

■ **LIFE IN PRISON** by Stanley "Tookie"

Williams (SeaStar Books). Crime doesn't pay and prison is no walk in the park. Though to many, this sort of talk may sound like obvious and even preachy statements, there are many inner-city youth who are regularly dealt appealing stories of life behind bars. These stories tend to make prison out to be a place no different — or in some cases, *better* — than life on the streets. It's dog-eat-dog, survival of the fittest and according to these ignorant storytellers, only the strong, toughest and coolest survive. As Tookie explains in *Life In Prison*, these stories actually got youth to look forward to spending some time in lock-up.

Stanley Williams has experienced a bit of resurgence in the public eye recently, due to the release of the film, *Redemption* (see this month's Reel Deal for more info), starring Jamie Foxx. As the co-founder of the infamous Crips gang, Tookie has been living on death row since 1981. Since the early '90s, he's dedicated all of his time towards battling crime, violence, gang life and most importantly, the corruption of Black youth. *Life In Prison* is just one of many books Williams has penned from his cell specifically to enlighten youth and give them a first person look at what really happens to those who choose a life of crime. This book has been reprinted in order to reach a new generation who may have discovered Tookie through the power of film. In it, he dismisses any glorification of prison life and discusses — in a very clean and non-graphic manner, suitable for even the youngest of readers — what it is like to be locked up in a cage like an animal and strip searched, as well as the lack of privacy, homesickness and inmates who go "stir-crazy" and commit suicide. Tookie, despite his past life, is committing his final days to a serious cause and ongoing battle to steer as many youth as possible away from a life of crime. It's no wonder he's been nominated for two Nobel Prize awards.

■ **HEY YA! The Unauthorized Biography of OutKast** by Chris Nickson (Griffin). With their groundbreaking double-CD release, *Speakerboxx/The Love Below*, OutKast put a torch to any preconceived notions that the world may have once had of hip-hop. Though the southern-fried hip-hop of Big Boi and Andre 3000 always had a unique flair — thanks to the production efforts of Organized Noize — it would take them nearly a decade to finally receive the respect they deserved. Author Chris Nickson, a well-known music journalist born-and-raised in Leeds, England and now residing in Seattle, Washington, guides readers through OutKast's musical journey and beyond.

OutKast appeals to everyone. It doesn't matter if you are a teenybopper from the 'burbs or a hardcore street thug from the PJs — everyone respects these Atlanta-raised music geniuses. Thing is, only the most well-versed music aficionado or hip-hop head has been following the duo since their outstanding 1994 debut, *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*. Since then, they've willingly pushed the boundaries of what to expect from a hip-hop group, using their knack for southern soul and throwback funk as an undercurrent for rap music that regularly defies genre classification. Nickson goes back in time to when Andre Benjamin and Antwan Patton were just high school kids earning each other's respect through lunchroom rap ciphers. Dre's eclecticism was witnessed early on as he was one of the few of his peers who opted to go skate-board, rather than just hang around in the projects. Big Boi continues to inject that rap base and credibility as the member who had the rough-and-tumble upbringing. As best friends, they truly were outcasts amongst their peers. Nickson dives headfirst into the development of the Dirty South scene — namely, the eclectic side of it that stemmed from groups like Arrested Development and continued with OutKast's involvement with the Dungeon Family (which included the similar-minded group, Goodie Mob). Learn how these young and daring ATLians were

signed by urban music honcho L.A. Reid, became a triple Grammy award-winning pop music phenomenon and what the future holds for the daring duo.

■ **MOVE WITHOUT THE BALL: Put Your Skills and Your Magic To Work For You!**

by Stedman Graham (Fireside). In sports, the difference between an athlete who succeeds and an athlete who fails all comes down to the hunger and drive that person has. Which of the two has the will to work hard and push on to achieve their goals? Better yet, which one of them actually *has* goals? Take a look at the way Puerto Rico's basketball team toppled the typically almighty, unbeatable American "Dream Team" in this summer's Olympics. Obviously, that team had the drive and determination to succeed over the NBA's highly paid finest. This sort of attitude and ethic doesn't relate to just sports. In fact, according to businessman, lecturer and author Stedman Graham, "athletics is a metaphor for life."

This is the approach Graham adheres to in *Move Without the Ball*. As a former professional athlete who never achieved his dream of playing in the NBA, Graham took the drive and determination he learned in sports to the business world, where he conquered and became the CEO of his own management and marketing consulting firm. He's already written the *New York Times* bestsellers *Teens Can Make It Happen* and *You Can Make It Happen*, and this time around uses sports as the backdrop for his inspirational advice. Featuring images and examples ranging from Hank Aaron to Serena Williams, Graham provides advice on how to succeed and achieve your goals — whatever they may be. He also provides statistics regarding things such as how drug and alcohol abuse can ruin chances of success. Using sports as a parallel to life makes this book interesting for those who normally find such inspirational/self-help books boring, and as the book says, it just might help them improve their game "both on and off the field."

■ **LOST IN THE GROOVES: Scram's Capricious Guide to the Music You Missed**

edited by Kim Cooper and David Smay (Routledge). You may not know it, but the music industry probably controls your tastes in music. If you're the average person who relies heavily on radio and television for the latest music, then chances are you're missing out on some of the best stuff while being force-fed mostly mediocre tunes. The problem is, with so much music — both excellent and atrocious — sliding under the radar, finding the gems really does become a test of time, money and patience — three things the average person rather not part with. So, unless you are a complete music snob who willingly buys any music on a whim, on the off chance of finding something good, then you can use a bit of assistance when it comes to picking out *only* the classics. Luckily for you, *Scram Magazine* has been in the business of filtering out the treasures from the mounds of garbage that are released year after year.

Beginning life in 1992 as a West Coast fanzine, *Scram* has risen to the top of the underground magazine circuit by always keeping tabs on the more obscure stuff that is currently hot in music. As humorous music junkies, they've already released their hilarious "tell all" book, *Bubblegum Music is the Naked Truth: The Dark History of Prepubescent Pop from the Banana Splits to Britney Spears*. Now, with this "Capricious Guide" they've compiled hundreds of LPs and records that you've probably passed over while shopping for CDs. No stone is left unturned, from garage rock and funk to blues and hip-hop, as there's something in this guide for even the most fickle of music fans. There are even a number of established artists in here, such as Marvin Gaye, whose post-divorce LP (*Here, My Dear*) remains a little-known and obscure R&B gem. Perfect for average music lovers or even DJs who may have missed a key item in their rotation, this guide is the perfect way to tighten up *anybody's* music collection. ■

