

INTERVIEW WITH WEST COAST LEGEND MC EIHT

Written by Westside ID55

Saturday, 25 September 2004 11:12 -

West coast hip-hop legend and gangsta rapper icon Mc Eiht has a new album coming out September 28th. 'Veterans Day' is an album that true west coast music lovers have been waiting for. With in your face lyrics and strong beats from the coast mixed with an 'ol skool' feel, this album is sure to make some noise in the industry.

If you're tired of the bling and you need a little bit of west coast gangsta rap, west coast original hip-hop this is the album you have been waiting for.

Eiht comes serious and his flow, on top of Chill's hard core beats make this album one that needs to be talked about.

I had a chance to speak with Eiht about the album and much more.

I wanted to say that MC Eiht has been making records longer than anyone on the coast. His longevity in the business is not an accident.

One of the basic beliefs in hip-hop culture is 'keeping it real', and Eiht is as real as it gets.

With his busy schedule he took time for us and that shows he is dedicated to his fans. I got the feeling if I had questions that lasted 3 hours he would have addressed them, cause he is a real west coast Compton born and raised MC. Who values his fans and is set on a mission to bring back the west coast no matter what it takes.

This interview speaks on Veterans Day, but also Eiht addresses some things that are going on and we even cover some back in the day questions. Like I said Eiht is real and he took time for this and it isn't like he is sitting around the crib waiting for a call. The album will prove that to

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you.

If you don't know MC Eiht, just give him a listen. And if you know of Eiht well yea he's back and it is pure g. Enjoy the interview. I enjoyed doing it, very much. Thanks to Eiht for his time.

Robert: Thanks for taking time for us, I appreciated it, I know you're busy.

Eiht: No problem

Robert: Are you comfortable with people referring to you as a legend?

Eiht: I'm pretty comfortable with it. Seeing that I you know, when you look at rappers now days or hip hop people with all the new stuff with all the new artist, being as I came out in '89 I guess that people would consider that as a legend. I mean I don't put myself in the same ranks as you know people like Chuck D or people like that, you know originators but as far as west coast hip-hop is concerned, I consider myself as a little west coast legend.

Robert: With all the success you have had; how do you remain grounded and still rep the streets instead of getting caught up in the glamour side of the rap 'game'?

Eiht: Well because it's a tricky aspect. Basically you have to stay true to your roots, ya know. Cause the money will come and ya know you'll get a nice car, nice house and all that. Some of that shit will side track ya. Especially if you listen to a lot of these other rappers who glorify the financial status of being an entertainer, I guess you would call it. Ya know we got the Jay Z's, we got the 50 cents, and we got all these other brothers who tell ya you got to have a Bentley, you got to have a platinum Rolex, or a red gold chain, or ya got ta fly in a G4, and have a chinchilla mink

And a lot of those guys started off on the same aspect as I did. Coming from the streets, projects, underprivileged, poverty stricken.

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But sometimes when ya make money ya let the money take over for ya. So from where I come from; being in Compton and still being around and still dealing with niggaz who don't have Bentleys and platinum watches, and shit like that, you gotta stay focused and grounded - because then you'd stick out like a sore thumb. Ain't nobody riding around in Compton in Bentleys. I mean we got hustlers and shit like that, and niggaz got Hummers and Cadillac trucks and shit, but niggaz ain't pushing the streets in 200 thousand dollar cars and shit so, I stay grounded by basically just trying to stay on the same path as when I first started into the game. I just try to stick to what I know and I know brothers in the struggle and the hustle. I don't know to many niggaz riding around in Bentleys, living in 3 million dollar mansions.

Robert: So you still live in Compton?

Eiht: Yea. Compton born and raised.

Robert: Since the days of Compton's Most Wanted it seems your lyrics have caused some people to stress. Veterans Day seems to be no exception. Have you got much feedback on 'Veterans Day' yet; especially the intro 'Vetz Day'?

Eiht: I'm getting a little feedback on it but hey ya know I've been known to go thru that. Like you say I've been known to ruffle peoples feathers since I first came out. So basically I'm not trying to cause controversy. It's just something I feel. Coming from MC Eiht, doing 12 and 13 albums and seeing the transition of hip hop and the streets and what ever you call it. I named the record Veterans Day and I came up with the intro specially cause I wanted people to relate to what realism that goes on in the streets still.

Like I said we color coat a lot of things. We show the war in Iraq everyday and Afghanistan, and we show the Olympics and we show all that, but we still poverty stricken and grief is still right here in these streets. So I want people to know that even though this is like an anthem that I need people to understand, about how things are going on. Domestic fights and police brutality and drive by shootings and all that still exists today. It isn't being glorified today because we got a lot of other stuff to talk about in the media but it's still happening. So that's why I put it out there like that.

Robert: I mean like here it's an every day thing so it's not news any more. It is a form of

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genocide really.

Eiht: Definitely.

Robert: The question about being a legend was really a two-fold question. You know when your on top of your game you will always have someone looking to fault ya.

Eiht: Right.

Robert: It seems your coming ready and loaded for a few different people on this album. You shout out at a few, and it goes from a subtle reference to a full in your sights attack, ya know.

Eiht: Right.

Robert: First can we have a lil insight about what's going on with you and Camron?

Eiht: The Camron issue, I just – I mean I just have a personal thing with people trying to be something their not. And I understand that we trying to set trends and I don't know if Camron was trying to set a trend or what ever but the pink thing didn't hit me to good.

It's like a phase of shit that people go thru, that they try shit. And I just don't like it and I don't like his lyrics. I mean he ain't talking about nothing to me. And for him to be...You know for you to have a following to where you can turn a whole nation of people to start wearing different colors and stuff, it's crazy how his voice and what he does. Ya know it's not like he's doing something like a follower of like people like Tupac had or Biggie had or something like that.

People are following this cat cause he's wearing pink shows, and pink rags and pink tee shirts and then when ; me from the west coast, when I can walk out my door, and ride around my

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neighborhood and I can see niggaz wearing pink tee shirts and pink bandannas, it's not cool and I don't think that that's a trend we should have brought to hip hop.

And then it's like one rapper to another rapper. I mean you should get your skills up. I mean you making money and you representing whatever your set whatever. I just don't feel he representing hip-hop to the fullest because it ain't never been about pink. It's always been about struggle. But Camron has been on some party thing anyway so I wouldn't expect him to know the hard struggles of hip hop and brothers struggling and going thru whatever. So I wouldn't expect him to do that but when you got other people following out their trends to try to follow something, I got ta step up and say something bout that.

Robert: Yea, they call him the 'Pink Panther'.

Eiht: Yea, ya know the pink Range Rover and pink drawers, pink this and pink that. That's not cool for me.

Now I'm not one to get beef's with niggaz and be personal about shit but the pink thing is just not happening for me.

I'm the first to say if your lyrics is tight, your lyrics is tight.

I have no beef with the east coast. I'm cool with Gang Starr, Premiere, Busta, Red, Meth. I have significant homies in New York. But it is just that some things have to be addressed. And I think that is an issue that I needed to address. The pinkism and all the flamboyant shit with all the hot pink, then when you listen to his lyrics he's not talking about nothing significant in the rap game. So people like that need to be exposed.

Robert: Then there is G-Unit. I know Banks threw your name out on his album, so what's up? What's their problem with you?

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Eiht: A lot of people have been addressing me about the Banks situation. I don't know, I didn't take it as a diss. But you know how people always pump things up. Because he said you don't have to go all the way to LA to get your MC Eiht. So I didn't take that as a diss. I took it as him trying to walk in my shoes or compare himself to a west, he's saying he's an east coast version of me. He's laid back, he's gangsta, he's smooth, that's the way I took it.

Now if it's a different way other than that, then I'm pretty sure that if he's suppose to be real gangsta and G Unit is suppose to be, ya know cause I did a song with Game cause he's from Compton. So if they are suppose to be real G Unit niggaz and hard gorillas, ya know they Gorilla Unit, we the Gang Unit out here. That's the controversy we got going right now. Cause they Gorilla Unit and I got a group called Gang Unit. So if they suppose to be the true hard-core street rebels that they are, I'm pretty sure that he could find a better way of trying to address me if he wanted that to be addressed like that. But I didn't take it as a diss, so really I'm not even focusing on it.

I made a comment on one of the songs on my record saying that you don't have to go all the way to the East to get your Gang Unit. So it's a little throw back but I didn't take it as a diss. So I'm not really concentrating on it. Really I say free advertisement for me so go right ahead.

Robert: So this ain't no full out beef you got with these guys, you're just putting them in check right?

Eiht: Yea, I don't start beefs, I just voice my opinion. Everybody got an opinion, that's my personal opinion.

Lots of people might like wearing pink. A lot of people might love Camron. I'm pretty sure they do, he sells significant units. But you know there's a lot of people who don't know TRUE hip hop either. So

There's a lot of people who don't know TRUE struggle either. So

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I just had to address that. Because a lot of people were addressing me, ya know.

What do you think about niggaz rocking pink?

What do you think about this, what do you think about that?

I'm not one to hold my tongue. So I just spoke my mind. But you know we did a little couple of commercials about niggaz wearing pink on the record. Pink is for honies, and shit like that just to tease it up a little bit.

But ya know, hey if they feel that like we taking a personal shot at them, Hey get at me. That's how it always goes. Maybe we can talk about it. One thing for a video shoot is all good but now you making it a trend. Niggaz shouldn't be wearing pink.

Robert: Since ya got your hand on the pulse of the streets in the west – is there a reason why the west isn't appealing?

Eiht: Well I say it to myself that the west isn't appealing.

I mean I say all day because I don't know what happened. The radio stations on the west coast, we play more east coast music than anything.

I mean everybody knows what the deal is with the radio programmers and all that shit. So basically that's inevitable. But the west coast artist to me: and I'm a west coast artist, Now the reason I'm not there is because like you said sometimes people are afraid of Eiht. When people hear Eiht's lyrics, Eiht talking his mind and doing what he want to do; people get scared of that. That's why I tend to put my records out independently. Cause I don't want people to be afraid whatever what ever.

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Now after people jump on it and start seeing how the public is accepting it then they'll jump on the bandwagon.

But to me west coast artist just got afraid of being blackballed. They got afraid of being true to their art form, because they wanted to keep getting the million dollar checks.

So it made niggaz change their format.

Snoop went from being a gangsta to being a pimp. Cube, he gave up the records and focused on movies.

And as far as brothers who are true; myself and WC, brothers who are in the struggle like that. We can't get a break because majors don't want to invest in our type of music.

But it's funny because now ya got brothers like T.I. who's spitting about the streets and the game.

You got 50 and G Unit spitting about the streets and the game.

You got variety but as long as it doesn't come from the west coast its acceptable.

Coming from the west it leaves a bad taste in peoples mouth.

Ya know for the fact that we haven't had the baton for a while. The baton has been held by New York and down south for a while. And it's like people are scared to put their investment dollars back in west coast artist.

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And for the fact that the west coast artist ain't staying true to their craft anyway.

Because there isn't a significant west coast artist I would even listen to right now. And I day that on my record, 'Is there anybody on the west coast left who can represent what we do'.

That's why I did the Veterans Day record how I did it. Cause I didn't want to sugar coat it. I didn't want people to go 'Oh another west coast artist coming out, but his shit fittin to be watered down, all about shaken booties, collecting chips and riding around. I didn't want to focus like that.

I want the focus on we struggling. Fuck this shit. Fuck this shit. I'm going blow this shit up, I'm going blow this shit up and let the chips fall where the may.

Because we got scared. Back when Easy E and Tupac were still around, we could do that. Cause that was the thing. But after them two died it's like people got scared to touch the west. Because of what we represented. There isn't nobody to me, I feel, significantly who's coming out of the box to try to save the west. That's why I'm doing it.

I mean you got new niggaz like Gorilla Black and there's a lot of talent in the west and in Compton and LA, but nobody's getting exposed.

The artist in the majors, brothers who got their foot in the door ya know the Cube's, the Dre's, ya know whatever; they don't want ta fuck with people. They rather go fuck with somebody from another town, cause that's how it goes to. West coast mutha fuckers got heads. Sometimes it ain't cool to work with them.

Robert: What about some of the New Bay artist?

Eiht: Yea, I went up to the Bay. I did a record with Spice One. Me and Spice One have an album together.

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Robert: You do a lot with him don't ya?

Eiht: Yea. Now that's one artist from the Bay that I keep in touch with, cause Spice is kinda like on my same level. Me and Spice started out together. His direction coming from the Bay was a lot like mine. He wasn't up in the Bay trying to spit about being high signing and flossin. He spit about the streets, niggaz getting shot up, police. Same thing I did, that's why Spice and me always had a connection.

The Bay area is so big, them brothers up there hustle.

Now down in Southern California we trying to get our shit crackin but up in the Bay they know how to work their independent records. Cause they have doing that. They have no problem putting out independent records, not trying to fuck with majors. Southern California we looking for deals. We looking for the big money deals and that's where we get side tracked.

I got a lot of respect for the North artist up in the Bay. Cause they hustle. They don't give a fuck about getting an Epic, Priority or an Atlantic to sign them. They don't care. They going go sell 5 – 6 thousand records, turn around 2 months later and put out another one, put out another one, put out another one. At the end of the year they done sold 30 – 40 thousand copies. They don't get a lot of recognition but I give them props for how they keep their shit spinning.

Robert: How long did it take to get 'Veterans Day' together?

Eiht: I started working on Veterans Day in Feb. this year. And because I already knew the direction I wanted to go, basically it wasn't nothing but just getting into the studio and putting the beats down, Chill and me would go in the studio, come up with the beat. And as soon as he would lay the foundation, I'm in there writing the song. I ain't one of these cats that say I got the gift of gab where I can just jump on the mic and make up songs. I mean I could do it, I could freestyle but I'm a person who likes dictate. I like to write my shit down so it will hit home better, than a nigga who's just running off at the mouth.

So I knew what I wanted to say, I knew the direction I was going, I knew I wanted to stir up a pot

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of gumbo, ya know with all these other artist. Ya know the pink situation, the G Unit situation and all this other little shit that's been happening, letting me know it's time for you to start knocking on people's doors. So that's what I've been up to.

Robert: After listening to the album, I have to ask; which comes first – the beat or the spit? Or do you sorta know the kind of beat ya want when you write the track?

Eiht: The beats always come first. That's what I do. The music always comes first. I'm so picky when it comes to music. That's why half the time I listen to peoples records and I can't believe, ya know, what would make you do a song like that.

Me, I listen to the beats. Beats always dictate to me what goes on. I get the beat down; get it to a foundation to where I got the drum track and the bass line, so now I know the direction of the song.

I know if it's fittin to be a song to where I need to rip somebody's head off or a song where I just need to talk to somebody and tell em about the situation. So I always got to have the music first.

Robert" So music and then ya write the track.

Eiht: I get the music. Once I got the music and usually what I do is burn it to a CD, throw it in my car and I'll bump in on the way home from the studio to the house, just to get the feel of it in the car. Ya know with out lyrics, to see how the beat is hittin. Then if it's catching me and I got ta rewind it all the way till I get home, I know once I get home I got a good song. So that's when I try to start crafting a rap to it.

Robert: Well the album is great. The 'Ol Skool feel of 'Compton's Most Wanted' is there but the lyrics are for today. Was there anything that ya wanted to be included (like featured artist or tracks) that couldn't get done in time?

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Eiht: I mean there where a lot of tracks we couldn't squeeze on the record because we were getting so pressed for time. A lot of artist said they wanted to participate with it being a Veterans Day Project. I had a lot of Ol Skool brothers who wanted to participate. But I was just so anxious to get this record out that I couldn't even hold up.

I was going ta get Ren on it, RBX, a couple of veterans in the game.

When you get in the studio and you get excited about a project you don't want to waste no time. And then other people's time you can't count on other people's time. They might be busy or might have shit to do. So me, I'm like hey today lets get this cracking, and the next day, and the next day and next thing ya know, you look up and I got a done album. So its time to start mixing and mastering.

I really don't focus too much on trying to snatch people. If they're willing to get down and can do it in a fashionable time, yea I'm always for it. Other than that I don't look to other artist as a crutch for me, cause I feel I can hold my own. If I can't, hopefully somebody will tell me before the record comes out, and I can change it up.

Robert: On the track 'Living Like G'staz', who is the female singing the hook?

Eiht: She is a local home gurl just from around the way. Just a local gurl wanting to get a shot to get her shine on. So we just brought her in and she really shined on it.

Robert: Yeah she definitely shined. She has a real nice voice

Eiht: One of them 'gritty' voices.

Robert: Kinda puts ya in the mind of an ol Death Row album with Jewell on it singing hooks.

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Eiht: Right. There you go. That's what we were aiming for. We were aiming for that early 90's feel of west coast hip-hop. How we were so significant over here and had a voice in the communities and in the rap world. So basically that was the direction. Veterans Day we wanted to make it like a veterans album. Something like you listened to 10 years ago, but with that 2004 feel.

Robert: Well when I heard that track that is the first thing I thought of, Jewell. I thought man that's retro there.

Eiht: Definitely

Robert: Veterans Day seems to reflect a lot of thoughts that are on the streets, not just in Compton but thru out the country. So how do you see this album doing?

Eiht: Well being an independent project and we working it the way we're doing it, I feel it is going to be real significant. For the fact that we're getting press on it, we getting anticipation on it, a lot of people are expecting it. I guess it happens like that sometimes. If you all yourself a pioneer or a legend and you kinda put yourself on hiatus for awhile and when you start mentioning that you coming back with a record. And if the record is half way decent you got a shot. So basically it's my job to get out there and network ya know. Like I'm campaigning. Like I say this is election year and it is record year for me to. So I get to get out there and start campaigning. So that's why we are setting up a Promo tour.

Just not in Compton or LA or California, like you said hit the communities nationwide to start feeling these people. Let em know there's somebody who relates to their situations. Putting it into music form that we all can enjoy. And ya know, one of your favorite MC's is back.

Robert: If ya had to just state the main message you are stating on Veterans Day, what would it be?

Eiht: The main message of Veterans Day is to take heed to the realism that's happening out here in the streets. Like they say 'Life ain't a box of chocolates', ya know ya never know what

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you're going to get.

Just don't think that life is all about platinum watches, Bentleys, who's fucking Beyonce and Jay Lo, who go t on 2 million dollar chains.

There's still brothers out here that live in the projects who struggling to feed their family, who's committing drive bys and killings, and who getting killed themselves. You know a lot of gurls having to prostitute and hoe for money to feed their kids. So the realism of Veterans Day is that I want people to know there is still a MC out here who is still inclined to the real streets and the real progressions of what's going on. Not to pick up this record and think that's it's fittin to be about a party, flying a G4 back and forth and drinking crystal and pouring it on naked bitches.

This is about the struggle of how I grew up in hip-hop. How we talked about the struggles in your community. The struggles they might have in New York in the Burroughs, or down south in the wards, or on the west coast in the projects. I relate to that, that's the message I want Veterans Day to give. That a TRUE west coast pioneer who knows the street music how all these other cats are trying to mimic, who knows it and who's trying to really put it out there that's the message I'm giving with Veterans Day. An original true record that you can listen to and relate to and don't have to think when you get thru listing to this record – I got to go get me a Bentley.

Robert: The day I got it; Veterans Day, I listened that night with headphones on and was like – damn this is some real stuff here. I won't front ya the Camron thing went right past me cause I don't even listen to that dude.

Eiht: Definitely. There's a lot of people who don't listen to Camron and it's just not a shot at Camron, but it's just a sense of going – the hip hop community is being fooled with a lot of shit. And it's kinda fucked up that for others who are in the struggle for real to try to make a real point. Ya know, then a nigga can make up a song about some cologne and blow the fuck up. A nigga can make a song about purple haze and blow up, ya know and I don't understand what the nigga be saying. Ya know - get your Get ur gitty gitty with ur witty witty, ya know I'm not with that. I mean for me to be a MC is just..it don't happen for me. You gotta address shit like that.

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You can't let niggaz like that make, and it's not about the money, but you can't let niggaz like that represent the image of hip-hop. That's not hip-hop.

Robert: Well ya know back in the day there was awareness in hip-hop.

Eiht: Thank You.

Robert: That's were NWA, Public Enemy, Tupac..

Eiht: We shot down people like that. Chuck D shot down people like that. Easy and them clowned people like that. But because of the game is so open and its every which way but loose, you can be anything now, and to me I think that needs to be exposed because real brothers catch it hard and fake brothers get so many breaks. Niggaz become overnight successes over gimmicks.

Robert: It seems you see more and more kids out trying to get theirs anyway they can. A lot get busted and then they are hung up in the system; starting that cycle. And (I feel) that you can blame some of that on BET and MTV.

Eiht: Right. Basically that's it. I men shit, they see everything on BET. They see everything on BET and all, so whatever those video channels play as far as hip-hop is concerned; that's what they relate to. And that's the bad thing about it. Because then, like I said when I got started it was about how good, how high quality your shit was. It wasn't about how much money you had or the image you have. It was how you reach the people in the community of hip-hop.

Now a day if you got enough money; fuck it, we'll play anything. And it's so messed up because most of all these artist that get signed to major labels on a whim and then major labels go spend the money, cause its nothing to them. We'll give you a video and we'll give you a record ya know. I've been thru that channel.

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Then they pay for the video's to get played but all the videos are about: now don't get me wrong, I like tits and ass just as much as the next man, but still. The videos are nothing. If you look at the videos everything is dance steps, who's got on the shortest skirts, who's got the prettiest models in their video.

We don't see video's any more where... you know when I did video's there wasn't females in my videos. I didn't have females in my videos. There s no point for a female there. Why am I going to bring a female to distract the point I'm trying, I'm trying to get you to see my point. Look at all the poverty and these struggling niggaz and all these gang bangers and all this shit. This is real. I don't want you to get side tracked by the half naked gurl standing over there in a g-string shaking her butt while I'm trying to get a point across. Now if that's the type of song I want to make; and that's why I strayed away from them type of songs, I didn't want people to think that I'm just a laugh and party jokester, that everything I do is about shaking your ass and having a good time. Now there ain't nothing wrong with that, but like I said, I didn't grow up having a good time. I didn't grow up partying and shit. I grew up ducking and running and hiding and shooting and fighting and going ' why the fuck is my life like that here'.

So maybe if I talk about it, it will make it better. Maybe if I talk about it somebody a thousand miles away who going thru the same shit is going to relate to me. Cause they going to go ' you know something I went thru that too. Just like when niggaz come out of jail. Not to glorify that but when homies come from prison or come from lock down and they tell me 'man all I listened to was you in there. You got me thru many a day cause you talked about how niggaz got caught up in the struggle, how niggaz had to do this to feed their family, how niggaz go sign a job application and still don't get no call backs. You know you talk about that and that's real'. And it's going on right now. That why so many people tell me 'You are one true nigga that stay true, don't ever change. Don't ever put on a shiny suit with big diamonds and ride with your top down. Don't ever do that. Stay like you is, cause that's the way we love ya'.

Robert: I have said for a long time that hip-hop now ain't nothing but gym shoes, Crystal, and clubbing. And life is a lot more than that.

Eiht: Definitely. I mean Run DMC did 'My Adidas' back in the day. But now days you can songs about the type of tennis shoes you got. I got my air force ones. You can talk about what kind of rims your car rides; I'm riding 22's, ya know. Stupid shit. Who gives a fuck what kind of rims you ride? Who gives a fuck what kinda chain? But that's the imagery. They going after the females because they think that's what the females want. They going to tell the females 'Hey babe, I'm riding on 22's', 'Hey babe I got a platinum chain. The gurls are going to flock to that and the niggaz going to flock behind the gurls. That's the imagery of hip-hop right now, how it works.

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Get the women cornered. We get the women, the niggaz going to run behind the women because we got all the women. That's the nature of hip-hop.

Get us some sexy gurls, butt naked gurls, some cleavage showing, some g-string showing; that's how the video is going ta blow up.

Because like you said, kids are so blinded by what's on TV right now, that's all that happens. So if I turn on my TV right now, like you said; if my son or my daughter came home and they between the ages of 10 and 15 and they happen to come home from school and they turn on the TV and they see that; that's what they focus on. That's what they relate to. They don't relate to how we grew up in the hood, or how I was a straight up Menace, or ya know niggaz are struggling or how it was for the money. They don't relate to that. They relate to the new dance steps and stuff like that. So that's about it, they don't relate to nothing else. So it's kinda hard for us to show them what's going on when that's all they know. All they know is dance steps.

Robert: I see that Tha Chill did most of the production on Veterans Day. You and him have a long history. How did you first meet up with him?

Eiht: Right. Me and Chill went to school together. And basically we met thru church. His parents were going to the same church that my peoples were going to. So that's how we met. We met in church then we went to Jr. High School together. So that's how we evolved and we started up this group Compton's Most Wanted, We both are from Compton so that's how we did it.

Robert: So you've been homies all that time?

Eiht: All that time. Ever since the eight grade.

Robert: Have you ever tried your hand at producing?

Eiht: Yea, I have produced – wow – I did a song for the Rhyme and Reason soundtrack. I

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produced that. I produced ½ the songs on 'We Come Strapped'. I produced a song for Westcoast Bad Boyz. I produced mainly the We Come Strapped and Death Threats albums. They were all produced by me and Slick. We had a production company called Half Ounce Productions.

So yea I've produced. I've produced for some guys overseas in Stockholm called Infinite Mass, a European group. So I've tried my hand at producing, it takes so much time. You got to concentrate on getting the music right. Then you want to have those killer lyrics. If a person has been working with me for a while then they know what kind of music I flow. They go this type beat Eiht works with, so it really isn't hard for a person to feel me out if they know me.

Like Chill. Me and Chill been working since '87 – '88. So it's easy as a producer for him to go I know what kind of music Eiht going ta like. There's no question. I don't have to go lets see if this will work or see if this works. It don't work like that. He already knows what I'm listening to, so it's easy for him.

And producers who have worked with me. Like Premier did tracks for me before. It's just the trend of having that respect for the artist and the producer and as a friend. It's like we reading each other. So I need to go back to somebody who knew me. I didn't want to experiment on this record. I didn't want to go; let me go try to find this producer and this one and this one. I had to deal with somebody who knew MC Eiht, Compton's Most Wanted sound. And who better than somebody who was part of the group.

Robert: It seems that the whole west coast sound was influenced an affected by the loss of Tupac and Easy E. Do you think that the 'tru' west can ever come back as strong as they were at one time while the 'mainstream' media outlets seem fixated on the eastcoast bling bling sound? Is there hope for the west coast?

Eiht: I think there's hope for the west coast if we get back focused. My goal is to try and go out and try to put us back in the foundation. Right now we're not even in the foundation. My idea is to go back put us in the foundation and try to get us back working on that angle.

I have to get back out there and reach those people. That's why another thing is a significant promotional tour. Because I have to get back out to those retailers, those mom and pop's. So

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they will know that we are still around, and that somebody with a significant force and a significant name comes out to do what he's gotta do.

You know you put out a record and you don't get out there to meet and greet and let people know you appreciate them with the product, then 9 times out of 10 they ain't going to be interested in what your doing. So that's one of my things I need to go back to meeting the people, getting in their faces.

I feel that if we start showing this art form that has bought us so many riches, that has kept us out of jails, kept us out of poverty; we have to start respecting it and treating it like it has treated us. We have to be good to it and can't be lazy about it. I'm going to put out a record and sit at home, I ain't doing no interviews, I ain't signing no autographs, I don't feel like going on no promotional tour, then people lose respect for ya.

So that's one thing I'm doing. I'm taking it back to the basics. I'm getting on that bus, hitting all these towns, shaking hands, kissing babies, signing autographs; to let people know that yea as somebody who has been in the game for awhile, who knows how the wheels should be turning, I'm turning them that way.

So there's hope, And I think if somebody; one of these corporate American companies, they see that a person who has had longevity in this game; cause like I said, I haven't had all the major backing and sponsorship, but I've put out a record every year since I got started in '89. And that's hard for people to believe cause after your third album and you ain't gone double, triple platinum; basically you are lost in the system.

But it's been my longevity and its been my name, my reputation and how I reach the people that's enabled me to stay in the game. With the blessings of God to keep me going to reach my people that's how I go.

So I don't look for; Ok this year I'm putting out an independent record compared to 2 years ago when I put out a major record. I look at it like I'm still putting out records. I'm still putting out records, I'm still doing what I do, I'm still speaking my truth to people.

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That's why I get so much respect from the industry. People tell me 'aw, you one of the originals, you one of the true niggaz from the west, you one of the pioneers and I can accept that because they appreciate the way I'm going with it. They appreciate me for keeping it alive. We can't let the memory of Easy and Tupac be in vain.

Especially Easy who helped start this for the west coast. He got us to a point where people recognized Compton. People knew where Compton was. What Compton was about and we got to keep that going. We can't just let it die, causes we started this art form. Hard core gangsta rap, reality rap, what ever they want to call it, we started it. And for us to let other people take it and craft it and down south can take it, east coast can take it, its cool for the east coast niggaz – we thugz, we hard core, bullet proof vests and shooting up the party. It's cool for that now.

When I did it we got banned, we got blackballed, we got arrested at concerts and shit. But now you can get up on stage and do all that. So why should somebody else take the art form and run with it that we created? That's like saying gang banging started in Little Rock. No way, it started here. This is the original spot. So that's what I'm doing. I'm representing for all the originals.

Peace to all the newcomers who come out of LA and the west coast. Just keep the art form. I love it but I'm doing this for all the veterans, that's why it's Veterans Day.

Robert: Well do you think that Westside Connection and the Boo Yaa Tribe have helped lay some of this 'foundation' for the coming back of the west coast with their latest releases?

Eiht: Westside Connection fucked up with that last record they put out. I thought it was so much of a disappointment for the west coast as far as representation. It was just sad.

I didn't like the record. Tell ya the truth, I didn't like it. The direction of the record. If you look at the new Westside Connection record compared to the first one it was a total different scale. You can't get that back. Why? Because them niggaz was on a mission then. They was on a mission. This last record was just something threw together so Mack 10 could get some money.

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Robert: What about the Boo Yaa Tribe?

Eiht: Boo Yaa Tribe is some more niggaz I respect. Now I respect the Boo Yaa Tribe. They might not sell significant records; they have struggled all their career like a MC Eiht. But they don't let it discouraged them from doing what they want to do. You can't tell Boo Yaa Tribe they can't make records. Ya know what I'm saying? They ain't going to hear you. We going to make records and put it our regardless of what you mutha fuckers think. Cause we are significant west coast. We know that west coast shit. We know the streets. We know the struggle. We know the grim. So I respect the Boo Yaa Tribe for being just some hard-core niggaz in the street who can't nobody tell them they can't do what they want to do.

We significant. You know Boo Yaa Tribes been around since I've been around. And they've had the same ups and down's that I've had. But just like me these niggaz from the streets. You can't shoot them down. Whatever you tell me I can't do, I am going to do it. And I don't care about anybody else. I'm going to do what I know my people and the people I relate to are into; period and that's what's happening.

So Boo Yaa Tribe definitely is another foundational west coast group who gets respect from just like niggaz.

Westside Connection is like that Hollywood shit.

Robert: What about if you take Westside Connection and break it down into solo artist?

Eiht: In solo artist.

Cube is always going to be a significant force in west coast history; west coast hip-hop, always.

But Cube starting losing me around Lethal Injection. Because if you take his first record and you take Americas Nightmare or the Steady Mobbin album where he was with the Muslims and

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Uncle Sam and shit, these where records where Cube had a mission. As he started making money, started getting his popularity, then the music got to changing. The lyrics started changing.

I haven't listened to a Cube album since who knows when. If it ain't the first album or the second album, I don't listen to Cube.

Now I listen to some of his singles. Like he did a song with me, I'll listen to that. I'll listen to Supreme Hustle and there are a few songs on the War and Peace disc I like.

Cube will tell ya in a minute, my thing is movies right now. I'm a movie man.

Dub C – Always a significant force in the streets. Dub C will always, just like he's another Eiht. He has been struggling all his life to try to get shit.

Mack 10 – Mack didn't come up like that. Mack 10 had a free ticket thru the door. Mack 10 had Cube to ride on. Cube instantly put Mack into the game. Mack's first record was gold, cause it was on the B-side of Dre's Keep Your Heads Ringing.

So Mack already had a foundation laid. When Mack came into the game he already had followers cause of Cube. So when he threw his first record out – instant gold record.

Mack 10 didn't have a chance to go thru the struggle. I was signed to Mack 10's label Hood Banging. The situation didn't work out because Mack didn't know what the struggles of hip-hop were. He don't know what it is like to put out 2 or 3 albums and not get any significant help.

So when he first came into the game his first album went gold platinum. He got a million dollars off his first record. So he didn't come in the game seeing how the struggles were. He came into the game and instantly pulled up in a Bentley, and it went to his head.

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Robert: So West Inc. Records is your company?

Eiht: West Inc. is my company. I formed my own label and then I got a distribution deal thru Native Penalty. Which is a distribution deal out of New York, which is Ryko.

Robert: So is this going to be a national drop?

Eiht: Yes, national distribution.

Robert: In listening to the album you can just imagine what kind of videos could be made off the different joints. Any videos planned for any of the tracks?

Eiht: Yea we are planning a video off of 'It's Alright'. And we are planning a video off of 'U Know Why / feat. Chill'

Robert: Can you say what the first single is going to be? My pick is 'You Know Why' feat/ Chill.

Eiht: The first single is 'It's Alright' It is a double single really. 'It's Alright' and 'U Know Why' are on the 12-inch.

Robert: Yea I am glad to hear 'U Know Why' is going ta be a video. I really like that track.

Eiht: A lot of people are into it. And 'U Know Why' was a last minute song. We were in the middle of mixing and we were just going thru beats. And Chill put the beat on and I wrote the song right then and there, and made him do the hook.

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Robert: You once said in an interview that 'having 'heat' was mandatory in LA, is that still true today?

Eiht: Oh definitely. That was mandatory back in the day. I mean I use to get phone calls, threaten phone calls, people stealing, people try to car jack ya. So it was mandatory. I didn't go nowhere without a pistol.

Robert: What about now days?

Eiht: Back then I felt threatened, because of the image I was putting myself in. Riding around in the 500 Benz. I was getting caught up in that shit. And you have to realize that when people around you don't have the tools that you have, there's somebody out there that's going to try to take it from you.

And I had to learn all that. I had to learn that even though I thought I was this hard nigga from Compton and that I had gang banged and I was representor of a gang banging, and people knew me cause I gang banged I felt that that imagery wouldn't let anything harm me. That's what I thought. So when I rolled around Compton in my Benz or I rolled around in my BMW or my Suburban that didn't phase me. Cause I'm quick on the trigger just like any other nigga. You know you pull a gun, I pull a gun. But then I had to start thinking ya know. Don't put yourself in those situations and you wouldn't have to go thru that.

So I just learned to start being open minded with niggaz and being cool with niggaz. And maybe I should talk to a nigga before we pull our pistols.

So now I feel that it enables me not to get myself into a provoked situation. If I know I got a pistol under the seat it's going down. There ain't going to be no talk. Soon as there's a problem we going start shooting.

If I know I don't have a pistol under my seat and I don't know what this nigga got, we can talk for a few minutes to see what his problem is and we might work it out.

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I've changed my mentality. The streets haven't changed; it's just that I have changed my mentality on the way I think about shit.

And I got sick of being pulled over every other week and police finding a strap in my car. A nigga can only go to jail so many times for possession of a firearm before they lock ya up in prison.

Robert: They got ya what 3 times already?

Eiht: Yea 3 times already, so I can't afford to be even caught. That was another thing to me. Even though I had three gun charges I was still like fuck it I'm carrying my pistol. And then I had a real close call and started thinking it ain't worth me doing a year in prison cause I got ta ride around with this gun in my car.

Robert: Being as you started back at the birth of gangsta rap and lived thru the west coast - east coast rivalry; at it's height, were you involved in Tupac's One Nation Project? Do you have a track or are you on a track on that album?

Eiht: Naw I wasn't on that project. I did so many projects with gang violence and stopping the violence. But that's me. I've done so much shit. I did a couple of songs with Tupac but who knows where they are. Just like I did a couple songs with Snoop. Who knows where they are. Did a couple songs with Mac 19. Who knows where they are.

Robert: The one's with Tupac, were they done at Death Row?

Eiht: The one's I dropped with Tupac were on other peoples projects. I did a song with Tupac called Gangsta Team – South Central Cartel.

I did a song on their project. It was me, Tupac, Ice-T and a couple of other people.

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And I did another song, I don't know whatever happened to it. A song off The Show soundtrack. Off that movie The Show that Russell put out. I did a song with Tupac on there.

Robert: You got any thoughts on Afeni using east coast producers for the upcoming Tupac album and some of the tracks off the Resurrection soundtrack?

Eiht: I think she probably did that as, she kinda like want to distance herself from Suge and his fashion. And whenever she thinks of the west coast she affiliates that to Suge and Death Row, so I look at it as a personal ting for her to try to disassociate herself with Suge and all the workings of Suge. Because she is basically dealing with who people are telling her to deal with. Ya know, you should use this person, you should use that person.

Cause like I said if you look to the west coast the only significant producer over here that people know by name is Dr.Dre.

Robert: What about Johnny J or Hurt M Badd?

Eiht: I mean Johnny J and them is all good don't get me wrong but their name is not standing out like Dr.Dre. When you go name me a west coast producer and the first person that will come out of your mouth will be Dr.Dre.

Robert: If you could change anything in the rap game to make it better for all concerned---artist and fans; what would it be?

Eiht: I would change all this payola in the industry. I would change the you have to be Jay Z to get radio play. I would change all that shit you have to spend 250 thousand dollars to get your shit played on the radio.

I would take it back to if your shit is good or not period.

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That's what I feel would give everybody a chance in the game. If we all had the equal opportunities like everybody else has.

I mean if Jay Z can get his video played on TRL why cant MC Eiht get his video played? It's a video company. It's not suppose to be about paying. They are suppose to want your video. They need your video to keep their station running. Not like we got to pay you guys now to play our video. We already paying 3 to 4 hundred thousand to do them, now you want us to turn around and pay you 200 thousand to play it, When this is what you do?

Robert" Well Boo Yaa Tribe finally got one on MTV and then they banned it.

Eiht: Yea, and see that's ridiculous to me. You do all that effort to get your shit played, somebody finds out you didn't kick up no money, now they want to ban your shit.

That's how it works. Everything is payola now, everything.

I had to pay a gurl 10 thousand on an independent video I never seen on Rap City. Because that's how they do you, they fuck you out of your money.

They tell you – well you got to give me 10,000, I'll go in, I'll work it, I'll get it played, then they get to telling you all kinds of stupid shit.

Well we need to see sound scans for this week. We want to see how many records you sold in this region then in this region. What the fuck that have to do with a fuckin video?

You basing record sales off of a video. Play the motherfucker and I'll get some record sales.

That's how I thought it worked. I didn't think it was get record sales then we will play your video.

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How am I going to get record sales if people are not seeing the video?

I would change how the payola scam has come into the industry.

And whoever was the first nigga that went to the program directors or the video directors and said I'll give ya 100 thousand to play this video all day; I'd shoot him. That's what I'd do.

I'd get rid of bootlegging and the cd burning shit.

Whoever made cd burning fucked a nigga. That's another one to. Whoever thought of taking songs and putting them on computer, letting niggaz burn them I'd kill that nigga to.

Those 2 things I'd change in hip-hop.

Robert: If you were not blessed with the talents of being able to rap or write; where do you think Eiht would be today and what would he be doing?

Eiht: Aw man – thank the Lord that I have the talent to do that. Even in elementary school I was in sports, talent shows, school plays, I was destined to be here. There were things that happened early on in my life that I said Eiht is not going ta live like this. I was destined to be who I am.

Robert: Other than going out and getting Veterans Day on Sept. 28th, and keeping an eye out for that promo tour is there anything that we as fans should be watching for from ya?

Eiht: I just finished a small cameo part in a Movie, which will be out early next year next year. We got a brand new CMW (Compton's Most Wanted) album coming out maybe this year. Chill and I got us a new group; ECMP (Eiht and Chill Making Paper) and we are working on the Gang

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Unit album.

Robert: Well we hope the best for ya.and for the album. It is an album that will touch everyone who listens and especially those of us who are starved for westcoast gangsta rap. It will be in stores Sept.28th.

Eiht: And that's what I wanted Veterans Day to be. I wanted people who like true west coast hip hop to listen to the album and say 'ya know something that's a true west coast record'. That was the point for Veterans Day. For connoisseurs of true west coast music. If you just want to hear some good hard-core beats, nice rhymes, up in your face Nigga I don't like you, I don't like you. You know I got that for ya with Veterans Day.

Robert: Any thing I have missed or any shout outs?

Eiht: Ya covered everything it sounds like.

I like to shout out to everybody in the industry who is keeping it real. Thanks to all the publicity and the press people for staying in tune with MC Eiht.

And be on the look out for Veterans Day Sept.28th

Robert: Well again thanks for the time and keep us up on what's going on with ya,----Peace & 1

Eiht: Aw, no problem man. Thanks for the interview.

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