

CAMPYR

BY ANTHONY Q. CASASNOVAS

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58 BLACK BEAT

O N "IT'S ALL ABOUT GOIN' TO THE NEXT HUSTLE."

The end of 2004 saw a number of pivotal moments in the career of Harlem's own Killa Cam. This Dipset family member kept busy by dropping his fourth full-length album, *Purple Haze* and rode on the success of his club-friendly "Girls/Family Ties" and "Get 'Em Girl/Killa Cam" singles. He also worked with his Diplomats crew to release their latest CD, *Diplomatic Immunity 2*. However, as is always the case in hip-hop, 2004 hosted a number of controversies the likes of which keeps Wendy Williams warm, cozy and shamelessly rich at night.

For starters, Cam left Roc-A-Fella – the label that once offered him the opportunity to become its president. Then there's the question of what really went down between Cam and his former Harlem World allie Mase? Does Cam really believe that children should get crunk off of his alcohol-fortified Sizzurp Purple Punch and if so, what flavors does it come in? Last but not least, what's with all the color changes? In a recent interview, Cam'ron was more than willing to address these questions and enforce that you, the beloved Black Beat reader, "go and get your hustle on baby!"

AQC: Did the release of *Purple Haze* officially mark the end of the pink era?

CAM'RON: Well, realistically it wasn't really me trying to do anything. I was just doin' what people wasn't doin', then it turned into everybody doin' what I was doin'. So it wasn't like I was dressin' up to get everybody to wear pink. That was just Cam's signature thing, that's what Cam wanted to do – then it turned into everybody's signature thing. So, I just left it alone, because it was no longer Cam's thing – it was America's thing. A lot of times when I'm doin' things, it's for the flyness of myself, it ain't really about tryin' to make everybody do things. That's like the number one question now, "So you goin' from pink to purple?" I'm not goin' from nothin' to nothin'! If I feel like puttin' on green today, that's what I'm gonna do! [Laughs] I'm from Harlem – Harlem dudes have a much different aura about them. They could have two dollars in they pocket,

but as long as they have something fresh on they straight. That's Harlem. That's just a part of growin' up – my roots. It wasn't nothin' about me tryin' to wear pink, but I don't even rock pink anymore – just pink accessories.

Like the pink SUV?

Yeah! And I got another pink Ranger and I got a pink GT Bentley. My bathroom is pink – stuff like that. Pink items.

Didn't you auction off one of your pink Rangers?

Yeah, I had it on eBay. I auctioned one off and then got another one.

You once spoke about creating a completely new color.

Yeah, we're actually working on that now also. Like I said, I wasn't trying to have everybody wearing pink. So what I did was just in case I get that vibe again and I wanna bust out with something, if people wanna do it – even Crayola – they would have to call me up. I've

already done a color, now I'm just learnin' how to process a patent on it – copyrightin' it.

Seven years is a long time – especially in hip-hop. You've already dropped four albums, how do you continue getting inspiration for material?

A lot of times I just listen to old songs – stuff I used to like when I was younger. I'll listen to albums like Mobb Deep's *The Infamous*, Jay-Z's *Reasonable Doubt*, Nas' *Illmatic* – a lot of stuff from that era. I really can't get inspiration from a lot of the new stuff that's out, 'cause the creativity is just lacking, know what I'm sayin'?

Yeah, the good stuff is few and far between.

Exactly! So I listen to a lot of the old stuff I liked when I was 11 and 12. That used to get me amped to wanna do what I'm doin' today – a lot of stuff from the early '90s.

Many die-hard rap fans feel that there's not much

more

CAM'RON

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straight-up real hip-hop nowadays, how do you feel about that?

At the end of the day, you really can't complain — when you're in the music business. Every few years, you got people who can come with a certain style and can change the game up for a minute and if it's hot, people will stick with it. I could recall in like '96 to '98, when DMX was first comin' out. His whole style kinda changed the game at that particular point. Before that there was Mase and Puff and it was cool to be doin' what they was doing. Then DMX came with something totally to the left and he changed up the music from dancin' to people goin' hard. Now you got Lil Jon and the South [bringing] a whole other vibe to the table — and people are feeling that. The thing is, if you are hot and people are feelin' your style, it doesn't matter what the majority is runnin' with as long as you stick in there and you have a definite fan base. With me, it didn't matter who was out, we always made sure we did our damn thing.

There's been a bit of an uproar regarding your liquor, Sizzurp Purple Punch. Some people think since it's purple, it too closely resembles fruit punch or grape juice and that kids would be more likely to purchase it. What's been your response to all of those hatin' on the drink?

I actually never heard that before, but I'm glad you let me know! [Laughs] Parents gotta let [their kids] know! We're not acting like it's an Icee or nothin'. We're lettin' people know that it's alcohol called Sizzurp. It's the parents' job to make sure that their kids aren't gainin' to the store and drinking it. We're gonna let you know it's a liquor. It's like ten years ago, when Ice Cube, EPMD and everybody did the same thing with St. Ides. It was okay until one guy started rappin'

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about it, then another guy starts rappin' about it. The only difference being that Ice Cube didn't own it. I own this liquor and it's a business. There's gonna be a backlash in everything. There's always a backlash in rap — Bill O'Reilly is angry that I said “Pimp your ho's” in a song! [Laughs] Know what I'm sayin'? Anything you do, there's always gonna be a backlash. I just say, go and get your hustle on baby!

Has the liquor been a big business for you?

We're the number one cognac in the country. Bigger than Alizé, bigger than Hypnotiq and bigger than Hennessy. They offered us a nine digit figure to buy out the Sizzurp contract. Honestly, this is something where my kid's kids won't even have to work anymore. The people I run the business with owned the Cabbage Patch Kids back in the day and they own Bailey's Irish Cream —

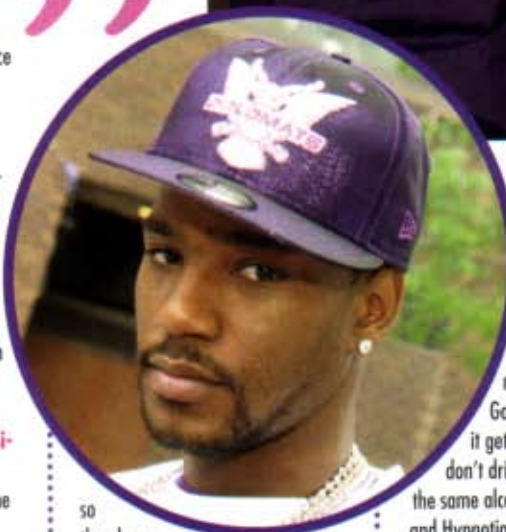
so they know how to market the liquor real well.

Ever going to branch out with other flavors?

It's funny you ask that, 'cause I have a red Sizzurp coming out just in time for Valentine's Day and also a Sizzurp martini that's coming out about a month after that.

Family Portrait: Cam (far right, back row) and his thug mug-wearing Diplomats crew always get their hustle on just don't ask them to smile for the camera.

Killa Cam rocks his purple New Era Diplomats cap. Remember, he's only doing pink accessories from now on.



How do you recommend drinking it?

I drink it straight. Me — I'm not a hard drinker. People like mixing it with Grey Goose or Hennessy, but it gets me right straight. I don't drink too heavy and it's the same alcohol content as Alizé and Hypnotiq, so if that stuff gets you twisted, it's the same thing.

What's up with the short film you were working on?

It's actually coming out in February on pay-per-view with a concert we did at the Apollo back on November 30th. It's called *What's Really*



Good? It's a gangsta musical. We don't get a lot of video play all the time and we got hot songs with video-like themes, so we've shot videos for the songs and put dialogue in between. It's like one big movie with the videos included. The videos would be part of the movie. Basically, we're doin' this 'cause we have a lot of songs, but then we'd have to go and kiss BET's a** and MTV's a**. No disrespect — it's all love — but at the end of the day, there's only a certain amount of videos they play and there's a bunch of songs we would love to do videos for that I think people would like.

Will it include older videos?

We may throw some in at the very, very end, but anything we're doin'

— the new videos that are part of the movie — will all make sense *within* the movie. So it's not like we're just gonna throw a video in the middle of the movie [laughs]. It'll be like, one scene we're shootin' up a place then the next minute we're in the tropics with girls. Everything's gonna make sense.

Is it being filmed around Harlem?

We're shootin' it around Harlem and in a club in Cincinnati, Ohio. I know some people out there.

A few months ago, you showed up to perform in place of Mase during a concert he was headlining — in the midst of some very public beef between your camp and him. How'd that all go down?

Basically, Hot 97 called me up and told me, "Mase isn't showin' up,

wanna come through?" They got the money and I went. It wasn't no big mystery or puzzle. I happened to be in town and they happened to have the money I was lookin' for. That's all. [Laughs] No big story behind it or nothing!

Mad reports were twisting the story around.

Yeah, it wasn't personal or nothing. They called and said, "Do you wanna come to this show? We got the money." I said, "How much?" They gave me the right number and I went. I would've went even if Mase wasn't there! It was business.

Are you already working on your next album?

Well, we got our own studio in Jersey, so depending on who's in the studio, we're always recording. Sometimes we even get in ten songs a day. There's always somebody working.

How many more albums do you feel you got in you?

It doesn't matter how many more I can do. I could write another 20 if I wanted to. It's about the business and if it's gonna be worth it. I'm a hustla. It isn't about how many I'm gonna do, but about whether or not I've got the team around me to do what they're supposed to do. But honestly, for as long as I've been signed I still wind up making more money off of liquor than I ever did off the music. It's all about goin' to the next hustle.

Do you see yourself getting into any other businesses?

With me, there's always an offer on the table, but I don't really like to talk about it 'til it's done. There's definitely stuff goin' on. Right now I got Sizzurp and I renegotiated the Diplomat's deal with Koch Records for \$1.5 mil. It's a beautiful life.

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