

The history of hip hop music essay



Rap as we know it today was originated in the 70's, but the earliest known recited rhyme was performed by the famous boxing champion Muhammad Ali just before his bout with Sonny Liston in which he says:

“ Clay comes out to meet Liston And Liston starts to retreat If Liston goes back any further He'll end up in a ringside seat. Clay swings with a left, Clay swings with a right, Look at young Cassius Carry the fight. Liston keeps backing But there's not enough room It's a matter of time. There, Clay lowers the boom. Now Clay swings with a right, What a beautiful swing, And the punch raises the bear, Clear out of the ring. Liston is still rising And the ref wears a frown, For he can't start counting, Till Sonny comes down Now Liston disappears from view. The crowd is getting frantic, But our radar stations have picked him up He's somewhere over the Atlantic. Who would have thought? When they came to the fight That they'd witness the launching Of a human satellite Yes, the crowd did not dream When they laid down their money That they would see A total eclipse of the Sonny I am the greatest!” (Hip-Hop Timeline, N. D)

Today's Rap, or Hip-Hop, was brought into the U. S by a group of Jamaican immigrants in the 70's. One of the Jamaicans, Clive Campbell, A. K. A Kool Herc began, making instrumentals out of two turntables. While another man from the Bronx, Theodore Livingstone, A. K. A Grand Wizard, accidentally discovered the scratching sound of the turntable. Rap was created as an inter-cultural phenomenon of New York's poorer sections (Harlem, Soho, Greenwich Village, Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn). Rap became an evolved form of Jamaican dub music which is an instrumental subgenre of reggae

music. The rapper would record his voice over a pre-recorded base of percussions, bass and horns (Scaruffi, 2004).

The predecessors of rap were disc-jockeys, or “ spinners”, (A. K. A. Djs) who would comment on the song and try to excite people to dance; the “ deejays” became cult figures. Later on, the Bronx was divided into three main parts of influence: Bambaata in the southeast, Hercules in the west, and Grandmaster Flash in the center. They also corresponded to the aspects of different “ crews”. Another part of hip-hop, although not a lyrical one, was graffiti or “ tagging”. Tagging started in Philadelphia sometime in the 1960s, pioneered by such legendary figures as Cornbread and Cool Earl (who may or may not have existed) (Scaruffi, 2004).

Soon after, a particular form of graffiti began to appear on the New York subway train Scarfutti P says: “ the following year the New York Times claimed to have interviewed the “ tagger”, a teenager only known as Taki 183 (also may not have existed). It is unknown whether these graffiti writers really existed because other people began to use the same names to write graffiti around the city” (Scaruffi, 2004).

The first rap records made were done by the Sugar Hill Gang, who released the song Rapper’s Delight in 1979 (the song became the first know rap song on Billboard), Kurtis “ Blow” Walker, who wrote the songs, Christmas Rapping and The Breaks, as well as, having the first rap album to go gold.

Grandmaster Flash (Joseph Saddler), Melle Mel (Melvin Glover), Kidd Creole (Nathaniel Glover), Cowboy (Keith Wiggins), Raheim (Guy Williams), and Mr. Ness (Eddie Morris) were the third of the early top artist to record songs

under the name, Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five. Rap music began to become more popular and led to the first rap radio show called, Mr. Magic's Rap Attack, on WHBI. Then 1981, Grandmaster Flash's album, *The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel*, became the first album to showcase the use of turntables to make music. Two years later, rappers began to put political messages in their songs, as Kurtis Blow did in the song, *The Breaks*, and Grand Master Flash had done with *The Message*. Both songs talked about inner-city poverty instead of just party themes (Scaruffi, 2004 Timeline Help, N. D). It was at this time that rap music began to move outside the park or block party format and saw performers begin to put more thought into their lyrics as they created routines and choruses and catchy phrases.

As rap's popularity begins to grow and spread from New York to the rest of the country two entrepreneurs, Russell Simmons and Rick Ruben, start a record company out of the dorm room of Rick Ruben who was attending college at the time. The record label, Def Jam Records, became one of the most important record labels ever. Although Russell Simmons was the brother of rapper Run, from the group Run-DMC, he did not have the group on his label in the early years. The label did release T La Rock "It's Yours" and then followed that with another artist who is still recording to this day, LL Cool J, who recorded "I Need A Beat". Other artists began to create songs and the battle rap style (still popular today) began to take the spotlight as the group UTFO's put out a "diss" song called, *Roxanne Roxanne*. It was during this time that rap began to combine with other styles of music and moved away from using simple beats made with drum machines. One the

biggest and most successful example of this was Run-DMC whose music allowed them to become the first rap act to get airplay on MTV and radio stations throughout the country. Run-DMC put out the first collaboration between rock and rap music and achieved success using this style in their albums: Run-DMC (1984), King of Rock (1985) and Raising Hell (1986). Their hits had a heavy mix of hard-rock guitar riffs and hip hop beats. LL Cool J introduced a softer side to rap's hard edge as he recorded the song "I Need Love" which would become a major part of his appeal and formula for future music. As rap continued to grow in popularity, different forms emerged ranging from political rap (Public Enemy, KRS-ONE) to comedic (Fat Boys, Slick Rick) to the later, more edgy forms of gangster rap made introduced by artists from the West Coast.

Rap was able to cross racial lines also as white artists, such as, the Beastie Boys released their first album, License to Ill, in 1987, which mixed punk rock and hip-hop and became a top selling group in the history of rap music. Other artist focused on developing strong wordplay skills, using metaphors and similes to separate themselves from other artists of the time. These artists, such as, Kool Moe Dee, Rakim and KRS-ONE helped to elevate the art form while also promoting the development of intellectual thoughts in the music.

Boogie Down Productions releases "Criminal Minded" and following the release KRS-ONE's DJ Scott LaRock is shot and killed trying to settle an argument. Public Enemy stuns the world when they drop "Yo Bum Rush The Show" which signals the beginning of politically motivated Hip-Hop. During this time Rick Rubin leaves Def Jam and founds Def America. (Adaso, N. D).

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Kool Moe Dee Battles LL Cool J begins with Moe Dee's How " You Like Me Now" LL's response to this was " Jack the Ripper" the feud would continue until Moe Dee tries to battle LL at a St Louis concert and LL refuses so Moe Dee broke down his name to diss him and then slammed the mic down in victory (Hip-Hop Timeline, N. D). After a long battle with crack-addiction Cowboy from Grandmaster's Furious Five dies at age 28. Dr. Dre's protégé D. O. C releases " No One Can Do It Better" D. O. C ends up in a terrible accident and although he survives his career however didn't.

NWA's " Niggaz for life album reaches #1 on pop charts and sells almost a million copies in its first week. Then Nas' " Illmatic" album goes gold is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest albums in Hip-Hop history. The same year Warren G's Regulate: The G-Funk Era Goes 4x platinum. Soon artists started to want a boycott against gangsta-rap artists like Dr. Dre, Snoop Doggy Dog and 2Pac because of their violent lyrics (Adaso, N. D).

2 Pac is robbed and shot 5 times in a New York studio. After he recovers Pac is then sentenced to 8 months in prison. 2 Pac's death row career takes off after prison Adaso, H says " 2 Pac signs a deal with Death Row Records after Suge Knight posts a \$1. 4 million bail". On September 7th, Tupac Shakur is murdered after being shot multiple times as he rode in a car driven by Ceo of Death Row Records Marion " Suge" Knight near the Las Vegas strip. Tupac died 5 days later. His death once again sparked the debate on whether rap promotes violence or just reflects the ugly side of the streets (Adaso, N. D).

2Pacs New York counterpart Biggie Smalls is also killed Adaso, H says " The Notorious B. I. G. is murdered in a drive-by shooting only six months after

2Pac's murder. His second album, released only a few days later, and ironically titled *Life After Death* becomes the best selling rap album of all time" (Adaso, N. D).

Eminem is signed to Aftermath Records and releases his debut album the "Slim Shady LP" which despite racial complications sells 4 million copies. The following year Eminem releases the "Marshall Mathers LP" which solidifies his spot as a future great in the rap community. The album sells 1.76 million in the first week out and Eminem receives two Grammys for his work. Just after 9/11 two of New York greats Nas and Jay-Z begin to battle after years of subliminal attacks Jay-Z hits Nas with the "Takeover" and Nas strikes back with the earth-shattering "Ether" Jay-Z bounces back with hard hitting "Super Ugly" (rapped over the instrumental of Nas's "Got Yourself A Gun") in which Jay talks about having sex with Nas' baby momma. New York's Hot 97 asks for a vote to pick a winner. While votes are being tallied up Jay rushes to apologize for the vulgar lyrics in the freestyle but it doesn't change the fact the Nas won the battle however fans would forever debate the victor of the battle.

Jam Master Jay (DJ of Run-DMC) is murdered in a Queens Bridge studio. No convictions have been made on his murder. More battles emerge such as: Nelly vs. KRS-One, Eminem vs. The Source magazine, Jermaine Dupri vs. Dr. Dre and more. More violence emerges Adaso, H says: In the middle of the 2004 Vibe Awards ceremony, a man named Jimmy James Johnson approaches rap legend Dr. Dre, who was preparing to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award, and punches him in the face. A full-on brawl ensues during which Johnson gets stabbed. After reviewing tape of the melee,

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authorities identify the stabber as G-Unit rapper Young Buck, a member of Dr. Dre's label. Suge Knight, who also crashed the event, later denies allegations that he had promised Johnson \$5000 to assault Dr. Dre. Nas and Jay end their long feud at a 2005 power 105 concert.

Eminem becomes the new face of the argument of Hip-Hop racism Adaso H says: "Eminem becomes the new focus of a debate on hip-hop and racism after some unidentified friends of the rapper submitted a tape of him using the N-word and making several derogatory remarks about the African-American community. Sample lyrics from the Eminem tape: "Black girls are b****es/ That's why I'ma tell ya you better pull up your britches/'Cause all that cash is making your a** drag. On another song, he rhymes: "Black girls and white girls just don't mix/Because Black girls are dumb and white girls are good chicks." The Source uses the tape to renew their anti-Eminem campaign, even releasing a CD version of the "racist tape." In response, Eminem apologizes publicly and claims the rap was done out of teen angst following a break-up with a black girlfriend. Eminem says: "I did and said a lot of stupid s**t when I was a kid, but that's part of growing up," said Eminem in a statement. "The tape of me rapping 15 years ago as a teenager that was recently put out by The Source in no way represents who I was then or who I am today."

This is a collection of some of the most significant events in Hip-Hop from the beginning to 2004. With more time however I would have liked to touch up on establishing some of the more influential aspects of Hip-Hop and those who made them popular. What I hoped to achieve with this report is that Hip-Hop wasn't originally about who has the most record sales or who has the

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best cars of jewelry it was as KRS-ONE often says: “ peace love unity and having fun”. Anyway I’d like to thank you for taking the time to read this.