



Amarpaal Kallani

# EVE

**After a decade of changes, the rapper turns up the intensity on a new set**

IN THE 11 YEARS SINCE HER LAST album, Eve has been rather busy. She released singles, made guest appearances on more than a dozen tracks for other artists, had her own sitcom, appeared in the two *Barbershop* films, and launched a fashion line. But *Lip Lock*, her long-awaited

return, wasn't a snap decision.

"It's been a bit of journey. I've been trying to put out a record for two years," says Eve, who was born Eve Jeffers. "In those two years, I changed management, lawyers, even labels. It took a while for me to find the right relationship after leaving Interscope." In the

end, the right relationship was to release the album on her own label, From the Rib.

The 34-year-old rapper started out with hip-hop collective Ruff Ryders in the late 1990s. Her first album was well received, but it was the single from the follow-up *Scorpion*, "Let Me Blow Ya Mind"—her collaboration with Gwen Stefani—that won her platinum sales and a Grammy in 2002.

*Lip Lock*, however, features heavier beats and a more intense tone than her earlier albums. "A lot of the tracks are in-your-face," she says. "I don't think it was preconceived, it was just me picking whatever sounded right. I worked with a lot of different producers, so I picked tracks that would complement each other."

Producers on *Lip Lock* include Claude Kelly, Salaam Remi and longtime collaborator Swizz Beats. Selecting a producer is a critical first step in Eve's songwriting process. "I usually sit with the producer before we even go in the studio," she says. "Once we're in the studio you go back and forth about the vibe, listen to tracks, and it goes from there. I always like being in the room with at least the producer. I think it makes for a better song." *Lip Lock* features guest appearances from such hip-hop luminaries as Snoop Dogg and Missy Elliott, and vocals from Cobra Starship's Gabe Saporta on the lead single, "Make It Out This Town" echo the crossover appeal of her earlier work.

For Eve, *Lip Lock* isn't just her return to music, but a new way of making and releasing music. "I've been calling this my record," she says, "because I come from Ruff Ryders, and there were so many people in the room. For me, this is definitely intimate."

—Amanda Farah

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