

A full-page photograph of Snoop Dogg sitting at a rustic wooden table. He is wearing a black fedora with a patterned bandana tied around it, a black tank top, and a gold chain. He is holding a lit cigar in his mouth and lighting it with a match in his right hand. On the table in front of him are some papers, a small container, and a pile of what looks like tobacco or ash. The background is a textured, dark blue wall with two horizontal light fixtures.

The COOLEST

★★★★ INTERVIEW THOMAS GOLIANOPOLOUS//IMAGES ANTHONY MANDLER

HE FLAUNTS HIS ASSOCIATION WITH A CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION AND COLLECTS FELONY CHARGES LIKE BASEBALL CARDS. BUT HE'S A FIXTURE AT THE TOP OF THE CHARTS, A FATHER WITH A FAMILY-ORIENTED REALITY SERIES AND A FAVORITE ON DAYTIME TALK SHOWS FOR THE SOCCER-MOM SET. HOW DOES **SNOOP DOGG** DO IT? HE'S A LIBRA. HE'S BALANCED.

It's two days before Christmas, and Snoop Dogg is the embodiment of holiday cheer. Or, judging from the three blunt roaches nestling in the ashtray on his coffee table, some sort of other cheer. Whatever the reason, Cordozar Calvin Broadus Jr., 36, is in a very good mood. Sports might have something to do with it, too. His beloved Pittsburgh Steelers just clinched the AFC North, the Los Angeles Lakers beat the New York Knicks this morning and, most importantly, yesterday his youngest son Cordell's football team won the Southern California state championship.

On this typically sunny Sunday afternoon (remember, it never rains here), Snoop is holed up in a Hollywood apartment dubbed the Doggy Den. He's loafing around, watching football in a soccer jersey, sweatpants, fleece slippers and white socks. His cornrows are tied tight, with a slight flicker of gray in one. He's even skinnier than he appears on TV—he's built like a praying mantis.

The decor of the Doggy Den seems to have been chosen by its owner. The walls are covered with a dozen self-portraits (gangster Snoop, pimp Snoop, friendly Snoop...), the only other one a memorial painting of Tupac Shakur. A big bowl of candy takes up a large portion of the coffee table's surface, next to a tall stack of coffee-table books. An MTV Video Music Award sits neglected on a corner shelf. The trophy itself is almost an afterthought in a career that spans more than 15 years and includes eight solo albums (representing more than 16 million in sales), dozens of movie and TV roles (including his new reality show, *Snoop Dogg's Father Hood*) and countless endorsement deals (care for a Snoop De Grill, anyone?). He is certainly the only former crack-dealing Long Beach Crip to ever co-star in a commercial with Lee Iacocca and make repeated appearances on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

Such mainstream success, however, hasn't turned Snoop into a Boy Scout. In fall 2006, he was arrested three times in three months: at John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana for weapons possession (a collapsible baton), at Bob Hope Airport in Burbank for marijuana and weapons possession and on the way home from performing on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* for marijuana, cocaine and weapons possession. A few months before that he was barred from flying British Airways after a melee at London's Heathrow Airport, and he was later forced to scrap a U.K. tour with Puff Daddy after being denied a British visa. He was subsequently banned from Australia after "failing a character test."

Despite the legal problems, though, Snoop is still one of hip-hop's great hitmakers. Think "Beautiful," "Drop It Like It's Hot," "Signs," "That's That Shit." And that's just culling from the last five years (thus, post-Death Row, post-No Limit). His latest: "Sensual Seduction." The catch: Not only does Snoop *sing* the bulk of the tune, he does so through a vocoder, the same robotic voice manipulator used by Roger Troutman, Peter Dinklage and, more recently, T-Pain. "Seduction" is the lead single from Snoop's new Geffen Records album, *Ego Trippin'*, which, judging from the guest list (R. Kelly, Janet Jackson and Ne-Yo), is decidedly more rhythm than gangster.

Today, before going to pick up his kids, Snoop will light up a blunt and watch the Patriots beat the Dolphins. While doing so, he'll candidly discuss his new musical direction, his TV show and his legacy as an MC. He'll open up about his relationship with Tupac and Death Row founder Suge Knight. He'll talk about his legal troubles and about straddling the line between the streets and the mainstream. One subject he won't expand on, though, is national politics—specifically President George W. Bush. "I can't say nothing about him, man,"

he says sternly. "I'll be in jail tomorrow if I say something bad about him. My gig is not politics."

What Snoop's gig is, of course, is celebrating the finer things in life: women, weed, football and music. So he does identify with a certain saxophone-blowing, blue-dress-staining former commander in chief. "My favorite is Bill Clinton," he says. "He was the best. When he was president, shit was live. Even when Jimmy Carter was president, shit was live. Carter and Clinton. Two C's. My guys."

Snoop then takes an impressively protracted toke. He holds it in. Holds it. And finally blows a thick billow of smoke out of his mouth and nose. Leaving little doubt that he inhaled.

"Sensual Seduction" took people by surprise. Why release what's basically an R&B record as your first single?

There was no strategy. My boy Shawty Redd wrote the song, and once I sent it back, he started playing it in the clubs in Atlanta. He's like, "This muthafucka is a big record." When I played it for my peoples, they didn't feel it at first—not my immediate people, my record-label people. They were like, "Eh." I was like, "Fuck what y'all talking about, I'm putting this shit out. This is some fly shit. It's *my* career, anyway."

Your label does have a lot of money invested in you.

I don't give a fuck if they have money invested in me. It's me that makes them have money to be invested in me. I'm the only thing going over there. Well, I'm the best thing going over there. I'll say it like that. It's no disrespect. It is what it is. You don't get what you get out of a regular artist what you get out of Snoop Dogg. You getting everything. You getting cool, you getting funny, you getting gangster, you getting pop, you getting streets, you getting Whites, you getting Blacks, you getting old, young. You get all that with Snoop Dogg. Them artists that they got only got one genre of fans. You can't spread them out all over the table like me. I'm the only muthafucka that can do porno, coach football and have a cooking show.

Is the reality show promotion for the album?

Nah. They been asking me to do a reality show for five years, and this is the perfect time, because me and my family is coming together now. It just gives you the context of me as a real person, as opposed to all the fake shit and negative shit you hear about me all the time in the media.

Do you ever worry about what effects it might have? Ozzy's son went to rehab. Nick and Jessica divorced. Britney and K-Fed.

Any concern over putting your family on camera?

Have you seen *Run's House*? They doing just fine. [Pause] 'Cause they Black. Black families don't do all that bullshit like the White families do. This is bonding time, because this is helping us out. Somebody in the family wants to be a star. Someone wants to do this. So we're looking at it like capitalizing off the moment. We're not going to blow this moment and have a fallout.

Who wants to be the star?

My daughter and my wife. But ain't nothing wrong with it.

Back to the album. Initially, there weren't supposed to be any guest artists on *Ego Trippin'*. Why the switch?

It just happened. *That* might be me ego-tripping. The real ego-tripping on this record is that I let people write songs for me.

Singing songs? Rapping songs?

Everything.

Have you run out of things to say yourself?

Nah. I'm ego-tripping. I was watching Diana Ross getting inducted into a Hall of Fame, and she got up there and named all these great songwriters. Her biggest songs were written by somebody else. So I'm thinking, Wow, there's nothing wrong with my pen, but I'm going to let other people write for me.

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SET DESIGNER: NICHOLAS SAVALAS; STYLIST: APRIL ROOMET; BRAIDER: TASHA HAYWARD; GROOMER: BLACK

Has the recording process become easy?

Yeah, because I know what I want. When you know what you want, you aim for it and shoot for it. I was talking to Quincy Jones. He told me that, when he used to make records, there was a target they used to aim for, whether it was a No. 1 song or a hot artist. If you aim for a target, you're either going to hit it or go higher. That's what I'm on right now.

Who are you targeting?

Right now, Kanye West got the best rap album out, to me. So I'm aiming for him. And when I say I'm aiming for him, I'm just aiming to have a record as clean, as fly as his shit is.

So making music is easier now. But are you a better rapper now, or back in 1993?

I was probably a little dooper back then, because I was more into rapping. Right now, I'm into creating a lot of shit. Back then, I was just into

rap—the style, the flow, fucking you up, the baddest muthafucka, the coldest vocalist. Now I'm not into that. I can sit back and take a backseat and watch them do a Top 10 hottest rappers right now, and my name ain't in there, and it don't bother me.

It doesn't bother you at all?

Ten, 12 years ago, if they would have ever had a Top 10 without my name in it, I would have went off on the niggas in the Top 10 and the niggas who did the Top 10.

I noticed that painting of Tupac over there. Did you ever view him as competition?

He was never competition for me, because he was my brother, my homeboy. Anybody that I get down with, I don't ever view them as competition. Even, like, Game. I view Game like my family. He's not competition to me. So when people say, "Game said that he brought

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the West Coast back, and Game was saying this...” That’s my brother. He’s *supposed* to say that. He’s a young gorilla. When I was a young gorilla, Ice Cube had the game on lock. And in so many ways, I was saying I was the baddest muthafucka. No disrespect to him, but you have to say that and mean that and feel that.

Suge Knight has said that you and Tupac got into it right before he died.

He told you that?

He didn’t tell me that. But it’s been printed. He told XXL.

He said me and ‘Pac got into it?

You’ve heard that before, c’mon.

We had a misunderstanding. Our thing was, if someone is on you, they on me. He had a problem with Biggie and Puffy, and I did an interview with Angie Martinez when we was in New York, and she asked me how I felt about Biggie and Puffy, and I said I was cool. That triggered an emotion in him, because he wanted me to say, ‘Fuck Biggie and fuck Puffy.’ But I didn’t feel like that about them, for the simple fact that they didn’t really even want to fight him. He was fighting some guys that didn’t even want to fight him. It’s like, if I act and step in, we’re going to kill these niggas. And it don’t even matter. I’d gotten to the point in my life where I just beat my murder case, and I was more forgiving and humble and sympathetic, and the gangster in me just turned down. And he was so used to me being Snoop Dogg the muthafuckin’ killer that, when he heard that, it just fucked him up, like, “These niggas tried to kill me, and you ain’t riding with me.”

But it wasn’t like that. We didn’t even talk about it. We went to the plane, and them niggas didn’t say nothing to me all the way home, five and a half hours. My Rolls was there. His Rolls was there. I got out the plane. I was like, “Cuz, you going to the fight?” [Mike Tyson vs. Bruce Seldon, Sept. 7, 1996, Las Vegas] He looked at me like, “I don’t

know.” I jumped in my car and rolled out. Next time I seen him, he’s laying in the bed, half-dead.

Right before that fight, the night Tupac was shot, he and Suge were caught on camera beating Orlando Anderson. If you went to Vegas, you might have been involved in that. That could have been you going to jail, too.

That could have been me going to jail *forever*. You see how they gave Suge, what, nine years for that shit?

For kicking somebody on the floor.

Half-kicking somebody. I got my faith in who I believe in, and I know how I move. And it’s been like this for a long time. Even when I sold dope back in the ‘80s. Right before niggas got robbed, I would always leave. I remember, one time, we were all selling dope in front of this apartment, and most niggas had their dope on them or put away so they can get it when their sale came out. A car pulls up and pulls down the street. Two dudes come out. One had a plastic bag in his hand. And they walking to us looking like they were going to buy some dope. So I run to the back to get my dope. And when I come halfway back, these niggas had pulled guns out and were robbing the homies. I get into my house, ‘cause I live right there, and I’m hearing this shit like, “Please don’t shoot me.” “Give me your rings, give me your dope, give me your money.” The niggas don’t shoot them, just hit them in the head, and then they made them lay down while they jumped in the car and drove off. So I come out afterwards, and my homeboy fires on me—*Poomp!* Because he thinks I set him up. I fire back—*Poomp!* Me and this nigga fighting. That’s how my conscious is. I’ve always been able to get away.

After Tupac was killed, was that when you decided to move beyond just the music industry?

No. That’s when I wanted to just start doing songs with other people outside of Death Row. I wanted to expand and start making people

★ ★ ★ "WHY HASN'T SNOOP DOGG BEEN GIVEN A CEO SPOT AT ONE OF THESE RECORD LABELS?"

know me for who I am. Because there was a persona that was out there of me that was misunderstood. I didn't want people to think I was a murderer. I wanted muthafuckas to know who I was.

Seems like you're able to straddle that line in a way that most artists can't. Between being a mainstream star and the streets. "Drop It Like It's Hot" was a No. 1 pop hit, and you were dropping overt Crip references on it.

I'm a Libra. I'm balanced. It's a reference. When you rap, you being very boisterous about who you are and what you are. It's not saying, "Hey, go join a gang. Go fuck up some niggas." I didn't say that. I said, "I wear a blue flag hanging out my back side/Only on the left side/Yeah, that's the Crip side."

Were you ever surprised that you appealed to such a wide spectrum of people?

I was always like that. Even before I became successful, I had a good way of communicating with people of different colors and ages and ethnicities. All that. I just ran with a bunch of muthafuckas that just wasn't Black. When my music started appealing to people that just wasn't Black, it didn't surprise me, because I never just did shit for Black people. When I grew up in Long Beach, I went to a White junior school. Then I came back to Poly High School, which was a Black school. I was able to mix and mingle and get down and make it happen.

In the grand scheme of things, was bringing gangster rap to White people a good thing?

It was a great thing. Because White people brought Black people gangster movies, and that's what inspired gangster rap. It all complements each other. We see a great movie that inspires us to make great music. How many use *Scarface*? *Goodfellas*? Movies that were made by somebody that's not Black.

Could you make a "Deep Cover" or "Murder Was the Case" today and still be true to yourself?

Definitely, if that's the way I feel. I'm only going to make records about how I feel. Some of those feelings never leave me. When I perform those songs onstage, it takes me right back to that feeling again. There are certain times when I'm riding with my young son, and we

see the police, and the first thing he says is, "I can't stand the police. I hate them." That's his mentality.

Why does he say that?

I don't know. You would have to ask him. That's the vibe that they giving off on him because they mess with his daddy so much.

Do you think you're a target?

I know I'm a target.

You were arrested three times within three months last fall.

But you got off with probation and community service. How does Snoop stay out of jail?

I don't have no violent crimes. None of them crimes is violent. None of those crimes are shooting a muthafucka, slap a muthafucka. The crime is possession.

Your arrest record has impeded some of your travel plans.

Did it hurt when the Australian immigration minister said, "He's not the kind of bloke we would want around"?

Did I get banned from Australia, too? [Snoop's manager, Constance Schwartz, who has been sitting quietly in the corner, interjects: "Only temporarily."]

Since Death Row's heyday in the mid-'90s, there hasn't been another West Coast label to achieve that kind of dominance.

Why do you think that is?

We don't spend money on our artists out here. When Death Row fell down, it knocked the whole business sense out here. Nobody wants to do business with the West Coast, because they fear the fact that it will become a Death Row Records again. Why hasn't Snoop Dogg been given a CEO spot at one of these record labels? Why haven't I been given a president spot, like Jay-Z? Why haven't I been given the chance to develop and find new talent and put it out on the West Coast? Why? You use me to be on the singles. You use me to make your artists hot. You use me to get something sold. Why can't you use me as a VP? I'm too West Coast for you? I'm international. I'm the biggest rapper in the world.

Is it still hard being Snoop D-O-double-G?

Every day. It's the hardest thing in the world to be. ■

All the Above

SNOOP DOGG HOUSE SLIPPERS >>>



The footwear that results from this future venture with soccer star David Beckham likely will not help you bend it like the Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder, but they're guaranteed to look great with white tube socks.

RICH & INFAMOUS >>>

Developed in partnership with Industry Concepts, Snoop's sportswear line, Rich & Infamous, debuted this February at the influential Magic Marketplace convention in Las Vegas. When the official launch comes later this year, expect hoodies, jackets and specialty tees adorned with Snoop's lyrics—all, of course, in high doggy style.



SNOOP DOGG PETS >>>

Launched in 2006, this apparel line features a Snoop Dogg basketball jersey (for dogs), a faux fur coat (for dogs) and a hoodie sweatshirt (for dogs).

SNOOP DOGG'S DOGGYSTYLE >>>

Snoop's pornographic directorial debut won Adult Video News Awards for Best Music and Top Selling Tape of 2001. The next year, he made a follow-up, *Snoop Dogg's Hustlaz: Diary of a Pimp*, under the alias Snoop Scorsese.



SNOOP DEVILLE >>>

Snoop Dogg worked with a Memphis Cadillac dealer and added wire wheels and custom pin-striping to his 1965 Cadillac Coupe DeVille convertible, and, voila, the Snoop DeVille.

In 2006, Wal-Mart started selling a miniature, radio-controlled model for \$59.97. — T.G.



SNOOP DOGG AND BECKHAM: BRIAN ARIS/GETTY IMAGES