Preface

LANCE SCOTT WALKER

In the process of compiling *Houston Rap*, the photo and oral history book to which this serves as companion, we had to leave a lot out. In fact, *most* of the material that photographer Peter Beste and I began gathering in 2004 and 2005 didn't make the cut. Peter shot thousands more photos than we could ever include, and I had to boil hour-long interviews down to a paragraph or just a few lines. The length of those quotes preserves the context for the most part, but nothing compares to the full text of the conversations.

And it's important stuff in those conversations. Plenty of Houston's rap history has been documented over the years, but even more of it only survives as unwritten stories. As Houston's landscape is further developed, and so much of its physical history is erased in favor of strip centers and condominiums, those stories work to keep that history alive. Gentrification may have rendered parts of some Houston neighborhoods unrecognizable, but the fabric of the communities who once resided there remains strong, spread out as it may be. Houston's like that.

It is an enormous city, the fourth largest in the nation and one of the fastest growing, with an infrastructure that divides it up into smaller cities that really are their own towns. The neighborhoods of Fifth Ward, Third Ward, and South Park and its surrounding Southside area are all known as the birthplace of Houston rappers, but aside from that, they really couldn't be more different. Their histories are unique, the vibe in the streets is different, and of course, so are the people.

Your city is only as big as the parts of it you allow yourself to see. These are perspectives from

some of Houston's marginalized corners. In the culture, the slang, and the history, you see something revealed that is inimitably Houston, but there are neighborhoods like Fifth Ward, Third Ward, and South Park in a lot of American cities. The struggles laid out here and the feelings expressed may be unique to the individuals who tell the stories, but we can all relate. Through the years-long process of making these two books—doing photo shoots and interviews at backyard barbecues, in private living rooms, leaning against cars in the Texas sun, in corners of nightclubs, out under the street lights, or through countless late-night phone conversations—rap music took a backseat to the human element that opened up. The men and women interviewed here are known as rappers, producers, DJs, radio personalities, and the like, and we learn Houston's history through their own, but we also learn about their passions, regrets, memories, and hopes.

There is a long history of rap music in Houston, but no nostalgia. People grow apart and move on, but the momentum of rap in Houston has never died, regardless of its popularity elsewhere. There is a family element to it that reaches across the neighborhoods. Chalk it up to the insular atmosphere of Houston, as global a city as it may be. That's what makes it special. It is all at once a huge melting pot and its own planet. They may tear down a lot of buildings in Houston, but nobody forgets.

For this New Edition of *Houston Rap Tapes*, we have added 22 more interviews, and the book has been reorganized into sections that cover different eras and movements in Houston music history, with contributions from a wide range

of photographers. Still, this isn't meant to be a complete look into Houston rap—more like a cross section—and the names you see here aren't all the most famous ones. But Houston's superstars had a lot of help building their communities, and some of the lesser-known characters have big stories they've just never been asked to tell. In that, we get Houston at street level. It is a city that has always had its own identity, characterized in part by its outsider status, and you see why when you hear from its artists. It's a long game in Houston, and you do it all from scratch. Mainstream attention may come and go, but the neighborhoods keep on living and breathing, and everybody sticks around. I hope these conversations shed some light on that world. ✕

← SAN ANTONIO

← KATY

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NEAR
NORTHSIDE

FIFTH
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BEAUMONT
PORT ARTHUR
NORTH SHORE

NEW ORLEANS
BAYTOWN

DENVER HARBOR
PORT HOUSTON

RICE
MILITARY

FIRST WARD
Dope House
Records
Rhythm
Room

FOURTH
WARD

MONTROSE

69

← ALIEF

SUGAR
LAND

Sharpstown
Chinatown
TV Johnny's

RIVER OAKS

Westheimer

Jamaica Jamaica

The Summit

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GALVESTON

SOUTH HOUSTON
Broadway
Square

HOBBY
AIRPORT

Almeda
Skating Rink
Quail
Meadows
Fuqua
Walter Jones
Park

PEARLAND

LAKE JACKSON

ROSHARON

HIRAM CLARKE

W Fuqua

W Orem Dr

S Main

Stella Link

Buffalo Speedway

Kirby Dr

W Holcombe Blvd

Chimney Rock

288
TEXAS

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Tom Bass Park

Paradise South

DEAD
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SOUTH
ACRES

CLOVERLAND

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