



Born to Use Mics: Reading Nas's Illmatic

Michael Eric Dyson, Sohail Daulatzai

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At the age of nineteen, Nasir “Nas” Jones began recording tracks for his debut album—and changed the music world forever. Released in 1994, *Illmatic* was hailed as an instant masterpiece and has proven one of the most influential albums in hip-hop history. With its close attention to beats and lyricism, and riveting first-person explorations of the isolation and desolation of urban poverty, *Illmatic* was pivotal in the evolution of the genre.

In *Born to Use Mics*, Michael Eric Dyson and Sohail Daulatzai have brought together renowned writers and critics including Mark Anthony Neal, Marc Lamont Hill, Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., and many others to confront *Illmatic* song by song, with each scholar assessing an individual track from the album. The result is a brilliant engagement with and commentary upon one of the most incisive sets of songs ever laid down on wax.

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