



The E.A.R.L.: The Autobiography of DMX

By Earl Simmons, Smokey D. Fontaine

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The dark journey of a boy who became a man, the man who became an artist, and the artist who became an icon. A talent for rhyme saved his life, but the demons and sins of his past continue to haunt him.

This is the story of Earl Simmons.

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- Sales Rank: #2397630 in Books
- Published on: 2002-12-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.98" h x 1.06" w x 9.02" l, 1.22 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

With lyrics that balance an extremely bleak view of urban ghetto "thug life" with a deep spiritual yearning for communion with God, DMX (Earl Simmons) has produced four consecutive No. 1 releases over the past six years, making him one of the undisputed superstars in the hypercompetitive world of hip-hop. On the eve of his fifth release, DMX (with Fontaine, the former music editor of the leading hip-hop magazine, *The Source*) has chosen to tell his own version of his already well-publicized life story. Born to a single mother in the projects of Yonkers, N.Y., DMX led a life of "running, robbing, rapping" for his first 25 years, serving numerous jail terms until being discovered by the legendary rap record company Def Jam. But this is no quickie celebrity biography: the obvious model is Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*, the classic tale of the rise and fall and redemption of a tough inner-city youth. Like Brown, DMX is unsparing in describing the details of his hard life, including the brutal beatings he experienced at the hands of his mother and her boyfriends and the ease with which he adapted to his incarcerations ("I was used to sleeping on hard surfaces, used to eating rotten food"). As successful as his best recordings ("*It's Dark & Hell Is Hot*") in describing the tension between the author's street and spiritual sides, this is a painfully honest account of how one individual overcame "a lifetime of suffering" by discovering and believing in his lyric talent.

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From Library Journal

Simmons's rise from impoverished child in Yonkers, NY, to successful hip-hop artist DMX known the world over is indeed an inspiring tale. But here the performer, aided by Fontaine (former music editor of *The Source* magazine), puts a bit too much emphasis on his violent formative years. Readers must wade through endless accounts of fights, beatings, and compromising positions involving the subject before reaching DMX's later critical and commercial success. Curiously, his artistic accomplishments are given only cursory treatment when they deserve much more; only serious fans will be interested in all the minutiae of his life revealed here. Although this is the first book devoted to DMX, libraries would do better to wait for a more balanced treatment. Not recommended. [DMX will release a new album in December, which may generate some demand for this book; because it will attract many YAs, librarians should take into account its graphic content.-Ed.]-Caroline Dadas, Hickory Hills, IL

--*Caroline Dadas, Hickory Hills, IL*

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From [Booklist](#)

In this as-told-to, rappin' gangsta DMX tells his ultragritty, ultrawack, ultrathug life story. Simmons took the name DMX from a drum machine, ostensibly because he was "nice with the beats" and "liked the three letters and thought it would be cool to make them stand for different things." (Like what?) He is more specific about the pits in his path, such as estrangement from his mother and being near-fatally beaten when accused of a hold-up (he says he was innocent but probably deserved the walloping for other transgressions). He read "*Mad* from cover to cover" and once liked Led Zeppelin, despite hearing "Stairway to Heaven" nightly. So similar to previous rap bios that it won't help you make sense of the music, this is still a must-have item because of Simmons' high-profile music-video presence. So close your eyes to the mayhem and concentrate on the beautiful sentiments: "I sold my soul to the devil, and the price was cheap. / Hey, yo, it's cold on this level 'cause it's twice as deep." *Mike Tribby*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Noah Giles:

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Karen Taylor:

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