

Busta Rhymes keeps you all in check.

COMING ON STRONG

BY LORIE CAVAL

Busta Rhymes, the beamer of hip-hop crew Leaders of the New School, is on the phone from Chicago, just one stop on his U.S. tour to promote his new album and first solo endeavor, *The Coming* (Elektra). You'll remember him flippin' shit wild-style alongside partners Charlie Brown, Milo Don and Dinco D on hit singles like "What's Next?" Over the years, this bunch has really lived up to its name as leaders of a new school of conviction and style, with Busta Rhymes holding a pointer to the blackboard of our minds.

to just as much damage — if not more. This album is like a baby for me."

The Coming is Rhymes' first try at flying solo, and a dream come true for many of his fans. "It's a lot more work, a lot more responsibility, a lot more pressure," he says, "but then comes just as much reward." Contrary to what people have been saying, the fact that Rhymes is doing his own thing does not mean that the Leaders of the New School have broken up. They are still together — those who need proof can check out *The Coming's* collaborative cut,



Busta moves

The surprisingly calm, deep voice that greets me on the horn is totally unlike the "Rar rar, like a dungeon dragon" tone I was anticipating. I could only imagine the statuesque, dreadlocked cutie alone in his hotel room getting ready for his show. Rhymes, along with his production and management crew, the Flip Mode Squad, has been flying around the country, bringing the noise to all the girls and boys, but he hasn't allowed any sneak peeks at the LP — even to the press. "I've encountered experiences where things have been leaked, and it limits the success of the project," he says, hinting at the bootlegging phenomenon that haunts the music industry. "Unintentional accidents can lead

"Keep It Movin'." "We grew up together," says Rhymes of his crew. "We had to separate for a while before we destroyed what we have, so that we could grow up as men."

Ever since Busta Rhymes blew up the spot with his raspy, explosive style, brothers have been emulating him — some would even say biting his style. "I definitely believe that I influenced hip-hop in a major way; at the same time, I don't want to discredit the other MCs," he says. "I just hope that I can continue to innovate." Reflecting on the innovative old-school hip-hop heroes, Rhymes recognizes that "unfortunately, the old school never got their reward," due to a lack of political power in the music industry. To guard against history repeating itself, he has plans to plant roots as a big Willie — not only as a performer, but on the business tip as well with his Flip Mode Squad. This 23-year-old has definitely got it goin' on — due perhaps in part to his three-year-old son, who fuels his quest for success: "[A child] brings about a whole new picture and enhances your work ethic," he admits.

"Nobody can ever say that my shit ain't tight when it comes to music," he calmly boasts. And if the title of his latest single is any indication of the rest of the album's strength, we'll see that "Woo-Hah!!! Got You All in Check" will be Busta Rhymes' mantra for years to come.