



# The Los Angeles INDEPENDENT



## ON DVD: Review - Style Wars

By KEVIN HERRERA, EScene staff writer 31.AUG.05 “Now it’s not even about the culture, it’s about the dollar,” says a reflective DJ Kay Slay, better known in the graffiti world as Dez, in the more than 3 hours of poignant interviews and bonus footage found on the re-release of director Tony Silver’s ever enduring documentary Style Wars (Public Film Art Inc./ \$27.95), considered to be the quintessential representation of hip-hop culture.

Before there were multimillion-dollar recording contracts, shoe deals, bling or R&B collaborations, there was a growing movement amongst New York’s street kids who formed their own way of life based on individuality, self expression and banging break beats. They were hip-hoppers before there was such a term, carrying ghetto blasters on their shoulders as they descended into the dark pits of Manhattan’s subways where they created constantly-moving, multicolored murals on the city’s subway cars with only cans of spray paint and a longing to be recognized.

After hearing about the new art form and the city’s war to eradicate it during the early ‘80s, Silver, producer Henry Chalfant and a small film crew traveled to the streets of the NYC, where they encountered teenage B-boys spinning on cardboard dance floors while their homies freestyled to a beat by Grandmaster Flash. While some were graf writers or “bombers” there were the dancers too; members of party crews who would battle late into the night, using their funky robotic dance moves as a way to get out their aggression instead of picking up a pistol. Before there was krumping, there was breaking.

Required viewing for any fan of hip-hop, the double-disc DVD not only features the digitally-remastered version of the film, but also over 23 minutes of outtakes, commentary by Silver and Chalfant, plus a vivid collection of elaborate pieces painted by over 32 graf writers like the legendary Dondi, Daze, Blaze and Cey, not to mention recent interviews with a majority of the artists, who offer varied perspectives on the culture, how it’s evolved and where it’s going. There is also a 30 minute loop of over 200 murals and guest interviews with hip-hop luminaries like Fab 5 Freddy, DJ Red Alert, Guru of Gangstarr, Goldie, and photographer Martha Cooper. — Kevin Herrera