

chapter one

THE ROAD TO MY PLATINUM BODY

Singleness of purpose is one of the chief essentials for success in life no matter what may be one's aim.

—JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

I'VE BEEN a boxing fan all my life, and while I've never entered the ring for a world championship bout, preparing to go onstage for a rap concert is probably about as close to that feeling as you can achieve. It's that hyped up, you know what I'm sayin'? A crowd eagerly anticipates your arrival, waiting for the first chord or the ding of the bell to unleash its collective energy. The buzz in the air is so thick, you think the venue is

plugged into some mysterious energy source. Once onstage or in the ring, you bob and weave, trying to find your flow, burning more calories than Martha Stewart working the dials on her stove. The collective outpouring from the crowd washes over the stage/ring, but you're unaware of it because you're so in the zone. Song leads to song like round to round. You need to stay strong and go the distance—but you always keep your

eyes open and look for your opening. I'm gonna knock you out.

This was the tour in support of my comeback album, *Ten*, released in 2002 to both commercial success and critical acclaim. I had worked out for years, but I had accomplished more in the previous 6 months than I had in all those other years combined. Back in the day, it was just pushup contests and hitting the heavy bag and maybe going to the gym once a week, basically to hang with the fellas. No dieting, no nutrition—just a down-and-dirty street style of working out to maintain some kind of conditioning. There was absolutely nothing scientific about it. One day I was looking in the mirror at my body, and I just wasn't happy with what was going on. I became fed up with looking at myself that way. If I'm unhappy with something, I don't accept it; I fix it. So *I made the decision right then and there that I was going to do everything I could to achieve the best possible shape of my life*, without even really knowing what that would look like or feel like.

I set my sights on making it happen for this tour. I was determined to take it to the next level, so I asked my personal trainer, Dave “Scooter” Honig, to join the rest of the crew and me on the tour bus. At the time I weighed 223 pounds, and once he was onboard, I told him, “Scooter, I just want to get down to 210 pounds. If we can accomplish that, I'll be ecstatic.” Little did I know that we would actually end up building more muscle than I ever dreamed possible, all while burning fat and getting ripped.

Next thing I knew, we were hopping off the tour bus in the middle of the desert in New Mexico, 115 degrees outside, watching our ride drive off without us, the bus blurry in the heat. The driver would pull off the road 5 miles ahead of us and wait for me to catch up. On foot. Hot? The bugs couldn't walk, it was so hot. The turtles were taking a rest. Maybe it was the heat coming up off the asphalt, but it felt like I was running in hot grease, my calves were burning so bad. Still, we would do that

2 days a week on the road because we were spending so much time driving from one venue to another. It wasn't just a matter of getting from here to there either. We would clock ourselves and try to improve each time.

That's the type of dedication that you must have to succeed at this. What's your highway in the desert? Is it working hard all day and then going home to take care of your family before you can even think about picking up a dumbbell? Your tour is your life. Your tour is work, kids, school, trying out for a team, or whatever. It's different for all of us.

For me, it was passing a school, having the driver pull over, and scrambling over the fence for a makeshift workout. I'd run around the track, do pullups off the football goalpost, bang out some pushups in the end zone. It was crazy, wasn't it, Scoots?

Scooter recalls: “We used supersets. We used pre-exhaust sets. We used straight sets. We used circuits. It all depended on what I thought Todd needed to accomplish on that particular day. I incorporated anything and everything in a concerted effort to confuse his muscles.

“We might go from heavy benches to weighted dips and weighted pullups, and then sprint for a minute, followed by stomach crunches. I'd throw intervals into the mix as well. If a treadmill wasn't available, we'd use stepups, or jumping rope, or mountain climbers. That's what we did a lot on the road.

“He has to rock 'n' roll onstage, so the goal was to keep his heart rate elevated during his training sessions. We don't always have to do this, but the goal on that tour was to burn as many calories as possible in the shortest amount of time. I'd also break the workouts up. Sometimes we'd do our runs early in the morning, and then later in the day, once it had cooled down, we would do our weight training.”

Rock Hard

When you're training that intensely, you really need to keep an eye on your diet as well. After walking into a diner at 3:30 one morning, Scooter asked the cook to clean the grill off because he didn't want the grease on the grill entering my body. The guy looked at him, thought he was crazy, took a \$5 tip, cleaned the grill, and then cooked for us.

Other times we would stop at a truck stop in the Deep South, those places where they sell anything from guns and flannel shirts to rebel flags. There was a small diner attached to one such truck stop, and here come seven black guys and one little white guy—Scooter—walking in through the door. We sit down and the waitress comes over holding her notepad and missing several teeth.

She goes, "What can I do for you fellas?"

I said, "We'd like to order, please."

She goes, "You've got to wait a minute. I got to go take the money over at the register, and then I've got to just clean those tables."

So she buses the tables, handles the money, washes some glasses. Then, without washing her hands, she comes straight back over to us.

"Okay, now what can I getcha?"

We all look at each other for a few seconds, and then Scooter says, "We'd like to order. Can I please speak to the cook?"

She goes, "You're lookin' at her, honey."

He says, "Well, ma'am, I'm sorry but you're not cooking our food. Take me to the kitchen. Would you mind if I cook?"

She goes, "No."

So Scooter went back there and made us egg-white omelets. All the guys went crazy.

Scooter: "We would stop on the road, the rest of the crew, from the lighting guys down to the bodyguards, and, boy, can they eat. One of the guys on the bus is the rib king. He would always ask the driver to stop at those rib joints that pop up on the side of the road, the ones where you can see the smoke coming out of the windows from a mile down the road. You think fire trucks are coming there, only they're just cooking ribs in a tin barrel. Anyway, this guy had a built-in homing device for those joints, and as soon as we stopped, Todd would look at me, and I would look at him and say, 'You're not eating it.' Every time, the rib king would have a sour stomach."

Even at five-star hotels, Scooter would go in the back and ask the chefs to please cook his way. It was hilarious: At the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills, they had Scooter's Menu on the wall for Mr. Todd Smith. It was crazy.

Scooter: "After the show, whether we trained would depend where we were that day and how long of a ride we'd have to the next town. Because Todd needs to sleep. So I figured, since he's up, and it's 12:30, we'd get a bite to eat, and then we'd get our workout in. That way he'd have more time to sleep. When you're on the road, it's very important for your client to sleep because he's performing and there's a lot

L'S MUSCLE-BUILDING TIP It doesn't really matter *when* you lift during the day—just so long as you lift. Testosterone levels are naturally highest in the morning, which might give you a little more intensity. At night the weights might boost your metabolism at a time when it normally slows down. Either way, these differences are negligible and tend to cancel each other out. Train whenever it best fits your schedule.

S COOTER'S FAT-LOSS TIP

If you eat until you're full, you've lost the battle. Always leave the dinner table with a desire to consume more food—but the discipline and foresight to get up and leave.

of traveling involved. So what we'd usually do was, he would sleep, get up and eat, we'd train, he'd go back, lie down, relax—and then we'd go to the show. All the meals would be sent to his room.

“That was the easy part. If we were on the bus, we couldn't stop because we had to reach the next gig, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. You have 8 hours to get from Point A to Point B. So I'd have to serve food on the bus. And I would be cooking chicken breasts, smoking up the cabin—the guys would go crazy. I was the king of tuna. Everybody wanted me to make Scooter's Tuna Special for them, with mayo, sliced tomatoes, a little lemon-lime juice, a little pepper, and a little celery. I would mix that all together and make a nice platter—and everybody would enjoy that. That was the Scooter Meal.”

The Man in the Mirror

In the middle of that tour came the moment of truth: We had gotten the single “Luv U Better” heated up on the radio, and it was time to shoot the video. I was doing some barbell rows a day or two before the cameras were to roll, and I looked up at the mirror, and all of a sudden I saw the form. I saw it! I said, “Yo, this is *real*.” I saw the shape, I saw the cuts, and I was like, “This is crazy.” I had never really noticed it before, but all of a sudden, I just saw it. I was like, “Wow—this thing is really working!”

You're probably wondering how I could have sustained such an intense training regimen and gotten in shape for a video in the middle of a concert

tour. It sounds crazy, I know. But through years of training fighters and other world-class athletes, Scooter has developed a unique knack for pushing the human body just far enough to make it respond without pushing it over the edge. See, boxers have to build some serious body armor—muscle—and then maintain it while they systematically develop enough endurance to go the distance. That balance between muscularity and conditioning is a delicate one to achieve, and never more so than when he takes a client like me out on the road. If I catch a cold on tour and cancel a date, a lot of money is at stake for many people, including the promoter, let alone thousands of disappointed fans. Scooter knows exactly how far he can push me, just as he knows exactly how far we can push you in the Platinum Workout.

I may look like a pro athlete, but at the end of the day, I'm an artist and a businessman. I'm not looking to enter a World's Strongest Man contest. I'm looking to build an aesthetic body that can blow people away onstage, on-screen, or in a video. I don't have to prove how strong I am; I need to present a certain look. And when I'm performing, I need to be in good enough cardiovascular shape to move like an uncaged lion and sing at the same time.

Scooter: “After a while, you can read your client not only motivationally, to see if burnout is approaching, but also by monitoring his strength levels and his heart rate to see if he's overtraining. If LL was overtraining, he would tell me, ‘Scooter, I'm beat. It's over. It's a wrap. Go relax.’ Occasionally there would be stretches where we wouldn't work out for 2 or 3 days because he would be very tired. It's just not productive to train in that state.

“The goal is to keep the client very strong, and I do that by balancing food, supplementation, and rest along with working out. It’s a very hard process to figure out for each individual, and I can’t predict what all of your unique characteristics are going to be in advance. If I could do that, I’d be a million-dollar baby. It’s trial and error, but the Platinum Workout gives you the blueprint enabling you to make your own adjustments as needed. Everyone has his own limitations. Everyone has his own wants and desires. LL happens to desire reaching a mountain peak. Then, when he gets to the mountain peak, he wants to jump up into the sky. And once he hits the sky he’s like, ‘Where do we go from here?’”

We’ve tried enough things enough times to know what works and what doesn’t work. This is what I mean by trial and error. When Scooter was working ringside with one of his first big fighters, Oleg Maskaev, he asked him if he could wear a heart rate monitor. “Oleg, please, just give me one round,” he said.

Oleg goes, “No, I can’t, because it’s gonna—”

Scooter says, “Oleg, just give me one round, and I will tell you why.”

When you’re training at an elevated heart rate, you don’t push yourself as much as you really can. When you start to reach the state of discomfort, naturally you have a tendency to back off. So what Scooter did was measure Oleg’s heart rate in the uncomfortable state of actually fighting in the ring, which turned out to be 185 beats per minute. After that, in training, Scooter knew he needed to work Oleg in a range from 10 percent below to 5 percent above that. That way he grew accustomed to feeling that stress on his heart and his body, that intense fatigue. So when that fatigue hits you, you’re used to it. You don’t get nervous thinking, *Oh, I’m running out of gas—what am I going to do?* No. Whether it was Round 1 or Round 12 or Round 15, Scooter’s fighters were always as fresh as possible because they had already fought the fight at the gym.

Here’s how that approach translates to my world.

Scooter: “The hardest part of becoming a champion isn’t the fight itself, it’s training for that fight. And that’s how Todd looks at everything. He looks forward to perfecting himself and his craft, his mind, his spirit—bringing it

Don’t u call this a regular jam
I’m gonna rock this land
I’m gonna take this **itty bitty world by storm**
And I’m just gettin’ warm
Just like Muhammad Ali they called him Cassius
Watch me **bash this beat like a skull**

—LL Cool J, “Mama Said Knock You Out,” 1990

all together to where he can stand onstage confident that he looks good, that he feels good, and that he's not going to get winded. So many of these singers now are putting tapes behind them. You saw Ashlee Simpson on *Saturday Night Live*. They use prerecorded tape, most of them. Todd is one of the originators. He doesn't use a tape. He's live. When you see 'live and in concert,' he's live and in concert. He's not live and on tape."

Full Force

In the end, the results spoke for themselves. I learned a lot about conquering discomfort; I learned a lot about conquering that inner resis-

tance that comes before you embark on any great undertaking; I learned that if I stick to it, I can make things happen, God willing. I found out that if you *really* want to do something, anything is possible. You can chop down a thousand trees in a row if you really want to. It's just a matter of getting up every day and goin' to work.

Yeah, that was the real deal. All told, the tour lasted about 3 months. I'm probably the first entertainer in history to pack on 12 pounds of muscle on the road while burning a bunch of body fat in the process. As for Scooter Pie? He went nuts. I found out he was crazy. In a good way. He lost 12 pounds trying to keep up with all of our craziness that goes from being on tour with a rap star. That's what you call a win-win situation.

