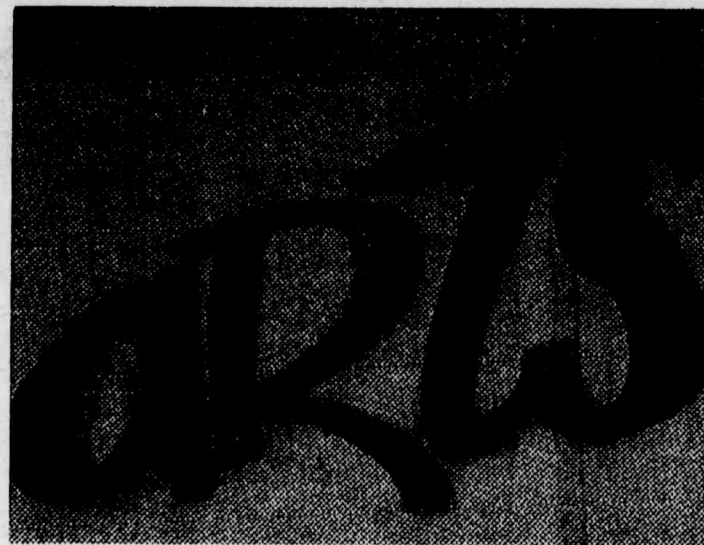


"We are almost
a nation of dancers,
musicians, and poets."

Oluda Equiano



excalibur february 1 - 29 African History Month

Pro-Black radical mix

By Trevor Burnett

"Can you believe those hypocrites
who distribute Guns and Roses, but not our shit
and they say we're a racist act
ain't that the pot calling the kettle black."

• Geto Boys "We Can't be Stopped"

Hardcore Houston rap group the Geto Boys' song "We can't be stopped" could well be the victory song of the rap music industry in the 1990s.

Today rap (or hip hop, as it is often called) can't be stopped. Ever since this Black art form busted out of New York's South Bronx in the mid to late 1970s it's been a continual climb to the top amid censorship, bad press, and commercialization. Rap has emerged as arguably the most popular form of music around today. Any sceptic should look at music magazines such as *Rolling Stone* or *Billboard* and see the number of rap albums or singles charted — better yet, how many are in the top 10.

Rap albums are some of the fastest to reach gold, platinum, or double platinum status. Consider some of these album sales figures: Run DMC's landmark album *Raising Hell* (1986) sold 3 1/2 million copies, LL Cool J's *Bigger and Deffer* sold over 2 1/2 million in 1987. Public enemy's *Fear of a Black Planet* (1990) sold over a million in only a week. Tone Loc's mammoth single "Wild Thing" (1989) sold over 2 million copies and is now the second largest selling single in the history of popular music.

Even with all those achievements, the power of rap was largely overlooked until last June when hardcore Los Angeles based N.W.A's (Niggas wit Attitude) album *Niggaz4Life* made music history by debuting at number two on Billboard's top pop album chart, knocking out Paula Abdul's *Spellbound* at number one the following week.

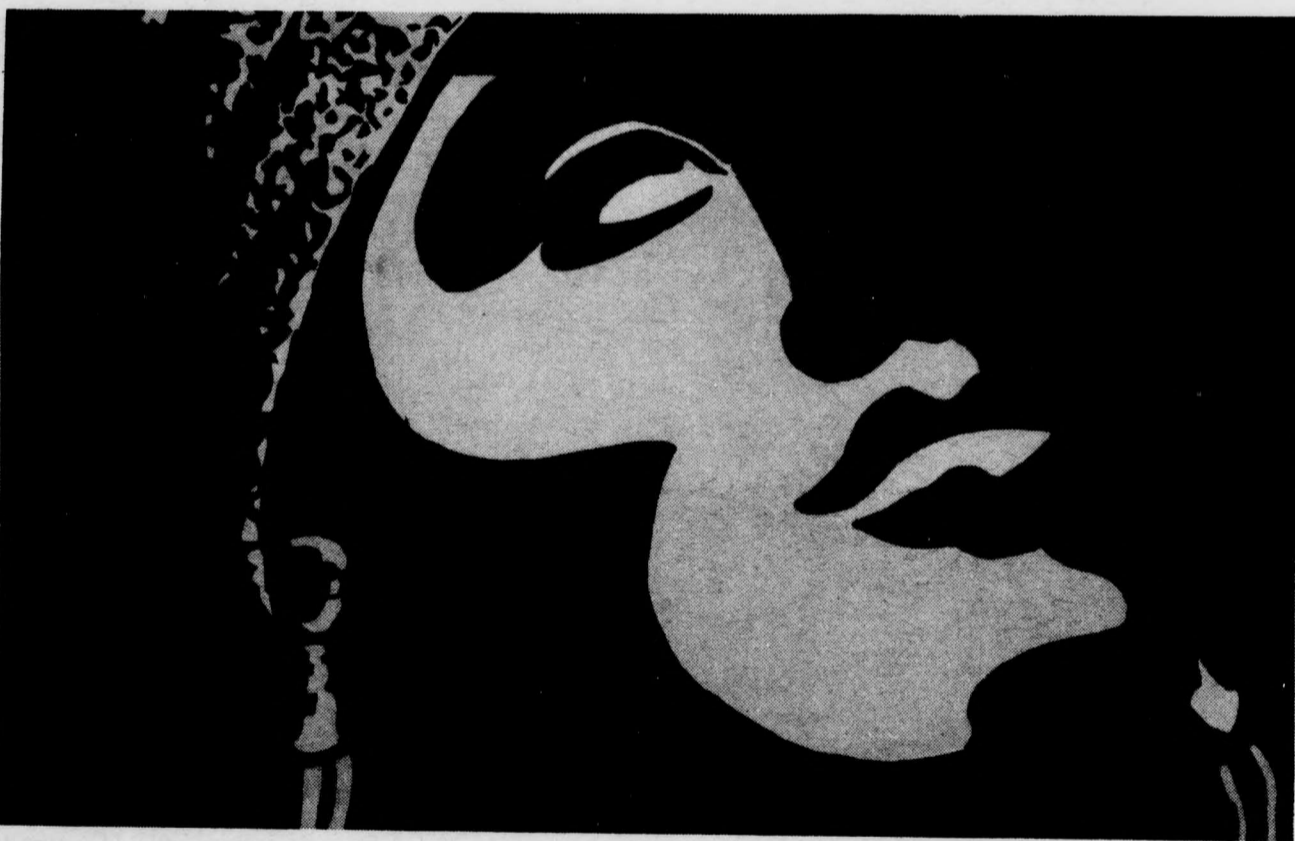
Jon Schecter, editor of hip hop magazine *The Source*, writes "[this was] the highest entry by any album since Michael Jackson's *Bad*. All this with no single, and no video... *Niggaz* is only the fourth album to top the pop chart in the last 16 years without generating a top 40 single."

Other rappers that have walked down the golden or platinum path include Big Daddy Kane, Salt 'N Pepa, Heavy D and the Boyz, De La Soul, Naughty by Nature, Two Live Crew, EPMD, Ice cube, Kool Moe Dee, The FatBoys, Boogie Down Productions, X Clan, Eric B and Rakim, Ice T, Digital Underground, Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, and a host of others.

That's not bad for music that received neither Grammy recognition nor mainstream acceptance, and has often been described as a fad.

Art and expression

Some people listen to rap and think of it as only words and loud music. True, that's what you hear, but rap is much more. Rap is art. The way some rappers put together def beats and dope rhymes,



Cheap little rhymes
A cheap little tune
Are sometimes as dangerous
As a sliver of the moon.
A cheap little tune
To cheap little rhymes
Can cut a man's
Throat sometimes.

Langston Hughes

graphic • Nicole Alfred