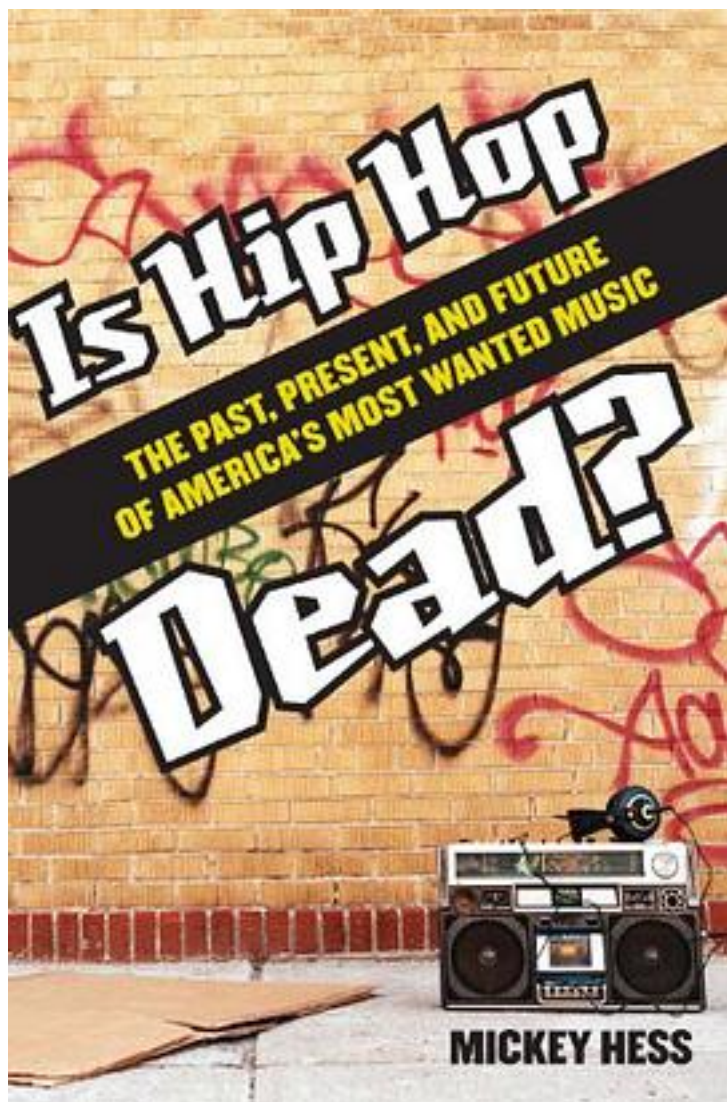


Is Hip-hop Dead?



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Recently, proclamations of hip-hop's death have positively flooded the airwaves. This issue may have reached its boiling point in Nas' 2006 album "Hip Hop is Dead", an album driven by nostalgia for a mythically pure moment in hip-hop's history, when the music was motivated by artistic passion, instead of base commercialism. In the course of this same album, however, Nas himself brags about making money for his particular record label. These and similar contradictions are emblematic of the complex forces underlying the dialogue that keeps hip-hop a vital element of our culture. "Is Hip-Hop Dead?" seeks to illuminate the origins of hip-hop nostalgia and examine how artists maintain control of their music and culture in the face of corporate record companies, government censorship, and the standardization of the rap image. Many hip-hop artists, both mainstream and underground, use their lyrics to engage in a complex dialogue about rhyme skills versus record sales, and commercialism versus culture. This ongoing dialogue invigorates hip-hop, and provides a common ground upon which to reconsider many of the developments in the industry over the past 20 years. Through the lens of hip-hop, and the threats to hip-hop culture, the author is able to confront a range of important issues, including race, class, criminality, authenticity, the media, and personal identity.

作者介绍:

目录:

[Is Hip-hop Dead?_ 下载链接1](#)

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