

HOLIDAY ISSUE: THE ART OF HIP-HOP

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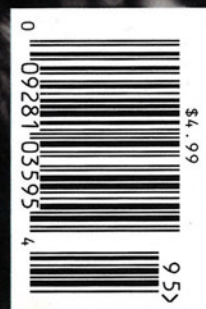
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THE HUSTLE

words by **Mark Anthony Jenkins**

photographed by **Cheryl Fox**

SPECIAL THANKS TO VOYEUR, LOS ANGELES, CA

hustle- v. 2 a : to obtain by energetic activity

2 c : to sell or promote energetically and aggressively

3 a : to make strenuous efforts to obtain, especially money or business

4 : to play a game or sport in an alert aggressive manner

The term "hustle" or "hustler" seems to get thrown around a lot in Hip-Hop these days. Whether it's in reference to the entrepreneurial peddling of illegal products, or to hawking one's heart and soul on a street corner in the form of a CD, everyone lays claim to being one. And who's not claiming to stay on their "grizzle?" Whatever the case, the truth is that far too many exaggerate the amount of effort they put in to the rewards they receive from their supposed lucrative endeavors. But if you're looking for a real example of what a bona fide "hustler" is, set your eyes on the Left Coast.





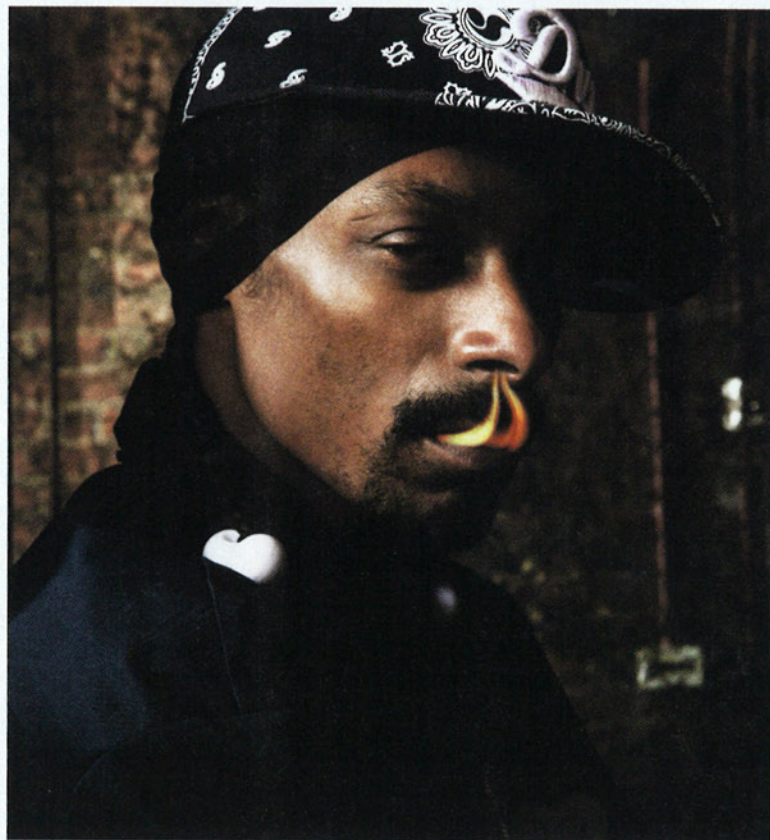
Possessing a stellar resume that includes over 30 million albums sold to date, countless TV and film cameos, a fully integrated platform deal with MTV including games and shows, a gigantic digital and social networking presence and a newly acquired creative chairman position at Priority Records, no one can hold Snoop down. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to find an artist-cum-exec of his caliber, talent and reach.

Enter *Malice N Wonderland*, Snoop's 10th solo release, which drops this December. Shockingly, the Boss Dogg readily admits that he didn't always think he would be as successful as he is now. "I just thought that I would be like a passing phase, like the rest of the Hip-Hop guys that I grew up listening to. Here today, gone tomorrow. Get it in while you can and keep it moving. I thought that's what it would be," he says.

Straight from a photo shoot in Venice, Snoop finally finds a cool 45 minutes to sit down and discuss his standing in Hip-Hop's hierarchy. His condo, located smack dab in the middle of Hollywood among a wave of new commercial development, seems fitting considering his status as a household name in popular culture. Inside, his abode could pass for a college grad's first bachelor pad, complete with countless sports jerseys hung on the wall and dozens of records on the floor. The only exception would be that Snoop's jerseys are hung alongside plaques. His place also doubles up as a studio, which he used to record his last two albums. "You in the Doggy Den, man, this is where I do it at," Snoop says, sounding like his next endeavor could involve hosting a late-night radio talk show.

At first glance, the team jerseys on Snoop's living room walls paint the obvious picture that he is an avid sports fan. But they mean more than that. They yield a clue as to how Snoop has managed to prevent his success and longevity from breeding complacency. And while those few artists who carry a dossier as stacked as Snoop's find it easy to rest on their laurels a bit, Snoop credits his competitive nature as the reason why he is able to avoid becoming a victim of his own success. "I just love doing it, I love competing. Like, if I can see Jay-Z make all of these records and still be hot, I'm like, 'Shit, I need to keep going.' And then when I see a young rapper do his thing, I'm like, 'Damn!' That young rapper inspires me to still be fresh and young. So I'm inspired by the industry right now, that's what makes me move forward to continue making records."

To his credit, Snoop is also in the midst of doing something that far too many veterans have not done enough of, especially on the West Coast, and that is supporting newer, younger MCs in the game. In fact, *Malice N Wonderland* features several collaborations with up-and-coming West Coast artists including Problem and the heavily co-signed Nipsey Hu\$\$le, in addition to the ever polarizing Soulja Boy. He has also embraced Jerkin', the dance phenomenon that has blown up in LA and is slowly sweeping the nation, making references to the dance in two of his tracks. When asked whether the Jerk craze is a fad or a part of something larger, Snoop is quick to defend it. "It's more than a dance craze, I think it's a representation of a movement of



young, innovative West Coast rappers and groovers. We as Hip-Hop, we got to respect when the young generation takes some shit, runs with it and creates their own. I'm going to support the youngsters for what they do and how they do it, and push them as much as I can. Respect and appreciate it. If you don't understand it, don't bad mouth it, just respect and appreciate it."

All of the aforementioned makes Snoop's latest accomplishment that much more impressive. As the recently named Creative Chairman of Priority Records, Snoop has finally achieved a longtime goal of becoming an industry executive. "That role to me is a role that I have been wanting for a long time," he says. "Nobody has really been able to see the vision that I have as far as putting together music and artists and making it work. Finally, Priority recognized what they could do by giving me a position like this, by me bringing back the catalog and the West Coast sound, which was the sound that originated this gangsta movement."

It is at this point that the records leaning against the wall compared to the others that lay on the floor stand out, and what initially appears as random clearly has a purpose. "I'm trying to make it fresh again. Like, I got these albums—look around at these albums. You see Eazy-E, N.W.A, Ice Cube, niggas come up in here and be like, 'That's the shit!' So it's like I'm trying to turn that vibe back on because Priority used to have a vibe where every West Coast rapper had a shot."

Although he doesn't have the power to sign and cultivate artists just yet, Snoop is convinced that it will happen in due time. In the meantime, he is determined to utilize his role to the fullest and support artists that he feels can one day carry the torch. "I've got a bunch of things I'm trying to do to establish this West Coast movement here. I'm supporting all West Coast artists from Crooked I to Glasses Malone, Bishop Lamont, Jay Rock, Nipsey Hu\$\$le—anything that's West Coast. If you got the dubb up, I'm down with you. I don't have no issues with nobody." The tone of his voice lingers as he concludes with a sincerity that would convince anyone that what he says will one day be.

Being an icon means always having to be somewhere. Whether it's having a presence at his Snoop Youth Football league, which has continued to expand over the past five years, hosting an awards show for MTV3, or keeping up with his nearly three million fans via Twitter, Facebook and MySpace, the ultimate hustler always has something to do. While his publicist and assistant wait patiently, there was one final topic that remained to be explored before wrapping the interview. When it is all said and done, what will be the legacy that defines Snoop Dogg? Will it be all of the multi-platinum albums? His own TV show? His partial ownership of Ustream, or the numerous mobile apps? After being asked what he would like it to be, Snoop replies smoothly and without hesitation, "That I was the coolest one to ever do it." With his face recognizable to those who don't even listen to Hip-Hop, it seems quite certain that he has already gotten his wish. ☐



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