

THE ILLEST MEN'S MAGAZINE EVER!

# KING

WOMEN: GARY SPURDAS/GETTY IMAGES

SEPTEMBER 2008

*The Melting Pot Issue*

**AKIRA  
TORII**

**T.I.'s HAWAIIAN  
HOTTIE  
HEATS IT UP!**

**FIRST-CLASS CASH!**

**KIMORA  
LEE  
SIMMONS**

**CLIMB ON  
BOARD,  
TURBULENCE  
IS A B\*\*\*H!**



**MYSFACE GANGSTA!**

**TILA  
TEQUILA**

**OVER 1,000,000  
SERVED**

**PLUS**

**WHO KILLED  
TUPAC?**

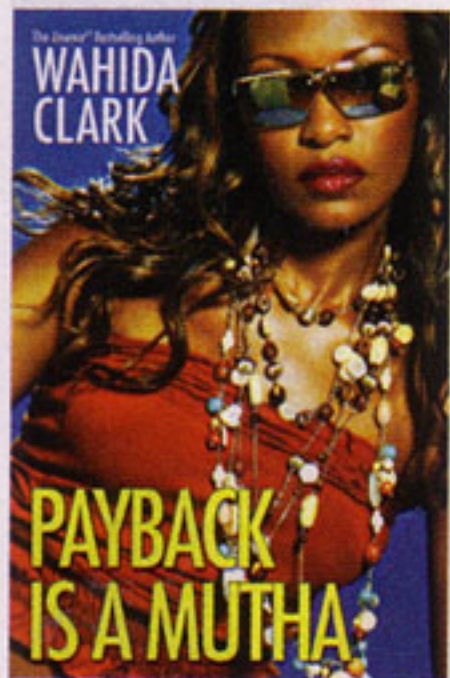
**DATE-A-DIME  
CONTEST**

**NAS' FASHION  
STOCK RISES**



# OUT WITH A VENGEANCE

LOCKED-UP WRITER  
**WAHIDA CLARK** IS  
 READY FOR FREEDOM



**THE OLD ADAGE** about suffering breeding creativity may be true after all. One of the O.G.s of the “street lit” genre—author Wahida Clark, best known for her 2002 *Essence* best-seller *Thugs and the Women Who Love Them*—returns with *Payback Is a Mutha*. Published by the Kensington Publishing imprint Dafina Books, *Payback* is another unlikely hit, blazing up the Amazon.com sales charts.

The ever-growing genre, scoffed at by stuffy literary types, has proven to be a popular and lucrative niche market. “I came up in the ’hood and I know how it is: survival of the fittest,” says Clark, 42, from Alderson prison in West Virginia. “I got 125 months for conspiracy and money laundering, mail and wire fraud. . . . After I got in, I was racking my brain to figure

out how I could [continue to work]. My job at that time was prison librarian, so I spent my time reading magazines. In the magazines I would read any interviews I saw with black authors. I told myself, ‘I can do that.’”

And so she did. “A sister had to do what a sister had to do, and writing a hot novel while [in prison] makes the success feel that much better,” says the Trenton, New Jersey, native. While locked up, she made some important allies, most notably Martha Stewart. “I met with her to go over my business plans when she was locked up with me,” Clark says. “She gave me some very valuable feedback.” With *Payback*’s success and an addition to the *Thug* series on the way, Clark is preparing to celebrate her success outside of prison. A trip to Martha’s Vineyard seems appropriate. —SETH FERRANTI