

SCHOOL' D BY FUNKMODE

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

TEDDY RILEY AND NEW JACK SWING - PART 1

Throughout these lessons, we have learned about many people who were influential in the creation of Hip Hop dance, music, dance and art. However, as Hip Hop is moving into its fifth decade as of this writing, it is also important to also talk about the people who changed the direction of Hip Hop along the way. In the 1990s, Hip Hop music and dance went through some enormous changes. These changes gave new life to the culture and made it more relevant and popular than ever before. While many people had a hand in helping these changes come along, every single one of those people and more will tell you that the primary person behind this massive change was musical artist Teddy Riley. His creation was called New Jack Swing (NJS).

Teddy was into music from a very young age. He sang and played instruments with his local church and found encouragement from his close family members who believed he had a special talent. His uncle William took a part of the roller skating ring he owned and converted it into a music studio for Teddy. It was in this studio that Teddy developed his skills at producing music. By his mid-teens, Teddy had rappers from the local area coming to him to get instrumental tracks for their songs. As his skills grew, he found himself being able to work with artists who would become legends in Hip Hop music. At only 18 years old, he produced hit songs for rappers like Kool Moe D and Heavy D*. Teddy says of his early success with producing, "everybody would just come to get a beat ... like it was a candy store." As he became more recognized in the music community, he was approached about creating his own R&B group. Teddy eventually found two excellent singers and was able to form his first group called "Guy" which got signed to the major record label Jive while he was still only 19 years old. Guy experienced tremendous success, with their first album going triple platinum** and their songs being included in highly successful feature films. Most importantly for Hip Hop, it was with Guy that Teddy really developed the NJS sound.

Before we go into the creation of NJS, it is important that we explain what the state of music was like before its creation. As we know from previous lessons, the foundation of Hip Hop music is primarily funk, but also R&B, Soul, electronic and dance music samples. In the 1980s, Rap and R&B formed the foundation of African American popular music. However, aside from a few notable exceptions which we've also mentioned in previous lessons***, the new style of Rap music was far removed from the more established genre of R&B. A quick glance at the two styles reveals the obvious difference that Rap music features spoken word as vocals while R&B features singing. Throughout most of the 1980s, this simple difference kept the two genres separate despite them often having the exact same musical influences and listening audiences. Rappers saw what they did as completely distinct and unrelated to what singers were doing and vice versa. Through his production work with Guy, Teddy started to create a sound that would eventually create a bridge between these musical styles, forever changing both Hip Hop and R&B.

When Teddy first put together the New Jack Swing sound, he did not give it that name. He playfully referred to it as "sophisticated bubblegum music" because it had the sweet bubblegum appeal of pop music mixed with the deep and refined sensibilities of R&B. The actual term New Jack Swing came from a writer with the acclaimed New York magazine "The Village Voice" named Barry Cooper. The name referred to a modern resurgence of the times in the 1930s/40s when street culture invaded mainstream society through Swing music and dancing. Musically, the name also explains the sounds produced by the drum sampling machines which, in NJS, often feature what are called "Swing" rhythms. The sound of NJS is very distinct, despite the fact that it crosses multiple genres. Before we go further into explaining NJS, it will be very helpful for you to actually hear the music. You'll notice from the four examples provided that it is upbeat, has strong dance rhythms and powerful, soulful vocals.

"Groove Me" @ http://youtu.be/_VOMzdzXl8M - "Fairweather Friend" @ <http://youtu.be/S6Yw0UoaQZk>

"She's Playing Hard to Get" @ <http://youtu.be/gaLHE9qd8LA> - "Playground" @ http://youtu.be/Eq_-DZBZOWc

* no relation :)

** over 3 million albums sold

*** For example, Stevie Wonder in the song "Do I Do", Teena Marie in "Square Biz" and Chaka Khan in "Feel For You".

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(MUCH MORE INFORMATION TO COME IN PART 2 OF THIS LESSON ON NEW JACK SWING)

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Chill(in)/Kick(in) it: To relax and spend time in a certain place. A play on the word chill meaning that when you relax you are cooled down. Kickin it refers to "kicking back" as when you lie back and "kick" your feet up to relax.

EX: "My friends and I were chillin all weekend. Just kickin it and playing video games."

Scopin: Derived from the term scope to mean that you are looking at something interesting as through a scope.

EX: "I was scopin a new pair of kicks at the mall last weekend."

Gully: Something created in the streets (i.e. Hip Hop music and B-boying)

EX: "A lot of people listen to music from the radio but my favorite stuff is straight gully."

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Where is Teddy Riley from?
- 2) Who were the other members of Teddy Riley's group "Guy"?
- 3) What was your favorite of the four songs in the examples of New Jack Swing music?