T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E. by Sanyika Shakur

Gangsterism Continues

The follow up to his best-selling memoir Monster, Sanyika Shakur’s T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E. is a vicious, heart-wrenching and true-to-life novel about an LA gang member that masterfully captures the violence and depravity of gang life. Shakur’s protagonist is Lapeace, the leader of the Eight Tray Crips gang in South Central Los Angeles. In a deadly gunfight with Anyhow, a Blood and Lapeace’s rival since childhood, eight innocent civilians are killed. Anyhow is captured. Lapeace becomes a fugitive and he must hide out in the home of his girlfriend, Tashima, a hip-hop mogul as a pair of crooked LA detectives, John Sweeney and Jesse Mendoza, attempt to track him down.

This novel was written from the confines of Shakur’s jail cell, and the authenticity of its street scenes--the relentlessness of violence, the do-or-die attitude of each side of the gang war, the sheer joy in the killing--is a testament to the hell that has been a majority of Shakur’s life. With T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E., Shakur delivers a powerful and gripping story about the terror of gang life and one man’s attempt to free himself.

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My Personal Review:
Gangsterism Continues in this gripping "partially" fictional account of Sanyika’s experiences post Monster. Having read some of the inferior works which were inspired by the commercial success of "Monster" the autobiography, it was refreshing to see the talent and originality which earned Sanyika critical acclaim back on display. T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E. is no less dramatic as life in the hood provides enough drama filled moments for a hundred books.

Love, loyalty, deceit, anguish, pain, hope, disappointment and confusion are as much the focus as the assortment of crooked cops, gang rivals and assortment of characters from ETG. The main character is LaPeace an older more focused version of the infamous Monster. The reference being to the state of living the author has been forced into as he struggles to escape his notorious past. La being Swahili for No coupled with peace.
The author also deals openly with the pain of a failed marriage making little effort to conceal the identity of his ex-wife Tamu from LaPeace's unfaithful mate Tammy. He talks about his concern for his children and his search and desire to find true love. Of course his loyalty to his hood remain a central focus and we are introduced to a new generation of homies from ETG. Crazy De, Diamond, Sidewinder, Tray-Stone, Tray-Ball, Mad Bone and Lil Spike are mentioned in passing as a reminder of the reverence and esteem in which they are held by the author. Tiny and Sista Monster, Lil, Baby, Tiny Stag, Sista Sodi, Sekou and a variety of new personas round out the cast.

One of the most interesting portions of the book is the authors explanation of the shooting of Tupac Shakur. That alone is worth the price of the title as Sanyika draws on past interviews and conversations with accused triggerman Orlando Anderson and former Death row records head Suge Knight to formulate an interesting narrative. No love is shown for Suge Knight who appears as Deathrow Records Chief Simon Knowles nor is there any love for an unidentified character known as Bingo though there is more than enough bio information provided on Bingo to identify him to those in the know. There is also a detailed explanation of his involvement with the Spear and Shield collective and his identification with the Shakur tribe.

The author proves once again he is one of the best at painting word pictures and including the reader in the events of which he writes. If you enjoyed Monster, then you'll undoubtably enjoyed T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E.

Featured characters are
LaPeace Shakur - Sanyika Shakur
Askari Shakur - Tupac Shakur
Simon Knowles-Suge Knight
Tammy Shakur - Tamu Shakur
Baby Lane - Orlando Anderson
John Sweeny - LAPD
Jesse Mendoza - LAPD
Tashima -

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