



# Can't Stop Won't Stop : A History of the Hip Hop Generation

By Jeff Chang

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**Can't Stop Won't Stop : A History of the Hip Hop Generation** By Jeff Chang

Forged in the fires of the Bronx and Kingston, Jamaica, hip-hop became the Esperanto of youth rebellion and a generation-defining movement. In a post-civil rights era defined by deindustrialization and globalization, hip-hop crystallized a multiracial, polycultural generation's worldview, and transformed American politics and culture. But that epic story has never been told with this kind of breadth, insight, and style.

Based on original interviews with DJs, b-boys, rappers, graffiti writers, activists, and gang members, with unforgettable portraits of many of hip-hop's forebears, founders, and mavericks, including DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Chuck D, and Ice Cube, *Can't Stop Won't Stop* chronicles the events, the ideas, the music, and the art that marked the hip-hop generation's rise from the ashes of the 60's into the new millennium. Here is a powerful cultural and social history of the end of the American century, and a provocative look into the new world that the hip-hop generation created.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Many good books have been written about the history of hip-hop music and the generation that nurtured it. *Can't Stop Won't Stop* ranks among the best. Jeff Chang covers the music--from its Jamaican roots in the late 1960s to its birth in the Bronx; its eventual explosion from underground to the American mainstream--with style, including DJs, MCs, b-boys, graffiti art, Black Nationalism, groundbreaking singles and albums, and the street parties that gave rise to a genuine movement. But the book is about more than beats and rhymes. What distinguishes his book from the pack is Chang's examination of how hip-hop has shaped not only pop music, but American history and culture over the past 30 years. He shows how events such as urban flight, race riots, neighborhood reclamation projects, gang warfare in the Bronx and Los Angeles, and grassroots movements that influenced political agendas are as integral a part of the hip-hop story as the music itself. He also charts the concurrent rise of hip-hop activism and the commodification of the music and the ideological clashes that developed as a result.

Based on hundreds of interviews and over a decade of work as a respected music journalist, Chang offers colorful profiles of the lives and influences of "the trinity of hip-hop music"--Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, and DJ Kool Herc--along with many other artists, label executives, DJs, writers, filmmakers, and promoters. Impressive in its scope, *Can't Stop Won't Stop* is a lively and sharply written exploration of the power of hip-hop to unite people across generational, racial, and economic lines. --Shawn Carkonen

#### From Publishers Weekly

Hip-hop journalist Chang looks back on 30 years of the cultural landscape, with a particular focus on the African-American street scene, in this engaging and extensive debut. Chang shows how hip-hop arose in the rubble of the Bronx in the 1970s, when youth unemployment hit 60%-80%; traces the music through the black-Jewish racial conflicts of 1980s New York to the West Coast scene and the L.A. riots; and follows it to the Kristal-soaked, bling-encrusted corporate rap of today. Chang's balanced assessment of rap's controversial trappings neither condemns gang culture nor forgives its sins, but places gangs in the conditions that birthed them and illustrates their influence on street culture. Chang also examines art forms that arose alongside the music: the b-boys ("break dancers") with their James Brown-inspired, acrobatic battles and the graffiti artists, who practiced their defiant, "outlaw art" on the sides of subway trains and any other flat surface available. The vivid narrative alternates between Chang's historical elucidation and first-person accounts from the major players, including DJ Kool Herc, the mythic DJ who started it all at a West Bronx party; Afrika Bambaataa, who crossed gang boundaries for block parties, inspiring scores of others to enact truces and do the same; and Kurtis Blow, the first major-label rap artist, along with countless more. Most importantly, he documents stories that have been left unrecorded until now, with the oral histories of the gangs and artists. Illus. (Feb.)

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#### From School Library Journal

Adult/High School--This isn't a musical history, but rather an urban social history. While learning about those who originated hip-hop, readers are informed of the social conditions that led to its creation in the Bronx and its expanding popularity. In the '70s, the borough was in the throes of an urban-development scheme that left it cut off from the rest of New York City by major highway construction, as illustrated by two small maps. With crushing poverty and little to do, teens turned to gangs, but also to house parties, break dancing, and graffiti. Soon, Lower East Side art dealers and club owners discovered the scene and brought it

to the mainstream. But hip-hop wasn't destined to be a fad, and suburban Long Island's Public Enemy appeared, followed a few years later by the Los Angeles scene, led by NWA and Ice Cube. The contrast between the Bronx gangs of the '70s and the Crips and Bloods of the '90s shows how rap lyrics—and the daily lives of rappers—got more violent. This is an extremely well-researched, heavily footnoted, thoroughly indexed book that, although lengthy, isn't the dry scholarly read it might appear to be. Chang wears his left-leaning sensibilities on his sleeve, and artists who tried to advance the art form are given more attention, to the detriment of those who were shallower but just as popular. The conclusion the book draws is its real strength—hip-hop is the culture of youth, and teens today have never known a world without it.—*Jamie Watson, Harford County Public Library, MD*

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