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**N.W.A** (an abbreviation for **Niggaz Wit Attitudes**)[[1]](#cite_note-1)<ref name=times5753629>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[2]](#cite_note-2) was an American [hip hop](/wiki/Hip_hop_music) group from [Compton, CA](/wiki/Compton,_CA). They were among the earliest and most significant popularizers and controversial figures of the [gangsta rap](/wiki/Gangsta_rap) sub genre, and are widely considered one of the greatest and most influential groups in the history of hip hop music.[[3]](#cite_note-3) Active from 1986 to 1991, the rap group endured controversy owing to their music's explicit lyrics, that many viewed as being disrespectful of women, as well as to its glorification of drugs and crime.[[4]](#cite_note-4) The group was subsequently banned from many mainstream American radio stations. In spite of this, the group has sold over 10 million units in the United States alone. The group was also known for their deep hatred of the police system, which sparked much controversy over the years.

The original lineup formed in 1986 consisted of [Arabian Prince](/wiki/Arabian_Prince), [Dr. Dre](/wiki/Dr._Dre) and [Eazy-E](/wiki/Eazy-E).[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6) [Ice Cube](/wiki/Ice_Cube), [DJ Yella](/wiki/DJ_Yella) and [MC Ren](/wiki/MC_Ren) joined later, with Arabian Prince eventually leaving shortly before the official release of *Straight Outta Compton,* which came out in 1988, and Ice Cube following suit in December 1989. Eazy-E, Dr. Dre, Ice Cube and MC Ren would later become [platinum](/wiki/Music_recording_sales_certification)-selling solo artists in the 1990s. Their debut album [*Straight Outta Compton*](/wiki/Straight_Outta_Compton) marked the beginning of the new gangsta rap era as the production and social commentary in their lyrics were revolutionary within the genre, while their second album [*Niggaz4Life*](/wiki/Niggaz4Life) would be the first hardcore rap album to debut at number one on the [Billboard 200](/wiki/Billboard_200) sales charts.[[2]](#cite_note-2) [*Rolling Stone*](/wiki/Rolling_Stone) ranked N.W.A number 83 on their list of the "100 Greatest Artists of All Time".[[7]](#cite_note-7) In 2016, the group was inducted into the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](/wiki/Rock_and_Roll_Hall_of_Fame), following three nominations.

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## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

### Formation and "Panic Zone" (1986–88)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

The group was assembled by [Compton](/wiki/Compton,_California)-based [Eazy-E](/wiki/Eazy-E), who co-founded [Ruthless Records](/wiki/Ruthless_Records) with [Jerry Heller](/wiki/Jerry_Heller). Eazy-E sought an introduction to Steve Yano. Although initially rebuffed, Yano was impressed by Eazy-E's persistence and arranged a meeting with [Dr. Dre](/wiki/Dr._Dre).[[8]](#cite_note-8) Initially, N.W.A consisted of Eazy-E and Dr. Dre. Together with fellow producer [Arabian Prince](/wiki/Arabian_Prince), [Ice Cube](/wiki/Ice_Cube) was added to the roster after he had started out as a rapper for the group [C.I.A.](/wiki/C.I.A._(group))[[9]](#cite_note-9) Dre would later bring [DJ Yella](/wiki/DJ_Yella) on board as well.[[10]](#cite_note-10) Dre and Yella were both formerly members of the [World Class Wreckin' Cru](/wiki/World_Class_Wreckin'_Cru) as DJs and producers. Ruthless released the single "[Panic Zone](/wiki/Panic_Zone)" in 1987 with Macola Records, which was later included on the compilation album [*N.W.A. and the Posse*](/wiki/N.W.A._and_the_Posse). N.W.A was still in its developing stages, and is only credited on three of the eleven tracks, notably the uncharacteristic record "Panic Zone", "8-Ball", and "Dopeman", which marked the first collaboration of Arabian Prince, DJ Yella, Dr. Dre, and Ice Cube. Mexican rapper Krazy-Dee co-wrote "Panic Zone", which was originally called "Hispanic Zone", but the title was later changed when Dr. Dre advised Krazy-Dee that the word "hispanic" would hinder sales.[[11]](#cite_note-11) Also included was Eazy-E's solo track "[Boyz-n-the-Hood](/wiki/Boyz-n-the-Hood)".[[12]](#cite_note-12) Prior to the release of the compilation album [*N.W.A. and the Posse*](/wiki/N.W.A._and_the_Posse), [Ice Cube](/wiki/Ice_Cube) left Compton for the Phoenix Institute of Technology in Fall 1987 in Arizona. Now short of a writer, [Eazy-E](/wiki/Eazy-E) recruited 20-year-old rapper [MC Ren](/wiki/MC_Ren) to write songs for [Eazy-E's](/wiki/Eazy-E) solo debut album [*Eazy-Duz-It*](/wiki/Eazy-Duz-It). Having written almost half of the album, [MC Ren](/wiki/MC_Ren) was eventually included in the group.

### ''Straight Outta Compton'', ''Eazy-Duz-It'' (1988–89)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

N.W.A released their debut studio album, [*Straight Outta Compton*](/wiki/Straight_Outta_Compton), in 1988. With its famous opening salvo of three tracks, the group reflected the rising anger of the urban youth. The opening song "[Straight Outta Compton](/wiki/Straight_Outta_Compton)" introduced the group, "[Fuck tha Police](/wiki/Fuck_tha_Police)" protested [police brutality](/wiki/Police_brutality) and [racial profiling](/wiki/Racial_profiling), and "[Gangsta Gangsta](/wiki/Gangsta_Gangsta_(N.W.A_song))" painted the [worldview](/wiki/World_view) of the inner-city youth. While the group was later credited with pioneering the burgeoning subgenre of [gangsta rap](/wiki/Gangsta_rap), N.W.A referred to their music as "reality rap".[[13]](#cite_note-13) Twenty-seven years later, member and co-producer of the Straight Outta Compton film, Ice Cube commented "they were talking about what really led into the style that we ended up doing, which is now called hardcore gangster rap."[[14]](#cite_note-14) Dr. Dre and DJ Yella, as HighPowered Productions, composed the beats for each song, with Dre making occasional rapping appearances.[[15]](#cite_note-15) The D.O.C., Ice Cube, and MC Ren wrote most of the group's lyrics, including "Fuck tha Police", perhaps the group's most notorious song, which brought them into conflict with various [law enforcement agencies](/wiki/Law_enforcement_agencies). Under pressure from [Focus on the Family](/wiki/Focus_on_the_Family),[[16]](#cite_note-16) Milt Ahlerich, an assistant director of the [FBI](/wiki/Federal_Bureau_of_Investigation), sent a letter to Ruthless and its distributing company [Priority Records](/wiki/Priority_Records), advising the rappers that "advocating violence and assault is wrong and we in the law enforcement community take exception to such action." This letter can still be seen at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in [Cleveland](/wiki/Cleveland), [Ohio](/wiki/Ohio).[[17]](#cite_note-17) Policemen refused to provide security for the group's concerts, hurting their plans to tour. Nonetheless, the FBI's letter only served to draw more publicity to the group.

*Straight Outta Compton* was also one of the first albums to adhere to the new [Parental Advisory](/wiki/Parental_Advisory) label scheme, then still in its early stages: the label at the time consisted of "WARNING: Moderate impact coarse language and/or themes" only. However, the taboo nature of N.W.A's music was the most important factor of its mass appeal. Media coverage compensated for N.W.A's lack of airplay and their album eventually went double [platinum](/wiki/Platinum_album).[[18]](#cite_note-18) One month after *Straight Outta Compton*, Eazy-E's solo debut [*Eazy-Duz-It*](/wiki/Eazy-Duz-It) was released. The album was dominated by Eazy's persona (MC Ren was the only guest rapper) but behind the scenes it was a group effort. Music was handled by [Dr. Dre](/wiki/Dr._Dre) and [DJ Yella](/wiki/DJ_Yella); the lyrics were largely written by MC Ren, with contributions from Ice Cube and [The D.O.C.](/wiki/The_D.O.C.) The album was another double platinum success for Ruthless[[19]](#cite_note-19) (in addition to girl group [J.J. Fad](/wiki/J.J._Fad) in 1988 and singer [Michel'le](/wiki/Michel'le) in 1989). 1989 saw the re-issue of *N.W.A and the Posse* and *Straight Outta Compton* on CD, and the release of The D.O.C.'s [*No One Can Do It Better*](/wiki/No_One_Can_Do_It_Better). His album was essentially a collaboration with Dr. Dre and notably free of "gangsta rap" content, including the N.W.A [posse cut](/wiki/Posse_cut) "The Grand Finalé". It would become another #1 album for the record label.

### ''100 Miles And Runnin''' and ''Niggaz4Life'' (1989–91)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|Ice Cube (pictured in 1987) left N.W.A. in 1989](/wiki/File:Ice_Cube_HS_Yearbook.jpeg) Ice Cube left the group in December 1989 over [royalty](/wiki/Royalties) disputes;[[2]](#cite_note-2) having written almost half of the lyrics on *Straight Outta Compton* himself, he felt he was not getting a fair share of the profits.[[20]](#cite_note-20) A lawsuit brought by Ice Cube against band manager Jerry Heller was settled out of court.[[21]](#cite_note-21) He wasted little time putting together his solo debut, 1990's [*AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*](/wiki/AmeriKKKa's_Most_Wanted), but he avoided mentioning his former label mates. N.W.A's title track from their 1990 [EP](/wiki/Extended_play) [*100 Miles and Runnin'*](/wiki/100_Miles_and_Runnin'), however, included a [diss](/wiki/Wikt:diss) of Ice Cube: *"We started with five, but yo / One couldn't take it—So now it's four / Cuz the fifth couldn't make it."* The video for the song depicted the remaining members of N.W.A together in a jail cell, while an Ice Cube look-alike is released. Also heard on the EP (which found its way on the [*Efil4zaggin*](/wiki/Efil4zaggin) CD re-issue) was "Real Niggaz", a full-blown diss on Ice Cube where the remaining members accuse him of cowardice, and question his authenticity, longevity and originality: *"How the fuck you think a rapper lasts / With your ass sayin' shit that was said in the past / Yo, be original, your shit is sloppy / Get off the dick, you motherfuckin' carbon-copy"*, and *"We started out with too much cargo / So I'm glad we got rid of* [*Benedict Arnold*](/wiki/Benedict_Arnold)*, yo."* The song "100 Miles and Runnin'" was Dr. Dre's final [uptempo](/wiki/Uptempo) recording, which had been a common feature of late 1980s hip hop. After this, he focused on a midtempo, [synthesizer](/wiki/Synthesizer) based sound which would become known as [G-funk](/wiki/G-funk), starting with "[Alwayz Into Somethin'](/wiki/Alwayz_Into_Somethin')" from *Efil4zaggin* in 1991. The G-funk style dominated both the West and East Coast hip hop music scene for several years to come. N.W.A is referenced on Ice Cube's 1990 EP, [*Kill at Will*](/wiki/Kill_at_Will), where he name-checks his former group (likely in a mocking manner) on the song "Jackin' For Beats". On "I Gotta Say What Up!!!", Ice Cube gives shout-outs to his rap peers at the time, among them [Public Enemy](/wiki/Public_Enemy_(band)), [Geto Boys](/wiki/Geto_Boys), and [Sir Jinx](/wiki/Sir_Jinx). At the end of the track, in what appears to be an on-the-phone interview, Ice Cube is asked, "Since you went solo, what's up with the rest of the crew?" and the phone is abruptly hung up on the interviewer.

The group's second full-length release, 1991's [*Efil4zaggin*](/wiki/Efil4zaggin) ("Niggaz4Life" spelled backwards), re-established the band in the face of Ice Cube's continued solo success. The album is considered by many [Dr. Dre's](/wiki/Dr._Dre) finest production work, and it heralded the beginning of the [G-Funk](/wiki/G-Funk) era. It also showed a clear animosity towards their former member, and derogatory references to Ice Cube are found in several songs. The interlude "A Message to B.A." echoes the beginning of his song "Turn Off the Radio" from [*AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*](/wiki/AmeriKKKa's_Most_Wanted): Ice Cube is first addressed by the name [Benedict Arnold](/wiki/Benedict_Arnold) (after the infamous [traitor](/wiki/Treason) of the [American Revolution](/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War)) but then named outright in a torrent of abuse from both the group and its fans: *"When we see yo' ass, we gon' cut yo' hair off and fuck you with a broomstick"* spoken by MC Ren. The N.W.A–Ice Cube feud eventually escalated, both on record and in real life. *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* had avoided direct attacks on N.W.A, but on [*Death Certificate*](/wiki/Death_Certificate_(album)), Ice Cube's second full-length release, he retaliated. He sampled and mocked the "Message to B.A." skit before embarking on a full-blown tirade, the infamous "[No Vaseline](/wiki/No_Vaseline)". In a series of verses, Ice Cube verbally assaulted the group: *"You lookin' like straight bozos / I saw it comin' that's why I went solo / Kept on stompin' / When y'all Muthafuckas moved Straight outta Compton / You got jealous when I got my own company / But I'm a man, and ain't nobody humpin' me."* He also responded to members MC Ren, Dr. Dre, and Eazy-E individually to "[100 Miles and Runnin'](/wiki/100_Miles_and_Runnin')", claiming *"I started off with too much cargo / Dropped four niggaz and now I'm makin' all the dough"*, using homophobic metaphors to describe their unequal business relationship with [Jerry Heller](/wiki/Jerry_Heller), who became the target of harsh insults: *"Get rid of that devil real simple / Put a bullet in his temple / Cuz you can't be the 'Niggaz 4 Life' crew / With a white* [*Jew*](/wiki/Jew) *tellin' you what to do."* The song attracted controversy for its [antisemitism](/wiki/Antisemitism) (the beginning of such accusations against Ice Cube during his affiliation with the [Nation of Islam](/wiki/Nation_of_Islam)), based on the bashing of Heller's religion.[[22]](#cite_note-22) The track was omitted from the UK release, and later pressings included a censored version of the song. In September 1990, members of hip hop act [Above the Law](/wiki/Above_the_Law_(group)) clashed with Ice Cube and his posse [Da Lench Mob](/wiki/Da_Lench_Mob) during the annual [New Music Seminar](/wiki/New_Music_Seminar) conference, forcing the latter to flee the premises of [Times Square's](/wiki/Times_Square) [Marriott Marquis](/wiki/New_York_Marriott_Marquis), the venue of the event.[[23]](#cite_note-23) On January 27, 1991, Dr. Dre assaulted [Dee Barnes](/wiki/Dee_Barnes), host of the hip hop show *Pump It Up*, after its coverage[[24]](#cite_note-24) of the N.W.A/Ice Cube beef. According to *Rolling Stone* reporter Alan Light: [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

In response, Dre commented: "People talk all this shit, but you know, if somebody fucks with me, I'm gonna fuck with them. I just did it, you know. Ain't nothing you can do now by talking about it. Besides, it ain't no big thing—I just threw her through a door."[[25]](#cite_note-25)

### The end of N.W.A (1991–95)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[thumb|Eazy-E (pictured in 1993) feuded with the other former members of the group until his death in 1995](/wiki/File:Eazy-E.jpg) 1991's [*Niggaz4Life*](/wiki/Niggaz4Life) would be the group's final album. After Dr. Dre, The D.O.C. and Michel'le departed from Ruthless to join [Death Row Records](/wiki/Death_Row_Records) and allegations over Eazy-E being coerced into signing away their contracts (while however retaining a portion of their publishing rights), a bitter rivalry ensued.[[2]](#cite_note-2) Dr. Dre began the exchange with Death Row's first release, 1992's [*Fuck Wit Dre Day (And Everybody's Celebratin')*](/wiki/Fuck_Wit_Dre_Day_(And_Everybody's_Celebratin')), and its accompanying video featured a character named "Sleazy-E" who ran around desperately trying to get money. The insults continued on [*The Chronic*](/wiki/The_Chronic) with "Bitches Ain't Shit". Eazy-E responded in 1993 with the EP [*It's On (~~Dr. Dre~~) 187um Killa*](/wiki/It's_On_(Dr._Dre)_187um_Killa) on the tracks "[Real Muthaphuckkin G's](/wiki/Real_Muthaphuckkin_G's)" and "It's On". Eazy-E accused Dr. Dre of being a homosexual, calling him a "she thang", and criticizing Dre's new image by calling him and Snoop "studio gangsters". The music video for "Real Muthaphuckkin G's" showed a still of Dre wearing make-up and a sequined jumpsuit. The photos dated back to Dr. Dre's [World Class Wreckin' Cru](/wiki/World_Class_Wreckin'_Cru) days, when such fashion was common among West Coast electro hop artists, prior to N.W.A's popularization of gangsta rap. Eazy-E kept dissing Dre and Death Row on most of his songs until his [AIDS](/wiki/AIDS)-related death on March 26, 1995.

Even Eazy-E's longtime friend MC Ren voiced his dislike for Eazy-E in 1994, calling Eazy-E a "big-head" and "wannabe mega-star", and even suggesting that N.W.A should reunite without Eazy-E.[[26]](#cite_note-26) MC Ren later said that the only relationship he had with Eazy-E was through Ruthless Records, where he released several gold and platinum selling albums, including [*Kizz My Black Azz*](/wiki/Kizz_My_Black_Azz) and [*Shock of the Hour*](/wiki/Shock_of_the_Hour). Eazy-E and MC Ren would squash their beef shortly before Eazy-E's death in their 1995 duet '"[Tha Muthaphukkin' Real](/wiki/Tha_Muthaphukkin'_Real)" after two years of not talking to each other. All bad blood finally ceased within the rest of the group. Dr. Dre, MC Ren and Ice Cube would later express their re-evaluated feelings to their old friend on 1998's "Ruthless for Life", 1999's "What's the Difference" and "Chin Check", 2000's "Hello", 2006's "Growin' Up", and in the 2011 music video "[I Need a Doctor](/wiki/I_Need_a_Doctor)".

### Reunions and legacy (1995–present)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

Having both parted with Ruthless Records on bad terms, tensions between Ice Cube and Dr. Dre eventually eased on their own. After Ice Cube made a [cameo appearance](/wiki/Cameo_appearance) in Dr. Dre's "[Let Me Ride](/wiki/Let_Me_Ride)" video in 1993, the two recorded the hit song "[Natural Born Killaz](/wiki/Natural_Born_Killaz)" for [Snoop Doggy Dogg's](/wiki/Snoop_Dogg) 1994 short film and soundtrack [*Murder Was the Case*](/wiki/Murder_Was_the_Case). Ice Cube also later appeared on MC Ren's album [*Ruthless for Life*](/wiki/Ruthless_for_Life) on the track "[Comin' After You](/wiki/Comin'_After_You)". MC Ren appeared on Dre's 1999 album [*2001*](/wiki/2001_(Dr._Dre_album)), and the three remaining N.W.A emcees would reunite for "[Hello](/wiki/Hello_(Ice_Cube_song))" on Ice Cube's [2000](/wiki/2000_in_music) album [*War & Peace Vol. 2 (The Peace Disc)*](/wiki/War_&_Peace_Vol._2_(The_Peace_Disc)), and the song "[Chin Check](/wiki/Chin_Check)" for the [*Next Friday* soundtrack](/wiki/Next_Friday_(soundtrack)) from which Ice Cube starred in.

The West Coast and "gangsta" music scene had however fallen out of the spotlight since the death of [Tupac Shakur](/wiki/Tupac_Shakur) in 1996, and it was only after Dr. Dre's successful patronage of [Eminem](/wiki/Eminem) and Dre's ensuing comeback album [*2001*](/wiki/2001_(Dr._Dre_album)) that the genre and its artists would regain the national spotlight. 2000's all-star [Up In Smoke Tour](/wiki/Up_In_Smoke_Tour) would reunite much of the N.W.A and Death Row families, and during time spent on the road, Dre, Ice Cube, MC Ren, guest star Snoop Dogg and Eminem began recording in a mobile studio. A comeback album entitled *Not These Niggaz Again* was planned[[27]](#cite_note-27) (and would include DJ Yella, who had not been present on the tour).

However, due to busy and conflicting schedules as well as the obstacles of coordinating three different record labels ([Priority](/wiki/Priority_Records), [No Limit](/wiki/No_Limit_Records) and [Interscope](/wiki/Interscope_Records)), obtaining the rights to the name N.W.A and endorsing the whole project to gain exclusive rights, the album never materialized.[[28]](#cite_note-28) Only two tracks from these sessions would be released: the aforementioned "[Chin Check](/wiki/Chin_Check)" (with Snoop Dogg as a member of N.W.A) from 2000's [*Next Friday* soundtrack](/wiki/Next_Friday_(soundtrack)) and "[Hello](/wiki/Hello_(Ice_Cube_song))" from Ice Cube's 2000 album [*War & Peace Vol. 2 (The Peace Disc)*](/wiki/War_&_Peace_Vol._2_(The_Peace_Disc)). Both songs would also appear on N.W.A's [remastered](/wiki/Audio_mastering) [*Greatest Hits*](/wiki/Greatest_Hits_(N.W.A)). There would also be partial reunions on other projects, notably "Set It Off", from Snoop Dogg's [*Tha Last Meal*](/wiki/Tha_Last_Meal) (2000), which featured MC Ren and Ice Cube, and The D.O.C.'s "The Shit", from his 2003 album [*Deuce*](/wiki/Deuce_(The_D.O.C._album)), featuring MC Ren, Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg and Six-Two. [Dr. Dre](/wiki/Dr._Dre) and [DJ Yella](/wiki/DJ_Yella) were present in the studio for the latter song.

In addition to the *Greatest Hits* initially released by Priority in 1996, [Capitol](/wiki/Capitol_Records) and Ruthless Records jointly released [*The N.W.A Legacy, Vol. 1: 1988–1998*](/wiki/The_N.W.A_Legacy,_Vol._1:_1988–1998) in 1998, a compilation that contained songs by other rap artists and only three songs from the actual group but various solo tracks from the five members. The success of the album prompted a second volume, [*The N.W.A Legacy, Vol. 2*](/wiki/The_N.W.A_Legacy,_Vol._2), two years later. It emulated the format of its predecessor, containing only three genuine N.W.A tracks and many solo efforts by the crew members. In 2007, a new greatest hits package was released, entitled [*The Best of N.W.A: The Strength of Street Knowledge*](/wiki/The_Best_of_N.W.A:_The_Strength_of_Street_Knowledge).

In 2014, Ice Cube appeared on MC Ren's remix for "[Rebel Music](/wiki/Rebel_Music_(song))". This was the first time the duo had worked together since the N.W.A reunion in 2000.[[29]](#cite_note-29) On June 27, 2015, MC Ren and DJ Yella joined Ice Cube during his solo set as part of the BET Experience show at the [Staples Center](/wiki/Staples_Center) in [Los Angeles, California](/wiki/Los_Angeles,_California). This marked the first reunion performance of the group (minus Dr. Dre) in fifteen years. Following a 27-year hiatus, the group finally reunited with surviving members Ice Cube, MC Ren, Dr. Dre and DJ Yella taking the stage during the second weekend of the [Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival](/wiki/Coachella_Valley_Music_and_Arts_Festival) in April 2016, just days following the group's Rock N' Roll Hall of Fame induction.[[30]](#cite_note-30)