

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

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

ORIGIN OF THE TERM "HIP HOP"

The term "Hip Hop" is well known all around the world today. However, very few people know what the term actually represents. Even fewer know where the name originated. If you've been following these lessons, you know that Hip Hop is not just music, not just dance, but an entire culture which includes Rap music, B-boying, DJing, Beatboxing, Graffiti, fashion and even its own vocabulary. You also know that this culture began in the early 1970s at block parties in the Bronx area of New York. What we haven't covered yet is how all of these different cultural elements came to be known as Hip Hop.

As is common when discussing history, there are multiple explanations of events, all of which contain some truth. However, deciding which story is the final truth is a subject of debate. Despite the fact that the term Hip Hop is only slightly over 30 years old, with most of the pioneers of the culture being alive and able to tell their stories, there is still no real agreement over exactly how the name Hip Hop was created. What we do have are three stories that all have some merit and are commonly told when the subject of Hip Hop's origin arises.

The first story starts with a rapper named Cowboy who was a founding member of the crew Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five (one of only two Hip Hop crews to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame). Cowboy had a friend named Kokomo who was in the military. Cowboy liked to make fun of his friend. It is commonly known that soldiers have to march in a very strict and orderly way and Cowboy used this to mock Kokomo saying, "HIP-HOP-HIP-HOP-HIP-HOP-HIP-HOP" as he pretended to march like him. Later, it is said that he worked this back and forth style of saying "Hip Hop" into his rapping. Other rappers heard this term used and also started to include it into their own rhymes. As people outside of Hip Hop would come to jams (parties) and see the people on stage rapping, they referred to them as "Hip Hoppers". Some people say that this was originally intended to be a negative term but later became used in a positive way to represent the entire culture.

Regardless of being able to agree on the exact origin of the term Hip Hop, most Hip Hop historians credit Afrika Bambaataa* as the person who actually started using the term to identify the entire developing culture. Bam says that his close friend and partner DJ Lovebug Starski is the one who actually created the name Hip Hop. Bam, like DJ Kool Herc, also used to throw block parties in the Bronx. He thought that more people would come to parties that had special names, as opposed to just calling them parties or jams. One of his parties he called the "Hip Hop Beeny Bop". When Starski would MC the party, he would get on the mic and shout out to all the people attending, saying "Welcome to the Hip Hop Beeny Bop! That's right y'all, Hip Hop, you don't stop!" From there, the story goes similar to Cowboy's as it is said that Starski put this small phrase into his rap lyrics and other people started to copy it until it was everywhere. Although Cowboy passed away in 1989, Starski is alive and repeatedly says in interviews that it was he who truly created the name Hip Hop.

The final story of the origin of the term Hip Hop is perhaps the simplest. You don't have to look any further than the origin of the two words that make up the term. "Hip" means "cool", "in the know", "stylish" and "trendy". "Hop" has been used for centuries to refer to dance parties or just dancing itself. For example, Lindy Hop is a type of Swing dancing that started in New York in the 1920s. In the 1950s, Sock Hops were a popular type of dance held at High Schools. Students had to remove their shoes to protect the gym floors which is how these Hops got their name. Going back to the term Hip Hop, when you put the two words together (Hip and Hop), you get a name that describes a cool, trendy and stylish form of dancing or party ... and, at the time, that's exactly what Hip Hop was.

Which story is the right one? We may never know for sure. Whichever story you believe, what's really important is that you understand all of the different explanations as all of them are important parts of the history of Hip Hop.

*Afrika Bambaataa is known as the "Godfather of Hip Hop". Next to DJ Kool Herc, he may be the single most important person in the history of Hip Hop culture. Bambaataa will be the subject of an entire School'd lesson in the future.

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HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Cheese/Cheddar: Money. EX: "One day I'm gonna be stackin cheese like a Kraft Singles factory!"

Get it twisted: Getting confused or misunderstanding someone/something. EX: "Don't get it twisted. Just because I got mad skills on the basketball court, that doesn't mean I can't rock a straight-A report card too."

Rock: To wear or have. EX: "I'm rockin my new kicks at school today." "Word? Those are so fly!"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Which story of the origin of the term Hip Hop sounds most believable to you?
- 2) "Hip Hop" is a term used over and over in one of the most famous Hip Hop songs of all time. This song was released in 1979. Name that song.
- 3) Everyone knows Lovebug Starski was a DJ. Did he ever record any music of his own?