



DVD Review -Kill The Record Labels

Directed by Charles Rand & T. Thomas

Focus Media/MVD

One might think from the cover that this is some gritty footage of backstage Hip Hop drama a la the infamous “Beef” series, but no, this documentary is a serious inquiry into the nefarious elements of the record industry that have recently been cracking down on the now well established art of the mixtape. The main culprit here is the RIAA - the Recording Industry Association of America, who have been mercilessly persecuting the producers and distributors of mixtapes on the grounds of copyright infringement, while at the same time covertly supporting, providing songs for, and in many cases even commissioning mixtapes from prominent DJ’s as the most effective method of street-level artist promotion. When fans can only expect one or two hit songs per artist to drop on the radio, mixtapes allow rappers to promote rare, one-off, original material on a hand to hand basis.

Made up almost entirely of interview footage with prominent DJ’s like Green Lantern and DJ Drama, Industry execs, entertainment lawyers and MC’s like Juelz Santana and 50 Cent, the tale is told of a long established tradition of mixtapes in Hip Hop developing into a viable industry and underground economy that was inevitably noticed by the vultures of the big four - EMI, Universal, Warner Brothers and Sony, and like the first wave of Hip Hop from DJ’s Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa, was first promoted and capitalized on, then vilified and persecuted under dubious “copyright” laws. In that Hip Hop music has always been about sampling, the careful distinction is made between “bootlegging” - i.e. straight copying and selling a cd, and the mixtape - in which the amount of hours spent remixing, chopping and adding new vocal tracks may rival the time spent on the major label album.

At the bottom of it all of course is the allmighty dollar - you know damn well that as soon as the suits found out how much money was being made by people other than themselves, they pulled out all the stops! What couldn’t be accomplished by lawsuits was further facilitated by the formation of the so called “Hip Hop Cops” - a shady NYC undercover unit that keeps tabs on every artist who makes even a bump on their radar. With SWAT team tactics learned from DEA and ATF style raids, the authorities have literally been treating the mixtape game like the drug game, despite the vast gulf in revenue...and intent.

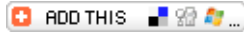
So once again we have a basic element of Hip Hop criminalized when its profitability threatens the corporate interest. With the development of the internet and modern recording technologies, the floodgates are open to all comers and of course the labels are scared, but the fact is that they were perfectly content to assist and encourage mixtape DJ’s for years. When it comes down to it, this is an issue of property and territory - not the “intellectual property” of artists and labels who cannot handle having their work used as raw materials by others, but the property and territory of true Hip Hop culture - culture which defines itself on its own terms, not in reference to

marketability.

Many artists have described the industry as the new slavery, and when you hear the words of the masses and bosses of today from their own mouths, you will know that they hold this cynical truth as a motto for their evil works. Kill the motherfuckers!

killtherecordlabels.com

By [Dave “Murda” McCallum](#)



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