

IT'S MORE THAN
20 QUESTIONS
AS 50 CENT
SPEAKS FRANKLY
ON FRIENDS
AND FOES.

WHAT'S THE REAL
STORY BEHIND HIS
RELATIONSHIP WITH
INCARCERATED CRACK
BARRON KENNETH
"SUPREME" MCGRUFF?
HOW DOES HE FEEL
ABOUT JAY-Z SIGNING
NAS TO DEF JAM?
WHY WON'T PUFFY
RELEASE MA\$E FROM
BAD BOY? WHO WILL THE
GAME BE RECORDING
HIS NEXT ALBUM WITH?
AND WHERE DOES
G-UNIT STAND IN
TODAY'S RAP GAME?



GAMES HATERS PLAY

INTERVIEW VANESSA SATTEN
IMAGES DANIELLE LEVITT





At this point, it's a well-known story. A Southside Jamaica, Queens, native, orphaned as a child, who'd taken nine bullets and lived, 50 Cent exploded onto the scene in 2002 via a series of mixtapes and a public feud with rap star Ja Rule and his label, Murder Inc. 50 signed to a joint deal with Eminem's Shady Records and Dr. Dre's Aftermath Entertainment (both subsidiaries of Jimmy Iovine's Interscope Records), launched his own company, G-Unit, and sold 7.5 million copies of his debut, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*—effectively ending Murder Inc.'s viability along the way.

But there's backstory. Lots of backstory. Murder Inc. was tight with Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff, a legendary Queens gangster who ran the infamous 1980s crack cartel the Supreme Team. McGriff, who'd been released from prison in 1995 after serving eight years on racketeering charges, had gone into business with Murder Inc. principals Irv and Chris Gotti and another partner, Chaz Williams, and his Black Hand Entertainment, in hopes of making a movie out of the Donald Goines novel *Crime Partners*.

In December 2002, though, McGriff was arrested on federal weapons charges. The next month, the Murder Inc. offices were raided on suspicion that the Gotti brothers were laundering McGriff's dirty money. (The Gottis would go on to beat a federal case in court.) Supreme started serving a 37-month sentence at Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Center in mid-2003. But in the time since, Feds have accused him of ordering the famed May 2000 hit on 50, and officially charged him with a slew of crimes ranging from drug distribution to orchestrating murder. He now faces the death penalty.

Early in his career, 50 recorded "Ghetto Qu'ran," a song about Southside Queens' notorious gangsters that mentioned McGriff in the first verse. While 50 says he intended it as a tribute, some cite the song as an example of snitching. (According to court documents entered in the Murder Inc. trial, when Federal investigators questioned 50 about McGriff, 50 told them to read his lyrics.) Last year, 50 played a character named Marcus in a movie, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, inspired by his life story. Another character, a drug kingpin named Majestic, is loosely based on McGriff. The film suggests that Majestic killed Marcus' mother, had something to do with Marcus being shot and may have actually been Marcus' biological father.

Last fall, *New York* magazine writer Ethan Brown released *Queens Reigns Supreme: Fat Cat, 50 Cent, and the Rise of the Hip-Hop Hustler* (Anchor Books), a book detailing the Q-borough's crime lords and their connection to hip-hop. (*XXL* featured an interview with Brown in our March 2006 issue.) More recently, Brown visited McGriff in prison to conduct an interview for *Vibe* magazine. In the article, McGriff disparaged 50—"Kid," he said, "you've never been through nothing..."—insisted he'd tried to squash beef, and again raised the matter of 50's alleged snitching.

50 now presides over an empire, having expanded into the worlds of fashion, film, video games and Vitamin Water—but this year has been a bumpy one for G-Unit. Tony Yayo's name was repeatedly mentioned in reports surrounding the February shooting of Busta Rhymes' bodyguard Israel Ramirez. On the business front, after six straight platinum releases, sales are slowing. Last year's high-profile recruits (Ma\$e, M.O.P., Mobb Deep) have thus far yielded more headaches than rewards, and dismissed California rep The Game—the crew's only multiplatinum artist besides 50—will most definitely not be releasing his second album through G-Unit.

Still, financial independence allows certain luxuries. 50's going back to his roots this summer—the mixtape. With the help of his long-time DJ, Whoo Kid, he's dropping three full-length collections, dozens of new songs, just for the streets. He has high hopes for joint ventures he's entered with Jay-Z and Lil Jon, and for a new artist, Phoenix MC Hot Rod.

So 50 Cent has a sly smile on his face when we find him sitting in G-Unit's Manhattan offices. Clearly, he's got a lot on his mind.

XXL: Were you surprised by the article on Supreme in *Vibe*?

That's something I think would be in *F.E.D.S.* or *Don Diva*. He's fuckin' on trial. He shouldn't be talking. He should be keeping his fuckin' mouth shut. I'm sure if he had a lawyer his lawyer would tell him not to have that fuckin' article.

What did you think of the *Queens Reigns Supreme* book?

The reason why 50 Cent is in big bold letters on the cover of the book is for marketing purposes. Whoever this Ethan is, I never had a conversation with this guy [for his book]. This guy's assuming that he knows what's going on. He don't know nothing that's really fuckin' going on outside of what these monkeys done went and told this nigga. Individually, they sat down with this nigga, 'cause according to this article and in the book...

A lot of things in the article were not said by Supreme directly, but were in the words of the writer based on his reporting.

Yeah, but it still was said to the writer by them. The writer ain't in South Jamaica, Queens. That's why he don't understand nothing he talking about. All he doing is saying back what niggas said to him... And he's putting himself in the middle of a world where everybody ain't going to be happy about it.

Do you think this is stuff that shouldn't

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even be talked about?

None of it should be out there. It's all illegal activity. Everything that you mention when you talk to these niggas, they can't make reference to nothing but breaking the fuckin' law. That's it. We talking about career criminals.

So you make a movie loosely based on your life story, and there's a character named Majestic that resembles Supreme. The movie made it look like Majestic killed your mother and that he could have been your father...

He's not my father. I can't stand that nigga. There are other things there, but he know that I didn't think... I wasn't accusing him of fuckin' killing my mother. That's the way they make the character darker... In the article, he said he has relationships with people that I used to be cool with. Lil' Troy, the nigga that robbed Ja, is in my era. We did shit in the street together. While 'Preme's always talking about the nigga that took the jewelry from Ja was raised under the Supreme Team,

under him, that's true. I was raised under the Supreme Team.

What does it mean to be raised under the Supreme Team?

They came at a time—early '80 into the '90s. Everybody that was from that area fall under that umbrella at some point. If it wasn't under 'Preme, it was under Cat [Lorenzo "Fat Cat" Nichols] and Corley or somebody down there. You looked up to all of them niggas that ring them kind of bells, 'cause they doing what you doing and they count so much more to the streets at the time based on their reputation, what they accomplished. I came up under all these niggas. Not necessarily the Supreme Team in Baisley, but everything that was going on in that era. Those niggas are the niggas that actually got the money when it was there to get. Initially, I didn't know 'Preme like that. I knew 'Preme through Black Just. Blackie was cool with me. He was calling me Curt when everybody was calling me Boo Boo or 50. He financed the boxing program. Blackie, he was

that nigga to me. He paid for it, but... He was under this nigga and this nigga was in jail at the time...

Seems like Supreme bothers you more than anybody.

Yeah. I like him. We're married. 'Til death do us part.

What does that mean?

I love him more than anybody alive on this planet. We have a special bond. He cannot go to sleep without me on his mind.

But married? That sounds deeper than...

Listen. They was supposed to fuck with me. The old heads in my hood... Why? Because they know I'm authentic.

know they ain't gonna do nothing."

He made it the way it is right now. If I said he had something to do with me getting shot, it means nothing, 'cause everybody in my hood knows that's what time it is. But that's not the problem. It's 'cause he didn't see that I don't just listen. Nigga just don't tell me what to do, and it's okay.

Whatever same type of shit he has running through him, is running through me. And he can't see it enough to give me room to coexist with him. He wanted me to submit, and that's just not in me. A nigga would have to kill me to stop me from doing what I want to do. That's what they tried. It's not gonna happen with a

before any shooting. Now what the fuck would I be doing walking into a room when everybody in the room is cool but me? I had a MAC-32 shot clip. I came to the building, and didn't go in. 'Cause my brain tells me—when I use it, it tells me, Don't walk in that situation. It's a bad situation. Niggas will say the wrong thing out they mouth, 'cause they got that comfort zone. They got you in a room all by yourself. You kill somebody in the building, then you're done. So I don't go to the fuckin' meeting. Chaz, the same nigga who's supposed to be cool with me, setting up the meeting so we can squash it. He's calling this nigga his friend now, so you know the nigga was on the gate the whole time.

"THEY WAS SUPPOSED TO F&#K WITH ME. THE OLD HEADS IN MY HOOD... WHY? BECAUSE THEY KNOW I'M AUTHENTIC... I'M ACTUALLY FROM THE SAME F&#KIN' CLOTH... EVERYTHING THAT'S F&#KED UP ABOUT ME COMES FROM THESE MUTHAF&#KAS. THE BEHAVIOR..."



They were supposed to get behind you as a rapper?

Period. Any move I decided to make, they were supposed to roll with me because I'm actually from the same fuckin' cloth. I'm an offspring of them. I'm not a relative. I'm not a brother or sister to these niggas. I'm a

distant cousin. I'm from down the road. Everything that's fucked up about me comes from these muthafuckas. The behavior...

'Preme's telling me, "Chill." And then the nigga goes and says something new. He came down there to me several times and said, "Yo, leave these niggas alone. These niggas is my food." To tell me to leave Irv and Ja and them niggas alone.

I went to see this nigga on the Coliseum block. They was shooting a video back there. Nigga called me from the barbershop, told me them niggas was up there shooting the shit. I walked up to see what was up with the nigga, and the nigga acted real funny the time that I did see him.

Who? Ja?

Ja. So I went got the pistol. I went there on the motorcycle 'cause I wanted to see what it's about. The nigga see me. They had the mailbox joint right across the street, the post office box. [Supreme] see me from across the street, walking down there toward the shoot, and says, "Ehhhh, hey. Come here, don't even do it. I see you." Pulls me to the side, and I'm like, "Yo, what's up with this nigga?" And he's like, "Nah, nah. I told you, leave them alone, man. You

halfway mark. You really have to kill me to stop me from doing what I want to do. 'Cause all I believe is what I think. All I believe in is me. My thoughts and the way I see things are my truths. It has to make sense to me. And then I'm with you.

So you wanted to decide for yourself...

I took a meeting with DJ Clue and Skane [Clue's manager, Rich Skane], respectfully, to do a deal. [This is around 2002.] You know the first thing he said to me when we got in there? Skane, he said, "Yo, I spoke to the wolves. Niggas told me it's all right to sit with you, do business." 'Cause 'Preme thought I tried to kill him at the gas station. Somebody shot at him and tried to kill him at the gas station. So Skane's saying, "I spoke to 'Preme, and he was like, Yo, it's okay to fuck with you. He thought you tried to kill him, but he found out it was something else..."

Either way, he's a wrap now, because the changes they don't see is the financial transition. Same way the nigga that shot me wasn't an in-house for them—he was just a shooter. I have access to that now. I have the finances. The shooters shoot as soon as the bag is dropped. So now, either they give him life, or they let him go and I give him life. They don't understand the difference. The first album I was trying to explain it, *Power of the Dollar*. They had money when I didn't have money, so I had to take bullets.

So it started as a matter of who controls...

They tried to arrange a meeting for me to go meet with him with Chaz [Williams] and [Williams' entertainment company] Black Hand. I wouldn't even say the nigga name. But since he done put him in the magazine and shit... At the time, Chaz, we was cool with each other. All Murder Inc. is there with 'Preme, and I'm supposed to go in there with Chaz and squash the beef?

This was before we had the altercation in Atlanta, before the Hit Factory altercation,

After I get shot up, I call my grandmother's house. I say, "Anybody call me there?" She said, "No." I said, "Ma, you sure nobody called there for me? The old man didn't call there for me?" Mind you, these niggas is 50 and 47 fuckin' years old. I'm like, "An old man didn't call there for me?" She goes, "No." So in my head, if [Chaz] didn't know exactly what the fuck happened before it happened, then he knew already. That's why he didn't call. And they wonder to this day why I don't fuck with him.

A lot of people think it all goes back to the "Ghetto Qu'ran" song.

The "Qu'ran" didn't make reference to anybody who was actively doing something at the time. It was all past shit. I'm just saluting niggas... The cops come asking me questions. I said, "I ain't got no answers for you." They talking to you like, "Come on, 50. You always don't give a fuck. You always say whatever you..." I'm like, "Man listen. Listen to my music, like everybody else listens to my music." I'm telling them, "Listen to the lyrics like everybody else does, and what did I say that they don't say?"

The worst thing you could be where I'm from is a snitch. They don't like that shit. So that's what they try to make me out to be based on. If I'm a snitch, who's in jail?

Even with all the bad blood, though, you do seem to respect the old gangsters from Queens.

They are not suckers. These niggas is gangstas. I came up under these niggas. I still do what the fuck I wanna do. It's one thing if you out there and you poppin' off and you talking about this nigga from up the block who got a verse that sound like you. It's another thing when you talking about real street niggas. These niggas is real niggas. So what do you think my thought process is when I'm tellin' them to suck my dick? So what do you think my thought process is when I'm telling them when I see them I'm down for that daytime action? We





between himself and these people. How do you expect this nigga to know? He came home from jail and these niggas was in the club, with me. I'm 19, and I'm kinda hot right now. Bitches is looking at me. I was already 50 before my record came out, because I got a 400 SC Benz in the hood and I'm 19. I'm a hell of a catch at that point.

You know what's weird, though? I didn't always feel like I feel about these niggas now. Younger, you look up to these niggas. Those are the niggas that you know made the money. And then what you see them turn into. These are lessons to kids to say no to drugs. These are perfect lessons, because you look up to them. And then you look at this nigga like, He did nothing. Why does he mention that he's not gonna snitch? Is it on his mind? Does he wanna be rewarded in some way? **Well, like you said, it's important to avoid that label.**

But why would he have to avoid that? Maybe he has to avoid that because he knows he doing something he ain't supposed to do.

Like what?
'Preme loves to be out in the eye. He wants to be a fuckin' celebrity. This is why when he first heard the record, he told me he liked the record. He liked the "Ghetto Qu'ran." Now he doesn't like that I'm airing dirty laundry? He done put the laundry out on the line. Look, "OG" stands for Old Goat to me. I don't like none of them old nig-



GAME AND 50 IN 2004

"GAME IS ON GEFFEN. HE'S NOT ON G-UNIT OR AFTERMATH ANYMORE.

IT'S ALL UNDER INTERSCOPE STILL. HE JUST HAS NO PARTICIPATION FROM DR. DRE OR 50 CENT ON HIS NEW PROJECT."

can do it whatever time it is in the day when I run into you. I'm saying this on the records to these niggas before my album even come out. Before these niggas go to jail, while they still on the street with me... This ain't when 'Preme went to jail 50 started talking crazy. When he was on the streets, I tell him, "Fuck you. I see you, I blow your head off 12 o'clock in the afternoon." Now this is what is really getting interesting to niggas in the hood, 'cause they go, *Yo this nigga got hit nine times, this nigga don't give a fuck.*

You dealing with real niggas, you better come to the plate. You better come with your A game or get wrapped up. That's it. Niggas gave you an example. Took nine bullets, nigga. You come back saying, You know what? I don't care. I'll kill 'em. I go to jail, they going to remember me in my hood for the rest of my life. 'Cause if I'd have seen him in the gas station or the store, I'd have wrapped his ass up. Then there would be, *'Preme was a real nigga, but that little nigga 50, remember the nigga who shot him?* So even if it didn't work out for me where I could become a

nigga that was able to do things in business that's respectable, they would've respected me, or remembered me, for blowing his head off. You feel what I'm saying?

What do you think will happen to Supreme?
When 'Preme blows trial, and they send him to Texas, he's gonna stay in Texas for a lil' bit. Then when they ship again and he ends up at Leavenworth and he hit that max, they gonna eat him alive. They gonna eat him for breakfast. **Why doesn't the fact that he's locked away satisfy you? Doesn't that hurt him enough?**
It doesn't hurt. I mean, it hurts him mentally. It hurts him when he hears me talking like that, but you know what it is? If the nigga would've kept his mouth shut and just deal with what he had to do right now, I wouldn't be talking about him. A few muthafuckas listen when he talk. This is why [*Vibe*] put *my* name in bold print. They don't give a fuck about Supreme. Then the [writer] played him. Made him look like a fuckin' clown with cocaine on his nose—buffoonish. That's what he is, a buffoon...

Are you an organized crime mob boss or were you a nigga from Baisley projects that sold crack? He doesn't know the difference

gas. They whole style is obsolete...

I'ma say this to you: 'Preme just destroyed what he was in the minds of so many people with this article. He was a nigga you would look at and say, *He the real deal.* The nigga at this point is broken. His spirit is broken. He's desperate and in a position where he's vulnerable. He's crying 'cause he has nothing. You hear him in the magazine, "I never been fascinated by a nigga based on money." He's making that note because I have truckloads of money. He's trying to look like that was how he was moving. Niggas roll with you, and they ain't eat with you. So where's the fuckin' crew? You mean to tell me none of the crew is making enough money in the streets to handle your lawyer fees? That means the way he was moving didn't *move* shit. He compares himself to John Gotti, but I don't recall John Gotti ever having a problem getting his lawyers' fees paid.

Okay, changing directions. In terms of the public, have you felt any 50 backlash lately?
'Cause muthafuckas don't understand. **Don't understand what?**

They get angry 'cause they have no idea why I continue to win. It's fuckin' backlash to the



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magazine for me continuously being on the cover. They don't realize that when I'm on the cover, it sells the most. They still buy it to be upset about it.

It's the same thing in the actual neighborhood. If a nigga in the hood buys a nice new car, some people gonna be cool with it and some people don't like that he got that car. Now imagine what it is when you're fuckin' beyond their imagination with the finances you're acquiring. You're executing business on a level they didn't think possible. You're gonna get a group of haters. Where was these niggas when I was coming out on *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*? None of 'em existed. The only problem I had altercations with was Murder Inc. And my issues with them was about them being bitch-ass niggas trying to claim something they ain't really have nothing to do with.

Let's talk about the G-Unit roster. Tony Yayo didn't go platinum. Mobb Deep didn't even go gold. How do you respond to that? Some people might say G-Unit is losing its juice... Tell me what other company you can go to and the minimum you sell is 500,000 records? There's no such thing. Is it? Def Jam has a line of how many artists that they released that didn't sell gold records. If we gonna get that, then you know that being here is the best place for you to be, regardless.

What about Mobb Deep's sales? They're at about 225,000 now. Did you expect more? I expected it to do more because of the quality of the material. But am I disappointed with Mobb Deep? No. Prodigy and Havoc both did what they were supposed to do as artists... And with Yayo, "Seductive" didn't grow to be as big as it could because he was on parole. We couldn't even do the promo tour for him to go to each market to open the record up.

Let's talk about the Game situation. Game is on Geffen. He's not on G-Unit or Aftermath anymore. It's all under Interscope still. He just has no participation from Dr. Dre or 50 Cent on his new project.

That whole Game thing is an interesting situation. Everybody's waiting to see how it plays out with his album.

I don't think it's going to be interesting. I think it's going to be what it was before I wrote his hits. That's the bottom line. I wrote six records for his album, three of them were his first three singles. Can he rap? Yeah. Is he a good songwriter? No. **Do you still make money off that?** Of course. You think I gave my money away? Me and Dre will still make the same money we would make off the project. It's just no longer on Aftermath or G-Unit.

But if he's not on your label, how do you make money?

Because Jimmy [Iovine] is the boss. Jimmy says this will stop the confusion, 'cause Dre isn't as vocal. The average person in the general public, they would think the differences between me and Game are cool with Dre, 'cause they didn't hear Dre say anything. And then you look at it like, Game's from the West. **Does Game know that Dre is not going to be on his album? I mean, the album's supposed to be called *The Doctor's Advocate*.** He front like *The Doctor's Advocate* because he tries to stay with Dr. Dre's association so he get the love on the West Coast. That's what he needs. I'll make more money off a Game record every time it comes out than he will. It doesn't bother me if he sells records. I don't believe he will. My morals say every dollar ain't a good dollar. I'm sure we'll never be friends.

What's your relationship like with Em and Dre now?

Em is my partner. I'll do anything for him. He can call me right now and say, Let me borrow \$20 million. And I'll give it to him. And he would never call about money, 'cause he got so much. He could get whatever he want from me. On any level, I'll do whatever for him. And Dre, our relationship is good. It's good like when we get face to face. It's different... It takes reasons to bring us around each other. After Proof passed, we all ended up together. Em was in L.A. to spend some time with Dre, actually staying at Dre's house. And I came to L.A., so we was all together.

What do you think about Jay-Z and Nas' peace concert?

Peace concert? Cam was saying the peace concert was about him. I'm looking at the stage saying the peace concert is about me. He didn't get it.

Jay is the only exception so far [as being]

someone I didn't get for standing next to nig-gas I don't like. He did it in a way that made me look at it like he was doing business. As opposed to it being you made a decision to just stand next to a nigga. And that I understand, because it's about the actual business. So it's like, "Okay, cool."

Does it matter to you that Nas signed to Def Jam?

No. It doesn't matter, because if you feel like that's a good business decision, you should make that first.

As a hip-hop fan, can you believe Nas signed with Jay after all the past drama?

On Jay's part, yes. It wouldn't matter. If I fucked your baby's mother and I wanted you to work for me, it'd be cool.

There are rumors you are fighting with Puffy over Ma\$e...

I don't have a problem with Puffy. Puff don't need a problem with me. He trying to sell a record, so he definitely don't want that. And he don't want to let Ma\$e go. That's it. That's the bottom line. I think it's foul, but it's cool. I mean, you can think a nigga foul...

You're splitting the Freeway project with Jay and Scrappy with Lil Jon, how come you can't split Ma\$e?

Why would I split it when he has no value? Puffy. There is no value to the music. If I can't go in with him and create material to help him sell the fuckin' records... Why would I split it

with someone who can't go in and write the rhymes? Can't go in and produce the beats?

You have a new artist, Hot Rod. Can you tell us a little about him?

Hot Rod's project is exciting. It's something new. He got his own sound, his own style. It's a breath of fresh air for you to hear someone come out and their material be a reflection of their experiences. 'Cause he hasn't been in a lot of the unfortunate situations that I experienced. He doesn't have the same content, but he has a similar tone. It feels like something I would do.

So you're doing some mixtapes?

I think that music sucks right now. So I gotta put out material for myself and everybody else to listen to. I'm getting back on the street. I'm getting busy this summer. I'm going to be active, fuck it.

Let's talk about the shooting at the Busta Rhymes video. You've been quiet since the incident back in February. And G-Unit has been tied to the story in the press—Tony Yayo in particular. Does that concern you?

The real scary part about those types of situations is they try to convict you without having any information. Like I was there on the scene and involved. Or they make the general public feel you did that. And at the end of the day, I'm not even in the country. That makes you feel like the law enforcement is a part of the general public. So when you put it in a fuckin' news publication, you change their perspective. Police will tell you themselves, I'm the number one watched

person. It's like the president—it ain't hard to kill him, it's hard to get away with it. It's cool.

What's your relationship with the police? On the one hand, it's like, "50's harassed by the cops..." But then a lot of people say, "50's down with the cops, he's protected by the cops."

Am I protected by the cops or are the cops protecting them from me? Why are they fuckin' literally watching me every day?

'Cause you were shot nine times and you have some influence?

Oh, 'cause I was shot nine times? Or maybe because they believe that every time shots are fired, that I sent it? In my hood, the drama pop off all the time. But every time it pop off and niggas go to the precinct, I know the cops think I'm responsible for everything 'cause they asking, "Come on, why 50 did that? If it looks professional, they think I got it done. If a nigga go there shooting 50, 60 times and ain't nobody really wrapped up out there, they ain't going to put that on me. That was an incident. If a nigga come, get off the bike and hit him in his chest twice..."

In the eyes of police, that gives you a lot of power, right?

They know it's easy. Where I'm from, the price of life is cheap. They know that if I'm trying to do that, it could get done. But why? Why am I doing that? They must think I'm a nut, just out of my mind. ♠

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