



The Words and Music of Ice Cube (The Praeger Singer-Songwriter Collection)

Gail Hilson Woldu

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Ice Cube is one of the most influential figures in the history of rap and hip-hop. Best known for the vitriol of his angry black man recordings of the late 1980s and mid 1990s, Ice Cube epitomizes the genre often referred to as gangsta rap. Much of his music from these years is focused on the disturbing realities of life in black urban ghettos, and as a result it chronicles such complex and controversial issues as racial stereotypes, street gangs, racial profiling, black on black crime, teen pregnancy, absentee fathers, and male-female relationships. His recordings with NWA are noteworthy for their sardonic humor in discussing dire issues. The group's landmark CD *Straight Outta Compton* (1988) is a palette of urban woes recounted in aggressive and hostile street vernacular, while Ice Cube's recordings of the 1990s now represent paradigms of the gangsta style.

The first three chapters of *The Words and Music of Ice Cube* explore Ice Cube's recordings between 1988 and 1996 and situate Ice Cube in the context of other rappers of this period—most notably Public Enemy, Ice-T, Tupac, Biggie, and Snoop Dogg—whose music also chronicled explosive issues in urban ghettos. The fourth chapter considers Ice Cube's career in film, beginning with a discussion of his performance in *Boyz n the Hood* and ending with a look at his most recent films, *Barber Shop*, *Barber Shop II*, *Are We There Yet?* And *Are We Done Yet?* The fifth and final chapter looks back over all of Ice Cube's work to date and considers his impact and his legacy in music and popular culture at large. .

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