

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

BEATBOXING

If you've been following our lessons for a while now, you probably know that Hip Hop culture was the creation of kids in the urban areas of New York who didn't have much but would not let themselves be limited by those lack of resources. Our lesson today focuses on yet another essential component of Hip Hip culture that came out of the need to create something from nothing.

Beatboxing is the imitation of the sounds created by a beat/sampling machine (aka "beatbox) using only one's mouth and voice. In our lesson on sampling in Hip Hop, we talked about how in the early 1980s sampling moved from being created by DJs using albums, to producers using sampling machines. These machines became the main way Hip Hop music was created from that time forward. However, these machines were very expensive and were not easily available to many people. There became a desire among Hip Hop music fans to produce the unique sounds they heard in the music. People wanted to rap their favorite raps while hanging out with friends or going to parties. People also wanted to make up their own raps and perform them for others. Without beat machines, those people could do one of three things to get the job done. They could (1) rap completely accapella, (2) they could rap over top of a beat played off of a record, tape or CD or (3) they could make the music themselves. At that time, most Hip Hop music didn't feature actual instruments, only digital ones. Therefore, using actual instruments wouldn't really do the job (besides the fact that instruments are expensive and difficult to carry around). This left people with only one real solution if they wanted beats to go with their rhymes ... they could use their voice to be the beatbox. By imitating the beatbox with the only instrument every always one carries with them, they could have beats to back up their raps anywhere they wanted to go. People became human beatboxes.

Speaking of "Human Beatboxes", there is a rapper who goes by that very nickname. His name is Doug E. Fresh and he is known as one of the first artists to make beatboxing known to the world. He isn't the first beatboxer, of course, but since he was well known in the Hip Hop world and was excellent with his beatboxing technique, he became many people's introduction into the world of beatboxing. However, there have been many others who have helped make beatboxing what it is today. Michael Jackson was known to beatbox for his own music and often recorded himself to see what kind of beats he could create (<http://youtu.be/5C5he8XQCBw>). In the 1980s, the solo artist Biz Markie and the group The Fat Boys were very instrumental (pun intended) in helping become popular. Moving into the 1990s, a rapper named Rahzel took beatboxing to a whole new level in the mainstream. Rahzel not only provided the drum and scratching sounds most people expected of beatboxers, but he taught himself how to make these sounds AND SING at the same time (a skill now known as "multivocalism"). One of his most famous beatboxing performances is of a song he calls "If Your Mother Only Knew" and displays him using this multivocalism technique. See an example of this technique @ <http://youtu.be/BpENg9PnZug>

Today, beatboxing has grown beyond anyone's imagination. There are now worldwide competitions and websites dedicated entirely to the art form. Reality television shows have featured and been won by incredibly skilled beatboxers. Non-Hip Hop recording artists have had beatboxers on their songs to provide backup vocals. There are now artists who have made beatboxing their job and get paid well to perform. Beatboxing is today a respected art form and is one more way to show the amazingness of Hip Hop culture.

*All links were functional as of 11.14.2011

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HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Lid: a hat. EX: "I went over to 'Lids' in the mall to buy a new lid."

Swag: confidence and style. EX: "That new kid has so much swag, he's gonna be the most popular guy in school in no time!"

Spun: confused, flabbergasted, out of sorts, unable to think clearly. EX: "My parents just told me we're moving to the other side of the country in two weeks!" "Man, you must be so spun right now."

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) What instruments can you imitate using beatboxing?
- 2) Try to beatbox on your own for 60 seconds without stopping.
- 3) Did anyone ever try to make the sounds of instruments with their voices before beatboxing became popular in the 1980s?