

DEEPER THAN RAP

THE EMPIRE STATE'S NEXT GREAT RAPPER COMES BACK FOR THE FIRST TIME

New York has searched high and low for its next great rapper. Saigon, Papoose and Joel Ortiz have all tried their hands at carrying on the legacies of Jay-Z, Nas and the late Notorious B.I.G. All have failed fabulously at the task. Through the auditioning and premature media christening, Jason "Jadakiss" Phillips has quietly played his role in the corner, putting in consistent work and patiently waiting on his chance to shine.

At 34 years of age, Jadakiss' time may have finally come. *The Last Kiss* is the scruffy-voiced MC's third album, and it's your typical trek around a dark, desolate Brooklyn or Harlem block. There's posturing, pistol-waving and proclamations of being the best. But it's all arranged so magically, those who've heard the spring release can't help but scream its praises. "Pain & Torture," "Something Else" and "Come and Get Me" are vintage East Coast sounds that don't ever feel forced or dated. It's the kind of music Jada fans can play in Atlanta, Chicago or Miami and follow with a proud "What?! We told you the North wasn't goin' nowhere!"

"I think some people are taking the art for granted," says Kiss, who's also still one-third of rap trio The LOX. The popular late '90s crew plans to bring more heat to Rotten Apple streets with *No Security* later this year. "Hip hop is a culture that shouldn't be tampered with. It should be expanded. Hip hop stems from break-dancing and block parties out in the park and a DJ with two turntables, a mixer and two MCs battling, going back and forth. We can't switch it. We can't be ignorant about it. But at the same time, we can't make the shit too far out, know what I mean?"

Yep, sure do. And that's why *Last Kiss'* back-to-the-borough-basics approach works so well. There's no auto-tune. No pointless skits or Akon



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cameos. Just a man, his mic and some of the fiercest musicianship the rap game's heard in a few years. Listen closely to the album; you'll detect something else— a softer, almost sensitive side we didn't know the Yonkers native had— especially on

commercial tracks like "By My Side."

"That Ne-Yo song is for the ladies," Jadakiss swears. "You gotta cater to the ladies— no matter how you look at it or how gangsta you are or what you portray. I'm an artist. I understand

JADAKISS

WHO'S WHO
Jadakiss (MC)

FORMED
1993 in New York

LABEL
D-Block/Rock-A-Fella/Ruff Ryders

LATEST RELEASE
The Last Kiss (2009)

ON THE WEB
www.jadakiss.com

the demographics of the game. If you start complaining early, [my label, Def Jam will] cut the money off. So, I had to let them rock with that. It works out as a win-win for me. I ain't changin' though. That might be good 'cuz you gotta cop the album in case you think I changed. There definitely aren't no more songs like the Ne-Yo song. That ain't what the core of the album is. The core of the album is that Jada shit— them good lyrics, them good beats."

Jada will admit that, while his first Roc-A-Fella release, ultimately is his own vision, he did get some aid from one of New York's finest to polish things off. "Hove came in," Kiss recalls, "and [had me] go back in [the studio] with Swizz Beatz. I got a joint from DJ Khaled and another Pharrell [Williams] joint too. It was good. Some advice and help is always good. Everybody could use help— Barack, Jordan, LeBron, Kobe, Shaq. Everybody needs a lil' bit."

Fans in the Tri-State area looking for the next big thing to come out of New York don't need any help. They've finally found him in Jadakiss. But the funny thing is that he's been there the whole time.

— DeMarco Williams