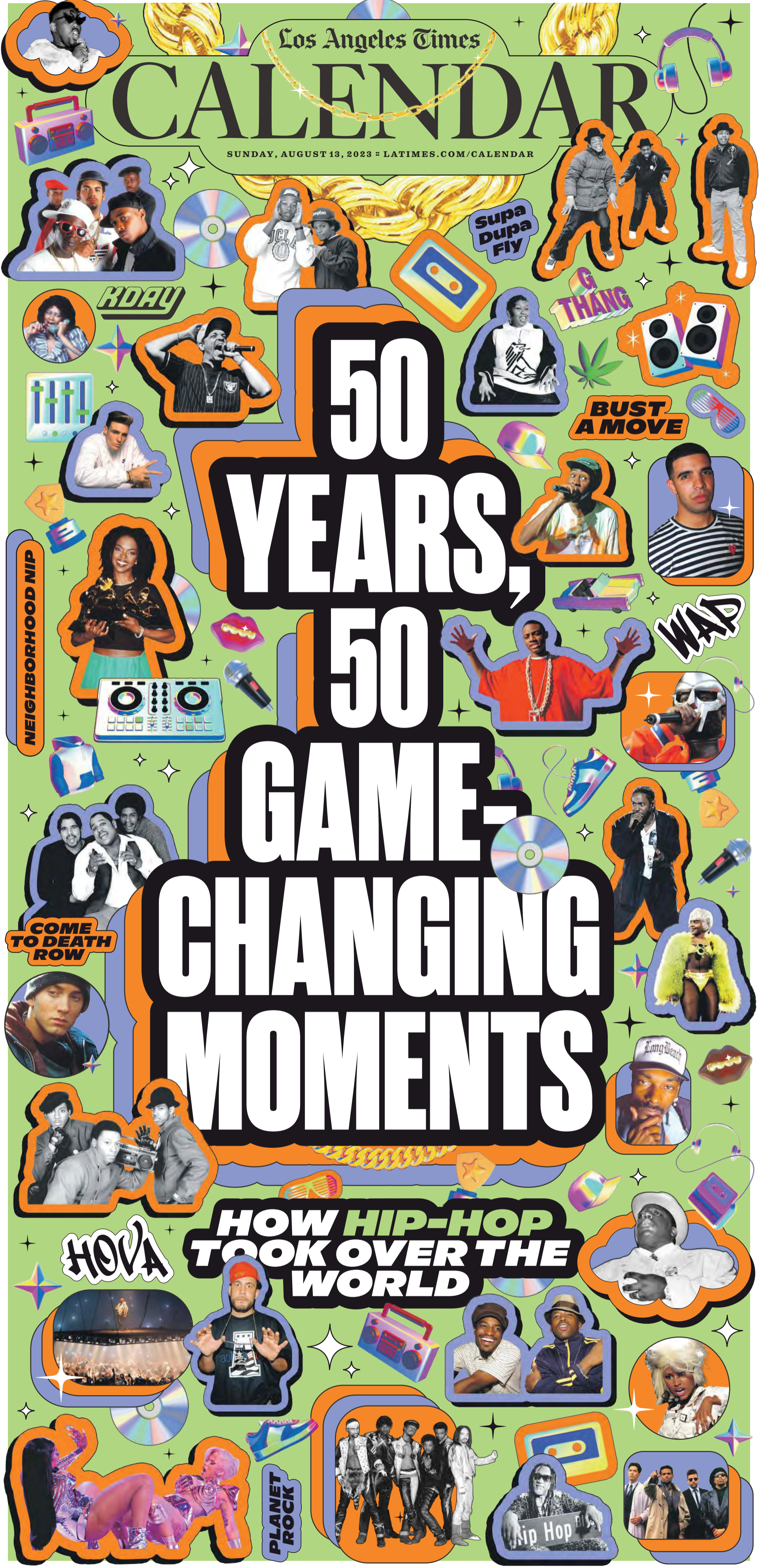


Los Angeles Times

# CALENDAR

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 2023 # LATIMES.COM/CALENDAR

# 50 YEARS, 50 GAME-CHANGING MOMENTS



**KDAY**

**Supa Dupa Fly**

**G THANG**

**BUST A MOVE**

**NEIGHBORHOOD NIP**

**COME TO DEATH ROW**

**W.A.P.**

**Long Beach**

**HOVA**

**HOW HIP-HOP TOOK OVER THE WORLD**

**PLANET ROCK**

**Hip Hop**

**1993**  
**Cash Money Records recruits Mannie Fresh**

Before Fresh joined the fledgling Cash Money label, he was the major draw at the popular New Orleans spot Club Rumors. While other DJs would spin MC T. Tucker's and DJ Irv's foundational 1992 single "Where Dey At?" to get the crowd hyped, Fresh augmented the local favorite credited with being the city's first bounce record with R&B and church-music samples. Not only were clubgoers enthralled, so were brothers Bryan "Baby" Williams and Ronald "Slim" Williams, who in '93 recruited him to be Cash Money's in-house studio vision-

Main Source's "Live at the Barbecue," the first verse of his that the world would ever hear. With that song, along with a feature on MC Serch's "Back to the Grill" and his own debut single "Halftime," Nas had the world at his feet.

But Nas didn't just clear the bar; he delivered what many still consider to be hip-hop's finest album in his debut "Illmatic." When influential rap magazine the Source awarded it with its highest rating — the hallowed "5 mic" review — it sent shock waves; only six albums at the time had ever received the honor, and it was exceedingly rare for it to go to a new artist.

In just over 500 words, Source intern Minya Oh wrote the album into history, raving over Nas' lyrical ability and the elite production from DJ Premier, Large Professor, Pete Rock, Q-Tip and L.E.S. "The bottom line is this: even if the album doesn't speak to you on that personal level, the music itself is still well worth the money," Oh concluded. "If you can't at least appreciate the value of Nas' poetical realism, then you best get yourself up out of hip-hop." (K.D.)

**1995**  
**"Come to Death Row"**

On Aug 3, 1995, Marion "Suge" Knight, then the chief executive of Death Row Records, used one of hip-hop's biggest celebrations as an opportunity to sow discord.

At the second Source Awards, at Madison Square Garden's Paramount Theater in New York City, Knight closed his acceptance speech for soundtrack of the year with a very public insult and an invitation.

"Any artist out there that want to be an artist, stay a star and don't want to have to worry about the executive producer



KMAZUR WireImage / Getty Images

**LIL' KIM'S** brash confidence in the '90s would go on to inspire such equally bold artists as Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion.

being all in the videos, all on the records, dancing — come to Death Row."

The barb was aimed at Bad Boy Records Chief Executive Sean "Diddy" Combs and his love of the spotlight. Bad Boy, based in New York, had emerged as the music industry's new sensation due in large part to the Notorious B.I.G. and his 1994 debut, "Ready to Die," and Combs' own ascent as a shiny-suited rapper, producer and celebrity. Knight's Death Row, built on the success of Dr. Dre's 1992 album "The Chronic" and Snoop Dogg's "Doggystyle" the following year, was its West Coast antithesis, all masculine bravado and lean, gangsta-funk rhythms.

Knight's comments served as an accelerant to highly publicized bicoastal tension within hip-hop at the time, precipitating one of the genre's most turbulent periods. In the meantime, Death Row would make one major addition to its roster: 2Pac, a.k.a. Tupac Shakur, whom Knight had mentioned earlier in his speech.

At the time of the 1995

Source Awards, 2Pac was an inmate at Clinton Correctional Facility in upstate New York after being convicted of sexual abuse that February. He would make headlines in September 1995, when he signed a handwritten contract to join Death Row after Knight agreed to post his \$1.4-million bail. The following month, he exited prison, flew to Los Angeles and went directly to the studio. "California Love," released in December 1995, became his brash reintroduction to the world.

Over the next 15 months, Dr. Dre left Death Row, Shakur died after being shot in Las Vegas and Knight was imprisoned for violating the conditions of his parole. Shortly after Knight's conviction, the Notorious B.I.G. was fatally shot in Los Angeles, capping off a tragic period in hip-hop's journey. (J.K.)

**1996**  
**Lil' Kim gets "Hard Core"**

If a female rapper dropped this verse in 2023, they'd be memed into feminist heaven and give Ben Shapiro a well-deserved aneurysm: "You ain't lickin' this, you ain't stickin' this / And I got witnesses, ask any n—I been with / They ain't hit sh—till they stuck their tongue in this / I don't want d— tonight, eat my p— right."

But this verse off Lil' Kim's "Hard Core" hit record stores in 1996. Today, it's regarded as a classic of both rap craft and brash female confidence amid the rough-hewn boys' town of mid-'90s hip-hop. Taking the baton from Queen Latifah and Salt-N-Pepa, Kim would go on to inspire Cardi B, Megan Thee Stallion and (though she'd hate the comparison) Nicki Minaj.

But Kimberly Jones was a complex, contradictory artist, and "Hard Core" debuted into a rap culture with different ideas of women and sex. Mentored by the Notorious B.I.G. (he picked out the legs-wide portrait for the album's cover), the 4-foot 11-inch Kim arrived with awareness of her appeal and a well of trauma from childhood homelessness and drug-dealing.

Kim made art out of her sexual frankness and changed fashion with her avant-garde, ultra-revealing outfits (her 1999 MTV VMAs bodysuit remains seared in millennial minds). After Biggie's 1997 slaying, she proved her gifts on tracks like "The Jumpoff" and "How Many Licks." But her career stalled in the mid-2000s, and the hip-hop industry didn't know how to sustain a sexually liberated woman's career into middle age. "Hard Core" was ahead of its time, and Kim both reaped the rewards and suffered the costs for seeing the future. (A.B.)



JEFF KRAVITZ FilmMagic / Getty Images

**DR. DRE**, left, and Snoop Dogg at the 1993 MTV Movie Awards in Culver City.

ary. Five years later, the move had paid off as Fresh kicked off a blistering run with Juvenile's quadruple platinum "400 Degrees." Since then, Fresh has found commercial acclaim with Birdman as one half of the platinum duo Big Tymers and has manned the boards for everyone from Lil Wayne to T.I. (K.M.)

**1994**  
**The Source gives Nas' "Illmatic" 5 mics**

When Nas was 12, he "went to hell for snuffing Jesus" — at least, that's what he claimed on



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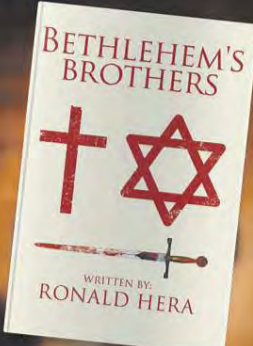
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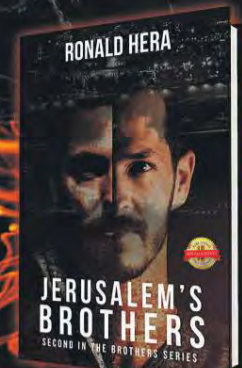
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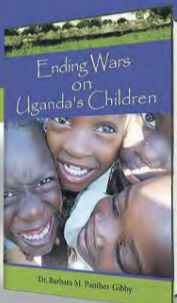
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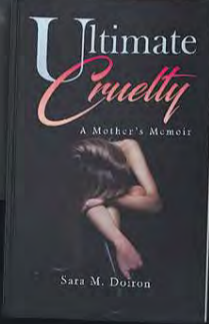


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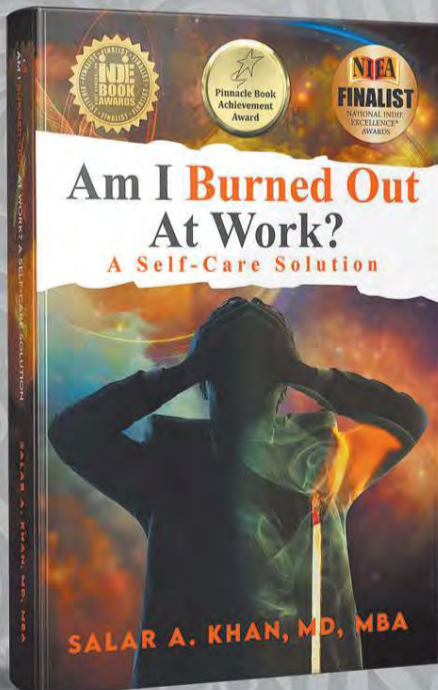
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