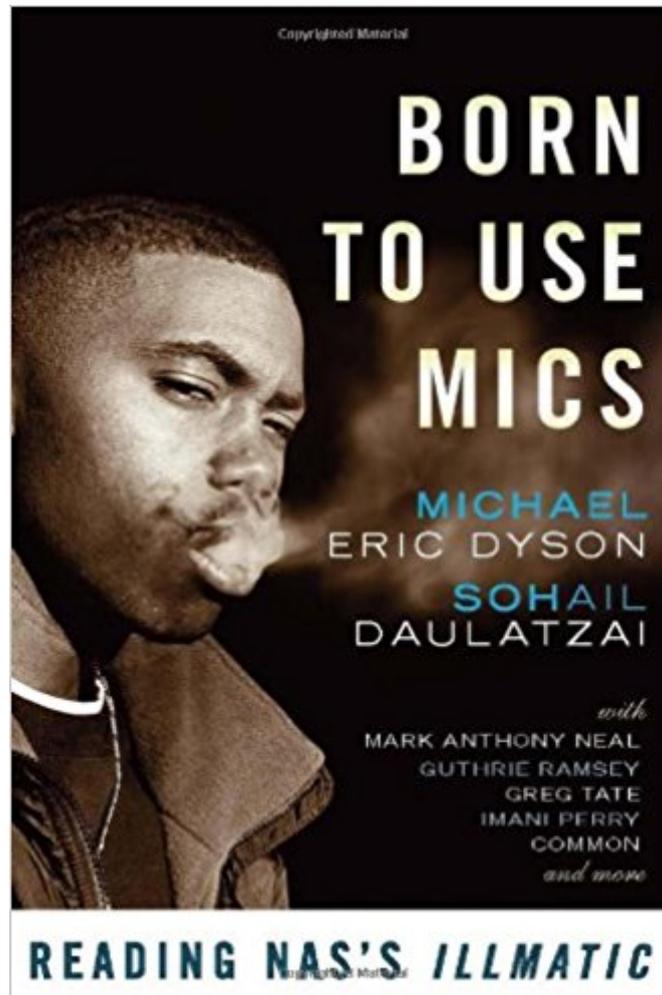


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Born To Use Mics: Reading Nas's Illmatic



Synopsis

At the age of nineteen, Nasir "Nas" Jones began recording tracks for his debut album and changed the music world forever. Released in 1994, *Illmatic* was hailed as an instant masterpiece and has proven one of the most influential albums in hip-hop history. With its close attention to beats and lyricism, and riveting first-person explorations of the isolation and desolation of urban poverty, *Illmatic* was pivotal in the evolution of the genre. In *Born to Use Mics*, Michael Eric Dyson and Sohail Daulatzai have brought together renowned writers and critics including Mark Anthony Neal, Marc Lamont Hill, Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., and many others to confront *Illmatic* song by song, with each scholar assessing an individual track from the album. The result is a brilliant engagement with and commentary upon one of the most incisive sets of songs ever laid down on wax.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I try to write reviews that I would have found helpful when I was shopping. The following info has already been mentioned in other reviews, but is important: This is a collection of essays connected to the tracks off of Nas' classic album "Illmatic." There is an essay for every song, including the intro, plus bonus commentary, interviews, and the original 5 Mic review from the Source. If one wants a "making of" version of *Illmatic*, then definitely buy the 33 1/3 book for *Illmatic*. *Nas' Illmatic* (33 1/3 series) If you are thinking of buying this book, answer these two questions: 1. Do you think a fair interpretation of the second line in "The World Is Yours" ("writin in my book of rhymes, all the

words pass the margin") could be "The margins also serve as a metaphor for urban youth relegated to the margins by being forced to work within clearly defined legal, economic, social, and political parameters (i.e., margins)."?

2. Would you agree that "N.Y. State of Mind" is "a bird's-eye view, a series of close-ups and cutaways that not only allows us to imagine the land-mine littered landscape of the globe under American power - but also to see the connections between the forces that have devastated urban centers in the United States and those that are destroying lives throughout the Third World"? If the answer is "Yes," definitely buy the book. If you answered, "No" or "I'm not sure" then this book might not be for you. Personally, I found these connections very clever, but I kept thinking, "I don't think this was on Nas' mind when he wrote this." My recommendation, look at the library first or borrow from a friend. The additional essays and interviews are very good. Nas' interviews are insightful, Dream Hampton writes about sharing *Illmatic* with Tupac, and Jon Caramanica writes an excellent essay putting *Illmatic* in historical context. He also includes a line that pops out in contrast to other writers: "(*Illmatic*) became what the listener wanted it to be as much as, if not more than, what Nas intended it to be."

This book was very informative and explored thoroughly by the authors. *Illmatic* is a true classic and needs to be examined and dissected as this novel does. Great insight on the history of this groundbreaking album and all the necessary producers that produced this exquisite masterpiece. How it got made and the necessary people that made it possible. The east coast was looking for something to embrace because at the time the west coast was becoming the source of current hip hop classics. Lyrical the east has always been the best not to say their aren't any lyrical cats elsewhere but the west was more into production of the musical renaissance. This album was influential in other classic's been made like "Ready To Die" and "Reasonable Doubt". Biggie might have taken the album art cover idea but "Reasonable doubt" samples the music from the classic "Illmatic" Also to know that "halftime" was on the "Zebra Head" soundtrack. Nas dropping classic verses on "Live at The Barbeque" and MC Search putting Nas on "Back to the Grill" and shopping his demo. The east-coast had group's dropping classics but not individual artist like the west-coast. This book is truly informative and deserves Five Mics for being written.

First and foremost, I have always been a fan of Nas, since *Illmatic*. If you don't own *Illmatic*, you need to get it before you attempt to read this book. Each track is broken down, essay style by a hip hop academic personality. The subject matter gets pretty deep in this book and it's a conversation piece among other true hip hop heads. This book is thought provoking, you may have to put it down

a few times to say "Dam!" and scratch your head. Don't be surprised if you need to get your dictionary out a few times. I highly recommend this book to people who enjoy a good discourse on the sociological perspectives of early hip hop. After you read this book you will have a lot more to talk and argue about.

Excellent read... In my collection... Very intelligent man

First, just so people don't get it twisted - bear in mind that this book is NOT a break down of how the music was made and does NOT have input from Nas or any of the people who worked on the album, which I thought it might have. Some Hip-Hop books have a LOT of input from MCs/producers like "Check the Technique: Liner Notes for Hip-Hop Junkies," "How to Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC," DJ Shadow's "Endtroducing... (33 1/3)," and "Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop (Music Culture)... but this isn't one of those kind of books. "Born to Use Mics" is essentially a series of essays written on Illmatic, so don't be disappointed if you buy it expecting MC/producer quotes and stories like in the above books, because that isn't what this book is about. So judging it on what it is - a collection of academic analyzes of various themes in the subject matter of Illmatic - it does this extremely well, with some of the most insightful break downs of the socio-political aspects of Hip-Hop that I have seen, from some of the best academic writers. Each essay is themed around one of the tracks on the album, and they touch on a lot of the references in the lyrics and go in depth to cover the intricacies that Nas put into the subject matter. Even people expecting more on the making of the album will be pleasantly surprised by how much you learn and the level of research into the themes and topics that are brought up. A good book on a great album, and also a good companion to the other recent book on Illmatic - "Nas' Illmatic (33 1/3 series).

Great read. Excellent book

The perspectives given are wise, well spoken and gives a genius insight into hip hop and nas' s world view

I love it...my 2nd time buying this book.

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Speed (speed reading techniques, speed reading for beginners, speed reading training) (Genius Guide: Step By Step Book 3) It's No Secret: From Nas to Jay-Z, from Seduction to Scandal--a Hip-Hop Helen of Troy Tells All Using SANs and NAS NAS Exhaustive Concordance: Born in Fire (Born In Trilogy) 10 Days to Faster Reading: Jump-Start Your Reading Skills with Speed reading Sight Reading Mastery for Guitar: Unlimited reading and rhythm exercises in all keys (Sight Reading for Modern Instruments Book 1) Ready-to-Use Illustrations of World-Famous Places: 109 Different Copyright-Free Designs Printed One Side (Dover Clip Art Ready-to-Use) Ready-to-Use Celtic Designs: 96 Different Royalty-Free Designs Printed One Side (Dover Clip Art Ready-to-Use) Ready-to-Use Old-Fashioned Patriotic Cuts (Dover Clip Art Ready-to-Use) Chemistry for Use with the International Baccalaureate : Standard Level: For Use with the IB Diploma Programme: Standard Level: Paperback + Student Cd-rom + Website How to Use a Dictionary/How to Use a Thesaurus: 48 Fun Activities for Students Learning Dictionary and Thesaurus Bailey Learns About Peers, Pressure and Friendship: An easy-to-use, and ready-made curriculum with worksheets and activities to reinforce language and reading skills. Map Use: Reading and Analysis The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs: Use Outdoor Clues to Find Your Way, Predict the Weather, Locate Water, Track Animals_and Other Forgotten Skills (Natural Navigation) Improve Your Sight-Reading! Piano: Level 1 / Early Elementary (Faber Edition: Improve Your Sight-Reading) Improve Your Sight-Reading! Piano: Level 2 / Elementary (Faber Edition: Improve Your Sight-Reading) My Little Pony: Ponyville Reading Adventures (Passport to Reading Level 2)

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