

The rise of asian asian american hip hop in america's music industry



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The Rise of Asian/Asian American Hip Hop in America's Music Industry

Hip hop culture in the past was an underground phenomenon that was accused of having a bad influence on youth due to its focus on drugs, sex, women, crime, and hate. (Gitonga 2015). However, hip hop culture in recent years became the mainstream culture and many hip hop artists have produced music to discuss current social issues (Gitonga, 2015). While hip hop music has been known as representing that represents the struggles of racial oppression among the black communities for a long time (Gitonga, 2015), Asian American participation in the hip hop music business suddenly rises in recent years.

Asian Americans in entertainment was a major topic in 2018 because of successful films featuring Asian casts such as *Crazy Rich Asians* and *Searching* (Lee, 2018). Moreover, Sandra Oh became the first actress of Asian descent to be nominated for lead actress at the Emmys award (Lee, 2018). Asians/Asian Americans are not only gaining more appearances on big screens but are also participating more in hip hop music in America. For instance, Asian rapper Rich Brian from a media enterprise called 88rising became the first Asian to be on the hip-hop chart of iTunes with his album *Amen* (Wang, 2018). Joji (another 88rising artist), a Japanese-Australian singer whose album *Ballads 1* also received number one on Billboard's R&B/hip-hop chart in November of 2018 (Wang, 2018).

It is important to examine the growing successes that Asian Americans have obtained in the music field because this field provides more and more opportunities for enthusiasts who are inspired to promote the status of Asian

culture through music in America, as well as for people who are interested in working in the music-related businesses as executives. It is necessary to understand this particular topic within the music industry because Asians have never been “cool” in American culture, as the founder of 88rising Sean Miyashiro claimed; his goal was thus to promote and amplify the coolness in Asian culture on a global scale (Wang, 2018).

Therefore, this paper aims to discover and answer the following questions: what are the key components for a music label company/an artist that promotes Asian culture to be successful in the mainstream music industry in America? What are the biggest challenges that Asian producers and artists encounter in America? The insights from this career capital research will be beneficial because understanding these business models and strategies in the hip hop music industry is significant for prospective graduates to decide on appropriate career choices in the future.

Method

Procedure

One phone call interview was conducted that lasted 20 minutes through Facebook Messenger with the participant who is based in Philadelphia, and the interview was recorded by note-taking. The interview discussed the topic of Asian/Asian American artists in the American music industry. The moderator was a graduate student in the Communication Management program at Annenberg.

Participants

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One male participant, Eddie Cai took part in the interview. Eddie was 18 years old and was Asian ethnicity. He was a freshman student at Drexel University studying in the Music Industry program with a concentration track on business MBA. He had been an independent producer for six years and recently started rapping.

Interview

The interview discussion consisted of two main questions. The first part focused on the music industry in America in general. An example question was “ What inspired you to work in the music industry?” The second part focused on the rise of Asian artists in American hip hop music. An example question was “ what are the biggest challenges in your opinion as an Asian producer/artist in America?”.

Discussion

The main insight found from this interview is that although Asians are not regarded as an authentic representation of hip hop music and culture, the rise of Asian artists in America marks a significant transition in the hip hop music history. Eddie, the interviewee was inspired to become a music producer and rapper because he is passionate about hip hop music. However, many Asian American parents regard the arts industry as a difficult and useless industry to pursue. He believed that the biggest challenges as an Asian producer/artist are encountering stereotypes and unable to relate to African Americans' hip hop culture. Many people only associate Asians with Medicine, business, and computer science degrees but rarely with music, thus it is frustrating for the participant to experience these

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assumptions. With the recent rise of Asian representation in Hollywood, Eddie also envisioned that an Asian artist will win a Grammy, play their songs on terrestrial radio and work together with mainstream artists such as Drake, Ed Sheeran, and Ariana Grande.

In addition, for an Asian hip hop focused music label company to be successful, it needs to maintain its hybrid style (record label and media company) of management mentality into the future, and hire the appropriate executives to discover more talented artists who have much potential in the American market. The position of garnering fans from all across Asia and slowly stepping into the American market will allow the company to preserve its reputation and success. As well, having collaborations between Asian artists and American artists is another key component to create conversation within the music industry. In Eddie's perspective, Asians are still underrepresented currently because many think that Asian artists cannot produce good music like American artists, but he believes that Asian hip hop will flourish further in the next few years with its mellow style of music (a blend between R&B and hip hop) which stands out from the repetitive American hip hop trap sound.

From the primary takeaways given by this interview, a few practical implications for people who interested in the hip hop music field can be predicted. Professionals will need to understand the history and the current trend of hip hop music in America in order to assist Asian artists and producers to appear more on mainstream media platforms. Moreover, as a Chinese Canadian, I truly wish for more accurate Asian representation in the arts industry. I believe learning from American artists/producers/companies <https://assignbuster.com/the-rise-of-asian-american-hip-hop-in-america-music-industry/>

who are both skilled and experienced is important for Asian music enthusiasts to be successful, and launching collaborations between Asians and Americans will attract both sides of audiences in which can help us gain more exposure and better impression.

Consequently, this interview experiences some limitations that should be improved for similar research in the future. The first issue was the choice of the interviewee because an artist has a different perspective from an executive of a music label company, who may provide more in-depth information about this industry from a management perspective. However, it was difficult for contacting executives due to their busy schedules. Moreover, it would be beneficial to interview someone in person and visit his/her music studio to learn more about the process of producing music and marketing strategies for future researches.

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