

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

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

HIP HOP AND POP STARS

Since its humble beginnings in the streets of New York and California, Hip Hop culture has spread to the farthest reaches of the globe and the grandest stages on the planet. There have been many people, events and a little bit of luck, which have contributed to Hip Hop becoming a worldwide phenomenon. One of the biggest catalysts for its popularity has been the inclusion of Hip Hop into the acts of world famous pop stars.

As Hip Hop dance and rapping became more popular in the streets and discos, it started to grab the attention of established recording artists. Some of these artists saw the power and potential in the emerging Hip Hop scene and became fans, adding elements of Hip Hop to their performances. Stevie Wonder is a funk, soul and R&B artist with more Grammys than any other male solo artist. In 1982, Stevie released a track called "Do I Do" which is over ten minutes long and includes him doing a small bit of rapping towards the end. Stevie was 32 years old at that point and had been signed to a record label since the age of 11. He was a very popular artist with an already well defined sound to his music. For him to include rapping in a song not only showed how popular rapping had become but also how strongly Hip Hop was influencing the rest of the music world. Blondie, a group in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, released a song in 1981 called "Rapture" which featured a huge rap section by the lead singer of the group Debbie Harry. The music video also included graffiti artists, Hip Hop dancers and references to famous Hip Hop DJs and rappers. It was the first song featuring rap to reach number one on the Billboard charts (a ratings system for music popularity). Also in 1981, singer Teena Marie recorded her most successful song up until that point in her career, "Square Biz", which included an entire verse of her doing some very skillful rapping. Funk/Soul singer, and 10 time Grammy award winner, Chaka Khan recorded a song entitled "I Feel for You" in 1984 that featured rapper Grandmaster Melle Mel (one of very few rappers in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame). As with Teena Marie, Chaka's song became as popular as any she had ever recorded up until that time.

As for Hip Hop dance, there has probably been no single person to help the style gain popularity than the most famous pop star of all time, Michael Jackson. Michael was an excellent dancer since the time he was very young. Those who worked with him described him as a perfectionist who would not rest until his moves were just right. Michael was a teenager during the years that Hip Hop started to become popular. This strongly influenced his performance style. You can see a huge difference in his dance moves from the performances he did in the late 1960s and early 1970s to his shows in the early 1980s and beyond. From that time on, almost every one of his most popular dance moves was either taken directly from or inspired by B-boy or Funk Style dances. Probably his best known move, the Moonwalk, was taken straight from the Funk Style of Gliding and is actually called a "backslide". Michael also helped popularize Popping, The Robot, Locking, Boogaloo and Tutting as each of these styles became huge parts of his act. Most people unfamiliar with Hip Hop dancing don't even realize that his moves were taken from Funk Style dances. And in fact, his perfectionistic tendencies caused him to do them so well, that even dancers who practiced the styles were impressed by Michael. However, if you've never seen or realized the strong presence of Hip Hop in Michael Jackson's dancing, watch his music videos for "Smooth Criminal" and "Remember the Time" and you can see nearly all the styles mentioned above. Michael's younger sister Janet became nearly as popular of a dancer as Michael and she too was an enormous contributor and user of Hip Hop dance in her performances and videos. A great example of her doing excellent Locking is in her video for the song "Alright".

Since then, many other non-Hip Hop artists have added Hip Hop dancing into their acts. Madonna and Britney Spears have studied Hip Hop and danced it in their shows while routinely featuring Hip Hop dancers in their concerts. Justin Timberlake is a super famous pop artist who has really mastered some Hip Hop styles like Popping and Gliding and shows great skill with Hip Hop choreography. Even young pop stars like Justin Bieber have been clearly influenced by Hip Hop. Then there are also pop artists who do not actually dance Hip Hop but constantly surround themselves with Hip Hop dancers in their music videos and live performances such as Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Katy Perry, Pink and Miley Cyrus.

In a few cases, we have even seen established Hip Hop dancers become pop recording stars. Believe it or not,

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long before Fergie, the Black Eyed Peas started as a b-boy crew. J-Lo danced Hip Hop on the popular sketch comedy show "In Living Color" for years before acting or singing. Chris Brown was dancing Hip Hop long before he became popular as a singer. Usher and Ciara started as recording artists but had also been studying dance since little children and have become two of the best Hip Hop dancers in the pop scene today.

Hip Hop started and continues to be innovated at the street level. However, it owes much of its worldwide popularity to those recording artists, actors and film makers who helped bring the culture to a global audience. The internet is now changing the way people consume media. This means that a freestyle session with you and your friends can become global within days or even minutes. You can create a move or start a style that gains the same kind of attention that it took multi-million dollar movies, music videos or shows to get before. With just a phone, you can spread new Hip Hop ideas all over the world in an instant. Hip Hop is now back in the hands of the streets. You have the power to start the next trends. If you love Hip Hop, get out there today and share your talents, creativity and skills with the world. Spreading your love of the culture is what Hip Hop is all about.

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Go Off: To suddenly start performing at an extremely high level of skill, usually stunning your audience.

EX: "When she entered the circle that last time ... man, I mean, I've never seen her put a set together like that before. I had no idea she could just go off like that."

Buggin/Trippin: To be in disbelief, confused, very frustrated, or to be unexplainedly angry/accusatory.

EX: "I can't believe he was buggin so hard over losing his jacket." "No man, he was definitely trippin. That jacket cost a grip, yo."

Rollin' (car): To drive in a car, often slowly so people can observe your vehicle.

EX: "I'm rollin to the store right now. You wanna come with?"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Who is your favorite dancer?
- 2) Who is the first famous person that impressed you with his or her dancing skills?
- 3) If you haven't before, why not try posting a video of you showing your Hip Hop skills online?
(If you are under 18, get approval from a guardian first.)