

sound - salVation

oh those crazy gangsta kids!

by kirby ferguson

monster-selling rappers Snoop Doggy Dogg and Ice Cube, the argument may be well-founded.

I haven't paid much attention to rap since 1990 or so--it seems to be creatively brain-dead to me. Even "fresh" acts like Arrested Development (see De La Soul) seemed old-hat to me. Recent hits like "Whoop! (There it is)," "Slam" and "Insane in the Brain" (great title) made me wanna smack somebody. I now view it all

Injection (1) sounds much the same as *Doggystyle*, heavily Clinton-influenced, but it's actually considerably worse, rumbling along without a trace of imagination. The opening scenario, with Ice Cube playing a doctor, sure is a hoot, though:

Ice Cube: Yo, what's up?

White Guy [speaking in a voice that makes it very clear he is a white guy]: Hi, how ya doin'?

Ice Cube: Let's see what we got here... Mr White, huh?

White Guy: Yes sir, that's me.

Ice Cube: I heard you don't like shots too much.

White Guy: No, I sure don't.

Ice Cube: Ah, you're a big boy--this won't hurt a bit. Just turn your head... rub some alcohol on there for ya... and, uh, brace yourself. [gunshot] Har, har.

Musically, I found both albums a very difficult listen. With both I found myself listening in very small doses, as it would seem sentient beings may have a hard time handling the stuff. I'd rather listen to planes land, actually. Though there are flashes of compassion and even regret on both albums, the flaws render the whole pretty much contemptible. Gangsta rappers' cries of freedom of artistic expression are really a hoax: gangsta rap is cashing in on the public's ever-increasing appetite for sex and violence; this is pure voyeurism. The difference with gangsta rap is that it's real, and the concept of a community whose artists can't even muster a little compassion

obviously frightens a lot of people. Until gangsta rap eliminates some of its more reprehensible traits, though, (the sexism, the gun craziness, the relentless profanity) it will never be regarded as anything other than exploitative schlock. And while I'll scream from the highest mountaintop for their right to be idiots--they're still idiots.

like an old codger: Snoop Doggy Dogg? Just saying it makes me feel ridiculous. Recent gangsta rap is now being referred to as something new and exciting, but it's actually just Parliament; George Clinton seems to have replaced James Brown as rap's granddaddy. Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Doggystyle (1)* is heavily Clinton derived:

loads of chants, high-pitched synthesizers, tons of bass. The music itself is moderately funky, but *Doggystyle's* title is fairly indicative of the kind of wit within. The guy is an astounding misogynist: "When I met you last night, baby/Before you opened your gap/I had respect for ya, baby/But I take it all back/Cuz you gave me all your pussy/And you even licked my balls." Marvin Gaye he ain't.

Ice Cube's stupidity is less excusable since he's been around for a while, being one of the founding members of NWA (Niggaz With Attitudes). *Lethal*

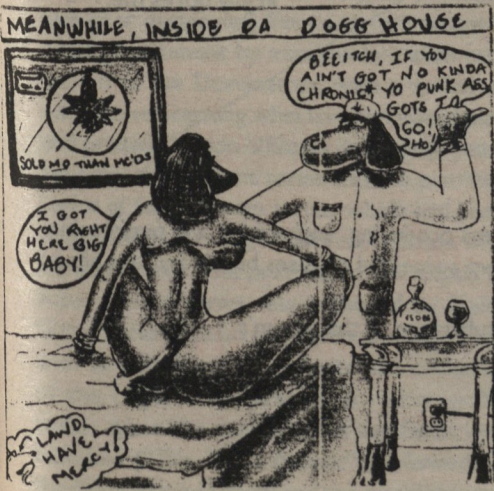
With the recent legal problems of rappers Snoop Doggy Dogg, Tupoc Shakur and Public Enemy's Flavor Flav, rap is once again under intense scrutiny. The primary target has been the genre's most contemptible breed, gangsta rap, the hardest of the hardcore, portraying urban gang life without a trace of compassion.

Coincidentally, with the immense sales of Dr. Dre's *The Chronic* (now being referred to as the *Nevermind* of gangsta rap) and the current top five positions of new releases from Snoop Doggy Dogg and Ice Cube, gangsta rap is selling bigger than ever.

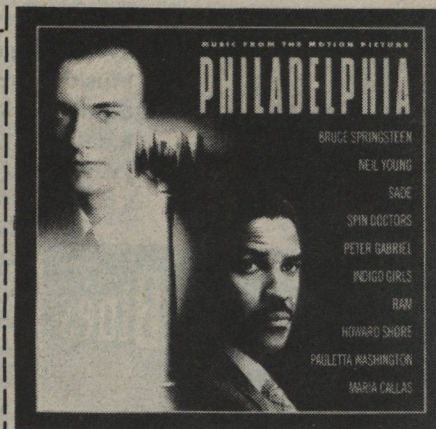
Those wishing to simply wipe gangsta rap out of existence can be too easily dismissed as attempting to silence an already oppressed community. Unlike gang-life films such as *Menace II Society* and *Boyz N the Hood*, which are heavily moralistic, gangsta rap displays nary a trace of conscience. Gangsta rap clearly depicts the morally bankrupt minds that keep the community's murderous wheels turning; for that, the form must at least be of anthropological interest. Rap is undoubtedly the freest forum of exchange for this group of people, and, warts and all, I'll defend its existence; however, the more persuasive argument is "who gets to hear this stuff?" As it is now, though some albums now feature parental advisory stickers, there's nothing stopping your twelve-year-old brother from heading to the nearest department store and picking

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up Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Doggystyle*. "Cuz she ain't nuthin' but a bitch to me/And ya know the bitches ain't shit to me" could be rattling around in his empty little skull right beside his high-score on *Zelda*. The proposal that albums be classified just as films are is becoming increasingly popular, and judging by the latest releases from



Excerpts from the booklet of Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Doggystyle*



Philadelphia Music From the Motion Picture (Sony)

Ghostly, mournful and skeletal, the *Philadelphia* soundtrack (3) is, if nothing else, an aesthetic success, considering the subject matter of the film. But what it has in coherence of mood, it lacks in coherence of artists. The likes of Bruce Springsteen, Peter Gabriel and Neil Young make sense together, but the rest of the album is made up of oddities: Sade whispers sweet nothings in your ear; Spin Doctors contribute a superficial reading of CCR's "Have You Ever Seen the Rain;" Neil Young whines a pretty tune, but his delivery is as pathetic as a wet cat. Classical and opera tracks also obstruct the album's generally tense, rhythmic flow. Nonetheless, Springsteen and Gabriel give resonant performances, and the Indigo Girls' "I Don't Wanna Talk About It" is soulful. Heavily padded, but the highpoints might be worth your time.

—Kirby Ferguson

No Alternative Various Artists (BMG)

The third in the Red Hot series (Red Hot and Dance, and Red Hot and Blue) of compilation albums recorded to AIDS awareness. This one is obviously a collection of alternative songs. Ranging from the rap rhymes of the Beastie Boys remix of "The New Style" to the harder sounds of Smashing Pumpkins "Glynnis". Other artists include Sarah McLachlan, Buffalo Tom, and Soul Asylum. (3.5)

—Scott MacDonald