

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

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

HISTORY OF DON CAMPBELL AND LOCKING

Determining exactly when Hip Hop began is tricky business. Most people look to 1973, when DJ Kool Herc started his technique of break beat DJing and toasting the crowd, as Hip Hop's beginning. However, there are other things that are now a part of Hip Hop culture, like graffiti art, that were born before 1973. Another one of those things is the Funk Style dance called Locking. Locking is universally associated today with Hip Hop but was around years before Herc got on his turntables.

Locking was created by Don Campbell, who was born in 1951 in St. Louis but grew up in Los Angeles. He says that he was a very artistically inclined child which led him as a young man to Los Angeles Trade-Technical College to study Commercial Art. It was in college that he started to dance recreationally. Like most people, Don was drawn to the popular dances of the time. As he would switch between popular dances and combine them with his own freestyling, occasionally he would stop suddenly as he decided what to do next. In a now famous story, Don says that he was attempting to do the popular dance called the "Funky Chicken" but was doing it poorly and pausing a lot. While these pauses were not intended to be part of his dance style, other dancers started to note that they actually made his other moves more interesting. After a while, he started to intentionally integrate stops into his freestyling. The Funky Chicken has a move where you bend your elbows to imitate chicken wings and pop your elbows out to the side quickly. When mixed with the quick freezes this was the real beginning of the Locking style. The actual name "Locking" comes from these quick stops. His style of stopping abruptly was so different from the usual way people danced to Funk, Soul and R&B music that it really stood out and became popular on its own.

Don explored and developed his dance style throughout his hometown neighborhood of Watts. He started winning dance contests and becoming somewhat of a star in the local dance scene. However, Don's big break came in 1971 when he became a featured dancer on the brand new dance TV show, Soul Train. The show was recorded in LA but shown to a national audience which accomplished something with Hip Hop dance that had not been done before. Don Campbell was able to get Locking seen all across America. B-boying was happening all throughout the 1970s but didn't become an international sensation until it was featured in movies in the early 1980s. Now realize, as Locking was happening in California, far from the emerging Hip Hop scene in New York, and as the term "Hip Hop" was not even in use yet, many people may say that the national exposure of Locking was not part of the development of Hip Hop culture. However, as essential as Locking has become to Hip Hop dancing today, it is impossible to dispute how important the national exposure of Locking was to Hip Hop history. People all over the United States started to copy the quick, stylish moves of Don and the group he started with other Soul Train dancers called "The Campbelllock Dancers". The group had an improvisational, cypher style, meaning that they primarily danced as soloists taking turns going into the circle. This resulted in the group being filled with highly skilled individuals that each became very popular with the crowds. In fact, the Campbelllock Dancers came to include and produce some of the most important dancers of the era.

Just as Locking spread to a national audience through Soul Train, it also spread through another 1970s TV show called "What's Happening!!" That show featured as a main character one of the Original Lockers named Fred "Mr. Penguin" Berry who was constantly seen Locking throughout the series. Another Locker who experienced greater fame was Doney Terrio who went on to appear in many movies, host the dance TV show competition "Dance Fever" and choreograph for John Travolta in the famous disco movie "Saturday Night Fever" (where he actually included some Locking moves). A founding member of The Lockers, Adolfo "Shabba-Doo" Quinones, later starred in arguably the most famous Hip Hop dance movie of all time, "Breakin'". Choreographer Toni Basil was a girlfriend of Don and, due to her strong dance background, ended up becoming one of the most skilled Lockers. She used her connections and clout in the dance community to help the Lockers get exposure through TV show appearances and commercials. Besides being a highly respected and well-known choreographer, Toni Basil is best known for her hit song "(Hey) Mickey" which sold millions of copies. Locking is often associated with "Popping" and this may be due to one of the inclusion of Charles "Robot" Washington and Bill "Slim the Robot" Williams (also Soul Train

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dancers) in the original group. Though they sometimes locked, they primarily did their Robot dance and therefore Roboting became associated with the Locking style.

However, the main things associated with the Locking style were the costumes and the large, expressive movements. Some describe the outfits Lockers wore as "clownish" because they included oversized apple hats, white gloves, baggy capri pants cuffed at the knee, tall striped socks and loud, colorful satin shirts, often with bow ties. Every move in Locking is done to get a reaction and therefore is exaggerated for that effect. It is common to see big, comedic, facial expressions with each move and lock. Besides the quick stops which define the style, Locking switches up freezes with big leaps into the splits, huge points (called "Uncle Sam points") and moves like the "Whichaway" which looks like a cowboy riding a horse but lifting and twisiting your legs one at a time. Locking really has to be seen to be understood properly and the following video should give you a good sense of exactly what the style entails ... <http://youtu.be/TAKEspfqwxA> (link active as of April 2012).

The Lockers became one of the most well-known dance groups of the 1970s and early 80s. They appeared alongside some of the most famous performers of the last century like Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Bill Cosby, Richard Pryor, Johnny Carson and Carol Burnett. They performed at the Academy Awards, the Grammys and were the first non-musical act to ever perform on Saturday Night Live. Since that time, Locking has spread all over the world and has been included in music videos/performances by today's biggest artists like Snoop dogg, Busta Rhymes, Justin Timberlake and Christina Aguilera. In fact, speaking of influential artists who loved Locking, Michael Jackson was probably the most famous locker of all as he used Don's moves heavily throughout his entire career.

Don left behind a large legacy for the Hip Hop dance community. But, he isn't done yet. Don still travels around the world teaching seminars, classes, judging competitions and continuing to spread knowledge about the history of Hip Hop. And although he has not been inducted, Don was honored at the First Hip Hop Conference sponsored by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame where some of his costumes were displayed. However, probably the most important thing that Don left with the Hip Hop community (at least in the opinion of FUNKMODE) was that he had always intended for the Lockers to be featured dancers, not a backup act for some other performer. When the Lockers did a show, they were the show. Just as you can see in the video linked above, they took the stage all by themselves and entertained simply through their style and flair. They were true performers and they commanded the stage. Therefore, they were respected as featured acts everywhere they went. Considering that they danced on the biggest TV and live shows available at the time, what Don did with the Lockers was a major and stunning accomplishment. We believe that Hip Hop dancers should strive passionately to follow in Don's footsteps by making Hip Hop dance an art that stands all on its own.

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Ill (ill): So amazing and awesome that it overwhelms you to the point of virtually making you sick.

EX: "That whip was so ill, I thought I was gonna lose my lunch!"

Bout It: To be interested in something or to support it.

EX: "That guy said he's not into Hip Hop but I'm definitely bout it."

Holla (holla back): To call someone. A derivative of the word "holler", meaning to yell.

EX: "I gotta head out right now but holla at me later, k?"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Name another one of the Original Lockers not named in this lesson.
- 2) What song did Don Campbell record?
- 3) Name another Locking move not mentioned in this lesson.