



## Queens Reigns Supreme: Fat Cat, 50 Cent, and the Rise of the Hip Hop Hustler

By Ethan Brown

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Based on police wiretaps and exclusive interviews with drug kingpins and hip-hop insiders, this is the untold story of how the streets and housing projects of southeast Queens took over the rap industry.

For years, rappers from Nas to Ja Rule have hero-worshipped the legendary drug dealers who dominated Queens in the 1980s with their violent crimes and flashy lifestyles. Now, for the first time ever, this gripping narrative digs beneath the hip-hop fables to re-create the rise and fall of hustlers like Lorenzo “Fat Cat” Nichols, Gerald “Prince” Miller, Kenneth “Supreme” McGriff, and Thomas “Tony Montana” Mickens. Spanning twenty-five years, from the violence of the crack era to Run DMC to the infamous murder of NYPD rookie Edward Byrne to Tupac Shakur to 50 Cent’s battles against Ja Rule and Murder Inc., to the killing of Jam Master Jay, *Queens Reigns Supreme* is the first inside look at the infamous southeast Queens crews and their connections to gangster culture in hip hop today.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

*Starred Review.* This engrossing portrait of the trigger-happy hip-hop demimonde explores the origins of the gangsta-rap ethos in southeast Queens, home to legendary narcotics gangs and many of rap's biggest stars, including 50 Cent and Ja Rule. *New York* magazine music editor Brown begins by chronicling the careers of three Queens drug kingpins during the 1980s crack epidemic, when maintaining a fearsome reputation for violence was a must for doing business. He continues through to the 1990s, when a younger generation of hip-hop artists and impresarios idolized such criminals and adopted their twisted moral economy of street cred. Rappers dissed rivals' lack of a criminal background while burnishing their own; the war of rhymes occasionally escalated into gunplay between hostile entourages; prison stints and shoot-out wounds were coveted markers of hoodlum authenticity. Drawing on interviews with gangsters and rappers alike, Brown looks behind the tabloid headlines about such hip-hop luminaries as Russell Simmons and Tupac Shakur, while fleshing out the dynamics of machismo, loyalty, vengeance and greed in the claustrophobic 'hood. His is a vigorous account of an American subculture that's colorful, influential and, given the body count, tragic. 16 pages photos. (Dec. 6)

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From [Booklist](#)

New York journalist Brown, who covers pop music, drug issues, and crime, resifts the evidence in the city's rapper/gang wars, thoroughly exploring the connections between the big-money rap music industry and the big-money criminal enterprise of drug dealing. So doing, he makes a valuable contribution to the burgeoning literature on the violence of such heroes of the 'hood as Lorenzo "Fat Cat" Nichols, Gerald "Prince" Miller, Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff, and Thomas "Tony Montana" Mickens as well as the rappers who glorified and shared with them a glitzy, murderous urban pleasure-dome existence. In the 1980s "hip-hop and hustling inhabited separate social spheres," but in time, hip-hoppers, "particularly those who were teenagers in the eighties," looked up to drug dealers, who had "all of the accoutrements that would come to define hip-hop's 'bling' lifestyle in the late nineties." The fast-money, heavily armed -criminals-cum-rappers world eventually erupted in murders, such as those of Jam Master Jay and Tupac Shakur, and a festering series of rap feuds. A good, detailed report on an ongoing, epic social problem. *Mike Tribby*

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About the Author

Ethan Brown writes about pop music, crime, and drug policy for publications such as *Wired*, *New York*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Village Voice*, and *GQ*. This is his first book. He lives in New York.

### Users Review

From reader reviews:

**Daniel Bravo:**

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**Titus Johnson:**

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