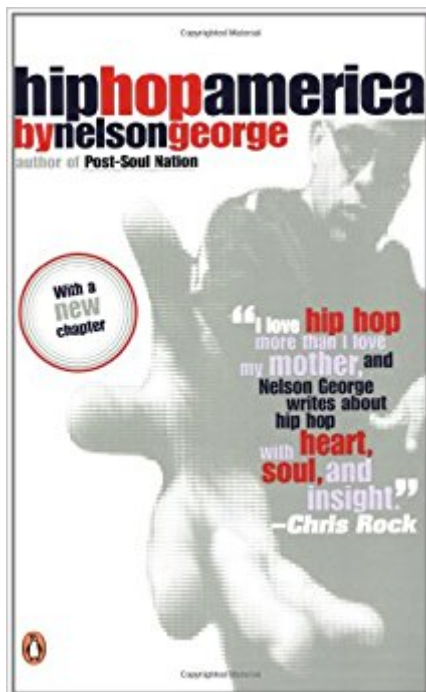


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# Hip Hop America



## Synopsis

From Nelson George, supervising producer and writer of the hit Netflix series, "The Get Down," *Hip Hop America* is the definitive account of the society-altering collision between black youth culture and the mass media.

## Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Revised ed. edition (April 26, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143035150

ISBN-13: 978-0143035152

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 7.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 41 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #118,124 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #55 in *Books > Arts &*

*Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Rap* #226 in *Books > Humor & Entertainment >*

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## Customer Reviews

Although it's been part of the cultural soundscape for over 25 years, hip-hop has been the focus of very few books. And when those books do pop up, they tend to be either overtly scholarly, as if the writer in question has just landed on some alien planet, or a bit too much like a fanzine. If there's anyone qualified to write a solid, informative, and entertaining tome on the culture, politics, and business of hip-hop, it's Nelson George. A veteran journalist, George is one of the smartest and most observant chroniclers of African American pop culture. Much as he broke down and illuminated R&B with his acclaimed book *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, George now tackles hip-hop with the clarity of a reporter and the enthusiasm of a fan--which is fitting, because George is both. A Brooklyn native, he began writing about rap back in the late 1970s, when the beats and the lifestyle were not only foreign to most white folks, they were still underground in the black communities. *Hip Hop America* is filled with George's memories of the scene's nascent years, and it tells the story of rap both as an art form and a cultural and economic force--from the old Bronx nightclub the Fever to the age of Puffy. Highlighting both the major players and some of the forces behind the scenes, George gives rap a historical perspective without coming off as too intellectual.

All of which makes Hip Hop America a worthwhile addition to any fan's collection. --Amy Linden

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

George (The Death of Rhythm and Blues) calls this wide-ranging history of hip-hop a "book of memory" and compares his relationship with the music to a love affair. A portrait not just of the music but of the whole culture coalescing around beats and rhymes, from graffiti to break dancing and basketball, George's narrative sometimes jumps from topic to topic like the fragmentary soundscapes of his subject. Nonetheless, he does follow a loose, anecdotal trajectory from the "post-soul" era of the early 1980s through the Old School to the New School, through gangsta rap to the latest innovators. Often, detours seem to be taken solely because George couldn't bear to drop material, and the writing can seem hasty. One may disagree with certain assessments (he says of trendy vocalist and hip-hop impresario Puff Daddy, "Never in the history of postwar black pop has a single man done so much so well"), but quibbling aside, the author's knowledge and passion run deep. George conveys a continuing excitement and personal investment rather than pretending critical distance, still rethinking his own past positions. Most refreshingly, while an advocate, he is blunt and perceptive in areas where traditional hip-hop advocates can be blindly protective. The book is at its best when George is more commentator than chronicler; one wishes more space had been devoted to exploration of many provocative issues raised in passing: Is democracy good for art? Why no great women rappers? One such thought George offers is that art can be suffocated when "loved too well by the people [it was] intended to make uncomfortable

I am currently writing an entry about Grandmaster Flash for the forthcoming Icons of Hip-Hop (Greenwood Press). First of all, Nelson George is one of the most experienced, respected and eloquent hip-hop journalists alive, and he maintains his reputation in this book. He grew up in the middle of the birth of this artistic-come-cultural phenomenon, and tells the story as both insider and critic. Though there wasn't much specific material about Flash (which I didn't expect), George paints a genuine, if disarming or infuriating, portrait of the rise and continued influence of hip-hop through elegant and sometimes even poetic language and virtually unsurpassed insight. The latter observation comes, in part, from his willingness to explore the broader picture that this culture informs and is controlled by. He raises political and socioeconomic questions, takes on the task of discussing the record industry and how its desire for hit records over individual talent promotes a homogeneous selection of 'rap artists', and is unafraid to question the roles society has played to transform hip-hop almost completely from what it was in its nascent form. Some people complain,

with regard to hip-hop reference books, that the author obviously has no real authority. No one can make that claim about George. After all, he is respected enough to be able to interview GM Flash, Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa (considered the 'Holy Trinity'/founding fathers of hip-hop) in the same place at the same time. [For those of you who don't understand the significance here, no one has ever been able to get these three guys together, because of past rivalry among other things, and Kool Herc had not discussed hip-hop publicly for about thirty years prior to this interview.] So, George gives an authoritative, articulate, thoughtful and insightful account of the rise of hip-hop and the consequences of its appearance in mainstream society (which basically transformed it completely, so that the only true-to-its-roots subculture is underground hip-hop). Buy this book - but don't expect an in-depth discussion of the major players because that isn't what the book is supposed to be anyway.

Great book.

All about Hip Hop

:-)

Can't remember anything earth shattering that I learned from this book but it was worth the money and time and written by the most respected hip hop journalist ever

Gave me good insight to a research project I'm working on. Since the change in sports in how it's marketed.

The condition of the book was poor

Nelson George writes about the art form, history, and influence of hip hop with great passion and intensity. Although the book is not necessarily a chronological arrangement of hip hop's greatest moments it does touch on every aspect of hip hop's short, yet extremely diverse, timeline. Ranging from the early B-Boys and Girls of the Bronx to contemporary "gangster rap" from the likes of Jay-Z, DMX, Puff Daddy, Wyclef Jean, and Busta Rhymes. George does great job of intertwining pure facts and his own personal, sometimes not so popular, opinions of hip hop. It is evident throughout the book that George's passion and knowledge of hip hop is second to none, which makes for quite

the enlightening read. Definitely would recommend to hip hop connoisseurs and beginners alike looking to get an idea of what hip hop is truly all about. Overall a very high quality book.

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