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By KEITH J. KELLY

Ali tome

Get ready for a new round of Ali-mania.

Muhammad Ali, arguably among the most famous people in the world, turns 65 next January.

George Lois, the legendary magazine cover designer, ad man and longtime friend of Ali, has a book on the life and times of the famed boxer ready to hit shelves on Nov. 2.

The book is called "Ali Rap."

The book will not in any way rival the bio that New Yorker Editor-in-Chief **David Remnick** penned several years ago.

The Lois-designed-and-edited version comprises a collection of Ali poems, wisecracks and witticisms accompanied by art or photos to illustrate.

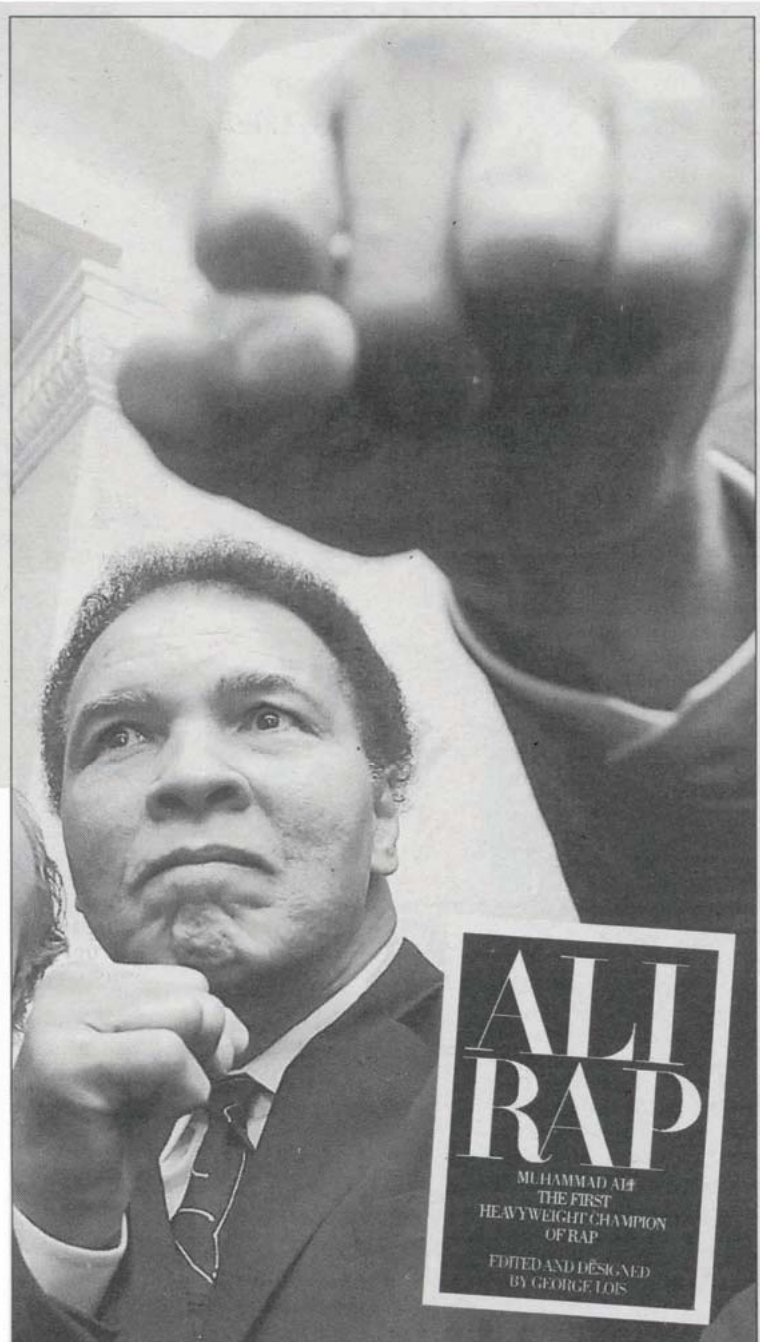
"Sonny Liston is great, but he'll fall in eight," reads one line, uttered on the eve of Ali's first fight with the reigning heavyweight champion. It is accompanied by a picture of an eight ball.

"He was the precursor to all the rappers of today," says Lois.

The designer clearly loves the man he profiled. He said when he went to visit Ali in Michigan, Ali put his arm around him and asked, "George, are you still my n****r?"

"Yeah," Lois recalled, then asked, "Are you still my cracker?" (Ali said he was.)

Lois did the famous cover of Ali for Esquire magazine in 1968. Ali, under fire for opposing the Vietnam War and refusing to be drafted, was photographed in the pose of the Christian martyr St. Sebastian, who was killed when arrows pierced his body.



THE GREATEST: A new bio of Muhammad Ali by longtime friend George Lois is scheduled for publication in November. Bloomberg

Ali was at first reluctant to do the pose, because it was evocative of a Christian martyr and he by that time had converted to Islam. The cover was chosen as one of the 40 greatest magazine covers of the last 40 years by the American Society of Magazine Editors.

The book is being jointly published by the Taschen America imprint and ESPN, which is planning a number of Ali specials for its fall lineup.

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