

Legendary Hip Hop Label Ruthless Records on a Comeback

Written by Robert ID4174

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Officially founded in 1987 by the late west coast hip hop entrepreneur and gangsta rap icon Eric "Eazy-E" Wright, with \$7,000 of his own money, 5,000 twelve-inches of his hip hop / rap single, "Boyz N The Hood," and a maverick spirit, the groundwork for the Ruthless Records label was formed. The enterprising 23-year-old sold more than 500,000 copies throughout South Central Los Angeles by word of mouth alone.

In 1988 Eazy-E discovered the first female hip hop / rap group to ever be nominated for a Grammy Award. J.J. Fad was totally contrary to the image everyone thought Eazy would project. "Supersonic" was an instant R&B/Pop smash and became Ruthless Records' first million selling album and first gold single.

That same year, what would become one of the greatest selling and most controversial hip hop and rap groups in history, Niggaz With Attitude (NWA), was born. Fusing the talents of other California natives, Eazy established a dream team of hip-hop genius yet to be duplicated. The five man crew -- Eazy E, Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, MC Ren and DJ Yella -- single-handedly changed the hip-hop landscape, forever giving west coast rappers a voice. NWA's sophomore release, "Straight Outta Compton," was the first album to ever reach platinum status without radio airplay. As the members of NWA became a household name, Eazy-E simultaneously released his solo debut, "Eazy Duz It," and it too moved to multi-platinum success.

Over the next five years, Ruthless continued to produce gold and platinum selling titles in R&B, pop and rap including Michel'le ("No More Lies"), The D.O.C. ("No One Can Do It Better"), Above The Law ("Livin' Like Hustlers") and MC Ren ("Kizz My Black Azz" and "Shock of the Hour"). But it was the 1991 release of NWA's "EFL4ZAGGIN," which debuted at #2 on Billboard's pop charts, the highest charting rap album debut, selling more than one million copies in less than two weeks, that solidified Ruthless' musical longevity and Eazy-E's genius. With the 1994 introduction of rap innovators Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Ruthless became the example for introducing new styles in rap. Their debut "Creepin On Ah Come Up," fueled by the hit "Tha Crossroads," sold more than two million copies, earning the group their first Grammy nomination.

Eazy's untimely death in March 1995 not only left behind an unprecedented hip-hop legacy but a wife and children. Tomica Woods-Wright picked up the pieces and fulfilled the promise to her husband to continue his legacy, quickly transitioning to become the President & CEO of Ruthless Records. Eazy's nonconformist methods of success remain the cornerstone of the Ruthless legacy twenty years later.

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After twenty years, Ruthless Records President & CEO Tomica Woods-Wright is confident about the future. "It's about one thing right now, the artists -- what their contributions will be and the next layers they will add to the legacy of the label." With a rich heritage already established, Ruthless Records has no choice but to continue to rise to the top.

Ruthless Records, one of the most successful independent music labels of all time, celebrates its 20th anniversary with a full roster of fresh new talent and an exciting 2008 release schedule. The new face of Ruthless Records includes a Latin Pop female, an R&B angel, a hip-hop lyricist, a mid-western rapper and a get-the-party-started group from Atlanta.

Now in its twentieth year of operation, Ruthless has renegotiated its distribution deal with Sony and is poised to introduce a new generation of artists that cross many different genres of music. Nashay is an R&B princess with an angelic tone. Agina is the bilingual pop princess who utilizes her sultry voice to woo audiences in both English and Spanish. Hopsin is the self-contained triple threat (rapper / songwriter / producer) whose vivid storytelling is equally thought provoking. Stevie Stone raps with a confident swagger minus the aggressive street innuendo, and Street Runnaz Click rhyme using their party/dance-driven music to bring the crowd to their feet.

For additional information on Ruthless Records, please visit www.myspace.com/ruthlessrecords