



Poli-tricks & Pimpin'

ICE-T

FORGET WHAT YA (MIS)HEARD. THE RAPPER/ACTOR KNOWN AS ICE-T IS THE REAL RBG, TAKING RAW REALITY RHYMES ABOUT GUNS, GHETTOS AND THE GUTTER TO A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU AND YA SURBURBAN SIBLINGS TOO. PIMPS, PUSHERS, PROSTITUTES AND POLITRICKSTERS PARADE THROUGH A POP (CULTURE) PANORAMA COURTESY OF THE ORIGINAL GANGSTA GRIOT WHO'S BEEN DROPPING SEEDS OF STREET SCIENCE SINCE WAY BACK IN THE EARLY EIGHTEES. WITHOUT ICE-T THERE MIGHT NOT BE THAT "SCARY" THING WE CALL "GANGSTA RAP" OR WHAT TUPAC CALLED "THUG (THE HATE YOU GAVE) LIFE." AND MAYBE YOU THINK WE'D BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT 'EM ANYWAY, BUT LEST WE FORGET, GANGSTA GAVE US THE CREATIVITY TO SAY "FUCK THE POLICE." AND IF YOU THINK THAT'S A BAD THING, THEN YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER BEEN STOPPED FOR DRIVING WHILE BLACK, BEEN TOSSED IN A CELL FOR "FITTING THE DESCRIPTION" OR BEEN SHOT AT 41 TIMES. ICE-T HAS BEEN SPEAKING HIS MIND FOR YEARS AND RARELY WATCHING WHAT HE SAYS OR WHAT YOU SAY EITHER. AND HE PAYS NO MIND, WHETHER OR NOT THE POLICE, PRIEST OR YOUR PRE-PUBESCENT PIMPLY PUNK ASS MINDS.

UGLY PLANET: *You've been someone who's been able to be popular and well known, but your music has never gotten commercial radio airplay or been on MTV.*

ICE-T: Fortunately there are the hardcore underground people who will talk about good stuff. And will seek out good stuff. I've always been someone who just stayed out of the politics of MTV and the radio and all that begging and paying to get your record played. My stuff has always been quality, and if someone does find it, they kind of go, "Wow, why am I not hearing this on the radio?" My stuff has been too controversial, progressive; they didn't like me because I wouldn't get up in there and do the song and dance with them. I could be ten times as rich if I did things their way. But I just decided I'd take my own path. People say Ice-T you've gone mainstream, and I'm like, I've maxed out the hardcore, maxed out the underground to where everybody knows me. Like when I got on the TV show

Law and Order, people were like, "How the fuck did he get on there after he cursed out the president of the U.S. and everybody else? But he's so known, we've got to use him."

The Body Count project was the thing that crossed the borders between black and white audiences. And also created all the controversy...

Body Count brought a lot of attention to me. It was all good attention, it helped the underground know that I was serious about what I was saying—I did have an opinion. But I wouldn't advise anyone to try to get attention like that. Because you carry that with you forever. I'll be fucking 60 years old, and I'll still be the "Cop Killer." But at the time, that's how I felt. I still feel like that in many ways. Corrupt cops are the worst criminals and shit, you know. But really, there's no way I can sit back and say let's figure out a way to get the whole world to know me. It has to happen organically.

I guess it goes back to just being yourself...

And I've been very fortunate that many people line up with myself, my views are parallel to a lot of other people's views. So when I speak, I speak for a lot of people. And even people who disagree with me on one thing, they'll agree with me on another. The thing of it is that if you never say anything, how do you even know you agree with me? A lot of these people who are politically correct never say anything. You don't know who the fuck they are. Coming out of the streets, I was like, I'll be in this shit, but I ain't going to play no act. But if anything, now I just try to stay out of trouble. Because there's people out there who want to get me in a crossfire so they can sue me and take what little I've got. So I have to be on my best behavior. But besides that, try to stay as honest as I can.

"Fame is nothing more than being known by a lot of people. It doesn't mean you are great. It just means you are known."

“To me, Hugh Hefner is the biggest pimp that’s ever walked the earth. What he did is that he didn’t sell the actual female, he figured out a way to sell the image.”

Can you elaborate on that? You know, back in the day, if someone said something to you, you’d just punch them in the mouth. Nowadays people say things to you in order to make you punch them in the mouth, just so they can take you to court. And woop-de-doop, you dig? You become a target. For these lazy motherfuckers. So you can’t do what you normally would have done in the past. Now and again I may say something that offends someone. And someone will say, “I don’t like him, I’d like to fuck his life up.” And a normal person, who’s, like, with his family, no one is trying to fuck their life up—no one knows how they feel. But my feelings are put out there for people to know. So that allows people to hate you. People who normally would not know you. See, fame is nothing more than being known by a lot of people. It doesn’t mean you are great. It just means you are known. Have you ever heard the analogy I do with the grapefruit?

No, I haven’t...

Think of a grapefruit they put on television every day at 1 o’clock, it’s on the channels, and the grapefruit is on a little pedestal turning really slowly. And the whole world has to watch it for 20 minutes. We can put that grapefruit in Times Square, put a rope around it and people will take pictures of themselves next to it and say, “Mommy, that’s the grapefruit!” That’s what fame is. People take fame and think they are special, but you are not. Let’s say that grapefruit had a swastika on it; when that grapefruit went out in public, people would hate that grapefruit. That grapefruit hasn’t done anything, but it represents something. So as a public figure like me, when you say something, everybody in the world hears it, and now you have to walk into them. You can be ridiculed; you can be loved. That’s all fame is. Now, talent is another thing.

What did you do to earn the title “Original Gangster?”

Coming from South Central Los Angeles, I was involved with the Crip gang. And I was involved with all kinds of high-end crimes. When I came out of the Army, I came home, and we were doing robberies like [in the movie] *Heat*. I was in the lifestyle, total criminal, and with that gangbanging mentality. When rap came out, I listened to NY rap, and it all was party, throw your hands in the air. And I tried to rap like that, but the crew I was rolling with was like, “Yo nigga, rap about what we do, rap about us.”

And that’s when I started to rap about street cats. And it was the first blip on the radar of hardcore rap dealing with crime. Like they say, I’m the inventor of the crime rhyme. Like rap about drugs and guns. The first original gangsta record was Schoolly D’s “PSK.” That was him singing about a gang called Park Side Killers. And then after that came my song “Six N The Morning,” which was the first rap record about someone running from the police. The kind of stuff you hear in records every day now. Then after me came NWA, Ghetto Boys, Too Short started doing dirty raps. Prior to that, you won’t hear any of that stuff, it was all about parties.

Do you think gangsta has lost its meaning? Has it become a cartoon?

Let me put it like this, I don’t think it’s lost its true meaning; it’s lost its shock value. When Too Short first yelled “bitch,” it scared the shit out of people. People were really afraid when we came out, it’s not that we were any more gangsta, it’s just that we were new. The same way Eminem scared everybody, ‘cos they’ve never heard a white boy talk like that. Now in his new album, you know he’s gonna talk it, and it doesn’t shock you. I think it’s lost its shock value, and it’s lost its pioneering spirit. It definitely was uncharted terrain. As far as it being a cartoon, no, the kids on the streets are just as crazy. And that’s the biggest mistake that people make. Thinking that gangsta rap is fake. The lives these kids come from are extremely dangerous and hazardous. And it’s not to be taken lightly.

How about pimpin’, with MTV and TV commercials using the term to mean flamboyant...

Like *Pimp My Ride* on MTV... Yeah, well, the word *pimp* has been redefined. Now pimp means cool, flamboyant and outrageous. A real pimp manages prostitutes. I think Jay-Z turned the word around when he did the record “Big Pimpin’.” The lyrics of that song say “spending cheese,” but big pimpin’ is “making cheese” from women, not spending it. You see what I’m saying? So he turned the word around to where you are a guy at a club and you are spending a lot of money. And that’s the opposite of what pimpin’ is. When you tell a girl, “I’m going to take you to a store and buy you shit,” that’s not pimpin’. Pimpin’ is, “Bitch you gonna take me to the store and buy me shit.” So the word has been blown out. But maybe for the best, because now it’s less threatening, but there are two meanings. Kind of like I introduce a girl to one of my buddies, and I’m like, “He’s a pimp,” and she’s like, “Yo, he’s a pimp,” and I’m like “No, he’s a pimp!” and they go, “Oh shit!” Hip-hop has a tendency to change the meaning of things.

Do you think pimpin’ is an occupation that’s needed in our society?

I don’t think it’s an occupation that’s needed. I think that if you took all the pimps away in the world, there would still be a lot of hoin’.

Is it possible to get rid of the hoin’?

Nah, there’s always people who will give up themselves for money. Whether I’m hoin’ at Warner Brothers or whatever. When someone puts money in front of you, there’s always somebody who will step over their morals and their integrity. There will always be women who know men want to have sex, and they just, I guess, are what some people would say, “too lazy to do anything else.” And they’ll do that. And the pimp is the guy who comes in and organizes it. Out of all the hoin’, only one half of one percent of the hos got pimps. The rest of them are just freelance trickin’. Like when a chick goes out on a date with a guy she doesn’t like for dinner, whether or not she sucks his dick, she did some hoin’. And if she sucks his dick for a car, that’s another level of hoin’. Most of these women who are married are hoin’, because they don’t really love their husbands. They’re there for the security. Now if a guy manages to get himself into that kind of loop, then he’s a hustler, you see. Actors have agents—that’s a pimp, too. Whatever hustle there is, there’s someone trying to sneak their way in. The pimp’s whole swaggering style is based around ability to know he is mind-fucking somebody into giving him that money. That’s why he’s so cocky. “I’m making a bitch give me something she doesn’t have to give me, because I’m that fly.” That’s why pimps are so arrogant. That’s the same reason them fucking agents are so arrogant. There’s not a lot of women willing to pay to be with men. But there’s more men who wanna be with women, so that raises the level of that commodity, and some cats stepped in and said, let me organize this.

Are sex workers any more exploited than any other entertainer?

One thing we say in pimpin’ is that the “game” is by choice, not by force. You hear all these stories about women being drugged and they can’t get away...but not any more than any normal relationship where a girl is afraid to leave her boyfriend. That’s looked down on in pimpin’, when you terrorize your girls. Girls choose this occupation; you can’t make no woman do that. I’ve asked women how can you do that to yourself, and they say, “Hey, I just zero out, to me sex isn’t anything.” If one side of your male side says, “How can a woman do that, lie on her back,” but then you look to your other male side and know you too could probably fuck any broad at one time in your life, because you zeroed out sex and just turned it into an act. It’s complicated. If you look at it from a high horse, it looks so terrible. You have to look at yourself during your spring break days, and how motherfuckers can do just about anything. Well, chicks have that ability, too.

We, men and women, get used to seeing the whole world from the male perspective...

It’s a weird game. To me, Hugh Hefner is the

biggest pimp that’s ever walked the earth. What he did is that he didn’t sell the actual female, he figured out a way to sell the image. “I’m not going to let you touch my broad, I’m just going to let you see her.” And he’s still got a line around the block of women who want to be his hos. He ain’t begging nobody. And he’s selling the image, so chicks are like, “Wow, I get to show it, that’s a better deal, I’ll go for that.” Meanwhile, he’s respected in some circles. But he’s looked at as a pimp in other circles.

Playboy does play that line, glamor, nudity...but nothing hardcore or too explicit. And then there are other magazines or other mediums that take it further...

Right now in the game, women determine what they are comfortable with. So if a woman says, “I like men looking at me, I’m cool with that,” the next question is, “Do you wanna strip?” “Oh no, I don’t even want to touch them.” “You wanna go on the Internet?” “Yeah. I can control it there.” “How much of yourself do you wanna show?” “I want it to stop at the playboy level, I don’t want to meet the guy, I don’t want to flirt with the guy, and I’m making me some money.” So it’s a matter of where they want to draw the line. That’s why there’s different publications and different levels to this game.

I’ve heard people say sex work is wrong because of what you do to your body. But if you look at the sports industry, you have a boxer getting the shit beat out of him. And there are other sports where people get all kinds of crazy injuries. These people really do take their bodies to extreme levels...yet they are not judged the same way.

It’s actually no different unless you connect it morally to something. When you connect morals to it, it could be something different. Like sex will connect you to relationships. A girl can do something when she’s single, but if she gets married...her husband may not like it. I can be a guy that says, “I don’t like your sex site,” but that just has to do with my own limitations. Sex is a touchy subject. There’s guys who let their chick do porno and sit there and watch it. But I ain’t cut like that. Everybody has a threshold of what’s right and

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tory rape, is a rape of the mind. Like if you had a 6-year-old kid, and I ask the kid would you do something sexual with me, you’ll think I have to be put in jail. But the law reads that a 6-year-old is the same as a 17-year-old. So whatever you wouldn’t do to a 6-year-old, you can’t and shouldn’t do to a 17-year-old. So, therefore, even suggesting sex to a 17-year-old is rape. And I understand that. And I believe in that. If anyone is forced to do something, it’s wrong. But if someone is doing it, and that’s what they choose to do with an adult’s mind, let them do it. And if they find out they’re stupid later, they can regret it. Lots of people regret shit they did.

But then it’s different in other countries. Americans do have a lot of hang-ups about sex. Definitely, when I was going to Europe, I’d turn on the television and there’d be a lot of nudity. And you got the red light areas in Germany, in Amsterdam...Americans have a lot of religious hang-ups out here. Americans rather be uptight with sex and let violence go.

Yeah, kind of what I was saying before about sports. Families get together to watch wrestling or the Super Bowl, but they can’t show a nipple on TV?

We are born in this culture, and it changes as you travel. So it’s very interesting.

Do you believe in the American dream? If you work really hard, you get to achieve your dreams?

I think that in America, you get a good chance to win, yes. I do believe in that. In other places, it might be a bit more complex. I think women and minorities have it harder. But I do think you can win. But I think it’s based more around what your dream is. You may want to have a log cabin, and be, like, bohemian up in the woods. That may be your dream. If you ask me if I captured my dream, I did. I just wanted to be a rapper and stay out of trouble. I didn’t want to own the fucking world. Own buildings like Donald Trump. Let’s get it clear, it’s way more fucked up in other places, the United States is one of the top places to be. There’s a lot wrong here, but we are not going to say it’s worse than other places. But I think the thing about America is that we try to pretend like it’s perfect. And that’s what it’s not. It’s far from perfect. There’s a lot of injustices that went on, there’s a lot of shit that’s going down now you can’t sweep under the carpet.

One of the reasons why we have more resources here is because we’ve kicked every one else’s ass here and elsewhere to get it, for the past 400 years...

And we continually kick our own selves in the ass. It’s a healing process. The protest and everybody fighting and struggling, black people yelling that we need rights, women yelling, there’s going to be a lot of fighting and struggling to get this thing right. It all came from such a totally wrong thing. I do think shit is get-

ting better, but it might take another 400 years, you know. If they don’t just blow this whole shit up before that.

Did you see a difference between G.W. Bush and Kerry?

I thought John Kerry was more of the type of person you could talk to. More of that Clinton-type vibe. Honestly, I think Bush is the antichrist. He’s on a mission. And he believes he talks to god. And once you start telling me you talk to god, you sound like every other crazy dictator psycho. Like, who would Jesus Christ have bombed?

There’s also the question of people who make it quick...

One thing you have to remember is that with entertainment, people make extreme amounts of money. When you make it like that, you gotta learn how to hold onto it. That goes for musicians, that goes for actors, anybody who makes it quick. I think that people who really struggle to get it, hold onto it more and use it right.

Do you think the consumer culture is working against the black community? Bling bling and all that?

No, and I think it will go away in time. But when I first came out, and I was rapping, I was so happy to rap about having things, possessions. We achieve things and “move on up,” you know. I don’t think there’s necessarily anything wrong with that. When a young black kid sees me with a new car, or they see Ice-T on TV, that’s motivational for them. I’m just moving forward so I can show ya’ll how to move forward. We aren’t telling niggas to go out and sell dope and shit. We’re running record labels and doing productive things, and I think kids are seeing and listening to that. You have to do things in a way that they can relate to and understand. So we are breaking down the barrier of what we can have and what we can do. But think about it, if you take away the bling bling culture, then the only person blinging would be Robin Leach talking about white people and all they have, and that just makes us think that as black people, we can’t bling. We can’t do anything. I think it’s a good thing and a good sign for us as black people to shine for a minute. ☹



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