

hip hop.

Musical style with funk, rhythm and blues, and ethnic roots, characterized by a strong beat, intricate mixing of recorded music, DJing, and rhythmic song-speech known as MCing or "rapping." Rap evolved in the Bronx in the mid-1970s as part of a wider subcultural movement that also included break dancing, graffiti, and other cultural practices.

ORIGINS

Pressing poverty, political grievances, and a wide mixture of persons of African descent, including Haitians, US-born blacks, Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans, contributed to the distinctive nature of hip hop culture, which allowed inner-city youth to establish individual and neighborhood identities in a competitive, largely nonviolent forum. Hip hop competition also brought disparate ethnic groups into a forum where musical ideas were shared and improvisational musical conventions evolved.

Prominent local ethnic groups contributed crucial ingredients to the hip hop formula. Cuban and Puerto Rican musical culture can be found in the percussive style of early hip hop. Early hip hop DJs made intensive use of timbales, salsa beats, and Tito Puente records; Barbadian bongo style is also prominent. Jamaican traditions brought to hip hop competitive DJing and a communal sense of song ownership. Rapping, the vocal component of hip hop, may have antecedents in Jamaican music genres of talk-over and dub, both of which feature song-speech called toasting. Other antecedents may be found in domestic black oral culture. The lyrical content of many early raps is reminiscent of schoolyard verbal abuse games, like the dozens ("Your mama is so ugly that..."). Several early rappers cite the album *Hustler's Convention* (1973), a collection of prison recitations put to music by the Last Poets, as their primary inspiration. Others suggest that rapping began simply as a means to make announcements during dances or as a means of promoting favorite DJs.

Jamaican-born DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell) was one of the first well-known DJs in the Bronx. His powerful sound system, innovative techniques, and funky and obscure playlist produced numerous imitators. Herc also pioneered "cutting and mixing," playing the most danceable drum breaks in succession on two turntables, a practice favored by competitive dancers. Former gang member Afrika Bambaataa (Kevin Donovan) publicly promoted

hip hop as an alternative to gangs, and his single "Planet Rock" (1982) was one of the earliest and most influential hip hop songs. Bronx DJ Grandmaster Flash (Joseph Sadler) composed the critically acclaimed hip hop classic "The Message" (1982) and revolutionized DJing by introducing numerous turntable techniques, including the playing of increasingly small snippets of songs ("cutting"), using the sounds of records played backward ("backspinning"), and creatively manipulating the speed of play ("phasing"). Flash's companion Grand Wizard Theodore (Theodore Livingstone) pioneered "scratching," in which a record is rapidly moved back and forth with the turntable's stylus in the groove, making the turntable a rhythmic instrument and allowing the DJ to evolve from passive medium to active musician.

THE 1980s

The first hip hop record was probably the New Jersey-based Sugar Hill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" (1979), which found a national audience, opening the door for other hip hop artists. With the exception of Mercury Records, which signed Kurtis Blow in 1980, major record companies failed to mine the hip hop talent in New York City, leaving it to minor labels. Blow's album sales were modest but captured the spirit of Bronx-style rapping. The first group to have significant critical and commercial appeal was Run DMC from Hollis (Queens Co), which released a nationally successful album in 1984. Middle class and well versed in hard rock, members Run (Joseph Simmons), DMC (Darryl McDaniels), and Jam Master Jay (Jason Mizell; killed in 2002) worked closely with New York University art student Rick Rubin to produce a hard-edged, guitar-heavy brand of hip hop. Following closely behind were the Beastie Boys, an all-white rap group that, using a formula similar to Run DMC's, sold millions of records and established the commercial viability of hip hop.

In the late 1980s hip hop acts and styles, several of which evolved in New York City and many of which reached a national audience through MTV, steadily proliferated. "Old School" hip hop, which included mostly Bronx- and Harlem-based artists such as L. L. Cool J., Big Daddy Kane, Kool Moe Dee, and Rakim, emerged from the core group of early hip hop performers, retaining a funk and rhythm and blues (R&B) rhythmic framework and a lyrical focus on boasting and disparaging others. Many suburban-based acts, such as Public Enemy and De La Soul (both from Long Island), A Tribe Called Quest, and Digable Planets, known as the "New School," expanded the musical parameters of hip hop, all promoting, albeit in differing tones, positive self-awareness and political consciousness for Blacks. Bronx native Teddy Riley popularized the so-called New Jack Swing sound via his

production work with artists like Keith Sweat, Heavy D and the Boyz (from Mount Vernon, Westchester Co), and even Michael Jackson. This musical innovation borrowed more heavily from contemporary R&B to create a highly danceable musical style with broad commercial appeal. Other well-known New York hip hop acts from this period also expanding the boundaries of hip hop include all-female groups Salt-N-Pepa and Stetsasonic and dance-oriented artists like Rob Base and DJ EZ Rock.

SINCE 1990

In the 1990s the hegemony of New York City in the hip hop world eroded, especially with the rise of scenes in Los Angeles and Oakland, Calif. Verbal feuding between rap stars based in New York and Los Angeles may have led to the much-publicized murders of Tupac Shakur (originally from New York City) in 1996 and the Notorious B.I.G., a New York City-based artist on Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs's Bad Boy record label, in 1997. Combs, also later known as P. Diddy, from Mount Vernon, became by the mid-1990s a prominent pop music impresario, producing a string of hits that appealed to a wide mainstream audience and that were met with derision by many in the hip hop community. Jay-Z (Shawn Carter) from Brooklyn also emerged as a major star in the 1990s, launching his career on his own record label.

The marriage of hard rock and hip hop became something of a subgenre all its own, with New York City-based heavy metal band Anthrax jointly recording with Public Enemy, and with groups including Korn, Limp Bizkit, Rage Against the Machine, Slayer, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Kid Rock spreading the popularity of rap rock into new white suburban market niches. By the early 21st century hip hop was an influential cultural force worldwide, influencing the direction not only of popular music but areas as disparate as fashion, language, and politics.

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