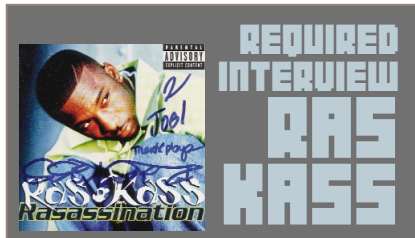


# REQUIRED AUDIO

TEXT & PHOTOS BY { JOEL MARASIGAN }



Tonight I was in a Burbank studio with Watts native, Carson-bred John Austin A.K.A. Ras Kass. He was in studio to wrap up his promo of his upcoming album "Golden Child" (formerly "Van Gogh") before he sets off for the Anger Management Tour.

Ras Kass is on the same lyrical and mental level as a KRS-One, Rakim or Chuck D but as lyrics become more and more adapted to lowest common denominators he is honored by being one of the most slept-on lyricists of today. Slept-on by the mass because he's didn't take quicker steps to go in the way of mainstream radio. That's not to say that his artistry is sub-par and wouldn't be enjoyed by the many, in fact, you can put any type and style of lyrics to a pop-track (think insta-hit producers the

Neptunes or Dre) and be a hit—just add the artist.

As people kept rolling in and out of the studio like, Kid Capri, Spliff Star, Busta Rhymes, Kurupt and Saafir, I was starting to notice the potential of this next album and it's promising future. It's got some of Dre's music. It's got Mya. Xzibit, Nate Dogg, Saafir, Tash, Kokane, and Bad Azz. All these contributions won't make it blaze but the heat is there. As he kept blasting some of the tracks he was working on I concluded that if this third album doesn't get high sales numbers it wasn't the fault of Ras.

While shooting I got a chance to tear him away from work and rattle of a series of questions.

**With all the words and stories you've written did you ever think about writing a book?** Not really a book but more like a screenplay. Movies. I've actually got one written. I'm thinking about more stuff.

**Fuck getting high, Ras is Elevating." Still true?** I don't smoke (weed) so yeah. I've got to elevate.

**What's a little known fact about Ras Kass that people wouldn't normally know?**...that I'm an introvert. I'm basically a hermit. I like the peaceful and calm stuff. I like chillin. **You got your name from...**An



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*Spliff Star of the Flip Mode Squad (second image from right) thinks of lyrics for his new Hi-Tek beat. » Ras Kass goes over a few key topics for the legendary Dj Kid Capri to announce as transitions for his Golden Child promo. Golden Child releases around August. Check [rasskass.com](http://rasskass.com) or [priorityrecords.com](http://priorityrecords.com).*

Ethiopian king; King Ras Rass of the African kingdom of Shoa. He was the fourth son. I'm the fourth son. He's a king and it's a symbol of where I want to be. **It's been said that you were a voracious reader when you were a youth. What prompted you to read? What did you read?** I read encyclopedias. Stuff like that. I just liked reading anything. My mom and I would debate and I had to back my shit up. I couldn't just say something just to say shit. I had to prove it. **What's something that's happening in rap today that doesn't bother you but did when you first**

**started.** If it bothered me back then it probably still bothers me today. **If all books and music were destroyed and people had to pass stories through tales. Who is Ras Kass and how would he be known?** I'd like it to be told like the story of "Gladiator". Fighting the evil. Righting the wrong. **If fish was Rakim's favorite dish what yours?** Shit! Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo! **You are regarded as one of the best lyricists in rap. As other preceded you who do you precede?** I don't think I've preceded any on just yet. There are a lot of people out there. I

think I'm still trying to "precede". **If you weren't in rap you'd be...Rich.** Let's just leave it at that. If I weren't in rap I'd be rich. **What's something you should have known before you started rapping?** This business. This music business. The politics. The bull. **Some people have 5- and 10-year-plans. Do you have one and what is it you want to accomplish?** Shit, I had a 5-year-plan 5 years ago. Sometimes the plan doesn't work out like it's supposed to. Shit happens and you have to adjust. Ultimately I want to take of family. My family. My people.