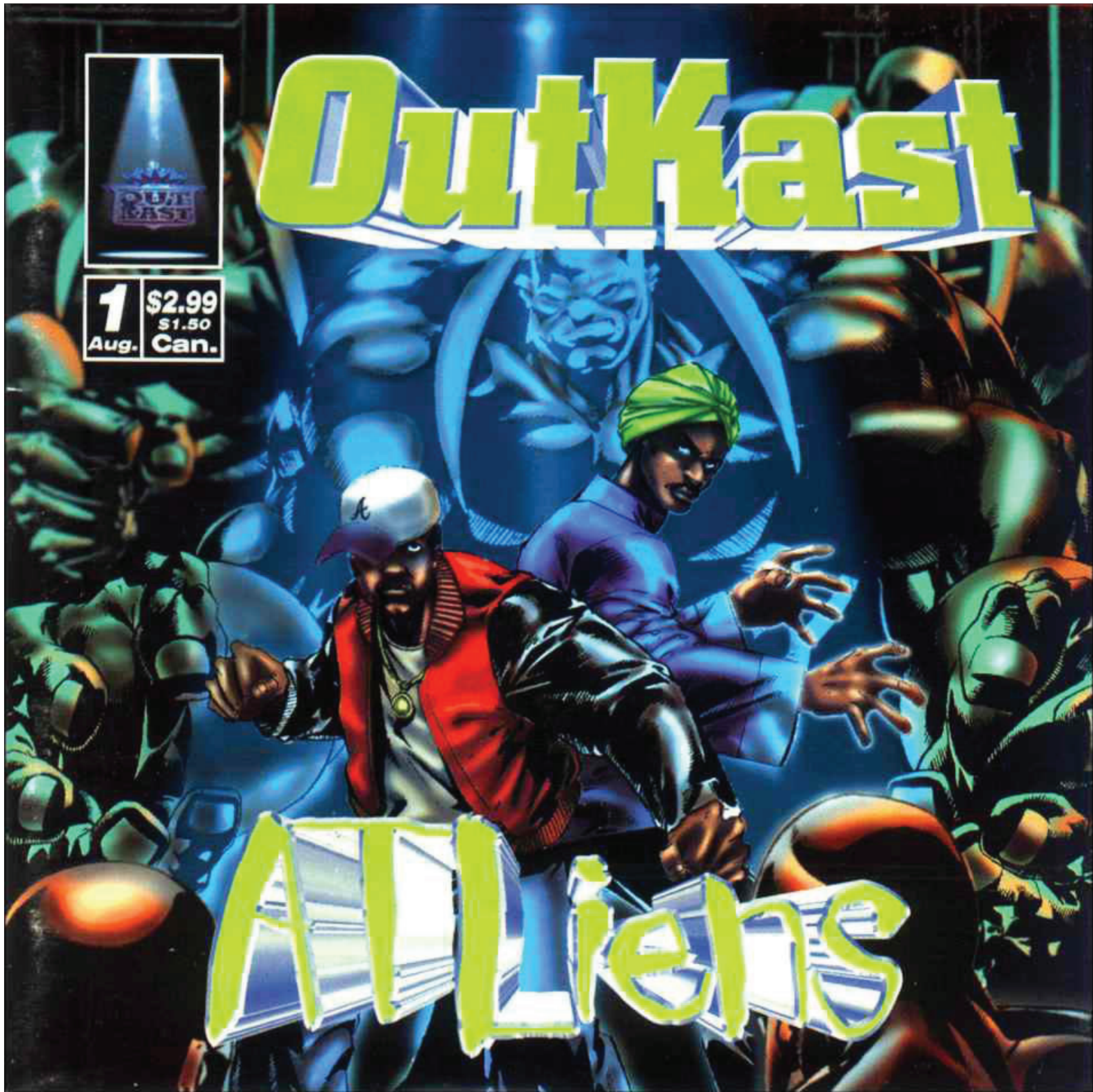


90'S  
HIP-HOP  
IN TYPE

EXPLORE →

A STUDY OF THE TYPOGRAPHIC TRENDS  
FROM HIP-HOPS GOLDEN AGE



# ATLIENS

## OUTKAST

When I think of the dynamic hip-hop duo Outkast, I can't think of a more fitting album cover than that of their second album "ATLiens". The album cover features comic book like illustrations of the group's members Big Boi and André 3000 in a sort of sci-fi looking scene. If this wasn't absurd enough, the typography on this album cover adds so much character that fits the duo perfectly. At the top of the cover, we see the group's name, Outkast, in a bold serif font with a blocky, 3D shape effect behind it that was featured in a lot of

comic book designs from the time. We see this same effect applied to the bottom text, with the album's name ATLiens. However, this text is done in what appears to be a handwritten style. These typographic choices may seem odd at first, but I think it's perfect for Outkast. André 3000 and Big Boi are two of the most eccentric and experimental figures in hip-hop, with Andre constantly pushing the boundaries of the genre and Big Boi always coming with electric, bouncy flows that keep their audience on the edge

of their seat. If the album cover's typography featured anything less quirky than this, I just don't think it would do the legendary hip-hop duo any justice.





# THE LOW END THEORY

## A TRIBE CALLED QUEST



The cover art for the legendary rap group, A Tribe Called Quest's album "The Low End Theory", is largely considered by many to be one of the best of all time. On a list published by Complex of the top 50 rap album covers of all time, "The Low End Theory" was ranked number one. So, with this amazing album cover, we can of course expect some fantastic typography. The cover features a stylized painting of a woman kneeling with stripes of bright red and green going down her body, with the title of the album

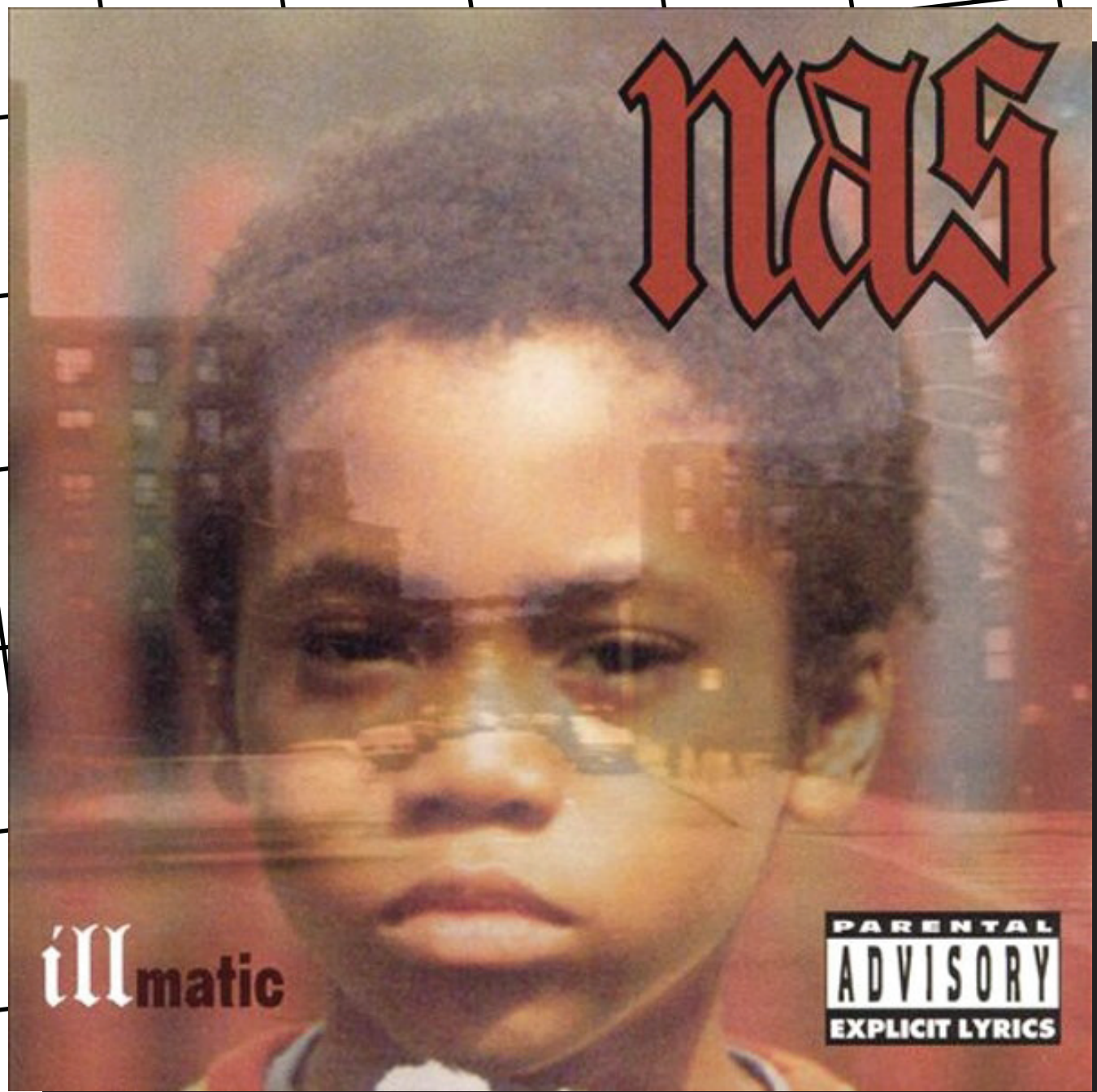
running down her back in a very natural feel. The text is written in a handwritten kind of style, almost as if it was painted directly on the cover of the album. It is written in the same bright green color that we see featured in some of the accenting stripes on the figures body, making it fit in with the very simple color scheme of the cover. On the lower body of the figure, we see the groups logo, which is known for featuring hand drawn stylized text and figures in it.

This goes along perfectly with the handwritten look of the typography on the album cover. The type is very playful and smooth in the way it is positioned in relation to the main art of the cover. Playful and smooth is also almost exactly how I would describe A Tribe Called Quest's music. They are introspective and smooth with their lyrics, while also remaining playful in their songs with bright, brash beat selections and instrumentation.





# ILLMATIC **NAS**



While the album covers we saw from Outkast and A Tribe Called Quest felt very bright and imaginative, the cover for Nas' classic album "Illmatic" gives the complete opposite feeling. The cover features a photo of Nas as a child, superimposed over a street block that represents the projects in which he grew up in. The entire cover is tinted in a sort of brownish red color, giving a very grimy feeling to the entire thing, which also reflects the overall sound of the album. As for the typography, it compliments this feeling as well. We see the name Nas placed in the top right of the cover in a very classic type of graffiti text. This typography choice goes along well with the feeling of growing up in the streets, and the faded red color of the text helps it to fit in with the darker theme of the entire cover. Illmatic is

widely considered to be one of the greatest rap albums of all time. On the album, Nas raps about his life growing up in the Queensbridge Houses in Queens, New York. The cover art and specifically the typography capture this feeling perfectly and allow the listeners to get an idea of the sound of the album before they even hit play on albums first track.

**"It drops deep as it does in my breath, I never sleep, 'cause sleep is the cousin of death. Beyond the walls of intelligence, life is defined, I think of crime when I'm in a New York state of mind"** - Nas

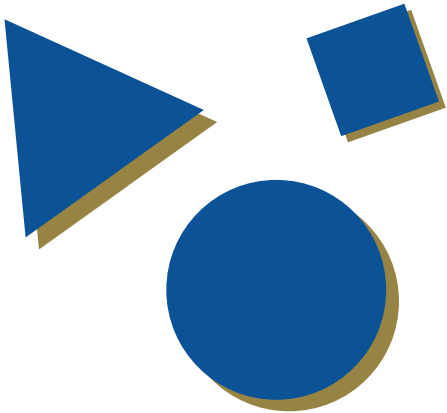


# THE ~ CHRONIC ~ DR. DRE

When we look at the cover art for Dr. Dre's debut 1992 album, "The Chronic", the first thing we notice is how simple and clean it is. It features a plain white background, with "Dr. Dre" written in a decorative serif font at the top of the cover, and the album's title "The Chronic" at the bottom of the cover in a simple sans serif font. Both lines of text have a very grand feel to them, and they curve in a way that perfectly frames the center of the cover. In the center, we see a photo of

Dre, with a decorative frame around it. The concept for the cover is actually based off the packaging of Zig-Zag rolling papers which are used for rolling tobacco or weed. The album's name even takes its inspiration from weed, as chronic is a reference to high grade marijuana. As a whole, the design and typography of the cover art being based around weed culture is extremely fitting, as it was a big part of the west coast rap scene at the time. The Chronic is known as the

album that redefined west coast hip-hop in the 90s, even launching the careers of famous rappers such as Snoop Dogg and Nate Dogg. Because of this, it is very appropriate that the typography and overall design of the album cover have a west coast feel to it.





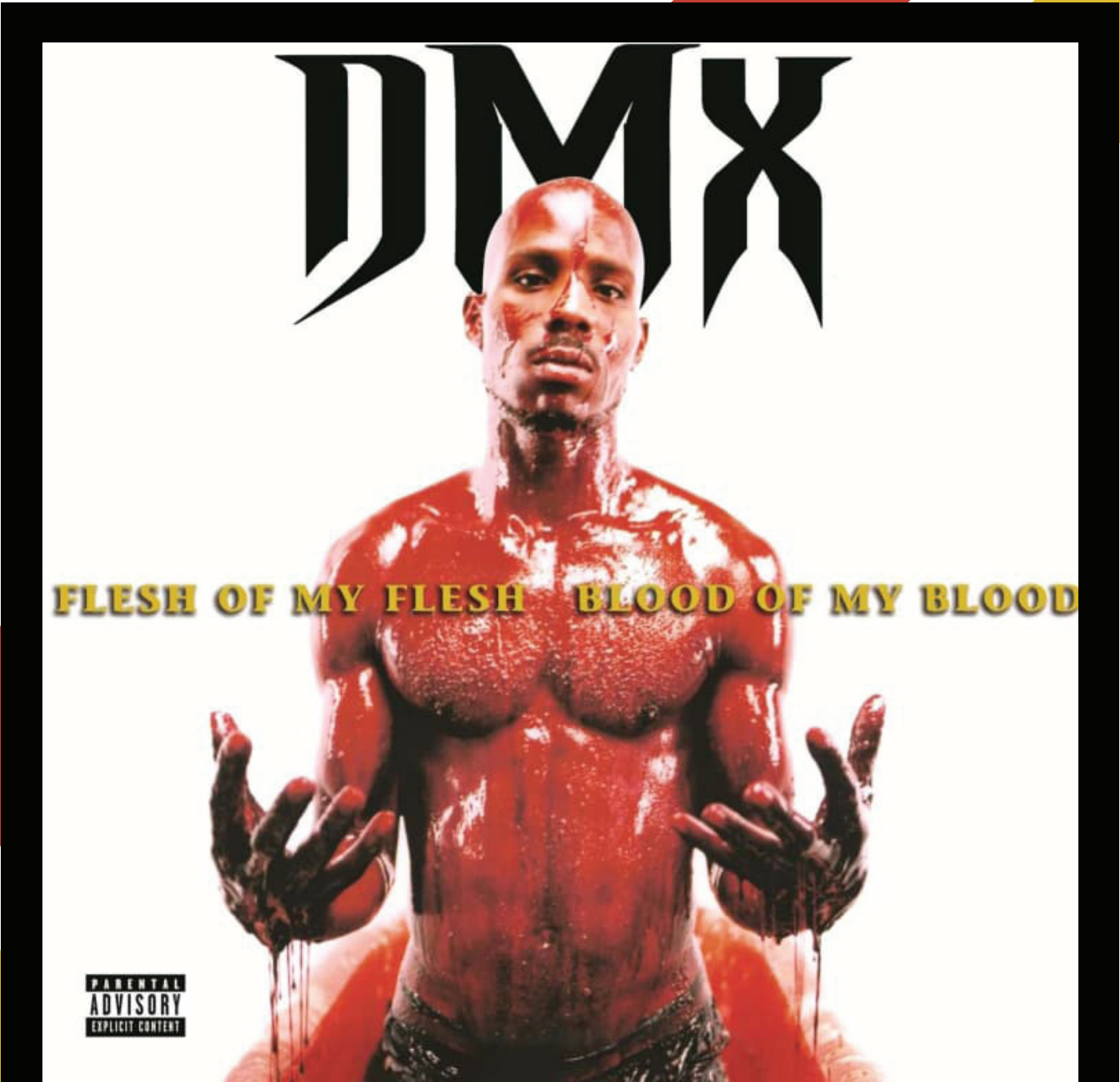
# FLESH OF MY FLESH, BLOOD OF MY BLOOD

DMX's "Flesh of My Flesh, Blood of My Blood" features one of the most original and also horrifying album covers in all of rap. The cover features DMX himself, absolutely drenched in blood, leaving listeners confused and scared, but also intrigued. In the back of the image, we see the rappers name "DMX" written in large black letters behind his head. The text is written in a very decorative style with sharp

serifs. The font appears to be based off graffiti text, similar to what we saw in Nas' Illmatic album cover. This style of font is fitting for a DMX album cover, as it fits the extremely rough life he grew up with on the streets of New York. In the middle of the cover, we see the title in a yellow, more standard serif font. This is a much more traditional font when compared to the other text we see on the cover. I believe it was

DMX

done in this style in order to not take attention away from the shocking imagery of the cover. This is one of the most iconic album covers in the history of hip-hop, so it's very fitting that it belongs to a rapper who was one of the genres most abrasive and memorable figures.







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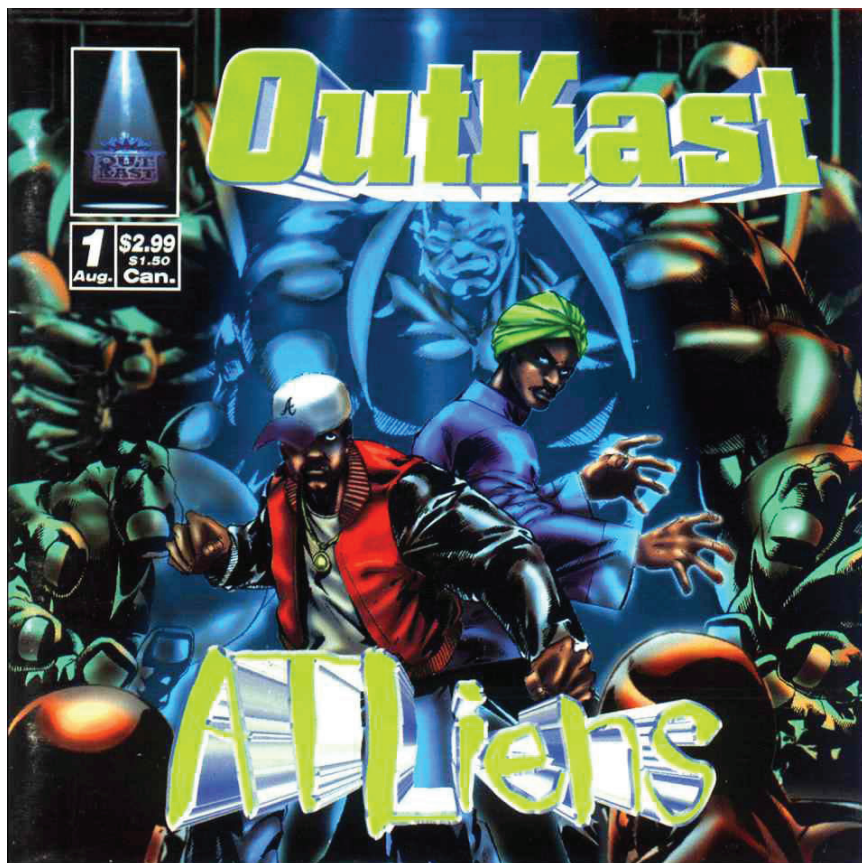
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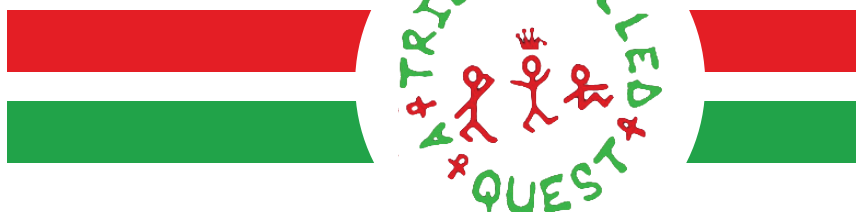
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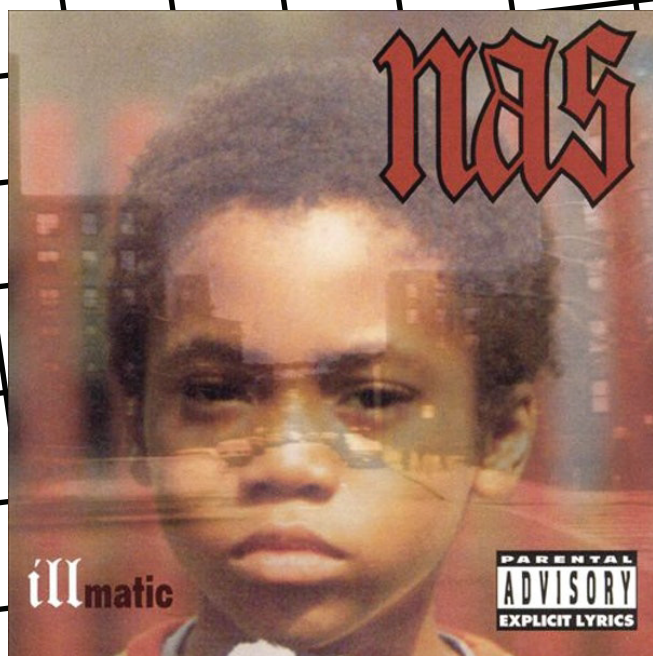
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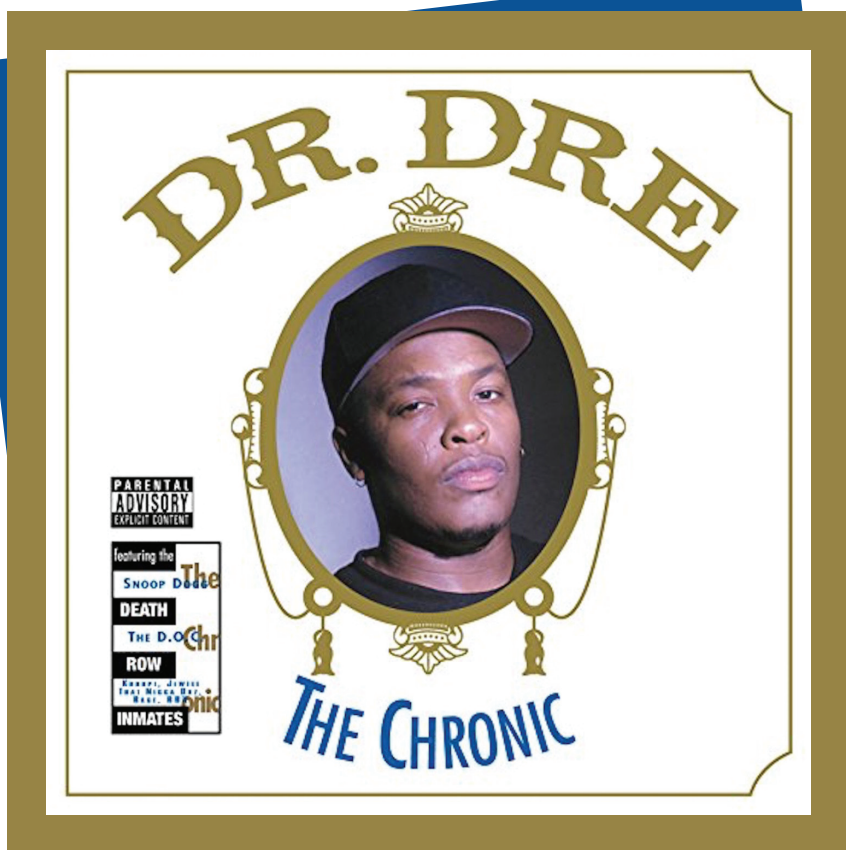
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