


Ali Rap (Book)

Artist: Book Review

Title: Ali Rap (Book)

Rating: 

Reviewed by: Sidik Fofana



"Sammy Davis told me it was the most beautiful fight he had ever seen, and he only has one eye." This citation is one of Muhammad Ali's many historical witticisms, frozen in time from the storied boxer's life and career, and recently compiled by George Lois into the photo art coffee table book release *Ali Rap* (Taschen). Though Muhammad Ali's colorful trash talk may not have surpassed his boxing legacy, there are some who argue that Ali may be the greatest rapper never to rock a beat.

Ali Rap makes a stalwart case for such claims. Although it falls more into the picture book category, the quotations carry the bulk of the book's interest. Ali's sayings glow with the simple but scintillating insight of the common man. The phenomenal level of self-assurance he was known to possess seeps into nearly every quotation in *Ali Rap*. "You can get hurt playing football," Ali responded matter-of-factly to being asked why he didn't play football in his youth. Sharp quips like this one coupled with Ali's whimsical rhymes predicting which round his various ring opponents would fall ("Moore in four"), captures Ali's limitless bravado.

Ali Rap also honorably stays true to Muhammad Ali's timeline. The book catalogs his quotations in chronological order from one significant epoch

to another. There's Cassius the boy who travels to town only to be snubbed by his favorite boxer Ray Robinson. There's the Ali who refused to serve in the Vietnam War, adding, "No Vietnamese ever called me 'Ni**er.'" There's even the Ali who received an honorary doctorate degree at Columbia and trembling from Parkinson's, addresses the university by saying, "From now on call me doctor."

The erratic pictures which include a pelican, an ad for the George Foreman grill, and print of Greek Hero Herakles slaying a lion and so on are random but purposeful. They give the book a scattered artsy feel that you might find in the FADER Magazine or in the Village Voice. Proudly, Taschen Books and ESPN have come together to release a fun book that finds a common intersection between rap fans, sports fan, and art fans alike.