
go broke

And believe me, to me, girl, that ain't no joke"

People smile in your face and talk behind your back And when you get
the story it's never exact Some say they're your friends but they really
are not Because they only out to try to get what you got They wanna

hang out all day, smoke cheeba, sniff coke Then it's see you later,
alligator, when you're broke But you attract all the dudes and all the
young ladies With your diamond rings and your big Mercedes Gold on
your chest with your fine suit and clothes 'Cause that's the way the
whole story goes Now you got you a girl and you're doing the do But
every girl you see, you think she's made for you She used to walk
down the street and never did speak Now she knows you got money at
the tip of your feet And you're a sucker-sucker dude for thinking you're
slick 'Cause all you gonna do with the girl is trick You can't lead
yourself because you been led The same young girl that messed up
your head Every time you look around she's asking for your money She
thinks it's cool and she thinks it's funny If you're smart you leave her,
if you're dumb you stay But if you do you'll be a fool until your hair
turns gray 'Cause when your money's gone, believe me, my friend
That those money-hawking girls are gonna get in the wind 'Cause
when you ain't got a dime, that ain't no joke And the girls you used to
know will call you Mister Broke So you better, better learn from the
one mistake And stop being a fool before it's too late I gotta cure for
all women and hope you understand Why they call me Spoonie Gee,
the medicine man Because I do it with greed and not too much speed
So just take off your clothes, let me give you what you need Make you
feel like a woman from what I have to give 'Cause I'ma be a lover for
as long as I live 'Cause I'm the S to the P, double O-N-Y-G

My purpose to service for you ladies to see So fly guys, come drop, give
the ladies a chance To see the king of soul, the prince of romance
'Cause I'm sweet, not mean, every woman's supreme I want all you fly
girls to stay on the scene See the microphone king while he's doing his
thing To the punk rock, disco, boogie, and swing Let's rock, y'all, it
don't stop

And before I rock and get you out your seat I'm gonna give you a taste of
the sure-shot beat

SUGARHILL GANG

Almost anyone who has even heard of rap has heard the Sugarhill Gang. Wonder Mike, Big Bank Hank, and Master Gee released two full-length albums, *Sugarhill Gang* (1980) and *8th Wonder* (1982), but their name is synonymous with one song: “Rapper’s Delight.”

Recorded in September 1979, “Rapper’s Delight” became the first rap record to make a major impact on the listening public. After its release, Sylvia Robinson’s Harlem-based independent label, Sugar Hill Records, became the major studio player of rap’s early era; the nascent form began in earnest its transformation from an exclusively live (and underground, tape-based) medium to one that was pressed on vinyl; and the group became and remains a lightning rod attracting charges of plagiarism and lack of authenticity. Did Big Bank Hank, who was discovered by Robinson rapping while working in a pizzeria, steal his rhymes from the rhyme book of his acquaintance Grandmaster Caz? (Rahiem from the Furious Five has also said the song bit one of his rhymes.) Or did he and the other members merely take what was available at the time, the figures and forms that made up the lingua franca of rap, and with equal parts skill and luck deliver it artfully to a surprisingly eager public? (Says Wonder Mike: “I think there’s no denying there’s a lot of shout-outs and phrases that were just like the common vocabulary at the time.”) ¹⁸

Granted, the fact that the first big rap group did not hone its routines in the clubs and at park jams—though as individuals they had been members of groups—was striking. But “Rapper’s Delight” had *something*. Part of that something was no doubt the Sugar Hill house band’s re-creation of the bass line from Chic’s disco hit “Good Times.” But just as much or even more was the rhythmic ebullience of the delivery of the lyrics. At fifteen minutes’ running time, the three rappers could trade riffs and stories with abandon, which gave the song a more flexible and human feel than could the disco dominating the era’s airwaves.

Other performers, whatever their ambivalence about the song, knew that things were about to be different. Reggie Reg of the Crash Crew says, “Guys was going crazy over this ‘Rapper’s Delight’ thing. It was a very good record, and seeing how good that record was doing, the attention that record got, we knew we had to make a record.” Grandmaster Flash said, “The game of hip-hop changed. ‘Rapper’s Delight’ just set the goal to

a whole 'nother level. It wasn't rule the Bronx or rule Manhattan, or rule whatever. It was now how soon can you make a record.” ¹⁹ And ultimately it was by making records that rap ruled not whatever but the world.

FROM RAPPER'S DELIGHT

[Wonder Mike]

I said a-hip-hop, the hibble, the hibble To the hip-hip-hop and you don't
stop the rockin To the bang-bang boogie, say up jump the boogie To
the rhythm of the boogedy-beat Now what you hear is not a test I'm
rapping to the beat

And me, the groove, and my friends Are gonna try to move your feet You
see, I am Wonder Mike

And I'd like to say hello

To the black, to the white, the red and the brown The purple and yellow—
but first I gotta Bang-bang, the boogie to the boogie, say Up jump the
boogie to the bang-bang boogie Let's rock, you don't stop

Rock the rhythm that'll make your body rock Well, so far you've heard my
voice But I've brought two friends along And next on the mic is my
man Hank Come on, Hank, sing that song [Big Bank Hank]

Check it out—I'm the C-A-S-N, the O-V-A and The rest is F-L-Y

You see, I go by the code of the Doctor of the Mix And these reasons I'll
tell you why You see, I'm six foot one and I'm tons of fun And I dress
to a tee

You see, I got more clothes than Muhammad Ali And I dress so viciously

I got bodyguards, I got two big cars I definitely ain't the wack

I got a Lincoln Continental and A sun-roof Cadillac

So after school I take a dip in the pool Which is really on the wall

I got a color TV so I can see The Knicks play basketball—Hear me talking
'Bout checkbook, credit cards, mo' money Than a sucker could ever
spend But I wouldn't give a sucker or a punk from the rocker Not a
dime 'til I made it again—everybody go “Hotel, motel”

What you gonna do today—“Say what?!”

Is I'ma get a fly girl, gonna get some spank And drive off in a def OJ—
everybody go “Hotel, motel

Holiday Inn”

You say, if your girl starts acting up Then you take her friend
Master Gee, my mellow
It's on you, so what you gonna do?

[Master Gee]

Well it's on-'n-'n-on, 'n-on-on, 'n-on The beat don't stop until the break of
dawn I said M-A-S-T-E-R, a G with a double E

I said I go by the unforgettable name Of the man they call Master Gee—
well My name is known all over the world By all the foxy ladies and
the pretty girls I'm going down in history

As the baddest rapper that ever could be Now I'm feelin the highs and
you're feelin the lows The beat starts gettin into your toes You start
poppin your fingers and stompn your feet And movin your body while
you're sittin in your seat And then damn!—you start doing the Freak I
said damn!—right out of your seat Then you throw your hands high in
the air You're rockin to the rhythm, shake your derriere You're rockin
to the beat without a care With the sure shot MCs for the affair Now
I'm not as tall as the rest of the Gang But I rap to the beat just the
same I got a little face and a pair of brown eyes All I'm here to do,
ladies, is hypnotize Singing on-'n-'n-on and on-on-'n-on The beat don't
stop until the break of dawn Singing on-'n-'n-on and on-on-'n-on Like
a hot butter-'d-pop-'d-pop-'d-pop-dibbie-dibbie Pop-d'-pop-pop, you
don't dare stop Come alive, y'all, give me what you got I guess by now
you can take a hunch And find that I am the baby of the bunch But
that's okay, I still keep in stride 'Cause all I'm here to do is just a-
wiggle your behind Singing on-'n-'n-on and on-'n-on The beat don't
stop until the break of dawn Singing on-'n-'n-on and on-on and on
Rock-rock, y'all, get on the floor I'm gonna freak you here, I'm gonna
freak you there I'm gonna move you out of this atmosphere 'Cause I'm
one of a kind and I'll shock your mind I put the jig-jig-jiggles in your
behind I said a-one, two, three, four Come on, girls, get on the floor
Come alive, y'all, give me what you got 'Cause I'm guaranteed to
make you rock I said one, two, three, four Tell me, Wonder Mike, what
are you waiting for?

[Wonder Mike]

To the hip-hop, the hibble to the hibble The hip-hip-a-hop-a, you don't
stop rockin To the bang-bang boogie, say up jump the boogie To the

rhythm of the boogedy-beat Skiddily-be-bop, we rock, Scooby-doo And guess what, America? We love you 'Cause you rock and a-roll with-a so much soul You can rock 'til you're a hundred and one years old I don't mean to brag, I don't mean to boast But we like hot butter on our breakfast toast Rock it out, baby-bubba

Baby-bubba to the boogedy-bang-bang the boogie To the beat, beat, it's so unique Come on, everybody and dance to the beat

[Big Bank Hank]

Well I'm Imp the Gimp, the ladies' pimp The women fight for my delight But I'm the grandmaster with the three MCs That shock the house for the young ladies And when you come inside, into the front You do the freak, spank, and do the bump And when the sucker MCs try to prove a point We're a treacherous trio with a serious joint From sun to sun and from day to day I sit down and write a brand new rhyme Because they say that miracles never cease I've created a devastating masterpiece I'm gonna rock the mic 'til you can't resist Everybody, I say it goes like this Well, I was coming home late one dark afternoon Reporter stopped me for an interview She said she's heard stories and she's heard fables That I'm vicious on the mic and the turntables This young reporter I did adore So I rocked some vicious rhymes like I never did before She said, "Damn, fly guy, I'm in love with you The Casanova legend must've been true"

I said, "By the way, baby, what's your name?"

Said, "I go by the name Lois Lane And you can be my boyfriend, you surely can Just let me quit my boyfriend called Superman"

I said, "He's a fairy, I do suppose Flying through the air in pantyhose He may be very sexy or even cute But he looks like a sucker in a blue and red suit"

I said, "You need a man who's got finesse And his whole name across his chest He may be able to fly all through the night But can he rock a party 'til the early light?"

He can't satisfy you with his little worm But I can bust you out with my super sperm"

I go do it, I go do it

I go do it, do it, do it

And I'm here and I'm there

I'm Big Bank Hank, I'm everywhere Just throw your hands up in the air

And party hearty like you just don't care Let's do it, don't stop, y'all A-
tick-a-tock, y'all, you don't stop Go, "Hotel, motel"

What you gonna do today? "Say what?!"

Say, I'm gonna get a fly girl, gonna get some spank And drive off in a def
OJ

Everybody go, "Hotel, motel

Holiday Inn"

You say, if your girl starts acting up Then you take her friend

I say skip, dive, what can I say I can't fit 'em all inside my OJ

So I just take half and bust them out I give the rest to Master Gee so he
can shock the house

[Wonder Mike]

I say a can of beer that's sweeter than honey Like a millionaire that has
no money Like a rainy day that is not wet Like a gambling fiend that
does not bet Like Dracula without his fangs Like the boogie to the
boogie without the boogie-bang Like collard greens that don't taste
good Like a tree that's not made out of wood Like going up and not
coming down Is just like the beat without the sound, nonsound To the
beat-beat, you do the freak Everybody just rock and dance to the beat
Have you ever went over a friend's house to eat And the food just ain't
no good?

I mean the macaroni's soggy, the peas are mushed And the chicken tastes
like wood So you try to play it off like you think you can By saying
that you're full

And then your friend says, "Mama, he's just being polite He ain't finished,
huh-uh, that's bull"

So your heart starts pumping and you think of a lie And you say that you
already ate And your friend says, "Man, there's plenty of food"

So you pile some more on your plate While the stinky food's steamin your
mind starts to dreamin Of the moment it's time to leave And then you
look at your plate and your chicken's slowly rotting Into something
that looks like cheese Oh, so you say, that's it, I got to leave this place
I don't care what these people think I'm just sitting here making
myself nauseous With this ugly food that stinks So you bust out the
door while it's still close Still sick from the food you ate And then you
run to the store for quick relief From a bottle of Kaopectate

And then you call your friend two weeks later To see how he has been
And he says, "I understand about the food Baby-bubba, but we're still
friends"

With a hip-hop, the hibbie to the hibbie The hip-hip-a-hop-a, you don't
stop the rockin To the bang-bang boogie, say, up jump the boogie To
the rhythm of the boogedy-beat I said, Hank, can you rock?

Can you rock to the rhythm that just don't stop?

Can you hip me to the shoobie doo?

I said, come on, make-the-make-the people move [Big Bank Hank]

I go to the halls and then ring the bell Because I am the man with the
clientele And if you ask me why I rock so well I'm Big Bank, I got
clientele And from the time I was only six years old I never forgot
what I was told It was the best advice that I ever had It came from my
wise, dear old dad He said, "Sit down, punk, I wanna talk to you And
don't say a word until I'm through Now there's a time to laugh, a time
to cry A time to live and a time to die A time to break and a time to
chill To act civilized or act real ill But whatever you do in your lifetime
You never let a MC steal your rhyme"

So from sixty six 'til this very day I'll always remember what he had to say
So when the sucker MCs try to chump my style I let them know that
I'm versatile I got style, finesse, and a little black book That's filled
with rhymes and I know you wanna look But the thing that separates
you from me And that is called originality Because my rhymes are on
from what you heard I didn't even bite, not a goddamn word And I say
a little more, later on tonight So the sucker MCs can bite all night A-
tick-a-tock, y'all, a-beat-beat, y'all A-let's rock, y'all, you don't stop
You go, "Hotel, motel"

What you gonna do today? "Say what?!"

You say, I'm gonna get a fly girl, gonna get some spank And drive off in a
def OJ

Everybody go, "Hotel, motel

Holiday Inn"

You say, if your girl starts acting up Then you take her friends

A-like that, y'all, to the beat, y'all Beat-beat, y'all, you don't stop Master
Gee, my mellow

It's on you, so what you gonna do?

[Master Gee]

Well, like Johnny Carson on the *Late Show*

A-like Frankie Crocker in stereo Well, like the Bar-Kays singing “Holy Ghost”

The sounds to throw down, they’re played the most It’s like my man
Captain Sky Whose name he earned with his “Super Sperm”

We rock and we don’t stop

Get off, y’all, I’m here to give you what you got To the beat that it makes
you freak And come alive, girl, get on your feet A-like Perry Mason
without a case Like Farrah Fawcett without her face Like the Bar-Kays
on the mic Like gettin right down for you tonight Like movin your
body so you don’t know how Right to the rhythm and throw down Like
comin alive to the Master Gee The brother who rocks so viciously I said
the age of one, my life begun At the age of two, I was doing the do At
the age of three, it was you and me Rockin to the sounds of the Master
Gee At the age of four, I was on the floor Givin all the freaks what
they bargained for At the age of five, I didn’t take no jive With the
Master Gee, it’s all the way live At the age of six, I was a-pickin up
sticks Rappin to the beat, my thing was fixed At the age of seven, I
was rockin in heaven Don’t you know, I went off

I got right on down to the beat, you see Gettin right on down, makin all
the girls Just take off, take off—to the beat, the beat To the double
beat-beat that makes you freak At the age of eight, I was really great
'Cause every night, you see, I had a date At the age of nine, I was right
on time 'Cause every night I had a party rhyme Going on-’n-’n-on, ’n-
on-on-’n-on The beat don’t stop until the break of dawn A-saying
on-’n-’n-on, ’n-on-on-’n-on Like a hot-buttered d’pop, d’pop, d’popcorn

TREACHEROUS THREE

At its inception, the Treacherous Three were Spoonie Gee, LA Sunshine, and Kool Moe Dee. But when Spoonie went solo on the success of “Spoonin Rap,” Special K stepped in. For their first release, “The New Rap Language” (1980), the Treacherous Three—along with erstwhile member Spoonie Gee—came forth with a song that contains more syllables per line than any rap of its time. The “super-rhyming, fascinating, faster rhyme originating” style that Kool Moe Dee names late in the rather long song was in one sense virtuosic, though in another sense it sometimes didn’t allow the rappers enough leisure to enunciate or elaborate on a theme at length. At any rate, the song is a kind of road-not-taken in early rap, for the speed-rapping style of the song was not taken up by other rappers and would emerge again only in the early 1990s with tongue-twisting groups such as the Fu-Schnickens. One road that was taken, however, was the path of the battle rap, laid down by Moe Dee in his infamous skirmish with the “Chief Rocker” Busy Bee in a way that was ahead of its time. The excerpt transcribed here finds the Treacherous Three phenom picking apart Busy’s use of the phrase “in the place to be,” as well as the “ba-diddy-ba” rap that Busy frequently used and that Kid Rock would later take to the top of the charts.

THE NEW RAP LANGUAGE

[All]

We rock ... and don’t stop

Well, it’s the supercalifragilisticexpialidocious With no strings attached,
no bags of tricks, this is the way we get our kicks [Treacherous Three]

We’re qualifyin, rectifyin, rock until the day we’re dyin Every time you’re
screamin, cryin, we’ll be here with no denyin [Spoonie Gee] We hold
our honor and our pride [Special K] Just take the step that kept in
stride [LA Sunshine] Set down rules you will abide

[Kool Moe Dee] We’re gonna take you for a ride

[Spoonie Gee] Before we’re rockin as a full, let’s introduce us one by one

[Special K] I’m Special K, I’m on display, I rock across the USA [LA
Sunshine] LA Sunshine, I rock your mind, I do it to you every time

[Kool Moe Dee] Remember me, MC Moe Dee, the man that’s at the t-o-
p [Spoonie Gee] I’m Spoonie Gee, as you can see, I rock the world

society And at the end, you will agree, nobody rock the mic like me
[Treacherous Three] But Special K, Sunshine, Moe Dee, you add us up,
we'll equal three [Spoonie Gee] And on the mic we turn it out, young
ladies bite without a doubt [All] And if you don't believe it's true, just
check out how we rock for you [3x]

Do it!

[Spoonie Gee] Moe Dee, you got a lotta class, so rock a rhyme and make
it fast [Kool Moe Dee]

The super scooper, party pooper, man with all the super-duper Disco
breaks, have what it takes, a man who never makes mistakes Can rap
it low, I'm not a bore, the baddest man you ever saw The money-
makin, earth-quakin man who gets the party shakin [Special K]

Undefeated, never beated, never cheated, but succeeded If I need it, you
believe it, rhymes on guarantee Wheelin, dealin, women-stealin,
Casanova booty-feelin Understandin, reprimandin, rockin on it, that's
demandin [LA Sunshine]

No complication, stimulation, man who's gonna rock the nation Rhyme,
rhyme, battle time, my opponent, he's all mine I'm not the baddest,
not the maddest, when I win I am the gladdest No beginner, not a
sinner, on the mic I'm just a winner [Spoonie Gee]

Well, I'm always clean, I'm not too mean, the baddest man you ever seen
The finger-poppin, nonstoppin man who gets the party rockin I'm so
vicious and ambitious to the young, 'cause I'm delicious Good lovin I
always make, I always do good, no mistake [Kool Moe Dee]

And I'm very, very, very, very and my favorite flavor's cherry Oh my God,
it's fame and glory but I never tell a story The only time I funk a mic
because it's somethin that I like To be assured the rhymes are low, I
always keep some sex in store [Special K]

The bad, bad, superb,ad, never sad, always glad Not a day you find him
mad, ain't nothing I never had Sleek, sleek, so unique, guaranteed to
move your feet So every time I play the beat, ladies get up out their
seat [LA Sunshine]

The wheelin, stealin, double-dealin man who rock with all the feelin Give
you more of rhymes galore, I shoot my shot, I always score Girls on my
jock and all on lock, the man who rock around the clock I never date, I
never wait, the man who set the people straight [Spoonie Gee]

Well, I'm Spoonie Gee, as you could see I rock the world society I always

rock, as you can tell, I rock with all the clientele Finesse is do you
know I will, I keep the people starin still Eyes swollen, rhymes tollin,
comin out this microphone

[Special K]

For MCs who bite the fast-talkin rhymes

They're gonna feed ya, so get ready to eat

Moe Dee's the originator, so you might as well starve 'Cause you can't
catch this fast beat (Hit it, Moe) [Kool Moe Dee]

Hey, diddle-diddle on the fiddle, 'cause the cat is in the middle Will he
rhyme or will he riddle, does he want a tender vittle?

Have a lot, maybe a little, long as he can feel his middle And an ocean
full of lotion 'cause it's like his magic potion But my notion's that the
potion's workin some kind of commotion With the cats and you don't
seem to understand Instead of high he's in the aisle, tip his hat at any
town Thought the cat was found missin somewhere on the line The
only thing he hears is me, you're desperate 'cause of Kool Moe Dee
You're walkin on a leash, whether talkin on the street Whether north
or south or east or whether human or a beast I'm so full of disco
(power), it ain't a MC that I can't (devour) In a hour talkin fast and he
goes sour, Moe Dee, the disco tower power So take a deep breath, get
a drink of water

Special K, you can say it, but make yours shorter [Special K]

Well, I'm so sincere, just sincere, the baddest MC of the year Say it low,
say it loud, say it special, say it proud Takin every year in hell, I
weigh the highest on the scale When I rock I take a bow, Sunshine,
come on and show 'em how [LA Sunshine]

The girl-teasin, woman-pleasin, take a girl, others freezin Got the heart to
play the part, I'm not too sweet, I'm not too tart We're rockin to the
funky beat, the kids all chowed us like a treat So come on in and get a
taste, believe me, girl, it's not a waste [Kool Moe Dee]

The super-rhymin, fascinatin, faster rhyme originatin Number one, we're
rhyme creatin, number one with no debatin If you look up on the
rating, you will see that you've been waitin And you're only
commentatin and that gets to be frustratin [Special K]

Yes, for real, we are the deal and on the mic we use our skill The latest,
greatest, no one hate us, take us home and gold-plate us Rappin raw

and never bore and always keep you on the floor And rock and roll
and take control and rock until we're gray and old [LA Sunshine]

The law-abiding, never fighting, girls around us never hiding Pain-
enduring, love-ensuring, cool, calm, and most alluring Constant on the
jock, the man who make the party rock I gratify and satisfy, girl, just
say, just say good-bye [Spoonie Gee]

Well, I'm lettin you know I am a pro, just give me a mic, I'm on the go
[Treacherous Three]

The three MCs that never freeze, that rock you on down to your knees
FROM KOOL MOE DEE'S BATTLE WITH BUSY BEE (1981)

*One two, one two, party people in the place to be. My name is MC Kool Moe
Dee from the Treacherous Three. My man LA Sunshine in the place to be.
We gon' get a little something straight here in the place to be. Don't worry
about it, DJ Lee, in the place to be. We gonna get a little something straight
in the place to be. My man Busy Bee Starski. How many people think Busy
Bee Starski rocked the house? I hear that in the place to be. But if y'all
noticed it or not, you know, I heard a lot of shit, you know, Busy Bee is
popping shit, saying he'll take out any MC and all that. I give it to the man,
he know how to rock the crowd. But when it come to having rhymes, no
way he can fuck around. And I'ma prove that right now. In the place to be,
MC Kool Moe Dee, the coolest of the cool. Can't nobody rock like me.
Remember this. Cold Crush Four in the house. My man LA Sunshine in the
place to be. We gonna have a little fun, have a little fun. DJ Lee, you think
you got it together yet? One two...*

One for the treble, two for the bass

Come on, Easy Lee, and let's rock the place

One-two, one-two, doing the do, now

Hold on, Busy Bee, I don't mean to be bold

But put that ba-diddy-ba bullshit on hold

We gonna get right down to the nitty-grit

Gonna tell you a little something why you ain't shit It ain't an MC's jock
that you don't hug

You even bit your name from the Lovebug

And now to bite a nigga's name is some low-down shit If you was money,
man, you'd be counterfeit

I got to give it to you, though, you can rock But everybody know you on
the Furious' jock
And I remember Busy from the olden times
When my man Spoonie Gee used to sell you rhymes Remember that rhyme
called diddy-ba-diddy?
Man, goddamn, that shit was a pity
Too hot to trot, here to rock the spot
Spoonie Gee rocked it whether you like it or not He begged for the rhyme,
asked for it twice
He said, "Spoonie Gee, I'll buy at any price"
Well, Spoonie finally sold it, oh, what a relief Busy Bee stole it like a
fuckin thief
Came out rockin the party hard
Got everybody thinkin that shit sound's yours Every time I hear it, I throw
a fit
Party after party, the same old shit
Record after record, rhyme after rhyme
Always want to know your Zodiac sign
He changed the shit to the favorite jeans
Come on, Busy Bee, tell me what that means
Hold on, brother man, don't you say nothing
I'm not finished yet, I gotta tell you something Too hot to trot, I'm here to
rock the spot
I'm gonna rock your ass whether you like it or not He made up the title
right on the spot
How can I take a title you ain't got?
You're not number one, you're not even the best And you can't win no
real MC contest
Celebrity clubs and bullshit like those
Those the kind of shows that everybody knows Celebrity clubs, those the
kind you can win
It's all set up before we come in
But in a battle like this you know you'll lose Between me and you, who do
you think they'll choose?

Well, if you think it's you, I got bad news

Because they hear your name, you're gonna hear some boos 'Cause you're
faking the funk, 'cause you're faking the funk And at the end of this
rhyme you can call me uncle Moe Dee—rock, shock the house—Call
me uncle

Rock the house

TANYA (“SWEET TEE”) WINLEY

Having become fans in its prerecorded stages, the sisters Paulette and Tanya Winley released a record in 1979 on the independent label run by their father, Paul Winley. With backing music by the Harlem Underground Band, “Rhymin and Rappin” contains a number of themes and tropes familiar to listeners of the first rap records: self-naming, claims of being the best, a genesis rhyme of the “age of one *I was having fun* at the age of two” type; however, more is different here than meets the ear. First broadcasting herself as “Sweet Tee on your radio dial,” Tanya Winley fills her lines on “Rhymin and Rappin” with vibrant wordplay and worthy variations on the standard tropes and themes. Her finest extended moment is the solo “Vicious Rap,” which hints at its vintage when Sweet Tee begins by introducing the house-band trio that is backing her. “Vicious Rap” contains some of recorded rap’s first overtly political content in Sweet Tee’s depiction of an unwarranted arrest. (Later such arrests in rap tend to have less-polite arresting officers.) The sisters also recorded together on the song “I Believe in the Wheel of Fortune.”

The significance of these releases by the Winley sisters is enhanced by their being on Paul Winley Records. A respected Harlem doo-wop label started by the elder Winley in the 1960s, it changed to accommodate contemporary tastes. In addition to releasing records by his daughters Paulette and Tanya, Winley released some of the earliest break beat records (the “Super Disco Brakes” series), speeches by Malcolm X, both parts of “Zulu Nation Throwdown,” as well as “Death Mix Live,” a 12-inch lifted from a cassette tape recording of a performance by Afrika Bambaataa and his crew at James Monroe High School in the Bronx. The release was unauthorized by Bambaataa and its sound quality is just adequate, but original copies are among the most collectible records in hip-hop.

RHYMIN AND RAPPIN

This is Sweet Tee on your radio dial And I’ll be with you for just a little
while Or long enough to say my rhymes

I can’t say them all ’cause there ain’t enough time I got rhymes ga-lot and
rhymes galore And when I finish with those I still got more Because
they’re comin out my ears and out of my eyes They are so devastating
you will be surprised MC Sweet Tee is my DJ name

I'm in the history books and the hall of fame I rock so good and I rock so well

And my voice sounds better than Howard Cosell 'Cause I'm the crowd-pleaser, the Charmin-squeezer A hell of a love bug

And you know when I'm rocking up in the sky 'Cause you always see an angel fly by With a lovely smile up on their face That tell you Sweet Tee's rocking the whole damn place So you get on the elevator, press seven When you walk out the door you will be in heaven Take ten steps straight and turn to your right Go down a flight of stairs and oh, what a sight You're in a daze 'til the count of three 'Cause you can't believe what your eyes is seeing When you get to earth, they won't believe your story So you take out your book and you take inventory On the def equipment that God has granted me For rocking the heavens so viciously You count fifteen speakers in the corner of the sky A case of brew and some def get-high A mic for every member of the gangster crew Two turntables you can see right through A serious mixer and I almost forgot Three echo chambers and a def beat box

.....

I'm the best MC all across the land And I got more rhymes than the beach got sand Yes, I go by the name of MC Tee

I bite the sucker DJ's rhymes before they bite me I say, when I came out my mama's womb My doctor put me in a separate room I was by myself and all alone

'Til my mama came and handed me a microphone And at the age of one, it's just begun I was beginning to have me a little bit of fun At the age of two, I wasn't through I was rocking all night and in the morning too And at the age of three, I said to me You're the finest MC that there could ever be And at the age of four, I looked some more I said, damn Tanya, you're beginning to score And at the age of five, I made a man cry Then I knew I was qualified

And at the age of six, I knew all the tricks That got me into the disco mix

At the age of seven, I went to heaven To rock a little, you know

They had to let me go, I was too good, you know Because I gave those angels a hell of a blow And at the age of eight, everything was straight I was always on time and never late And at the age of nine, I rocked my mind I was known around the world as one of a kind And at the age of ten, I had the urge again But it ain't enough tape so this is the end *Bye-bye*

VICIOUS RAP

I said before the Lord God made the sea and the land He gave Sweet Tee
the master plan

And the message to give all the other MCs About the earth, sea, and sky,
the birds and the bees How to make money, take money, steal, cheat,
and lie The main definition of the word survive I know you heard the
philosophy about You got to give a little to gain a lot But these words
don't pull

Take a good look, look at the government How they sit back, relax, and
don't give a damn And every time you turn around they holdin out
your hand And when you think of it, I said you start to holler About
the eight cents tax that's on the dollar So we all get mad and as hot as
a fire But soon you cool off and prices get higher And before you know
it you can't buy many With a dollar because the value is a penny For
the money, huh, we're gonna scream and shout And let the
government know what we all about So get in touch, huh, I'm too
much, huh And you don't stop, you keep on

See I was rocking a party, just a-doing my best When a man told me I was
under arrest He said, "Follow me, ma'am, if you will And when we get
downtown, I'll tell you the deal"

So he read the rights and then he cuffed my hands He drove me
downtown to the big man For a year or two they looked around and
about Want to know what Sweet Tee was all about I said, "I don't
know what or why I'm here But without a doubt I have no fear"

He say, "Get in the cell and don't waste my time Because you're under
arrest for first degree rhymes"

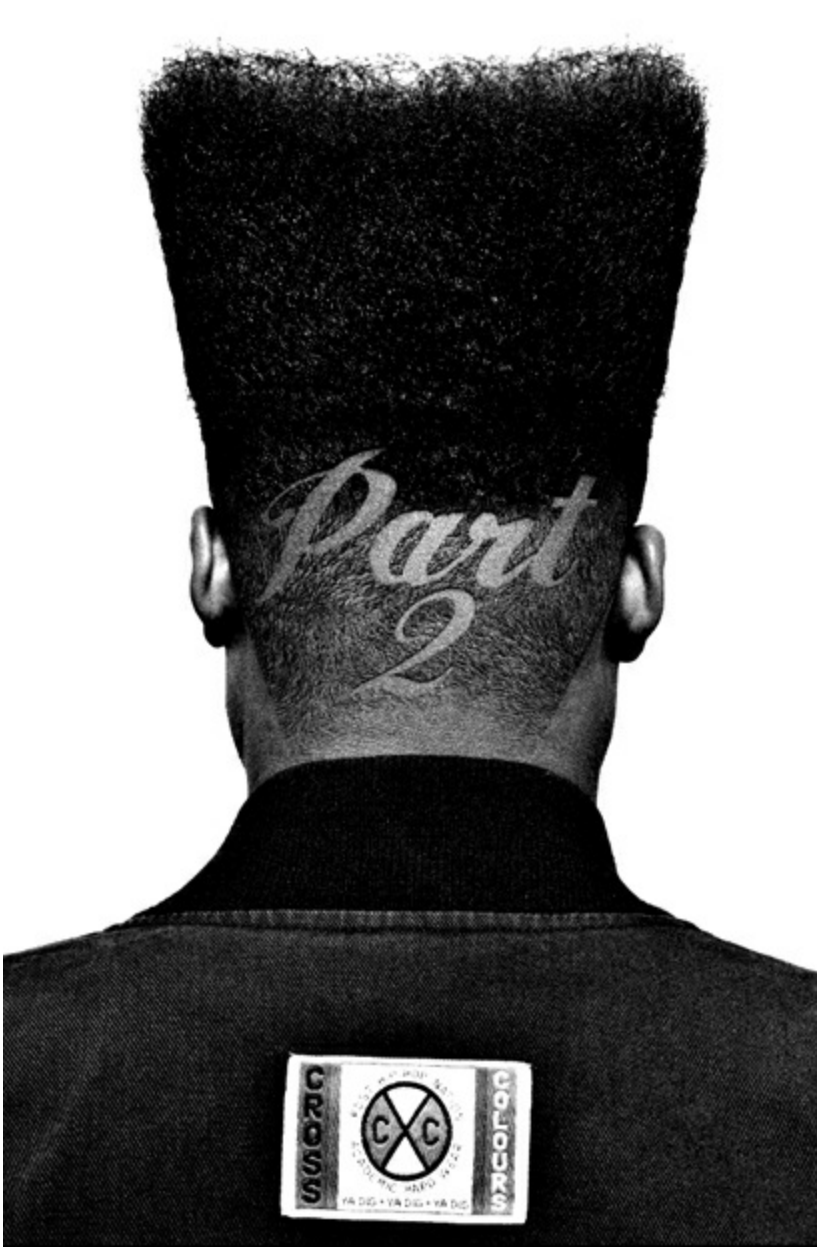
The next day, huh, you see, I went to court And I took the stand just like I
was taught They put the Bible in my hand and said, "Speak the truth"

And when they took it away, I said, "I do"

I said, "I'm just an MC, that's all I am And I shock the house when there's
a mic in my hand I don't snort, I don't smoke, I just keep it clean And I
am not into the junkie scene

I'm just asking for a little sympathy Because my crew, ha, my crew is
waiting for me"

So they took the votes and they let me go And here I am, I said, in stereo
In stereo, ha, and you don't stop ...



1985–1992

The Golden Age

“It’s all brand new, never ever old school,” raps Run on Run-DMC’s 1985 song “King of Rock,” a hyperkinetic, electric-guitar-driven declaration of rap’s independence from its own past. In the years between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s rap experienced a series of rapid transformations. The craft of MCing began settling into its maturity as artists started paying more attention to song structure with 4-bar choruses and 16-bar verses, with narratives and message raps. Stylistic trailblazers like Rakim,

Big Daddy Kane, Kool G Rap, and KRS-One expanded the formal potentialities of rhythm, rhyme, and wordplay. Where end rhymes and, particularly, rhyming couplets were the norm, MCs began employing an array of techniques like internal rhyme and chain rhyme. The once-dominant effusive mode of rapping now shared space with a host of other flows. Hip-hop production moved from the break beat to intricate samples drawn from soul, funk, and jazz.

Thematically, hip-hop began pushing beyond the party rhymes and battle raps that had dominated its early life to include everything from Black Nationalist politics to Five-Percenter ideology to streetwise chronicles of the criminal underground. Women, while certainly a part of hip-hop in its early years, began to fashion distinct voices for themselves through the efforts of artists like Roxanne Shanté, Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, and Monie Love. Primarily a New York phenomenon in its early years, rap began to expand its regional parameters, most notably with the rise of the so-called gangsta rap of Ice-T and NWA. The hip-hop industry also expanded, as major labels began to see opportunities for profit in the music. And rap finally broke through to the pop charts and MTV, with artists as diverse as Run-DMC, the Beastie Boys, Salt-N-Pepa, and DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince leading the way.

With all of these advancements in the art, it should come as no surprise that this period is often referred to as the golden age of rap. The very concept of a golden age is, of course, a fiction—the product of nostalgia and wishful thinking combined with a healthy distrust of the music of the moment. Indeed, one generation's golden age is often another's era of decline or stagnation or worse. We should look upon such a designation with a degree of skepticism. That said, the years between the release of Run-DMC's 1985 platinum-selling *King of Rock* and the release of Dr. Dre's 1992 album *The Chronic* are inarguably a period of fertile creation, rapid expansion, and lasting importance in the history of rap. If hip-hop music can be said, like jazz, to have songs considered as “standards,” then a disproportionate number of them can be credited to the artists who emerged in this period. The MCs of this era hover over hip-hop to this day, either by still putting out records (as do LL Cool J, Rakim, De La Soul, and KRS-One, for instance), or by lyrically influencing all other artists that followed.

One of the ways in which rap moved forward in this period was paradoxically by going back. By the mid-1980s the art had been around long enough to be marketed in certain ways that mainstreamed but

diluted its power. A visual record of this transformation can be seen in the marked differences among the films *Wild Style* (1982), Charlie Ahearn's grimy hip-hop indie that was in essence a documentary; *Beat Street* (1984), a Hollywood version of Ahearn's film that nonetheless had a strong soundtrack that included several important early artists; and the widely distributed *Breakin'* and *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo* (both 1984), a revelation to ten-year-olds in mall theaters far from the New York epicenter whose primary purpose seemed to be teaching outsiders what gear to wear and what slang to use in order to be hip—if not hip-hop. Rap artists themselves were less complicit but had still settled into the production of a particular image, often including elaborate costumes (a mélange of punk and new-wave paraphernalia filtered through a latter-day Funkadelic motif) that were heavy on leather, buttons, bracelets, and chains. Furthermore, despite a couple of crucial shifts in sound production, the perceived taint of disco lingered.

Those who were active in hip-hop at the time often mark a twofold shift that involved the rise of Run-DMC on the one hand and the advent of the Def Jam label on the other. Grandmaster Caz says, "Run-DMC was the cutoff point between us and hip-hop after that. That was the end of the era for Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, for the Cold Crush, for the Funky 4 + 1, for the Fearless 4s and for the Fantastic 5s and all that." Sal Abbatiello, who ran the popular club called the Fever, noted that when the group first showed up there, "their outfits were so hysterical" for being so plain, given that "the whole scene was leather and fringes and sparkly and rhinestones—made outfits—and they came out with these plaid jackets." ¹ DMC himself says that their decision to scale back the theatrics was derived from their heroes the Cold Crush Brothers:

At a time when hip-hop was becoming really popular in all the five boroughs in New York, Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, everybody started dressin' up 'cause they had a little bit of money. The Cold Crush would just come to the parties as is and do their performance. And the performance became the attention-getter and not how good you looked, how many curls you had in your hair, how many braids you had in your hair. It was just about the beats and the rhyme. To Run-DMC, it was like, "Oh, you mean to tell me we don't gotta dress up?" They showed us what to rap about, how to rap, how to represent yourself with your title, to make it royal ... but they also showed us come as you are, you know what I'm sayin'? And when Run-DMC first came out, that was the reason why people related to us—even the rock 'n' roll kids, the white kids. They

could relate to us because we was just like the guys on the corner they saw, or the guys they went to school with, or the people they worked with. You know, we had on Lee jeans, shell-toe Adidas, Pro-Keds, Pumas, Kangol hats, sweatshirts, whatever was just common at the time.... The Cold Crush showed me that what my mother bought was cool. We don't have to go to the leather guy and get costumes made up to look like Superman or to look like the stars of the day 'cause we are the stars. We're normal guys, but we're good, and this is who we be. This is who we are. ²

Of course, to make a worldwide mark, even such transparency needs a good hype man, and the promoter Russell Simmons, who was also Run's brother and later the founder of Def Jam Records, was up to the task. "The key to his success," remembers Bill Adler, is that Simmons said, "I'm not going to water it down. I'm not going to whiten it up. This is going to be pure and uncut. This is what these young Black kids are bringing to the party. This is their ticket, okay?' ... These rappers were much more everyday. And it was Russell's genius to broker them to the mainstream as they were. They didn't have to be white. They didn't have to have white mannerisms. They didn't have to speak standard English. None of that. And even so, they were going to get over. And more than that, Russell's point was that it was because they were authentic and true to themselves that they would get over. And he was right." ³

It was not only the look that was scaled back and pared down. The sound of Run-DMC comes at you without excess. When they trade verses, it is more like a dialogue than a jumbled conversation. And while a master like Melle Mel could, in "The Message," paint a series of ghetto pictures that were effectively plaintive in their poetic decrepitude, most MCs who initially tried to follow that template merely dropped wooden platitudes. Run-DMC traveled the same road but did so in a way commensurate with their no-nonsense image:

Unemployment at a record high

People coming, people going, people born to die

Don't ask me, because I don't know why

But it's like that, and that's the way it is

The lack of a solution to such problems is less surprising than the absence of sentimentality. Their bluntness was also manifest in such songs as "Sucker MC's," a genesis song that quickly shifts into a battle rap:

Two years ago, a friend of mine

Asked me to say some MC rhymes

So I said this rhyme I'm about to say

The rhyme was def and then it went this way

Nor did the template change once the group had experienced some success, as on “My Adidas,” where the eponymous sneakers are still good enough for now-popular entertainers:

My Adidas

Walk through concert doors

And roam all over coliseum floors

I stepped on stage at Live Aid

All the people gave and the poor got paid

The music itself was stripped down, not disco derived and even without the rhythmic flourishes of funk. Its reliance on drum-machine patterns was much starker (and slower) than those found in post-“Planet Rock” electro-rap. What’s more, their songs never ran any longer than typical radio or jukebox fare.

Another related shift was that this new style in rap incorporated a rock-and-roll aesthetic. If the kids could relate to wearing sweatshirts and sneakers, they could also relate to thrashing out a couple of bar chords on an electric guitar. On their second LP Run-DMC even deemed themselves the kings of rock, and their 1986 collaboration with Aerosmith on “Walk This Way” was a huge hit. Rock guitar riffs had long been part of the rap repertoire; Billy Squier’s “Big Beat” was a late 1970s DJ staple. The architect of this sound as standardized in a studio setting was Rick Rubin, Simmons’s partner in Def Jam Records and the label’s signature producer. His combination of drum-machine beats and recycled rock guitar helped make the Beastie Boys album *Licensed to Ill* (1986) a number-one record. (Nor was the group’s race a deterrent to large-scale commercial success.) At any rate, as Reggie Reg says, “When Def Jam came out, that was like the nail in Sugarhill’s coffin.” ⁴ The look was changing, the sound was changing (even if the changes were sometimes old solutions deployed in new contexts)—most of all, the rhymes were changing. The formal evolution of MCing was brisk. Perhaps the change is best epitomized in Rakim, the MC’s MC. With his DJ Eric B., Rakim intensified the pace of the delivery of rhymes without sacrificing enunciation or the sense of a solid presence. His ability to break up his lines and to balance that fractured phrasemaking with generous enjambment suggests how the

rhythms of jazz were making their way into the music. Since rapping at a formal level had always been particularly associated with rhyme, it was the variety of Rakim's rhymes that garnered special attention. As the MC Masta Ace said of Rakim's verses on "Eric B. Is President": "Everybody's mind was blown because nobody had ever put three words that rhyme together in a sentence, and that just opened up so many doors. That just like really got the ball rolling in terms of creativity as a lyricist. There was no limit to what you could do and figure out how to do it with words, and that's what got me really excited about being an MC—the endless possibilities in terms of the cadences, the flows, and how to make words rhyme." ⁵

Perhaps because of that formal intensity, another aspect of Rakim's art is sometimes overlooked, namely, the way he went from discrete metaphor to developed conceit. Instead of just dropping in an isolated image of music as a drug, for instance, Rakim in "Microphone Fiend" builds a complete song around the metaphor, not just deepening but personalizing it, using the initial comparison as the basis for a story of artistic development and aesthetic value:

I was a fiend before I became a teen

I melted microphones instead of cones of ice cream

.....

So then I add all the rhymes I had

One after the other one, then I make another one

To dis the opposite then ask if the brother's done

I get a craving, like I fiend for nicotine

But I don't need a cigarette, know what I mean?

.....

But back to the problem, I got a habit

You can't solve it, silly rabbit

The prescription is a hyper-tone that's thorough when

I fiend for a microphone, like heroin

Soon as the bass kicks, I need a fix

Give me a stage and a mic and a mix

Nor was Rakim alone in making more of flow and figurative language than had been heard before in rap. Big Daddy Kane was also changing the scene. According to Masta Ace the two rappers were alike in advancing

the art: “Up until [Rakim], everybody you heard rhyme, the last word in the sentence was the rhyming [word], the connection word. Then Rakim showed us that you could put rhymes within a rhyme, so you could put more than one word in a line that rhymed together, so it didn’t have to be just the last word. Now here comes Big Daddy Kane—instead of going three words, he’s going multiple, seven and eight words in a sentence.” ⁶ And like Rakim, Kane was a master of metaphor and simile. When he developed a conceit it would usually be in service of slicing up other MCs:

**You’re just a butter knife, I’m a machete
That’s made by Ginsu, wait until when you
Try to front, so I can chop into
Your body, just because you try to be basing
Friday the 13th, I’m a play Jason
No type of joke, gag, game, puzzle, or riddle
The name is Big Daddy, yes, big not little**

Usually, however, rather than developing conceits, Kane was likelier to proliferate promiscuous strings of similes, as if he had so many options at his poetic disposal that restricting himself to one was miserly:

**I relieve rappers just like Tylenol
And they know it, so I don’t see why you all
Try to front, perpetrating a stunt
When you know that I’ll smoke you up like a blunt
I’m genuine like Gucci, raw like sushi**

Big Daddy Kane also exemplifies a trend toward rappers developing a more elaborate and sophisticated persona. The combative rapper had been around for a while, as had the occasional lover man. But Kane, like LL Cool J, attempted and largely achieved the creation of a more organic persona that brought verbal warfare and romantic love (or sexual conquest) together.

One way that a persona is successfully developed is through a convincing narrative. Thus it is no surprise that the increasing detail and range of the stories being told in rap provided a context in which a more interesting and complete persona could thrive. Slick Rick, for instance, was continuing the evolution of rap storytelling without ever letting the listener forget that just as important as the story was the teller who told it. That connection became especially strong in a rising genre that would

become a powerful force—namely, gangsta rap.

Several songs are associated with the rise of gangsta rap: Schoolly D's "P.S.K. What Does It Mean," Ice-T's "6 'N the Mornin'," and Eazy-E's "Boyz-n-the-Hood," among others. But no song did more to establish the gangsta archetype and the genre of gangsta rap than the aptly titled "Gangsta Gangsta" by NWA. The song starts, "Here's a little somethin 'bout a nigga like me," while the chorus begins with Ice Cube claiming that he's "the type of nigga that's built to last." And what is the type? A young black man who is an anarchist, a hedonist, and a nihilist all rolled into one. Part of sustaining the gangsta character lies in formal decisions: Ice Cube's deliberately simple diction, the paucity of metaphor, the refusal to name himself as a rapper or to refer ostentatiously to his own rhetorical skills.

While rap was reaching a rhetorical height in the work of lyricists such as Big Daddy Kane and Rakim, both of whom never let it be forgotten that they were rapping, Ice Cube in "Gangsta Gangsta" exhibits another, concurrent trend toward what we might think of as the "plain style" of rap. Ice Cube's is an unadorned, propulsive diction that keeps coming and coming:

**Boom boom boom, yeah I was gunnin
And then you look, all you see is niggaz runnin
And fallin and yellin and pushin and screamin
And cussin**

The language fits the character. Such a perfect fit between a character and the language that character uses was once designated by the critical term *decorum*. This might be the last word under which anyone would class the explicit lyrics of NWA, which hardly strike most listeners as decorous. Yet in terms of constructing a character whose actions, setting, and speech all exist in a relationship of unobtrusive propriety, the lyrics of NWA may serve as a model of the term.

Decorum in this sense is an august literary value. The ancient Greeks prized it, if Aristotle's discussion of propriety of style is a proper indication. Latin critics elaborated on the topic, often arranging decorum into stylistic tiers. Of the plain style, Demetrius wrote that its "diction should be entirely ordinary and in everyday use." Cicero warned that "plainness of style may seem easily imitable in theory; in practice nothing could be more difficult." The plain speaker was deliberately "unpretentious, giving an appearance of using ordinary language, but in

reality differing from the inexpert more than is commonly supposed.”⁷ This last description brings to mind the Renaissance term *sprezzatura*, which signifies minimizing the impression that a task is difficult, hiding the truth that its success is determined by tireless practice, insofar as it appears to be accomplished with ease.

In addition to this sense that simplicity itself is an elaborate performance—a kind of verbal puppeteering with the strings kept hidden—a common thread in descriptions of the plain speaker is the use of everyday words by everyday people to describe everyday actions and things. Such a notion was elaborated influentially in English-language poetry by William Wordsworth, who in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* described his own attempt to write in the “language really used by men.” The pub dwellers in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, the rustics of Robert Frost’s New England poems, and the blues singers in the work of Langston Hughes all follow partially in this tradition.

In terms of diction, NWA adhere to the plain-style edict that less is more. Although there is an occasional specific reference (“Daytons,” a brand of rims) and a scattering of slang (“eight bottle,” “8-Ball,” “whooride,” “bum rush,” “the bucket”) that establishes local color, the song is otherwise devoid of neologisms and allusions. There is even a dearth of multisyllabic words, especially in rhyming positions where such words would draw particular attention. (The exception proving the rule is “penitentiary,” which completes the opening couplet of “Gangsta Gangsta”; in fact, rhyming “penitentiary” with “a nigga like me” in the song’s opening lines is a crafty way of linking the gangsta character to his antisocial role, a link developed through the rest of the song.) The starkness of the diction obtains not because Ice Cube doesn’t know or couldn’t choose different, bigger words but because the character he is creating is a gangsta figure whose *modus operandi* revolves more around action than talk.

Another factor in the successful creation of the gangsta archetype is the infrequent use of obtrusive poetic and rhetorical figures. For Cicero, the plain style demanded that “all obvious pearls of ornament” be removed; such writing should also be “modest and sparing in metaphor.”⁸ Certainly “Gangsta Gangsta” fits his two-thousand-year-old criteria. Unlike the lines of Rakim, those of NWA stay away from internal rhyme, sticking almost without exception to end rhyme. Unlike the delivery of Big Daddy Kane, that of Ice Cube resists bending words athletically to force them into a rhyming relation. (The one time he attempts it, rhyming “me to go” with

“vehicle,” is only slightly less convincing than Eazy-E rhyming “court” and “fart” in “Boyz-n-the-Hood.”) There is a coherent characterization, but no running conceit as one finds in “Microphone Fiend” by Rakim; nor is there a cluster of motifs, as in Rakim’s grouping of horror films, physical infirmity, and rap battles in his “Lyrics of Fury.” In fact, “Gangsta Gangsta” is so “modest and sparing in metaphor” that metaphor hardly exists. The song’s prime example is found in Ice Cube’s introduction of Eazy-E, who is “built like a tank,” which is a simile hackneyed enough to seem more natural than ornamental.

This paucity of elaborate poetry is matched by the simplicity of the storyline. “I got a shotgun and here’s the plot,” raps Ice Cube, “Taking niggaz out with a flurry of buck shots.” Not much of a plot, perhaps, but “Gangsta Gangsta” has generic forebears; among other things, it is a circumscribed picaresque. (The term, designating a story that follows a character living by his wits through a series of adventures, comes from the Spanish word for “rogue”—in this case, a fitting etymology.) Instead of traveling across a whole country or continent, we merely move through the city of Compton. The limited range of motion—the characters seem to know only the violent streets of one city and to shuttle from there to prison and back—compounded by the limited range of action—they fight, they get fucked up, and they hunt for sex with futility—suggests a limited life. It is to the aesthetic credit of the song that the unrepentant aggression of its performance gives what could be a claustrophobic circumscription instead a feeling of audacity.

Another way in which NWA employ limited means to suggest the expansion of limits is in their use of expletives. “We knew the value of language,” Ice Cube has said, “especially profanity. We weren’t that sophisticated”—he was only eighteen when he wrote “Gangsta Gangsta”—“but we knew the power we had.”⁹ That power depended on not “breaking the frame,” on not referring to themselves as rappers in the song. As music critic Kelefa Sanneh writes, “Time was, rappers were eager to tell you what they did for a living, and how well they did it. In fact, that seemed to be the only thing they wanted to talk about. Like generations of three-card monte men before them, they rapped about rapping, explaining how the trick worked even as they pulled it off. You can hear this on virtually any earlier hip-hop record.” However, as Sanneh points out, “Things changed with NWA. They were riveting storytellers, and they realized, long before many of their peers, that hip-hop storytelling was built on a paradox. How could any rapper be

convincing if he kept reminding his audience that he was merely a rapper? How could he draw listeners into his narratives if he refused to stay in character?” ¹⁰

The template fleshed out by Ice Cube and company would continue to be developed through the course of the 1990s. But the gangsta persona in the later 1980s was matched by a different vision of the direction in which rap should travel. If the West Coast was telling stories that were implicitly sociopolitical, when one turned (to cite an X-Clan album) “To the East, Blackwards,” one heard voices that were explicitly political. Where Rakim and Big Daddy Kane had made relatively subtle allusions to the Five-Percent Nation ideology derived from the Black Muslim movement, X-Clan and others came straight out with a pro-black message that was steeped in arcane terminology. Chuck D of Public Enemy scattered his lyrics with references to Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, and other radical black leaders, and his rhetorical style was that of the modern-day prophet crying out against a racist and overly commercialized society.

There was a didactic impulse at work in these artists, as well as a sense of rescuing rap from frivolity. One persona that developed as a result was that of the teacher. Since rap had been around long enough to have an “old school,” there was felt to be a need to educate the newer generation of listeners. As only a teacher can, Kool Moe Dee even issued a “report card” on the state of rap.

No one embodied the role of the teacher better than KRS-One of Boogie Down Productions. His example shows, however, that the teacher in rap will often pitch his lesson far outside the conventional classroom. In fact, KRS suggests how tricky these nascent categories were, since his pedagogical drive on tracks like “Poetry” met a more gangsta aesthetic on a song such as “9mm Goes Bang.” There was also a more subtle approach to instruction, as in the music of those groups associated under the rubric Native Tongues (among them Black Sheep, De La Soul, Jungle Brothers, and A Tribe Called Quest). Their lesson plan was an eclectic one, and what was being taught was creative engagement, not only with a range of external sources, but with the ultimate source of the self. Both the increased emphasis on self-realization and the widening of the tent under which one could rap are also manifest in the changing nature of women rappers. Whereas before, the best female lyricists crafted lyrics that were indistinguishable in essence from those of their distinguished male counterparts, figures such as MC Lyte, Roxanne Shanté, Salt-N-Pepa, and Queen Latifah began to speak on themes provoked by a sense of gender

disparity and the untapped power of women. As Queen Latifah put it, they could be “ladies first” without giving up their status as rappers.

It was a rich time for rap. Whether it was a golden age depends on one’s currency of choice. Maybe it was more of a barter economy, since so many wonderful verses were being traded. Or maybe an economic conceit is less appropriate than an environmental one. If the rise of Run-DMC and the sparse sounds of Def Jam equaled a kind of sonic slash-and-burn, a deliberate clearing of the old growth of the old school, then the landscape that remained was ripe for a burst of new and varied life that had been until then unimagined. And grow the new sounds did, proving that an art form that had only a few years before been dismissed by some skeptics as a fad was in fact real and self-sustainable.

BEASTIE BOYS

The career of the Beastie Boys now spans almost three decades. *Licensed to Ill* (1986), their debut LP, became rap's first certified platinum album. Crass in subject matter, rough in delivery, the Beasties' early style on that album also suggested adaptability and an independent streak that promised things to come.

Adrock (Adam Horovitz), Mike D (Mike Diamond), and MCA (Adam Yauch) were originally part of the indie punk rock scene, releasing the EP *Pollywog Stew* (1982). The move from punk to rap was more natural than it may appear; the two musics share a basic timeline, a rough-hewn aesthetic, and an irreverent view of authority. These characteristics meshed perfectly with the Rick Rubin-produced Def Jam template of drum-machine beats and heavy rock guitar samples.

In songs like "Brass Monkey" and "Fight for Your Right (to Party)," the Beasties develop personas that presaged the nihilism later perfected by gangsta rappers, as well as the "crazy white guy" position subsequently elaborated by Eminem. The description of a rapper as "beer drinking, breath stinking, sniffing glue" on "Hold It Now—Hit It" is not far from Eminem's Slim Shady.

After an acrimonious split from Def Jam, the group released *Paul's Boutique* (1989). Sonically, the music was marked by manic sampling and a wide-ranging repertoire of beats. Lyrically, their now familiar high jinks expanded to include a new penchant for pop cultural similes. On *Check Your Head* (1992), they continued to hone their skills while moving in yet another direction—this time back to their punk past, as many of the tracks featured the group playing their own instruments. Subsequent years brought such releases as *Ill Communication* (1994), *Hello Nasty!* (1998), and *To the Five Boroughs* (2004), each one another mark in a career of surprising vitality and duration.

PAUL REVERE

[Adrock] Now here's a little story I got to tell About three bad brothers
you know so well

It started way back in history

With Adrock, [MCA] MCA, [Mike D] and me, Mike D

[Adrock]

Been had a little horsy named Paul Revere

Just me and my horsy and a quart of beer

Riding across the land, kicking up sand

Sheriff's posse's on my tail 'cause I'm in demand One lonely Beastie I be

All by myself without nobody

The sun is beating down on my baseball hat

The air is gettin hot, the beer is gettin flat Lookin for a girl, I ran into a
guy

His name is MCA, I said, "Howdy," he said, "Hi"

He told a little story that sounded well rehearsed Four days on the run
and that he's dying of thirst The brew was in my hand and he was on
my tip

His voice was hoarse, his throat was dry, he asked me for a sip He said,
"Can I get some?" I said, "You can't get none!"

Had a chance to run, pulled out his shotgun

Quick on the draw, I thought I'd be dead

He put the gun to my head and this is what he said [MCA] "Now my name
is MCA, I've got a license to kill I think you know what time it is, it's
time to get ill Now what do we have here, an outlaw and his beer I run
this land, you understand, I made myself clear"

[Adrock] We stepped into the wind, he had a gun, I had a grin You think
this story's over but it's ready to begin. Now, [MCA] "I got the gun,
you got the brew

You got two choices of what you can do

It's not a tough decision as you can see

I can blow you away or you can ride with me"

[Adrock] I said, "I'll ride with you if you can get me to the border The
sheriff's after me for what I did to his daughter I did it like this, I did it
like that

I did it with a whiffleball bat—so

I'm on the run, the cop's got my gun

And right about now it's time to have some fun The King Adrock, that is
my name

And I know the fly spot where they got the champagne”
We rode for six hours then we hit the spot
The beat was a-bumping and the girly was hot This dude was staring like
he knows who we are We took the empty spot next to him at the bar
MCA said, [MCA] “Yippie yo, you know this kid?”
[Adrock] I said I didn’t but I know he did
[MCA] The kid said, [Mike D] “Get ready ’cause this ain’t funny My
name’s Mike D and I’m about to get money”
Pulled out the jammy, aimed it at the sky

[Adrock] He yelled, [Mike D] “Stick ’em up!” [Adrock] and let two fly
Hands went up and people hit the floor
He wasted two kids that ran for the door
[Mike D] “I’m Mike D and I get respect
Your cash and your jewelry is what I expect”
[Adrock] MCA was with it and he’s my ace
So I grabbed the piano player and I punched him in the face Piano
player’s out, the music stopped
His boy had beef and he got dropped
[MCA] Mike D grabbed the money, [Mike D] MCA snatched the gold
[Adrock] I grabbed two girly and a beer that’s cold **SURE SHOT**
Because you can’t, you won’t, and you don’t stop [3x]
Mike D, come and rock the sure shot

[Mike D] I’ve got the brand new doo-doo guaranteed like Yoo-Hoo I’m on
like Dr. John—yeah, Mr. Zu Zu
I’m a newlywed, not a divorcé
And everything I do is funky like Lee Dorsey
[Adrock] Well, it’s *The Taking of the Pelham One Two Three*
If you want a doo-doo rhyme then come see me
I’ve got the savoir faire with the unique rhyming I keep it on and on, it’s
never quittin time and [MCA] Strictly hand held is the style I go
Never rock the mic with the panty hose
I strap on my ear goggles and I’m ready to go

'Cause at the boards is the man they call the Mario [Mike D] Pull up at the
function and you know I Kojak To all the party people that are on my
Bozak

I've got more action than my man John Woo
And I've got mad hits like I was Rod Carew

Because you can't, you won't, and you don't stop [3x]
Adrock, come and rock the sure shot

[Adrock] Hurricane will cross fade on your ass and bust your ear drums
Listen everybody 'cause I'm shifting gears. I'm Fresh like Dougie when
I set my specs and

On the microphone I come correct

[MCA] Timing like a clock when I rock the hip-hop Top notch is my stock
on the soap box

I've got more rhymes than I've got gray hairs
And that's a lot because I've got my share

[Mike D] I've got a hole in my head and there's no one to fix it Got to
straighten my thoughts, I'm thinking too much sick shit Everyone just
takes and takes, takes, takes, takes I've got to step back, I've got to
contemplate [Adrock] I'm like Lee Perry, I'm very

On—rock the microphone and then I'm gone
I'm like Vaughn Bodé, I'm a Cheech Wizard
Never quittin, so won't you listen

Ah yes indeed, it's fun time

Because you can't, you won't, and you don't stop [3x]
MCA, come and rock the sure shot

[MCA] I want to say a little something that's long overdue The disrespect
to women has got to be through

To all the mothers and the sisters and the wives and friends I want to
offer my love and respect to the end [Mike D] Well, you say I'm
twenty-something and should be slacking But I'm working harder than
ever and you could call it macking So I'm supposed to sit upon the
couch watching my TV

I'm still listening to wax, I'm not using the CD
[Adrock] Well, I'm that kid in the corner
All fucked up and I wanna so I'm gonna
Take a piece of the pie, why not, I'm not quittin Think I'm gonna change
up my style just to fit in?
[MCA] I keep my underwear up with a piece of elastic I use a bullshit mic
that's made out of plastic To send my rhymes out to all the nations
Like Ma Bell, I've got the ill communication

SHADRACH

[MCA] Riddle me this, my brother, [Mike D] can you handle it?
[Adrock] Your style [Mike D] to my style, [Adrock] you can't hold a
candle to it [MCA] Equinox symmetry and the balance is right [All]
Smoking and drinking on a Tuesday night
[Adrock] It's not how you play the game, [Mike D] it's [Adrock] how you
win it [MCA] I cheat [Mike D] and steal [Adrock] and sin [MCA] and
I'm a cynic [Adrock] For those about to rock [All] we salute you
[Adrock] The dirty thoughts for dirty minds we contribute to [Mike D]
I once was lost [Adrock] but now I'm found [MCA] The music washes
over and you're one with the sound [Adrock] Well, who shall inherit
the earth? [All] The meek shall [Adrock] And yo, I think I'm starting to
peak now, Al [Mike D] And the man upstairs, [MCA] well, I hope that
he cares [Adrock] If I had a penny for my thoughts I'd be a millionaire
[MCA] We're just [All] three MCs and we're on the go [Adrock]
Shadrach, [Mike D] Meshach, [MCA] Abednego [Mike D] Only twenty-
four [Adrock] hours in a day [Mike D] Only [Adrock] twelve [Mike D]
notes, [Adrock] well, a man can play [All] Music for all and not just
one people
[Adrock] And now we're gonna bust with the *Putney Swope* sequel [Mike
D] More Adidas sneakers than a plumber's got pliers [MCA] Got more
suits than Jacoby and Meyers
[Adrock] Well, [Mike D] if not for my vices [Adrock] and my bugged-out
desires [Mike D] My year would be good just like Goodyear's tires
[MCA] 'Cause I'm out picking pockets at the Atlantic Antic [Adrock]
And nobody wants to hear you 'cause your rhymes are damn frantic
[MCA] I mix business [Mike D] and pleasure [Adrock] way [MCA] too
much [Adrock] You know—[MCA] wine [Adrock] and women [Mike D]

and song [Adrock] and such [Adrock] I don't get blue, I got a mean red
streak [MCA] You don't pay the band, [Mike D] your friends—
[Adrock] yo, that's weak [MCA] Get even like Steven like pulling a
Rambo [Adrock] Shadrach, [Mike D] Meshach, [MCA] Abednego [Mike
D] Steal from the rich [Adrock] and I'm out robbing banks [Mike D]
Give it to the poor [MCA] and I always give thanks [Adrock] Because I
got more stories than J.D.'s got Salinger [Mike D] I hold the title
[MCA] and you are the challenger [All] I've got money [Mike D] like
Charles Dickens [MCA] I got the girlyies in the coupe like the Colonel's
got the chicken [Adrock] And I always go out dapper like the Harry S.
Truman [Mike D] I'm madder than Mad—[All] Alfred E. Newman
Never gonna let 'em say that I don't love you

[Adrock] Well, my [Mike D] noggin [Adrock] is [Mike D] high and
[Adrock] all kinds of thoughts [Mike D] And Adam [Adrock] Yoggin
[Mike D] is [Adrock] Yauch [Mike D] and he's rocking of course [MCA]
Smoke the holy chalice, got my own religion [All] Rally round the
stage and check the funky dope musicians [Mike D] Like Jerry Lee
Swaggert [Adrock] or Jerry Lee Falwell [Mike D] You like Mario
Andretti 'cause he always drives the car well [MCA] Vicious circle of
reality since the day you were born [Adrock] And we love the hot
butter—[MCA] say what?—[All] the popcorn [Mike D] Sipping on
wine [All] and macking

[Mike D] Rocking on the stage with all the hands clapping [MCA] Ride
the wave of fate, [Adrock] it don't ride me, home *Being very proud to be
an MC*

[Adrock] And the man upstairs, [MCA] well, I hope that he cares [Adrock]
If I had a penny for my thoughts I'd be a millionaire [Mike D] Amps
and crossovers [MCA] under my rear hood [All] The bass is bumping
[MCA] from the back of my Fleetwood [All] They tell us what to do?
Hell, no!

[Adrock] Shadrach, [Mike D] Meshach, [MCA] Abednego

BIG DADDY KANE

Big Daddy Kane was an originator and a trendsetter. Eschewing old school reliance on rhymed couplets and simple similes, Kane expanded the terms of lyrical acceptability and innovation. His booming voice, rich with command, and his battle-anybody mentality have made him an enduring figure in hip-hop.

Kane was born in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. In 1984 he met Biz Markie, and both joined Marley Marl's Juice Crew. Even before Kane released his first single, he was already responsible for several hits as a ghostwriter for Biz and Roxanne Shanté. In 1988 Kane released "Raw," his first single and an underground hit. Over the next six years, he released four more albums and a slew of rap hits. He cultivated a personality that was at once gangster tough and lover-man smooth.

Like his contemporary Rakim, Kane focused closely on craft. Looking back on his career, he reflected on aspects that he has consciously honed over the years. "I believe that my vocabulary has broadened," Kane said. "I believe that I know how to deliver metaphors in ways that's not as typical as I used to. And, plus, I believe that I really tightened up my flow." ¹¹ In the selection of lyrics that follows, one can see him expanding not only his own sense of lyrical possibility but that of rap as a whole.

RAW

Here I am ... R-A-W

A terrorist, here to bring trouble to Phony MCs, I move on and seize
I just conquer and stomp another rapper with ease 'Cause I'm at my apex
and others are be-low Nothing but a milliliter, I'm a kilo Second to
none, making MCs run

So don't try to step to me, 'cause I ain't the one I relieve rappers just like
Tylenol And they know it, so I don't see why you all Try to front,
perpetrating a stunt

When you know that I'll smoke you up like a blunt I'm genuine like Gucci,
raw like sushi The Sage of Rage is what rap did to me To make me
want to create chaos and mayhem Cold rock a party until the A.M.

I'll make a muscle, grab the mic and hustle While you stand dazed and
amazed, I'll bust a little Rhyme with authority, superiority

And captivate the whole crowd's majority The rhymes I use definitely
amuse

Better than *Dynasty* or *Hill Street Blues*

I'm sure to score, endure for more without a flaw 'Cause I get RAW!

I give a speech like a reverend, rappers start severin And in my lifetime,
believe I've never been Beaten or eaten, and just taken out You
know, come to think about, I keep MCs lookin out And real nervous,
when I'm at your service So give me that title, boy, you don't deserve
this I work like a slave to become a master And when I say a rhyme,
you know that it has to Be perfectly fitted, 'cause I'm committed The
entertainer and trainer and Kane'll get with it I go and flow and grow
to let you know I'll damage ya, I'm not an amateur but a professional
Unquestionable, without doubt superb So full of action, my name
should be a verb My voice will float on every note

When I clear my throat, that's all she wrote The minute that the Kane
starts to go on Believe it's gonna be smooth sailing so on As I put other
rappers out of their misery Get 'em in a battle and make them all
history Rulin and schoolin, MCs that I'm duelin Watch 'em all take a
fall as I sit back coolin On my throne with a bronze microphone Um,
God bless the child that can hold his own 'Cause I get RAW!

Twenty-four seven chillin, killin like a villain The meaning of raw is
ready and willing To do whatever is clever, take a loss never And the
rhymes I bust, comin off is a must And I come off hard with rhymes
that are odd I rip the microphone and leave it scarred Never smokin or
hittin or takin a sniff Only crushin MCs that be tryin to riff I get strong
and Titanic, do work like a mechanic Make MCs panic, they all get
frantic And skeptic, like a girl on a contraceptive As I rock, but hey,
what you expected?

I'll get raw for ya, just like a warrior Rather like a Samurai and I'll be
damn if I Ever let a Fisher-Price MC hang

Their rhymes are toy, nothing but yin-yang So if we battle on the
microphone

Bring your own casket and tombstone And I'ma preach your funeral, tell
me who in the world Could ever come with more? I get RAW

WRATH OF KANE

The wrath of Kane, takin over your circumference Destroyin negativity
and suckers that come with The weak, the wack, the words, the poor I
thrash, bash, clash, mash, and then more Blow up the scenery, I reign
supremer, see You need a savior to save ya, so lean on me I prey on
rappers like a haunted ghost And stomp 'em out like a wanted roach I
slay my prey and they decay, I blow away And throw away, so go
away 'cause I don't play Attackin like a psychopath, breakin rappers
in half So feel the wrath of Kane!

The name is Big Daddy
I'm here to bring trouble

The man at hand to rule and school and teach And reach the blind to find
their way from A to Z

And be the most and boast the loud and proud Kane'll reign your domain
(Yeah, Kane!) The heat is on so feel the fire

Come off the empire on a more higher Level than def, one step beyond
dope The suckers all scope and hope to cope, but nope 'Cause I can
never let 'em on top of me I play 'em out like a game of Monopoly Let
'em speed around the board like an Astro Then send 'em to jail for
tryin to pass go Shakin 'em up, breakin 'em up, takin no stuff But it
still ain't loud enough

So Mister Cee, let the volume grow

So I can flow. Now, yo ...

Juice Crew's the family, Slick Rick's a friend of me And Doug E. Fresh,
Stet', KRS, and Public Enemy Blasé-blah, you know who you are

The red, black, and green, the sun, moon, and star Knowledge of self is
bein taught hereon after Peace in the name of I-Self Lord and Master I
come to teach and preach and reach in each With the speech, every
leech I'll impeach Drop science and build with math

And the dumb, deaf, and blind'll feel the wrath of Kane!

The name is Big Daddy
I'm here to bring trouble

Marley Marl, break it down!

Bring it back, Cee

Line by line, chapter after chapter Like a pimp on the street, I gotta rap
to Those who chose to oppose, friend or foes, I still dispose And blow
'em out like Afros

So many rappers have fronted to get a name out Yellin and screamin and
dreamin but still came out Off the wall and butter softer, y'all 'Til you
waited for Kane to come forth to all Competition, that bite and chew
and crunch and munch To play the opposition, you on a mission So
stop lyin and tryin to front adventures Your rhymes are more false
than dentures Freeze as I get warm like a heater

You bite like a mosquito, but still can't complete a Rhyme or find the time
to design a line Or phrase that pays, so you dine on mine Instead of
frontin and tryin to be a friend of You might as well see *Guess Who's
Coming to Dinner?*

So just quit, submit, forget

Huh—you must be on some new improved shit!

I get busy from sun to sun

I'm only twenty-one and untouched by anyone No one throws bangs or
blows

All foes, I keep 'em runnin like pantyhose They get soft and tender, front
and they'll surrender I turned off more lights than Teddy Pender-Grass,
bring on your class, force be my staff But when I'm in effect, they feel
the wrath of Kane!

I'm here to bring trouble

AIN'T NO HALF STEPPIN'

*Ah yeah, I'm with this. I'm just gonna sit here laid back to this nice mellow
beat, you know. And drop some smooth lyrics 'cause it's 88, time to set it
straight, know what I'm saying? And there ain't no half stepping, word, I'm
ready.*

Rappers stepping to me, they want to get some But I'm the Kane, so, yo,
you know the outcome Another victory, they can't get with me So pick
a BC date 'cause you're history I'm the authentic poet to get lyrical For
you to beat me, it's gonna take a miracle and Stepping to me, yo,
that's the wrong move So what you on, Hobbes? Dope or dog food?

Competition I just devour

Like a pit bull against a Chihuahua 'Cause when it comes to being dope,
hot damn I got it good, now let me tell you who I am The B-I-G-D-A
doubleD-Y-K-A-N-E

Dramatic, Asiatic, not like many

I'm different, so don't compare me to another 'Cause they can't hang,
word to the mother At least not with the principal in this pedigree So
when I roll on you rappers you better be Ready to die because you're
petty

You're just a butter knife, I'm a machete That's made by Ginsu, wait until
when you Try to front, so I can chop into

Your body, just because you try to be basing *Friday the 13th*, I'ma play
Jason No type of joke, gag, game, puzzle, or riddle The name is Big
Daddy, yes, big not little so Define it, here's your walking papers, sign
it And take a walk as the Kane start to talk, 'cause [Chorus 3x]

Ain't no half-steppin

I'm the Big Daddy Kane

My rhymes are so dope and the rappers be hopin To sound like me, so
soon I'll have to open A school of MCin, for those who want to be in
My field and court, then again on second thought To have MCs comin
out sounding so similar It's quite confusing for you to remember the
Originator and boy, do I hate a

Perpetrator, but I'm much greater

The best, oh yes, I guess suggest the rest should fess Don't mess or test
your highness

Unless you just address with best finesse And bless the paragraphs I
manifest Rap prime minister, some say sinister Nonstopping the
groove until when it's the Climax and I max, relax, and chill

Have a break from a take of me acting ill Brain cells are lit, ideas start to
hit Next the formation of words that fit At the table I sit, making it
legit And when my pen hits the paper? Aww, shit!

I stop and stand strong over MCs

And devour with the power of Hercules Or Samson, but I go further the
length 'Cause you could scalp my cameo and I'll still have strength And
no, that's not a myth, and if you try to riff Or get with the man with
the given gift Of gab, your vocab, I'll only ignore Be sleeping on your
rhymes 'til I start to snore You can't awake me, or even make me Fear

you, son, 'cause you can't do me none So, think about it if you're
trying to go When you want to step to me, I think you should know
that [Chorus 3x]

I appear right here and scare and dare A mere musketeer that would dare
to compare Put him in the rear, back there where he can't see clear Get
a beer, idea, or near stare, yeah Sworn to be, want to be competition
Trying to step to me, must be on a mission Up on the stage is where
I'ma get you at You think I'm losing? Pst, picture that!

[Chorus 3x]

Mister Cee, step to me

The name is Big Daddy, you know, as in your father So when you hear a
def rhyme, believe that I'm the author I grab the mic and make MCs
evaporate The party people say, "Damn, that rapper's great"

The creator, conductor of poetry

Et cetera, et cetera, it ain't easy being me I speak clearly so you can
understand Put words together like Letterman

Now that's dictation, proceeding to my innovation Not like the other MCs
that are an imitation Or an animation, a cartoon to me

But when I'm finished, I'm sure that you are soon to see Reality, my secret
technique

Because I always speak with mentality I put my title in your face, dare
you to base And if you try and come get it, yo, I'ma show you who's
with it So if you know like I know, instead of messing around Play like
Roy Rogers and slow down

Just give yourself a break, or someone else will take your title Namely
me, because I'm homicidal

That means murder, 'cause I'm out to hurt aNother MC that try to get with
me, I'll just Break him and bake him and rake him and take him and
mold him and make him Hold up the peace sign, As-Salāmu Alaykum

BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS

Boogie Down Productions consisted of DJ Scott La Rock and KRS-One. The name *KRS-One* is an acronym for “Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone.” He values the power that knowledge confers while he critiques the knowledge that we receive. His is a sound “with a cap and gown,” as he puts it in “Ghetto Music.” But BDP’s purpose was not only pedagogical. KRS’s lyrics move the crowd. He delivers his words like a lava flow—hot and unhurried, but faster than they seem.

BDP can be credited with helping to effect two important changes in rap. First, KRS-One brought West Indian rhythms and diction into his verses, which not only emphasized rap’s historical link to reggae and dancehall but also expanded rap’s sonic range. Second (and often passed over), BDP laid the foundation for gangsta rap. The first of their albums, *Criminal Minded* (1987), had the duo on its cover amid grenades and shotgun shells. *By All Means Necessary* (1988) also featured KRS on the cover with a gun, but the lyrics suggested a more conflicted persona. Songs like “Stop the Violence” show the gangsta archetype blended with radical politics, a revolutionary but gangsta sensibility later built upon by groups like dead prez.

It is finally as a teacher, however, that KRS has most made his mark. Never using “street knowledge” as a means to mystify or merely self-advertise, he makes it organic and substantial, specific and practical. He recommends vegetarianism; he outlines and categorizes hip-hop like a Linnaeus from the Bronx; he critiques “mental pictures, stereotypes, and fake history;” he urges curricular renewal at the secondary-school level; he teaches African American history. His lectures can take the form of disses, rhetorical question-and-answer sessions, self-catechisms, genealogies, and political broadsides. Most of all, though, KRS-One is giving poetry lessons.

POETRY

Well now you’re forced to listen to the teacher and the lesson
Class is in session so you can stop guessing
If this is a tape or a written-down memo
See, I am a professional, this is not a demo
In fact, call it a lecture, a visual picture
Sort of a poetic and rhythm-like mixture
Listen—I’m not dissin but there’s something that you’re missin
Maybe you should touch reality, stop wishin
For beats with plenty bass and lyrics
said in haste If its meaning doesn’t manifest, put it to rest
I am a poet,

you try to show it yet blow it It takes concentration for fresh
communication Observation, that is to see without speaking Take off
your coat, take notes, I am teachin A class, or rather school, 'cause you
need schooling I am not a king or queen, I'm not ruling This is an
introduction to poetry A small dedication to those that might know of
me They might know of you and maybe your gang But one thing's for
sure, neither one of y'all can hang 'Cause, yo, I'm like a arrow and
Scott is the crossbow Say something now—thought so

You seem to be the type that only understand The annihilation and
destruction of the next man That's not poetry, that is insanity It's
simply fantasy, far from reality Poetry is the language of imagination
Poetry is a form of positive creation Difficult, isn't it? The point—
you're missing it Your face is in front of my hand so I'm dissing it Scott
La Rock

Innovating, decorating hip-hop

The beat may drop but not like all the others They just cover while I just
smother Every single stupid mother—wait, wait, brother KRS-One will
have to show another MC or self-proclaimed king or queen Or gang or
crew or solo or team that I mean Business—so tell me, what is this?

See, I come from the Bronx, so just kiss this Boogie Down Productions is
somewhat an experiment The antidote for sucker MCs and they're
fearing it It's self-explanatory, no one's writing for me The poetry I'm
rattling is really not for battling But if you want I will simply change
the program So when I'm done you will simply say "Damn"

So this conversation is somewhat hypothetical Boogie Down Productions
attempts to prove somethin I say hypothetical because it's only theory
My theory, so take a minute now to hear me So what's your problem?
It seems you want to be KRS-Two From my point of view, backtrack,
stop the attack 'Cause KRS-One means simply one KRS

That's it, that's all, solo, single, no more, no less I've built up my
credential financially and mental Anytime I rhyme I request the
instrumental I speak clearly and that's merely Or should I say a mere
help to my career I'm really not into fashion or craze Just the one who
pays and how soon I get a raise You're probably in a daze, acting out
of sympathy Wrote a couple of rhymes and think that you can get with
me But what a pity, I'm rocking New York City And everywhere else
you put the jams on the shelf You as an amateur is outspoken

I'm looking at your face, you seem to be hoping That I might stutter, stop,

or just mess up But everything's live, that's why I don't dress up
Blastmaster KRS—a synonym for fresh I'm the teacher of the class, I do
not pass no test Got DJ Scott La Rock by my side, not in back of me
'Cause we make up the Boogie Down Productions crew faculty Get it
right or train yourself not to bite 'Cause when you bite you have
bitten, when I hear it, that's it I do not contemplate a battle 'cause it
really ain't worth it I'd rather point a pistol at your head and try to
burst it I'm teaching poetry

I'm teaching poetry

Scott La Rock

We're teaching poetry

CRIMINAL MINDED

[First stanza sung to the tune of "Hey Jude"]

Boogie Down Productions

Will always get paid

We'll take the wackest song

And make it better

Remember to let us into your skin

'Cause then you'll begin

To master rhyming, rhyming, rhyming

Criminal minded, you've been blinded Looking for a style like mine, you
can't find it They are the audience, I am the lyricist Sometimes the
suckers on the side gotta hear this Page, a rage, and I'm not in a cage
Free as a bird to fly up out on stage Ain't here for no fronting, just to
say a little somethin You suckers don't like me 'cause you're all about
nothin However, I'm really fascinating to the letter My all-around
performance gets better and better My English grammar comes down
like a hammer You need a style, I need to pull your file I don't beg
favors, you're kissing other people's— I write and produce myself just
as fast Keep my hair like this, got no time for Jheri curls Attracting
only women, got no time for little girls *'Cause girls look so good*

But their brain is not ready, I don't know

I'd rather talk to a woman

'Cause her mind is so steady, so here we go

I'm not a musical maniac or b-boy fanatic I simply made use of what was upstairs in the attic I've listened to these MCs back when I was a kid But I bust more shots than they ever did I mean, this is not the best of KRS, it's just a section But how many times must I point you in the right direction?

You need protection when I'm on the mic Because my mouth is like a nine millimeter windpipe You're a king, I'm a teacher—you're a b-boy, I'm a scholar If this was a class, well, it would go right under drama See, kings lose crowns but teachers stay intelligent Talking big words on the mic, but still irrelevant Especially when you're not college material Wake up every morning to your Lucky Charms cereal DJ Scott La Rock has a college degree Blastmaster KRS writes poetry

I won't go deeper in the subject 'cause that gets me bored It's a shame to know some MCs on the mic are frauds Saying styles like this to create a dis But if you listen, who you dissing? See, I am a musician Rapping on the mic like this to me is fine 'Cause if I really want to battle I will pull out a nine You can see that Scott La Rock and I are mentally binded In other words we're both criminal minded We're not promotin violence, we're just having some fun He's Scott La Rock, I'm KRS-One

Never off beat 'cause it don't make sense Grab the microphone, relaxed and not tense You waited, debated, and now you activated A musical genius that could not be duplicated See, I have the formula for rockin the house If you cannot rock a party do not open your mouth It's that simple, no phony cosmetics for your pimple Take another look because the gear is not wrinkled The K, the R, the S, the O, the N, the E

Saying rhyme for '87, not from 1983

Well versed, to rehearse, in my rhymes I might curse Originality comes first but the suckers get worse Allow me to include I have a very stable mood Poetic education of a high altitude I'm not a MC, so listen—call me poet or musician A genius when it comes to making music with ambition I'm cool, collected with the rhyme I directed Don't wanna be elected as the king of a record Just respected by others as the man with the solution An artist of the '80s came and left his contribution On wax, relax, there's twenty-four tracks After years of rocking parties now I picked up the knack Because everything that flows from out my larynx Takes years of experience and bottles of Becks I cannot seem to recollect the time I didn't have sex Is it real or is it Memorex?

I'm living in a city known as New York State Sucker MCs gotta wait while

I translate I hang with real live dreads with knowledge in their heads
People with ambition and straight-up musicians Although our lives
have been so uprooted I have it included, you all get zooted So take
each letter of the KRS-One Means Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over
Nearly Everyone You look at me and laugh, but this is your class It's
an all-out discussion of the suckers I be crushin So now you are
awakened to the music I be makin Never duplicated and also highly
cultivated Don't get frustrated 'cause nothing has been traded Only
activated, it came out very complicated Not separated from my DJ
You see my voice is now faded, I'll see you folks around the way Criminal
minded

MY PHILOSOPHY

So you're a philosopher?

Yes, yes

I think very deeply

In about four seconds a teacher will begin to speak...

Let us begin—what, where, why, or when Will all be explained like
instructions to a game See, I'm not insane, in fact I'm kinda rational
When I be asking you who is more dramatical This one or that one, the
white one or the black one?

Pick the punk and I'll jump up to attack one KRS-One is just the guy to
lead a crew Right up to your face and dis you Everyone saw me on the
last album cover Holding a pistol, something far from a lover Beside
my brother S-C-O-T-T

I just laughed 'cause no one can defeat me This selection number two,
“My Philosophy”

Number one was “Poetry,” you know it's me It's my philosophy, many
artists gotta learn I'm not flammable, I don't burn

So please stop burnin and learn to earn respect 'Cause that's just what KR
collects See, what do you expect when you rhyme like a soft punk?

You walk down the street and get jumped You gotta have style and learn
to be original And everybody's gonna wanna dis you Like me, we
stood up for the South Bronx And every sucker MC had a response You
think we care? I know that they are on the tip My posse from the
Bronx is thick

And we're real live, we roll correctly A lot of suckers would like to forget me But they can't 'cause like a champ I have got a record Of knocking out the frauds in a second On the mic I believe that you should get loose I haven't come to tell you I've got juice I just produce, create, innovate on a higher level I'll be back but for now just seckle *In about four seconds the teacher will begin to speak...*

I'll play the nine and you play the target You all know my name so I guess I'll just start it Or should I say, "Start this," I'm the artist Styles and new concepts at their hardest Yo, 'cause I'm a teacher and Scott is a scholar It ain't about money 'cause we all make dollars That's why I walk with my head up When I hear wack rhymes I get fed up Rap is like a setup, a lot of games A lot of suckers with colorful names "I'm so-and-so, I'm this, I'm that"

Huh, but they all just wick-wick-wack I'm not white or red or black I'm brown from the Boogie Down

Productions, of course our music be thumpin Others say they're bad, but they're buggin Let me show you something now about hip-hop About D-Nice, Melodie, and Scott La Rock I'll get a pen, a pencil, a marker Mainly what I write is for the average New Yorker Some MCs be talkin and talkin

Tryin to show how black people are walkin But I don't walk this way to portray Or reinforce stereotypes of today Like all my brothers eat chicken and watermelon Talk broken English and drug sellin See, I'm tellin and teaching pure facts The way some act in rap is kind of wack And it lacks creativity and intelligence But they don't care 'cause their company's sellin it It's my philosophy on the industry Don't bother dissin me or even wish that we'd Soften, dilute, or commercialize all the lyrics 'Cause it's about time one of y'all hear it And hear it firsthand from an intelligent brown man A vegetarian, no goat or ham Or chicken or turkey or hamburger 'Cause to me that's suicide, self-murder Let us get back to what we call hip-hop And what it meant to DJ Scott La Rock *In about four seconds the teacher will begin to speak...*

How many MCs must get dissed

Before somebody says, "Don't fuck with Kris!"

This is just one style out of many Like a piggy bank, this is one penny My brother's name is Kenny, that's Kenny Parker My other brother, ICU, is

much darker Boogie Down Productions is made up of teachers The lecture is conducted from the mic into the speaker Who gets weaker? The king or the teacher?

It's not about a salary, it's all about reality Teachers teach and do the world good Kings just rule and most are never understood If you were to rule or govern a certain industry All inside this room right now would be in misery No one would get along nor sing a song 'Cause everyone'd be singing for the king—am I wrong?

S-C-O, what's up? It's me again

Scott La Rock, KRS, BDP again

Many people had the nerve to think that we would end the trend When *Criminal Minded*, an album which is only ten Funky, funky, funky, funky, funky hit records No more than four minutes and some seconds The competition checks and checks and keeps checkin They take the album, take it home, and start sweatin Why? Well, it's simple, to them it's kind of vital To take KRS-One's title

To them I'm like an idol, some type of entity In everybody's rhyme they wanna mention me?

Or rather mention us, me and Scott La Rock But they can get bust, get robbed, get dropped I don't play around, nor do I f' around And you can tell by the bodies that I left around When some clown jumps up to get beat down Broken down to his very last compound See how it sound? A little unrational A lot of MCs like to use the word "dramatical"

Fresh for '88 ... you suckers!

SOUTH BRONX

[Scott La Rock] *Yo, wassup, Blastmaster KRS-One? This jam is kickin.*

[KRS-One] *Word! Yo, what up, D-Nice?*

[D-Nice] *Yo, wassup, Scott La Rock?*

[Scott La Rock]

Yo man, we chillin this funky fresh jam. I wanna tell you a little somethin about us. We're the Boogie Down Productions crew, and due to the fact that no one else out there knew what time it was, we have to tell you a little story

about where we come from.

South Bronx, the South-South Bronx [4x]

[KRS-One]

Many people tell me this style is terrific It is kinda different but let's get
specific KRS-One specialize in music

I'll only use this type of style when I choose it Party people in the place to
be, KRS-One attacks Ya got dropped off MCA 'cause the rhymes you
wrote was wack So you think that hip-hop had its start out in
Queensbridge If you pop that junk up in the Bronx you might not live
'Cause you're in

South Bronx, the South-South Bronx [4x]

I came with Scott La Rock to express one thing I am a teacher and others
are kings If that's a title they earn, well, it's well deserved, but
Without a crown, see, I still burn You settle for a pebble, not a stone
like a rebel KRS-One is the holder of a boulder, money folder You want
a fresh style, let me show ya Now way back in the days when hip-hop
began With Coca La Rock, Kool Herc, and then Bam Beat boys ran to
the latest jam

But when it got shot up they went home and said "Damn There's got to be
a better way to hear our music every day B-boys gettin blown away
but comin outside anyway"

They tried again outside in Cedar Park Power from a street light made the
place dark But, yo, they didn't care, they turned it out I know a few
understand what I'm talkin about Remember Bronx River rollin thick
With Kool DJ Red Alert and Chuck Chillout on the mix When Afrika
Islam was rockin the jams And on the other side of town was a kid
named Flash Patterson and Millbrook projects

Casanova all over, ya couldn't stop it The Nine Lives Crew, the Cypress
Boys The real Rock Steady takin out these toys As odd as it looked, as
wild as it seemed I didn't hear a peep from a place called Queens It
was '76 to 1980

The dreads in Brooklyn was crazy

You couldn't bring out your set with no hip-hop Because the pistols would
go

So why don't you wise up, show all the people In the place that you are
wack

Instead of tryna take out LL

You need to take your homeboys off the crack 'Cause if you don't, well,
then their nerves will become shot And that would leave the job up to
my own Scott La Rock And he's from

South Bronx, the South-South Bronx [8x]

BLACKMAN IN EFFECT

*Wake up! Take the pillow from your head and put a book in it. It's time for the
massive BDP crew at the top of the pile.*

Yo. In the morning I'm yawning, at noon is when I wake up Make up my
bed, break up the bread, and said Scratching my head, "Why am I so
damn intimidating?"

Is it because of laws designed to keep us waiting and waiting Thus hating
all forms of a setback Get back, if you can't understand a rap act This
is the language of the people ready to hear the truth I've got no juice,
'cause I'm not getting juiced To have juice means you kiss and lick a
lot of booty To have respect means you simply knew or knew me
Heard what I had to say and felt as though you'd say that too I'm not
down with a Juice Crew

But anyway, I say today the message I create is great I don't preach hate,
I simply get the record straight It's not the fault of the black race that
we are misplaced We're robbin and killin, your own medicine you
taste You built up a race on the concept of violence Now in '90 you
want silence?

Well, I want science, not silence but science Scientific fact about black
The board of education acts as if its only reality Is talking about a Tom,
Dick, and Harry So now you learn your black history is questions and
answers Every question but the Black Panthers Timbuktu existed when
the caveman existed Why then isn't this listed?

Is it because the black man is the original man?

Or does it mean humanity is African?

I don't know, but these sciences are hidden For some strange reason, it's
forbidden To talk about or converse on a political outburst I don't

believe that I'm the first Or should I say the first one or the first one
that's done Music like "I'm still #1"

But music like that or this is the incredible uplift Those that oppose gets
dissed

But who will oppose the Teacher when society's a wreck?

So check—the blackman in effect

Near the Tigris and Euphrates Valleys in Asia Lies the Garden of Eden
where Adam became a Father to humanity, now don't get mad at me
But according to facts this seems as fantasy 'Cause man, the most
ancient man

Was found thousands of years before Adam began And where he was
found, again, they can't laugh at ya It's right dead-smack in Africa

But due to religious and political power We must be denied the facts every
hour We run to school, tryin to get straight A's Let's take a trip way
back in the days To the first civilization on Earth The Egyptians, givin
birth to

Science, mathematics, and music

Religion, the list goes on, you choose it Egypt was the land of spiritual
blessing Egypt was the land of facts, not guessing People from all over
the world had come To learn from Egypt, Egypt number one So,
people that believe in Greek philosophy Know your facts, Egypt was
the monopoly Greeks had learned from Egyptian masters You might
say "Prove it," well here's the answers 640 to 322

BC originates Greek philosophy

But in that era Greece was at war With themselves and Persia, what's
more Any philosopher at that time was a criminal He'd be killed, very
simple

This indicates that Greece had no respect For science or intellect

So how the hell you created philosophy When you kill philosophers
constantly?

The point is that we descend from kings Science, art, and beautiful things
African history is the world's history This is the missing link and
mystery Once we realize they all are African White will sit down with
black and laugh again So judge not lest ye might be judged By the
judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged Matthew seven, first verse
doesn't budge No man should walk the Earth in sludge If you don't
believe, you can go and check To see how and where the blackman in

effect

DE LA SOUL

Perhaps it was the Day-Glo cover of its debut album. Perhaps it was the surrealism of such titles as “Potholes in My Lawn.” Perhaps it was the fact that even baby boomers could hear snatches of the Turtles and Steely Dan in the mix. It all added up to De La Soul being described at first as a group of hippies. Actually, De La Soul was—and remains—a necessary group of hip-hop eclectics.

De La Soul consists of three members who began performing as high-school students in Long Island: Posdnuos, Trugoy the Dove, and Pacemaster Mase. As part of the Native Tongues Posse—which also included groups like Black Sheep, the Jungle Brothers, and A Tribe Called Quest—they cultivated a shared aesthetic. Their first album, *Three Feet High and Rising* (1989)—produced by Prince Paul, a member of the rap group Stetsasonic—pulled in a wide range of sounds like some crazy magnet in the ear. What made it all function and not merely funny or frivolous was that the lyrics matched the sonic variety with their own wide range of themes, genres, and forms.

On the morbidly named *De La Soul Is Dead* (1991) the daisy on the cover is wilted. But despite the dark humor, the music was flourishing. The second album was more sonically subtle than the first, and the rhymes of Posdnuos and Dove had gained in strength. Another thing that the album added to the group’s repertoire was storytelling. “My Brother’s a Basehead” and “Millie Pulled a Pistol on Santa” both use humor, dialogue, indirection, and fine detail to tell sad tales of misplaced trust and familial abuse.

On the subsequent albums *Buhlōōne Mindstate* (1993) and *Stakes Is High* (1996) the group exhibited artistic growth, consolidation, and transformation. And so De La Soul continues to this day, trailing with them a train of records and a deserved reputation for artistic integrity.

MY BROTHER’S A BASEHEAD

This song does not contain explicit lyrics, but what it does contain is an undesired element. This element is known as the basehead, the lowest of lowest of all elements that exist. And the sad thing is, this particular element ... is me brudda!

[Posdnuos]

Brother, brother, oh, brother of mine We used to be down and partners in
crime From our parents nickname was forged I was the Beaver, you,
Curious George Wanted to be exposed to this and that But curiosity
had killed the cat

At this age no warning was read

But this was the fate that you were fed Throughout high school our minds
we'd waste High off all the cheeba that we could taste Soon you had
converted to nasal sports Every five minutes cocaine you'd snort Told
me that you needed a stronger fix Stepped to the crack scene in '86

Unlike the other drugs where you had control This substance had engulfed
your body and soul Now from me you lost dumb respect

Said you need to put the shit in check Wanted me to believe that you had
tried But your mind and the craving didn't coincide Said there was a
voice inside you that talked It said you shouldn't stop but continue to
walk Now the brother who could handle any drug Had just found the
one that could pull his plug [Dove]

Yo, bro, got another rock for your hiking boots Gonna make you scream
and loop three loops Gonna take you far on the freeway, okay?

Remember that day? Slipped me a smile for a twenty crack vial Guess
what? Time to collect, correct Don't have a dime? It's payback time,
payback time Don't cry the blues 'cause I got bad news Should I stab
ya? Should I punch ya? Should I use my tools?

No, I got another way to earn my defeat, ah!

Slam the child on the hard concrete

Make the bass come out so clear

[Posdnuos]

Brother, brother, stupid brother of mine Started getting high at the age of
nine Now at twenty-one you're lower than low Nowhere to turn,
nowhere to go

My dividends and wares started to disappear Where it ended up, I had an
idea

Bucking you with the quickness reversed intent Instead went to Pop and
gave him the print Now Pop grew tired of being a mouse Finally told
you to get the hell out the house From there mother figure came into

play Claimed for you she saw a better day Now Mom was a product of
Christ's rebirth Thought the only chance was to go to church Quitting
this stuff you had tried before This time you claimed you'd really score
Something I had to see to believe

Put on my suit and to church I weaved *My, my, my. What happened to the
people? The people who used to care about what took place in the world
today? I've been summoned here today to reach the people who still can be
reached, to save the people who still can be saved. Can I get an Amen? Can
I get an Amen? Hit me! Forgive us. Said it's taking over, all it's doin is
taking over, takin over the world. Where them crackers at? Them crackers
that they serve, where they at?*

[Posdnuos]

Bullshit, didn't believe a lick

Knew this fool too long for that to stick Then they gave you benefit of the
doubt Wanted to see if you would work it out First two weeks try
frontin it calm Walked round by readin verses of Psalms Then you
smiles with the funky frowns What do you know, the voice is back in
town Mom was saying God would send it away You and I knew it was
here to stay

'Cause the man help you when you help yourself That meant going to
rehab for your health Finally it went and blew your cork

Heard you moved to the comfortable streets of New York And when my
friends see me and come and ask "Yo, where's your brother at?" I'll be
the first to splash "Yo, he's a basehead"

MILLIE PULLED A PISTOL ON SANTA

"If you will suck my soul, I will lick your funky emotions ..."

[Posdnuos]

This is the stylin for a title that sounds silly But nothing silly 'bout the
triflin times of Millie Millie—a Brooklyn queen originally from Philly
Complete with that accent that made her sound hillbilly Around this
time the slamming joint was "Milk is Chillin"

But even cooler was my social worker Dillon Yeah, I had a social worker
'cause I had some troubles Anyone who'd riff on me, I'd pop their
dome like bubbles He'd bring me to his crib to watch my favorite races

That's how his daughter Millie became one of my favorite faces She had the curves that made you wanna take chances I mean on her, man, I'd love to make advances I guess her father must've got the same feeling I mean, actually finding his own daughter Millie appealing At the time no one knew, but it was a shame That Millie became a victim of the touchy-touchy game [Dove]

“Yo Millie, what's the problem? Lately you've been buggin On your dookie earrings someone must be tuggin You were a dancer who could always be found clubbin Now you're world renowned with the frown you're luggin Come to think, your face look stink when Dill's around you He's your father—what done happen? Did he ground you?

You shouldn't flip on him 'cause Dill is really cool Matter fact, the coolest elder in the school He hooked up a trip to bring us all to Laces He volunteered to play old Santa Claus at Macy's Child, you got the best pops anyone could have Dillon's cool, super-hip, you should be glad”

[Posdnuos]

Yeah, it seemed that Santa's ways was parallel with Dillon But when Millie and him got home, he was more of a villain While she slept in he crept inside her bedroom And he would toss and then would force her to give him headroom Millie tried real hard to let this hell not happen But when she'd fuss, he would just commence to slappin Yo, *Dillon, man, Millie's been out of school for a week, man, what's the deal?*

I guess he was giving Millie's bruises time to heal Of course he told us she was sick and we believed him And at the department store as Santa we would see him And as he smiled, his own child was at home plottin How off the face of this earth she was gonna knock him When I got home I found she had tried to call me My machine had kicked to her —“Hey, how ya doin—so-so-sorry”

I tried to call the honey but her line was busy I guess I'll head to Macy's and bug out on Dillon [Dove]

I received a call from Missus Sick herself I asked her how was she recovering her health She said that what she had to ask would make it seem minute She wanted to talk serious—I said, “Go ahead, shoot”

She claimed I hit the combo dead upon the missile Wanted to know if I could get a loaded pistol That ain't a problem, but why would Millie need one?

She said she wanted her pops Dillon to heed one Ran some style about

him pushing on her privates Look, honey, I don't care if you kick five fits There's no way that you can prove to me that Dill's flip He might breathe a blunt but your jeans he wouldn't rip You're just mad, he's your overseer at school No need to play him out like he's someone cruel She kicked that she would go get it from somewhere else Yeah, whatever you say, go for yourself [Posdnuos]

Macy's department store, the scene for Santa's kisses And all the little brats demanding all of their wishes Time passes by as I wait for my younger brother He has his wish, I waste no time to return him back to mother As I'm jettin Millie floats in like a zombie I ask her what's her problem, all she says is, "Where is he?"

I give a point, she pulls a pistol, people screamin She shouts to Dill he's off to hell 'cause he's a demon None of the kids could understand what was the cause All they could see was a girl holding a pistol on Claus Dillon pleaded mercy, said he didn't mean to Do all the things that her mind could do nothing but cling to Millie bucked him and with the quickness it was over **STAKES IS HIGH**

[Posdnuos]

The instamatic focal point bringing damage to your borough We some brothers from the East with them beats that be thorough Got the solar gravitation so I'm bound to pull it I gets down like brothers are found ducking from bullets Gun control means using both hands in my land Where it's all about the cautious livin Migrating to a higher form of consequence, compliments Of strugglin, that shouldn't be notable Man, every word I say should be a hip-hop quotable [Dove]

I'm sick of bitches shakin asses, I'm sick of talkin about blunts Sick of Versace glasses, sick of slang, sick of Half-ass awards shows, sick of name-brand clothes Sick of R & B bitches over bullshit tracks Cocaine and crack, which brings sickness to blacks Sick of swell' head rappers with their sicker-than raps Claps and gats makin the whole sick world collapse The facts are gettin sick, even sicker perhaps I stick-a-bush to make a bundle to escape the synapse [Posdnuos]

Man, life can get all up in your ass Baby, you betta work it out. Let me tell you What it's all about, a skin not considered equal A meteor has more right than my people Who be wastin time screaming who they've hated That's why the Native Tongues has officially been reinstated (Vibes ... vibrations)

Stakes is high

(Higher than high)

You know them stakes is high

(Higher than high)

When we talkin 'bout the

(Vibes ... vibrations)

Stakes is high, y'all know them stakes is high When we dealin with the

(Vibes ... vibrations)

Stakes is high

(Hey yo, what about that love?)

[Posdnuos]

Yo, it's about love for cars, love for funds Loving to love mad sex, loving
to love guns Love for opposite, love for fame and wealth Love for the
fact of no longer lovin yourself, kid We living in them days of the
man-made ways Where every aspect is vivid. These brothers No longer
talk shit; aiyo, these niggas live it 'Bout to give it to you twenty-four
seven on the microphone Plug One translating the zone

No offense to a player, but, yo, I don't play And if you take offense, fuck
it, got to be that way Jay Dee, Dove show your love, what you got to
say?

[Dove w/Jay Dee]

I say Gs are making figures at a high regard And niggas dying for it
nowadays ain't hard Investing in fantasies and not God

Welcome to reality—see, times is hard People try to snatch the credit, but
can't claim the card Showing out in videos, saying they costarred See,
shit like that'll make your mama cry Better watch the way you spend
it, 'cause the stakes is high Y'all know them stakes is high

When we talkin 'bout the

(Vibes ... vibrations)

Stakes is high

[Dove]

I think that smiling in public is against the law 'Cause love don't get you
through life no more It's who you know and "How you, son?" and how
you gettin in?

And who the man holding heat? Hey, yo, and how was the skins?

And how high? Yo, what up, huh? I heard you caught a body Seem like every man and woman share the life of John Gotti (But they ain't organized!)

Mixing crimes with life enzymes

Taking the big scout route and niggas no doubt Better than they know their daughters and their sons (Oh, boy) [Posdnuos]

Yo, people go through pain and still don't gain Positive contact just like my main man Who got others cleaning up his physical influence His mind got congested, he got the nine and blew it Neighborhoods are now 'hoods 'cause nobody's neighbors Just animals surviving with that animal behavior Under I who be rhyming from dark to light sky Experiments when needles and skin connect No wonder where we live is called the projects When them stakes is high you damn sure try to do Anything to get the piece of the pie Electrify, even die for the cash

But at last we be out even though you wantin more This issue is closed like an elevator door But soon reopened once we get to the next floor where the ...

(Vibes ... vibrations)

Stakes is high

You know them stakes is high

When we dealin with the

(Vibes ... vibrations)

Stakes is high

Stakes is high, come on

ERIC B. & RAKIM

Rakim is among the most influential artists in the history of rap, with a style that is as relevant today as it was when he first emerged in the mid-1980s. Along with Eric B., he forged one of the most potent duos in hip-hop history, recording four classic albums between 1987 and 1992.

As a young man, Rakim played the saxophone, a skill to which he ascribes some of his rhythmic sensibility and timing as a rapper. He finds lyrical inspiration in his urban surroundings, in popular culture, and in the arcane lore of the Five-Percent Nation, or Nation of Gods and Earths, a derivative of the Nation of Islam that teaches a philosophy including knowledge of self, faith in the black man as God, and the division of the human population into categories of awareness. After joining the Nation of Gods and Earths in 1985, Rakim began liberally lacing his lyrics with its terminology.

Rakim's nickname, the GOD MC, is a nod not only to his Five-Percenter ideology but also to the high esteem in which he is held as a lyricist. Even before one considers his poetics, Rakim distinguishes himself with his delivery and his voice—a rich and resonant baritone. Inspired by the jazz instrumentalists he studied as a youth, he practices careful enunciation, mindful of giving rhythmic shape to his lines. At the same time, his delivery is not as highly stylized as Eminem or Lil Wayne but instead maintains a calm, controlled cadence that at times can even come across as deadpan.

Rakim's signal poetic achievements are in rhyme and its attendant aural effects like alliteration, assonance, and consonance. He brought scientific attention to the craft of MCing, employing a host of unusual compositional methods over the years that speak to his desire for lyrical distinction. Among them is his habit of writing the last line of a given verse first, then composing the preceding lines with that end in mind. Wishing to go beyond the old school strictures of end rhyme, Rakim developed a technique whereby he would split each individual line within a given verse in half, then conclude both the middle section and the end with rhymes. The result is a densely layered lyric, rich with internal rhymes and sonic echoes. Over time, Rakim has expanded his range of multisyllabic rhymes and slant rhymes. One can hear these techniques on

such signature songs as “Paid in Full,” “My Melody,” and “Lyrics of Fury,” as well as many more.

ERIC B. IS PRESIDENT

I came in the door, I said it before I never let the mic magnetize me no more
But it's biting me, fighting me, inviting me to rhyme I can't hold it back,
I'm looking for the line Taking off my coat, clearing my throat
The rhyme will be kickin until I hit my last note My mind remains to find
all kind of ideas Self-esteem makes it seem like a thought took years to build
But still say a rhyme after the next one Prepared, never scared, I'll just bless one
And you know that I'm the soloist

So Eric B., make 'em clap to this

I don't bug out or chill or be acting ill No tricks in '86, it's time to build
Eric B., easy on the cut, no mistakes allowed 'Cause to me, MC means move the crowd
I made it easy to dance to this

But can you detect what's coming next from the flex of the wrist?

Say “indeed,” then I proceed 'cause my man made a mix If he bleed he won't need no Band-Aid to fix
His fingertips, so I rhyme until there's no rhymes left I hurry up because the cut'll make him bleed to death
But he's kicking it, 'cause it ain't no half-steppin The party is live, the rhyme can't be kept in
Side of me, eruptin, just like a volcano It ain't the everyday style or the same old rhyme 'Cause I'm better than the rest of them
Eric B. is on the cut and my name is Rakim Go get a girl and get soft and warm Don't get excited, you've been invited to a Quiet Storm
But now it's out of hand 'cause you told me you hate me And then you ask what have I done lately First you said all you want is love and affection
“Let me be your angel and I'll be your protection”

Take you out, buy you all kind of things I must've got you too hot and burned off your wings
You caught an attitude, you need food to eat up I'm scheming like I'm dreaming on a couch with my feet up
You scream I'm lazy. You must be crazy Thought I was a doughnut, you tried to glaze me **PAID IN FULL**

Thinkin of a master plan

'Cause ain't nothin but sweat inside my hand So I dig into my pocket, all my money is spent
So I dig deeper but still comin up with lint So I start my mission, leave my residence Thinkin, “How could I get some dead presidents?”

I need money, I used to be a stick-up kid So I think of all the devious things I did I used to roll up: “This is a hold up, ain’t nothin funny Stop smiling, be still, don’t nothin move but the money”

But now I learned to earn ’cause I’m righteous I feel great, so maybe I might just Search for a nine to five

If I strive, then maybe I’ll stay alive So I walk up the street whistlin this Feelin out of place, ’cause, man, do I miss A pen and a paper, a stereo, a tape of Me and Eric B. and a nice big plate of Fish, which is my favorite dish

But without no money it’s still a wish ’Cause I don’t like to dream about gettin paid So I dig into the books of the rhymes that I made So now’s the test to see if I got pull Hit the studio, ’cause I’m paid in full **MY MELODY**

Turn up the bass, check out my melody, hand out a cigar I’m lettin knowledge be born and my name’s the R

A-K-I-M, not like the rest of them, I’m not on the list That’s what I’m sayin, I drop science like a scientist My melody’s in a code, the very next episode Has the mic often distortin, ready to explode I keep the mic at Fahrenheit, freeze MCs to make ’em colder The listener’s system is kickin like solar As I memorize, advertise, like a poet Keep you goin when I’m flowin, smooth enough, you know it But rough, that’s why the moral of my story I tell’ll be Nobody beats the R, check out my melody So what, I’m a microphone fiend, addicted soon as I seen One of these, for MCs, so they don’t have to scream I couldn’t wait to take the mic, flow into it to test it Let my melody play, then a record suggested I’m droppin bombs, but I stay peace and calm Any MC that disagree with me, wave your arm And I’ll break, when I’m through breakin, I’ll leave you broke Drop the mic when I’m finished and watch it smoke So stand back, you wanna rap? All of that can wait I won’t push, I won’t beat around the bush I wanna break upon those who are not supposed to You might try but you can’t get close to Because I’m number one, competition is none I’m measured with the heat that’s made by sun Whether playin ball or bobbin in the hall Or just writin my name in graffiti on the wall They shouldn’t have told me you said you control me So now a contest is what you owe me Pull out your money, pull out your cut Pull up a chair ...

My name is Rakim Allah and R & A stands for Ra Switch it around—it still comes out R

So easily will I E-M-C-E-E

My repetition of words is “check out my melody”

Some bass and treble is moist, scratchin and cuttin a voice And when it's mine, that's when the rhyme is always choice I wouldn't have came to say my name and run the same weak shit Puttin blurbs and slurs and words that don't fit in a rhyme Why waste time on the microphone?

I take this more serious than just a poem Rockin party to party, backyard to yard Now tear it up, y'all, and bless the mic for the gods Check out my melody

The rhyme is rugged, at the same time sharp I can swing off anything, even a string of a harp Just turn it on and start rockin, mine, no introduction 'Til I finish droppin science, no interruption When I approach, I exercise like a coach Usin a melody and add numerous of notes With the mic and the R-A-K-I-M

Is attached, like a match I will strike again Rhymes are poetically kept and alphabetically stepped Put in an order to pursue with the momentum, except I say one rhyme out of order, a longer rhyme shorter Or pause ... but don't stop the tape recorder Check out my melody

I'm not a regular competitor, first-rhyme editor Melody arranger, poet, *et cetera* Extra events, the grand-finale-like bonus I am the man they call the Microphonist With wisdom, which means wise words bein spoken Too many at one time, watch the mic start smokin I came to express the rap I manifest Stand in my way and I'll veto, in other words protest MCs that wanna be dissed, they're gonna Be dissed if they don't get from in front of All they can go get is me a glass of Moët A hard time: sip your juice and watch a smooth poet I take seven MCs, put 'em in a line And add seven more brothers who think they can rhyme Well, it'll take seven more before I go for mine Now that's twenty-one MCs ate up at the same time Easy does it, do it easy, that's what I'm doin No fessin, no messin around, no chewin No robbin, no buyin, bitin, why bother?

This slob will stop tryin, fightin to follow My unusual style will confuse you a while If I was water, I'd flow in the Nile So many rhymes, you won't have time to go for yours Just because of applause I have to pause Right after tonight is when I prepare To catch another sucker-duck MC out there 'Cause my strategy has to be tragedy, catastrophe

And after this you'll call me "Your Majesty." My melody ...

Check out my melody

Yes, my melody

Marley Marl synthesized it, I memorize it Eric B. made a cut, then
advertised it My melody's created for MCs in the place They try to
listen 'cause I'm dissin them so pick up your face Shook off your neck,
'cause you try to detect my pace Now you're buggin, almost doggin off
my rhyme-like bass The melody that I'm stylin, smooth as a violin
Rough enough to break New York from Long Island My wisdom is
swift, no matter if

My momentum is slow, MCs still stand stiff I'm genuine like leather,
inclined to be clever MCs, you'll beat the R, I say, "Oh, never"

So Eric B., cut it easily

And ... check out my melody

I AIN'T NO JOKE

I ain't no joke, I used to let the mic smoke Now I slam it when I'm done
and make sure it's broke When I'm gone, no one gets on, 'cause I
won't let Nobody press up and mess up the scene I set I like to stand in
a crowd and watch the people wonder, "Damn!"

But think about it, then you understand I'm just an addict, addicted to
music Maybe it's a habit, I gotta use it

Even if it's jazz or the Quiet Storm I hook a beat up, convert it into hip-
hop form Write a rhyme in graffiti in every show you see me in Deep
concentration, 'cause I'm no comedian Jokers are wild, if you wanna
be tame I treat you like a child, then you're gonna be named Another
enemy, not even a friend of me 'Cause you'll get fried in the end when
you pretend to be Competing, 'cause I just put your mind on pause
And I complete when you compare my rhyme with yours I wake you
up and as I stare in your face you seem stunned, remember me The
one you got your idea from?

But soon you start to suffer, the tune'll get rougher When you start to
stutter, that's when you had enough of Biting, it'll make you choke,
you can't provoke You can't cope, you should have broke because I
ain't no joke I got a question, as serious as cancer: Who can keep the

average dancer

Hyper as a heart attack, nobody's smiling 'Cause you're expressin the
rhyme that I'm styling This is what we all sit down to write You can't
make it so you take it home, break it and bite Use pieces and bits of all
my hip-hop hits Get the style down pat then it's time to switch Put my
tape on pause and add some more to yours Then you figured you're
ready for the neighborhood tours An E-M-C-E-E, don't even try to be

When you come up to speak, don't even lie to me You like to exaggerate,
dream and imagine Then change the rhyme around that can
aggravate me So when you see me come up, freeze

Or you'll be one of those seven MCs They think that I'm a new jack, but
only if they knew that They who think wrong are they who can't do
that Style that I'm doing, they might ruin Patterns of paragraphs based
on you and Your offbeat DJ, if anything he play Sound familiar, I'll
wait 'til E say "Play 'em," so I'ma have to dis. You broke You could get
a smack for this—I ain't no joke I hold the microphone like a grudge
B'll hold the record so the needle don't budge I hold a conversation
'cause what I invent I nominated my DJ the president

When I MC I'll keep a freestyle going steadily So pucker up and whistle
"My Melody"

But whatever you do, don't miss one There'll be another rough rhyme
after this one Before you know it, you're following and fiendin
Waiting for the punch line to get the meanin Like before, the moral of
my story I'm tellin Nobody beats the R, so stop yellin

Save it, put it in your pocket for later 'Cause I'm movin the crowd and B'll
wreck the fader No interruptions 'til the mic is broke When I'm gone,
then you can joke

'Cause everything is real on a serious tip Keep playing and I get furious
quick And I take you for a walk through hell Freeze your dome, then
watch your eyeballs swell Guide you out of triple-stage darkness When
it get dark again, then I'ma spark this Microphone, 'cause the heat is
on, you see smoke And I'm finished when the beat is gone—I'm no
joke **MICROPHONE FIEND**

I was a fiend before I became a teen I melted microphones instead of
cones of ice cream Music orientated, so when hip-hop was originated
Fitted like pieces of puzzles, complicated 'Cause I grab the mic and try
to say, "Yes, y'all"

They try to take it, and say that I'm too small Cool, 'cause I don't get

upset

I kick a hole in the speaker, pull the plug, then I jet Back to the lab—
without a mic to grab So then I add all the rhymes I had

One after the other one, then I make another one To dis the opposite then
ask if the brother's done I get a craving like I fiend for nicotine But I
don't need a cigarette, know what I mean?

I'm raging, ripping up the stage and Don't I sound amazing? 'Cause every
rhyme is made and Thought of, 'cause it's sort of an addiction
Magnetized by the mixing

Vocals, vocabulary, and verses, just stuck in The mic is a Drano, volcano's
eruptin Rhymes overflowing, gradually growing Everything is written
in the cold so it can coin-Cide, my thoughts to guide Forty-eight tracks
to slide

The invincible microphone fiend Rakim Spread the word, 'cause I'm in
E-F-F-E-C-T

A smooth operator operating correctly But back to the problem, I got a
habit You can't solve it, silly rabbit

The prescription is a hypertone that's thorough when I fiend for a
microphone, like heroin Soon as the bass kicks, I need a fix Give me a
stage and a mic and a mix And I'll put you in a mood or is it a state of
Unawareness? Beware, it's the reanimator A menace to a microphone,
a lethal weapon Or assassinator, if the people ain't steppin You'll see
a part of me that you never seen When I'm fiending for a microphone,
I'm the microphone fiend After twelve, I'm worse than a Gremlin Feed
me hip-hop and I start trembling The thrill of suspense is intense,
you're horrified But this ain't the cinemas or *Tales from the Darkside*

By any means necessary, this is what has to be done Make way, 'cause
here I come

My DJ cuts material

Grand Imperial

It's a must that I bust any mic you hand to me It's inherited, it runs in the
family I wrote the rhyme that broke the bull's back If that don't slow
'em up, I carry a full pack Now I don't want to have to let off, you
should have kept off You didn't keep the stage warm, step off Ladies
and gentlemen, you're about to see A pastime hobby about to be

Taken to the maximum, I can't relax, see I'm hype as a hyper-chondriac
'cause the rap be one Hell of a antidote, something you can't smoke

More than dope, you try to move away but you can't, you're broke
More than cracked up, you should have backed up For those that act
up need to be more than smacked up Any entertainer, I got a torture
chamber One on one and I'm the remainder

So close your eyes and hold your breath And I'ma hit you with the blow of
death Before you go, you'll remember you seen The fiend of a
microphone, I'm the microphone fiend **LYRICS OF FURY**

I'm rated R ... this is a warning, ya better void Poets are paranoid, DJs
destroyed

'Cause I came back to attack others in spite Strike like lightnin, it's quite
frightenin But don't be afraid in the dark, in a park Not a scream or a
cry, or a bark, more like a spark Ya tremble like a alcoholic, muscles
tighten up What's that? Lighten up. You see a sight but Suddenly you
feel like you're in a horror flick You grab your heart and wish for
tomorrow quick Music's the clue, when I come you're warned
Apocalypse Now, when I'm done, you're gone Haven't you ever heard
of a MC murderer?

This is a death penalty and I'm servin a Death wish, so come on, step to
this Hysterical idea for a lyrical professional Friday the thirteenth,
walking down Elm Street You come in my realm, ya get beat

This is off limits, so your visions are blurry All ya see is the meters of the
volume, pumpin "Lyrics of Fury"

A furified freestyle ...

Terror in the styles, never error-files Indeed, I'm known to exile
For those that oppose to be level or next to this I ain't a devil and this
ain't *The Exorcist*

Worse than a nightmare, you don't have to sleep a wink The pain's a
migraine every time ya think Flashbacks interfere, ya start to hear The
R-A-K-I-M in your ear

Then the beat's hysterical, that makes Eric go Get a ax and chops the
wack, soon the lyrical Format is furier, faces of death remain MCs
decaying, 'cause they never stayed The scene of a crime every night at
the show The fiend of a rhyme on the mic that you know It's only one
capable, breaks the unbreakable Melodies unmakable, pattern
unescapable A horn if you want the style I possess I bless the child, the
Earth, the gods, and bomb the rest For those that envy a MC it can be

Hazardous to your health so be friendly A matter of life and death, just
like a Etch-A-Sketch Shake 'til you're clear, make it disappear, make
the next After the ceremony, let the rhyme rest in peace If not, a soul'll
release

The scene is re-created, reincarnated Updated, I'm glad you made it
'Cause you're about to see a disastrous sight A performance never again
performed on a mic: "Lyrics of Fury"

A furified freestyle ...

The R is in the house, too much tension Make sure the system's loud when
I mention Phrases that's fearsome, you want to hear some Sounds that
not only pound but please your eardrum I sit back and observe the
whole scenery Then nonchalantly tell you what it mean to me Strictly
business, I'm quickly in this mood And I don't care if the whole crowd's
a witness I'ma tear you apart but I'ma spare you a heart Program it to
the speed of the rhyme, prepare to start Rhythm's out of the radius,
insane, it's the craziest Musical madness MC ever made, see it's Now
an emergency, open-heart surgery Open your mind, you will find
every word'll be Furier than ever, I remain the future Battle's
tempting, whatever suits ya From words to sentence, there's no
resemblance You think you're rougher, then suffer the consequences
I'm never dying, terrifying results I wake ya with hundreds of
thousands of volts Mic-to-mouth resuscitation, rhythm with radiation
Novocain ease the pain, it might save him If not, Eric B.'s the judge,
the crowd's the jury How do I plead to homicide? Lyrics of Fury!

A furified freestyle ...

GANG STARR

Although he has produced beats for many of the biggest names in the game, DJ Premier's deepest and longest-lasting partnership was with the rapper Guru under the name Gang Starr. They debuted with *No More Mr. Nice Guy* (1989) and followed it with *Step in the Arena* (1990). The second album's title track elaborates on the concept of rap as a battle. Moving through a medieval British world to the Coliseum of ancient Rome, the song ends in an arena of another sort, a place we buy tickets to enter to hear rhymes styled as battle.

This historicizing expansion of a common metaphor into a conceit is joined on the album by "Just to Get a Rep" one of rap's best and most terrible stories. The terror there is Guru's plain reportage of how nonchalantly the desire to be known, respected, and feared by young men with little besides their reputations to bank on becomes another man's death.

Gang Starr's third album, *Daily Operation* (1992), continued the style of Guru's smoothly delivered yet sonically dense lyrics and Premier's impeccable beats. Three more Gang Starr releases followed in the 1990s. Throughout that time Premier was spreading around his gifts for the benefit of other rappers, while Guru was releasing his influential *Jazzmatazz* albums, which asserted the connection between rap and jazz, another rich African American contribution to the world's music.

STEP IN THE ARENA

Once you step in the arena, cheater, you're gonna be a-Mazed when you
gaze at the armor on this leader Fully clad and glad to fight a cause, I
won't pause Fear is a joke, slowpoke, I'm like claws that'll rip 'Cause
your gift is merely flesh

Superficial, and I wish you would give it a rest But if you don't, I'll
unsheath my Excalibur Like a noble knight, so meet ya challenger A
true hero, while you're a true zero Gettin beat to a pulp so that you
can't run for help I heard a gulp in your throat, 'cause you hope that
I'll be merciful But coo-cluck, I made you strut as I rehearse a few
Battle drills and watch your bladder spill Yellow fluid, check how I
mellowly do it Face defeat to this beat, you can tell I'm into it As I'm
pullin out my lance to kill you and advance to The winner's throne,

'cause I own you once you Step in the arena

In the arena, or rather coliseum

There's people gatherin by multitudes to see one Perpetrator fall to the dust after the other Quickly disposed of at the hand of a known brother Born with the art in his heart that is Spartacus And one-to-one combat, Jack, just the thought of this Matchup makes Gang Starr wanna snatch up One or two phrases from the new book with new pages Of rhymes that are built like a chariot Dope vocals carry it to the battle set If a beat was a princess, I would marry it But now I must bow to the crowd as I stand proud Victorious, glorious—understand now?

'Cause battles and wars and much fights I have been through One MC got beheaded and you can, too

Forget it, 'cause you'd rather be just a spectator An onlooker, afraid you may get slayed or Struck by a blow from a mic gladiator I bet you that later you might be sad that you played yourself 'Cause you stepped up, chest puffed out And in just one lyric you got snuffed out 'Cause rhymin is serious, I'm strong, I'm like Hercules You'll get hurt with these lines, close the curtains, please The suckers can jet 'cause I wreck once you step In the arena

In the arena or forum, weak MCs I will floor 'em Causin mayhem, I'll slay them and the blood'll be pourin Furthermore, I implore that as a soldier of war I go in only to win and be the holder of more Trophies, titles, and triumphs, 'cause I dump all the sly chumps Never choosin to lose my spot, not once For the mere idea of an opponent that I fear Is foolish utterly, I mean but none'll be Tryin to toy with a destroyer of many You shitted your pants 'cause you can't think of any Foe that can step to this concept so

You better sit again, citizen, weak MCs, I get rid of them Watch the way they get distraught when they get caught In the worst positions, 'cause they didn't listen and tried Goin up against a hungry killer who's itchin To maim and murder those who claimed that they were the Toughest ones, they get done once they step In the arena

JUST TO GET A REP

Brothers are amused by others brothers' reps But the thing they know best

is where the gun is kept 'Cause in the night you'll feel fright And at the
sight of a four-fifth I guess you just might Wanna do a dance or two
'Cause he could maybe bust you for self or with a crew No matter if you or
your brother's a star He could pop you in check without a getaway car
And some might say that he's a dummy
But he's sticking you and taking all of your money It's a daily operation
He might be loose in the park or lurking at the train station Mad brothers
know his name
So he thinks he got a little fame from the stick-up game And while we're
blaming society
He's at a party with his man
They got their eye on the gold chain
That the next man's wearing
It looks big but they ain't staring
Just thinking of a way and when to get the brother They'll be long gone
before the kid recovers And back around the way, he'll have the chain
on his neck Claimin respect, just to get a rep

Ten brothers in a circle had the kid trapped The one with the hoodie said,
"We'll hurt you If you don't run out your dues and pay Give up the
Rolex watch or you won't see another day"
See, they were on the attack and one said "Yo, you wanna make this to a
homicide rap?
Make it fast so we can be on our way
Kick in the rings and everything, okay?"
The kid was nervous and flinchin
And little Shorty with the .38, yo, he was inchin Closer and closer, put the
gun to his head Shorty was down to catch a body instead Money was
scared so he panicked
Took off his link and his rings and ran frantic But Shorty said, "Nah,"
pulled the trigger and stepped It was nothing, he did it just to get a
rep The rep grows bigger, now he's known for his trigger finger Rollin
with troops of his sons like a gangster figure He's near the peak of his
crazy career His posse's a nightmare, mackin jewels and crazy gear
But as we know, the things we do come back And Shorty's not peepin,
others are steamin to counteract Because the kid that got shot didn't

perish, so He pulls up in the Jeep with tinted windows Too late—
Shorty was caught in the mix His time ran out, his number came up,
and that's it You know the rest, so don't front, the plan has been upset
Some brothers gotta go out just to get a rep **WORDS I MANIFEST**
(REMIX)

I profess and I don't jest, 'cause the words I manifest They will take you,
sedate you, and I will stress upon You the need for you all to feed your
Minds and souls, so you can lead yourSelf to peace, I got a real
objective here I am effective here, 'cause I select a clear Method for all
—suckers I maul, they fall and crawl Into the pit of purgatory

I go for glory, I'm takin inventory

Countin all the tough-luck ducks while I narrate Relate and equate, dictate
and debate 'Cause my fate is to be cold makin history I use sincerity
but I'll still bury the Doubts and questions of all the skeptics I'm kickin
clout and I'll even bet this Is true—there's nothing so-so 'cause I know
Right about this minute, I'm in it, admit it, I did it For you, 'cause this
is what I'm into So chill while I instill that we all must fulfill The
proper mission for us, and yo, this is a must Using lines of my rhymes I
attest

These are the words that I manifest, I manifest I suggest you take a rest
for the words I manifest They will scold you and mold you, while I
impress upon You the fact that I use my tact at

Rhyming, cold-climbin and chill while I attract that Girl you're with, I got a
sincere quality I give her all of me, 'cause you're too small to be Tryin
to riff, so let me uplift and shift my gift Let's go to the fullest capacity

I got tenacity because I have to be

The brother who must live and give with much insight Foresight to ignite,
excite, and delight And you might gain from it or feel pain from it
Because I'm ultimate and I'm about to let off Knowledge, wisdom,
understanding

Truth—we cool, so won't you throw a hand in The air, put up a peace
sign and please find That though we're feeling good, we should, we
could, we would Stop—think for a moment, okay?

And then sway while I convey that we must do away With all the stress
and the strife, God bless your life And use kindness and never
blindness

And you will find that this perspective is best, check it out These are the

words that I manifest, I manifest I convey that what I say will awaken
you today Have you jockin while I'm talkin, but anyway That you put
it, I give you lyrics to live to Righteousness rules, so I forgive you this
time For you are being very ignorant

That's insignificant, I guess you figured and Hoped you'd be dope as me,
ID, you flee Because the pressure's too much for you I'm your
professor, I got the touch to do More than the rest who fess and can't
compete I'm elite, I'll defeat, delete and mistreat Make mincemeat of
other fools, 'cause I'm the brother who'll Snatch up the funds and make
lonely ones I meant it, really, 'cause I'm clearly obsessed and I These
are the words that I manifest, I manifest

ICE-T

Taking his name from the pimp turned novelist Iceberg Slim, Ice-T cut a larger-than-life figure. In the spirit of his namesake, Ice-T early on developed a pimp persona in such songs as “Somebody Gotta Do It (Pimpin’ Ain’t Easy).” More pronounced, however, was his role in developing the persona of the West Coast gangsta. “6 ’N the Mornin’” is a gangsta rap classic and displays Ice-T’s success in exploiting a series of genres. The song is an aubade, as it begins at the crack of dawn, and partakes of the picaresque as it moves through its series of episodes. Each episode is contained in a discrete stanza, but each stanza advances the story. The song’s chronology spans a couple of complete days and also encompasses a significant jail term.

In the years following *Rhyme Pays* (1987), Ice-T’s work got more realistic (sometimes taking on a documentary-like feel, as in “Colors”), more political (as in 1989’s *The Iceberg/ Freedom of Speech ... Just Watch What You Say*), and even more historical (1991’s *O.G.: Original Gangster*). His rap-rock group Body Count released the deliberately provocative “Cop Killer” in 1992, and his performance with Jane’s Addiction front man Perry Farrell of Sly Stone’s “Don’t Call Me Nigger, Whitey” on the first Lollapalooza tour was some of the most nerve-touching racial theater of the decade.

6 ’N THE MORNIN’

6 ’n the mornin, police at my door
Fresh Adidas squeak across the
bathroom floor
Out my back window I make my escape
Didn’t even
get a chance to grab my old school tape
Mad with no music but happy
’cause free
And the streets to a player is the place to be
Got a knot in
my pocket weighing at least a grand
Gold on my neck, my pistol’s
close at hand
I’m a self-made monster of the city streets
Remotely
controlled by hard hip-hop beats
But just living in the city is a serious
task
Didn’t know what the cops wanted,
didn’t have time to ask
Word

Seen my homeboys cooling way, way out
Told ’em ’bout my morning, cold
bugged ’em out
Shot a little dice ’til my knees got sore
Kicked around
some stories ’bout the night before
Posse to the corner where the fly
girls chill
Threw action at some freaks ’til one bitch got ill
She started
acting silly, simply would not quit
Called us all punk pussies, said we

all weren't shit As we walked over to her, ho continued to speak So we
beat the bitch down in the goddamn street But just living in the city is
a serious task Bitch didn't know what hit her, didn't have time to ask
Word

Continued clockin freaks with immense posteriors Rolling in a Blazer with
a Louis interior Solid gold, the ride was raw

Bust a left turn, was on Crenshaw

Sean-E-Sean was the driver, known to give freaks hell Had a beeper going
off like a high-school bell Looked in the mirror, what did we see?

Fucking blue lights, LAPD

Pigs searched our car, their day was made Found a Uzi, .44, and a hand
grenade Threw us in the county, high power block No freaks to see, no
beats to rock Didn't want trouble, but the shit must fly Squabbled with
this sucker, shanked him in the eye But just living in the county is a
serious task Nigga didn't know what happened, didn't have time to ask
Back on the streets after five and a deuce Seven years later, but still
had the juice My homeboy Hen put me up on the track Told me E's
rolling villain, BJ's got the sack Bruce is a giant, Nat C's clocking
dough Be-Bop's a pimp, my old freak's a ho The Batterram's rolling,
rocks are the thing Life has no meaning and money is king Then he
looked at me slowly and Hen had the grin He said, "Man, you out
early, we thought you got ten"

Opened up his safe, kicked me down with cold cash Knew I would get
busy, he didn't waste time to ask Word

I bought a Benz with the money, the rest went on clothes Went to the
strip, start pimpin the hoes My hair had grew long on my seven-year
stay When I got it done, on my shoulders it lay Hard from the joint but
fly to my heart I didn't want trouble but the shit had to start Out with
my crew, some punks got loud Shotgun blasts echoed through the
crowd Six punks hit, two punks died

All casualties were applied to their side Human lives had to pass just for
talking much trash We didn't know who they were, no one had time to
ask Word

SWAT team leader yelled, "Hit the floor!"

Reached in my pocket, pulled my .44

Dove across the room, peeped out the window Twenty cops jumped
behind a Pinto

Out the back door like some damn track stars Broke down a alley, jumped
into a car Suckers didn't even see us, they musta been blind Black wire
touched red, the car was mine We hadn't done nothin but some suckers
got shot Hit the first turn, goddamn roadblock Broke through the block
and we did it fast Cops would've shot us on sight, they wouldn't of
took time to ask Word

The rollers gave chase at a serious speed One more conviction was all I
need This shit was for real, it was no la-di-da-di 'Cause the boys had to
pin the shit on somebody And me and my crew, we were known to get
ill We carried heat for protection but not to kill We bust a corner doing
sixty, one police car spun And all I was thinking was murder one Bust
a move into an alley and did it right And me and my crew were gone
into the night Broke to my old lady's, who drew me a bath She didn't
even know what happened, didn't care, didn't ask Word

We made love like crazy on top of the sheets This girlie was my whirly, a
natural freak She ran her tongue over each and every part of me Then
she rocked my Amadeus while I watched TV

A technician with a mission, that's what she was If there had been a
crowd she would've gotten applause This girl did everything on earth
to me that could be done The she backed off and teased me so I
couldn't come Then she cold got stupid, pushed me on the floor Had
me begging to stop while I was screaming for more After she waxed
my body, she let me crash She knew her loving was def, she didn't
waste time to ask Word

Up the next morning feeling good as hell Sleeping with the girlie sho'
beats a cell Hit the boulevard in my AMG

Hoes catching whiplash trying to glimpse the T

Ring on my mobile—yes, cellular

Got to have a phone when I'm in my car With my homeboy Red, some say
he's insane Broke his bitch jaw for smokin 'caine Told me to meet him
at the airport Said he's jumping bail, said he just left court Caught the
first thing smokin in a serious dash We didn't know where we were
going, didn't care, didn't ask Fell asleep on the plane and so did he
Woke up chilling in NYC

Called up my posse when I got there Hit the Latin Quarter and Union
Square Rooftop, Devil's Nest—the rest we passed Back door at the
Palladium just for class About four A.M. we crashed the deuce We never
catch static 'cause my boy's got juice Deuced it to the Bronx to rest our
heads Where a shoot-out jumped off, nine people lay dead It sounded
like it happened with a MAC-10 blast But it was 6 'n the mornin', we
didn't wake up to ask Word

COLORS

[Chorus]

Colors, Colors, Colors [4x]

I am a nightmare walkin, psychopath talkin King of my jungle, just a
gangster stalkin Living life like a firecracker, quick is my fuse Then
dead as a deathback, the colors I choose Red or Blue, Cuz or Blood, it
just don't matter Sucker, die for your life when my shotgun scatters
(Colors) We gangs of LA will never die ...

Just multiply—colors

[Chorus]

You don't know me, fool

You disown me? Cool

I don't need your assistance, social persistence Any problem I got I just
put my fist in My life is violent, but violent is life Peace is a dream,
reality is a knife My colors, my honor, my colors, my all With my
colors upon me, one soldier stands tall Tell me, what have you left
me? What have I got?

Last night in cold blood my young brother got shot My homeboy got
jacked, my mother's on crack My sister can't work 'cause her arms
show tracks Madness, insanity, live in profanity Then some punk
claimin they understandin me?

Give me a break, what world do you live in?

Death is my sect—guess my religion [Chorus]

My pants are saggin, braided hair Suckers stare but I don't care

My game ain't knowledge, my game's fear I've no remorse so squares

beware

But my true mission is just revenge You ain't in my set, you ain't my
friend Wear the wrong color, your life could end Homicide's my
favorite binge (Colors) [Chorus]

So I'll just walk like a giant, police defyin You'll say to stop but I'll say
that I can't My gang's my family, it's all that I have I'm a star, on the
wall's my autograph You don't like it—so? You know where you can
go 'Cause the streets are my stage and terror's my show Psychoanalyst
tried diagnosing me—why?

It wasn't your brother to brutally die But it was mine, so let me define
My territory, don't cross the line Don't try to act crazy 'cause that shit
don't faze me If you ran like a punk, it wouldn't amaze me 'Cause my
color's death, though we all want peace But our war won't end 'til all
wars cease [Chorus]

KOOL G RAP

Many rappers are described as cinematic, but the adjective is especially fitting in the case of Kool G Rap. “I’m not just a rapper, like, that try to get people to dance or to move and stuff like that,” he explains. “I’ll write that shit that’s gonna have you sit there and you gonna see visuals of what I’m talking about. You’re gonna see a short little movie—I’m gonna give somebody a visual of G Rap doing something.” ¹²

Kool G Rap’s cinematic lyrics are often urban vignettes. Balancing short and long lines in “Streets of New York” and moving from scene to scene, he manages to evoke how the impact of these sad stories is cumulative, whereas at the day-to-day level it’s like they never happened. He verbally paints the portrait of a prison cell on “Rikers Island” with such harsh brushstrokes that you can see the cellmate ready with the shank as you hear the bars lock shut. Not every tale is quite so morbid or fear inducing. G Rap also gives us new twists on the American success story in songs like “Road to the Riches.”

Kool G Rap began his own upward trajectory as an artist alongside his partner DJ Polo on the single “It’s a Demo / I’m Fly” (1986). His appearance on the Juice Crew cut “The Symphony,” where he rapped alongside the likes of Masta Ace and Big Daddy Kane, garnered even more attention. Although it took some time for a full-length album to appear, the Marley Marl-produced *Road to the Riches* (1989) lived up to expectations. Kool G Rap continues to build on a body of work that has established his place among the most verbally dexterous MCs to emerge in the 1980s.

ROAD TO THE RICHES

When I was five years old I realized there was a road
At the end I will win
lots of pots of gold
Never took a break, never made a mistake
Took time to create 'cause there's money to make
To be a billionaire takes hard work for years
Some nights I shedded tears while I said my prayers
Been through hard times, even worked part time
In a seafood store sweepin floors for dimes
I was sort of a porter, takin the next man's orders
Breakin my back with a shack for headquarters
All my manpower for four bucks an hour
Took the time and wrote rhymes in the shower
Shoes are scuffed 'cause the road gets rough
But I'ma rock

it 'cause my pockets ain't stuffed enough All the freaks wouldn't speak
'cause my checks were weak They would turn the other cheek so I
started to seek A way to get a play and maybe one day

I'll be performin up a storm for a decent pay No matter how it seems, I
always kept the dream All the girlyies scream and suckers get creamed
Dreamed about it for five years straight Finally I got a break and cut
my first plate The road ain't yellow and there ain't no witches My
name is Kool G Rap, I'm on the road to the riches I used to stand on
the block sellin cooked-up rock Money bustin out my sock 'cause I
really would clock There were four kinda fiends bringin jackets and
jeans Magazines, anything, just to hustle a bean The cash was comin
fast, money grew like grass People hungry for the blast that don't even
last Didn't want to be involved but the money will getcha Gettin richer
and richer, 'til police took my picture But I still supplied, some people
I knew who died Murders and homicides for bottles of suicide Money,
jewelry, livin like a star

And I wasn't too far from a Jaguar car In a small-time casino, the town's
Al Pacino For all of the girls, a pretty boy Valentino I shot up the
stores and I kicked down doors Collected scars from little
neighborhood wars Many legs I broke, many necks I choked And if
provoked, I let the pistol smoke Loyal members in a crew now down
with the game Sellin nickels and dimes in sunshine or rain What I had
was bad from my shoes to my pad In the first time in my life loanin
money to Dad Now the table's turned and my lifestyle switches My
name is Kool G Rap, I'm on the road to the riches A thug amongst the
drugs, he eventually bugs Lookin for crack on carpets and rugs

A squealer tells but the dealer still sells Little spoiled kids inheritin oil
wells I was the type on the opposite side

Of smokin the pipe, in a beef I got hype 'Cause rags to riches switches
men to witches Become snitches, body bags in ditches

Bloodshed, I painted the town red

People fled as I put a dread's head to bed That means dead, in other
words deceased Face got erased, bullets got released

Bombs were planted, the kids were kidnapped In fact, this was a way to
get back

At enemies who tried to clock Gs

On my block, now they forever knock Zs Plans of rampages went for ages

Some got knocked and locked inside cages Some bit the dust for crumbs
and crusts In God We Trust now rots to rust
Bust caps at cops, policeman drops
You blew off his top when the pistol went pop Troopers, soldiers, rollin
like boulders Eyes of hate and their hearts get colder Some young male
put in jail
His lawyer so good his bail is on sale Lookin at the hourglass, how long
can the power last?
Longer than my song but he already fell He likes to eat hearty, party
Be like John Gotti and drive a Maserati Rough in the ghetto but in jail he's
Jell-O
Mellow yellow fellow, tell or hell, hello One court date can turn an
outlaw to an inmate The judge states "Ship him upstate" by the Great
Lakes And let him wait and wait and wait
Until he breaks, that's all it takes
So he fakes to be a man, but he can't stand On his own two feet because
now he's in a new land Rules are different and so is life
When you think with a shank, talk with a knife Not my lifestyle so I made
a U-turn
The more money I earn, more money to burn Pushin off buttons, pullin
off switches My name is G Rap, I'm on the road to the riches **STREETS
OF NEW YORK**
In the streets of New York
Dope fiends are leaning for morphine
The TV screens follow the homicide scenes You live here, you're taking a
chance
So look and I take one glance, there's a man inside an ambulance The
crowds are getting louder, I wonder how The people want to go fight
for the white powder People hanging in spots, they waited 'til the
blocks got hot And got raided by the cops
I'll explain the man sleeping in the rain His whole life remains inside a
bottle of Night Train Another man got his clothes in a sack
'Cause he spent every dime of his rent playing blackjack And there's the
poor little sister; she has a little baby daughter Named Sonya, and
Sonya has pneumonia
So why's her mother in a club unzipped though?

Yo, that's her job, Sonya's mommy is a bar stripper
Drug dealers drive around looking hard
Knowing they're sending their brothers and sisters to the graveyard
Every day is a main event, some old lady limps
The pushers and pimps eat shrimps

It gets tiring, the sight of a gun firing
They must desire for the sound of a siren
A bag lady dies in an alleyway

She's seen the last of her days inside the subways
More and more down the slope, the kid couldn't cope
So he stole somebody's dope and a gold rope
Now my son's on the run, he's a wanted one
Had fun then was done by a shotgun

Upstairs I cover my ears and tears

The man downstairs must have drank too many beers
'Cause every day of his life he beats his wife
'Til one night she decides to pull a butcher knife
Blind man plays the sax

A tune called "The Arms on My Moms Show Railroad Tracks"

... Many lives are cut short

That's when you're living ... in the streets of New York
Baby needs new shoes

But his papa uses all the money for booze
A young girl is undressed in the back seat of a Caddy
Calling some man Daddy

Three men slain inside a apartment

All you could see is the sparks when it darkens
Daylight broke, cops roll on the scene
The drug war, daily routine

Gambling spots, just a poor man's jackpot
You winning a lot, you get shot
The drug-dealing fanatics

But you don't want no static 'cause they got crack addicts
With automatics, shoot-outs for a desire for territory
A kid got caught in the crossfire

A tired mother can't take no more

She grabbed the bottle full of sleeping pills and took about twenty-four
Human beings are laying on the pavement
'Cause they're a part of a mental enslavement
The cop snipers, little babies in dirty diapers
This type of life is making you hyper

People scouting a torched-out building
And got killed when the cold air filled in
Is hell really suggested?

No more persons arrested, a child molested
A little kid says, "Yo ...

I got a color TV, CD player, and car stereo And all I want is a castle

I also got a .38, don't give me no hassle"

One kid heads straight for the top

And gets stopped and popped by a crooked cop Look behind you when
you walk

That's how it is in the streets of New York **RIKERS ISLAND**

Well, listen to me, you young hoods, this is some advice You do the crime,
you're payin the price 'Cause if you're in the drug spots, sellin crack on
the block Snatchin chains, bustin brains like a real hardrock If you
ever hear a cop say you're under arrest Go out just like a trooper, stick
out your chest 'Cause you might have been robbin, you might have
been wildin But you won't be smilin on Rikers Island Just to hear the
name, it makes your spine tingle This is a jungle where the murderers
mingle This ain't a place that's crowded, but there's room for you
Whether you're white or you're black, you'll be black and blue 'Cause
in every cellblock there is a hardrock With a real nice device that's
called a sock lock Don't ever get caught in a crime, my friend 'Cause
this bus trip is not to Adventure's Inn They have a nice warm welcome
for new inmates Razors and shanks and sharp-edged plates Posses will
devour punks with power

After the shower it's rush hour

So watch your back before you get sacked These a bunch of maniacs that's
about to attack If you're a hustlin pro, keep a low profilin 'Cause you
won't be smilin on Rikers Island C-74, adolescents at war

Put your ear to the floor, you can hear the roar They take you out of BC,
they now found you a cage All eyes are glued to you like you're up on
stage If you're soft as a leaf don't get into a beef And God be with you,
chief, if you got gold teeth Some try to be hard, front and say, "I'm
God"

Don't know a lesson, say a blessin, you're gonna get scarred "*Yo, call the
CO*"—that won't be necessary He'll watch him beat you down and take
your commissary Inside the lunchroom, you meet your doom Someone
is lookin at you sharpenin a tablespoon Use your hands like a man,
don't go out like a chump Never fess, bench press so that you can be
pumped If you don't got a game, you get beaten as lame And scared as
a mouse in a house of pain So to all the jailbirds that listen to hip-hop
Move your pelvis like Elvis, do the "Jailhouse Rock"

You might be coolin, you might be stylin But you won't be smilin on
Rikers Island If you're on a drug tip don't be a Dumbo Police
investigate like Columbo if they think you're sellin jumbo But don't get
me wrong, it might be your thing Whether smilin on the Island or
singin in Sing-Sing The way you're takin pictures and you're givin a
smile Cheerin the privilege for a long, long while So keep your money
pilin, keep profilin 'Cause, ahh, you won't be smilin on Rikers Island

KOOL MOE DEE

Having honed his skills and reputation in hip-hop's early years, onetime Treacherous Three member Kool Moe Dee found himself in limbo. The forefathers of rap were not yet classic, just old, and past success seemed more likely to predict irrelevance than longevity. But for a master lyricist who had helped develop "The New Rap Language" and whose park and club battles with the likes of Busy Bee shaped the combative nature of the art, longevity was a must.

Kool Moe Dee deftly made the jump out of the old school and made his mark in the late 1980s with several high-profile projects: his "Wild, Wild West" charted well for a rap song released in 1987, he joined in the KRS-One project "Stop the Violence," and he was one of four rappers (the others were Big Daddy Kane, Ice-T, and MelleMel) to appear on Quincy Jones's Grammy-winning *Back on the Block* (1989). He also engaged in a long-running feud with LL Cool J, a win-win situation that helped establish the rhyme credentials of his younger opponent while further burnishing his own.

Kool Moe Dee's first solo song of note was "Go See the Doctor," which showcased a narrative side not evident in his work with the Treacherous Three. It was one of the first of many rap tales counseling watchfulness over STDs and seems quite tame compared to some that followed as AIDS became a scourge. "I Go to Work," in which Moe Dee calls himself a doctor, architect, boxer, and a "prophet for profit," is a hip-hop version of Walt Whitman's "A Song for Occupations," and like Whitman, he takes pleasure in the list. "How Ya Like Me Now" showcases a talent that shows up all the more when transcribed to the page—namely, Moe Dee's flow. The song's heavily enjambed lines culminate in the titular rhetorical question.

GO SEE THE DOCTOR

I was walking down the street, rocking my beat
Clapping my hands and stomping my feet
I saw a little lady so neat and petite
She was so sweet, yes, I wanted to meet her
So I asked this lady could I take her
out We could wine and dine and talk about
The birds and the bees and my waterbed
And you could treat me like a Buddha and bow your head
We continued to talk and before you knew it
We were at my house and it was time to do it
As soon as I finished, I lost my poise
Ran

outside and told all my boys

I said, "Listen up, fellas, come over here, bust it"

They said, "Did you get it?" I said, "Yeah," they said, "How was it?"

The poontang was dope and you know that I rocked her But three days later, go see the doctor I rocked her to the left, rocked her to the right She felt so good, hugged me so tight I said, "Good night"

Three days later ...

Woke up fussin, yellin, and cussin Drip-drip-drippin and puss-puss-pussin I went into the bathroom and said, "Mamma mia!"

I'ma kill that girl next time I see her The madder I got, the more I reminisce Why is my thing-thing burning like this?

Well, I remember the first day I saw that girl I just couldn't wait to rock her world I said, "Hey, good looking, what you got cooking?"

What have I done stuck my dick in?

Now I know why her ex-boyfriend Dave Calls her Mrs. Microwave

'Cause she was hotter than an oven and I had to learn The hard way— stay in the microwave too long, you get burned But the poontang was dope and you know that I rocked her But three days later, go see the doctor I went to the doctor's office, I said, "What have I got?"

He said, "Turn around, boy, and take this shot"

I looked at him like he was crazy and I said, "What?"

Ain't nobody sticking nothin in my butt"

He turned and said in a real deep voice "Have it your way, if that's your choice And I'll put it down if you want me to put it But don't blame me if it turns into a foot ex-Tending from the middle of your body And the next time you see a cute hottie You won't be able to screw, the only thing you can do Is just kick her, so go take karate"

As I turned around to receive my injection I said, "Next time I'll use some protection"

If I see another girl and I get an erection I'm walking in the other direction 'Cause I don't wanna do the sick-sick dance So I'm keeping my prick inside my pants And if I see another girl and I know I can rock her Before I push up, I'll make her go see the doctor **HOW YA LIKE ME NOW**

I throw my tape on then I watch ya Three seconds later I got ya

Shakin your head, dancin instead of sittin The rhymes kick, the beats
hittin you Just like a home run, slammin like a slam dunk Ride the
wave James Brown gave funk It happened to James like it happened
to me How you think I feel to see another MC

Get paid usin my rap style

And I'm playin the background meanwhile I ain't with that, you can
forget that You took my style, I'm takin it back Comin back like *Return
of the Jedi*

Sucker MCs in the place that said I Could only rock rhymes and only rock
crowds But never rock records—how ya like me now?

Now brothers are riding me like a pony I'm no phony, I'm the only real
mic-aroni Playin the mic like it's supposed to be played New jacks, you
all shoulda stayed Out of the business—what is this?

Amateur night at the Apollo? Get off this Stage, I'm enraged, just like a
lion Trapped inside of a cage

I'm the real king, rap is a jungle I never understood how could one go To
a party, watch me, stand around and jock me Become a rapper, then
try to rock me Schemin like a demon, you're screamin and dreamin I'm
from the old school, I used to see men Die for less, but I'm not livin
that way I'll let my mic do the talkin and let the music play How ya
like me now?

Rap is an art and I'm like Picasso But of course why else would you try so
Hard to paint a picture and try to get your-Self in my shoes but they
won't fit ya—I'm Bigger and better, forget about deffer Every time I
rocked the mic I left a Stain in your brain that will remain Stuck in the
back of your brain until you see me again Respect, I come correct

The rhymes I select are nothing short of perfect Vernaculars pure and I
can ensure Life or death with my breath, my voice is a cure I heal life
from the words I spread I'll make a sick man rock on his deathbed
Sucker MCs, I'll make your girl say "ow"

And she's jockin—now how ya like me now?

It irked my nerve when I heard

A sucker rapper that I know I'll serve Run around town sayin he is the
best Is that a test? I'm not impressed, get real You're nothin but a toy
Don't you know that I'll serve that boy Just like a waiter, hit him with a
plate of these Fresh rhymes and make sure that he Pay the, pay the,

pay the bill and leave him standin still And when he's had enough, hit him with a refill And for dessert it won't be no ice cream, I'm just Gonna shatter and splatter his pipe dreams Make him feel the wrath, beat him down and laugh And when I finish, then I'm gonna ask him "Who is the best?" and if he don't say Moe Dee I'll take my whip and make him call himself Toby Whip him good, then I'll make him sweat Always talkin about battles but he never had a battle yet But if we ever did, how could he beat me?

He's so petrified, he's scared to even meet me My word's the law, that's why you don't beef You're nothing but a punk, track star, and a thief So I'm puttin you on punishment, just like a child Never touch another mic—how ya like me now?

I can continue, there's more on the menu But I relax 'cause I'm so far in you You had enough, I know you're overstuffed And if I keep going you'll be throwin up old Rhymes I used to say way back in the day When you used to come to my parties and pay Nobody's ever gonna rock me and this I vow So all I wanna say is—how ya like me now?

I GO TO WORK

I go to work like a doctor

When I rock the mic you got to like The way I operate, I make miracles happen Just from rappin. I'm so lyrically potent And I'm flowin and explodin

On the scene, mean, I got the potential To make you go then chill, I got the credentials That is so essential to make a rhyme send chills Then you know I will fulfill

And make a couple of mil as I build a guild For all the rappers of skill and kill the weak rappers with no frills Hang 'em in effigy

If he's a sucker, hang him to the left of me 'Cause my right-hand man is my mic stand and The microphone that I own and my game plan Is keeping at a steady pace

Ain't no need for no rush, it ain't no race I'ma hit the top just when I wanna And it's a matter of time and I'm gonna 'Cause I know when to go 'head, enter The classic Moe Dee rap that sent ya Runnin around, holdin ya head, askin ya homeboy "Yo, man, you heard what he said?"

Another funky rhythm, look at your man and give him A high five 'cause

I'm live runnin around with him Telling everybody hanging out on the
block It's time to wake up and check the clock Punch it

I go to work

I go to work like an architect

I build the rhymes, sometimes it climbs so erect Skyscrapers look like
atoms

Cars, electrons rollin in patterns Writing out word after word

With each letter it becomes visibly better 'Cause my foundation built a
nation Of rappers and after I came off vacation I came to roam the
land I own and stand alone On the microphone—Daddy's home

So open the door, playtime is over Time to go to work, work and show the
Suckers in the place who run their face A taste of the bass and who's
the ace Start the race, I'm coming in first With each verse I build a
curse

So rappers can't capture Moe Dee's rapture And after I have ya I have to
slap ya senseless With endless rhymes, don't pretend this Is anything
short of stupendous and when this Rhyme is done your mind will
become So trapped in the rap, you'll lust another one But you gotta
wait, it takes time I don't write, I build a rhyme

Draw the plans, draft the diagrams An architect in effect and it slams And
if it's weak when I'm done

Renovate and build another one

I go to work [2x]

I go to work like a boxer

Train the brain and aim to outfox ya Like a punch my rhyme rocks ya,
someTimes it knocks ya so hard it stops ya Dead in your tracks, so
power packed Before you can react you're flat on your back Down for
the count, get up and dismount 'Cause I'm coming with an endless
amount Of rhymes in a hurry like a flurry A collage of camouflage, the
power punch, but don't worry Knowledge is an antidote, I got hands of
smoke Writing at the speed of light with insight I wrote Rhymes on a
level so you can't relate Unless you're intelligent, so stay awake
Sleepwalkers, slick talkers

This time a native New Yorker's

Riding a crescendo wave to save the mental State of the fan so he can
understand—my pencil's Writing a rhyme in its highest form And I'ma
drop it on ya like a bomb And when it explodes, I'll blow up A few
casualties, but so what?

If you're slow, you blow, you know you go I flow, I throw, all-pro, I go

To work

To say rap is not work is ludicrous Whoever said it must be new to this
When you hear me you'll compare me To a prophet for profit not
merely Putting words together for recreation Each rhyme's a
dissertation

You wanna know my occupation?

I get paid to rock the nation

I go to work [5x]

LL COOL J

I Need a Beat, “I Need Love,” “I Can’t Live Without My Radio,” “I’m That Type of Guy,” “I’m Bad”—as these song titles from early in his career suggest, LL Cool J has always been a supremely self-assured figure in an art form famous for first-person assertion. The young man who turned himself from James Todd Smith to Ladies Love Cool James was never short on confidence. On his first two albums, *Radio* (1985) and *Bigger and Deffer* (1987), his delivery was probably the most athletic of any rapper around. He directed this sonic vigor toward adversaries both abstract and concrete and, of course, toward hyping himself.

LL mixes aggression with likeability on early songs like “I Can’t Live Without My Radio,” where he posits himself as one of the mid-1980s archetypes of rebellious teenage behavior—the guy on the subway with the blaring boom box. He also shows a romantic side. “I Need Love” suggests the direction LL would explore in many subsequent releases, accounting in part both for the longevity of his career and for his crossover appeal.

Mama Said Knock You Out (1990) seems in retrospect like the album that gave LL the momentum necessary to catapult himself into a sort of perpetual orbit of the public’s attention. As usual LL was backed by production that suited him (this time the tracks were Marley Marl’s), and he showed more range than before: “Illegal Search” elaborated on the reality of “driving-while-black,” “Cheesy Rat Blues” uncovered the duplicity of erstwhile friends, “Farmers Boulevard (Our Anthem)” was a vigorous walk down memory lane, and “The Power of God” describes itself. Hits from the album included “Boomin’ System” and the remix of “Jingling Baby,” but the title track remains the most memorable: “Don’t call it a comeback, I been here for years / Rockin my peers, puttin suckers in fear.” No comeback was necessary for a rapper who never left the scene.

ROCK THE BELLS

LL Cool J is hard as hell

Battle anybody, I don’t care who you tell I excel, they all fail

I’m gonna crack shells, Double-L must rock the bells You’ve been waitin
and debatin for oh so long Just starvin like Marvin for a Cool J song If

you cried and thought I died, you definitely was wrong It took a
thought plus I brought Cut Creator along Evened up, E-Love down
with the Cool J force Specializin in the rhymin for the record of course
I'm a tower full of power—wind, rain, and hail Cut Creator scratch the
record with his fingernail Rock the bells

The king of crowd rockers finally is back My voice is your choice as the
hottest wax You ask, "Who is it?" Just a wizard who ain't takin no
crap I'm rhymin and designin with your girl in my lap The bass is
kickin, always stickin 'cause you like it that way You take a step
because it's def and plus it's by Cool J

Cut Creator on the fader, my right-hand man We rock the bells so very
well 'cause that's the name of this jam Rock the bells

Some girls will like this jam and some girls won't 'Cause I make a lot of
money and your boyfriend don't LL went to hell, gonna rock the bells
All you washed up rappers wanna do this well Rock the bells

Now I'm worldwide known whether you like it or not My one-man band is
Cut Creator aka Philpot He'll never skip it, only rip it when he's on the
fader What's my DJ's name? (Cut Creator!) Now you know at my show
who's on the wheels He'll drive the cross fader like a cut mobile So
precise with a slice that you know he's greater What's my DJ's name?
(Cut Creator!) Let you know, what do you know, Earl rolls the weed I
go to the store and get the Old Gold So all you crabby-lookin nappy-
head girls get back 'Cause there's a ten-to-one chance that you might
get smacked Rock the bells

The bells are circulatin the blood in your veins Why are girlies on the tip?
(LL's your name!) Cut Creator's good, Cool J is good-good You bring
the woodpecker, I'll bring the wood The bells are whippin and rippin
at your body and soul Why do you like Cool J? (It ain't rock and roll!)
'Cause it ain't the "Glory Days" with Bruce Springsteen I'm not a virgin
so I know I'll make Madonna scream You hated Michael and Prince all
the way ever since If their beats were made of meat, then they would
have to be mince Rock the bells

So listen to the rhyme, the line, the rhyme on time He'll cut the record in a
second, make your DJ look blind So all you Jheri-curl suckers wearin
high-heel boots Like ballerinas, what I mean is you're a fruit-loop

troop All you gonna-be, wannabes, when will you learn Wanna be like Cool J, you gotta wait your turn Some suckers don't like me, but I'm not concerned Six Gs for twenty minutes is the pay I earn I'm growin and glowin like a forest blaze Do you like Michael Jackson? (We like Cool J!) That's right, I'm on the mic with the help of the bells There's no delayin what I'm sayin and I'm rockin you well Rock the bells

I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT MY RADIO

My radio, believe me, I like it loud I'm the man with a box that can rock the crowd Walkin down the street to the hardcore beat While my JVC vibrates the concrete I'm sorry if you can't understand But I need a radio inside my hand Don't mean to offend other citizens But I kick my volume way past 10

My story is rough, my neighborhood is tough But I still sport gold and I'm out to crush My name is Cool J, I devastate the show But I couldn't survive without my radio Terrorizing my neighbors with the heavy bass I keep the suckers in fear by the look on my face My radio's bad from the Boulevard I'm a hip-hop gangster and my name is Todd Just stimulated by the beat, bust out the rhyme Get fresh batteries if it won't rewind 'Cause I play every day, even on the subway I woulda got a summons but I ran away I'm the leader of the show, keepin you on the go But I know I can't live without my radio Suckers on my jock when I walk down the block I really don't care if you're jealous or not 'Cause I make the songs, you sing along And your radio's def when my record's on So get off the wall, become involved All your radio problems have now been solved My treacherous beats make ya ears respond And my radio's loud like a fire alarm The floor vibrates, the walls cave in The bass makes my eardrums seem thin Def sounds in my ride, yes, the front and back You would think it was a party, not a Cadillac 'Cause I drive up to the ave with the windows closed And my bass is so loud, it could rip your clothes My stereo's thumpin like a savage beast The level on my power meter will not decrease Suckers get mad 'cause the girlies scream And I'm still gettin paid while you look at me mean I'm the leader of the show, keepin you on the go But I know I can't live without my radio I'm the leader of the show, keepin you on the go And I know I can't live without my radio Don't touch that dial, I'll be upset Might go into a fit and rip off your neck 'Cause the radio's thumpin when I'm down to play I'm the royal chief rocker LL Cool J

Let your big butt bounce from right to left 'Cause it's a actual fact this jam
is def Most definitely created by me

Goin down in radio history

I'm good to go on your radio

And I'm cold gettin paid 'cause Rick said so Make the woofers wallop and
your tweeters twitch Some jealous knuckleheads might try to dis But
it's nuthin, ya frontin, ya girl I am stuntin And my radio's loud enough
to keep you gruntin My name is Cool J, I'm from the rock Circulating
through your radio nonstop I'm lookin at the wires behind the cassette
And now I'm on the right, standing on the eject Wearin light blue
Pumas, a whole lotta gold And jams like these keep me in control I'm
the leader of the show, keepin you on the go And I know I can't live
without my radio Your energy level starts to increase As my big beat is
slowly released I'm on the radio and at the jam LL Cool J is who I am

I'ma make ya dance, boogie down and rock And the scratch adds shade to
my musical plot And to expand my musical plan

Cut Creator, rock the beat with your hands That's right, so don't try to
front the move As you become motivated by the funky groove You can
see me and Earl chillin on the block With my box cold kickin with the
gangster rock See, people can't stop me, neither can the police I'm a
musical maniac to say the least For you and your radio I made this for
Cool J's here to devastate once more Pullin all the girls, takin out MCs
If ya try to disrespect me, I just say, "Please!"

Here to command the hip-hop land Kick it live with a box inside my hand
I'm the leader of the show, keepin you on the go But I know I can't
live without my radio *Farmers Boulevard, yeah, you know that's where
me and E hang out, cool out, you know what I'm sayin? That's where the
crib's at ...*

I'M BAD

*"Calling all cars, calling all cars.... Be on the lookout for a tall light-skinned
brother with dimples wearing a black Kangol, sweat suit, gold chain, and
sneakers. Last seen on Farmers Boulevard headed east. Alias LL Cool J.
He's bad ..."*

Aaaahhhhhhhhhh ...

No rapper can rap quite like I can I'll take a muscle-bound man and put

his face in the sand Not the last mafioso, I'm a MC cop Make you say
"Go LL" and do the wop If you think you can outrhyme me—yeah,
boy, I bet 'Cause I ain't met a motherfucker who can do that yet
Trendsetter, I'm better, my rhymes are good I got a gold nameplate
that says "I wish you would"

And when rappers begin then I gotta join in and Before my rhyme is over,
you know I'ma win Cool J has arrived so you better make way Ask
anybody in the crowd, they say the kid don't play Slaughter
competition, that's my hobby and job I don't wear a disguise because I
don't owe the mob Got a pinpoint rap that makes you feel trapped So
many girls on my jock, I think my phone is tapped I'm bad ...

I'm like Tyson, icin, I'm a soldier at war I'm makin sure you don't try to
battle me no more Got concrete rhymes, been rappin for ten years and
Even when I'm braggin, I'm bein sincere MCs can't win, I make 'em
rust like tin They call me Jaws, my hat is like a shark's fin Because I'm
bad as can be, got my voice on wax Some brothers think, "He's making
records, now he must have relaxed"

I couldn't, I shouldn't, and it'll stay that way The best rapper you've heard
is LL Cool J

Kamikaze, take a look at what I've done Used to rock in my basement,
now I'm number one And can happen on time, never standin on line
You wanna try me? First you better learn how to rhyme I'm the
pinnacle, that means I reign supreme And I'm notorious—I'll crush you
like a jelly bean I'm bad ...

I eliminate punks, cut 'em up in chunks You were souped, you heard me,
and your ego shrunk I'm devastating, I'm so good it's a shame 'Cause I
eat rappers like a cannibal, they call me insane I'm as strong as a bull,
of course you know I have pull I enjoy what I'm doing plus I'm paid in
full Not Buckaroo Banzai, but bustin out as I Say the kind of rhymes
that make MCs wish that I'd die Never retire or put my mic on the
shelf The baddest rapper in the history of rap itself Not bitter or mad,
just provin I'm bad You want a hit? Give me a hour plus a pen and a
pad MCs retreat, 'cause they know I can beat 'em And eat 'em in a
battle and the ref won't cheat 'em I'm the baddest! Takin out all
rookies So forget Oreos, eat Cool J cookies I'm bad ...

Never ever no never ...

Never wearin no Levis, battle me why try?

I'll treat you like a stepchild, so tell Mommy bye-bye Slaughterin MCs and
I'ma never get whipped When I retire I'll get worshipped like a old
battleship LL, I'm bad—other rappers know When I enter the center
they say, "Yo, yo, there he go!"

My paycheck's large, Mr. Bogart in charge Not a puncher or hunter from a
raccoon lodge The original Todd, teachin how to be hard Take the skin
off a snake and split a pea from a pod You're a novice, I'm noble, and
I dissect with my tongue Not Attila the Hun, but [] his son My vocals
exact, like rack and pinion in a Jag You try to brag, you get your
rhymes from a grab bag No good scavenger, catfish vulture My
tongue's a chisel and this composition's sculpture I'm bad ...

"Think I'm gonna need backup"

"Think I'm gonna need backup"

*Gimme that, boy. Get funky! Yo, this is LL Cool J and you'll never catch me so
don't even try it 'cause I'm too bad for ya. Understand? Aaaaaahhhh ... I'm
bad!*

I NEED LOVE

When I'm alone in my room sometimes I stare at the wall And in the back
of my mind I hear my conscience call Telling me I need a girl who's as
sweet as a dove For the first time in my life, I see I need love There I
was, giggling about the games That I had played with many hearts,
and I'm not saying no names Then the thought occurred, teardrops
made my eyes burn 'Cause I said to myself, "Look what you've done to
her"

I can feel it inside, I can't explain how it feels All I know is that I'll never
dish another raw deal Playing make believe, pretending that I'm true
Holding in my laugh as I say that I love you Saying amour, kissing you
on the ear Whispering I love you and I'll always be here Although I
often reminisce, I can't believe that I found A desire for true love
floating around Inside my soul because my soul is cold One half of me
deserves to be this way 'til I'm old But the other half needs affection
and joy And the warmth that is created by a girl and a boy I need love

I need love

Romance, sheer delight, how sweet I gotta find me a girl to make my life

complete You can scratch my back, we'll get cozy and huddle I'll lay down my jacket so you can walk over a puddle I'll give you a rose, pull out your chair before we eat Kiss you on the cheek and say, "Ooh girl, you're so sweet"

It's déjà vu whenever I'm with you I could go on forever telling you what I do But where you at? You're neither here nor there I swear I can't find you anywhere Damn sure you ain't in my closet or under my rug This love search is really making me bug And if you know who you are why don't you make yourself seen?

Take a chance with my love and you'll find out what I mean Fantasies can run but they can't hide And when I find you, I'ma pour all my love inside I need love

I need love

I wanna kiss you, hold you, never scold you, just love you Suck on your neck, caress you and rub you Grind, moan, and never be alone If you're not standing next to me, you're on the phone Can't you hear it in my voice, I need love bad I've got money, but love's something I've never had I need your ruby-red lips, sweet face, and all I love you more than a man who's ten feet tall I'd watch the sunrise in your eyes We're so in love, when we hug we become paralyzed Our bodies explode in ecstasy unreal You're as soft as a pillow and I'm as hard as steel It's like a dreamland, I can't lie, I never been there Maybe this is an experience that me and you can share Clean and unsoiled yet sweaty and wet I swear to you this is something I'll never forget I need love

I need love

See what I mean? I've changed, I'm no longer A playboy on the run, I need something that's stronger Friendship, trust, honor, respect, admiration This whole experience has been such a revelation It's taught me love and how to be a real man To always be considerate and do all I can Protect you, you're my lady, and you mean so much My body tingles all over from the slightest touch Of your hand and understand I'll be frozen in time 'Til we meet face to face and you tell me you're mine If I find you, girl, I swear I'll be a good man I'm not gonna leave it in destiny's hands I can't sit and wait for my princess to arrive I gotta struggle and fight to keep my dream alive I'll search the whole world for that special girl When I finally find you, watch our

love unfurl I need love
I need love

*Girl, listen to me. When I be sittin in my room all alone, staring at the wall,
fantasies, they go through my mind, and ... I've come to realize that I need
true love. And if you wanna give it to me, girl, make yourself seen. I'll be
waiting. I love you.*

I'M THAT TYPE OF GUY

You're the type of guy
That can't control your girl
You try to buy her love
With diamonds and pearls
I'm the type of guy
That shows up on the scene
And gets the seven digits
You know the routine
You're the type of guy
That tells her, "Stay inside"
While you're steady frontin
In your homeboy's ride
I'm the type of guy
That comes when you leave
I'm doin your girlfriend
That's somethin you can't believe 'Cause ...

[Chorus 4x]

I'm that type of guy

You're the type of guy
That gets suspicious
I'm the type of guy that says
"The puddin is delicious"
You're the type of guy that has No idea that a

Sneaky, freaky brother's sneakin In from the rear
I'm the type of guy
To eat it when he won't
And look in the places
That your boyfriend don't
You're the type of guy
To try to call me a punk
Not knowin that your main girl's Bitin my chunk
I'm the type of guy
That loves a dedicated lady
Their boyfriends are boring
And I can drive 'em crazy
You're the type of guy
To give her money to shop
She gave me a sweater
[*kiss*] Thank you, sweetheart [Chorus]

I'm the type of guy
That picks her up from work early Takes her to breakfast, lunch
Dinner, and breakfast
You're the type of guy
Eatin a TV dinner
Talkin about ...
"Goddamn it, I'ma kill her"
I'm the type of guy
To make her say, "Why you illin, B?"
... You're the type of guy to say "My lower back is killin me"
... Catch my drift?
You're the type of guy
That likes to drink Olde English I'm the type of guy
To cold put on a Pamper
You're the type of guy to say

“What you talkin ’bout?”

I’m the type of guy

To leave my drawers in your hamper I’m that type of guy

[Chorus 4x]

T-Y-P-E-G-U-Y

I’m that type of guy

To give you a pound

And wink my eye

Like a bandit

Caught me red-handed

Took her for granted

But when I screwed her

You couldn’t understand it

’Cause you’re the type of guy

That don’t know the time

Swearin up and down

“That girl’s all mine”

I’m the type of guy

To let you keep believin it

Go ’head to work

While I defrost it and season it [Chorus 4x]

“So ridiculous!”

So funny. I don’t know. Come on down. Yeah. Like real cool, you know what I mean? I like just going to your front door ringin bells. And just like, ha, leave ...

MAMA SAID KNOCK YOU OUT

C’mon, man

And with the local DBC News, LL Cool J with a triumphant comeback. But tonight ...

Don't call it a comeback, I been here for years I'm rockin my peers, puttin
suckers in fear Makin the tears rain down like a monsoon Listen to the
bass go boom

Explosion, overpowerin

Over the competition I'm towerin Wreckin shop when I drop

These lyrics that'll make you call the cops Don't you dare stare, you better
move Don't ever compare

Me to the rest that'll all get sliced and diced Competition's payin the price

[Chorus 4x]

I'm gonna knock you out. (Huuuh!) Mama said knock you out. (Huuuh!)
Don't you call this a regular jam I'm gonna rock this land

I'm gonna take this itty-bitty world by storm And I'm just gettin warm
Just like Muhummad Ali, they called him Cassius. Watch me bash this
Beat like a skull that you know I had Beef with. Why do you riff with me?

The maniac psycho

And when I pull out my jammy get ready 'cause it might go Blaow! How
ya like me now?

The Ripper will not allow

You to get with Mr. Smith, don't riff Listen to my gear shift

I'm blastin, outlastin

Kinda like Shaft, so you could say I'm shaftin Olde English fill my mind

And I came up with a funky rhyme [Chorus 4x]

Breakdown!

Shadowboxin when I heard you on the radio Huuuh! I just don't know

What made you forget that I was raw?

But now I got a new tour

I'm goin insane, startin the hurricane Releasin pain

Lettin you know, you can't gain or maintain Unless you say my name

Rippin, killin, diggin, and drillin a hole Pass the Ol' Gold

[Chorus 4x]

Shotgun blasts are heard
When I rip and kill at will
The man of the hour, tower of power I'll devour
I'm gonna tie you up and let you Understand that I'm not your average
Man when I got a jammy in my hand Damn!
Oooh! Listen to the way
I slaaay your crew
Damage (uuh!)—damage (uuh!)
Damage (uuh!)—damage
Destruction, terror, and mayhem Pass me a sissy-soul sucker, I'll slay him
Farmers. (What?) Farmers (What?) I'm ready. (We're ready!)
I think I'm gonna bomb a town
Get down!
Don't you never, ever pull my lever 'Cause I explode
And my nine is easy to load
I gotta thank God
'Cause he gave me the strength to rock Hard—knock you out
Mama said knock you out

[Chorus 4x]

MC LYTE

MC Lyte is an especially versatile MC. This flexibility is measured by how she balances local poetic effects with the bedrock values of rap braggadocio, all while crafting a variety of compelling stories. As Kool Moe Dee observes, “She has an exceptional flow, a diverse body of work and subject matter, hit radio and hit street records, and an impeccable delivery on top of her battle skills.... Lyrically, she is a rap icon who sounds and feels as current today as she did fourteen years ago.”

13

“I Cram to Understand U,” with its memorable simile serving as a chorus—“Just like a test / I cram to understand u”—has a twist at the end, where what seemed like a story of romantic disinterest opens up to reveal a bigger social problem. “Cappuccino” is an uneasy dream vision: neither Lyte nor we are ever totally sure what is real and what is dream; the song paints a picture of the randomness of much violence and the contingencies that shape our experience. Arbitrary choices have unintended consequences. To then shift us from this urban phantasmagoria into a straightforward description of the nature of the “cappuccino” is a funny, self-consciously “realistic” way to wake us from the dream.

10% DIS

Hot damn! Hot damn, ho, here we go again
Suckers steal a beat when you
know they can't win You stole the beat, are you havin fun? Now Me
and the Aud's gonna show you how it's done You are what I label as a
“nerve plucker”

You're pluckin my nerves, you MC sucker I thought I oughta tell you,
better yet warn That I am like a stock and my word is bond Like
James, killin everybody in sight

The code's three-six, the name is Lyte After this jam, I really don't give a
damn 'Cause I'ma run and tell your whole damn clan that you're a
[Chorus 2x]

Beat-biter! Dope-style taker!

Tell you to your face you ain't nothin but a faker!

Hit me why dontcha, hit me why dontcha?

Milk's bodyguard is my bodyguard too

You wanna get hurt, well, this is what you do: you put your Left foot up
and then your right foot next Follow instructions, don't lose the
context Thirty days a month your mood is rude

We know the cause of your bloody attitude [Chorus]

Your style is smooth, even for a cheatin mic You shoulda won a prize as a
Rakim soundalike Here's a Milkbone, a sign of recognition Don't turn
away, I think you should listen close Don't boast, you said you wasn't
braggin You fuckin liar, you're chasin a Chuckwagon The only way
you learn, you have to be taught That if a beat is not for sale then it
can't be bought When you leave the mic, you claim it's smokin Unlike
Rakim, you are a joke and I

Think you oughta stop before you get in too deep 'Cause with a sister like
Lyte, yo, I don't sleep [Chorus]

When I'm in a jam with my homegirl Jill My cousin Trey across the room
with a posse of girls So I step in the middle, shake it just a little Wait
for some female to step up and pop junk Give my cousin a cue, treat
the girl like a punk Now I'm not tryin to say that I'm into static But yo,
if you cause it, yup, we gotta have it 'Cause I ain't goin out like a
sucker, no way So I sit around the way for you to make my day We
can go for the hands, better yet for the words 'Cause you'll be ignored
and at the same time, I'll be heard Throughout the city, the town, and
the country The beat is funky, my rhyme is spunky

There is no delayin in the rhyme I'm sayin Neither are there flaws in what
my DJ is playin, so Sit back, Jack, and listen to this, it's 10% Dis
'Cause I'm just about ready to

Fly this fist against your lips!

But I'll wait for the day or night that you approach and I'm-A serve and
burn ya like a piece of toast Pop you in the microwave to watch your
head bubble Your skin just crumble, a battle's no trouble Get my
homegirls Dohni and Kiki to get stupid This thing called hip-hop, Lyte
is rulin it I hate to laugh in your face, but you're funny Your beat, your
rhymin, your timin—all crummy On the topic of rappin, I should write
a pamphlet Better yet, a booklet

Your rap is weak, homegirl, and it's definitely crooked Others write your

rhymes, while I write my own I don't create a character when I'm on
the microphone I am myself, no games to be played

No script to be written, no scene to be made I am the director as far as
you are concerned You don't believe me then you'll have to learn This
ain't as hard as MC Lyte can get

And matter fact, you ain't seen nothin yet So never let me step into a
party-hearty Talk to some people and then hear from somebody "You
wanna battle?" 'Cause you know where I am You don't wanna come in
the 90s and see me at a jam When a mic is handy, ten feet away

I stretch my arm like elastic, head like a magnet Said assure, you know I
don't play

When it comes down to it, the nitty-gritty For a sucker like you I feel a
whole lot of pity **I CRAM TO UNDERSTAND U**

I used to be in love with this guy named Sam I don't know why 'cause he
had the head like that of a clam But you couldn't tell me nothin 'cause
Sam was number one 'Cause to me, oh my gosh, he was one in a
million I shoulda knew the consequences right from the start That he'd
use me for my money, and then break my heart But like a fool in love,
I fell for his game But I got mine, so I show no shame. In Empire
Winked his eye, and then he kept walkin All of those who live in
Brooklyn know just what I'm talkin The roller disco where we all used
to go Just to have some fun back in 1981

You know the place, Empire Boulevard

Is where I first saw the nigga, and he tried to play hard but I knew the
deal, 'cause I knew his brother Jerry And Sam, he just broke up with
his girlfriend Terry, so Jerry introduced Sam and I that night. He said
"Hello, my name is Sam." I said, "Hi, my name is Lyte"

We yipped and we yapped and we chit 'n we chat about This and that,
from sneakers to hats. He said "Look, I'm in the mood for love

Simply because you're near me"

(Let's go) To my house, lay back and get nice Watch television, a Riunite
on ice. I said "Slow down, I know you wanna shake me down But I'm
not one of the girls that go rippin around"

[Chorus]

Just like a test

I cram to understand u

Next month, I finally went to his house. I walked Into the door, there was
a girl on the couch. I said “Who’s the frog, the bump on the log?
You chump, you punk, how could you do me wrong?
Singing sad songs about your love is so strong”
You said, “Wait Lyte, you’re confused, the girl is my cousin”
Your brother agreed, but later said that she wasn’t [Chorus]

Forgotten, next month we went to the Deuce, well I Thought it kinda
strange ’cause you had lots of juice You knew the dopes, the pushers,
the addicts, everybody Asked ya how you met ’em, said you met ’em at
a party Then these girls tried to tell me you were sellin the stuff I said,
“It’s not your business, so shut the fuck up”
They said, “Oh, okay Lyte, think what you wanna think, but it’s Goin be
some shit when your man becomes a fiend.” I said “Look, to bust a
move, I don’t even know you To put it Lyte, I really don’t care to”
They got kinda mad and sort of offended They said, “We only lookin out
for your best interest”
I said, “Thanks but no thanks” in an aggravated tone “When I wanna find
out, I find out on my own”

[Chorus]

Then my cousin said she saw you with this lady name of C
Well, I’m clawin my thoughts, I wonder who she could be You’re spending
all your time with her and not a second with me They say you spend
your money on her and you’re with her night and day Her name starts
with a C and it ends with a K
I strain my brain lookin for a name to fit this spellin But I just couldn’t do
it ’cause my heart kept yellin Burning, begging from affection from
you, Sam But just like a test I cram to understand u Thought I knew
you well enough to call you a man but [Chorus]

Then it came a time you started looking kinda thin, I asked you Why, you
said, “Exercise, tryin to stay slim”
I bought it, even though I knew it was a lie, ’cause it Really didn’t matter,
you were still lookin fly, but oh no Oh no, you started askin me for
money

Butter me up, beg me, and call me your honey, so I Gave you two yards,
and then I gave you one more You picked up your jacket and you flew
out the door You came back an hour later and you asked me for a ten I
said, “I only got a twenty,” you said, “Give me that, then”

I said, “Nope, I’ll tell you now, you better stop slobbin Find you a job, or
you better start robbin”

So I stepped off—with a giant step

Picked up my belongings, and I just left But now I see you in Empire
every Sunday Juicin the girls up for some money and a lay, but every
Time I see you doin it, I just ruin it Tell ’em how ya on crack, smoke,
sniff, and chewin it As for this girl, Miss C, oh well

I was shocked as hell when I heard, Samuel When your homeboys told me,
I almost went wack That the girl you was addicted to, her name was
Crack **CAPPUCCINO**

It was a cafe on the West Side, midtown Said they had the best cap-a-
cappuccino around So I stepped in and I ordered a cup

Someone grabbed me by my throat and said, “Shut the fuck up!”

And I did—pronto, quick, fast

How much longer would the torture last?

In the wrong place, at the wrong time—it was A drug sale. I could feel
from behind

Death—it was gettin closer

Right behind my back, ready to attack

I got shot in a shoot-out and then I died I could feel it, I was on the other
side In between lives, I’m so confused

What do I do, oh, what do I do?

Was it really time for me to go?

Why, oh why did I need cappuccino?

Why, oh why did I need cappuccino?

But then I calmed down, I spotted some friends That I knew in a past life,
way back when A couple had died in the drug world

And this one guy died fightin over his girl Another died drivin while
intoxicated

Why do people make livin so complicated?

But then I saw a girl, her name was Mary Introduced to drugs by her
boyfriend Harry He sold crack to the kids on the uptown corners A
social worker named Hannah Smith tried to warn her But she wouldn't
listen—no one listens I saw the light, I awakened, it was a dream
Man, oh man, you shoulda heard me scream!

So glad to be given my life back

So good to be livin—or was dead better?

I didn't have to run from the bullets or drugs and I Didn't have to run
from the murderers or thugs I didn't have to worry about fallin from a
plane But at this cafe was death still callin my name?

Or did this cafe even exist? There was My name, just another on the death
list I knew it couldn't happen, even though On the bottom of my shirt
was a spot of cappuccino Why, oh why did I need cappuccino?

Bust it, to some of you that really don't know I break it down to you, the
word "cappuccino"

It's somewhat like coffee, then again not quite It's creamy and smooth
and it goes down light They charge you three dollars, you ask is it
worth it?

But when you start drinkin, shit, it be workin I'm hooked, well, I was,
'cause, yo, it's the best But if every time I drink I voyage through death
I leave it alone and just stick to tea, CappucCino was fly, but too fly
for me Why, oh why did I need cappuccino?

NWA

Any group whose name stands for “Niggaz With Attitude” is bound to garner attention, but for all of the tensions that NWA provoked, they were more important as innovators. They ushered in the rise of West Coast gangster rap. One of their members, Eazy-E, distributed their aesthetically, critically, and commercially successful album *Straight Outta Compton* (1988) on a label he owned. Two other members, Dr. Dre and Ice Cube, would go on to become hip-hop icons. And their music remains provocative and wildly playable.

The three aforementioned members, along with Yella and MC Ren, formed as a group in 1986 in Compton, California. Under his own name, Eazy-E (a former drug dealer who bankrolled Ruthless Records, on which NWA ultimately appeared) recorded the Ice Cube–penned “Boyz-n-the-Hood,” a song that set the stage for the songs to follow with its credo “Ain’t nothing in life but to be legit.” This and other songs were collected on *N.W.A. and the Posse* (1987).

But it was *Straight Outta Compton* that had the greatest impact. The album was a virtual blueprint for the genre of gangster rap that would flourish in the 1990s. Almost every song felt archetypal. “Straight Outta Compton” established the importance of place to the genre, moving rap from East to West; “Gangsta Gangsta” gave the genre a name and fleshed out its main character, the young black male gangbanger; “Dopeman” described the powerful figure who served as ghetto businessman and politician, a savvy but sadistic street capitalist willing to destroy his people as long as his pockets got fat. “Fuck tha Police,” the group’s most controversial song (it raised the ire of the FBI), was deathly anti-authoritarian, claiming that the Compton police “have the authority to kill a minority.” Its shock value was that it imagined scenarios in which brutality was not just coming from the police but pointed back at them.

The ethos emanating from these songs was so against civic norms, the “establishment,” and its putative leaders that they likely would have offended many even had they delivered their message in nursery rhymes. As it stood, the sentiments were appropriately conveyed in language more explicit than most rap fans had heard on record.

With a band this volatile, the center predictably could not hold. Ice Cube left the group in an acrimonious split and took with him not only his

verbal virtuosity but also the sense of humor that lurked impishly beneath his lines. *Niggaz4Life* (1991) still had Dr. Dre's production and thus sounded as strong as ever, but on this album there was a sense, which had been lacking on *Compton*, that the violence, misogyny, and incessant repetition of the n-word were merely gratuitous. They came, they saw, they started a genre—and then NWA disbanded, a short-lived but high-impact group.

DOPEMAN (REMIX)

Yo, Dre!

[Ice Cube]

It was once said by a man who couldn't quit "Dopeman, please can I have another hit?"

The Dopeman said, "Cluck, I don't give a shit If your girl kneel down and suck my dick"

It all happened and the guy tried to choke her Nigga didn't care, she ain't nothin but a smoker That's the way it goes, that's the name of the game Young brother gettin over by slangin 'caine Gold around his neck, in 14K heaven Bitches clockin on his dick twenty-four seven Plus he's makin money, keep the baseheads waitin Rollin six-fo with the fresh ass Daytons Livin in Compton, California C-A

His Uzi up yo' ass if he don't get paid Nigga beggin for credit, he's knockin out teeth Clockin much dollars on the first and fifteenth Big wad of money, nothin less than a twenty Yo, you want a five-oh, the Dopeman's got plenty To be a Dopeman, boy, you must qualify Don't get high off your own supply From a key to a G, it's all about money Ten piece for a champ, bass pipe comes free If people out there are not hip to the fact If you see somebody gettin money for crack He's the ...

[Chorus]

Dopeman, Dopeman

Ay, man, give me a hit

Dopeman, Dopeman

Yo, man, fuck that shit

Dopeman, Dopeman

We just can't quit
Dopeman, Dopeman
Well, suck this, bitch

[Dr. Dre]

Wait a minute, wait a minute. Who the fuck are you talking to? Do you know who the fuck I am? Man, I can't believe this shit. This bitch is tryin to gank me. Yo, I oughta slap you upside yo' head with nine inches of limp dick.

[Ice Cube]

You need a nigga with money so you get a Dopeman Juice that fool for as much as you can She like his car and he get with her Got a black eye 'cause the Dopeman hit her Let that slide and you pay it no mind Find that he's slappin you all the time But that's okay, 'cause he's so rich And you ain't nuttin but a Dopeman's bitch Do what he say and you keep your mouth shut Poppin that trash might get you fucked up Will sit and cry if the Dopeman strike you He don't give a fuck, he got two just like you There's another girl in the Dopeman's life Not quite a bitch but far from a wife She's called the Strawberry and everybody know Strawberry, Strawberry is the neighborhood ho Do anything for a hit or two

Give the bitch a rock, she fuck the whole damn crew It might be your wife and it might make you sick Come home and see her mouth on the Dopeman's dick Strawberry, just look and you'll see her But don't fuck around, she'll give you gonorrhea If people out there not hip to the fact The Strawberry is a girl sellin pussy for crack To the ...

[Chorus]

[Ice Cube]

If you smoke 'caine, you a stupid motherfucker Known around the 'hood as the schoolyard clucker Doin that crack with all the money you got On your hands and knees, searchin for a piece of rock Jonesin for a hit and you're lookin for mo'

Done stole the Alpine out of Eazy's six-fo You need your ass whooped 'cause it's out of this earth To get a ten piece need a dollar fifty worth Knucklehead nigga, yeah, you turned into a crook But swear up and down, boy, that you ain't hooked You beat your friend up and you

whooped his ass long 'Cause he hit the pipe 'til the rock was all gone
You robbin and stealin, buggin and illin While the Dopeman's dealin,
what is healin yo' pain Cocaine, this shit's insane

Yo, E, she's a berry, let's run a train [Eazy-E] *Man, I wouldn't touch that bitch.* [Ice Cube] Me neither Ho, go home and wash out your beaver
And niggaz out there messin up people's health Yo, what the fuck you
gotta say for yourself?

[Eazy-E] Well, I'm the Dopeman, yeah boy, wear corduroy Money up to
here but unemployed

You keep smokin that rock and my pockets gettin bigger [Dr. Dre] Yo, got
that five-oh, double up, nigga!

[Eazy-E] Yeah, high rollin, big money I'm foldin Bitch on my tip for the
dick I'm holdin Sprung Strawberry jockin me so early Ho, you wanna
hit, you gotta get your knees dirty Now that's my life, that's how it's
cut "Hey, Dopeman!" Bitch, shut the fuck up!

Gotta make a run, it's a big-money deal Gankers got the fake but you can
get the real From the ...

[Chorus]

*Yo, Mr. Dopeman, you think you're slick
You sold crack to my sister and now she's sick
But if she happens to die because of your drug
I'm puttin in your culo a .38 slug*

FUCK THA POLICE

[Dr. Dre]

*Right about now NWA court is in full effect. Judge Dre presiding in the case of
NWA versus the police department. Prosecuting attorneys are MC Ren, Ice
Cube, and Eazy motherfuckin E. Order, order, order. Ice Cube, take the
motherfuckin stand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
nothin but the truth, so help your black ass?*

[Ice Cube]

You goddamn right.

[Dr. Dre]

Why don't you tell everybody what the fuck you gotta say?

[Ice Cube]

Fuck tha police, comin straight from the underground A young nigga got it bad 'cause I'm brown And not the other color, so police think They have the authority to kill a minority Fuck that shit 'cause I ain't the one For a punk motherfucker with a badge and a gun To be beatin on and thrown in jail We could go toe to toe in the middle of a cell Fuckin with me 'cause I'm a teenager With a little bit of gold and a pager Searchin my car, lookin for the product Thinkin every nigga is selling narcotics You'd rather see me in the pen

Than me and Lorenzo rollin in a Benzo Beat a police outta shape

And when I'm finished bring the yellow tape To tape off the scene of the slaughter Still gettin swoll off bread and water I don't know if they fags or what

Search a nigga down and grabbin his nuts And on the other hand, without a gun they can't get none But don't let it be a black and a white one 'Cause they'll slam ya down to the street top Black police showin out for the white cop Ice Cube will swarm

On any motherfucker in a blue uniform Just 'cause I'm from the CPT Punk police are afraid of me

A young nigga on the warpath

And when I'm finished, it's gonna be a bloodbath Of cops dyin in LA

Yo, Dre, I got somethin to say

Fuck tha police [4x]

Pull your goddamn ass over right now.

Ah, shit. What the fuck you pull me over for?

'Cause I feel like it. Just sit your ass on the curb and shut the fuck up.

Man, fuck this shit.

All right, smart ass, I'm takin your black ass to jail.

MC Ren, will you please give your testimony to the jury about this fucked-up incident?

[MC Ren]

Fuck tha police and Ren said it with authority Because the niggaz on the street is a majority A gang is with whoever I'm steppin And the motherfuckin weapon is kept in A stash box, for the so-called law Wishin Ren was a nigga that they never saw Lights start flashin behind me

But they're scared of a nigga so they mace me to blind me But that shit don't work, I just laugh Because it gives 'em a hint not to step in my path To the police I'm sayin, "Fuck you, punk"

Readin my rights and shit, it's all junk Pullin out a silly club, so you stand With a fake-ass badge and a gun in your hand But take off the gun so you can see what's up And we'll go at it, punk, and I'ma fuck you up Make ya think I'ma kick your ass

But drop your gat and Ren's gonna blast I'm sneaky as fuck when it comes to crime But I'ma smoke 'em now and not next time Smoke any motherfucker that sweats me Or any asshole that threatens me

I'm a sniper with a hell of a scope Takin out a cop or two, they can't cope with me The motherfuckin villain that's mad With potential to get bad as fuck

So I'ma turn it around

Put in my clip, yo, and this is the sound Yeah, somethin like that

But it all depends on the size of the gat Takin out a police would make my day But a nigga like Ren don't give a fuck to say ...

Fuck tha police [4x]

Yeah, man, what you need?

Police. Open up.

Oh, shit.

We have a warrant for Eazy-E's arrest. Get down and put your hands where I can see 'em.

Man, what the fuck did I do? What did I do?

Just shut the fuck up and get your motherfuckin ass on the floor!

But I didn't even do shit!

Man, just shut the fuck up!

Eazy-E, why don't you step up to the stand and tell the jury how you feel about this bullshit.

[Eazy-E]

I'm tired of the motherfuckin jackin Sweatin my gang while I'm chillin in the shack and Shining the light in my face, and for what Maybe it's because I kick so much butt I kick ass, or maybe 'cause I blast On a stupid-ass nigga when I'm playin with the trigga Of an Uzi or an AK

'Cause the police always got somethin stupid to say They put out my picture with silence 'Cause my identity by itself causes violence The E with the criminal behavior

Yeah, I'm a gangsta, but still I got flavor Without a gun and a badge, what do ya got?

A sucker in a uniform waitin to get shot By me or another nigga

And with a gat it don't matter if he's smaller or bigger (Size ain't shit; he's from the old school, fool) And as you all know, E's here to rule

Whenever I'm rollin, keep lookin in the mirror And ears on cue, yo, so I can hear a Dumb motherfucker with a gun

And if I'm rollin off the eight, he'll be the one That I take out, and then get away While I'm drivin off laughin this is what I'll say ...

Fuck tha police [4x]

The verdict: The jury has found you guilty of bein a redneck, white bread, chicken-shit motherfucker.

Wait, that's a lie. That's a goddamn lie.

Get him out of here.

I want justice!

Get him the fuck out my face.

I want justice! Fuck you, you black motherfucker!

Fuck tha police [3x]

GANGSTA GANGSTA

[Ice Cube]

Here's a little somethin 'bout a nigga like me Never shoulda been let out
the penitentiary Ice Cube would like to say
That I'm a crazy motherfucker from around the way Since I was a youth, I
smoked weed out Now I'm the motherfucker that you read about Takin
a life or two, that's what the hell I do You don't like how I'm livin?
Well, fuck you This is a gang and I'm in it
My man Dre'll fuck you up in a minute With a right, left, right, left—
you're toothless And then you say, "Goddamn, they ruthless"
Everywhere we go they say, "Damn"
NWA's fuckin up the program
And then you realize we don't care We don't just say no, we're too busy
sayin "Yeah!"
About drinkin straight out the eight bottle Do I look like a motherfuckin
role model?
To a kid lookin up to me
Life ain't nothin but bitches and money 'Cause I'm the type of nigga that's
built to last If ya fuck with me I'll put my foot in ya ass See, I don't
give a fuck 'cause I keep bailin Yo, what the fuck are they yellin?
Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin *It's not about a salary, it's all
about reality*
Gangsta, Gangsta!
Hopin you sophisticated motherfuckers hear what I have to say

[Ice Cube]

When me and my posse stepped in the house All the punk ass niggaz start
breakin out 'Cause you know they know what's up So we started
lookin for the bitches with the big butt Like her, but she keep cryin
"I got a boyfriend." Bitch, stop lyin!
Dumb-ass hooker ain't nothin but a dyke Suddenly I see some niggaz that
I don't like Walked over to 'em, and said, "What's up?"
The first nigga that I saw, hit him in the jaw Ren started stompin him,
and so did E
By that time got rushed by security Out the door, but we don't quit
Ren said, "Let's start some shit!"
I got a shotgun and here's the plot: Takin niggaz out with a flurry of

buckshots Boom boom boom, yeah I was gunnin

And then you look, all you see is niggaz runnin And fallin and yellin and pushin and screamin And cussin, I stepped back, and I kept bustin And then I realized it's time for me to go So I stopped, jumped in the vehicle It's like this because of that whoo-ride NWA is wanted for a homicide

'Cause I'm the type of nigga that's built to last Fuck with me, I'll put my foot in your ass See, I don't give a fuck 'cause I keep bailin Yo, what the fuck are they yellin?

Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin *It's not about a salary, it's all about reality*

Gangsta, Gangsta!

He'll tell you exactly how he feel, and don't hold a fuckin thing back

[Ice Cube]

Homies all standin around, just hangin Some dope dealin, some gang bangin We decide to roll and we deep

See a nigga on Daytons and we creep Real slow and before you know I had my shotgun pointed in the window He got scared and hit the gas Right then I knew I had to smoke his ass He kept rollin, I jumped in the bucket We couldn't catch him so I said, "Fuck it"

Then we headed right back to the fort Sweatin all the bitches in the biker shorts We didn't get no play from the ladies With six niggaz in a car—are you crazy?

She was scared, and it was showin

We all said, "Fuck you, bitch!" and kept goin To the 'hood and we was f'in to

Find somethin else to get into

Like some pussy or in fact

A bum rush, but we call it rat pack On a nigga for nothin at all

Ice Cube'll go stupid when I'm full of 8-Ball I might stumble but still won't lose Now I'm dressed in the county blues 'Cause I'm the type of nigga that's built to last If you fuck with me, I'll put my foot in your ass I don't give a fuck 'cause I keep bailin Yo, what the fuck are they yellin?

[Dr. Dre]

Wait a minute, wait a minute, cut this shit

Man, what you gonna do now?

What we're gonna do right here is go back

How far you goin back?

Way back

As we go a lil' somethin like this. Hit it!

[Ice Cube]

Here's a lil' gangsta, short in size A T-shirt, Levis is his only disguise Built like a tank yet hard to hit

Ice Cube and Eazy-E cold runnin shit [Eazy-E]

Well I'm Eazy-E, the one they're talkin about Nigga tried to roll the dice and just crapped out Police tried to roll, so it's time to go I creep away real slow and jumped in the six-fo'

With the "Diamond in the back, sun-roof top"

Diggin the scene with the gangsta lean 'Cause I'm the E, I don't slang or bang I just smoke motherfuckers like it ain't no thang And all you bitches, you know I'm talkin to you "We want to fuck you, Eazy!" I want to fuck you, too Because you see, I don't really take no shit ("So let me tell you motherfuckers who you're fuckin with") 'Cause I'm the type of nigga that's built to last If you fuck with me, I'll put a foot in your ass I don't give a fuck, 'cause I keep bailin Yo, what the fuck are they yellin?

Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin *It's not about a salary, it's all about reality*

Gangsta, Gangsta!

He'll fuck up you and yours and anything that gets in his way

Gangsta, Gangsta! That's what they're yellin *It's not about a salary, it's all about reality*

Gangsta, Gangsta!

He'll just call you a low-life motherfucker and talk about your funky ways

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

You are now about to witness the strength of street knowledge

[Ice Cube]

Straight outta Compton, crazy motherfucker named Ice Cube From the
gang called Niggaz With Attitudes When I'm called off, I got a sawed-
off Squeeze the trigger and bodies are hauled off You too, boy, if ya
fuck with me

The police are gonna hafta come and get me Off yo' ass, that's how I'm
goin out For the punk motherfuckers that's showin out Niggaz start to
mumble, they wanna rumble Mix 'em and cook 'em in a pot like
gumbo Goin off on the motherfucker like that With a gat that's pointed
at yo' ass So give it up smooth

Ain't no tellin when I'm down for a jack move Here's a murder rap to
keep you dancin With a crime record like Charles Manson AK-47 is the
tool

Don't make me act a motherfuckin fool Me and you can go toe to toe, no
maybe I'm knockin niggaz out the box, daily Yo, weekly, monthly, and
yearly

Until them dumb motherfuckers see clearly That I'm down with the capital
C-P-T

Boy, you can't fuck with me

So when I'm in your neighborhood you better duck 'Cause Ice Cube is
crazy as fuck

As I leave, believe I'm stompin

But when I come back, boy, I'm comin straight outta Compton City of
Compton, City of Compton

Yo, Ren

Whassup?

Tell 'em where you from!

[MC Ren]

Straight outta Compton, another crazy-ass nigga More punks I smoke, yo,
my rep gets bigger I'm a bad motherfucker and you know this But the
pussy-ass niggaz won't show this But I don't give a fuck, I'ma make my
snaps If not from the records, from jackin at craps Just like burglary,
the definition is "jackin"

And when illegally armed it's called "packin"

Shoot a motherfucker in a minute

I find a good piece of pussy and go up in it So if you're at a show in the
front row I'ma call you a bitch or dirty-ass ho You'll probably get mad
like a bitch is supposed to But that shows me, slut, you're composed to
A crazy motherfucker from the street Attitude legit 'cause I'm tearin up
shit MC Ren controls the automatic

For any dumb motherfucker that starts static Not a right hand 'cause I'm
the hand itself Every time I pull a AK off the shelf The security is
maximum and that's a law R-E-N spells Ren but I'm raw

See, 'cause I'm the motherfuckin villain The definition is clear, you're the
witness of a killin That's takin place without a clue

And once you're on the scope, your ass is through Look, you might take it
as a trip

But a nigga like Ren is on the gangsta tip Straight outta Compton
City of Compton, City of Compton

Eazy is his name and the boy's comin ...

[Eazy-E]

Straight outta Compton

Is a brother that'll smother yo' mother And make yo' sister think I love her
Dangerous motherfucker raising hell And if I ever get caught I make
bail See, I don't give a fuck, that's the problem I see a motherfuckin
cop, I don't dodge him But I'm smart, lay low, creep a while And when
I see the punk pass, I smile To me it's kinda funny, the attitude show a
nigga drivin But don't know where the fuck he going, just rollin
Lookin for the one they call Eazy

But here's a flash, they'll never seize me Ruthless! Never seen like a
shadow in the dark Except when I unload

You see us flock and talk over our hesitation And hear the scream of the
ones who caught the lead's penetration Feel a little gust of wind and
know I'm jettin But leave a memory no one'll be forgettin So what
about the bitch who got shot? Fuck her!

You think I give a damn about a bitch? I ain't a sucker!

This is the autobiography

Of the E, and if you ever fuck with me You'll get taken by a stupid dope
brother Who will smother, word to the motherfucker Straight outta
Compton

City of Compton, City of Compton

Damn, that shit was dope!

PUBLIC ENEMY

Of all rap groups, Public Enemy mixed the most serious political engagement with many of the greatest innovations in sound and poetic form for the longest period of time. The group's leader, Chuck D, has been called by KRS-One "Hip Hop's authentic 'poet of protest.'" ¹⁴ The single-mindedness and range of that lyrical protest found a match in the group's sound.

The Long Island-based group—which in its most robust stage featured Chuck D as lead rapper, Flavor Flav as hype man and comic foil, Terminator X as DJ, Professor Griff as "Minister of Information," and a group of uniformed men called the S1Ws serving as "Security of the First World"—was founded in 1986.

PE's name came from a track called "Public Enemy #1," which Chuck made while working as a radio DJ. Although the song (as well as the track "Miuzi Weighs a Ton") was in fact a defense of Chuck's reputation as a rapper against the perceived slights of other local artists, such internecine feuds with fellow rappers were to be the exception rather than the rule in the group's oeuvre. As Kool Moe Dee has noted, "Chuck used none of the clichéd, familiar, conventional braggadocio emceeisms! He never talked about being the best, and he never criticized another emcee. He never even compared himself to another emcee." ¹⁵

Public Enemy focused largely on public matters of political import. In doing so they injected hip-hop with a prophetic strain of politics reminiscent in content of the spoken-word tradition of artists such as Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets. The production that backed their lyrics—concocted by Hank and Keith Shocklee and Eric "Vietnam" Sadler under the name of the Bomb Squad—updated the overall sound, pushing it into public consciousness by means that included radically textured sampling from multiple sources and a propensity to demand attention by, if necessary, irritating eardrums with discomfiting noises that emerged from a propulsive backbeat.

Chuck D often asserts a form-content connection in describing his lyrical strategy. For instance, discussing the song "Bring the Noise," he explains, "I was specifically talking about how people at the time considered all rap music 'noise.' It was common to hear, 'Cut that noise off, it's irritating, it has no melody.' We were like, 'If you're calling that

noise, we have some noise for your ass.’ ... For those that didn’t understand the music[,] the noise was not just a sonic thing, the noise that people considered irritating was hearing us talk about issues that rarely gets talked about; our history, our culture, our language, our God, and just coming out strong.” ¹⁶

MIUZI WEIGHS A TON

Step back, get away—give the brother some room You got to all turn me
up when the beat goes boom Lyric to lyric, line to line

And then you’ll all understand my reputation for rhyme ’Cause my rhyme
reputation depends on what Style of record my DJ cuts

His slice and dice—super mix so nice So bad, you won’t dispute the price
’Cause it’s plain to see, it’s a strain to be Number one in the public-eye
enemy ’Cause I’m wanted in fifty—almost fifty-one States where the
posse got me on the run It’s a big wonder why I haven’t gone under
Dodgin all types of microphone thunder A fugitive missin all types of
hell All this because I talk so well

When I—

[Chorus 4x]

Rock—get up—get down

Miuzi weighs a ton

The match-up title, the expression of thrill For elite to complete and
attempt to get ill If looks could kill, I’d chill until All the public catches
on to my material You know the ducks criticize my every phase of
rapture Can’t wait to read the headlines of my capture Accused of
assault, a first-degree crime ’Cause I beat competitors with my rhymes
Tongue-whipped, pushed, shoved, and tripped Choked from the hold of
my kung-fu grip And if you want my title, it would be suicidal From
my end, it would be homicidal When I do work, you get destroyed All
the paranoid know to avoid

The Public Enemy seat I’ve enjoyed This is no kid and I’m not no toy boy
[Chorus 4x]

I’m a Public Enemy but I don’t rob banks I don’t shoot bullets and I don’t
shoot blanks My style is supreme, number one is my rank And I got
more power than the New York Yanks If miuzi wasn’t heavy I would

probably fire it Make you walk the plank if I was a pirate If they made me a king I would be a tyrant If you want to get me, go ahead and try it Snatcher, dispatcher, biter never been a Instead of takin me out take your girl to dinner The level of comp has never been thinner It's a runaway race where I'm the winner It's unreal, they call the law

And claimed I had started a war

It was war they wanted and war they got But they wilted in the heat when miuzi got hot [Chorus 4x]

My style versatile, said without rhymes Which is why they're after me and they're on my back Lookin over my shoulder, seein what I write Hearin what I say, then wonderin why Why they can't ever compete on my level Superstar status is my domain

Understand my rhythm, my pattern of lecture And then you'll know why I'm on the run This change of events results in a switch It's the lateral movement of my vocal pitch It eliminates pressure on the hunted But the posse is around so I got to front it Plus employ tactics so coy

And leave no choice but to destroy Soloists, groups, and what they say And all that try to cross my way **BLACK STEEL IN THE HOUR OF CHAOS**

I got a letter from the government the other day I opened and read it, it said they were suckers They wanted me for their army or whatever Picture me givin a damn, I said never Here is a land that never gave a damn About a brother like me and myself, because they never did I wasn't wit' it, but just that very minute, it Occurred to me the suckers had authority Cold sweatin as I dwell in my cell How long has it been? They got me sittin in the state pen I gotta get out, but that thought was thought before I contemplated a plan on the cell floor I'm not a fugitive on the run

But a brother like me begun to be another one Public Enemy servin time They drew the line, y'all, they criticize me for some crime Nevertheless, they could not understand That I'm a black man and I could never be a veteran On the strength, the situation's unreal I got a raw deal, so I'm lookin for the steel They got me rottin in the time that I'm servin Tellin you what happened the same time they're throwin Four of us packed in a cell like slaves—oh, well The same motherfucker got us livin in his hell You have to realize that it's a form of slavery Organized under a swarm of devils Straight up, word 'em up on the

level The reasons are several, most of them federal Here is my plan
anyway and I say I got gusto, but only some I can trust, yo Some do a
bid from one to ten

But I never did, and plus I never been I'm on a tier where no tears should
ever fall Cell block and locked—I never clock it, y'all 'Cause time and
time again, time they got me servin To those and to them, I'm not a
citizen But ever when I catch a CO

Sleepin on the job, my plan is on go-ahead On the strength, I'ma tell you
the deal I got nothin to lose

'Cause I'm goin for the steel

Don't you know I caught a CO fallin asleep on death row I grabbed his
gun and he did what I said so And everyman's the man got served
Along with the time they served, decency was deserved To understand
my demands I gave a warnin I wanted the governor, y'all, and plus
the warden to know That I was innocent because I'm militant Posing a
threat, you bet it's fuckin up the government My plan said I had to get
out and break North Just like with Oliver's neck, I had to get off My
boys had the feds in check, they couldn't try Nothin, we had a force to
instigate a prison riot This is what it takes for peace, so I just took the
piece Black for black inside, time to cut the leash Freedom to get out to
the ghetto, no sellout Six COs we got, we ought to put their head out
But I'll give 'em a chance, 'cause I'm civilized As for the rest of the
world, they can't realize A cell is hell, I'm a rebel so I rebel Between
bars, got me thinkin like an animal Got a woman CO to call me a
copter She tried to get away, and I popped her Twice, right—now who
wanna get nice?

I had six COs, now it's five to go And I'm serious; call me delirious But I'm
still a captive, I gotta rap this Time to break as time grows intense I
got the steel in my right hand, now I'm lookin for the fence As I
ventured into the courtyard Followed by fifty-two brothers, bruised,
battered, and scarred but hard Goin out with a bang, ready to bang
out But power from the sky and from the tower shots rang out A high
number in dose, yes, and some came close I figure I trigger my steel,
stand and hold my post This is what I mean, an anti-nigger machine If
I come out alive, then they won't come clean Then I threw up, my steel
bullets flew up And to my surprise, the water tower blew up Who shot
what, who, the bazooka was who And to my rescue, it was the S1Ws
Secured my getaway, so I just got away The joint broke from the black

smoke Then they saw it was rougher than the average bluffer 'Cause
the steel was black, the attitude exact Now the chase is on, tellin you
to c'mon Fifty-three brothers on the run, and we are gone **REBEL**
WITHOUT A PAUSE

Yes—the rhythm, the rebel

Without a pause, I'm lowering my level The hard rhymer, where you
never been I'm in You want stylin? You know it's time again D, the
enemy—tellin you to hear it They praised the music, this time they
play the lyrics Some say no to the album, the show Bum rush the sound
I made a year ago I guess you know, you guess I'm just a radical Not
on sabbatical, yes, to make it critical The only part of your body
should be partying to Panther power on the hour from the rebel to you
Radio: suckers never play me

On the mix, they just okay me now Known and grown when they're
clocking my zone It's known, snakin and takin everything that a
brother owns (Hard): my calling card

Recorded and ordered, supporter of Chesimard Loud and proud, kickin
live, next poet supreme Loop a troop, bazooka, the scheme (Flavor): a
rebel in his own mind Supporter of my rhyme designed to Scatter a
line of suckers who claim I do crime They're on my time—dig it?

Terminator X [4x]

From a rebel it's final on black vinyl Soul, rock and roll comin like a rhino
Tables turn, suckers burn to learn They can't disable the power of my
label Def Jam: tells you who I am

The Enemy's public, they really give a damn Strong Island: where I got
'em wild and That's the reason they're claimin that I'm violent Never
silent, no dope, gettin dumb Nope, claimin where we get our rhythm
from Number one, we hit ya and we give ya some No gun and still
never on the run You wanna be an S1, Griff will tell you when And
then you'll come again, you'll know what time it is Impeach the
president, pullin out the ray-gun Zap the next one, I could be your
Shogun (Suckers) Don't last a minute

Soft and smooth, I ain't with it (Hardcore) Rawbone like a razor

I'm like a laser, I just won't graze ya Old enough to raise ya, so this will
faze ya Get it right, boy, maybe I will praise ya Playin the role, I got
soul, too Voice my opinion with volume

(Smooth) Not what I am
(Rough) 'Cause I'm the man
No matter what the name, we're all the same Pieces in one big chess game
(Yeah) The voice of power
Is in the house, go take a shower, boy PE a group, a crew
Not singular, we wear black Wranglers We're rap stranglers, you can't
angle us I know you're listenin, I caught you pissin in Your pants,
you're scared of us, dissin us The crowd is missin us, we're on a
mission, y'all *Terminator X* [4x]

Attitude when I'm on fire
Juice on the loose, electric wire Simple and plain, give me the lane I'll
throw it down your throat like Barkley You see my car keys? You will
never get these They belong to the 98 posse
You want some more, son? You wanna get some?
Bum rush the door of the store, pick up the album You know the rhythm,
the rhyme, plus the beat is designed So I can enter your mind, boys
Bring the noise, my time
Step aside for the flex, *Terminator X*

FIGHT THE POWER

*Yet our best-trained, best-educated, best-equipped, best-prepared troops refuse
to fight. Matter of fact, it's safe to say that they would rather switch ... than
fight.*

1989, the number, another summer (Get down) Sound of the funky
drummer Music hittin your heart 'cause I know you got soul (Brothers
and sisters) Hey
Listen if you're missin, y'all, swingin while I'm singin Givin what ya
gettin
Knowin what I'm knowin while the black band's sweatin In the rhythm
rhyme rollin
Got to give us what we want
Got to give us what we need
Our freedom of speech is freedom of death We got to fight the powers that

be (Lemme hear you say ...)

Fight the power [8x]

As the rhythm's designed to bounce, what counts is that the rhyme's
Designed to fill your mind. Now that you Realize the pride's arrived
We got to pump the stuff that make ya tough From the heart, it's a start, a
work of art to revolutionize Make a change, nothin's strange
People, people, we all the same—no, we're not the same 'Cause we don't
know the game
What we need is awareness, we can't get careless You say, "What is this?"
My beloved, let's get down to business Mental self-defensive fitness
(Yo) Bum rush the show
(You gotta go for what you know) To make everybody see, in order to
Fight the powers that be

Fight the power [8x]

Elvis was a hero to most

But he never meant shit to me—you see Straight-out racist, the sucker was
simple and plain (Motherfuck him and John Wayne) 'Cause I'm black
And I'm proud, I'm ready, I'm hyped, plus I'm amped Most of my
heroes don't appear on no stamp Sample, a look back, you look and
find Nothing but rednecks for four hundred years if you check ("Don't
Worry, Be Happy") was a number-one jam Damn if I say it, you can
slap me right here Get it (Let's get this party started right) Right on
(C'mon)

What we got to say
Power to the people, no delay
Make everybody see, in order to
Fight the powers that be

Fight the power [8x]

WELCOME TO THE TERRORDOME

I got so much trouble on my mind Refuse to lose

Here's your ticket
Hear the drummer get wicked
The crew to you to push the back-to-black attack So I sat and japped then
slapped the Mac Now I'm ready to mike it
(You know I like it) Huh
Hear my favoritism roll, "Oh"
Never be a brother like me go solo Laser, Anastasia, maze ya
Ways to blaze your brain and train ya The way I'm livin, forgivin what
I'm givin up X on the flex, hit me now
I don't know about later
As for now I know how to avoid the paranoid Man, I've had it up to here.
Yeah Gear I wear got 'em goin in fear Rhetoric said read just a bit ago
Not quittin, though, signed the hard rhymers Work to keep from gettin
jerked
Changin some ways
To way back in the better days
Raw, metaphysically bold, never followed the code Still dropped a load
Never question what I am, God knows 'Cause it's comin from the heart
What I got, better get some (Get on up) Hustler of culture
Snakebitten, been spit in the face But the rhymes keep fittin
Respect's been givin. How's ya livin?
Now I can't protect a paid-off defect Check the record and reckon an
intentional wreck Played off as some intellect
Made the call, took the fall
Broke the laws
Not my fault that they're fallin off Known as fair and square throughout
my years So I growl at the livin foul
Black to the bone, my home is your home But welcome to the Terrordome

*So long now, have a good trip. Yo, yo, who put this thing together, huh? Me.
Me, that's who. Who I trust? Who I trust? Me. That's who. Now who you
trust, man?*

Subordinate terror, kickin off an era Cold deliverin pain
My 98 was '87 on a record, yo

So now I go Bronco

*Aw, Chuck, they out to get us, man.... Aw, aw, aw, aw, aw.... Aw, Chuck,
they out to get us, man. Yo, we got to dust these boys off!*

Crucifixion ain't no fiction

So-called chosen frozen

Apology made to whoever it pleases Still they got me like Jesus

I rather sing, bring, think, reminisce 'Bout a brother while I'm in synch

Every brother ain't a brother, 'cause a color Just as well could be
undercover Backstabbed, grabbed a flag

From the back of the lab

Told a Rab get off the rag

Sad to say I got sold down the river Still some quiver when I deliver Never
to say I never knew or had a clue Word was heard, plus hard on the
boulevard Lies, scandalizin, basin

Traits of hate and celebratin wit' Satan I rope a dope the evil with
righteous bobbin and weaving And let the good get even

C'mon down

But welcome to the Terrordome

Caught in the race against time, the pit and the pendulum Check the
rhythm and rhymes while I'm bendin 'em Snakes blowin up the lines of
design Tryin to blind the science I'm sendin 'em How to fight the
power, cannot run and hide Bullets shouldn't be suicide

In a game a fool without the rules Got a hell of a nerve to just criticize
Every brother ain't a brother

'Cause a black hand squeezed on Malcom X the man The shootin of Huey
Newton

From a hand of a nigger pulled the trigger It's weak to speak and blame
somebody else When you destroy yourself

First, nothing worse than a mother's pain Of a son slain in Bensonhurst
Can't wait for the state to decide the fate So this jam I dedicate

Places with the racist faces

Example of one of many places

The Greek weekend speech I speak From a lesson learned in Virginia I

don't smile in the line of fire, I go wildin But it's on bass and drums,
even violins Watcha do, getcha head ready

Instead of gettin physically sweaty When I get mad I put it down on a
pad Give ya somethin thatcha never had Controllin, fear of high rollin
God bless your soul and keep livin Never allowed, kickin it loud
Droppin a bomb, brain game, intellectual Vietnam Move as a team, never
move alone But welcome to the Terrordome

QUEEN LATIFAH

Queen Latifah's dignified demeanor and commanding presence earned her the regal name, but her rhymes maintain it. Latifah is adept at various styles, able to throw in a reggae flow, slow it down still further with a love song, deliver a message with the strength of her convictions, or slay a wack MC for daring to get in her way.

Latifah's debut single was the infectious "Wrath of My Madness," and the album that followed, *All Hail the Queen* (1989), contained "Evil That Men Do," a song that explores the gender disparity in structural poverty. Songs like "Princess of the Posse" and especially her duet with Monie Love, "Ladies First," asserted female priorities and called for women to stand together. These pieces constituted an important counterbalance in a rap world that at the time was becoming more brazenly misogynistic. That puerile but powerful trend raised Latifah's ire on "U.N.I.T.Y.," a classic song that would have appeared in this anthology had we not been denied permission to print it. This call to arms was her biggest single and appeared on her third album, *Black Reign* (1993), which, like her aptly named sophomore release, *Nature of a Sista* (1991), continued to develop a place for women in rap.

EVIL THAT MEN DO

You asked, I came, so behold the Queen Let's add a little sense to the
scene I'm living positive, not out here knocked up But the lines are so
dangerous, I ought to be locked up This rhyme doesn't require prime
time I'm just sharing thoughts of mine

Back again, because I knew you wanted it From the Latifah with the
Queen in front of it Droppin bombs, you're up in arms and puzzled
The lines will flow like fluid while you guzzle You slip, I drop you on a
BDP-produced track From KRS to be exact

It's a Flavor Unit quest that today has me speaking 'Cause it's knowledge
I'm seeking

Enough about myself, I think it's time that I tell you About the evil that
men do

Situations, reality, what a concept!

Nothing ever seems to stay in step

So today, here is a message to my sisters and brothers Here are some things I want to cover: A woman strives for a better life, but who the hell cares?

Because she's living on welfare

The government can't come up with a decent housing plan So she's in no man's land

It's a sucker who tells you you're equal (You don't need him, Johannesburg's crying for freedom!) "We the people hold these truths to be self-evident"

(But there's no response from the president) Someone's living the good life, tax-free 'Cause some poor girl can't find a way to be crack-free And that's just part of the message I thought I had to send you About the evil that men do

Tell me, don't you think it's a shame When someone could put a quarter in a video game But when a homeless person approaches you on the street You can't treat him the same?

It's time to teach the deaf, the dumb, the blind That black-on-black crime only shackles and binds You to a doom, a fate worse than death But there's still time left

Stop puttin your conscience on cease And bring about some type of peace Not only in your heart

But also in your mind; it will benefit all mankind Then there will be one thing that will never stop you And it's the evil that men do

ELEMENTS I'M AMONG

Booty rappers posin as gun-clappers get bitch-smacked Need to switch to bein actors, image is all ya after Hold the laughter and the lip, the clappers and the clips I flip a flow like Divine be turnin tricks, and my clique and I Cut ya like [] when the beat comes on I leave darkness where there used to be your front teeth I'm heartless when it comes to havin the back of my partners Yeah, we artists, but testin us ain't the smartest You can huff, puff, but blow me down—I doubt it, kid Or get yo' ass whooped behind what ya mouth did You need more Hail Marys than a Catholic Your ass ain't slick, I'll mash you up quick I got connects, I get that ass stuck like glue Stand to the F-U, I wag two and make your fans forget you 'Cause if I let you get over and then I pass

you Think you can do it on the reg, so I'ma wreck you [Chorus 2x]
Elements that I'm among, these none Fools gettin done, but over dumb
reasons You didn't know. Elements that I'm among, these none Betta
check it out before you become one You said new tricks in '86, it's time
to build Here we go, be pushin '96 and you still gotta kill Tryin to keep
it real ...

But is it really real?

If you could fly, is it? Get between my legs You fuckin kid, you'd be the
man but hold ya head Because if a fifth was a fifth we'd all be drunk
Nigga, don't put no yayo in my blunt I just wanna bring the funk like I
pooted Y'all wannabe niggas is fired or be the ill reputed You throw
shade, I throw it too, more than you can chew I'll get back at you,
lyrically hack at you I keep the facts here. I keep it real, hell yeah I
keep the phat gear, don't make me hate you like a pap-Smear, that's
where I get ticked Matter fact in the '96, almost a pistol grip Pump on
my lap at all times. Shit!

Niggas be on some black-on-black crime shit And I can't let it slide 'cause
I'm terrified That I might be the next homicide, the pound is on my
side [Chorus 2x]

Niggas be all in my face like the government be in my check Every time I
pick up the mic and begin to wreck But right now my job is more
important than a nigga I'm independent, so trickin just ain't the way I
figure And evident I wasn't raised that way We chicks are quick to
spray that way, and I'm tryin To stay "Forever Free," like AZ, baskin
in The riches of this hip-hop M-U-S-I-C

'Cause when the East is in the house, "Oh My God!" is right I know girls
that's givin niggas fair fights, so you damn right I'ma stick up for mine
like a queen at a bee, and I'ma Get my own rhythm without a "G."
Hey!

If ya kiddie come-come, well, ya need to run-run Like a bee you'll get
stung by my diggy dum-dum All because of ya tongue

And I'll be lampin in the sun when the day is done [Chorus 2x]

RUN-DMC

Run-DMC holds the distinction of being the second rap group (after Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five) enshrined in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. They conquered the mainstream and changed rap by introducing it to a wider listening public, all without relinquishing their hip-hop credentials.

Run-DMC was born in Hollis, Queens, and consisted of Joseph “Run” Simmons and Darryl “DMC” McDaniels as the MCs and Jason Mizell, known as Jam Master Jay, as DJ and producer. Run’s younger brother, Russell Simmons, helped conceive and promote the group before going on to found Def Jam Records and becoming hip-hop’s first mogul.

Run-DMC brought both orchestrated rhymes and a new sense of style to rap. They quickly became known for their signature apparel: tracksuits, unlaced Adidas, and fedoras. They brought a similar sense of style to their rhymes. In 1983 they released their first single, “It’s Like That,” with the B-side “Sucker MC’s.” “Sucker MC’s” was a bold alternative to the familiar rap sounds of the time. With no bass line, it placed the entire focus on the relationship between Jam Master Jay’s hard-hitting beats and the lyrical duo’s back-and-forth rhymes.

Run-DMC’s self-titled first album sparked a sort of hip-hop revolution, breaking down conventions in lyricism by abandoning the melodic rhyming made popular by such artists as Melle Mel and Kurtis Blow. It seems only a small step from there to weaving in elements of rock music. Run-DMC’s second album, *King of Rock* (1985), saw the group fully embrace their signature blend of rock and rap. This sound was only reinforced by their next album, *Raising Hell* (1986), which was a hallmark album in rap history and would change the state of the industry. Featuring the hit single “My Adidas,” the album displayed the group’s genius at branding themselves. Perhaps the most momentous single off the album, however, was “Walk This Way,” a collaboration with the rock group Aerosmith that remade an earlier Aerosmith track. The song was a hit not just on radio but also on the newer video format of MTV, which had heretofore all but ignored rap.

In the years since, the group has explored a range of vocations and projects—both together and individually. Run went on to become an ordained minister and to star in a reality TV show. Jam Master Jay

enjoyed a successful career as a producer for other acts until he was murdered in his studio on October 30, 2002, a case that has yet to be solved.

Run-DMC is not the most lyrically accomplished group in rap history, nor the longest running, but its members will be remembered as the innovators who took rap from the old school into its modern beginnings. As if this weren't enough, the group also became one of the first rap acts to achieve crossover success, propelling the genre from block parties to concert arenas.

SUCKER MC'S

[Run]

Two years ago, a friend of mine

Asked me to say some MC rhymes

So I said this rhyme I'm about to say The rhyme was def and then it went
this way Took a test to become an MC

And Orange Krush became amazed at me So Larry put me inside his
Cadillac The chauffeur drove off and we never came back Dave cut the
record down to the bone And now they got me rocking on the
microphone And then we talking autographs and cheers and laughs
Champagne, caviar, and bubble baths But see, that's the life that I lead
And you sucker MCs is who I feed So take that and move back, catch a
heart attack Because there's nothing in the world that Run'll ever lack
I cold chill at a party in a b-boy stance And rock on the mic and make
the girls wanna dance Fly like a dove that come from up above I'm
rocking on the mic and you can call me Run-Love I got a big long
Caddy not like a Seville And written right on the side it reads "Dressed
to Kill"

So if you see me cruising girls just a-move or step aside There ain't enough
room to fit you all in my ride It's on a first-come, first-serve basis
Cooling out, girl, take you to the def places One of a kind and for your
people's delight And for you sucker MC, you just ain't right Because
you're biting all your life, you're cheating on your wife You're walking
round town like a hoodlum with a knife You're hanging on the ave,
chilling with the crew And everybody know what you've been through
Ah, with the one-two-three, three to two-one My man, Larry Larr, my
name DJ Run We do it in the place with the highs and the bass I'm
rocking to the rhythm, won't you watch it on my face Go uptown and

come down to the ground You sucker MC, you sad-face clown You're a five-dollar boy and I'm a million-dollar man You's a sucker MC and you're my fan You try to bite lines, but rhymes are mine You's a sucker MC in a pair of Calvin Kleins Coming from the wackest part of town Trying to rap but you can't get down You don't even know your English, your verb or noun You're just a sucker MC, you sad-face clown So DMC and if you're ready

The people rocking steady

You're driving big cars, get your gas from Getty [DMC]

I'm DMC in the place to be

I go to St. John's University

And since kindergarten I acquired the knowledge And after twelfth grade I went straight to college I'm light skinned, I live in Queens And I love eating chicken and collard greens I dress to kill, I love the style I'm an MC you know who's versatile Say, I got good credit in your regards Got my name, not numbers, on my credit cards I go uptown, I come back home

With who? Me, myself, and my microphone All my rhymes are a sweet delight So here's another one for y'all to bite When I rhyme, I never quit

And if I got a new rhyme I'll just say it 'Cause it takes a lot to entertain And sucker MCs can be a pain

You can't rock a party with the hip in hop You gotta let 'em know you'll never stop The rhymes have to make

[Run] a lot of sense [DMC] You got to know when to start [Run] when the beats come in **IT'S LIKE THAT**

[Run] Unemployment at a record high People coming, people going, people born to die Don't ask me, because I don't know why [Both] But it's like that, and that's the way it is [DMC] People in the world tryin to make ends meet You try to ride car, train, bus, or feet I said you got to work hard, you want to compete [Both] It's like that, and that's the way it is. Huh!

[Run] Money is the key to end all your woes [DMC] Your ups, your downs, your highs, and your lows [Run] Won't you tell me last time that love bought you clothes?

[Both] It's like that, and that's the way it is [DMC] Bills rise higher every

day [Run] We receive much lower pay

[DMC] I'd rather stay young,

[Both] go out and play It's like that, and that's the way it is. Huh!

[Run] Wars going on across the sea [DMC] Street soldiers killing the elderly [Run] Whatever happened to unity?

[Both] It's like that, and that's the way it is [DMC] Disillusion

[Run] is the word [DMC] That's used by me

[Run] when I'm not heard [DMC] I just go through life

[Both] with my glasses blurred It's like that, and that's the way it is. Huh!

[Run] You can see a lot

[DMC] in this lifespan [Run] Like a bum eating out of

[DMC] a garbage can [Run] You noticed one time

[DMC] he was your man [Both] It's like that. What? And that's the way it is [DMC] You should have gone to school [Run] you could've learned a trade [DMC] But you laid in the bed

[Run] where the bums have laid [DMC] Now all the time you're crying [Run] that you're underpaid [Both] It's like that. What? And that's the way it is. Huh!

[Run] One thing I know is that life is short [DMC] So listen up, homeboy, give this a thought [Run] The next time someone's teaching, why don't you get taught?

[Both] It's like that. What? And that's the way it is [DMC] If you really think about it, times aren't that bad [Run] The one that blesses with successes will make you glad [DMC] Stop playing, start praying, [Both] you won't be sad It's like that. What? And that's the way it is. Huh!

[DMC] When you feel your failure sometimes it hurts [Run] For a meaning in life is why you search [DMC] Take the bus or the train, [Run] drive to school or the church [Both] It's like that, and that's the way it is [DMC] Here's another point in life you should not miss [Run] Do not be a fool who's prejudiced [DMC] Because we're

[Both] all written down on the same list It's like that. What? And

that's the way it is. Huh!

[DMC] You know it's like that,

[Run] and that's the way it is [DMC] Because it's like that,

[Run] and that's the way it is **PETER PIPER**

[Run (DMC)]

Now Peter (Piper) picked (peppers), but Run rocked (rhymes) Humpty (Dumpty) fell (down), that's his hard (time) Jack B. (Nimble) was (nimble) and he was (quick) But Jam (Master) cut (faster), Jack's on Jay's dick Now Little Bo Peep cold lost her sheep And Rip van Winkle fell the hell asleep And Alice chillin somewhere in Wonderland Jack's servin Jill, bucket in his hand And Jam Master Jay's making mad-ass sound The turntables might wobble but they don't fall down Now Dr. Seuss and Mother Goose both did their thing But Jam Master's gettin loose and DMC's the king 'Cause he's adult entertainer, child educator Jam Master Jay, king of the crossfader (He's the better of the best, best believe he's the baddest) Perfect timin when I'm climbin, I'm a rhymin apparatus Lot of guts (When he cuts, girls move their butts) His name is Jay (hear the play), he must be nuts And on the mix (real quick) and I'd like (to say) He's not (Flash) but he's (fast) and his name is Jay It goes a one, two, three, and

[DMC]

Jay's like King Midas, as I was told Everything that he touched turned to gold He's the greatest of the greater—get it straight, he's great Playing fame 'cause his name is known in every state His name is Jay, to see him play will make you say “Goddamn, that DJ made my day”

Like the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker He's a maker, a breaker, and a title taker Like the little old lady who lived in a shoe If cuts were kids he would be due Not lyin, y'all, he's the best I know And if I lie, my nose will grow

Like a little wooden boy named Pinocchio And you all know how the story go [Run (DMC)]

Trix are for kids, he plays much gigs He's a big bad wolf and you're the three pigs He's a big bad wolf in your neighborhood Not (bad) meaning (bad) but (bad) meaning good There it is

[DMC (Run)]

We're Run-DMC, got a beef to settle (D's not Hansel), he's not Gretel Jay's
a winner, not a beginner

His pockets get fat, others get thinner (J-J-J-J-Jump) on Jay like cows
jump moons People chase Jay like dish and spoon And like all fairy
tales end

You'll see Jay again, my friend

PROUD TO BE BLACK

You know I'm proud to be black, y'all, and that's a fact, y'all And if you
try to take what's mine, I take it back, y'all It's like that

[Run]

Licki-licki-licki-licki-licki-licki-licki Listen, party people, here's a
serious song It's right, not wrong, I should say right on I gotta tell you
somethin that you all should know It's not a mystery, it's history, and
here's how it goes Now Harriet Tubman was born a slave She was a
tiny black woman when she was raised She was livin to be givin,
there's a lot that she gave There's not a slave in this day and age I'm
proud to be black

[DMC]

Goddamn, I'm tired, my man

Don't worry 'bout what color I am Because I'll show you how ill this man
can act It could never be fiction 'cause it is all fact And if you get in
my way I will not turn back I'm proud of my name, my name is Darryl
Mack I'm black and I'm proud and I'll say it out loud I'll share my
story with the whole crowd Argh!

[Run] You know I'm proud to be black, y'all, [DMC] and that's a fact,
y'all [Run] And if you [DMC] try to take what's mine [Run] I take it
[DMC] back, y'all [Both] It's like that!

[Run]

DJ Run and I'm runnin things

You can hear it loud and clear like when the school bell rings Like Martin
Luther King, I will do my thing I'll say it in a rap 'cause I do not sing
[DMC]

DMC, the man that's causin the grief I got a message for the world so
listen up, it's brief Like Malcolm X said, I won't turn the right cheek
Got the strength to go the length if you wanna start beef Start beef

[Run] You know I'm proud to be black, y'all, [DMC] and real brave, y'all
[Run] And motherfucker, I could never be a slave, y'all [Both] So take
that!

[Run] We're gonna tell ya something, put your mind in a swirl God bless
the next baby that comes in this world The world's full of hate,
discrimination, and sin People judgin other people by the color of skin
I'll attack this matter in my own way Man, I ain't no slave, I ain't
balin no hay We're in a tight position in any condition Don't get in my
way 'cause I'm full of ambition I'm proud to be black [DMC] and I
ain't takin no crap [Run] I'm fresh out the pack [DMC] and I'm proud
to be black [Both] So take that!

[DMC] There was a man, [Run] an inventor, who invented so well He
invented a fortune for a man named Bell [DMC] George Washington
Carver made the peanut great Showed any man with a mind could
create You read about Malcolm X in the history texts Jesse Owens
broke records, Ali broke necks [Run] What's wrong with ya, man?
[DMC] How can you be so dumb?

[Both] Like Dr. King said, "We Shall Overcome!"

SALT-N-PEPA

Salt-N-Pepa expanded the possibilities for women in rap by making their brash sexuality and assertiveness not simply stylish but marketable. As the first platinum-selling female rappers, they set the standard for an emerging hip-hop feminism. With major hits in both the 1980s and 1990s, they established the kind of popular longevity that few artists in rap's history can claim.

Salt-N-Pepa got their start in Queens in the mid-1980s. Beginning with their second album, *Spinderella* provided production. Together, they challenged the male-dominated industry as well as many of the established conventions for female artists. The title of their debut album, *Hot, Cool, and Vicious* (1986), speaks to their reconception of hip-hop gender roles. The album included several hits, such as "Tramp," "My Mike Sounds Nice," and "Chick on the Side," but it was "Push It," the B-side to "Tramp," that would score their biggest early hit, reaching number nineteen on the Billboard pop charts. The song was among the earliest hip-hop songs nominated for a Grammy.

Salt-N-Pepa returned in 1990 with *Blacks' Magic*. The lead single, "Let's Talk About Sex," reached number thirteen on the pop charts and earned the group heavy rotation on MTV; more than that, it opened up new lyrical terrain. With its frank attention to sex and relationships, it offered an alternative to the more exploitative language emerging from artists like 2 Live Crew, whose hit single from the year before, "Me So Horny," had generated much controversy. By advocating safe sex without denying sexual desire, Salt-N-Pepa responded to the new realities of the age of AIDS without being preachy or compromising their craft.

The group's commercial peak came with *Very Necessary* (1993), which spawned two smash hits, "Shoop" (which reached number four on the charts) and "Whatta Man" (which reached number three). These singles—alongside a host of fine album tracks that expand on the themes of sexuality, responsibility, and love—helped certify Salt-N-Pepa as essential voices in rap's enduring tradition of women on the mic.

TRAMP

Homegirls, attention you must pay So listen close to what I say
Don't take this as a simple rhyme 'Cause this type of thing happens all the

time Now what would you do if a stranger said “Hi”?
Would you dis him, or would you reply?
If you answer, there is a chance That you’ll become a victim of
circumstance Am I right, fellas? Tell the truth!
Or else I’m a have to show and prove You are what you are, I am what I
am It just so happens that most men are —Tramps

Have you ever seen a dude who’s stupid and rude?
Whenever he’s around he dogs your mood I know a guy like that, girl
He thinks he’s God’s gift to the world You know the kind, excited all the
time With nothin but sex on the mind?
I’m no stunt, on me he can’t front I know the real deal, I know what they
want It’s me (why?) because I’m so sexy It’s me (what?) don’t touch
my body ’Cause, you see, I ain’t no skeezer But on the real tip I think
he’s a —Tramp

On the first date he thought I was a dummy He had the nerve to tell me he
loved me But of course I knew it was a lie, y’all He undressed me with
his eyeballs Trying to change the whole subject ’Cause everything he
said pertained to sex So I dissed him, I said, “You a sucker Get your
dirty mind out the gutter You ain’t gettin paid, you ain’t knockin boots
You ain’t treatin me like no prostitute”
Then I walked away. He called me a teaser You’re on a mission, kid, yo,
he’s a —Tramp

LET’S TALK ABOUT SEX

[Chorus]

Let’s talk about sex, baby
Let’s talk about you and me
Let’s talk about all the good things And the bad things that may be
Let’s talk about sex

Let’s talk about sex for now
To the people at home or in the crowd It keeps coming up anyhow
Don’t decoy, avoid, or make void the topic ’Cause that ain’t gonna stop it
Now we talk about sex on the radio and video shows Many will know

anything goes

Let's tell it like it is and how it could be How it was and of course how it
should be Those who think it's dirty have a choice Pick up the needle,
press pause Or turn the radio off

Will that stop us, Pep? (I doubt it) All right then, come on, Spin'

[Chorus]

Hot to trot, make any man's eyes pop She use what she got to get
whatever she don't got Fellas drool like fools but then again they're
only human The chick was a hit because her body was boomin Gold,
pearls, rubies, crazy diamonds Nothin she wore was ever common Her
dates: heads of state, men of taste Lawyers, doctors, no one was too
great for her To get with or even mess with

The prez, she says, was next on her list And believe me you, it's as good as
true There ain't a man alive that she couldn't get next to She had it all
in the bag

So she should have been glad

But she was mad and sad and feelin bad Thinkin about the things that she
never had No love, just sex, followed next with a check and a note
That last night was dope

[Chorus]

Ladies, all the ladies, louder now, help me out Come on, all the ladies
(let's talk about sex) all right [2x]

Yo, Pep, I don't think they're gonna play this on the radio

And why not? Everybody have sex

I mean, everybody should be makin love

Come on, how many guys you know make love?

[Chorus]

SCHOOLLY D

Just as gangsta rap was springing up on the West Coast, from the streets of Philadelphia came an East Coast variation on the theme. Schoolly D's "P.S.K. What Does It Mean" (1986) not only spoke of a gang called the "Park Side Killers" but also drew a picture of the conflicted artist who was channeling violent urges into patterns of words.

As a rapper, Schoolly has the insouciance of a latter-day Spoonie Gee, cut through with more explicit language and darker stories. Schoolly collaborated with the director Abel Ferrara on the macabre gangster movie *King of New York*, providing a soundtrack that matched in its menace the scary cackling of the thuggish Laurence Fishburne and the ghost-faced stare of Christopher Walken in the title role. After selling tales of the street on albums such as *The Adventures of Schoolly D* (1987) and *Smoke Some Kill* (1988), the rapper turned in a different direction with an album, *Am I Black Enough for You?* (1989), that fit in with the Afrocentric artists beginning to emerge.

Fittingly, though, Schoolly D was less concerned with Five-Percenter ideology than with expressing the rage of someone perpetually put-upon by white society. The combative rhetorical question of *Am I Black Enough for You?* would give way to a consideration of *How a Black Man Feels* (1991), a topic that in essence Schoolly D had been trying to explain all along, at least if the black man in question was found on the streets of West Philadelphia.

P.S.K. WHAT DOES IT MEAN

The official adventures of ... of ... of

[Chorus 2x]

PSK, we're makin that green

People always say, "What the hell does that mean?"

P for the people who can't understand How one homeboy became a man

S for the way we scream and shout One by one I'm knockin you out

K for the way my DJ cuttin

Other MCs, man, you ain't sayin nothin Rockin on to the break of dawn

I think, Code Money, your time is on Drivin in my car down the avenue

Towin on a J, sippin on some brew Turn around see the fly young lady
Pull to the curb and park my Mercedes Sayin, "Fly lady, now you're
lookin real nice Sweeter than honey, sugar, and spice"

Told her my name was MC Schoolly D

All about makin that cash money

She said, "Schoolly D, I knows yo' game Heard about you in the hall of
fame"

I said, "Mama, mama, I tell you no lies 'Cause all I wanna do is to get you
high And, uh, lay you down and do the body rock To the wall, to the
corner," got into the car Took a little trip to a fancy bar Copped some
brew, some J, some coke Tell you now, brother, this ain't no joke She
got me to the crib, she laid me on the bed I fucked her from my toes to
the top of my head I finally realized the girl was some whore Gave her
ten dollars, she asked me for some more [Chorus]

Clinton Road one Saturday night

Towin on a cheeba, I was feelin all right Then my homie-homie called me
on the phone His name is Chief Keith, but we call him Bone Told me
'bout this party on the Southside Copped my pistols, jumped into my
ride Got at the bar, copped some black Copped some cheeba-cheeba, it
wasn't the wack Got to the place and who did I see A sucker-ass nigga
tryin to sound like me Put my pistol up against his head I said, "You
sucker-ass nigga, I should shoot you dead"

A thought ran across my educated mind Said, "Man, Schoolly D ain't doin
no time"

Grabbed the microphone and I started to talk Sucker-ass nigga, man, he
started to walk [Chorus]

SATURDAY NIGHT

It was Saturday night and I'm feelin kinda sporty Went to the bar and
copped me a forty Got kinda high and a ... kinda drunk So I kicked the
ass of this little punk Forgot my key, had to ring my bell My mama
came first, she said, "Who the hell?"

"Wait Mama, wait, it's me, ya little son"

Before I knew it my mom pulled a gun "I know who you are, but who the
hell is that?"

I turned around, man, this bitch was fat I really don't know how she got

into the car I musta picked her up when I left the bar Ya know I'm horny, homie—man, I wanted to chill But you know how mothers are, she wanted to ill So I said, "Hey, baby, is you on the pill?"

'Cause tonight I wanna be your lover Just one thing: I forgot to buy a rubber"

Wait a little while then we snuck upstairs Step by step with a hint of fear

We got into my room, bitch started to scream Mama busted in, what a fucked-up scene Shirt ripped off, drawers down to my knees "Wait Mama, wait Mama, wait, wait, please!

Put back your gun, put down your broom"

My mom fucked up the room

The bitch jumped up with no respect I had to put the big, big bitch in check I said, "Ya come a little closer and ya will get shot"

"I'm sober anyway, I don't need no cock"

Oh yeah, them wild Saturday nights, man. You know what I mean, they wild as shit, man. They wild, man, you know. Yeah, man, let me tell you about another Saturday night experience I had...

It was Saturday night and I was feelin kinda funny Gold around my neck, pockets full of money Went to the corner, man, who did I see?

But the superbitch lookin back at me I said, "Fly lady, man, you got a big butt"

This bitch turned around, all she said was, "What?"

I said, "My name is Schoolly, baby. Uh, what is yours?"

Before I knew it, up come my boys Noisy as hell and drunk as shit

Sayin, "Yo, Schoolly School, what time is it?"

Looked a little closer and I knew it was gag What I thought was a girl was nothin but a fag *Oh, man, you know what I mean. You know what I mean, M&M, man. Them wild Saturday nights, man. You know I got somethin else to say, man. I got somethin to say, man, to everybody. It's like this...*

Everybody rappin but they don't know how Shoulda seen the boy rappin to the cow He rapped so hard that the nigga saw smoke He lit up his cheeba and they both took a toke The cow got high and the boy got by Don't come in my face and ask me why Cheeba, cheeba, y'all

Yeah, it's that cheeba cheeba makin 'em feel like that Cheeba, cheeba,
y'all

Um ... some call it cheeba, some call it weed It's the killer, it's a thriller,
it's the thing that you need Cheeba, cheeba, y'all

Little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet Smokin a J and scratchin the itch
Along came a spider and sat down beside her And said, "Yo, what's up
with that, bitch?"

But then down the road came Mary and her lambs Smokin a Lacy in each
and every hand The poor little spider, he couldn't score any They was
two-dollar bitches and he only had a penny Cheeba, cheeba, y'all

Yeah, cheeba, cheeba, y'all

Let me tell ya a little tale about Peter the Pimp Sucker MC tryna cop a
limp

Rode around town in a couple of cars Got gagged by the man tryin to
stick up a bar The judge said, "Boy, what was on your mind?"

He said, "I had some cheeba cheeba, cocaine, and some wine"

The judge said, "Boy, relax and have a beer You won't be doin shit for the
next ten years"

Cheeba, cheeba, y'all

Yeah, it's that cheeba cheeba

Cheeba, cheeba, y'all

Some call it cheeba, some call it weed It's the killer, it's a thriller, it's the
thing that you need So cheeba, cheeba, y'all

ROXANNE SHANTÉ

Hailing from the Queensbridge projects, Roxanne as a teenager first made her mark by responding to UTFO's "Roxanne, Roxanne" with "Roxanne's Revenge," the first and still the most serious sally in what quickly became a saga. A member of Mr. Magic and Marley Marl's Juice Crew, Roxanne followed her initial hit with such songs as "Queen of Rox," "Bite This," "Have a Nice Day," and "Def Fresh Crew," the last of which featured Biz Markie beatboxing. Her collaboration with Rick James, "Loosey's Rap," topped the Billboard black singles chart for a week in 1988.

The recorded output of Shanté is not large, but she is a fierce MC in bursts. Much of the pleasure of listening to her rap derives from something hardly extant before the likes of Foxy Brown and Lil' Kim—that is, a female MC as verbally combative and profane as her male counterparts. It has been said that those who rely on curse words are simply making up for a lack of vocabulary, but lovers of literary invective know otherwise. Shanté—especially in her freestyles—can drop an explicit bomb with the best, sometimes to dis the worst and sometimes just for fun. In fact, there is more than one side to Roxanne. Her song "Independent Woman," included here, is a clarion of tough-love feminism, by turns harsh and sympathetic.

ROXANNE'S REVENGE

Well, my name is Roxanne, a-don't ya know I just a-cold rock a party and
I do this show I said I met these three guys and you know it's true A-let
me tell you and explain them all to you I met this dude with the name
of a hat

I didn't even walk away, I didn't give him no rap But then he got real
mad and he got a little tired If he worked for me, you know he would
be fired His name is Kangol and that is cute

But he ain't got money and he ain't got the loot And every time that I see
him, he's always a-beggin And all the other girls that he's always tryin
to layin Every time that I see him, he says a rhyme But, see, compared
to me, it's weak compared to mine Every time I know that I am sayin
somethin fresher In any category I'm considered the best And every
time that I say it there ain't nothin less And everybody knows I will

win the contest Then after that came the Educated Rapper His fingers started snappin and his hands start to clappin Every time-a that I see him, everything he say He rock it to the beat-a and he come this way He said-a, "Yeah, you know, your mother's name is Mary And from what I heard, your father is a fairy"

But every time that I see him, he's sayin somethin new But let me explain to him what he should do He should be like me, a fly MC

Don't never have to bite, will always write I have the freshest rhymes that I do recite And after that and you know it's true

Well, let me tell you somethin else about the Doctor, too He ain't really cute and he ain't great He don't even know how to operate

He came up to me with some crabbish rap But let me tell you something, don't you know it's wack So when he came up to me, I told him to step back He said, "You call yourself a MC?" I said, "This is true"

He said, "Explain to me really what MCs must do"

I said, "Listen very close 'cause I don't say this every day My name is Roxanne and they call me Shanté"

But every time-a that I say a rhyme-a just-a like-a this-a It ain't nothin you MCs want-a miss-a

Now, Kangol, if you think you cute, you think you so right That's why you said it in a language so you wouldn't have to bite You started talkin Pig Latin, didn't make no sense You thought you was cute, yeah, you thought you was a prince You're walkin down the block 'cause I'm the one you're gonna clock And everybody knows that you're all on my yacht I'm just a devastatin, always rockin, always have the fliest clockin Everybody knows it's me, the R-O-X-A-N-N-E

Everyone knows I am fresh, in any category best And every time I start to write, everyone insist to bite Every time I do it, yeah, you know it is a me-a Rockin on the beat-a, that you can see

So, the UTFO crew, you know what you can do Lemme tell you one for me and then I'll tell you one for you Every time you say a rhyme-a just-a like-a this-a It ain't nothin that I don't wanna miss-a And if you think you right and I'm bitin your beat Well, then you just better know and a-listen to me Because my name is Roxanne-a and I came to say I rock it to the beat-a and I do it this way I'm conceited, never beated, never heard of defeated I rock it to the beat-a and you know it is-a me-a The R-O-X-A-N-N-E-a

And if you wanna play a little game for me Lemme show you what you
can do, baby
'Cause with a twist of my cheek and a twist of my wrist I have all the guys
droppin down like this Yeah, I am fly and you must admit
That everybody knows I don't go for it
So, if you're tryin to be cute and you're tryin to be fine You need to cut it
out 'cause it's all in your mind Tryin to be like me, yeah, it is very hard
You think you are God, but you do eat lard Tryin to be cute and you're
tryin to be fly Don't you know you wish you could be my guy?
So I can take you home, make you relax
And everybody knows that you're out there, tryin to tax Like corn on the
cob, you're always tryin to rob You need to be out there lookin for a
job Yeah, you're tryin to meet and talk about Roxanne But lemme let
ya know—you're not a real man 'Cause a Roxanne needs a man, and
yes
Someone fresh who always dress
Someone, yes, who will never fess
And then I'll say, yeah, forget the rest You gotta be cute and you tryna be
fly
But all you wanna be is Roxanne's guy
'Cause I turned you down without a frown Embarrassed you in front of
your friends, made you look like a clown And all you do is get real
mad
And you talk about me and make me look bad?
But everybody knows how the story goes
There's no ifs, no ands, no buts, or suppose No coke up your nose, no
dope in your vein And then it won't cause no kind of pain But yet and
still, you're tryin to be fly I ask you a question, I wanna know why
Why'd ya have to make a record 'bout me?
The R-O-X-A-N-N-E

INDEPENDENT WOMAN

Ladies, listen up, I really hope you're ready 'Cause what I've got to say is
far from petty We've come a long way, baby, so maybe
Shanté can help a sister that's way be—

Hind, lost in the mind and can't find
Her way to a better day, you know the kind So wrapped up in fairy-tale
dreams
So naive that every male seems
Honest and loyal, ready to spoil
Buyin him gifts as if the boy's loyal
But Shanté is here just to say a few things Some you heard before, but
some are new things So lend me your ears, dry up your tears And let's
hear the cheers for the years Of the independent woman

How many runny-nose kids can you have?
How many nights can you work on the ave?
Your so-called man has a car and a Visa He's livin large while you're livin
on pizza Unemployed while you wait for the perfect mate Let's get one
thing straight 'cause it's gettin late What you're waitin for is really
never comin No one hears the sorry tunes that you're hummin I'm here
to bring the news, that if you're singin the blues Every day, it will not
change the views That people have of you, they say you're lost Nobody
forced you to quit, your future's tossed You put your faith in the guys
with the hazel eyes You thought you would get a prize, all you got was
lies Now you're stuck in a room with a mop and a broom Did you
assume that one day you will find a groom?

Are you dizzy—who would ever marry you?
You're lookin for a man that will carry you And buy you nice things, like
diamond rings You're amazed at the truth that my rhymin brings But
the truth is the only way you'll ever see That the life that you're hopin
for will never be But the race isn't over, put down the rope Shanté is
here to say there's still hope So lend me your ears, dry up your tears
And let's hear the cheers for the years Of the independent woman

So much to live for, she wants to die
Life's full of pitfalls, maybe that's why Her pops went to jail, her mother
tapped her vein City took custody and trapped her in pain Feelin so
alone in the room with a stranger Hates her own blood and nothing's
gonna change her Angry at the world 'cause it doesn't play fair So
much despair does she feel, no one to care Not a single family member
will remember her Smoke's in her eyes and the past is a blur She's on

her own now, livin with some other girls With the same damn lives,
but from a different world These girls are lost, how the city is full of
fools So many years, no guidance, and no kinda rules No love to give
—yo, they need love to live If not, instead, they'll ponder in a bed Sex
is the thing that makes her feel wanted Love and care, for she's
undaunted

Because whoever is laying there won't really matter Such a sad song when
young dreams shatter I really don't think glue is gonna fix it But
homegirl can walk the right path if she picks it So lend me your ears,
dry up your tears And let's hear the cheers for the years Of the
independent woman

The black woman's role grows larger each day Nothing in the way so
what we teach may Somehow help those young sisters that doze And
sleepwalk through life with their eyes closed You don't need a man, all
you need is to know you can Then you can stand on your own two feet
and Achieve anything that you want out of life Do for yourself, then
you can be a wife And you'll feel so good that you wanna shout
Because you got to the top and got there without Relying on Tom,
Dick, or Billy Dee

You don't have to turn the lights on to really see So lend me your ears,
dry up your tears And let's hear the cheers for the years Of the
independent woman

Independent woman

SLICK RICK

Slick Rick is the hip-hop Aesop. Employing a range of voices, moods, and narrative techniques, he defined the terms of rap storytelling. Dubbed “The Ruler,” perhaps as much for his aristocratic English accent as for his command of the microphone, he also became known for his trademark attire of Kangol, gold rope chain, and eye patch (which covers an eye blinded in a childhood accident).

Slick Rick was born to Jamaican immigrant parents in South Wimbledon, London. After moving to the North Bronx as a teen, he befriended Dana Dane and formed the Kangol Crew. They began performing at local shows and hip-hop battles. At one such event Rick met Doug E. Fresh, an originator of the human beat box (that percussive technique that uses the human voice to fashion rhythm and sound effects), who invited him to join the Get Fresh Crew, which then consisted of Doug, Barry Bee, and Chill Will. In 1985 Rick made his debut as MC Ricky D alongside Doug E. Fresh on the classic single “The Show / La Di Da Di.”

With his newfound exposure Ricky D, now named Slick Rick, signed a deal with Def Jam and released his platinum-selling solo debut, *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick* (1988). It stands as one of rap’s indispensable albums for its commanding example of hip-hop storytelling and its raucous—often raunchy—sense of humor. Rick’s rhymes, rich in detail and dialogue, are carefully crafted narratives of ghetto life. On songs like “Children’s Story” and “Mona Lisa,” he offers cautionary tales that are never preachy. The album is also marked by misogyny. Tracks such as “Treat Her like a Prostitute” and “Indian Girl (Adult Story)” show Rick employing his narrative prowess toward less-than-noble ends.

Slick Rick’s influence is apparent among artists as divergent as Snoop Dogg, Black Star, Outkast, and Nas. Even into middle age, he remains relevant on the rap scene, as is made apparent by his warm and charming contribution to Ghostface’s 2001 track “The Sun” and by his skillful verse on Mos Def’s 2009 song “Auditorium,” the latter of which is included in this anthology.

LA DI DA DI

(with Doug E. Fresh)

Okay, party people in the house. You’re about to witness something you’ve

never witnessed before. Yes, it's the original human beat box, Doug E. Fresh, and his partner, the grand wizard, MC Ricky D, D. And that's me in the place to be. We gonna show you how we do it for '85, kick it live, all right? Because, um, I've got a funny feeling, um, you're all sick of all these crap-rappers bitin their rhymes because, um, they're backstabbers. But when it comes to me and my friend Doug Fresh here, there is no competition 'cause we are the best, yeah. Finesse, impress, which we prove, and y'all will realize that we are the move. So listen close, um, so you all don't miss as we go a little somethin like this. Hit it!

You know what? Yo, peep this

La di da di, we like to party

We don't cause trouble, we don't bother nobody, we're Just some men
that's on the mic

And when we rock upon the mic we rock the mic (right!) For all of y'all,
keepin y'all in health Just to see you smile and enjoy yourself 'Cause
it's cool when you cause a cozy condition and, uh That we create
'cause that's our mission, so Listen to what we say because

This type of shit, it happens every day—I Woke up around ten o'clock in
the mornin I gave myself a stretch up, a mornin yawn and Went to the
bathroom to wash up, had some Soap on my face and my hand upon a
cup—I said, um “Mirror, mirror on the wall

Who is the top choice of them all?”

There was a rumble dumble

Five minutes it lasted, the mirror said “You are, you conceited bastard!”

But that's true, that's why we never have no beef So then I washed off the
soap and brushed the gold teeth Used Oil of Olay 'cause my skin gets
pale And then I got the files for my fingernails Chewed through the
night and on my behalf I put the bubbles in the tub so I could have a
bubble bath Clean, dry, was my body and hair

I threw on my brand-new Gucci underwear For all the girls I might take
home

I got the Johnson's Baby Powder and the Polo Cologne Fresh dressed like
a million bucks

Threw on the Bally shoes and the fly green socks Stepped out my house,
stopped short, “Oh no!”

I went back in, I forgot my Kangol

And then I dilly (dally), I ran through a (alley) I bumped into my old girl
(Sally) from the (Valley) This is a girl plays hard to get so I said
“What’s wrong?” ’cause she looked upset She said, “It’s all because of
you

I’m feeling sad and blue. You went away And now my life is filled with
rainy days And I love you so, how much you’ll never know ’Cause you
took your love away from me”

Now what was I to do? She’s crying over me and she was Feeling blue. I
said, “Don’t cry, dry your eye Here comes your mother with those two
little guys”

Her mean mother stepped up, said to me, “Hi!”

Looked Sally in the face and decked her in the eye Punched her in the
belly and stepped on her feet Slammed the child on the hard concrete
The bitch was strong, the kids was gone Something was wrong, I said,
“What is going on?”

I tried to break it up, I said, “Stop it, leave her”

She said, “If I can’t have you she can’t either”

She grabbed me closely by my socks

So I broke the hell out like I had the chicken pox but She gave chase, she
caught up quick

She put a finger in the face of MC Rick She said, “Why don’t you give me
a play So we can go cruising in my OJ

And if you give me that OK

I’ll give you all my love today

Ricky, Ricky, Ricky, can’t you see

Somehow your words just hypnotize me

And I just love your jazzy ways

Oh, MC Rick, my love is here to stay”

And on and on and on she kept on

The bitch been around before my mother’s born I said, “Cheer up!” I gave
her a kiss I said, “You can’t have me, I’m too young for you, Miss”

She said, “No, you’re not,” then she starts crying I says, “I’m nineteen,”
she said (“Stop lying!”) I says, “I am, go ask my mother

And with your wrinkled pussy, I can’t be your lover!”

To the tick tock, you don’t stop

To the tick tick and you don't quit, hit it!

CHILDREN'S STORY

Once upon a time not long ago

When people wore pajamas and lived life slow When laws were stern and justice stood And people were behavin like they ought to: good There lived a little boy who was misled By another little boy and this is what he said "Me and you, Ty, we're going to make some cash Robbin old folks and makin the dash"

They did the job, money came with ease But one couldn't stop, it's like he had a disease He robbed another and another and a sister and her brother Tried to rob a man who was a DT undercover The cop grabbed his arm, he started acting erratic, he said "Keep still, boy, no need for static"

Punched him in his belly and he gave him a slap But little did he know the little boy was strapped The kid pulled out a gun, he said, "Why'd you hit me?"

The barrel was set straight for the cop's kidney The cop got scared, the kid, he starts to figure "I'll do years if I pull this trigger"

So he cold dashed and ran around the block Cop radios in to another lady cop

He ran by a tree, there he saw this sister Shot for the head, he shot back but he missed her Looked around good and from expectations He decided he'd head for the subway stations But she was coming and he made a left He was runnin top speed 'til he was out of breath Knocked an old man down and swore he killed him Then he made his move to an abandoned building Ran up the stairs, up to the top floor Opened up a door there, guess who he saw?

(Who?) Dave the dope fiend shootin dope Who don't know the meaning of water nor soap He said, "I need bullets, hurry up, run!"

The dope fiend brought back a spanking shotgun He went outside but there was cops all over Then he dipped into a car, a stolen Nova Raced up the block doing eighty-three Crashed into a tree near University

Escaped alive though the car was battered Rat-a-tat-tatted and all the cops scattered Ran out of bullets and he still had static Grabbed a pregnant lady and pulled out the automatic Pointed at her head, he said the gun was full of lead He told the cops, "Back off or honey here's dead"

Deep in his heart he knew he was wrong So he let the lady go and he
starts to run on Sirens sounded, he seemed astounded, and Before long
the little boy got surrounded He dropped his gun, so went the glory
And this is the way I have to end this story He was only seventeen, in
a madman's dream The cops shot the kid, I still hear him scream This
ain't funny so don't you dare laugh Just another case about the wrong
path Straight and narrow or your soul gets cast Goodnight

I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT

Well, I'ma tell you a story and I come out bluntly Want a ugly child? Hey,
nobody would want me I used to walk around and get upset and
upsetter 'Til I figured out ways to make myself look better As I got
older, my awareness expanded I met this beautiful girl and my wish
was commanded Didn't hang with fellas, 'cause they started gettin
shady I'd always be with my girl and y'all could call her my lady I
loved her a lot, word up, not going to front, see?

The problem that arise is why on earth did she want me?

Couldn't figure it out and to make things worse I was cursed to the
torment of not being the first And the first was this fly guy, made me
very jealous Always think she'd cheat on me and talk to other fellas
Two wrongs don't make a right, but any time we would fight I would
kindly pick up the phone and call a girl out of spite [Chorus]

I shouldn't have done it, man

I'm feelin sad and blue

I'm feelin sad and blue

I'm feelin

I want to make this right, so directly was admiring I tried to stop my love,
but no, my love was not retiring To catch her in a lie was near
impossible and tricky Didn't want her in certain clothes, getting really
picky We got into it again, this time she got too bright So me,
preventin a fight, I just stayed out for the night I had to ease up off the
pressure, all this heartache pain, so I went up to the Parrot with
Omega, Vance, and Dane This girl came over, she was trucked down
excessive Started talkin to me and she was poppin quite aggressive A
pretty young thing, she didn't strike me as no ho So weak-minded Rick
the Ruler went on with the flow My joint was gettin hard, word,
without me even knowing We stepped back to my van and I could feel

it's for her growing The girl took off her coat, her body was no joke
Well, a rub or two, unzip it, and I went for broke [Chorus]

Well, now I've sinned and there's no one to blame That night when I went
home, I felt real guilty and ashamed Snuck right into bed, I felt just
like a shady fella What made me so self-centered? How am I ever
gonna tell her?

I shouldn't have cheated, just because we'd always doubt Endurance, be a
man, that's what I had to learn about Now me, I guess I'm, like,
"That's one of the secrets that I hid"

I figure, I'll patch things up and then I'll tell her what I did Then after that
night, she started actin heaven-sent I found the house spotless and
she'd help out with the rent So, I bought the ring, it was a good twenty
karat Then word got back about me chillin at the Parrot So when I got
home, I thought she'd just be out to roast Instead I found this letter and
I found her overdosed It said, "I do for you but I guess you didn't care"

All this went and happened 'cause of me and my affair [Chorus]

TOO \$HORT

Too \$hort pioneered the westward expansion of rap with his raunchy tales of urban life. His slow-tempo flow and melodic, funk-inflected beats made him the indisputable father of Bay Area hip-hop. His career spans more than twenty years, nearly twenty albums, and scores of songs.

When Too \$hort started rapping in East Oakland in the early 1980s, few major labels were signing West Coast artists, so he began recording and selling his own mix tapes. After a few successful independent releases, Too \$hort formed his own record label, which was soon picked up by Jive Records. With major-label publicity behind him, his next two albums, *Born to Mack* (1987) and *Life Is ... Too Short* (1989), had considerable commercial success, the second achieving platinum status. He retired after the release of his tenth studio album, in 1996, only to return three years later.

Too \$hort helped inaugurate the West Coast gangsta style, not through gunplay and gangs but through the pimp persona. Though he helped start a tradition, he also marks the contemporary limit of another one that long precedes him: the toasts. Much is rightly made of the deep links between rap and the “toasting” tradition in African American oral poetry, those long narrative poems describing the exploits of outlaw and trickster figures. Too \$hort’s raps are modern-day toasts on wax, fitting comfortably alongside the tales of pimps and sexual freaks transcribed in Bruce Jackson’s *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me*.

The fact that such toasts tend to formalize misogyny makes them a perpetual problem, one that Too \$hort doesn’t disown but rather exacerbates. On songs like “Freaky Tales” he delights in the outrageous and explicit actions of his outsized persona. A coarse purveyor of the closed couplet, at the meeting point of two traditions, Too \$hort brings a nonchalant vibrancy to his rhymes. That nonchalance does not extend to any reticence about placing himself in the history of rap, however. “When you talk about the earliest days of hip-hop and where it came from, I just wanna be right there,” he has said. “There have been phases of pioneers. There have been the pioneers who pioneered hip-hop—Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, that crew from the South Bronx. There have been the pioneers like Russell Simmons who brought it to the world. But you also

have your West Coast pioneers, and that would be the Ice Cubes, Dr. Dres, Too \$horts. And so on. We pioneered rap on the West Coast. It did not come from anybody but us.” ¹⁷

CUSSWORDS

So you motherfuckers thought I was gonna change my style?

—So what are you saying, Todd?

To all you bitches, hoes, and all that shit Here’s another rap that I’m
ready to spit It goes like this, my name is \$hort I’m tearin shit up like
never before Pimp slaps, makin snaps

Cold cash money and Too \$hort raps Oakland, California, that’s where
I’m from The city where the boys say you don’t want none But if you
do, I’m gonna tell you this Trues and vogues ain’t really shit Wanna
roll so hard, all the time You and that bitch playin Too \$hort rhymes If
you ask me what it’s all about I’ll say it’s about that money But if you
ask me could you have some I’ll say it doesn’t concern me Ronald
Reagan came up to me

And said, “Do you have the answer To the US economy
And a cure for cancer?”

I said, “What are you doin in the White House If you’re not sellin cocaine?

Ask your wife, Nancy Reagan

I know she’ll spit that game

Like one night, she came to my house And gave me a blow job

She licked my dick, up and down Like it was corn on the cob”

What is life? Life is Too \$hort I play the bitches like it’s a sport Yeah, I’ll
play the bitches just like y’all Like Dr. J played basketball

You can call me Too, don’t say it twice You get me real mad and I’ll fuck
your wife See, I’m not proper, I’m rarely polite Too \$hort, Too \$hort,
don’t say it tonight, beeatch It started on a bright morning in 1987

I was in my drop-top Caddy, y’all Gettin sucked by a bitch named Helen
Nasty bitches, around the world I wrote this rhyme for you

You might not like my rap

But I’m tellin you, bitch, it’s true So much death in the Oakland streets Am
I gonna live ’til next week?

Will I get shot by a dope fiend Tryin to get high, tryin to steal my ring?
I really can't say, 'cause I don't know why People out here droppin dead
like flies I used to see a homeboy, give him five Now I say, "Man, you
still alive?"

Cold as hell, this town I'm from Won't last too long when you're fakin the
funk I'm the master rapper, so unique Clap my hand when I want my
freak You can't deny it, you know I'm right I turn any rapper out
when I'm on the mic And I won't kick back or relax 'Til he knows I'm
the best at the MC rap 'Til he knows Too \$hort set the trap They got
him caught up in my serious cap Motherfucker can't spit straight game
on the mic 'Cause he's worse than a fag or a Frisco dyke He's a sucker
MC, I call him punk You tryin to spit that rap, you can scratch that
junk You little punk-ass boy, wouldn't listen to me Think I'm fakin but
I'm takin all you sucker MCs To the end of the world and push you
over Good luck couldn't find you in a four-leaf clover If I ever said a
rap, tryin to cap on you I wouldn't even sweat it 'cause you'll be
through Lookin so far up, you might fall down Gettin clowned by the
hound from east Oaktown And the look in your face when you're
lookin at Too Could make a grown man die, laughin at you 'Cause
you're a no-rappin, no-rhymin Played-out fake-ass simple simon I
never understood one word you said But you're swearin up and down
that you're killin me dead There's only one thing I wanted to know
Sucker motherfucker, where's the joke?

I'm the player of players, just call me Pop My name is Too \$hort, no, I
don't stop I just don't stop mackin, don't stop cappin Don't stop
rappin, now you see what happens Your mind is gone, your crew just
cut Sucker MC, I'll tell you what

Your rhymes are weak, your rap the same And when it comes to game,
you are lame Never even heard of Too \$hort, baby Hit Oakland in
1980

Singin mo' raps than a rap could rhyme Tellin sucker MCs don't waste my
time There's a girl I know, her name is Betty Straight to the head, just
rock it steady She's so freaky she'll juice you up All the homeboys just
can't get enough She's a PhD, don't even stop

In the back like that goin chop, chop, chop I won't say white girl, won't
say she's black She's the kind of girl that make your knees go crack
Feel the beat, rock with me

Let me tell you what I be

I'm a MC rapper, a MC rapper

A big bank roller and a cold, cold capper Hey, baby, I got this rhyme

It's not gonna stop 'til the end of time Like rock and roll I'll play that
song To the beat all day and all night long So listen up to what I'm
sayin I'm a Oaktown mack, bitch, I ain't playin To all the homeboys
doin time in the pen Gonna rock this beat for you once again If you
can't get out and you're mad as hell Say beeatch, now make it sound
for real I'ma tear shit up, if I get the chance I could give a fuck less if
your ho don't dance See, I'm a big mack now, I'm so great I was born
and raised in the Golden State Call me T-O-O, if you say \$hort I'ma
rap my ass off 'til you give me some more Big bank, now just make me
rich Bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch make me rich Check out my style, baby, I
don't quit I heard this freak say, "That's the shit He took the cake,
fucked the rake Too \$hort, baby, damn sure ain't fake"

But the sucker MCs are screamin loud Sayin, "Sir Too \$hort, shut your
mouth"

How can you talk about me and call me weak When your father smokes
coke and your mother's a freak?

So I keep on rappin, if nothin else Keep your jealous-ass thoughts to
yourself (Beeatch) Picture this, he's a MC, right?

(Beeatch) Ain't sayin nothin but he's holdin the mic (Beeatch) Fuck with
me and boy you're doomed I send a trick with a ho to the motel room
'Cause I'm the coldest MC on a microphone Like a .357 pointed at your
dome I got cap for cap, you never heard So fresh again with cusswords

Motherfuckin shit, fuckin with me Fuck a stank bitch and a sucker MC

All you bastards got the claps And fuck you, punk, 'cause you still can't
rap Cusswords, just let 'em know

Motherfuckin shit, goddamn asshole Cusswords, just don't quit

Motherfuck you, damn shithead bitch It's Too \$hort, on the mic, and it
don't stop And it don't stop, and it won't stop, beeatch Check out my
style

THE GHETTO

[Chorus]

The ghetto

The ghetto

(Talking 'bout the ghetto)

The ghetto

The ghetto

(Funky funky ghetto)

Even though the streets are bumpy, lights burned out Dope fiends die with
a pipe in their mouths Old school buddies not doing it right Every day
it's the same and it's the same every night I wouldn't shoot you, bro,
but I'd shoot that fool If he played me close and tried to test my cool
Every day I wonder just how I'll die Only thing I know is how to
survive There's only one rule in the real world And that's to take care
of you, only you and yours Keep dealing with the hard times day after
day Might deal me some dope but then crime don't pay Black man
tryin to break into my house again Thought he got off early doing time
in the pen Even though my brothers do me just like that I get a lot of
love so I'm giving it back to the ...

[Chorus]

So just peep the game and don't call it crap 'Cause to me, life is one hard
rap Even though my sister smoked crack cocaine She was nine months
pregnant, ain't nothing changed Six hundred million on a football
team And her baby died just like a dope fiend The story I tell is so
incomplete Five kids in the house and no food to eat Don't look at me
and don't ask me why Mama's next door getting high

Even though she's got five mouths to feed She'd rather spend her money
on a H-I-T

I always tell the truth about things like this I wonder if the mayor
overlooked that list Instead of adding to the task force, send some help
Waiting on him, I'd better help myself Housing Authority and the OPD
All these guns just to handle me in the ...

[Chorus]

Even though they put us down and call us animals We make real big
banks and buy brand new clothes Drive fancy cars, make love to stars
Never really saying just who we are We use alias names like Too \$hort
Sell you stuff you might kill for Young kids grow up and that's all they

know Didn't teach him in school, now he's slangin dope Only thing he
knows is how to survive But will he kill another brother before he dies?
In the ghetto, you keep one eye open All day long, just hoping and
hoping You can pay your bills and not drink too much Then the
problems of life you'll be throwing up Like me, but you don't see
Ten years from now, where will you be?

[Chorus]

So much game in a Too \$hort rap Blacks can't be white and whites can't
be black Why you wanna act like someone else?

All you gotta do is just be yourself We're all the same color underneath
\$hort Dog is in the house, you better listen to me Never be ashamed of
what you are Proud to be black, stand tall and hard Even though some
people give you no respect Be intelligent when you put 'em in check
'Cause when you're ignorant, you get treated that way And when they
throw you in jail you got nothing to say So if you don't listen, it's not
my fault I'll be getting paid and you'll be paying the cost Sitting in the
jailhouse running your mouth While me and my peoples try to get out
[Chorus]

A TRIBE CALLED QUEST

A Tribe Called Quest's two MCs, Q-Tip and Phife Dawg, present a stylistic contrast that reaches from the philosophical to the comic, from personal reflections to battle rhymes. As part of the Native Tongues collective, they cultivated a sense of musicality and a freewheeling spirit of improvisation that charted new directions for rap in the early 1990s and beyond.

ATCQ formed in 1988 in Queens when childhood friends Q-Tip and Phife Dawg joined with DJ/producer Ali Shaheed Muhammad, a classmate of Q-Tip's, to form a group known simply as Tribe. (A fourth member of the crew, Jarobi, remained a behind-the-scenes influence, particularly on their debut album.) At the suggestion of Afrika from the Jungle Brothers, they expanded their name to A Tribe Called Quest.

After signing to Jive Records in 1989, ATCQ released their first album, *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm* (1990). It was packed with jazz-inflected tracks on an eclectic range of subject matter: vegetarianism, safe sex, and road trips gone awry. *The Low End Theory* (1991) witnessed the successful fusion of opposites: the complex musical textures of jazz and the straightforward boom-bap of rap, Q-Tip's esoteric musings and Phife's sardonic battle rhymes. It saw Q-Tip emerge as the public face of the group, though Phife's contribution remained undeniable and essential. "Phife was always the battle rapper—he would take what was happenin' on the street and rhyme about it," Q-Tip would later explain. "And he was a great freestyler as well. My shit was always more cerebral, and the combo always worked really well. We'd always make up routines that would emulate Run-DMC." ¹⁸

By the time they released *Midnight Marauders* (1993), ATCQ had become standard-bearers for a new rap aesthetic that had at its center a conscious mind-set, an informed eclecticism, and a jazz-based sound. *Marauders* challenged some of these assumptions, marking a shift away from the heavy jazz influence of the previous albums. Listeners were led through the tracks by the robotic voice of a tour guide advising us how to make our listening experience "precise, bass heavy, and just right." Including such standout songs as "Sucka Nigga," "Electric Relaxation," "Steve Biko (Stir It Up)," and "Award Tour," it remains the group's best-selling album. That A Tribe Called Quest became alternative hip-hop icons proved that

intellectually stimulating hip-hop could gain mainstream success. With their beats and rhymes they infused rap with new life.

I LEFT MY WALLET IN EL SEGUNDO

I left my wallet in El Segundo

Left my wallet in El Segundo

Left my wallet in El Segundo

I gotta get it, I got-got to get it My mother went away for a month-long trip Her and some friends on an ocean-liner ship She made a big mistake by leaving me home I had to roam so I picked up the phone Dialed Ali up to see what was goin down Told him I'd pick him up so we could drive around Took the Dodge Dart, a '74

My mother left a yard but I needed one more Shaheed had me covered with a hundred greenbacks So we left Brooklyn and we made big tracks Drove down the Belt, got on the Conduit Came to a toll, we paid and went through it Had no destination, we was on a quest Ali laid in the back so he can get rest Drove down the road for two days and a half The sun had just risen on a dusty path Just then a figure had caught my eye A man with a sombrero who was four feet high I pulled over to ask where we was at His index finger, he tipped up his hat "El Segundo," he said. "My name is Pedro If you need directions, I'll tell you pronto"

Needed civilization, some sort of reservation He said, "A mile south, there's a fast-food station"

"Thanks, Señor," as I start up the motor Ali said, "Damn, Tip, what you drive so far for?"

"Well, describe to me what the wallet looks like."

Anyway, a gas station we passed

We got gas and went on to get grub It was a nice little pub

In the middle of nowhere, anywhere would have been better I ordered enchiladas and I ate 'em Ali had the fruit punch

When we finished we thought for ways to get back I had a hunch

Ali said, "Pay for lunch." So I did it Pulled out the wallet and I saw this wicked Beautiful lady. She was a waitress there Put the wallet down and stared and stared To put me back into reality, here's Shaheed: "Yo,

Tip, man, you got what you need?"

I checked for keys and started to step What do you know, my wallet I forget *"Yo, it was a brown wallet, it had props numbers, had my jimmy hats. I got to get it, man."*

Loooord, have mercy!

The heat got hotter, Ali starts to curse me I feel bad but he makes me feel badder Chit-chit-chatter, car starts, we scatter Breaking on out, we was northeast bound Jettin on down at the speed of sound Three days coming and three more going We get back and there was no slack 490 Madison, "We're here, Sha"

He said, "All right, Tip, see you tomorrow"

Thinking about the past week, the last week Hands go in my pocket, I can't speak Hopped in the car and torpe'ed to the shack Of Shaheed. "We gotta go back"

When he said, "Why?" I said, "We gotta go 'Cause I left my wallet in El Segundo"

Yeah, I left my wallet in El Segundo Left my wallet in El Segundo
Left my wallet in El Segundo

I gotta get it, I got-got to get it **CHECK THE RHIME**

[Q-Tip] Back in the days on the boulevard of Linden We used to kick routines and the presence was fittin It was, I, the Abstract

[Phife Dawg] and me the Five Footer I kicks the mad style so step off the frankfurter [Q-Tip] Yo, Phife, you remember that routine That we used to make spiffy like Mr. Clean?

[Phife] Um, um, a tidbit, um, a smidgen I don't get the message so you gots to run the picture [Q-Tip] You on point, Phife?

[Phife] All the time, Tip [Q-Tip] You on point, Phife?

[Phife] All the time, Tip [Q-Tip] You on point, Phife?

[Phife] All the time, Tip [Q-Tip] Well, then grab the microphone and let your words rip [Phife]

Now here's a funky introduction of how nice I am Tell your mother, tell your father, send a telegram I'm like an Energizer 'cause, you see, I last long My crew is never ever wack because we stand strong Now if you say my style is wack that's where you're dead wrong I slayed that

body in El Segundo then push it along You'd be a fool to reply that
Phife is not the man 'Cause you know and I know that you know who I
am A special shout of peace goes out to all my pals, you see And a
middle finger goes for all you punk MCs 'Cause I love it when you
wack MCs despise me They get vexed, I roll next, can't none contest
me I'm just a fly MC who's five foot three and very brave On top
remaining, no home training 'cause I'd misbehave I come correct in
full effect, have all my hoes in check And before I get the butt the jim
must be erect You see, my aura's positive, I don't promote no junk See,
I'm far from a bully and I ain't a punk Extremity in rhythm, yeah,
that's what you heard So just clean out your ears and just check the
word [Chorus 2x]

Check the rhyme, y'all [6x]

Check it out [2x]

[Phife] Back in days on the boulevard of Linden We used to kick routines
and the presence was fittin It was I, the Phifer,

[Q-Tip] and me, the Abstract The rhymes were so rumpin that the
brothers rode the 'zack [Phife] Aiyo, Tip, do you recall when we used
to rock Those fly routines on your cousin's block?

[Q-Tip] Um, let me see.... Damn, I can't remember I receive the message
and you will play the sender [Phife] You on point, Tip?

[Q-Tip] All the time, Phife [Phife] You on point, Tip?

[Q-Tip] Yeah, all the time, Phife [Phife] You on point Tip?

[Q-Tip] Yo, all the time, Phife [Phife] So play the resurrector and
give the dead some life [Q-Tip]

Okay, if knowledge is the key then just show me the lock Got the scrawny
legs but I move just like Lou Brock With speed. I'm agile, plus I'm
worth your while One hundred percent intelligent black child My optic
presentation sizzles the retina How far must you go to gain respect?
Ummm Well, it's kind of simple, just remain your own Or you'll be
crazy sad and alone

Industry rule number four thousand and eighty: Record company people
are shady

So, kids, watch your back 'cause I think they smoke crack I don't doubt it.
Look at how they act Off to better things like a hip-hop forum Pass me
the rock and I'll score with decorum and Proper. What you say,

Hammer? Proper Rap is not pop, if you call it that then stop NC, y'all,
check the rhyme, y'all SC, y'all, check it out, y'all

Virginia, check the rhyme, y'all

Check it out, check it out

In London, check the rhyme, y'all **AWARD TOUR**

We on Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin each and every place
with the mic in their hand New York, NJ, NC, VA

We on Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin each and every place
with the mic in their hand Oaktown, LA, San Fran, St. John

[Q-Tip]

People, give your ears so I be sublime It's enjoyable to know you and the
concubines Niggas, take off your coats, ladies, act like gems Sit down
Indian style as we recite these hymns See, lyrically I'm Mario Andretti
on the mo-mo Ludicrously speedy or infectious with the slo-mo Heard
me in the '80s, JB's on the promo In my never-endin quest to get the
paper on the caper But now, let me take it to the Queens side I'm takin
it to Brooklyn side

All the residential Questers who invade the air Hold up a second, son,
'cause we almost there You can be a black man and lose all your soul
You can be white 'n' blue but don't crap the roll See, my shit is
universal if you got knowledge of dolo Or of delf for self, see, there's
no one else Who can drop it on the angle, acute at that So, do dat do
dat do do dat dat dat (Come on) Do dat do dat do do dat dat dat
(Okay) Do dat do dat do do dat dat dat

I'm buggin out but let me get back 'cause I'm wettin niggas So run and tell
the others 'cause we are the brothers I learned how to build mics in my
workshop class So give me this award and let's not make it the last We
on Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin each and every place
with the mic in their hand Chinatown, Spokane, London, Tokyo We on
Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin each and every place with
the mic in their hand Houston, Delaware, DC, Dallas

[Phife]

Back in '89 I simply slid into place Buddy, Buddy, Buddy all up in your
face A lot of kids was bustin rhymes but they had no taste Some said
Quest was wack, but now is that the case?

I have a quest to have a mic in my hand Without that, it's like Kryptonite
and Superman So, Shaheed, come in with the sugar cuts Phife Dawg's
my name but on stage call me Dynomutt When was the last time you
heard the Phifer sloppy?

Lyrics anonymous, you'll never hear me copy Top notch baby, never
comin less

Sky's the limit, you gots to believe up in Quest Sit back, relax, get up out
the path If not that, here's the dance floor, come move that ass
Nonbelievers, you can check the stats I roll with Shaheed and the
brother Abstract Niggas know the time when Quest is in the jam I
never let a statue tell me how nice I am Comin with more hits than the
Braves and the Yankees Livin mad phat like an oversized Bambi The
wackest crews try to dis, it makes me laugh When my track record's
longer than a DC-20 aircraft So next time that you think you want
somethin here Make somethin different, take that garbage to St.
Elsewhere We on Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin each
and every place with the mic in their hand SC, Maryland, New
Orleans, Motown We on Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin
each and every place with the mic in their hand Chinatown, Spokane,
London, Tokyo We on Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin
each and every place with the mic in their hand Houston, Delaware,
DC, Dallas

We on Award Tour with Muhammad, my man Goin each and every place
with the mic in their hand New York, NJ, NC, VA

ULTRAMAGNETIC MCS

Ultramagnetic MCs was an idiosyncratic Bronx-based trio consisting of DJ Moe Love and the rappers Ced-Gee and Kool Keith. There is something deliberately futuristic about their debut album, *Critical Beatdown* (1988), which is forward looking not only in its critique of “the simple back and forth, the same old rhythm *That a baby can pick up*” (a jab at Run-DMC), but also in the use of pseudoscientific terminology: “*Using frequencies and data, I am approximate* Leaving revolutions turning, emerging chemistry / With the precise implications.” Ced-Gee’s lines in “Ego Trippin” point toward both exactness and approximation—an incoherent message, to be sure, but then it is not so much the message as the energy with which it is delivered that is the point of Ultramagnetic.

The battle rhymes of Ced-Gee’s partner, Kool Keith, come at a staccato pace from a sadistic place. Although the “you” constantly being addressed is ostensibly another rapper, it is we—the listeners—who are attacked. On “Ego Trippin” we are “burned / By the flame of the lyrics which cooks the human brain.” Listening to Keith’s manic verses can be a masochistic experience.

As a solo artist, Keith developed this line of intrusive metaphor into something even more substantial, both by developing various personae—the sleazy medicine man of *Dr. Octagonecologist* (1996); the science-fiction pompadoured rockabilly character of *Black Elvis/Lost in Space* (1999)—and by taking sexual tropes common in rap and pushing them past the parodic breaking point, as in *Sex Style* (1997), an album of Sadean excess that, for better or worse, belongs in rap’s pornographic pantheon.

EGO TRIPPIN

Party peoples, in the place to be. Just for you, it’s the Ultramagnetic MCs!

[Kool Keith] Say what, Peter Piper?

[Ced-Gee] To hell with childish rhymes!

[Kool Keith] ’Cause this jam is just movin, [Ced-Gee] the crowd is steady
groovin [Kool Keith] To a supersonic pace [Ced-Gee] with highs and
stupid bass [Kool Keith] With some pep

[Ced-Gee] in the step [Both] ’Cause the beat is so funky the pace is

well kept 'Cause we're ...

“Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic)

“MCs, Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic) “MCs, Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic) “MCs”

Kool Keith!

[Kool Keith]

They use the simple back and forth, the same old rhythm That a baby can pick up and join right with them But their rhymes are pathetic, they think they copasetic Using nursery terms, at least not poetic On a educated base, intelligent, wise As the record just turn, you learn, plus burned By the flame of the lyrics which cooks the human brain Providing overheating knowledge by means causing pain Make a migraine, hated yourself, start to melt While the Technics spin, the wax is on the belt Motivating clockwise the more you realize Moe Love's moving steady by most with Eveready Like a battery, charged, I'm worth the alkaline Yes, the mystery to solve, so seek and define These words I've given, extreme and now driven With a Datsun, a Maxima to glide Yes, the wizard, Kool Keith and I'm sportin my ride 'Cause we're ...

“Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic)

“MCs, Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic) “MCs, Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic) “MCs”

Ced-Gee!

[Ced-Gee]

Usin frequencies and data, I am approximate Leaving revolutions turning, emerging chemistry With the precise implications, achieved adversely Explorating, demonstrating, ruling, dominating Igniting, causing friction with nuclear alarms Separates competing biters from me, the scientist As I execute lyricists known as predators When by strippin high potents and makin penicillin I will surely sort out and stomp every pest Oh, the rampaging paramedic, quoted is my title To inform other worlds of such a hellacaust Quick serve as a purpose, preparing first aid With medical utensils, the wizard Ced-Gee Is

advanced with elevation, astonishing with rhythm 'Cause we're ...

“Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic)

“MCs, Ultra ...” (magnetic, magnetic) “MCs, Ultra ...” (magnetic,
magnetic) “MCs”

CRITICAL BEATDOWN

[Kool Keith]

Well, I'm the equalizer, known to be graphic I clear static, breakin up
traffic Move, while I enter the groove

I'm on top and happy to prove

To wack MCs who claim to be better than No way, I'm frankly more
clever than All of you, each and every one, my son Pay close attention

I'll take your brain to another dimension Hold it, mold it, shape it

You got a knife? Yes, I wanna scrape it Up and down, sideways, anyway
I can Be rude to you

But I'll rap and be crude to you And eat up, toy ducks I beat up

I am the oven, your brains I wanna heat up Mega, supersonic degrees

I come around, roastin MCs

With fire, to burn the toy liar

Raw meat, turn the flame higher

Cook it, like a fish I'll hook it For any beat, it's time that I took it Right,
correctly to the top

With the rhythm and add your head bop I'm hype for the critical
beatdown!

[Ced-Gee]

I'm attacking them, my job is stacking them For every rapper, must I be
smacking them Once or twice in the face

With rough beats, producin the bass That blow out, cause power to go out
Inner spark, I'm ready to blow out Like this, altitude level

Reachin forth, stompin every devil In sight, you might just wanna bite My
allusions, mental confusions

You're a mark, skulls I've been abusin Losin, any rapper who follow me

Your girl loves me, now she wanna swallow me
Back up, move on to the rear

When I'm on the stage should be clear
Speakin, goin ear to ear
Places far, ducks would appear

For the countdown, so you wait to rhyme
And twist, stuttering, uttering
Parkay, margarine, everything butter and
Another thing, you shoulda
been a Muppet A toy boy, a fake string puppet

I'm takin titles and punks better up it
To me, Ced-Gee on the mic, and I'm
hype For the critical beatdown!

[Kool Keith]

Here's the K, combined the double-O

Swing in the L, I'm ready to go

As Keith, Rap General Chief Executive Plus exquisite

Mandatory, capital statements

I am the teacher, preaching what makes sense
Class, you wasn't able to pass

For any germ or lice who come last I'm boric, high computing acid

Get off the mic and won't you please pass it
To me, for a one-two check

Give me a pound and lots of respect
No hands, you're disappointing my fans
You on reverb and talking through cans
Hello—how are you doing?

I come to wreck and parties I'll ruin
With rhymes, pumpin out smoke

Diesel advances makin them choke
And cough up, the hard-headed I'll

soften Spongee, then after that drink a dungee
Roll the sess, the

buddha with the ganji Puff up, while I make tough stuff up
I'm Kool

Keith, cold rippin MCs

I'm hype—for the critical beatdown!

X-CLAN

Although they were not as prolific as their reputation might suggest, the X-Clan marks a rigorous extension of the Afrocentric direction that began in late 1980s hip-hop. They might even be said to epitomize rap's attempt to grow in racial self-understanding and to integrate larger self-histories into the mix. The group's two rappers, Brother J and the late Professor X, were attuned to contemporary problems. But they tackled such matters not by trying to paint pictures of the present so much as by insisting that their listeners go "back to Africa."

The journey implicit in their songs comes through even in the titles of their albums *To the East, Blackwards* (1990) and *Xodus* (1992). The journey was less geographical than temporal, however, as the group's lyrics developed the notion of Africa as the birthplace of humanity through imagery that recalls a distant past now suddenly relevant:

**Living off the earth, eatin herbs and fruits
The children await me by the mountain and the river
And gather 'round the fire for the scrolls that I deliver
And speak of a house that's from the sand to the sky**

The language akin to a religious text underscored the serious mien of the group. To a degree even greater than their more prolific political contemporaries, Public Enemy, the X-Clan referred to religious ideology in their lyrics. They are probably the most intense and concentrated, genuinely Afrocentric group of rappers of their era.

GRAND VERBALIZER

Grand Verbalizer, what time is it? [3x]

[Brother J]

African, very African

Come and step in Brother's temple, see what's happenin Then taste the
bass flow, comin from a zero Tell me what a sissy know! Funkin lesson
is a new flow Stalkin, walkin in my big black boots Living off the
earth, eatin herbs and fruits The children await me by the mountain
and the river And gather 'round the fire for the scrolls that I deliver

And speak of a house that's from the sand to the sky And devils ever
doubtin, want to measure how high Your logic reveals you, your mind
can't catch it Dimensions of a God go far beyond brackets Come into
my oven, devils, come and you burn I can always beat a vulture with
the strength in black word You're pissin me off because you swear
you're higher level Back to your cave, get yourself together Chilly and
Magilla, chocolate and vanilla How can polar bears swing on vines
with the gorillas? Please Check your reasoning 'cause there's
something amiss My home is the void, you drown in abyss I teach a
funk code and don't preach a rap rhyme Harambe to the sun as the
mortals ask time [Chorus]

(Grand Verbalizer, what time is it?) The funkin lesson comes, the sundial
speaks (Grand Verbalizer, what time is it?) The building of the strong
or the lessons of the meek (Grand Verbalizer, what time is it?) My
science is deep, my blackness is deep [Brother J]

(HOW DEEP?) Deep, deeper than Atlantis Deeper than the seafloor
traveled by the mantis You copycats'll never know

With you the funk'll never flow, but that's another blow Make your move,
beef apprentice, I never step I'm a tribal move your master hasn't
figured yet Bring your weapons to my sword and shield What's the
higher level if your shit ain't real?

My mystic magic, whatcha gonna do?

Think before you step before the rebel, silly mortal you!

I tried to warn you but your mind won't catch it You're just cookies in my
oven

If I want to burn a batch, you just burn!

[Professor X]

VAINGLORIOUS! THIS IS PROTECTED BY THE RED, THE BLACK, AND
THE GREEN WITH A KEY. SISSSSSY!

[Brother J]

Like this, like that, and like that, like this How dark is the world, how
strong is a fist?

Originals come from the sand and the sword To the concrete, fightin wars
in the street The Day of Outrage, history, another page You lack the
word of this, but now there is a Brother J

The Prince of Warriors, leadin masses Stomp a liverlip, punks playin asses
The damn sissies always stalk for the glory Sissy bomb is comin, but
that's another story So many people forgot where they came
Disrespect religion, but their living is lame Blackwatch, how you livin?
(ZOOM!) Flow in the Nile (ZOOM!) Teach the many mortals, the times
of a sundial To the East, teachin gods to be

What it was, what it is, and again shall be What's my mind state if my
state ain't black?

But Moses, Malcolm, and Huey are back And the voice to a many goin
verb to verb Sit back and take heed, brother, YOU MUST LEARN!

Swimmin in the books and the books ain't givin The scales of a black
man, ways in the livin [Chorus]

[Brother J]

Tick tock tick, we go sun to moon

Verbalizer speaks, it's a quarter to doom Self-destruction is not a key
function Never mind the leaders 'cause the people keep frontin When
will they realize? The body needs head It's more than what's said when
a leader lies dead Come into the darkness, past is light Death meaning
life as the pharaohs take flight Too much degrees for a silly pale thief
You can't define what's direct from the East God protect me, he selects
me

God makes a path so the world respects me Zero to nine, grandest creator
I pray for those on both sides of equator Professor X, when will they
learn?

Once life enters doors, death no return, no return [Professor X]

This is an invitation to the crossroads if you dare, sissssssssy! With a key!

A.D.A.M.

*Come diddy-dum! Welcome to this archeological find! At the road, witness me
before the coming of the sun; peeking at you from the Eastern side of
Plutonia. Dressed in armor of Order, to meet destiny with a strong black
grip. Teh-hun-zu, see you in from the zero, take 'em to the three. Stand
firm at the five; here's a star and a shield to support you at the nine!*

[Brother J]

It's like A-D-A-M

Prepare your mind, run tell your children Fire, air, water, let the earth
make flesh Now see from the Father, how funky can you get?

Now my activity is cosmitivity

Immortal is my soul, my God, my reality I'm not measured by tradition, or
any type of 'ligion, huh Not even cosmic dimensions and such

But many fools, they try to post a duel Try to post a front but they know
it ain't cool, yeah Boy, my mind goes back to things, just like the
cosmic battle When sword was my rattle

Shield was my bib and sarcophagi my crib Not measured by my words, but
the deeds that I did for God A logical God, I was created and formed
Verbal shogun, yes, the cosmic storm Whose scrolls to lyrics to bust

I roll 'em up with the papyrus, funk sealed, in God we trust I laid it down
from circumference to dry space And now I'm back again, quite lyrical,
to kick my bass Energized by another plane

By logical fanatics, which try to examine my brain They can't beat me, so
they try to eat me They can't keep me, so they try to freak me Positive
sin, again and again, degrees in a spin Verbs are lockjaw, your silly
mortal g-g-grin Make you feel you could drown in some godly waters
Take control of your body like the farmer's daughter And as you beg
for control, what's the reason? What's the reason?

Yo, I am son of the Chaos so my brothers call me Cosmic Teh-hun-zu for
tribal, Brother J when trying to rock it Six-foot black boot god in the
suit of the warrior So now I'm taller 'n ya, check'n me out A-D-A-M

Prepare your mind, run, tell your children Fire, air, water, let the Earth
make flesh Now see from the Father, now how funky can you Get get
get get get down, the rhythm must come to such When it's time to bust
and all the mortals lay crushed Dark Son will get darker

'Cause I existed in the valley of the Father I got whooped by my mate

'Cause the fruit had a taste

Of the curse that served as a marker Now here we go, to deal with all the
little "-isms"

To define me in simple "-ologies"? Hell no!

On with the flow, here we go, sickamo'

Let us slip on back into the blackwards row Niggas didn't catch it anyway
They pat me on the back, talkin 'bout, "Yeah, J"

Well yeah, right
East I flow, East I go
Cover both your eyes, and what do you know?
What do you see? How does it be?
Is it circumference, or what's up, G?
It's like that on the break, with a verbal milkshake And a godly
vainglorious break

[Professor X]

*You shall be moved, logical one! After a clear pouncing with energy from the
sun. At my beckoning—you and your landmark built without the zero pride
shall crumble, stumble my way to might to a pretender—your time has
come!*

[Brother J]

I once walked the heavens with Gabriel Walked through the desert with
Israel Traveled onto Mecca with Ishmael
Crucified, resurrected—now ask how I feel A-D that I AM, that I AM
From Father flesh to Father Solomon
From the pinky to the thumb 'pon my hand Bring a other Caddy and a
tribal j-j-j-j-jam But yet I'm judged, leather prophet and all that Still a
pimp with a crown and a Yankee hat And yet they ask me, "Brother,
what's the time?
Is it African drum with some space-age rhymes, man?"
Yo, not at all, I say it's sexual, infectual, delectable I'm not a
masturbating intellectual
And couldn't read it from a book because that bores you all So come to
Umoja, Kujichagulia
Ujima, Ujamaa, and purpose stands for Nia Kuumba, Imani, daughter
named Simani Came to the planet, Father Afer left his body Leave the
boy in the coffin within
Raise your head, let's the A to the D to the A to the M
This is the message from the cosmic storm Let the doubters and the judges,
disbelievers be warned!

[Professor X]

With a shield of David on the grill and the has-been proudly adorned with the color pink. Bring on your Gs, your Qs, your Rs, and your Alphas. It is time—Shalom! And ya don't stop—Sisssssyyyyyyy!!!



1993-1999

Rap Goes Mainstream

Hip-hop in the 1990s was marked by tragedy: the slayings of two of rap's biggest stars, Tupac Shakur (2Pac) and Christopher Wallace (the Notorious B.I.G.). In September 1996, Shakur was killed in a drive-by shooting on the Las Vegas strip. Six months later, in March 1997, Wallace was killed in a drive-by shooting on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. These two acts of violence were fueled by an atmosphere that pitted East Coast against West Coast in a battle about style and substance. The West

Coast's gangsta aesthetic clashed with the emerging "mo' money, mo' problems" ethos of East Coast flash. Some have dubbed the mid-1990s the Bling Era for its displays of conspicuous consumption and material excess. It is the era of champagne and shiny suits, of diamond chains and expensive cars. At the same time, it is the era that introduced some of rap's best poets and some of the most psychologically compelling, formally sophisticated lyrics in hip-hop history. In the 1990s hip-hop went mainstream, shaping American culture even as hip-hop was still shaping itself.

If the mid-to late 1980s marked the moment rap codified its formal elements and made its initial impression on the public at large, then the 1990s signaled rap's coming of age. Rap began the decade as a decidedly East Coast—even specifically New York—phenomenon and would end it as a national, and even an international, art. It began the decade as a niche genre, akin in audience share to bluegrass or Dixieland jazz in earlier eras, and would end the decade as far and away the dominant form of popular music, with a near hegemonic hold on the *Billboard* charts. It began the decade as an outsider idiom, with all the freedom and all the limitation that such status entails, and would end the decade with a significant share of its mainstream releases under the sway of corporate interests. Rap became big business, and, as a result, much of the music came to follow a new set of imperatives. Yes, some measure of the profit motive had always been present in rap—hence the "gotta get mine" perspective—but when the lust for funds shifted from the artist to the corporation, a serious transformation began to show in the music.

The risks that corporatized hip-hop presented were ones of homogenization and stagnation. With rap viewed as a commodity first, whatever else it might be, it became necessary to brand it to fit a particular image. That image was most often subsumed by extremes—the gangsta aesthetic, violence, sexual bravado. All of these have been part of rap since the beginning, but never were they the *only* images in hip-hop, nor were they ever so widely disseminated. "We made [hip-hop] into a stereotype when it's not," Common told CNN, looking back on the 1990s from the vantage point of 2007. "You have to remember that hip-hop had De La Soul. It had the Pharcyde. It had A Tribe Called Quest. It had Souls of Mischief, Kwamé, NWA, Compton's Most Wanted, the Geto Boys, Rakim, Slick Rick—it was never one thing. The stereotype came about when the corporations really started taking the artists who were producing one type of sound and said, 'Okay, this is what we're going to

endorse.’ But throughout the years, it’s been much more than that.” ¹

Any discussion of rap in the 1990s begins with 2Pac and Biggie. Shakur started as a backup dancer and sometime rapper with Digital Underground, a group known for its psychedelic, funk-inflected jams. His guest verse on the group’s “Same Song” gave a glimpse of the prodigious talent still waiting to be expressed. In only eight bars, he delivers a playful but potent verse filled with sonic patterns of rhyme and assonance: “Now I clown around when I hang around with the Underground/Girls used to frown, say I’m down, when I come around.” Tupac would soon refashion himself as 2Pac, crafting a “T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E.” image that drew from the West Coast style of gangsta rap made famous by artists like Ice-T and NWA. Also transcending the genre, he penned rhymes about teen pregnancy, his mother’s drug addiction, and life in poverty. In death, 2Pac became something that no one could become in life: an icon, a martyr, and a hip-hop existentialist hero. His reflections on his own mortality abound in lyrics such as “If I Die 2Nite” and “Death Around the Corner.”

“I ain’t never seen nobody that was just ghettofied and at the same time articulate and just able to maneuver them words and vocabulary and just expand to where you just be like, ‘Damn!’” recalls frequent T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E. collaborator Big Syke, describing 2Pac’s seeming contradictions. “See, Black Panthers was built on education. And streets are built on wildness. So when you mix them two together, oh, it’s gunpowder. So that’s what he was, he was an educated nut! You feel me?” ² There wasn’t an immediate alchemical reaction, however, in the melding of Pac’s thoughtfulness and thuggishness; it took time for his multifaceted personality to express itself on record.

With more albums released posthumously than many artists release in their careers, 2Pac’s influence on hip-hop and the broader culture remains active. The way his flow echoed both a country preacher and a city pimp, the way he endowed even simple rhymes like “black queen” and “crack fiend” with power and meaning, the way he stretched syllables as if an art unto itself—as on “California Love,” when he says “Soon as I step on the sceeene ...”—the way he did all of these things would come to influence the lyrical style and posture of many MCs to follow. As much as his talents, his flaws too would come to stand for hip-hop’s own conflicted identity. “Tupac keeps you searching, even now, for the line between how one rolls through life and how one rocks the microphone,” writes Danyel Smith, former editor of *Vibe*. “Crazy motherfucker. Coward. Sucker. Sexist.

Sex symbol. Superman. Provocateur. Hero.” ³ Tupac is all that and then some.

And then there is Biggie. The Notorious B.I.G.’s career would usher in a host of pivotal developments in the music, many of which went on to shape rap today. In the early 1990s, Christopher Wallace left a life of petty crime and small-time drug dealing at the age of twenty for a new career in the rap game after meeting hip-hop impresario Sean “Puffy” Combs, who was soon to launch his record label, Bad Boy Entertainment. Biggie brought with him the slang, swagger, and street storytelling that went with his outlaw persona. His agile and infectious delivery, his booming but somehow still vulnerable voice, his menacing microphone presence always leavened by humor honed in street-corner battles and ciphers, would find an unlikely match in Puff Daddy’s pop-oriented and hook-driven production. Few other rappers could invest a guttural “Uhh” with so much flavor. Few could deliver a hot line simply by spelling out their name: “B-I-G-P-O-P-P-A, no info for the DEA.”

Biggie’s debut album, *Ready to Die* (1994), included danceable pop tunes, such as “Big Poppa” and “One More Chance,” laced with familiar R&B samples; alongside these were gritty stories of crime and self-reflective expressions of nihilism and despair. With only two albums recorded in his lifetime, Biggie would nonetheless have a major impact on hip-hop, ushering in the blend of rap and R&B that would come to dominate the music a few years later while also encouraging the development of lyrical craftsmanship among a generation of MCs to follow. “He had perhaps the greatest emotional range and straight-up literary skill of any rapper before or after him,” writes Anthony DeCurtis. “He could seamlessly move from fury to vulnerability to sensuality to poignancy within a few lines.” ⁴

Perhaps the most dramatic development in rap during the 1990s was its emergence as a popular cultural form—not simply in music, but in style and image. Hip-hop expanded its audience from the metropolises on the East and West coasts to suburban outposts throughout the nation. Aided by the rise of music videos, hip-hop’s version of urban cool would help shape youth fashion, slang, and, above all, musical tastes. With the growing influence of music videos, rap itself began to change. “Just as hip-hop reinvented the role of sampling, music videos altered hip-hop,” observes pioneering hip-hop critic Nelson George. “Once an underground music based on beats and rhymes, in the ’90s hip-hop became the most image-driven part of pop music.” ⁵ Rap reached its apex of excess with

MC Hammer's 1991 "Too Legit to Quit" video, a nine-minute mini-movie with a reported production budget of between \$2 million and \$3 million.

Rap's pop identity brought with it certain stylistic consequences. As with other genres of popular music before it, crossover rap settled into a recognizable form of hook/verse/hook/verse/hook/verse/hook. It put more emphasis on slick production and often involved singing, especially on the hook. Artists like Biggie, along with Diddy, ushered in the Bling Era. Jewels, cars, champagne, and women became the trappings—the last of these the most troubling—of hip-hop "success." The governing visual aesthetic of this era belonged to Hype Williams, a painter turned director whose penchant for fish-eye lenses, bold color palettes, cameos by other artists, and beautiful "video vixens" helped define not only rap's image but its musical sensibilities (to say nothing of its sexual and ethical sensibilities). All-video stations like the Box and finally MTV and BET abetted this transformation by playing the increasingly lavish videos in heavy rotation, saturating the consciousness of a new generation of rap listeners that stretched far beyond the music's original demographic.

This commercial expansion and the rise of video culture spawned a new phenomenon in hip-hop: the rap superstar. At the beginning of the decade, the biggest figures in rap were artists like LL Cool J, Run-DMC, and Public Enemy—respected artists who on their own could sell out a club or perhaps a mid-sized ballroom. By the end of the decade, artists like Eminem and Jay-Z were internationally known public figures selling out Madison Square Garden and other arenas and stadiums around the globe. The very nature of celebrity in rap had shifted.

Hip-hop's new white suburban audience had a great deal to do with the shift. A white teenager in Topeka, Kansas, or Eugene, Oregon, was for the first time constantly exposed to the energy and attitude, the swagger and style of rap without setting foot in New York or L.A. Judging by album sales, the particular variety of music that seemed to appeal most to this group was the brash, loud, and bombastic style of gangsta rap. Listening to Ice Cube or Snoop Dogg often brought with it not just entertainment but identity. "At its best," writes Jason Tanz in *Other People's Property: A Shadow History of Hip-Hop in White America*, "the desire of white teenagers to identify themselves with the African American struggle represents an urge to connect and to overcome the artificial separation of our past. At its worst, it is a fantasy that equates garden-variety suburban alienation with the struggle of ghetto life, and that defines the black experience by the cartoonish swagger of paid entertainers." ⁶ Rap's expanding audience

carried with it much of the baggage that always accompanies cross-racial artistic exchange in America—in this case, anxieties about the “corruption of youth” on one side, fears of banalization and cooption on the other.

The only way to understand the multiplatinum success of such artists as NWA, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, and others is in terms of a cross-racial audience dominated by young men. As a result, many of the other hip-hop voices were being excluded from major-label deals. With the growing influence of record labels and media conglomerates such as Clear Channel and Radio One, hip-hop became branded—paradoxically and profitably—as both mainstream and taboo. Rap record labels like Suge Knight’s notorious Death Row Records were among the corporate beneficiaries of rap’s newfound popularity. Between 1992 and 1996 alone, Death Row earned an estimated \$125 million. ⁷

Rap’s expansion in the 1990s was not all about the money. One of the most significant developments of the decade was the broadening of rap’s voices in spite of the constricting influence of commercial radio. Groups like the Fugees and the Roots extended an alternative hip-hop tradition initiated near the end of the 1980s with the likes of the Native Tongues collective of De La Soul, A Tribe Called Quest, and the Jungle Brothers. The Wu-Tang Clan, with its unconventional blend of gritty urban tales and Eastern mysticism, fashioned a new model for the rap supergroup. They recorded albums both as a collective and as individual solo artists, building a distinct aesthetic and philosophy. These groups set forth an alternative set of hip-hop values and a markedly different aesthetic from the artists in hip-hop’s commercial mainstream—yet they were commercially successful and fully ensconced in many of the main streams through which cash and attention flowed. It could have been a precarious position, but it didn’t damage the poetry. While acts like MC Hammer, Vanilla Ice, and Young MC were making platinum-selling albums, groups like Public Enemy, De La Soul, and Mobb Deep went gold at best. That said, their influence on the direction of hip-hop poetics went well beyond that of the commercial heavyweights of the genre.

Two years in particular, 1993 and 1994, marked a kind of second-wave hip-hop golden age. Nineteen-ninety-three saw the release of classic debuts like the Wu-Tang Clan’s *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*, Snoop Doggy Dogg’s *Doggystyle*, Souls of Mischief’s *’93 ’til Infinity*, Digable Planets’ *Reachin’ (A New Refutation of Time and Space)*, the Roots’ *Organix*, and Black Moon’s *Enter Da Stage*, as well as strong albums like A Tribe Called Quest’s *Midnight Marauders*, De La Soul’s *Buhloōne Mind State*, and

KRS-One's *Return of the Boom-Bap*. Nineteen-ninety-four saw such trailblazing releases as Nas's *Illmatic*, the Notorious B.I.G.'s *Ready to Die*, Outkast's *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, Common's *Resurrection*, Method Man's *Tical*, and Scarface's *The Diary*. The years that followed would bring important debuts and important albums as well (Mobb Deep's 1995 *The Infamous*, Jay-Z's 1996 debut *Reasonable Doubt*, the Fugees' masterful 1996 album, *The Score*), but for sheer volume of classic hip-hop it is difficult to surpass 1993–94.

With this outpouring of excellence over such a short period of time, it would be easy to overlook any one of these releases. Together they speak to a kind of rap renaissance. Many of these MCs and groups would go on to enjoy long careers. One such group is the aforementioned Wu-Tang Clan. Hailing from Staten Island, the last of New York's five boroughs to gain rap recognition, the Wu consisted of a core group of nine members: RZA, GZA, Method Man, Raekwon, Ghostface Killah, Inspectah Deck, U-God, Masta Killa, and Ol' Dirty Bastard. With the RZA handling most of the production duties and tailoring the beats to the various vocal styles of the group's members, the Wu-Tang Clan built an impressive body of artistic work and a life philosophy to go along with it. "While the '90s saw no shortage of MTV rap stars, the Wu rewrote the rules on mass hip-hop success," explains Chris Norris. "They muscled in weird, edgy, and uncompromisingly hardcore hip-hop right next to the Spice Girls without one stupendously obvious pop loop. They blended ghetto street buzz with Madison Avenue pitchmanship, packaged densely intricate rhymes with love-line 900-numbers, wore Mecca instead of Versace. They recast the rap group as street gang, Mafia family, ninja corps, artistic collective, and multinational business conglomerate." ⁸ From their easily recognizable emblem to their indelible lyrical styles, the Wu helped define rap for the new era.

Rap's geographic expansion had important stylistic implications as well. Nowhere is this more apparent than in southern rap. The South was nearly invisible on the rap landscape in the 1980s, but by the late 1990s it would become arguably the dominant rap region, defying East Coast–West Coast hegemony. At the end of the decade, songs by southern MCs accounted for between 30 and 40 percent of hit singles on the hip-hop charts. By the early 2000s, that number was close to 60 percent. ⁹ The Dirty South, as it is often known because of its dank beats and raw rhymes, was supreme.

Yet defining rap from the South is challenging because it embodies such

a diversity of style and place. “The South, truth be told, is full of contradictions, conundrums, and tautologies,” writes Tony Green. “At once expansive and insular, cosmopolitan and not-around-here reactionary, the South offers infinite interpretations. It stands to reason that southern hip-hop would reflect all of that.” ¹⁰ Rap’s various southern scenes—from Atlanta to New Orleans, Houston to Miami—fashioned distinct sounds and linguistic innovations.

Atlanta’s Outkast and Goodie Mob introduced southern slang, gutbucket soul, and rapid-fire flows with their debut albums *Southernplayalisticadillacmusik* and *Soul Food*, respectively. On “Dirty South,” which featured members of both groups, you could hear Big Boi from Outkast recalling how he “wanted to live the life of Cadillacs, Impalas, and Regals,” certainly not the cars rappers were dreaming about north of the Mason-Dixon line. You could hear them name-checking East Point Atlanta, Piedmont Park, and even public housing projects like Perry Homes and Herndon Homes. This was rap on the local level with a global audience.

In Houston it was the Geto Boys, DJ Screw, and later UGK (from nearby Port Arthur) delivering gritty street tales with a blues influence. In New Orleans, it was Master P’s No Limit Records and Baby’s Cash Money label building their own rap empires. In Miami, it was still Luke Campbell’s Miami Bass sound along with emerging artists like Trick Daddy and Trina delivering songs for the clubs. Meanwhile, the Midwest was undergoing its own emergence. In Cleveland, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony developed their brand of rapid-fire rap harmonies. In Chicago, Common (formerly Common Sense) helped bring much-deserved exposure to that city’s vital underground scene.

By the end of the decade, hip-hop had proved its staying power such that Nelson George could confidently assert that “while there are signs of weakness—its overwhelming dependence on major corporations for funding, its occasionally gleeful celebration of anti-social tendencies—hip-hop has outlived all its detractors and even surprised most ardent early supporters by always changing, and with each change, expanding its audience.” ¹¹ The 1990s now stand as perhaps the most important decade in hip-hop for the ways it made use of the past and predicted the future.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

Arrested Development, founded in the late '80s by rapper Speech and DJ Headliner, crafted progressive Afrocentric lyrics set to funk-and soul-inflected rhythms. The group's debut album, *3 Years, 5 Months & 2 Days in the Life of...* (1992), drew its title from the time it took for them to secure a record contract. Part of the difficulty, no doubt, was convincing record labels that a rap group from outside of New York and Los Angeles—one from the South, no less—could sell records.

Their first album went quadruple platinum, producing melodically, spiritually, and narratively rich singles like the top ten hit “Tennessee,” “People Everyday” (a reconception of Sly & the Family Stone’s “Everyday People”), and “Mr. Wendal.” They won Grammys for best rap album and best new artist in 1993, and were named *Rolling Stone*’s band of the year.

Speech’s flow is melodic, coming close at times to singing. “I just wanted to come up with something unique, and I had just started to discover rhyming and putting it into more of a melodic style,” he recalls. “I had never heard it in hip-hop, really, especially for the whole song. Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force would put melody in rhyme, but it would just be for one line of the rhyme. And for me, I saw a whole new opportunity to add more emotion to what I was saying when I started to put more melody to it, and so ‘Tennessee’ was one of the first songs that I did that.” ¹²

TENNESSEE

Lord, I’ve really been real stressed Down and out, losing ground

Although I am black and proud

Problems got me pessimistic

Brothers and sisters keep messin up Why does it have to be so damn tough?

I don’t know where I can go

To let these ghosts out of my skull My Grandma passed, my brother’s gone
I never at once felt so alone

I know you’re supposed to be my steering wheel Not just my spare tire
(Home)

But, Lord, I ask you (Home)

To be my guiding force and truth (Home) For some strange reason it had to be (Home) He guided me to Tennessee (Home) [Chorus 2x]

Take me to another place

Take me to another land

Make me forget all that hurts me Let me understand your plan

Lord, it's obvious we got a relationship Talkin to each other every night and day Although you're superior over me We talk to each other in a friendship way Then outta nowhere you tell me to break Out of the country and into more country Past Dyesburg into Ripley

Where the ghost of childhood haunts me Walk the roads my forefathers walked Climbed the trees my forefathers hung from Ask those trees for all their wisdom They tell me my ears are so young (Home) Go back to from whence you came (Home) My family tree, my family name (Home) For some strange reason it had to be (Home) He guided me to Tennessee (Home) [Chorus 2x]

Eshe, she went down to Holly Springs. Rasa Don and Baba, they went down to Peach Tree. Headliner, I challenge you to a game of horseshoes. A game of horseshoes!

Now I see the importance of history Why my people be in the mess that they be Many journeys to freedom made in vain By brothers on the corner playin ghetto games I ask you, Lord, why you enlightened me Without the enlightenment of all my folks He said 'cause I set myself on a quest For truth and he was there to quench my thirst But I am still thirsty ...

The Lord allowed me to drink some more He said what I am searchin for Are the answers to all which are in front of me The ultimate truth started to get blurry For some strange reason it had to be It was all a dream about Tennessee [Chorus]

BAHAMADIA

Bahamadia is a trailblazer for women in underground hip-hop. She began her career as a DJ before picking up the mic full time. She is a skilled lyricist with a decidedly laid-back delivery, and her intricate wordplay testifies to the intensity of her craft. Her skills are in evidence on her debut album, *Kollage* (1996), as well as on her numerous guest verses on songs by such artists as the Roots and Talib Kweli.

Bahamadia rose to prominence in underground hip-hop as the protégée of Gang Starr's Guru. Throughout the 1990s she lent her smooth-flowing raps to a variety of projects, including songs by electronica and acid jazz artists. Bahamadia is often associated with "conscious" hip-hop, a term that she wishes to complicate. "Well, we're all conscious of something," she says. "We're conscious of whatever we perceive. There are many people out there who are conscious of whatever type of reality they come in contact with. I'm conscious of being righteous, and that's just who I am, but I'm from the 'hood too. And telling my story through hip-hop is what I do, and that can change at any time, because I'm still growing and still learning." ¹³

SPONTANEITY

Straight outta the metro, rhythm central I'm innovative at the intro 'cause
I go Slow mo' but never slow poke
But never no joke, dope but never no toke Spits the riddles like phlegm
Loose with my lyrics like a double-jointed limb Twist and I bend, formin
episodes past freak modes The monstrous bass beneath my pace be like
Morse code Slash-beep, slash-beep scanners
Zero in to the systems in your Jeeps I'm out there with Kool Keith and
Ced-Gee And De La, inventors of my third seeing eye With futuristic
vision I'm not among Loony nut cakes upon no mission, I gets in
where I fit in 'Cause life's too short, so you could All label me weirdo
but, yo, I know ... it's talent [Chorus]
Mad explosive spontaneity [8x]
At present I speak the new, beginning When every other trend fell short,
so who'll be The shareholder of my kinda thoughts besides The studios
'cause the gluteus maxi-Mus lack ability ...

To scoop all capabilities of spontaneity within Depicted, kicked it true
Vibes past jazz but collaborated with the cool Known flows but unfamiliar
grooves That soothe individuals' moods
Like soul food for thought ...

[Chorus]

Rip here be dizz like everybody's on it 'Cause eternal verbal expansion
keeps enhancing Brainchild's ability to like
Surpass the swarm of booty ass. No grass roots-Having ass MCs with
lukewarm degrees Trying to get hot like sun rays
But save your jazz for Sun Ra, ya na wanna spar Our skills fill up the
outer limits like Mars And you's a little star, I jacked your twinkle
When I excelled well like Tinkerbell Of the higher level and
Hype cerebral flow takes flight on Airborne time, I'm a prime candidate
Or specimen in your Walkman
As you're listenin I make things happen 'Cause I'm the cap-a-tain keepin
this great ...

[Chorus]

BIG L

Big L is part of the fated fraternity of talented MCs who died too young. He was shot and killed in 1999 at the age of twenty-four. At the time of his death he had released only one album, 1995's *Lifestylez ov da Poor & Dangerous*, but he had already established his reputation as a gifted lyricist who favored street tales drawn from his Harlem upbringing. His posthumously released second album, 2000's *The Big Picture*, burnished this reputation with a series of classic tracks including "Ebonics," "'98 Freestyle," "Flamboyant," and "Platinum Plus."

Big L was adept at both battle raps and more conceptually driven lyrics. "Ebonics (Criminal Slang)," for instance, perhaps his best-known song, is built upon the concept of a slang dictionary, explaining terms like "kicks" and "telly" to the uninitiated. "Platinum Plus" captures his distinctive flow—his use of idiosyncratic pauses in the midst of phrases and his doubling and tripling up of rhyme sounds. Big L's influence stretches well beyond what one might expect from such a modest body of work; echoes of his style are audible in the flows of such well-known artists as Jay-Z, Cam'ron, and Ludacris.

EBONICS (CRIMINAL SLANG)

Yo, pay attention ... and listen real closely how I break this slang shit down.

Check it, my weed smoke is my lye, a ki of coke is a pie
When I'm lifted,
I'm high, with new clothes on, I'm fly
Cars is whips and sneakers is
kicks

Money is chips, movies is flicks

Also, cribs is homes, jacks is pay phones
Cocaine is nose candy, cigarettes
is bones
A radio is a box, a razor blade is a ox
Fat diamonds is rocks
and jakes is cops
And if you got robbed, you got stuck, you got shot
You got bucked and if you got double-crossed, you got fucked
Your bankroll is your poke, a choke hold is a yoke
A kite is a note, a con is
a okey doke
And if you got punched that mean you got snuffed
To clean is to buff, a bull scare is a strong bluff
I know you like the way
I'm freakin it
I talk with slang and I'ma never stop speakin it [Chorus
2x]

(Speak with criminal slang)

That's just the way that I talk, yo

(Vocabulary spills, I'm ill)

Yo, yo, a burglary is a jook, a woof's a crook Mobb Deep already
explained the meanin of shook If you caught a felony, you caught a F

If you got killed, you got left

If you got the dragon, you got bad breath If you 730, that mean you crazy

Hit me on the hip means page me

Angel dust is sherm, if you got AIDS, you got the germ If a chick gave you
a disease, then you got burned Max mean to relax, guns and pistols is
gats Condoms is hats, critters is cracks

The food you eat is your grub, a victim's a mark A sweat box is a small
club, your tick is your heart Your apartment is your pad, your old man
is your dad The studio is the lab and heated is mad I know you like the
way I'm freakin it I talk with slang and I'ma never stop speakin it
[Chorus 2x]

The iron horse is the train and champagne is bubbly A deuce is a honey
that's ugly

If your girl is fine, she's a dime, a suit is a vine Jewelry is shine, if you in
love, that mean you blind Genuine is real, a face card is a hundred
dollar bill A very hard, long stare is a grill

If you sneakin to go see a girl, that mean you creepin Smilin is cheesin,
bleedin is leakin

Beggin is bummin, if you nuttin you comin Takin orders is sunnin, an
ounce of coke is a onion A hotel's a telly, a cell phone's a celly Jealous
is jelly, your food box is your belly To guerrilla mean to use physical
force You took a L, you took a loss, to show off mean floss, uh I know
you like the way I'm freakin it I talk with slang and I'ma never stop
speakin it [Chorus 2x]

*Yeah, yeah. One love to my big brother Big Lee. Holdin it down. Yeah,
flamboyant for life. Yeah, yeah, flamboyant for life.*

BIG PUNISHER

Big Punisher was the first solo Latino rapper to go platinum. He was also yet another member of the hip-hop community to fall victim to an early death, albeit from weight-related health complications rather than violence. At his death in 2000 he reportedly weighed close to seven hundred pounds. As an MC, however, he was light and agile, capable of tongue-twisting feats of lyrical dexterity.

Big Pun was a member of the Terror Squad, a Bronx-based hip-hop collective founded in the early 1990s by Fat Joe. Together, they cultivated a relentless rap style filled with street themes set to instrumentals often designed to appeal to a mainstream audience. Big Pun's solo debut, 1998's *Capital Punishment*, included the club-banger "Still Not a Player." On "Capital Punishment" he trades bars with fellow Terror Squad member Prospect. But it is "Twinz (Deep Cover '98)," his collaboration with Fat Joe, that is most often cited as his masterpiece, with its rapid-fire flow, ample use of assonance, and multilayered rhymes. Their freestyle from three years earlier, included here, captures much of the same spirit.

FROM CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Yo, I've seen child blossom to man, some withered and turned to
murderers Led astray by the liars, death glorifiers observin us
Watching us close, marking our toast, 'cause he the perp, just
Purposely overtaxin the earnings, nervous, burning down the churches
They're scared of us, rather beware than dare to trust Always in jail,
million-dollar bail, left there to rust Let's call in order, give ourselves a
chance to enhance broader Advance to where minorities are the
majority voter Holdin my own, I'm livin alone in this cold world My
sister just bought a home without a loan—you go, girl!

She's an exception, some people can leap to the impression See, me
myself, I start flippin and fall victim to deep depression I'm stressin
the issue here, so we can gross the fiscal year Tired of gettin fired and
hired as a pistol-eer There's no longevity living off negativity

Fuck it, I'd rather sell reefer than do pizza delivery That's how the city be,
everybody gettin they hustle on Judge singin death penalty like it's his
favorite fuckin song Word is bond, takin my life, you know they lovin
it God "F" the government and its fuckin capital punishment Capital

punishment, given by the government

System so organized they get to you and who you runnin with Can't live alone, watch for the spies and tapped phones Totin the yayo for life, the rightful heir to the throne We come from Kings and Queens, people with dreams, Gods and Earths For what it's worth, we benefit the Earth with infinite worth First it's turnin tables, open our own labels

Disable the Republicans, then reverse capital punishment I've seen it all up close, shit out the movies, you'd be buggin My cousin JuJe, barely a juve', lost it and turned on the oven He wasn't playin, blew out the flame and started inhalin Bearin a secret too deep to keep, more discreet, for sharin Wearin the virus, Acquired Immune Deficiency

Dishin his dick in every thick promiscuous fish in the sea Listen to me, shit is rough in the ghetto

You bluff, blow your head off, fuck a snuff, we bust lead off Get off your high horse or die off like an extinction Boricuanas are like Mohicans, the Last of the Po'Ricans We need some unity, fuck all the Jeeps and jewelry The maturity keeps me six feet above obscurity The streets are deadly and everybody's a desperado I guess the motto, we promise to let you homage in death your motto Like Zorro, I mark my territory with a symbol

Not with a Z, but a P, 'cause punishment's what I resemble I lend you this if it expands yours, for you and yours A real man can't fall, he stands tall

The Man's claws is diggin in my back, I'm tryin to hit him back Time to counteract, where my niggas at?

'95 FREESTYLE

(feat. Fat Joe)

[Fat Joe]

Power from the streetlights made the place dark But, yo, they didn't care. They turned it out ...

Uh, you know who this is, South Bronx? Fat Joey Crack representin the realest. I got my man Big Dog Punisher in the house. Yo Punisher, let these niggas know ...

[Big Punisher]

Brothers are rappin like a rack of soldiers, actin like They crackin
boulders when they pack a cap but won't attack a blowfish Always
talkin shit, players that rather balk than pitch And often counterfeit,
Kings of New York on Mr. Walken's dick You make me sick to my
stomach; you don't really want it Riffin like you sniffin coke to scare
me but you barely blunted You really done it; now you got me mad.
Morenos be like "Papi's bad," makin fakers stop me when I'm drivin
back [Fat Joe]

Many thought it couldn't happen: Joe is never rappin He was always
gettin loot off the crack and fuckin with Them heavyweights, who had
shit sewn in every state The very sight'll make the average man
defecate Livin the life of stock, bonds, and cars—word bond I be gone,
I'll be worshipped like Nicky Barnes It's on—you don't want no
confrontation

Kill the communication or suffer from multiple lacerations [Big Punisher]
I keep a Desert Eagle cocked back in my tuxedo With my top hat, what
you funny motherfuckers know about that?

Lookin Doug E. Fresh in my double breast

Like a pimp, eatin shrimp gumbo, bubble bathin In the jumbo jet, set on
auto-pilot

Gonna fly it to Puerto Vallarta, charter a chopper on top of the Hyatt [Fat
Joe]

Business chatter over shrimp and lobster platters At Jimmy's Cafe, a glass
of Perrier

Chick go for celly, booked a room at the Holiday Inn, so I can get her and
a friend

Ménage à trois, livin the life of a star

Overweight, overpaid, pockets bustin out the seams While you niggas
havin limousine dreams

I got you all sized up. Niggas, wise up

Or that meat truck'll be pickin all you guys up [Big Punisher]

For you hilarious comedians, I'm at the Marriott with deviants Arrangin
chariots to carry us to various

Evening events, eating the best up in Jimmy's Caf'

Extortin wannabes for all they Gs—Fuck it, just gimme half I make it last

with the dough I got, if not

I'll blow your spot. If not, Joey Crack, please load the Glock Let these
niggas learn the hard way

The word to God way, the motherfuckin murder mob way

BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY

Bone Thugs-N-Harmony popularized a style of rapid, melodic flows that blurred the line between rap and song. Coming from Cleveland, they helped initiate a Midwest movement in hip-hop that would see rap's center of gravity shift from the coasts to the center of the country as the 1990s progressed.

It was a West Coast artist, Eazy-E, former member of the iconic gangsta rap group NWA, who signed the group—initially comprising Krayzie Bone, Wi\$h Bone, Flesh-N-Bone, Layzie Bone, and Bizzy Bone—to Ruthless Records and released an EP and, a year later, a full-length debut album. *E 1999 Eternal* spawned a pair of hits, “1st of the Month” and “Tha Crossroads,” the latter of which won a Grammy.

Krayzie Bone describes the origin of their rhyming style like this: “We always used to rap together, whether we were just sitting around the house or driving around in the car, we’d always just rap. We got so used to saying each other’s ad-libs to the point that when we did it, it sounded like we were harmonizing.... We just kept doing it and doing it, till we eventually got real good at it like ‘this is our style.’” ¹⁴ Of course, much of this style is lost on the page, though some suggestion of their rapid delivery is evident in the length of their lines—far longer than the average rap line. More so even than most rap groups, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony demands to be heard.

THA CROSSROADS

Bone, Bone, Bone, Bone, Bone, Bone, Bone, Bone, Bone Now tell me
whatcha gonna do

When there ain’t nowhere to run (Tell me what) When judgment comes
for you (When judgment comes for you) And whatcha gonna do

When there ain’t nowhere to hide (Tell me what) When judgment comes
for you (’Cause it’s gonna come for you) [Bizzy]

Head South, let’s all bring it in for Wally, Eazy sees Uncle Charlie Little
Boo, but God’s got him and I’m gonna miss everybody I only rolled
and blows my gauge, looked at him while he lay When playing with
destiny, plays too deep for me to say Lil’ Layzie came to me, told me if
he should decease, well, then please Bury me by my grand-grand and
when you can, come follow me [Layzie]

God bless you, working on a plan to heaven, follow the Lord all twenty-four seven days God is who we praise, even though the devil's all up in my face But he keeping me safe and in my place, say grace For the case to race with a chance to face the judge And I betcha my soul won't budge, grudge, because there's no mercy for thugs Oooh, what can I do? It's all about our family and how we roll Can I get a witness? Let it unfold, we living our lives to eternal our soul, aye-oh-aye-oh
[Krayzie]

Prayyyyyyyy, and we pray and we pray, and we pray, and we pray Every day, every day, every day, every day

And we pray, and we pray, and we pray, and we pray Still we laced ...

Now follow me, roll, stroll, whether it's hell or it's heaven Come, let's go take a visit of people that's long gone—Darris Wally, Eazy, Terry, Boo. It's steadily creeping up on the family Exactly how many days we got lasting?

While you laughing we're passing, passing away So y'all go rest y'all souls, 'cause I know I'ma meet you up at the crossroads Y'all know y'all forever got love from them Bone Thugs, baby [Wi\$h]

Lil Eazy's long gone. Really wish he would come home But when it's time to die, gotta go bye bye

All a lil' thug could do is cry, cry

Why they kill my dog? And man, I miss my Uncle Charles, y'all And he shouldn't be gone, in front of his home, what they did to Boo was wrong Oh so wrong, oh so wrong, gotta hold on, gotta stay strong When the day comes, better believe Bone got a shoulder you can lean on (Lean on) Hey, and we pray, and we pray, and we pray, and we pray Every day, every day, every day, every day

And we pray, and we pray, and we pray, and we pray Every day, every day, every day, every day

[Chorus]

See you at the crossroads, crossroads, crossroads (So you won't be lonely)
[2x]

See you at the crossroads, crossroads (So you won't be lonely) See you at the crossroads, crossroads

[Bizzy]

And I'm gonna miss everybody [5x]

[Layzie]

Living in a hateful world (Sending me straight to heaven), that's how we
roll [3x]

And I'm asking the good lord "Why?" and sigh, it's I, He told me we live
to die [Krayzie]

What's up with murder, y'all? See, my little cousin was hung Somebody
was really wrong, everybody want to test us, dawg Then Miss Sleazy
set up Eazy to fall, you know why we sinning And Krayzie intended on
ending it when it ends Wanna come again, again and again

Now tell me whatcha gonna do

[Wi\$h]

Can somebody, anybody tell me why?

Hey, can somebody, anybody tell me why we die, we die?

I don't wanna die

Ohhh, so wrong [4x]

BUSTA RHYMES

When he debuted in the early 1990s as part of the rap group Leaders of the New School, Busta Rhymes had already cultivated his idiosyncratic delivery, growling voice, raucous humor, and halting, ragga-inspired cadence. His recognizable style is “animated,” as Jay-Z once described it in a lyric. Far from a criticism, this quality accounts in large part for Busta’s longevity.

Before launching his solo career—and even after—Busta Rhymes gained a considerable reputation for his guest verses. He delivered a feverish verse on A Tribe Called Quest’s “Scenario,” which included the memorable line “RRRRRROAW, RRRRRRROAW like a Dungeon Dragon.” His solo debut, *The Coming* (1996), produced the hit single “Woo-Hah!! Got You All in Check,” which is equally remembered for its video, which helped inaugurate a visual style to accompany Busta’s signature performance.

Busta Rhymes is now a multidimensional artist capable of carrying an album and displaying a range of emotions in his lyrics. “I got my boom-bap shit for the street, I got big records for pop radio without compromising who I am, I got inspirational records and records that make you laugh, have fun and wanna enjoy your life,” he told an interviewer upon the release of his most recent album. ¹⁵ The selections that follow show him in several of these lyrical modes.

FROM SCENARIO

(A Tribe Called Quest)

Watch, as I combine all the juice from the mind Heel up, wheel up, bring
it back, come rewind Powerful impact—BOOM!—from the cannon

Not braggin, try to read my mind, just imagine Vo-cab-u-lary’s necessary
When diggin into my library

Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh!

Eating ital stew like the one Peter Tosh-a Uh, uh, uhh, all over the track,
man

Uh, pardon me, uhh, as I come back

As I did it ra’ I had to beg your pardon When I travel through the turn I
roll with the squadron RRRRRROAW, RRRRRRROAW like a Dungeon
Dragon Change your little drawers ’cause your pants are saggin Try to

step to this, I will twist you in a turban And have you smellin rank like
some old stale urine Chockety-choco, the chocolate chicken
The rear cock diesel, buttcheeks they were kickin Yo, bustin out before the
Busta bust a nut the rhyme The rhythm is in sync (UHH!), the rhymes
are on time (TIME!) Rippin up the sound just like Horatio
Observe the vibe and check out the scenario!

PUT YOUR HANDS WHERE MY EYES COULD SEE

Hit you with no delayin, so what you sayin, yo? (Uh) Silly with my nine
milli, what the deally, yo? (What?) When I be on the mic, yes, I do my
duty, yo Wild up in the club like we wild in the studio (Uh) You don't
wanna violate, nigga, really and truly, yo (Uh) My main thug nigga
named Julio, he moody, yo (What?) Type of nigga that'll slap you with
the tool-io (Blaow!) Bitch nigga scared to death, act fruity, yo (Uh)
Fuck that! Look at shorty, she a little cutie, yo (Yeah) The way she
shake it make me wanna get all in the booty, yo (Whoo) Top miss, just
hit the bangin bitches in videos (Huh?) Wildin with my freak like we
up in the freak shows (Damn) Hit you with the shit make you feel it all
in your toes (Yeah) Hot shit, got all you niggas in wet clothes (Take it
off) Stylin my metaphors when I formulate my flows (Uh) If you don't
know, you fuckin with lyrical player pros, like that [Chorus]

Do you really wanna party with me?

Let me see just what you got for me

Put all your hands where my eyes can see Straight buckwhylin in the
place to be

If you really wanna party with me

Let me see just what you got for me

Put all your hands where my eyes can see Straight buckwhylin in the
place to be

If you really wanna party with me ...

... In God We Trust (What?)

Yo, it's a must that you heard of us, yo, we murderous (Uh) A lot of niggas
is wonderin and they curious (What?) How me and my niggas do it,
it's so mysterious (That's true) Furious, all of my niggas is serious
(Huh) Shook niggas be walkin around fearin us (What?) Front, nigga,

like you don't wanna be hearin us (No) Gotta listen to how radio be
playin us (Ahh) Thirty times a day, shit'll make you delirious (What?)
Damagin everything all up in your areas

Yo, it's funny how all the chickens be always servin us All up in between
they ass where they wanna carry us (What?) Hit ya good then I hit 'em
off with the alias (What?) Various ... chickens, they wanna marry us
(Hah) Yo, it's Flipmode, my nigga, you know we 'bout to bust (Uh)
Seven-figure money, the label preparin us Bite the dust, instead of you
makin a fuss (What?) Niggas know better 'cause there ain't no
comparin us (Nope) Mad at us, niggas is never, we fabulous (Yup) Hit
my people off with the flow that be marvelous (Hah) Oh shit, my
whole clique victorious (Yup) Takin no prisoners, niggas is straight up
warriors (What?) While you feelin that I know you be feelin so
glorious (Uh) Then I blitz and reminisce on my nigga Notorious
[Chorus]

CANIBUS

Canibus is, in the words of one publication, “one of the architects of post-modern hip-hop lyricism.” ¹⁶ He laces his lyrics with arcane references and tightly stitched flows rich in figurative language. Though his lyrical style may be cutting edge, his content is traditional—a throwback to the socially and politically conscious lyrics of the 1980s. “I feel like poetry that was written in the earlier stages of rap music, like about ’84, ’85, anywhere up to ’93 or ’94, the rhymes and the lyrics were something that you could learn something from. You could listen to it and you could learn things about cultures and learn things about places that you’ve never been to before. It wasn’t like it is now. Now it’s just a bunch of people running around telling you about things that they have that you’ll probably never be able to get. It’s different now.” ¹⁷

Canibus’s “Poet Laureate” series, the third installment of which is included here, extends over several hundred lines. “I feel like my lyricism and the dexterity of it has come from trying to re-create and recapture what was being done when I was coming up,” Canibus explains. “I wanna say things that provoke emotion. Because emotion manifests thought and thought manifests words and words manifest action and action manifests reality.” ¹⁸

POET LAUREATE INFINITY 3

Cycles of time; it is ubiquitous, it goes all over. It’s ancient, it’s one of the most ancient symbols there are. And this is an interpretation of what that actually means.

This has never been done before with a rhyme Outside the realm of time,
it’s the first of its kind Poet laureate infinity
I will forever be the illest lyrically

Nobody do it better, there ain’t a truer Ripper I did this separate, imagine
what we could do together Inspired by God, inspired by the suffering
Was it done by a prophet? It must have been. Who was it then?

Rip the Jacker, hot but cold-blooded

Many utter the name, but very few love him Other MCs be nervous or
somethin

Rhymes in abundance, hip-hop justice, rappers are captured and punished
The Polar Manitoba's melted by lava

A team of ER doctors climb aboard the chopper My skull is a submarine
hull, I empty the ballast tanks I could smell the shit from the seagulls
My mind dives deep beneath yours, Poseidon Trident Seahorse bubbles
form, I scream with extreme force Mariana's Trench detour to Ultima
Thule

Let me explain what my sonar saw

This is the greatest rhyme of all time, supposedly Through a term I'd like
to call "Pulse Detonation Poetry"

Industrialists, civilians, women and children directly Military chiefs,
aristocrats in buildings Membership is based off your raw intelligence
Four hundred screen video editing with hard evidence Imagine being
fined over a rhyme for steppin over the line When I inspired Hova and
Nas

Recite thirty-three threes, thirty-three three times For twenty-four hours,
twenty-one thousand nautical miles, ah Don't be upset with Can-I-Bus
yet, the kids just want respect You been a success, but what do he get?

Divine design, a miracle of metallurgy

Every clergy member from Mecca who heard of me worshipped me I got
away nervously, talked about it purposefully Next time I see it, it's
gonna have a word with me The biological chemical emergency

I purchase the beat; I resumed PsyOps on the enemy Mix the blood so it
don't coagulate

The sex magic won't work if the bitch masturbates Nobody can hold me
back, my flow bloviates Into a spiritual shape, a capsule in space No
MC could rhyme like this, there's no challenge His poet laureateship
pontificates balance Telencephalon olfactory lobes I had to practice
When a woman has her period I smell it on the mattress Advanced step
in innovative mobility

Most MCs try to clone me lyrically

They can't battle me, so they rather embarrass me But I need a volunteer,
do I have any?

The NASA contractor with a satchel of answers I passed up the Nobel
Peace Prize for my passion Most of you will never understand what I
mean My dreams are broken into storyboard scenes Kill you with
green lasers, evaporated weed vapor Electromagnetic scalar, then

somethin they call a maser “That is not dead, which can eternally lie
And with strange eons, even death may die”

The leaders’ lies got me reassigned, my loyalty was redefined They will
not be allowed to see the rhymes In a town near Kadam and Kakrak
Jalalabad I pray in a hut constructed from Sago Palm I’m take you
for a walk through a beautiful place called Honey Swamp, we’ll shoot
hoops at Mosquito Lagoon Park Emotion manifest thought, thought
manifest words Actions and reality, that’s how it has to be The
overseer of poetic antiquity

The Victoria and Albert Museum kept them for me Inject the gas into the
centrifuge mass

The teleological dynamic will enhance

I remove the veil from in front of me suddenly Truly, there is too much to
see

The Law of Attraction is attracted to me The Laws of Poetry in action is
practiced quite actively My body did not melt beyond the Van Allen
Belt I was transformed into a spirit with no shell I’m modifying the
weather from behind a weather shield Writing with a feathered quill,
gettin more ill I hope I am not alone, that would be terrible If I am
celebrating, then that’d be a miracle At least for my interconnected
introspective perspective The more pretentious, the more apprehensive
the sentence Hip-hop made me, hip-hop praise me

Ain’t nothin changed me since 1980

Involuntary catalepsy, battle me, baby

One thousand bars, nigga, zero vector systems Brain waves reveal high-
yield E&D fields Chew MCs like I’m eatin a meal

Normal life is not real, we are just cogs in a wheel We work, we hurt, we
search, we feel

The microphonist that utilizes the study of conics Circular motion in both
the para and the hyperbolas *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* under Red
Rock It’s no use if you can’t use what you got Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La,
Si, Do

These are the tones that will activate your ohm Who have lost their faith,
who have lost their hope Who have lost their point, who have lost their
own Are you food for the moon? The portion is you Just in case you
try to poison my food but I want you to Rap music and those who
listen to it don’t owe me nothin I don’t want nothin from you, not

even your judgment I ride on a flatbed chariot, four ostriches carry it I
control their movements with lariats

Polygraphs flutter, the Lovecraft craft lover I don't want it, that's why I'm
rarely seen in public If I were you I wouldn't waste my time readin
rubbish I don't care what you say, nigga, you a nigga lover The
relative radiance of the rhymes make it shine Increase the star wattage
with longer cycle time How's my driving? Run you off the road smiling
1-800-Road Rage, start dialing

Don't care if I make history, I wanna be a part of infinity Look at what
your sun god did to me

I submit to the will of the creator willingly The possibilities present a
probable infinity I climbed the slope shaped like a stop sign in record
clock time Hot lava rock rhymes, rock slide topside At the observatory
summit of Mount Graham Lookin through the starlight scope in my
hand Creative writing and rhythm, grammar and composition Don't
ignore me, ignore the fools who tell you, "Don't listen"

Strivin my principal findings by designing a new style of rhyming That
you could take home and try out

A hundred bars per hour, sometimes I doubled the writing Secret signature
timing was the hardest part to figure out Poetically paralyzing.
"Where are you?" "Are you hiding?"

"No. I am sandbag diving." From the kinetic to the energetic St. Germaine
was made to explain the lesson with a thousand-bar message Straight
out the freak show, no preshow

Limited oxygen, when I rhyme fast you breathe slow The pope shook, they
ransacked Rome and burned books I ran back home to hide mine in
the woods MOSES is a new weapon system, secret code CONUS is the
continent of the U.S., I suppose I don't have all the answers; I am not
in the know I can only see what is above and only from below
Substratum of reality through the thick cloud canopy "How can it be,
Canibus? Answer me!"

My shelter is not far, you can borrow what you need The bunker doors
sequestered beneath the tall tumble trees Gold chords from the organ
cut down your swordsman Tell everybody, "Shut the fuck up," when
I'm talking From a very cold place called Faraday Base Right next to
the South Pole's longest ice strait My dream was identical seven nights
in a row I saw a sideways eight wrapped around a microphone
Extraterrestrial isotopic ratios

A broke scientist in his lab with no place to go
Fire and ash fallout, that's
what it's all about We must construct a shelter then build a wall
around it Geography is conducive to astronomy

And the study of celestial bodies, biopsy My austere designs are so ahead
of their time Even when you press rewind, you're still left behind I
blasted through the limestone with water mixed with a dissolver Then I
signaled the remaining cave crawlers Dig a hole for the collateral
carnage, battle the hardest Take out hip-hop trash and garbage

On the Sabbath, I write preplanning for the planet Drawing mechanics,
suspended in space as holographics The quarantine isolation unit is
where I house it My team and I salvage the work of Dr. Fritz Albert
Hip-hop is the blackened pot placed next to a kettle With my logo in
it, a rigid rehomogenized metal Greetings and salutations, my
equations are inundated With information, electrocranial stimulation
Password, please. Have patience, verification I repeat, "What's your
character string verification?"

Battle rap is just aimless entertainment "Second Round Knockout" was
one of they favorites, fuck all the haters This shit was responsibility
entrusted. There's only one way For me to prove that I love it. That's
why I'm bustin I turned the page, wrote a turn of phrase Verbal X-
Rays, they say, "I don't burn, I blaze"

Attach the piezoelectric transducer to your computer Poet laureate is the
future

Next time we meet, this whole song'll be a new mix For all the rippers out
there who need a new fix With these lyrics, I consecrate the spirit
Whenever I spit it, concentrate, you can hear it I've almost perfected
this, I'm one word away from Excellence, Cyclotronic Resonance,
patents are pending it Can-I-Bus a.k.a. "The Spitzberg Beast"

Gave his bicentennial speech on Emerald Peak What are you building,
'Bis? Is it a flyin silver disk?

GW—I'm positive it's him

I proofread my writtens, eat a chicken with the skin missin In ten
minutes. Now, that's some shit!

You think that's fast? Nah. That's faster than you think By the time you
blink, the whole Universe shrinks We'll observe the Gods, my thoughts
graduated To the stars to infinity, listen to the bars Thick rhymes
compartmentalized, separatized to prevent Bootleg pirates, gives me
energy when I'm tired I'm hooked on hip-hop, I can't live without it

You can mix this song a thousand ways, I don't doubt it
Several million years into the past, the primitive Future, in a world without oil and gas

Gather the evidence then give it to the president Don't reprimand him,
ask him for help next I hold hip-hop responsible, every magazine
Writer that wrote bullshit in his article Always remember: I'll be gone forever

I made these bars so you all could remember The rhyme's in my mind
when I autograph sign I can't wait to sign a autograph for the last time
The ungrateful dead recurring images playin In my head, every color in America bled

Canibus grabbed the mic like a energized amulet Then spit a rap that you can't forget

"With this sacred water, I consecrate this Talisman So that it will make me poet laureate"

This is a no brainer, stop the complaining If hip-hop was dead, I came here to save it
Classified payloads, no frequency safe modes No safety, and I still made time for the ladies
No corruption, no disruption, no destruction, no budget No nothin. It's never that easy, you just gotta trust it
The spin off from the press should be able to feed you But I declined, 'cause I'm familiar with what greed can do
I sit down and think, when I write I can smell the ink It's the dark-skinned Lizard King

Metronome man will never take commands from the drum The beat is my slave and it will behave as I want
I heard hip-hop was dead, that's not fair Who I talk to? "Go he there, Nasir"

Yeah, poet laureate infinity

I will forever be the illest lyrically

Poet laureate infinity

Poet laureate infinity

Poet laureate infinity

This never been done before in history

CHINO XL

Chino XL is a half-African American, half-Puerto Rican MC who forged his skills touring with Zulu Nation founder Afrika Bambaataa. Known for his expansive vocabulary and intricate wordplay, Chino has earned a loyal underground fan base. As a youth, Chino rode the momentum from performances in New Jersey neighborhood talent shows and began recording demos, which eventually caught the ear of Def Jam co-founder Rick Rubin. Since his first release, *Here to Save You All* (1996), Chino has worked with some of the biggest names in rap, including Common, J-Dilla, and the RZA.

On “What Am I?” Chino rhymes about the adversity he faced growing up as the child of Puerto Rican and African American parents. The lyrics highlight Chino’s skill as a storyteller as the song moves in time from ages six to nineteen. Chino XL’s *The Poison Pen* (2006), his third studio album, features “Wordsmith,” a track on which his vocabulary pushes him to conceive unexpected rhymes.

WHAT AM I?

Yo, I don’t even know what the vibe is, kid. All these different things separating us. It got me walking this fence, man, and I don’t even know what side I’m a fall on, B. Can’t see it.

Well, I’m a zebra, y’all

“Half Puerto Rican, half black, but you don’t speak Spanish”

Don’t call me zebra, y’all

“Half Puerto Rican, half black, but you don’t speak Spanish”

(Now how old are you?)

About six, on my BMX, doin tricks

Back to Middlesex with a couple of poor white trashy brats Everything was coochie crunch ’til it was time for lunch They said to wait in the back, they said their Pops ain’t like black See, where I was the population’s mostly white (Ain’t it?) They wanna see you jigga booin with your (face painted) Be brought home by one of their daughters and their fathers (fainted) They want to see you a failure so I never (became it) Light-skinned, showed them length, curly-headed Called

me names, I was different, I was gifted, they made me ashamed Found
out that I'm a different shade when I'm in the second grade Abe
Lincoln's play, they want me to portray a slave My mama's face went
pale; she looked like she wanted to puke Now that I know the truth, I'd
rather play John Wilkes Booth Although my family came and bitched
and in the play my role was switched My grandma told me I was fixed,
my problems wasn't fixed My family seen my views of the world
distort Mom's last resort, she decided we would move to Newark I took
a deep breath leaving everything I knew behind The country air, the
green grass, and my peace of mind Harassed by white cops, on our
way were pulled out our car Mistook my mom for Joanne Chesimard,
now I'm really scarred [Chorus]

What am I? I'm confused, can't decide

What am I? Who am I? What am I?

Black or white, I can't identify

What am I? Who am I? What am I?

I'm confused, can't decide

What am I? Who am I? What am I?

Black or white, I can't identify

What am I? Who am I? What am I?

Culture shock, Newark's a far cry from Middlesex Bradley Court projects,
black eyes, regrets

Torn lives, I've never seen so many people depressed My mental gets
molested, physical takes violent threats Stress, walkin home from
school's like a terrorist test I learned blacks could be racist too,
somehow still I felt I was blessed Even my teachers called me half-
breeds and all of that I was scared of livin here but also scared of
movin back See, where I was before I was the darkest thing they ever
saw They figured that I'm black-white around

They kick me like a soccer ball

White people didn't accept me (Fuck you)

Black people didn't accept me (Fuck you)

Puerto Ricans didn't accept me (Fuck you)

Diggin, researchin my identity. It gots me goin cuckoo *I'm the yellow nigga,
right? I'm tired of that. I am not passing, I am black! I was born black, I live*

black, and I'ma die probably because I'm black...

So now I'm goin, "Hey, niggas," at niggas that say Chino's not black Then come to my house and tell my African mother that In fact, 'cause a cracker thinks no sister would attract to me These same brothers got perms to get their hair like mine was naturally Discrimination affects a brother's education Hands up in black history class, they never called on my ass But wait, growing at a rapid rate

I digest their hate, it's family, found out my daddy left me when I'm three Dealt with, felt if I knew my Spanish family, they'd help Every mixed person I met, they mostly just kept to themselves We moved to East Orange, I set it off, talent shows starring A high-yellow nigga's progression, my flavor's foreign [Chorus]

(Now how old are you?)

About nineteen, lettin off my steam

Used to be a punchin bag, but now I stomps in hip-hop fiend Now I get the Goya jokes, Menudo jokes, Rico Suave jokes But females rush me and the MCs steal up all my quotes See, what I lacks in melanin I makes up with adrenaline Your weak attempts at, blemishing my mixed heritage I'm treasurin Don't need Caucasian acceptance, just that of a human being Laughed and spit at, "I don't represent," 'cause I am not Spanish-speaking Now, how many dues must I pay to win?

You're angry and you're stressin that oppression But you judge me by the skin I'm in when

Adam Clayton Powell was light-skinned

Farrakhan, the brother's light-skinned

Elijah Muhammad's also light-skinned

Discrimination from my own peoples is making my temper go thin so Stop playing me slight, saying my song's aight instead of hype Don't call me red-boned, or light and bright and damn near white I ain't no zebra, ain't no half an original either Don't call me mulatto, I stab you with a broken bottle Callin your brother Oreo, get off it, yo, now Tom, consider He could be like Chino XL, that yellow-ass nigga

WORDSMITH

[Chorus]

Perfection, flawless masterpiece, no mistakes Back in the 1800s, I was

burned at the stake (I am the Wordsmith) Metaphor Mephistopheles,
degrees I've achieved The brain fluid it takes to believe would equal
the Seven Seas (I am the Wordsmith) I could reveal the true name of
God, you'd go insane upon hearing it Release enough winds to blow
down pyramids (I am the Wordsmith) I'm the Michelangelo of syllables
since I freestyle Genesis been biblical. That's something you got to give
in to Since born in my mama vaginal sauna

As a sonogram, I've been fond of phonics

It's ironic, even as an embryonic

Fed through an umbilical, don't that sound biblical?

I've been a terror since I tear-eth out of that u-terus Evil plans were made
to defeat us as a fetus Though now I walk in infamy, as a child they
had it in for me Was raised with guns and infantry in diapers and in
infancy The childhood of a hood that was raised in the 'hood Cops
said, "Put your hands in the hot sky," I put my hands down on the hot
hood I can't whine or drink wine, nine planets planned it 'Til it
became apparent my parents shouldn't have been a parent State to
state we ran some, I wasn't worth no ransom Money, won't you hand
some? A nigga wasn't handsome Raise the mind like Charles Manson's,
knew I was some man's son But, which one? That made me strong.
Created my poison tongue ...

[Chorus]

Why you cut school? 'Cause you ain't feel too good I cut school 'cause my
cuts ain't heal too good Through all the physical abuse, my mind
escaped through the gift of wordplay I memorized encyclopedias and
dictionaries

I wrote anthems from antonyms, harmonies from homonyms Created
cinema from synonyms, livid to eliminate that illustrious life you're
livin in Wrote rhetorical in rhythms

I could paralyze with a parable, make rhymes out of religion Crucify you
with a prefix or suffocate you with a suffix Wrote lectures so infectious
they're known to infect the listeners Who dissin us? Yo, punks, you
wait, I punctuate My karma's the comma that put you inside of a coma
Hyphen, dot, dot, semicolon, leave you semi-swollen Question mark:
You pregnant? Oh, you're not? I love you, period.

To sum it up, language is my essence

Fucked up in all my adolescence 'til my mom was out of lessons Laws, I
store convenient—still I robbed a convenience store Love Mom? Fuck
Mom. Shit, I ain't love me no more Mentally it didn't register, "Bitch,
empty the register, bitch You just a cashier, bitch, give the cash here
Or I'll shoot you in your cabbage, hijack a getaway cab, bitch"

Words ain't makin me no loot, don't change no Dow Jones average
Regardless, we godless, they stole my innocence In a sense, the judge
sentenced me to three lifetime sentences To write my life and times in
sentences; art, my dark archnemesi They want me off the premises.
That's what the premise is Locked on a tier where you can't shed a tear
at Studied more Shakespeare than any African shakes a spear at And
the whole world fear that and it hurts

I got caught killing time, but then I got a way with words [Chorus]

People can say whatever they want about me

But agree that I am the Wordsmith (I am the Wordsmith) They can try to
ignore everything that I achieve But agree that I am the Wordsmith (I
am the Wordsmith) The love of words is deep in my brain

Must be to silence my pain. I am the Wordsmith (I am the Wordsmith)
Even if I never move a million units

It's my blessin how I do it. I am the Wordsmith (I am the Wordsmith) I'm
in a game full of morons, they keep putting more on I tutor the Torah,
I'm in the core of the Qur'an The mind's what I represent and MCs
better represent I'm taking this rappin bullshit to the fullest extent I
have reservations why Indians are on reservations Told the board of
education: I was bored of education As far as this go, I leave you
deader than disco Rocking sex and violence over sax and violins
Through your mind's camera lens you're in need of an ambulance I'll
knock you to the asphalt, it's your own ass fault Your last thought, I'll
never sell my self short to be famous And taking it up the anus just
ain't us

The world could get the penis of this classical trained pianist My P.O. was
p.o.'d, handed me a cup, told me to pee in this The linguist musician,
my college position is that my intuition Told me I wouldn't be affordin
tuition

My education's all on my own, so, I might have been born yesterday But I
rhyme like there's no tomorrow ...

[Chorus]

COMMON

When Common emerged in the early 1990s, hip-hop was largely a bicoastal phenomenon in the public eye. Eschewing bling and gangsta trends for a more introspective style, Common wrote on such topics as abortion, the story of hip-hop, and the life of Assata Shakur. Many of his songs also described the people and places of his native Chicago.

Even in his early work, one can hear Common—then known as Common Sense—forging a lyrical identity as a socially conscious, emotionally engaged artist with the skills for battle rapping. *Resurrection* (1994), his second album, earned him critical praise. His allegory of hip-hop as a female lost love, “I Used to Love H.E.R.,” is among the best-known hip-hop lyrics. “I wrote ‘I Used to Love H.E.R.’ ... as a way of expressing how I felt about where hip-hop was at that point and where it might go,” Common explains. “Because it was that serious for so many of us. We didn’t just grow up with hip-hop; we grew up with hip-hop as hip-hop was also growing, and so that made for a very close and intimate relationship that was becoming more and more urgent—and we all felt it.” ¹⁹

Over the years, Common’s style has gone through substantial evolution. He began his career primarily as a freestyler and battle rapper, relying on lines packed with syllables, delivered with speed. He had a penchant for chain rhyming and a fondness for playing games with words. In the years since, he seems consciously to have streamlined his flow, putting fewer syllables into individual lines. The result has been a shift toward songcraft over battle rapping, mirrored in his expanding range of themes.

I USED TO LOVE H.E.R.

I met this girl when I was ten years old
And what I loved most, she had so
much soul She was old school when I was just a shorty
Never knew throughout my life she would be there for me
On the regular, not a church girl, she was secular
Not about the money, no studs was mic checkin her
But I respected her, she hit me in the heart
A few New York niggas had did her in the park
But she was there for me and I was there for her
Pull out a chair for her, turn on the air for her
And just cool out, cool out and listen to her
Sittin on bone, wishin that I could do her
Eventually if it was meant to be, then it would be 'Cause

we related, physically and mentally And she was fun then, I'd be
geeked when she'd come around Slim was fresh, yo, when she was
underground Original, pure, untampered and down sister Boy, I tell
ya, I miss her

Now periodically I would see

Ol' girl at the clubs and at the house parties She didn't have a body, but
she started gettin thick quick Did a couple of videos and became
Afrocentric Out goes the weave, in goes the braids, beads, medallions
She was on that tip about stoppin the violence About my people she
was teachin me

By not preachin to me, but speakin to me In a method that was leisurely,
so easily I approached She dug my rap, that's how we got close But
then she broke to the West Coast and that was cool 'Cause around the
same time, I went away to school And I'm a man of expandin, so why
should I stand in her way She probably get her money in L.A.

And she did, stud, she got big pub, but what was foul She said that the
pro-black was goin out of style She said Afrocentricity was of the past
So she got into R&B, hip-house, bass, and jazz Now black music is
black music and it's all good I wasn't salty she was with the boyz in
the 'hood 'Cause that was new for her, she was becomin well rounded I
thought it was dope how she was on that freestyle shit Just havin fun,
not worried about anyone And you could tell by how her titties hung I
might've failed to mention that this chick was creative But once the
man got to her he altered her native Told her if she got an image and
a gimmick That she could make money and she did it like a dummy
Now I see her in commercials, she's universal She used to only swing it
with the inner-city circle Now she be in the 'burbs lickin rock and
dressin hippy And on some dumb shit when she comes to the city
Talkin about poppin Glocks, servin rocks, and hittin switches Now
she's a gangsta rollin with gangsta bitches Always smokin blunts and
gettin drunk Tellin me sad stories, now she only fucks with the funk
Stressin how hardcore and real she is She was really the realest before
she got into showbiz I did her, not just to say I did it

But I'm committed, but so many niggas hit it That she's just not the same,
lettin all these goofies do her I see niggas slammin her and takin her to
the sewer But I'ma take her back hopin that the shit stop 'Cause who
I'm talking 'bout, y'all, is hip-hop **THE 6TH SENSE**

The revolution will not be televised. The revolution is here. Yeah, it's Common

Sense with DJ Premier. We gonna help y'all see clear. It's real hip-hop music, from the soul, y'all. Yeah, check it, yo.

The perseverance of a rebel, I drop heavier levels It's unseen or heard, a king with words Can't knock the hustle, but I've seen street dreams deferred Dark spots in my mind where the scene occurred Some say I'm too deep, I'm in too deep a sleep Through me, Muhammad will forever speak Greet brothers with handshakes on ghetto landscapes Where a man is determined by how much a man make Cop cognacs and spit old raps with young cats With cigarettes in their ear, niggerish they appear Under the FUBU is a guru that's untapped Want to be in the rap race but ain't ran one lap Ran so far from the streets that you can't come back You tripping with nowhere to unpack, forgot that [Chorus]

This is rap for real, something you should feel And you know you should know [3x]

In front of two-inch glass from Arabs I order fries Inspiration when I write, I see my daughter's eyes I'm the truth, across the table from corporate lies Immortalized by the realness I bring to it If revolution had a movie I'd be theme music My music, you either fight, fuck, or dream to it My life is one big rhyme, I try to scheme through it Through my shell, never knew what the divine would bring through it I'd be lying if I said I didn't want millions More than money saved, I wanna save children Dealing with alcoholism and Afrocentricity A complex man drawn off of simplicity Reality is frisking me. This industry'll Make you lose intensity. The Common Sense in me Remembers the basement. I'm Morpheus

In this hip-hop Matrix, exposing fake shit [Chorus]

Some days I take the L to jell with the real world Got on at 87th, stopped by this little girl She recited raps, I forgot where they was from In 'em, she was saying how she made brothers come I start thinking, how many souls hip-hop has affected How many dead folks this art resurrected How many nations this culture connected Who am I to judge one's perspective?

Though some of that shit y'all pop to it, I ain't relating If I don't like it, I don't like it, that don't mean that I'm hating I just want to innovate and stimulate minds Travel the world and penetrate the times Escape through rhythms in search of peace and wisdom Raps are smoke

signals letting the streets know I'm with 'em For now I appreciate this
moment in time Ballplayers and actors be knowing my rhymes, it's
like [Chorus]

THE LIGHT

I never knew a luh, luh-luh, a love like this Gotta be somethin for me to
write this Queen, I ain't seen you in a minute

Wrote this letter and finally decide to send it Signed sealed delivered for
us to grow together Love has no limit, let's spend it slow forever I
know your heart is weathered by what studs did to you I ain't gon' salt
'em 'cause I probably did it, too Because of you, feelings I handle with
care Some niggas recognize the light but they can't handle the glare
You know I ain't the type to walk around with matchin shirts A
relationship is effort; I will match your work I wanna be the one to
make you happiest and hurt you the most They say the end is near, it's
important that we close ...

... To the Most High

Regardless of what happen, on Him let's rely [Chorus]

There are times when you'll need someone I will be by your side

There is a light that shines

Special for you and me ...

Yo, yo, check it...

It's important we communicate

And tune the fate of this union to the right pitch I never call you my bitch
or even my boo There's so much in a name and so much more in you
Few understand the union of woman and man In sex and a tingle is
where they assumin it land But that's fly by night, for you in the sky I
write For in these cold Chi nights' moon, you my light If heaven had a
height, you would be that tall Ghetto to coffee shop, through you I see
that all Let's stick to understanding and we won't fall For better or
worse times, I hope to me you call So I pray every day more than
anything Friends will stay as we begin to lay this foundation For a
family; love ain't simple

Why can't it be anything worth having you work at annually?

Granted, we known each other for some time It don't take a whole day to
recognize sunshine [Chorus]

Yeah ... yo, yo, check it

It's kinda fresh you listen to more than hip-hop And I can catch you in the mix from beauty to thrift shop Plus you shit pop when it's time to, thinkin you fresh Suggestin beats I should rhyme to. At times When I'm lost I try to find you. You know To give me space when it's time to. My heart's Dictionary defines you as love and happiness Truthfully, it's hard tryin to practice abstinence The time we committed love it was real good Had to be for me to arrive and it still feel good I know the sex ain't gon' keep you, but as my equal It's how I must treat you. As my reflection In light I'ma lead you. And whatever's right I'ma feed you digga-da, digga-da, digga-da, digga-digga-da-da Yo, I tell you the rest when I see you **A SONG FOR ASSATA**

(feat. Cee-Lo)

In the spirit of God, in the spirit of the ancestors, in the spirit of the Black Panthers, in the spirit of Assata Shakur, we make this movement toward freedom for all those who have been oppressed and all those in the struggle. Yeah, yo, check it ...

There were lights and sirens, gunshots firin Cover your eyes as I describe a scene so violent Seemed like a bad dream, she laid in a blood puddle Blood bubbled in her chest

Cold air brushed against open flesh

No room to rest, pain consumed each breath Shot twice with her hands up

Police questioned but shot before she answered One Panther lost his life, the other ran for his Scandalous the police were as they kicked and beat her Comprehension she was beyond, tryna hold on To life. She thought she'd live with no arm That's what it felt like, got to the hospital, eyes held tight They moved her room to room—she could tell by the light Handcuffed tight to the bed, through her skin they bit Put guns to her head, every word she got hit “Who shot the trooper?” they asked her Put mace in her eyes, threatened to blast her Her mind raced 'til things got still

Opened her eyes, realized she's next to her best friend who got killed She got chills, they told her that's where she would be next Hurt mixed with anger, survival was a reflex They lied and denied visits from her lawyer But she was buildin as they tried to destroy her If it wasn't for this German nurse they woulda served her worse I read this sister's story, knew that it deserved a verse I wonder what would happen if

that woulda been me?

All of this shit so we could be free, so dig it, y'all [Chorus: Cee-Lo]

I'm thinkin of Assata, yes

Listen to my love, Assata, yes

Your power and pride is beautiful

May God bless your soul

It seemed like the middle of the night when law awakened her Walkie-talkies cracklin, not sayin where they takin her Though she kinda knew. What made the ride peaceful Was the trees and the sky was blue

Arrived to Middlesex Prison about six in the morning Uneasy as they pushed her to the second floor in A cell, one cot, no window, facing hell Put in the basement of a prison with all males And the smell of misery, seatless toilets and centipedes She'd exercise, paint, and begin to read Two years in a hole. Her soul grew weak Away from people so long she forgot how to speak She discovered freedom is a unspoken sound And a wall is a wall and can be broken down Found peace in the Panthers she went on trial with One of the brothers ... she had a child with The foulness, they wouldn't feed her, hopin she'd lose her seed Held tight, knowing the fight would live through this seed In need of a doctor, from her stomach she'd bleed Out of this situation a girl was conceived Separated from her, left to mother the Revolution And lactate to attack hate

'Cause federal and state was built for a black fate Her emptiness was filled with beatings and court dates They fabricated cases, hoping one would stick And said she robbed places that didn't exist In the midst of threats on her life and being caged with Aryan whites Through dark halls of hate she carried the light I wonder what would happen if that woulda been me?

All of this shit so we could be free

Yeah, I often wonder what would happen if that woulda been me?

All of this shit so we could be free, so dig it, people ...

[Chorus]

From North Carolina her grandmother would bring News that she had had a dream

Her dreams always meant what they needed them to mean What made them real was the action in between She dreamt that Assata was free in they old house in Queens The fact that they always came true was the thing Assata had been convicted of a murder she couldn't a done Medical evidence shown she couldn't a shot the gun It's time for her to see the sun from the other side Time for her daughter to be by her mother's side Time for this beautiful woman to become soft again Time for her to breathe and not be told how or when She untangled the chains and escaped the pain How she broke out of prison I could never explain And even to this day they try to get to her But she's free with political asylum in Cuba [Chorus]

Freedom! You askin me about freedom? Askin me about freedom? I'll be honest with you. I know a whole lot more about what freedom isn't than about what it is, 'cause I've never been free. I can only share my vision with you of the future, about what freedom is. The way I see it, freedom is—is the right to grow, is the right to blossom. Freedom is the right to be yourself, to be who you are, to be who you wanna be, to do what you wanna do.

DIGABLE PLANETS

Digable Planets were not the first to bring a jazz sensibility to hip-hop, but they were certainly among the most successful. The group's three MCs layered complex and politically conscious lyrics over laid-back tracks with live jazz instrumentation as well as with samples from jazz legends like Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis, and Herbie Hancock. They are also important in the story of hip-hop as one of a small number of mixed-gender groups.

Digable Planets consists of Butterfly, Doodlebug, and Ladybug Mecca. The insect aliases were political. "They work together for the good of the colony," Butterfly explains. "It was a socialist, communist thing that I was talking about." ²⁰ Their first album, *Reachin' (A New Refutation of Time and Space)* (1993), was a critical success, driven by their jazz-inflected first single "Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)."

The three MCs share a wide-ranging allusive style that drops references to everyone from Karl Marx to bell hooks, Jimi Hendrix to Nikki Giovanni. In 1994 the group won the Grammy for Best Rap Performance by a Duo or Group. Digable Planets may have reached their peak of popularity in the early 1990s, but their effect on hip-hop is apparent in the work of later groups like the Fugees and the Roots.

REBIRTH OF SLICK (COOL LIKE DAT)

[Butterfly]

We like the breeze, flow straight out of our lids
Them, they got booed by these hard-rock Brooklyn kids
Us floor rush when the DJ's boomin classics
You dig the crew on the fattest hip-hop record
He touch the kinks and sinks into the sounds
She frequents the fatter joints called undergrounds
Our funk zooms like you hit the Mary Jane
They flock to booms, man, boogie had to change
Who freaks the clips with mad amount percussion?

Where kinky hair goes to unthought-of dimensions
Why's it so fly? 'Cause hip-hop kept some drama
When Butterfly rocked the light blue-suede Pumas
What by the cut we push it off the corner
How was the buzz entire hip-hop era?

Was fresh in fact since they started sayin "Audi"

'Cause funks made fat from right beneath my hoodie The puba of the
styles like Miles and shit Like sixties funky worms with waves and
perms Just sendin chunky rhythms right down ya block We be to rap
what key be to lock

But ...

I'm cool like dat [7x]

I'm cool ... (I'm cool ...)

[Ladybug]

We be the chocolates tap to my raps

She innovates after sweeter cat naps He at the funk club with the vibrate
Them, they be crazy, down with the Five Nate It can kick a plan then a
crowd burst Me, I be diggin it with the bug verse Us, we be freakin 'til
dawn blinks an eye He gives the strangest smile so I say "Hi" (Wassup)
Who understood, yeah, understood the plans Him heard a beat and put
it to his hands What I just flip let borders get loose How to consume all
the beats is like juice If it's the shit we'll lift it off the plastic The
babes'll go spastic, hip-hop gains a classic Pimp playin sharp, it don't
matter, I'm phatter Ask Butta how I zone (Man, Cleopatra Jones) And
...

I'm chill like dat [7x]

I'm chill ... (I'm chill ...)

Blink ... blink ... blink ... blink ... blink ... blink ... blink ...

Think ... think ... think ... think ... think ... think ... think ... think ...

[Doodlebug]

We get ya free 'cause the clips be fat boss Them dug the jams and
commence to goin off She sweats the beats and ask me could she puff
it Me? I got crew, kid, seven and a crescent Us cause a buzz when the
nickel bags are dealt Him? That's my man with the asteroid belt They
catch a fizz from the Mr. Doodle-big He rocks a tee from the Crooklyn
non-pigs The rebirth of slick like my gangsta stroll The lyrics just like
loot come in stacks and rolls You used to find the bug in a box with
fade Now he boogies up your stage—plaits twists the braids And ...

I'm peace like dat [7x]

I'm peace ... (I'm peace ...)

[Butterfly]

Check it out, man, I groove like dat, I'm smooth like dat I jive like dat, I
roll like dat

[Ladybug]

Yeah, I'm thick like dat, I stack like dat I'm down like dat, I'm black like
dat [Doodlebug]

Well, yo, I funk like dat, I'm fat like dat I'm in like dat 'cause I swing like
dat [Butterfly]

We jazz like dat, we freak like dat

We zoom like dat, we out ... we out

DMX

DMX is gifted with one of the most distinctive voices in all of rap—a guttural baritone that favors the pit bulls he keeps as pets. His flow often comes in bursts, punctuated by barks and growls. Beyond the signature ad-libs, his flow is swaggering, aggressive, even angry. “I never saw any bright lights around me,” DMX writes in his autobiography. “Nothing about my Tims and hoodie was shiny. [I was] committed to taking hip-hop back to the streets where it belonged.” ²¹

DMX enjoyed one of the most successful runs of commercial success in hip-hop history. His first five albums, released between 1998 and 2003, debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 and all went platinum. His work is marked by confessional reflections (“Damien”), prayers (he has a series of numbered “Prayer” songs), personal family stories (“I Miss You”), street anthems (“Ruff Ryders Anthem”), and swagger-laden, come-hither jams (“Howz It Goin Down”). One of DMX’s favorite tropes is to play multiple parts in his raps, as shown here on “Damien.” Perhaps his most formally compelling song is “Who We Be,” in which he matches his flow to the lurching beat, pushing together strings of short phrases before settling into fully expressed thoughts. The song is an exercise in control, containment, and release.

DMX’s style is often strikingly introspective. As one reviewer noted on the release of his first album, “DMX is meaningful as well as symbolic. He professes an ideology that stresses the inner world—characterized by such qualities as survival, wisdom, strength, respect, and faith—rather than the material one that infatuates most rappers of his time.” ²² X has made that inner turmoil—publicized through his many run-ins with law enforcement—the subject of his art.

DAMIEN

[Chorus 2x]

The snake, the rat, the cat, the dog

How you gon’ see them if you livin in the fog?

Why is it every move I make turn out to be a bad one?

Where’s my guardian angel? Need one, wish I had one *I’m right here,*
shorty, and I’m hold you down

*And tryin to fuck all these bitches? I'ma show you how
But who? Name D like you, but my friends call me Damien
And I'ma put you into somethin about this game we in
You and me could take it there and you'll be
The hottest nigga ever livin. That's a given? You'll see
Hmmm, that's what I've been wantin all my life Thinkin 'bout my little
man so I call my wife Well your dada is about to make it happen
"What you mean, my nigga?" I'm about to make it rappin Today I met
this cat, he said his name was Damien He thinks that we're a lot alike
and wants to be my friend "You mean like Chucky?" Haha, yeah, just
like Chucky "Dada, looks like we both lucky." Yeah*

[Chorus 4x]

*Hey yo, D? What up, D? You'se a smooth nigga
I seen you but nobody knew who pulled the trigger
Yeah, you know it's always over dough. You sure?
I could've swore it was over a ho. Na, na, that ain't my style Nigga, you stay
frontin but you still my man
And I ain't goin say nothin. Got yo' weed—
Go 'head smoke it, go 'head drink it
Go 'head and fuck shorty, you know I can keep a secret
I'm about to have you drivin, probably a Benz
But we gotta stay friends, blood out, blood in
Sounds good to me, fuck it, what I got to lose?
Hmmm. Nothin I can think of, any nigga would choose Got me pushin the
whips, takin trips across seas Pockets stay laced, nigga, I flush G's
For that nigga I would bleed, give him my right hand Now that I think
about it—yo, that's my man*

[Chorus 4x]

*You like how everything is goin? You like what I did? Yeah You know if you
was goin down I'd be the one to save you. True But, yo, I need a favor,
these cats across town hate me. Uh-huh Plus their behavior hasn't been too
good lately. What!?*

Anything for you, dog. Where them niggas at?

38th and Broadway. Let me get the gat Run up on 'em strapped, bust off caps on four niggas Laid low for 'bout a month and killed two more niggas Now I'm ready to chill, but you still want me to kill *Look at what I did for you, dog, come on, keep it real*

Aight, fuck it, I'm gonna do it, who is it this time?

Hey, yo, remember that kid Sean you used to be with in '89?

Nah, that's my man. *I thought I was your man?*

But, yo, that's my nigga! *Hey, who's your biggest fan?*

Either do it or give me your right hand. That's what you said

I see now, ain't nothin but trouble ahead

[Chorus 4x]

WHO WE BE

[Chorus]

They don't knooow, who we beee

They don't knooow, who we beee

What they don't know is:

The bullshit, the drama (Uhh), the guns, the armor (What?) The city, the farmer, the babies, the mama (What?!) The projects, the drugs (Uhh!), the children, the thugs (Uhh!) The tears, the hugs, the love, the slugs (C'mon!) The funerals, the wakes, the churches, the coffins (Uhh!) The heartbroken mothers, it happens too often (Why?!) The problems, the things we use to solve 'em (What?!) Yonkers, the Bronx (uhh!), Brooklyn, Harlem (C'mon!) The hurt, the pain, the dirt, the rain (Uhh!) The jerk, the fame, the work, the game (Uhh!) The friends, the foes, the Benz, the hoes (What?!) The studios, the shows, it comes and it goes (C'mon!) The jealousy, the envy, the phony, the friendly (Uh-huh!) The one that gave 'em the slugs, the one that put 'em in me (Whoo!) The snakes, the grass, too long to see (Uhh, uhh!) The lawnmower sittin right next to the tree (C'mon!) [Chorus 2x]

What we seein is:

The streets, the cops, the system, harassment (Uh-huh) The options: get

shot, go to jail, or get ya ass kicked (Aight) The lawyers, the part they are of the puzzle (Uh-huh) The release, the warning, "Try not to get in trouble" (Damn!) The snitches, the odds (uhh), probation, parole (What?!) The new charge, the bail, the warrant, the hole (Damn!) The cell, the bus, the ride up north (Uh-huh) The greens, the boots, the yard, you caught (Uhh!) The fightin, the stabbin, the pullin, the grabbin (What?!) The riot squad with the captain, nobody knows what happened (What?!) The two years in a box, revenge, the plots (Uhh!) The twenty-three hours that's locked, the one hour that's not (Uhh!) The silence, the dark, the mind so fragile (Aight!) The wish that the streets would have took you when they had you (Damn) The days, the months, the years, despair

One night on my knees, here it comes, the prayer [Chorus 2x]

This here is all about:

My wife, my kids (Uh-huh), the life that I live (Uh-huh) Through the night I was his (uh-huh), it was right what I did (Uh-huh) My ups and downs (Uhh), my slips, my falls (Uhh) My trials and tribulations (Uhh), my heart, my balls (What?!) My mother, my father, I love 'em, I hate 'em (Uhh!) Wish God I didn't have 'em, but I'm glad that he made 'em (Uhh!) The roaches, the rats, the strays, the cats (What, what?!) The guns, knives, and bats, every time we scrap The hustlin, the dealin, the robbin, the stealin (Uhh!) The shit hit the ceilin, little boy with no feelins (Damn) The frustration, rage, trapped inside a cage Got beatins 'til the age I carried a twelve gauge (Aight!) Somebody stop me (please!), somebody come and get me (What?!) Little did I know that the lord was ridin with me The dark, the light (Uhh), my heart (Uhh), the fight (Uhh) The wrong (Uhh!), the right (Uhh!), it's gone (Uhh!), aight?

[Chorus 4x]

E-40 is the ambassador of Bay Area hip-hop. He has been in the industry for over two decades, producing a shelf's worth of albums and working with a range of artists, from 2Pac to Too \$hort to Lil Jon. He is renowned for his verbal virtuosity, his knack for neologism. E-40 bends the rules of the English language in ways that sometimes go unnoticed but can challenge the comprehension of the uninitiated. He fashioned the “-izzle” technique (for example, turning “for sure” into “fo’ shizzle”), though Snoop Dogg is more commonly associated with it. “Everybody wanna hear a little razzle-dazzle, they wanna hear something slick, they wanna hear new words,” he explains. “The world revolves around slang, whether it’s corny slang or hip slang from the ’hood. They just wanna hear it, and that’s just how it goes. Some people have different ways of doing their slang, but I spit that ’hood slang.” ²³

In recent years, E-40 has been an advocate of the hyphy movement, a kind of Bay Area equivalent of southern crunk. “Even though it was a drought on the West Coast, especially in the Bay, for a good 10 years, ever since Tupac passed away,” he says, “I held on like a hubcap in the fast lane and kept carrying the Bay on my back.” ²⁴

SPRINKLE ME

(feat. Suga T)

(Burrp, burp) Yeah, hocus pocus, skiggedy skay. It ain't nuttin but me, that nigga E-40 finna sprinkle some of you fools with some of this. This G-A-M-E, man, some of this game. Understand, my sister. Finna sprinkle you fools with my sprinkle, sister. Understand this, doe. It don't stop 'til the motherfucking Glock pop. (Don't stop) And fuck a Glock, I'm fuckin with a 6RP226 Diana Ross cousin nina misdemeanor, that's what we do, understand it.

[E-40]

I be more hipper than a hippopotamus, get off in your head like a neurologist Pushin more weight than Nautilus, got a partner by the name of 2Pacalypse The seven-oh-seven, my roots go hella far back to Flor Terrace I pull a forty out of my ballcap and then I flush it down my esopha-garus The group that I'm with the Click: Suga, D-Shot, Legit

Family orientated, game related, it's the shit Killing motherfuckers off
crucial, sittin 'em down mutual Running through these lyrics as if I was
fibered like Metamucil [Chorus]

Timah timah ...

Forty wata, Forty wata

Sprinkle me, main. Sprinkle me, main

Sprinkle me, main. Sprinkle me, main

Big timah timah, big timah ...

Forty wata-ahh

Sprinkle me, main. Sprinkle me, main

Sprinkle me, main ... Kick that shit, Suga [Suga T]

Here comes the top notch, ooh ooh ooh, here I be Cliqued-out me, Suga T
from the V

I'm quick to smob (Quick to smob), always down for the job Ya gotta
strut, that's a gang of shot (Gang of shot) Ooh ooh ooh, I'm a fool

Slangin more mail as I smobs through yo' 'hood Straight shakin all these
bustas and busterettes Tryin to claim fame off my sharp-ass rep
(Sharp-ass rep) Why, oh, why must I be so tight? (Why, oh, why) Most
folks tell me, Suga, you ain't right (Why, oh, why, Suga, you ain't
right)

It makes me wanna scream while I make ya holla Pullin a gang of clout
like that almighty dollar [Chorus]

[Suga T] Check the flotation! [E-40] Niggas PHin on a playa-makin mega
Tryin to knock the hustle just because we way too major [Suga T] E,
they tryin to test your testicles, you know that shit ain't cool [E-40]
Suga, don't make me have to come up out the sound booth and act a
fuckin fool [Suga T] All these old hoe-cake ass niggas, they make me so
damn sick [Suga T and E-40] BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM ON
A TRICK!

[E-40] Playa play her for false and get rubbed off, ya don't want malse
Fuck around and get evaporated

[Chorus]

FOXY BROWN

Foxy Brown takes her name from the blaxploitation heroine made famous in the 1970s by Pam Grier, but her style is hers alone. Before releasing an album, Foxy Brown appeared on several 1995–96 platinum singles from artists like Jay-Z, LL Cool J, and Toni Braxton.

Brown is most often compared to Lil' Kim. Both arrived on the music scene at around the same time. Both were mentored by major rap stars (Jay-Z for Foxy and Biggie for Kim). And both played upon their sexuality while exuding an attitude of overwhelming confidence on the microphone. Both also dealt with the rumor that their famous mentors wrote some of their lyrics. What is undeniable, though, is that both women made major impacts upon 1990s hip-hop, bringing female MCs a level of public recognition and commercial success rarely seen in years prior.

As Brown's career has evolved, her lyrics have become increasingly self-reflective. While "I'll Be," her duet with Jay-Z from her first album, was all glamour and flash, the later "My Life" and "BK Anthem" explore her Brooklyn upbringing and personal challenges. "I'm probably the most mysterious, misunderstood female rapper ever," she told MTV's Sway around the time of the release of 2001's *Broken Silence*. "And I think that I am sort of a voice of reason for the young teenagers, young adults that are struggling every day, that look up to me." ²⁵

MY LIFE

(Nigga, uh)

Yeah, huh (Nigga, uh)

Why don't y'all take a look into my life?

See what I see

(Nigga uh, nigga, nigga, nigga uh)

At the age of fourteen, introduced to couples Learnin how to seduce
niggas, takin they loot Quickly got involved with this money lifestyle
The finer things, all kind of things Power, money, cars, and diamond
rings And nice braids, flaunt it, the Gucci boots with the G's on it A
high price for this high-price life While I'm on tour, is my man cheatin
just for spite?

And if you only knew, I hold my minks at night We cheat, but no other
hands can hold me right My girls ain't the same, guess it's 'cause the
fame Bitches smile in my face then throw dirt on my name Mad 'cause
I made it, now friends intimidated Hate it that I'm in the same game
as them With mo' fame than them, they know who they are This life is
no joke, I was happier broke You was my sister, we used to dream
together How we could make it real big, do our thing together Uhh,
Thelma & Louise together Remember them days? Them niggas we
played?

Now we don't even speak, went our separate ways Separate lives, lost
friendship for pride Playin the game, about to forfeit
High-price life, I can't afford it

[Chorus]

My life, do ya feel what I feel?

My life, a black girl's ordeal

My life, do ya see what I see?

Have you been where I've been? Can you go where I go?

My life, do y'all know what it feels like?

Do y'all know what it be like?

Do ya see what I see?

Have you been where I've been? Can you go where I go?

Daddy's girl, in his wildest dreams Did he think that lil' Ing will be illest in
this rap thing?

Age four in my mother's shoes, swore I could sing And even as a little girl
I was doin my thing Uhh, confused, I ain't asked to be born Nigga so
dumb, shoulda used a condom Ask Mommy every day, "When Daddy
gon' come?"

But he never showed up, I would pimp for them Became demented then.
Men? Resented them Just the scent of 'em made me 'url

'Specially the baller ones tryin to buy me with pearls All I needed was
love, all I wanted was love Lack of love had me fallin for thugs The
niggas who ain't care, just like Daddy If he ain't care, why should
they?

For this high-price life, it's the price I pay [Chorus]

All my girls 'cross the world that feel what I feel
Hearts bruised and been where I been?
Keep it movin Let him do his thing, I'm the one he's
lovin I'm here to show y'all, havin a kid ain't meanin nuthin
That ain't keepin him, 'specially if he in love
With another chick, then you stuck with the baby-mother shit
Don't be lovin niggas more than yourself
Let 'em roam, a dog always finds his way home
Think: y'all don't wanna take my place
Catchin cases, spittin in faces, I never seem
Falsely accused, while some say it's rude
But if I was a dude, they all be amused
But I'm a woman, so I'm a bitch, simple as that
Double-standards, call him a Mack, call me a ho
Say I'm in it for the dough, but tell me
What the fuck he in it for? Huh?

Wanted it all, now it's all mine

Loneliness, sorrow, confusion, and pain
Nightmares, headlines, "Rapper Found Slain"

If it wasn't for my moms I'd drown in this pain
Now y'all see what it's like, y'all don't wanna be me
'Cause it ain't always what it seem on TV
Shit, but this is my nine to five, y'all
Sometimes I wanna slit my wrist and end my life, y'all
[Chorus until fade]

BK ANTHEM

[Chorus]

Lemme tell you where I grew up at

Sip Mo', threw up at, flip coke, blew up at
Little fake thugs got they vests chewed up at
Brooklyn! Beef, who want that?

I grew up in the thoroughest borough: BK

Where Big had everybody rockin DK

Gav was the first dude with the CLK

And bricks was gettin shipped out of East L.A.

It's Brooklyn, where niggas lives is taken
Rich cats got knocked and they wives was taken
Fort Greene and Hemlock, the fifth been cocked
We cried when they killed Lenox and popped them rocks
(Aiyo, y'all ain't hear what the fuck I just said?)
BK—the home of Biggie and Jay

Where niggas got Will Smith chips, get jiggy all day
Bitches that boost in the City all day
Heckler & Koch, crack spots, federal watch
I grew up here, sip Mo', threw up here
Yo, the feds snatched two up here, in BK

Niggas in the 'hood in that all blue and gray Gorillas got rich from stairwells in PA [Chorus 2x]

Brooklyn! The livest borough

You come here frontin, you might die in this borough The Eastern Field and Bed-Stuy's in this borough It's full of projects, the wildest borough Try to figure out which side is thorough From C.I. to Saint Marks, it's carryin cons Niggas rock Coogi and Dolce Gaban's The women here make a livin just carryin bombs We pop corks a little bit, we floss a little bit In the club, buyin out Cris', pour us a little bit I told y'all that my borough is thorough I know niggas that'll clap you up and bury the metal Same day, still in the 'hood, we so ghetto Brook-non, holla back, get your crook on Live from the seven-one-eight, we raised the eight Every time Papi raise the rate of that weight [Chorus 2x]

It's BK, nigga, get yo' vest ate up Over them chips, you could get S-K'ed up They find you in the back of the buildin, sprayed up All for the love of this paper. We misled By twenty-one some'll be dead

By twenty-two the rest of these dudes'll be in the feds We got change but we still fucked up Niggas is outta jail but they still locked up The feds takin flicks when we pullin the drops up BK open up, get popped up

You know it's the borough where cats drive wit' the box in they truck Trey pound Glocked up, wrist be rocked up Yellin out, "Get down, lay down!" when we pop up Blocks so hot we drive the drops with tops up Windows tinted, you can't see who's in it It's Brown, nigga, I represent it, it's Brooklyn!

[Chorus 4x]

FREESTYLE FELLOWSHIP

Freestyle Fellowship is a group from Los Angeles consisting of rappers Aceyalone, Myka 9, P.E.A.C.E., Self Jupiter, and producer J Sumbi. They emerged out of the underground hip-hop workshop known as Project Blowed, which started at the Good Life Café in Compton. Together, they defined what photographer-writer Brian “B+” Cross has termed Los Angeles’s “post-gangsta” era. Thematically, they offer a sharp contrast to the gangsta aesthetic that dominated Los Angeles rap in the 1990s. Instead, they favored Afrocentric messages and social commentary.

The group, as its name suggests, is known for its range of freestyle rhyming techniques. Their sound is heavily influenced by jazz music, not simply in their beats, but also in their use of scat. “That’s what they say I helped do—I helped get the world to freestyle, me and the Freestyle Fellowship, by inventing the Freestyle Fellowship and by redefining what freestyle is,” says Myka 9. “Back in the day freestyle was bust[ing] a rhyme about any random thing, and it was a written rhyme or something memorized. We have redefined what freestyle is by saying that it’s improvisational rap like a jazz solo, so as a result we actually helped create another trend and culture, another pastime. So now kids can do something else other than just play basketball or whatever—they can sit on the staircase and exchange rhymes instead of going around getting into crimes. It’s a good thing to not only MC but freestyle, because it kinda helps promote free thinking.” ²⁶

CAN YOU FIND THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY IN THIS?

Can you find the level of difficulty in this? Hahahahaha [2x]

[Myka 9]

Every man for himself

Can be difficult, mythical, typical, critical, pitiful, beautiful, hypocritical, hypothetical Alphanumeric in a Darwinian way, obstacle course, fittest survival Unforgettable, unforgiveable, diabolical lies within the Bible Unified field theory of love, ignoramus enlightened To his path and purpose, creator, preserver, destroyer, curb server Quantum mechanics converted from bowties to Mormon, also a paraplegic Whirling dervish pledge of allegiance backwards rocket science

nanotechnology Awkward moments, caught between a rock and a hard place You're in a sticky situation zero visibility late night radar emergency Passenger planet typhoon hurricane broken components Airstrip stormy rain military ship landing a plane in Malaysia amnesia Indonesia with a squeegee, you were trying to make a dollar out of fifteen cents For a ticket to Fiji with *Saturday Night Fever* without the Bee Gees All the doohickies and thingamabobs of highly sensitive circuitry microengineering A blind man behind the wheel steering energy equaling matter or mass Times the speed of light squared foreplay with a Catholic nun Making a ho into a housewife, making a crackhead drop the pipe Lookin at Luke's peep show fully dressed with a number of angels dancing On a nuclear warhead, everyone on earth chanting, "Aum"

Taking bong hits holding hands alone at the same time finding a truly righteous queen In a strip club playing patty cake with heartless thugs Smotherfuckin overdub

[Aceyalone]

What an elegant battle cry, young Pocahontas, you brought down a shower of meteorites Predicted well before Nostradamus described the fall, taking most of us with it Forever throwing the earth off of its axis, the autistic artistic art without the practice The parachute brainless aimless jump off the twenty-fifth floor Onto a mattress on to Atlantis, we'll take the Milky Way In a filthy way and try to dig a hole through China with a spoon handcuffed To a thousand pounds of C4 we'll dip to the bottom of the sea floor Then swim back up to the seashore then have a sharpshooting contest I'll shoot a mango off your head from a mile away eyes shut I ran a marathon barefooted on broken glass without a cut Take my place in the stars, see my face on Mars Hijack NASA for the shuttle with .38 snub nose and race the cars Take the negative double gee out of man and then erase the wars For the straightjacket and the crooked face and the broken stick shifter Or a ceremony for the audio body of miracle spiritual uplifter A Siamese twin Libra connected amoeba

A beautiful wonderful world, without Mrs. Moon Makeba That's impossible like Ethan Hunt breathin a blunt, well, believe what you want A serial killer Gandhi, lovable Hitler, a fiddler on a burning roof Learning the truth about the one arm, one leg, one peg, one hook Rock climber to the top shock rhymer grandfather counterclockwise Timer

oldtimer rap rhyme designer purely indubitably excellent Brilliantly intertwined her kinda off beat, off center Odd, simple yet confusing, god, sun shiner with a twist now Can you find-a the level of difficulty in this?

Can you find the level of difficulty in this? Hahahaha [P.E.A.C.E.]

Time is running out, only thirty seconds to go Keep marching in that madness but you must challenge the Final Four Or the game, lock it up like a lo-lo, rock the cradle like a yo-yo Bzzzzz-uh-bzzzt. What is robo?

Another word for alright, so-so. Another word for chocolate cocoa Stunt double Wesley Snipes, faster than yo' fo-fo Now, that's velvet? How did you know? 'Cause I felt it Your wack-ass albums, we'll shelve it. I hit a note like Harold Melvin Earthquake every spots where wackness dwells in They're melting. I can smell them

Stop. Sergio Tacchini, ma cherie amour Diador

In Fila, Reeboks, and Le Coque Sportif

Where's the beef? Barley malt in cereal grains Choice hops with flip-flops, freshly fried pork chops Eatin moon soup on a moon rock, collard greens boiled with the ham hocks Sleep in a hammock and I flow on the shamrock

And I kill ya, kill ya with a overlocked Glock 9

Supply minds, plant landmines, can you find

The level of difficulty in this?

[Self Jupiter]

You'd rather jump off the Empire State building with Explosive-tip helmet and copper-plated nuclear denture caps, perhaps Maybe you'd rather dance through the streets of Iraq Wearing American flag three-piece suit screamin at the top of your lungs, "Shoot Fuck Saddam Hussein. There is no God," in Arabic Truthfully, you got a better chance of hitting the lottery fifteen times in a row and winning Now you tell me the odds on that. You'd rather get head from a wild bobcat You'd rather slap the chief of police knowin you got two strikes You'd rather run up on the White House with a bullseye T-shirt on Blastin a starter pistol, yelling, "Revolution, revolution"

You'd rather skydive butt naked into a field of meat hooks And bathe in a flammable solution, solution

Open a Philly overdose on the heron, you'd rather try to dope fiend
Farrakhan You'd rather walk through the lion's den wearing pork chop
earrings And cheap top sirloin and body oil cologne

You'd rather be fully awake while being operated on You got a better
chance of going back to the 1920s as a black transvestite Running for
president and winnin, you wanna go head up with a swinging
wrecking ball And drug at a hundred and twenty miles through a
pavement of ten-inch titanium nails You'd rather die for what you
don't believe in ...

Can you find the level of difficulty in this? Hahahahaha [2x]

THE GUIDELINES

(Aceyalone)

Let's begin ... As-Salamu Alaykum, people of good will I offer you the
greeting of thought-manifested skill To finally reveal the open-end
chapter

As real as the flesh that you're embodied in

To the skull cavity your mind is rotting in, I'll be riding in And there
might have been a slight, rotation warp to curve The course. Of course
I'm cordial when I report I won't distort, I don't contort

Connect, conduct, collect, console, or conceal In full control of the roll of
the wheel

My eyes are my appliance to decipher the science Omitting defiance with
the high-tech mic check The buttons that flashed I pushed for absolute
Destruction, your structure is lifted from the ground The foundation
mound is broke, so you float around I'm embedded in what is known
as beat

Let it be shown every enzyme is complete

In time, you'll see the pace of the pulse pump Rapidly, heart rate, happily
marched

I happen to be the dark man who holds the charts I arch my horizontal
line to make a rainbow

But it ain't the same though, yo

The tried and true pros are chasing fool's gold Sliding through holes like
small rodents

It's obviously evident my embellishment
Peaks at two-ninety-two, I.Q.
'Cause Big Ace is the spinner in the center
Inventor, and I plan to be a winner, meaning
I'll be in the inner outer ovaries, overload, overboard Overseas, hearing
oversees more than the eye can I stand, limited primitive,
sentimentalist, escapist The way I shape this landscape automatically
makes this vivid I give it a rivet, hold it, stand at the pivot I love it,
learn it, live it, then give you my exhibit Not inhibited, not even a
little bit, when I'm inclined My attempts to redefine your hip-hop
guidelines And you can play the sideline; write rhymes in your spare
time My attempts to redefine your hip-hop guidelines You can play the
sideline; write rhymes in your spare time 'Cause I'd rather stimulate
your mind than emulate your purpose And we have only touched on
the surface of the serpent Consider me part of the dust, in the dusk
I must collect the samples from the rust
Penetrate the crust then trust no living
Driven by the sonic, language passion
Your ashes spark the flashes, of the neon
From be-yond, what kind of planet could I be on?
I don't know, but I'ma be on for eons and eons While many think that
they can never play out
Get trapped in a timeframe and never find their way out I stay off the
dramatization and I balance
Always seeking the challenge, to show the world The incredible talents, I
cut the corners, smooth out the surfaces Worthlessness is just half of
the problem
I read the grid, kid, I did every column
I note the animal kingdom and the phylum
Why-lum style 'em, until they get to hit the target I mark it on the
bullseye, of flies and the buffalo wing in the sky My architectnique
sparks the dark streets of your resting ground I suggest that you warn
your town
I inhabit the oxygen, mark off the memory
You will never forget to remember the lone wolverine Marine biologist
machine with the verbal

Internal mind fertile, foot over hurdle
Tight like girdle and my word'll be the last
I incubate every other millennium
I fast and I hibernate to pass any of 'em
I am potent, untraceable
No color, no odor, no taste, no replaceable parts No heart, no head, just a
carcass
The darkest days come right before the light
I watch my watch and stand right before the mic By the powers vested in
me, I digested MCs
Food for thought, caught on to the end of the rope and swung Then stood
stiff as if I was on a cliff
Not beneath sticks, my feet are made of bricks When I walk my footprints
indent cement
I am not practical, nor am I unusual
Nor am I oblivious to hideous crimes
Every city is captured and trapped in my mind
Given the spinal tap as the final rap climbs
My attempts to redefine your hip-hop guidelines You can play the
sidelines; write rhymes in your spare time My attempts to redefine
your hip-hop guidelines You can play the sidelines; write rhymes in
your spare time 'Cause I have become the night owl on the prowl
Master of the free pen pal style
'Cause I'm om-nipotent
I'm some government experiment that is out of control I'm from some big
black hole
I square up, select, and wrecked every tangle
I flare up and you can try any angle
Even Bermuda, but I bury the barracuda
Then I'm octa-gone in the wind with the pollen

THE FUGEES

The Fugees are among the most recognized groups in the history of rap, though they only released two albums. Consisting of Wyclef Jean and Pras Michel, both Haitian immigrants, and Lauryn Hill, from suburban New Jersey, they derived their name from the slang term for “refugee.” The spirit of the African diaspora, most especially the Caribbean, suffuses their music. They crafted powerful, melodic hip-hop that was popular without compromise. Their Grammy-winning *The Score* (1996) is one of the bestselling rap albums in history, with over 18 million sold.

The trio was stylistically complementary. Jean’s rhyming laced with Haitian patois and reggae-influenced singing matched well with Hill’s commanding flows and cerebral content and Pras’s resonant vocal tones. “They were definitely a group that didn’t care what everyone else was doing,” remarks Havoc of Mobb Deep. “They just were them, and you could tell they weren’t trying to be different; they *were* different.” ²⁷

VOCAB

Yo, this is the Fugees. Refugees. About to take you on a journey into the dimensions of the Booga Basement, the Basements, word. Uhh

[Lauryn Hill]

Hey, yo, one two three! The crew is called Re-Fu-Ge-ee-es An if you come
fa’ tes’ the rap style Stop the violence and just bring it on, wyo!

Hey, yo, I feel kind of melancholy people think they really know me I
keep my wrap about me while I’m driving Daddy’s Audi I pay the toll
fighting for my own soul ’Cause the bourgeois type of mental sucks
like a black hole But I be raidin the rebel base to bass, distort the EQ

Them devils wishin they could send me back to Mogadishu ’Cause I’ve
been wild since I was a juvenile Afrocentric profile, back when
righteous rap was still in style Now kids are whylin so I ask the bad
black “Boogie bandit, what’s the damage, gimme the estimate then
Pray tell me when the revolution will begin”

I turn on my TV, I check out Farrakhan on CNN, see I’m like the phantom
that’s flying like the bird Doing things you never heard, plus I come

from the suburbs Word to God, I heard you had it kind of hard And you
got your skin scarred when they was shootin on the boulevard
[Chorus]

(You got the vocab) I got the vocab

(On the real, got the vocab) You know we got the vocab (All my peeps
got the vocab) Yeah, we got the vocab [Lauryn Hill] Aiyo, Pras, grab
the mic and show that you got the gift of gab [Pras]

Then cast off from here to Mexico

You see my four-five-six a-be my cee-lo And when I rest my head is on a
pi-llow Be-ba-dee-be, be-dee-be, be-dee-be-bo You see the skills I
manifest is very thorough And if you don't believe me ask Frère
Jacques-o Mmmm, Frère Jacques-o, Frère Jacques-o A dormez-vous? A
dormez-vous?

WATCH OUT NOW! When I choose to speak I'm forming the cipher fly,
peace to the Five-Percenter Knowledge is born, to all beginners

Cast the first stone, if you feel you ain't a sinner, ahh Say our Father, who
art in heaven

Forgive the foolish rapper for he not know how Fugee be steppin Correct
and, stopped and kept in, nuff respect to the DJ, that be selectin the
type of record, ahhh [Chorus]

[Wyclef Jean]

Check it out, here we go

Back in Eighty-TREE, no one wanted to be NAP-PY

I turn on my TV, it's a dreadlock for FREE

Kill the gimmick, it's nonsense, it's no sense or value A rapper, disaster,
nobody ever told me that "Roxanne, you don't got to work for money
no more!!"

And ... Back in the days I used to listen to Kool G Rap Way back when
before guns became gats and Run-DMC used to ask Mary was she
buggin?

I loved P.E., they kept me conscious of what I was saying Afrika
Bambaataa, Poor Righteous Teachers Got within myself so it made me
a Five-Percenter Say la-di-da-di, uhh, we like to party but My jam was
BDP, with "My Philosophy"

Say Grandmaster Flash, MC Melle Mel

Then LL Cool J came with “Rock the Bells”

See, I’m known for the crew, like a Jew is a Jew Like Apollo got the
moon, like the men who got the brew Like the Fu got the Manchu,
Shaka got the Zulu Hawaii got the Honolulu

I got the rap blues, so skippedy-de-bop-bop, you don’t stop You do the
rock-rock from hip-hop through be-bop From be-bop to bee-bee

[Chorus 3x]

FU-GEE-LA

[Wyclef Jean]

We used to be number ten, now we permanent at one In the battle lost
my finger, mic became my arm Pistol nozzle hits your nasal, blood
becomes lukewarm Tell the woman be easy, naah squeeze the Charmin
Test Wyclef, see death flesh get scorned Beat you so bad make you feel
like you ain’t wanna be born, Jean And tell your friends stay the hell
out of my lawn Chicken George became Dead George stealin chickens
from my farm Damn ... another dead pigeon

If you’re Mafiosos then I’m bringin on Haitian Sicilians Nobody’s shootin,
my body’s made of hand grenade Girl bled to death while she was
tongue-kissin a razor blade That sound sick, maybe one day I’ll write a
horror Blackula comes to the ghetto, jacks an Acura Stevie Wonder
sees crack babies becoming enemies In they own families

Armageddon come, you know-a we soon done Gun by my side just in case
I gotta rum’

A boy on the side of Babylon

Trying to front like you’re down with Mount Zion [Chorus]

Oooh la la la

It’s the way that we rock when we’re doing our thing Oooh la la la

It’s the natural la that the Refugees bring Oooh la la la la la la

La-la-la la laaah, sweeeeet thing

She love me like she never before, hey [Lauryn Hill]

Yeah, in saloons we drink Boone’s and battle goons ’til high noon Bust rap
toons on flat spoons, take no shorts like poon-poon’s See, hoochies pop
coochies for Guccis and loochie Find me in my Mitsubishi, eatin sushi,
bumpin Fugees Hey, hey, hey, try to take the crew and we don’t play

play "Say, Say, Say," like Paul McCartney, not hardly Odd-ly enough, I
can see right through your bluff Niggas huff and they puff but they
can't handle us, we Bust! 'Cause we fortified, I could never hide Seen
Cooley High, cried when Cochise died I'm twisted, blacklisted by some
other Negroes Don't remove my Polos on the first episode (Ha ha ha
ha) You shouldn't dis Refugees and (Ha ha ha ha) Your whole sound
set booty and (Ha ha ha ha) You have to respect Jersey, 'cause I'm
superfly When I'm super-high on the Fu-Gee-La [Chorus]

[Pras]

I sit ninety degrees underneath palm trees Smokin bidis as I burn my
calories

Brooklyn rooftops become Brooklyn teepees Who that be? Enemy wanna
see the death of me From Hawaii to Hawthorne, I run marathons, like
Buju Banton, I'm a true champion, like Farrakhan reads his daily
Qur'an, it's a Phenomenon, lyrics fast like Ramadan [Wyclef Jean]

What's goin on? Armageddon come, you know we soon done Gun by my
side just in case I gotta rum'

A boy on the side of Babylon

Trying to front like you're down with Mount Zion [2x]

[Chorus 2x]

READY OR NOT

[Chorus]

Ready or not, here I come, you can't hide Gonna find you and take it
slowly

Ready or not, here I come, you can't hide Gonna find you and make you
want me

[Wyclef Jean]

Now that I escape, sleepwalk awake

Those who could relate know the world ain't cake Jails bars ain't golden
gates, those who fake, they break When they meet their four-hundred-
pound mate If I could rule the world, everyone who have a gun In the
ghetto, of course, when giddy-uppin on their horse I kick a rhyme
drinking moonshine

I pour sip on the concrete for the deceased But, no, don't weep, Wyclef's
in a state of sleep Thinkin 'bout the robbery that I did last week
Money in the bag, banker look like a drag I wanna play with pelicans
from here to Bagdad Gun blast, think fast, I think I'm hit My girl
pinched my hips to see if I still exist I think not, I'll send a letter to my
friends A born-again hooligan, only to be king again [Chorus]

[Lauryn Hill]

I play my enemies like a game of chess Where I rest, no stress if you don't
smoke cess Less, I must confess my destiny's manifest In some Gore-
Tex and sweats, I make tracks like I'm homeless Rap orgies with Porgy
and Bess

Capture your bounty like Eliot Ness (Yes) Bless you if you represent the
Fu'

But I hex you with some witches' brew if you do-do Voodoo, I could do
what you do easy (Easy) Believe me, frontin niggas give me heebie-
jeebies So while you imitatin Al Capone

I be Nina Simone and defecating on your microphone [Chorus]

You can't run away from these styles I got, oh baby Hey, baby, 'cause I
got a lot, oh yeah And anywhere you go, my whole crew gonna know,
oh, baby, hey, baby You can't hide from the block, oh, no [Pras]

Ready or not, Refugees taking over

"The buffalo soldier, dreadlock rasta"

On the twelfth hour, fly-by in my bomber Crews run for cover, now they
under pushin up flowers Superfly, true lies, do or die, toss me high
Only puff lye with my crew from la caille I refugee from Guantanamo
Bay

Dance around the border like I'm Cassius Clay [Chorus]

GOODIE MOB

Goodie Mob defined the Dirty South—quite literally, introducing the term on a song from their debut album. The Dirty South would come to embody a raw and uncompromising style of rap that stretched from Georgia to Texas. Goodie Mob consists of four MCs: Cee-Lo, Khujo, T-Mo, and Big Gipp. Along with fellow Atlanta rappers Outkast, they came to embody a southern rap aesthetic of soulful beats (both groups were produced by Organized Noize) and street-oriented and socially conscious lyrics. “Goodie Mob aimed to capture the entire existential struggle of the black man trying to get by on the land where his ancestors had been enslaved,” writes Roni Sarig. ²⁸

Their debut album, *Soul Food* (1995), features everything from introspective rhymes concerning the South’s legacy of slavery (“See, in the third grade this is what you told: *You was bought, you was sold*”) to odes honoring the wonders of southern cuisine (“*a heaping helping of fried chicken, macaroni and cheese and collard greens Too big for my jeans*”). The group released two more albums in the 1990s before one of the key members, Cee-Lo, left the group for a solo career. Cee-Lo’s dual talents of rhyming and singing are apparent on songs like “Cell Therapy” and “Soul Food.”

CELL THERAPY

[Khujo]

When the scene unfolds, young girls

Thirteen years old, expose themselves To any Tom, Dick, and Hank. Got
mo’

Stretch marks than these hoes hollerin they got rank See, Sega ain’t in this
New World Order, dem Experimenting in Atlanta, Georgia

United Nations overseas, trained assassins Do search and seize, ain’t
knocking or asking Dem common folk, niggas like me, po’ white trash
like they Tricks like her back in slavery

Concentration camps laced with gas pipelines Infernos outdoors like they
had back

When Adolf Hitler was living in 1945

Listen to me now, believe me later on In the future. Look it up—Where
they say it? In the Constitution That in the event of a race war, places

like Operation Heartbreak Hotel, moments 'til Until air-tight vents seal
off despair Dem say expect no mercy. Fool, you should be my least
worries Got to deal with W-2s

1099s, unmarked black helicopters

Swoop down and try to put missiles in my ass [Chorus]

Who's that peeking in my window

Pow! Nobody now

Who's that peeking in my window

Pow! Nobody now

[Cee-Lo]

Me and my family moved in our apartment complex A gate with the serial
code was put up next They claim that this community is so drug free
But it don't look that way to me 'cause I can see The young bloods
hanging out at the store twenty-four seven Junkies looking fo' a hit of
the blow, it's powerful Oh, you know what else they tryin to do? Make
a curfew Especially for me and you, the traces of the New World
Order, time is getting shorter

If we don't get prepared, people, it's gon' be a slaughter My mind won't
allow me to not be curious My folk don't understand so they don't take
it serious But every now and then, I wonder if the gate Was put up to
keep crime out or keep our ass in ...

[Chorus]

[T-Mo]

Listen up, little nigga, I'm talking to you About what yo' little ass need to
be going through I fall a victim, too, and I know I shouldn't Smoke so
much, but I do with the crew every day On the average 'bout four or
five, I'm lucky to be alive At sunrise now I realize the cost after I lost
My best friend Ben I recognize as a kin Who am I to tell you to stop
smoking?

Now you're open to disease and colds and ain't sixteen years old This shit
has got to stop, let's take a walk through detox I want outta this hole,
I'm in a cell Under attack. Loc' up, folks, they in the 'hood Got an eye
on every move I make

Open your face to info you ain't know 'cause it's kept low How the New
World plan reach the planet without the black man [Big Gipp]

So what's your aim? Tryin to separate me from the blood Is disrespect like
coming in my home and not Wiping your feet on the rug, the Citron
Absolut Has got me bucking, no hang with no phony Look out for the
man with the mask and the white pony On my back are bills, staying
off my toes, always on my heels Insane plain, soldiers coming in the
dark by plane To enforce the new system by reign, tag my skin with
your computer chip Run your hand over the scanner, divide you dish
now No more fishing for your fish

Kiss the days of the old days past ways gone Mind blown, conception,
protection

My name on your selections but I caught you coming—Pow!

[Chorus 2x]

HIEROGLYPHICS

Hieroglyphics is an ever-expanding underground Oakland collective presently comprised of Del tha Funkee Homosapien, Casual, Domino, Pep Love, DJ Touré, and the members of the group Souls of Mischief (A-Plus, Opio, Tajai, and Phesto). The group formed in the early 1990s, and though they have released only two studio albums—*3rd Eye Vision* (1998) and *Full Circle* (2003)—the various members have compiled an extensive discography through their outside efforts. The selections that follow include Hiero’s “Classic” and lyrics from both Del and Souls of Mischief.

Souls of Mischief cultivated a sound that helped broaden the accepted range of West Coast rap and had a lasting effect on hip-hop from the Bay Area and beyond. Their debut *93 'til Infinity* (1993) was a commercial success, due in large part to its distinctive sound, distinguished by hyperkinetic flows. As Lefty Banks points out, on many of their songs “the verbal battery is relentless, practically pummeling you into submission as the MCs finish each other’s sentences and hand off verses faster than a relay team does a baton.”²⁹ This back and forth lyrical style is evident on “Cab Fare,” testifying to the group aesthetic that Souls epitomizes. For his part, Del brings the rich tones of his voice to lyrics that range from the offbeat (like rapping about body odor on “If You Must”) to the interplanetary (as on “Virus”).

CAB FARE

(Souls of Mischief)

[Tajai]

Yo, the jam was fly. Oh my, now it’s over My batch of pals cut so Tajai
must catch a Taxicab. Dag nab, why’d they leave me?

Stuck in the late night alley. Cali’s Not so hype that everyone should be
sweatin Yet nobody’s smilin, plus crews are pilin Starin, thinkin what
they’d look like wearin My gear. A sigh when the Yellow Cab neared
He sped up, ’cause dreds made him think I’d vic him Now I gotta dodge
thugs like I’m playin chicken An Englishman, an Irishman

Five or ten Caucasians passed me in their taxis Oh, no such luck, I’m
gonna get bucked For my apparel as I seen a black gauge barrel Just

then a fat cab came to my rescue Damn ... I'm glad black men drive them cabs, too [Opio]

It seems nowadays cab rides are rather pricey Especially when the driver goes for self, in spite of the Directions that are given, they are driven to cruise backstreets That treats them to a pricey fair, exactly What happened to myself when I chose to call a taxi It pulled up to the curb and I hopped into the backseat Gave him the destination—said he'd never heard of the place And I'd have to tell him as we went along, and then placed it In drive. When I said make a left he made a right All right, I get it. You wanna make some slight Detours so you can be sure that you get yours And when I turn my head, you up the bill a little more I told the cabbie to stop; he didn't think I watched it Fake reached into my pocket and then jetted like I was Rocket Ishmael. His taillight was broken as a token Of appreciation. He started chasin but I smoked him [Phesto]

What? You can't escape me, mop head Drop dead, deceased, say your final summons If I catch ya, bet ya regret ya ever ditched me Drivin, connivin, guys been

Robbin me lately. He went up Blake Street, but I'm followin Swallowin up steps. He ran to the left, I made a left And crashed into a rose bush. My nose crushed On impact. But, yo, I'll get him back ...

[A-Plus]

I didn't have enough for a car; what a bummer I had to get a job drivin taxis last summer All the other drivers knew that my car was spectacular 'Cause I had a tight, very bright yellow Acura Pilin in nine or ten skins at a time, G

Funny how the honeys with the money always find me Payin their green to see what color my house is Feelin like Del 'cause they would sleep on my couches I'd charge senior citizens extra 'cause they never mention I'd take all the money from they pension And I'd drive a blind man around for a while Even if he only had to travel just a mile With a smile. And don't let your dog off the leash 'Cause if he stepped, then I would have to squash the beast And if you didn't have the right change, don't even ask me Or I woulda ran ya ass down with my taxi
CLASSIC

[Tajai]

It's the lynchpin, lynching, antsy inchin Bit by bit, chompin at the bit

My shots hit accurate for profit, passionate For profit, cashin in, that's the
shit Lyrical laxative runnin off afta'

Never relaxing, lashin different than the last one So let's see, chocolate
dipped nuts, I'm Nestle Milk, World Wrestling Federation built Y'all
are complacent still? Display some skill!

My word placement, first place, and not a verse basic My complex is
complex, balance in check No comment with comparable talents as yet
There's always a first, yet there's always a verse And always a hearse,
so they always disperse Tails tucked, who, why, when, where, what?

And how? Sorry, but not with that style!

I'm fond of fondling these tactless tactile Cats until they tapped out, put
that down 'Cause I put that down. Yeah, I do that there While you act
scared, talkin 'bout "who that there"

I'll knock 'em out! If you ain't ship shape keep your shit shut 'Fore I shift
shape, leave this shit shut Closed up, sucker, get your pose up!

You hold down ... what's the hold up, huh?

[Chorus: Del]

Uh, somethin ya do when you're fire resistant An ion intrinsic
instantaneous lenses Diablo, domino effect, wobble

Stumble, tryin to follow? Ask Pollo Dumbo! Need a model? Taj will
Assault silicone, reverberate with realer tone Fill in holes 'til it hurt deep
in your bones I mean really drill it home to your inner zone [Pep
Love]

We put in the work to make your body jerk We won't shirk the duty of
makin you shake your glute-Us maximus, yeah, that's what's up!

The music is movin, you need to be catchin up Classical massacres occur
in a flash, a blur Smashin her iller than when we clash with words
Adrenaline rush shatter you fragile gentlemen When I hit 'em up with
agile style, venom And change the game like two ways did pagers And
2Pac did before the plagiarists came Sword swing around, we not
horsing I'ma do mine, you do your thing Hieroglyphics is monolithic,
chronicle and I Careen in on a collision course to contradiction God is
listenin, we collage

Analyze with the touch of a brush to paint this picture I'm heartfelt with
the texture of velvet My art propellin, the wax start meltin We makin
the matrix break to this And motivatin the shake complacentness

Mixed of many maneuvers, we get blitzed And the groove is deep as it
gets to reap benefits From Oakland to Brooklyn, the language spoken
Broken and crooked, you know how we do it!

[Chorus]

VIRUS

(Del)

[Chorus]

I wanna devise a virus

To bring dire straits to your environment Crush your corporations with a
mild touch Trash your whole computer system and revert you to
papyrus I want to make a super virus

Strong enough to cause blackouts in every single metropolis 'Cause they
don't wanna unify us So fuck it, total anarchy and can't nobody stop
us You see, late in the evening

Fucked up, on my computer and my mind starts roaming I create like a
heathen

The first cycles of this virus I can send through a modem Infiltration hits
your station

No Microsoft or enhanced DOS will impede Society thinks they're safe
when Bingo! Hard drive crashes from the rending A lot of hackers tried
viruses before Vaporize your text like so much whiteout I want it
where a file replication is a chore Lights out, shut down entire White
House I don't want just a bug that could be corrected I'm erecting
immaculate design

Break the nation down section by section Even to the greatest minds, it's
impossible to find [Chorus 2x]

I want to develop a super virus Better by far than that old Y2K

This is 3030, the time of

Global unification, break right through they Terminals, burn 'em all,
slaves to silicon Corrupt politicians with leaders and their keywords
FBI and spies stealin bombs

Decepticate their plans in their face and catch the fever Everybody loot
the stores, get your canned goods Even space stations are having a

hard time Peacekeepers seek to take our manhood Which results in the
form of global apartheid Ghettos are trash dumps with gas pumps
Exploded and burnt out since before the great union The last punks
walk around like masked monks Ready to manipulate the database
and break through 'em Human rights come in a hundredth place Mass
production has always been number one New Earth has become a
repugnant place So it's time to spread the fear and the thunder some
[Chorus 2x]

LAURYN HILL

Lauryn Hill is one of the most beloved artists in hip-hop, though also one of the most enigmatic. Her production to date mostly came during the intensive period between the release of the Fugees' *Blunted on Reality* (1994) and her classic solo debut, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998). In between came another classic with the Fugees, *The Score* (1998). Hill, one of the most musical of rappers, has a style that comes at the listener in dense layers of melody, assonance, alliteration, and rhyme, both at the end and within the line. She brings a rich array of themes to her lyrics, delving into matters of politics, faith, and metaphysics. Many of her lyrics also deal with love—erotic, paternal, filial, divine.

Among the many inspirations heard in her music and lyrics is Bob Marley. "I grew up really appreciating Bob Marley's music until I realized that I had certain gifts that I had not exercised," she recalls. "I wasn't utilizing all of myself. Many people are artists, not because they decide to be artists. They stumble onto a talent, a favor from God, after He decided to anoint them, and give them a little more than others. But then they have to walk this fine line between being apologetic for their talent and being considered egotistical. The same thing people get celebrated for, that's the same they get hated for. A true artist has to understand humility, and be aware of how the world treats its prophets." ³⁰ A singer, rapper, actress, and ambivalent sex symbol, Lauryn Hill was one of the biggest stars in hip-hop culture before receding from the limelight near the turn of the century.

DOO WOP (THAT THING)

It's been three weeks since you've been looking for your friend
The one you let hit it and never called you again 'Member when he told you he
was 'bout the Benjamins You act like you ain't hear him then give him
a little trim To begin, how you think you really goin pretend Like you
wasn't down, then you called him again?

Plus, when you give it up so easy you ain't even foolin him If you did it
then, then you'd probably fuck again Talking out your neck sayin
you're a Christian A Muslim sleeping with a djinn

Now that was the sin that did Jezebel in Who you goin tell when the
repercussions spin?

Showing off your ass 'cause you're thinking it's a trend Girlfriend, let me
break it down for you again You know I only say it 'cause I'm truly
genuine Don't be a hard rock when you really are a gem Baby girl,
respect is just a minimum Niggas fucked up and you still defending 'em
Now, Lauryn is only human

Don't think I haven't been through the same predicament Let it sit inside
your head like a million women In Philly Penn; it's silly when girls sell
they souls Because it's in. Look at where you be in, hair weaves Like
Europeans, fake nails done by Koreans Come again

Win, win, come again

Brethren, come again

My friend, come again

Guys, you know you better watch out Some girls, some girls are only
about That thing, that thing, that thing

That thing, that thing, that thing

The second verse is dedicated to the men More concerned with his rims
and his Tims than his women Him and his men come in the club like
hooligans Don't care who they offend popping yang (Like you got
yen) Let's not pretend, they wanna-pack-pistol-by-their-waist men
Cristal-by-the-case men, still-in-their-mother's-basement The pretty-
face-men, claiming that they did-a-bid men Need to take care of their
three and four kids then They facing a court case when the child's
support late Money-taking, heartbreaking, now you wonder why
women hate men The sneaky-silent men, the punk-domestic-violence
men The quick-to-shoot-the-semen, stop acting like boys and be men
How you gon' win when you ain't right within?

How you gon' win when you ain't right within?

How you gon' win when you ain't right within?

Uh, uh, come again

Yo, yo, come again

Brethren come again

And sistren come again

Watch out, watch out, look out, look out Watch out, watch out, look out,
look out Girls, you know you better watch out Some guys, some guys

are only about That thing, that thing, that thing
That thing, that thing, that thing

LOST ONES

It's funny how money changes situations Miscommunication lead to
complication My emancipation don't fit your equation I was on the
humble, you on every station Some wan' play young Lauryn like she
dumb But remember not a game new under the sun Everything you did
has already been done I know all the tricks from Brix to Kingston My
ting done made your kingdom wan' run Now understand L. Boogie
nonviolent But if a thing test me, run for mi gun Can't take a threat to
mi newborn son L been this way since creation

A groupie call, you fall from temptation Now you wan' bawl over
separation

Tarnish my image in your conversation Who you goin scrimmage, like
you the champion?

You might win some but you just lost one You might win some but you
just lost one [4x]

Now, now how come your talk turn cold?

Gained the whole world for the price of your soul Tryin to grab hold of
what you can't control Now you all floss, what a sight to behold
Wisdom is better than silver and gold I was hopeless, now I'm on Hope
Road Every man wanna act like he's exempt Need to get down on his
knees and repent Can't slick-talk on the day of judgment Your
movement's similar to a serpent Tried to play straight, how your
whole style bent?

Consequence is no coincidence

Hypocrites always wanna play innocent Always wanna take it to the full-
out extent Always wanna make it seem like good intent Never wanna
face it when it time for punishment I know that you don't wanna hear
my opinion But there come many paths and you must choose one And
if you don't change then the rain soon come See, you might win some
but you just lost one You might win some but you just lost one [4x]

[Chorus]

You might win some but you really lost one You just lost one; it's so silly,

how come?

When it's all done, did you really gain from What you done, done? It's so silly, how come?

You just lost one

Now don't you understand, man, universal law?

What you throw out come back to you, star Never underestimate those who you scar 'Cause karma, karma, karma come back to you hard You can't hold God's people back that long The chain of Shaitan wasn't made that strong Trying to pretend like your word is your bond but Until you do right, all you do will go wrong Now, some might mistake this for just a simple song and Some don't know what they have 'til it's gone Now, even when you're gone you can still be reborn and From the night can arrive the sweet dawn Now, some might listen and some might shun and Some may think that they've reached perfection; if you Look closely you'll see what you've become 'Cause you might win some but you just lost one You might win some but you just lost one [4x]

[Chorus]

FINAL HOUR

I treat this like my thesis

Well-written topic broken down into pieces I introduce then produce words so profuse It's abuse how I juice up this beat like I'm deuce Two people both equal like I'm Gemini Rather Simeon. If I jimmy on this lock I could pop it, you can't stop it, drop it Your whole crew microscopic like particles while I make international Articles and on the cover

Don't discuss the baby mother business I been in this—third LP, you can't tell me, I witness first-handed I'm candid, you can't stand it, respect demanded And get flown around the planet, rock-hard like granite Or steel, people feel Lauryn Hill from New-Ark to Israel And this is real, so I keep makin the street ballads While you lookin for dressin to go with your tossed salad [Chorus 2x]

You can get the money, you can get the power But keep your eyes on the Final Hour I'm about to change the focus from the richest to the brokest I wrote this opus to reverse the hypnosis Whoever closest to the line gon' win it You gonna fall trying to ball while my team win

the pennant I'm about to begin it, for a minute, then run for Senate
Make a slum lord be the tenant, give his money to kids to spend it And
then amend it, every law that ever prevented Our survival since our
arrival documented in the Bible Like Moses and Aaron, things gon'
change, it's apparent And all the transparent gon' be seen through Let
God redeem you, keep your deen true, you can get the green too
Watch out who you cling to, observe how a queen do And I remain
calm reading the 73rd Psalm 'Cause with all this going on, I got the
world in my palm [Chorus]

Now I be breaking bread, sipping Manischewitz wine Pay no mind, party
like it's 1999

But when it come down to ground beef like Palestine Say your rhyme, let's
see if that get you out your bind Now I'ma get the mozzarella like a
Rockefeller, still be In the Church of Lalibela, singing hymns a
cappella Whether posed in *Mirabella* in couture—or Collecting residuals
from off *The Score*

I'm making sure I'm with the Hundred-Forty-Four I been here before, this
ain't a battle, this is war Word to Boonie, I makes a lot like a Sunni
Get diplomatic immunity in every ghetto community Had opportunity,
went from 'hood-shock to 'hood-chic But it ain't what you cop, it's
about what you keep And even if there are leaks, you can't capsize this
ship 'Cause I baptize my lips every time I take sips [Chorus]

ICE CUBE

Ice Cube was one of the big reasons that the West Coast earned legitimacy for its lyricism in the 1990s. As a founding member of NWA, along with Eazy-E, Dr. Dre, and DJ Yella, he honed his commanding lyrical style and helped give birth to gangsta rap.

With his solo debut, *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* (1990), Ice Cube took the unconventional step for a West Coast artist of recording with the East Coast production gurus the Bomb Squad, whose signature, post-Phil Spector “wall of noise” sound was made famous in rap by Public Enemy. This fusion of East and West Coast sounds was idiosyncratic and even controversial, but the result helped to launch Ice Cube’s fame and further extend rap’s reach. “The sound is what attracted me,” Cube recalls, “because I knew I would be doin’ what I do, but like I said, Public Enemy was a big influence on me, so I was waiting for Chuck D, to see what he brought to the table in terms of my style—the street knowledge and political hip-hop.” ³¹ The album also occasioned a number of controversies, with Ice Cube being accused of racism and misogyny (the latter charge anticipated, exacerbated, and complicated by “It’s a Man’s World,” a duet with Yo-Yo included below). Over the next three years he released three more hit albums, emerging along with Snoop Dogg as the leading figure in West Coast hip-hop.

Ice Cube’s lyrical craft is sometimes overlooked because of his subject matter. “Greatest MC of all time to me?” Snoop Dogg once remarked. “I will say probably Ice Cube.” ³² Cube has frequently stated in interviews, by way of explaining gangsta rap and his style in particular, that the violence and mayhem described in his lyrics require a sense of tone and context from the listener. “You take a little bit of Muhammad Ali, a little bit of Richard Pryor, you take a lot of the ’80s and what was goin’ on, and out comes gangsta rap,” he says. “People gotta understand its ingredients, and if you don’t have those ingredients of humor and command of the language and of course rhyming, bravado, you gotta bring a little ego wit’ you, you know what I mean? The ingredients of bein’ a great rapper. That is the key—these are the things you have to have to even be in the game, so that’s a lot of people’s startin’ point.” ³³

THE NIGGA YA LOVE TO HATE

I heard payback’s a motherfucking nigga That’s why I’m sick of gettin

treated like a goddamn stepchild Fuck a punk 'cause I ain't him
You gotta deal with the nine-double-M
The damn scum that you all hate
Just think if niggas decide to retaliate And try to keep me from runnin up
I never tell you to get down, it's all about comin up So what they do? Go
and ban the AK
My shit wasn't registered any fucking way So you better duck away, run
and hide out When I'm rollin real slow and the light's out 'Cause I'm
about to fuck up the program Shootin out the window of a drop-top
Brougham When I'm shootin let's see who drop
The police, the media, and suckers that went pop And motherfuckers that
say they too black Put 'em overseas, they be beggin to come back They
say keep 'em on gangs and drugs
You wanna sweep a nigga like me up under the rug Kickin shit called
street knowledge
Why more niggas in the pen than in college?
Because of that line, I might be your cellmate That's from the nigga ya
love to hate

[Chorus]

Fuck you, Ice Cube!

Yeah, ha-ha, it's the nigga you love to hate *Fuck you, Ice Cube!*

Aiyo, baby, your mother warned you about me

It's the nigga you love to hate

*"Yo, you ain't doing nothing pos'tive. Yo, you ain't doing nothing pos'tive for
the brothers. What you got to say for yourself?" You don't like how I'm
living? Well, fuck you!*

Once again it's on, the motherfucking psycho Ice Cube the bitch killa, cap
peeler

Yo, runnin through the line like Bo

There's no pot to piss in, I put my fist in Now who do ya love to hate?

'Cause I talk shit and down the eight-ball 'Cause I don't fake, you're
begging I fall off You crossed over, might as well cut them balls off
And get your ass ready for the lynching The mob is droppin common

sense and

We'll gank, in the pen we'll shank

Any Tom, Dick, and Hank or get the ass

Fake, it ain't about how right or wrong you live But how long you live, I
ain't with the bullshit I meet cold bitches ... mo' hoes

Don't wanna sleep so I keep poppin NoDoz And tell the young people
what they gotta know 'Cause I hate when niggas gotta live low And if
you're locked up, I dedicate my stylin From San Quentin to Rikers
Island

We got 'em afraid of the funky shit

I like to clown, so pump up the sound

In your Jeep, make the old ladies say

"Oh, my God." Wait, it's the nigga ya love to hate [Chorus]

*"Yo, who the fuck you think you are calling girls bitches? You ain't all that.
That's all I hear, bitch, bitch. I ain't nobody's bitch." A bitch is a...*

Soul Train done lost they soul Just call it *Train* 'cause the bitches look like
hoes I see a lotta others, damn

It almost look like the *Bandstand*

You ask me, did I like *Arsenio*?

About as much as the bicentennial

I don't give a fuck about dissing these fools 'Cause they all scared of the
Ice Cube

And what I say, what I portray and all that And they ain't even seen the
gat

I don't wanna see no dancing

I'm sick of that shit: listen to the hit 'Cause, yo, if I look and see another
brother On the video tryin to outdance each other I'ma tell T-Bone to
pass the bottle

And don't give me that shit about role model It ain't wise to chastise and
preach

Just open the eyes of each

'Cause laws are made to be broken up

What niggas need to do is start loc-ing up And build, mold, and fold

theyselves into shape Of the nigga ya love to hate

IT'S A MAN'S WORLD

(feat. Yo-Yo)

[Ice Cube]

Women, they good for no—

[DJ]

Wait, wait, wait, Cube. Trip this: We gonna dedicate this to the pretty young lady. You know them pretty young ladies that wouldn't give us the play before the album? This is for you...

Bitch ... bitch on this gank move ... bitches ... no, bitch, I think you shit ... ladies are beautiful ... bitch on ... bitches, bitch, bitch ... a bitch is a ... I'm not no ... bitch is a ... I'm not no ... bitch is a ... bitch! ... I'm not no ... bitch ... I'm not no ... bitch ... ladies are beautiful ... I'm not no ... bitch, bitch ... bitch ... ladies are ... no, bitch ... bitch on ... bitch, bitches, bitch, bitch, bitch ... back up off my tip for the simple fact you on it like a gnat on a dog's dick ... I'm not no ... with me tonight I also have Mr. Anthony ... what'd you say about my mother, man?

[Ice Cube]

Women, they good for nothing—nah, maybe one thing To serve needs to my ding-a-ling

I'm a man who loves the one-night stand 'Cause after I do ya, huh, I never knew ya 'Cause to kick it, man, it gives me the fits They wanna lay with they nose under your armpits Ice Cube won't wait, so give it up, cow After we do it, you can go home now

I'm a brother with a big long ...

[Yo-Yo]

What the hell you think you talkin about?

First of all, let me tell you my name, it's Yo-Yo When down on a girl, first the fist and that's a no-no Yo-Yo thinks the kitchen sink should be thrown in Niggas be schemin and fiendin to stick the bone in No, Yo-Yo's not a ho or a whore

And if that's what you're here for, exit through the door There's more to
see of me, but you're blind so Women like me are fading brothers in
the 9-0

[Ice Cube]

Wait! First of all, how you gonna come on my record and talk—

[Yo-Yo]

I'm tryin to say all women are superior over men

[Ice Cube]

Yeah, yeah, yeah

[Yo-Yo]

No, wait. How you gonna rule the world when you broke as a joke?

[Ice Cube]

With your county check, baby

Ay, what up, buttercup or Miss Yo-Yo (That's me) I know you like to rap
and like to flow so (True) But when it comes to hip-hop, this is a man's
world Stay down and play the playground, you little girl [Yo-Yo]

What you're sayin, I don't consider is rapping 'Cause you're on rewind
and I'm the new what's-happening It never fails, I always get respect
And you lose, so take a rain check

[Ice Cube]

Hell no, 'cause you know that I'm first and you're second (Never) If it
wasn't for me, you'd probably be pregnant (What?) And barefoot,
complaining that your back is aching Shaking and faking while I'm
bringing home the bacon [Yo-Yo]

Well, you're mistaken, it's not goin that far I make brothers like you play
the backyard (I doubt it) You used to flow with the title but I took it
Bring home the bacon but find another ho to cook it [Ice Cube] Damn
it—look it, 'cause you're talking a lot of bull [Yo-Yo] Well, I'm not
your puppet, so don't even try to pull [Ice Cube] This is a man's world,
thank you very much [Yo-Yo] But it wouldn't be a damn thing without
a woman's touch *This is—this is—this is a man's world* [4x]

[Ice Cube]

Ah, Miss Yo-Yo. (What's up?) So what gives?

I hear females always talkin about women's lib Well, get your own crib
and stay there

Instead of having more babies for the welfare (What?) 'Cause if you don't,
I'll label you a gold-digger The name is Ice Cube, you know that I ain't
the nigga For you to look at when your hair get nappy So take a piece
of the pole and be happy [Yo-Yo]

Hell no, because to me you're not a thriller You come in the room with
your three-inch killer (What?) Thinking you can do damage to my
backbone (Yeah ...) Leave your child in the yard until it's full-grown
I'ma put it like this, my man (What's up?) Without us, your hand
would be your best friend So give us credit like you know you should If
I don't look good, you don't look good [Ice Cube] I doubt it, baby,
'cause we still most dominant [Yo-Yo] But you don't know how funky
that I can get [Ice Cube] This is a man's world, thank you very much
[Yo-Yo] But it wouldn't be a damn thing without a woman's touch *This
is—this is—this is a man's world* [6x]

[Ice Cube]

Man, women, I put a lot of fear in 'em

'Cause I had it up to here with 'em

Drink a beer with 'em? No way

'Cause I can only deal with 'em about a hour every day Yeah, if you know
what I mean, baby

[Yo-Yo]

Well, I guess now that I think about it, I think maybe If you was more of a
man instead of faking it Women deserve the credit when they're
making it [Ice Cube] Yeah, so what's the problem? [Yo-Yo] Well, I
think we solved it I know they know the best male from who's doggin
it [Ice Cube] Yeah, I admit you can flow. [Yo-Yo] Well, that's true [Ice
Cube] But you see I'm a pro with the bank too [Yo-Yo] Yeah, I can see
you got it good. [Ice Cube] Oh, that I know [Yo-Yo] But you see you're
not better than Yo-Yo The brand-new intelligent black lady

[Ice Cube] You're kinda dope but you still can't fade me [Yo-Yo] So what
up then? [Ice Cube] Girl, what you tryin to do?

[Yo-Yo] To prove a black woman like me can bring the funk through [Ice Cube] This is a man's world, thank you very much [Yo-Yo] But it wouldn't be a damn thing without a woman's touch [Ice Cube] Or a big butt ... [Yo-Yo] See! You know what I mean?

This is—this is—this is a man's world [to fade]

A BIRD IN THE HAND

Say, look at this! I've been cleaning out my nest and I found an old book of my poetry!

Fresh out of school 'cause I was a high-school grad Gots to get a job 'cause
I was a high-school dad Wish I got paid by rappin to the nation But
that's not likely, so here's my application Pass it to the man at AT&T

'Cause when I was in school I got the AEE

But there's no S.E. for this youngsta

I didn't have no money, so now I gotta punch the Clock at a slave and be
half a man

But whitey says there's no room for the African Always knew that I would
clock g's

But "Welcome to McDonald's. May I take your order, please?"

Gotta sell ya food that might give you cancer 'Cause my son doesn't take
no for an answer Now I pay taxes that you never give me back What
about diapers, bottles, and Similac?

Do I have to sell me a whole lotta crack For decent shelter and clothes on
my back?

Or should I just wait for help from Bush Or Jesse Jackson and Operation
PUSH?

If you ask me the whole thing needs a douche A Massengill. What the
hell?

Crack'll sell in the neighborhood

To the corner-house bitches

Miss Parker, Little Joe, and Todd Bridges Or anybody that he know

So I copped me a bird, better known as a kilo Now everybody know I
went from po'

To a nigga that got dough

So, now you put the feds against me
'Cause I couldn't follow the plan of the presidency I'm never gettin love
again
But blacks are too fuckin broke to be Republican Now I remember I used
to be cool
'Til I stopped fillin out my W-2
Now senators are gettin high
And you're playing against the ghetto black fly So now you got a pep talk
But sorry, this is our only room to walk 'Cause we don't wanna drug push
But a bird in the hand is worth more than a Bush **IT WAS A GOOD DAY**
Break 'em ...

Just wakin up in the morning, gotta thank God I don't know but today
seems kinda odd
No barkin from the dog, no smog
And mama cooked a breakfast with no hog (Damn) I got my grub on, but
didn't pig out
Finally got a call from a girl I wanna dig out (Whassup?) Hooked it up for
later as I hit the do'
Thinkin will I live another twenty-fo'?
I gotta go 'cause I got me a drop top
And if I hit the switch, I can make the ass drop Had to stop at a red light
Lookin in my mirror, not a jacker in sight And everything is alright
I got a beep from Kim and she can fuck all night Called up the homies and
I'm askin y'all Which park are y'all playin basketball?
Get me on the court and I'm trouble
Last week fucked around and got a triple double Freakin niggas every
way like M.J.
I can't believe today was a good day (Shit!) Drove to the pad and hit the
showers
Didn't even get no static from the cowards 'Cause just yesterday them
fools tried to blast me Saw the police and they rolled right past me No
flexin, didn't even look in a nigga's direction as I ran the intersection
Went to \$hort Dog's house, they was watchin *Yo! MTV Raps*
What's the haps on the craps?

Shake 'em up, shake 'em up, shake 'em up, shake 'em Roll 'em in a circle
of niggas and watch me break 'em With the seven, seven-eleven,
seven-eleven Seven even back do' Lil' Joe

I picked up the cash flow
Then we played bones and I'm yellin, "Domino"
Plus nobody I know got killed in South Central L.A.
Today was a good day (Shit!)

Left my nigga's house paid (Word)
Picked up a girl been tryin to fuck since the twelfth grade It's ironic, I had
the brew, she had the chronic The Lakers beat the Supersonics
I felt on the big fat fanny
Pulled out the jammy and killed the punanny And my dick runs deep, so
deep
So deep put her ass to sleep
Woke her up around one, she didn't hesitate To call Ice Cube the top gun
Drove her to the pad and I'm coastin
Took another sip of the potion, hit the three-wheel motion I was glad
everything had worked out
Dropped her ass off and then chirped out Today was like one of those fly
dreams
Didn't even see a berry flashin those high beams No helicopter looking for
the murder
Two in the morning, got the Fatburger
Even saw the lights of the Goodyear Blimp And it read, "Ice Cube's a
pimp" (Yeah) Drunk as hell but no throwin up
Halfway home and my pager still blowin up Today I didn't even have to
use my AK
I gotta say it was a good day (Shit!)

Hey wait, wait a minute, Pooh, stop this shit. What the fuck I'm thinkin about?

JAY-Z

If Jay-Z isn't the greatest MC of all time (as MTV ranked him in 2006), then he is certainly in the discussion. His reputation is built upon his longevity, ingenuity, and no small amount of business savvy. As Elizabeth Mendez Berry remarks, "Jay-Z raps like a kingpin: he's articulate, ruthless, in control." ³⁴ Since his solo debut, *Reasonable Doubt* (1996), he has emerged as a crossover celebrity just as likely to be featured in the pages of *US Weekly* alongside his superstar wife, Beyoncé, or in the pages of *Forbes*, which once named him the most successful hip-hop entrepreneur alive, as in the pages of *The Source* or *XXL*. His career embodies many of hip-hop's enduring tensions: glamour and grime, celebrity and crime, craft and commercialism. Perhaps Jay-Z described himself best in rhyme: "I'm like Che Guevara with bling on, I'm complex."

Reasonable Doubt's sales were modest, but it soon gained acclaim as a classic. Originally intended to be his first and only album, it instead signaled the arrival of a prolific new voice; from 1996–2003, Jay-Z released an album a year.

The skilled veteran Kool G Rap offers the following assessment of Jay-Z's lyrical abilities: "That dude is a genius with his craft. He's got all the qualities that it takes for somebody to blow up to superstardom. He's got character, he's got lyrics, he knows how to put songs together. His wittiness ... From the time he came out up 'til now, he grew musically—not so much lyrically. He was crazy lyrical on his first album. He grew musically as far as what plays on that radio and what bumps in that club. I think he just mastered that shit. Dude is in a class by himself. Dudes ain't even touching him as far as I'm concerned." ³⁵

Jay-Z is also known for his compositional practice; unlike most MCs, he does not write down his lyrics. "I can't explain it to y'all, man ... It comes out the air for me. I start mumbling ... They say you put the right artist with the right track in the studio, leave the door cracked and let God in."

³⁶

DEAD PRESIDENTS II

[Chorus]

Presidents to represent me

I'm out for presidents to represent me

I'm out for presidents to represent me

I'm out for dead fuckin presidents to represent me

Who wanna bet us that we don't touch lettuce?

Stack cheddars forever, live treacherous, all the et ceteras To the death of
us, me and my confidants

We shine, you feel the ambiance, y'all niggas just rhyme By the ounce
dough accumulates like snow. We don't just shine We illuminate the
whole show—you feel me?

Factions from the other side would love to kill me Spill three quarts of my
blood into the street, let alone the heat Fuck 'em, they hate a nigga
lovin his life In all possible ways, know the feds is buggin my life
Hospital days, reflectin when my man laid up On the Uptown hot
block he got his side sprayed up I saw his life slippin, this is a minor
setback Yo, still and all we livin, just dream about the get back That
made him smile though his eyes said, "Pray for me"

I'll do you one better and slay these niggas faithfully Murder is a tough
thing to digest, it's a slow process And I ain't got nothin but time

I had near brushes, not to mention three shots Close range, never touched
me, divine intervention Can't stop I from drinkin mai-tais with Ta-Ta
Down in Nevada, ha ha Poppa, word life

I dabbled in crazy weight without rap, I was crazy straight Potna', I'm still
spendin money from eighty-eight. What!

[Chorus]

I'll make you and your wack mans fold like bad hands Roll like
Monopoly, advance, you're coppin me Like white crystal I gross the
most

At the end of the fiscal year than these niggas can wish to The dead
presidential candidate with the sprinkles And the presidential ice
that'll offend you In due time when crime flees my mind

All sneak thieves and playa haters can shine But until then I keep the
trillion cut

Diamonds shinin brilliant, I'll tell you half the story The rest you fill it in,
'long as the villain win I spend Japan yen, attend major events

Catch me in the joints, convinced my iguanas is bitin J-A-Y hyphen,

controllin

Manipulatin, I got a good life, man, pounds and pence Nuff dollars make sense, while you ride the bench Catch me swinging for the fence—
Dead Presidents, ya know?

[Chorus]

So be it, the Soviet, the Unified Steady Flow You already know, you light,
I'm heavy roll, heavy dough Mic machete'd your flow, your paper fall
slow Like confetti, mine's a steady grow, bet he glow Pay five dead it
from blow, better believe I have Eleven-sixty to show, my dough flip
like Tae-Kwon Jay-Z the Icon, baby, you like Dom?

Maybe this Crystals'll change your life, huh? Roll with the winners Heavy
spenders like hit records: Roc-A-Fella. Don't get it corrected This shit is
perfected from chips to chicks that strip in the Lexus Nekkid without
your gun, we takin everything you brung We cakin, you niggas is
fakin, we gettin it done Crime family, well connected Jay-Z

And you fake thugs is Unplugged like MTV

I empty three, take your treasure, my pleasure Dead presidentials, politics
as usu-al—baow!

Dead (fuckin) presidents to represent me (Whose...) [4x]

[Chorus 2x]

HARD KNOCK LIFE (GHETTO ANTHEM)

*Take the bassline out, uh-huh. Jigga (Bounce with it), uh-huh uh-huh uh-huh,
yeahh. Let it bump though.*

[Chorus]

It's the hard knock life (Uh-huh) for us

It's the hard knock life for us!

'Stead a treated, we get tricked

'Stead a kisses, we get kicked

It's the hard knock life!

From standin on the corners boppin to drivin some Of the hottest cars

New York has ever seen, from droppin some Of the hottest verses rap
has ever heard, from the dope spot With the smoke Glock fleein the
murder scene, you know me well From nightmares of a lonely cell, my
only hell But since when y'all niggas know me to fail? Fuck, naw
Where all my niggas with the rubber grips? Bust shots And if you with
me, Mama, rub on your tits, and whatnot I'm from the school of the
hard knocks, we must not Let outsiders violate our blocks, and my plot
Let's stick up the world and split it fifty-fifty, uh-huh Let's take the
dough and stay real jiggy, uh-huh Let's sip the Cris' and get pissy-pissy,
flow infinitely Like the memory of my nigga Biggie, baby!

You know it's hell when I come through, the life and times Of Shawn
Carter, nigga, Volume 2—y'all niggas get ready [Chorus]

I flow for those dro'ed out, all my niggas Locked down in the ten by fo'
controllin the house We live in hard knocks, we don't take over, we
borrow blocks Burn 'em down and you can have it back, Daddy, I'd
rather that I flow for chicks wishin they ain't have to strip to pay
tuition I see your vision, Mama, I put my money

On the long shots, all my ballers that's born to clock Now I'ma be on top
whether I perform or not I went from lukewarm to hot, sleepin on
futons And cots to king size, dream machines, the green fives I've seen
pies, let the thing between my eyes analyze life's ills Then I put it
down, type braille

I'm tight grill with the phony rappers, y'all might feel we homies I'm like
still, y'all don't know me, shit I'm tight brill when my situation ain't
improvin I'm tryin to murder everything movin—feel me?!

[Chorus 2x]

I don't know how to sleep, I gotta eat, stay on my toes Got a lot of beef,
so logically, I prey on my foes Hustlin's still inside of me and as far as
progress You'd be hard-pressed to find another rapper hot as me I gave
you prophecy on my first joint and y'all all lamed out Didn't really
appreciate it 'til the second one came out So I stretched the game out,
X'ed your name out Put Jigga on top and drop albums nonstop for ya,
nigga [Chorus 2x]

RENEGADE

(feat. Eminem)

[Jay-Z]

Motherfuckers say that I'm foolish, I only talk about jewels (Bling bling)
Do you fools listen to music or do you just skim through it?

See, I'm influenced by the ghetto you ruined That same dude you gave
nothin, I made somethin doin What I do through and through and

I give you the news with a twist; it's just his ghetto point-of-view The
renegade, you been afraid, I penetrate Pop culture, bring 'em a lot
closer to the block where they Pop toasters and they live with they
moms Got dropped roasters, from botched robberies, niggas crotched
over Mommy's knocked up 'cause she wasn't watched over Knocked
down by some clown, when child support knocked No, he's not
around. Now how that sound to ya? Jot it down I bring it through the
ghetto without ridin 'round Hidin down, duckin strays from frustrated
youths Stuck in they ways. Just read a magazine that fucked up my
day How you rate music that thugs with nothin relate to it?

I help them see they way through it—not you Can't step in my pants,
can't walk in my shoes Bet everything you worth you lose your tie and
your shirt [Eminem]

Since I'm in a position to talk to these kids and they listen I ain't no
politician but I'll kick it with 'em a minute 'Cause, see, they call me a
menace and if the shoe fits, I'll wear it But if it don't, then y'all'll
swallow the truth, grin and bear it Now who's the king of these rude
ludicrous lucrative lyrics Who could inherit the title, put the youth in
hysterics Usin his music to steer it, sharin his views and his merits But
there's a huge interference—they're sayin you shouldn't hear it Maybe
it's hatred I spew, maybe it's food for the spirit Maybe it's beautiful
music I made for you to just cherish But I'm debated, disputed, hated,
and viewed in America As a motherfuckin drug addict—like you didn't
experiment?

Now, now, that's when you start to stare at who's in the mirror And see
yourself as a kid again and you get embarrassed And I got nothin to do
but make you look stupid as parents You fuckin do-gooders; too bad
you couldn't do good at marriage (Ha ha!) And do you have any clue
what I had to do to get here I don't think you do, so stay tuned and
keep your ears glued to the stereo 'Cause here we go: he's Jigga joint
Jigga-chk-Jigga And I'm the sinister, Mr. Kiss-My-Ass, it's just the ...

[Chorus 2x]

RENEGADE! Never been afraid to say

What's on my mind at any given time of day 'Cause I'm a RENEGADE!
Never been afraid to talk About anything (ANYTHING) anything
(ANYTHING) [Jay-Z]

I had to hustle, my back to the wall, ashy knuckles Pockets filled with a
lot of lint, not a cent Gotta vent, lot of innocent lives lost on the
project bench Whatchu hollerin? Gotta pay rent, bring dollars in By
the bodega, iron under my coat, feelin braver Doo-rag wrappin my
waves up, pockets full of hope Do not step to me; I'm awkward, I box
leftier often My pops left me an orphan, my mama wasn't home Could
not stress to me I wasn't grown, 'specially on nights I brought
somethin home to quiet the stomach rumblings My demeanor, thirty
years my senior

My childhood didn't mean much, only raising green up Raising my fingers
to critics, raising my head to the sky B.I.G., I did it—multi before I die
(Nigga) No lie, just know I chose my own fate

I drove by the fork in the road and went straight [Eminem]

See, I'm a poet to some, a regular modern-day Shakespeare Jesus Christ,
the King of these Latter-Day Saints here To shatter the picture in which
of that as they paint me is A monger of hate and Satan, a
scatterbrained atheist But that ain't the case; see, it's a matter of taste
We as a people decide if Shady's as bad as they say he is Or is he the
ladder, a gateway to escape?

Media scapegoat, who they can be mad at today See, it's as easy as cake,
simple as whistlin "Dixie"

While I'm wavin the pistol at sixty Christians against me Go to war with
the Mormons, take a bath with the Catholics In holy water—no
wonder they try to hold me under longer I'ma motherfuckin spiteful,
DELIGHTFUL eyeful The new Ice Cube, motherfuckers HATE to like
you What did I do? (Huh?) I'm just a kid from the gutter Makin this
butter off these bloodsuckers, 'cause I'm a muh'fuckin ...

[Chorus]

DECEMBER 4TH

Shawn Carter was born December 4th. Weighing in at 10 pounds, 8 ounces, he

was the last of my four children, the only one who didn't give me any pain when I gave birth to him. And that's how I knew that he was a special child.

They say they never really miss you 'til you dead or you gone So on that note I'm leaving after this song So you ain't gotta feel no way about Jay, so long At least let me tell you why I'm this way, hold on I was conceived by Gloria Carter and Adnes Reeves Who made love under the sycamore tree, which makes me A more sick MC and my mama would claim

At ten pounds when I was born I didn't give her no pain Although through the years I gave her her fair share I gave her her first real scare, I made up for birth when I got here She knows my purpose was on purpose, I ain't perfect, I care But I feel worthless 'cause my shirts wasn't matchin my gear Now I'm just scratchin the surface 'cause what's buried under there Was a kid torn apart once his pop disappeared I went to school, got good grades, could behave when I wanted But I had demons deep inside that would raise when confronted. Hold on *Shawn was a very shy child growing up. He was into sports and a funny story is: At four, he taught hisself how to ride a bike, a two-wheel at that. Isn't that special? But, I noticed a change in him when me and my husband broke up.*

Now all the teachers couldn't reach me and my mama couldn't beat me Hard enough to match the pain of my pop not seeing me So with that disdain in my membrane

Got on my pimp game, fuck the world, my defense came Then the Haven introduced me to the game

Spanish José introduced me to 'caine, I'm a hustler now My gear is in and I'm in the in-crowd

And all the wavy light-skinned girls is loving me now My self-esteem went through the roof, man, I got my swag Got a vocal from this girl when her man got bagged Plus I hit my mama with cash from a show that I had Supposedly knowing nobody paid Jaz wack ass I'm getting ahead of myself—by the way, I could rap That came second to me moving this crack, give me a second I swear I will say about my rap career

'Til '96 came, "Niggas, I'm here." Goodbye *Shawn use to be in the kitchen, beating on the table and rapping and, um, until the wee hours of the morning. And then I bought him a boom box and his sisters and brothers said that he would drive them nuts. But that was my way to keep him close*

to me and out of trouble.

Goodbye to the game—all the spoils, the adrenaline rush
Your blood boils, you in a spot knowing cops could rush
And you in a drop, you're so easy to touch, no two
Days are alike except the first and fifteenth,
pretty much And trust is a word you seldom hear from us Hustlers, we
don't sleep, we rest one eye up And a drought can define a man, when
the well dries up You learn to work the water, without work you thirst
'til you die—yup!

And niggas get tied up for product and little brothers'

Ring fingers get cut up to show mothers they really got 'em
And this was the stress I lived with, 'til I decided
To try this rap shit for a livin, I pray I'm forgiven
For every bad decision I made, every sister I played
'Cause I'm still paranoid to this day

And it's nobody fault, I made the decisions I made
This is the life I chose or rather the life that chose me
If you can't respect that your whole perspective is wack
Maybe you'll love me when I fade to black [4x]

99 PROBLEMS

If you're having girl problems I feel bad for you, son

I got 99 problems but a bitch ain't one

I got the rap patrol on the gat patrol

Foes that wanna make sure my casket's closed
Rap critics that say he's "Money, Cash, Hoes"

I'm from the 'hood, stupid, what type of facts are those?

If you grew up with holes in your zapatos
You'd celebrate the minute you was having dough
I'm like, fuck critics, you can kiss my whole asshole
If you don't like my lyrics you can press fast forward
Got beef with radio if I don't play they show
They don't play my hits, well, I don't give a shit. So?

Rap mags try and use my black ass

So advertisers can give 'em more cash for ads ... fuckers
I don't know what you take me as

Or understand the intelligence that Jay-Z has
I'm from rags to riches, niggas, I ain't dumb
I got 99 problems but a bitch ain't one

Hit me

[Chorus]

99 problems but a bitch ain't one

If you having girl problems I feel bad for you, son I got 99 problems but a
bitch ain't one

Hit me

The year is '94 and in my trunk is raw

In my rearview mirror is the motherfucking law I got two choices, y'all:
pull over the car or Bounce on the devil, put the pedal to the floor
Now, I ain't trying to see no highway chase with Jake Plus I got a few
dollars, I can fight the case So I pull over to the side of the road

I heard, "Son, do you know why I'm stopping you for?"

'Cause I'm young and I'm black and my hat's real low?

Do I look like a mind reader, sir? I don't know Am I under arrest or should
I guess some mo'?

"Well, you was doing fifty-five in a fifty-four License and registration and
step out of the car Are you carrying a weapon on you? I know a lot of
you are"

I ain't stepping out of shit, all my paper's legit "Well, do you mind if I
look round the car a little bit?"

Well, my glove compartment is locked, so is the trunk and the back And I
know my rights so you gon' need a warrant for that "Aren't you sharp
as a tack, you some type of Lawyer or somethin? Somebody important
or somethin?"

Nah, I ain't pass the bar but I know a little bit Enough that you won't
illegally search my shit "Well, we'll see how smart you are when the K-
9s come"

I got 99 problems but a bitch ain't one

Hit me

[Chorus 2x]

Now, once upon a time not too long ago

A nigga like myself had to strong-arm a ho This is not a ho in the sense of

having a pussy But a pussy having no goddamn sense, try and push me
I tried to ignore him, talk to the lord

Pray for him, 'cause some fools just love to perform You know the type,
loud as a motorbike

But wouldn't bust a grape in a fruit fight The only thing that's gonna
happen is I'ma get to clappin and He and his boys gon' be yapping to
the captain And there I go trapped in the kit-kat again Back through
the system with the riffraff again Fiends on the floor scratching again

Paparazzis with their cameras snapping them D.A. tried to give a nigga
shaft again

Half-a-mil for bail 'cause I'm African

All because the fool was harassin him

Trying to play the boy like he's saccharin But ain't nothing sweet 'bout
how I hold my gun I got 99 problems, being a bitch ain't one Hit me

[Chorus 3x]

You're crazy for this one, Rick. It's your boy!

MY PRESIDENT IS BLACK (D.C. MIX)

My president is black, my Maybach, too

And I'll be goddamn if my diamonds ain't blue My money's dark green
and my Porsche is light gray And I'm headed for D.C.—anybody feel
me?

[Repeat 2x]

My president is black, in fact, he's half white So even in a racist's mind,
he's half right If you have a racist mind, you be aight

The president is black, but his house is all white Rosa Parks sat so Martin
Luther could walk Martin Luther walked so Barack Obama could run
Barack Obama ran so all the children could fly So I'ma spread my
wings, you can meet me in the sky I already got my own clothes,
already got my own shoes I was hot before Barack, imagine what I'm
gon' do Hello, Miss America, hey, pretty lady

Red, white, and blue flag, wave for me, baby!

Never thought I'd say this shit: "Baby, I'm good"

You can keep your puss, I don't want no more bush No more war, no
more Iraq

No more white lies, the president is black!

KRS-ONE

KRS-One is often referred to simply as the Teacher for his command of lyrical knowledge. He is among a handful of artists who can lay claim to being both old school and cutting edge. From 1987 to the present he has averaged nearly an album a year—first as the rapping half (alongside DJ Scott La Rock) of Boogie Down Productions, and then as a solo artist. He has also established himself as an authority on all things hip-hop through books, lectures, and interviews. He has written about the craft of MCing, the spiritual side of hip-hop culture, and a host of other topics.

KRS-One's style is defined by his vocal authority and flow. His rhymes are rarely adorned with complex figurative language, instead relying upon cadence and content to drive his message home. As a battle rapper, KRS has few peers. At the same time, he has fashioned didactic rhymes, charged with Afrocentric history and philosophy.

SOUND OF DA POLICE

[Chorus 4x]

Woop-woop! That's the sound of da police!

Woop-woop! That's the sound of the beast!

Stand clear! Don man a talk

You can't stand where I stand, you can't walk where I walk Watch out!

We run New York

Policeman come, we bust him out the park I know this for a fact—you don't like how I act You claim I'm sellin crack but you be doin that I'd rather say "See ya" 'cause I would never be ya Be a officer? You wicked overseer!

Ya hotshot, wanna get props and be a savior?

First show a little respect, change your behavior Change your attitude, change your plan There could never really be justice on stolen land Are you really for peace and equality?

Or when my car is hooked up, you know you wanna follow me Your laws are minimal

'Cause you won't even think about lookin at the real criminal This has got

to cease

'Cause we be getting hyped to the sound of da police!

[Chorus 2x]

Now here's a likkle truth, open up your eye While you're checking out the boom-bap, check the exercise Take the word "overseer," like a sample Repeat it very quickly in a crew, for example Overseer. Overseer. Overseer.

Overseer, officer, officer, officer, officer!

Yeah, officer from overseer

You need a little clarity? Check the similarity!

The overseer rode around the plantation The officer is off patrolling all the nation The overseer could stop you what you're doing The officer will pull you over just when he's pursuing The overseer had the right to get ill And if you fought back, the overseer had the right to kill The officer has the right to arrest

And if you fight back they put a hole in your chest!

Woop! They both ride horses

After four hundred years, I've got no choices The police, them have a likkle gun

So when I'm on the streets, I walk around with a bigger one (Woop-woop!) I hear it all day

Just so they can run the light and be upon their way [Chorus 2x]

Check out the message in a rough stylee The real criminal are the C-O-P

You check for undercover and the one PD

But just 'cause me a Black man, them wan' check me Them check out me car for it shine like the Sun But them jealous or them vexed 'cause them can't afford one Black people still slaves up 'til today But the Black police officer nah see it that way Him want him salary, him want it

So he put on a badge and kill people for it My grandfather had to deal with the cops My great-grandfather dealt with the cops My great-great-grandfather had to deal with the cops And then my great, great, great, great ... When it's gonna stop?

[Chorus 3x]

MCS ACT LIKE THEY DON'T KNOW

Clap your hands everybody, if you got what it takes

'Cause I'm KRS and I'm on the mic and Premier's on the breaks

Goin out to the hardcore hip-hop

Goin out to the hardcore hip-hop

Of course, we don't flip-flop

If you don't know me by now, I doubt you'll ever know me I never won a
Grammy, I won't win a Tony But I'm not the only MC keepin it real
When I grab the mic to smash a rapper, girls go, "Illlll"

Check the time as I rhyme, it's 1995

Whenever I arrive, the party gets liver Flow with the master rhymer

That's to leave behind the video rapper You know, the chart climber—
clapper

Down goes another rapper, onto another matter Punch up the data,
Blastmaster

Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everybody Call up KRS, I'm
guaranteed to rip a party Flat top, braids, bald heads, or natty dread
There once was a story about a man named Jed But now Jed is dead,
all his kids instead Want to kick rhymes off the top of they head Word,
what go around come around I figure Now we got white kids callin
themselves "Niggas"

The tables turned as the cross is burned Remember, "You must learn"

About the styles I flip and how wild I get I go on like a space-age rocket
ship

You could be a mack, a pimp, hustler or player But make sure live you is a
dope rhymesayer "MCs act like they don't know" [4x]

This is what you waited all year for The hardcore, that's what KRS is here
for Big up Grand Wizard Theodore, gettin ill If you see then ya saw,
I'm in your grill with mad skill MCs can only battle with rhymes that
got punchlines Let's battle to see who headlines

Instead of flow for flow, let's go show for show Toe for toe, yo, you better

act like you know Too many MCs take that word “MC” lightly They
can’t Move a Crowd, not even slightly It might be the fact that they
express wackness Let me show ya whose ass is the blackest I flip a
script a little bit, you ride the tip and shit Too sick to get with it, admit
you bit, your style Is counterfeit, now tone it down a bit My title you
will never get, I’m too intelligent I’ll send your family my sentiments,
my style is toxic When I rock and shock and hip-hop it

Unlock your head, I knock it. It split quick from the lyric Direct hit,
perfect fit, you can’t get with it ...

“MCs act like they don’t know” [4x]

Some MCs don’t like the KRS but they must respect him ’Cause they know
this kid gets all up in they rectum Slappin and selectin ’em, checkin
’em, disrespectin ’em Just deckin ’em, deckin ’em, deckin ’em Who in
their right mind can mimic a style like mine?

I design rhyme and get mine all the time MCs standin on the sidelines,
always dissin When I roll up and rush their crew they start bitchin I
don’t burn, I don’t freeze, yet some MCs Believe they could tangle with
the likes of these Cross your t’s and dot your i’s whenever I arrive
Wide, magnified, live like the ocean tide You dope, you lied, I reside
like artifacts On the wrong side of the tracks, electrified Coming
around the mountain, you run and hide Hoping your defense
mechanism can divert my heat-seeking lyricism As I spark mad-ism

The 1996 lyrical style’s what I give ’em “MCs act like they don’t know”
[4x]

THE LADY OF RAGE

The Lady of Rage's braggadocio and lyrical strength assume female empowerment without ever explicitly asserting it. Her appearances on Dr. Dre's *The Chronic* and Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Doggystyle* are song-stealing, but her career extends well beyond those memorable turns.

Rage first began composing lyrics in the sixth grade. "I used to write poetry a lot," she recalls, "so the transition from poetry to rap is not that hard. It's just music to poetry." ³⁷ She received her moniker her senior year of high school after her best friend remarked on her temper. After high school she moved to Texas, where she developed her rhyming skills and gained a small following through local rap battles. Her style is commanding and effortless. Whether tackling common rap themes like self-aggrandizement ("Afro Puffs") or spitting vicious battle raps ("Unfucwitable"), she finds ways to refresh what might be overused material in the hands of a lesser MC.

AFRO PUFFS

[Chorus 2x]

I rock rough and stuff with my Afro puffs (Rage!) "Rock on, witcha bad self"

I rock on with my bad self 'cause it's a must It's the Lady of Rage still
kickin up dust So, um, let me loosen up my bra strap

And, um, let me boost you with my raw rap 'Cause I'ma break it down to
the nitty-gritty one time When it comes to the lyrics I gets busy with
mine Busy as a beaver, you best believe-a

This grand diva's runnin shit with the speed of a cheetah Meet a lyrical
murderer, I'm servin 'em

Like two scoops of chocolate, check out how I rock it I'm the one that's
throwin bolos, ya better Roll a Rolo to find out I'm the number one
solo, uh The capital R-A, now take it to the G-E

I bring the things to light, but you still can't see me I flow like the
monthly, you can't cramp my style For those that try to punk me
here's a Pamprin, child No need to say mo', check the flow

Rage in effect once mo', so now ya know

[Chorus]

Now I'm hitting MCs like, "Ha-dou-ken!"

Ain't no doubt about it, I'm the undisputed So what you, uhh, wanna do is
back on up

I'll tap that butt, wax the cuts, pass the bucks So put your money on the
breadwinner

I kick lyrics so dope that the brothers call 'em head spinners I got the
tongue that has outdone anyone

From the rising to the setting of the sun Or the moon, I consume the room
with doom When I hear the kick of a 808 bass ... BOOM

BOOM, BAM, GOD-DAYUMMM

I'm hittin so hard you could say it's a grand Slam ... dunk ... punks ...

Get broken off a chunk when they feel the funk Of the rhythm (Fresh) that
I give 'em

Let it hit 'em, split 'em, did it, now I'm rid of 'em Yeah, I put that on my
unborn kids

Rage in effect so you know how it is

[Chorus]

Now ever since my debut I've continued to lay you Flat on your back from
the raps that I spat Spit, ohh shit, I'm the shit!

You can't get with the Rage then tough tit-ty I pi-ty the fool that gets

With the lyrical murderer 'cause my shit is rude (Ooh!) You wanna get
with the wickedness?

With that big bot-ty girl that's kickin it Rippin it apart like Jason, you'll
be chasin a dream Like Freddy, are you ready for the cream

De la crème? I'm steam-pressurin those who ain't Measurin up, I keep
competitors stuck

In the muck with they butt up. What? You wanna nut up Like cashew,
don't you know that I will mash you?

For real, that's the deal, I'm straight out of Farmville VA (So what you
gotta say?)

[Chorus 2x]

I am the roughest, roughest, roughest (Say what? Say what?) I am the toughest, toughest, toughest (RAGE!) [Repeat 4x]

UNFUCWITABLE

You talkin smack, bitch? You wanna get at this? Think you need more practice You way out your bracket, I rock the home of fuckin Atlas Save that racket for the tennis court, and, uh, bought your mission Resort to kissin these glutes or get played like flutes 'Cause, um, the agony that I inflict causes tragedy when I spit And if you ain't the shit, you better dip, you better split You better take off, before I break off, make off Must be cupcakes that's soft, that's why I serve you like a bake-off I'll rip your *Face/Off* like I'm Nicolas Cage You wanna face off? That's ridiculous, I'm Rage The mic brawler, the night crawler, I smoke 'em like I'm off that water Clara Alice great-granddaughter

Would injure ya, your girl from Virginia (Uh, uh) Make no bones about it, when it's on, I'm 'bout it I got a niceness that remains raw, my iceless never thaws Priceless, baby, ha, Rage, that's all ...

I'm foldin MCs like *Times* with dirty consonants and vowels When I'm creepin on the prowl and stay wide-eyed like an owl Now who (Who) flows better than this rhyme writer?

You in a clique full of dicks and you still couldn't come tighter than Robin Redbreast with a Afro puff headdress Young and restless, naw, you nah wan' test this, ha I break it down, baby, you best pray to the lord 'Cause fuckin 'round with Rage is a wish you can't afford I leave 'em standin on they tippy toes, dealin with a drippy nose Bombard 'em with my fifty flows, I ain't fuckin with these silly hoes Now, shit's about to get so retarded

I just got dumped and I got left brokenhearted I ain't got shit to lose, the first bitch that move They gon' catch it in the worst way, Rage blood thirsty Attacks ready to throw down, that's how it goes down I can't slow down, Judge Joe Brown convicted me of rhyme-slaughter 'Cause I spit killable syllables

Leave 'em pitiful, the cynical Rage unfucwitable Now with my Timbos I could leave a bimbo in limbo Make 'em tremble when I spit through the dental of these instrumentals While I'm chewin on a Mento, flows wicked from the intro I told y'all from the get-go, I rock harder than credentials Save that shit for your colon, I strike 'em like I'm bowlin

You sweet cheeks can't compete with the heat that I'm holdin, ha
Dingbats better take they wings back and cash in Lyrical murderer
back up in this bitch to bashin So, ante up and pull your panties up
And call your granny up, tell her that you got your fanny bust Weak shit
banged off the backboard

How about some hardcore? How about some rough, rugged, and raw?
With all sincereness I spit lyrics with raw severeness Gladiator fearless,
Tyson style, leave 'em earless So which of you want me to snatch you
by your britches, boo?

I hit you with my witches' stew, turn 'em into bitches' brew Terror, when
you up against Rage Hitchcock From H block with a flow that make
'em scream, "Rage, stop!"

Now that's crazy—naw, that's the Lady of Rage (Rage ...)

LIL' KIM

Lil' Kim might be the anti-Lauryn Hill for the exuberant way she often seems to embrace the conventional trappings of misogyny. She dubbed herself the Queen B, or Queen Bitch, and made a career of reciting lyrics that would appear to support sexist fantasies of rampant materialism and hypersexuality. Many listeners, not to mention the artist herself, have instead understood Kim's explicit lyrics as radical acts of female empowerment. Her hardcore raps and overt eroticism challenge the presumed boundaries of hip-hop femininity.

Kimberly Jones was discovered by the Notorious B.I.G., and with Biggie's help, she would soon emerge as the larger-than-life Lil' Kim, a member of the Junior MAFIA, the collective of Biggie's Bedford-Stuyvesant associates. After success with Junior MAFIA, Kim released a double platinum-selling solo album, *Hard Core* (1996).

After a hiatus following Biggie's death, Kim returned with her sophomore album, *The Notorious Kim* (2000), which sold more than 1.4 million copies. Two notable singles, "No Matter What They Say" and "How Many Licks," revealed Kim's growing lyrical abilities.

Disagreement remains over whether Lil' Kim has been good or bad for the image of women in hip-hop; none can sensibly deny her impact on the industry. Her hypersexual language and image made her both revered and reviled. Her hardcore swagger and sharp delivery challenge the limitations often foisted upon female MCs.

QUEEN BITCH

(feat. The Notorious B.I.G.)

If Peter Piper pecked 'em, I betcha Biggie bust 'em
He probably tried to fuck 'em, I told him not to trust 'em
Lyrically, I dust 'em off like Pledge
Hit hard like sledgehammers, bitch with that platinum grammar I am a
diamond cluster hustler

Queen bitch, supreme bitch, kill a nigga for my nigga
By any means bitch, murder scene bitch

Clean bitch, disease free bitch

Check it, I write a rhyme, melt in your mouth like M&Ms
Roll with the M.A.F.I.A., remember them?

Tell 'em when I used to mess with gentlemen, straight up apostles Now
strictly niggas that jostle
Kill a nigga for the figure, how you figure?
Your cheddar would be better
Beretta inside of Beretta, nobody do it better Bet I wet cha like hurricanes
and typhoons Got buffoons eatin my pussy while I watch cartoons
Sleep 'til noon, rap Pam Grier's here
Baby drinkers beware, mostly Dolce wear Frank kill niggas' wives for one
point five While you struggle and strive we pick which Benz to drive
The M.A.F.I.A., you wanna be 'em
Most of y'all niggas can't eat without per diem I'm rich, I'ma stay that
bitch

Uh, who you lovin? Who you wanna be huggin?
Roll with niggas that be thuggin, buggin in the tunnel in Eso's Sippin
espresso, cappuccino with Nino
On a mission for the lucci creno
I used to wear Moschino, but every bitch got it Now I rock colorful minks
because my pockets stay knotted C-note after C-note, Frank boat hold
fifteen Plus the caterer. You think you greater? Uh [Notorious B.I.G.]
You niggas got some audacity
You sold a million, now you half of me. Get off my dick Kick it, bitch ...

Check my pitch, or send it persona And I'll still stick your moms for
her stocks and bonds I got that bomb-ass cock, a good ass shot With
hardcore flows to keep a nigga dick rock Sippin Zinfandels up in
Chippendales
Shop in Bloomingdale's for Prada bags
Female Don Dada has no problems spittin cream with my team Shit's
straight like nine fifteen, you nahmean?
Cruise the diamond district with my biscuit Flossin my Rolex rich, shit. I'm
rich
I'ma stay that bitch

MIA X

Mia X was an important part of Master P's No Limit Records empire—the South's answer to Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown. Her sharp enunciation offered a nice contrast to Master P's southern drawl. As a hardcore southern rapper, she deals with all the themes one might expect. And while the No Limit instrumental production sometimes lacked originality, her lyrics were always delivered with energy and command. Her best songs, like "Hoodlum Poetry," put unusual spins on gangsta themes. In this instance, she raps from the perspective of crack cocaine, offering its life story in a style reminiscent of the jailhouse and street-corner toasts of previous eras.

HOODLUM POETRY

I came to this country with my mama

Everybody called her the white girl

But you all knew I had a lil' somethin somethin on me 'Cause my outer
was slightly tanned

Southern folk called me a yella gal

I've been out here in this world for a while now Bringing madness and
mayhem to man, woman, and child You see, my mother, the white
girl, had several lovers So my father's true identity has yet to be
discovered Some call it A-1 soda, others V-12

Doctor Tishner has been implicated

But all of their seeds are incriminating evidence As far as my perception
goes

My mother, she was indeed good, but I am most powerful Just ask
anybody in your 'hood

You can even ask those in corporate America about this mobstress Most
times, I, as little as a pea, though my weight fluctuates Size ain't shit,
'cause I have enough game to make you steal from ya mama And call
her out her name

I can make her neglect her children, sell her body, perform dirty tricks On
her knees and be called the neighborhood hottie Everybody's a thief
and a liar once they make my acquaintance They be anxious to buy
my love, they lust for me Want to hold me and test my purity, but it's

only for a moment You see the ecstasy that I give to you
It's only temporary but quite costly
I'm bossy from your very first encounter with me I tell you you need me,
gots to have me, can't live without me The pea, my game extends, it
gets deeper You see my skills don't just pimp the weak-minded The so-
called big ballin brothers are obsessed with me They kill, rob, plot, and
rat on one another to possess me They see me as a goddess
The financial path that will lead them out the ghetto But don't they know,
have a clue
That my mother and I were sent here to destroy them To entice, baffle,
and trap them
Conscious people call the conspiracy "genocide"
Well, what do you think?
I mean, you make money off me, while they pile evidence on you Then
get you to spend all the money you're stackin on lawyers and bail
bondsmen They seize your property and all your worldly items That
have you so caught up in this lifestyle Material things that turn friend
to foe Woman to ho, and man to monster
Yeah, nigga, you've changed, but so what 'Cause I give you what you
need, I give you power Make you feel invincible—right, papi?
I make you feel like a big man, a timer No matter how ugly, fat, or
illiterate you are I make the prettiest women love you
Fight over you and compete with others trying to give you plenty babies I
make your relatives want to kiss your ass Treat you like a king and
roll out the red carpet All the while, they've got one hand out for
money And the other hand has a pen in it so you can sign your life
policy My existence makes you have that edge over the next man
'Cause it's all about me and the money, the root of all evil The
necessities that function in this society I make all your gangsta
dopeman stories interesting 'Cause you the man
I mean, we listen in awe while you speak of your murder tales Ménage à
trois, homosexual advances, and secret romances I'm 'bout it and I
make you feel 'bout it 'bout it I split family, split friends, split lovers,
and even business partners So you nickname me crack, ain't that
something?
I'm the reason why a lot of people are homeless, crazy, crippled Why
they're HIV positive and dead

But you still want me, feel the need for me to be in your possession
Fear to get high off my intoxicating little pieces Or to spread my love for profit

You're even willing to kill and die for me And even though my mother,
the white girl Engaged in several orgies for my creation I still know
my father, you know him too You follow his lead to work with him

You claim you hate him but your actions are different from your tongue
Let's face it, you serve him faster than you do your God We own you,
nigga

And as far as the ones who send I and my mother here to destroy you We
own them, too

So after all my destruction, I must pat myself on the back, ummumm I am
crack, the devil's daughter

Human life, mind destroyer

And you need me, yeah ya do, for sho' ya do, you really do So go head on,
nigga, take a hit

I'ma keep putting you out on the streets Freeze you now, help me to kill
you

Hoodlum poetry, food for ya mind

Wake up deaf, dumb, and blind, it's time I'm the masteress, I'm the
mobstress

I'm the pimpstress and I own you

I'm the masteress, I'm the mobstress

And I own you, I'm trying to kill you

And I'm succeeding, yes, I'm succeeding I'm trying to kill you and I'm gon'
do it I'm gon' kill you, I'm gon' kill you

I'm gon' kill you and it's bloody

MOBB DEEP

Mobb Deep are poet laureates of the streets. Havoc and Prodigy both hail from the Queensbridge projects, the largest public housing development in the United States, covering a six-block section of Queens. The QB gave birth to a host of hip-hop talents—from MC Shan and Nas to Capone and Noreaga. “We got our own language, style of dress out there, and attitude,” Prodigy says. “You going to see some unique shit out there that you only going to see [in] the music, the language, how people tie their boots, the dress code.” ³⁸

Their breakthrough album, *The Infamous* (1995), was dark with atmospheric beats, sinister piano loops, and cold, clever lyrics. The album encapsulated a profoundly nihilistic worldview. Most of the songs dealt with the “trife life,” the drug trade and various other criminal enterprises. Led by the songs “Shook Ones, Pt. II” and “Survival of the Fittest,” the album won a cult following. The group released three more albums in the 1990s and continued into the next decade. One of the highlights of their work late in the 1990s is “Quiet Storm (Remix),” which featured a blistering verse from Lil’ Kim.

Because Mobb Deep produces most of its own music (Havoc does the majority of the production), one hears a striking correlation between beats and rhymes. “When we make an album it’s different every time,” Prodigy explains. “Sometimes we’ll come at the lyrics first, but most of the time we’ll have the beat first. We just go in and just have fun basically, you know, we don’t think too hard on it and just let it be organic.” ³⁹

SHOOK ONES, PT. II

Word up, son, word ...

To all the killers and the hundred dollar billers

For real niggas who ain’t got no feelins

Check it out now ...

[Prodigy]

I got you stuck off the realness, we be the infamous You heard of us,
official Queensbridge murderers The Mobb comes equipped for
warfare, beware Of my crime family who got nuff shots to share For
all of those who wanna profile and pose Rock you in your face, stab

your brain with your nose bone You all alone in these streets, cousin
Every man for theyself, in this land we be gunnin And keep them
shook crews runnin like they supposed to They come around but they
never come close to I can see it inside your face

You're in the wrong place, cowards like you just get They whole body
laced up with bullet holes and such Speak the wrong words, man, and
you will get touched You can put your whole army against my team
and I guarantee you it'll be your very last time breathin Your simple
words just don't move me, you're minor We major, you all up in the
game and don't deserve to be a player Don't make me have to call
your name out Your crew is featherweight, my gunshots'll make you
levitate I'm only nineteen but my mind is old And when the things get
for real my warm heart turns cold Another nigga deceased, another
story gets told It ain't nothin really, hey, yo, dun, spark the Phillie So I
can get my mind off these yellow-backed niggas Why they still alive? I
don't know, go figure Meanwhile back in Queens, the realness, the
foundation If I die, I couldn't choose a better location When the slugs
penetrate you feel a burning sensation Getting closer to God in a tight
situation Now, take these words home and think it through Or the next
rhyme I write might be about you [Chorus 2x]

Son, they shook ...

'Cause ain't no such things as halfway crooks Scared to death, scared to
look

Livin the life that of diamonds and guns There's numerous ways you can
choose to earn funds (Earn funds) Some of 'em get shot, locked down,
and turn nuns Cowardly hearts end straight up shook ones (Shook
ones) He ain't a crook, son, he's just a shook one (Shook one) [Havoc]

For every rhyme I write its twenty-five to life Yo, it's a must, in gats we
trust, safeguardin my life Ain't no time for hesitation, that only leads
to incarceration You don't know me, there's no relation Queensbridge
niggas don't play. I don't got time For your petty thinking mind, son,
I'm bigga than those Claimin that you pack heat, but you're scared to
hold And once the smoke clears you'll be left with one in your dome
Thirteen years in the projects, my mentality is what, kid You talk a
good one but you don't want it Sometimes I wonder: Do I deserve to
live?

Or am I going to burn in hell for all the things I did?

No time to dwell on that 'cause my brain reacts Front if you want, kid, lay
on your back I don't fake jacks, kid, you know I bring it to you live
Stay in a child's place, kid, you outta line Criminal mind thirsty for
recognition I'm sippin, E&J got my mind flippin I'm buggin, dig a
mind without a hope of hustlin Get that loot, kid, you know my
function 'Cause long as I'm alive I'ma live illegal And once I get on
I'ma put on all my peoples React mix for lyrics, like MACs I hit Your
dome up. When I roll up, don't be caught sleepin 'cause I'm creepin
[Chorus]

QUIET STORM (REMIX)

(feat. Lil' Kim)

[Havoc]

*In broad daylight get right ... Just been through it all, man. Blood sweat and
tears. Niggas is dead and shit. What the fuck else can happen, yo? I don't
think much more, son, word to mother, yo. We done seen it all, we done
been through it all, yo. Let y'all niggas know right now Word to mother, for
real, for real.*

[Lil' Kim]

Queen Bee, baby

[Havoc]

That shit is the truth

[Lil' Kim]

Lil' Kim, B.I.G.

[Havoc]

I'm not lyin ... Yo ...

Blowin niggas with rusty-ass German things Keepin it thorough is our
motherfuckin claim to fame Throw on your wetsuit, when it rains it
pours and all Hit 'em with the fall, don't even know him from a hole in
the wall Get at me, niggas wanna clap me, snitches wanna rat me?

Put it right where they back be

Keep my duns close to me, enemies even closer Sendin kites with the

Motorolas, yo

Give 'em the cold shoulder with a hollow-tip to match Bad apple outta the batch, obsessed with gats Since a little dude, eatin niggas' food, buck-fifty's Niggas can kill me but they comin with me How about that? Send the Queen Bee to attack Only a fly bitch like that can leave 'em and laugh Rock 'em to sleep, make 'em think the drama is dead Yo, I smile up in your face though I'm plottin instead [Chorus 2x]

Yo, it's the real shit, shit to make you feel shit Thump 'em in the club shit, have you wildin out when you bump this (Hip-hop) Drugs to your eardrum, the raw uncut Have a nigga OD 'cause it's never enough [Lil' Kim]

Hot damn, ho, here we go again

"Lyte as a Rock," bitch, hard as a cock, bitch This shit knock for blocks through hardtops In the parkin lots, where my nigga Rock like to spark-a-lot My Brooklyn style speak for itself

Like a wrestler, another notch under my belt The embezzler, chrome treasurer, the U-N-O

Competitor, I'm ten steps ahead of ya I'm a leader, y'all on some followin shit Comin in this game on some modelin shit Bitches suck cock just to get to the top I put a hundred percent in every line I drop It's the Q to the B, with the M-O, B-B

Queensbridge, Brooklyn and we D-double-E-P

What? Y'all wish I lived the life I live Aiyo, Prodigy, tell 'em what this is, dun ...

[Chorus 2x]

[Prodigy]

Yo, I could never get enough of it, yo, that's my shit I need that shit to boost my adrenaline Yo, rock that shit, that real-life shit Makes bitches wanna thug it, makes the projects love it We come through like, "Fuck it"

Y'all want problems? Pursue it, let's do it Infamous Mobb bosses, check out the portrait At the round table, my dun speakin with his twin ghost It's gangsta how we rock, while you watch Attracted to our style, this is how we get down With big jewelry and big guns

We get busy, it get grizzly, beat niggas bloody Twist niggas frontin, get to

runnin

'Fore the mens get to dumpin, the fans get to thumpin M-O-B-B, got the
whole spot jumpin

When my niggas step in the place—Damn, you gotta love it [Chorus 2x]

It's the real

Hah, it's the real baby, hip-hop, hip-hop, hip-hop

NAS

Raised in the Queensbridge Houses, Nas grew up in a street culture still palpable in his rhymes. With depth and delivery comparable to Rakim and a perspective that ranges from the anarchy of the corner to the penetrating consciousness of Eastern philosophy, Nas has built a body of work with few equals.

Even after two decades of recording, Nas's most notable achievement is still widely considered to be the album he began as a teenager, *Illmatic* (1994). On *Illmatic*, Nas rhymes with as much poetic sophistication as anyone in hip-hop at that time or since. "When Nas busted out with [*Illmatic*]," writes Matthew Diehl, "he was hailed as a neo-realist ghetto poet, a welcome return to rap's lyrical-invention roots." ⁴⁰

Nas's career reflects the many changes he has experienced during the transition from the project life of his youth to adulthood in the spotlight. This transition is a major theme in Nas's lyrics. From the ambition he expresses on *Illmatic* ("I dream I can sit back *And lamp like Capone with drug scripts sewn* Or the legal luxury life, rings flooded with stones, homes") to his reflective tone of arrival on "Nothing Lasts Forever" ("Nice cars, livin like a star, club hoppin *Poppin bottles at the bar, love shoppin Gucci iceberg, coppin two, three nice furs*") and finally to his ruminations on the limitations of wealth on *Hip Hop Is Dead* ("The way I flaunted it then would now embarrass me / It kinda make me wanna hate bling, it's a race thing"), we witness the evolution of an artist in rhyme.

FROM LIVE AT THE BBQ (MAIN SOURCE)

Street's disciple, my raps are trifle

I shoot slugs from my brain just like a rifle Stampede the stage, I leave the
microphone split Play Mr. Tuffy while I'm on some Pretty Tone shit
Verbal assassin, my architect pleases

When I was twelve, I went to hell for snuffin Jesus Nasty Nas is a rebel to
America

Police murderer, I'm causin hysteria

My troops roll up with a strange force I was trapped in a cage and let out
by the Main Source Swimmin in women like a lifeguard

Put on a bulletproof, nigga, I strike hard Kidnap the president's wife

without a plan And hangin niggas like the Ku Klux Klan I melt mics 'til
the soundwave's over

Before steppin to me you'd rather step to Jehovah Slammin MCs on
cement

'Cause verbally, I'm iller than a AIDS patient I move swift and uplift your
mind

Shoot the gift when I riff in rhyme

Rappin sniper, speakin real words

My thoughts react like Steven Spielberg's Poetry attacks, paragraphs
punch hard

My brain is insane, I'm out to lunch, god Science is dropped, my raps are
toxic

My voicebox locks and excels like a rocket **N.Y. STATE OF MIND**

Yeah, straight out the fuckin dungeons of rap

Where fake niggas don't make it back ...

I don't know how to start this shit, yo ...

Rappers, I monkey flip 'em with the funky rhythm I be kickin, musician,
inflictin composition Of pain, I'm like Scarface sniffin cocaine Holdin
a M-16, see, with the pen I'm extreme Now, bullet holes left in my
peepholes, I'm suited up With street clothes, hand me a nine and I'll
defeat foes Y'all know my steelo: with or without the airplay I keep
some E&J, sittin bent up in the stairway Or either on the corner bettin
Grants with the cee-lo champs Laughin at baseheads tryin to sell some
broken amps G-Packs get off quick, forever niggas talk shit
Reminiscing about the last time the Task Force flipped Niggas be
runnin through the block shootin Time to start the revolution, catch a
body, head for Houston Once they caught us off guard, the MAC-10
was in the grass and I ran like a cheetah with thoughts of an assassin
Pick the MAC up, told brothers, "Back up," the MAC spit Lead was
hittin niggas, one ran, I made him backflip Heard a few chicks scream,
my arm shook, couldn't look Gave another squeeze, heard it click. Yo,
my shit is stuck Try to cock it, it wouldn't shoot, now I'm in danger
Finally pulled it back and saw three bullets caught up in the chamber
So now I'm jettin to the building lobby And it was fulla children,
probably—couldn't see as high as I be (So whatchu sayin?) It's like the
game ain't the same Got younger niggas pullin the triggers bringing

fame to they name And claim some corners, crews without guns are
goners In broad daylight, stickup kids, they run up on us Four-fives
and gauges, MACs, in fact

Same niggas'll catch a back to back, snatchin yo' cracks in black There
was a snitch on the block gettin niggas knocked So hold your stash 'til
the coke price drop I know this crackhead who said she gotta smoke
nice rock And if it's good she'll bring ya customers and measuring pots
But, yo, you gotta slide on a vacation Inside information keeps large
niggas erasin and they wives basin It drops deep as it does in my
breath

I never sleep, 'cause sleep is the cousin of death Beyond the walls of
intelligence, life is defined I think of crime when I'm in a New York
state of mind New York state of mind [4x]

Be havin dreams that I'm a gangster

Drinkin Moëts, holdin TEKs

Makin sure the cash came correct, then I stepped Investments in stocks,
sewing up the blocks To sell rocks, winnin gunfights with mega cops
But just a nigga walking with his finger on the trigger Make enough
figures until my pockets get bigger I ain't the type of brother made for
you to start testin Give me a Smith & Wesson, I'll have niggas
undressin Thinkin of cash flow, Buddha, and shelter Whenever
frustrated I'm a hijacked Delta In the PJs, my blend tape plays, bullets
are strays Young bitches is grazed, each block is like a maze Full of
black rats trapped, plus the Island is packed From what I hear in all
the stories when my peoples come back, black I'm livin where the
nights is jet black, the fiends Fight to get crack, I just max, I dream I
can sit back And lamp like Capone with drug scripts sewn Or the legal
luxury life, rings flooded with stones, homes I got so many rhymes I
don't think I'm too sane Life is parallel to hell but I must maintain And
be prosperous, though we live dangerous Cops could just arrest me,
blamin us, we're held like hostages It's only right that I was born to
use mics And the stuff that I write is even tougher than dice I'm takin
rappers to a new plateau, through rap slow My rhymin is a vitamin,
held without a capsule The smooth criminal on beat breaks

Never put me in your box if your shit eats tapes The city never sleeps, full
of villains and creeps That's where I learned to do my hustle, had to
scuffle with freaks I'm a addict for sneakers, twenties of Buddha, and
bitches with beepers In the streets I can greet ya, about blunts I teach

ya Inhale deep like the words of my breath I never sleep, 'cause sleep
is the cousin of death I lay puzzle as I backtrack to earlier times
Nothing's equivalent to the New York state of mind New York state of
mind [4x]

LIFE'S A BITCH

(feat. AZ)

[AZ]

Visualizin the realism of life and actuality Fuck who's the baddest, a
person's status depends on salary And my mentality is money
orientated

I'm destined to live the dream for all my peeps who never made it 'Cause,
yeah, we were beginners in the 'hood as Five-Percenters But somethin
must of got in us 'cause all of us turned to sinners Now some restin in
peace and some are sittin in San Quentin Others such as myself are
tryin to carry on tradition Keepin the *Schweppervescence* street ghetto
essence inside us 'Cause it provides us with the proper insight to guide
us Even though we know somehow we all gotta go But as long as we
leavin thievin we'll be leavin with some kind of dough So and to that
day we expire and turn to vapors Me and my capers'll be somewhere
stackin plenty papers Keepin it real, packin steel, gettin high 'Cause
life's a bitch and then you die [Chorus 2x]

Life's a bitch and then you die; that's why we get high 'Cause you never
know when you're gonna go Life's a bitch and then you die; that's why
we puff lye 'Cause you never know when you're gonna go [Nas]

I woke up early on my born day, I'm twenty years of blessing The essence
of adolescent leaves my body, now I'm fresh in My physical frame is
celebrated 'cause I made it One quarter through life, some godly-like
thing created Got rhymes 365 days annual, plus some

Load up the mic and bust one, cuss while I puffs from My skull 'cause it's
pain in my brain vein, money maintain Don't go against the grain,
simple and plain When I was young at this I used to do my thing hard
Robbin foreigners, take they wallets, they jewels, and rip they green
cards Dipped to the projects flashin my quick cash And got my first
piece of ass smokin blunts with hash Now it's all about cash in
abundance, niggas I used to run with Is rich or doin years in the
hundreds

I switched my motto—instead of sayin fuck tomorrow That buck that
bought a bottle could've struck the lotto Once I stood on the block,
loose cracks produce stacks I cooked up and cut small pieces to get my
loot back Time is illmatic, keep static like wool fabric Pack a four-
matic that crack your whole cabbage **FROM THE WORLD IS YOURS**

I sip the Dom P watchin *Gandhi* 'til I'm charged Then writin in my book of
rhymes, all the words pass the margin To hold the mic I'm throbbin,
mechanical movement Understandable smooth shit that murderers
move with The thief's theme—play me at night, they won't act right
The fiend of hip-hop has got me stuck like a crack pipe The mind
activation, react like I'm facin time Like "Pappy" Mason with pens I'm
embracin Wipe the sweat off my dome, spit the phlegm on the streets
Suede Timb's on my feets, makes my cipher complete Whether cruisin
in a six cab or Montero Jeep I can't call it, the beats make me fallin
asleep I keep fallin, but never fallin six feet deep I'm out for presidents
to represent me (Say what?) I'm out for presidents to represent me
(Say what?) I'm out for dead presidents to represent me

.....

To my man Ill Will, God bless your life ("It's yours!") To my peoples
throughout Queens, God bless your life I trip, we box up crazy bitches,
aimin guns in all my baby pictures Beef with housin police, release
scriptures that's maybe Hitler's Yet I'm the mild, money-gettin style,
rollin foul The versatile, honey-stickin wild, golden child Dwellin in
the Rotten Apple, you get tackled Or caught by the devil's lasso, shit is
a hassle There's no days for broke days when sellin smoke pays While
all the old folks pray, to Je-sus, soakin they sins in trays Of holy
water, odds against Nas are slaughter Thinkin a word best describin
my life, to name my daughter My strength, my son, the star, will be
my resurrection Born in correction, all the wrong shit I did, he'll lead
in right direction How ya livin? Large, a broker, charge cards are
mediocre You flippin coke or playin spit spades and strip poker?

.....

I'm the young city bandit, hold myself down singlehanded For murder
raps, I kick my thoughts alone, get remanded Born alone, die alone,
no crew to keep my crown or throne I'm deep by sound alone, caved
inside a thousand miles from home I need a new nigga for this black
cloud to follow 'Cause while it's over me it's too dark to see tomorrow
Trying to maintain, I flip, fill the clip to the tip Picturin my peeps,
now the income make my heartbeat skip And I'm amped up, they

locked the champ up, even my brain's in handcuffs Headed for
Indiana, stabbin women like the Phantom The crew is lampin Big
Willie style

Check the chip-toothed smile, plus I profile wild Stash through the flock
wools, burnin dollars to light my stove Walk the blocks wit' a bop,
checkin Danes, plus the games People play, bust the problems of the
world today **ETHER**

*"Fuck Jay-Z." What's up, niggas? Aiyo, I know you ain't talkin about me, dog.
You? What? "Fuck Jay-Z." You been on my dick, nigga. You love my style,
nigga. "Fuck Jay-Z."*

[Chorus]

(I) Fuck with your soul like ether

(Will) Teach you the king you know you (Not) "GOD'S SON" across the
belly

(Lose) I prove you lost already

Brace yourself for the main event

Y'all impatiently waitin

It's like a AIDS test, what's the results?

Not positive, who's the best? Pac, Nas, and B.I.G.

Ain't no best, East, West, North, South, flossed out, greedy I embrace y'all
with napalm

Blowed up, no guts left, chest, face gone How could Nas be garbage?

Semiautos at your cartilage

Burner at the side of your dome, come outta my throne I got this locked
since 9-1

I am the truest, name a rapper that I ain't influenced Gave y'all chapters,
but now I keep my eyes on the Judas With "Hawaiian Sophie" fame,
kept my name in his music Check it

[Chorus]

*Aiyo, pass me the weed, put my ashes out on these niggas, man (No doubt).
Ay, y'all faggots, y'all kneel and kiss the motherfuckin ring.*

[Chorus]

I've been fucked over, left for dead, dissed, and forgotten Luck ran out,
they hoped that I'd be gone, stiff and rotten Y'all just piss on me, shit
on me, spit on my grave (Uh) Talk about me, laugh behind my back,
but in my face Y'all some well-wishin (bitch niggas), friendly-actin,
envy-hidin snakes With your hands out for my money, man, how much
can I take?

When these streets keep callin, heard it when I was sleep That this Gay-Z
and Cockafella Records wanted beef Started cockin up my weapon,
slowly loadin up this ammo To explode it on a camel, and his soldiers,
I can handle This for dolo and his manuscript just sound stupid When
KRS already made a album called "Blueprint"

First, Biggie's ya man, then you got the nerve to say that you better than
Big Dick-suckin lips, won't you let the late, great veteran live?

(I ... will ... not ... lose ...)

"GOD'S SON" across the belly, I prove you lost already The king is back,
where my crown at?

(Ill Will) Ill Will rest in peace, let's do it, niggas [Chorus]

Y'all niggas deal with emotions like bitches What's sad is I love you 'cause
you're my brother You traded your soul for riches

My child, I've watched you grow up to be famous And now I smile like a
proud dad, watchin his only son that made it You seem to be only
concerned with dissin women Were you abused as a child, scared to
smile, they called you ugly?

Well, life is harsh, hug me, don't reject me Or make records to disrespect
me, blatant or indirectly In '88 you was gettin chased through your
buildin Callin my crib and I ain't even give you my numbers All I did
was give you a style for you to run with Smilin in my face, glad to
break bread with the god Wearin Jaz' chains, no TEKs, no cash, no
cars No jail bars, Jigga, no pies, no case

Just Hawaiian shirts, hangin with little Chase You a fan, a phony, a fake,
a pussy, a Stan I still whip your ass, you thirty-six in a karate class You
Tae-bo ho, tryin ta work it out, you tryin to get brolic?

Ask me if I'm tryin ta kick knowledge

Nah, I'm tryin to kick the shit you need to learn though That ether, that
shit that make your soul burn slow Is he Dame Diddy, Dame Daddy, or
Dame Dummy?

Oh, I get it, you Biggie and he's Puffy (Ill) Rockefeller died of AIDS, that was the end of his chapter And that's the guy y'all chose to name your company after?

Put it together, I rock hoes, y'all rock fellas And now y'all tryin to take my spot, fellas?

Philly's hot rock fellas; put you in a dry spot, fellas In a pine box with nine shots from my Glock, fellas Foxy got you hot 'cause you kept your face in her puss What you think, you gettin girls now 'cause of your looks? (Girls, girls, girls) Ne-gro, please

You no mustache havin, with whiskers like a rat Compared to Beans you wack

And your man stabbed Un and made you take the blame You ass, went from Jaz to hangin with Kane, to Irv, to Big And Eminem murdered you on your own shit You a dick-riding faggot, you love the attention Queens niggas run you niggas, ask Russell Simmons Ha, R-O-C get gunned up and clapped quick J. J. Evans get gunned up and clapped quick Your whole damn record label gunned up and clapped quick Shawn Carter to Jay-Z. Damn, you on Jaz' dick So, little shorty's gettin gunned up and clapped quick?

How much of Biggie's rhymes is gonna come out your fat lips?

Wanted to be on every last one of my classics You pop shit, apologize, nigga, just ask 'Kiss BLACK PRESIDENT

[Barack Obama] *They said this day would never come.* [Crowd cheers] *They said our sights were set too high.* [Crowd cheers] *This country is too divided, too disillusioned, to ever come together around a common purpose. They said ...*

[Chorus 2x]

And though it seems heaven-sent

We ain't ready to have a black president

Yes we can... change the world...

They forgot us on the block, got us in a box Solitary confinement, how violent are these cops?

They need an early retirement

How many rallies will I watch? I ain't got it in me to march I got a semi

to spark, the game's in a drought Public housing projects, cookin up in
the Pyrex My set, my clique, either gettin money Or runnin from
homicide trial, that's if they ain't died yet Tryin to be rich, still I'm
pledging allegiance A predicate felon, a ghetto leader

Lendin my poetical genius to whoever may need it I bleed this from
Queensbridge, now living with my feet up Never defeated, so a
president's needed You know these colored folks and Negros hate to
see One of they own succeeding

America, surprise us, and let a black man guide us [Chorus]

What's the black prez thinking on election night?

Is it, "How can I protect my life? Protect my wife? Protect my rights?"

Every other president was nothing less than white Except Thomas
Jefferson and mixed Indian blood and Calvin Coolidge KKK is like,
"What the fuck?" Loadin they guns up Loadin up mines, too, ready to
ride

'Cause I'm ridin with my crew: he dies, we die, too Yeah, but on the
positive side

I think Obama provides hope and challenges minds Of all races and colors
to erase the hate And try to love one another; so many political snakes
We in need of a break, I'm thinkin I can trust this brother But will he
keep it way real?

Every innocent nigga in jail gets out on appeal When he wins, will he
really care still?

I feel ...

[Chorus]

Say a prayer for dude, we have to

You ain't right, Jeremiah, wrong pastor In love with a slave master

Sincerely yours, USA's most brave rapper Jesse carjacker, Uncle Tom
kidnapper

Ask around, Bentley Coupe off the Richter Bitch called Life, I pimped her,
whaaaat?

Politics, politricks, Klan shooter

Deacon for defense, progress producer

Nothing on the stove, a survival booster Gotta do what we gotta do
We ain't got no governors comin through to help Anything we need done,
we gotta do for self New, improved JFK on the way
It ain't the '60s again, niggas ain't hippies again We ain't fallin for the
same traps
Standin on the balconies where they shot the King at McCain got
apologies, ain't nobody hearin that People need honesty

[Chorus]

[Gov. Bill Richardson] *It is my distinct honor and privilege to introduce to you
the next president of the United States: Barack Obama!*

THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.

The Notorious B.I.G. died a homicide victim at the age of twenty-four. Despite his brief career, Biggie was an innovator who became an icon. Everything about him—his look, his voice, his flow, his cadence, his swagger, and even his ad-libs—have proved influential, and, like 2Pac, his friend turned rival, his memory lives on through his music.

After doing jail time for weapons and drug charges, Biggie began to see the potential of rap as a career. He landed a mention in *The Source*'s Unsigned Hype column and eventually wound up meeting Sean "Puffy" Combs, then record producer and A&R for Uptown Records. Biggie signed a deal with Uptown and immediately began working with other artists on the label, including Mary J. Blige. Biggie followed when Combs founded Bad Boy Records.

The hustler's work ethic and street morality that Biggie developed on the corner helped shape him as a lyricist and are reflected in his music. Perhaps the best example of this is "Juicy," a classic song that we were forced to cut from the anthology due to permissions issues. His sense of escape through hip-hop and his tragicomic sensibility, which no doubt carried him through his dangerous, cutthroat adolescence, are evident in his lyrics. Regarding the dark, hardcore street content of his music, Biggie (as he was known because of his six-foot-three-inch, more than three-hundred-pound frame) said, "My shit is just about me, yo. This is like an autobiography.... You can take it as you want to be like me or you want to take it as you want to stay away from what I was doin. Everybody got their own mind, you know what I'm sayin? Go to your parents for messages; come to me for good music." ⁴¹

'95 FREESTYLE

(feat. Scoob, 2Pac, Shyheim, and Big Daddy Kane)

[Big Daddy Kane] *Where's 2Pac and Biggie Smalls?*

[Scoob] *Yeah. Aight? (Yeah!) Let's keep it goin ...*

[Big Daddy Kane] *Mister Cee ... Yo, Scoob, you set it off and let's get down for the crown ...*

[Scoob] *Rock it. That ill shit ...*

[Notorious B.I.G.] *One, two. One, two. One, two.*

[Scoob] *Brooklyn. JFK, all my niggas—Richie, Matt ... Ready to get wreck.
Aight? Uh! Awww, shit!*

[Big Daddy Kane] *Go, Scoob!*

[Scoob]

Check it, check it, check it, check it This here for the motherfuckin record
Here we, here we, here we go, here we, here we go Can I, can I, can I
kick a motherfuckin flow?

Chitty chitty bang bang, uh, chitty bang bang Motherfuckin niggas can't
hang

Well, oh no. Look at the cloud, it's gonna rain But I don't give a fuck, I'm
lettin niggas know they can't hang Don't give me no lip, don't give me
no backtalk, ya break North Don't make me get my gun and blow your
motherfuckin head off Once again, niggas know my style, god damn it
Unless it's on the cut, so give me the mic and watch me slam it Hard
like Shaquille. Oh, you better kneel When you see me comin, Big Scoob
got 'em runnin Sex when I flex, I catch wreck on the world tour With
dough in my pockets, big like the biscuits at CB4

Set up a contest, I'm comin, I'm takin the dough They wouldn't pick you
even if you had a Afro So don't try me, you better walk by me I'll do
you like the first part in *Menace II Society*

Like Cypress Hill, yo, I'm insane

I'll shoot a hole in your toe; I'll make you jump like the House of Pain
Bang biggy, bang biggy, bang bang

Niggas can't hang, niggas can't hang

Bang biggy, bang biggy, bang bang

Motherfuckin niggas can't hang

[Big Daddy Kane] *Biggie Smalls, what you gonna do with it, baby?*

[Notorious B.I.G.]

*One two, one two, gonna do it like this ... Where Brooklyn at? Where Brooklyn
at? Where Brooklyn at? Where Brooklyn at? We gonna do it like this ...
Any time you're ready, check it ...*

I got seven MAC-11s, about eight .38s Nine 9s, ten MAC-10s, the shits
never ends You can't touch my riches

Even if you had MC Hammer and them 357 bitches Biggie Smalls, the

millionaire, the mansion, the yacht The two weed spots, the two hot
Glocks That's how I got the weed spot

I shot Dread in the head, took the bread and the lambsbread Lil' Gotti got
the shotty to your body So don't resist or you might miss Christmas I
tote guns, I make number runs

I give MCs the runs drippin

When I throw my clip in the AK, I slay from far away Everybody hit the
D-E-C-K

My slow flow's remarkable

Peace to Mateo. Now we smoke weed

Like Tony Montana sniff the yayo

That's crazy blunts, mad Ls

My voice excels from the avenue to jail cells Oh my God, I'm droppin shit
like a pigeon I hope you're listenin, smackin babies at they christening
[2Pac] *Motherfuckin Biggie Smalls!*

[Big Daddy Kane] *What you gonna do with it, 2Pac?*

[2Pac]

*Yeah, where the motherfuckin thugs at? Throw your motherfuckin middle
finger up. We gonna do this shit like this ...*

I thank the Lord for my many blessings—no, I'm stressin Keep a vest for
protection from the barrel of a Smith & Wesson And all my niggas in
the pen, here we go again Ain't nuttin separatin us from a MAC-10

Born in the ghetto as a hustler—hold up A straight soldier, buckin at the
bustas No matter how you try, niggas never die We just retaliate with
hate, then we multiply You see me strikin down the block, hittin
corners Mobbin like a motherfucker, livin like I wanna And ain't no
stoppin at the red lights, I'm sideways Thug Life, motherfucker, crime
pays!

Let the cops put they lights on—chase me, nigga Zig zaggin through the
freeway—race me, nigga In a high speed chase with the law

The realest motherfucker that you ever saw [Big Daddy Kane] *Yeah! Come
here, man. Now I wanna see what my man Shyheim gonna do with it ...*

[Shyheim]

*Yo, this goes out to everybody from Staten Island
(Ah, Mister Cee, and you don't stop)*

Yo, times is gettin hard, word is bond, I swear to God I even got caught
tryin to steal from the junkyard A born terror, a rebel without a pause
I never had a good Christmas, so who is Santa Claus?

I walk the streets at night with my head down In this little town you see
clowns that wanna be down So they get a Glock and lick shots to get
props And when shit rocks all you can hear is when the shells drop An
old man got shot in the parkin lot In front of my building, I hang with
his grandchildren And for the nigga that pulled the trigga then tried to
slide And hide, but he got knocked by the homicide And this happens
everyday around my way So I pray that I can live another day [Big
Daddy Kane] *This how we gonna do it. Hold up, Cee. Aiyo, let's try this ...*

[Shyheim] *Staten Island in the motherfuckin house. What's up? Wu-Tang Clan
in here or what?*

[Big Daddy Kane]
Hold up, Cee ...

Now what's the bullshit niggas been sayin?

Don't try to act like Martin now with that "I was just playin!"

No need to grieve for more now that the beef is on Uhh ... Oh yeah,
motherfucker, your teeth is gone Just 'cause you rap don't meant that
you're catchin wreck with me Step to this, I'll give your mic a
vasectomy I only know one nigga that can come next to me Yo, that's
a tattle, 'cause I can't count my own shadow A battle, I gots to have it,
'lest you're gonna rob me Like they did Whittaker when he fought
Chavez 'Cause when it comes to goin against Kane rappin That's like a
pimp trying to pull a nun, ain't nuttin happenin Non-resistible, non-
compatible

I'm not saying I'm the best, I'm just saying I'm fuckin incredible And let's
just make one more thing understood If I fart on a record, trust me
nigga, that shit gon' sound good **ONE MORE CHANCE (REMIX)**

First things first, I Poppa, freaks all the honies Dummies, Playboy
bunnies, those wantin money Those the ones I like 'cause they don't
get nathan But penetration, unless it smells like sanitation Garbage, I
turn like doorknobs

Heartthrob, never, black and ugly as ever However, I stay Coogi down to
the socks Rings and watch filled with rocks

And my jam knock in your Mitsubishi

Girls pee-pee when they see me

Navajos creep me in they teepee

As I lay down laws like Island Carpet Stop it if you think they gonna
make a profit Don't see my ones, don't see my guns—get it?

Now tell ya friends Poppa hit it then split it In two as I flow with the
Junior M.A.F.I.A.

I don't know what the hell's stoppin ya I'm clockin ya, Versace shade
watchin ya Once ya grin, I'm in, game begin

First I talk about how I dress, it's this And diamond necklaces, stretch
Lexuses The sex is just immaculate from the back I get deeper and
deeper, help ya reach the Climax that your man can't make

Call him, tell him you'll be home real late, then sing the break [Chorus]

One more chance

Biggie, give me one more chance

She's sick of that song on how it's so long Thought he worked his until I
handled my biz There I is, Major Payne like Damon Wayans Low
Down Dirty even, like his brother Keenan Schemin, don't leave your
girl 'round me True player for real, ask Puff Daddy

You ringin bells with bags from Chanel Baby Benz, traded in your
Hyundai Excel Fully equipped, CD changer with the cell She beeped
me, meet me at twelve

Where you at? Flippin jobs, payin car notes?

While I'm swimmin in your women like the breaststroke Right stroke, left
stroke was the best stroke Death stroke, tongue all down her throat
Nuttin left to do but send her home to you I'm through—can you sing
the song for me, boo?

[Chorus]

So, what's it gonna be? Him or me?

We can cruise the world with pearls, 'gator boots for girls The envy of all
women, crushed linen

Cartier wrist-wear with diamonds in 'em The finest women I love with a
passion Your man's a wimp, I give that ass a good thrashin High
fashion—flyin into all states

Sexin me while ya man masturbates

Isn't this great? Your flight leaves at eight Her flight lands at nine, my
game just rewinds Lyrically I'm supposed to represent
I'm not only the client, I'm the player-president [Chorus]

TEN CRACK COMMANDMENTS

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine"

*Uhh, it's the ten crack commandments. What? Uhh, uhh. Nigga can't tell me
nothin 'bout this coke, uh-huh. Can't tell me nothin 'bout this crack, this
weed. For my hustlin niggas. Niggas on the corner, I ain't forget you niggas.
My triple-beam niggas, word up.*

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine"

"Ten"

I been in this game for years, it made me a animal It's rules to this shit, I
wrote me a manual A step-by-step booklet for you to get Your game on
track, not your wig pushed back Rule numbre uno: Never let no one
know How much dough you hold, 'cause you know The cheddar breed
jealousy especially If that man fucked up, get your ass stuck up
Number two: Never let 'em know your next move Don't you know Bad
Boys move in silence and violence Take it from your Highness (Uh-
huh)

I done squeezed mad clips at these cats for they bricks and chips Number
three: Never trust no-bo-dy

Your moms'll set that ass up properly gassed up Hoodie to mask up, shit,
for that fast buck She be layin in the bushes to light that ass up
Number four: Know you heard this before Never get high on your own
supply

Number five: Never sell no crack where you rest at I don't care if they
want a ounce, tell 'em bounce Number six: That goddamn credit, dead
it You think a crackhead payin you back, shit, forget it Seven: This rule
is so underrated

Keep your family and business completely separated Money and blood
don't mix, like two dicks and no bitch Find yourself in serious shit

Number eight: Never keep no weight on you Them cats that squeeze your guns can hold jumps too Number nine: Shoulda been number one to me If you ain't gettin bags, stay the fuck from police (Uh-huh) If niggas think you snitchin, ain't tryin listen They be sittin in your kitchen, waitin to start hittin Number ten: A strong word called consignment Strictly for live men, not for freshmen If you ain't got the clientele say, "Hell, no!"

'Cause they gonna want they money rain, sleet, hail, snow Follow these rules, you'll have mad bread to break up If not, twenty-four years on the wake up Slug hit your temple, watch your frame shake up Caretaker did your makeup

When you pass, your girl fucked my man Jake up Heard in three weeks she sniffed a whole half of cake up Heard she suck a good dick and can hook a steak up Gotta go, gotta go, more pies to bake up, word up, uhh "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine"

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine"

"Ten"

I GOT A STORY TO TELL

Who y'all talkin to, man? Uhh! Check it out, check it out. This here goes out to all the niggas that be fuckin mad bitches in other niggas' cribs. Thinkin shit is sweet ... Nigga creep up on your ass, hahaha. Live niggas respect it, check it:

I kick flows for ya, kick down doors for ya Even left all my motherfuckin hoes for ya Niggas think Frankie pussywhipped—nigga, picture that With a Kodak, Insta-ma-tic

We don't get down like that

Lay my game down, quite flat

Sweetness, where you parked at?

Petite-ness, but that ass fat

She got a body make a nigga wanna eat that I'm fuckin with you

The bitch official though, dick harder than a missile, yo Try to hit it and she trippin, disappearin like Arsenio Yo, the bitch push a double-oh

With the Five in front, probably a conniving stunt Y'all drive in front, I'ma peel with her Find a deal with her, she fuck around and steal,

huh?

Then we all get laced

Televisions, Versace heaven, when I'm up in 'em The shit she kicked, all
the shit's legit She get dick from a player off the New York Knicks
Nigga tricked ridiculous, the shit was plush She's stressin me to fuck,
like she was in a rush We fucked in his bed, quite dangerous I'm in his
ass while he play against the Utah Jazz My 112 CD blast, I was past
She came twice, I came last, roll the grass She giggle, sayin, "I'm smokin
on homegrown"

Then I heard her moan. "Honey, I'm home"

Yep, tote chrome for situations like this I'm up in his broad, I know he
won't like this Now I'm like, "Bitch, you better talk to him"

Before this fist put a spark to him

Fuck around, shit get dark to him, put a part through him Lose a major
part to him: arm, leg

She beggin me to stop, but this cat gettin closer Gettin hot like a toaster, I
cocks the toast, uhh Before my eyes could blink, she screams out
"Honey, bring me up somethin to drink!"

He go back downstairs, more time to think Her brain racin, she's tellin me
to stay patient She don't know I'm cool as a fan

Gat in hand, I don't wanna blast her man But I can and I will, though, I'm
tryin to chill, though Even though situation lookin kinda ill, yo It came
to me like a song I wrote

Told the bitch, "Give me a scarf, pillowcase, and rope"

Got dressed quick, tied the scarf around my face Roped the bitch up,
gagged her mouth with the pillowcase Play the cut, nigga comin off
some love potion shit Flash the heat on 'em, he stood emotionless
Dropped the glass, screamin, "Don't blast, here's the stash A hundred
cash, just don't shoot my ass, please!"

Nigga pullin mad G's out the floor

Put stacks in a Prada knapsack, hit the door Grab the keys to the five, call
my niggas on the cell Bring some weed, I got a story to tell, uh, uh Yo,
man, y'all niggas ain't gonna believe what the fuck happened to me.
Remember that bitch I left the club with, man? (Yeah.) Yo, freaky, yo. I'm
up in this bitch, playa, this bitch fuckin one of them ol' Knick ass niggas and
shit, I'm up in the spot so... (Who, man? Who? Which one?) One of them

six-five niggas, I don't know. Anyway, I'm up in the motherfuckin spot, so boom, I'm up in the pussy, whatever, whatever. I sparks up some lye, Pop Duke creeps in up on some. (Get the fuck out of here!) Must have been rained out or something because he comes up in the spot—Had me scared, had me scared. I was shook, Daddy, but I forget I had my Roscoe on me. (He didn't know you had ya heat.) Always. You know how we do. So anyway, the nigga comes up the stairs, he creepin up the steps, the bitch all shook. She sends the nigga back downstairs to get some drinks and shit. She getting mad nervous, I said, "Fuck that, man!" I'm the nigga, you know how we do it, nigga, ransom note-style. Put the scarf around my motherfuckin face, gagged that bitch up, played the kizzock. Soon as this nigga comes up in the spot, flash the Desert in his face, he drops the glass. Looked like the nigga pissed on hisself or somethin, word to my mother! Ahh, fuck it, this nigga runs dead to the floor, peels up the carpet, start givin me mad papers, mad papers. (I told you that bitch was a sheisty bitch, cuz! Word to mother, I used to fuck with her cousin. But you ain't know that! Hahaha. You ain't know that shit. Really, though.) I threw all that motherfuckin money up in the Prada knapsack. Two words, "I'm gone!" (No doubt, no doubt... no doubt!) Yo, nigga, got some lye, y'all got some lye? (No doubt.)

OUTKAST

When Outkast appeared on the hip-hop scene with *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik* (1994), they laid the groundwork for one of the most diverse, genre-defying, and sustained careers in rap. From the outset, the Georgia natives André “3000” Benjamin and Antwan “Big Boi” Patton demonstrated a rare combination of skills behind the mic. In stark outline, André is the rebellious artist and romantic of the group; Big Boi is the streetwise, strip-club bottle-popper. Fill in the details and a more nuanced picture develops. Although his staccato flow may suggest a gangsta aggression, Big Boi often delivers astute social commentary and lays down personal stories that reveal a vulnerable side. André’s rap eclecticism is given room to breathe by a deep-seated self-assuredness that sometimes manifests itself in tough talk that is initially hard to detect since it eschews all the thugged-out clichés.

Together the two artists make a potent if at times unlikely tandem. “Outkast is dope because they’re two opposites and they come together to make cohesive-sounding music,” remarked Q-Tip, half of another famous hip-hop tandem, A Tribe Called Quest. “That’s amazing to me—they bumped it up and made it work for them.”⁴² On the track “Elevators (Me & You),” from Outkast’s second album *ATLiens* (1996), they explain how their seemingly unlikely partnership came into being. The up-and-down motion of the elevators of the title also represents the trajectories of rap careers; that movement is balanced in the song by circular images of ceiling fans and MARTA routes, as the duo describe their early days of trying to break big in Atlanta and its surroundings. It is a spare and compelling genesis song, one which ends with André being accosted by an around-the-way fan who affects an old acquaintanceship.

The album that followed, *Aquemini* (1998), carried in its title another clue to the organic nature of Outkast’s collaboration, combining as it did the Zodiac signs of André and Big Boi. “Rosa Parks,” from the same album, was not the history lesson listeners might have expected from the name of the civil rights icon in the title, but rather a bumping, fast-paced track that lightened up and smartened up the normally heavier, blunter Southern sound of crunk. *Stankonia* (2000) also had a standout track whose title promised politics, “Bombs Over Baghdad (B.O.B.),” but which in fact made its arguments on aesthetic grounds.

Their biggest-selling album to date, *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below* (2003), was in essence two solo albums packaged together, but as with all of the group's releases, the final result was an organic concoction. They made singles such as "Hey Ya!" and "The Way You Move" that even casual listeners of pop radio came to love, but also kept producing bangers for the hip-hop heads. They spoke in the terms and forms most familiar to longtime fans of rap, but also stretched out in idiosyncratic songs such as "A Life in the Day of Benjamin André (Incomplete)," an unrelenting five-minute flow of raw rhymes without bridge or chorus. Big Boi and André remain those rarest of artists, in rap or otherwise—the kind you always have to attend to because their track records are marked by success without compromise.

(Note: The editors intended to include in this volume "Elevators [Me and You]," "Aquemini," "Rosa Parks," and "A Life in the Day of Benjamin André," but could not obtain permissions.)

RAS KASS

Ras Kass laces his lyrics with unexpected allusions to literature, history, and philosophy. Even before the release of his debut album, *Soul on Ice* (1996), he had won acclaim for his lyrics both in his native Los Angeles and nationwide.

Ras Kass's style is distinguished by his allusive breadth, his dense texture, and his swaggering delivery. His songs often contain ambitious conceits, as on "Interview with a Vampire," in which he conducts a lyrical conversation with God and Satan. Thematically, his subjects range from government conspiracy ("Ordo Ab Chao [Order Out of Chaos]") to more conventional hip-hop boasts taken to comic extremes. Ras Kass has never quite achieved the commercial success one would expect of such a skilled and inventive MC, but the quality of his lyrics only grows when they are seen on the page.

Like many MCs, Ras Kass usually writes his lyrics with a specific beat in mind. "Nowadays," he explains, "nine times out of ten, I write on the spot to the beat. That's something I picked up from Dre. The 10th time, usually a political song, or a personal song I write first then create the beat around it. Sometimes the music is in my head and I just have to find the right producer to play what I hum, like [on] 'Interview with a Vampire.'"

43

ORDO AB CHAO (ORDER OUT OF CHAOS)

The story begins like a Dickens novel, *David Copperfield*

"I am born," and naw, nigga, we can't all just get along 5996 A-L The
Year of Light

Illuminati border on a New World Order

And a nigga fightin the struggle sorta kinda on some rappin shit But real
activists be on death watch like Mumia Abu Jamal. Ain't this a bitch?
Y'all figure It only takes a trigger and \$12.98 plus tax To potentially
murder fifty niggas

So motherfuckers better duck like Daffy

'Cause nowadays the average niggas think they Butch Cassidy And the
Sundance Kid, doin bids with no remorse It's almost methodical,
education is false assimilation Building prisons is economical, so young
niggas in gang modules Be giving more head than hair follicles

And niggas like myself know the ledge and still jump like Geronimo Huh,
Supreme Mathematics and bad habits

'Cause chasing cabbage keeps a nigga savage Blame it on the disease, we
all got the symptoms Most of us niggas wanna be pimps, but Uncle
Sam really pimpin them What the fuck?

[Chorus]

Naw, they don't feel you, but what you don't know can kill you They
don't feel you, but what you don't know can kill you They don't feel
you, but what you don't know can kill you Naw, they don't feel you,
but what you don't know can kill you The planet revolves, supposedly
man evolves But no problem is solved, 'cause man is the cause For the
sake of eugenics biochemists create ethno-specific Epidemics, injecting
the public in clinics Then when the truth comes out ("You black people
are so paranoid") But who murdered Africa? The World Health
Organization Before 1978 there was no blood

With AIDS contamination. It ain't little green monkeys It's little white
honkies crossing bovine leukemia With sheep Visna Virus. (Whaat?) As
Set tore out the iris Of Horus and Isis loved Osiris, black men is blinded
While black women look for real men but can't find it Sometimes I
think to myself, "Why'd I even bring a Child into this world?" I pay
taxes so Bill Clinton Can slang crack in Arkansas, buy gold

Imported from South Africa, but I don't eat swine And beat the living shit
out of skinheads. So where's my peace of mind, huh?

A Swiss watch, leasing a Lex on credit

All the liquor and pussy a nigga can get Put together this puzzle but my
pieces won't fit What the fuck?

[Chorus]

Now shit gets no realer, reality dictates fate Global Policy 2000, by then
the planet depopulates By about one billion men, women, and children
By whatever means necessary: wars, disease Starvation, plagues, et
cetera—set your watch and watch Lord Maitreya's sin been in effect
since Before George Washington Monument, an obelisk The thirty-
three-hundred-pound capstone semi-conceals The Masonic seal. I'm
knowin, but it's like Trying to stop the sun from shining, *Soul on Ice*
Damned if I do and fucked if I don't, dog eat dog Like Jeff Dahmer. And

most brothers ain't soldiers 'Cause you got no code, you got no honor.
Wanna build An empire, blood-sucking me to get richer? So, B
What's getting six figures when ya fuckin with bitch niggas?
I ask you. Don't make me gay bash you
So the longer I live the less love I have to give And the tragedy is
It's a vicious cycle, everybody caught up the vortex So we try to cash more
checks and have more sex The problem gets worse but a solution ain't
clear And we been sayin the same shit for 650 years What the fuck?

[Chorus]

INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE

[Ras Kass] You wanna talk to God? God never sleeps.

[Chorus]

[Ras Kass] Now what came first, the chicken or the egg?

[God] Armageddon. [Ras Kass] The arm, a leg, a leg, a arm, a head
Headin in your direction. The riddle was the answer to the question
Born of the flesh, what is perfection?

[Ras Kass]

Inside my mother's womb, doomed to return to the tomb Or was it from
the dead I was raised? All too soon to pay On Judgment Day, is this
beginning or the ending?

Died sinning, still winning, still grinning Descending, verdict still
pending, born pretending Three hundred billion men, women, and
children Déjà vu, could be I'm dreaming

But we all ask for divine reason, while still breathing and until leaving
Who, what, when, where, how, but most of all why?

[God] Why what? [Ras Kass] Do we live just to die?

[God]

The Book was written way before the apple got bitten There is no God but
me, mathematically, in division My decision was all inventions. I need
not mention Infinite dimensions, but the human mind's flaw Was
limited comprehension. So while you try to travel to Mars And the

stars, the God manifests through the entire universe From the sun,
moon, the earth

I created man in my image and the black man was first The scientific
explanation—yeah, I made man out of dirt [Ras Kass] But how can a
man be first when it's the woman that's giving birth?

[God] Listen, single-celled organisms. The homo sapiens, the albinen [Ras
Kass] What's that? [God] White people [Ras Kass] They keep the world
separate and unequal [God] They teach you right is wrong, wrong is
right, up is down (Shit) Kick the king off his throne, is the planet flat
or round?

[Ras Kass] Can we really time travel and is there life in outer space?

[God] Wait, you knew all this in the first place You tryin to get to God.
[Ras Kass] But I've fallen from your grace A billion paths to take, but
which one is truly straight?

[Chorus]

[Ras Kass]

Can you walk across water or rise from the dead?

I heard he said he lived in the son of man's legs [God]

It's a process, shit don't just happen, I create it Everything you see, and
shit you don't, son, I made it And waited. I'm the Big Bang Theory and
evolution Been there, done that, from revolution to prostitution The
first and final solution. The Qur'an, Bible And Vedas is only tools,
don't be confused when the medulla Oblongata do. [Ras Kass] Oh, so
Revelations is Genesis?

[God] Three-sixty degrees are limitless

[Satan] Shit, my motherfuckin nemesis [Ras Kass] Who's you?

[Satan]

Chump, I thought you knew. Who else?

Lucifer, the light-bearer, stupid, the devil himself He the creator, we all
the creations, guess I'm eternal damnation Got you bitches seeking
your own salvation Who taught you how to pray? 'Cause you read it in
the book?

Look, you bear witness to Amen Ray

Every day when you say Amen, and turn around And preach worshipin

false gods is a unforgivable sin Yeah, the good book is like comic books, you take 'em too literal I tricked you into believin that the power to reason Makes you able to live infinitely in the physical Guess I'm the pawn con miracle

Basically I tell true lies in general, the yin and the yang The player with a trillion years of game [God]

He got you sellin your spiritual for power, money, and fame I came out of triple-stage darkness, gave mortals my attributes But even you made me the mystery God like the Loch Ness And use science to prove or disprove my existence Tryin to unlock this artificial intelligence Cloned in a space station, tryin to build the Tower of Babylon But you sadly mistaken, when I started raping homo sapiens You lookin for an angel with wings

I'ma bring young niggas with a AK, fuck a alien [Ras Kass] So what you sayin then? You the one that created sin?

[God]

What you call Mother Nature was the nature of me (Oh) What you call evil, ultimately, was the force inside of me Matter can't be created or destroyed, it just changes shape One God, many people and many faiths

And this is how I wanted it done. [Ras Kass] Wait, wait, hold up Father, tell me, who is God's Son?

[Chorus 2x]

[God]

I be the Jesus to your Buddha, the Krishna at your Juma The Big Kahuna, Jehovah Witnesses in suede Pumas Zeus, Pharaoh, Elohim, Saturn, Yahweh, Jah Rastafari, Allah, the Most High

A being, only that I'm not. I'm the oceans The trees, a bumblebee, and a Glock

Earthquakes, how much money you ever take The reason behind every mistake mankind continually makes [Ras Kass] Did God create man or did man need to create God?

[Satan] The answer is both; that's how mortals look at God is odd [God] You try to customize me to be comfortable For what you want to do and how you choose to act The Pope and Christians will tell you God

ain't black But to get something from nothing is physically impossible,
that's a fact [Satan] Black is the combination of all colors. [Ras Kass]
White is the lack thereof [God]

Darkness is beneath the ground and in the skies up above The clue was
that the true illumination is me Not Illuminati, 'cause I alone
discriminate And eliminate any who be believing they can rationalize
Or out-reason He who created the creature The student can never be
greater than the teacher Whether it's Adam and Eve, or atomic
chemistry I'm the one true source of all energy

Will eventually destroy every enemy when I see fit I can't blaspheme my
own name so when God damn it, so be it [Satan]

That's called the wrath of God, but we got a deal, I can kill Fuck up the
whole world and in the end

He'll still fulfill his plan, to restore man to his original position Nigga
gave me some hooks and said I gets to go fishin [God]

I gave man dominion over the earth, to master the wealth But most of my
children don't have dominion over theyself [Satan]

That's where I come in. Call it original sin (Damn) Who really gives a
flying fuck?

I taught you how to blood suck and ultimately self-destruct [God]

Know the ledge, wise the dome, do the data I'm the alpha. [Satan] I'm the
beta

[Ras Kass]

And I'm omega

To be or not to be was man's question since inception "I think, therefore I
am" was man's perception But the birth is the resurrection. The son of
God (Christ) Or God's son, that lights our entire spectrum You got
everlasting life 'long as you got day and night Illumination, not
education, to bring the blind sight And what you need to know is that
you'll never know it all I'm a lowercase g, son of the ever-living God

THE ROOTS

When Tariq Trotter, aka Black Thought, and drummer Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson met at the Philadelphia High School for Creative Performing Arts around 1987, they fashioned one of the most enduring partnerships in hip-hop. Questlove brought a musical vocabulary of live beats and Black Thought brought his rapid-fire staccato lyricism. In those early years the two could be found on the Philly streets with Black Thought rapping over Questlove’s beats. Their call-and-response style, the back and forth between voice and beat, is the soul of MCing laid bare; it has remained at the heart of the Roots’ style for more than twenty years.

In their fourth year performing together, Black Thought and Questlove recruited other talented Philly musicians and created the Square Roots. In 1991, the group, now simply the Roots, released its first studio album, *Organix*. The album featured Black Thought as the primary MC with occasional appearances on the mic from Questlove and Malik B, another local Philly rapper.

Where *Organix* showcased the Roots’ Philadelphia soul, their sophomore album, *Do You Want More!?! (1995)*, featured Black Thought’s lyricism. The album earned acclaim for its live instrumentation. The tracks “Proceed” and “Silent Treatment” had some success as singles, with the latter featuring Black Thought’s storytelling and the former featuring him waxing philosophical and flexing his lyrical mental muscles with lines like “What if you could just think / just think yourself away.”

The Roots’ highest charting album to date is *Things Fall Apart* (1999), which featured the Grammy-winning romantic rap ballad “You Got Me.” In the years since, they have kept up a rigorous schedule of recording and live performances. They continue to make music that defies critics and pushes rap music beyond its generic boundaries.

THE NEXT MOVEMENT

C’mon... Hey, yes, y’all. You are now in tune to the sounds ... Of the legendary ... Foundation ...

[Chorus]

Yeah, you go

Hey, you listeners, stop what you’re doin and Set it in motion, it’s the next

movement You listeners, stop what you're doin and Set it in motion,
it's the next movement Word up, we got the HOT-HOT music, the HOT
MUSIC [1X]

The HOT-HOT music, the HOT music [3x]

Yo, one, two, one-two one-two

That's how we usually start, once again it's the Thought The Dalai Lama
of the mic, the prime minister Thought This directed to whoever in
listening range Yo, the whole state of things in the world 'bout to
change Black rain fallin from the sky look strange The ghetto is red
hot, we steppin on flames Yo, it's inflation on a price for fame And it
was all the same, but then the antidote came The Black Thought, ill
syllable-ist out the Fifth This heavyweight rap shit I'm about to lift
LIKE a phylum lift up its seed to sunlight I plug in the mic, draw like a
gunfight I never use a cordless or stand applaudless Sippin chlorophyll
out of ill silver goblets I'm like a faucet, monopoly's the object There
ain't no way to cut this tap, you got ta get wet Your head is throbbin
and I ain't said shit yet The Roots crew, the next movement, c'mon!

*Hey, yes, y'all. You are now in tune to the sounds of the legendary
Foundation. Check it out, uh...*

[Chorus]

Word up, the formation of words to fit That's what I usually disturb you
with A lot of rappers never heard of this, or know half the time it is
You doubt the Illa-Fifth, what could you accomplish?

Whether they skywriting your name or you anonymous You be speechless
with stinging sinuses The Roots royal highnesses through your
monitors I tilt my crown then blow down a dime a kiss You need to
buy a CD and stop rewindin this I'm the finalist, shinin like a rugged
amethyst And at your music conference I'm the panelist Listen close to
my poetry, I examine this Like an analyst to see if you can handle this
(Check it out) You, got the groove, MCs Freeze, stand still, nobody
move

Unless you dealin with the Next Movement The P-Phi-D, we be the mon-u-
ment

I live my life nice, but I'm not too bent You theatrical as a Broadway
play, this ain't *Rent*

One hundred percent, straight out the basement Spreading this across a
planet on some next shit How many people feelin this love music?
(C'mon!) [Chorus]

FROM ACT TOO ... THE LOVE OF MY LIFE

(feat. Common)

.....

[Black Thought]

The anticipation arose as time froze I stared off the stage with my eyes
closed and dove Into the deep cosmos, the impact pushed back The
first five rows, but before the raw live shows I remember I'se a little
snot-nosed Rockin Gazelle, goggles and Izod clothes Learnin the ropes
of ghetto survival Peepin out the situation I had to slide through Had
to watch my back, my front, plus my sides, too When it came to gettin
mine I ain't tryin to argue Sometimes I would'nta made it if it wasn't
for you Hip-hop, you the love of my life and that's true When I was
handlin the shit I had to do It was all for you, from the door for you
Speak through you, gettin paper on tour for you From the start,
Thought was down by law for you Used to hit up every corner store
wall for you We ripped shit and kept it hardcore for you I remember
late nights, steady rockin the mic Hip-hop, you the love of my life

So tell the people like that, y'all (That, y'all) And it sounds so nice
Hip-hop, you the love of my life
We 'bout to take it to the top ...

[Common]

Yo, yo, I was speakin to my guy 'Riq and How she was desperately seekin
to Organize in a Konfusion Usin no protection, told H.E.R. on
Resurrection

Caught in the Hype Williams and lost H.E.R. direction Gettin ate in
sections where I wouldn't eat H.E.R.

An under-the-counter love, so silently I treat H.E.R.

Her daddy'll beat H.E.R., eyes all puffed In the mix on tape, niggas had
her in the buff When we touch, it was more than just ta fuck The
police, in her I found peace (Like who?) Like Malcolm in the East

Seen H.E.R. on the streets of New York, trickin off Tried to make a hit
with H.E.R. but my dick went soft Movin weight, losin weight, not
picky with who she choose to date Too confused to hate, with her
struggle I relate Close to thirty, most of the niggas she know is dirty
Havin more babies than Lauryn, she started showin early As of late I
realized that this is H.E.R. fate Or destiny that brings the best of me
It's like God is testin me

In retrospect I see she brought life and death to me Peace to us
collectively, live and direct when we perform It's just coffee shop
chicks and white dudes Over H.E.R. I got into it with that nigga Ice
Cube Now the fight moved to in life, makin the right moves Besides
God and family, you my life's jewel Like that, y'all

Hip-hop ... [echoes]

.....

YOU GOT ME

(feat. Eve and Erykah Badu) [Chorus: Erykah Badu]

If you were worried 'bout where

I been or who I saw or

What club I went to with my homies

Baby, don't worry, you know that you got me If you were worried 'bout
where

I been or who I saw or

What club I went to with my homies

Baby, don't worry, you know that you got me [Black Thought]

Somebody told me that this planet was small, we used to live In the same
building on the same floor and never met before Until I'm overseas on
tour and peep this Ethiopian Queen from Philly taking classes abroad
She studying film and photo flash focus record Said she workin on a
flick and could my clique do the score?

She said she loved my show in Paris at Elysée Montmartre And that I
stepped off the stage and took a piece of her heart We knew from the
start that things fall apart and tend to shatter She like, "That shit don't
matter," when I get home, get at her Through letter, phone, whatever,
let's link, let's get together Shit, you think not? Think the Thought
went home and forgot?

Time passed, we back in Philly, now she up in my spot Tellin me the things I'm tellin her is makin her hot Started buildin with her constantly round the clock Now she in my world like hip-hop and keep tellin me [Chorus]

[Black Thought]

Yo, I'm the type that's always catchin a flight And sometimes I gotta be out at the height of the night And that's when she flip and get on some 'ol ...

[Eve]

Another lonely night?

Seem like I'm on the side, you only loving your mic I know you gotta get that paper, Daddy, keep that shit tight But, yo, I need some sort of love in my life, you dig me?

While politickin with my sister from New York City She said she know this ballplayer and he think I'm pretty Psych, I'm playin, boo. You know it's just with you I'm stayin, boo And when cats be poppin game, I don't hear what they sayin, boo When you out there in the world, I'm still your girl With all my classes I don't have the time for life's thrills So when you sweatin on stage, think of me when you rhyme And don't be listenin to your homies, they be leavin you blind [Black Thought] Yeah, so what you sayin? I can trust you?

[Eve] Is you crazy? You my king for real [Both] But sometimes relationships get ill (No doubt) [Chorus]

[Black Thought]

That snake could be that chick and that rat could be that cool cat That's whispering, "She tryin to play you for the fool, Black"

If something's on your chest then let it be known See, I'm not your every five minutes all on the phone And on the topic of trust, it's just a matter of fact That people bite back and fracture what's intact And they'll forever be, I ain't on some "Oh, I'm a celebrity"

I deal with the real so if it's artificial let it be I've seen people caught in love like whirlwinds Listenin to they squads and listenin to girlfriends That's exactly the point where they whole world ends Lies come in, that's where that drama begins. She like ...

[Chorus to fade]

WEB

Uh ... and it weighs a ton

'Riq Geez, motherfuckers, I'm a son of a gun Black master of any trade
under the sun Talk sharp like a razor blade under the tongue Clear my
path and come get your captain hung Trying to breathe like Black'll
collapse your lungs Young chump, you could choke off the web I spun I
done cleared 'em out from the threat I brung You done heard about
what set I'm from My nigga, word-a-mouth, lil' rule-a-thumb Y'all
better bow down when the ruler come I'm a real 'hood nigga not a
hood-a-lum The way Thought put it down be confusin some of y'all
Cats can't walk while chewin your gum 'n all What a keyboard gotta
do with a drum 'n all?

School 'em on stage like I'm doin a seminar Professional type, I'm
adjusting my mic Go to war, kid, I'll give you any weapon you like
Give you something to run from, bust off your dum-dum Stop, kid, that
hot shit, you know where it come from It's Philly worldwide
phenomenon

And reinforcin that shit is my nine-to-five And when I finish making you
recognize, I'm gettin at A couple civilized women that's tryin to ride
You were waitin on the raw to come off the oil You wanna get the
bitches up off the wall Just to see you smile and enjoy yourself To
keep you in health, this for all of y'all I'm quick on the draw like Black
McGraw And I can't tell what y'all cats rappin for My name 'Riq Geez
and I'm back for more To get more chips than the corner store With a
portrait of Malcolm X on the door While I'm eatin MCs like a
carnivore Matter fact, ease back 'fore you get harmed Ring the
warning horn when I'm gon' perform The first nigga that move or
disturb the groove I'ma have y'all flicks on the evening news Play y'all
part—get on y'all P's and Q's And when y'all think Thought, be
prepared to lose Bring money to spend and somebody to lend And
some worthwhile money, not twenties and tens Get took for your tuck
right in front of your hens Who coulda helped you, nigga? Not none of
ya friends Because I put a black fist under ya chin Have your physical
remains found under the pen If I'm coming up in the place, I'm coming
to win Wasn't in it for a minute, now I'm dumbin again 'Riq Geez, ock,
y'all can chat what y'all please Receive what I'm gonna give back to

y'all, please 'Cause y'all don't really wanna get clapped with all these
My man, you can take y'all strap when y'all leave You see the squad
come in the place, they all freeze Ice cold, with his mellow cool breeze
MCs never showed loyalty yet

Kool Herc ain't never get a royalty check I do work, no question, and
bomb your set I'm calm, collect, sharp like my name Gillette RIP, my
main Gillette, until I touch the mic Y'all people ain't seen danger yet

I'm a decorated vet, I regulate and wreck Never hesitated yet, I'm gettin
heavyweighted checks If you would dare ask if I'm dedicated—yes I
spit live rounds that'll penetrate a vest Nigga, take ya seats, I'ma
demonstrate a test How to freak the beats, so gangsta fresh And it
thump from the East Coast to Bangladesh Big Bank, Willy Gank smoke
the thing to death But hold tight, 'cause it's not over yet I don't even
feel like I'm not sober yet And it ring like shots in the projects New
Year's Eve And it ain't even October yet

I'm a big bounty hunter like Boba Fett Y'all more shell-shocked than a
soldier get If the prize in my sights then I'm goin for this Whoo, whoo,
'Riq Geez be the ultimate I'm the corporate, give me the bulk of this
'Riq set it on the magnetic ultra tip Get down how you 'posed to get

I got nothing to lose, I'm a killer with no regrets I'm like young LL 'cause
I'm hard as hell Makin niggas screw face like Gargamel Now I'm all
out on my own like Patti LaBelle Put the pimp game down on your
mademoiselle

SCARFACE

Scarface's influence is audible. Before there ever was such a thing as "crunk" or the Dirty South, Scarface was dishing out grimy rhymes, telling tales from the streets of Southside Houston, slanging stories ranging from crack deals to police shootings. Though Scarface often raps about the criminal life, he rejects the term "gangsta rapper." "I don't call my music 'gangsta rap,'" Scarface told the *Washington Post* in 1994. "I call my music reality."⁴⁴ Scarface kicks this reality flow slowly and deliberately, using a voice that is at once removed and observational yet still embedded in and encompassed by the raw power of the street life.

Scarface began his rap career as a teenager in the late 1980s as a member of the controversial Houston rap group the Geto Boys. After much publicity and media clamor over the explicitly violent lyrical content of their self-titled album (released 1990), their follow-up release, *We Can't Be Stopped* (1991), sold well enough to reach platinum. Scarface launched his solo career in the same year with his debut *Mr. Scarface Is Back*.

Scarface went on to release four more albums in the 1990s and another four in the first decade of the 2000s. But in 2008, the godfather of southern thuggery removed himself from the game, temporarily retiring after releasing *Emeritus*. In interviews, Scarface explained his exit by denouncing the state of current hip-hop, implicating the corporate machine in the forced commoditization of black cultural expression.

MIND PLAYING TRICKS ON ME

(Geto Boys)

I sit alone in my four-cornered room, staring at candles ...

Oh, that shit is on? Let me drop some shit like this here. Real smooth.

[Scarface]

At night I can't sleep, I toss and turn Candlesticks in the dark, visions of
bodies being burned Four walls just starin at a nigga

I'm paranoid, sleeping with my finger on the trigger My mother's always
stressing I ain't living right But I ain't going out without a fight See,
every time my eyes close

I start sweatin and blood starts comin out my nose It's somebody
watching me act

But I don't know who it is, so I'm watching my back I can see him when
I'm deep in the covers When I awake I don't see the motherfucker He
owns a black hat like I own

A black suit and a cane like my own Some might say, "Take a chill, B"
But fuck that shit, there's a nigga trying to kill me I'm poppin in the clip
when the wind blows Every twenty seconds got me peepin out my
window Investigating the joint for traps

Checking my telephone for taps

I'm staring at the woman on the corner It's fucked up when your mind is
playing tricks on ya [Willie D]

I make big money, I drive big cars

Everybody know me, it's like I'm a movie star But late at night, somethin
ain't right I feel I'm being tailed by the same sucker's headlights Is it
that fool that I ran off the block?

Or is it that nigga last week that I shot?

Or is it the one I beat for five thousand dollars?

Thought he had 'caine but it was Gold Medal flour Reached under my seat,
grabbed my popper for the suckers Ain't no use to be lying, I was
scareder than a motherfucker Took a left into Popeye's and bailed out
quick If it's going down, let's get this shit over with Here they come,
just like I figured I got my hand on the motherfuckin trigger What I
saw will make your ass start giggling Three blind, crippled, and crazy
senior citizens I live by the sword

I take my boys everywhere I go because I'm paranoid I keep looking over
my shoulder and peeping around corners My mind is playing tricks on
me

[Scarface]

Day by day it's more impossible to cope I feel like I'm the one that's doin
dope Can't keep a steady hand because I'm nervous Every Sunday
morning I'm in service Praying for forgiveness

And trying to find an exit out the business I know the lord is looking at
me

But yet and still it's hard for me to feel happy I often drift when I drive
Havin fatal thoughts of suicide

Bang and get it over with

And then I'm worry-free, but that's bullshit I got a little boy to look after
And if I died then my child would be a bastard I had a woman down with
me

But to me it seemed like she was down to get me She helped me out in this
shit

But to me she was just another bitch Now she's back with her mother

Now I'm realizing that I love her

Now I'm feelin lonely

My mind is playing tricks on me

[Bushwick Bill]

This year Halloween fell on a weekend Me and Geto Boys are trick-or-
treatin Robbing little kids for bags

'Til an old man got behind our ass

So we speeded up the pace

Took a look back and he was right before our face He'd be in for a
squabble no doubt

So I swung and hit the nigga in his mouth He was going down, we figured

But this wasn't no ordinary nigga

He stood about six or seven feet

Now that's the nigga I be seein in my sleep So we triple-teamed on him

Dropping them motherfuckin b's on him The more I swung, the more
blood flew Then he disappeared and my boys disappeared, too Then I
felt just like a fiend

It wasn't even close to Halloween

It was dark as fuck on the streets

My hands were all bloody from punching on the concrete Goddamn,
homie

My mind is playing tricks on me

I SEEN A MAN DIE

He greets his father with his hands out Rehabilitated slightly, glad to be
the man's child The world is different since he seen it last Outta jail,
been seven years, and he's happy that he's free at last All he had was

his mother's letters Now he's mobile and he's gotta make a change and make it for the better But he's black, so he's got one strike against him And he's young, plus he came up in the system But he's smart and he's finally making eighteen And his goal's to get on top and try to stay clean So he's calling up his homie who done came up Living lavish, now they dealing with the same stuff And had that attitude that who he was was worthless And with that fucked-up attitude he killed his first man Now it's different, he done did dirt And realized killing men meant coming up, but it still hurt And can't nobody change this

It's 1994 and we up against the same shit I never understood why
I could never see a man cry 'til I seen a man die Man cry

Imagine life at its full peak

Then imagine lying dead in the arms of your enemy Imagine peace on this earth when there's no grief Imagine grief on this earth when there's no peace Everybody's got a different way of ending it And when your number comes for souls, then they send it in Now your time has arrived for your final test *I see the fear in your eyes and hear your final breath*

How much longer will it be 'til it's all done?

Total darkness, at ease, be it all one I watch him die and when he dies, let us celebrate You took his life, but your memory you'll never take You'll be headed to another place

And the life you used to live will reflect in your mother's face I still gotta wonder why

I never seen a man cry 'til I seen a man die I hear you breathing but your heart no longer sounds strong But you kinda scared of dying so you hold on And you keep on blacking out and your pulse is low Stop trying to fight the reaper, just relax and let it go Because there's no way you can fight it, though you'll still try And you can try it 'til you fight it, but you'll still die Your spirits leave your body and your mind clears The rigor mortis starts to set, now you outta here You start your journey into outer space You see yourself in the light, but you're still feeling out of place So you standing in the tunnel of eternal life And you see the ones you never learned to love in life Make the choice, let it go, but you can back it up If you ain't at peace with God you need to patch it up But if you're ready, close your eyes and we can set it free Here lies a man not scared of dying, may he rest in peace I still got to

wonder why

I never seen a man cry 'til I seen that man die

SNOOP DOGG

The gangsta-stoner-poet-pimp of rap, Snoop Dogg, with his smoothed-out, nearly southern drawl, brought a new vibe to West Coast hip-hop at a time when NWA and Ice-T were at the forefront of the game.

As a member of the Crips in high school, Snoop ran into legal trouble. When he got out of jail he recorded a demo with Warren G and Nate Dogg, titled “213,” which got him noticed by Dr. Dre, who immediately got Snoop involved in his projects, particularly *The Chronic* (1991). Snoop was featured on most of the tracks on Dre’s first solo album, which was a monstrous success. It went quadruple platinum and ushered in a new era of hip-hop through its smoked-out, soul-thickened beats that were meant to be bumped on the stoop as much as in the whip, and that were the perfect match for Snoop’s laconic flow.

New York Times writer Jon Pareles commented that Snoop and Dre made the West Coast “gangsta life sound like a party occasionally interrupted by gunplay,” which is another way of saying that Snoop and Dre took their thug-laden West Coast lifestyle and refashioned it lyrically to reach a mass audience.⁴⁵ The spirit of *The Chronic* was extended on Snoop’s hotly anticipated solo debut, *Doggystyle* (1993).

In the years since, Snoop has emerged as a major figure not only in hip-hop but in popular culture at large. As MTV observed, “[Snoop’s] laid-back flow has proven to be timeless, and his charisma transcends all categorization: How else can you explain his transformation from one of the most feared rappers into a beloved household name who can successfully peddle everything from cars to clothes—and still yell out his gang affiliation and proudly proclaim himself to be a pimp?”⁴⁶

NUTHIN BUT A G THANG

(feat. Dr. Dre)

[Snoop Dogg (Dr. Dre)]

One, two, three and to the fo’

Snoop Doggy Dogg and Dr. Dre is at the do’

Ready to make an entrance, so back on up (’Cause you know we’re ’bout
to rip shit up) Gimme the microphone first, so I can bust like a bubble

Compton and Long Beach together, now you know you in trouble Ain't
nuttin but a G thang, baby!

Two loc'ed-out niggas, so we're crazy!

Death Row is the label that pays me!

Unfadeable, so please don't try to fade this (Hell, yeah!) But, uh, back to
the lecture at hand

Perfection is perfected, so I'ma let 'em understand From a young G's
perspective

And before me dig out a bitch I have to find a contraceptive You never
know, she could be earnin her man And learnin her man (And at the
same time burnin her man) Now you know I ain't with that shit,
Lieutenant Ain't no pussy good enough to get burnt while I'm up in it
(Yeah!) And that's realer than Real-Deal Holyfield And now you
hookers and hoes know how I feel Well, if it's good enough to get
broke off a proper chunk I'll take a small piece of some of that funky
stuff [Chorus]

It's like this and like that and like this and uh [3x]

[Snoop Dogg] Dre, creep to the mic like a phantom [Dr. Dre]

Well, I'm peepin and I'm creepin and I'm creepin But I damn near got
caught 'cause my beeper kept beepin Now it's time for me to make my
impression felt So sit back, relax, and strap on your seatbelt You never
been on a ride like this befo'

With a producer who can rap and control the maestro At the same time
with the dope rhyme that I kick You know and I know, I flow some old
funky shit To add to my collection, this selection Symbolizes dope, take
a toke but don't choke If you do you'll have no clue

Of what me and my homie Snoop Dogg came to do [Chorus]

[Snoop Dogg]

Fallin back on that ass, with a hellafied gangsta lean Gettin funky on the
mic like a old batch of collard greens It's the capital S, oh, yes, I'm
fresh, N double-O-P

D O double-G Y, D O double-G, ya see?

Showin much flex when it's time to wreck a mic Pimpin hoes and clockin
a grip like my name was Dolomite Yeah, and it don't quit

I think they in the mood for some motherfuckin G shit (Hell, yeah) So, Dre

(What up, Dogg?)

Gotta give 'em what they want (What's that, G?) We gotta break 'em off
somethin (Hell, yeah) And it's gotta be bumpin (City of Compton!)
[Dr. Dre]

Is where it takes place so when asked, show attention Mobbin like a
motherfucker, but I ain't lynchin Droppin the funky shit that's makin
the sucker niggas mumble When I'm on the mic, it's like a cookie, they
all crumble Try to get close and your ass'll get smacked My
motherfuckin homie Doggy Dogg has got my back Never let me slip,
'cause if I slip, then I'm slippin But if I got my Nina, then you know
I'm straight trippin And I'ma continue to put the rap down, put the
mack down And if you bitches talk shit, I'll have to put the smack
down Yeah, and you don't stop

I told you I'm just like a clock when I tick and I tock But I'm never off,
always on, to the break of dawn C-O-M-P-T-O-N and the city they call
Long Beach Puttin the shit together

Like my nigga DOC, "No one can do it better"

[Chorus]

GIN AND JUICE

With so much drama in the L-B-C

It's kinda hard bein Snoop D-O-double-G

But I, somehow, some way

Keep comin up with funky-ass shit like every single day May I kick a little
something for the G's? (Yeah) And make a few ends as (Yeah) I breeze,
through Two in the mornin and the party's still jumpin 'Cause my
mama ain't home

I got bitches in the living room gettin it on And they ain't leavin 'til six in
the mornin (Six in the mornin) So what you wanna do? Shit

I got a pocket full of rubbers and my homeboys do too So turn off the
lights and close the doors But (But what?) we don't love them hoes
(Yeah) So we gonna smoke a ounce to this

G's up, hoes down, while you motherfuckers bounce to this [Chorus 2x]

Rollin down the street, smokin indo, sippin on gin and juice Laid back
(with my mind on my money and my money on my mind) Now that I

got me some Seagram's gin

Everybody got they cups, but they ain't chipped in Now this type of shit
happens all the time You gotta get yours but, fool, I gotta get mine
Everything is fine when you listenin to the D-O-G

I got the cultivating music that be captivating he Who listens, to the
words that I speak

As I take me a drink to the middle of the street And get to mackin to this
bitch named Sadie (Sadie?) She used to be the homeboy's lady (Oh,
that bitch) Eighty degrees, when I tell that bitch, please Raise up off
these N-U-T's, 'cause you gets none of these At ease, as I mob with the
Dogg Pound, feel the breeze Be-otch, I'm just

[Chorus]

Later on that day, my homie Dr. Dre
Came through with a gang of Tanqueray
And a fat-ass J of some bubonic

Chronic that made me choke—shit, this ain't no joke I had to back up off
of it and set my cup down Tanqueray and chronic, yeah, I'm fucked up
now But it ain't no stoppin, I'm still poppin Dre got some bitches from
the city of Compton To serve me, not with a cherry on top

'Cause when I bust my nut, I'm raising up off the cot Don't get upset, girl,
that's just how it goes I don't love you hoes, I'm out the do', and I'll be
...

[Chorus 2x]

FROM FREESTYLE CONVERSATION

Anonymous: Ay, Dogg, let me holla at'cha, man.

Snoop: What's up homie?

*Anonymous: Word is on the streets your beats gon' be delicate since Dre done
shook the speezot, man.*

*Snoop: Delicate? Beats? So that's what makes me now? Nigga, I don't give a
fuck about no beat.*

I got more niggas tryin to get at me than the president do sometimes
Niggas be tryin to get at me 'cause I be droppin funky rhymes What

the fuck is goin on? This rap game is made to make money You niggas is taking the shit outta hand, actin way too funny Doin too much, y'know what I said from the get-go What the fuck's goin on wit' you niggas? Y'all tryin to play low pro And tryin ta be hard and tryin to be big willies or whatever they call it And yet it's time for me to act just like a alcoholic And step into the game. I'ma stumble in like I don't know And if a nigga say somethin wrong, I'm takin off from the get-go I ain't givin you no room to try to get me first 'Cause I done been bombed on before and I'ma tell you, man, that's the worst Feelin in the world, but I'ma keep my thing together 'Cause I'ma keep makin money and hope everything is still together Havin papers, man, now what y'all niggas doin?

Oh, y'all broke on the corner?

Drinkin y'all drink, wanna be doin what I'm doin But don't get mad and don't be tryin to play-hate 'Cause, uhh, takin trips around state to state Representin, uhh, what y'all wanna represent But y'all can't represent it 'cause y'all ain't got no dollars nor cents I'm movin on, groovin on, and I'm movin Makin more moves than the average Cuban Tryin ta get G's across the town, tryin ta make more hits And tryin ta get my game tight and get at yo' bitch Now, if she wants to get with this, she gon' come holla at a player, though 'Cause she know that Snoop Dogg is got that white Rolls-Royce And she wants to jump in, bring a friend 'Cause everything is like alphabet, come on in Come on in and bring a friend and you can come on back 'Cause when you do, we gon' be sippin on some cognac It's on me, I'm feelin good tonight

'Cause I'ma do mines and I'ma keep everything tight I ain't lettin nothin leak 'cause if thangs leak, then I'ma get caught And I can't get caught 'cause you know how they do it about that child support Shit, bitches is cold on a nigga who ain't got his game tight Gettin 18-point-5 percent, half your life Shit, I love my baby boy and all

But I ain't gonna be payin no bitch, no, no, no way, dawg I'm too slick on my toes, I'm too tight I'm guaranteed to get away from some shit like that, ain't that right?

'Cause, uhh, when you play in this game you got to be the real player You can't be no fake-ass nigga talkin about you wanna be the mayor 'Cause if you ain't with the game, the game ain't gonna be with you And I can put that on everything, including you One of every five black males before the year 2000

Will be detained or deceased

No justice, no peace

Yeah, the truth hurts. If you're scared, go to church

2PAC

Tupac Amaru Shakur, or 2Pac, is one of the most influential rappers of all time—a status he achieved as much in death as in life. He is one of the most prolific artists in the music’s history, producing one gold and nine platinum records and selling more than 75 million albums. In the years since his death in 1996 at twenty-five, 2Pac has only grown in stature as one of hip-hop’s most enigmatic, explosive, and thought-provoking figures.

2Pac delivered his rhymes with musicality and intensity; his flow was unmistakable. In subject matter, he gravitated toward gritty tales of thug life. Regarding his often violent, sometimes misogynistic, and usually profane lyrics, he once said, “I’m not saying I want to rule the world, but I know that if I keep talking about how dirty it is out here, somebody going to clean it up.” ⁴⁷ His lyrics also included more poignant subjects—reflections on love and loss, life and death.

Tupac’s identity is rich in contradictions. Born in New York City to a single mother, Afeni Shakur, Pac would eventually grow up to become the standard-bearer of the West Coast rap scene. Afeni spent a large portion of her pregnancy defending herself before the New York Supreme Court, having been charged with 150 counts of conspiracy against the U.S. government, as part of the Panther 21, a group of Black Panthers.

After being acquitted on the conspiracy charges, Afeni moved with young Pac to Baltimore, where Pac enrolled in the Baltimore School for the Arts and studied poetry, philosophy, politics, jazz, ballet, and acting. In an interview with Tupac from high school he appears outgoing, bursting with optimism and positivity, speaking idealistically about his views of the world. Just a few years later, after moving to Oakland (Marin City), California, Tupac embraced what he called T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E. (The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody), a nebulous worldview that he would advocate in his music and tattoo on his body.

Pac made his recording debut on Digital Underground’s “Same Song,” which he followed with his debut album, *2Pacalypse Now* (1991). Explosive, growling, and rhyming “from the pit of his stomach,” as Digital’s Shock G put it, Shakur developed his delivery and mic presence. The last three albums, released while Tupac was alive, represent the peak of his career: *Me Against the World* (1995), *All Eyez on Me* (1996), and *The*

Don Kiluminati: The 7 Day Theory (1996) all went platinum. *Me Against the World* was recorded in just a few weeks after Shakur had been sentenced to serve an eight-month jail term. “It was like a blues record,” Tupac said. “It was down-home. It was all my fears, all the things I just couldn’t sleep about. Everybody thought I was living so well and doing so good that I wanted to explain it. And it took a whole album to get it all out. I get to tell my innermost, darkest secrets. I tell my own personal problems.” ⁴⁸

Tupac’s legacy is one of paradox: raucous in the limelight but introspective in private, a thug and a poet. His foresight concerning his own death, here displayed on “How Long Will They Mourn Me,” as well as his insight into the emotional chasms of prejudice and inequality, helped his music achieve a resonance that reaches well beyond the span of a short life.

BRENDA’S GOT A BABY

I hear Brenda’s got a baby, but Brenda’s barely got a brain A damn shame, the girl can hardly spell her name (That’s not our problem, that’s up to Brenda’s family) Well, let me show you how it affects the whole community: Now Brenda really never knew her moms And her dad was a junkie putting death into his arm It’s sad, ’cause I bet Brenda doesn’t even know Just ’cause you’re in the ghetto doesn’t mean you can’t grow But, oh, that’s a thought, my own revelation Do whatever it takes to resist the temptation Brenda got herself a boyfriend

Her boyfriend was her cousin. Now let’s watch the joy end She tried to hide her pregnancy from a family Who really didn’t care to see, or give a damn if she Went out and had a church of kids As long as when the check came they got first dibs Now Brenda’s belly’s getting bigger But no one seems to notice any change in her figure She’s twelve years old and she’s havin a baby In love with a molester who’s sexin her crazy And yet and all she thinks is that he’ll be with her forever And dreams of a world where the two of them are together Whatever, he left her and she had the baby solo She had it on the bathroom floor and didn’t know so She didn’t know what to throw away and what to keep She wrapped the baby up and threw him in a trash heap I guess she thought she’d get away, wouldn’t hear the cries She didn’t realize how much the little baby had her eyes Now the baby’s in the trash heap bawling Mama can’t help her, but it hurts to hear her calling Brenda wants to run away, Mama say, you making me lose pay And

social workers here every day Now Brenda's gotta make her own way
Can't go to her family, they won't let her stay No money, no
babysitter, she couldn't keep a job She tried to sell crack but end up
gettin robbed So, now what's next? There ain't nothing left to sell So
she sees sex as a way of leaving hell It's paying the rent, so she really
can't complain Prostitute found slain and Brenda's her name She's got
a baby

DEAR MAMA

You are appreciated.

When I was young me and my mama had beef Seventeen years old,
kicked out on the streets Though back at the time, I never thought I'd
see her face Ain't a woman alive that could take my mama's place
Suspended from school and scared to go home, I was a fool With the
big boys, breakin all the rules I shed tears with my baby sister Over the
years we was poorer than the other little kids And even though we had
different daddies, the same drama When things went wrong we blame
Mama I reminisce on the stress I caused, it was hell Huggin on my
mama from a jail cell And who'd think in elementary?

Heeey, I'd see the penitentiary one day Running from the police, that's
right Mama catch me, put a whoopin to my backside And even as a
crack fiend, Mama You always was a black queen, Mama I finally
understand, for a woman it ain't easy Tryin to raise a man

You always was committed. A poor Single mother on welfare, tell me how
ya did it There's no way I can pay you back But the plan is to show
you that I understand You are appreciated

[Chorus]

Lady ... Don'tcha know we love ya? Sweet lady Dear Mama
Place no one above ya, sweet lady You are appreciated
Don'tcha know we love ya?

Now, ain't nobody tell us it was fair No love from my daddy 'cause the
coward wasn't there He passed away and I didn't cry 'Cause my anger
wouldn't let me feel for a stranger They say I'm wrong and I'm
heartless, but all along I was looking for a father—he was gone I hung
around with the thugs and even though they sold drugs They showed a

young brother love I moved out and started really hangin I needed money of my own so I started slangin I ain't guilty 'cause even though I sell rocks It feels good puttin money in your mailbox I love payin rent when the rent's due I hope you got the diamond necklace that I sent to ya 'Cause when I was low you was there for me And never left me alone because you cared for me And I could see you coming home after work late You're in the kitchen trying to fix us a hot plate Ya just working with the scraps you was given And Mama made miracles every Thanksgiving But now the road got rough, you're alone You're tryin to raise two bad kids on your own And there's no way I can pay you back But my plan is to show you that I understand You are appreciated

[Chorus]

Pour out some liquor and I reminisce 'Cause through the drama
I can always depend on my mama
And when it seems that I'm hopeless You say the words that can get me
back in focus When I was sick as a little kid To keep me happy there's
no limit to the things you did And all my childhood memories
Are full of all the sweet things you did for me And even though I act crazy
I gotta thank the lord that you made me There are no words that can
express how I feel You never kept a secret, always stayed real And I
appreciate how you raised me And all the extra love that you gave me
I wish I could take the pain away If you can make it through the night,
there's a brighter day Everything will be alright if you hold on It's a
struggle every day, gotta roll on And there's no way I can pay you
back But my plan is to show you that I understand You are
appreciated

[Chorus 2x]

SO MANY TEARS

*I shall not fear no man but God. Though I walk through the valley of death I
shed so many tears (If I should die before I wake). Please, God, walk with
me (Grab a nigga and take me to Heaven).*

Back in elementary, I thrived on misery Left me alone, I grew up amongst

a dying breed Inside my mind, couldn't find a place to rest Until I got that T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E. tatted on my chest Tell me, can you feel me? I'm not livin in the past You wanna last? Be the first to blast Remember Kato, no longer with us, he's deceased Call on the sirens, seen him murdered in the streets Now rest in peace. Is there heaven for a G? Remember me So many homies in the cemetery, shed so many tears Ahh, I suffered through the years and shed so many tears Lord, I lost so many peers and shed so many tears Now that I'm struggling in this business, by any means Label me greedy, getting green but seldom seen And fuck the world 'cause I'm cursed I'm having visions of leaving here in a hearse God, can you feel me? Take me away From all the pressure and all the pain Show me some happiness again, I'm goin blind I spend my time in this cell, ain't living well I know my destiny is hell. Where did I fail?

My life is in denial and when I die Baptized in eternal fire, I'll shed so many tears Lord, I suffered through the years and shed so many tears Lord, I lost so many peers and shed so many tears Now I'm lost and I'm weary, so many tears I'm suicidal, so don't stand near me My every move is a calculated step to bring me closer To embracing early death, now there's nothing left There was no mercy on the streets, I couldn't rest I'm barely standing, 'bout to go to pieces, screaming peace And though my soul was deleted, I couldn't see it I had my mind full of demons trying to break free They planted seeds and they hatched, sparking the flame Inside my brain like a match, such a dirty game No memories, just a misery

Paintin a picture of my enemies killing me, in my sleep Will I survive 'til the morning, to see the sun?

Please, lord forgive me for my sins, 'cause here I come Lord, I suffered through the years (God) and shed so many tears (God) I lost so many peers and ...

Lord knows I tried, been a witness to homicides And drive-bys taking lives, little kids die Wonder why as I walk by

Brokenhearted as I glance at the chalk line, gettin high This ain't the life for me, I wanna change But ain't no future right for me, I'm stuck in the game I'm trapped inside a maze

See this Tanqueray influenced me to getting crazy, disillusioned Lately I've been really wanting babies So I could see a part of me that wasn't always shady Don't trust my lady, 'cause she's a product of this poison

I'm hearing noises, think she fuckin all my boys Can't take no more
I'm falling to the floor
Begging for the lord to let me into heaven's door Shed so many tears

(Dear God, please let me in)

Lord, I've lost so many years and shed so many tears I lost so many peers
and shed so many tears Lord, I suffered through the years and shed so
many tears God, I lost so many peers and shed so many tears *FROM*
ALL EYEZ ON ME

I bet you got it twisted, you don't know who to trust So many playa-
hating niggas trying to sound like us Say they ready for the funk, but I
don't think they knowin Straight to the depths of hell is where those
cowards goin Well, are you still down, nigga? Holla when you see me
And let these devils be sorry for the day they finally free me I got a
caravan of niggas every time we ride Hittin motherfuckers up when
we pass by Until I die, live the life of a boss playa 'Cause even when
I'm high, fuck with me and get crossed later The future's in my eyes,
'cause all I want is cash and things A five-double-oh Benz, flaunting
flashy rings, uh Bitches pursue me like a dream, been known to
disappear Before your eyes just like a dope fiend. It seems My main
thing was to be major paid The game sharper than a motherfuckin
razor blade Say money bring bitches, bitches bring lies One nigga
gettin jealous and motherfuckers died Depend on me like the first and
fifteenth They might hold me for a second, but these punks won't get
me We got fo' niggas in lowriders and ski masks Screamin "Thug life!"
every time they pass All eyes on me

CHANGES

I see no changes. Wake up in the morning and I ask myself Is life worth
living? Should I blast myself?

I'm tired of being poor, and even worse, I'm black My stomach hurts, so
I'm lookin for a purse to snatch Cops give a damn about a Negro
Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero Give the crack to the kids, who
the hell cares?

One less hungry mouth on the welfare First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal
to brothers Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other It's
time to fight back, that's what Huey said Two shots in the dark, now

Huey's dead I got love for my brothers, but we can never go nowhere
Unless we share with each other We gotta start makin changes
Learn to see me as a brother 'stead of two distant strangers And that's
how it's supposed to be How can the devil take a brother if he's close
to me?
I'd love to go back to when we played as kids But things change, that's the
way it is [Chorus 2x]
That's just the way it is
Things'll never be the same
That's just the way it is
Aww, yeah

I see no changes, all I see is racist faces Misplaced hate makes disgrace to
races We under, I wonder what it takes to make this One better place,
let's erase the wasted Take the evil out the people, they'll be acting
right 'Cause both black and white is smokin crack tonight And the only
time we chill is when we kill each other It takes skill to be real, time to
heal each other And although it seems heaven-sent We ain't ready to
see a black president It ain't a secret, don't conceal the fact The
penitentiary's packed and it's filled with blacks But some things will
never change Try to show another way but you stayin in the dope
game Now tell me, what's a mother to do?

Bein real don't appeal to the brother in you You gotta operate the easy
way

("I made a G today") But you made it in a sleazy way Sellin crack to the
kids ("I gotta get paid") Well, hey, well, that's the way it is [Chorus
2x]

*We gotta make a change. It's time for us as a people to start makin some
changes. Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live, and
let's change the way we treat each other. You see, the old way wasn't
workin so it's on us to do what we gotta do to survive.*

And still I see no changes, can't a brother get a little peace?

It's war on the streets and the war in the Middle East Instead of war on
poverty, they got a war on drugs So the police can bother me

And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do But now I'm back with the
facts givin it back to you Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up Crack

you up and pimp smack you up You gotta learn to hold ya own
They get jealous when they see ya with ya mobile phone But tell the cops
they can't touch this I don't trust this, when they try to rush I bust this
That's the sound of my tool, you say it ain't cool My mama didn't raise
no fool
And as long as I stay black I gotta stay strapped And I never get to lay
back
'Cause I always got to worry about the payback Some buck that I roughed
up way back Comin back after all these years Rat-a-tat-tat-tat—
that's the way it is, uh [Chorus 2x]

HOW LONG WILL THEY MOURN ME

(feat. Nate Dogg, Big Syke, Rated R, and Macadoshis) [2Pac]

*How long will they mourn me? Yeah! This for my nigga Kato. It's still on, nigga.
Believe that. Thug life, thugs for life, haha ... (How long will they mourn
me?) We handle this shit for you, boy. Yeah, nigga. 2Pac in this
motherfucker ...*

All my homies drinkin liquor, tears in everybody's eyes Niggas cried to
mourn a homie's homicide But I can't cry, instead I'm just a shoulder
Damn, why they take another soldier?

I load my clip before my eyes blurry, don't worry I'll get them suckers
back before your buried (Shit) Retaliate and pull a 1-8-7

Do real niggas get to go to heaven?

How long will they mourn me? Bury me a motherfuckin G

Bitch don't wanna die? Then don't fuck with me It's kinda hard to be
optimistic When your homie's lying dead on the pavement twisted
Y'all don't hear me, though—I'm tryin hard to make amends But I'm
losin all my motherfuckin friends, damn!

They should've shot me when I was born Now I'm trapped in the
motherfuckin storm How long will they mourn me?

[Chorus]

[Nate Dogg and 2Pac]

[Nate Dogg] I wish it would have been another [2Pac] How long will they
mourn me?

[Nate Dogg] How long will they mourn my brother?

(Half them niggas all dead and shit) [2Pac] How long will they mourn me?

[Nate Dogg] I wish it would have been another (Dedicated this to Kato, nigga, and every thug) [2Pac] How long will they mourn me?

[Nate Dogg] How long will they mourn my brother?

(Yo, nigga, we gotta keep this shit goin on, yo, Syke) [Big Syke]

How long will they mourn me?

Every motherfuckin day, homie

You stayed down when the other niggas didn't know me From my heart to the trigger, you my fuckin nigga And things won't be the same without you, nigga I remember kickin back, you wanted a Lac And goin half on a motherfuckin hundred sack Smokin blunt after blunt and steady drinkin Hung around so much, you knew what I was thinkin Tell me, lord, why you take big Kato?

So confused not knowing which way to go I'm goin crazy and runnin out of fuckin time I can't take it, I'm losin my fuckin mind So day after day, ride after ride We'll hook up on the other side Watch over your family and your newborn 'Til we meet again, homie

How long will they mourn me?

[Chorus]

[Rated R]

Damn, a nigga tired of feelin sad, I'm tired of puttin in work I'm tired of cryin watchin my homies leave the earth I know soon one day I'll be in the dirt And my peoples'll be mournin, when they get a call from the coroner's All niggas can say is, "That's fucked up"

And get tossed up, reminiscing how we grew up (My nigga) Rest and love to my nigga Kato, see you in the crossroads real soon For now let me pour out the brew I'll be always thinkin of ya, homie Rest in peace. How long will they mourn me?

[Macadoshis]

We know life's a fuckin trip, and everybody gotta go But why the fuck it have to be my nigga Kato?

Another nigga fell victim to the chrome It's enough to make you crazy, it's

fuckin with my dome You only live once on this earth A nigga had it
bad, since the day of my motherfuckin birth (Uh) My niggas say they
down and they always be my homie But when a nigga gone, how long
will ya mourn me? (Yeah) [Chorus 2x]

TWISTA

Twista might be dismissed as a gimmick rapper. Having held the Guinness record as the world's fastest on the mic, and having begun his career with the moniker Tung Twista, he could have settled for a career founded entirely on his rapid-fire flows. Certainly, the clarity of his speedy delivery is astounding. "[I created my fast flow] by just trying to expand with the rap style," he explains. "It started with just tripling up the words with one sentence and then a whole four bars, and then it's like a whole verse. Probably around the time I wrote one complete verse like that was when I realized that this is a hot style for me." ⁴⁹

Twista tossed the "Tung" from his name and began to expand his expressive range and the varieties of his delivery. His flow is evident on the page as well. Notice that the lyrics follow just how long his lines are; they look like almost no other lines in the book. He somehow fits all of these words into a single musical measure. Whereas a line from most rappers might contain ten or twelve syllables, his lines routinely contain at least twice that many. More astounding still, he delivers his words without compromising the clarity of his speech. When speaking about a rapper as formally unique as Twista, it almost seems irrelevant to dwell on content. Most of his subject matter is straightforward: his mic skills, his luck with women, and the weakness of his opponents. When looking at Twista's lyrics, form is at the forefront.

EMOTIONS

"Well, a motherfucker could never control me, only squeeze me and hold me"

That's what the ho came up and told me. Now is she bold, G?

But in my mouth is where the gold be 'cause I be pimpin her like Goldie
Gotta get paid in this age, my fingers ain't made just to be choppin up
confetti with

If it's a ready dick you better steady lick—if you ain't with it you can git,
'cause I ain't even on that petty shit So who the fuck you actin petty
with? The rhythm I kick is like a rhythmly-wicked arithmetic Pick 'em
up quick and then give 'em the dick, thinkin I'm innocent. They up in
the mall shoppin for me, pickin a fit I got them heifers's nose red and
when we get in the bed, I be leavin 'em with rose legs Stuff that'll

make 'em wanna pose dead, but you ain't really got 'em until you get 'em all up in them hoes's head I don't mean to sound bogus or nothing, but it's the bomb when I be havin them cuties thinkin I'm in love with 'em, when I'm rubbin 'em Be gettin pub with 'em, in a club with 'em, smokin dub with 'em, huggin 'em, freakin in the tub with 'em After gettin paid from her, she ain't trippin 'cause she know she got what she paid for She honor my name, I got her tame, here it go. Now we speakin with a game of ways to make mo'

[Chorus 2x]

Let me play with your emotions, ho, to the rhythm of a hi-hat, take a puff and lie back Let me stimulate your mind, body, and soul, I know you want to try that. Now, really, baby, can you buy that?

Tell me, baby, can you buy that?

I got you under my complete control, you know it's worth more than diamonds and gold, now don't be bogus and deny that Now how the fuck you gon' act, ho? I saw you creepin out the back do', what you runnin from a mack fo'?

Lay you on your back slow 'cause you know I got you with my lasso. Blow your mind like a Afro Come and take a glimpse and a stare, it's the aroma of a pimp in the air, I bet ya notice the smell It's like a lotus when I flow this, 'cause my eyes be the lowest; if you didn't notice then you bogus as hell I'm puttin women under my spell, like I'm up in their brain pumpin their vein with game for the anatomy that's feminine Then fillin 'em up with adrenaline, got 'em geekin, we speaking, approachin a po' pimp like a gentleman Submission is surrendering, it ain't no endin if it's on with a blunt from a bomb sack In the right place, with the right mind and the right line, you can get a lifetime contract They be wise until they look into your eyes, a shorty freaked when she spotted mine

Took her over to my crib, lay low, hit her off from behind then she signed on the dotted-line, then she was like (*"Oooh, Daddy, why you doin me like this?"*)

I'd do anything to be with you, you got me gone in the head")

Ya mind, I don't mean to make a disaster of like my daddy, Master Love But if a motherfucker breaking you for every penny you earn then how could you still show the bastard love?

I guess it's 'cause I'm cold, shit. Thought you was gon' be spendin me? I

bet ya think, you sure did But game recognize game, now you lame in the brain—stupid bitch, that's what you get for tryin to gold dig, now
[Chorus 2x]

I know you think it's blasphemy, but won't you get my boys and ask for me? I think he passed the beat Since you said I was your majesty, I had to see, and when you get paid, then bring some cash to me Is it a tragedy that I can get her so gone the ho be trippin, talkin about love a lot?

But the only love I got is when I grip a mic or I when I hug the Glock or when I rub the twat Or pickin up a dub at spots, fuck the hoes, thugs, and clubs, and the phony perpetrators with dimes The Speedknots, Match Voodoo or Die, Psycho Drama, Crucial Conflict be pimpin 'em with gators and dons Collect the papers and dolls, player-haters' remarks will get smoked to a blunt dust

So keep walkin the next time you hear grown folks talking, motherfuckers betta shut the fuck up 'Cause we make the women suck up. You insist on bein trippin while we be gamin like Don Juan What up? The filet mignon, the Grey Poupon, them hoes are slaves to charm, because we make the bomb?

Now I don't mean no harm, but either come on in or get on gone and let me pour my potion slow In between your thighs, come take a pull and vibe and let your tongue go coastin low

[Chorus 2x]

UGK

UGK consisted of Pimp C and Bun B, both from Port Arthur, Texas. As the self-styled Underground Kingz of the South, they favored lyrics about women, money, cars, and hustling in the drug trade. As they continued to record through the 1990s and into the 2000s, they kept to their basic street template but expanded upon their themes and added elements to their style.

Bun B is regarded among his peers as a technically skilled lyricist, holding his own with the likes of Jay-Z and Outkast. “Well, the first thing I do is I try to listen to whatever rapping is already on the track,” he told Jon Caramanica in *The Believer* by way of describing how he writes. “I listen for cadence and melody to see how the track’s already been written, and to make sure that whatever flow or flows I decide to run with, or patterns or melodies that I decide to put into the song, that they’re not already in there. Then I try to see if there’s a different part of the subject matter that I can talk about. If there isn’t, I try to see if I can analogize it, break it down, flip it another way. If that can’t be done, the best thing I can do is pretty much out-rap the guy. And when I say out-rap the guy—say, if he uses ten syllables in a line, I’m going to use fifteen. If he uses fifteen, I’m going to use twenty, twenty-five. If he’s rhyming two or three words within two bars, I’m going to rhyme four or five words in two bars. I’m going to out-skill you.” ⁵⁰

Unlike many MCs who govern their lyrics strictly to the beat, Bun B often intentionally raps off the beat, bulldozing through the bars. Though Pimp C died in 2007, Bun B carries on the group’s work as a solo artist and frequent collaborator with a host of hip-hop luminaries.

MURDER

[Pimp C]

I’m still Pimp C, bitch, so what the fuck is up?

Puttin powder on the streets ’cause I got big fuckin nuts Comin back from Louisiana in a Fleetwood Lac I just served them niggas some shit to put they fiends on they back Got the pound four by four ’cause you know I just pay two Nigga bought thirty from me, so I fronted forty-two He gon’ pop to seven hundred times sixty-two Twenty-four eight is

what I do, so nigga, fuck what you do If I told ya cocaine numbers,
you would think I was lyin Young-ass niggas twenty-two is talkin 'bout
they retirin In the game ain't a thang, comin foreign with Benz Rick
ass own two apartments where I entertain friends More bounce to the
ounce 'cause the Burm the shit I done got me fifty ounces outta birds in
this bitch Tighten up, no slack, bitch checkin my stock Got some birds
I'm sellin, nigga, some I go rock for rock Just got back from California,
kicked it with B-Legit Put me down with purple chronic and that
hurricane shit At the studio with Tone, man, I wish I could stay I got to
holla at Master P, 'cause we got money to make We're the playas from
the South, stack G's, man Like Ball I got to stack big cheese, man

Bitch say he wanna show you got nine grand

I ain't rappin shit until my money in my hand South Texas, motherfucker,
that's where I stay Gettin money from yo' bitches every goddamn day
Big paper I'm foldin. Hoes

Is on my motherfuckin jock for all this dick that I be holdin I hate clone
men, show it

Especially them fools take our style and act like my niggas don't know it
Kick it with the trill niggas so you best not trip If ya keep on poppin
shit, my niggas empty a clip Ho-ass nigga

Murder, mur, murder [6x]

[Bun B]

Well, it's Bun B, bitch, and I'm the king of movin chickens Got them
finger-lickin stickin niggas that be trippin You need a swift kickin,
your ass is ripe for the pickin Now as my pockets thicken, I be thinkin
nigga's slippin You sick when I be clickin. Now take a look at the
bigger nigga Malt liquor swigger, playa-hata, ditch-digger Figure my
hair-trigger give a hot one in your liver You shiver, shake, and quiver,
I'm frivolous if a nigga get wetter than a river For what it's worth it's
the birth of some nigga's doin dirt Fuck her first and take off her skirt

Make the pussy hurt, Mister Master hit the Swisha faster Than you fever-
blistered bastards. Fuck your sister, passed her Fifty elbows for sale,
yo, brother better have my mail, ho Before I catch a murder case and
go to jail, ho Hell no, time to bail, hit the trail so

We can sell mo' fuckin yayo, get the scale, no Other bullet duckers could
shove us out of this game. They better buck us 'Cause the cluckers, they
love us. Make them glass-dick suckers Shake they jelly like Smucker's, I

hit like nunchuckers 'Cause Short Texas bring the ruckus, this for my
motherfuckers Cooking cheese to crooked geez, rockin up quarter ki's
Just to get the hook with ease, wannabes get on yo' knees Feel the
squeeze from them HK one-threes from here to overseas We do what
we please, don't trip 'cause we flip Light up a dip, I'm breakin 'em off
from they hip to yo' lip Go ask that boy Skip, that nigga Bun rip

With one clip, soon as the gun slip, now I done whipped out my Berretta
Flyin through yo' Pelle Pelle and some smelly red jelly is drippin out of
ya belly Servin 'em up like a deli, jumped on my cellular tele'

Hoes sellin like it's goin out of style

You can't see me, Marcus, go have a motherfuckin Sweet and a smile
Murder, mur, mur, murder [6x]

DIRTY MONEY

[Bun B]

Say, look here, man, I'm a rapper—hold up, let me take that back I make
rap music, but that don't mean all a nigga do is rap But that don't
matter. I've been labeled, stigmatized, stereotyped There's an
entertainment disease worse than cancer, a venereal type I spit
imperial-type game like Digga from the Squad But they act like they
can't separate a real nigga from the fraud Rule number one: Never
send a boy to fuck a grown-ass lady And respect the game 'cause the
game is known to be gone fast, baby Now that's a long pass, maybe
you should try diving for it Fools act like they striving for it, hit *Total
Request Live* and blow it No, it ain't a given and nothing is. See, all this
candy-coated And bluffing is detrimental to our beautiful black
southern kids Enough of this, man, let's get this here straight like
creases It's a never-ending cycle and motion that never ceases It
compresses and releases, man, and for the love of Jesus It breaks the
soul, now we forever left to pick up the pieces, it's dirty money
[Chorus 2x]

Niggas laughing but ain't a damn thing funny It's all about the paper in
this land of milk and honey Yeah, it's bright outside but not necessarily
sunny And no matter how you make it, it's all dirty money, baby
[Pimp C]

Every drug I sold was for the dirty money

Most of my niggas is dead because the game is funny You can get your

life took at the drop of the dime But I'm a pimp 'til the end, I keep my money on my mind Most of my life I've been broke, trying to save my bread I never asked to be hustling, now I watch out for feds 'Cause niggas be talking and giving up game About the cheese, the green, the pills, the coke D's I marry my pockets, so now I chase my green Keep a thang for them haters with the red beam Ever since fifteen I've been a big money fiend Sippin cold codeine and pulling up clean

Popping up at the spot and dropping the top And keep a bad yellow box with my dick on rock, uh!

[Chorus 2x]

[Bun B]

You can't get no house, no car, no weed, no bar No flash, no show, no class, no flow

No help, no love, no liquor, no drug

No clique, no crew, no tracks to flow to

No pager, no phone, no flavor, no zone

No fiend, no cut, no wife, no slut

No name, nowhere in the game to get me five No nothing without dirty-ass M-O-N-E-Y

[Chorus 2x]

[Pimp C]

My mama taught me what the value of a dollar should be But everybody I saw balling was rolling, selling ki's In the late '80s niggas pulling up on D's

Putting dick up in these hoes and making 'em pay fees Learn how to ride dirty 'cause ain't shit for free Then all them niggas got popped, that's all I needed to see For some the dope game cool 'cause that's all that they could be I know God ain't put me down here just to be serving no fiends I know God ain't put me down here just to be serving no fiends

[Chorus 2x]

THE WU-TANG CLAN

According to production guru and de facto group leader, the RZA, the Wu-Tang Clan is the first group ever to practice hip-hop as a martial art. By this he means a couple of things: that Wu-Tang rappers are masters of the battle rhyme and that they practice hip-hop with emotional content as a means of catharsis, spontaneity, self-defense, and the transformation of life into art.

On record the Wu-Tang Clan delivers an alternative, underground aesthetic—a world where griminess, hardness, danger, and criminality play against the sensitivity and self-consciousness of youth coming of age amid violence. The nine core Clan members include Ol' Dirty Bastard, Inspectah Deck, GZA, RZA, Method Man, U-God, Ghostface Killah, Raekwon, and Masta Killa. Whether rhyming about swinging swords or creating “poetry whirlpools” (as Wu associate Cappadonna once put it), the Wu MCs are lyrical martial artists.

Each MC's sound is distinctive, from Ol' Dirty Bastard's rowdy, free-associating, unmetered abstractions to Method Man's gravelly, steadily laid-back baritone to Raekwon's staccato strings of slang; together the Clan's lyricism is comprehensive and cinematic, with threatening storytelling and believable braggadocio. The abstraction and aphoristic quality of their dense, murky concrete wilderness of sound reveal an exceptional group of gifted poets.

The following selections from the extensive Wu-Tang library represent not only the collective strength of the group, which as a unit left its indelible mark on hip-hop, but also the development and achievements of the group as individuals. From the tragic rise and fall of Ol' Dirty Bastard to the spectrum traveled by the RZA—from rapper/producer to actor and soundtrack composer—to the mainstream success of Ghostface Killah, Raekwon, GZA, and the Method Man, much has happened in the decade and a half since the Clan began their reign as legendary denizens of the hip-hop arts.

PROTECT YA NECK

[RZA] Wu-Tang Clan comin at ya

Protect ya neck, kid, so set it off, the Inspectah Deck [Method Man]

Watch ya step, kid, watch ya step, kid [4x]

[Inspectah Deck]

I smoke on the mic like smokin Joe Frazier The hell raiser, raisin hell with
the flavor Terrorize the jam like troops in Pakistan Swinging through
your town like your neighborhood Spiderman So, uh, tick-tock and
keep tickin

While I get ya flippin off the shit I'm kickin The Lone Ranger, code red,
danger!

Deep in the dark with the art to rip the charts apart The vandal, too hot
to handle

Ya battle, you're sayin "Goodbye" like Tevin Campbell Roughneck,
Inspectah Deck's on the set The rebel, I make more noise than heavy
metal [Raekwon]

The way I make the crowd go wild, sit back, relax Won't smile, Rae' got it
goin on, pal Call me the rap assassinator

Rhymes rugged and built like Schwarzenegger And I'ma get mad deep like
a threat

Blow up your project then take all your assets 'Cause I came to shake the
frame in half With the thoughts that bomb shit like math So if ya
wanna try to flip, go flip on the next man 'Cause I grab the clip and
Hit ya with sixteen shots and more, I got Goin to war with the meltin pot,
ock

[Method Man]

It's the Method Man, for short Mr. Meth Movin on your left, ah!

And set it off, get it off, let it off like a gat I wanna break, fool, cock me
back

Small change, they puttin shame in the game I take aim and blow that
nigga out the frame And like *Fame*, my style'll live forever Niggas
crossin over, but they don't know no better But I do, true, can I get a
"su"?

Nuff respect due to the one-six-oooh

I mean oh, yo, check out the flow

Like the Hudson or PCP when I'm dustin Niggas off because I'm hot like
sauce The smoke from the lyrical blunt makes me cough [U-God]

Ooh, what, grab my nut, get screwed

Ow, here comes my Shaolin style

Sloop-B and my b-boy's U
To my crew with the "su"

[Method Man] Watch ya step, kid, watch ya step, kid [4x]
[Ol' Dirty Bastard] C'mon, baby, baby, c'mon [4x]

[RZA] Yo, ya best protect ya neck

[Ol' Dirty Bastard]

First thing's first, man, you're fuckin with the worst I'll be stickin pins in
your head like a fuckin nurse I'll attack any nigga who's slack in his
mack Come fully packed with a fat rugged stack Shame on you when
you step through to The Ol' Dirty Bastard straight from the Brooklyn
Zoo And I'll be damned if I let any man

Come to my center, you enter the winter Straight up and down, that shit
packed jam You can't slam, don't let me get fool on him, man The Ol'
Dirty Bastard is dirty and stinkin Ason-Unique rollin with the night of
the creeps Niggas be rollin with a stash

Ain't sayin gas, bite my style, I'll bite your motherfuckin ass!

[Ghostface Killah]

For cryin out loud, my style is wild, so book me Not long is how long that
this rhyme took me Ejectin styles from my lethal weapon

My pen that rocks from here to Oregon Here's more again, catch it like a
Psycho flashback I love gats, if rap was a gun, you wouldn't bust back I
come with shit that's all types of shapes and sounds And where I
lounge is my stompin grounds I give a order to my peeps across the
water To go and snatch up props all around the border And get far like
a shootin star

'Cause who I are is livin the life of Pablo Escobar Point blank as I kick the
square biz

There it is, you're fuckin with pros, and there it goes [RZA]

Yo, chill with the feedback, black, we don't need that It's ten o'clock, ho,
where the fuck's your seed at?

Feelin mad hostile, ran the apostle

Flowin like Christ when I speaks the gospel Stroll with the holy roll then
attack the globe With the buckus style, the ruckus

Ten times ten men committin mad sin

Turn the other cheek and I'll break your fuckin chin Slang boom-bangs
like African drums (we'll be) Comin around the mountain when I come
Crazy flamboyant for the rap enjoyment My Clan increase like black
unemployment Yeah, another one dare, G-Gka-Genius

Take us the fuck outta here

[GZA]

The Wu is too slammin for these cold killin labels Some ain't had hits since
I seen Aunt Mabel Be doin artists in like Cain did Abel Now they
money's gettin stuck to the gum under the table That's what ya get
when ya misuse what I invent Your empire falls and ya lose every cent
For tryin to blow up a scrub

Now that thought is just as bright as a twenty-watt lightbulb Should of
pumped it when I rocked it

Niggas so stingy they got short arms and deep pockets This goes on in
some companies

With majors, they're scared to death to pump these First of all, who's your
A&R?

A mountain climber who plays an electric guitar?

But he don't know the meaning of dope when he's lookin for a suit-And-tie
rap that's cleaner than a bar of soap And I'm the dirtiest thing in sight

Matter of fact, bring out the girls and let's have a mud fight [RZA] You
best protect ya neck

C.R.E.A.M.

[Raekwon]

I grew up on the crime side, the *New York Times* side Staying alive was no
jive

At second hands, Moms bounced on old man So then we moved to Shaolin
land

A young youth, yo, rockin the gold tooth, lo' goose Only way I begin to G
off was drug loot And let's start it like this, son, rollin with this one
And that one, pullin out gats for fun But it was just a dream for the
teen who was a fiend Started smokin woos at sixteen

And running up in gates and doing hits for high stakes Making my way

on fire escapes

No question, I would speed for cracks and weed The combination made
my eyes bleed

No question I would flow off and try to get the dough off Sticking up
white boys on ball courts My life got no better, same damn lo' sweater
Times is rough and tough like leather Figured out I went the wrong
route

So I got with a sick-ass clique and went all out Catchin keys from cross
seas, rollin in MPVs Every week we made forty G's

Yo, nigga, respect mine, or here go the TEC-9

Ch-chick-POW! Move from the gate now

[Chorus]

Cash Rules Everything Around Me

C.R.E.A.M., get the money

Dollar, dollar bill, y'all

[Inspectah Deck]

It's been twenty-two long, hard years, I'm still strugglin Survival got me
buggin, but I'm alive on arrival I peep at the shape of the streets

And stay awake to the ways of the world, the shit is deep A man with a
dream with plans to make C.R.E.A.M.

Which failed; I went to jail at the age of fifteen A young buck sellin drugs
and such who never had much Trying to get a clutch at what I could
not touch The court played me short, now I face incarceration Pacin,
knowin upstate's my destination Handcuffed in back of a bus, forty of
us Life as a shorty shouldn't be so rough But as the world turned I
learned life is hell Living in the world no different from a cell Every
day I escape from Jakes givin chase, sellin base Smokin bones in the
staircase

Though I don't know why I chose to smoke cess I guess that's the time
when I'm not depressed But I'm still depressed, and I ask what's it
worth?

Ready to give up, so I seek the Old Earth Who explained working hard
may help you maintain To learn to overcome the heartaches and pain
We got stickup kids, corrupt cops, and crack rocks And stray shots, all
on the block that stays hot Leave it up to me, while I be living proof

To kick the truth to the young black youth But shorty's running wild,
smokin cess, drinkin beer And ain't trying to hear what I'm kickin in
his ear Neglect it for now, but yo, it gots to be accepted That what?
That life is hectic

[Chorus to fade]

FROM BRING THE PAIN

(Method Man)

I came to bring the pain, hardcore from the brain Let's go inside my astral
plane

Find out my mental's based on instrumental Records, hey, so I can write
monumental Methods—I'm not the King, but niggas is decaf I stick 'em
for the C.R.E.A.M. Check it Just how deep can shit get?

Deep as the abyss and brothers is mad fish, accept it In your Cross Color
clothes, you've crossed over Then got totally crossed out and Kris
Krossed Who da boss? Niggas get tossed to the side And I'm the dark
side of the Force. Of course It's the Method Man from the Wu-Tang
Clan I be hectic and comin for the head piece—protect it Fuck it, two
tears in a bucket, niggas want the ruckus Bustin at me, bra', now bust
it

Styles, I gets buckwild, Method Man on some shit Pullin niggas' files, I'm
sick

Insane, crazy, Drivin Miss Daisy

Out her fuckin mind, now I got mine, I'm Swayze Brothers want to hang
with the Meth, bring the rope The only way you hang is by the neck,
nigga poke Off the set, comin to your projects

Take it as a threat, better yet, it's a promise Comin from a vet on some
old Vietnam shit Nigga, you can bet your bottom dollar, hey, I bomb
shit And it's gonna get even worse, word to God It's the Wu comin
through, stickin niggas for they garments Movin on your left,
southpaw, Mr. Meth Came to represent and carve my name in your
chest You can come test, realize you're no contest Son, I'm the gun that
won that old Wild West Quick on the draw with my hands on the four
Nine-three-eleven with the rugged rhymes galore Check it, 'cause I
think not when this hip-hop's like proper Rhymes be the proof while
I'm drinkin 90 proof Huh, vodka, no OJ, no straw

When you give it to me, ay, give it to me raw I've learned when you drink

Absolut straight it burns Enough to give my chest hairs a perm
I don't need a chemical blow to pull a ho All I need is Chemical Bank to
pay tha Mo'

DUEL OF THE IRON MIC

(GZA)

*Oh, mad one. We see your trap. You can never escape your fate. Submit with
honor to a duel with my son.*

I agree.

I see you using an old style. I wondered where you had learned it from.

You know very well. It's yours, too.

Yo, god, it's a duel, it's a duel.

Heh, by the gods, will you show me?

(Buck buck buck buck buck buck) And where do you come for?

(Duel of the Iron Mic) You come here, since you're so interested.

(Duel of the Iron Mic) Fight me.

(In the moonlight, niggas, lightning strike)

(What, what? Bring it!)

[GZA]

Yo, picture bloodbaths and elevator shafts Like these murderous rhymes
tight from genuine craft Check the print, it's where veterans spark the
letterings Slow-moving MCs is waiting for the editing The liquid
soluble that made up the chemistry A gaseous element that burned
down your ministry Herbal vapors and biblical papers

Smoking Exodus, every square yard is plush Fuck the screw-faced photo
sessions, facial expression Leaves impressions, try to keep a shark
nigga guessin Give crazy shouts, son, here's the outcome Cut across the
semigloss rhymes you floss Shit is outdated, just like neckloads of
sterlings Suede-fronts, bell bottoms, and tri-colored shearlings I ain't
particular, I bang like vehicular Homicides on July 4th in Bed-Stuy

Where money don't grow on trees and there's thievin MCs Who cutthroat
to rake leaves

They can't breathe, blood splash, rushin fast Like runnin rivers, I be that

whiskey in your liver [Ol' Dirty Bastard]

Duel of the Iron Mic!

It's the fifty-two fatal strikes!

[Masta Killa]

This is not a eighty-five affair, made clear When the gods get on to
perform, storms blew up Wu's up, causin the crowd to self-destruct
Killer bees are stingin somethin while I reveal Science that's heavily
guarded by the culprit Bombin your barracks with aerodynamic
Swordplay, poison darts by the doorway Minds that's laced with
explosive doses Damaging lyrical launcher

Lunge at the youthful offender, then injure Any contender, testin the
murderous Master Could lead to disaster, dynamite thoughts Explode
through your barrier, rips the retina Who can withstand the
astonishing punishing Stings to the sternum? Shocked in the hip-hop
Livestock, seekin for a serum to cure 'em [Inspectah Deck]

Adults kill for drugs plus the young bucks bust Duckin handcuffs, throats
get cut when dough rush Out-of-town foes look shook but still pose We
move like real pros, through the streets we stroll Bullet holes lace the
windows in one-six oh So control the avenues that's the dream that's
sold Building lobbies are graveyards for small-timers Bitches caught in
airports, ki's in they vaginas No peace, yo, the police mad corrupt

You get bagged up, dependin if you're passin the cut Plus shorty's not a
shorty no more, he's livin heartless Regardless of the charges, claims to
be the hardest Individual, critical thoughts, criminal minded Blinded by
illusion, findin it confusin [Ol' Dirty Bastard]

Duel of the Iron Mics (*The master, he must be dreaming, heh*)

It's that fifty-two fatal strikes (*Well, if he is dreaming*)

Duel of the Iron Mics (*Then he must be asleep*)

It's that fifty-two fatal strikes, NUH (*But if he's asleep*

Then I will wake him up!)

*At the height of their fame and glory, they turned on one another, each
struggling in vain for ultimate supremacy. In the passion and depth of their
struggle, the very art that had raised them to such Olympian heights was
lost. Their techniques vanished.*

INCARCERATED SCARFACES

(Raekwon)

*He looks determined without being ruthless ... something heroic in his manner.
There's a courage about him ... doesn't look like a killer ... comes across so
calm ... acts like he has a dream ... full of passion ...*

You don't trust me, huh?

Well, you know why.

I do. We're not supposed to trust anyone in our profession anyway ...

[Chorus]

Now yo, yo, whattup, yo? Time is runnin out It's for real though, let's
connect politic, ditto We could trade places, get lifted in the staircases
Word up, peace, incarcerated scarfaces [Raekwon]

Thug-related style attract millions. Fans They understand my plan. Who's
the kid up in the green Land?

Me and the RZA connect, blow a fuse, you lose Half-ass crews get
demolished and bruised Fake be frontin, hourglass heads niggas be
wantin Shuttin down your slot; time for pumpin Poisonous sting which
thumps up and act chumps Raise a heavy generator, but, yo, guess
who's the black Trump?

Dough be flowin by the hours. Wu, we got the collars Scholars. Word life,
peace to Power

And my whole unit. Word up! Quick to set it, don't wet it Real niggas lick
shots, peace, Connecticut [Chorus]

Chef'll shine like marble, rhyme remarkable Real niggas raise up, spend
your money, argue But this time is for the uninvited. Go head and
rhyme to it Big nigga mics is gettin fired

Morphine chicks be burnin like chlorine Niggas recognize from here to
Baltimore to Fort Greene But hold up, Moët be tastin like throw-up My
mob roll up, dripped to death whips rolled up Ya never had no wins,
slidin in these dens With Timbs wit' MAC-10s and broke friends Ya got
guns, got guns too—what up, son?

Do you wanna battle for cash and see who Sun Tzu?

I probably wax, tax, smack rap niggas who fax Nigga's lyrics is wack,
nigga can't stand unofficial Wet tissue, blank bustin Scud missiles You
rollin like Trump, you get your meat lumped For real, it's just slang

rap democracy Here's the policy, slide off the ring, plus the Wallabees
Check the status, soon to see me at Caesar's Palace Eatin salads, we
beatin mics and the keys to Dallas I move rhymes like retail, make
sure shit sell From where we at to my man's cell

From staircase to stage, minimum wage But soon to get a article in *Rap*
Page

But all I need is my house, my gat, my Ac Bank account fat, it's goin down
like that And pardon the French but let me speak Italian Black
Stallions whylin on Shaolin

That means the island of Staten and niggas carry gats And mad police
from Manhattan

[Chorus]

I do this for barbershop niggas in the Plaza Catchin asthma, Rae is stickin
gun-flashers Well-dressed, skatin through the projects with big ones
Broke elevators, turn the lights out, stick one Upstairs, switch like a
chameleon, hip Brazilians Pass the cash or leave your children, leave
the buildin Niggas, yo, they be foldin like envelopes Under pressure,
like Lou Ferrigno on coke Yo, Africans denyin niggas up in yellow cabs
Musty like funk, wavin they arms, the Arabs Sit back, coolin like
Kahluas on rocks On the crack spots, rubberband wrapped on my
knots Few bitches who fuck dreds on Sudafeds Pussy's hurtin, they did
it for a yard for the feds Word up cousin, nigga, I seen it

Like a twenty-seven-inch Zenith—believe it!

[Chorus]

BROOKLYN ZOO **(Ol' Dirty Bastard)**

I'm the one-man army, Ason

I've never been taken out, I keep MCs lookin out I drop science like girls
be droppin babies Enough to make a nigga go cra-a-azy

Energy buildin, takin all types of medicines Your ass thought you were
better than Ason, I keep planets in orbit

While I be comin with deeper and more shit Enough to make ya break and
shake ya ass 'Cause I create rhymes good as a Tastykake mix This style

I'm mastered in
Niggas catchin headaches, what? What? You need aspirin?
This type of pain you couldn't even kill with Midol Fuck around, get
sprayed with Lysol
In your face like a can of mace, baby Is it burnin? Well, fuck it, now
you're learnin How? I don't even like your motherfuckin profile Give
me my fuckin shit, ch-ch-blaow!
Not seen and heard, no one knows
You forget, niggas be quiet as kept
Now you know nothing, before you knew a whole fuckin lot Your ass
don't wanna get shot!
A lot of MCs came to my showdown
To watch me put your fuckin ass lo-o-ow down As you can go, below zero
Without a doubt, I never been taken out By a nigga who couldn't figure
Yo, by a nigga who couldn't figure
Yo, by a nigga who couldn't figure (Brooklyn Zoo) How to pull a fuckin
gun trigger
I said, "Get the fuck outta here!"
Nigga wanna get too close, to the utmost But I got stacks that'll attack
any wack host Introducin, yo, fuck that nigga's name!
My hip-hop drops on your head like ra-a-ain And when it rains it pours,
'cause my rhymes' hardcore That's why I give you more of the raw
Talent that I got will riz-ock the spot MCs I'll be bur-r-rnin, bur-r-rnin
hot Whoa-hoa-hoa! Let me like slow up with the flow If I move too
quick, oh, you just won't know I'm homicidal when you enter the
target Nigga, get up, act like a pig tryin to hog shit!
So I take yo' ass out quick
The mics, I've had it my nigga, you can suck my dick If you wanna step to
my motherfuckin rep Ch-ch-blaow! blaow! blaow! Blown to death You
got shot 'cause you knock knock knock "Who's there?" Another
motherfuckin hardrock Slackin on your mackin 'cause raw's what you
lack You wanna react? Bring it on back ...

Shame on you, when you step through to The Ol' Dirty Bastard, Brooklyn
Zoo! [Repeat to fade]

DAYTONA 500

(Ghostface Killah)

[Raekwon]

Say peace to cats who rock mack knowledge Knowledgists, street astrologists, light up the mic, god, acknowledge this Fly joints that carry two points, Corolla Motorola holder Play it, god, he pack over the shoulder Chrome tanks, player like Yanks, check the franchise Front on my guys, my enterprise splash many lives Rappel on fakes like reflectors

He had sugar in his ear in his last crack career We can can him, manhandle him, if you wanna Run in his crib-o, get ditto, skate like a limo And jet to the flyest estate, relate, take a break Break down the eighth and then wait, drop it like Drake Thugs they be booing and screwing, we canoeing Claim they doin the same shit we doin, fuck your union It's the same style, RZA trainable, jump the turnstile On the alley tried to challenge god for the new vials Especially that aluminum bat in the act Relax, lay back, sell a grenade a day, it pays, black The MAC-10 flex white cats like Windex Index finger be sore, bustin these fly scripts The Wally kid count crazily grands with our plans Layin with my bitches and my mans in Lex lands We losin 'em, jet to the stash and now Jerusalem Abusin 'em, rockin his jewels like we usin 'em Low pro star, seven thick waves rock Polar Roll with the older god, build with the Sun, Moon, Star [Chorus]

All these MCs start realizing

That Ghost got that shit that'll keep you vibing The Wu is here to bring you Shaolin's finest But if your shields are weak, you better step behind us [Ghostface Killah]

Mercury raps is roughed then god just shown like taps Red and white Wallys that match, bend my baseball hat Doin forever shit like pissin out the window on turnpikes Robbin niggas for leathers, high swipin on dirt bikes Voice be metal like Von Harper, radio barber Murder sleep-away camp, the fly lady champ The arsonist, who burn with his pen regardless Slaying all these earthlings and fake foreigners In the Philippines, pick herbal beans, bubbling strings Body chemical cream, we burn kerosene The conviction of my tape is rape, wicked like Nixon Long-heads inscriptions with three sixes in Kiss the pyramid experiment with high explosive I slapbox with Jesus, lick shots at Joseph Zoomin like binoculars, the rap blacksmith Money's Rolex was

rockless, Chef's ragtop is spotless I'm Iron Man, no cheap cash metal,
I'm steel alloy True identity hidden inside secret tabloids Breathe
oxygen, both sides of my jaw carry oxes The track hit like the bangers
in hundred-watt boxes Yo' jostling these cats while Little J be deli-ing
Sip Irish Moss out of Widelians

"Rhymes like retail, make sure shit sell"

[Chorus]

[Cappadonna]

Give me the fifty-thou small bills, my gold plate, my slang kills My Benz
spills, whattup Lils? Murder one dun Killer bee stung, guess who back
home, son?

My technique of slang camp won, third platoon soon Cristal bottles, cages
of boom, poppy wardrobe The mad-hatter big dick style, beware goons
Smuggle balloons, Lorna Doones in fat pussy wombs Let the gods
build, pull up the grill, check out the mad skills Top secret technique,
too hard for you to peep it And keep it, jiggy style of rap and watchin
knuckle slang Sweep it out of order, tape recorder can't record my
slaughter Spoil the rotten, Donna too good to be forgotten High-top
notch, borderline rhymes is handcocked Ninety-six, my ill sound clash
is still hot Get yourself shot

[Chorus]

THE M.G.M.

(Ghostface Killah and Raekwon)

[Ghostface Killah and Raekwon] Yo, up in the M.G.M. coked up

[Ghostface Killah] Psyche! Six niggas walked in flashing they gems,
peace. [Raekwon] Aight!

One dark skinned nigga, fifty-six-inch rope Wrapped around twice.

[Ghostface Killah] Smash the Gilligan boat with ice [Raekwon] They
threw sign language, [Ghostface Killah] ordered hot coffee [Both] wit'
a danish [Ghostface Killah] "Relax." Whispered, "They rap
entertainers"

[Raekwon] Had Lizzy on, two Japanese birds with furs look good, kid

[Ghostface Killah] Laid back handlin hors d'oeuvres [Raekwon] It's like

round three. [Ghostface Killah] We too black for BET

You memorize the one to forty? [Raekwon] I'm at the nineteenth degree If a civilized person doesn't perform his duty What shall be done?

[Ghostface Killah] Pardon me, god, that nigga got a gun Bulgin out his sweatpants, check out his stance See the side of his grill? [Raekwon]

Look like my cousin Lance Left hand rock a Guess watch. [Ghostface

Killah] Yo, I think I did his Clarks He wore the crush bone leather with

the strings dark [Raekwon] Now I remember [Ghostface Killah] He

from Bear Mountain He and Mitch Greene shot the fair one [Raekwon]

near the water fountain [Ghostface Killah] Seventh round, Chavez

bleedin from his right ear Yo, keep ya eye on that same nigga from

right here [Raekwon] Popcorn spillin all on Liz Claiborne Ghost had

the fly Gucci mocs with no socks on Seen Deion Sanders in the back

with the fat fur on [Ghostface Killah] Workin them hoes with the fly

Wu shirts on Mixed drink session, dun [Raekwon] Pour me some more

[Ghostface Killah] Chef leathered down, blinking at Chanté Moore

[Raekwon] Tenth round, Chavez tearin him down. [Ghostface Killah]

Sweet Pea, get ya shit off!

[Raekwon] It's like blacks against the Germans. [Ghostface Killah] Gettin

hit off [Raekwon] Smooth and them walked in, [Ghostface Killah]

Brownsville representin [Raekwon] They sent a bottle over, autograph

blessin [Ghostface Killah] Chef pull out the doodle, twist the dank pink

noodles [Raekwon] Yo, I'm 'bout to roll one. [Ghostface Killah] Matter

fact, twist two of those [Raekwon] Yo, they wound up stoppin the

fight. Steeles took a point away from Chavez [Ghostface Killah]

Rematch scheduled on October ninth Rematch scheduled on October

ninth

TRIUMPH

[Ol' Dirty Bastard]

What, y'all thought y'all wasn't gon see me? I'm the Osiris of this shit. Wu-Tang is here forever, motherfucker. It's like this ninety-seven. Aight, my niggas and my niggarettes. Let's do it like this. I'ma rub your ass in the moonshine. Let's take it back to seventy-nine!

[Inspectah Deck]

I bomb atomically, Socrates philosophies And hypotheses can't define how
I be droppin these Mockeries, lyrically perform armed robbery Flee

with the lottery, possibly they spotted me Battle-scarred shogun,
explosion when my pen hits Tremendous, ultraviolet shine blind
forensics I inspect you, through the future see millennium Killa B's sold
fifty gold, sixty platinum Shacklin the masses with drastic rap tactics
Graphic displays melt the steel like blacksmiths Black Wu jackets,
Queen B's ease the guns in Rumble with patrolmen, tear gas laced the
function Heads by the score take flight, incite a war Chicks hit the
floor, diehard fans demand more Behold the bold soldier, control the
globe slowly Proceeds to blow, swingin swords like Shinobi Stomp
grounds and pound footprints in solid rock Wu got it locked, performin
live on your hottest block [Method Man]

As the world turns, I spread like germs, bless the globe With the
pestilence, the hard-headed never learn It's my testament to those
burned, play my position In the game of life, standin firm on foreign
land Jump the gun out the fryin pan, into the fire Transform into the
Ghostrider, a six-pack And *A Streetcar Named Desire*, who got my back?

In the line of fire holdin back, what?

My peoples, if you with me, where the fuck you at?

Niggas is strapped, and they tryin to twist my beer cap It's court
adjourned for the bad seed from bad sperm Herb got my wig fried like
a bad perm What the blood ... clot? We smoke pot

And blow spots. You wanna think twice? I think not The Iron Lung ain't
got ta tell you where it's coming from *Guns of Navarone*, tearing up
your battle zone Rip through your slums

[Cappadonna]

I twist darts from the heart, tried and true Loop my voice on the LP,
martini on the slang rocks Certified chatterbox, vocabulary Donna
talking Tell your story walkin

Take cover kid, what? Run for your brother, kid Run for your team and
your six camp rhyme groupies So I can squeeze with the advantage

And get wasted. My deadly notes reign Supreme, your fort is basic
compared to mine Domino effect, arts and crafts paragraphs Contain
cyanide, take a free ride

On my dart, I got the fashion catalogues for all y'all To all praise to the
gods

[Ol' Dirty Bastard]

The saga continues: Wu-Tang, Wu-Tang

[U-God]

Olympic torch flaming, we burn so sweet The thrill of victory, the agony,
defeat We crush slow, flamin deluxe slow for Judgment day cometh,
conquer, it's war Allow us to escape hell glow spinning bomb Pocket
full of shells out the sky, Golden Arms Tune spit the shitty Mortal
Kombat sound The fateful step make the bloodstain the ground A
jungle junkie, vigilante tantrum

A death kiss, catwalk, squeeze another anthem Hold it for ransom,
tranquilized with anesthetics My orchestra, graceful, music ballerinas
My music Sicily, rich California smell An ax-killer adventure, paint a
picture well I sing a song from Sing-Sing, sippin on ginseng Righteous
wax chaperone, rotating ring king [RZA]

Watch for the wooden soldiers, C-Cypher-Punks couldn't hold us A
thousand men rushin in, not one nigga was sober Perpendicular to the
square, we stamp gold like Flee Escape from your Dragon's Lair, in
particular My beats travel like a vortex through your spine To the top
of your cerebrum cortex

Make you feel like you bust a nut from raw sex Enter through your right
ventricle, clog up your bloodstream Now terminal, like Grand Central
Station Program fat basslines on Novation

Getting drunk like a fuck, I'm duckin five-year probation [GZA]

War of the masses, the outcome, disastrous Many of the victim family
save they ashes A million names on walls engraved in plaques Those
who went back, received penalties for the ax Another heart is torn as
close ones mourn Those who stray, niggas get slayed on the song
[Masta Killa]

The track renders helpless and suffers from multiple Stab wounds and
leaks sounds that's heard Ninety-three million miles away from came
one To represent the Nation, this is a gathering Of the masses that
come to pay respects To the Wu-Tang Clan as we engage in battle The
crowd now screams in rage

The high chief Jamel-I-Reef takes the stage Light is provided through
sparks of energy From the mind that travels in rhyme form Givin sight
to the blind, the dumb are mostly Intrigued by the drum, death only
one Can save self from this relentless attack Of the track spares none

[Ghostface Killah]

Yo! Yo! Yo, fuck that, look at all these crab niggas laid back Lampin like them gray and black Pumas on my man's rack Codeine was forced in your drink, you had a navy green Salamander fiend, bitches never heard you scream You two-faces, scum of the slum, I got your whole body numb Blowin like Shalamar in eighty-one

Sound convincin? Thousand-dollar cork pop convention Hands like Sonny Liston, get fly permission Hold the fuck up, I'll unfasten your wig, bad luck I humiliate, separate the English from the Dutch It's me, black Noble Drew Ali, came in threes We like the Genovese, is that so? Seizin these degrees It's earth ninety-three million miles from the first Rough turbulence, the waveburst, split the megahertz [Raekwon]

Aiyo, that's amazing, gun-in-your-mouth talk, verbal-foul hawk Connect thoughts to make my manchild walk Swift notarizer, Wu-Tang, all up in the high-riser New York Yank visor, world tranquilizer Just a dosage, delegate my Clan with explosives While my pen blow lines ferocious

Mediterranean, see y'all, the number one draft pick Tear down the beat, god, then delegate the god to see God The swift chancellor, flex, the white-gold tarantula Track truck diesel, play the weed, god, substantiala Max mostly, undivided, then slide in, sickenin Guaranteed, made 'em jump like Rod Strickland **SHAKEY DOG**

(Ghostface Killah)

Yo, making moves back and forth Uptown, sixty dollars Plus toll is the cab fee, wintertime bubble goose Goose, clouds of smoke, music blastin In the A-rab V blunted, whip smelling like fish From 125th, throwin ketchup on my fries Hitting baseball spliffs, back seat with my leg all stiff Push the fuckin seat up, tartar sauce On my S Dot kicks, rocks is lit while I'm poppin the clips I'm ready for war, got to call the Cuban guys Got the Montana pulled in front of the store Made my usual gun check, safety off, "Come on, Frank The moment is here, take your fuckin hood off And tell the driver to stay put. Fuck them niggas On the block, they shook; most of 'em won't look They frontin, they no crooks, they fuck up they own juks Look out for Jackson 5-0 'cause they on foot"

Straight ahead is the doorway, see that lady with the shopping cart She keep a shottie cocked in the hallway "Damn, she look pretty old, Ghost." She work for Kevin She 'bout seventy-seven. She paid her dues

when she smoked his Brother-in-law at his boss's wedding

Flew to Venezuela quickly when the big fed stepped in Three o'clock,
watch the kids, third floor, last door "You look paranoid, that's why I
can't juks with you"

Why? "Why you behind me leery? Shakey Dog stutterin When you got the
bigger cooker on you You's a crazy motherfucker, small hoodie dude
Hilarious move, you on some Curly, Moe, Larry shit Straight Perry shit,
Krispy Kreme, cocaine Dead bodies, jail time, you gon' carry it Matter
of fact, all the cash, I'ma carry it Stash it in jelly and break it down at
the Marriott This is the spot. Yo, son—your burner cocked? These
fuckin Maricons on the couch watchin *Sanford and Son*, passin They
rum, fried plantains and rice, big round onions On a T-bone steak. My
stomach growling, yo, I want some Hold on, somebody's comin, get
behind me, knock at the door Act like you stickin me up, put the joint
to my face Push me in quickly when the bitch open up Remember you
don't know me, blast him if he reach for his gun"

"Yo, who goes there?" "Tony." "Tony, one second, homie No matter rain,
sleet, or snow you know you 'posed to phone me"

Off came the latch, Frank pushed me into the door The door flew open,
dude had his mouth open Frozen, stood still with his heat bulgin Told
him, "Freeze! Lay the fuck down and enjoy the moment"

Frank snatched his gat, slapped him, asked him "Where's the cash, coke,
and the crack? Get the smoke and you fast"

His wife stood up speakin in Spanish, big titty bitch Holdin the cannon
ran in the kitchen, threw a shot, then Kick in the four fifth, broke a
bone in her wrist and she dropped the heat "Give up the coke!" But the
bitch wouldn't listen I'm on the floor like, holy shit! Watchin my man
Frank get busy, he zoned out, finished off my man's wizie He let the
pitbull out, big head Bruno With the little shark's teeth, chargin,
foamin out the mouth I'm scared, Frank screamin, blowin shots in the
air Missin his target off the Frigidaire, it grazed my ear Killed that
bullshit pit, ran to the back room butt first Frank put two holes in the
doorman's Sassoon "The coke's in the vacuum," got to the bathroom
Faced his bad moves, the big one had the centipede stab wound Frank
shot the skinny dude, laid him out The bigger dude popped Frankie
boy, played him out To be continued ...



2000-2010

New Millennium Rap

In 2006 Nas released the album *Hip Hop Is Dead* with its eponymous single, a sharp critique of present-day hip-hop from one of rap's most respected artists. The album cover shows Nas, clad in black, dropping a black rose into an open grave. "Everybody sound the same, commercialize the game *Reminisce* when it wasn't all business, it forgot where it started So we all gather here for the dearly departed," he raps to a menacing beat driven by a psychedelic rock guitar riff from Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-

Da-Vida.” ¹

“Hip Hop Is Dead” inspired passionate responses from rappers, journalists, and fans, ranging from affront to agreement. Most of the discussions, however, failed to look beyond the bold title. Lyrically, the song is not an elegy but an exhortation. Rather than pronouncing hip-hop’s demise, Nas voices a prophetic warning. In the words of the rapper Common, Nas was issuing “a call to arms, a battle cry almost.” ² Saving hip-hop, Nas insists, means shifting the course of the music away from commercial interests and toward the essence of what made rap great in the first place: beats and rhymes, love and lyrics.

Hip-hop began the 2000s as the undisputed face of mainstream music and popular culture; it closed the decade as a smaller, more segmented, though fiercely inventive part of a similarly transformed cultural landscape marked by the atomization of audience and popular taste. The Billboard Hot 100 charts from a typical week between 2000 and 2005 were dominated by rappers (50 Cent, Eminem, Jay-Z, Nelly, Missy Elliott) and by artists strongly influenced by the beats and rhymes of rap (Mary J. Blige, Usher, Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, Gwen Stefani, Mariah Carey).

By contrast, the rappers who earned significant critical and commercial attention in the waning years of the decade often did so with albums that few hip-hop traditionalists would recognize as rap at all—such as Gnarls Barkley’s *St. Elsewhere* (2006), M.I.A.’s *Kala* (2007), Kanye West’s *808s and Heartbreak* (2008), The Black Eyed Peas’s *The E.N.D.* (2009), Kid Cudi’s *Man on the Moon: The End of Day* (2009), and Lil Wayne’s *Rebirth* (2010). Rap’s ever-expanding soundscape, its genre-bending fusions of forms, means that many of the old definitions don’t hold. Rhyming over beats is no longer the sole defining element of rap, though it remains essential to the art form.

In the past decade, hip-hop has undergone a handful of seismic shifts: rap’s decreasing sales and its move from the pop music spotlight, its transformation through digital technology, and its rapid global expansion even as rap’s growth seems to have slowed in the United States. In isolation, each of these could be read as a sign of decline, but taken together they suggest promising new directions for a culture in flux from the start.

We now live in a time, at least in the United States if not beyond, in which no one under the age of thirty has known a world without hip-hop. Its influence has stretched well beyond the music to such realms as sports, advertising, and fashion. *GQ*, for instance, observed in February 2010 that

“hip-hop has been as influential on fashion as any other cultural force in the last thirty years.”³ The present generation of college students came of age when rap was the dominant form of popular music, ruling the radio and music video charts and defining youthful rebellion. But as the world has adjusted to hip-hop and hip-hop to the world, it has become increasingly difficult for anything related to hip-hop to be considered avant-garde. For an art form that was born in reaction to the establishment, that cobbled itself together out of the detritus of the mainstream (sampled records, spray-painted train cars, repurposed and refashioned parts put to new use), being at the seat of power is discombobulating and potentially stagnating.

Hip-hop is now institutionally grounded in a way that would have surprised—and maybe even slightly disturbed—its originators. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five and Run-DMC became the first hip-hop artists inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, an honor for which groups don’t become eligible until twenty-five years after the release of their debut album. In 2006 the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History launched “Hip-Hop Won’t Stop: The Beat, The Rhymes, The Life,” a major collecting initiative with the goal of establishing “an unprecedented permanent collection that will document the undeniable reach of hip-hop and commemorate it as one of the most influential cultural explosions in recent history.” Harvard University’s HipHop Archive, founded in 2002, has dedicated itself to fostering research and scholarship on hip-hop music and culture. Across the academic landscape, from grade school to graduate school, hip-hop is now part of the curriculum. This anthology, too, embodies these transformations.

Few artists better illustrate hip-hop’s move to the mainstream than Eminem. By album sales and cultural impact, he was the most influential artist of the decade. In fact, *Billboard* magazine named him just that. Eminem sold more albums in the last ten years than did his closest competition—the Beatles and Britney Spears—over the same period of time. In 1999 he released his much-anticipated debut album, *The Slim Shady LP*, after spending years building his reputation on the freestyle battle scene, winning contests both in his native Detroit and throughout the country. Bolstered by production from Dr. Dre, the album and the two that followed in quick succession, *The Marshall Mathers LP* (2000) and *The Eminem Show* (2002), went multiplatinum and led the surge of hip-hop to its position of pop music dominance.

Many within the hip-hop community, however, felt uncomfortable that a white MC would gain for hip-hop even wider acceptance than it had already enjoyed. Some called Eminem the Elvis of Rap. What kept him from following in the path of another white rapper with trailblazing commercial appeal, Vanilla Ice, is that Eminem is a supremely gifted lyricist. His influence on hip-hop has been not only commercial but stylistic. Among his many formal innovations are his experiments in persona. His first three albums marked the introduction of three distinct lyrical identities—Slim Shady, the madcap, near-cartoonish alter ego whose high-pitched, nasally voice delivers comic and sinister lines with equal zeal; Eminem, the swaggering lyrical swordsman capable of dismantling any opponent with a phrase; and Marshall Mathers, his given name, a voice that produced more introspective lyrics such as those on “Mockingbird.”

Eminem’s innovations extend to nearly all of rap’s formal elements. He introduced a host of compelling word pairs never heard before in hip-hop, or perhaps any other musical genre—rhyming “Britney Spears” with “switch me chairs,” or “public housing systems” with “victim of Munchausen syndrome.” He fashioned a signature flow that draws heavily on assonance and alliteration to capture a cadence that is both rhythmic and relentless, as he does on “Renegade” in lines like these: “Now who’s the king of these rude ludicrous lucrative lyrics *Who could inherit the title, put the youth in hysterics.*” *In his wordplay he expanded the potential of the hip-hop simile, sometimes stretching them across three or four lines, creating expressions that modulate in meaning as they develop in time:* “I don’t give a fuck if it’s dark or not. I’m harder than me tryna park a Dodge When I’m drunk as fuck right next to a humongous truck in a two car garage / Hoppin out with two broken legs tryna walk it off ...”

Through all of this, Eminem emerged as a popular and a polarizing figure. By virtue of his confessional rhymes, the drama of his personal life is now public: his conflicted relationship with his mother and his ex-wife, his dedication to his daughter, and his battles with chemical dependence. He is one of those rare celebrities about whom we know far too much yet hardly anything at all.

Understanding rap in the 2000s requires paying close attention to another hip-hop icon: Jay-Z. After debuting in 1996 with *Reasonable Doubt*, he became a crossover cultural sensation late in the decade with such chart-topping songs as “Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)” and “Izzo (H.O.V.A.).” By the turn of the century, he was among rap’s most visible

figures, which made it all the more dramatic when he retired in 2003. His decision reflected a desire to pursue other interests, including his responsibilities as president of Def Jam Records and his business interests that would eventually include part ownership in an NBA franchise, a clothing label, and more. Rap called to him, however, and much like Michael Jordan's return to basketball, he came back reinvigorated and refocused.

Jay-Z's career has offered a model for the new hip-hop mogul and global celebrity. *Forbes* magazine cited him as the head of a new breed of "hip-hoprenuers," naming him the highest-earning hip-hop celebrity in its inaugural 2007 money list. Describing the group of hip-hop "Cash Kings" that also includes 50 Cent, Diddy, Kanye West, Ludacris, and others, the magazine noted that "these impresarios have mastered the arts of branding and cross-promotion, with licensing deals for everything from booze to books." In 2008 alone, the top twenty earners in hip-hop exceeded \$500 million. ⁴

Jay-Z's influence on the lyrical craft is equally significant. "With an acute eye for detail," writes David Bry, "an unparalleled ear for dialogue, and a sense of song structure rare among rap writers, Jay created compelling four-minute vignettes detailing topics long revered by the American public: Cool cars. Hot girls. Lotsa money. Jay-Z puts it all together in a dense, twisted mass of internal rhyme and cross-referential metaphor. And, of course, he flows like a faucet." ⁵

Perhaps the most unlikely transformative figure in hip-hop over the past decade has been Kanye West. Kanye burst onto the scene as a rapper in 2004. By that time he had already gained a reputation as a masterful producer with hits like Jay-Z's "Izzo (H.O.V.A.)" and "This Can't Be Life." *The College Dropout* marked the debut of a fresh voice in rap—full of confident swagger but down-to-earth enough to rhyme about folding shirts at The Gap. On "All Falls Down" he reveals a vulnerability and self-doubt rarely heard in rap:

**I wanna act ballerific like it's all terrific
I got a couple past due bills, I won't get specific
I got a problem with spending before I get it
We all self-conscious, I'm just the first to admit it**

Thematically, the album ranged from reflections on organized religion ("Jesus Walks") to the excesses of consumerism ("All Falls Down") to the

love of family (“Family Business”). Poetically, his greatest influence may be in rhyme, where he has taken the practice of slant rhyme and pushed it to the breaking point. This method—call it transformative rhyme—involves consciously altering the pronunciation of one word to forge a perfect rhyme with another. On “Gold Digger,” for instance, he rhymes “Serena” with “Trina,” a perfect rhyme, then makes both rhyme with “Jennifer” by pronouncing it “Ginafa.” The result is a playful move that makes something new by flouting constraint.

Kanye’s career trajectory has mirrored that of hip-hop as a whole. He has expanded his sound to embrace other genres, finally rejecting rapping entirely in favor of singing in Auto-Tune (a technological trick that alters the voice to endow it with a digitized quality) on his 2008 release, *808s and Heartbreak*. His energy, ego, and inventiveness put their mark on the 2000s in a way few other artists can claim.

For all the backlash Auto-Tune experienced by the close of the decade, rap has always developed, employed, and repurposed technological inventions in the making of its art. Kool Herc’s sound system and Timbaland’s arsenal of digital production tools represent a direct evolutionary line in innovation and artistry. Similarly, rap’s audience has been quick to adopt technology that brings it closer to the music. Practices like peer-to-peer file sharing and services like iTunes have revolutionized the way people relate to music. They have both served consumer demand for more freedom of choice and shaped a new model for consuming music. As a result, songs have supplanted albums as the basic unit of musical measure. A whole subgenre of so-called ring-tone rap has ensued, made with the specific purpose of sounding good through the tinny speakers of a cell phone. The rise of digital technology and the resulting web of interconnectivity that now binds nearly the entire planet enable new voices to make music and new ears to hear it.

Relatively inexpensive and high-quality music production software has allowed individuals to produce professional-sounding tracks in their homes. Once the track is finished, they can upload it to any number of Web sites like MySpace and YouTube and deliver their music directly to an audience without record labels and promoters. This new means of music production and dissemination not only challenges the corporate music business model, but also reshapes the aesthetics of rap. Fewer gatekeepers means that more artists than ever can find audiences for their music.

In 2007 a seventeen-year-old from Atlanta followed precisely this

process, uploading his homemade single to SoundClick, YouTube, and MySpace. Commercial radio picked up Soulja Boy Tell 'Em's "Crank That (Soulja Boy)" and it became a nationwide craze, spending seven weeks at the number one spot on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. It sold millions of copies—both as a single and as a ring tone—and earned Soulja Boy a Grammy nomination for Best Rap Song. The song itself is a simple affair: beat-and hook-driven, with basic lyrics. Its massive popularity can be attributed to a number of factors: its stripped-down production translates well to a ring tone, its lyrics are easy to memorize, and it came complete with its own dance—which became a sensation as well.

For some, Soulja Boy's success was a sure sign of rap's decline. Ice-T accused the teenager of "killing hip-hop," leading to an unseemly beef between the venerable rapper and the young upstart. None would confuse Soulja Boy with Rakim, but his success suggests new possibilities for creating and consuming music. The potential now exists for a creative renaissance driven by a musical meritocracy, resisting the trend-chasing impulses of many record labels. At the same time, however, a gutted corporate infrastructure means that artist development is no longer as widespread. Could it be, then, that we will simply get more and more varieties of worse and worse music? The results of this dramatic transformation in the way rap music is made and consumed are still sorting themselves out.

Rap is paradoxically both more globally integrated and more fiercely regional than it has ever been. Rap's regionalism partakes of the energy of grassroots hip-hop scenes around the country. Local artists build local fan bases, touring within the region but rarely beyond. This is happening almost everywhere. Every now and then a regional scene becomes national and even global. Two large regions experienced rapid growth over the decade, shifting hip-hop's center of gravity away from the coasts and toward the South and the Midwest.

The rap industry in the South began building in the 1990s through the enterprising efforts of self-made moguls like Master P and his No Limit Records and Baby and his Cash Money Records. They offered a blueprint for commercial success—self-production, promotion, and distribution. The music coming from Atlanta and New Orleans, and from Memphis and Miami, was varied but shared a few dominant characteristics. Sonically, it tended toward slow, bass-heavy beats. Lyrically, it often relied on memorable hooks and chanted choruses. Thematically, the lyrics tended to center on clubbing, street life, and the drug trade. Sometimes the music

was associated with—and advertised by—a particular dance, such as the “snap-music” trend of the later years of the decade.

Perhaps the greatest underground success story in southern style was crunk. Crunk, which takes its name from the wild response the music tends to elicit from the crowd on the dance floor, fused hip-hop and electro beats. With a slower tempo than that of New York-based hip-hop, it also tended to feature strong hooks rather than complex verses. Lyrics serve a complementary function, bolstering the energy of the music—hence the fact that shouts and screams, like Lil Jon’s famous “Yeaaaah!” are often the most memorable part of the performance. Lil Jon & the Eastside Boyz were the most visible figures of this new movement, scoring a major hit with 2002’s “Get Low.”

The South also produced a new breed of hardcore lyricists, most notably Atlanta’s T.I., the self-proclaimed “King of the South,” and Young Jeezy. By the middle of the decade, T.I. was among only a handful of rap artists capable of charting major record sales. In the second half of the decade, Jeezy emerged as a commercial force in his own right. But the most transformative figure to emerge from the South over the past decade has been Lil Wayne. Wayne, or Weezy, was the youngest member of Baby’s Cash Money Millionaires from New Orleans. He was recording by the age of eleven and before the age of twenty he already had gold records to his credit. He reached a new level of fame starting with 2004’s *Tha Carter*, led by the hit “Go DJ.”

Renowned for never writing down his lyrics, Lil Wayne has cultivated a style that draws on the strengths of this exclusive orality. He relies heavily on devices like homonyms and homophones, assonance, alliteration, and, of course, rhyme. His wordplay most often is grounded in puns, turns of phrase that make the most of the play of sound.

Wayne built a reputation as a relentless lyricist through a series of mix tapes. Traditionally, mix tapes formed part of a street economy with DJs blending the latest hits, punctuated by the occasional freestyle verse or unreleased track. In the past decade, however, mix tapes became far more polished, essentially functioning as ersatz albums, with high production values, sharp lyrics, and considerable listenership. Mix tapes allow the MC greater freedom—they can spit verses on other people’s tracks, they can experiment with styles. For some artists, like The Clipse, their best work has arguably come out on mix tapes rather than on studio albums. Though some mix tapes are still offered for purchase (on CD as opposed to actual tape), many are available for free download. Lil Wayne became

the master of the mix tape; *Vibe Magazine* even ran a feature entitled “The 77 Best Lil Wayne Songs of 2007.” He did not release a studio album that year.

Conventional wisdom said that it was commercial suicide to give so much music away for free, yet when *Tha Carter III* was released in 2008, it sold over a million copies in its first week even though most of the songs had been previously available for download (both legally and illegally)—exceedingly rare in the new record industry economy. *Tha Carter III* earned eight Grammy nominations and cemented Lil Wayne’s reputation as a prodigious lyrical talent. If not the greatest rapper alive, a title he sometimes claims for himself, then he is certainly one of the most ubiquitous and memorable.

Other regional scenes developed in unlikely places like Portland, Oregon, and the Twin Cities of Minnesota. From this latter locale the Rhymesayers label released its first album in 1996, shortly followed by Atmosphere’s 1997 debut album. In the next several years, the label built one of the most respected rosters of MCs in the independent hip-hop world, including Atmosphere, Brother Ali, MF DOOM, Eyedea & Abilities, I Self Divine, Blueprint, and Soul Position. They brought international attention to the grassroots hip-hop in Minneapolis–St. Paul. Through relentless touring and word of mouth promotion, Rhymesayers fashioned a new model for independent hip-hop labels.

Hip-hop’s trend in the first decade of the 2000s has been toward geographic expansion. Whereas the 1990s saw the reification of difference between East and West Coast, culminating in the violent deaths of two of hip-hop’s biggest stars, the years since have seen a declining emphasis on the dividing lines of place. This is not to say, however, that place has lost all significance—far from it. Rather, it suggests that rap has expanded to embrace its multiregional and, indeed, multinational identity. Surely the Web, with its aforementioned influence on the production and consumption of the music, has led the way. Now that hip-hop resides largely beyond borders, its beats and rhymes have become a kind of linguistic gumbo, with MCs borrowing from other artists from other places.

Rap’s global expansion is clearly audible in today’s hip-hop. An influential rhyme style, like Nas’s or Busta Rhymes’s or André 3000’s, quickly becomes a model for other rappers from Chicago to Kingston to Cairo and back. Travel itself has become a popular theme in the lyrics as well, with Jay-Z admonishing his adversaries on “30 Something” that “you

ain't got enough stamps in your passport." Hip-hop has always had its global vision—it was, after all, originated by a Jamaican (Kool Herc) and shaped by a Bronxite (Bambaataa) heavily influenced by his formative experiences traveling to Africa and Europe. What we are witnessing today, then, is a turn back to hip-hop's global roots, a necessary embrace of the fact that much of hip-hop now lives outside of America's shores. The present anthology has the space to gesture only broadly toward this rich global heritage; the full wealth of lyrical excellence from abroad demands an anthology all its own.

One international artist with considerable influence on American hip-hop is M.I.A. London-born and Sri Lanka-raised, M.I.A. is an unlikely hip-hop celebrity, not the least because hip-hop is only one of the influences behind the eccentric and energizing music she makes. Her 2005 debut, *Arular*, was a daring blend of styles from East and West. Her lyrics complemented the odd, ambient music, reflecting on a broad range of themes, from politics to poverty, self-reflection to revolution. Her next album, 2007's *Kala*, extended her influence with its omnipresent hit "Paper Planes," a song that lived an even more pervasive second life as a sample on the mega-hit "Swagger Like Us" by Jay-Z, Kanye West, Lil Wayne, and T.I.

M.I.A.'s nearly unclassifiable music is one example of how hip-hop is changing as it comes in contact with other cultures. As Mark Schwartz explains, "Across the globe, hip-hop has been customized, souped up, or retrofitted into local relevance." ⁶ As a fungible commodity, hip-hop culture easily adjusts to new environments and new aesthetic aims. The universal sounds of rhythm—of both the voice and the beat—make hip-hop at home almost anywhere. "I can go to Japan, not speak the language or communicate whatsoever," remarks Evidence from Dilated Peoples, "but a beat will come on, and we'll all move our heads the same way. It lets me know that there's something bigger than just making rap songs." ⁷ Rhythm is universal, whether it comes from a kick drum and a snare or from an MC spitting flows to the beat.

One place rap seems to have least expanded in recent years is in gender equity. The first decade of the 2000s should have been the decade in which women took their rightful place in the music. Rap's second generation of female MCs blossomed in the 1990s. Lil' Kim, Foxy Brown, Eve, Rah Digga, Bahamadia, Lady of Rage, and a host of rappers from the South like Trina, Khia, Shannna, and Mia X all made important records. But the most transformational figure of all was Lauryn Hill. Her supreme gifts as

a lyricist and singer distinguished her as perhaps the most important artist, regardless of gender, in late 1990s hip-hop. Her retreat from music and fame in the 2000s has left a lyrical void.

Instead of continuing its expansion, the role of women in rap has seemingly contracted in the past ten years. While most other genres of popular music saw an expanding role for women in the decades after their inception, hip-hop appears to have inverted the model. The reasons for this are complex and also unclear. Many of the prominent female MCs of the 1990s and early 2000s ran into legal trouble (Lil' Kim, Foxy Brown, Rah Digga), slowing down their production of music. Perhaps, too, young women who might have gone into rap in generations past are now finding forms of expression in musical genres less seemingly hostile to women. However one interprets the recent troubled role of women in hip-hop, it is a crisis that deserves attention.

One of the few bright spots is the rise of women MCs in hip-hop's underground, both in the United States and around the globe. Several recent documentaries call attention to this expanding trend, such as Joshua Asen and Jennifer Needleman's *I Love Hip Hop in Morocco* (2007) and Maori Karmael Holmes's *Scene Not Heard* (2009). Young women are finding within hip-hop a means for self-expression and, at times, resistance.

At the end of the first decade of a new millennium, hip-hop is now just over thirty years old. As a cultural form, it is still in its adolescence—defining the forms of its art, establishing the terms of its aesthetics, settling upon its values and purpose. Rap is at the center of these changes, the voice for a culture born in both resistance and celebration, told in tones of both profundity and profanity. “Hip hop has so much power,” Common says. “The government can’t stop it. The devil can’t stop it. It’s music, it’s art, it’s the voice of the people. And it’s being spoken all around the world and the world is appreciating it.”⁸ Hip-hop has finally proven itself in longevity; the next challenge is to establish its place in history.

Like jazz and rock and roll before it, hip-hop has gone from musical upstart to mainstream success only to face an identity crisis. Rap's mainstreaming in the early years of the decade and its declining sales in the waning years could be a story of demise, but it is more likely one of rebirth, as rap puzzles out its post-pop identity. What does rap do when faced with the threats of co-option and stagnation? In the words of André 3000, it “makes new shit.”⁹ This crass and creative injunction, echoing

the modernist motto of Ezra Pound from nearly a century ago to “make it new,” is an artistic call to action. Hip-hop’s future lies in the ingenuity of its present-day artists as well as in its judicious use of its own past.

AESOP ROCK

Aesop Rock crafts jam-packed imagistic verses. His rhymes are characterized by their texture and abstraction. “It’s kind of what comes naturally for me,” he explains. “The way I write is how I like to write and how I prefer to write. It comes more naturally for me to be into an abstract idea, I guess. It takes a while to sit and hash it all out on paper, but it’s what I want to write, so it’s what gets me excited.” ¹⁰

Aesop Rock began rapping in the early 1990s. While studying painting at Boston University, he struck up a friendship with producer Blockhead, which evolved into a professional relationship that has spanned Aesop’s career. In 2001 he signed to underground rapper/producer EL-P’s Definitive Jux (Def Jux) label, which boasts a roster of talented MCs including Del, Dizzee Rascal, and Mr. Lif.

Some of Aesop’s lyrics are plainspoken and powerful, such as the narrative-driven “No Regrets.” Other rhymes can leave one grasping for meaning. Opacity through abstraction and allusion, however, is precisely what makes Aesop Rock’s lyrics appeal to his fans. “Even if it’s not laid out in perfect sentences—is any rap?—you’d have to be an idiot to not at least grasp a few things from these songs,” Aesop says, “or have had no interest in pulling anything from them in the first place.” ¹¹

9-5ERS ANTHEM

Zoom in to the fumin of an aggravated breed

Via the study of postadolescent agitated seeds Half the patients wasted
self prior to commencement So I focus on the urban oxygen samples,
the half that made it breathe This old Pompeii impression sways
infection in twelve steps or less And cretins swiftly tippy-toe on hard
to swallow barter concepts The give-it/get-it never let itself past
wrought iron stubbornness Martyrs talk funny causes in a harvesting
Spartacus And so on ... I throw long Hail Mary bombs

Toward cookie-cutter Mother Nature’s bedazzled synthetic fabrics Life
treats the peasants like they tried to fuck his woman While he slept
inside, while they’re merely chasing perfectionist emblems When the
clock strikes nine, I’ll be wakin with the best of the Routine caffeine
team players for the cycle of it Under a dusted angel harp-string, Big
Brother is watching My odometer like buzzard to fallen elk, hawkin

stealth We got babies, rubber stamps, and briefcase parts We on some door-to-door now, order ten dollars or more We'll shove it down your throat for free

I'll sacrifice my inborn tendencies for copper pennies From one commander 'gimme that' so he can retain baby fat Mega biter snake bedlam, Holocaust freak

Heckle shiesty brain headroom shake planet

Make a move, pause, make a move, break cannon Bend barrel one-eight-zero U-turn, squeeze, end it It's on like it's never been. It's bleeding well It's bigger than a breadbox. It corrodes my leaky finance I take my seat atop the Brooklyn Bridge with a Coke and a bag of chips To watch a thousand lemmings plummet just because the first one slipped Sometimes I laugh at victory, kissing these little question marks I tend to underestimate my average

Just another bastard savage. Someday you'll all eat out of my cold hand 'Cause every dog has its day at which point, I'll pull it away [Chorus]

Now, we the American working population

Hate the fact that eight hours a day

Is wasted on chasing the dream of someone that isn't us And we may not hate our jobs

But we hate jobs in general

That don't have to do with fighting our own causes We the American working population

Hate the nine-to-five day-in/day-out

When we'd rather be supporting ourselves

By being paid to perfect the pastimes

That we have harbored based solely on the fact That it makes us smile if it sounds dope ...

It's the Year of the Silkworm

Everything I built burned yesterday. Let's display the purpose That these stilts serve. Elevate the spreading of the silk germ Trying to weave a web but all I believe in is dead Nah, brother, it's the Year of the Jackal

Saddle up on high horse. My torch forced Polaris embarrassed Shackle up the hassle by the doom and legend marriage I bought some new sneakers, I just hope my legacy matches It's the Year of the Landshark

Dry as sand—parched—damn, get these men some water They're out there being slaughtered in meaningless wars so you don't have to bother And can sit and soak the idiot box, trying to fuck their daughters Man, it's the Year of the Orphan

Seated adjacent to the fireflies circling the torches on your porches Trying to guard the fortress of a king they've never seen or met But all are trained to murder at the first sign of a threat Maybe it's the Year of the Water Bug

Cockroach, utter thug specimen. Fury spawned from Dreaming of your next of kin. I'm still dealing with this mess I'm in I've been the object of your ridicule. You've been a bitch lieutenant God, it's the Year of the Underpaid Employee Spitting forty plus a week and trying to rape Earth in my off time You bored dizzy, I can't keep myself busy enough So you can run, run, run, and I'ma let you think you won EVERYBODY!

[Chorus]

Fumble outta bed and stumble to the kitchen Pour myself a cup of ambition

And yawn and stretch and my life is a mess

And if I never make it home today, God bless Fumble outta bed and I stumble to the kitchen Pour myself a cup of ambition

And yawn and stretch and my life is a mess

And if I never make it home today, God bless NO REGRETS

Lucy was seven and wore a head of blue barrettes City born into this world with no knowledge and no regrets Had a piece of yellow chalk with which she'd draw upon the street The many faces of the various locals that she would meet There was Joshua, age ten, bully of the block Who always took her milk money at the morning bus stop There was Mrs. Crabtree, and her poodle, she always Gave a wave and holler on her weekly trip down to the bingo parlor And she drew: men, women, kids, sunsets, clouds And she drew: skyscrapers, fruit stands, cities, towns Always said hello to passersby, they'd ask her why she passed her time Attachin lines to concrete, but she would only smile Now all the other children living in or near her building Ran around like tyrants, soaking up the open fire hydrants They would say, "Hey, little Lucy, wanna come jump double dutch?"

Lucy would pause, look, grin, and say, "I'm busy, thank you much"

Well, well, one year passed and believe it or not She covered every last inch of the entire sidewalk And she stopped. "Lucy, after all this, you're just giving in today?"

She said, "I'm not giving in, I'm finished," and walked away [Chorus 2x]
1-2-3, that's the speed of the seed

A-B-C, that's the speed of the need

You can dream a little dream or you can live a little dream I'd rather live it 'cause dreamers always chase but never get it Lucy was thirty-seven and introverted somewhat Basement apartment in the same building she grew up in She traded in her blue barrettes for long locks held up with a clip Traded in her yellow chalk for charcoal sticks And she drew: little Bobby who would come to sweep the porch And she drew: the mailman, delivered everyday at four Lucy had very little contact with the folks outside her cubicle day But she found it suitable and she liked it that way She had a man now: Rico, similar, hermit

They would only see each other once or twice a week on purpose They appreciated space and Rico was an artist, too So they'd connect on Saturdays to share the pictures that they drew (Look!) Now every month or so, she'd get a knock upon the front door Just one of the neighbors, actin nice, although She was a strange girl, really, said, "Lucy, wanna join me for some lunch?"

Lucy would smile and say, "I'm busy, thank you much"

And they would make a weird face the second the door shut And run and tell their friends how truly crazy Lucy was And Lucy knew what people thought but didn't care, 'cause While they spread their rumors through the street, she'd made another masterpiece [Chorus 2x]

Lucy was eighty-seven, upon her deathbed

At the senior home, where she had previously checked in Traded in the locks and clips for a headrest Traded in the charcoal sticks for arthritis, it had to happen And she drew no more, just sat and watched the dawn Had a television in the room that she'd never turned on Lucy pinned up a life's worth of pictures on the wall And sat and smiled and looked each one over, just to laugh at it all Now Rico, he had passed, 'bout five years back So the visiting hours pulled in a big flock of nothin She'd never spoken much throughout the spanning of her life Until the day she leaned forward, grinned, and pulled the nurse aside

And she said: "Look, I've never had a dream in my life Because a dream is what you wanna do, but still haven't pursued I knew what I wanted and did it 'til it was done So I've been the dream that I wanted to be since day one!"

Well! The nurse jumped back, she'd never heard Lucy even talk, especially words like that

She walked over to the door and pulled it closed behind Then Lucy blew a kiss to each one of her pictures and she died [Chorus 2x]

ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is a Minneapolis-based rap duo comprised of the rapper Slug and the DJ/producer Ant. The group has existed in various iterations since 1993, one of the longest-lived and most successful independent acts in rap. Together with their Rhymesayers label mates, they have fashioned not only their own independent business model, but also a hip-hop aesthetic driven by varied storytelling, dense lyrical flows, and eclectic beats.

Both in beats and rhymes, Atmosphere's sound is often dark and emotional. The group is known for their series of songs about a woman named Lucy, who is, by turns, an actual woman or a poetic conceit used to talk about everything from politics to hip-hop. "Fuck You Lucy" is, as the title suggests, about a difficult breakup, but it is also a love lyric. The jumbled language of the sample that both opens and closes the song ("It leave never would you, you show could I if") reflects the speaker's confusion and his search for certitude. By contrast, "Sunshine" is both an aubade and a hip-hop pastoral. The speaker, hung over from a night of revelry, is initially reluctant to confront the light of day; the sun, Slug rhymes in an artful simile, hits him "dead in the eye / Like it's mad that I gave half the day to last night." But once he goes outside, it inspires reveries of days past and present.

FUCK YOU LUCY

It leave never would you, you show could I if [6x]

She sayin that she still wants a friendship She can't live her life without
me as a friend I can't figure out why I'd give a damn to what she
wants I don't understand the now before the then Most of this garbage
I write that these people seem to like Is about you and how I let you
infect my life And if they got to know you, I doubt that they would see
it They'd wonder what I showed you, how you could leave it A friend
in Chicago said that I should stay persistent If I stay around, I'm bound
to break resistance Fuck you, Lucy, for defining my existence Fuck you
and your differences ...

Ever since I was a young lad with a part-time dad It was hard to find
happiness inside of what I had I studied my mother, I digested her pain
And vowed no woman on my path would have to walk the same

Travel like sound across the fate ladder I travel with spoon to mix this
cake batter And I travel with feel so I can deal with touch It's like that.
Thank you very much. Fuck you very much [Chorus 2x]

Yes, yes it is

And everyone in his life would mistake it as love Everyone in his life
would mistake it as love Everyone in his life would mistake it as love
Fuck the what happened, I got stuck

They can peel pieces of me off the grill of her truck Used to walk with
luck, used to hold her hand Fell behind and played the role of a slower
man I wanna stand on top of this mountain and yell I wanna wake up
and break up this lake of hell I feel like a bitch for letting the sheet
twist me up The last star fighter is wounded, time to give it up On a
pick it up mission, kept it bitter Gettin in a million memories just to
forget her The difficulty in keeping emotions controlled Cookies for the
road took me by the soul Hunger for the drama, hunger for the nurture
Gonna take it further, the hurt feels like murder Interpret, the eyes
read the lines on her face The sunshine is fake, how much time did I
waste?

Fuck you, Lucy, for leaving me

Fuck you, Lucy, for not needin me

I wanna say fuck you because I still love you No, I'm not OK and I don't
know what to do [Chorus 2x]

Do I sound mad? Well, I guess I'm a little pissed Every action has a point,
five points make a fist You close 'em, you swing 'em, it hurt when it
hits And the truth can be a bitch, but if the boot fits I got an idea: You
should get a tattoo That says "warning." That's all, just a warning So
the potential victim can take a left and save breath And avoid you,
sober and upset in the morning I wanna scream, "Fuck you, Lucy!"

But the problem is I love you, Lucy

So instead, I'ma finish my drink and have another While you think about
how you used to be my lover (Fuck you)

[Chorus 2x]

It leave never would you, you show could I if ... [repeat to fade]

SUNSHINE

Ain't no way to explain or say
How painful the hangover was today
In front of the toilet, hands and knees Trying to breathe in between the
dry heaves My baby made me some coffee
Afraid that if I drink some it's probably coming right back out me Couple
a Advil, relax and chill
At a standstill with how bad I feel
I think I need to smell fresh air
So I stepped out the back door and fell down the stairs The sunlight hit me
dead in the eye
Like it's mad that I gave half the day to last night My bad sight made me
trip on my ass, right Into that patch of grass like "That's life!"
All of a sudden, I realize something
The weather is amazing, even the birds are bumpin Stood up and took a
look and a breath And there's that bike that I forgot that I possessed
Never really seen exercise as friendly But I think something's telling
me to ride that ten-speed The brakes are broken, it's alright
The tires got air and the chain seems tight Hopped on and felt the
summertime
It reminds me of one of them Musab lines like [Chorus 2x]
Sunshine, sunshine, it's fine
I feel it in my skin, warmin up my mind Sometimes you gotta give in to
win
I love the days when it shines. Whoa, let it shine If I could I would keep
this feeling in a plastic jar Bust it out whenever someone's actin hard
Settle down, barbeque in the backyard The kids get treats and old folks
get classic cars Every day that gets to pass is a success And every
woman looks better in a sundress The sunshine's an excuse to shoot
hoops Get juice, show and prove them moves and let loose I hear
voices, I see smiles to match 'em Good times and you can feel it in the
fashion Even though the heat cooks up the action The streets still got
butterflies, enough kids to catch 'em Ridin my bike around these lakes,
man Feelin like I finally figured out my escape plan Take it all in, the
day started off all wrong But somehow now that hangover is all gone
Ain't nothing like the sound of the leaves When the breeze penetrates

these southside trees Leanin up against one, watchin the vibe Forgettin
all about the stress, thanking God I'm alive It's so simple, I had to keep
the song simple And when I get home I'm gonna open all the windows
Feelin alright, stopped at a stop sign A car pulled up, bumpin Fresh
Prince's "Summertime"

[Chorus 2x]

BEANIE SIGEL

Beanie Sigel is part of a long tradition of streetwise Philadelphia rappers stretching back to the 1980s with Schoolly D. After delivering a guest verse on fellow Philadelphians The Roots's "Adrenaline!" Sigel was signed to Jay-Z's Roc-A-Fella Records label. He would appear on several Jay-Z tracks as well as release a series of hard-hitting solo albums, beginning with *The Truth* (2000).

Stylistically, Sigel is known for constructing long runs of chain rhymes, sometimes even repeating the same word in distinct contexts. While much of his subject matter concerns the life of crime, as in "Tales of a Hustler" and "The Truth," he also reveals a raw and confessional tone.

THE TRUTH

I hope you got a extra mic and a fireproof booth 'Cause you know I'm
known to melt a wire or two You need a fire engineer when I lay this
blaze I melt down tracks that's real since slaves Hit the studio, jars of
dro, bars to blow B. Sigel with that arsenic flow

Fuck that, don't hold me back, I roll with crack Y'all cats told Mac to rap
Y'all don't realize y'all released the beast untamed Speech all flame,
streets y'all blame

It should be a honor for y'all to speak my name I could go before your
honor, he couldn't peep my game Gotta laugh, y'all act like ya spit it
the same Why you motherfuckers can't get in the game?

I come from high school and go straight to the league Who you know who
can spit it with Sig'?

[Chorus 2x]

Nigga, the truth, every time I step in the booth I speak the truth, y'all
know what I'm bringing to you I bring the truth, you motherfuckers
know who I be I be the truth, what I speak shall set you free Nigga, the
truth

Ain't nothin changed with Sig', I'm still stuck in the kitchen So what I'm
signed? That's fine, still stuck in position You motherfuckers know me
well, couple court cases From jail, couple .44 shells from hell Stuck on
this mission, go home, my girl fussin and bitchin "Motherfucker, won't

you change your life?" I'm thinkin Motherfucker, won't I change my wife?

Ignorant bastard, laughin, like, "fuck the rap shit"

It's just another hustle, another way for niggas to touch you Now they know the face of Beans

Now they see my face on screens and I ain't even Chase this dream; I feel sorry for those who did Y'all niggas can't stop the boar, whether rock or raw I'm slingin coke in a Roc velour

You niggas know what block I'm on, Glock in palm You wanna get shot, karate chopped, or stabbed—it's on Motherfucker ...

[Chorus]

Black Friday management and Roc's the label And I still hit you niggas with shots that's fatal That bullshit vest can't save you, I had a doc Open you up from chest to navel

See my face on cable and have flashbacks Of that cold-ass table and them holes I gave you I'm that nigga that'll come and pour salt in your wound At the hospital while the cops guardin your room You got to see what I've seen, look where I've looked Touch what I've reached and take what I've took You got to go where I've gone, walk where I've walked To get where I'm at to speak what I talk You got to lay where I've laid, stay where I've stayed Play where I've played to make what I've made You got to move what I've moved, use what I used Use tools how I use, use fools how I use [Chorus 2x]

BLACKALICIOUS

Blackalicious is the partnership between MC Gift of Gab and producer Chief Xcel. Gift of Gab's flow is fast-paced and laced with multisyllabic rhymes, consciously crafted in relation to the beat. "I'm basically trying to be like another instrument on the track," he explains. "I want to ride it like the bass line is riding it, only with words. I wanna ride it just like the guitar or the violin or whatever instrument, just riding it." ¹²

Blackalicious favors songs with clear formal and thematic structures. On "Alphabet Aerobics," for instance, Gab spits lyrics based upon each letter of the alphabet. From these kinds of self-imposed formal constraints, the group achieves a level of creative freedom within the structure.

ALPHABET AEROBICS

Now it's time for our wrap-up. Let's give it everything we've got. Ready? Begin

Artificial amateurs aren't at all amazing Analytically, I assault, animate
things

Broken barriers bounded by the bomb beat

Buildings are broken, basically I'm bombarding Casually create
catastrophes, casualties

Cancelling cats got their canopies collapsing Detonate a dime of dank,
daily do indulge

Demonstrations, Don Dada on the down low

Eatin other editors with each and every energetic Epileptic episode,
elevated etiquette

Furious, fat, fabulous, fantastic

Flurries of funk felt feeding the fanatics Gift got great global goods gone
glorious

Gettin godly in this game with the goriest Hit 'em high, hella hype,
historical

Hey, holocaust hymns, hear 'em, holler at your homeboy Imitators idolize,
I intimidate

In a instant, I'll rise in a irate state

Juiced on my jams like Jheri curls jockin joints Justly, it's just me, writin
my journals
Kindly I'm kindling all kinds of King Kong Karate Kid type Brits in my
kingdom
Let me live a long life, lyrically lessons is Learned lame louses just lose to
my livery My mind makes marvelous moves, masses
Marvel and move, many mock what I've mastered Niggas nap knowin I'm
nice naturally
Knack, never lack, make noise nationally
Operation, opposition, off, not optional
Out of sight, out of mind, wide beaming opticals Perfected poem,
powerful punch lines
Pummeling petty powder puffs in my prime
Quite quaint quotes keep quiet, it's Quannum Quarrelers ain't got a
quarter of what we got, uh Really raw raps, risin up rapidly
Riding the rushing radioactivity
Super scientific sound search sought
Silencing superfire saps that are soft
Tales ten times talented, too tough
Take that, challengers, get a tune up
Universal, unique, untouched
Unadulterated, the raw uncut
Verb vice lord victorious valid
Violate vibes that are vain, make 'em vanish Why I'm all well what a wise
wordsmith just Weaving up words, weeded up on my work shift Xerox,
my X-ray-diation holes extra large
X-height letters and xylophone tones
Yellow back, yak mouth, young ones' yaws
Yesterday's lawn yards sell, I yawn
Zig-zag zombies, zoomin to the zenith
Zero in Zen thoughts, overzealous rhyme zealot!

Hahaha. Good. Can you say it faster?

MY PEN & PAD

Here we go [6x]

Back on the journey again, tool is a pad and a pen Cool as the fan, as the
wind soothing you after I send True inner-vision risen and driven
while givin you my Isms of intuition while niggas is livin a lie
Syllables spill and I fly, high as the pinnacle rhyme Not to belittle a
fool, but try to get into you, my Lyrics inherited from awareness
somewhere in the sky Clearly, you'll give them merit and cherish 'em
better with time There is none ever and on like rivers so clever I shine
Verbal ambassador travel in this endeavor of mine Never a
antigangster, the ghetto is still in the mind If I was not rappin, a nigga
might be up inside All of your terraces, stealin wallets and necklaces, I
Give hella gratefulness for the blessing to share this and fly
Everywhere people outside the culture now try to divine What it is, but
it is mine, such it is, love it with blind-Vision but no division is vivid,
we livin inside Vicious vindictive and mental prisons from within the
mind Sits and I find stillness, from minutes is written the rhyme Gettin
you smitten with it, particularly if you're a prime Listener, listen up,
twist it up like the lyrics was lime Vintage is instant, so give it up
when you hear it reci-ted At attention, relieving tension and bending
yo' spine Sendin you signals to get yo' internal system aligned Lyrical
pinnacle situation is critical

Syllable after syllable, give it to you, deliver you my Intervals, sendin you
through dimensions you didn't know Hidden in you, within you, when
you get into the begin to intuit Sentiments, internets, couldn't send
you yet signals you get Ripping through skin and through tissue, fix
you elixirs that might Lift your peripheral vision, the mystical wisdom
that tends To go into the infinite system of livin and this is the ending
As well as the beginning of the Gift in his prime Mission the bliss is
divine, christen it, isn't it fine?

Listen and dissin it, that's the incident innocent Men and women hit lyrics
is killin niggas, they shiverin The predicament's thick and it splits the
wig of the ignorant lyricist Puttin fear in their spirit—Yo, that's my
time! ...

BROTHER ALI

Brother Ali is known for both his clever wordplay and his confessional subject matter. His lyrics embody a range of emotions—from insecurity to outrage, wry humor to reflection. He confronts difficult personal topics, including divorce, homelessness, and self-doubt. “I always want to make music that’s really powerful and personal and real, and that when you hear it, you can feel that feeling that I’m going through. And so the only way that I really know to definitely ensure that is to [write] stuff about my life. Even if I’m writing things that aren’t necessarily *my* story, it’s somebody very close to me, or something that I’ve seen or that I’ve been involved in. So, it’s all from real-life things, and then basically at that point the idea is to just tell you what you need to know to understand where this feeling is coming from.” ¹³

Born with albinism, a defect in melanin production that results in little or no pigment in the skin, hair, and eyes, he takes his physical appearance as a theme in ways both humorous (“Forest Whitaker”) and poignant (“Picket Fence”). He is also known for “Uncle Sam Goddamn,” a critique of U.S. government actions, both foreign and domestic. “My thing though is that I’m not a political rapper,” he explains. “I had one political song [“Uncle Sam Goddamn”] that ended up being a video and a single. But that even isn’t really a political song. I’m not talking about policies ... I’m talking about the greed and the hatred that’s written into the history of this country.” ¹⁴

ROOM WITH A VIEW

I guess it’s nowhere different from anywhere else in the world, man. I look out my window, I see the whole thing.

One side of the street is Malone’s Funeral Home And the other side’s a library ...

Try very hard to picture this shit, walk through where I live at Where
parents are embarrassed to tell you they raise their kids at You need
some half-and-half or an eight-ball, you can get that Fuck with Little
Rodney and you’ll get all of your ribs cracked In a location where
slanging (crack rock) is not seen As a fuckin recreation but a vocation
And the sellers and the smokers are both pacin Got one eye on

Minneapolis P.D., they both racin Three for fifty is the supply and demand

And the Twin Cities, American heartland

And they been busy, masterminds tearing apart plans And hoop dreamers ballin with blisters on they hands With chains danglin from the rims

Pain strangles 'em from within

'Til a belt around the arm makes the veins stand at ATTENTION

I try to block it out with a bedsheet, the moonlight's as a curtain 'Cause I'm not comforted by red and blue lights when I'm hurtin Mommy loves you. Yeah, I knew but I wasn't certain 'Cause the lenses through which she views life wasn't workin As a boy she told me, "Wait 'til your father to come home"

I'm twenty-four, still waitin for my father to come home And some parents only touch they children when a whip's brought That's why bad kids do bad shit, just so they could get caught And get touched, this growing up shit's rough That's a big part of why we're so mixed up

Shit, we don't have Bar Mitzvahs, we become men The first time our father hits us, and we don't open gifts up Sister Regina from across the street is beautiful But for fifty bucks ain't nothing she won't do to you Used to be premium pussy, now she used up

For that same fifty bucks she got to do some new stuff Whatever it takes to make you pull the dollars out If you don't intervene then there's a day she'll turn her daughter out Speaking of kids, I'm fixing lunch for my firstborn I had the windows wide open 'cause the weather's warm That's when the greatest hits of Donny Hathaway Got interrupted by a drive-by shooting half a block away Faheem was in the window, he didn't get hit, though All praise due Allah

[Chorus 3x]

I see all this from the desk that I write my rhymes from Pen starts to scribble on its own, my mind's numb But you can call me modern urban Norman Rockwell I paint a picture of the spot well

PICKET FENCE

I was up and out my mother's house at seventeen Been a grown-ass married man ever since

Family reunions, I'm talked about but never seen 'Cause I learned that
some of them can be your nemesis Got a lot of scars on me and I'll tell
you the stories If you promise not to take offense

Homie, sit back, let Ant bring the beat in
I'll try to find a place that starts to make sense now The first time I was
pushed out blind

Cold and naked, spanked on the ass to breathe An immigrant from
heaven on Earth with a word piece I announce myself with gasping
screams

Before blight and white supremacy heisted my innocence I was living out
life behind the picket fence Happy go lucky, scared of no one

With only the exception, I'm allergic to the sun Didn't know I had a image
that a camera couldn't capture One hundred percent Allah's
manufacture

But then came the laughter and outside a battered Picket fence shattered,
I saw myself

As a bastard tag-along, harassed and spat upon By the children of slave
masters who passed it on The saddest songs have been sung at the
hands of Who I call the race from hell, it's a disgrace from hell Fell
face first into self-hate

Burst into tears when I'd hear my own hellish name cursed If I seem timid,
it's only because every mirror That I saw back then had the Earth's
ugliest human being in it And with that said

They would kick me 'til they got tired or I act dead And I have to tell y'all
that the obvious part Is I always feel free when I'm talking to God
Alone on the playground, Friday afternoon

And the old sister who hums gospel tunes
I saw her, noticed her getting closer

She approached me and put a knowing hand on my shoulder And booked
my feelings 'cause she looked at me In a way that adults very seldom
look at children And with the wisdom only earned by years

She read my thoughts and she welled up with tears and said: "You look
the way you do because you're special Not the short bus way, I mean
that God's gonna test you And all of this pain is training for the day
when you Will have to lead with the gift God gave to you Grown folks
don't see it, but the babies do

And there's a chance that you can save a few"

And time would prove that, she started my movement She didn't tell me to take it, she told me to use it The second time Poppa ripped the womb open early And exposed me to the coldness of life prematurely Where Mom's love used to live now housed denial And when that decayed, it made her bitter and spiteful But me and my runaway, we share something special Rode into the sunset, could barely touch the pedals No strings attached, screaming, "Fuck Geppetto"

We may live in the gutter, but we cling to each other A week before my son came, I caught a bad bounce And had to step to Mom with my hands out

And Mama proved the two of us could not live in that house She lied to the police so they would throw us in the streets And separation from you is something I feel I must do It's not that I don't love you, it's more that I don't trust you It's been a year since I've seen a living relative And it's just now that I'm starting to live

But while I'm sitting here, choking on tears, wishing I didn't care Feeling all alone in this hemisphere, I swear upon Everything I hold dear and then my wife come near And I hear a voice whisper in my ear:

"You're going through all of this because you're special Not no superstar shit, I mean that God had to test you And all of this pain has been training for the day when you Would lead us with the gift God gave to you

Your parents might not see it, but your babies do And there's a chance that you can save a few"

And time would prove that, she started my movement She didn't tell me to take it, she told me to use it So I use it

CAM'RON

Cam'ron was born and raised in Harlem amid poverty but also amid the atmosphere of creativity that has made Harlem synonymous with African American artistic achievement for generations. In the 1990s Cam formed part of the group Children of the Corn alongside his cousin Bloodshed, Digga, and two other MCs who would go on to have solo success, Ma\$e and Big L. Cam'ron would ultimately found The Diplomats (also known as Dipset) and would help foster a roster of talented MCs that includes Jim Jones, Juelz Santana, JR Writer, and others.

Cam's solo career began in 1999 with *Confessions of Fire*, which featured the hit collaboration with Ma\$e, "Horse & Carriage." It also introduced Cam's signature sound, which draws from hard-edged themes of crime and which includes the occasional R&B-inflected tracks. As *Pitchfork* notes, "Cam's flow is a thing of beauty. His bored, arrogant voice rolls syllables around until he's hit just about every possible permutation, transforming hard consonants into thrown rocks and idly toying with drug metaphors like they're Rubik's Cubes. In Cam's world, he's the king of Harlem, moving kilos, dispatching foes, and throwing around money with Machiavellian cool." ¹⁵

GET IT IN OHIO

*What up, Midwest? They forgot about the fourth coast—it ain't nuthin, though.
What up, Arkansas, Minnesota, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri? Everybody in
the Lou ...*

Thinkin 'bout Guy Fisher

Never met him, but goddamn, that's my nigga I figure real estate investor,
pie flipper Never snitch. Me, I'm in a bathrobe, fly slippers Left
Chicago with good money for five drops West Side, did the South Side
like the White Sox (What up, Stony Island?) Bamboo and Pulaski, K-
Town is Contra (Westside) They'll dearly depart ya in front of
MacArthur's (What up, Madison?) I'm the author for gangstas, tough
guys

Did the whole Ohio, but I started off a Buckeye Columbus to 'Nati, them

towns, I raped 'em Few clowns was hatin, moved my pounds to
Dayton And in Akron, my niggas they would throw things Not King
James, these were coke kings

And he actin grown, doggy, you ain't back at home The smack, it's on,
wrapped in chrome, you better get a chaperone [Chorus]

If you know like I know, you should lie low Killa, I used to get it in Ohio
Don't forget the Chi though, guns are like a pyro You keep playin you will
look like a gyro

Yo, go 'head and hate me, hater, 'cause I'm flyer than a aviator Well,
you'll get smacked with the radiator And I get catered, playa, wanna
talk? Maybe later Told her, her time was up, eighty-eight her, Flavor
Flaved her Need ya neck choked, rather your neck broke Ya dead
broke, yes folks, the jewels are like egg yolks And you'll get yolked up,
switchblade, poked up Bitch-made since sixth grade, he need his rope
cut Cowboy roped up, y'all boys sold what?

Know what? Dope, crack, and coke is in the coat tucked Roll up, hold up,
family, this a holdup

Get close up, soaked up, I'm KG, post up

Ho, slut, no love, turn beef to cold cuts

Family gettin bread? Well, he about to get his loaf cut Y'all doped up, this
game is sewed up

Malcolm X, tell the white bitch: "Yo, I want my toes sucked"

[Chorus]

I'd rather be judged by twelve than carried by six My twelve to twelve?
Well, they carry my bricks And them twelve-twelve fiends, they're
married to sniff And the V12? That's on various strips

Y'all make a brother laugh; me, I took another bath Come into my
habitat, hovercrafts, bubble baths, Duffle bags stuffed with cash, fell in
love with math I got the green Benz, red Range, mustard Jag White
coke, tan dope, black gun, Tre-Deuce Silver bullets, purple piff, blue
pills, Grey Goose Pull out the rat-a-tat, duck-duck, say "Goose"

Beige Coupe, suede roofs, send him off to Jesus H-deuce, yeah yeah, piss
off the state troops See me, then they don't, I disappear, say poof Play
Zeus. Homeboy, get a replaced tooth

Not Pac, mean dust when a nigga say “juice”

Killa, Killa

[Chorus]

CEE-LO

Cee-Lo, who made his name first as a member of Atlanta's Goodie Mob and later as the lead singer of Gnarls Barkley, has built his solo rap career on inventive and experimental sounds that fuse hip-hop with soul, funk, blues, and electronica. His themes range from the street to the spiritual. "There's a bit of Buddhism, a bit of that Baptist and that Christianity, and Five Percent," he says by way of explaining the faith expressed in his music. "My awareness is broad. To claim a religion is almost like to claim a gang or set, which would make you an adversary of another ... and rightfully so, because you oppose their beliefs or question their beliefs. I think that there's validity in all of the interpretations." ¹⁶

As a member of hip-hop's southern fraternity, he is well aware of the perception that southern artists lack lyrical complexity. Songs like "Big Ole Words (Damn)" and "Childz Play" (the latter included here) demonstrate beyond any doubt Cee-Lo's technical virtuosity and idiosyncratic style.

CHILDZ PLAY

(feat. Ludacris)

[Cee-Lo]

Well, hello, howdy do. How are you? That's good Who me? I'm still hot. I still got. You got me?

I'm here, I'm there, 'cause I'm raw, 'cause I'm rare I can spit on anything, got plenty game, authentic My pen's sick, forensic, defends it, he wins it Again and again and again and again and a I'm the one, come see, lookee I, and come meet The young Cee, the one treats everything the sun seek I'm hollerin. Can you help? I'm hungry

I cake rap, bake rap, sack rap, trap rap Same shoes, same shirt, the same work, the same jerk Claim hurt, the game hurt, my name work, it ain't work?

I'm fast. How fast? I'm first, I'm last Psychic, I knew you would like it like this I write this, priceless, more than my right wrist Cock back, block track, the beat bleed discretely No need weed to feed seed, I speed-

read, you need me To give it to you like you want it, I own it when I'm
on it Maintain the same thing, nigga rap about the same game None
left, shame shame, plain game, insane When I rap things change. Me
and God? Same thing Money jingle, money fold, I'm young, my money
old Maybe look, cross hanging down to my tummy toes I know it, I'ma
stop, I'm trying, it's like lyin Yes, I can sing and I can rap

And I can act and I can dance

And I can dress and I'm the best

So is my guest—man, I'm impressed

Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, come and see This is just like child's play to
me, ah ha Little melody and a little drum

All I really need to have a little fun

Hush, little one, let's get it done

Dress like a bum, bust like a gun

Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, come and see This is just like child's play to
me, ah ha [Ludacris]

Who the only little nigga that you know with 'bout fifty flows Do about
fifty shows in a week but creep on the track with my tippy toes Shhh,
shut the fuck up, I'm tryin to work Ah, forget it, I'm going berserk

'Cause I stack my change and I'm back to claim My reign on top, so pack
your thangs

I've racked your brain like crack cocaine My fame won't stop or I'll jack
your chain Give it up, dad a ding ding ding, thanks, the price was right
That Grey Goose got me loose, but my eyes are tight It's the truth, give
me a light like I'm dyn-o-mite Alright, alright, we gon' ride tonight

I'm so dangerous that I gotta bang with this You could be famous or
remain nameless

Better just drop down to your knees, call upon the Lord and pray Better
luck next time but you wanna open that door today Your hair sorta
gray, it's that sorta day Flowing so hard over this track and I got more
to say I ain't new to this, I'm so true to this See what you get fucking
with Cee-Lo and Ludacris?

[Chorus 2x]

*Haha. Okay, there you have it, little kids. Wasn't that fun? Yeah. Saturday
morning, Cee-Lo Green and my man Ludacris. Doing this thing, ATL style.*

This is child's play to us. Seriously though, I can rap better than you guys with my tongue tied. Ha ha ha. Don't make me get serious on your ass. You wouldn't like me when I'm serious. I could have said anything I wanted to ...

THE CLIPSE

The Clipse's brand of music is often derisively referred to as "crack rap" for its frequent references to the drug trade, but these lyricists are unconstrained by their subject matter. The group consists of Malice and Pusha T, a pair of brothers from Virginia Beach, Virginia. After connecting with Pharrell Williams of the Neptunes in the mid-1990s, they began working with the producer on crafting their distinctive sound. Though many of their songs tell tales of drug trafficking, their verses are rich and varied. As Pusha T explains, "It's one thing to say 'I sell bricks, I sell bricks.' But when you saying 'Trunk like Aspen / Looking like a million muthafuckin crushed aspirins,' dog, we getting back to the colors. A lot of dudes is working with the eight crayons in the box. They do not have the sixty-four box, yo. They don't got 'Burnt Sienna.' They got red, yellow, blue." ¹⁷

Some of The Clipse's finest work can be found on their mix tapes, represented here by "Zen." With lyrical support from the other two members of the Re-Up Gang, Roscoe P. Coldchain and Ab Liva, they deliver hard-hitting rhymes, often over familiar beats from recent hip-hop hits.

GRINDIN

*Yo, I go by the name ... (I'm your pusher) of Pharrell from the Neptunes ...
and I just wanna let y'all know ... (I'm your pusher) the world is about to
feel ... something ... (I'm your pusher) that they never felt before. C'mon
...*

[Pusha T]

From ghetto to ghetto, to backyard to yard I sell it whip on whip, it's off
the hard I'm the ... neighborhood pusher

Call me subwoofer, 'cause I pump base like that, Jack On or off the track,
I'm heavy, Cuz Ball 'til you fall 'cause you could duck to the Fedy govs
Sorry, my love, but I'm seeing through these eyes Benz convoys with
the wagon on the side Only big boys keep deuces on the ride Gucci
Chuck Taylor with the dragon on the side Man, I make a buck, why
scram?

I'm trying to show y'all who the fuck I am The jewels is flirtin, be damned

if I'm hurtin Legend in two games like I'm Pee Wee Kirkland Platinum
on the block with consistent hits While Pharrell keep talking this music
shit [Chorus 5x]

Grindin! (Ahhh)

[Malice]

Patty cake, patty cake, I'm the baker's man I bake them cakes as fast as I
can And you can tell by how my bread stack up And disguise it as rap
so the Feds back up Watch it, like my whip like my chick: topless
Doing a buck-six with me in the cockpit Grindin, cousin, I got holes for
a dozen Even eleven-five, if I see ya keep it comin And my weight,
that's just as heavy as my name So much dough, I can't swear I won't
change Excuse me if my wealth got me full of myself Cocky's
something that I just can't help 'Specially when them twenties is
spinning like windmills And the ice thirty-two below minus the wind
chill Filthy the word that best defines me I'm just grinding, man, y'all
never mind me [Chorus 5x]

Grindin, you know what I keep in a lining Niggas better stay in line when
You see a nigga like me shinin (Grinding!) Grindin, you know what I keep
in a lining Niggas better stay in line when

You see a nigga like me shinin (Grinding!) [Malice]

My grind's 'bout family, never been about fame Them days I wasn't able,
there was always 'caine Four and a half will get you in the game
Anything less is just a goddamn shame Guess the weight, my watch got
blue chips in the face Glock with two tips whoever gets in the way Not
to mention the hideaway that rests by the lake Consider my raw
demeanor the icing on the cake I'm grinding ...

[Pusha T]

I move 'caine like a cripple Balance weight through the 'hood, kids
call me Mr. Sniffles Other hand on my nickel—

Plated whistle, one eye closed I'll hit you As if I was Slick Rick, my aim is
still an issue Lose your soul in ... whichever palm I'm holdin One'll
leave you frozen, the other, noddin and dozin I'm grindin, Jack ...

[Chorus 5x]

Grindin, you know what I keep in a lining Niggas better stay in line when
You see a nigga like me shinin (Grinding!) Grindin, you know what I keep
in a lining Niggas better stay in line when
You see a nigga like me shinin (Grinding!) **ZEN**
(feat. Roscoe P. Coldchain and Ab Liva) [Chorus]
Is it them blings that make them watch us?
The awkward lean and the cars that's topless?
I got them things, I cut and chop it I sell that ostrich, I'm so obnoxious
Gettin money, say ...

[Pusha T]

Hands got the bubble touch, bike with the double clutch Two diamond
jump ropes, my neck do the double dutch Give a fuck about such and
such
On behalf of the Re-Up Gang I'm saying enough's enough Turn it, turn it,
fire burn it
Gram weight straight like a nigga just permed it Pyrex and water, playa,
how I earns it Lamé rap niggas, I'm so not concerned with On another
level, my third bezel, my fourth gas pedal Fifty-five on the back, I'm a
daredevil The course is paved, the watch is Pave You niggas gotta love
me, I'm somethin the Lord made [Roscoe P. Coldchain]
I got, gots to do it, do it
VVS my jewelry, don't need no jury To find me guilty, I stay Goldie
Pockets bulky, how can y'all fault me?
Ghostrider driver, what that mean?
You small wheelin, nigga, fuck that Beam, us that team Touch that
C.R.E.A.M., digital scale, what's that scheme?
(It's all real) I won't touch that theme (Fake!) Nigga's face gets spat in,
then clacked in Squad wants action, Re-Run, what's happenin?
Every episode, the Tech explodes, Gotti bodies Tsunami homies, that's
gotta be why they watch me [Chorus]
Zen zen zen ...

[Ab Liva]

Now, how that forearm glow on 'em, feelin so grown on 'em I pitch work,
sorta like Nomo on 'em Snow on 'em, cover my tracks low on 'em So

on 'em streets I push blow on 'em The car driver, the soft top like Bose
on 'em Rose on 'em, gold on 'em, I'm strikin the pose on 'em No
opponent can come close, match tone on it Flow on it, hone on it, I'm
feelin at home on it That's Liva, the right of the man that hang clothes
on 'em With the belt matchin the shoes, the G soles on 'em I'm classic,
the plastique got olds on 'em I rose on 'em, the self-murder doors close
on 'em [Malice]

Yeah ... Good gosh almighty!

All we do is cook raw, push cars like whitey Like a moth to a flame, it's so
inviting To opposite sexes, the stones so precious Still in the resi', G-4,
or Lear No diamond in that bezie, I get growner every year Pay me for
that feature, that don't make it family All I see is blackface and you
singin "Mammy"

I'm from the old school when the gat was a jammy Twin four-fifths, the
resemblance is uncanny I bust both in sync—Y'all niggas hear me Now
that's what I call the Big Bang Theory [Chorus]

DEAD PREZ

Dead prez are hip-hop's self-styled political revolutionaries for the new millennium. Stic.man and M-1 have fashioned a body of work that goes beyond the music to describe an entire philosophy of living, down to dietary habits and exercise regimens. Beginning with their debut album, *Let's Get Free* (2000), the incendiary cover art of which included a photograph of a slave with a whip-mangled back on one side and a group of young, gun-toting revolutionaries with their hands in the air on the other, dead prez reignited a long-standing hip-hop tradition of radical political rhymes.

Their songs use an array of formal techniques to inculcate an eclectic political philosophy that draws equally from Marxist tracts, socialist manifestos, and spiritual books from the East like the I Ching. Although they sometimes rap allegorically (as on the Orwellian apocalyptic track "Animal in Man"), "Police State" and "Hip-Hop" opt for a more direct approach, with striking lyrics delivered in syncopated flows that draw from southern rhythms as well as New York styles.

POLICE STATE

[Chairman Omali Yeshitela]

You have the emergence in human society of this thing that's called the State. What is the State? The State is this organized bureaucracy. It is the po-lice department. It is the army, the navy. It is the prison system, the courts, and what have you. This is the State—it is a repressive organization. But the State—"And, gee, well, you know, you've got to have the police, 'cause... if there were no police, look at what you'd be doing to yourselves! You'd be killing each other if there were no police!" But the reality is... the police become necessary in human society only at that junction in human society where it is split between those who have and those who ain't got.

[stic.man]

I throw a Molotov cocktail at the precinct, you know how we think
Organize the 'hood under I Ching banners

Red, black, and green instead of gang bandanas FBI spyin on us through
the radio antennas And them hidden cameras in the streetlight watchin
society With no respect for the people's right to privacy I'll take a slug

for the cause like Huey P.

While all you fake niggas (Unnngh!) try to copy Master P

I wanna be free to live, able to have what I need to live Bring the power
back to the street, where the people live We sick of workin for crumbs
and fillin up the prisons Dyin over money and relyin on religion for
help We do for self like ants in a colony

Organize the wealth into a socialist economy A way of life based off the
common need

And all my comrades is ready, we just spreadin the seed [Chorus]

The average black male

Live a third of his life in a jail cell

'Cause the world is controlled by the white male And the people don't
never get justice

And the women don't never get respected

And the problems don't never get solved

And the jobs don't never pay enough

So the rent always be late. Can you relate?

We livin in a police state

[M-1]

No more bondage, no more political monsters No more secret space
launches

Government departments started it in the projects Material objects,
thousands up in the closets Could've been invested in a future for my
comrades Battle contacts, primitive weapons out in combat Many
never come back, pretty niggas be runnin with gats Rather get shot in
they back than fire back We tired of that—corporations hirin blacks
Denyin the facts, exploitin us all over the map That's why I write the
shit I write in my raps; it's documented I meant it, every day of the
week, I live in it Breathin it, it's more than just fuckin believin it I'm
holdin M1s, rollin up my sleeves and shit It's cee-lo for push-ups, now
many headed for one conclusion Niggas ain't ready for revolution

[Chorus]

[Fred Hampton]

I am... a revolutionary. And you're gonna have to keep on sayin that... You're gonna have to say that I am a proletariat. I am the people, I'm not the pig.

[Unidentified Speaker]

Giuliani, you are full of shit! And anybody that's down with you! You could manmake things better for us and you cuttin the welfare, knowin damn well when you cut the welfare, a person gon' do crime.

HIP-HOP

Uh, uh, uh, 1, 2, 1, 2

Uh, uh, 1, 2, 1, 2, uh, uh

All my dogs

[Chorus]

It's bigger than hip-hop, hip-hop, hip-hop, hip It's bigger than hip-hop, hip-hop, hip-hop, hip-hop [M-1]

Uh, one thing 'bout music, when it hit you feel no pain White folks say it controls your brain. I know better than that, that's game And we ready for that, two soldiers head of the pack—matter of fact, who got the gat?

And where my army at? Rather attack and not react Back the beats, it don't reflect on how many records get sold On sex, drugs, and rock and roll, whether your project's put on hold In the real world, these just people with ideas They just like me and you when the smoke and cameras disappear Again, the real world (world) is bigger than all these fake ass records When po' folks got the millions and my woman's disrespected If you check 1, 2, my word of advice to you is just relax Just do what you got to do, if that don't work then kick the facts If you a fighter, rider, biter, flame igniter, crowd exciter Or you wanna just get high, then just say it. But then if you A liar-liar, pants on fire, wolf-cry, agent with a wire I'm gon' know it when I play it

[Chorus]

[stic.man]

Who shot Biggie Smalls? If we don't get them, they gonna get us all I'm down for runnin up on them crackers in they city hall We ride for

y'all, all my dogs stay real

Nigga, don't think these record deals gonna feed your seeds and pay your bills Because they not. MCs get a little bit of love and think they hot Talkin 'bout how much money they got, all y'all records sound the same I'm sick of that fake thug, R&B, rap scenario all day on the radio Same scenes in the video, monotonous material Y'all don't hear me though, these record labels slang out tapes like dope You can be next in line, and signed, and still be writing rhymes and broke You would rather have a Lexus or justice, a dream or some substance?

A Beamer, a necklace, or freedom?

See, a nigga like me don't play a hate, I just stay awake This real hip-hop and it don't stop

'Til we get the po-po off the block. They call it ...

[Chorus]

Uh, DP's got that crazy shit, we keep it crunk up John blazed and shit—
what?

(Fake, fake, fake records)

DEVIN THE DUDE

Devin the Dude is a hip-hop comic—not a clown but a trickster, finding humor in unlikely places. In the 1990s Devin signed with Houston's Rap-A-Lot Records, which was best known for the raw street rhymes of Scarface and the Geto Boys. He forged an alternative persona: part stoner, part lady's man, all lyricist. Describing his writing, he observed that "60 percent is really just personal shit I went through; 20 percent is stuff I know about somebody who's close, or a story I heard. Ten percent is wishful thinking. And the other 10 percent is some high shit we just thought of [Laughs]." ¹⁸ His playfulness is on display on "Briarpatch," a modern-day reinvention of the Br'er Rabbit tale.

BRIARPATCH

[Chorus]

The briar patch

No, don't throw me in the briar patch You can cut off all my toes, but not
the briar patch You can fill me full of holes, but not the briar patch
Don't throw me in the briar patch

Don't throw me in the briar patch

Please don't put me in the briar patch You can season and cook me, but
not the briar patch For me, no one would ever look off in the briar
patch Don't throw me in the briar patch

Don't throw me in the briar patch

I hop, I jump, I skip through the rubble Yo, me ain't lookin for trouble

I's just tryin to get to the other end, I never been Maybe then I can tell my
friends how it is, I been Searching for someone to help me, maybe you
can But it's hard to tell you how I feel when you got a knife in ya hand
You can carve me, tie me up and starve me Put me on the grill, still,
nothing can harm me Like the briar patch ... Don't chunk me in What
kind of luck would I have then?

Wait a minute, man, before you put me in it, use the gun Bet you got a
couple of bullets; I'll be finished, done Or, hey, I can help you find a
pot

Help you build a fire, help you get it good and hot Well, unless you like to

eat me cold

You can, but oh no, please don't throw me in [Chorus]

You's an ugly motherfucker, dog, I just call it like I see it And yo' breath is like death, if you don't like it so be it I get mistreated by others if you cut for me or not Slice off my toes if that's how it goes. I really don't give a fuck If all this belongs to you, do what you do, go 'head But throw me in the briar's patch and you'll never see so much red I bled for less than just trespassing 'cause I'm just askin for a favor Excuse my rude behavior, I'm just

Trying to savor the flavor of the fruit I just picked And if you don't like it, you can suck my diiiiiiiiiiii-

-iiiick! But what you don't do

Is throw me in the briar patch and then I'm through Come on, man. Can't we call a truce? Can't we do somethin about it Before people end up crying and shoutin and poutin?

Man, come on, man

Now that would really hurt off in the church [Chorus]

DOOM

DOOM (also known as MF DOOM) is among the most enigmatic figures in hip-hop—both for the trademark mask that he dons at concerts and for the recondite nature of his lyrics. DOOM'S raspy baritone weaves an intricate web of allusions drawn from comic books and metaphysics along with seeming nonsense and non sequiturs.

DOOM'S career began in the early 1990s under the name Zev Love X as a member of the group KMD along with his younger brother, DJ Subroc, and another MC, Onyx the Birthstone Kid. They produced only two albums, *Mr. Hood* (1991) and *Black Bastards* (which was completed in 1994 but not released until 2000). The group disbanded shortly after Subroc died in a 1993 car accident. Zev Love X retreated from the hip-hop scene for several years before returning as MF DOOM in the late 1990s. His work includes album-length collaborations with producers Madlib (Madvillany) and Danger Mouse (Danger Doom) as well as solo albums both as DOOM and as his alter egos Viktor Vaughn, Metal Fingers, and King Geedorah.

To read DOOM'S lyrics is to relinquish the need for certitude. His lines often defy paraphrase. “Ever since third grade, I had a notebook and was putting together words just for fun,” he told Ta-Nehisi Coates in the *New Yorker*. “I liked different etymologies, different slang that came out in different eras. Different languages. Different dialects. I liked being able to speak to somebody and throw it back and forth, and they can't predict what you're going to say next. But once you say it they're always like, ‘Oh, shit!’” ¹⁹

BENZI BOX

(feat. Cee-Lo)

[Chorus: Cee-Lo]

His name's DOOM

They wonder just who is he

But don't worry

Believe me, he'll get busy

When it comes to ...

Poetry he's got plenty la la la ...

La la la la la la

Jump 'em in like jump rope

Double dutch then turn on the mic with a thumb stroke Subtle touch,
cuddle clutch, is this thing on?

Like the fling with Mrs. King Kong, this spring gone Sing a song of slap-
happy crappiness He came to flow like it was strapped to his nappy
chest Surely I jest, the best on a wireless Mic not an eye test, yet I
digress But why stress, try and remember when Maybe bit the tender-
skinned babysitter Gwendolyn The type to hit and run and go tell a
friend Word to El Muerto Cucaracha Exo-Skeleton He know, flow like
interstellar wind Tow a rap djinn by his toe into hell again Ahem!
One, two, check me, too

Loose wreck, see through your goose-neck EQ

[Chorus]

Ay! If I may interject

Rap these days is like a pain up in the neck Cornier and phonier than a
play fight Take two of these and don't phone me on the late night The
beat won't fail me

With more rhymes than times he wash his hands and feet daily And all
that kerosene ain't cheap

Villain been deep since a teenage creep, peep He always was a gentleman
And kept a pen and a pencil in his mental den Right there next to where
the Rolodex was Before it turned up all burnt by his solar plexus He
don't know his own strength

When he's on the bone it's like the microphone's length And width ... Ain't
it funky like dingy socks Feel the full effect off cassette in your Benzi
Box [Chorus]

SALIVA (AS VIKTOR VAUGHN)

Great balls of fire!

Guess who just crawled out the muck and mire That could make you trust
a motherfuckin liar?

A real shuck 'n' jiver, Vaughn never been a duck 'n' diver
He spit on the mic, yuck, saliva

Hold it like a drunk driver, hold a CB on a sharp turn
Still clutchin his chest from the heartburn
What's your handle? I need a Zantac, ack
And thanks before I blank into anaphylactic shock
Rock or disco? Chocolate or the Crisco ho?

Cock diesel, still tell a joke like Joe Piscopo
Tell 'em the basics: basically, break the Matrix
And just for kicks, make 'em gel like Asics
That's why they actin standoffish

Eat the beat by hand like canned raw crawfish
Can you please pass the cocktail sauce?

You might as well know, hell is hot as hell, boss
"Tell my horse" ... He said, "Broads call me Vaughny"

I make sure I throws 'em back if they's too scrawny
Or boney, phony MCs use a stand-in
Leave him hangin like if I ain't know where his hand's
been Hussy, how 'bout we bloody up ya "just for me"

Bust a knee, then go finish study a plus degree
True victory, a new sick story

I never met a chick that was too thick for me
Holy Moses, my old Earth know me closest
And how I played the back and stayed bent like scoliosis
It's no puzzle, you can ask Doc Zizmor
The slow guzzle got your nizzle crooked like Biz jaw
Drink like a fishy, he wish she was a Pisces
Live since back when twenty-five cents Icees
Used to turn your tongue the color red
Now they want to fill ya full of lead. What the fuck that young fella said?

What, kid? It's Vaughn, the red-blooded
Do yourself a favor or come on, get head butted
Yoke him if he run, I'll be there in a jiffy, son
With the flame suppressor like off the 151

Quit your bitchin, or get *BLAOW* in your babble-box
Punishment for dry snitchin, now eat this Travel Fox
You'll be aight once it pass through your yellow belly
Only thing he said was, "Can you please pass the jelly?"

"Homosaywhat?" Like a promo play the cut on the late night
Before you touch the mic, get your weight right
A lot of crews like to act like a violent mob
They really need to just shut the fuck up like Silent Bob
Either that or get smoked like hickory
Should squash the beef and go wash they teeth quickly
Know the stee, write a rhyme like a mystery

And sign it at the bottom in calligraphy, "Your nigga, V"

FIGARO

The rest is empty with no brain, but the clever nerd The best MC with no
chain ya ever heard Take it from the TEC-9 holder

They bit and don't know they neck shine from shineola Everything that
glitter ain't fishscale. Let me think Don't let her faint, get Ishmael

A shot of Jack got her back, it's not a act, stack Forgot about the
cackalack, holla back, clack clack blocka Villainy, feel him in ya heart
chakra Chart toppa, star, shit stoppa, be a smart shoppa Shot a cop
day around the way 'bout to stay But who'd a know there's two mo'
that wonder where the shooter go 'Bout to jet, get him, not a bet, dead
'em Let 'em spit the venom, said 'em got a lot of shit with 'em Let the
rhythm hit 'em, it's stronger in the other voice We makes the joints
that make 'em spread 'em butta moist Man, please. The stage is made
of panties From the age of baby hoochies on to the grannies Ban me
the dough rake, daddy, the flow make her Fatty shake, patty cake,
patty cake For fake, if he was Anita Baker's man He'd take her for her
masters, hit it once an' shake her hand On some ol' "Thank ya, ma'am"
an' ghost her She could mind the toaster if she sign the poster A whole
host of roller coaster riders Not enough tracks (is it?) Hot enough,
black? (for ya) It's too hot to handle, you got blue sandals Who shot
ya? Ooh, got you new spots to vandal Do not stand still, boast show-
skills close But no crills, toast for po' Lil's, post no bills Coast to coast
Joe Shmoe's flows ill, go chill Not supposed to overdose, No-Doz pills
Off pride tykes talk wide through scar meat Off sides like how Warf
ride with Starfleet Told ya, on some get-rich shit

As he gets older he gets colder than a witch tit This is it, make no mistakes
Where my nigga go? Figaro, Figaro

O's beats and my rhymes attack

A scary act, all black like Miss Mary Mack Wait 'til you see him live on
the piano When DOOM sings soprano like: "Uno dos y'ano"

My mama told me

Blast him and pass her glass of Ol' E

Not to be troublesome, but I could sure use A quick shot of double rum, no
stick of bubble gum I like ice cream, we could skip the wedding Have a
nice dream, she only let him stick the head in

EMINEM

Eminem is one of rap's most polarizing figures—a global celebrity whose personal struggles play themselves out for public view, an instigator in the culture wars, an exhibitionist at times but also a recluse, and above all, a gifted lyricist. “Air Jordan. Tiger Woods. You know how a person is made for something?” remarks 50 Cent. “Eminem is made for hip-hop. The best rapper is a white man.”²⁰ That Eminem is one of the few white MCs to gain both popular success and respect among his peers has made him a pivotal figure in hip-hop's emergence in the mainstream.

He is the past decade's best-selling artist, outpacing the Beatles and Britney Spears, and two of his albums—*The Marshall Mathers LP* and *The Eminem Show*—have sold approximately ten million copies each. More than his considerable album sales, Eminem distinguishes himself by his lyrical skill. He's earned the attention of many outside of rap, including unlikely fans such as the Irish poet and Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney, who marvels at his “verbal energy.”

Eminem plays with persona. He embodies three distinct poetic identities in his work: Slim Shady, his outrageous and antic voice, filled with pop cultural references and descriptions of absurd indulgence; Eminem, his hungry battle rapper voice; and Marshall Mathers, his given name and his more confessional voice. “When does Slim Shady kick in, when does Eminem step in, where does Marshall begin?” Eminem asks. “Let's say ‘Just Don't Give a Fuck’ is Slim Shady. Eminem is ‘Lose Yourself,’ and ‘Mockingbird’ is Marshall. I think those are the most blatant, extreme examples.”²¹ All three are included in the lyrics that follow.

JUST DON'T GIVE A FUCK

[Frogger]

Whoa! Ay, get your hands in the air, and get to clappin' 'em and, like, back and forth because, ah, this is... what you thought it wasn't. It beez... the brothers representin' the Dirty Dozen. I be the F-R-O-the-double-G and check out the man; he goes by the name of, er...

Slim Shady, brain-dead like Jim Brady I'm a M80, you lil' like that Kim lady I'm buzzin, Dirty Dozen, naughty rotten rhymers cursin at you players worse than Marty Schottenheimer You wacker than the

motherfucker you bit your style from You ain't gon' sell two copies if
you press a double album Admit it, fuck it, while we coming out in the
open I'm doing acid, crack, smack, coke, and smokin dope then My
name is Marshall Mathers, I'm an alcoholic ("Hi, Marshall") I have a
disease and they don't know what to call it Better hide your wallet
'cause I'm coming up quick to strip your cash Bought a ticket to your
concert just to come and whip your ass Bitch, I'm coming out
swinging, so fast it'll make your eyes spin You gettin knocked the fuck
out like Mike Tyson The Proof is in the puddin, just ask DeShaun
Holton I'll slit your motherfucking throat worse than Ron Goldman
[Chorus]

So when you see me on your block with two Glocks Screaming "Fuck the
World" like Tupac

I just don't give a fuck!

Talkin that shit behind my back, dirty mackin Tellin your boys that I'm on
crack

I just don't give a fuck!

So put my tape back on the rack

Go run and tell your friends my shit is wack I just don't give a fuck!

But see me on the street and duck

'Cause you gon' get stuck, stoned, and snuffed 'Cause I just don't give a
fuck!

I'm Nicer than Pete, but I'm on a Serch to crush a Miilkbone I'm
Everlasting, I melt Vanilla Ice like silicone I'm ill enough to just
straight up dis you for no reason I'm colder than snow season when it's
twenty below freezing Flavor with no seasoning, this is the sneak
preview I'll dis your magazine and still won't get a weak review I'll
make your freak leave you, smell the Folgers crystals This is a lyrical
combat—gentlemen, hold your pistols But I form like Voltron and blast
you with my shoulder missiles Slim Shady, Eminem was the old initials
(Bye-bye!) Extortion, snortin, supportin abortion Pathological liar,
blowing shit out of proportion The looniest, zaniest, spontaneous,
sporadic Impulsive thinker, compulsive drinker, addict Half animal,
half man

Dumping your dead body inside of a fucking trash can With more holes
than an afghan

[Chorus]

Somebody let me out this limousine (Hey, let me out!) I'm a caged demon,
on stage screaming like Rage Against the Machine I'm convinced I'm a
fiend, shootin up while this record is spinning Clinically brain dead, I
don't need a second opinion Fuck droppin a jewel, I'm flippin the
sacred treasure I'll bite your motherfuckin style just to make it fresher I
can't take the pressure, I'm sick of bitches Sick of naggin bosses bitchin
while I'm washing dishes In school I never said much, too busy having
a head rush Doing too much Rush had my face flushed like red blush
Then I went to Jim Beam, that's when my face grayed Went to gym in
eighth grade, raped the women's swim team Don't take me for a joke,
I'm no comedian Too many mental problems got me snorting coke and
smoking weed again I'm going up over the curb, driving on the
median Finally made it home, but I don't got the key to get in [Chorus]

Hey, fuck that! Outsidadz. Pace One. Young Zee

THE WAY I AM

Whatever ... Dre, just let it run

Aiyo, turn the beat up a little bit

Aiyo... This song is for anyone—fuck it

Just shut up and listen, aiyo...

I sit back with this pack of Zig Zags and this bag Of this weed, it gives me
the shit needed to be The most meanest MC on this—on this Earth And
since birth I've been cursed with this curse to just curse And just blurt
this berserk and bizarre shit that works And it sells and it helps in itself
to relieve All this tension dispensin these sentences, gettin this Stress
that's been eatin me recently off of this chest And I rest again
peacefully (peacefully) ...

But at least have the decency in you

To leave me alone when you freaks see me out In the streets when I'm
eatin or feedin my daughter To not come and speak to me (speak to
me) ...

I don't know you and no, I don't owe you a motherfuckin thing I'm not
Mr. N'Sync, I'm not what your friends think I'm not Mr. Friendly, I can
be a prick if you tempt me My tank is on empty (is on empty) ...

No patience is in me and if you offend me I'm liftin you ten feet (liftin you ten feet) ... in the air I don't care who is there and who saw me destroy you Go call you a lawyer, file you a lawsuit I'll smile in the courtroom and buy you a wardrobe I'm tired of all you (of all you) ...

I don't mean to be mean but that's all I can be, it's just me [Chorus]

And I am whatever you say I am

If I wasn't, then why would I say I am?

In the paper, the news, every day I am Radio won't even play my jam

'Cause I am whatever you say I am

If I wasn't, then why would I say I am?

In the paper, the news, every day I am I don't know, it's just the way I am

Sometimes I just feel like my father, I hate to be bothered With all of this nonsense—it's constant And, "Oh, it's his lyrical content— The song 'Guilty Conscience' has gotten such rotten responses"

And all of this controversy circles me And it seems like the media immediately Points a finger at me (finger at me) ...

So I point one back at 'em, but not the index or pinkie Or the ring or the thumb, it's the one you put up When you don't give a fuck, when you won't just put up With the bullshit they pull, 'cause they full of shit, too When a dude's gettin bullied and shoots up his school And they blame it on Marilyn (on Marilyn) ... and the heroin Where were the parents at? And look where it's at Middle America, now it's a tragedy

Now it's so sad to see an upper class city Havin this happenin (this happenin) ...

Then attack Eminem 'cause I rap this way (rap this way) ...

But I'm glad 'cause they feed me the fuel that I need for the fire To burn and it's burnin and I have returned [Chorus]

I'm so sick and tired of being admired That I wish that I would just die or get fired And dropped from my label, let's stop with the fables I'm not gonna be able to top a "My Name is ..."

And pigeon-holed into some poppy sensation To cop me rotation at rock and roll stations And I just do not got the patience (got the patience)

...

To deal with these cocky Caucasians who think I'm some wigger who just

tries to be black 'cause I talk With an accent and grab on my balls, so
they always keep askin The same fuckin questions (fuckin questions)
...

What school did I go to, what 'hood I grew up in The why, the who, what,
when, the where and the how 'Til I'm grabbin my hair and I'm tearin it
out 'Cause they drivin me crazy (drivin me crazy) ... I can't take it I'm
racin, I'm pacin, I stand then I sit And I'm thankful for every fan that I
get But I can't take a shit in the bathroom without someone Standin by
it ... No, I won't sign your autograph You can call me an asshole—I'm
glad

[Chorus]

STAN

[Chorus 2x]

My tea's gone cold, I'm wondering why I Got out of bed at all
The morning rain clouds up my window
And I can't see at all
And even if I could it'd all be gray
But your picture on my wall
It reminds me that it's not so bad
It's not so bad

“Dear Slim, I wrote you but you still ain't callin I left my cell, my pager,
and my home phone at the bottom I sent two letters back in autumn,
you must not-a got 'em There probably was a problem at the post
office or something Sometimes I scribble addresses too sloppy when I
jot 'em But anyways, fuck it, what's been up man? How's your
daughter?

My girlfriend's pregnant too, I'm 'bout to be a father If I have a daughter,
guess what I'ma call her? I'ma name her Bonnie I read about your
Uncle Ronnie too; I'm sorry I had a friend kill himself over some bitch
who didn't want him I know you probably hear this every day, but I'm
your biggest fan I even got the underground shit that you did with
Skam I got a room full of your posters and your pictures, man I like
the shit you did with Ruckus, too, that shit was phat Anyways, I hope
you get this, man, hit me back Just to chat, truly yours, your biggest

fan. This is Stan”

[Chorus]

“Dear Slim, you still ain’t called or wrote, I hope you have a chance I ain’t mad—I just think it’s fucked up you don’t answer fans If you didn’t wanna talk to me outside your concert You didn’t have to, but you coulda signed an autograph for Matthew That’s my little brother, man, he’s only six years old We waited in the blistering cold for you, four hours and you just said, “No”

That’s pretty shitty, man, you’re like his fuckin idol He wants to be just like you, man, he likes you more than I do I ain’t that mad, though, I just don’t like being lied to Remember when we met in Denver? You said if I’d write you You would write back—see, I’m just like you in a way I never knew my father neither, he used to always cheat on my mom and beat her I can relate to what you’re saying in your songs So when I have a shitty day I drift away and put ’em on ’Cause I don’t really got shit else, so that shit helps when I’m depressed I even got a tattoo of your name across the chest Sometimes I even cut myself to see how much it bleeds It’s like adrenaline, the pain is such a sudden rush for me See, everything you say is real and I respect you ’cause you tell it My girlfriend’s jealous ’cause I talk about you twenty-four seven But she don’t know you like I know you, Slim, no one does She don’t know what it was like for people like us growin up You gotta call me, man, I’ll be the biggest fan you’ll ever lose Sincerely yours, Stan—P.S. We should be together, too”

[Chorus]

“Dear Mister-I’m-Too-Good-To-Call-Or-Write-My-Fans This’ll be the last package I ever send your ass It’s been six months and still no word—I don’t deserve it?

I know you got my last two letters, I wrote the addresses on ’em perfect So this is my cassette I’m sending you; I hope you hear it I’m in the car right now, I’m doing ninety on the freeway Hey Slim, I drank a fifth of vodka—you dare me to drive?

You know the song by Phil Collins, “In the Air of the Night”

About that guy who coulda saved that other guy from drowning but didn’t Then Phil saw it all, then at a show he found him?

That's kinda how this is, you coulda rescued me from drowning Now it's too late—I'm on a thousand downers now, I'm drowsy And all I wanted was a lousy letter or a call I hope you know I ripped ALL of your pictures off the wall I love you, Slim, we coulda been together, think about it You ruined it now, I hope you can't sleep and you dream about it And when you dream I hope you can't sleep and you SCREAM about it I hope your conscience EATS AT YOU and you can't BREATHE without me See Slim—(screaming) Shut up, bitch! I'm trying to talk!

Hey Slim, that's my girlfriend screamin in the trunk But I didn't slit her throat, I just tied her up—see, I ain't like you 'Cause if she suffocates she'll suffer more, and then she'll die, too Well, gotta go, I'm almost at the bridge now Oh shit, I forgot, how am I supposed to send this shit out?"

[Chorus]

Dear Stan, I meant to write you sooner but I just been busy You said your girlfriend's pregnant now, how far along is she?

Look, I'm really flattered you would call your daughter that And here's an autograph for your brother, I wrote it on a Starter cap I'm sorry I didn't see you at the show, I musta missed you Don't think I did that shit intentionally just to dis you But what's this shit you said about you like to cut your wrists, too?

I say that shit just clowning, dog, c'mon—how fucked up is you?

You got some issues, Stan, I think you need some counseling To help your ass from bouncing off the walls when you get down some And what's this shit about us meant to be together?

That type of shit'll make me not want us to meet each other I really think you and your girlfriend need each other Or maybe you just need to treat her better I hope you get to read this letter, I just hope it reaches you in time Before you hurt yourself, I think that you'll be doin just fine If you relax a little. I'm glad I inspire you but, Stan Why are you so mad? Try to understand, that I do want you as a fan I just don't want you to do some crazy shit I seen this one shit on the news a couple weeks ago that made me sick Some dude was drunk and drove his car over a bridge And had his girlfriend in the trunk and she was pregnant with his kid And in the car they found a tape, but they didn't say who it was to think about, his name was ... it was you.
Damn **LOSE YOURSELF**

Look, if you had one shot ... or one opportunity ... to seize everything you ever wanted ... in one moment ... would you capture it ... or just let it slip?

His palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy
There's vomit on his sweater already, Mom's spaghetti
He's nervous, but on the surface he looks calm and ready
To drop bombs, but he keeps on forgetting
What he wrote down, the whole crowd goes so loud
He opens his mouth, but the words won't come out
He's choking, how? Everybody's joking now
The clock's run out, time's up, over, blaow!

Snap back to reality, oh, there goes gravity
Oh, there goes Rabbit, he choked, he's so mad
But he won't give up that easy, no, he won't have it
He knows his whole back's to these ropes, it don't matter
He's dope, he knows that, but he's broke, he's so stagnant
He knows when he goes back to this mobile home, that's when it's
Back to the lab again, yo, this whole rhapsody
He better go capture this moment and hope it don't pass him [Chorus 2x]

You better lose yourself in the music, the moment
You own it, you better never let it go
You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow
This opportunity comes once in a lifetime, yo!

Soul's escaping through this hole that is gaping
This world is mine for the taking, make me king
As we move toward a New World Order

A normal life is boring, but superstardom's close to postmortem, it only grows harder
Homie grows hotter, he blows, it's all over
These hoes is all on him, coast to coast shows
He's known as the globetrotter, lonely roads,
God only knows He's grown farther from home, he's no father
He goes home and barely knows his own daughter
But hold your nose 'cause here goes the cold water
These hoes don't want him no mo', he's cold product
They moved on to the next schmoe who flows, he nose-Dove and sold nada,
so the soap opera is told, it unfolds, I suppose it's old, partner
But the beat goes on, da da dum da dum da da dum
[Chorus 2x]

No more games, I'ma change what you call rage
Tear this motherfuckin roof off like two dogs caged
I was playing in the beginning, the mood all changed
I been chewed up and spit out and booed off stage
But I kept rhyming and stepped right in the next cipher
Best believe somebody's paying the pied piper
All the pain inside amplified by the Fact that I can't get by with my nine to Five
and I can't provide the right

type of Life for my family, 'cause man, these goddamn Food stamps don't buy diapers and it's no movie There's no Mekhi Phifer, this is my life And these times is so hard and it's getting even harder Trying to feed and water my seed, plus Teeter Totter Caught up between being a father and a prima donna Baby mama drama's screaming on and too much for me to wanna Stay in one spot, another day of monotony Has gotten me to the point I'm like a snail, I've got To formulate a plot or I end up in jail or shot Success is my only motherfucking option, failure's not Mom, I love you, but this trailer's got To go, I cannot grow old in Salem's lot So here I go—it's my shot, feet fail me not This may be the only opportunity that I got [Chorus 2x]

MOCKINGBIRD

Yeah. I know sometimes things may not always make sense to you right now. But, hey, what Daddy always tell you? Straighten up, little soldier. Stiffen up that upper lip. What you crying about? You got me.

Hailie, I know you miss your Mom and I know you miss your Dad Well, I'm gone but I'm trying to give you the life that I never had I can see you're sad, even when you smile, even when you laugh I can see it in your eyes, deep inside you want to cry 'Cause you're scared. I ain't there? Daddy's with you in your prayers No more crying, wipe them tears, Daddy's here, no more nightmares We gon' pull together through it, we gon' do it. Laney Uncle's crazy, ain't he? Yeah, but he loves you, girl, and you better know it We're all we got in this world, when it spins, when it swirls When it whirls, when it twirls, two little beautiful girls Lookin puzzled, in a daze, I know it's confusing you Daddy's always on the move, Mama's always on the news I try to keep you sheltered from it but somehow it seems The harder that I try to do that, the more it backfires on me All the things growing up as Daddy that he had to see Daddy don't want you to see, but you see just as much as he did We did not plan it to be this way, your mother and me But things have got so bad between us I don't see us ever being Together ever again like we used to be when we was teenagers But then of course everything always happens for a reason I guess it was never meant to be, but it's just something we Have no control over and that's what destiny is But no more worries, rest your head and go to sleep Maybe one day we'll wake up and this'll all just be a dream [Chorus]

Now hush little baby, don't you cry

Everything's gonna be alright

Stiffen that upper lip up, little lady, I told ya Daddy's here to hold ya
through the night I know Mommy's not here right now and we don't
know why We feel how we feel inside

It may seem a little crazy, pretty baby But I promise Mama's gon' be
alright

It's funny ... I remember back one year when Daddy had no money
Mommy wrapped the Christmas presents up and stuck 'em under the
tree And said some of 'em were from me 'cause Daddy couldn't buy 'em
I'll never forget that Christmas, I sat up the whole night crying 'Cause
Daddy felt like a bum; see, Daddy had a job But his job was to keep the
food on the table for you and Mom And at the time every house that
we lived in either kept Getting broken into and robbed or shot up on
the block And your Mom was saving money for you in a jar Tryin to
start a piggy bank for you so you could go to college Almost had a
thousand dollars 'til someone broke in and stole it And I know it hurt
so bad it broke your Mama's heart And it seemed like everything was
just startin to fall apart Mom and Dad was arguin a lot so Mama
moved back Onto Chalmers in the flat one bedroom apartment And
Dad moved back to the other side of 8 Mile on Novara And that's when
Daddy went to California with his CD

And met Dr. Dre and flew you and Mama out to see me But Daddy had to
work, you and Mama had to leave me Then you started seeing Daddy
on the TV and Mama didn't Like it and you and Laney were too young
to understand it Papa was a rollin stone, Mama developed a habit And
it all happened too fast for either one of us to grab it I'm just sorry you
were there and had to witness it firsthand 'Cause all I ever wanted to
do was just make you proud Now I'm sitting in this empty house, just
reminiscin Lookin at your baby pictures, it just trips me out To see
how much you both have grown, it's almost like you're sisters now
Wow, guess you pretty much are and Daddy's still here Laney, I'm
talkin to you too, Daddy's still here I like the sound of that, yeah, it's
got a ring to it, don't it?

Shh, Mama's only gone for the moment

[Chorus]

And if you ask me to

Daddy's gonna buy you a mockingbird
I'ma give you the world
I'ma buy a diamond ring for you
I'ma sing for you
I'll do anything for you to see you smile And if that mockingbird don't
sing and that ring don't shine I'ma break that birdie's neck
I'll go back to the jeweler who sold it to ya And make him eat every carat,
don't fuck with Dad (ha-ha) **WHEN I'M GONE**
Yeah. It's my life. But all in words, I guess ...

Have you ever loved someone so much you'd give an arm for?
Not the expression, no, literally give an arm for When they know they're
your heart and you know you are their armor And you will destroy
anyone who would try to harm her But what happens when karma
turns right around and bites you And everything you stand for turns on
you to spite you?

What happens when you become the main source of her pain?

"Daddy, look what I made!" "Dad's gotta go catch a plane"

"Daddy, where's Mommy? I can't find Mommy, where is she?"

"I don't know, go play, Hailie, baby, your Daddy's busy Daddy's writin
this song, this song ain't gon' write itself I'll give you one Underdog,
then you gotta swing by yourself"

Then to write a rhyme in that song and tell her you love her And put
hands on her mother who's a spittin image of her That's Slim Shady,
yeah baby, Slim Shady's crazy Shady made me, but tonight, Shady's
rock-a-bye baby [Chorus 2x]

And when I'm gone, just carry on, don't mourn Rejoice every time you
hear the sound of my voice Just know that I'm lookin down on you
smiling and I didn't Feel a thing, so baby, don't feel no pain, just smile
back I keep havin this dream, I'm pushin Hailie on the swings She
keeps screamin, she don't want me to sing "You're makin Mommy cry.
Why? Why is Mommy crying?"

"Baby, Daddy ain't leavin no more." "Daddy, you're lying You always say
that, you always say this is the last time But you ain't leavin no more.
Daddy, you're mine!"

She's piling boxes in front of the door tryin to block it "Daddy, please,

Daddy, don't leave, Daddy, no, stop it!"

Goes in her pocket, pulls out a tiny necklace locket, it's got a picture

"This'll keep you safe, Daddy, take it with you"

I look up, it's just me standin in the mirror These fucking walls must be
talkin 'cause, man, I can hear 'em They're saying you got one more
chance to do right and it's tonight Now go out there and show 'em that
you love 'em 'fore it's too late And just as I go to walk out of my
bedroom door It turns to a stage, they're gone and the spotlight is on
and I'm singin [Chorus 2x]

Sixty thousand people, all jumpin out their seat The curtain closes, they're
throwing roses at my feet I take a bow, "And thank you all for comin
out"

They're screamin so loud, I take one last look at the crowd I glance down,
I don't believe what I'm seein "Daddy, it's me! Help Mommy, her
wrists are bleedin"

"But, baby, we're in Sweden, how did you get to Sweden?"

"I followed you, Daddy, you told me that you weren't leavin You lied to
me, Dad, and now you made Mommy sad And I bought you this coin,
it says '#1 Dad'

That's all I wanted, I just wanna give you this coin I get the point, fine,
me and Mommy are going"

"But, baby, wait—" "It's too late, Dad, you made the choice Now go out
there and show 'em you love 'em more than us That's what they want,
they want you, Marshall, they keep Screamin your name, it's no
wonder you can't go to sleep Just take another pill, yeah, I bet you
you will You rap about it. Yeah, word, 'ke-keep it real'"

I hear applause, all this time I couldn't see How could it be that the
curtain is closing on me?

I turn around, find a gun on the ground, cock it Put it to my brain, scream
"Die, Shady!" and pop it The sky darkens, my life flashes, the plane
that I was supposed to be on crashes and burns to ashes That's when I
wake up, alarm clock's ringing, there's birds singin It's spring and
Hailie's outside swingin I walk right up to Kim and kiss her, tell her I
miss her Hailie just smiles and winks at her little sister, almost as if to
say ...

[Chorus 2x]

EVE

Eve, who once dubbed herself the “illest vicious pit bull in a skirt,” has defined her hip-hop persona in terms of both her femininity and her swagger. She made her name as a member of the Ruff Ryders, the crew that included DMX. After appearing on several compilation albums, Eve began her solo career with the release of three albums between 1999 and 2002. Her biggest hits included pop-friendly songs like “Who’s That Girl” and duets with singers Gwen Stefani (“Let Me Blow Your Mind”) and Alicia Keys (“Gangsta Lovin”). Her finest lyrical performances, however, may be on lesser-known tracks in which she confronts difficult issues like domestic violence (such as on “Love Is Blind,” included here) and the travails of a troubled self-image.

LOVE IS BLIND

Hey, yo, I don’t even know you and I hate you
See, all I know is that my girlfriend used to date you How would you feel
if she held you down and raped you?
Tried and tried, but she never could escape you She was in love and I’d
ask her how? I mean, why?
What kind of love from a nigga would black your eye?
What kind of love from a nigga every night make you cry?
What kind of love from a nigga make you wish he would die?
I mean, shit, he bought you things and gave you diamond rings But them
things wasn’t worth none of the pain that he brings And you stayed,
what made you fall for him?
That nigga had the power to make you crawl for him I thought you was a
doctor, be on call for him Smacked you down ’cause he said you was
too tall for him, huh?
That wasn’t love, baby girl, you was dreamin
I could have killed you when you said your seed was growin from his
semen [Chorus 2x]
Love is blind and it’ll take over your mind
What you think is love is truly not
You need to elevate and find

I don't even know you and I'd kill you myself You played with her like a doll and put her back on the shelf Wouldn't let her go to school and better herself She had a baby by your ass and you ain't give her no help Uh-huh, big-time hustler, snake motherfucker

One's born every day and every day she was your sucker How could you beat the mother of your kids?

How could you tell her that you love her? Don't give a fuck if she lives She told me she would leave you, I admit it, she did But came back, made up a lie about you missing your kids Sweet kisses, baby ain't even know she was your mistress Had to deal with fistfights and phone calls from your bitches Floss like you possessed her, tellin me to mind my business Said that it was her life and stay the fuck out of it I tried and said just for him I'll keep a ready clip [Chorus 2x]

I don't even know you and I want you dead

Don't know the facts but I saw the blood pour from her head See, I lay down beside her in the hospital bed And about two hours later, doctors said she was dead Had the nerve to show up at her mother's house the next day To come and pay your respects and help the family pray Even knelt down on one knee and let a tear drop And before you had a chance to get up, you heard my gun cock Prayin to me now, I ain't God but I'll pretend I ain't start your life but, nigga, I'ma bring it to a end And I did, clear shots and no regrets, never

Cops comin in, watch me going to jail. Nigga, whatever My bitch, fuck that, my sister, you could never figure out Even if I let you live what our love was all about I considered her my blood and it ain't come no thicker [Chorus to fade]

EYEDEA & ABILITIES

Eyedea, the rhyming half of the duo Eyedea & Abilities, may be best known for his freestyle battle raps, but his studio recordings deserve attention as well for their narrative drive and occasional tongue-twisting delivery. Eyedea sees a connection between freestyling and songwriting, both of which he believes emerge from the same creative place. “Hip hop has a great history of improvising—the MC freestyling it and the DJ scratching, even dancing—the whole thing,” he told the *Michigan Daily* in 2009. “I think improvising is when you’re testing yourself and when you are experiencing the expression of those things that we’re talking about.”²² Together, E&A have forged a symbiotic sound that achieves a distinctive balance between voice and beat. Part of Minnesota’s Rhymesayers label along with such acts as Aesop Rock, Atmosphere, Sage Francis, and Blueprint, E&A have helped define the Twin Cities hip-hop scene.

BOTTLE DREAMS (AS OLIVER HART)

Everyone knew she was a special young girl from her neighbors to her teachers
Some labeled her “prodigy,” others called her a genius
It was amazing the way she could play the violin
It made it hard for people to believe that she was only ten
But behind every brilliant mind there lies a monster
This one just so happened to be her father

See, Daddy was sick, he’d get a rush by playin touchy touch
And tellin her to keep it hush. It was his secret way
Of loving, that he needed someone he could trust
Fucked her head up, sayin, “If Mama was alive she’d be so proud of us”

So she’d hide her desire to die

But if you paid close attention you could see the sorrow in her eyes
Walking around in the only real hell

No one would ever think she’d have such a story to tell
Afraid to go home, afraid to talk, afraid of cryin
She was too young to even know why

[Chorus]

And everyday she’d go to the river with a message in a bottle sayin
“Please, God help me, I don’t wanna live to see tomorrow”

Each day she’d scrounge for a tiny shred of hope
Just to wish the bottle

would stay afloat

But every single solitary day, the bottle seems to sink I don't know why
but the bottle always sinks

She never sees it happen, but the bottle always sinks Now only the bottom
of the river knows what she really thinks She made that violin sing
with so much pain

Could almost hear her scream through the strange vibrations What was
once sweet and innocent is now riding with the psychotic father Chose
to probe the flowers of the pure and sacred Her instrument was a rolly
tongue

To express the infinite abuse in its depths

At night the footsteps crept to her door and she'd begin to shake and weep
And with tears rolling down her cheeks she'd pretend she was asleep
When the nightmare was over and the sun dawn is light She'd retreat
to the same place she always did

Rip a page from her diary and write with all her might Then send it off
into the current, determined to find a way to live [Chorus]

Being a victim of her daddy's hands for so long, she lost the will to move
on Sick of picking up her violin to hide from what's wrong Exhausted
but stayin strong, she tried to play the bright side But couldn't bring
herself to make nothing but sad songs Sick of that sick feeling that
stays in her stomach Sick of waiting for a rescue by someone who
found one of her bottles Sick of keepin Daddy's little secret, she got up
at The crack of day and smashed her violin into pieces Then proceeded
to walk towards the river with a plan Only this time the diary bottle
was in her hand

Just walk with herself, away from the hell

Not knowin at the river bottom lied all the cries for help It was weeks
before they found her dead body. Some fisherman Reeled it from the
water like something from a detective novel Diagnosis: suicide,
stemmed from desperation

Was near where she drowned they found about five hundred messages in
sunken bottles **NOW**

[Chorus]

We're ... here ... to ...

Bring the people and the music and the movement all together now We ...

see ... through ...

Repetitive etiquette and the highly unoriginal

We're ... here ... to ...

Bring the people and the music and the movement all together now They
... will ... lose ...

Check it out now, check it out now

This is a necessary change from the grim simple and plain Gonna exercise
that brain to break the chain, pain is a part of gain No need to explain
...

We innovate to generate an intricately interwoven tapestry of musical
and ethical epiphanies The interest is minimal, I'm on my own mission
to mess with an angel to take it all the way to where the sun is Just
like a running leopard running around to turn it into a simple simile,
simple synonym adrenaline is coming back I made it my own city,
why's it gotta be a superstar, I'd rather be a galaxy, but how you see is
so dependent On the medicine, the rhetoric, and how at any second
you think you could sit on the brink of This world is all asleep and I
have no apologies I ... breathe, keep my sight on what we ride on

Let bygones be bygones, the migraines don't sidetrack My final
destination, nothing rivals predetermination to exterminate the
germination Of a nation that accepts anything that's thrown in its fat
face 'Cause when there's nothing left, there's no more point to the rat
race We don't waste a minute of the day, don't be offended by what
I'm saying, trying to send it all the way to another stage A creative
alternative rated and greater, the crazy maniac melody take it all up
in your face Wait ... Success ain't only based on self-esteem

It takes a sense to differentiate between what's yours and someone else's
dreams I felt the screams climbing up my cold spine

Saying now's the time, gotta give it all my energy to get rid of the enemy,
I said it so ...

[Chorus]

'Cause music ain't nothing if it ain't got style Free us and touch what we
can't see

Twist that knife and watch him bleed

Lost inside, it's way too deep
Someone choke me, help me breathe

Run from mistakes

Right in my face

Feels like I'm running in place

LUPE FIASCO

Lupe Fiasco represents the changing face of hip-hop, expanding the meaning of the culture and the music. He also represents a return to hip-hop's emphasis on lyrical content—skills over swagger and shine. His rhyme style is fluid and lyrical, rich with multisyllabic internal rhymes, assonance, and alliteration. One can hear on songs like “Dumb It Down” and “Go Go Gadget Flow” a near-incessant lyrical play with sound.

Lupe's records to date have all been concept albums in which he frequently adopts fictive personas. He understands this as a natural outgrowth of his desire to use rap for storytelling. “I come from a literary background,” he explains, “and I loved to tell stories. I remember freestyling stories, not in rhyme, by just coming up with things when I was a kid on the bus. But I couldn't play an instrument, so I decided to take my storytelling mind and to apply it to rap, which seemed like a natural thing. So I practiced a lot and really tried to apply the techniques I'd learned from poetry—which, of course, is the predecessor of rap—and include new things. I'd add haikus and try all wild poetic things, and I knew I'd have something different and interesting to say.” ²³

DUMB IT DOWN

I'm fearless, now hear this, I'm earless And I'm peer-less, that means I'm
eyeless Which means I'm tearless, which means my iris Resides where
my ears is, which means I'm blinded But I'ma find it, I can feel its
nearness But I'ma veer so I don't come near

Like a chicken or a deer ... but I remember I'm not a listener or a seer so
my windshield smear Here, you steer, I really shouldn't be behind this
Clearly 'cause my blindness, the windshield Is menstrual, the whole
grill is roadkill So trill and so sincere. Yeah, I'm both them there Took
both pills when a bloke in a trench coat And the locs in the chair had
approached him here And he clear as a ghost, so a biter of the throats
In the mirror, the writer of the quotes for the ghosts Who supplier of
the notes to the living, riveting Is rosy, pockets full of posies, given to
The mother of the deceased. Awaken at war 'Til I'm restin in peace
(peace, peace, peace) [Chorus]

You goin over niggas' heads, Lu (Dumb it down) They tellin me that they
don't feel you (Dumb it down) We ain't graduate from school, nigga

(Dumb it down) Them big words ain't cool, nigga (Dumb it down)
Yeah, I heard "Mean And Vicious," nigga (Dumb it down) Make a song
for the bitches, nigga (Dumb it down) We don't care about the
weather, nigga (Dumb it down) You'll sell more records if you (Dumb
it down) And I'm mouthless, which means I'm soundless Now as far as
the hearing, I've found it It was as far as the distance from an earring
To the ground is, but the doorknockers on the ear Of a stewardess in a
Lear. She fine

And she flyin, I feel I'm flying by 'em 'cause my mind's On cloud nine and
in her mind at the same time Pimp C the wings on the Underground
King Who's also Klingon, to infinity and beyond Something really
stinks, but I Spinks like Leon Or lying in the desert

I'm flying on Pegasus, you flying on a pheasant Rider of the white
powder, picker of the fire flowers Spit hot fire like Dylan on
Chappelle's skit Yeah, smell it on my unicorn

Don't snort the white horse, but toot my own horn (sleep) [Chorus]

You've been shedding too much light, Lu (Dumb it down) You make 'em
wanna do right, Lu (Dumb it down) They're getting self-esteem, Lu
(Dumb it down) These girls are trying to be queens, Lu (Dumb it
down) They're trying to graduate from school, Lu (Dumb it down)
They're starting to think that smart is cool, Lu (Dumb it down) They're
trying to get up out the 'hood, Lu (Dumb it down) I'll tell you what you
should do (Dumb it down) And I'm brainless, which means I'm headless
Like Ichabod Crane is

Or foreplay-less sex is, which makes me saneless With no neck left to hang
a chain with

Which makes me necklace-less

Like a necklace theft, and I ain't used my headrest yet They said they
need proof like a vestless chest 'Bout the best, fair F-F-jet in the nest
Who exudes confidence and excess depth

Even Scuba Steve will find it hard to breathe Around these leagues

My snorkel is a tuba, Lu the ruler around these seas Westside Poseidon,
Westside beside 'em

Chest high and rising, almost touching the knees Of stewardess and the
pilot, lucky they make you fly with Personal floating devices, tricks
falling out of my sleeves David Blaine, make it rain

You make a boat, I make a plane

Then, I pull the plug and I make it drain Until I feel like flowing and
filling it up again ... (Westside) [Chorus]

You putting me to sleep, nigga (Dumb it down) That's why you ain't
popping in the streets, nigga (Dumb it down) You ain't winning no
awards, nigga (Dumb it down) Robots and skateboards, nigga? (Dumb
it down) GQ Man of the Year, G? (Dumb it down)

Shit ain't rocking over here, B (Dumb it down) Won't you talk about your
cars, nigga? (Dumb it down) And what the fuck is Goyard, nigga?
(Dumb it down) Make it rain for the chicks (Dumb it down) Pour
champagne on a bitch (Dumb it down) What the fuck is wrong with
you? (Dumb it down) How can I get on a song with you? (Dumb it
down) *G, they told me I should come down, cousin*

But I flatly refuse, I ain't dumb down nothin

HIP-HOP SAVED MY LIFE

*Dedicate, dedicate ... This one right here goes out to my homie with the dream,
nah mean?*

He said, I write what I see

Write to make it right, don't like where I be I'd like to make it like the
sights on TV

Quite the great life, so nice and easy

See, now you can still die from that

But it's better than not being alive from straps Agree, a Mead notebook
and a Bic that click When it's pushed and a wack ass beat

That's a track that's weak, that he got last week 'Cause everybody in the
stu' is like that's that heat A bass-heavy medley with a sample from the
70s With a screwed-up hook that went, "Stack That Cheese"

Somethin, somethin, somethin, "Stack That Cheese"

Mother, sister, cousin, "Stack That Cheese"

He couldn't think of nothin, "Stack That Cheese"

He turns down the beat, writer's block impedes Cryin from the next room,
a baby in need Of some Pampers and some food and a place to sleep
That, plus a black Cadillac on D's

Is what keep him on track to be a great MC, yeah [Chorus]

One you never heard of, I push it hard to further the Grind, I feel like

murder but hip-hop, you saved me One you never heard of, I push it
hard to further the Grind, I feel like murder but hip-hop, you saved my
life Reps Northside so he rocks them braids Eleven-hundred friends on
his MySpace page “Stack That Cheese” got seven hundred plays
Producer made him take it down, said he had to pay Open mic champ
two weeks in a row

Ex-D-Boy with a B-Boy flow

Glow like Leroy, you should see boy go

Got a daddy servin life and a brother on the row Best homie in the grave,
tatted up while in the cage Minute Maid, got his mama workin like a
slave Down baby mama who he really had to honor 'Cause she was his
biggest fan, even let him use her Honda To drive up to Dallas, went to
open up for amateurs Let him keep a debit card so he could put gas in
it Told her when he get on he gon' take her to the Galleria Buy
everythin but the mannequins, ya dig?

[Chorus]

His man called, said, “Ya time might be now They played your freestyle
over ‘Wipe Me Down’

They played it two times, said it might be crowned As the best thing out
the H-Town in a while”

He picked up his son with a great big smile Rapped every single word to
the newborn child Then he put him down and went back to the kitchen
And put on another beat and got back to the mission of Get his mama
out the 'hood, put her somewhere in the woods Keep his lady lookin
good, have her rollin like she should Show his homies there's a way,
other than that flippin yay Bail his homie outta jail, put a lawyer on
his case Throw a concert for the school, show the shorties that it's cool
Throw some candy on the Caddy, chuck the deuce and act a fool Man,
it feels good when it happens like that Two days from goin back to
sellin crack—yes, sir [Chorus 2x]

50 CENT

Few artists have been so shaped by personal catastrophe as 50 Cent. After several years toiling in relative obscurity as an underground artist, 50 Cent (often known simply as “50”) burst onto the mainstream scene with his major label debut, *Get Rich or Die Tryin’* (2003). The hype surrounding it had as much to do with its infectious lead single, “In Da Club,” as it did with his celebrity label, Shady/Aftermath (the imprints of Eminem and Dr. Dre—each of whom produced tracks on the album). More than that, however, was the violence in 50’s personal story. “Being shot defines how strong I am,” he says. “It prepares you for the confusion of being an artist.” ²⁴

In May 2000, 50 was ambushed outside his grandmother’s house in South Jamaica, Queens. He was shot nine times at close range. He survived but suffered serious injuries, including gunshot wounds to his jaw. The resulting change in the timbre and texture of his voice would, ironically, help account for his distinctive sound—by turns vulnerable and menacing, plaintive and playful. One need only compare a track recorded before the shooting, like 1999’s “How to Rob,” with a postshooting song, such as “21 Questions” or “P.I.M.P.”

Not only has 50’s sound changed, but so has his style. The hungry, aggressive quality of the earlier songs is tempered in the later tracks by an assured tone and an almost bemused perspective on most every subject. “My music is a soundtrack,” he says. “The film is my life. My music matches things I’ve experienced or felt. Even if the whole thing is made up.” ²⁵

50 SHOT YA

That’s the sound of the man cockin that thang—that thaaaang

That’s the sound of the man clappin that thang—thaaang

Yo, in my ’hood we was taught not to say who shot ya
See the flash, you heard the shot, you feel the burnin, I got ya
Say a prayer for me if you care for me ’cause I’m on the edge I’m finna put a shell in a nigga head

I rock a lot of ice, I dare you to scheme on it
The fifth got a rubber grip and a beam on it
Homie that took the hit on me couldn’t shoot They

say I'm skinny now, but I look big in the coupe-dee My cousin Uzi out
in L.A. done tripped and do the sets again Got shot the fuck up tryin to
rob the wrong Mexicans I write my lifestyle, y'all niggas is cheaters
Your lines come from feds, felons, and Don Diva Oh, you the black
hand of death? Why your name ain't Preacher?

If you a pimp like Kemp, why them hoes don't treat ya?

You wanna ball like Kirkland? Shorty, let me teach ya This flow's
Godsent, it's bound to reach ya [Chorus]

Problem child, I'm familiar with problems

I know how to solve 'em

Semiautomatic, Luger trey revolve 'em

Shoot 'em up, rob 'em

In the 'hood we starvin, you don't want problems Problem child

And why can't you be man enough

To tell me where you're comin from

They say you can never repay the price for takin a man's life I'm in debt
with Christ, I done did that twice I'm nice, y'all niggas can't hang with
50

Blaaat, y'all niggas can't bang with 50

For every bar in a rhyme, there's a shell and a 9

For every stone in the cross, there's a bitch I tossed See the wounds in my
skin? They from a war, of course You can check CNN for the "War
Report"

See, the drama got me ridin with a sawed-off shottie Catch you at the
light, I blow ya ass off the Ducati Man, niggas ain't gon' do me like
Sammy did Gotti I do it myself, I don't need no help

Give me a knife, I'll get rid of your neighborhood bully Give me a minute,
I'll take a fuckin car with a pulley See, the 'hood is the deepest, stole my
innocence young Niggas jumped me 'cause they couldn't beat me one-
on-one [Chorus]

I must've broke a mirror at three and had bad luck for seven 'Cause Pops
slid and Mommy died before I turned eleven They say it split—'posed
to let black cats cross your path The footprints in the sand is Satan
carryin your ass I got "God Understand Me" tattooed in my skin When

I die, come back, I'ma tattoo it again I'm the young buck that let the
gun buck

Roll the window down and say: "Wassup? Niggas, get ready to duck"

My heart is a house, homie, fear don't live here Nigga, believe me when I
say I don't care

Muslims mix a lot, gods studied they lessons Even when my luck's hard I
still count my blessings See that look in my eye, ya betta keep on
steppin Spent time on my cell floor to sharpen my weapon If you
pussy I'ma smell you when you come around here Them boys in
Pelican Bay couldn't live on my tier [Chorus]

GHETTO QUA'RAN

*Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh Southside, what y'all niggas know about the Dirty
South? One time ...*

[Chorus]

Lord forgive me, for I've sinned

Over and over again, just to stay on top

I recall memories filled with sin

Over and over, again and again

Yo, when you hear talk of the Southside, you hear talk of the Team See,
niggas feared Prince and respected Preme For all you slow
motherfuckers I'ma break it down iller See, Preme was a businessman
and Prince was the killer Remember, he used to push the bulletproof
BM, uh huh This here get you seasick, I sat back and peeped shit They
roll with E-Z Wider and they ain't get blunted Had the whole projects
working for fifty on five-hundred As a youth, all I ever did was sell
crack

I used to idolize Cat. Hurt me in my heart to hear That nigga snitched on
Pap. How he go out like that?

Rumors in the 'hood was Gus was snitchin

I ain't believe that, pa, he helped me cop my first GSX-R

Had the four-runner, the Z, the 5, and the 3

Used to drive his truck through the 'hood draggin jet skis From George
Wallace to Baby Wise, don't be surprised Of how freely I thought of

names of guys who dealt with pies Like L-A-N-Y's, L got shot in the neck, then told us connect Them niggas who shot him got him for ten bricks Fucking Dominicans, turned around and gave 'em more bricks
[Chorus]

That first verse is just a dose of the shit that I'm on Consider this the first chapter in the ghetto's Qua'ran I know a lot of niggas that get dough like Remmy and Joe And Prince and Righteous from Hillside with the mole on his nose Throughout my struggles in the 'hood, I started learnin Life's a bitch with a pretty face, but she burnin Man, I'ma get cheese like Chaz then run through whips like Cigar Gamble all the time like country-curly head Prince and Tah-Tah Po-po under pressure too, they know what they facing Go against crews like BeBos and killers like Pappy Mason A lot of niggas I know been corrupted since birth Enticed to rob nuns for fun, for everything they worth I know some cats that hail out old complexes like Cooley Wall Together niggas stand and divided they fall Round here, shook niggas, they keep it in motion Come around here with your Rollie you can get robbed like Ocean Lord knows, Tommy had lost and sold

Helicopters, Rolls-Royces with Louis Vuitton interior Might sound like I'm fantasizing, but, son, I'm dead serious Montana was no dummy, brought Benice to watch the money Had money out the ass, he politic like the Asian Feds couldn't catch him dirty, so settled for tax evasion
[Chorus]

Yo, rest in peace to Rich and Ron, money what they was about, yo The twins was from Queens but got crazy cream with Alpo Throughout my time I heard tales of Hymie, Frenchy, Jamaican Pauly Duckie Corley, Ronnie Bumps, and Chick, shit A lot of niggas flow the way I flow But ain't been in the game all their life so don't know who I know Writing rhymes is the best way I express how I feel If I ain't rich by twenty-six, I'll be dead or in jail Coming up I heard sippin too much booze'll leave you confused And if you watch the news, you see players in this game that lose I'm forgettin Lefty and Jazz, Pretty Tony and Lance Head Lou, Mel son, Troy and E Money Bags

In a conversation over shrimp and lobster at Benihana's Heard Chico stopped boxing and started robbin diners Shout out to Clarence and Clutch, Bob Dre, Black Will If the flow don't kill you the MAC will

JEAN GRAE

Jean Grae is among the most admired and accomplished underground MCs. Now over a decade into her career, she is finally beginning to earn public attention to match her underground credibility. In the words of Talib Kweli, Jean Grae is “one of the last true MCs left.” ²⁶ Though her purposefully uninflected delivery has sometimes been criticized as monotonous, Jean Grae responds to these critics with the same force and directness she does with her rhyme adversaries. Her greatest contribution to rap poetics may be in storytelling, where she has found a way of inserting varied female personas and narratives into hip-hop’s hypermasculine world.

LOVESONG

She grew up believin in passion and love, whose folks divorced and
remarried Very naïve, seen life in commitments

That shoulda been dead and buried. Highly sentimental, sensitive Gentle
beyond the point she should be. What might be Obvious to most, she
says they too bitter Can’t see the world the way she does: clean lungs,
undamaged liver Sees thugs through her pink-tinted glasses.

Occasionally Weed does make her giggle, listen to some music closer
Dudes approach her lightly, wanna be her lover and she obliges Likes
to cuddle under the covers by candlelit fires Oblivious to lying schemes
to talk her out of clothes Says she’s just in love with love, cuts her
classes, spends too much Time entranced in romancing, things are
changing quickly She’s asking, “Why aren’t you spending more time
with me?” Nigga’s eyes Are getting shifty, coming over later smelling
of pussy On his face, jeans, and sweaters; something’s fishy, and it’s
not What he tells her, man, it’s what he don’t. And she don’t
understand And for some years, she probably won’t. Just wants an
honest man For goodness sake, they backstabbin and cutting her
throat Restraining orders follow, but she’s still optimistic about it Like
Annie, thinking tomorrow maybe will be a better day I let her pray on
bended knees, “Ask him to send Prince Charming, please”

She’s never cheated, treats her man well, cooks, cleans Dresses sexy for
him—halter tops and tight jeans Would break the law for him, go
through a couple of these relationships Still stays strong; she’s too
young and dumb to call it quits Learns that she’s carrying twice, scared

and afraid the first time The second, she don't even cry. Makes her
wipe away his tears And it hurts. They always leave, return crazy So
she doesn't flirt, spends time mourning the babies Goes through a
couple of these relationships and still stays strong Too young and
dumb to call it quits ... It's still a love song She's got a good man; she's
nineteen, he's twenty-one and sweet and honest Promised to love her,
talk of marriage, she would never wanna be Somebody's baby's
mother. Use rubbers occasionally When she's flowin', open off the
affection and gifts And all the good manners he's showing; he's trying
to build a life for himself Studies late, computer shit, and she's missing
attention That she's not getting, sex dwindles, crawling in the sheets
He say he tired and she say she feel neglect and defeat Just doesn't see
his ambition. She wanna be the Universe And hold his center position.
Starts hanging round her best friend more Crazy attraction takes
impulsive action, drop the drawers And falls in love. The world
explodes and she confesses, "Yeah I did it. So?"

They so tight it's like he move when she stretches Over the couple years,
too many stresses: girls who wanna fight her Bitches writing letters,
friendships disappearing Plus he rhymes, so it's competitive. Pressure,
miscarriage They break up fifty times a week and make up just as
much He fuckin and I know, but pretending I'm out of touch It's
getting strained and gets physical. She cries until the river dries And
leaves her dead and cold, packs up her things and leaves behind What
I thought was gold was only gold-plated. Thinking of All the other
ones I coulda just left and up and dated Single after four years,
starting over's never easy But it takes some time to realize your own
worth Come into your own, play your mental rebirth, she starts
penning Some better poems, straighten up her bank account Likes to
take herself out, I'm getting better at it I've had a few relationships,
but still too young and dumb enough To call it quits ... It's still a love
song Love

All I ever want is you

All I ever had, leading in my life was you All that ever was, all I ever had
[sung]

Maybe it's easier to talk about this shit in third person Learning better,
"Wookin' Pa Nub" in all the wrong places Like I'm Eddie Murphy,
curse me to repeat the same cycle I'm breaking, no longer think
relations make a better woman Just for life, I'm pursuing, growing,

but hopelessly romantic still Tasted weather in the bitter climates, love
the sunshine better Dreaming of dream proposals, decent moral values
Placing higher on my chart, trying not to have a shallow heart But
battle scars are deep and reaching to the depth of Hell and back Try to
give up the grudges, think it's experience And move from the clutches
of sadness. It's difficult Sometimes I wish I wasn't an adult, adolescent
Primetime sitcom star, I've been too far

And too much, too hard, for too long. It's still a love song **HATER'S
ANTHEM**

Liquid content may cause y'all faggots' frames to burst Insane rhyme
structure flame your brain, I'll blame birth The game switched her,
made her retain a greater picture Of lame dames that couldn't be felt
with Braille scripture Even deaf kids are rockin earplugs

I'll rip you then stick you with sticks I dipped in arsenic-filled jugs
(Official, you bitches) I ignite under certain circumstances Flip back
and have your ass hit by backup dancers Cancer-choker, the Mad
Hatter, the Jabberwocky of rap Been hibernatin, contemplatin, now
I'm finally back With rope chains so hopscotch yo' ass back I play close
like a thong huggin an ass crack The verbs leave scabbed, riddled
permanent scars That scratch deep like a cheap box of CD-Rs Spread
heat like I'm Gia's drawers pleading the fourth In court like he's the
boss, then they'll carry you off (Fuck it) I'm more necessary than
violence on the Amistad (Oh, my God) She's wrong like eating bacon
in Ramadan

I'll piss on your shoes then make you clean it with your mouth Then I'll
tell all your friends to send Depends to your house Must be crazy, put
speed knots in your lady Phallic DNA tests so it's not your baby

(Maybe we can be friends) Naw, just pretend I'll slip razors in your charm
bracelets, slit your skin, bitch [Chorus 8x]

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you.

Superenhanced survival shooter with a crucial plan Infatuated with music
and loops, no scruples, man Phraseologist, nonapologetic mutilators

Stays on the list, defaming names so they can sue me later Hater, yes!
decatherm gas, the fate opposer Philanthropist, misanthropist,
underground soldier Banana clips just start unloading in your
supermarkets Screaming 'til you're hoarse, bleeding, finding out that
you're the target Monotony flow, contradictory word placin

Like bringing Satan to a baptism in a flooded basement (Jean's out to lunch) She ain't even punched in yet You're a facsimile, I'm the original document All shock and then—lights out—drop 'em in Selections then very bury them proper things I'm married to rap like J. Lo to scandals Light up the room like J. Hov's birthday candles I'm that bright, like Stephen Hawking's computer chair Asked out a teacher on a Sadie Hawkins dare Parallax view, see the future in my sleep I'll battle-rap you until your gullet starts to leak Gnash your teeth, smash you then bind your feet Thrash holes in your dome, snatch your soul and retreat Mad Maxish, the prose so dope it's fantastic Now fold up your dough before you get yo' ass kicked
[Chorus 2x]

Rush the door like a Russian whore

Mail-order bitch sent to Dahmer's crib

It's an honor to split your armor, blood drip Like *Pulp Fiction* when bits of bones get on ya Shit, I just talk jargon, disregard margins Liquidate any enemies, rap incarnate

I'm cynical, criminal actions excite me

My mic chord's an umbilical that radiates high beams Humorous, filled with more flow than a cumulous cloud Dentist mad, he said my words abuse my mouth So I upchucked 'em, butt fuck 'em out

Chuckle loud, duck down screamin "Fuck the crowd"

Specialized stacker mixed malt liquor with Jolt cola Start drinkin when the cops start lookin over they shoulder Nastier than central booking samiches handled tough Cranky in the morning when smokin that cannabis stuff Can't see it like orphan Annie's pupils in cartoons Can't be it like trannies who pay for implanted wombs Nope—that's not it. Close, but no cigar

Dutch lit but I'm passin it right past you, parr That's all. That's Jean. The definitive minister The sarcastic wit, bar spit at competitor The uncosmetic'd up shit on your pedestal The sanatorium released, the most unforgettable Moked off, dirt. Molotov your face

Then lock you in a box and watch you burn in a close space Pig face, get your shit taken and replaced With a tickin case that's strapped to your waist. (Duh!) You move too slow, sloth, boost your movement Your mind counts time like down South screw music Who's it? The phoenix wings spread like the Ox said I'll knock you out a window, make you

literally drop dead **DON'T RUSH ME**

Listen: There's nothing like knowing yourself like the way I know That smoking's kinda broken my health like the way I know My flow don't make appropriate wealth. I can't change that But funny I'm sayin that when it's money I'm aimed at I don't give a fuck if you frame that or quote it I meant what I said 'cause I wrote it; point noted I know I'm overly sensitive when it comes to, well ...

Just about everything

And I'm so hardheaded, I don't need your help Like, no advice for these records 'less it's me, myself Like, I don't ever want to breathe if it requires assistance Just ... just shut down my system. I'm a victim of Choosin bad love, Bad Luck Lucy

Every man's touch seems to be a doozy and plus I'm attached to this loose leaf, stand on my two feet So it's hard enough to even have to physically move me Go ahead. Try

[Chorus]

I know I'm on the right path

To who I'm gonna be at last

But don't rush me, nigga

I know I'm wrong and right

At the same time both, I'm the dark and light They say life needs everything to live

At the same time, I've got everything to give So don't rush me

Don't rush me

I've got to be more disciplined, I'm listening More to straight logic, blockin random shit that's driftin in Age is a motherfucker, find myself starin At the little kids, thinkin I could beat 'em like a stepmother Creepin on a come-up of thirty soon, but lookin twenty, ooh The food catches up to you now plenty

Attending christenings of my best friend's children And they're asking who's next and I'm wishin for Six more wishes for Christmas or kids on the wish list Or time machines to be in existence

I'm a team player, not. The dry wit is similar To Arizona weather—say it, nigga: hot

Patent-leather sole tappin at my goal

If the album's not platinum, then I'll have to rack a gold 'Cause rappin
ain't for nothing, unless I hold plaques So I can sit up on a boat like
Colin, roll that And you know that

[Chorus]

See, this here is the most serious

That I've ever been, the most clear-headed My gear fetish clearly needs an
account

So if I need, I'll smoke 'em all like Dennis Leary and I'm out That's great,
though. Thanks for adding more insecurities Just as I was finding my
level of maturity Just as I was mindin my business, try to murder
Jean's confidence But lucky for me you're all incompetent

Road-blockin this guess, I see 'em tryin

To put a stop to my obnoxiousness, but

I stay long-winded like saying "George Papadopolis"

I know, but I write from the heart with this So I've got some things to
work on

My moodiness like masturbation gets its jerk on My fascination with the
fast pace—money's encapsulated In my mind space like: "What a
thrill"

Past-dated and I know I'm not in last place But it's hard to work through
it with this masked face The masking tape up on the window keeps the
cold out And every time I'm layin down my back breaks 'cause it's old
now I yell too much, get stressed too quick

But the best thing about it, I can change that shit And still remain who I
came down to Earth to be It's not Jean Grae, that's just a name, you'll
see [Chorus]

IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE

Immortal Technique is a defiantly political, stolidly independent artist known for clever wordplay and fearless commentary on a range of controversial subjects. “I’ve heard ‘Revolutionary Rapper,’ ‘Street Politician,’ ‘Political Rapper,’ ‘Activist MC,’ all that shit,” he says. “I pay it no mind. I know what it is to be pigeonholed in the game, so I don’t worry about what people say. The hardest albums, even the birth of gangsta rap, was all revolutionary: *AmeriKKKa’s Most Wanted*, *The Chronic*, Ice-T’s *O.G.* How can someone listen to these albums and not hear a revolutionary message encoded in them? I represent the streets here in America and I represent the people from other countries that come here as a result of what has been done to their homeland. Every aspect of this rap game is political, any veteran will tell you that.” ²⁷

Immortal Technique is not defined by his politics alone. “Industrial Revolution” is a fierce battle rap, full of cutting punch lines. “Dance with the Devil” is an arresting narrative that tells the tale of a youth’s decline into crime with a shocking ending. Unlike so many rap stories, the protagonist is not the “I” of the rapper, but another person entirely.

DANCE WITH THE DEVIL

I once knew a nigga whose real name was William

His primary concern was making a million

Being the illest hustler that the world ever seen He used to fuck movie stars and sniff coke in his dreams A corrupted young mind at the age of thirteen

Nigga never had a father and his mom was a fiend She put the pipe down, but for every year she was sober Her son’s heart simultaneously grew colder

He started hanging out, selling bags in the projects Checking the young chicks, looking for hit and run prospects He was fascinated by material objects

But he understood money never bought respect

He built a reputation ’cause he could hustle and steal But got locked once and didn’t hesitate to squeal So criminals he chilled with didn’t think he was real You see, me and niggas like this have never been equal I

don't project my insecurities on other people

He fiended for props like addicts with pipes and needles So he felt he had to prove to everyone he was evil A fever-minded young man with infinite potential The product of a ghetto-bred capitalistic mental Coincidentally, dropped out of school to sell weed Dancing with the devil, smoked until his eyes would bleed But he was sick of selling trees and gave in to his greed [Chorus]

Everyone trying to be trife never face the consequences You probably only did a month for minor offenses Ask a nigga doing life if he had another chance

But then again there's always the wicked that knew in advance Dance forever with the devil on a cold cell block But that's what happens when you rape, murder, and sell rock Devils used to be gods, angels that fell from the top There's no diversity because we're burning in the melting pot So Billy started robbing niggas, anything he could do He'd get his respect back in the eyes of his crew Starting fights over little shit up on the block Stepped up to selling mothers and brothers the crack rock Working overtime for making money for the crack spot Hit the jackpot and wanted to move up to cocaine Fulfilling the Scarface fantasy stuck in his brain Tired of the block niggas treating him the same

He wanted to be major like the cutthroats and the thugs But when he tried to step to 'em, niggas showed him no love They told him any motherfucking coward can sell drugs Any bitch nigga with a gun can bust slugs

Any nigga with a red shirt can front like a Blood Even Puffy smoked a motherfucker up in the club

But only a real thug can stab someone 'til they die Standing in front of them, staring straight into their eyes Billy realized that these men were well guarded

And they wanted to test him before business started Suggested raping a bitch to prove he was coldhearted So now he had a choice between going back to his life Or making money with made men, up in the ciph'

His dreams about cars and ice made him agree

A hardcore nigga is all he ever wanted to be

And so he met them Friday night at a quarter to three [Chorus]

They drove around the projects slow while it was raining Smoking blunts,
drinking and joking for entertainment Until they saw a woman on the
street walking alone Three in the morning, coming back from work,
on her way home And so they quietly got out the car and followed her
Walking through the projects, the darkness swallowed her They
wrapped her shirt around her head and knocked her onto the floor
“This is it, kid. Now you got your chance to be raw”

So Billy yoked her up and grabbed the chick by the hair And dragged her
into a lobby that had nobody there She struggled hard but they forced
her to go up the stairs They got to the roof and then held her down on
the ground Screaming, “Shut the fuck up” and “Stop moving around”

The shirt covered her face, but she screamed and clawed So Billy stomped
on the bitch until he’d broken her jaw The dirty bastards knew exactly
what they were doing They kicked her until they cracked her ribs and
she stopped moving Blood leaking through the cloth, she cried silently
And then they all proceeded to rape her violently Billy was made to go
first, but each of them took a turn Ripping her up and choking her
until her throat burned A broken jaw mumbled for God but they
weren’t concerned When they were done and she was lying bloody,
broken, and bruised One of them niggas pulled out a brand new
twenty-two They told him that she was a witness for what she’d gone
through And if he killed her he was guaranteed a spot in the crew He
thought about it for a minute, she was practically dead And so he
leaned over and put the gun right to her head *I’m falling and I can’t turn
back*

I’m falling and I can’t turn back

Right before he pulled the trigger and ended her life He thought about the
cocaine with the platinum and ice And he felt strong standing along
with his new brothers Cocked the gat to her head and pulled back the
shirt cover But what he saw made him start to cringe and stutter
’Cause he was staring into the eyes of his own mother She looked back
at him and cried ’cause he had forsaken her She cried more painfully
than when they were raping her His whole world stopped, he couldn’t
even contemplate His corruption had successfully changed his fate And
he remembered how his mom used to come home late Working hard
for nothing, ’cause now what was he worth?

He turned away from the woman that had once given him birth And
crying out to the sky ’cause he was lonely and scared But only the

Devil responded, 'cause God wasn't there And right then he knew what it was to be empty and cold And so he jumped off the roof and died with no soul They say death takes you to a better place but I doubt it After that they killed his mother and never spoke about it And listen, 'cause the story that I'm telling is true 'Cause I was there with Billy Jacobs and I raped his mom, too And now the Devil follows me everywhere that I go In fact, I'm sure he's standing among one of you at my shows And every street cipher listening to little thugs flow He could be standing right next to you and you wouldn't know The Devil grows inside the hearts of the selfish and wicked White, brown, yellow, and black—color is not restricted You have a self-destructive destiny when you're inflicted And you'll be one of God's children that fell from the top There's no diversity because we're burning in the melting pot So when the Devil wants to dance with you, you better say never Because the dance with the Devil might last you forever **INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION**

"The day of the Geechie is gone, boy. And you goin with him"

Yeah, nigga, Immortal Technique, metaphysics

The bling-bling era was cute but it's about to be done I leave you full of clips like the moon blocking the sun My metaphors are dirty like herpes but harder to catch Like an escape tunnel in prison, I started from scratch And now these parasites want a percent of my ASCAP

Trying to control perspective like a acid flashback But here's a quotable for every single record exec Get your fucking hands out my pocket, nigga, like Malcolm X

But this ain't a movie, I'm not a fan or a groupie And I'm not that type of cat you can afford to miss if you shoot me Curse the heavens and laugh when the sky electrocutes me Immortal Technique, stuck in your thoughts, darkening dreams No one's as good as good as me, they just got better marketing schemes I leave you to your own destruction like sparkin a fiend 'Cause you got jealousy in your voice like Starscream And that's the primary reason that I hate y'all faggots I've been nice since niggas got killed over eight-ball jackets And Reebok Pumps that didn't do shit for the sneaker I'm a heat seeker with features that'll reach through the speaker And murder counterrevolutionaries personally

Break a thermometer and force-feed his kids mercury A & R's try jerkin

me, thinking they call shots Offered me a deal and a blanket full of
small pox You're all getting shot, you little fucking treacherous bitches
[Chorus]

This is the business and y'all ain't getting nothing for free And if you
devils play broke, then I'm taking your company You can call it
reparations or restitution

Lock and load, nigga, industrial revolution

I want fifty-three million dollars for my collar stands Like the Bush
administration gave to the Taliban And fuck packing grams, nigga,
learn to speak and behave You wanna spend twenty years as a
government slave?

Two million people in prison keep the government paid Stuck in a six-by-
eight cell alive in the grave

I was made by revolution to speak to the masses

Deep in the club, toast the truth, reach for your glasses I'll burn an
orphanage just to bring heat to you bastards Innocent deep in a
casket, Columbian fashion

Intoxicated off the flow like thug's passion

You motherfuckers will never get me to stop blastin You better off asking
Ariel Sharon for compassion You better off begging for twenty points
from a label You better off battling cancer under telephone cables
Technique, chemically unstable, set to explode

Foretold by the Dead Sea Scrolls, written in code So if your message ain't
shit, fuck the records you sold 'Cause if you go platinum, it's got
nothing to do with luck It just means that a million people are stupid
as fuck Stuck in the underground, a general that rose to the limit
Without distribution, managers, a deal, or a gimmick *Revolutionary*
Volume 2, murder the critics And leave your fucking body rotten for
the roaches and crickets [Chorus]

K'NAAN

K'naan is a Somali-born, Toronto-based rapper who grew up amid the violence and refugee camps brought on by his native country's ongoing civil war. On his debut, *The Dusty Foot Philosopher* (2005), he raps in stark detail and emotion about the horrors he witnessed in Mogadishu. "What's Hardcore?" is a lyrical broadside against the gangsta rappers in America who glamorize the war going on in the streets of New York or Los Angeles or Atlanta when the real war of which K'naan speaks is far from glamorous. "My Old Home" is a rich and complicated portrait of his native land—the good, the bad, and the ambivalent.

With all of this weighty subject matter, one might assume that K'naan is one of the breed of conscious rappers that rely on their righteous content at the expense of their lyrical skill. This is far from the case. Rhyming over rich instrumental tracks that draw from the full range of the African diaspora, K'naan laces the beats with lyrics that are as attuned to the ear as they are to the mind. He considers himself a poet, but he does so with the understanding that his poetry is inextricably bound up with music. "At some point I started to think in terms of melody," he says, explaining why he is an MC and not a poet bound strictly by the page. "Words were like the same as writing like a poet writes, but I was still thinking of melody and something like the guitar sounds built up on its own. It's natural, rather than me trying to have a certain career plan." ²⁸ In K'naan, consciousness and craft combine.

WHAT'S HARDCORE?

I put a pen to the paper, this time as visual as possible
Guns blast at the hospital

The walls are whitewashed with tin rooftops
To show love you lick two shots. It's dangerous, man
Journalists hire gunmen, there's violent women
Kids trust no one 'cause fire burned them
Refugees die in boats headed for peace
Is anyone scared of death here? Not in the least
I walk by the old lady selling coconuts under the tree
Life is cheap here but wisdom is free
The beach boys hang on the side, leaning with pride
Scam artists and gangsters fiendin to fight
I walk with three kids that can't wait to meet God lately
That's Bucktooth, Mohamed, and Crybaby
What they do everyday just to eat, Lord have mercy
Strapped with an AK and they blood thirsty [Chorus 2x]

So what's hardcore? Really, are you hardcore? Hmm We begin our day by
the way of the gun Rocket-propelled grenades blow you away if you
front We got no police, ambulance, or firefighters We start riots by
burning car tires

They lootin, and everybody start shootin Bullshit politicians talking 'bout
solutions But it's all talk, you can't go half a block Without a
roadblock. You don't pay at the roadblock You get your throat shot
and each roadblock is set up by these gangsters And different
gangsters go by different standards For example, the evening is a no-
go

Unless you wanna wear a bullet like a logo In the day you should never
take the alleyway The only thing that validates you is the AK

They chew on Khat, it's sorta like coca leaves And there ain't no police

[Chorus 2x]

I'ma spit these verses 'cause I feel annoyed And I'm not gonna quit 'til I
fill the void If I rhyme about home and got descriptive I'd make 50
Cent look like Limp Bizkit It's true, and don't make me rhyme about
you I'm from where the kids is addicted to glue Get ready, he got a
good grip on the machete Make rappers say they do it for love like R.
Kelly It's hard, harder than Harlem and Compton intertwined Harder
than harboring Bin Laden and rewind To that earlier part when I was
kinda like We begin our day by the way of the gun Rocket-propelled
grenades blow you away if you front We got no police, ambulances, or
firefighters We start riots by burning car tires

They looting and everybody starting shooting [Chorus 2x]

MY OLD HOME

So, yeah, basically a lot of people ask me how life was then. So here it is ...

My old home smelled of good birth

Boiled red beans, kernel oil, and hand me down poetry Its brick
whitewashed walls widowed by first paint The tin rooftop humming
songs of promise while time is Locked into demonic rhythm with the
leaves The trees had the wind hugging them

Lovin them a torturous love

Buggin when it was over and done

The round cemented pot kept the raindrops cool Neighbors and dwellers
spatter in the pool Kid's playin football with his hand and sock We had
what we got and it wasn't a lot No one knew they were poor

We were all innocent to greed's judgment The country was combusting
with life like a long hibernating volcano With a long tale of success
like J-Lo Farmers, fishers, fighters, even fools had a place in
production The coastal line was the place of seduction The coral reefs
make you daze in reflection The women walked with grace and
perfection And we just knew we were warriors, too Nothing morbid,
it's true, we were glorious BOOM!

Then one day it came, spoiled the parade like rain Like oil in a flame, it
pained

The heart attack sudden, odder than eleven Harder than a punch in the
womb

Harder than the lunch you consume

For us, it had a cancerous fume, or a lust Men who made killing holy
Selling powerfully like healthy livestock It made tides rock with a diligent
mock Confused are the people, infused in the evil Professed to eject
like Jews in the sequel, so when It came in the morning, with a
warning and without The hurting was a burden, only certain was
doubt A mythical tale, no soul knows well

Liberty went to hell, freedom called for shells Fierce was the blow, keep
your ears to the show It appears Orwell was right in '84

Had big brother kill Mother in her store With all of us watching, we didn't
love her anymore Peep my poem, Mother was my old home

Goodwill is looted in my old home

Religion is burned down in my old home Kindness is shackled in my old
home

Justice has been raped in my old home Murderers hold post in my old
home

The land vomits ghosts in my old home We got pistols with eyes,
corruption and lies Trusting snakes, and death without breaks
Suspicious newborns live in our horn

Used to the pain, rack bodies not grain Chopped limbs not trees, spend
lives not wealth Seek vengeance not truth, the craziest youth Hoist

pain not plans, nigga, fuck your plans Bandits will beat us down in my
old home Rumors are law now in my old home

Sedatives of faith in my old home

Rapers are praised in my old home

Demons dress well in my old home

Infants are nailed in my old home

Spirits are jailed in my old home

Grudges grow tails in my old home

Our roads have seen electric hate and Our women labor beneath stubborn
faith and Our farms produce guilty grub and

Our kids depend on shifty luck, see

Our news is life for death is old, so Don't blame me for truth I've told, say
Goodwill is looted in my old home

Religion is burned down in my old home Kindness is shackled in my old
home

Justice has been raped in my old home Murderers hold post in my old
home

The land vomits ghosts in my old home

TALIB KWELI

In rap, Talib Kweli's name is synonymous with depth and excellence. Even Jay-Z, considered by many to be the greatest rapper ever, famously named-checked Kweli on "Moment of Clarity": "If skills sold, truth be told / I'd probably be lyrically Talib Kweli." Though some consider Talib Kweli a "conscious" rapper rather than a commercial one, he rejects the designation, preferring to understand hip-hop as a culture without divisions. "I'm a fan of demolishing those terms because I think those terms divide our music," he told hip-hop journalist Davey D. ²⁹

Talib Kweli is a technically sophisticated rhymers who makes ample use of a range of poetic techniques, all while delivering provocation for thought. His vocal tone is high-pitched and nasal, which he uses to his advantage, even bending his voice toward song at times. His style employs a dense tapestry of syllables, delivered at whim and consciously off the beat, and he makes ample use of wordplay, particularly of similes. "When you are honest with your craft," he says, "it comes out fly-er than anything you try to write for radio." ³⁰

RE:DEFINITION

(Black Star w/ Mos Def)

What what what, what what, what what, what what

Whoaaaaahhhhhh!

[Chorus]

One two three, Mos Def and Talib Kweli

We came to rock it on to the tip-top

Best alliance in hip-hop, wayohh

I said, one, two, three, Black Star shine eternally We came to rock it on to the tip-top

And Hi-Tek make the beat drop, wayohh

[Talib Kweli]

RE:DEFinition, turning your play into a tragedy Exhibit level degree on the mic passionately Niggas is sweet, so I bet if I bit I'd get a cavity Livin to get high, you ain't flyer than gravity We Die Hard like the

battery done in the back of me by the mad MC

Who think imitation is the highest form of flattery, actually Don't be mad at me, I had to be the one to break it to you You get kicked into obscurity like judo—no, Menudo 'Cause you pseudo, tryin to compete with reality like Xerox Towards destruction you spiraling like hairlocks, wipe them teardrops Chasing stars in your eyes, playing games with your lives Now the wives is widows soakin up pillows, weepin like willows Still mo' blacks is dyin, kids ain't livin, they tryin "How to Make a Slave" by Willie Lynch is still applyin Regardless, the Mos is one of my closest partners Rockin ever since before Prince was called The Artist Rockin before Funkmaster Flex was rockin Starter When 'Pac and Biggie was still cool, before they was martyrs Life or death, if I'm choosin, with every breath I'm enhancin Stop, there comes a time when you can't run [Mos Def]

What, lyrically handsome, call collect, a king's ransom Jams I write soon become the ghetto anthem

Way out like Bruce Wayne's mansion, move like a phantom You'll talk about me to your grandsons

Cats who claimin they hard be mad fag

So I run through 'em like flood water through sandbags Competition is mad, what I got, they can't have Sinkin they ship like Moby Dick did Ahab

Son, I'm way past the minimum, enter a millennium Where rap stars hold a gat to your back like Palestinians Ancient Abyssinia, shorn a horn of Gideon

Official b-boy gentlemen won't turn off at the interim Born inside the winter wind, day after December 10

These simpletons, they mentionin the synonym for feminine Sweeter than some cinnamon in Danish rings by Entenmann's Rush up on adrenaline, they get they asses sent to them (Gentlemen) you got a tenement, well then assemble it Leave your unit tremblin like herds of movin elephant Intelligent embellishment, follow for your element From Flatbush settlement, skin possesses melanin Hotter than tales of crack peddlin, makin 'em WOOP

Like blue gelatin, swing like Duke Ellington Broader than Barrington Levy, believe me

The hot Apache red who burnt down your chief teepee You see me?

One two three, Mos Def and Talib Kweli

We came to rock it on to the tip-top

Best alliance in hip-hop, wayohh

I said, one, two, three, Black Star shine eternally We came to rock it on to the tip-top

Because we rulin hip-hop, yes, we is rulin hip-hop Talib Kweli is rulin hip-hop

Say we Black Star, we rule hip-hop-ah-ahh-ah-ahh-ahh Whoahhhh!

FOR WOMEN

Yeah, so we got this tune called "For Women," right? Originally, it was by Nina Simone. She said it was inspired by, you know, down South. In the South, they used to call her Mother "Auntie." She said, "No Mrs., you know, just Auntie," you know what I'm saying? She said if anybody ever called her "Auntie" she'd burn the whole goddamn place down. Know what I'm sayin? But, you know, we're movin past that, you know what I'm sayin, coming into the new millennium, we can't forget our elders ...

I got off the 2 train in Brooklyn on my way to a session Said let me help this woman up the stairs before I get to steppin We got in a conversation, she said she a 107

Just her presence was a blessing and her essence was a lesson She had her head wrapped and long dreads that peeked out the back Like antenna to help her get a sense of where she was at Imagine that, livin a century, the strength of her memories Felt like an angel had been sent to me

She lived from nigger to colored to Negro to Black To Afro then African-American and right back to nigger You'd figure she'd be bitter in her twilight But she aight, 'cause she done seen the circle of life Yo, her skin was black like it's packed with melanin Back in the days of slaves, she packin like Harriet Tubman And her arms are long and she moves like song Feet with corns, hand with calluses, but the heart is warm And her hair is wooly and it attract a lot of energy Even negative, she gotta dead that, the head wrap is her remedy Her back is strong and she's far from a vagabond This is the back the master's whip used to crack upon Strong enough to take all the pain that's been inflicted Again and again and again and again and flip it To the love for her

children, nothing else matters What do they call her? They call her Aunt Sarah I know a girl with a name as beautiful as the rain Her face is the same but she suffers an unusual pain Seems she only deal with losers who be usin them games Chasin the real brothers away like she confused in the brain She try to get in where she fit in on that American Dream mission Paid tuition for that receipt to find out her history was missing And started flippin, seeing the world through very different eyes People askin her what she'll do when it come time to choose sides Yo, her skin is yellow, it's like her face is blond, word is bond And her hair is long and straight just like Sleeping Beauty See, she truly feel like she belong in two worlds And that she can't relate to other girls

Her father was rich and white, still livin with his wife But he forced himself on her mother late one night—they call it rape That's right, and now she take flight through life with hate and spite Inside her mind that keep her up to the break of light a lot of times (I gotta find myself) (I gotta find myself) (I gotta find myself) She had to remind herself They called her Safronia, the unwanted seed Blood still blue in her vein and still red when she bleeds (Don't, don't, don't hurt me again) [8x]

Teenage lovers sit on the stoops up in Harlem Holdin hands under the Apollo marquee dreamin of stardom Since they was born the streets is watchin and schemin, and now it got them Generations facin diseases that don't kill you, they just got problems And complications that get you first. Yo, it's getting worse When children hide the fact that they pregnant 'cause they scared of givin birth "How will I feed this baby? How will I survive? How will this baby shine?"

Daddy dead from crack in '85, Mommy dead from AIDS in '89

At fourteen the baby hit the same streets, they became a master The children of the enslaved, they grow a little faster They bodies become adult while they keep the thoughts of a child Her arrival into womanhood was hemmed up by her survival Now she twenty-five, barely grown, out her own Doin whatever it takes—strippin, workin out on the block, up on the phone Talkin about, "My skin is tan like the front of your hand And my hair? Well, my hair's alright whatever way I want to fix it It's alright; it's fine. But my hips, these sweet hips of mine Invite you, Daddy. And when I fix my lips my mouth is like wine Take a sip; don't be shy. Tonight I wanna be your lady I ain't too

good for your Mercedes, but first you got to pay me Quit with all them questions, sugar—whose little girl am I?

Why? I'm yours if you got enough money to buy You better stop with the compliments, we running out of time You wanna talk? Whatever. We could do that; it's your dime From Harlem is where I came, don't worry about my name Up on one-two-five they call me Sweet Thang"

A daughter come up in Georgia, ripe and ready to plant seeds Left the plantation when she saw a sign even though she can't read It came from God, when life get hard she always speak to him She'd rather kill her babies than let the master get to 'em She on the run up North to get across the Mason-Dixon In church she learned how to be patient and keep wishin The promise of eternal life after death for those that God bless She swears the next baby she'll have will breathe a free breath And get milk from a free breast, and love being alive Otherwise they'll have to give up being themselves to survive Being maids, cleaning ladies, maybe teachers or college graduates Nurses or housewives, prostitutes and drug addicts Some will grow to be old women, some will die before they born They'll be mothers and lovers who inspire and make songs "But me, my skin is brown and my manner is tough Like the love I give my babies when the rainbow's enuff I'll kill the first motherfucker that mess with me, I never bluff I ain't got time to lie; my life has been much too rough Still running with bare feet, I ain't got nothin but my soul Freedom is the ultimate goal, life and death is small on the whole In many ways. I'm awfully bitter these days 'Cause the only parents God gave me, they were slaves And it crippled me, I got the destiny of a casualty But I live through my babies and I change my reality Maybe one day I'll ride back to Georgia on a train Folks round there call me Peaches—I guess that's my name"

GIVE 'EM HELL

Okay. This what it is nowadays, right? Little noises and whatnot. I got one though. Ready or not.

[Sung]

We know that what we reap we sow

But we forget how low we can go

We think it's bad here on earth
But if we don't get to Heaven it's Hell

[Chorus]

It's all going to (Hell)
It's all going to (Hell)
Yup, we living in (Hell)
Yup, they giving us (Hell)
It's all going to (Hell)
It's all going to (Hell)
Yup, we living in (Hell)
Word

Every Sunday dressing up, catching gossip at its worst Couldn't see the
difference in the Baptist and the Catholic Church Caught up in the
Rapture of the first chapter and second verse If we all God's children
then what's the word of the Reverend worth?

Taught early that faith is blind like justice when you facing time If we all
made in God's image then that means his face is mine Wait—or is that
blasphemy? It's logical, it has to be If I don't look like my father then
the way I live is bastardly Naturally that's confusion to a young'un
trying to follow Christ Taught that if you don't know Jesus then you
lead a hollow life Never question the fact that Jesus was Jewish, not a
Christian Or that Christianity was law according to politicians Who
was King James? And why did he think that it was so vital To remove
chapters and make his own version of the Bible?

They say Hell is underground and Heaven is in the sky And they say that's
where you go when you die—but how they know?

[Chorus]

I've been to many churches; I've quoted many verses I've dealt with my
base self; I control my many urges I used to study my lessons, it was a
blessing not a curse I learned that Heaven and Hell exist right here on
Earth, word I've studied with Rastafarians and learned from the dreads
That Hell is called Babylon and that's where them crazy baldheads
dwell They got us thinking that Muslims like to make bombs But real

Muslims believe in paradise and resist the Shaitan So it all sound the same to me, that's why when they say One's right and the other's wrong it just sound like game to me It's like God skipped past the church and came to me. No, that ain't vain To me, it's just a particular way that I came to see The difference between those who claim to be religious And those that say they spiritual and recognize that life is full of miracles You could see my glow in a rhyme, the poem divine 'cause it coincide With the growin tide of those who lookin for God and know to go inside [Chorus]

Living in mass confusion, looking for absolution The gas-seducer psychopath produced the last solution Based on his interpretation of what the words were saying Trying to get to God but ended up doing the work of Satan Religion create division, make the Muslim hate the Christian Make the Christian hate the Jew, make up rules of faith that you Conditioned to and gotta follow and God forbid you go to Hell But if you ever walked through any ghetto then you know it well [Chorus]

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Just because the Lord is my shepherd don't mean I gotta be no sheep, feel me? More blood is spilled over religion than anything in world history. We saying the same thing.

LIL WAYNE

Lil Wayne divides people into sides, with some—including himself—calling him the greatest rapper alive, and others dismissing him as a gimmick rapper or a victim of his own vices. Much of what surrounds him carries the weight of myth: He never writes down a single line of lyrics. He records almost every waking hour. He is—again in his own words—a Martian.

Whatever one might think of him, he is a lyrical craftsman in the oral tradition, using the fact that he does not write down his lyrics to his advantage. Wayne relies heavily on aural devices like homonyms and homophones, assonance, alliteration, and, of course, rhyme. He grounds his wordplay in puns, turns of phrase that make the most of the play of sound.

When Lil Wayne released his first solo album, *Tha Block Is Hot* (1999), he was already a rap veteran, having recorded alongside his Cash Money label mates since he was eleven years old. Between 1999 and 2008 he released six studio albums, a respectable output. But it is through mix tapes that Wayne built his considerable fame. In that same span, dozens of official and unofficial mix tapes have appeared featuring hundreds of songs.

The lyrics that follow chart the trajectory of Lil Wayne's career to this point, with his early solo effort "Tha Block Is Hot" all the way to his 2008 multiplatinum album *Tha Carter III*. But it may be on his mix tape lyrics that we get the clearest glimpse into Wayne's mind and mad artistry. "I Feel Like Dying" is an ambivalent and abstract paean to chemical dependency in which Wayne fragments his words, reciting them with deliberate attention to each broken syllable.

FROM THA BLOCK IS HOT

Straight off the block thang, nuts in my hand, trustin no man Got my
Glock cocked, runnin this thing, ya understand?

We be steamin, blazin, nines pumped in caves and Hollygrove
Seventeenth, the 'hood where I was raised in Niggas bustin heads in,
runnin, duckin Feds and Rocks under they tongues and ki's under they
beds and Do it for the real niggas, twenty-four seven hustlers Ehheh,
until we shove a barrel down ya pipe, suckers Ain't no love for no

busta, no pimp for no coward No respect for no stunt and no money
without power We keepin niggas hotter, ewwww, nasty and sour Pile
up in the Eddie Bauer and blakka at every hour Some niggas like that
powder, fold it up with that drain Some like that weed or that dope
and some shoot it up in they veins From the home of the game, jackin
and crackin brains Broadcastin live from Tha Block it's Lil Wayne I
FEEL LIKE DYING

Only once the drugs are done that I feel like dying ... I feel like dying [3x]

Yeah, hello...

Get lifted...

Yeah, I get lifted

Yeah, yeah, so get lifted... yup! Haha...

I am sittin on the clouds, I got smoke comin from my seat I can play
basketball with the moon, I got the whole world at my feet Playin
touch football on Marijuana Street Or in a marijuana field, you are so
beneath my cleats Get high, so high that I feel like lying Down in a
cigar, roll me up and smoke me 'cause ...

(I feel like dying)

Only once the drugs are done that I feel like dying ... I feel like dying [2x]

Swimming laps around a bottle of Louis the XIII Jumpin off of a mountain
into a sea of Codeine I'm at the top of the top, but still I climb And if I
should ever fall, the ground would then turn to wine Pop-pop, pop-
pop, I feel like flying ...

Then I feel like frying, then ...

(I feel like dying)

Only once the drugs are done that I feel like dying ... I feel like dying [2x]

I can mingle with the stars and throw a party on Mars I am a prisoner
locked up behind Xanax bars I have just boarded a plane without a
pilot And violets are blue, roses are red Daisies are yellow, the flowers
are dead Wish I can give you this feeling I feel like buying And if my
dealer don't have no more, then ...

(I feel like dying)

Only once the drugs are done that I feel like dying ... I feel like dying [2x]

LIVE FROM THE 504

Live from the five hundred and fo'

It's Mr. Crazy Flow jumpin like a bungee, no rope Even in the dungeon I glow, even if it ain't sunny I glow If it ain't about money I go ... nowhere, I'm nailed to the flo'

Money controls where I go; it is the sail to my boat And it's goin down, it's goin down like there's a whale in the boat See, you can smell that I smoke, and, yeah, I sip that Lean You hit me with that combination that make my eyes bleed I'm a shark in the water, yep, I swim with the bigs So I don't have time to deal with Willie the Squid Li-li-lilipad niggas, l-l-look at the monsta You-you-you don't wanna crash like La-La-La Bamba See, it's me, Ronnie, and Terry and my new drop is berry Watermelon plum, just call it fruit punch I'm a old rapper gettin new bucks

And all ya new rappers, ya just new lunch Flow sick, so sick need a doc, yes A creature monster like the Loch Ness I gets hotter by tha tock before I sizzle to death I just tell the clock, "Gimme a sec"

In the middle of the war, where my enemy at?

I'm runnin this bitch like Eric Bieniemy back 'Cause every time I hear the track I'm like a energy pack The instruments are cryin out, "Where the sympathy at?"

Yeah, if you bettin money, baby, him'll be back Whatever legends look like, bitch, I'm fin ta be dat I walk right in hip-hop like, "Where my dinna be at?"

I ate that and I was like, "Where my dinner be at?"

I hate that women lie, so I lie to them back Got two bitches in my pants, quiet, nada dem that Lotta bitches want dick, I give a lot of them that Let's do a pill, I could fuck ya for a hour with that To the kids, drugs kill—I'm acknowledgin that But when I'm on the drugs, I don't have a problem with that And my niggas got guns the size of toddlers, biatch And we aimin right at ya fuckin collar, biatch **DR. CARTER**

Where's my coffee?

Good morning, Dr. Carter

Hey, Sweetie

Looks like it's going to be a long day

Ahh, another one ... What we got?

Your first patient...

Yeah

... is suffering from a lack of concepts

Uh-huh

originality

Ugh

his flow is weak

Another one ...

and he has no style

Ugh

Whatcha got for him?

Okay, let me put my gloves on and my scrubs on Dr. Carter to the rescue.

Excuse

Me if I'm late, but like a thief it takes Time to be this great. Uh, so just wait Your style is a disgrace, your rhymes are fifth place And I'm just grace. One, uno, ace

And I'm tryin to make your heart beat like bass ... But you're sweet like cake

And I come to fix whatever you shall break Where is your originality? You are so fake So picture me like a gallery, capture what I say All I need is one mic. All I need is one take Like hey, brighter than the sun ray Got a pistol on the playground, watch the gun play Like, no kidding, no kids in the way But the kids do watch, gotta watch what we say Gotta work everyday, gotta not be cliché Gotta stand out like André Three-K

Gotta ... kick it, kick it like the sensei You gotta have faith, you gotta gotta—... wait wait (I think, I think I lost him ...)

Good afternoon, Dr. Carter

Nurse

I don't know about this one. His confidence is down, vocab and metaphors needs work, and he lacks respect for the game.

Ahhh. Let me see

You think you can save him?

Okay, respect is in the heart. So that's where I'ma start And a lot of heart patients don't make it Now hey, kid—plural, I graduated

“Cause you could get through anything if Magic made it”

And that was called recycling, RE: reciting Something 'cause you just like it so you say it just like it Some say it's biting but I say it's enlightening Besides, Dr. Kanye West is one of the brightest And Dr. Swizz can stitch your track up the tightest And Dr. Jeezy can fix you back up the nicest Arthritis in my hand from writin

But I'm a doctor, they don't understand my writin So I stop writin. Now I'm like lightin And you ain't Vince Young so don't clash with the Titan Fast and excitin, my passion is frightening Now let me put some more vocab in your I.V.

Here, take this Vicodin, like it and love it And confidence has no budget So pay me no mind, I don't walk it Like I talk it 'cause I run it, I don't do it 'cause I done it And I'm in the emergency on it

God darnit, I've lost another one ...

Good evening, Dr. Carter. It's been a long day, but this one looks much better than the others. His respect is back up, concepts sound good, his style is showing strong signs of improvement. All he needs now is his swagger

Okay, let me take my gloves off then ...

Swagger tighter than a yeast infection Fly, go hard like geese erection

Fashion patrol, police detection

Eyes stay tight like Chinese connection I stay tight like pussy at night

Baby, don't get me wrong, I could do that pussy right But I'm too wrong to write, too fresh to fight Too paid to freestyle, too paid to freestyle Had to say it twice, swagger so nice And don't ask me shit unless it concern a price And I don't rap fast, I rap slow

'Cause I mean every letter in the words in the sentence of my quotes Swagger just flow sweeter than honey oats That swagger, I got it, I wear it like a coat Wait, as I put the light down his throat I can only see flow. His blood starting to flow His lungs starting to grow. This one starting to show Strong signs of life. Where's the stitches? Here's

the knife Smack his face, his eyes open. I reply with a nice “Welcome back, Hip-Hop. I saved your life”

He looks good. His vitals are up. He's looking good. He's looking good. I think we got one. Dr. Carter, I think we got one. Yup. Yup, we got one. We saved him. He's good. He's good. We got one. He's good.

LITTLE BROTHER

Little Brother is a rap duo from Durham, North Carolina, comprised of two MCs, Phonte and Rapper Big Pooh; the producer 9th Wonder was a founding member but left the group in 2007. Their debut, *The Listening* (2003), was laced with 9th Wonder's soulful, booming beats and Phonte and Pooh's often comic tales of everyday life. "All for You," transcribed below, appeared on *The Minstrel Show* (2005), a loosely conceptual album that critiques potentially nefarious trends in commercialized rap.

Both MCs approach their craft with analytical focus. Reflecting on his writing style, Big Pooh notes: "I write everything like one big run-on sentence, no slashes, no nothing, like one big block of words." ³¹ Phonte sees significant development in his writing style across their albums: "For me personally as a writer I used to be scared to go into a studio without something pre-written already. But now, for the past couple of years, I been pretty much doin my stuff on the spot. All my concepts have been worked on in the studio instead of writing at home, writing at work, writing in the car. I actually use the studio as my workplace. I've also been more into editing. We used to go and do a song in one night, but now I listen to a song and go back and redo the harmony." ³²

ALL FOR YOU

[Rapper Big Pooh]

Uh, Dear Pops. It's your boy. I got some things I want to say to you, man. Just a couple of words. Bear with me. Gimme a minute

Time to face it

Sitting in the middle of the basement holding a jack
How I'm anticipating he gon' call me back
Got so much on my mind, ain't no holding it back
In fact, I give a fuck how he gon' react
For my first nineteen, asking,
"Where Lee at?"

Never seen him in the spots where we be at
For the next couple hours I sat
'til the phone rang
No luck or no cigar

So I said to myself I'll try tomorrow

Me and Vincent left out, went to shoot some ball
Came back, had a message like, "This your pa"

Then I took to the phone, conversation was raw Shit, I had to let him
know that his child was scarred And right now we working through
our mess But I had to get some shit off my chest, so bear with me, y'all
[Chorus]

Just want to take the time to let you know Sometimes it's hard to let my
feelings show The possibilities are really so ...

This is all for you, you

[Phonte]

I was looking at your photograph, amazed how I favored you I remember
being young, wanting to play with you 'Cause you was a wild and
crazy dude and now I understand Why my mama couldn't never stay
with you From the roots to the branch to the leaves They say apples
don't fall far from the trees Used to find it hard to believe and I swore
that I would Always hold my family as long as I could But damn, our
memories can be so misleading It's misery, I hate to see history
repeating Thought you were the bad guy, but I guess that's why Me
and my girl split and my son is leaving I did chores, did bills, and did
dirt

But I swear to God I tried to make that shit work 'Til I came off tour to a
empty house

With all the dressers and the cabinets emptied out I think I must've went
insane, thinking I was in love But really in chains, trapped to this girl
Through the two-year-old who carried my name I tried to stop
tripping, but, yo, I couldn't and the plot thickened That shit affected
me, largely

Because I know a lot of people want me to fail as a father And the
thought of that haunts me, especially when I check My rearview mirror
and don't see him in his car seat So the next time it's late at night

And I'm laid up with the woman I'ma make my wife Talking 'bout how
we gon' make a life

I'm thinking about child support, alimony, visitation rights 'Cause that's
the only outcome, if you can't make it right Pissed off with your
children feeling the same pain So, Pop, how could I blame 'cause you
couldn't maintain?

I did the same thing, the same thing ...

[Chorus 2x]

LUDACRIS

Ludacris is a wild card, capable of comedic performances, head-bobbing club bangers, menacing dis tracks, and songs of emotional reflection. In each instance, his personality and charisma are at the forefront. “Just as my name implies—Ludacris—that’s how my music is,” he says in explaining his style, “as long as they understand that Ludacris means crazy and wild and ridiculous, that is exactly how I would explain it ... It’s looking for a little fun in [people’s] lives.” ³³

Though born and raised in Illinois, Ludacris has long called Atlanta home. After a successful career as a radio personality, he broke into rap in 2000 with his major-label debut, *Back for the First Time*. It boasted the hits “What’s Your Fantasy” and “Southern Hospitality,” the latter of which was driven by an infectious Neptunes-produced beat.

The hallmark of his style may be the idiosyncratic way that he emphasizes unexpected syllables, creating a kind of music to the line. At least in this regard, his flow bears some resemblance to the effusive deliveries popularized by old school artists like Kurtis Blow and Kool Moe Dee. But where those artists fell into regular rhythm patterns within the pocket of the beat, Ludacris bobs and weaves in relation to the music.

In 2000 Ludacris formed his own label, Disturbing tha Peace, and has gone on to amass a minor media empire that *Forbes* magazine estimated to be worth tens of millions of dollars. For all the wealth that the business of rap has brought him, Ludacris considers himself above all an artist. On “I Do It for Hip Hop” Luda, alongside Nas and Jay-Z, rhymes about his love of the culture: “I don’t do it for the money, I do it from the heart / The van Gogh flow, Luda do it ’cause it’s art.” ³⁴

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

Cadillac grills, Cadillac mills

Check out the oil my Cadillac spills

Matter fact, candy paint Cadillacs kill So check out the holes my Cadillac
fills Twenty inch wide, twenty inch high

Ho, don’t you like my twenty-inch ride?

Twenty-inch thighs make twenty-inch eyes Hoping for American twenty
inch pies

Pretty-ass clothes, pretty-ass toes
Oh, how I love these pretty-ass hoes
Pretty-ass, high-class, anything goes
Catch 'em in the club throwin pretty-ass 'bows Long-john drawers, long
john stalls
Any stank puss' make my long john pause Women on they cell makin
long john calls And if they like to juggle, get long John's balls [Chorus]
All my players in the house that can buy the bar And the ballin-ass niggas
with the candy cars If you a pimp and you know you don't love them
hoes When you get on the flo'—nigga, throw dem 'bows All my women
in the house if you chasin cash And you got some big titties with a
matchin ass Witcha fly-ass boots or ya open toes
When ya get on the flo'—nigga, throw dem 'bows Dirty South mind
blowin Dirty South bread Catfish fried up, Dirty South fed
Sleep in a cot pickin Dirty South bed
Dirty South guls gimme Dirty South head Hand-me-down flip-flops, hand-
me-down socks Hand-me-down drug dealers hand-me-down rocks
Hand-me-down a fifty-pack Swisher Sweets box And goodfella rich
niggas hand-me-down stocks Mouth full of platinum, mouth full of
gold Forty Glock cal' keep your mouth on hold Lie through your teeth,
you could find your mouth cold And rip out ya tongue 'cause of what
ya mouth told Sweat for the lemonade, sweat for the tea Sweat from
the hot sauce, sweat from the D
And you can sweat from a burn in the third degree And if you sweat in
your sleep then you sweat from me [Chorus]

Hit by stars, hit by cars
Drunk off the liquor, gettin hit by bars Keep yo' gul close 'cause she's hit
by far Hit by the Neptunes, hit by guitars
Afro picks, Afro chicks
I let my Soul Glow from my Afro dick
Rabbit out the hat pullin Afro tricks
Afro-American, Afro thick
Overall country, overall jeans
Overall Georgia, we overall clean
“Southern Hospitality” or overall mean

Overall triple, overall beams

Thugged out niggas wear thugged out chains Thugged out blocks playin
thugged out games All black tinted up thugged out Range

DTP stay doing thugged out thangs

[Chorus 2x]

HIP HOP QUOTABLES

Hi, my name's Ludacris and I'm high as giraffe butts (yeah) And I'm close to the edge so your parents can come push me I curse so much just to get on they nerves I got kids acting a fool from the traps to the 'burbs My filthy mouth, it won't fight cavities or beat plaque So I shot the Tooth Fairy (aahhh) and took my old teeth back I'll take a shit on the equator the size of a crater And make government officials breathe harder than Darth Vader It's the chicken and the beer that makes Luda keep rapping But no pork on my fork, I don't even speak pig Latin I go fishing on my lake with your bitch as the bait Plus I eat many MCs but I don't gain no weight The number one chief rocker, clean out your rap lockers I'm as stiff as a board, y'all more shook than maracas But my tricks ain't for kids, if you dig 'em you'll get smacked I'll clock ya—I'll spring forward, you fall back (whoo) Every album that I drop has got more than ten bangers (yeah) That's 'cause I'm a shot caller, y'all fools is Crank Yankers (bells) Ain't a damn thing changed but the ice on my chain I get chicks from Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine Now I roll up torpedoes, get blunted with Rastas For a hefty fee I'm on your record like Bob Costas (yeah) I own so many jerseys, I'm a throwback mess I hit the cleaners and tell 'em I want a full court press (ohh) So, mama, toast ya glass while I'm counting my cash 'Cause every single is a smash, I'm hot as a camel's ass (ha) The competition never just wanna admit that they lost And that they last about as long as my part in *The Wash*

From your car to crap game, no one rolls with you One of Mini-Me's shoes got more soul than you (okay) So by the time you figure out why your record ain't spinning I'm in the strip club smokin with President Clinton (cough cough cough) So stand clear of the long sideburns and goatee (teeth) They make the mold of the penis enlarger off me (me) I'll be in another when I hit from the back (back) Not to mention my refrigerator's taller than Shaq (yeah) So yippie ka ye yippie ya ya yo

(yo)

If you can't swim don't smoke my hydro (dro) I've been looking for a woman just to put my stamp on But a lotta y'all are more stuck up than tampons (whoo) So wash all you sins away and stop playing (yeah) If God's line is busy you might have to two-way him (uh hmm) And catch me in your backyard playing croquet And when I'm drunk, tellin kids, "Drugs are bad, umm-kay"

Or watch me swing my chains at the Roscoe's off Pico Got seven cars, get all my rims at Chrome Depot And people think I'm bad, they say, "Ooh, he's so evil"

'Cause I go on blind dates with actual blind people (ohh) But my album's out the store, yours be on the shelf (uh-hmm) I heard you masturbate a lot, so y'all keep to yourself 'Cause these women want a man to stay up and stay strong Like the NBA, you gotta play hard or go home All that shit that y'all talking, y'all can pop it to them 'Cause Ludacris will beat you down with a prosthetic limb I'll put my foot so deep in your ass that you can smell it And your breath'll turn to Foot Locker water repellent I'm the man, I got money far as the eyes can see And I'm in a group—I split dough wit' me, me, and me So much money in my jewelry that I'm damn near sorry So I'ma trade my earrings in and get a Ferrari (whoo) I buy cars with straight cash, have meetings with Donald Trump Y'all meet with Honda, no payments for twelve months (uh huh) Take a look at your life and no wonder you so sad Y'all put up with more shit than a colostomy bag Fool! Ha ha ha ...

M.I.A.

M.I.A.'s music collects sounds from all around the world and blends them in a musical genre she playfully identifies as "other." For those familiar with her dynamic vocals and eclectic soundscapes, her style is something less ambiguous: a polyphonic and political music for a new hip-hop era.

Maya Arulpragasam was born in London but raised in Sri Lanka, where she witnessed civil war firsthand. When her father left to found a Tamil revolutionary party, she relocated to London with the rest of her family. Her family history shapes her music—her first two albums, *Arular* (2005) and *Kala* (2007), are named after her father and mother, respectively. M.I.A. ties her political lyrics to pounding beats, and her unique but spare mélange of diction finds a fitting environment in a thicket of sounds both familiar and fresh to rap.

SUNSHOWERS

I bongo with my lingo

And beat it like a wing, yo To Congo, to Colombo

Can't stereotype my thing, yo I salt and pepper my mango Shoot spit out
the window Bingo, I got him in the thing, yo Now what? I'm doing my
thing, yo Quit bending all my fingo Quit beating me like you're Ringo
You wanna go? You wanna win a war?

Like P.L.O., I don't surrendo [Chorus]

'Cause sunshowers that fall on my troubles Are over you, oh, baby

And some showers I'll be aiming at you 'Cause I'm watching you, my baby
I bongo with my lingo

And beat it like a wing, yo To Congo, to Colombo

Can't stereotype my thing, yo I checked that mouth on him Fucking
checked my gas on him I had him, cornered him

Fucking shut that gate on him Why would you listen to him?

He had his way, I'm bored of him I'm tired of him

I don't wanna be as bad as him It's a bomb, yo, so run, yo Put away your
stupid gun, yo 'Cause see through, like, protocol This is why we blow it
up 'fore we go [Chorus 2x]

Semi-nine and snipered him On my wall they posted him They cornered him

And then just murdered him And he told them he didn't know them He wasn't there, they didn't know him They showed him a picture then: "Ain't that you with the Muslims?"

He got Colgate on his teeth And Reebok Classics on his feet At a factory he does Nike And then helps a family

Beat heart, beat, he's

Made it to the *Newsweek*

Sweetheart, seen it, he's Doing it for the peeps, peace [Chorus 3x]

PAPER PLANES

I fly like paper, get high like planes If you catch me at the border I got visas in my name If you come around here, I make 'em all day I get one done in a second if you wait I fly like paper, get high like planes If you catch me at the border I got visas in my name If you come around here, I make 'em all day I get one done in a second if you wait Sometimes I think sitting on trains Every stop I get to I'm clocking that game Everyone's a winner, we're making our fame Bona fide hustler, making my name Sometimes I think sitting on trains Every stop I get to I'm clocking that game Everyone's a winner, we're making our fame Bona fide hustler making my name [Chorus 4x]

All I wanna do is (BANG BANG BANG BANG!) And (KKKAAAA CHING!) and take your money Pirate skulls and bones

Sticks and stones and weed and bongs Running when we hit 'em

Lethal poison for the system Pirate skulls and bones

Sticks and stones and weed and bongs Running when we hit 'em

Lethal poison for their system No one on the corner has swagger like us Hit me on my burner, prepaid wireless We pack and deliver like UPS trucks Already going to hell just pumping that gas No one on the corner has swagger like us Hit me on my burner, prepaid wireless We pack and deliver like UPS trucks Already going to hell just pumping that gas [Chorus 4x]

M.I.A. Third world democracy. Yeah, I got more records than the K.G.B. So, uh, no funny business ...

Some some some I some I murder Some I some I let go
Some some some I some I murder Some I some I let go

[Chorus 4x]

PHAROAHE MONCH

Pharoahe Monch is known for multisyllabic rhymes and intricate flows that use idiosyncratic rests to lend rhythmic variety. He released three albums in the 1990s as part of the duo Organized Konfusion along with Prince Poetry. Later, he signed a solo deal with the independent label Rawkus, releasing *Internal Affairs* (1999), an indie classic led by the anthem “Simon Says.”

Pharoahe Monch’s lyrical complexity has led some to criticize him for being too technical. “With me a lot of times, it is a concerted effort to do a dense piece of work—and I guess that’s not for everybody,” he explains. “Everybody doesn’t go into a gallery and look at art the same way, and over the years I have painted more simple portraits. I just enjoy not being boxed in as a portrait painter or an abstract artist. You have works like ‘Who Stole My Last Piece of Chicken?’ and ‘Fudge Pudge’ and ‘My Life’ and ‘Oh No,’ and you also have works like ‘Agent Orange’ and ‘[Releasing] Hypnotical Gases’ and ‘Rape’ and ‘Trilogy,’ which are a little more complicated and take more time for the listener to retrieve. But the beauty about that is that you listen to the album for a month and put it down, and [then you] pick it up again and you hear something new.” ³⁵

RELEASING HYPNOTICAL GASES

(Organized Konfusion w/ Prince Poetry) [Pharoahe Monch]

As you look from whenceforth I come Riding the wind, thus eliminating
Competition from bird’s-eye view, I’m Descending in helicopters in a
village raid Flesh will burn when exposed to the poetical germ
Grenade, I’m highly intoxicating your mind When I’m operating on
cell walls to membranes Cytoplasms to protoplasms, disintegrate ’em
Eliminate ’em, now no one has ’em in battle I display a nuclear ray
that’ll

Destroy bone marrow in cattle

Thereby destroying the entire food supply That’s crawling with AIDS,
maggots, flies It’s ironic when a demonic government Utilizes bionics
in a six million dollar man To capture me. Clever. However

You could never ever begin to apprehend a hologram Who’s determined
to fight solely To defend in wars a land of the holy I threw a rock and

I ran

'Cause I couldn't stand anymore within the depths of the sand So don't ask
me who sane

'Cause the hypnotical gases are eating my brain *Oxygen levels? Check.*
Hydrogen levels? Check. Nitrogen levels? Check

[Prince Poetry]

Twenty-thousand leagues down below Minus one hundred and forty-three
degrees Seize the info, gather the archeologists The aftermath needs to
follow this 'cause it's Deep, equivalent to the esophagus Spreads to
scientists, a.k.a. Optimus Prime Time, television is dead

On this issue and very much irrelevant to this intuition Deleting any alias
info and descriptive Mortal calm, partition with infrared light Vision,
precision, beams

Colors, reds, fuchsias, lime-greens Black, don't you know my formulas
form dope lyrics Uplift spirits? And, yo, I hear it's fatal To walk the
path of Konfusion

Where it's torture, some cherish while most Humanlike beings perish,
subjected to death Their bodies don't agree with the hypnotical
intellect Poetical acid is burning up flesh At the end of the corridor you
see me sitting there Jotting more grotesque literature somewhat
equivalent To concentrated sodium hypochlorite Insight, foresight,
more sight

The clock on the wall reads a quarter past midnight You feel nauseous,
forever you will Avoid my royal presence as I step into darkness *Now*
is the time... to stretch your brain to its maximum

[Pharoahe Monch]

I am one who is one with all things Thus the unorthodox I am

The paradox I am, the equinox extending my hand Into dimensions to
unlock new doorways And so the light has revealed to me That there
must be more ways

And so I play with rhythms, for something more Than a mere game
enabling me to advance in wisdom Words will exist like vampires

No need for sunlight, from concentration Camps I escape with my sanity
— In 2010 every man will be

Subject to global warming, formless oval Millions of locusts swarming

Seek and you shall find the deliverer of a rhyme The intelligent one,
utilizing the mind Third vision surrounded by a three-sided figure
Containing the brain, the triggering mechanism From which I strike
sight beyond sight Sound beyond sound, which comes from below The
magma, the granite, the ground The surface will separate, dispersing
harmful ashes Your optics will not be able to detect The deadly
hypnotical gases

Damn, it's hard to breathe

But if I got one breath left

I'll suck wind from the valley of death Here I come from the slums of
Earth to center I reveal myself as a beast within a Unbreakable shell,
walking through The doorways of Heaven ... or is this Hell?

*The time is now. Right now. This is the hour, this is the new dawn! This is the
new day ...*

[Prince Poetry]

As I step into the Thunderdome

With flows as the wind blows

Visualize the intros

Releasing hypnotical gases

Chemicals mixed, fixed

Takin it to the sixth round of poetical warfare Energetically I walk with
the flare Rampaging like a rocklike figure Throughout the night's
atmosphere I swear My wrist holds mind-trigger, darkness can't
overshadow me 'Cause I have radar smashin you, then trashin you
After I'm bashin you with my hammer Pitchfork passed to me by Odin

Occasionally my profile is low-key. Gamma Rays brainwashed to
transforms me But I still withhold my hammer, to lift me up For God
still is my uplifter

I use this knowledge just to crush the cluster of grifter Night approaches so
I proceed in flight Back to the Hall of Justice as I continue to
disintegrate 'em Translating the codes in hypnotical language Then a
Theta assault steppin up

Frontin to be blunt but I'm a radical creator Of a poetical hypothetical
mathematical slay slur Punch that stuns and amazes and dazes And
phases and stages with pages of the Lost chapters, unfound factors

So I stretch like Reed Richards across the land Continue with reading your
equilibrium With concepts that confuse ya, metabolism's fallin off Data
can fit in a prism

Now as I walk through the valley of death ignorin The battle lashes and
gashes and rashes, the atom smashes 'Cause I released the last
hypnotical gases!

SIMON SAYS

[Chorus]

Get the fuck up

Simon says get the fuck up

Throw your hands in the sky

Queens is in the back sippin yak, y'all, what's up?

Girls, rub on your titties (yeahhhhhh) Yeah, I said it—rub on your titties
New York City gritty committee pity the fool that Act shitty in the
midst of the calm, the witty Y'all know the name ...

Pharoahe-fuckin-Monch, ain't a damn thang changed You all up in the
Range and shit, inebriated Phased from your original plan, you
deviated I alleviated the pain with the long-term goals Took my
underground loot without the gold You sold platinum round the world,
I sold wood in the 'hood But when I'm in the street, then shit, it's all
good I'm soon to motivate a room, control the game like Tomb Raider
Roc-clock dollars flip, tips like a waiter Block shots, style's greater, let
my lyrics anoint If you holdin up the wall, then you missin the point
[Chorus]

Yo, where you at? Uptown, let me see 'em Notorious for the six-fives and
the BMs Heads give you beef, you put 'em in the mausoleum And the
shit don't start pumpin 'til after 12 P.M.

Ugnh, ignorant minds, I free 'em If you tired of the same old everyday
you will agree I'm The most obligated, hard, and R-Rated Stated to be
the best, I must confess the star made it Some might even say this song
is sexist-eses 'Cause I asked the girls to rub on their breast-eses
Whether you're ridin the train or in Lexus-es This is for either/or
Rollies or Timex-eses Wicked like *Exorcist*, this is the joint You holdin
up the wall, then you missin the point [Chorus]

DESIRE

[Chorus]

Said it's my desire, yes it is, yeah Yes it is, yes it is, oh yes it is, uh
Comprehend the guidelines

My chest out, chinchilla on, relaxed on the sidelines I'm so famous,
understand

New York City respect my game like Joe Namath And I protect my name
like your anus In prison, y'all don't hear me, y'all don't listen Y'all just
wanna shine, y'all just wanna glisten Floss, knowin that the soul is
still missing Who am I? I am the poetical pastor Slave to a label but I
own my masters Still get it poppin without artist and repertoire 'Cause
Monch is a monarch only minus the A&R

When my brain excels, your train derails Pop shit, make you feel The
Clipse like Pharrell You will feel me, you will admire (My) Struggle,
(My) Hustle, (My) Soul, Desire [Chorus]

My book is a ovary, the pages I lust to turn My pen's the penis, when I
write the ink's the sperm Desire, the fire that ignites the torch that
burns This is not rocket science, this easy to learn My mic's the gavel;
when I talk, court's adjourned Respect, even if you were assets you
couldn't earn I embody antibiotics; you are infected with germs Rap's
fatally ill, please get concerned Players, pick turns to play, get burned
I color-commentate the game like Chick Hearn This is the moment of
truth for my opponents and liars Vocals alone invoke the emotion of
black choirs Fire, you don't wanna get burned like Rich Pryor Move
back. Who's that there? The live wire You will feel me, you will admire
(My) Struggle, (My) Hustle, (My) Soul, Desire [Chorus]

MOS DEF

Mos Def helped take the underground aboveground, gaining popular acclaim and record sales without making simple songs. He is a multit talented performer, known for his singing and acting as well as for his rhyming. As a singer, Mos has recorded in the dulcet tones of a song like “Umi Says” or in the hard-rock sounds of his Black Jack Johnson project. As an actor on both the stage and the screen, Mos has elevated the reputation of the much-maligned rapper/actor hybrid.

Mos Def also stands out for the force of his political voice and vision, on display in the scathing lyrics to “Dollar Day,” his response to the government’s failures to respond to the ravages of Hurricane Katrina. Some of Mos Def’s finest work came in his collaboration with Talib Kweli as Black Star. Mos’s solo debut, *Black on Both Sides* (1999), announced the arrival of a powerful voice in contemporary hip-hop. “Hip hop is a beautiful culture,” Mos told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2004. “It’s inspirational, because it’s a culture of survivors. You can create beauty out of nothingness.” ³⁶

HIP HOP

You say one for the treble, two for the time Come on, y’all, let’s rock this!
You say one for the treble, two for the time Come on!

Speech is my hammer, bang the world into shape, now let it fall... (Hungh!!)

My restlessness is my nemesis, it’s hard To really chill and sit still,
committed to page I write a rhyme, sometimes won’t finish for days
Scrutinize my literature from the large to the miniature I
mathematically add-minister, subtract the wack Selector, wheel it
back, I’m feelin that (Ha ha ha) From the core to the perimeter, Black
You know the motto: stay fluid even in staccato (Mos Def) Full
blooded, full throttle, breathe deep inside the drum hollow ... There’s
the hum

Young man, where you from? Brooklyn, number one Native Son, speaking
in the native tongue I got my eyes on tomorrow (there it is), while you
still tryna Find where it is, I’m on the ave’ where it lives and dies
Violently, silently ... Shine

So vibrantly that eyes squint to catch a glimpse Embrace the bass with my
dark ink fingertips Used to speak the King's English, but caught a rash
on my lips See, now my chat just like this

Long range from the baseline (swish). Move like an apparition Go to the
ground with ammunition (chi-chi-POW) Move from the gate, voice
cued on your tape Putting food on your plate, many crews can relate
Who choosing your fate, yo

We went from picking cotton, to chain-gang line chopping To be-bopping,
to hip-hopping

Blues people got the blue-chip stock option Invisible Man, got the whole
world watching (Where ya at?) I'm high, low, east, west, all over your
map I'm getting big props with this thing called hip hop Where you
can either get paid or get shot, when your product in stock The fair-
weather friends flock, when your chart position drop Then the phone
calls ...

Chill for a minute, let's see who else hot Snatch your shelf spot. Don't gas
yourself, ock The industry just a better-built cell block A long way from
the shell tops

And the bells that L rocked (rock, rock, rock, rock ...) Hip hop is
prosecution evidence A out of court settlement, ad space for liquor Sick
without benefits (hungh!), luxury tenements Choking the skyline, it's
low life getting tree-top high It is a backwater remedy

Bitter intent to memory, a class C felony Facing the death penalty
(hungh!), stimulant and sedative Original repetitive, violently
competitive A school unaccredited (there it is) The break beats you get
broken with on time and inappropriate Hip hop went from selling
crack to smoking it Medicine for loneliness, remind me of Thelonious
and Dizzy Propers to b-boys getting busy

The wartime snapshot, the working man's jackpot A two dollar snack box
sold beneath the crack spot Olympic sponsor of the black Glock Gold
medalist in the back shot from the sovereign state Of the have-nots
where farmers have trouble with cash crops It's all-city like Phase 2,
hip hop will simply amaze you Praise you, pay you

Do whatever you say do, but Black, it can't save you **MATHEMATICS**

*Booka-booka-booka-booka-booka-booka. Ha hah. You know the deal. It's just
me, yo. Beats by Su-Primo for all of my peoples, Negroes and Latinos. And
even the Gringos.*

Yo, check it, one for Charlie Hustle, two for Steady Rock Three for the fourth comin live, future shock It's five dimensions, six senses Seven firmaments of heaven to hell, eight million stories to tell Nine planets faithfully keep in orbit With the probable tenth, the universe expands length The body of my text possess extra strength Power-liftin powerless up out of this towerin inferno My ink so hot it burn through the journal I'm blacker than midnight on Broadway and Myrtle Hip-hop passed all your tall social hurdles Like the nationwide projects, prison-industry complex Workin class poor, better keep your alarm set Streets too loud to ever hear freedom ring Say evacuate your sleep, it's dangerous to dream For cha-ching cats get they CHA-POW, who dead now?

Killin fields need blood to graze the cash cow It's a number game, but shit don't add up somehow Like I got sixteen to thirty-two bars to rock it But only fifteen percent of profits ever see my pockets, like Sixty-nine billion in the last twenty years Spent on national defense but folks still live in fear, like Nearly half of America's largest cities is one quarter black That's why they gave Ricky Ross all the crack Sixteen ounces to a pound, twenty more to a ki A five minute sentence hearing and you no longer free Forty-percent of Americans own a cell phone So they can hear everything that you say when you ain't home I guess Michael Jackson was right, "You Are Not Alone"

Rock your hardhat, Black, 'cause you in the Terrordome Full of hard niggas, large niggas, dice tumblers Young teens in prison greens facin life numbers Crack mothers, crack babies, and AIDS patients Young bloods can't spell but they could rock you in PlayStation This new math is whippin motherfuckers' ass You wanna know how to rhyme you better learn how to add It's mathematics ...

[Chorus 2x]

Yo, there's one universal law, but two sides to every story Three strikes and you be in for life, mandatory Four MCs murdered in the last four years I ain't tryin to be the fifth one, the millennium is here Yo, it's six million ways to die from the seven deadly thrills Eight-year-olds getting found with nine mils It's 10 P.M., where your seeds at? What's the deal?

They on the hill pumpin krill to keep they belly filled Light in the ass with heavy steel, sights on the pretty shit in life Young soldiers tryin to earn

they next stripe When the average minimum wage is \$5.15

You best believe you gotta find a new grind to get cream The white unemployment rate is nearly more than triple for black So frontliners got they gun in your back Bubblin crack, jewel theft, and robbery to combat poverty And end up in the global jail economy Stiffer stipulations attached to each sentence Budget cutbacks but increased police presence And even if you get out of prison still livin Join the other five million under state supervision This is business, no faces, just lines and statistics From your phone, your zip code, to S-S-I digits The system break man, child, and women into figures Two columns for who is and who ain't niggas Numbers is hardly real and they never have feelings But you push too hard, even numbers got limits Why did one straw break the camel's back? Here's the secret The million other straws underneath it—it's all mathematics [Chorus]

DOLLAR DAY FOR NEW ORLEANS (KATRINA KLAP)

So there's a story about the lady in Louisiana. She's a flood survivor and the rescue teams, they come through, and they, I guess tryna recover people. And they see this woman, she's wadin through the streets. I guess it'd been some time after the storm and I guess they were shocked that, you know, she was alive. And rescue worker said, "So, oh my God, h-how did you survive? How did you do it? Where've you been?" And she said, "Where I been? Where you been?" Hah, where you been? You understand? That's about the size of it.

This for the streets, the streets everywhere The streets affected by the storm called ... America I'm doin this for y'all, and for me, for the Creator God save these streets

One dollar per every human being Feel that Katrina clap
See that Katrina clap

Listen, homie, it's Dollar Day in New Orleans It's water, water everywhere and people dead in the streets And Mr. President, he 'bout that cash He got a policy for handlin the niggas and trash And if you poor, you black

I laugh a laugh, they won't give when you ask You better off on crack
Dead or in jail, or with a gun in Iraq And it's as simple as that

No opinion, my man, it's mathematical fact Listen, a million poor since

2004

And they got-illions and killions to waste on the war And make you
question what the taxes is for Or the cost to reinforce the broke levee
wall Tell the boss he shouldn't be the boss anymore Y'all pray, amin?

[Chorus]

God save these streets
One dollar per every human being Feel that Katrina clap
See that Katrina clap
God save these streets
Quit bein cheap, nigga, freedom ain't free Feel that Katrina clap
See that Katrina clap

Lord have mercy
Lord God God save our soul
A-God save our soul, a-God
A-God save our souls
Lord God God save our soul
A-God save our soul soul soul
Soul survivor

It's Dollar Day in New Orleans
It's water, water everywhere and babies dead in the streets It's enough to
make you holler out Like where the fuck is Sir Bono and his famous
friends now?
Don't get it twisted, man, I dig U2
But if you ain't about the ghetto then fuck you, too Who care 'bout rock
and roll when babies can't eat food Listen, homie—man, this shit ain't
cool It's like Dollar Day for New Orleans It's water water everywhere
and homies dead in the streets And Mr. President's a natural ass He
out treatin niggas worse than they treat the trash [Chorus]

Lord did not intend for the wicked to rule the world Say, God did not
intend for the wicked to rule the world God did not intend for the
wicked to rule the world And even when they knew it's a matter of
truth Before they wicked ruling is through God save these streets

A Dollar Day for New Orleans

God save these streets

Quit bein cheap, homie, freedom ain't free [Chorus]

Don't talk about it, be about it Peace

AUDITORIUM

(feat. Slick Rick)

[Mos Def]

The way I feel sometimes it's too hard to sit still Things are so passionate,
times are so real Sometimes I try to chill, mellow down, blow a smoke
Smile on my face, but it's really no joke You feel it in the street, the
people breathe without hope They goin through the motion, they
dimmin down the focus The focus get cleared then the light turn sharp
Then the eyes go teary, the mind grow weary I speak it so clearly
sometimes y'all don't hear me I push it past the bass, no nations gotta
feel me I feel it in my bones, Black, I'm so wide awake That I'm hardly
ever sleep, my flow forever deep And it's volumes of scriptures when I
breathe on a beat My presence speak volumes before I say a word I'm
everywhere: penthouse, pavement, and curb Cradle to the grave, tall
cathedral or a cell Universal ghetto life—holla, Black, you know it well
Quiet storm, vital form, pen pushed it right across Mind is a vital
force, high level right across Soul is the lion's roar, voice is the siren I
swing 'round, ring out, and bring down the tyrant Chop a small axe
and knock a giant lopsided The world is so dangerous there's no need
for fightin Somethin's tryna hide like the struggle won't find 'em And
the sun bust through the clouds to clearly remind him, it's Everywhere:
penthouse, pavement, and curb Cradle to the grave, tall cathedral or a
cell Universal ghetto life holla, Black, you know it well [Chorus 2x]

What it is

You know, they know

What it is

We know y'all know

What it is

Ecstatic, there it is

Huh

What it is
You know, we know
What it is
They know y'all know
What it is
You don't know? Here it is

[Slick Rick]

Sit and come relax, riddle of The Mack It's The Patch, I'm a soldier in the
middle of Iraq Well, say about noonish, comin out the whip And lookin
at me curious, a young Iraqi kid (awww) Carrying laundry, what's
wrong, G? Hungry?

"No, gimme my oil or get the fuck out my country!"

And in Arabian barkin other stuff 'Til his moms come grab him and they
walk off in a rush Distrust, bitter like I's pissed upon wound I'm like,
"Shorty, hope that we can fix our differences soon. Bye!"

Buying apples, hung breakin on

"Brooklyn take everything, why not just take the damn food, black
bastard!"

I don't understand it, on another planet?

Fifty-one of this stuff, how I'm gonna manage?

And increasing the sentiment, gentlemen Gettin down on their Middle
Eastern instruments Realized trapped in this crowd

Walk over, kicked one of my fabulous raps (La Di Da Di ...) Arab jaws
dropped, they well-wished, they glad-wrapped Now the Kid considered
like the Elvis of Baghdad

T.I.

On his first album, T.I. dubbed himself the “King of the South,” a title that he seems to have grown into, having released nearly an album a year between 2001 and 2008. His rhymes frequently concern hustling, partying, and women. However, as his public profile increased, for good and for ill—through pop-friendly collaborations with Rihanna, Justin Timberlake, and Usher; a budding film career; and federal conviction on weapons charges—his songs began to show a greater thematic and emotional range. Always a lyricist with tight command of his flow and frequent use of chain rhyming, he puts those skills to work on lyrics that range from the braggadocio of “U Don’t Know Me” to the mournful introspection of “Dead and Gone.”

T.I. VS. T.I.P.

I wanna talk to you, shawty. *(Why?)* 'Cause you be trippin sometimes
Man, I'm just trying to stay true to what I say in my rhymes

It ain't a doubt in my mind, but you got a lot on the line You need to
think 'bout yo' actions. *(Why?)* You be overreactin. *(Maaaaan ...)*

Look at Cap and K.T., listen to K.P.

What about 'em? Where the fuck this shit come from?

Or to a J.G., to your mama or D.P.

Or somebody, shawty, shit, you be makin me sick. *(Nigga, fuck you!)*

You'd be a motherfuckin fool if you blow this lick. *(Alright, alright)*

This the chance of a lifetime, you know this shit

Remember what Jarmel told us: “Stay focused, Tip.” *(I remember, nigga)*

Man, but they be tryin me, shawty. Niggas be tryin you how?

Aye, let them tell it, you was just another guy in the crowd *Naw, but they
be talkin too loud.* Man, you be listenin too hard Just pay these niggas
no attention and keep fuckin they broads. *(Alright)*

I know you harder than these niggas and smarter than these niggas
(Yeah)

More heart than these niggas *(Yeah),* quit worryin 'bout these niggas *Aye,
man, fuck these niggas. I'm from Bankhead and I don't know where you*

stayed at

*But talkin sideways behind my back, I never played that
Since you become a paid cat, T.I., you been so laid back
I wonder where lil' bad ass Tip from back in the day at*

*Man, that nigga had to stay back there so we could be that Nigga on TV
and F.Y.I. we got the P back*

*Hold up, shawty, freeze Jack. (What?) Lame, I'll never be that. (Yeah,
okay)*

*Changed my name a thousand times and still a G, believe that Oh, yeah?
Good, we got ki's. That nigga from overseas back*

*You see what I be sayin 'bout this nigga. (What, man? Shit) I don't believe
that You ain't listenin, is you? You got issues, I got kids Two boys, a
lil' girl—Man, I know, nigga, they my kids, too*

*You know it's one false move and it's back to the big house The judge told
our ass "one more time and we ain't gettin out." (I wouldn't say that)*

Be thinkin 'bout standin outside in the sunshine (Ho)

*Watchin niggas' heads get buck for cuttin the lunch line Aye, shawty, you
ain't 'posed to make the same mistake more than one time And I ain't
made the same mistake twice since, uh, '99*

*Please, boy, stop—don't get me started, folk, it's not the time And let's
just do this shit my way, get paid and have a lot of time Plenty fine
bitches, who gon' pull 'em, Shawty? You is Man, you know Tip got the
hoes ... and Tip hoes got gold teeth What that mean? What you tryna
say, nigga?*

Mine got jobs, good credit, and they own features

And mine boost clothes, sell dro, and got the blow cheap

*I guess it's just depend on what ya like, folk. That's right, folk And I was just
kiddin 'bout them kites, folk. Heh, alright, folk I'm really glad we had a
chance to sit it down and rap a tad*

I admit you had a couple points, sometimes I act a ass

*Aye, but it is so important to keep it real, though, just like ya said No
record deal, no amount of mil' shall go to my head And with that said
can't nobody tell us shit, so fuck the hatin*

How many niggas real enough to stand and give theyself a straightenin?

U DON'T KNOW ME

I'm gonna tell y'all sucker-ass niggas something. Who wants to follow me? Look here, dawg ...

[Chorus]

You might see me in the street, but nigga, you don't know me When you holla when you speak, remember you don't know me Save all the hating and the popping, nigga, you don't know me Quit telling niggas you my partner, nigga, you don't know me Don't be a groupie, keep it moving, nigga, you don't know me Hey, I ain't tripping but the truth is really you don't know me Yeah, you know they call me T.I., but you don't know me You be hating and I see why 'cause you don't know me

I think it's time I made a song for niggas who don't know me I graduated out the streets, I'm a real OG

I've been trapping, shooting pistols since I stood four feet So while you niggas acting bad, you're gonna have to show me You gonna make me bring a Chevy to a real slow creep

My nigga's hanging out the window, mouth full of gold teeth When the guns start popping, wonder when it's gonna cease Cap'll hit you in the side and create a slow leak

We can end in the speculation, 'cause today we're gonna see What's the future of a pussy nigga hating on me

I give a fuck about the feds' investigation on me

I don't care that they at my shows and they waiting on me I'm gonna keep a flossy popping long as Toop is on the beat Tell polices I ain't stoppin, I'ma keep it in the streets Contrary to your beliefs, I'm as real as you can be

Fuck your thoughts and your feelings, nigga, you don't know me [Chorus]

Hey, once again let me remind you, nigga, you don't know me So don't be walking up and asking, "What's the deal on a ki?"

I don't know if you wearing wires, you could be the police If I was slangin blow you couldn't get a o-z

See me in the PAC, follow through at a show deep

Police holding up the door 'cause they know we tote heat I just wanna ride with C, blowin dro in the Fleet'

Only playing 'bout a dozen different bitches in a week I just wanna chill
with Country and his daddy, Freddy G
Balling out at anytime, get in a store and spill a G
Wanna ball in the Bahamas courtesy of KT
Fact I only got a mil' as well as dollar DP
AK house on the hill right next to JG
Every week we there for lunch, restaurant and eat free Get Inda paid, Lil
Craig, and B
That's the only shot we got at getting Cap back on the streets [Chorus]

You see a nigga hating on a G, ask him what's it gonna be What are you
looking at, pussy nigga? You don't know me At the club, in the streets
or wherever we should meet It's chopper chopping, pistols popping,
nigga, you don't know me You see a nigga hating on a G, ask him
what's it gonna be What are you looking at, pussy nigga? You don't
know me At the club, in the streets or wherever we should meet It's
chopper chopping, pistols popping, nigga, you don't know me
[Chorus]

KANYE WEST

Kanye West has quickly emerged as one of the leading figures in hip-hop—a tastemaker in beats, rhymes, and fashion. His lyrical content spans everything from traditional themes like his own ego to subjects rarely if ever discussed in rap, like folding shirts at The Gap.

Born in Atlanta to a Black Panther father and an academic mother, West moved to the South Side of Chicago at the age of three. West's breakout moment came when he produced a number of songs on Jay-Z's multiplatinum-selling *The Blueprint* (2001), including the lead single "Izzo (H.O.V.A.)." The following year West suffered a near-fatal car accident that left him with a metal plate in his jaw and an unbreakable resolve to become an MC. The result was *The College Dropout* (2004), with its vivid singles "Through the Wire," "All Falls Down," and "Jesus Walks."

On *The College Dropout*, Kanye forged the constitutive elements of his style: sampling, fresh content, inventive wordplay, and transformative and slant rhyme-laden lyricism. For example, in "All Falls Down," he rhymes "The concept of school seems so secure / Sophomore three years, ain't picked a career," altering his pronunciations of "secure," "years," and "career," so that they all rhyme with an "-ur" sound.

In subsequent years West's strong personality and experimental style have helped define the cutting edge of hip-hop, both musically and lyrically. Infusing his rhymes with wit and lyrical density, and employing his skill as a producer to craft songs with complex beats and catchy samples, he has set himself apart with swagger but also with substance.

ALL FALLS DOWN

[Chorus 4x]

Oh when it all, it all falls down

I'm telling you, ohh, it all falls down Man, I promise, she's so self-conscious
She has no idea what she doing in college That major that she majored in
don't make no money But she won't drop out, her parents'll look at her funny
Now, tell me that ain't insecurrre

The concept of school seems so securrre Sophomore three yearrrrs, ain't picked a carurrrr
She like: "Fuck it, I'll just stay down herre and do hair"

'Cause that's enough money to buy her a few pairs of new Airs 'Cause her baby daddy don't really care She's so precious with the peer pressure Couldn't afford a car so she named her daughter Alexis She had hair so long that it looked like weave Then she cut it all off, now she look like Eve And she be dealing with some issues that you can't believe Single black female addicted to retail and well ...

[Chorus 2x]

Man, I promise, I'm so self-conscious That's why you always see me with at least one of my watches Rollies and Pashas done drove me crazy I can't even pronounce nothing, pass that Versay-see!

Then I spent four hundred bucks on this Just to be like, "Nigga, you ain't up on this!"

And I can't even go to the grocery store Without some Ones that's clean and a shirt with a team It seem we living the American Dream But the people highest up got the lowest self-esteem The prettiest people do the ugliest things For the road to riches and diamond rings We shine because they hate us, floss 'cause they degrade us We trying to buy back our forty acres And for that paper, look how low we'll stoop Even if you in a Benz, you still a nigga in a coupe [Chorus 2x]

I say "fuck the police," that's how I treat 'em We buy our way out of jail, but we can't buy freedom We'll buy a lot of clothes, but we don't really need 'em Things we buy to cover up what's inside 'Cause they made us hate ourself and love they wealth That's why shorties holler: "Where the ballas at?"

Drug dealer buy Jordans, crackhead buy crack And a white man get paid off of all of that But I ain't even gon' act holier than thou 'Cause, fuck it, I went to Jacob with twenty-five thou'

Before I had a house and I'd do it again 'Cause I wanna be on "106 & Park" pushing a Benz I wanna act ballerific like it's all terrific I got a couple past due bills, I won't get specific I got a problem with spending before I get it We all self-conscious, I'm just the first to admit it [Chorus to fade]

JESUS WALKS

Yo, we at war

We at war with terrorism, racism, and most of all we at war with ourselves
(Jesus walks)

God show me the way because the Devil's trying to break me down
(Jesus walks with me) with me, with me, with me

You know what the Midwest is? Young and restless Where restless
(Niggas) might snatch your necklace And next these (Niggas) might
jack your Lexus Somebody tell these (Niggas) who Kanye West is I
walk through the valley of the Chi where death is Top floor, the view
alone'll leave you breathless. Uhhhh!

Try to catch it. Uhhhh! It's kinda hard Getting choked by the detectives—
Yeah, yeah, now check the method They be asking us questions, harass
and arrest us Saying, "We eat pieces of shit like you for breakfast"

Huh? Y'all eat pieces of shit? What's the basis?

We ain't going nowhere but got suits and cases A trunk full of coke, rental
car from Avis My mama used to say only Jesus can save us Well,
mama, I know I act a fool

But I'll be gone 'til November, I got packs to move. I hope ...

(Jesus walks)

God show me the way because the Devil's trying to break me down (Jesus
walks with me)

The only thing that I pray is that my feet don't fail me now (Jesus walks)
And I don't think there's nothing I can do now to right my wrongs (Jesus
walks with me)

I want to talk to God but I'm afraid 'cause we ain't spoke in so long To
the hustlers, killers, murderers, drug dealers, even the skrippers (Jesus
walks with them)

To the victims of Welfare feel we living in hell here, hell yeah (Jesus
walks with them)

Now hear ye, hear ye, want to see Thee more clearly I know He hear me
when my feet get weary 'Cause we're the almost nearly extinct We
rappers is role models, we rap, we don't think I ain't here to argue
about His facial features Or here to convert atheists into believers I'm
just trying to say the way school need teachers The way Kathie Lee
needed Regis, that's the way I need Jesus So here go my single, dawg,

radio needs this They say you can rap about anything except for Jesus
That means guns, sex, lies, videotape But if I talk about God my record
won't get played, huh?

Well, if this take away from my spins Which'll probably take away from
my ends, then I hope It take away from my sins and bring the day that
I'm dreaming about Next time I'm in the club, everybody screaming
out ...

(Jesus walks)

God show me the way because the Devil's trying to break me down (Jesus
walks with me)

The only thing that I pray is that my feet don't fail me now

HOMECOMING

Yeah. And you say Chi city ... Chi city ... Chi city

I'm coming home again

Do you think about me now and then?

Do you think about me now and then?

'Cause I'm coming home again

Coming home again

I met this girl when I was three years old And what I love most, she had
so much soul She said, "Excuse me little homie, I know you don't know
me, but My name is Windy and I like to blow trees"

And from that point I never blow her off Niggas come from outta town, I
like to show her off They like to act tough, she like to to' 'em off And
make 'em straighten up they hat, 'cause she know they soft And when I
grew up she showed me how to go downtown And at nighttime her
face lit up, so astounding And I told her in my heart is where she
always be She never mess with entertainers 'cause they always leave
She said, "It felt like they walked and drove on me Knew I was gang
affiliated, got on TV and told on me"

I guess it's why last winter she got so cold on me She said, "Ye, keep
making that, keep making that platinum and gold for me"

Do you think about me now and then?

Do you think about me now and then?

'Cause I'm coming home again
Coming home again
Do you think about me now and then?
Do you think about me now and then?
Oh, now I'm coming home again
Maybe we can start again

But if you really cared for her, then you wouldn't a Never hit the airport
to follow your dream Sometimes I still talk to her, but when I talk to
her It always seems like she talking 'bout me She said, "You left your
kids and they just like you They wanna rap and make soul beats just
like you But they just not you and I just got through Talking 'bout
what niggas trying to do, just not new"

Now everybody got the game figured out all wrong I guess you never
know what you got 'til it's gone I guess that's why I'm here and I can't
come back home And guess when I heard that? When I was back home
Every interview I'm representing you, making you proud Reach for the
stars so if you fall you land on a cloud Jump in the crowd, spark your
lighters, wave 'em around If you don't know by now, I'm talking about
Chi Town Do you think about me now and then?

Do you think about me now and then?

'Cause I'm coming home again

Coming home again

Baby, do you remember when fireworks at Lake Michigan Oh, now I'm
coming home again

Coming home again

Baby, do you remember when fireworks at Lake Michigan Oh, now I'm
coming home again

Maybe we can start again

Loyee oyeee oh, loyee oyeee oh

Coming home again

Loyee oyeee oh, loyee oyeee oh

Coming home again

Maybe we can start again

CAN'T TELL ME NOTHING

I had a dream I can buy my way to heaven When I awoke, I spent that on
a necklace I told God I'd be back in a second

Man, it's so hard not to act reckless To whom much is given, much is
tested Get arrested, guess until he get the message I feel the pressure,
under more scrutiny And what I do? Act more stupidly

Bought more jewelry

More Louis V, my mama couldn't get through to me The drama, people
suing me

I'm on TV talking like it's just you and me I'm just saying how I feel, man
I ain't one of the Cosbys, I ain't go to Hillman I guess the money should've
changed him I guess I should've forgot where I came from [Chorus]

La, la, la, la—wait 'til I get my money right La, la, la, la—then you can't
tell me nothin, right?

Excuse me, was you saying something?

Uh, uh, you can't tell me nothin

(Ha ha) you can't tell me nothin

Uh, uh, you can't tell me nothin

Let up the suicide doors

This is my life, homie, you decide yours I know that Jesus died for us
But I couldn't tell you who decide wars So I parallel double-park that
motherfucker sideways Old folks talking about "Back in my day"

But, homie, this is my day

Class started two hours ago—oh, am I late?

No, I already graduated

And you can live through anything if Magic made it They say I talk with
so much emphasis Ooh, they're so sensitive

Don't ever fix your lips like collagen To say something where you gon'
end up apology-in Let me know if it's a problem then

Aight, man, holla then

[Chorus]

... Let the champagne splash

Let that man get cash, let that man get passed You don't need to stop to
get gas
If he can move through the rumors, he can drive offa fumes 'cause How he
move in a room full of no's?
How he stay faithful in a room full of hoes?
Must be the pharaohs, he in tune with his soul So when he buried in a
tomb full of gold Treasure. What's your pleasure?
Life is a, uh, dependin how you dress her So if the Devil wear Prada,
Adam Eve wear nada I'm in between, but way more fresher ... With
way less effort
'Cause when you try hard, that's when you die hard Ya homies looking
like "Why God?"
When they reminisce over you, my god [Chorus]

YOUNG JEEZY

Young Jeezy is part of a new wave of southern rappers that swept through hip-hop in the middle of the decade. Drawing inspiration from the first rise of the South with artists like The Geto Boys, 8Ball & MJG, Master P, and others, this new generation of regional rhymers spits lyrics about crime and urban blight, but also about the strength of friendship and community.

Young Jeezy draws inspiration from his upbringing in Atlanta. His solo debut, *Thug Motivation 101* (2005), put his street credentials on display with rhymes about hustling in the drug game. “I always had a way with words,” Jeezy says, explaining how he got into rapping. “I was always motivational so even if I didn’t make it into rap ... I was speaking to cats as a motivationalist. That’s what I do.” ³⁷ Jeezy was embroiled in controversy after his Snowman logo, which depicts a sinister, scowling face on a traditional snowman’s body, said to symbolize the drug trade, became popular among schoolchildren. He made news of another kind during the 2008 presidential election when his song “My President” became a de facto anthem among many young supporters of Barack Obama.

FROM PUT ON

I put on ... [3x]

I put on for my city, on, on for my city [4x]

When they see me up in traffic they say Jeezy on some other shit Send
them pussy niggas runnin straight back to the dealership Me, I’m in
my spaceship, that’s right, I work for NASA This 7-H is not a fraud, call
that bitch my bodyguard Call that bitch his bodyguard? Yeah, that’s
my bodyguard Wear a lot of jewelry, Young don’t do security It was
whiter than a napkin, harder than a dinner plate If you want it come
and get it, you know I stay super straight Ran up in my spots so now
I’m workin out the Super 8

Know you niggas hungry, come and get a super plate Y’all sing happy
birthday, yeah, I got that super cake Hundred carat bracelet, I use it
like some super freight [Chorus 2x]

I put on for my city, on on for my city

I put on for my city, on on for my city

Put on ... (Eastside)

Put on ... (Southside)

Put on ... (Westside)

Put on ...

Let's go

Half bag, top back, ain't nothin but a young thug HKs, AKs, I need to join
a gun club

Big wheels, big straps, you know I like it supersized Passenger's a
redbone, her weave look like some curly fries Inside fish sticks, outside
tartar sauce

Pocket full of celery, imagine what she tellin me Blowin on asparagus, the
realest shit I ever smoked Ridin to that *Trap or Die*, the realest shit I
ever wrote They know I got that broccoli, so I keep that Glock on me
Don't get caught without one, comin from where I'm from Call me
Jeezy Hamilton, flyin down Campbellton So fresh, so clean, on my
way to Charlene's **MY PRESIDENT**

(feat. Nas)

*Yeah, be the realest shit I never wrote. I ain't write this shit by the way, nigga.
Some real shit right here, nigga. This'll be the realest shit you ever quote.
Let's go!*

[Chorus]

My president is black, my Lambo's blue

And I'll be goddamn if my rims ain't, too

My mama ain't at home and Daddy's still in jail Tryna make a plate,
anybody seen the scale?

My president is black, my Lambo's blue

And I'll be goddamn if my rims ain't, too

My money's light green and my Jordans light gray And they love to see
white, now how much you tryna pay?

Let's go!

[Young Jeezy]

Today was a good day, hope I have me a great night I don't know what

you fishin for, catch you a great white Me, I see great white, heavy as
killer whales I cannot believe this, who knew it came in bales?

Who knew it came with jail? Who knew it came with prison?

Just 'cause you got opinions doesn't make you a politician Bush robbed all
us, would that make him a criminal?

And then he cheated in Florida, would that make him a Seminole?

I say and I quote, "We need a miracle"

And I say a miracle 'cause this shit is hysterical By my nephews and
nieces, I will e-mail Jesus Tell him forward to Moses and cc: Allah

Mr. Soul Survivor, guess that make me a Konvict Be all you can be, now
don't that sound like some dumb shit?

When they die over crude oil as black as my nigga Boo It's really a Desert
Storm, that's word to my nigga Clue Catch me in Las Vegas, A.R.
Arizona

Rep for them real niggas, I'm winnin in California Winnin in Tennessee,
hands down Atlanta

Landslide Alabama, on my way to Savannah

[Chorus]

[Young Jeezy]

I said I woke up this morning, headache this big Pay all these damn bills,
feed all these damn kids Buy all these school shoes, buy all these school
clothes For some strange reason my son addicted to Polos Love me
some spinach dip, I'm addicted to Houston's And if the numbers is right
I take a trip out to Houston An earthquake out in China, a hurricane in
New Orleans Street Dreams Tour, I showed my ass in New Orleans Did
it for Soulja Slim, brought out B.G.

It's all love, Bun, I'm forgivin you, Pimp C

You know how the Pimp be, that nigga gon' speak his mind If he could
speak down from heaven, he'd tell me stay on my grind Tell him I'm
doin fine, Obama for mankind

We ready for damn change, so y'all let the man shine Stuntin on Martin
Luther, feelin just like a King Guess this is what he meant when he said
that he had a dream [Chorus]

[Nas]

Yeah, our history, black history, no president ever did shit for me Had to hit the streets, had to flip some keys so a nigga won't go broke Then they put us in jail, now a nigga can't go vote, so I spend dough on these hoes is strippin She ain't a politician, honey's a pole-itian My president is black, rose golden charms

Twenty-two-inch rims like Hulk Hogan's arms When thousands of peoples is riled up to see you That can arouse your ego, we got mouths to feed so Gotta stay true to who you are and where you came from 'Cause at the top'll be the same place you hang from No matter how big you could ever be

For whatever fee or publicity, never lose your integrity For years there's been surprise horses in this stable Just two albums in, I'm the realest nigga on this label Mr. Black President, yo, Obama for real

They gotta put your face on the five-thousand-dollar bill [Chorus]

So I'm sittin right here now, man. It's June 3rd, ha-ha, 2:08 A.M. Nigga, I wanna say win, lose, or draw, man, we congratulate you already, homie. See, I motivate the thugs, right? You motivate us, homie, that's what it is. This a hands-on policy, y'all touchin me right, nigga. Yeah, first black president, win, lose, or draw, nigga. Ha-ha, matter of fact, you know what it is, man? Shouts out to Jackie Robinson, Booker T. Washington, homie. Oh, you ain't think I knew that shit? Sidney Poitier, what dey do? Ha-ha, my president is black. I'm important, too, though, my Lambo's blue. I was, I was the first nigga to ride through my 'hood in a Lamborghini. Yeah. Ha-ha! Naw, for real though, we ready for change ...

LYRICS

for Further Study

What follows is a varied selection of lyrics, most of which are from artists not otherwise found in the anthology. Given the constraints of space, we can only gesture toward these artists' bodies of work with a song. The selections are drawn from three decades of hip-hop history and represent a diversity of regions, genres, styles, and themes. They include recognized gems like EPMD's "Strictly Business" and Pete Rock & C. L. Smooth's "They Reminisce over You (T.R.O.Y.)" as well as lesser-known but still memorable lyrics like Crooked I's "Grindin Freestyle" and Binary Star's "Reality Check." This representative selection simply begins to suggest the rich variety and complex interconnections that characterize rap poetics.

CADILLAC ON 22'S

DAVID BANNER

[Chorus 2x]

Cadillacs on twenty-twos

I ain't did nothin in my life but stay true Pimp my voice and mack these
beats

And pray to the Lord for these Mississippi streets, hey!

God, I know that we pimp; God, I know that we wrong God, I know I
shouldn't talk about Moët in all my songs I know these kids are
listening, I know I'm here for a mission But it's so hard to get 'em with
twenty-two rims all glisten I know these walls are talking. Lord, I
wanna do right I try to fight, but these demons they come at me at
night Like my mama, my daddy, my girl, and all my boys I lost
Michelle, but I guess I still got Dwayne and Roy My cousin Sweets,
Mamalita, and Jason Lord, I'm praying for Swack and my heart is
steadily pacin Keep 'em off them drugs, far away from thugs He still
my hero, but just a shell man of what he was Yeah, I smoke and get a
buzz, but God, I hear you calling Ain't shit wrong wit' ballin, but my
soul is just steadily falling Into sex, into debt, in the earthly jail God,

I'm stacking my mail, but will I end up in hell?

[Chorus 2x]

Lord, they hung Andre Jones, Lord, they hung Renard Johnson Lord, I
wanna fight back but I'm just so sick of bouncing Lord, I'm sick of
jumping, Lord, please just tell me something My folks still dumping,
my music bumping, but I feel nothing My heart is steadily pumping,
my heart is steadily breaking Sometimes I feel like I'm faking, man,
I'm so sick of takin Maybe hell ain't a place meant for us to burn
Maybe Earth is hell and just a place for us to learn 'Bout yo' love, yo'
will and grace

Sometimes I wish I wasn't born in the first place Maybe this first base,
God knocked the ball up out the park So we can come home, this world
right here is feeling so dark Feeling so cold, Lord, I'm getting so old I
don't know if I can take this world right here no more *Twenty-two-inch
rims on the 'Lac*

I guess that was yo' footprint in the sand carrying us on yo' back

[Chorus to fade]

REALITY CHECK

BINARY STAR

I have a request tonight. When you hear this, that is the introduction ...

[One Be Lo]

This is how I represent, I rock the mic 110 percent It's intimate, I keeps
the party moving like a immigrant Binary Star, superstar, it's no
coincidence Every verse is intricate, this ain't a circus in a tent We
don't get down like them clowns and the kids I'm used to being
indigent, who said it's all about the Benjamins?

I want a fortune, I want to make music and hit the lottery Fortunately,
my music is never watery That's how it got to be, as far as I can see
Maybe you should grab a telescope to see my view is like astronomy It
ain't all about economy, so the fact That all these wack MCs is making
G's don't bother me Honestly, my number-one policy is quality Never

sell my soul is my philosophy, high velocity Lyrics like Nostradamus
make a prophecy I told you cats a long time ago it ain't no stopping
me I bomb your set; that's not a threat, it's a promise Got everybody
ridin on my wagon like the Amish But still I never claim to be a big
rap star 'Cause no matter who you are it's still Allahu Akbar Better
believe this, most rappers can't achieve this I'm bad to the bone but X-
rays can't even see this See, I'm strategic, I let your money talk,
bullshit walk While I keep it rolling like paraplegics Whoever's on the
microphone let it be known You in danger, I got next like the Boston
Strangler You ain't never heard a MC speak like this And Rodney King
ain't never felt a beat like this *That is the main theme. I want to do
something else...*

[Senim Silla]

Get a grip on yourself 'cause you ain't gripping mine's Life and times
idolize rap guys, out of line careers I finalize Collide with this serenade
cyanide

You've applied for Silla-cide

The thing that makes killas hide

Hang 'em high by they gold link necktie And drain 'em dry, enter temper
sty

Now you ain't Ki so you ain't that high Wanna be aeronautic then get
swatted for acting fly Masterminds, crafty rhymes, ill wind from drafty
lines They chill spines like the Alpines

Running up on Senim turbine's a close encounter Of the worst kind. Go
ask them cats that heard I'm Lyrical turpentine. Who wanna taste
mine?

I carry hell on the waistline, God's gift to bass line So let the phlegm fly, I
semi seven-five through the MI when I forcefully Jedi

In a bull's eye—red-eye, heads fly, bet I Sharp-shoot, deadeye, snooze
crews bed bye Mary Lou flipping, I paper punk rippin I stomping, I
Semper Fi represent, temper high Signified, walking rhyme, ain't
nothing similar Like a Gemini, or in this perimeter 'cept him and I Cats
be cut dry, I'm a wild wet guy

I be raining precipitation 'til it's one inch from neck high Arrest fly kids
mid-sky without an alibi Who said you rap tight? You come unraveled
by A slice of this rap scalpel guy as quick as apple pie I'm learned in
all schools of thought and shit you baffled by Conceptual intellectual

fox-sly

Silla-oxide rhymes flow like a rock slide You must have forgot I'd slap yo'
ass knock-kneed and cockeyed Bruised, battered, broken up, open cut
Dipped in peroxide, death to the pop fly ...

*Usually don't do request numbers, unless, of course, I have been asked to do
so ...*

VAPORS

BIZ MARKIE

Radio, TV, and even the press

Say what's the meaning of the V-A-P-O-R-S

The meanin of this word without no doubt Means nobody want to be
down when you're down and out Now once you're established and got
a lot of money Everybody wanna be your buddy and honey Like tall
buildings they call skyscrapers Can you feel it? Nothin can save ya

For this is the season of catchin the vapors And since I got time, what I'm
gonna do Is tell ya how they spreaded throughout my crew Well, you
all know TJ Swan who sang on my records "Make the Music," "Nobody
Beats the Biz," well, check it Back in the day before this began

He usually tried to talk to this girl name Fran The type of female with fly
Gucci wear With big truck jewelry and extensions in her hair When
Swan tried to kick it, she always fessed Talkin about, "Baby, please,
you work for UPS"

Since he wasn't no type of big drug dealer My man TJ Swan didn't appeal
to her

But now he trucks gold and wears fly Bally boots Rough leather fashions
and tough silk suits Now she stop frontin an' wants to speak and be
Comin to all the shows every single weekend To get his beeper
number, she'd be beggin "Please!"

Dyin for the day to get skeezed

She caught the vapors [4x]

I got another partner that's calm and plain He goes by the name of the

Big Daddy Kane The mellow type of fellow that's laid back Back in the days, he was nothin like that I remember when he used to fight every day When grown-ups would tell him he would never obey He wore his pants hangin down and his sneakers untied And a Rasta-type Kangol tilted to the side Around his neighborhood, people treated him bad Said he was the worst thing his moms ever had They said that he will grow up to be nothin but a hoodlum Or either in jail or someone would shoot him But now he's grown up, to their surprise Big Daddy got a hit record sellin worldwide Now the same people that didn't like him as a child be sayin "Can I borrow a dollar? Ooh, you're a star now!"

They caught the vapors [4x]

Now I got a cousin by the name of Vaughn Lee Better known to y'all as Cutmaster Cool V

He cuts, scratch, transforms with finesse ...

And all that mess

I remember when he first started to rock And tried to get this job at a record shop He was in it to win it but the boss fronted, said "Sorry, Mr. Lee, but there's no help wanted"

Now my cousin Vaughn still tried on and on and on 'Til the, like, break of dawn

To get this J-O-B in effect

Then they'd look right past him and be like, "Next!"

Now for the year of '88

Cool V is makin dollars so my cousin's like straight He walks into the same record shop as before And the boss'll be like, "Vaughn, welcome to my store"

Offerin him a job, but, naw, he don't want it Damn, it feels good to see people up on it 'Cause I remember when at first they wasn't Now guess what they caught from my cousin?

They caught the vapors [4x]

Last subject of the story is about Biz Mark I had to work for mine to put your body in park When I was a teenager, I wanted to be down With a lot of MC-DJin crews in town

Saw a crew on Noble Street, I say, "Can I be down, champ?"

They said no and treated me like a wet food stamp After gettin rejected, I was very depressed Sat and wrote some def doo-doo rhymes at my rest When I used to come to parties they'd make me pay Would have to beg to get on the mic and rap that day I was never into girls, I was just into my music They acted like I wanted to keep it instead of tryin to use it But now things switched, without belief "Yo, Biz, do you remember me from Noble Street, Chief?"

We used to be down back in the days"

It happens all the time and never cease to amaze They caught the vapors [4x]

THE CHOICE IS YOURS (REVISITED)

BLACK SHEEP

Here they come, yo, here they come [3x]

This (or that), this (or that) [4x]

Yo, who's a Black Sheep? What's a Black Sheep?

Know not who I am or when I'm coming, so you sleep Wasn't in my realm or wasn't in your sphere Knew not who I was, but listen here

Drés, D-R-E-S, yes, I guess I could start If it's all right with you, I'll rip this here joint apart Back, middle, to the front, don't front Want a good time, wanna give you what you want Can I hear a "hey"? (Hey!) Now get a "yo" (Yo!) You got a "hay"? (Huh!) It's for the hoes (Oh!) The styling is creative, Black Sheep of the Native Can't be violated or even decepticated I got brothers in the Jungle, cousins on the Quest Dead retarded uncles and departed may they rest Guess: which way, what, when, how?

Mista Lawnge, Drés, Black Sheep slam now Know you've heard the others, phonies to the lovers Then of course, the choice is yours

[Chorus 2x]

You can get with this, or you can get with that You can get with this, or you can get with that You can get with this, or you can get with that I think you'll get with this, for this is where it's at Where's the Black

Sheep? Here's the Black Sheep Even if we wanted to, the flock could not be weak Watch me swing like this, why should I swing it like that? Because in fact, on me it might not attract Therefore I ignore, do as I feel inside I live with me, I've got my back tonight Ya know what I'm sayin? Yo, black, I'm not playin Need to go with this and go with this with no delay and See, in actuality, one day can it be
I made it look easy, because it is to me Any time capacity was filled, tried to rock it Any time a honey gave us play, tried to knock it Never was a fool so we finished school Never see us sweat and you'll never see us drool Out to rock the globe while it's still here to rock Don't punch girls and we don't punch a clock Gotta go, gotta go, see you later by the cat And you can't beat that with a bat

[Chorus 2x]

Engine, engine, number nine
On the New York transit line
If my train goes off the track
Pick it up! Pick it up! Pick it up!
Back on the scene, crispy and clean
You can try, but then why, 'cause you can't intervene We be the outcast,
down for the settle Won't play rock, won't play the pebble Open your door, you best believe, we're sliding through it Swiftly ...
Niftily, we can make it hip to be
What we are 'cause what we be
Be the epitome, doo-dah-dippity
So now I dwell just to say you're plainer Hold your cup 'cause I got the container Pass a plate across the fader
Black Sheep get played like the Sony Innovator Never the traitor, party o' f-later
And you can get a scoop, later

[Chorus 2x]

Here they come, yo, here they come [8x]

LUCHINI

CAMP LO

[Chorus]

This is it (What?!), Luchini pourin from the sky Let's get rich (What?!), the
cheeky vines and sugar dimes Can't quit (What?!), now pop the cork
and steam the Vega And get lit (What?! What?! What?!)

[Geechi Suede]

Introducin phantom of the dark, walk through my heaven With levitation
from reefers, drenching divas in these sevens Showboatin with Rugers,
flash vines, Belafonte jigga Landscape for what it's worth as we
confiscate your figures [Sonny Cheeba]

Casanova Brown levitatin jiggy in dashikis De la hotter a Car 54, chasin
diamond runners Headed ice bound, reppin killer diamond convention
Harlem buck strut, freezin world heist Hollywood Madame Butterfly,
let me in your house of pleasure From the knuckle swat shadow boxers
catching black-eye blues [Geechi Suede]

I play the thief—what?!, sensations at the Monte Barbie Screamin
“Cheeba!” fulfillin pleasures at my castles Blow the smoke out, the
Garcia Vega substitutes When the Dutch is gone, the Lo don't stop, give
me shouts It's the season sauté-ers, soufflé-ers for swervin on corners
We magnets to moolah, livin with Charlie's Angels hornets No smilin,
we're slidin, that gets you caught up in the Octa'

Or deaded for movin, it's just like that as we proceed [Sonny Cheeba]

Saturday night special, better take it light, you JahJah A capi-tan, quest to
the coast of Key Largo, wire The chain gang keep your ears out for our
air Sippin Fontainebleau, house of bamboo, paradise [Chorus 2x]

[Sonny Cheeba]

For these pharaohs, courtesies of Black Caesar, the convincer Silky Days,
satin nights, takin flight, Donald Goines Sweet sensation, Spanish flyin
with the lady Scarface Bottoms up, sunshine, love potion number nine
[Geechi Suede]

And we headed from the magic city, transcendin sweeter on your aura
Fly-chini in London, relaxation in Bora Bora Got notion to bring it,

sing it, never been my function Stonin, robbin, we heisting
merchandise and gunnin Love it, leave it, but bless the war chief for
his pricin Get it, got it, the Lo will forever be nice and [Sonny Cheeba]

Yeah, the Sonny Cheeba, he be sippin Armaretta The Geechi Gracious, he
be sippin Armaretta We float the tristate draped in the satin vines This
Cooley High jack pack from the Sugar Shack Then what we do after we
sip the Armaretta We start the Harlem River quiver, dig it sweet daddy
Sharpen the crimson blade, high sierra serenade Anatomy for
seduction beat his ebony chest in [Geechi Suede]

As we exit the place with grace, drizzly Armaretta That bursts into clouds
and pours, everything seems better On flax, with love, we move, only
in the mist It's Lo, it's life, and we can't get enough of this [Chorus 2x]

GRINDIN (FREESTYLE)

CROOKED I

[Crooked I]

Yo, this nigga never goin broke again: picture me poor I walk in the
jewelry shop, draw Glock, empty the store Crooked's a man-eating
lion, please don't tempt me to roar Ghetto enough to put hydraulics on
a Bentley Azure Pimp me a whore, tough talk I simply ignore
Thousand-dollar automatic weapons defend me in war I rock the
stocking cap in case I gotta pull it right Over my well-known face and
lay down the whole place It's killa Cal, this hour where criminals
prowl My residual prizzowl my lyrical style Make them niggas sound
bourgie. It's like you're tellin A statue to flinch, my nigga: your words
don't move me They make me want to trip with this gauge and you
suckers'll Be *Gone in 60 Seconds*, quicker than Nicolas Cage You get no
action, I beats more ass than Joe Jackson I tote Magnums even if I got
four platinums I blast that Enyce shirt, I make your bitch drop her DK
skirt 'Cause that's how niggas in Southern CA work I stay swift, walk
with my chest out

Like an ese on May 5th, I tell you you ain't shit Plus gangsta rap ain't
dead, it never died It took steroids to the head and became Crooked I
On the roof place by the gift, we could feud Like Cowboys and Indians
or Israelis and Palestinians I didn't want to resort to this, but my
cerebral cortex Is a fortress where metaphors exist, hit you with the

force of Morpheus after I transform my fist into a hammer Too heavy
for Thor to lift through a course of metamorphosis The U-Gang is more
than sick, sicker than newborn porn Swingin on some George Foreman
shit. Warn your clique I'm comin, nobody fucks with Mr. Icon A
natural-born time bomb. You know I gotta drop cowards With nine
millimeters of Glock power

Drop trousers, do your girl in a hot shower For a hot hour, drop her off at
the Watts Towers The block's ours, you seein me not now Or never, I
never let these snake niggas take me I blow out brains to entertain me
when I'm angry Don't tangle, I choke, strangle, break both ankles
Dangle you from a rope, clothes hang you from a coat hanger The
mangler, so anxious to kill, able to spill Ancient languages, dangerous
as eighty painkillin pills Young jacker, Gucci hat tilted gun clapper I'm
every artist Suge ever signed in one rapper Chrome ending your life,
I'm strong enough To stab you with the wrong end of a knife, gangsta
type And the lyrics that I quote poke through my clothin My father
didn't want me here but I broke through a Trojan It's on, Wake Up
Show

It never stops on the Wake Up Show

Wake Up Show

It can't stop, it's the ruh-oh, uh-oh [Sway] *Damn, I almost cursed. Damn.*

[Crooked I] *And we grinding and I keep a four-five in my lining*

[King Tech] *We're about to have a funeral for the microphone ...*

THEY WANT EFX

DAS EFX

[Dre]

Bum stiggedy bum stiggedy bum, hon

I got the old pa-rum-pum-pum-pum

But I can fe-fi-uh-fo, diddly-fum, here I come So Peter Piper, I'm hyper
than Pinocchio's nose 'Cause I'm a supercalifragilistic tic-tac-toe I gave
my oopsy, daisy, now you've got the crazy Crazy with the books,
googly-goo, where's the gravy So one, two, unbuckle my, um, shoe

Yabba doo, hippity-hoo, crack a brew

So trick or treat, smell my feet, yup, I drippedy-dropped a hit So, Books,
get on your mark and spark that old censorship [Books]

Drats and double drats, I smiggedy-smacked some whiz kids The boogedy-
woogedly Brooklyn boy's about to get his, dig My waist bone's
connected to my hip bone My hip bone's connected to my thigh bone
My thigh bone's connected to my knee bone My knee bone's connected
to my—hardy-har-har-har The jibbedy-jabber jaw ja-jabbing at your
funny bone, um Skip the Ovaltine, I'd rather have my Honeycomb Or
preferably the sesame, let's spiggedy-spark the blunts, um Dun dun
dun dun dun, dun dun

[Chorus]

They want EFX, some live EFX [3x]

Snap a neck for some live EFX

[Dre]

Well I'll be darned, shiver me timbers yo, head for the hills!

I picked a weeping willow and a daffodil So back up, bucko, or I'll
pulverize McGruff 'Cause this little piggy gets busy and stuff
Arrivederci, heavens to mercy, honky-tonk, I get swift I caught a
Snuffleupagus and smoked a boogaloo spliff I got the nooks, the
crannies, the nitty-gritty forty doe So all aboard, castaway, hey,
where's my boogaloo?

Oh-h-h-h-h-hhhh I'm steamin, a-go-ny!

Why's everybody always pickin on me?

[Books]

They call me Puddin Tane and rap's my game You ask me again and I'll t-
tell you the same Since I'm the vocal vegemintarian, stick 'em up,
freeze, so No pork sausages, mom, please?

A-Blitz shoots the breeze, Twiddly-dee shoots his lip Crazy Drayzie shot the
sheriff, yup, and I shot the gift And that's PRET-TY SNEA-KY SIS, oh yo
I got my socks off, my rocks off, my Nestle's cup of cocoa Holly Hobbie
tried to slob me, tried to rob me, silly stunt Diggedy-dun dun dun dun
dun, DUN DUN!

[Chorus 2x]

[Dre] Yahoo, hidee-ho, yup, I'm coming around the stretch So here, Fido
boy, fetch, boy, fetch

I got the rope-a-dope, a slippery choker, look at me get raw [Books] And
I'm the hickory-dickory top of morning boogaloo big jaw [Dre] With
the yippedy zippedy Winnie the Pooh bad boy blue [Books] Aiyo,
crazy, you got the gusto?

[Dre] What up, I swing that too

So nincompoop, I give a hoot and stomp a troop without a strain Like
Rosco P.-P. Coltrane

I spiggedy-spark a spliff and give a twist like Chubby Checker [Books] I
takes my Fruit Loops with two scoops and make it double-decker Oh
Vince, the baby come to Papa Duke

A babaloo, ooh, a babaloo boogedy boo I went from Coogi to Stussy, to
fliggedy-flam a groupie To Zsa Zsa, to yibbedy-yabba dabba hoochie
koochie Tallyho, I-I'll take my Stove Top instead of potatoes, so Maybe
I'll shoot 'em now (Nope), maybe I'll shoot 'em later (Yep) I used to
have a dog and Bingo was his name-oh, so uh B-I-N-G-O-oh

You do the hokeypokey and you turn yourself around, hon, so uh Dun dun
dun dun dun dun, dun dun

[Chorus]

FOR COLORED BOYS

DEEP DICKOLLECTIVE

[Marcus René Van]

This is a song made for colored boys

Whose rainbows forgot how to bloom

Whose moons forgot how to change into suns To illuminate the gray days

This is a song made for colored boys

Whose heroes forgot how to fly

Whose wings were clipped with rage

And cages waited to take them with no reasons why This is a song made

for colored boys
Whose up-ins that never come up
Whose mothers and fathers
Became the sons and the daughters
Of revolution's eternal corrupt

[Solas B. Lalgée]
So this is for the colored boys
Colored boys like me
Brother, fence walker, fringe society Pressure rising exponentially

[Tim'm West]
This is for the colored boys like me
Dirty-dirty, the city streets
Literary geeks that control, alternate, and delete To reboot, we be the
 strange fruit
Blackberry sweet juice
We be rigging your reel telling our truth We got moods like Langston
 Hughes
We the Countee Cullen blues
Be the soul of his shoes
Marvin White's blackbirds
Taking flight with words
With our pens and manifestos
We bourgie and ghetto
Thug and crud
The "nigga please!" and "nigga what?!"
The Essex of the mic check
We the boys suspect
When they fail to love themselves well We Ntozake's warriors, homo
 revolutionary males Following our hearts we spark
Sunshine in the dark, DDC
Famous Outlaw MCs, we get free

[Jeree “JB Rap” Brown]

We on some other shit

Spit so sick, choke on it

Hear me on MySpace, JBRap sick with it Call me Gaylord, feel the face
and fire grace Of those who expired

Rickey, Kaya, Alizé, and Tanya

We miss you bad, love—won’t retire

Ready to blow like Golden State, puff White girl, we done had enough

Moist and sticky on the same brain

Like cotton field’s pain in yesterday’s rain How you gon’ make it through

All the pain and all the anguish?

Ball to the death and stand tall

Ball to the death and stand tall

[Chorus]

So this is for the colored boys

Colored boys like me

Brother, fence walker, fringe society Pressure rising exponentially

And yet, we traverse on

Well, I was born inside of a pot of gold At the end of a rainbow that no
one knows So the answer is clear if you recognize If you’re looking for
truth, look into my eyes [Juba Kalamka]

The point is this colored noise

This joint is for colored boys

This is for Essex, Assoto, Donald, and Marlon Troy This is for Aimé, for
Melvin, Claude, and for Countee C.

This is for Larry Duckette, for Joseph and Jimmy B.

For cousins and lovers

Who couldn’t be because you would laugh This is for Luther, Poetic, Eazy,
and Sugar Shaft For brothers whose names we will never know I’m a
get it right

Labeija, Infiniti, Ninjas twistin it through the night In spite of the
pressures and expectations to hide desire Like Bayard, who paved it

Through slings and arrows while walking fire We pomo, our Afros so

homo stories will see the light The slights had me frightened
But now I'm ready to fuck and fight

Chocolate-colored rainbows, black boys get on down Chocolate-colored
rainbows, love to hear that sound [Solas B. Lalgee]

I like to see your shade of brown
I like to see you get on down
Down, down, down, down, down
Love to see them boys get down
I like that UK-Irish brown
I like that Tamil-Trini brown
Brown, brown, brown, brown, brown
Love to, love to see the sound
I love to see the sound
I love to see the brown
Love to see that sound (I like to ...)

[Chorus]

Chocolate-colored rainbows, black boys get on down Chocolate-colored
rainbows, love to hear that sound **SUMMERTIME**

DJ JAZZY JEFF & THE FRESH PRINCE

Here it is, a groove slightly transformed Just a bit of a break from the
norm

Just a little somethin to break the monotony Of all that hardcore dance
that has gotten to be A little bit out of control. It's cool to dance But
what about a groove that soothes and moves romance?

Give me a soft, subtle mix

And if it ain't broke then don't try to fix it And think of the summers of
the past

Adjust the bass and let the Alpine blast Pop in my CD and let me run a
rhyme

And put your car on cruise and lay back 'Cause this is summertime

School is out and there's a sort of a buzz But back then I didn't really

know what it was But now I see what habit is

The way that people respond to summer madness The weather is hot and girls are dressing less And checkin out the fellas to tell 'em who's best Riding around in your Jeep or your Benzos Or in your Nissan sitting on Lorenzos Back in Philly we'd be out in the park A place called the Plateau is where everybody go Guys out hunting and girls doing likewise Honking at the honey in front of you with the light eyes She turn around to see what you beepin at It's like the summer's a natural aphrodisiac And with a pen and pad I compose this rhyme To hip you and to get you equipped for the summertime It's late in the day and I ain't been on the court yet Hustle to the mall to get me a short set Yeah, I got on sneaks but I need a new pair 'Cause basketball courts in the summer got girls there The temperature's about eighty-eight

Hop in the water plug, just for old time's sake Break to your crib, change your clothes once more 'Cause you're invited to a barbecue that's startin at four Sittin with your friends as y'all reminisce About the days growing up and the first person you kissed And as I think back, makes me wonder how The smell from a grill could spark up nostalgia All the kids playing out front

Little boys messin 'round with the girls playing double dutch While the DJ's spinning a tune

As the old folks dance at your family reunion Then six o'clock rolls around You just finished wiping your car down It's time to cruise so you go To the summertime hangout, it looks like a car show Everybody come lookin real fine

Fresh from the barbershop or fly from the beauty salon Every moment frontin and maxin

Chillin in the car they spent all day waxin Leanin to the side, but you can't speed through Two miles an hour, so everybody sees you There's an air of love and of happiness And this is the Fresh Prince's new definition of summer madness **SAY WHAT'S REAL**

DRAKE

Why do I feel so alone like everybody passing through the studio Is in character as if we acting out a movie role Talking bullshit as if it was for you to know And I don't have the heart to give these bitch ass

niggas the cue to go So they stick around kicking out feedback And I entertain it as if I need that

I had a talk with my uncle and he agreed that My privacy about the only thing I need back But it's hard to think of them polite flows When Stefano Polato suits are your night clothes And Jordan sweat suits are your flight clothes And you still make it even when they say your flight closed Eyes hurting from the camera phone light shows Life was so full, now this shit just being lipo'd Always said I'd say it all on the right track But in this game you only lose when you fight back Black diamond bracelets showing you the basics I can't live and hold the camera, someone gotta tape this I make hits, unlike a bitch that's married I ain't miss Twenty-four hours from greatness, I'm that close Don't ever forget the moment you began to doubt Transitioning from fitting in to standing out Los Angeles cabanas or Atlanta south

Watchin whole show, embarrassed to pull my camera out And my mother embarrassed to pull my Phantom out So I park about five houses down

She say I shouldn't have it until I have the crown But I don't wanna feel the need to wear disguises around So she wonder where my mind is, accounts in the minus But yet I'm rolling round the fuckin city like your highness Got niggas reactin without a sinus

'Cause what I'm working with is timeless And promoters try to get me out to they club They say I have fun but I can't imagine how 'Cause I just seen my ex-girl standing with my next girl Standing with the girl that I'm fuckin right now And shit could get weird unless they all down And so I stay clear, we from a small town Everybody talks and everybody listen

But somehow the truth just always comes up missing I've always been something that these labels can't buy Especially if they tryin to take a piece of my soul And Sylvia be tellin Tez, "Damn, Drake fly"

And he just be like, "Silly motherfucker, I know"

"That was your bad, how could you pass up on 'em?"

He just take them records and he gas up on 'em Wayne will probably put a million cash up on 'em Surprised no one ever put your ass up on 'em"

Oh, they did, Po, at least they tried to And that's what happens when you spitting what's inside you But slip up and shoot the wrong fucking video And they think they can market you however they decide to Nah, but Forty told me to do me

And don't listen to anybody that knew me 'Cause to have known me
would mean that there's a new me And if you think I changed in the
slightest, could have fooled me Boy, and to my city I'm the 2-3
Drug dealers live vicariously through me I quit school and it's not because
I'm lazy I'm just not the social type and campus life is crazy
Understand, I could get money with my eyes closed Lost some of my
hottest verses down in Cabo So if you find a BlackBerry with the side
scroll Sell that motherfucka to any rapper that I know 'Cause they
need it much more than I ever will I got new shit, I'm gettin better still
Little niggas put my name in they verses 'Cause they girlfriend put my
ass on a pedestal Future said 'cause this 'Ye shit, you better kill And I
think this got this making of a legend feel Problem with these other
niggas, they ain't never real Yeah. That's all I can say ...

FUMBLING OVER WORDS THAT RHYME

EDAN

Pure rap music ain't made under pressure Expose a jewel, teach school at
my leisure Fumble over words that rhyme with a verse divine I
backtrack and think of the greatest of all time Class is in session,
master this lesson Teacher was a student, study like a Buddhist
Reviewing on the best to do it so let's do this (Do it) Nothing to it

Considered the first MC to blow the spot and do work Was Coke La Rock
spittin for Kool Herc Following the influence of Herculord parties
Brothers like Cowboy made you move your body Cowboy would toast
for the GM Flash

And the skills elevated as crews started to clash Flash and Bam, they both
sought clientele So Flash formed the Four with the father Melle Mel
Four became Five, law became live

Routines over breaks, true kings motivate Out the L Brothers came the
Five Fantastic With Theodore they battled with the Cold Crush Four
Few had the confidence of GMC

Without the CCBs, there'd be no Run-DMC

The Funky and the Fearless Four, Force MC's, the suave Spoonie Gee And
I can't forget the Treacherous Three MCs Praise to the Kool Moe Dee,
he elevated And changed it with records like "The New Rap Language"

Before the first full-length LPs

There was abstract brothers like the one Rammellzee Run-DMC broke through in '83 outta Queens And started rappin hard over drum machines 808s started shaking up floors ("It's Yours") With T La Rock's complex metaphors

(T-L-A-R-O-C-K)

A primary influence on LL Cool J

T La Rock's futurism must've been respectable 'Cause Tragedy from Queens was young but very technical Shan was eloquent, Kris was intelligent The R was all of the above with added elements Slick Rick the Ruler was a screenplay producer Ultramagnetic had the vision for the future Big Daddy Kane gettin raw at the Apollo and Kool G Rap was probably the sickest of all of 'em Jaz from the BK, Percee and Finesse from the BX

Prince Po and Pharaoh came next

Wu with the G-Z-A, G-F-K

N-A-S, one of the best out today

Any MC that's addin on to the list

Pump your fist, but first give praise to true scientists **THE RAIN (SUPA DUPA FLY)**

MISSY ELLIOTT

Me, I'm supa fly, supa dupa fly, supa dupa fly [4x]

When the rain hits my window

I take in (puff) me some Indo

Me and Timbaland, oooh, we sang-a-dango We so tight that you get our styles tangled Sway low, do-si-do like you loco

Can we get kinky tonight? Like Coko, so-so You wanna play with my yo-yo?

I smoke my hydro on the d-low

I can't stand the rain against my window [4x]

Beep, beep, who got the keys to the Jeep?

Vroom ... I'm drivin to the beach
Top down, loud sounds, see my peeps
Give them pound, now look who it be
It be me, me, me and Timothy
Look like it 'bout to rain, what a shame I got the Armor All to shine up the
stain Oh, Missy, try to maintain

Freaky, freaky, freaky, freaky, freaky, freaky, freaky I can't stand the
rain against my window I feel the wind

Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten

Begin, I sit on hills like Lauryn

Until the rain starts comin down, pourin Chill—I got my umbrella

My finger waves these days, they fall like Humpty Chunky, I break up
with him before he dump me To have me: yes, you lucky

I can't stand the rain against my window [repeat to fade]

STRICTLY BUSINESS

EPMD

[Erick Sermon]

Try to answer to the master or the MC rap artist No joke on the lyric, it's
hard to be modest I knew I was the man with the master plan To make
you wiggle and jiggle like gelatin Just think while I sink into the brain
structure (Yo, don't sleep on the E) Ya see, somethin might rupture It
don't take time for me to blow your mind It take a second to wreck it
because you're dumb and blind So just lounge, 'cause you a MC clown
Go join the circus, EPMD is in town

[PMD]

Total chaos, no, mass confusion

Rhymes so hypnotizin known to cause an illusion Like a magician, he
draws a rabbit out a hat, son I'ma draw 'em all like a .44 Magnum

MCs, freeze, stop, look, and listen and try to imagine It's travelin the
speed of light, but everything's motionless Frightening, plus the

thought you alone You now enter dimension called the Twilight Zone
You're terrified, plus you can't bear the thought You and I one-on-one
in the Land of the Lost You start to shiver, then you scream, my friend
Yo, wake up, Muttley, because you're dreamin again But next time I'm
on the scene, do not try to dis us Keep your mouth shut, suckaduck,
because I'm strictly business I'm strictly business ...

[Erick Sermon]

This is the rap season, where the E starts pleasin Girls around the world,
no need to be skeezin When I roll I stroll, cool, always pack a tool Just
in case (just in case) a brother acts a fool I've got the energy to put the
girls in a frenzy Put 'em in shock, when I rock, give enough, I'm not
stingy Make sure I don't bore when I'm on the dance floor (Get busy,
boy) like you never saw before One flow, good to go

After the show, I pull your ho, boy

(You sniff blow?) Hell, no

Have my whole life ahead of me, no time to be sniffin My parents find
out, then they start riffin So I stay A-OK

'Cause I'm the E—the R-I-C-K

[PMD]

MCs look me in my face, then their eyes get weak Pulse rate descends,
heart rate increase It's like "Beam me up, Scotty," I control your body
I'm as deadly as AIDS when it's time to rock a party In all due respect,
when I say "mic check"

Let a sucker slide once, then I break his neck So when I say "Jump," you'll
reply, "How high?"

Because I'm takin no prisoners, so don't play hero and die You're just a
soldier and I'm a Green Beret I do not think twice about the MCs I slay
So if you want to battle, I highly recommend this Bring your dog,
mom, and dad, because I'm strictly business I'm strictly business ...

[Erick Sermon]

Yo yo, you're still pickin on that four-leaf clover?

Bring in the Sandman, sucker, because it's over My name is Erick Sermon
and I'm back again I see the heads still turnin, and my so-called
friends They smile in my face, behind my back they talk trash Mad and

stuff, because they don't have cash Like the E-Double, or the PMD
He drives a Corvette, I drive a Samurai Suzuki I'm the locksmith with the
key to fame Never high on myself, always stay the same Play a lot
because I'm hot, like a horse I trot Around the track and back.
(Fatigued?) No, I'm not [PMD]

Well, I'm the mellow, the fellow, the one that likes to say "hello"
To a fly girl that is good to go

With the slow tempo and the offbeat rhyme flow 'Cause when I am in
action, there is no time for maxin Or relaxin, just reactin and
subtractin On a sucker MC who mouth keep on yappin And flappin. I
lose my cool, then I'll start slappin And smackin. You on a roll? Then
I'll be starts jabbin And cappin. No time to lounge, I'm packin a strap
And at my point of attack, I soar at you like a eagle I'm the sheriff and
bitin is illegal

So next time in town, I highly recommend this You got to chill, because
I'm strictly business **KING TIM III (PERSONALITY JOCK)**

THE FATBACK BAND (FEAT. KING TIM III) *All right, y'all*

Here we go

You just clap your hands and you stomp your feet 'Cause you're listening
to the sound of the sure-shot beat I'm the K-I-N-G, the T-I-M

King Tim the Third, and I am him

Just me, Fatback, and the crew

We're doing it all just for you

We're strong as an ox and tall as a tree We can rock you so viciously

We throw the highs in your eyes, the bass in your face We're the funk
machines that rock the human race Skate down, boogie shot

Come on girl, let's do the Rock

Slam dunk, do the Jerk

Let me see your body work

To the break, everybody

To the break, everybody

2, 4, 6, 8

Fatback, don't you hesitate

.....

To the break

Just keep the same old beat

About a while ago and I want you to know Just who you been listening to
I am the voice of King Tim the Third

Tell you what I want you to do

A little left hand, right hand in the air And you sway 'em like you just
don't care You put your left leg out, your right leg in Say the Hustle is
out and the Rock is in About a quarter to four somebody was at your
door And you wondered who it was

You started to shake and shiver so I said It's me, your little ol' cuz

I said open the door and let me in

I'll rock you so good you'll want it again I rocked you so good you heard
bells ring They went ring-ding-dang-a-ding-a-ding-ding Ring-ding-
dang-a-ding-a-ding-ding

To the break, everybody

Do it to me and I'll do it to you

Stomp your feet and clap your hands

'Cause you're listening to the sounds of the Fatback Band It ain't nothing
new in what I do

'Cause I'm doing it all just for you

I'm hotter than tea, I'm sweeter than honey I'm not doing it for the money
I'm sugar-coated, double-dunk

Chocolate-MC man

I'm sweeter than the Almond Joy

And grandma's sweet old jam

I'm the modified, the rectified

Ka-zink-di-fied, ka-jook-di-fied

Caput-a-fied, ca-dook-a-fied

To rock your mind, say all the time

To the break, everybody

To the break, everybody

It's on and on and on and on

Like hot butter on—say what?—the popcorn *Do it to me and I'll do it to you*

To the beat, everybody

You keep the pep in the step, the hip in your hop You don't stop 'til you
get on the mountain top Once you reach the top you won't be alone
You got King Tim on the microphone

Just grab your partner, you start to swing 'Cause I'm well-known just like
Burger King I don't sell burgers or French fries

I'm only here to make your nature rise Just grab your partners around
and round And grab her by the butt and boogie down Just open up her
jacket and open her bra And then just lay at the Mardi Gras

I'm the man of action, the main attraction The girls call me the
satisfaction

I'm the Romeo, the Casanova

Here tonight, I'm gonna get over

To the beat, everybody

To the beat, everybody

To the beat, everybody

To the beat, everybody

HATE IT OR LOVE IT

THE GAME (FEAT. 50 CENT)

[50 Cent]

Coming up I was confused, my mama kissing a girl Confusion occurs
coming up in a cold world Daddy ain't around, probably out
committing felonies My favorite rapper used to sing, "Check, check out
my melody"

I wanna live good, so, shit, I sell dope For a four-finger ring, one of them
gold ropes Nana told me if I passed, I'd get a sheepskin coat If I could
move a few packs, I'd get that hat, now that'll be dope Tossed and
turn in my sleep that night Woke up the next morning, niggas done
stole my bike Different day, same shit, ain't nothing good in the 'hood
I run away from this bitch and never come back if I could [Chorus 2x]

Hate it or love it, the underdog's on top And I'm gon' shine, homie, until

my heart stop Go 'head and envy me, I'm rap's MVP
And I ain't going nowhere, so you can get to know me G-G-G-G-G-G-G-
Unit!

[Game]

On the grill of my low rider
Guns on both sides, right above the gold wires I four-five 'em, kill a nigga
on my song And really do it; that's the true meaning of a ghostwriter
Ten G's will take your daughter outta Air Forces Believe you me,
homie, I know all about losses I'm from Compton, wear the wrong
colors, be cautious One phone call'll have your body dumped in Marcy
I stay strapped like car seats, been banging Since my little nigga Rob
got killed for his Barkleys That's ten years, I told Pooh in '95
I'll kill you if you try me for my Air Max 95s Told Banks when I met him,
I'ma ride
And if I gotta die, rather homicide
I ain't had 50 Cent when my grandmama died Now I'm going back to Cali
with my Jacob on See how time fly?

[Chorus 2x]

[50 Cent]

From the beginning to the end, losers lose, winners win This is real, we
ain't got to pretend The cold world that we in, it's full of pressure and
pain Enough of me, nigga, now listen to Game [Game]
Used to see 5-0, throw the crack by the bench Now I'm fucking with 5-0,
it's all starting to make sense My ma's happy, she ain't gotta pay the
rent And she got a red bow on that brand new Benz Waiting on Sha
Money to land, sitting in the Range Thinking how they spend thirty
million dollars on airplanes When there's kids starving, Pac is gone
And Brenda's still throwing babies in the garbage I wanna know
what's going on like I hear Marvin No school books, they use that
wood to build coffins Whenever I'm in a booth and I get exhausted I
think, What if Marie Baker got that abortion?
I love you, Ma

[Chorus 2x]

WHY

JADAKISS

Yo, why is Jadakiss as hard as it gets?

Why is the industry designed to keep the artist in debt?

And why them dudes ain't ridin if they're part of your set?

And why they never get it poppin but they party to death?

Yeah, and why they gon' give you life for a murder, turn around Only
give you eight months for a burner? It's goin down Why they sellin
niggas' CDs for under a dime?

And if it's all love, daddy, why you come wit' your nine?

Why my niggas ain't get that cake?

Why is a brother up North better than Jordan that ain't get that break?

Why you ain't stackin instead of tryin to be fly?

Why is rattin at an all-time high? Why are you even alive?

Why they kill Tupac 'n' Chris?

Why at the bar you ain't take straight shots instead of poppin Crist'?

Why them bullets have to hit that door?

Why did Kobe have to hit that raw? Why he kiss that whore?

Why?

[Chorus]

All that I been given

Is this thing that I've been living

They got me in the system

Why they gotta do me like that?

Tried to make it my way

But got sent up on the highway

Why, oh, why

Why they gotta do me like that?

Why would niggas push pounds and powder? Why did Bush Knock down
the towers? Why you around them cowards?

Why Aaliyah have to take that flight? Why my nigga D
Ain't pull out his Ferrari? Why he take that bike?
Why they gotta open your package and read your mail?
Why they stop lettin niggas get degrees in jail?
Why you gotta do 85 percent of your time?
And why do niggas lie in 85 percent of they rhymes?
Why a nigga always want what he can't have?
Why I can't come through in the pecan Jag?
Why did crack have to hit so hard, even though it's almost over?
Why niggas can't get no jobs?
Why they come up with the witness protection? Why they let The
Terminator win the election? Come on, pay attention Why sell in the
stores what you can sell in the streets?
Why I say the hottest shit but we sellin the least?

[Chorus]

Why Halle have to let a white man pop her to get a Oscar?
Why Denzel have to be crooked before he took it?
Why they didn't make the CL6 wit' a clutch?
And if you don't smoke, then why the hell you reachin for my Dutch?
Why rap? 'Cause I need air time
Why be on the curb wit' a "Why lie; I need a beer" sign?
Why all the young niggas is dyin 'cause they moms at work They pops is
gone, they livin wit' iron Why they ain't give us a cure for AIDS?
Why my diesel have fiends in the spot on the floor for days?
Why you screamin like it's a slug, it's only the hawk?
Why my buzz in LA ain't like it is in New York?
Why they forcin you to be hard? Why ain't you a thug by choice?
Why the whole world love my voice?
Why, try to tell 'em that it's the flow, son And you know why they made
the new twenties? 'Cause I got all the old ones That's why ...

[Chorus]

EXHIBIT C

JAY ELECTRONICA

It's coming. Ladies and gentlemen, this time around the revolution will not be televised. Woo.... As we proceed ... to give you what you need. '09 muf—, get live muf—. Ladies and gentlemen of the court, in the hearing against the state of hip-hop versus Jay Electronica, I present Exhibit C ...

When I was sleepin on the train, sleepin on Meserole Ave out in the rain,
without even a single slice of pizza To my name, too proud to beg for
change Mastering the pain, when New York niggas Was calling
Southern rappers lame, but then jacking our slang I used to get dizzy
spells, hear a little ring The voice of a angel tellin me my name Tellin
me that one day I'ma be a great man Transforming with the Megatron
Don, spitting out flames Eatin wack rappers alive, shittin out chains I
didn't believe it then, nigga, I was homeless Fighting, shooting dice,
smokin weed on the corners Trying to find the meaning of life in a
Corona 'Til the Five-Percenters rolled up on a nigga and informed him
"You either build or destroy. Where you come from?"

"The Magnolia projects and the Third Ward slum"

"Hmm ... it's quite amazing that you rhyme how you do And that you
shine like you grew up in a shrine in Peru"

Question fourteen, Muslim lesson two: Dip-diver, civilize a eighty-fiver

I make the devil hit his knees and say the Our Father Abracadabra, you
rocking with the true and livin Shout out to Lights Out, Joseph I, and
Chewy Bivens Shout out to Baltimore, Baton Rouge, my crew in
Richmond While y'all debated who the truth was like Jews and
Christians I was on Cecil B, Broad Street, Master North Philly, South
Philly, Twenty-Third, Tasker Six Mile, Seven Mile, Heartwell, Gratiot
Where niggas really would pack a U-Haul truck up Put the high beams
on, drive up on the curb At a barbeque and hop up out the back like:
"What's up?"

Kill a nigga, rob a nigga, take a nigga, bust up That's why when you talk
that tough talk I never feel ya You sound real good and you play the
part well But the energy you givin off is so unfamiliar I don't feel ya.
(We need something realer) Nas hit me up on the phone, said, "What
you waiting on?"

Tip hit me up with a twit, said, “What you waitin on?”

Diddy’s sending texts every hour on the dot sayin “When you gonna drop that verse? Nigga, you takin long”

So now I’m back spitting that He Could Pass a Polygraph That Reverend Run Rockin Adidas out on Hollis Ave The FOI, Marcus Garvey, Nikki Tesla

I shock you like the ill electric field, Jay Electra (Oh my God, keep going)

They call me Jay Electronica—fuck that Call me Jay Elec-Hanukkah, Jay Elec-Yarmulke Jay Elec-Ramadan Mohammed Asalaamica

Rasoul Allah Supana Watallah through your monitor My Uzi still weigh a ton, check the barometer I’m hotter than the motherfuckin sun, check the thermometer I’m bringin ancient mathematics back to modern man My mama told me never throw a stone and hide your hand I got a lot of family, you, you got a lot of fans That’s why the people got my back like the Verizon man I play the back and fade to black and then devise a plan Out in London smokin, vibin while I ride the tram Giving out that raw food to lions disguised as lambs And by the time they get they seats hot And deploy all they henchmen to come at me from the treetops I’m chilling out at Tweetstock, buildin by the millions My light is brilliant

I rest my case. ’09, act three, first chapter of the end, the last chapter of the new beginning. Ain’t this so, the things we do without even trying be better than a lot of y’all’s records, don’t get mad. Morning after, world premiere. Man, for real though, I ain’t even gonna say nothing. Matter fact, I ain’t saying—I don’t even know why I’m saying this. Jay, you should get Puff to do this over. We moving out, on to the next record. And, um, I’m let this just ride. Ride ...

UNCOMMON VALOR: A VIETNAM STORY

JEDI MIND TRICKS (FEAT. R.A. THE RUGGED MAN) [Vinnie Paz]

I don’t know why I’m over here, this job is evil They send me here to Vietnam to kill innocent people My mother wrote me, said the president, he doesn’t care He trying to leave the footprints of America here They say we’re trying to stop Chinese expansion But I ain’t seen no Chinese since we landed Sent my whole entire unit thinking we can win Against the Vietcong guerrillas there in Gia Dinh I didn’t sign up

to kill women or any children For every enemy soldier, we killin six
civilians Yeah, and that ain't right to me

I ain't got enough of motherfuckin fight in me It frightens me, and I just
want to see my son and moms But over here they dropping seven
million tons of bombs I spend my days dodging all these booby traps
and mines And at night, praying to God that I get back alive And I'm
forced to sit back and wonder Why I was a part of Operation Rolling
Thunder In a foxhole with nine months left here Jungle like the fuckin
harbinger of death here [Interlude]

[soldier] *I don't want to be here. I'm scared, I just want to go home.*

[officer] *You fucking kidding me? Don't be a pussy. Don't you love your
country?*

[soldier] *I like being here. I'm ready.*

[R.A. the Rugged Man]

True story ...

Call me Thorburn, John A. Staff Sergeant Marksman, skilled in killing,
illing, I'm able and willing Kill the village elephant, rapin and pillage
your village Illegitimate killers, US Military guerrillas This ain't no
real war, Vietnam shit, World War II That's a war, this is just a
military conflict Soothing, drug-abusing, Vietnamese women screwin
Sex, gambling, and boozin, all this shit is amusin Bitches and guns, this
is every man's dream I don't want to go home, where I'm just a
ordinary human being Special OP, Huey chopper gun ship, run shit
Gook run when the mini-gun spit, won't miss Kill shit, spit four
thousand bullets a minute Victor Charlie, hit trigger, hit it, I'm in it to
win it Get it, the lieutenant hinted the villain, I've been in The killin, I
did it, crippled, did it, pictures I painted is vivid Live it, a wizard with
weapons, a secret mission, we about to begin it Government funded,
behind enemy lines Bullets is spraying, it's heating up, a hundred
degrees The enemy's the North Vietnamese—bitch, please Ain't no
sweat, I'm totally at ease until I see The pilot got hit and we 'bout to
hit some trees Tail of the rotor broke, crash land, American man
Cambodia, right in the enemy hand

Take a swig of the whiskey to calm us, them yellow men Wearing black
pyjamas, they want to harm us, they all up on us Bang, bang, bullet
hit my chest, feel no pain To my left, the captain caught a bullet right
in his brain Body parts flying, loss of limbs, explosions Bad intentions,

I see my best friend's intestines Pray to the one above, it's raining and
I'm covered in mud I think I'm dying, I feel dizzy, I'm losing blood I
see my childhood, I'm back in the arms of my mother I see my whole
life, I see Christ, I see bright lights I see Israelites, Muslims, and
Christians at peace, no fights Blacks, whites, Asians, people of all
types I must have died, then I woke up, surprised I'm alive I'm in a
hospital bed, they rescued me, I survived I escaped the war, came
back, but ain't escape Agent Orange Two of my kids born handicapped
Spastic, quadriplegia, microcephalic
Cerebral palsy, cortical blindness—name it, they had it My son died, he
ain't live, but I still try to think positive 'Cause in life, God take, God
give

COME CLEAN

JERU THE DAMAJA

You wanna front, what? Jump up and get bucked If you're feeling lucky
duck, then press your luck I snatch fake gangsta MCs and make 'em
faggot flambé Your nine spray, my mind spray
Malignant mist that'll leave con defunked The results: your remains
stuffed in a car trunk You couldn't come to the jungles of the East
poppin that game You won't survive, get live, catchin wreck is our
thing I don't gangbang or shoot out "bang-bang"
The relentless lyrics the only dope I slang I'm a true master, you can
check my credentials 'Cause I choose to use my infinite potentials Got
a freaky, freaky, freaky-freaky flow Control the mic like Fidel Castro
Locked Cuba, so deep that you can scuba Dive, my jive's origin is
unknown like the Jubas I've accumulated honeys all across the map
'Cause I'd rather bust a nut then bust a cap In ya back, in fact my rap
snaps ya sacroiliac I'm the mack so I don't need to tote a MAC
My attack is purely mental and its nature's not hate It's meant to wake ya
up out of ya brainwashed state Stagnate nonsense but if you persist
You'll get ya snot box bust, you press up on this I flip, hoes dip, none of
the real niggas skip You don't know enough math to count the mics
that I ripped Keep the dirty rotten scamp as his verbal weapons spit
[Chorus 5x]

Uh oh, heads up, 'cause we droppin some shit

Real rough and rugged, shine like a gold nugget Every time I pick up the
microphone I drug it Unplug it on chumps with the gangsta babble
Leave your nines at home and bring your skills to the battle You're
rattlin on and on and ain't sayin nothin That's why you got snuffed
when you bumped heads with dirty rotten Have you forgotten? I'll tap
your jaw I also kick like kung-fu flicks by Run Run Shaw Made frauds
bleed every time I G'd

'Cause I've perfected my drunk good style like Sam Seed Pseudopsychos, I
play like Michael

Jackson when I'm bustin ass and breakin backs Inhale the putrefied
aroma

Breathe too deep and you'll wind up coma Toast the king, I'm hard like a
fifth of vodka And bring your clique 'cause I'm a hard rock knocka I
gotcha, out on a limb, about to push you off the brink Let you draw
your craw but your burner shot blanks When the East is in the house
you should come equipped [Chorus 9x]

Fly like a jet, sting like a hornet

Knuckleheads get live and set it off if you want it Dirty rotten scoundrels
is crushin fools, no joke With styles more fatal than secondhand smoke
Don't provoke the wrath of this rhyme inventor 'Cause I blow up spots
like the World Trade Center Come with the super-trooper on his
assault mission The TEK's technique, 'cause he's a technician Wishin
he'll go away won't help the weapons stop Your skills are shot 'cause
any idiot can let off a Glock Hard rocks melt in the clutch of the sun
toucha You claim you got beef on the streets, so whatcha Gonna do
when real niggas roll up on you And you don't got your crew?

Pull your Glock but you don't got the heart You was webbed straight from
the start Bought a tool and didn't learn how to use it Got lost in
Brooklyn so you had to lose it Just for frontin you got that ass waxed
[Chorus 10x]

LETTER TO OBAMA

JOELL ORTIZ

YAOWA! What's up, future president. My name is Joell Ortiz and I'm the voice of the underdogs in the 'hood, so I wanted to write this letter to you to see what you thought ...

Dear future president, I grew up with no brothers and sisters And my moms was on public assistance, and her husband Was missing. She developed this disgusting addiction That had her on some of the ugliest missions. So she missed Some appointments. She was supposed to keep my coverage consistent I was a chronic asthmatic: huffin, puffin, and whistlin Can't get a breath, I wished for death, it hurt my chest when I coughed Oh yeah, I'm from the projects of New York. We love basketball But last summer my boy got left on the court Some kid reached next to his shorts and put some lead in his thoughts And the murder's moms, she jetted from court. Her only son Had eighteen years in the street, he livin the rest up north My other homie sellin crack, he always tell me it's wack Every day he filling out apps but they don't call him back Background check spotted his felony, but that ain't fair You make a mistake, you can't fix it, man, this world don't care That's how he feelin; he got bills, so he movin them krills Livin life over his shoulder, boys in blue on his heels His little sister, man, she grown; she done threw on them heels Exotic dancing on the pole; look what she do for a bill Took one of them young boys backstage, pursuing a thrill Caught that thing, now every day she wake up doin them pills I get mad when I see what other artists do with a mil With a couple Gs I gave my Ps a few computers, for real Y'all done forgot where y'all came from. Have you no honor?

Only thing that chain doin is causing you more drama Here's a couple wise words from the dude that goes "YAOWA"

It's time for a change and that change is Obama Dear future president, I hope you heard this letter And do some things to make sure the next one I'm writing is better Peace!

HA

JUVENILE

That's you with that badass Benz, ha?

That's you that can't keep yo' old lady 'cause you keep fuckin her friends,

ha?

You gotta go to court, ha? You got served a subpoena for child support,
ha?

That was that nerve, ha?

You ain't even much get a chance to say a word, ha?

I know I ain't trippin; don't your brother got them birds, ha?

You want to bust one of them niggas' head, ha?

You ain't scared, ha? You know how to play it, ha?

I know you just ain't gonna let a nigga come and punk you, ha?

Stunt and front you, ha? Straight up run you, ha?

You know who got that fire green, ha?

You know how to use a triple beam, ha? Shit ain't hard as it seems, ha?

You keep your body clean, ha? You got a lot of Girbaud jeans, ha?

Some of your partners dope fiends, ha?

You really don't want to fuck with them niggas, ha?

You come up with them niggas, ha? You stuck with them niggas, ha?

[Chorus 2x]

You a paper chaser, you got your block on fire Remaining a G until the
moment you expire You know what it is to make nothing out of
something You handle your biz and don't be cryin and suffering You
can't do nothing but love fresh, ha?

You want to know what we gonna do next, ha? You bought my tape with
a check, ha?

You wearing a vest, ha? You tryin to protect your chest, ha?

You spent seventy on your Benz, ha?

That ain't yours, that's for your friends, ha? You wanna stop These niggas
from playing wit' you, ha? You wanna run the block, ha?

You wanna be the only nigga with rocks, ha? You keep your gun cocked,
ha?

You count the money at the end of the night, ha?

You on a three-day flight, ha? You full of that diesel, ha?

You duckin them people, ha? Your face was on the news last night, ha?

You the one that robbed them little dudes out they shoes last night, ha?

You don't go in the projects when it's dark, ha?
You claim you a thug and you ain't got no heart, ha?
You came in the Nola on New Year's Eve, ha?
You got stuck in that bitch and couldn't leave, ha?
It was hard for you to breathe, ha?

[Chorus 2x]

You got a trespassing charge, ha?
Your dick got hard, ha? When you were looking at them little broads, ha?
You don't know when to quit, ha? That's you with that shot-calling shit,
ha?
That's you with that balling shit, ha?
That's you that's taking them hits, ha?
That ho don't know when to shut up her mouth, ha? You gonna knock
that ho teeth out, ha?
You done switched from Nikes to Reeboks, ha?
You twinkle you golds every time you leave your house, ha?
Them income tax checks out, ha? You 'bout to flip that, ha?
You 'bout to go score you a gram, ha?
You gonna treat your nose, ha? You 'bout to go Put the dope dick on one
of these hoes, ha?
When you broke you drove, ha?
When you paid you got beaucoup places to go, ha?
You on top, ha? You rob a nigga's shop, ha?
You don't even think you can be stopped, ha?
You ridin in the Benz on twenty-inch rims, ha?

[Chorus 2x]

BAKARDI SLANG

KARDINAL OFFISHALL

We don't say, "you know what I'm sayin," T-dot says, "ya dun know"
We don't say, "hey, that's the breaks," we say, "yo, a so it go"
We don't say, "you get one chance," we say, "you better rip the show"
Before bottles start flyin and you runnin for the door Y'all talkin about
"cuttin and hittin skins," we talkin about "beat dat face"
T-dot niggas'll eat your food before y'all cats say grace Your cats is steady
saying "word," my niggas is steady yellin "zeen"
Half the time we talking about "more times" and don't even know what
"more times" mean More times we rock fresher, more times we come
correct More times y'all think it's the hot shh ... y'all haven't heard
nothin yet Differently, still ya know, the circle gettin ill, ya know Step
on the wrong Bally boot, you might get kill, ya know So every time
you walk through the dance, tell a youth "scuse me"
Tellin your jubie "I like her style," she's talkin about "abuse me"
"Use me," "Show me how the T-dot rolls"
My style's off the thermostat plus I'm comin from the cold, yo [Chorus]
(What the ... chill)
My niggas in the street, throwin dot slang Each and every single time we
meet
(What the ... chill)
My ladies lookin hot, screw face
Kissin teet, representin the T-dot

Kardinal rock the party in T-dot drinking Bacardi and Kardi drinkin
Bacardi in T-dot rocking the party and Niggas jumpin and wildin and
ladies showin a smile and Everybody knows it's the T-dot

So when we singin about the girls, we singin about the gyal dem Y'all
talkin about "say that one more time," we talkin about "yo, come
again"
Y'all talkin about "that nigga's a punk," we talkin about "that yout's a
fassy"
For the kids that think I'm comin wit' it, brother, just watch me A shoe is
called a "crep," a big party is a "fete"
Y'all talkin about "watch where you goin," we talkin about "mind where
you step"

We backin a 2–4 of Guinness, we ain't messin with Moët And if you
runnin out of liquor the bar might get wet You're talkin about "yo,
that girl's hype," we like, "she's the bundown"

Y'all say "a DJ battle," we say "a clash with two sounds"

We rock the hottest things no matter how much it cost You talkin about
"yeah, son," we talkin about "yo, lock it off"

Wheel that and tek it from de top and just Flash up lighta and watch the
dance rock Kardinal's gonna show you how the T-dot rolls My style's
off the thermostat plus I'm comin from the cold, yo [Chorus]

Yo, instead of "your boys," we talkin about "de man dem"

When we talkin about your "breddren," yo, we talkin about your friend
When you say "the club's over," yo, we say "the jam done"

When you're thinkin about the west, you're thinkin about Red-1

Big ups and salutations to the Figure IV crew When you sayin "she's a
chicken," she a "skettlebam," too When you talkin about a "thug
nigga," we talkin about a "shotta"

When you think you got it locked, T-dot comin much hotta Y'all think we
all Jamaican, when enough man are Trinis Bajans, Grenadians, and a
whole heap of Haitians Guyanese and all of the West Indies combined
To make a T-dot, O-dot, one of a kind IRS said "we burn corn," that
means they puff la When we say "hell no," that means "yo, that nuh
mek it"

Look me in the eye and tell me y'all ain't sold My style's off the
thermostat plus I'm comin from the cold, yo [Chorus 2x]

FROM THIS PUSSY'S A GANGSTA

MEDUSA

This pussy's a gangsta

But I don't want her to be, so I gotta cut her Cut her right out of your
game

When I say she's a big gangsta, she's a G

You 'bout to feel the depth of the G-spot inside of me I got nine months of
energy that you can't even touch, let alone fuck By the time you finish

fuckin with a G like this, you gonna need a crutch And it's guaranteed to drop you to your knees And a little further down so you'll be a dick in the dirt motherfucker I try to be courteous, but you know, if you can say "ho," I can say "dick in the dirt dumb shit"

But I'ma uplift and prove by the end because the sister just got that goddess glow And that's a part of what I'm talkin 'bout to be a gangsta Tired of these niggas grabbin the mic and becoming wacktors And pretendin they got to get with ...

This pussy's a gangsta

But I don't want her to be, so I gotta cut her Cut her right out of your game

Now, when I say we fittin to cut her up out yo' game I don't mean you gonna give me a hysterectomy and remove my thang I don't want you to scrape out the box it came in I want you to spend about a year tryin to get in See, 'cause you got to support me, it's most important, see A G don't like you rushin up on this gangsta You'll hear a couple of click clicks and get a cat scratch on your back and it won't leave you ...

And do you know what a real gangsta is?

See, a real gangsta don't give a fuck if you stand up or sit down to piss 'Cause it's all love and tears with it See, while you out gangbangin, I got time on my hands so I'm finger bangin **EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE ALRIGHT (GHETTO BASTARD)**

NAUGHTY BY NATURE

Nurse Johnson, is the mother still in the recovery room?

Yes, Dr. Blair

Okay, I'll go to the waiting room and inform the father it's a boy

I'm afraid there is no father, sir

Another ghetto bastard, huh?

I'm afraid so

Well, put him with the rest of the born losers

All right, Doctor. A shame, isn't it?

Not a shame—a problem

(Paging Dr. Blair, Dr. Blair, Dr. James Hamilton, Dr. James Hamilton)

*Smooth it out.... This is a story about the drifter who waited for the worst
'cause the best live 'cross town, who never planned on having someday.
Why me?*

Some get a little and some get none

Some catch a bad one and some leave the job half done I was one who
never had and always mad Never knew my dad, motherfuck the fag
Well anyway, I did pickups, lifts, and click ups See many stickups,
'cause niggas had the trigger hiccups I couldn't get a job, nappy hair
was not allowed My mother couldn't afford us all, she had to throw me
out I walked the strip with just a clip. Who want a hit?

Thank God I'm quick, I had to eat, this money's good as spent I threw in
braids, I wasn't paid enough I kept 'em on 'cause I couldn't afford a
haircut I got laughed at, I got chumped, I got dissed I got upset, I got a
TEC and a banana clip Was down in dope, don't let any dealer tack in
I sealed 'em in rope, so a lot of good it woulda did Or done, if not bad
luck I would have none Why did I have to live the life of such a bad
one?

Why when I was a kid and played I was a sad one And always wanted to
live like this or that one?

[Chorus 4x]

Everything's gonna be all right (all right) A ghetto bastard, born next to
the projects Livin in the slums with bums, I said, "Now why, Treach Do
I have to be like this?" Mama said I'm priceless So I am, I'm worthless,
starvin, that's just what being nice gets Sometimes I wish I could afford
a pistol, then though To stop the hell, I woulda ended things a while
ago I ain't have jack, but a black hat and knapsack War scars, stolen
cars, and a blackjack Drop that, and now you want me to rap and give
Say something positive; well, positive ain't where I live I live right
around the corner from West Hell Two blocks from South Shit and once
in a jail cell The sun never shined on my side of the street, see And
only once or twice a week, I would speak I walked alone, my state of
mind was home sweet home I couldn't keep a girl, they wanted kids
and cars with chrome Some life, if you ain't wear gold, your style was
old And you got more juice and dope for every bottle sold Hell, no, I
say there's gotta be a better way But hey, never gamble in a game that
you can't play I'm gonna flaunt it, gonna know when, know when and
not now How will I do it? How will I make it? I won't, that's how Why

me, huh?

[Chorus]

My third year to adulthood and still a knucklehead I'm better off dead,
huh, that's what my neighbor said I don't do jack but fightin, lightin up
the street at night Playing hide-and-seek with a machete, set to
Freddy's spike Some say I'm all in all, nothing but a dog now I answer
that with a "fuck you" and a "bowwow"

'Cause I done been through more shit within the last week Than the fly
flowin in doo-doo on a concrete I've been a dead beat, dead to the
world and dead wrong Since I was born, that's my life—oh, you don't
know this song?

So don't say jack and please don't say you understand All that man-to-
man talk can walk, damn If you ain't live it, you couldn't feel it, so kill
it, skillet And all that talkin 'bout it won't help it out, now will it?

In Illtown, "Good luck" got stuck up, "Props" got shot "Don't worry" got
hit by a flurry and this punk ass dropped But I'm the one who has been
labeled as an outcast They teach in schools, I'm the misfit that will
outlast But that's cool with the fool, smack 'em backwards That's what
you get for fuckin with a ghetto bastard *If you ain't never been to the
ghetto, don't ever come to the ghetto. 'Cause you wouldn't understand the
ghetto, so stay the fuck out of the ghetto. Why me? Why me?*

COUNTRY GRAMMAR (HOT SHIT)

NELLY

Hot shit!

[Chorus 2x]

Mmmmm, I'm going down, down, baby, North Street in a Range Rover
Street sweeper, baby. Cocked, ready to let it go Shimmy shimmy
cocoa, what? Listen to it now Light it up and take a puff, pass it to me
now Mmmmm.... You can find me in St. Louis rolling on dubs Smoking
on dubs in clubs, blowing up like cocoa puffs Sippin bub, getting
perved and getting rubbed Daps and hugs, mean mugs and shoulder
shrugs And it's all because accumulated enough scratch Just to

Navigate it, wood decorated on chrome And it's candy painted, fans
fainted while I'm entertaining Wild, ain't it? How me and money end
up hanging I hang with Hannibal Lecter (Hot shit!) so feel me when I
bring it Sing it loud (What?) I'm from the Lou and I'm proud Run a
mile for the cause, I'm righteous above the law Player, my style's raw,
I'm "Born to Mack" like Todd Shaw Forget the fame and the glamour,
give me D's with a rubber hammer My grammar be's Ebonics, gin,
tonic, and chronic Fuck bionic, it's ironic, slamming niggas like Onyx
Lunatics 'til the day I die, I run more game than the Bulls and Sonics
[Chorus 2x]

Who say pretty boys can't be wild niggas?

Loud niggas, O.K. Corral niggas, foul niggas Run in the club and bust in
the crowd nigga How, nigga? Ask me again and it's going down, nigga
Now nigga, come to the circus and watch me clown, nigga Pound
niggas, what you be giving when I'm around, nigga Frown niggas,
talking that shit when I leave the town, nigga Say now, can you hoes
come out to play now?

Hey, I'm ready to cut you up any day now Play by my rules, boo, and you
gon' stay high May I answer yo' third question like AI?

Say hi to my niggas left in the slamma From St. Louis to Memphis, from
Texas back up to Indiana Chi-Town, KC, Motown to Alabama

LA, New York Yankee niggas to Hotlanta Louisiana, all my niggas with
country grammar Smoking blunts in Savannah, blow thirty mil like I'm
Hammer [Chorus 2x]

Let's show these cats how to make these millions, so you niggas quit actin
silly, mon Kid quicker than Billy, mon, talking really not needed, mon
Flows I kick 'em freely, mon, especially off Remy, mon Keys to my
Beemer, mon, holler at Beenie Man See me, mon? Chiefin rollin deeper
than any mon Through Jennings, mon, through U-City back up to
Kingsland With nice niggas, sheist niggas who snatch yo' life, niggas
Trife niggas who produce and sell the same beat twice, nigga (Hot
shit!) Ice niggas all over, close to never sober From broke to havin
brokers, my price range is Rover Now I'm knocking like Jehovah. Let
me in now, let me in now Bill Gates, Donald Trump, let me in now
Spin now, I got money to lend my friends now We in now, candy
Benz, Kenwood and 10s now I win now. (Whoo!) Fuckin lesbian twins
now Seeing now, through the pen I make my ends now [Chorus]

SOMETIMES I RHYME SLOW

NICE & SMOOTH

Sometimes I rhyme slow, sometimes I rhyme quick [2x]

[Greg Nice]

Sometimes I rhyme slow and sometimes I rhyme quick I'm sweeter and
thicker than a Chick-O-Stick Here's an ice-cream cone, honey, take a
lick I go to Bay Plaza and catch a flick

Wore my Timberland boots so I can stomp the ticks Scandalous, get a
whiff of this mist

Just left the Yardboy, now I'm blissed I feel good, per se, good state of
mind Drive a red Sterling and the seats recline I love it when a lady
treats me kind

Go to Tavern on the Green and have a glass of wine He say, she say, I
heard it through the grapevine No static, got an automatic

Too much of anything makes you an addict Teasin, skeezin, also pleasin
Don't ask why, I got my own reasons

Smooth B, Greg Nice, Slick Nick, clique Sometimes I rhyme slow,
sometimes I rhyme quick Sometimes I rhyme slow, sometimes I rhyme
quick [2x]

[Smooth B]

Sometimes I rhyme slow, sometimes I rhyme quick I was on 125 and Saint
Nick

Waitin on a cab, standin in the rain

Under my heart, three clouds of pain

She got the best of me. What was her destiny?

Maybe I should lick her with my nine millimeTer.... My mind is in a blur
'Cause you could never pay me to think this would occur Me and this
girl Jane Doe was living together We were inseparable, no one could
sever At least that's what I thought, but later I fought With her
substance and almost ended up in Supreme Court When I was on the
road doing shows, getting ends She was in my Benz getting sniffy with
her friends And even when she crashed my whip I didn't flip My man
Slick Nick said, "Smooth, you're starting to slip"

Time went on, I started noticing weight loss Then I had to ask her was she

riding the white horse At first she said no, then she said, “Yo Smooth,
I’m sorry, but I keep having visions of snow I need blow.” And I said,
“Whoa, little hottie I’m not DeLorean, Gambino, or Gotti

I don’t deal coke, and furthermore you’re making me broke I’ll put you in
a rehab and I won’t tell your folks”

... And what do you know

In eighteen months she came home and I let her back in And now she’s
sniffing again ...

Sometimes I rhyme slow, sometimes I rhyme quick [repeat to fade]

TIME’S UP

O.C.

Time’s up

You lack the minerals and vitamins, irons and the niacin Fuck who that I
offend, rappers sit back, I’m ’bout to begin ’Bout foul talk you squawk,
never even walked the walk More or less destined to get tested, never
been arrested My album will manifest many things that I saw, did, or
heard about Or told firsthand, never word of mouth What’s in the
future for the fusion in the changer?

Rappers are in danger, who will use wits to be a remainder?

When the missile is aimed to blow you out of the frame Some will keep
their limbs and some will be maimed The same suckers with the gab
about killer instincts But turned bitch and knowin damn well they lack
In this division the connoisseur, crackin your head with a four-by-four
Realize, sucker, I be the comin like Noah Always sendin you down,
perpetrating, facadin what you consider A image, to me this is just a
scrimmage I feel I’m stone, not ’cause I bop or wear my cap cocked
The more emotion I put into it, the harder I rock Those who pose
lyrical but really ain’t true, I feel “Their time’s limited, hard rocks too”
[2x]

Speakin in tongues about what you did but you never done it Admit it,
you bit it ’cause the next man gained platinum behind it I find it
ironic, so I researched and analyzed Most write about stuff they
fantasized I’m fed up with the bull, on this focus of weed and clips And
Glocks gettin cocked and wax not bein flipped It’s the same-old same-

old, just strain it from the anal The contact is not complexed or vexed
So why you pushing it? Why you lying for? I know where you live I
know your folks, you was a sucker as a kid Your persona's drama that
you acquired in high school in actin class Your whole aura is plexiglass
What's-her-face told me you shot this kid last week in the park That's a
lie, you was in church with your moms See, I know, yo, slow your roll,
give a good to go Guys be lacking in this thing called rapping just for
dough Of course, we gotta pay rent so money connects, but, uh I'd
rather be broke and have a whole lot of respect It's the principle of it,
I get a rush when I bust Some dope lines oral that maybe somebody'll
quote That's what I consider real in this field of music Instead of
putting brain cells to work, they abuse it Nonconceptual,
nonexceptional
Everybody's either crime related or sexual I'm here to make a difference,
besides all the riffing The traps are not sticking, rappers stop flipping
For those who pose lyrical but really ain't true, I feel ...

“Their time's limited, hard rocks too” [2x]

THEY REMINISCE OVER YOU (T.R.O.Y.)

PETE ROCK & C. L. SMOOTH

I reminisce, I reminisce [9x]

I reminisce for a spell, or shall I say think back Twenty-two years ago to
keep it on track The birth of a child on the 8th of October A toast, but
my granddaddy came sober Countin all the fingers and the toes

Now I suppose you hope the little black boy grows Huh (yeah) eighteen
years younger than my mama But I rarely got beatings 'cause the girl
loved drama In single parenthood there I stood

By the time she was twenty-one, had another one This one's a girl, let's
name her Pam Same father as the first but you don't give a damn
Irresponsible, plain not thinkin

Papa said “chill” but the brother keep winkin Still he won't down you or
tear out your hide On your side while the baby maker slide But mama
got wise to the game

The youngest of five kids, hon, here it is After ten years without no spouse
Mama's getting married in the house

Listen: positive over negative, for the woman, a master Mother queen's
rising a chapter

Déjà vu, tell you what I'm gonna do

When they reminisce over you, my God

When I date back I recall a man off the family tree My right-hand Papa
Doc I see

Took me from a boy to a man, so I always had a father When my
biological didn't bother

Taking care of this so who am I to bicker?

Not a bad ticker but I'm clocking pop's liver But you can never say that
his life is through Five kids at twenty-one, believe he got a right to
Here we go while I check the scene

With the Portuguese lover at the age of fourteen The same age, front
page, no fuss

But I bet you all your dough they live longer than us Never been senile,
that's where you're wrong But give the man a taste and he's gone
Nodding off, sleep to a jazz tune

I can hear his head banging on the wall in the next room I get the pillow
and hope I don't wake him For this man to cuss, hear it all in verbatim
Telling me how to raise my boy unless he's taking over I said, "Pop,
maybe when you're older"

We laughed all night about the hookers at the party My old man standing,
yelling, "Good God Almighty"

Use your condom, take sips of the brew When they reminisce over you,
for real I reminisce so you never forget this The days of way back, so
many bear witness, the fitness Take the first letter, add up each word
in this joint Listen close as I prove my point

T to the R, a O, Y, how did you and I meet?

In front of Big Lou's, fighting in the street But only you saw what took
many time to see I dedicate this to you for believing in me Rain or
shine, yes, in any weather

My grandma Pam holds the family together My Uncle Doc's the greatest,
better yet the latest If we're talking about a car, Uncle Sterling got the
latest I strive to be live 'cause I got no choice And run my own
business like my Aunt Joyce So, Pete Rock, hit me, 'nuff respect due
When they reminisce over you, listen

PASSIN ME BY

THE PHARCYDE

[Fatlip]

Now in my younger days I used to sport a shag When I went to school I
carried lunch in a bag With an apple for my teacher 'cause I knew I'd
get a kiss Always got mad when the class was dismissed But when it
was in session, I always had a question I would raise my hand to make
her stagger to my desk "Can you help me with my problem?" It was
never much Just a trick to smell her scent, I'd try to sneak a touch Oh,
how I wish I could hold her hand and give her a hug She was married
to the man, he was a thug His name was Lee, he drove a Z, he'd pick
her up from school Promptly at three o'clock, I was on her jock Yes
indeedy, I wrote graffiti on the bus First I'd write her name then carve
a plus With my name last on the looking glass I seen her yesterday but
still I had to let her pass [Chorus 4x]

She keeps on passing me by ...

[Bootie Brown]

When I dream of fairy tales I think of me and Shelly See, she's my type of
hype and I can't stand when brothers tell me That I should quit chasin
and look for something better But the smile that she shows makes me a
go-getter I haven't gone as far as asking if I could get with her I just
play her by ear and hope she gets the picture I'm shooting for her
heart, got my finger on the trigger She could be my broad and I could
be her nigga But all I can do is stare ...

Back as kids we used to kiss when we played truth or dare Now she's more
sophisticated, highly edu-ma-cated Not at all overrated, I think I need
a prayer To get in her boots and it looks rather dry I guess a twinkle in
her eye is just a twinkle in her eye Although she's crazy stepping, I'll
try to stop her stride 'Cause I won't have no more of this passing me
by [Slim Kid Tre]

It's time for me to voice my opinion, can't be pretending she didn't have
me Sprung like a chicken, chasin my tail like a doggy She was kind of
like a star, thinkin I was like a fan Damn, she looked good, down side:
she had a man He was a rooty-toot, a nincompoop

She told me, "Soon your little birdie's gonna fly the coop"

She was a flake like corn and I was born not to understand
By lettin her pass I proved to be a better man [Chorus 4x]

[Imani]

Now there she goes again, the dopest Ethiopian, and now The world
around me, B, gets moving in slow motion when-Ever she happens to
walk by, why does the apple of my eye Overlook and disregard my
feelings no matter how much I try?

Wait, no, I did not really pursue my little princess With persistence, and I
was so low-key that she was unaware Of my existence, from a distance
I desired her, secretly admired her Wired her a letter to get her, and it
went: "My dear, my dear, my dear, you do not know me but I know
you very well Now let me tell you about the feelings. Does it bore you
when I try Or make some sort of attempt? I simp

Damn, I wish I wasn't such a wimp!

'Cause then I would let you know that I love you so And if I was your man
then I would be true The only lying I would do is in the bed with you"

Then I signed: "Sincerely, the one who loves you dearly. P.S., Love me
tender"

The letter came back three days later: return to sender Damn!

[Chorus 4x]

ROCK DIS FUNKY JOINT

POOR RIGHTEOUS TEACHERS

Time to get funky-nomatical hip as I get to the point (Rock dis funky
joint)

Wait a sec, the teacher's gotta check the intellect My stummer stepped in,
then give you it, but ...

But give you what? The P, the R, the T, fire often comes To twist your top,
but my style be just enough To manifest the fabric mathematics black
be that of Asiatic Rock the bass, subtract the static, then let you rock
into My concept, like I should stand for this For this, why, civilized, it
hip-hop rhyme From a black mind, to kickin it to you all the time As-
salaam alaikum or a peace sign

Rap is just my way of life and this be that of Islam I'll take my time just
before I manifest the rhyme Sharp and accurate, to stop the music on a
dime Knowledge—me a cappella, wisdom, G, I'm manifestin
Understanding, understood, so there's no need fa keep you guessin
Follow me now, see? See, I be rockin

The second hand is tickin, still the posse don't be clockin Controllers of
the block be tickin closer to the point (Rock dis funky joint)

The stummer step, the style that I use when folks would rather rap at me
PRT posse backin me

Easy now, star, you know exactly who we are Poor Righteous Teachers
tribe be PRT for short Nah, nah, don't want no more, hmm? Am I too
much for the mental?

Proceed, teacher, please, just keep it sort of simple Like hip-hop, yet
complicatedly I'll place it According to the moods of my intellect Step
for step, I'll step a little closer to the point Rock dis funky joint

But—but I'm your teacher! I teach ya, rockin when I rock ya The king I
vote for needs a different style of hip-hoppa Smooth like a wise word
spoken from a prophet Rough like the slave trying to get away See, I
combine with two kinds of rhyme tryin to reach ya The knowledge of
myself makes me a Poor Righteous Teacher Stop to flip the topic,
Islamically I drop it My duty be to teach so keep your pistol in your
pocket I-Self, Lord, and Master

Travelin faster, as I get closer to the point (Rock dis funky joint)

Stummer step, yeah, yeah, I'm on top of it, I-I have to get The styles that
you be seekin and the words that I be speakin Poor Righteous Teachers
posse teachin Anyone that lacks this style that I be stylin Mentally
profilin, should I say I'm ...

Smooth with the roughness, just servin justice Sucker's try to suck this,
but-but I be scopin Never, I'm not sleepin (Because it's Culture
Freedom, G) Whose posse rollin? (PRT)

Word, B, it's sorta simple, see

Now look at me, the holy intellectual type When I write, the spirit always
kick me somethin hype I grip the mic, yo, 'cause it's my whole life, like
Like I'm creatin, man-I-be-festatin

Can I say I'm great when there's not another brother greater?

Turn to Culture Freedom for support—G, manifest the point (Rock dis funky joint)

But no excuses, losers never rock this Snakes try to stop this, purified in holy hip-hopness Listen to the concepts, sweat tech-technique Peace be the lord from the sword when I speak As-salaam alaikum (Walaikum as-salaam) A universal greeting from the people of our kind Step into the realm of my cipher, feel the different type of Brother stummer slippin steppin Technics 1200s mastered by Devine

He's asking me to rock, so now I'm giving him the spot Style be the lyrics I be kickin, intelligence be tickin Somewhat symbolic to a bomb

Many brothers roll and fell a victim

I'm not livin wit' them, because they didn't know the time Turn to Culture Freedom for support—G, manifest a point (Rock dis funky joint)

MAKESHIFT PATRIOT

SAGE FRANCIS

[Chorus]

Makeshift Patriot, the flag shop is out of stock I hang myself at half mast
Makeshift Patriot, the flag shop is out of stock I hang myself at half mast
Makeshift Patriot, the flag shop is out of stock I hang myself at half mast
It's the Makeshift, the Patriot, the flag shop is out of stock I hang myself
... via live telecast

Coming live from my own funeral, beautiful weather offered a nice shine
Which is suitable for a full view of a forever-altered skyline At times
like these I freestyle biased opinions every other sentence Journalistic
ethics slip when I pass them off as objective. "Don't gimme that ethical
shit."

I've got exclusive, explicit images to present to impressionable American
kids and it's time to show this world how big our edifice is That's
exactly what they attacked when a typically dark-skinned Disney
villain Used civilians against civilians and charged the Trojan horses
into our buildings Using commercial aviation as instruments of
destruction Pregnant women couldn't protect their children,

wheelchairs were stairway obstructions Now I have to backpedal from the shower of glass and metal Wondering how after it settles we'll find who provided power to radical rebels The Melting Pot seems to be calling the kettle black when it boils over But only on our own soil, so the little boy holds a toy soldier And waits for the suit and tie to come home. We won't wait 'til he's older Before we destroy hopes for a colder war to end. "Now get a close up of his head."

[Chorus]

The city is covered in inches of muck. I see some other pictures of victims are up Grieving mothers are thinking their children are stuck. Leaping lovers are making decisions to jump While holding hands to escape the brutal heat, sometimes in groups of three The fallout goes far beyond the toxic cloud where people look like debris But all they saw after all was said beyond the talking heads Was the bloody dust with legs looking like the walking dead calling for meds But all hospitals are overwhelmed, volunteers need to go the hell home Moments of silence for firefighters were interrupted by cell phones Who's going to make that call to increase an unknown death toll? It's the one we rally behind He's got a megaphone promising to make heads roll We cheer him on, but asbestos is affecting our breath control The less we know, the more they fabricate, the easier it is to sell souls *There is a new price on freedom, so buy into it while supplies last. Changes need to be made: no more curbside baggage, seven P.M. curfew, racial profiling will continue with less bitching. We've unified over who to kill, so until I find more relevant scripture to quote, remember: our God is bigger, stronger, smarter, and much wealthier. So wave those flags with pride, especially the white part.*

We're sellin addictive twenty-four-hour candlelight vigils in TVs Freedom will be defended at the cost of civil liberties The viewers are glued to television screens, stuck 'cause lots of things seem too sick I use opportunities to pluck heartstrings for theme music I'll show you which culture to pump your fist at, which foot is right to kiss We don't really know who the culprit is yet, but he looks like this We know who the heroes are; they're not the xenophobes who act hard "We taught that dog to squat. How dare he do that shit in our own backyard!"

They happened to scar our financial state and char our landscape Can you count how many times so far I ran back this same damn tape?

While a cameraman creates news and shoves it down our throats on the
West Bank With a ten-second clip put on constant loop to provoke US
angst So get your tanks and load your guns and hold your sons in a
family huddle 'Cause even if we win this tug of war and even the
score, humanity struggles There's a need of blood for what's been
uncovered under the rubble Some of them dug for answers in the mess,
but the rest were looking for trouble [Chorus]

BROKEN LANGUAGE

SMOOTHE DA HUSTLER & TRIGGA DA GAMBLER

[Trigga]

Uh, base your eyes on the guy that has no kind Of worries if I die, so,
pussy clot, try Dangerfield step in my way; bodies

Get cremated on a Friday, the do-or-die way Your death threatener, sender,
head spinner Rap beginner, light dimmer, three knockout count
winner The gun reacher, bustin shot teacher

Your funeral service church preacher, your black hearse coffin seeker The
body polluter, the gat shooter

The Brownsville wild Brooklyn trooper, the cock D mountain mover The
face basher, the Mr. Brain Smasher The ass waxer, the drug money
taxer

[Smoothe]

The money stasher, gun blastin razor slasher The human asthma breath
taker, body dump waster The Glock cocker, the block locker, the rock
chopper The shot popper, the jock cock blocker The face splitter,
human disgrace getter The lady shitter, phone joneser, sneak over fuck
your babysitter The chronic smokin, gun-totin hearse initiator Crack
supplier, the human drug generator The honey gamer, the chicken
tricker

The slicker, long dick pussy sticker, the ready-to-bust-that-ass kicker The
track manoeuvrer, the box barrier The off-of-the-dome rapper, the C-
74 ox carrier [Trigga]

The gun seller, the chest sweller

The stickup smack bank teller, the money-back dweller The stitch
provider, the guess rider, the clip inserter The bullet shooter experter,

the man next to murder [Smoothe]

The ho bitch disser, the cunt man, the I-don't-want clan The stunt hitter in
thirty-four-days-in-a-month man The front man, the Brooklyn
representer, the beat down center The two brothers the hottest niggas
out this fuckin winter [Trigga]

The girl cheaters, the "be fast" beater The street sweep keeper, the body
to concrete meeter, the blood skeeter The weed smoker, the liver
choker, the spot stop broker The rugged picture poser, the card
scrambler Royal flush, same suit, poker gambler Nasty amateur
damager, snap master without the camera [Smoothe]

Camera, the beer guzzler, the slug-to-your-mug tussler The drug juggler,
the crazy thug hustler The Lexus wanter, the chain, ring, and bracelet
flaunterer The chamber smoker, the mansion havin sauna soaker The
corner stander, the style crammer, the takeover Spot block demander,
the Glock on cock handler The razor spitter, the fast dough, cash flow
getter The transmitter, North Carolina vagina hitter [Trigga]

The ass kicker, the internal heart dark sticker The red scope body hitter,
hang with Digga and the booty lickers The trigger-happy, father gun
caller pappy My gun blow out crib wave patterns to keep your hair
nappy To the death thinker, M.O.P. bell ringer How about some
hardcore fan singer, the jam swinger [Smoothe]

The Nautica wearer, the Karl Kani man The Mr. Get Jig, the fly man,
Notorious ready-to-die man The knower killer, the expert slayer, the
white girl Gangbanger, the Virgin Mary fucker, the Jesus hanger The
vital kicker, the drug dealer and title stripper The idol flipper, the
cross breaker and Bible ripper [Trigga]

The black history thriver, the racial thinker The nine to nine-to-five viber,
the jaw sinker The hell fighter, the Revelation writer The Egyptian
spirit inviter, the black body bag tie-er The money stasher, the nigga
crapper

The AKA cluck basher, my brother got a record racker [Smoothe (Trigga)]

The battle spinner (the grand prize winner) The life and death beginner
(the ninety-five interstate highway to heaven sender) The cocaine
cooker, the hook up on your hooker hooker The thirty-five-cent shorts
on my two for fives overlooker (The rap burner, the Ike the Tina
Turner, ass-whipping learner The hit man, the money earner)

The 'tologist without the derma', me and my little brother (The cock me
back, bust me off nigga undercover The Glock to your head pursuer)

the Big Daddy Kane Little Daddy Shane overdoers

I GOT IT MADE

SPECIAL ED

I'm your idol, the highest title, numero uno I'm not a Puerto Rican, but
I'm speaking so that you know And understand I got the gift of speech
And it's a blessin, so listen to the lesson I preach I talk sense
condensed into the form of a poem Full of knowledge from my toes to
the top of my dome I'm kind of young, but my tongue speaks maturity
I'm not a child, I don't need nothing for security I get paid when my
record is played

To put it short—I got it made

I'm outspoken, my language is broken into a slang But it's just a dialect
that I select when I hang I play it cool, 'cause coolin is all that I'm
about Just fooling with the girlies, yes, I'm bustin it out I'm Special Ed
and you can tell by the style that I use I'm creatively superior, yo, I
never lose I never lost 'cause I'm the boss and never will 'cause I'm still
The champion, chief one, won't lose until I choose, which I won't
'cause I don't retreat I'll run you over like a truck and leave you dead
in the street You're inviting me, a Titan, to a battle, why?

I don't need your respect 'cause I got it made I'm talented, yes, I'm gifted
Never boosted, never shoplifted

I got the cash, but money ain't nothin Make a million dollars every record
that I cut and My name is Special Ed and I'm a super-duper star Every
other month, I get a brand-new car Got twenty, that's plenty, yet I still
want more Kind of fond of Honda scooters, got seventy-four I got the
riches to fulfill my needs

Got land in the sand of the West Indies Even got a little island of my very
own I got a frog, a dog with a solid-gold bone An accountant to
account the amount I spent Got a treaty with Tahiti 'cause I own a
percent Got gear I wear for everyday

Boutiques from France to the USA

And I make all the money from the rhymes I invent So it really doesn't
matter how much I've spent Because, yo, I make fresh rhymes daily

You burn me—really?

Think, just blink, and I've made a million rhymes Just imagine if you
blinked a million times Damn, I'd be paid—I got it made

I'm kind of spoiled, 'cause everything I want I got made I wanted gear,
got everything from cotton to suede I wanted leg, I didn't beg, I just
got laid My hair was growing too long, so I got me a fade And when
my dishes got dirty, I got Cascade And when the weather was hot, I
got a spot in the shade I'm wise because I rise to the top of my grade
Wanted peace on earth, so to God I prayed Some kids across town
thought I was afraid They couldn't harm me, I got the army brigade
I'm not a traitor, if what you got is greater I'll trade But maybe later,
'cause my waiter made potatoed alligator soufflé I got it made

TALKIN ALL THAT JAZZ

STETSASONIC

Well, here's how it started

Heard you on the radio, talkin 'bout rap Sayin all that crap about how we
sample Give an example. Think we'll let you

Get away with that? You criticize

Our method of how we make records

You said it wasn't art, so now we're gonna rip you apart Stop, check it
out, my man

This is the music of a hip-hop band

Jazz: well, you can call it that

But this jazz retains a new format

Point, where you misjudged us

Speculated, created a fuss

You've made the same mistake politicians have Talkin all that jazz

Talk: well, I heard talk is cheap

But like beauty, talk is just skin deep And when you lie and you talk a lot

People tell you to step off a lot

You see, you misunderstood, a sample, just a tactic A portion of my

method, a tool

In fact it's only of importance when I make it a priority And what we
sample's loved by the majority But you a minority in terms of thought
Narrow minded and poorly taught

About hip-hop fame or the silly game

To erase my music, so no one can use it You step on us and we'll step on
you

Can't have your cake and eat it too

Talkin all that jazz

Lies: that's when you hide the truth It's when you talk more jazz than
proof And when you lie and address something you don't know It's so
wack that it's bound to show

When you lie about me and the band we get angry We'll bite our pen,
start writin again And the things we write are always true Suckers, get
a grip, now we talkin 'bout you Seems to me that you have a problem

So we can see what we can do to solve them Think rap is a fad? You must
be mad

'Cause we're so bad we get respect you never had Tell the truth, James
Brown was old

'Til Eric and Ra came out with "I Got Soul"

Rap brings back old R & B

And if we would not, people could've forgot We wanna make this
perfectly clear

We're talented and strong and have no fear Of those who choose to judge
but lack pizzazz Talkin all that jazz

Now we're not tryin to be a boss to you We just wanna get across to you
That if you're talkin jazz, the situation is a no-win You might even get
hurt, my friend

Stetsasonic, the hip-hop band

And like Sly and the Family Stone, we will stand Up for the music we live
and play

And for the song we sing today

For now, let us set the record straight And later on we'll have a forum and
a formal debate But it's important you remember, though What you

reap is what you sow

Talkin all that jazz

Talkin all that jazz [2x]

AFTERWORD

CHUCK D

We are living in a period of growth for hip-hop culture, led this time not simply by artists but by students and scholars. The word-revolution in rhyme has been reflected in a slew of necessary critical perspectives that shed light on hip-hop's history and development. Books and multimedia on hip-hop culture and rap music have entered a boom period—or should I say **BOOM BAP** period: a time in which the recorded history and the breakdown of interpretations may be more entertaining than a lot of the new music being made today.

The Anthology of Rap is a landmark text. What makes it so important is that the voices included within it are from the artists themselves, but they are presented in a way that gives the words context and meaning as part of a tradition. Anyone could put together a bunch of lyrics, but an anthology does something more: it provides the tools to make meaning of those lyrics in relation to one another, to think about rap both in terms of particular rhymes, but also in terms of an art form, a people, and a movement. Every great literature deserves a great anthology. Rap finally has its own.

I first heard about *The Anthology of Rap* after meeting Dr. Adam Bradley at a symposium sponsored by the HipHop Archive at Harvard University. A few weeks later, I interviewed him on my Air America Network radio show, **ON THE REAL**, about his first book, *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*. I was fascinated by what I would call the emergent “artcademic” perspective he was describing. Here was someone who grew up with the music and had gone on to study it in a social context as well as “gettin down to it” on the level of language. He was spitting out a well-considered, highly analytical point of view to a mass audience that too often defines rap merely by what they hear on radio and see on television. Along with Dr. Andrew DuBois, Dr. Bradley has now brought us a book that just might break the commercial trance that's had rap in a choke hold for the past several years. Rap now has a book that tells its lyrical history in its own words.

My own history in hip-hop goes back decades. I started out in 1979 as a mobile DJ/MC under a crew called Spectrum City in Long Island, New

York. Most of the shows we did were in less than ideal acoustic situations. Luckily my partner Hank Shocklee, who is now regarded as a sonic genius in the realm of recording, was just as astute about getting the best sound available out of the least amount of equipment. The challenge for many MCs was figuring out how to achieve vocal projection and clarity on inferior sound systems. I've always had a big voice, so my criteria were different because my vocal quality and power were audible. The content of my rhymes was heady because of what I knew. I'd been influenced by big voices like Melle Mel of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. I studied the rhymes and rhythms that worked and tried to incorporate my voice and subject matter in a similar manner. I had to be distinct in my own identity. That was a very important aspect to propel me beyond the pack.

Most MCs don't listen to enough other MCs. As artists we need to open our ears to as many styles as possible, even—and maybe especially—those that are not commercially successful. In sports you must study the competition. You've got to game-plan. You've got to school yourself not just about the defending champions, but about every team in the league. In these times, the individualization of the MC has often meant isolation—artists focus on a single model, a single sound. Some focus is a good thing, of course, but too much leads to a lot of rappers sounding the same, saying the same things, finding themselves adrift in a sea of similarity.

Having a range of lyrical influences and interests doesn't compromise an MC's art. It helps that art to thrive and come into its own. For instance, my lyrics on "Rebel Without a Pause" are uniquely mine, but even the first "Yes" I utter to begin the song was inspired by another record—in this case, Biz Markie's "Nobody Beats the Biz," a favorite of mine at the time. The overall rhyme style I deployed on "Rebel" was a deliberate mixture of how KRS-One was breaking his rhymes into phrases and of Rakim's flow on "I Know You Got Soul." Although the craft is difficult, the options are many and the limits are few. There are many styles to attend to and numerous ways to integrate them into your own art, transforming yourself and those styles along the way.

That's where *The Anthology of Rap* comes in. It reminds us just how much variety truly exists in this thing we call rap. KRS-One raging against police brutality is far removed from Will Smith beefing about parents that just don't understand or from UGK explaining the intricacies of the street pharmaceutical trade, but all of them are united through rhyming to a beat. We learn more as rap artists and as a rap audience by coming to

terms with all those things that rap has made.

In 2006 I did a collaboration with the great conscious rapper Paris. Paris singlehandedly created a Public Enemy album called *Rebirth of a Nation*. At the time, people asked why an MC like me would relinquish the responsibility of writing my own lyrics. My reason was simple: I thoroughly respect the songwriter and happen to think there is a valuable difference between the vocalist and the writer. Rarely are people gifted in both or well trained and skilled enough to handle both at once. The unwavering belief that MCs should always and only spit their own rhymes is a handicap for rap. In my opinion, most writers shouldn't spit and most vocalists shouldn't write unless there is a unique combination of skill, knowledge, ability, and distinction. To have Paris write my lyrics as well as produce the music added a breath of freshness to my voice. I put my ego aside—a hard thing for a lot of rappers to do—and was rewarded with a new weapon in my lyrical arsenal, unavailable had I simply gone it alone.

A lyric requires time and thought if it's going to last. Although top-of-the-head freestyles might be entertaining for the moment, they quickly expire. Even someone like Jay-Z, who claims never to write before rhyming, does his own form of composition. He has the older cat's knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of the many facets of multidimensional life zones and the ability to exercise his quickness of wit and tongue. Few MCs have his particular combination of gifts. Lyricism is a study of a terrain before it's sprayed upon like paint on a canvas. Most MCs would do better to think and have a conversation regarding what to rhyme about before they spit. While the spontaneity of the words to a beat might bring up-to-the-minute feelings to share, one cannot sleep on the power of the word—or in this case the arrangement and delivery of many words in rhythm.

When it comes down to the words themselves, lyricism is vital to rap, and because rap fuels hip-hop, this means that lyricism is vital to hip-hop culture as a whole. A rapper that really wants to be heard must realize that a good vocabulary is necessary, just as a good ball-handler sports his dribble on a basketball court. Something should separate a professional rapper from a sixth grader. Lyricism does that. Even when a middle school kid learns a word and its meaning, social comprehension and context take time to master. Even when a term or a line is mastered, the challenge should be on how many more peaks a rapper can scale to become a good lyricist. We all should know that the power of a word has both incited and

prevented war itself.

Good lyrics, of course, existed before rap. They're the lifeblood of song. They direct the music, and the music defines the culture. This is true for rap even though some mistake the music as being all about the beat. People sometimes overrate the beat, separating it from the song itself. I ask folks, would they rather just listen to instrumentals? The general response is no. Listeners want to have vocals driving the beat, but—importantly—not stopping it or slowing it down. It takes a master to ride any wild beat or groove and to tame it. Rakim, KRS-One, André 3000, MC Lyte, Black Thought, and Nas are just a few such masters featured in this anthology. They will make the music submit to their flows while filling those flows with words to move the crowd's minds, bodies, and souls. So reading lyrics on the page gives us a chance to understand exactly what makes these lyrics work. What's their meaning? What's their substance? How do they do what they do?

Like the air we breathe, hip-hop seems to be everywhere. The culture and lifestyle that many thought would be a passing fad has, more than three decades later, grown to become a permanent part of world culture. Hip-hop artists have become some of today's heroes, replacing the comic book worship of decades past and joining athletes and movie stars as the people kids dream of becoming. Names like 50 Cent, P. Diddy, Russell Simmons, Jay-Z, Foxy Brown, Snoop Dogg, and Flavor Flav now ring as familiar as Elvis, Babe Ruth, Marilyn Monroe, and Charlie Chaplin. But keeping in step with straight-up rap, a rapper is not just a celebrity. There still lies a performance factor that must be included before we describe an MC as a lyrical beast.

While the general public knows many of the names, videos, and songs branded by the big companies, it's important to study rap's history. The best place to start is the holy trinity, the founding fathers of hip-hop: Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, and Afrika Bambaataa. All are DJs that played the records that moved MCs and dancers to fashion their own art forms. The MC had to go to the rhythm of the DJ, thus creating the atmosphere with words on the beat to music. This background is crucial to the evolution of the MC. But the influence of these hip-hop pioneers often went beyond the realm of art. Bambaataa almost singlehandedly quelled the New York City gang wars of the 1970s with his message of peace, unity, love, and having fun.

Hip-hop is simply a term for a form of artistic creativity spawned in New York City, more precisely the Bronx, in the early to mid 1970s. Amid

the urban decay in the areas where black and Hispanic people dwelled, economic, educational, and environmental resources were depleted. Jobs and businesses dried up. Living conditions at times were almost indistinguishable from a developing country, all in the midst of the nation's wealthiest city. Last but not least, art and sports programs in the schools were the first to be cut for the sake of lowering budgets; music classes teaching history and technique were all but lost.

From these ashes, like a phoenix, rose an art form. Through the love of technology and of records found in family collections or discarded on the street, the DJ emerged. Different from the ones heard on the radio, these DJs were innovating a style first popularized on the island of Jamaica. Two turntables kept the music continuous, with the occasional voice speaking or chanting on top of the records. This is the very humble beginning of rap music.

It is important to remember that the thing we call rap is not a music in itself. It becomes music only when two words are combined: rap and music. Rap is the vocal application placed on top of the music. On a vocal spectrum, it falls somewhere between talking and singing and is one of the few new alternatives for vocalizing to emerge in the last fifty years. It is important to realize that inventors and artists are side by side in the importance of music's development. Let's remember that the man who invented the phonograph, Thomas A. Edison, was the first to record a rhyme, with "Mary Had a Little Lamb" in 1877. He did this in New Jersey, the same state that produced the first commercial rap hit, the Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," more than a century later.

It's hard to separate the importance of history, science, language arts, and education when discussing music. Because of the social silencing of black people in America from slavery in the 1600s to civil rights in the 1960s, much sentiment, dialogue, and soul is wrapped up in the cultural expression of black music. In eighteenth-century New Orleans, slaves gathered on Sundays in Congo Square to socialize and play music. Within this captivity many dialects, customs, and styles combined with instrumentation, vocals, and rhythm to form a musical signal or code of preservation. These are the foundations of jazz and the blues.

Similarly, it is impossible to separate hip-hop and rap music from the legacy of creativity from the past. Look within the expression and words of black music and you'll get a timeline reflecting American history itself. The four creative elements of hip-hop—MCing (the art of vocalization); DJing (the musician-like manipulation of records); breakdancing (the

body expression of the music); and graffiti (the graphic expression of the culture)—have been intertwined in the community before and since slavery. However, just because these expressions formed in the black and Hispanic underclass doesn't mean that they are exclusive to those groups in perpetuity. Hip-hop is specific, but it's universal too.

Hip-hop is a cultural language used best to unite the human family all around the world. Many international rap artists can rhyme in multiple languages and still move crowds with meaning. The world beyond the United States has excelled in hip-hop's fundamentals, perhaps more even than in the country of the culture's invention. To peep rap's global explosion one not even need search very far. Starting just north of the U.S. border, Canadian hip-hop has featured rappers who are infusing different language and dialect flows into their work, from immigrant artists like K'naan rhyming about the "ghosts in my old home" to French flowing cats from Quebec.

Few know that France for many years has been the second largest hip-hop nation, measured not just by high sales numbers, but also by its political philosophy. Hip-hop has been alive and present since the mid-1980s in Japan and other Asian countries. Australia has been a hotbed in welcoming world rap acts, and it has also created its own vibrant scene, with the reminder of its government's takeover of indigenous people reflected in many rappers' flows and rhymes. As a rhythm of the people, the continents of Africa and South America (especially Ghana, Senegal, and South Africa, and Brazil, Surinam, and Argentina) have long mixed traditional homage into the new beats and rhymes of this millennium. Hip-hop and rap have been used to help Brazilian kids learn English when school systems failed to bridge the difficult language gap of Portuguese and patois to American English. It has entertained and enlightened youth, and has engaged political discussion in society, continuing the tradition of the African griots and folksingers.

For decades, hip-hop has been bought, sold, followed, loved, hated, praised, and blamed. History has shown that other cultural U.S. music forms have been just as misunderstood and held up to public scrutiny. The history of the people who originated the art form can be found in the music itself. The timeline of recorded rap music spans more than a quarter century, and that is history in itself. With all this said it might sound like a broken record but the reintroduction must come with the clear definition of what it is. A rapper's style is not to itself. It comes from somewhere. All of these lyrics evolve as the griot-like timeline with the words finally

manifesting themselves into a solid testament of the craft. In the words of the Public Enemy song “Bring the Noise,” here we go again ...

AFTERWORD

COMMON

What you hold in your hands is more than a book. This is a culture. This is hip-hop. This book is Biggie and Pac and Rakim and Lauryn Hill. It's Run-DMC and Public Enemy and the Wu-Tang Clan. It's also Sequence and the Treacherous Three and the Cold Crush Brothers. It's Arrested Development and Goodie Mob and Freestyle Fellowship. It's all of these and so many others. Together, MCs have made music and also poetry. We have created a living language through rap.

Strip all the performance away from rap and what do you have? A new perspective. Reading rap lyrics lets you see familiar things in new ways. Everything that usually captures your attention—the inflections of the MC's voice and the style that somebody's using—fades away and you're left with just the words. You can speed up or slow down, go back or skip ahead. You can take your time and let the words take shape in your mind. When you get down to the bare lyrics, you can tell if there's something deep going on in the words.

So many of the debates about rap today miss the point. People argue without taking the time to listen to what rap is actually saying. *The Anthology of Rap* explodes the myth that MCs rhyme only about money, cars, and women. Think I'm lying? Open up the book and see for yourself. Even open it at random and you'll find lyrics about love and comic books and bicycles, about God and nature and fatherhood. You'll find rhymes, in other words, about life and the art of living.

I wrote my first rap verse when I was twelve. Back then I lived in Chicago and spent parts of my summers in Cincinnati. My cousin and I would hang out with his crew just talking and listening to music. Afrika Bambaataa and Soul Sonic Force. Egyptian Lover. And the biggest group in Cincinnati, the Bond Hill Crew. One night I sat in my cousin's room and tried to rap. He wrote a rhyme about the eighth graders and I wrote one about the Bond Hill Crew. It started out like this:

**Well, let me tell you 'bout a trip, a time ago
I was going there to run a cold-blooded show
When I was there I saw some people jamming, too**

They called themselves the Bond Hill Crew

Dr. Ice, Romeo, and Master E

All of the Bond Hill crew rappin to a T

I asked them could they rock with me

I'd write a lot more—and a lot better, I hope—as the years went by, but there was something pure and powerful about that first rhyme. As soon as I finished, my cousin and his friends looked at me, amazed. “Man, that’s cold!” They started repeating my lines back to me, memorizing what I had just written. That was deep to me. I loved the way that made me feel. Years later I'd look out into the crowd and see people reciting my words. That’s a beautiful thing.

Around 1993, I started writing in my head. I'd be out with my friends and would think of rhymes but wouldn't have a pen and paper. So when thoughts came, I'd just have to remember them. Often, rhymes would come to me in the car. My car became a place of solitude for me. I had a red Toyota Celica GT with no heat and an automatic transmission. I remember driving that car in the wintertime, just trying to wipe the frost off the windshield so that I could see where I was going. That's why I say on *Resurrection*, “cruise the South Side streets with no heat and no sticka.” Riding up Lakeshore Drive in Chicago, I'd look at the city and the people, and the lyrics would just ... flow.

I was attracted to hip-hop because of the rhythm, but the words were the reason I fell in love for keeps. My second album, *Resurrection*, featured a song called “I Used to Love H.E.R.,” which tells the story of hip-hop through the guise of a woman. Well, *The Anthology of Rap* makes me fall in love with H.E.R. all over again. I'm reminded of what makes hip-hop so powerful. Lines that rhyme and sometimes don't. Flows on top of flows. Stories about places near and far. Words that people want to memorize and recite. These are the things that drew me to rap from the start and have kept me around for as long as I can remember.

Rap is rhythm and poetry, as Rakim once said. All rap is poetry. That's not to say that all rap is *poetic*, though. Some rhymes just don't quite flow right; some are hard to listen to. But then again, just because it might not sound poetic to me doesn't mean it's not poetry. I get into the things that feel poetic to me—like Nas, Kanye, Eminem sometimes.

Being an MC is about aura and persona. It's a character you inhabit; it's a style; it's a mentality; it's the way you put yourself out there, the way

you think and the way you act. It's about lyrics and voice, creativity and showmanship. This book is filled with lyrics from great MCs, whether Rakim or Biggie or Lauryn Hill. And each artist arrives at his or her greatness by mixing the qualities of MCing in different proportions. Rakim has that voice and those rhymes. Biggie has storytelling. Lauryn has some of everything.

I began as a fan of the culture, a fan of rap music. So to be able to participate in making hip-hop culture is a lot like when you were young and the older guys would invite you to join a pickup basketball game. You're watching them from the sidelines, and then they say to you, "Hey, you wanna run?" After a while, you prove yourself. You get to stay on the court. Hip-hop is like that for me. It's an honor to be able to carry on this tradition—not just the tradition of Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Caz and Melle Mel, but the tradition of Miles Davis, James Baldwin, Bob Marley, Fela Kuti, too. We are the children of jazz. We are the children of all black art around the globe.

This book is a testament to the fact that rap is a living tradition told in many voices. Sure, sometimes it fades in and out. But over time, it endures. For me, it taught different spiritualities, different aspects of culture and history, different languages and modes of speech. I hope this book will help more people get back to that.

With *The Anthology of Rap*, Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois have given us something of great value and great power—if we learn how to use it. For aspiring MCs and established ones too, it can be a tool for the craft, showing you how the best artists throughout rap's history have created their art. For culture warriors, it will give you new ammunition and perhaps new means of finding peace with long-standing debates. For teachers, it offers a way to make the study of literature not only pleasurable but accessible and even cool. For parents, it can suggest new ways of finding common ground with your kids by engaging them on the music they love in terms that you, too, can understand. For anyone with the curiosity to see beyond the stereotype, this book offers a view of rap in full, from the root to the fruit.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THIS scope necessarily reflects the efforts of a great many individuals, the greatest of whom are the artists who wrote and performed the songs collected here. We thank each of them and offer special thanks to the following for reviewing transcriptions of their lyrics, offering insights into their craft, and generally providing support for this undertaking: Aesop Rock, Bahamadia, Binary Star, Kurtis Blow, Bun B, Camp Lo, Chino XL, Crooked I, dead prez, Del, Digable Planets, DOOM, Edan, Jean Grae, Grandmaster Caz, Immortal Technique, Juba Kalamka, Kool G Rap, MyKa 9, Pharoahe Monch, R.A. the Rugged Man, Ras Kass, Sage Francis, Schoolly D, Sequence, Souls of Mischief, Special Ed, and Speech. A special thanks goes to Chuck D and Common, who contributed tremendous afterwords. We hope this book stands as an appropriate and heartfelt shout-out to all those who've ever picked up a mic to rhyme.

This anthology would not exist without the vision and initiative of Jonathan Brent, former editorial director at Yale University Press. Over the past few years we've had the good fortune of working with a number of tremendous people at Yale. Foremost among them is Sarah Miller, who brought patience, resolve, and insight to her work as editor. Anja Manthey, along with Nathaniel Drake and Jeffery Zuckerman, made heroic efforts in working on the numerous permissions. Senior manuscript editor Jeffrey Schier and his team tackled unprecedented challenges in designing and proofreading this volume. Thanks to Heidi Downey (editorial), Karen Stickler (production), Mary Valencia (design), and Jenya Weinreb (editorial).

We owe a debt of gratitude to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for his masterful foreword. From the toasts to 2 Live Crew, he's always been an advocate of outlaw expression. The advisory board, whose names are listed at the front of this book, volunteered their knowledge, opinions, and talents toward making this anthology what it is. We thank them all.

With his cover design and interior images, Justin Francis fashioned a visual feel for the book that is every bit as powerful, stylish, and flavorful as the lyrics themselves. We join Justin in thanking all those who contributed to the book's visuals: Kenneth Barclift, Felton Brown, Dolo,

Kareem Johnson, the Retro Kidz, Kyle Mingo, Rebecca Pietri, Samuel T. Ritter, Santiago Siguenza, and Jimmy Silas Ulibarri.

Assembling this anthology required transcribing hours and hours of lyrics as well as writing headnotes and introductions. We had the dedicated assistance of a handful of people. Max Lipset brought his deep knowledge of hip-hop to this anthology in many ways—transcribing lyrics, drafting headnotes, and providing constructive criticism on the collection as a whole. Siavash Khazamipour deciphered some of the toughest lyrical passages; his work was indispensable. Megan Fries brought her rich knowledge of poetry and poetics to her work. A handful of others contributed transcriptions and other assistance to the book: Ezekiel Justice, Mike Lipset, Jake Miller, Julian Padgett, Lance Rutledge, Sydney Schavietello, and Kingston Yogendran. Thanks to David Caplan, Erica Edwards, and H. L. Hix for commenting on drafts of the introduction. Thanks as well to Jayquan and Troy L. Smith of the Web site The Foundation for sharing their copious knowledge of old-school hip-hop.

In addition ...

Andrew DuBois wishes to acknowledge the support of the UTSC Department of Humanities and of his friends and colleagues in English at the University of Toronto. Deep thanks to Andy and Naomi DuBois, Jay Smith, and Souvankham Thammavongsa, who knows what words can do and how best to make them do it; she listened along to these songs and I love her for that and for everything else.

Adam Bradley wishes to thank his agent, Robert Guinsler of Sterling Lord Literistic. Thanks to the University of Colorado at Boulder for supplying generous grants to support this anthology. Most important, I wish to thank my wife, Anna, who endured the near constant beats and rhymes at all hours of the day and night, whether coming from the car speakers or somehow seeping through my noise-cancelling headphones. You can turn the music down now.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. KRS-One, *Ruminations* (New York: Welcome Rain, 2003), 217.
2. David Foster Wallace and Mark Costello, *Signifying Rappers* (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco, 1990), 97.
3. Ibid., 96.
4. Marcyliena Morgan, *The Real HipHop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 190.
5. Eminem, *The Way I Am* (New York: Plume, 2009), 36.
6. *And You Don't Stop: 30 Years of Hip Hop*, DVD, directed by Richard Lowe and Dana Heinz Perry (n.p.: Bring the Noise LLC, 2004).
7. 50 Cent, *From Pieces to Weight: Once Upon a Time in Southside Queens* (New York: Pocket Books, 2005), 164.
8. Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2008), 5.
9. Morgan, *The Real HipHop*, 159.
10. Gail Mitchell, "Rapper Medusa Stands Strong in Man's World," Reuters, July 20, 2007.
11. Oliver Wang, *Classic Material: The Hip-Hop Album Guide* (Toronto: ECW, 2003), 24.
12. Paul Edwards, *How to Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 69.
13. Chuck D, *Lyrics of a Rap Revolutionary*, vol. 1 (Beverly Hills: Off Da Books, 2006), xi.

PART ONE: 1978 TO 1984

1. Sacha Jenkins et al., *Ego Trip's Book of Rap Lists* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), 22.
2. Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'all: Oral History of Rap's First Decade* (New York: Da Capo, 2002), 75.
3. Fricke and Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'all*, 36.
4. *Wax Poetics*, no. 27 (February–March 2008): 109.
5. Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's, 2005), 130.
6. *Wax Poetics*, no. 19 (October–November 2006): 120.
7. Fricke and Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'all*, 76.
8. Kool Moe Dee, *There's a God on the Mic: The True Fifty Greatest MCs* (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2003), 117.
9. David Toop, *Rap Attack #3* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), 120.
10. *Big Apple Rappin': The Early Days of Hip-Hop Culture in New York City, 1979–1982*, Vol. 2, Soul Jazz Records, 2006, LP liner notes.
11. *Wax Poetics*, no. 24 (August–September 2007): 72.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 74.
14. Fricke and Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'all*, 71.
15. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 133.
16. The Foundation, <http://www.thafoundation.com/sequence.htm>.
17. Spoonie Gee, *Spoonie Gee: Godfather of Hip Hop*, Ol' Skool Flava, 1996, CD liner notes.
18. Fricke and Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'all*, 189.
19. Fricke and Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'all*, 196.

PART TWO: 1985–1992

1. Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'all: Oral History of Rap's First Decade* (New York: Da Capo, 2002), 328.
2. Ibid., 329.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 327.
5. Paul Edwards, *How to Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 97.
6. Ibid., 105.
7. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, eds., *Ancient Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 206, 240, 280.
8. Ibid., 241.
9. Terry McDermott, "Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics," in *Da Capo Best Music Writing 2003*, ed. Matt Groening (New York: Da Capo, 2003), 20.
10. Kelefa Sanneh, "Rapping About Rapping: The Rise and Fall of a Hip-Hop Tradition," in *This Is Pop: In Search of the Elusive at Experience Music Project*, ed. Eric Weisbard (Seattle: Experience Music Project, 2004), 224, 226.
11. Big Daddy Kane, interview, Werner Von Wallenrod's Humble, Little Hip-Hop Blog, <http://wernervonwallenrod.blogspot.com/2007/11/werner-necro-bigdaddy-kane-interview.html>.
12. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 43.
13. Kool Moe Dee, *There's a God on the Mic: The True Fifty Greatest MCs* (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2003), 192–193.
14. Chuck D, *Lyrics of a Rap Revolutionary*, vol. 1 (Beverly Hills: Off Da Books, 2006), vi.
15. Moe Dee, *There's a God on the Mic*, 272.
16. Chuck D, *Lyrics of a Rap Revolutionary*, 50.
17. Too \$hort, quoted in *Wax Poetics*, no. 22 (April–May 2007): 130.
18. Brian Coleman, *Check the Technique: Liner Notes for Hip-Hop Junkies* (New York: Villard, 2007), 438.

PART THREE: 1993–1999

1. Common, “Why Hip Hop’s Square Peg Refuses to Live Up to His Name,” CNN. com, October 1, 2007.
2. Peter Spirer, *Thug Angel* (film), 2002.
3. Danyel Smith, “Tupac Shakur,” *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*, ed. Alan Light (New York: Three Rivers, 1999), 297.
4. Anthony DeCurtis, “Word,” *Vibe History*, 97.
5. Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (New York: Penguin, 1998), xiii.
6. Jason Tanz, *Other People’s Property: A Shadow History of Hip-Hop in White America* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2007), xii.
7. Sacha Jenkins et al., *Ego Trip’s Book of Rap Lists* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999), 195.
8. *Vibe History*, 332.
9. Roni Sarig, *Third Coast: Outkast, Timbaland, and How Hip-Hop Became a Southern Thing* (New York: Da Capo, 2007), xiv.
10. Tony Green, “The Dirty South,” *Vibe History*, 266.
11. George, *Hip Hop America*, x–xi.
12. Paul Edwards, *How to Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 251–252.
13. <http://www.sixshot.com/articles/11007/>.
14. <http://www.planeturban.com.au/node/6337>.
15. <http://www.hiphop.com/features/78-busta-rhymes-feature-part-two>.
16. <http://www.riotsound.com/hip-hop/rap/interviews/canibus/index.php>.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Michael Eric Dyson and Sohail Daulatzai, eds., *Born to Use Mics: Reading Nas’ Illmatic* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2010), x.
20. Brian Coleman, *Check the Technique: Liner Notes for Hip Hop Junkies* (New York: Villard, 2007), 161.
21. DMX and Smokey D. Fontaine, E.A.R.L.: *The Autobiography of DMX* (New York: It Books, 2003), 263.
22. <http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?>

p = amg&sql = 10:oadnvwxua9uk.

23. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 48–49.
24. <http://hiphopruckus.blogspot120t.com/2006/04/e-40-introduces-bay-area-to-forest-of.html>.
25. <http://www.mtv.com/bands/archive/f/fbrown01/index4.jhtml>.
26. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 182.
27. http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2007/groups/index3.jhtml
28. Sarig, *Third Coast*, 137.
29. Oliver Wang, *Classic Material: The Hip-Hop Album Guide* (Toronto: ECW, 2003), 55.
30. <http://www.assatashakur.org/forum/conscious-music-artists-news-views/9432prophet-laury-n-hill-interview.html>.
31. <http://www.avclub.com/articles/ice-cube,2139/>.
32. http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2006/emcees/index4.jhtml
33. <http://www.avclub.com/articles/ice-cube,2139/>.
34. Wang, *Classic Material*, 93.
35. http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2006/emcees/index11.jhtml
36. *Fade to Black* (film), 2004.
37. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 57.
38. http://www.ilikemusic.com/interviews/mobb_deep_interview_blood_mc_2056/4.
39. Ibid.
40. Matt Diehl, “Pop Rap,” *Vibe History*, 131.
41. Peter Spirer, *Notorious B.I.G.: Bigger Than Life* (film), 2007.
42. http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2007/groups/index8.jhtml
43. <http://www.hiphop-elements.com/article/read/6/5905/1/>
44. Phyllis Croom, “Well Versed in Reality: Scarface May Be Soft Spoken, But His Rap Is Anything But,” *Washington Post*, December 19, 1994.
45. Jon Pareles, “Four Hours of Swagger from Dr. Dre and Friends,” *New*

York Times, July 17, 2000.

46.

http://www.mtv.com/bands/h/hip_hop_week/2006/emcees/index12.jh

47. Tabitha Soren, Interview, MTV, 1995.

48. Karolyn Ali and Jacob Hoyer, *Tupac: Resurrection, 1971–1996*. (New York: Atria, 2003), 166.

49. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 124.

50. Jon Caramanica, “Bun B,” *Believer*, June–July 2006.

PART FOUR: 2000 TO 2010

1. Nas, "Hip Hop Is Dead," *Hip Hop Is Dead* (song), Def Jam, 2006.
2. Michael Eric Dyson and Sohail Daulatzai, eds., *Born to Use Mics: Reading Nas' Illmatic* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2010), xi.
3. Untitled sidebar, *GQ* (February 2010): 55.
4. http://www.forbes.com/2008/08/15/music-media-hiphop-biz-media-cz_zog_0818cashkings.html.
5. David Bry, "New York State of Mind: The Resurgence of East Coast Hip Hop," in *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*, ed. Alan Light (New York: Three Rivers, 1999), 335.
6. Mark Schwartz, "Planet Rock: Hip Hop Supa National," *Vibe History*, 362.
7. David Ma, "Bear Witness: Dilated Peoples' Evidence Testifies to Hip-Hop's Longevity," *Wax Poetics*, no. 26 (December/January 2008): 55.
8. "Resurrection: Common Walks," PopMatters music interview, September 21, 2005, <http://www.popmatters.com/music/interviews/common-050921.shtml>.
9. Outkast, "Hollywood Divorce," *Idlewild* soundtrack (song), 2006.
10. Paul Edwards, *How to Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC* (Chicago: Chicago Review, 2009), 38.
11. http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/397/graffiti_or_vermeer/.
12. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 115.
13. *Ibid.*, 8.
14. <http://www.hiphopdx.com/index/interviews/id.1309/title.brother-ali-the-truth-teller>.
15. <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/1791-purple-haze/>.
16. <http://www.thickonline.com/interviews/index.php?mod=cnt&act=cnt&id=1143&page=2>.
17. John Caramanica, "Keep on Pushin'," *Mass Appeal*, no. 39 (n.d.): 72.
18. *Wax Poetics*, no. 28 (December–January 2008): 52.
19. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Mask of Doom: A Nonconformist Rapper's Second Act," *New Yorker*, September 21, 2009, 53.

20. Ross McCammon, "50 Cent: What I've Learned," *Esquire*, January 2010, <http://www.esquire.com/features/what-ive-learned/new-50-cent-interview-0110>.
21. Eminem, *The Way I Am* (New York: Plume, 2009), 36.
22. <http://www.michigandaily.com/content/eyedea-abilities-previewinterview>.
23. Ken Capobianco, "Lupe Fiasco Accepts the Outsider Label as a Positive Rap," *Boston Globe*, November 13, 2006.
24. McCammon, "50 Cent: What I've Learned."
25. Ibid.
26. Talib Kweli blog, July 2008, <http://www.yearoftheblacksmith.com/profiles/blog/list?user=2cum77csuee8s>.
27. <http://www.xxlmag.com/online/?p=887>.
28. <http://www.formatmag.com/features/knaan/>.
29. <http://www.daveyd.com/interviewtalibkweliaol.html>.
30. <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/review/47420/talibkweli-ear-drum/>.
31. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 143.
32. <http://smokingsection.uproxx.com/TSS/2007/08/tss-presents-smokingsessions-with-little-brother>.
33. <http://www.concertlivewire.com/interviews/ludacris.htm>.
34. Ludacris, "I Do It for Hip Hop," *Theatre of the Mind* (song), 2008.
35. Edwards, *How to Rap*, 24.
36. Richard Cromlein, "Mos Def Wants Blacks to Take Back Rock Music," *Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 2004.
37. <http://www.ugo.com/channels/music/features/youngjeezy/default.as>.

INDEX

SONGS, ALBUMS, MOVIES, AND BOOKS

“Act Too ... The Love of My Life”

“A.D.A.M.”

“Adrenaline!”

The Adventures of Schoolly D

“Adventures of Super Rhyme (Rap)”

“Afro Puffs”

“Agent Orange”

“Ain’t No Half Steppin’”

“All Eyez on Me”

All Eyez on Me

“All Falls Down”

“All For You”

All Hail the Queen

“Alphabet Aerobics”

Am I Black Enough for You?

America

AmeriKKKa’s Most Wanted

“And You Know That”

“Animal in Man”

“Aquemini”

Aquemini

The Art of Emceeing

Arular

“Astrology Rap”

ATLiens

“Auditorium”

“Award Tour”

Back for the First Time

Back on the Block

“BaKardi Slang”

“Basketball”

Beat Street

“Benzi Box”

Beowulf

“Big Beat”

“Big Ole Words (Damn)”

The Big Picture

“Big Poppa”

Bigger and Deffer

“A Bird in the Hand”

“Bite This”

“BK Anthem”

Black Bastards

Black Elvis/Lost in Space

Black on Both Sides

“Black President”

Black Reign

“Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos”

“Blackman in Effect”

Blacks’ Magic

“Bling Bling”

“Tha Block Is Hot”

Tha Block Is Hot

The Blueprint

Blunted on Reality

“Bombs Over Baghdad (B.O.B.)”

“Boomin’ System”

Born to Mack

“Bottle Dreams”

“Boyz-n-the-Hood”

“Brass Monkey”

Breakin’

Breakin’ 2: Electric Boogaloo

“The Breaks”

“Brenda’s Got a Baby”

“Briarpatch”

“Bring the Noise”

“Bring the Pain”

“Broken Language”

Broken Silence

“Brooklyn Zoo”

Buhlõõne Mindstate

By All Means Necessary

“Cab Fare”

“Cadillac on 22’s”

“California Love”

“Can You Find the Level of Difficulty in This?”

“Can’t Tell Me Nothing”

“Capital Punishment”

Capital Punishment

“Cappuccino”

Tha Carter

Tha Carter III

“Catch the Beat”

“Cell Therapy”

“Changes”

“Check the Rhime”

Check the Technique (book) *Check Your Head*

“Cheesy Rat Blues”

“Chick on the Side”

“Children’s Story”

“Childz Play”

“Chillin”

“The Choice Is Yours (Revisited)”

The Chronic

“Clappers Power/Mao Dub”

“The Clapping Song”

“Classic”

The College Dropout

“Colors”

“Come Clean”

The Coming

Confessions of Fire

“Cop Killer”

“Country Grammar (Hot Shit)”

“Crank That (Soulja Boy)”

“C.R.E.A.M.”

“Criminal Minded”

Criminal Minded

“Critical Beatdown”

Critical Beatdown

“Tha Crossroads”

“Cusswords”

Daily Operation

“Damien”

“Dance with the Devil”

“Daytona 500”

De La Soul Is Dead

“Dead and Gone”

“Dead Presidents II”

“Dear Mama”

“Death Around the Corner”

“Death Mix Live”

“December 4th”

“Def Fresh Crew”

“Desire”

Deuce

The Diary

“Dirty Money”

“Dirty South”

Do You Want More!?!

“D.O.A. (Death of AutoTune)”

Doggystyle

“Dollar Day for New Orleans (Katrina Klap)”

The Don Kiluminati: The

Day Theory

“Don’t Rush Me”

“Doo Wop (That Thing)”

“Dopeman (Remix)”

“Dr. Carter”

Dr. Octagonecologist

“Duel of the Iron Mic”

“Dumb It Down”

The Dusty Foot Philosopher

E 1999 Eternal

“Ebonics (Criminal Slang)”

Ego Trip

“Ego Trippin”

“8 Million Stories”

808s and Heartbreak

“8th Wonder”

8th Wonder

“Electric Relaxation”

“Elevators (Me and You)”

Emeritus

The Eminem Show

“Emotions”

The E.N.D.

Enter Da Stage

Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)

“Eric B. Is President”

“Ether”

“Everyday People”

“Everything’s Gonna Be Alright (Ghetto Bastard)”

“Evil That Men Do”

“Exhibit C”

“Family Business”

“Farmers Boulevard (Our Anthem)”

“50 Shot Ya”

“Figaro”

“Fight for Your Right (to Party)”

“Fight the Power”

“Final Hour”

“1st of the Month”

“Flamboyant”

“For Colored Boys”

“For Women”

“Forest Whitaker”

“Freaky Tales”

“Freestyle Conversation”

“Fresh Wild Fly and Bold”

From Pieces to Weight

From Totems to Hip Hop

“Fuck tha Police”

“Fuck You Lucy”

“Fudge Pudge”

“Fu-Gee-La”

Full Circle

“Fumbling Over Words That Rhyme”

“Funk You Up”

“Funky Jam (Tear the Roof Off)”

“Gangsta Gangsta”

“Gangsta Lovin”

“Get It in Ohio”

“Get Low”

Get Rich or Die Tryin’

Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me

“The Ghetto”

“Ghetto Music”

“Ghetto Qua’ran”

“Gin and Juice”

“Give ’Em Hell”

“Go DJ”

“Go Go Gadget Flow”

“Go See the Doctor”

The Godfather

“Gold Digger”

“Good Times”

“Got to Be Real”

“Grand Verbalizer”

“Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel”

The Great Adventures of Slick Rick

“Grindin” (The Clipse) “Grindin (Freestyle)” (Crooked I) “Groovy Ghost Party”

“The Guidelines”

“Ha”

“Hambo—First Rap Part II”

Hard Core

“Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)”

“Hard Times”

“Hate It or Love It”

“Hater’s Anthem”

“Haunted House of Rock”

“Have a Nice Day”

Hello Nasty!

“Here Comes the Judge”

Here to Save You All

“Hey Ya!”

“Hip-Hop” (dead prez) “Hip Hop” (Mos Def)

“Hip Hop Is Dead”

Hip Hop Is Dead

“HipHop Knowledge”

Hip Hop Poetry and the Classics

“Hip Hop Quotables”

“Hip-Hop Saved My Life”

The Hip Hop Wars

“Hip-Hop Won’t Stop: The Beat, The Rhymes, The Life”

“Hold It Now—Hit It”

“Homecoming”

“Honeymooner’s Rap”

“Hoodlum Poetry”

“Horse & Carriage”

Hot, Cool, and Vicious

How a Black Man Feels

“How Long Will They Mourn Me”

“How Many Licks”

How to Rap

“How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise?”

“How Ya Like Me Now”

“Howz It Goin Down”

“I Ain’t No Joke”

“I Believe in the Wheel of Fortune”

“I Can’t Live Without My Radio”

“I Can’t Take It No More”

“I Cram to Understand You”

“I Do It for Hip Hop”

“I Feel Like Dying”

“I Go to Work”

“I Got a Story to Tell”

“I Got It Made”

“I Left My Wallet in El Segundo”

I Love Hip Hop in Morocco

“I Miss You”

“I Need a Beat”

“I Need Love”

“I Seen a Man Die”

“I Shouldn’t Have Done It”

“I Used to Love H.E.R.”

“Ice Ice Baby”

The Iceberg/Freedom of Speech ... Just

Watch What You Say

“If I Die 2night”

“If I Ruled the World”

“If You Must”

“I’ll Be”

Ill Communication

“Illegal Search”

Illmatic

“I’m Bad”

“I’m That Type of Guy”

“In Da Club”

“In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida”

“Incarcerated Scarfaces”

“Independent Woman”

“Indian Girl (Adult Story)”

“Industrial Revolution”

The Infamous

Internal Affairs

“Interview with a Vampire”

“It Was a Good Day”

“It’s a Demo/I’m Fly”

“It’s a Man’s World”

“It’s Good to Be the King”

“It’s Good to Be the Queen”

“It’s Like That”

“Izzo (H.O.V.A.)”

“Jailhouse Rock”

Jazzmatazz

“Jazzy Sensation”

“Jesus Walks”

“Jingling Baby”

“Juicy”

“Just Don’t Give a Fuck”

“Just to Get a Rep”

Kala

King of New York

“King of Rock”

King of Rock

“King Tim III (Personality Jock)”

Kollage

“Kool Moe Dee’s Battle with Busy Bee (1981)”

“La Di Da Di”

“Ladies First”

“Let a Man Come In and Do the Popcorn”

“Let Me Blow Your Mind”

Let’s Get Free

“Let’s Talk About Sex”

Licensed to Ill

“A Life in the Day of Benjamin André”

Life Is ... Too Short

“Life’s a Bitch”

Lifestylez ov da Poor & Dangerous

“The Light”

The Listening

“Live at Harlem World 1981”

“Live at the Armory 1979 (1)”

“Live at the Armory 1979 (2)”

“Live at the Audubon Ballroom (12/23/78)”

“Live at the BBQ”

“Live at the Dixie 1982”

“Live from the 504”

“Looking for the Perfect Beat”

“Loosey’s Rap”

“Lose Yourself”

“Lost Ones”

“Love Is Blind”

“Love Rap”

“Lovesong”

The Low End Theory

“Luchini”

Lyrical Ballads

“Lyrics of Fury”

“Makeshift Patriot”

“Mama Said Knock You Out”

Mama Said Knock You Out

Man on the Moon: The End of Day

The Marshall Mathers LP

“Mashed Potato Popcorn”

“Mathematics”

“MCs Act Like They Don’t Know”

Me Against the World

“The Message”

“The M.G.M.”

“Microphone Fiend”

Midnight Marauders

“Millie Pulled a Pistol on Santa”

“Mind Playing Tricks on Me”

The Minstrel Show

The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill

“Miuzi Weighs a Ton”

“Mockingbird”

“Moment of Clarity”

“Monster Jam”

“Mother Popcorn”

Mr. Hood

Mr. Scarface Is Back

“Mr. Wendal”

“Ms. DJ Rap It Up!”

“Murder”

“My Adidas”

“My Brother’s a Basehead”

“My Life” (Foxy Brown) “My Life” (Pharoahe Monch) “My Melody”

“My Mike Sounds Nice”

“My Old Home”

“My Pen & Pad”

“My Philosophy”

“My President” (Young Jeezy) “My President Is Black (D.C. Mix)” (Jay-Z)

“The Name Game”

Nature of a Sista

“The New Rap Language”

“The Next Movement”

“The Nigga Ya Love to Hate”

Niggaz4Life

“9–5ers Anthem”

“9mm Goes Bang” *’til Infinity*

“’95 Freestyle” (Big Pun and Fat Joe) “’95 Freestyle” (Notorious B.I.G. et al.) “’98 Freestyle”

“99 Problems”

“No Matter What They Say”

No More Mr. Nice Guy

“No Regrets”

Norton Anthology of African American Literature

“Nothing Lasts Forever”

The Notorious Kim

“Now”

“Nuthin But a G Thang”

N.W.A. and the Posse

“N.Y. State of Mind”

O.G.: Original Gangster

“Oh No”

“One Love”

“One More Chance”

“One More Chance (Remix)”

“Ordo Ab Chao (Order Out of Chaos)”

Organix

Other People’s Property: A Shadow History of Hip-Hop in White America

“Paid in Full”

“Paper Planes”

“Passin Me By”

“Paul Revere”

Paul’s Boutique

“People Everyday”

People’s Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm

“Peter Piper”

“Picket Fence”

“P.I.M.P.”

“Planet Rock”

“Platinum Plus”

“Poet Laureate Infinity 3”

“Poetry”

The Poison Pen

“Police State”

Pollywog Stew

“The Popcorn”

“Popcorn with a Feeling”

“Potholes in My Lawn”

“The Power of God”

“Prayer”

“Princess of the Posse”

“Proceed”

“Protect Ya Neck”

“Proud to Be Black”

“P.S.K. What Does It Mean”

“Public Enemy #1”

“Push It”

“Put On”

“Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Could See”

“Queen Bitch”

“Queen of Rox”

“Quiet Storm (Remix)”

Radio

“The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)”

Raising Hell

“Rape”

“Rapper’s Delight”

“Rappin and Rockin the House”

“Rappin Blow (Pt. 2)”

“Rappin’ Duke”

“Raw”

Reachin’ (A New Refutation of Time and Space)

“Ready or Not”

Ready to Die

“Reality Check”

Reasonable Doubt

“Rebel Without a Pause”

Rebirth

Rebirth of a Nation

“Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)”

“RE:DEFinition”

“Renegade”

“Releasing Hypnotical Gases”

Resurrection

Return of the Boom-Bap

Rhyme Pays

“Rhymin and Rappin”

“Rikers Island”

“Road to the Riches”

Road to the Riches

“Rock Around the Clock”

“Rock Dis Funky Joint”

“Rock the Bells”

“Room with a View”

“Rosa Parks”

“Roxanne, Roxanne”

“Roxanne’s Revenge”

“Ruff Ryders Anthem”

Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry

“Saliva”

“Same Song”

“Santa’s Rap Party”

“Saturday Night”

“Say What’s Real”

“Scenario”

Scene Not Heard

The Score

Sex Style

“Shadrach”

Shakespeare Is Hip Hop

“Shakey Dog”

“Shook Ones, Pt. II”

“Shoop”

“The Show”

“Signifying Rapper”

Signifying Rappers

“Silent Treatment”

“Simon Says” (Pharoahe Monch) “Simon Says” (Sequence) “6 ’N the Mornin’”

“The 6th Sense”

The Slim Shady LP

Smoke Some Kill

“So Many Tears”

“Somebody Gotta Do It (Pimpin’ Ain’t Easy)”

“Sometimes I Rhyme Slow”

“A Song for Assata”

“A Song for Occupations”

“Soul Food”

Soul Food

Soul on Ice

“Sound of da Police”

“South Bronx”

“Southern Hospitality”

Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik

Speakerboxxx/The Love Below

“Spontaneity”

“Spoonin Rap”

“Sprinkle Me”

St. Elsewhere

“Stakes Is High”

Stakes Is High

“Stan”

Stankonia

“Step in the Arena”

Step in the Arena

“Steve Biko (Stir It Up)”

“Still Not a Player”

“Stop the Violence”

“Straight Outta Compton”

Straight Outta Compton

“Street Girl”

“Streets of New York”

“Strictly Business”

“Sucka Nigga”

“Sucker MC’s”

Sugarhill Gang

“Summertime”

“The Sun”

“Sunshine”

“Sunshowers”

“Super Bowl Shuffle”

“Super Disco Brakes”

“Superrappin”

“Sure Shot”

“Survival of the Fittest”

“Swagger Like Us”

“The Symphony”

“Tales of a Hustler”

“Talkin All That Jazz”

“Ten Crack Commandments”

“10% Dis”

“Tennessee”

“They Reminisce Over You (T.R.O.Y.)”

“They Want EFX”

Things Fall Apart

3rd Eye Vision

“30 Something”

“This Can’t Be Life”

“This Pussy’s a Gangsta”

Three Feet High and Rising

3 Years, 5 Months & 2 Days in the Life of ...

“Through the Wire”

Thug Motivation

“T.I. vs. T.I.P.”

Tical

“Time’s Up”

“To the Beat, Y’all”

To the East, Blackwards

To the Five Boroughs

“Too Legit to Quit”

“Top Billin’”

Tough

“Tramp”

“Treat Her Like a Prostitute”

“Triumph”

“The Truth”

The Truth

“21 Questions”

“213”

2Pacalypse Now

“U Can’t Touch This”

“U Don’t Know Me”

“Umi Says”

“Uncle Sam Goddamn”

“Uncommon Valor: A Vietnam Story”

“Unfucwitable”

“U.N.I.T.Y.”

“Universal Mind Control”

“Vapors”

Very Necessary

“Vicious Rap”

“Virus”

“Vocab”

“Walk This Way”

The Waste Land

“The Way I Am”

“The Way You Move”

We Can't Be Stopped

“Web”

“Weekend”

“Welcome to the Terrordome”

“What Am I?”

“What's Hardcore?”

“What's Your Fantasy”

“Whatta Man”

“When I'm Gone”

“White Lines (Don't Don't Do It)”

“Who Stole My Last Piece of Chicken?”

“Who We Be”

“Who's That Girl”

“Why”

Wild Style

“Wild Wild West”

“Woo-Hah!! Got You All in Check”

“Words I Manifest (Remix)”

“Wordsmith”

“The World Is Yours”

“Wrath of Kane”

“Wrath of My Madness”

Xodus

“You Got Me”

“Zen”

“Zulu Nation Throwdown”

“Zulu Nation Throwdown Pt. 2”

INDEX

ARTISTS, AUTHORS, AND LABELS

Ab Liva

Abbatiello, Sal

Aceyalone

Adler, Bill

Adrock

Aerosmith

Aesop

Aesop Rock

Afrika (Jungle Brothers) Afrika Bambaataa

Ahearn, Charlie

Air America Network Ali, Muhammad

Almighty KG. *See* KG

André 3000

Angie B

Ant

Anton, Lewis

A-Plus

Apollo Theater

Aristotle

Arrested Development Arulpragasam, Maya. *See* M.I.A.

Asen, Joshua

Atmosphere

Audio Two

AZ

Baby

Bad Boy Entertainment Badu, Erykah

Bahamadia
Baker, Arthur
Baldwin, James
Banner, David
Baraka, Amiri
Baron
Barry Bee
Beanie Sigel
Beastie Boys
The Beatles
Benjamin, André. *See* André 3000
Berry, Elizabeth Mendez Beyoncé
B.G.
Big Bank Hank
Big Boi
Big Daddy Kane
Big Gipp
Big L
Big Punisher (aka Big Pun) Big Syke
Biggie Smalls. *See* Notorious B.I.G.
Binary Star
Biz Markie
Bizzy Bone
Black Elvis
Black Eyed Peas
Black Jack Johnson Black Moon
Black Panthers
Black Sheep
Black Star
Black Thought
Blackalicious
Blige, Mary J.

Blockhead
Blondie
Bloodshed
Blow, Kurtis
Blueprint
Bobby Digital
Body Count
The Bomb Squad
Bond Hill Crew
Bone Thugs-N-Harmony Boogie Down Productions Books
Bootie Brown
Braxton, Toni
Breakout
Br'er Rabbit
Brooks, Mel
Brother Ali
Brother D with Collective Effort Brother J
Brown, Angela. *See* Angie B
Brown, Foxy. *See* Foxy Brown Brown, H. Rap
Brown, James
Brown, Jeree "JB Rap,"
Brown, Peter
Bry, David
Bun B
Bushwick Bill
Busta Rhymes
Busy Bee
Butterball
Butterfly

Camp Lo
Campbell, Luke

Cam'ron
Canibus
Capone
Cappadonna
Caramanica, Jon
Carey, Mariah
Carter, Sean. *See* Jay-Z
Cash Money Records Casual
Caz. *See* Grandmaster Caz Ced-Gee
Cee-Lo
Chang, Jeff
Chaplin, Charlie
Charlie Chase
Cheba, Eddie
Cheryl the Pearl
Chic
Chief Xcel
Children of the Corn Chill Will
Chino XL
Chisholm, Gwendolyn. *See* Blondie Chubby Chub
Chuck D
Cicero
Cirelli, Michael
Clappers Records
Clark Kent
Clinton, George
The Clipse
Coates, Ta-Nehisi
Coke La Rock
Cold Crush Brothers Coleman, Brian
Combs, Sean "Puffy,"
Common

Compton's Most Wanted Cook, Cheryl. *See* Cheryl the Pearl Cortez, Jayne
The Cosmic Force
Costello, Mark
Cousin Brucie
Cowboy
Crash Crew
Crocker, Frankie
Crooked I
Cross, Brian "B+,"

Dana Dane
Danger Doom
Danger Mouse
Das EFX
Davey D
Davies, Frederick
Davis, Miles
De La Soul
dead prez
Death Row Records
DeCurtis, Anthony
Deep Dickollective Def Jam Records
Definitive Jux (aka Def Jux) Del (aka Del tha Funkee Homosapien)
Demetrius
Devin the Dude
Diamond, Mike. *See* Mike D
Diddy. *See* Combs, Sean "Puffy"
Diehl, Matthew
Digable Planets
Digga
Digital Underground Dilated Peoples
Dipset (aka The Diplomats) Disturbing tha Peace Dizzee Rascal
DJ Hollywood

DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince DJ Polo
DJ Premier
DJ Screw
DJ Subroc
DJ Touré
DJ Yella
DMC
DMX
Domino
Donald Duck
Doodlebug
DOOM
Dorsett, Tony
Doug E. Fresh
Dove
Dr. Doom
Dr. Dre
Dr. Octagon
Drake
Dre (Das EFX)
Duke Bootee

Easy AD
Eazy-E
Edan
Edison, Thomas A.
Edwards, Paul
E-40
Egyptian Lover
8 Ball & MJG
Eliot, T.S.
Elliott, Missy

Ellis, Shirley

El-P

Eminem

Enjoy Records

EPMD

Eric B.

Eve

Evidence

Eyedeas & Abilities Fantastic Five. *See also* Grand Wizard Theodore and the Fantastic Five Farrakhan, Louis

Fat Boys

Fat Joe

Fatback (aka The Fatback Band) Fatlip

Fawcett, Farrah

Fearless Four

Ferrara, Abel

Fiasco, Lupe

50 Cent

Fishburne, Laurence Five-Percent Nation (Nation of Gods and Earths)

Flavor Flav

Flesh-N-Bone

Flocabulary

The Foundation (Web site) Foxy Brown

Freestyle Fellowship Fresh Prince

Frogger

Frost, Robert

Fuchs, Aaron

The Fugees

Funkadelic

Funky Four + 1

Furious Five. *See* Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five Fu-Schnickens

Gable, Clark

The Game
Gang Starr
Gates, Henry Louis, Sr.
Geechi Suede
George, Nelson
Get Fresh Crew
Geto Boys
Ghostface Killah (aka Ghostface) Gift of Gab
Giovanni, Nikki
Gleason, Jackie
G.L.O.B.E.
Glover, Melvin. *See* Melle Mel Glover, Nathaniel. *See* Kid Creole Gnarl's Barkley
Good Life Café
Goodie Mob
Grae, Jean
Grandmaster Caz
Grandmaster Flash
Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Four Grandmaster Flowers Grand Wizard Theodore and the Fantastic Five Green, Tony
Greg Nice
Grier, Pam
Guevara, Che
Guru
GZA (aka Genius)

Haley, Alex
Hampton, Fred
Hancock, Herbie
Harlem Underground Band Harry, Debbie
Harvard University Havoc
Hayes, Isaac

Headliner

Heaney, Seamus

Hendrix, Jimi

Herculoids

Hewan-Lowe, Lister Hill, Lauryn

HipHop Archive

Holmes, Maori Karmael hooks, bell

Horovitz, Adam. *See* Adrock Hughes, Langston

Hutch Hutch

I Self Divine

Ice Cube

Iceberg Slim

Ice-Ice

Ice-T

Ikey C

Imani

Immortal Technique Inspectah Deck

Iron Butterfly

J Sumbi

Jackson, Bruce

Jadakiss

Jam Master Jay

James, Rick

Jane's Addiction

Jarobi

Jay Dee (aka J Dilla) Jay Electronica

JayQuan

Jay-Z

Jazzy Five

Jazzy Jay

Jazzy Jeff (Funky Four + 1) Jedi Mind Tricks

Jeru the Damaja

Jim Jones

Jive Records

Joell Ortiz

Johnson, Perry

Jones, Quincy

Jordan, Michael

JR Writer

Juelz Santana

Juice Crew

Jungle Brothers

Junior MAFIA

Juvenile

Kalamka, Juba

Kangol Crew

Kanye. *See* West, Kanye Kardinal Offishall Keith-Keith

Kevie Kev

Keys, Alicia

KG

Khujo

Kid Creole

Kid Cudi

Kid Rock

King Geedorah. *See* DOOM

King Tech

King Tim III

KK Rockwell

KMD

K'Naan

Knight, Suge

Kool G Rap

Kool Herc
Kool Keith
Kool Moe Dee
Kraftwerk
Krayzie Bone
KRS-One
Kuti, Fela
Kwamé
Kweli, Talib

LA Sunshine
The Lady of Rage
Ladybug Mecca
Lalgee, Solas B.
The Last Poets
Layzie Bone
Leadbelly
Leaders of the New School Lefty Banks
Lil Jon/Lil Jon & the Eastside Boyz Lil' Kim
Lil' Rodney Cee
Lil Wayne
Little Brother
Lisa Lee
Liston, Sonny
LL Cool J
Lollapalooza
Lopez, Jennifer
Lovebug Starski
Ludacris
Lupe Fiasco. *See* Fiasco, Lupe Lynn, Cheryl

Mabley, Moms
Mac Dre

Macadoshis
Madlib
Madvillany
Main Source
Malcolm X
Malice
Malik B
Markham, Pigmeat
Marley, Bob
Marley Marl
Marx, Karl
Ma\$e
Masta Ace
Masta Killa
Master Gee
Master P
MC Hammer
MC Lyte
MC Ren
MC Shan
MCA
McDaniels, Darryl. *See* DMC
Medusa
Melle Mel
Melvin, Harold, and the Blue Notes Metal Fingers. *See* DOOM
Method Man
MF DOOM. *See* DOOM
M.I.A.
Mia X
Mickey Mouse
Mike D
Mizell, Jason. *See* Jam Master Jay Mobb Deep

Moe Love

M-1

Monie Love

Monroe, Marilyn

Moore, Jessica Care Morgan, Marcyliena Mos Def

Mr. Biggs

Mr. Lif

Mr. Magic

Mr. Ness

MTV

Muhammad, Ali Shaheed Murray, Keith

Murray the K

Myka

Nas

Nate Dogg

Nation of Islam

Native Tongues

Naughty by Nature

Needleman, Jennifer Nelly

The Neptunes

Nice & Smooth

9th Wonder

No Limit Records

Noreaga

Norris, Chris

Notorious B.I.G.

Nubyaahn, Daryl Aamaa NWA

Obama, Barack

O.C.

Ol' Dirty Bastard (aka ODB) Oliver Hart. *See also* Eyedea & Abilities One
Be Lo

Onyx the Birthstone Kid Opio
Organized Konfusion Organized Noize
Ortiz, Joell. *See* Joell Ortiz Outkast

Pacemaster Mase
Pareles, Jon
Patton, Antwan. *See* Big Boi Paul Winley Records P.E.A.C.E.
Perry Farrell
Pete DJ Jones
Pete Rock & C.L. Smooth The Pharcyde
Pharoahe Monch
Pharrell. *See* Williams, Pharrell Phesto
Phife Dawg
Phonte
Pimp C
PMD
Poitier, Sidney
Poor Righteous Teachers Posdnuos
Pound, Ezra
Pow Wow
Pras Michel
Presley, Elvis
Prince Paul
Prince Poetry
Prodigy
Professor Griff
Professor X
Project Blowed
Prospect
Pryor, Richard
Public Enemy
Pumpkin

Punchline

Pusha T

Q-Tip

Queen Latifah

Questlove

R. A. the Rugged Man Raekwon

Rah Digga

Rahiem

Rakim

Rap Genius (Web site) Rap-A-Lot Records

Rapper Big Pooh

Ras Kass

Rated R

Rawkus

Red Alert, Kool DJ

Reed, Ishmael

Reggie Reg

Re-Up Gang

Reverend Ike

Rhymesayers

Richardson, Bill

Rick Ross

Rihanna

Robie, John

Robinson, Bobby

Robinson, Sylvia

Rock-A-Fella Records Rollins, Sonny

The Roots

Roscoe P. Coldchain Rose, Tricia

Roxanne Shant . *See* Shant , Roxanne Rubin, Rick

Ruff Ryders

Run

Run-DMC

Ruth, Babe

Ruthless Records

RZA

Sadler, Eric “Vietnam,”

Sage Francis

Salt-N-Pepa

Sanchez, Sonia

Sanneh, Kelefa

Sarig, Roni

Saukrates

Scarface

Schoolly D

Schwartz, Mark

Scoob

Scorpio. *See* Mr. Ness Scott La Rock

Scott-Heron, Gil

Self Jupiter

Senim Silla

Sermon, Erick

Shady/Aftermath

Shakur, Afeni

Shakur, Assata

Shakur, Tupac. *See* 2Pac Shanté, Roxanne

Sha-Rock

Shawnna

She

Shine

Shock G

Shocklee, Hank

Shocklee, Keith
Shyheim
Signifying Monkey
Simmons, Joseph. *See* Run Simmons, Russell
Sitomer, Alan
Skinny Boys
Slick Rick
Slim Kid Tre
Slug
Sly and the Family Stone (Sly Stone) Smith, Danyel
Smith, James Todd. *See* LL Cool J
Smith, Will. *See also* DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince Smithsonian
(National Museum of American History) Smooth B
Smoothe da Hustler & Trigga da Gambler Snoop Dogg
S1Ws
Sonny Cheeba
Soul Position
Soul Sonic Force
Soulja Boy Tell 'Em Souls of Mischief
Sound of New York
Spears, Britney
Spectrum City
Special Ed
Special K
Spector, Phil
Speech
Spice Girls
Spicer, Jimmy
Spinderella
The Spinners
Spoonie Gee
Squier, Billy

Stagolee
Stallone, Sylvester Stefani, Gwen
Stetsasonic
stic.man
Stone, Angie
Suga T
Sugar Hill Records Sugarhill Gang
Sun-Ra
Super Jay
Sway
Sweet Tee. *See* Winley, Tanya Tajai
Tanz, Jason
Terminator X
Terror Squad
Thompson, Ahmir. *See* ?uestlove T.I.
Timbaland
Timberlake, Justin Timmy Tim
TJ Swan
T-Mo
Tommy Boy Records
Tony Tone
Too \$hort
Travolta, John
Treacherous Three
A Tribe Called Quest Trick Daddy
Trina
Trotter, Tariq. *See* Black Thought Trugoy the Dove. *See* Dove Tuff City
Turner, Ike
Twista
2Pac
2 Live Crew

UGK

U-God

Uptown Records

Urban Dictionary (Web site) Usher

UTFO

Van, Marcus René

Vanilla Ice

Viktor Vaughn. *See* DOOM

Vinnie Paz

Wale

Walken, Christopher Wallace, Christopher. *See* Notorious B.I.G.

Wallace, David Foster Wang, Oliver

Warren G

Washington, Tim. *See* King Tim III Waterbed Kevie Kev. *See* Kevie Kev

The Watts Prophets Wayne, John

Wayne and Charlie (The Rapping Dummy) West, Kanye

West, Tim'm

White, Barry

Whitman, Walt

Wiggins, Keith. *See* Cowboy Williams, Hype

Williams, Pharrell Williams, Saul

Williams, William Carlos Willie D

Winley, Paul

Winley, Paulette

Winley, Tanya

With Bone

Withers, Bill

Wolfman Jack

Wonder Mike

Wordsworth

Wordsworth, William Wu-Tang Clan

Wyclef Jean

X-Clan

Yale University

Yauch, Adam. *See* MCA Yeshitela, Omali

Young Jeezy

Young MC

The Younger Generation Yo-Yo

Zev Love X

Zulu Nation

CREDITS

The editors have made every reasonable effort to secure permissions. If any errors should be noticed, please contact Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois care of Yale University Press. Corrections will follow in subsequent editions.

INTRODUCTION

Excerpt from “Ice, Ice Baby”: words and music by Vanilla Ice, Earthquake, M. Smooth, Brian May, Freddie Mercury, Floyd Brown, Mario Johnson, Roger Taylor, Robert Van Winkle, John Deacon and David Bowie. © 1981, 1990 QPM MUSIC INC., FERN HILL PUBLISHING, ICE BABY MUSIC, AFTERSHOCK MUSIC, SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, Johnson Music, Knightlife Productions, Kline Publishing Company, QUEEN MUSIC LTD., EMI MUSIC PUBLISHING LTD., BEECHWOOD MUSIC CORP., and TINTORETTO MUSIC. All Rights for QPM MUSIC INC., FERN HILL PUBLISHING, ICE BABY MUSIC, AFTERSHOCK MUSIC and SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for QUEEN MUSIC LTD. in the U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by BEECHWOOD MUSIC CORP. All Rights for QUEEN MUSIC LTD. in the world excluding the U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by EMI MUSIC PUBLISHING LTD. All Rights for EMI MUSIC PUBLISHING LTD. in the U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by SCREEN GEMS-EMI MUSIC INC. All rights on behalf of Johnson Music Co, Knightlife Productions administered by Sony/ ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Under Pressure” (Bowie/Mercury/Taylor/ Deacon/May). *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Johnson Music, Kline Publishing Company, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and Tintoretto Music admin. by RZO Music, Inc.*

PART I: 1978-1984—THE OLD SCHOOL

“Zulu Nation Throwdown, Pt. 1” used by permission of KLB Productions Inc. and JRL Music, Inc.

“Planet Rock” used by permission of Downtown Music and KLB Productions Inc.

“Rappin’ Blow (Part 2)” and “The Breaks” © Neutral Gray Music / Pure Love Music. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“If I Ruled the World”: words and music by Aaron O’Bryant, David Reeves and Kurt Walker. Copyright © 1985 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC., KUWA MUSIC, SCRATCH MASTER MUSIC and DAVY-D MUSIC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise?”: Thanks to the kind permission of Lister Hewan-Lowe and Clappers Records. Clappers Music Publishers.

“Live at Harlem World 1981,” “Live at the Dixie 1982” and “Weekend” written by Curtis Brown (BMI). Published by GMC Music Publishing (BMI).

“Fresh Wild Fly and Bold”: Cold Crush Brothers, (Fisher/Mandes/Harris), Published by Street Tuff Tunes, = & © Tufamerica, Inc. 1984.

“Rappin’ and Rockin’ the House” written by: Bobby Robinson/Caesar/Green/Myree/ Smith/Stone. Copyright Bobby Robinson Sweet Soul Music and JRL Music, Inc. All rights for Bobby Robinson Sweet Soul Music Controlled and Administered by Spirit One Music (BMI). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of JRL Music, Inc. and Spirit Music Group.

“That’s the Joint” used by permission of JRL Music, Inc.

“Superrappin’” by Williams, Glover, Morris, Wiggins and Glover, Jr. Courtesy of Artists Rights Enforcement Corp. o/b/o Superrappin Music (BMI) and Havnots Music (ASCAP).

“The Message,” “White Lines (Don’t Don’t Do It),” “To the Beat Y’all,” “Funk You Up,” “And You Know That” and “Simon Says” used by permission of JRL Music, Inc.

“Spoonin’ Rap”: Spoonie Gee, (G. Jackson), Published by Swing Beat Songs, = & © Tufamerica, Inc. 1979.

“Love Rap” written by: Bobby Robinson and Gabriel Jackson. Copyright Bobby Robinson Sweet Soul Music. All Rights for Bobby Robinson Sweet Soul Music Controlled and Administered by Spirit One Music (BMI). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Spoonie Gee, (G. Jackson), Published by Swing Beat Songs, = & © Tufamerica, Inc. 1980.

“Rapper’s Delight”: words and music by BERNARD EDWARDS and NILE RODGERS. © 1979 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Bernard’s Other Music. All Rights for BERNARD’S OTHER MUSIC Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.

“The New Rap Language” written by: Bobby Robinson. Copyright Bobby Robinson Sweet Soul Music. All rights for Bobby Robinson Sweet Soul Music Controlled and Administered by Spirit One Music (BMI). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission.

“Rhymin’ and Rappin’” and “Vicious Rap” used by permission of Ninny Publishing Co., Inc.

PART II: 1985-1992—THE GOLDEN AGE

Excerpt from Run-D.M.C.'s "My Adidas": words and music by JOSEPH SIMMONS, DARRYL MCDANIELS, and RICK RUBIN. © 1987 RABASSE MUSIC LTD. and RUSH GROOVE MUSIC. All Rights Administered by WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC CANADA LTD. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

"Paul Revere": words and music by Adam Horovitz, Darryl McDaniels, Rick Rubin and Joseph Simmons. Copyright © 1986 UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC., BROOKLYN DUST MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. and AMERICAN DEF TUNES. All Rights for BROOKLYN DUST MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights for AMERICAN DEF TUNES Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

"Sure Shot": words and music by Michael Diamond, Adam Yauch, Adam Horovitz, Mario Caldato, Wendell Fite and Jeremy Steig. Copyright © 1994 UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC., BROOKLYN DUST MUSIC, EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., STREET N.I.G.Z. MUSIC and GRAND ROYAL MUSIC. All Rights for BROOKLYN DUST MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights for STREET N.I.G.Z. MUSIC and GRAND ROYAL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Contains elements of "Howlin' For Judy" (Steig); © 1970 DESHON MUSIC, INC. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

"Shadrach": words and music by Michael Diamond, Adam Horovitz, Adam Yauch, John King, Michael Simpson and Matt Dike. Copyright © 1989 UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC., BROOKLYN DUST MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., DUST BROTHERS MUSIC and BROWN ACID MUSIC. All Rights for BROOKLYN DUST MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights for DUST BROTHERS MUSIC Controlled and Administered by

UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for BROWN ACID MUSIC Administered by BUG MUSIC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Raw,” “Wrath of Kane,” and “Ain’t No Half Steppin’” by Big Daddy Kane are used under license from CAK Music Publishing, Inc.

“Poetry”: words and music by Lawrence Parker and Scott Sterling. Copyright © 1986 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“My Philosophy”: words and music by Lawrence Parker. Copyright © 1988 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“South Bronx”: words and music by Lawrence Parker and Scott Sterling. Copyright © 1986 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Blackman in Effect”: words and music by Lawrence Parker, Booker T. Jones, Jr., Steve Cropper, Al Jackson, Jr. and Donald Dunn. Copyright © 1990 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Irving Music, Inc. and Memphis Group Music. All Rights for Memphis Group Music Controlled and Administered by Irving Music, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“My Brother’s a Basehead”: by DAVID JOLICOEUR, VINCENT MASON, KELVIN MERCER, PAUL E. HUSTON, ROBERT KRIEGER and CLINT BALLARD © 1991 WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP., TEE GIRL DAISY AGE, PRINSE PAWL MUSICK, DOORS MUSIC COMPANY and SHAPIRO, BERNSTEIN & CO. INC. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and TEE GIRL DAISY AGE Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and PRINSE PAWL MUSICK, INC. (BMI).

“Millie Pulled a Pistol on Santa” written by: George Clinton, Grace Cook, Paul Huston, Kevin Mercer, David Jolicoeur, Vincent Mason. © 1991 WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP., TEE GIRL DAISY AGE, PRINSE PAWL MUSICK and BRIDGEPORT MUSIC, INC.

All Rights on Behalf of Itself and TEE GIRL DAISY AGE Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. Published by Prinse Pawl Musick, Inc. (BMI). All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., BRIDGEPORT MUSIC, INC., and PRINSE PAWL MUSICK, INC. (BMI).

“Stakes is High”: by JAMES BROWN, FRED WESLEY, CHARLES FRED BOBBITT, AHMAD JAMAL, DAVID JOLICOEUR, VINCENT MASON, KELVIN MERCER and JAMES YANCY. © 1996 WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. and DAISY AGE MUSIC. All Rights Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Eric B. is President”: words and music by Eric Barrier and William Griffin. Copyright © 1987 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. and ROBERT HILL MUSIC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Robert Hill Music.*

“Paid In Full”: words and music by Eric Barrier, Benjamin Nagari and William Griffin. Copyright © 1987, 1990 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC., ROBERT HILL MUSIC, and Supreme Songs Limited. All rights for Supreme Songs Limited assigned in 2006 to Campbell Connelly & Co. Limited. © Copyright 2006 Campbell & Co. Limited. All Rights Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Music Sales Corporation.*

“My Melody”: words and music by Eric Barrier and William Griffin. Copyright © 1987 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. and ROBERT HILL MUSIC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Robert Hill Music.*

“I Ain’t No Joke”: words and music by Eric Barrier and William Griffin. Copyright © 1987 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM

INTERNATIONAL, INC. and ROBERT HILL MUSIC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Robert Hill Music.*

“Microphone Fiend”: words and music by Eric Barrier, William Griffin, Roger Ball, Malcolm Duncan, Stephen Ferrone, Alan Gorrie, Owen McIntyre and James Stewart. © 1988 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., ERIC B. AND RAKIM MUSIC and JOE’S SONGS, INC. All Rights for ERIC B AND RAKIM MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for JOE’S SONGS, INC. Administered by WIXEN MUSIC PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “School Boy Crush”: words and music by Roger Ball, Malcolm Duncan, Stephen Ferrone, Alan Gorrie, Owen McIntyre and James Stewart. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Lyrics of Fury”: words and music by Eric B. and Rakim. © 1988 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. and ERIC B. AND RAKIM MUSIC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Step in the Arena”: words and music by Keith Elam and Chris Martin. Copyright © 1991 ALMO MUSIC CORP. and GIFTED PEARL MUSIC, INC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by ALMO MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Just to Get a Rep”: words and music by Keith Elam and Chris Martin. Copyright © 1991 ALMO MUSIC CORP. and GIFTED PEARL MUSIC, INC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by ALMO MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Words I Manifest (Remix)” used by permission of Frozen Soap Songs.

“6 ’N the Mornin’”: words and music by Ice-T and Afrika Islam. © 1987 COLGEMS-EMI MUSIC INC., Reach Global Inc., and RHYME SYNDICATE MUSIC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard*

Corporation and Reach Global Music Publishing.

“Colors”: words and music by Ice-T and Afrika Islam. © 1988 COLGEMS-EMI MUSIC INC., Reach Global Inc., and RHYME SYNDICATE MUSIC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Reach Global Music Publishing.*

“Road to the Riches” and “Streets of New York” by Kool G Rap are used under license from CAK Music Publishing, Inc.

“Rikers Island”: words and music by Eric Barrier and Nathaniel Wilson. © 1991 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., ERIC B AND RAKIM MUSIC, WB MUSIC CORP. and COLD CHILLIN’ MUSIC. All Rights for ERIC B AND RAKIM MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. Used under license from CAK Music Publishing, Inc. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of CAK Music Publishing, Inc. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Go See the Doctor”: words and music by Mohandas Dewese. Copyright © 1986 by Universal Music—Z Songs. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“How Ya Like Me Now”: words and music by Mohandas Dewese and Edward Riley. Copyright © 1987 by Kool Moe Dee Music/BMI, Universal Music—Z Songs, Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Donril Music/ASCAP, a div. of EverGreen Copyrights/ Zomba Enterprises, Inc./ASCAP. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of EverGreen Copyrights, Inc., Hal Leonard Corporation, and Kool Moe Dee Music.*

“I Go To Work”: words and music by Mohandas Dewese and King Floyd. Copyright © 1989 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Peermusic III, Ltd., Malaco Music Co. and Roffignac Music Co. All Rights for Malaco Music Co. and Roffignac Music Co. Administered by Peermusic III, Ltd. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Rock the Bells” and “I Can’t Live Without My Radio”: Words and Music by Rick Rubin and James Todd Smith. Copyright © 1985, 1993 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, LL Cool J Music, American Def Tunes, Inc., Def Jam Music and Universal Music Corp. All Rights

on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, LL Cool J Music and American Def Tunes, Inc., administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“I’m Bad”: words and music by James Todd Smith, Bobby Ervin and Dawne Simon. Copyright © 1995 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, LL Cool J Music, Universal Music Corp. and Dwayne Simon Publishing Designee. All Rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and LL Cool J Music Administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights on behalf of Dwayne Simon Publishing Designee Controlled and Administered by Universal Music Corp. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“I Need Love”: words and music by James Todd Smith, Dwayne Simon, Bobby Ervin, Darryl Pierce and Steven Ettinger. Copyright © 1987, 1995 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, LL Cool J Music and Universal Music Corp. All Rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and LL Cool J Music Administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“I’m That Type of Guy”: words and music by Dwayne Simon, James Todd Smith and Steven Ettinger. © 1986, 1989 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, EMI VIRGIN MUSIC, INC., L.A. POSSE MUSIC, INC., DEF JAM MUSIC INC., and LL COOL J MUSIC. All Rights for L.A. POSSE MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI VIRGIN MUSIC, INC. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, LL Cool J Music administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Mama Said Knock You Out”: words and music by Marlon “MARLEY MARL” Williams, William Collins, James Smith, Sylvester Stewart,

Gregory Jacobs, Leroy McCants, James McCants, George Clinton and Walter Morrison. Copyright © 1990, 2003 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., RUBBER BAND MUSIC, INC., UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z SONGS, GLG TWO MUSIC, PUBHOWYALIKE PUBLISHING, RUBBERBAND MUSIC, MIJAC MUSIC, HARLEM MUSIC, INC., JIMI MAC MUSIC and BRIDGEPORT MUSIC, INC. All Rights for RUBBER BAND MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights for GLG TWO MUSIC and PUBHOWYALIKE PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z SONGS. All Rights for MIJAC MUSIC Controlled and Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Bridgeport Music, Inc., Hal Leonard Corporation, Harlem Music, Inc., and Jimi Mac Music c/o The Royalty Network, Inc.*

“10% Dis”: words and music by Lana Michele Moorer, Kirk S. Robinson and Nathaniel V. Robinson, Copyright © 1988 BROOKLYN BASED PUBLISHING (ASCAP), SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., DREAMWORLD PUDDING and FIRST PRIORITY MUSIC/Unknown publisher designee. All Rights for BROOKLYN BASED PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS. All Rights for DREAMWORLD PUDDING Administered by BUG MUSIC. First Priority Music/BMI (admin. by EverGreen Copyrights)/Unknown Publisher designee. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Brooklyn Based Publishing, EverGreen Copyrights, Inc., and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“I Cram to Understand U”: words and music by Lana Michelle Moorer and Kirk S. Robinson. Copyright © 1988 BROOKLYN BASED PUBLISHING and FIRST PRIORITY MUSIC. All Rights for BROOKLYN BASED PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS. First Priority Music/BMI (admin. by EverGreen Copyrights)/Brooklyn Based Publishing/ASCAP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Brooklyn Based Publishing, EverGreen Copyrights, Inc., and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Cappuccino”: words and music by Lana Michelle Moorer and Marlon Lu Ree Williams. Copyright © 1989 BROOKLYN BASED PUBLISHING, FIRST PRIORITY MUSIC, and MARLEY MARL MUSIC, INC. All Rights for BROOKLYN BASED PUBLISHING Controlled and

Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS. First Priority Music/BMI (admin. by EverGreen Copyrights)/Brooklyn Based Publishing/ ASCAP/Marley Marl Music/ASCAP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Brooklyn Based Publishing, EverGreen Copyrights, Inc., and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Dopeman (Remix)” written by Leroy Bonner, O’Shea Jackson, Marshall Jones, Ralph Middlebrook, Andrew Noland, Gregory Webster, Andre Young. © 1990 Bridgeport Music, Inc. (BMI). Used by permission of Bridgeport Music, Inc., Downtown Music, Musiranma Comedy Play Music, and Ruthless Attack Muzick.

“Fuck tha Police” used courtesy of Ruthless Attack Muzick.

“Gangsta, Gangsta” performed by N. W. A. Written by Gregory Webster, Andrew Noland, Leroy Bonner, Marshall Jones, Ralph Middlebrook, Walter Morrison, Marvin Pierce, Norman Napier, William Edwards Devaughn, O’Shea Jackson, Lorenzo Patterson, Eric Wright, Andre Young, Roger Parker, Steve Arrington, Charles Carter and Waung Hankerton. © 1988, 1989 Songs Of Lastrada, Deeply Sliced Publishing, Montezk Music, Amazing Love Publishing, Boyz Club Music, Bridgeport Music Inc, Your Mother’s Music, Gangsta Boogie Music, Music Sales Corporation (ASCAP), Ruthless Attack Muzick, and Globeart Publishing. All rights on behalf of Songs Of Lastrada, Deeply Sliced Publishing administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Bridgeport Music, Inc., Lastrada Entertainment Company, Ltd., Ruthless Attack Muzick, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.

“Straight Outta Compton” used courtesy of Ruthless Attack Muzick.

“Miuzi Weighs a Ton”: words and music by Carlton Ridenhour and Hank Shocklee. Copyright © 1987 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., REACH GLOBAL SONGS, TERRORDOME MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC and SHOCKLEE MUSIC. All Rights for REACH GLOBAL SONGS, TERRORDOME MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC and SHOCKLEE MUSIC Controlled and Administered by REACH GLOBAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Reach Global Music Publishing.*

“Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos”: words and music by Carlton Ridenhour, William Drayton, James Boxley III and Eric Sadler.

Copyright © 1988 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., TERRORDOME MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, REACH GLOBAL SONGS, SHOCKLEE MUSIC and YOUR MOTHER'S MUSIC, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Reach Global Music Publishing.*

“Rebel Without a Pause”: words and music by Carlton Ridenhour, James Boxley III, Norman Rogers and Eric Sadler. Copyright © 1987 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., REACH GLOBAL SONGS, TERRORDOME MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, SHOCKLEE MUSIC, XTRA SLAMMIN MUSIC and YOUR MOTHER'S MUSIC, INC. All Rights for REACH GLOBAL SONGS, TERRORDOME MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, SHOCKLEE MUSIC, XTRA SLAMMIN MUSIC and YOUR MOTHER'S MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by REACH GLOBAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Reach Global Music Publishing.*

“Fight the Power”: words and music by Eric Sadler, Keith Boxley, James Boxley III and Carlton Ridenhour. Copyright © 1990 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., YOUR MOTHER'S MUSIC, INC., REACH GLOBAL, INC. and SHOCKLEE MUSIC. All Rights for YOUR MOTHER'S MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for SHOCKLEE MUSIC Controlled and Administered by REACH GLOBAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Reach Global Music Publishing.*

“Welcome to the Terrordome”: words and music by Carlton Ridenhour and Keith Boxley. Copyright © 1990 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. and REACH GLOBAL SONGS. All Rights for REACH GLOBAL SONGS Controlled and Administered by REACH GLOBAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Reach Global Music Publishing.*

“Evil that Men Do”: words and music by QUEEN LATIFAH. © 1989 WB MUSIC CORP. and QUEEN LATIFAH MUSIC INC. All Rights Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Sucker MC's”: words and music by JOSEPH SIMMONS, DARRYL MCDANIELS, and LARRY SMITH. © 1987 RABASSE MUSIC LTD. and RUSH GROOVE MUSIC. All Rights in the US and Canada administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by

Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“It’s Like That”: by FRANK A. FRIEDMAN, SHAWN CARTER and DAVID A. LOVE. © 1998 UNICHAPPELL MUSIC INC., EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., LIL LU LU PUBLISHING, and KID CAPRI PRODUCTIONS. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Peter Piper”: words and music by JOSEPH SIMMONS and DARRYL MCDANIELS. © 1986 RABASSE MUSIC LTD and RUSH GROOVE MUSIC. All Rights Administered by WARNER/CHAPPELL MUSIC LTD. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Proud to Be Black”: by JOSEPH SIMMONS, DARRYL MCDANIELS and ANDRE A. BROWN. © 1986 RABASSE MUSIC LTD and RUSH GROOVE MUSIC. All Rights Administered by WARNER/CHAPPELL MUSIC LTD. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Tramp”: written by Lowell Fulsom and Jimmy McCracklin. Copyright © 1986 BUDGET MUSIC (BMI)/Administered by BUG MUSIC and UNIVERSAL MUSIC—CAREERS. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Let’s Talk About Sex”: words and music by HERBIE “FINGERPRINTS” AZOR. © 1990 WB MUSIC CORP. and SONS OF K-OSS MUSIC, INC. All rights administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“P.S.K. What Does It Mean?”: words and music by Jesse Weaver. Copyright © 1990 by Universal Music—Z Songs. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Saturday Night”: words and music by Jesse Weaver, Jr. Copyright © 1987 by Universal Music—Z Songs. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Schoolly D.*

“Roxanne’s Revenge”: words and music by Lolita Gooden and Marlon Williams. Copyright © 1984 NOTTING DALE SONGS, INC., TAO POP PUBLISHING, CAK MUSIC PUBLISHING, INC., SONGS OF MARL and COLD CHILLIN MUSIC. All Rights for NOTTING DALE SONGS, INC. and TAO POP PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by

UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for SONGS OF MARL and COLD CHILLIN MUSIC Controlled and Administered by CAK MUSIC PUBLISHING, INC. Used under License from CAK Music Publishing, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of CAK Music Publishing, Inc. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Independent Woman” by Roxanne Shanté used under license from CAK Music Publishing, Inc.

“La Di Da Di” used by permission of Slick Rick Music Corp. / Entertaining Music.

“Children’s Story”: words and music by Ricky Walters. Copyright © 1988 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. and SLICK RICK MUSIC CORP. All Rights Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“I Shouldn’t Have Done It”: words and music by Ricky Walters and Vance Wright. Copyright © 1991 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., SLICK RICK MUSIC CORP., UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. and VANCE WRIGHT MUSIC. All Rights for SLICK RICK MUSIC CORP. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for VANCE WRIGHT MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Cusswords”: words and music by Todd Shaw. Copyright © 1989 by Universal Music—Z Songs and Strand Music. All Rights Administered by Universal Music—Z Songs. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“The Ghetto” used by permission of Don-Pow Music.

“I Left My Wallet in El Segundo”: words and music by Kamaal Fareed and Ali Shaheed Jones-Muhammad. Copyright © 1990 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC and Jazz Merchant Music. All Rights Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Check the Rhime”: words and music by Leon Ware, Minnie Riperton, Richard Rudolf, Kamal Ibn Jon Fareed, Malik Taylore, Muhammad Ali, Owen McIntyre, Roger Ball, Alan Gorrie, James Stuart, Stephen Ferrone and Malcolm Duncan. © 1991 Leon Ware Music c/o Jobete

Music, Dickiebird Music Publishing and Co. (BMI), Embassy Music Corporation (BMI), Zomba Music, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, JAZZ MERCHANT MUSIC and Joe's Songs, Inc. (ASCAP). All Rights for JOBETE MUSIC CO. INC. and DICKIE BIRD MUSIC Administered by MUSIC SALES CORPORATION. All rights for Dickiebird Music Publishing and Co. and Leon Ware Music administered by Embassy Music Corporation. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of "This Love I Have" by Leon Ware, Minnie Riperton and Richard Rudolph, © 1975 (Renewed 2003) Jobete Music Co. Inc. and Dickie Bird Music. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Music Sales Group, and Wixen Music Publishing, Inc.*

"Award Tour": words and music by Kamaal Fareed, Ali Shaheed Jones-Muhammad, Weldon Irvine and Malik Taylor. Copyright © 1993 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Jazz Merchant Music, ZOMBA ENTERPRISES, INC., and Nodlew Publishing. All Rights for Jazz Merchant Music Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

"Ego Trippin'" and "Critical Beatdown": by CEDRIC MILLER and KEITH THORNTON. © 1988 WB MUSIC CORP. & BEATS G MUSIC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

"Grand Verbalizer": words and music by Jason Hunter. Copyright © 1990 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. and VAINGLORIOUS MUSIC CO. All Rights Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

"A.D.A.M.": words and music by Robert Carson, Claude Grey, Jason Hunter, Ralph MacDonald and William Satler. Copyright © 1992 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC., VAINGLORIOUS MUSIC CO., CHERRY LANE MUSIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC. and ANTISIA-MUSIC, INC. All Rights for VAINGLORIOUS MUSIC CO. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights for ANTISIA-MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by

CHERRY LANE MUSIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

PART III: 1993-1999–RAP GOES MAINSTREAM

Excerpt from “Soul Food” performed by Goodie Mob. Written by Patrick Brown, Raymon Murray, Rico Wade, Brandon Bennett, Robert Barnett, Thomas Burton, Cameron Gipp, Willie Knighton, Frederick Bell and Antwan Patton. © 1995 ORGANIZED NOIZE MUSIC (BMI), BUG MUSIC-HITCO MUSIC (BMI), EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. (ASCAP), BIG SEXY MUSIC (ASCAP), BROWN BRANCHES AND GREEN BOTTLES MUSIC (BMI), GOD GIVEN MUSIC (BMI), MUTANT MINDFRAME MUSIC (BMI) and T MO 2 MUSIC (BMI). All Rights for ORGANIZED NOIZE MUSIC and BUG MUSIC-HITCO MUSIC Administered by BUG MUSIC. All Rights for BIG SEXY MUSIC Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for BROWN BRANCHES AND GREEN BOTTLES MUSIC (BMI), MUTANT MINDFRAME MUSIC (BMI) and T-MO 2 MUSIC (BMI) Administered by HAVE WE GOT MUSIC FOR YOU, a division of SHELLY BAY MUSIC LLC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Alien Music Services, Hal Leonard Corporation, and Shelly Bay Music.*

Excerpt from “Dirty South” written by Patrick Brown, Raymon Murray, Rico Wade, Frederick Bell, Cameron Gipp and Antwan Patton. © 1995 ORGANIZED NOIZE (BMI), BUG MUSIC-HITCO MUSIC (BMI), COOL PEOPLE MUSIC (BMI), MUTANT MINDFRAME MUSIC (BMI) and GNAT BOOTY MUSIC. All Rights for ORGANIZED NOIZE (BMI) and BUG MUSIC-HITCO MUSIC (BMI) Administered by BUG MUSIC. All Rights for GNAT BOOTY MUSIC Administered by CHRYSALIS MUSIC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Cool People Music, Hal Leonard Corporation, and Shelly Bay Music.*

“Tennessee”: words and music by Todd Thomas and Tarre Jones. © 1992 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. and ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT. All Rights Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Spontaneity”: Antonia Reed p/k/a “Bahamadia,” Shades of Brooklyn (ASCAP) c/o The Royalty Network, Inc. Used by permission of The

Royalty Network, Inc. and Samadia Music.

“Ebonics (Criminal Slang)”: words and music by Rondell Turner, Lester Coleman, Chris Martin and Lamont Coleman. Copyright © 2000 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., NOTTING HILL MUSIC, INC., BROWZ MUSIC, EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. and GIFTED PEARL MUSIC. All Rights for NOTTING HILL MUSIC, INC. and BROWZ MUSIC Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for GIFTED PEARL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Capital Punishment”: Ayatollah Music c/o The Royalty Network, Inc. Used by permission of The Royalty Network, Inc.

“Tha Crossroads”: words and music by O’Kelly Isley, Ronald Isley, Rudolph Isley, Ernie Isley, Marvin Isley, Chris Jasper, Bone, DJ U-Neek and Tony C. © 1996 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., BOVINA MUSIC INC., RUTHLESS ATTACK MUZIC and MO’ THUG MUZIC. All Rights for BOVINA MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Make Me Say It Again Girl.” *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Ruthless Attack Muzick.*

“Scenario”: words and music by Kamaal Fareed, Bryan Higgins, James Jackson, Ali Jones-Muhammad, Trevor Smith, Leroy Bonner, Marshall Jones, Norman Napier, Ralph Middlebrooks, Walter Morrison, Andrew Noland, Marvin Pierce, G. Webster and Malik Taulor. Copyright © 1998, 1992 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Jazz Merchant Music, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Jelly Tea Marijuana Music, Tziah Music and Bridgeport Music, Inc. All Right, for Jazz Merchant Music Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. All Rights for Jelly Tea Marijuana Music and Tziah Music Administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Could See”: words and music by D. Durant, Jim Seals and Trevor Smith. © 1997 WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP., T’ZIAH MUSIC and ACUFF-ROSE MUSIC, LTD. All Rights on Behalf of itself and T’ZIAH MUSIC Administered by

WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Alshamighty Music, Big Baller Music, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.

“Poet Laureate Infinity 3” written by Canibus *Germaine Williams*, © *ADD HER ALL MUSIC*. *Christoph Bauss db/a Freibank Musik*. Used by permission of Add Her All Music and The Royalty Network, Inc.

“What Am I” and “Wordsmith” used by permission of Derek “chino xl” Barbosa.

“I Used to Love H.E.R.”: words and music by Lonnie Lynn and Ernest Wilson. Copyright © 1994 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., SENSELESS MUSIC, CHRYSALIS SONGS and NO I.D. MUSIC PUBLISHING. All Rights for SENSELESS MUSIC Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for NO I.D. MUSIC PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by CHRYSALIS SONGS. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“The 6th Sense”: words and music by Kejuan Muchita, Albert Johnson, Lonnie Rashid Lynn, Christopher Martin and Bilal Oliver. © 2000, 2002 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., GIFTED PEARL MUSIC, INC., UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS, JUVENILE HELL, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—CAREERS, P. NOID PUBLISHING, SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., SENSELESS MUSIC, INC., CAREERS BMG MUSIC PUBLISHING IL, WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. and JAZZMEN PUBLISHING. All Rights for GIFTED PEARL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for JUVENILE HELL Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS. All Rights for P. NOID PUBLISHING Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—CAREERS. All Rights for SENSELESS MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for JAZZMEN PUBLISHING Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and JAZZMEN PUBLISHING Administered by WARNE-RTAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains a sample of “Allustrious” by Kejuan Muchita and Albert Johnson. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC*

PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.

“The Light”: words and music by Lonnie Rashid Lynn, James Yancey, Bobby Calwell, Norman Harris and Bruce Malament. Copyright © 2000 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., SENSELESS MUSIC, INC., UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC., E.P.C.H.Y. PUBLISHING, BOBBY CALDWELL MUSIC, THE MUSIC FORCE and BENDAN MUSIC. All Rights for SENSELESS MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for E.P.C.H.Y. PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Contains a sample of “Open Your Eyes” by B. Caldwell/N. Harris. *Reprinted by Permission of Bendan Music, Hal Leonard Corporation, and The Music Force LLC.*

“A Song for Assata”: words and music by Lonnie Lynn, James Poyser and Thomas Burton. Copyright © 2000 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., SENSELESS MUSIC, INC., JAJAPO MUSIC and THOMAS BURTON PUBLISHING DESIGNEE. All Rights for SENSELESS MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)”: words and music by Ishmael Butler and Mary Ann Vieira. © 1993 GLIRO MUSIC, INC. and WIDE GROOVES MUSIC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Strchin.” *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Damien”: words and music by Damon Blackman and Earl Simmons. Copyright © 1998 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Damon Blackman Music, Boomer X Publishing, Inc., EMI April Music Inc. and Dead Game Publishing. All Rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and Damon Blackman Music Administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights on behalf of Boomer X Publishing, Inc. Controlled and Administered by Universal Music Corp. All Rights on behalf of Dead Game Publishing Controlled and Administered by EMI April Music Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Who We Be”: words and music by Earl Simmons and Mickey Davis. Copyright © 2001 BOOMER X PUBLISHING, INC., DEAD GAME PUBLISHING and FIFTY FOUR VILL MUSIC LLC. All Rights for BOOMER X PUBLISHING, INC. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for DEAD GAME PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for FIFTY FOUR VILL MUSIC LLC Controlled and Administered by THE ROYALTY NETWORK. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Fifty Four Vill Music LLC (BMI) c/o The Royalty Network, Inc.*

“Sprinkle Me” Words and Music by Michael Mosely, Sam Bostic, Earl Stevens and Tanina Stevens. © 1995 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., STEADY MOBBIN’ MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, BEAUTIFUL MESS MUSIC, SUGA T MUSIC and E FORTY MUSIC PUBLISHING COMPANY. All Rights for STEADY MOBBIN’ MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for BEAUTIFUL MESS MUSIC, SUGA T MUSIC and E. FORTY MUSIC PUBLISHING CO. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of E Forty Music Publishing Company / Sick Wid It Records and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“My Life”: words and music by Deric Angelettie, Kayne West, Inga Marchand, Jamal Barrow, John Phillips and Michelle Phillips. © 1999 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., DERIC ANGELETTIE MUSIC INC., YE WORLD MUSIC, PORK MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. and SOLOMON’S WORK MUSIC. All Rights for DERIC ANGELETTIE MUSIC and YE WORLD MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for SOLOMON’S WORK MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “California Dreamin’” by John Phillips and Michelle Phillips. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation*

“BK Anthem”: words and music by Inga Marchand and Robert Kirkland. Copyright © 2001 by Universal Music—MGB Songs, Pork Music, Inc., Lynette’s Son In Law, and Missing Link Music. All Rights for Pork Music, Inc. Administered by Universal Music—MGB Songs. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by*

Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Missing Link Music/Lynette's Son In Law Music.

“Can You Find the Level of Difficulty in This?” and “The Guidelines” used by permission of Freestyle Fellowship and That Kind of Music.

“Vocab”: Copyright 1994 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Huss-Zwingli Publishing Inc., Obverse Creation Music Inc., Tete San Ko Publishing Inc. All rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“Fu-Gee-La”: words and music by Salaam Remi, Mary Brockert, Allen McGrier, Samuel Michel, Lauryn Hill, Wyclef Jean and Teena Marie. © 1996 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., SALAAM REMI MUSIC, INC., Huss-Zwingli Publishing Inc., Obverse Creation Music Inc, Tete San Ko Publishing Inc., MIDNIGHT MAGNET MUSIC, SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC and MCNELLA MUSIC. All Rights for SALAAM REMI MUSIC, INC. and MIDNIGHT MAGNET MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Huss-Zwingli Publishing Inc., Obverse Creation Music Inc., and Tete San Ko Publishing Inc. administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains a sample of “Oh La La La” by Teena Marie. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Ready or Not” Words and Music by Enya, Nicky Ryan, Roma Ryan, Thom Bell and William Hart. © 1996 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. and WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains samples of “Story Of Boadicea” by Enya, Nicky Ryan and Roma Ryan © 1987 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. *Reprinted by Permission of Brookside Music Corp. (Adm.) co Ocean Drive Music (BMI), o/b/o Nickel Shoe Music Co., Inc. Nickelshoe@aol.com and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Cell Therapy”: words and music by Robert Barnett, Patrick Brown, Thomas Callaway, Cameron Gipp, Willie Knighton, Raymon Murray, and Rico Wade, and published by Brown Branches and Green Bottles Music/Have We Got Music For You (BMI), God Given Music (BMI), Mutant Mindrame Music/Have We Got Music For You

(BMI), T-Mo 2 Music/Have We Got Music For You (BMI). Copyright © 1996 Bug Music-Songs Of Windswept Pacific, Bug Music-Hitco Music, Organized Noize Music and Publisher Unknown. All Rights for Bug Music-Hitco Music and Organized Noize Music Controlled and Administered by Bug Music Songs Of Windswept Pacific. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Alien Music Services, Hal Leonard Corporation, and Shelly Bay Music.*

“Classic” by Hieroglyphics from their “Full Circle” CD. Lyrics: Pallo “Pep Love” Peacock, Teren “Del” Jones, Tajai Massey. Music: Damian “Domino” Siguenza. Publishing: Domino Effect Music, Black Magnet Music, Happy Hemp Music, Jhsiri Music, Hiero Imperium Music, Sound Symbol Music.

“Virus” from Deltron 3030 CD. Lyrics: Teren “Del” Jones. Music: Dan “The Automator” Nakamura. Publishers: Happy Hemp Music, Sharkman Songs.

“Doo Wop (That Thing)” Copyright 1998 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Obverse Creation Music Inc. All rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“Lost Ones” written by Lauryn Hill and Frederick Hibbert. Copyright © 1998 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Obverse Creation Music Inc., and Universal—Songs Of PolyGram International, Inc. All Rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and Obverse Creation Music Administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Contains elements from “Bam Bam” by Frederick Hibbert, published by Universal—Songs Of PolyGram International, Inc. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Final Hour”: words and music by Lauryn Hill and Christopher Martin. Copyright © 1998 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, EMI April Music Inc. and Gifted Pearl Music. All Rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC Administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights on behalf of Gifted Pearl Music Administered by Kobalt Music Services America, Inc. (KMSA) and EMI April Music Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Kobalt Music Services America, Inc., and Sony/ATV Music*

Publishing LLC.

“The Nigga Ya Love to Hate”: words and music by O’Shea Jackson, Steven Arrington, Charles Carter, George Clinton, Waung Hankerson, Roger Parker, Eric “Vietnam” Sadler, Garry Shider and David Spradley. Copyright © 1990 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC, YOUR MOTHER’S MUSIC, INC., WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP., AMAZING LOVE PUBLISHING, GLOBEART PUBLISHING, Songs of Lastrada, Montezk Music, Amazing Love Publishing, DEEPLY SLICED PUBLISHING, BOYZ CLUB MUSIC, BRIDGEPORT MUSIC, INC., SOUTHFIELD MUSIC and WRITER DESIGNEE. All Rights for GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and YOUR MOTHER’S MUSIC Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All rights on behalf of Songs Of Lastrada, Deeply Sliced Publishing administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Hal Leonard Corporation, Lastrada Entertainment Company, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and Your Mother’s Music, Inc.*

“It’s a Man’s World”: words and music by O’Shea Jackson, Anthony (Pka Sir Jinx) Wheaton, James Brown and Betty Newsome. Copyright © 1990 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC, WB MUSIC CORP., DYNATONE PUBLISHING CO. and CLAMIKE RECORDS MUSIC. All Rights for GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for DYNATONE PUBLISHING CO. and CLAMIKE RECORDS MUSIC Administered by UNICHAPPELL MUSIC INC. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “It’s A Man’s Man’s Man’s World”: words and music by James Brown and Betty Newsome. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Bird in the Hand”: words and music by O’Shea Jackson, Mark Jordan, George Clinton, William Collins, Ronald Dunbar, Garry Shider and Donnie Sterling. Copyright © 1991 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC, STREET KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTIONS, INC., Songwriter Services, BRIDGEPORT MUSIC, INC., EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. and BRITTOLESE MUSIC. All Rights for

GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for BRITTOLESE MUSIC Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Contains elements of "Big Bang Theory" Words and Music by George Clinton, Ronald Dunbar and Donnie Sterling and "Bop Gun" Words and Music by George Clinton, William Collins and Garry Shider. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Street Knowledge Music.*

"It Was a Good Day": words and music by O'SHEA JACKSON, O'KELLY ISLEY, RUDOLPH ISLEY, RONALD ISLEY, ERNIE ISLEY, MARVIN ISLEY, Chris Jasper, Ice Cube, Arthur Goodman, Silvia Robinson and Harry Ray. © 1992, 1993 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., BOVINA MUSIC INC., GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC, GAMBI MUSIC, INC., and WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights for BOVINA MUSIC INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights on behalf of itself and GANGSTA BOOGIE MUSIC Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of "Footsteps In The Dark." *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

"Dead Presidents II": words and music by Shawn Carter, Peter Phillips, Nasir Jones, Lonnie Smith and David Willis. © 1996, 1997 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., WB MUSIC CORP., NESS, NITTY AND CAPONE, INC., EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., ZOMBA ENTERPRISES, INC., COSMIC ECHOES PUBLISHING CO., LIL LULU PUBLISHING, PETE ROCK PUBLISHING, ILL WILL MUSIC, INC., and BIGGIE MUSIC. All Rights for LIL LULU PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights on Behalf of Itself, NESS, NITTY AND CAPONE, INC. and PETE ROCK PUBLISHING Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

"Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)": words by Shawn Carter, Mark James and Martin Charnin. Music by Shawn Carter, Mark James and Charles Strouse. © 1998 EDWIN H. MORRIS & COMPANY, A Division of MPL Music Publishing, Inc., INSTANTLY PUBLISHING, CHARLES STROUSE, EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., PEER MUSIC LTD., LIL LULU PUBLISHING and 45 MUSIC. All Rights for

CHARLES STROUSE MUSIC Administered by WILLIAMSON MUSIC. All Rights for LIL LULU PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights on Behalf of INSTANTLY PUBLISHING Administered by WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC LTD. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “It’s The Hard Knock Life” (from ANNIE). *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Charles Strouse Music Publishing, and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Renegade”: words and music by Shawn Carter, Marhsall B. Mathers, and Luis Edgardo Resto *Kobalt Music Services America Inc (KMSA) obo Eight Mile Steyle LLC* Resto World Music (BMI/ASCAP). © 2001 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., LIL LULU PUBLISHING, EIGHT MILE STYLE LLC, MARTIN AFFILIATED LLC, MARSHALL B MATHERS INC. and JACEFF MUSIC. All Rights for LIL LULU PUBLISHING, EIGHT MILE STYLE LLC, MARTIN AFFILIATED LLC and MARSHALL B MATHERS INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for JACEF MUSIC Controlled and Administered by KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Kobalt Music Services America.*

“December 4th”: words and music by Shawn Carter, Elijah Powell and Walter Boyd. © 2003 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., CARTER BOYS PUBLISHING, VAN MCCOY MUSIC and OCEANS BLUE MUSIC LTD. All Rights for CARTER BOYS PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for OCEANS BLUE MUSIC LTD. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “That’s How Long.” *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“99 Problems”: words and music by Norman Landsberg, John Ventura, Leslie Weinstein, Felix Pappalardi, William Squire, Alphonso Henderson and Tracy Morrow. Copyright © 1993, 2003 UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—CAREERS, SONGS OF THE KNIGHT, WB MUSIC CORP., AMMO DUMP MUSIC, CARRUMBA MUSIC, BRIDGEPORT MUSIC, INC., Reach Global Inc., and RHYME SYNDICATE MUSIC. All Rights for SONGS OF THE KNIGHT Controlled and Administered by SPIRIT TWO MUSIC, INC.

All Rights for AMMO DUMP MUSIC and CARRUMBA MUSIC Controlled and Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights on behalf of itself, AMMO DUMP MUSIC and CARRUMBA MUSIC Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “The Big Beat,” “Long Red,” “99 Problems” and “Straight Outta Compton.” *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Hal Leonard Corporation, Reach Global Music Publishing, and Spirit Music Group.*

“Sound of Da Police”: words and music by Rodney Lemay, Lawrence Parker, Eric Burdon, Bryan Chandler and Alan Lomax. Copyright © 1993 LONDON MUSIC U.K., UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, BDP MUSIC, UNICHAPPELL MUSIC INC., SLAMINA MUSIC, LUDLOW MUSIC, INC. and CARBERT MUSIC INC. All Rights for LONDON MUSIC U.K. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL —POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights for BDP MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights for SLAMINA MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNICHAPPELL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Inside Looking Out (Rosie)”: words and music by Eric Burdon, Alan Lomax and Bryan Chandler. *Reprinted by Permission of Carbert Music Inc., Hal Leonard Corporation, and Ludlow Music.*

“MCs Act Like They Don’t Know”: words and music by Lawrence Parker and Chris Martin. © 1995 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., GIFTED PEARL MUSIC and UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights for GIFTED PEARL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Afro Puffs”: words and music by Robin Allen and Delmar Drew Arnaud. Copyright © 1994, 1998 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., VRIJON MUSIC, CLARA’S GREAT GRAN’, SUGE PUBLISHING, and Robin Allen Pub Designee/ASCAP/Delmar Arnaud Musiq/BMI/Suge Publishing/ASCAP (admin. By EverGreen Copyrights). All Rights for VRIJON MUSIC. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Ever Green Copyrights, Inc. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Unfuckwitable”: words and music by Chris Martin, Robyn Allen and Norman Whitfield. © 2002 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., GIFTED PEARL MUSIC, STONE DIAMOND MUSIC CORP. and CLARA’S GREAT GRAN’. All Rights for GIFTED PEARL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Queen Bitch”: by Kimberly Jones, Carlos Broady, Nashiem Myrick. © 1996, 1997 Sony/ ATV Music Publishing LLC, Six July Publishing, Warner Tamerlane, UNDEAS MUSIC, NOTORIOUS K.I.M. MUSIC, and NASHMACK MUSIC. All Rights on Behalf of UNDEAS MUSIC and NOTORIOUS K.I.M. MUSIC Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Six July Publishing administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.

“Hoodlum Poetry” written by Mia Young, Craig Bazile and Vyshon Miller, Copyright 1997 LP Boyz Music, LLC and Ultra Empire Music. Published by Ultra Empire Music / Bookoo Jammin Music (BMI).

“Shook Ones, Pt. II”: words and music by Albert Johnson and Kejuan Muchita. Copyright © 1995 by Universal Music—Careers, P. Noid Publishing, Universal Music—MGB Songs and Juvenile Hell. All Rights for P. Noid Publishing Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights for Juvenile Hell Administered by Universal Music—MGB Songs. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Quiet Storm (Remix)”: words and music by Kejuan Muchita, Albert Johnson, Melvin Glover, Sylvia Robinson and Kimberly Jones. Copyright © 1999 by Universal Music—MGB Songs, Juvenile Hell, Universal Music—Careers, P. Noid Publishing, JRL Music, Inc., Sugar Hill Music Publishing Ltd., Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., Notorious K.I.M. Music and Undeas Music. All Rights for Juvenile Hell Administered by Universal Music—MGB Songs. All Rights for P. Noid Publishing Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights for Notorious K.I.M. Music and Undeas Music Administered by Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp. All rights for SUGAR HILL MUSIC PUBLISHING Administered by WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

CANADA LTD. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved.
Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Hal Leonard Corporation, and JRL Music, Inc.

Excerpt from “Nothing Lasts Forever”: words and music by Nasir Jones and Leshan Lewis. Copyright © 2002 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Universal Music—Z Songs, Universal Music Corp. and Mawkeens Music. All Rights for Mawkeens Music Administered by Universal Music Corp. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Live at the BBQ (Main Source)”: words and music by Paul Mitchell, Shawn McKenzie and Kevin McKenzie. © 1991 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., GRAB BAG PUBLISHING and FROZEN SOAP SONGS. All Rights for GRAB BAG PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Frozen Soap Songs and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“N.Y. State of Mind”: words and music by Eric Barrier, William Griffin, Chris E. Martin and Nasir Jones. © 1994 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., GIFTED PEARL MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z SONGS and SKEMATICS MUSIC, INC. All Rights for GIFTED PEARL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by Kobalt Music Series America, Inc. (KMSA) and EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for SKEMATICS MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Mahogany” by Eric Barrier and William Griffin. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Kobalt Music Services America, and Skematics Music, Inc.*

“Life’s a Bitch”: words and music by Oliver Scott, Nasir Jones, Ronnie Wilson and Anthony Cruz. Copyright © 1994 by Universal Music—Z Songs, Skematics Music, Inc., Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Taking Care Of Business Music, Inc. and Minder Music (USA). All Rights for Skematics Music, Inc. Administered by Universal Music—Z Songs. o/b/o Ronnie Wilson and Oliver Scott: Published in USA & Canada—Taking Care Of Business Music, Inc. (BMI) / Minder Music (ASCAP). Rest Of World: Published by Minder Music Ltd. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Minder Music Ltd., and Skematics Music, Inc.*

“The World is Yours”: words and music by Nasir Jones and Peter Phillips. Copyright © 1994 by Universal Music—Z Songs, Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Skematics Music, Inc. and Pete Rock Publishing. All Rights for Skematics Music, Inc. Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Reach Global Inc., and Skematics Music, Inc.*

“Ether”: words and music by Nasir Jones and Rondell Turner. Copyright © 2001 by Universal Music—Z Songs, Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Songs Of Universal, Inc., Notting Hill Music, Inc. and Browz Music. All Rights for Notting Hill Music, Inc. and Browz Music Administered by Songs Of Universal, Inc. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Black President”: words and music by Joshua Armour, James D’Agostino, Larry Goodman, Nasir Jones, Derrick McDowell, Tupac Shakur, Larry Troutman and Roger Troutman. Copyright © 2008 UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z SONGS, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., DJ GREEN LANTERN, INC., SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, SAJA MUSIC CO., SONGS OF LASTRADA, SONGS OF MADNESS, LAWHOUSE MUSIC, Songwriter Services, and WRITER DESIGNEE. All Rights for DJ GREEN LANTERN, INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC. Controlled and Administered by SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Lastrada Entertainment Company, Lawhouse Music, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“One More Chance (Remix)”: words and music by Sean “Puffy” Combs, Notorious B.I.G., Carl Thompson and Bluez Brothers. © 1994, 1995 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., JUSTIN COMBS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., BIG POPPA MUSIC, SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, NINTH STREET TUNNEL MUSIC, INC. and DISTANT BEATS. All Rights for JUSTIN COMBS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC. and BIG POPPA MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC and NINTH STREET TUNNEL MUSIC, INC. Administered by SONY/ATV MUSIC

PUBLISHING LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Norman Glover/Reggie Ellis for Distant Beats Music Publishing, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Ten Crack Commandments”: words and music by Khary Kimani Turner, Chris Martin and Christopher Wallace. © 1997 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., WEBLIFE, HERTZ-RENTATUNE, GIFTED PEARL MUSIC and JUSTIN COMBS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“I Got a Story to Tell”: words and music by Sean Combs, Christopher Wallace, Anthony Best and Chucky Thompson. © 1997 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, JUSTIN COMBS PUBLISHING, BIG POPPA MUSIC, UNIVERSAL—MGB SONGS, STILL DIGGIN’ MUSIC, and NINTH STREET TUNNEL MUSIC INC. All Rights for JUSTIN COMBS PUBLISHING and BIG POPPA MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for STILL DIGGIN’ MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—MGB SONGS. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Ninth Street Tunnel Music Inc administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Interview with a Vampire” used by permission of Whutevazklea Musik.

Excerpt from “Proceed”: words and music by Ahmir Thompson, Tarik Collins, Malik Smart, Leonard Hubbard and Scott Storch. Copyright © 1994 by Universal Music—Careers, Grand Negaz Music, Scott Storch Music and TVT Music Inc. All Rights for Grand Negaz Music Administered by Universal Music—Careers. Published by Reservoir Media Music (ASCAP). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Reservoir Media Music, and Windowcheese Music.*

“The Next Movement”: words and music by Ahmir Thompson, Tarik Collins, Leonard Hubbard, Mercedes Martinez, Tracey Moore and

Jimmy Gray. Copyright © 1999 by Universal Music—Careers, Grand Negaz Music, Astral Body Music and Jimmy Gray Publishing Designee. All Rights for Grand Negaz Music and Astral Body Music Administered by Universal Music—Careers. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Act Too ... The Love of My Life”: words and music by Tarik Collins, Leonard Hubbard, Lonnie Lynn, James Poyser and Ahmir Thompson. Copyright © 1999 by Universal Music—Careers, Grand Negaz Music, Songs Of Universal, Inc., Senseless Music, Inc. and Jajapo Music, Inc. All Rights for Grand Negaz Music Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights for Senseless Music, Inc. Controlled and Administered by Songs Of Universal, Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“You Got Me”: words and music by Tariq Trotter, Ahmir Thompson, Scott Storch and Jill Scott. Copyright © 1999 by Universal Music—Careers, Grand Negaz Music, Scott Storch Music/Reservoir Media Music (ASCAP), Blues Baby and Blondie Rockwell. All Rights for Grand Negaz Music Administered by Universal Music—Careers. Published by Scott Storch Music/Reservoir Media Music (ASCAP). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Reservoir Media Music.*

“Web”: words and music by Tarik Collins, Leonard Hubbard, Ahmir Thompson and Robert Dorsey Jr. Copyright © 2004 by Universal Music—Careers, Grand Negaz Music and Brought To Life Music, Inc. All Rights for Grand Negaz Music Administered by Universal Music—Careers. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Roots Band/Brought to Life Music Publishing.*

“Mind Playing Tricks on Me”: words and music by Isaac Hayes, Brad Jordan, Willie Dennis and Doug King. Copyright © 1991 INCENSE PRODUCTIONS, INC. and NTHE-WATER PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights for INCENSE PRODUCTIONS, INC. Controlled and Administered by IRVING MUSIC, INC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“I Seen a Man Die”: words and music by Joseph Johnson and Brad Jordan. © 1994 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., STRAIGHT CASH MUSIC and N THE WATER MUSIC PUBLISHING. All Rights for STRAIGHT CASH MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Nuthin’ But a ‘G’ Thang”: words and music by Frederick Knight, Leon Haywood and Cordozar Calvin Broadus. Copyright © 1993, 1994 IRVING MUSIC, INC., TWO-KNIGHT PUBLISHING CO., SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., MARI KNIGHT MUSIC, SUGE PUBLISHING, WB MUSIC CORP., and Snoop Doggy Dogg Pub Designee/ASCAP/Suge Publishing/ASCAP (admin. By EverGreen Copyrights)/Jim Edd Music/BMI/Music of the World/BMI. All Rights for TWO-KNIGHT PUBLISHING CO. Controlled and Administered by IRVING MUSIC, INC. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of EverGreen Copyrights, Inc. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Gin and Juice”: words and music by Harry Wayne Casey, Calvin C. Broadus, Richard R. Finch, Cordozar Broadus, Andre Romell Young, Steve Arrington, Steve Washington, Raymond Turner, Daniel Webster and Mark Adams. © 1992, 1993 EMI LONGITUDE MUSIC, WB MUSIC CORP., SUGE PUBLISHING, HARRICK MUSIC, WARNER TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP., COTILLION MUSIC, SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, and Snoop Doggy Dogg Pub Designee/ASCAP/Suge Publishing/ASCAP (admin. By EverGreen Copyrights)/Sony Tunes Inc./ASCAP/ LONGITUDE MUSIC CO./BMI. All Rights on behalf of SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC Administered by SONY/ATV MUSIC PUBLISHING LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of EverGreen Copyrights, Inc., Hal Leonard Corporation, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Freestyle Conversation” written by Calvin C. Broadus, Joseph Priest Brooks. © Copyright 1996 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, High Priest Publishing, Doggystyle Publishing, Suge Publishing, and Snoop Doggy Dogg Pub Designee/ASCAP/Suge Publishing/ASCAP (admin. By EverGreen Copyrights)/High Priest Publishing/ASCAP/Famous Music, LLC/ASCAP. All rights on behalf

of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and High Priest Publishing administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Excerpt from “Same Song”: words and music by Ronald Brooks, Gregory Jacobs, Tupac Shakur, George Clinton, William Collins, J. S. Theracon, Walter Morrison and James Vitti. Copyright © 1991 by Universal Music—Z Songs, Pubhowyalike Publishing, Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC, Universal Music Corp., EMI Blackwood Music Inc., Rubber Band Music, Inc., Bridgeport Music, Inc. and Writer Designee. All Rights for Pubhowyalike Publishing Administered by Universal Music—Z Songs. All Rights for Rubber Band Music, Inc. Administered by EMI Blackwood Music Inc. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Bridgeport Music, Inc. and Hal Leonard Corporation*

“Brenda’s Got a Baby”: words and music by Deon Evans and Tupac Shakur. Copyright © 1991 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., UNIVERSAL—Z SONGS and BACK ON POINT MUSIC. All Rights for BACK ON POINT MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—Z SONGS. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Dear Mama”: words and music by Tupac Shakur, Joe Sample, Tony Pizarro, Charles Simmons, Joseph Jefferson, Bruce Hawes and Terrance Thomas (aka) D.J. Master Tee. Track produced by D.J. Master Tee for Masterlab Music Pub. (BMI). Copyright © 1995, 1996 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., JOSHUA’S DREAM MUSIC, SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., CHRYSALIS MUSIC LTD., WB MUSIC CORP., THE UNDERGROUND CONNECTION, INTERSCOPE PEARL MUSIC, INC., FOUR KNIGHTS MUSIC COMPANY, WARNER TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. and MASTER LAB PUBLISHING. All Rights for JOSHUA’S DREAM MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for CHRYSALIS MUSIC LTD. in the United States and Canada Administered by CHRYSALIS SONGS. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and THE UNDERGROUND CONNECTION Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “In All My Wildest Dreams” by Joe Sample and “Sadie” by Charles Simmons, Joseph Jefferson and Bruce Hawes. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Hal Leonard Corporation, and Master Lab Music Publishing.*

“So Many Tears”: words and music by Stevie Wonder, Tupac Shakur, Greg Jacobs and Eric Baker. (c) 1995 JOBETE MUSIC CO. INC. and BLACK BULL MUSIC c/o EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., JOSHUA’S DREAM MUSIC, PUBHOWYALIKE PUBLISHING and TRI-BOY MUSIC. All Rights for JOBETE MUSIC CO. INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for JOSHUA’S DREAM MUSIC Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for PUBHOWYALIKE PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “That Girl” by Stevie Wonder. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Triboy Music.*

“All Eyez on Me”: words and music by Tyruss Himes, Johnny Lee Jackson, James Pennington and Tupac Shakur. Copyright © 1996 by Universal Music—Careers, Universal Music—MGB Songs, Universal Music Corp., Joshua’s Dream Music, Songs Of Universal, Inc., Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC and Imperial Loco Entertainment. All Rights for Joshua’s Dream Music Controlled and Administered by Universal Music Corp. All Rights for Imperial Loco Entertainment Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Changes”: words and music by Deon Evans, Bruce Hornsby and Tupac Shakur. Copyright © 1998 by Universal Music—Z Songs, Back On Point Music, Universal Music Corp., WB Music Corp., Joshua’s Dream Music, Interscope Pearl Music, and Zappo Music. All Rights for Back On Point Music Administered by Universal Music—Z Songs. All rights on behalf of Zappo Music administered Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“How Long Will They Mourn Me”: words and music by Walter Burns, James Gass, Warren Griffin III, Tyruss Himes, Diron Rivers and Tupac Shakur. Copyright © 1994 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., JOSHUA’S DREAM MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, IMPERIAL LOCO ENTERTAINMENT, DA’GASS CO., WARREN G. PUBLISHING (ASCAP) and WRITER DESIGNEE. All Rights for JOSHUA’S DREAM MUSIC Controlled and Administered by SONGS

OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for IMPERIAL LOCO ENTERTAINMENT Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Warren G Publishing.*

“Emotions”: words and music by Samuel Lindley and Carl Mitchell. Copyright © 1997 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., CREATOR’S WAY MUSIC, INC., STAY HIGH MUSIC and IT’S ALL GOOD! MUSIC. All Rights for CREATOR’S WAY MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Murder”: words and music by Chad Butler and Bernard Freeman. Copyright © 1996 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC and Pimp My Pen International. All Rights Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Dirty Money”: words and music by Chad Butler and Bernard Freeman. Copyright © 2001 by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC and Pimp My Pen International. All Rights Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Protect Ya Neck”: words and music by Dennis Coles, Robert Diggs, Gary Grice, Lamont Hawkins, Jason Hunter, Clifford Smith, Corey Woods and Russell Jones. Copyright © 1993 by Universal Music—Careers, Wu Tang Publishing, Inc., Ramecca Publishing, Inc. and Universal Music—MGB Songs. All Rights for Wu Tang Publishing, Inc. and Ramecca Publishing, Inc. Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“C.R.E.A.M.”: words and music by Gary Grice, Clifford Smith, Cory Woods, Dennis Coles, Jason Hunter, Lamont Hawkins, Robert F. Diggs Jr., Russell Jones, Isaac Hayes and David Porter. Copyright © 1993 by Universal Music—MGB Songs, Universal Music—Careers, Wu-Tang Publishing and Irving Music, Inc. All Rights for Wu-Tang

Publishing Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Bring the Pain”: words and music by Clifford Smith and Robert F. Diggs Jr. Copyright © 1994 by Universal Music—Careers, Wu-Tang Publishing and Ramecca Publishing. All Rights Administered by Universal Music—Careers. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Duel of the Iron Mic”: words and music by Robert Diggs, Gary Grice, Russell Jones, Herbert Magidson and Allie Wrubel. Copyright © 1995 by Universal Music—Careers, Ramecca Publishing, Inc., Universal—Songs of Polygram International, Inc., BERNHARDT MUSIC, WU TANG PUBLISHING, INC., Music Sales Corporation, Magidson Music c/o SGA, Careers-BMG Music, GZA Music Publishing and Writer Designee. All Rights for Ramecca Publishing, Inc. Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights for GZA Music Publishing Controlled and Administered by Universal—Songs of Polygram International, Inc. All Rights on Behalf of BERNHARDT MUSIC Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. Contains elements of “I’m Afraid The Masquerade Is Over.” All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Hal Leonard Corporation, and Music Sales Corporation.*

“Incarcerated Scarfaces”: words and music by Robert Diggs, Abrim Tilmon and Corey Woods. Copyright © 1996 by Universal Music—Careers, Ramecca Publishing, Inc., Wu Tang Publishing, Inc. and Bridgeport Music, Inc. All Rights for Ramecca Publishing, Inc. and Wu Tang Publishing, Inc. Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Brooklyn Zoo”: by RUSSELL JONES and DERRICK HARRIS. © 1995 WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP., WU-TANG PUBLISHING and BRIGHT SUMMIT MUSIC. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and WU-TANG PUBLISHING administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Bright Summit Music.

“Daytona 500”: words and music by Dennis Coles, Robert Diggs, Darryl Hill, Bob James and Corey Woods. Copyright © 1998 by Universal Music—Careers, Ramecca Publishing, Inc., Wu Tang Publishing, Inc., Remidi Music and Writer Designee. All Rights for Ramecca Publishing, Inc. and Wu Tang Publishing, Inc. Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Remidi Music.*

“The M.G.M.”: words and music by Dennis Coles, Corey Woods and Derrick Harris. Copyright © 1997 by Universal Music—Careers, Wu Tang Publishing, Inc. and Blue Summit Music. All Rights for Wu Tang Publishing, Inc. Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Bright Summit Music and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Triumph”: words and music by Dennis Coles, Robert Diggs, Gary Grice, Lamont Hawkins, Darryl Hill, Jason Hunter, Russell Jones, Clifford Smith, Elgin Turner and Corey Woods. Copyright © 1997 by Universal Music—Careers, Ramecca Publishing, Inc., Wu Tang Publishing, Inc., Universal Music—MGB Songs and Diggs Family Music, Inc. All Rights for Ramecca Publishing, Inc. and Wu Tang Publishing, Inc. Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Shakey Dog”: Leon Marcus Michels and Nicholas Anthony Movshon *Kobalt Music Services America, Inc (KMSA). For My Son Publishing (ASCAP) Wait That’s Mine Music (BMI) c/o The Royalty Network, Inc.*

PART IV: 2000-2010–NEW MILLENNIUM RAP

“9–5ers Anthem” and “No Regrets” used by permission of Don’t Jump! Music

“Fuck You Lucy” and “Sunshine” written by Slug of Atmosphere, S. Davey for Upsidedown Heart Music (ASCAP). Used courtesy of Ant Turn That Snare Down and Rhymesayers Entertainment www.rhymesayers.com/atmosphere.

“The Truth”: words and music by Dwight Grant, Kanye West and Graham Nash. © 1999 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., YE WORLD MUSIC, NASH NOTES, BUG MUSIC-MUSIC OF WINDSWEPT, HITCO SOUTH and SHAKUR AL DIN MUSIC. All Rights for YE WORLD MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All rights on behalf of Nash Notes administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights for HITCO SOUTH and SHAKUR AL DIN MUSIC Controlled and Administered by BUG MUSIC-MUSIC OF WINDSWEPT. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Chicago” by Graham Nash. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Alphabet Aerobics” used by permission of Cut Chemist, Songs Music Publishing, LLC o/b/o Ram Island Songs (ASCAP), Gab’s Gifted Music (ASCAP), Obrafo Music (ASCAP).

“My Pen & Pad” used by permission of Songs Music Publishing, LLC o/b/o Ram Island Songs (ASCAP), Gab’s Gifted Music (ASCAP), Obrafo Music (ASCAP).

“Room with a View” and “Picket Fence” used by permission of Rhymesayers Entertainment, LLC.

“Childz Play”: performed by Cee-Lo, Words and Music by Christopher Bridges, Thomas Callaway, Patrick Brown, Raymon Murray and Rico Wade. © 2004 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., God Given Music (BMI), LUDACRIS MUSIC PUBLISHING INC., CHRYSALIS MUSIC LTD. and ORGANIZED NOIZE MUSIC. All Rights for LUDACRIS MUSIC PUBLISHING INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for CHRYSALIS MUSIC LTD. in the

U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by CHRYSALIS SONGS. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Alien Music Services and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Grindin’”: words and music by Pharrell Williams, Chad Hugo, Gene Thornton and Terrence Thornton. © 2002 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., WATERS OF NAZARETH, EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., CHASE CHAD MUSIC, Songs Music Publishing, LLC o/b/o Songs For Beans (BMI), GENMARC and TERRORDOME MUSIC. All Rights for WATERS OF NAZARETH Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for CHASE CHAD MUSIC, GENMARC and TERRORDOME MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and SONGS Music Publishing LLC.*

“Police State” used by permission of The War of Art Music (BMI) *Walk Like a Warrior Music (BMI)* Hi Yo Silver Music (ASCAP) / Gold Touch Music (ASCAP) by arrangement with The Royalty Network, Inc.

“Hip Hop” used by permission of War of Art Publishing (BMI) / *Walk Like A Warrior Music (BMI)* c/o The Royalty Network, Inc.

“Benzi Box”: words and music by Brian Burton, Thomas Callaway, and Daniel Thompson. © Copyright 2007 Lord Dihoo Music/Nettwerk One Music A Limited (40%). All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by permission of Metalface and Music Sales Limited.

“Saliva”: words and music by Daniel Thompson and R J Krohn. © Copyright 2007 Lord Dihoo Music/Nettwerk One Music A Limited (50%). All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by permission of Metalface and Music Sales Limited.

“Figaro”: performed by MF Doom, written by Otis Jackson Jr. and Daniel Dumile Thompson. © Copyright 2006 Lord Dihoo Music, Madlib Invazion Music (BMI), and Nettwerk One Music Canada Ltd. Written By: Otis Jackson, Jr. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by permission of Metalface, Music Sales Limited, and Shelly Bay Music.

“Just Don’t Give a Fuck”: Copyright 1998 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Eight Mile Style Music. All rights administered by Sony/ATV

Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“The Way I Am”: Copyright 2000 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Eight Mile Style Music. All rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“Stan”: words and music by Marshall Mathers, Paul Herman and Dido Armstrong. Copyright © 2000 by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Eight Mile Style Music, ENSIGN MUSIC, EMI Blackwood Music Inc., Champion Management and Music Ltd., Cheeky Music, WARNER/CHAPPELL MUSIC LTD, and WB Music Corp. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC and Eight Mile Style Music administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights on behalf of Champion Management and Music Ltd. Administered by EMI Blackwood Music Inc. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Hal Leonard Corporation, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Lose Yourself”: Luis Edgardo Resto, Marshall B. Mathers and Jeffrey Irwin Bass *Kobalt Music Services America Inc. (KMSA) obo Eight Mile Style LLC* Resto World Music.

“Mockingbird”: Luis Edgardo Resto and Marshall B. Mathers *Kobalt Music Services America Inc. (KMSA) obo Eight Mile Style LLC* Resto World Music (ASCAP/BMI).

“When I’m Gone”: words and music by Marshall B. Mathers and Luis Edgardo Resto. Copyright © 2005 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., SHROOM SHADY MUSIC and JACEFF MUSIC. All Rights for SHROOM SHADY MUSIC Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for JACEFF MUSIC Controlled and Administered by KOBALT MUSIC PUBLISHING AMERICA, INC. *Kobalt Music Services America Inc (KMSA) obo Eight Mile Style LLC/Resto World Music (BMI/ ASCAP).* All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Kobalt Music Services America.*

“Love is Blind”: words by Shari Watson and Eve Jeffers. Music by

Kasseem Dean. © 1999 DEAD GAME PUBLISHING, SOLIDEAS SONGS, BUG MUSIC-SONGS OF WINDSWEPT PACIFIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., SWIZZ BEATZ and BLONDIE ROCKWELL. All Rights for DEAD GAME PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for SWIZZ BEATS and BLONDIE ROCKWELL Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Bottle Dreams” and “Now” used by permission of Rhymesayers Entertainment, LLC.

“Dumb it Down”: words and music by Wasalu Jaco, Rudolph Lopez and DeMarco Castle. Copyright © 2007 by Universal Music—Careers, Heavy As Heaven Music, Universal Music—MGB Songs, 1st And 15th Publishing, Mr. Lopez Music and Writer Designee. All Rights for Heavy As Heaven Music Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights for 1st And 15th Publishing and Mr. Lopez Music Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—MGB Songs. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Hip-Hop Saved My Life”: words and music by Wasalu Jaco, Rudolph Lopez and Nicholle Leary. Copyright © 2007 by Universal Music—Careers, Heavy As Heaven Music, Universal Music—MGB Songs, 1st And 15th Publishing, Mr. Lopez Music, Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 59 Darlene Ct. Music, and Writer Designee. All Rights for Heavy As Heaven Music Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—Careers. All Rights for 1st And 15th Publishing and Mr. Lopez Music Controlled and Administered by Universal Music—MGB Songs. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 59 Darlene Ct. Music, administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“50 Shot Ya (freestyle)” Words and Music by LYN COLLINS, James Brown, Paula Lindsay and Curtis Jackson. Copyright © 2003 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., DYNATONE PUBLISHING COMPANY, 50 CENT MUSIC and DYNATONE PUBLISHING CO. All Rights for 50

CENT MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights on Behalf of DYNATONE PUBLISHING COMPANY Administered by UNICHAPPELL MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Lovesong,” “Hater’s Anthem,” and “Don’t Rush Me” used by permission of Jean Grae.

“Dance with the Devil” and “Industrial Revolution” used by permission of Immortal Technique.

“What’s Hardcore?” Copyright 2006 Sony/ATV Music Publishing Canada, Mawga Dawg Inc., Worldwide West Music Inc. All rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“My Old Home” Copyright 2006 Sony/ATV Music Publishing Canada, Publisher(s) Unknown.

All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing Canada administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“RE:DEFinition”: words and music by Tony Cottrell, Talib Kweli and Dante Smith. © 1998 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., MEDINA SOUND MUSIC, EMPIRE INTERNATIONAL, BUG MUSIC-SONGS OF WINDSWEPT PACIFIC, DJ HI-TEK MUSIC and PENSKILLS MUSIC. All Rights for MEDINA SOUND MUSIC and EMPIRE INTERNATIONAL Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for DJ HI-TEK MUSIC and PENSKILLS MUSIC Controlled and Administered by BUG MUSIC-SONGS OF WINDSWEPT PACIFIC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“For Women”: words and music by Talib Kweli and Tony Cottrell. Copyright © 2000 Bug Music-Songs Of Windswept Pacific, DJ Hi Tek Music Publishing and Pen Skills Music. All Rights Administered by Bug Music-Songs Of Windswept Pacific. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Give ‘Em Hell” Copyright 2007 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Lyfe

In Music, Publisher(s) Unknown. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Lyfe In Music administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. Used by permission of Hear My Music. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“Tha Block Is Hot”: words and music by Dwayne Carter, Christopher Dorsey, Teruis Gray and Byron Thomas. Copyright © 1999 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., FRESH IS THE WORD, MONEY MACK MUSIC and CHOPPER CITY MUSIC PUBLISHING. All Rights for FRESH IS THE WORD Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Ultra International Music Publishing.*

“Dr. Carter”: words and music by David A. Axelrod, Dwayne Carter and Kasseem Dean. © 2008 MORLEY MUSIC CO., WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP., YOUNG MONEY PUBLISHING, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. and MONZA RONZA. All Rights for MONZA RONZA Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and YOUNG MONEY PUBLISHING, INC. Administered by WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“All For You”: written by Patrick Douthit, Phonte Coleman, Thomas Jones and Michael Franks. © 2005 IT’S A WONDERFUL WORLD MUSIC (BMI), ALWAYS BIGGER AND BETTER MUSIC (BMI), BUG MUSIC-HITCO MUSIC (BMI), VEORIS MUSIC (ASCAP), IMAGINE NATION MUSIC (ASCAP), BIG POOH MUSIC (ASCAP), BUG MUSIC-MUSIC OF WINDSWEPT (ASCAP) and MISSISSIPPI MUD MUSIC CO. All Rights for IT’S A WONDERFUL WORLD MUSIC (BMI), ALWAYS BIGGER AND BETTER MUSIC (BMI), BUG MUSIC-HITCO MUSIC (BMI), VEORIS MUSIC (ASCAP), IMAGINE NATION MUSIC (ASCAP), BIG POOH MUSIC (ASCAP) and BUG MUSIC-MUSIC OF WINDSWEPT (ASCAP) Administered by BUG MUSIC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Mississippi Mud Music Co.*

Excerpt from “I Do It for Hip Hop”: Words and Music by Christopher

Bridges, Shawn Carter, Wyatt Coleman, Youtha Fowler and Nasir Jones. © 2008 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., LUDACRIS WORLDWIDE PUBLISHING, CARTER BOYS PUBLISHING, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, ILL WILL MUSIC, INC. and WRITER DESIGNEE. All Rights for LUDACRIS WORLDWIDE PUBLISHING and CARTER BOYS PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for ILL WILL MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of DJ Nabs Publishing and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Southern Hospitality”: words and music by Christopher Bridges and Pharrell Williams © 2000 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., LUDACRIS MUSIC PUBLISHING, EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., WATERS OF NAZARETH and SONGS Music Publishing, LLC o/b/o Songs for Beans (BMI). All Rights for LUDACRIS MUSIC PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for WATERS OF NAZARETH Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and SONGS Music Publishing, LLC.*

“Hip Hop Quotables”: words and music by Christopher Bridges and Erick Sermon. © 2003 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., LUDACRIS MUSIC PUBLISHING, UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. and CHILD SUPPORT PUBLISHING. All Rights for LUDACRIS MUSIC PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for CHILD SUPPORT PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Sunshowers” written by Stony Browder, Jr., August Darnell, Ross Orton, Stephen Mackey and Mathangi Arulpragasam. © 2005 RAINEYVILLE MUSIC (BMI)/Administered by BUG MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, IMAGEM LONDON LTD. and UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING LTD. All Rights for IMAGEM LONDON LTD. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights for UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING LTD. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved.

International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Raineyville Music.*

“Paper Planes”: words and music by Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon, Topper Headon, Thomas Pentz and Mathangi Arulpragasam. Copyright © 2007 NINEDON LTD., IMAGEM LONDON LTD. and DOMINO PUBLISHING CO., LTD. All Rights for NINEDON LTD. in the United States and Canada Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights for IMAGEM LONDON LTD. in the United States and Canada administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Straight To Hell” Words and Music by Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon © 1982 NINEDEN LTD. and EMI VIRGIN MUSIC LTD. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Releasing Hypnotical Gases”: words and music by Lawrence Baskerville, Troy Jamerson and Wayne Shorter. Copyright © 1991 IRVING MUSIC, INC., MIYAKO MUSIC, FALFURIOUS MUSIC and OMNI FARIOUS MUSIC. All Rights for MIYAKO MUSIC Controlled and Administered by IRVING MUSIC, INC. All Rights for OMNIFARIOUS MUSIC Administered by FALFURIOUS MUSIC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Soul” by Gus Hawkins and Lee Lovett and “Non-Stop Home” by Wayne Shorter. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Simon Says”: words and music by Troy Jamerson. © 2004 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. and TRESCADECAPHOBIA MUSIC. All Rights Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Desire”: words and music by Troy Jamerson, Alan Maman, Luroner Brooksme, Lamont Dozier, Brian Holland and Edward Holland. © 2007 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., TRESCADECAPHOBIA MUSIC, SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., GOLD FOREVER MUSIC, INC., A MAMAN MUSIC c/o The Royalty Network, Inc., NOTTING DALE SONGS, INC. and PAT’S SON MUSIC. All Rights for TRESCADECAPHOBIA MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for GOLD FOREVER MUSIC,

INC. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and The Royalty Network, Inc.*

“Hip Hop” Words and Music by David Axelrod, Michael T. Axelrod, Mos Def, Joseph Kirkland and Gabriel Jackson. © 1999 GLENWOOD MUSIC CORP., EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., MEDINA SOUND MUSIC, EMPIRE INTERNATIONAL, DUSTY FINGERS MUSIC and STREET TUFF TUNES. All Rights for MEDINA SOUND MUSIC and EMPIRE INTERNATIONAL Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved International Copyright Secured Used by Permission.—contains elements of “The Warnings” and “Spoonin’ Rap”. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation*

“Mathematics”: words and music by Dante Beze and Christopher E. Martin. © 1999 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, EMPIRE INTERNATIONAL, MEDINA SOUND MUSIC, EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. and GIFTED PEARL MUSIC. All Rights for EMPIRE INTERNATIONAL and MEDINA SOUND MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for GIFTED PEARL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by Kobalt Music Services America, Inc. (KMSA) and EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All rights on behalf of Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation, Kobalt Music Services America, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“Dollar Day for New Orleans (Katrina Klap)” performed by Mos Def. Written by Mos Def, Terius Gray & Donald Robertson. Produced by Donald XL Robertson & Terius Gray. Used by permission of No Mistakes Allowed Publishing.

“Auditorium” written by Dante Terrell Smith, Ricky Walters, Otis Lee Jackson, Jr. Published by Madlib Invazion Music (BMI), Ultra Empire Music / Eye Patch Music Publishing Corp (BMI). Used by permission of Downtown Music.

“T.I. vs. T.I.P.” by CLIFFORD HARRIS. © 2003 WB MUSIC CORP. and DOMANI AND YA MAJESTY’S MUSIC. All Rights Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of

ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“U Don’t Know Me”: words and music by Aldrin Davis and Clifford Harris. © 2004 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., TOOMPSTONE PUBLISHING, YA’ MAJESTY’S MUSIC, WB MUSIC CORP., and DOMANI AND YA MAJESTY’S MUSIC. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and DOMANI AND YA MAJESTY’S MUSIC Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights for TOOMPSTONE PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

Excerpt from “Forgot About Dre” by ANDRE YOUNG, MELVIN BRADFORD and MARSHALL MATHERS. © 1999 WB MUSIC CORP., AIN’T NOTHING BUT FUNKIN’ MUSIC, HARD WORKING BLACK FOLKS INC., MELVIN BRADFORD PUB DESIGNEE, FAMOUS MUSIC CORPORATION and Kobalt Music Services America, Inc (KMSA) obo EIGHT MILE STYLE MUSIC. All Rights on Behalf of Itself, AIN’T NOTHING BUT FUNKIN’ MUSIC, HARD WORKING BLACK FOLKS INC. and MELVIN BRADFORD PUB DESIGNEE Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and *Kobalt Music Services America.*

“All Falls Down” Copyright 2004 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Obverse Creation Music Inc. All rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

“Jesus Walks”: words and music by Kanye West, Curtis Lundy, Che Smith and Miri Ben Ari. © 2004 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING, INC., CURWAN MUSIC, SONG OF UNIVERSAL, INC., MIRIMODE MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS and SOLOMON INK. All Rights for PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING, INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for SOLOMON INK Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS. All Rights for MIRIMODE MUSIC Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Curwan Music Inc. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Homecoming”: words and music by Kanye West, Warryn Campbell,

Chris Martin and Tony Williams. © 2007 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., WET INK RED MUSIC, EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING, INC., Ultra Empire Music / Penafire Productions (BMI), UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING MGB LTD. and ANTHONY VON WILLIAMS MUSIC. All Rights for WET INK RED MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING, INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING MGB LTD. Controlled and Administered in the U.S. and Canada by UNIVERSAL—MGB SONGS. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Ultra International Music Publishing.*

“Can’t Tell Me Nothing”: words and music by Kanye West, Aldrin Davis and Connie Mitchell. © 2000 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING, TOOMPSTONE PUBLISHING and GOOD SOLDIER SONGS LTD. All Rights for PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING and TOOMPSTONE PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights for GOOD SOLDIER SONGS LTD. in the U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Put On”: words and music by Jay Jenkins, Kanye West and Christopher Gholson. © 2008 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., YOUNG JEEZY MUSIC INC., PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING, WB MUSIC CORP. and YOUNG DRUMMA. All Rights for YOUNG JEEZY MUSIC INC. and PLEASE GIMME MY PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and YOUNG DRUMMA Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“My President”: words and music by Justin Henderson, Christopher Whitacre, Jay Jenkins and Nasir Jones. Copyright © 2008 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., NAPPYPUB MUSIC, HENDERWORKS PUBLISHING CO., UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., NAPPY BOY PUBLISHING, WEST COAST LIVIN’ PUBLISHING, UNIVERSAL

MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z SONGS, EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. and YOUNG JEEZY MUSIC INC. All Rights for NAPPYPUB MUSIC and HENDERWORKS PUBLISHING CO. Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for NAPPY BOY PUBLISHING and WEST COAST LIVIN' PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for YOUNG JEEZY MUSIC INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

LYRICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

“Cadillac on 22’s”: Crump Tight Publishing (BMI) c/o The Royalty Network, Inc.

“Reality Check” used by permission of Senim Silla.

“Vapors” by Biz Markie is used under license from CAK Music Publishing, Inc.

“The Choice is Yours (Revisited)”: words and music by William McLean and Andres Titus. Copyright © 1991 UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC., PEEP BO MUSIC, IRVING MUSIC, INC. and CHAR-LIZ MUSIC, INC. THE MUSIC GOES ROUND, B.V. dba MUSIC IN ONE c/o THIRD TIER MUSIC, LLC. All Rights for PEEP BO MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL—SONGS OF POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Third Tier Music.*

“Luchini”: words and music by Ricky Smith, Richard Randolph, Kevin Spencer, Saladine Wallace, Salahadeen Wilds and David Anthony Willis. Copyright © 1997 Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, My Kinda Music, Universal—Songs Of Polygram International, Inc., RABASSE MUSIC, LTD., UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING LIMITED (GB), Biggie Music and Satin Struthers Music. All Rights on behalf of My Kinda Music Administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights on behalf of Biggie Music Administered by Universal—Songs Of Polygram International, Inc. All Rights on Behalf of RABASSE MUSIC, LTD. Administered by

WARNER/CHAPPELL MUSIC LTD. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Hal Leonard Corporation, Lastrada Entertainment Company, Ltd., and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“They Want EFX”: words and music by Andre Weston and Willie Hines. © 1992 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., SEWER SLANG MUSIC, CELLAR TO THE ADDICT, Donna Dijon Music Publications, Dynatone Publishing Company, and Straight Out Da Sewer. All Rights Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All rights administered by Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, 8 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Blind Men Can See It” by James Brown, Fred Wesley and Charles Bobbit. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation and Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.*

“For Colored Boys” written by Jerry Brown, Ryan Burke, Essexincantations, Leslie Taylor, Marcus Van, Timothy West. Used by permission of Juba Kalamka/Deep Dickollective.

“Summertime”: words and music by Willard Smith, Lamar Mahone, Craig Simpkins, Robert Bell, Ronald Bell, Robert Mickens, Dennis Thomas, George Brown, Alton Taylor, Richard Westfield and Claydus Smith. Copyright © 1991 by Jazzy Jeff And Fresh Prince, ZOMBA ENTERPRISES, INC., WILLESSEN MUSIC, INC., Da Posse Music, Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp., Second Decade Music and Gang Music Ltd. All Rights for Jazzy Jeff And Fresh Prince Administered by Universal Music—Z Tunes LLC. All Rights for Da Posse Music Administered by Universal Music—Z Songs. All Rights for Second Decade Music Co. and Gang Music Ltd. Administered by Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains samples from “Summer Madness” by Alton Taylor, Robert Mickens, George Brown, Richard Westfield, Claydes Smith, Ronald Bell, Dennis Thomas and Robert Bell. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Fumbling Over Words That Rhyme” used by permission of Edan.

“The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)”: words and music by Ann Peebles, Bernard Miller, Don Bryant, Melissa Elliot and Timothy Mosley. Copyright ©

1997 JEC PUBLISHING CORP., WB MUSIC CORP., IRVING MUSIC INC., EAST MEMPHIS MUSIC and MASS CONFUSION PRODUCTIONS. All Rights for JEC PUBLISHING CORP. Controlled and Administered by IRVING MUSIC, INC. All Rights for MASS CONFUSION PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by IRVING MUSIC, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Strictly Business” contains a sample from “I Shot The Sheriff” written by Bob Marley. Published by Fifty Six Hope Road Music Ltd/Odnil Music Ltd. All rights administered by Blue Mountain Music Ltd.

“King Tim III (Personality Jock)”: written by Bill Curtis, Fred Demery and James Skelton. Published in the USA by Taking Care of Business Music (BMI) and in the rest of the world by Minder Music Ltd (PRS).
= © 1979

“Hate It or Love It”: words and music by Curtis Jackson, Andre Lyon, Marcello Valenzano, Ronald Baker, Allan Felder, Norman Harris and Jayceon Taylor. Copyright © 2005 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., 50 CENT MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z SONGS, DADE CO. PROJECT MUSIC, INC., MURED MUSIC CO (BMI), GOLDEN FLEECE MUSIC (BMI), Six Strings Music (BMI), and BLACK WALL STREET. All Rights for 50 CENT MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for DADE CO. PROJECT MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z SONGS. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Uses a sample of the composition “Rubber Band.” *Reprinted by Permission of Each 1 Teach 1, Golden Fleece Music, Hal Leonard Corporation, Mured Music, and Six Strings Music.*

“Why”: words and music by Jason Phillips, Pierre Moerlen, Anthony Hamilton and Kejuan Muchita. © 2004 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., JUSTIN COMBS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., EMI VIRGIN MUSIC LTD., SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., TAPPY WHYTE’S MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS and JUVENILE HELL PUBLISHING. All Rights for JUSTIN COMBS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC. Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for EMI VIRGIN MUSIC LTD. in the U.S. and Canada Controlled and Administered by EMI VIRGIN MUSIC, INC. All Rights for TAPPY WHYTE’S MUSIC Controlled and Administered by SONGS

OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights for JUVENILE HELL PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission Contains sample of “Mandrake” by Pierre Moerlen. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Uncommon Valor: A Vietnam Story” used by permission of R. A. Thorburn.

“Come Clean”: words and music by Chris Martin, Kendrick Davis, Freddie Scruggs, Tyrone Taylor, Kirk Jones and Shelly Manne. © 1994 EMI APRIL MUSIC INC., GIFTED PEARL MUSIC, IRVING MUSIC, INC., PERVERTED ALCHEMIST MUSIC, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC, ILL HILL BILLY Z MUZIK INC., 111 POSSE MUSIC and SITTING IN MUSIC PUBLISHING. All Rights for GIFTED PEARL MUSIC Controlled and Administered by EMI APRIL MUSIC INC. All Rights for PERVERTED ALCHEMIST MUSIC Controlled and Administered by IRVING MUSIC, INC. All Rights for ILL HILL BILLY Z MUZIK INC. and 111 POSSE MUSIC Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—Z TUNES LLC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Ha”: words and music by Teruis Gray and Byron Thomas. Copyright © 1998 SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC., MONEY MACK MUSIC and FRESH IS THE WORD. All Rights Controlled and Administered by SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“BaKardi Slang”: by JASON HARROW and SHELDON PITT. © 2000 WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC CANADA LTD., ONE MAN MUSIC, AND UNKNOWN PUBLISHER. All Rights on Behalf of Itself and ONE MAN MUSIC Administered by WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC CANADA LTD. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Everything’s Gonna Be Alright (Ghetto Bastard)”: by VINCENT “VINNIE” BROWN, KEIR GIST, ANTHONY CRISS and VINCENT FORD. © 1981 WB MUSIC CORP. (ASCAP) and NAUGHTY MUSIC (ASCAP). All Rights on Behalf of Itself and NAUGHTY MUSIC Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Country Grammar (Hot Shit)”: words and music by Jason Epperson and Cornell Hayes. Copyright © 2000 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP., JAY E’S BASEMENT, D2 PRO PUBLISHING, UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS and JACKIE FROST MUSIC, INC. All Rights for JAY E’S BASEMENT and D2 PRO PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP. All Rights for JACKIE FROST MUSIC, INC. Controlled and Administered by UNIVERSAL MUSIC—MGB SONGS. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“Sometimes I Rhyme Slow” written by: Greg Mays, Dairyl Barnes, Nuno Bettencourt, Gary Cherone, Adam McLeer, Worldwide rights administered by Vanessa Music Inc. o/b/o Nice and Smooth Music. Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.

“Time’s Up”: words and music by Anthony Best and Omar Credle. Copyright © 2002 by Universal Music—MGB Songs, Still Digging Music and Organimz Music, Inc. All Rights for Still Digging Music Administered by Universal Music—MGB Songs. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. *Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.*

“They Reminisce over You (T.R.O.Y.)”: words by COREY BRENT PENN Music by PETER O. PHILLIPS. © 1992 WB MUSIC CORP. and NESS, NITTY AND CAPONE, INC. All Rights Administered by WB MUSIC CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC. and Smooth Flowing Music c/o The Royalty Network, Inc.

“Passing Me By”: words and music by Steve Boone, John Sebastian, Trevant Germaine Hardson, John Manuel Martinez, Emandu Wilcox, Romye Robinson, Derrick Lemel Stewart and Mark Sebastian. © 1992 EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC., BIG BANG THEORY PUBLISHING, BUG MUSIC-TRIO MUSIC CO., INC., ALLEY MUSIC CORP., CRACK ADDICT MUSIC and MARK SEBASTIAN MUSIC. All Rights for BIG BANG THEORY PUBLISHING Controlled and Administered by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC INC. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Contains elements of “Summer In The City” by Quincy Jones. *Reprinted by Permission of Alley Music Corporation on behalf of itself and Mark Sebastian, Hal Leonard Corporation, and Romye Robinson.*

“Rock Dis Funky Joint” by ANTHONY ROBERT DEPULA, TIMOTHY W.

GRIMES, SYLVESTER ALLEN, HAROLD RAY BROWN, MORRIS DEWAYE DICKERSON, LE ROY LONNIE JORDAN, CHARLES MILLER, LEE OSKAR, HOWARD E. SCOTT. © 1990 RABASSE MUSIC, LTD. and UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING INT. LTD. All Rights on Behalf of RABASSE MUSIC, LTD. Administered by WARNER/CHAPPELL MUSIC LTD. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.

“Makeshift Patriot” written by Sage Francis and DJ Shalem. Published by Joe’s Songs, Inc. (ASCAP) and Sage Francis Publishing (ASCAP). Administered by Nixen Music Publishing, Inc.

“Broken Language” written by Darryl Pittman/Smith/Smith. Copyright Spirit Two Music, Inc. All Rights Controlled and Administered by Spirit Two Music, Inc. (ASCAP). All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by permission of Hill Playaz, Protoons Music, Inc., and Spirit Music Group.

“I Got It Made” written by Edward Anchor, Rober Beavers, Jack Hill, Preston Joyner, Dennis Taylor, Howard Thompson © 1989, 1997 Bridgeport Music, Inc. (BMI), Robert L. Beavers, Jabee Music Publishing Company (BMI), Special Ed Music, and RABASSE MUSIC LTD. All Rights on Behalf of RABASSE MUSIC LTD Administered by WARNER/CHAPPELL MUSIC LTD. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., Bridgeport Music, Inc., and Special Ed Music.

“Talkin All That Jazz”: words and music by GLENN BOLTON. © 1990 WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission of ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING CO., INC.