

SCHOOL' D BY FUNKMODE

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THE ROCK STEADY CREW

Since b-boying began in the 1970s, there have been many excellent break crews. However, none of those crews have lasted as long or become as popular in the world of Hip Hop dance as the Rock Steady Crew (RSC).

RSC was founded in 1977. At that time, b-boying was in a very interesting situation. Although it had only been around for a few years, the dance style was already starting to lose popularity. Many trend following people were ready to move on to the next big thing. Still, two breakers from the Bronx named Jamie "Jimmy D" White and Santiago "JoJo" Torres had the desire to create a crew that would keep the artform alive and represent the best b-boying had to offer. However, RSC was neither JoJo nor Jimmy D's first crew. In fact, JoJo had been breaking and battling since he was a very small kid. As he got older and more serious, he connected with three of his friends (EZ Mike, Peabody 170th and Jimmy D) to form the "Untouchable Four B-boys". This crew would become the catalyst for the RSC. According to JoJo, in an interview with Lisa Dumas of Shine Magazine, the Untouchable Four "did some damage in battles for a little while and then people wanted to get down with us, so we started thinkin', 'Hey we can have a bigger crew than four members.' But we had to change our name cuz' you can't have more than four b-boys if you got the Untouchable Four B-Boys." They had a meeting at Jimmy D's house and came up with the name "Rock Steady Crew" because they wanted to be a crew that always kept the dance floor steady rockin'. RSC helped to move b-boying forward by mixing old school foundational elements like uprocks, six-steps and backspins with newer power and acrobatic moves like windmills, suicides and headspins.

In 1979, RSC crew added what would become one of their most important members. To get into the RCS, a b-boy had to successfully battle one of the existing members. Richard "Crazy Legs" Colón and his cousin Lenny Len battled JoJo and Jimmy D to get into the crew. As Crazy Legs had to travel a long distance to dance with RSC in the Bronx, he wanted to start a second crew in Manhattan. He eventually got permission from Jimmy D to start this group and, in time, it actually became more popular than the Bronx crew. It was around this time that RSC experienced a great period of growth and success. As it was mentioned earlier, b-boying had been losing popular interest for a while. Some say that without the RSC and what happened for them in 1981, b-boying might have died out entirely.

In 1981, RSC got TV and newspaper exposure when they were booked for a big performance at the world famous Lincoln Center in New York. They battled their rival crew, The Dynamic Rockers in a show that was covered by the New York Times despite the fact that it was mainly a self-promoted event. RSC represented themselves very well at this battle, in large part because of Crazy Legs and the b-boys he had brought into the group through his Mahattan branch of RSC. As a result, Jimmy D made Crazy Legs the President of RSC, a title he still holds today. This event was only the beginning of a whole new level of popularity for RSC. They started to make appearances at extremely well-known dance clubs like the Ritz and the Roxy. But their success didn't stop with local shows. RSC found international success as well through movies and touring. In 1983, "Wild Style", the first movie to represent Hip Hop culture, featured RSC as well as some MCs, DJs and graffiti artists. Another Hip Hop movie, "Beat Street" (1984) also included the RSC. But it was "Flashdance" in 1983 that really brought b-boying to a worldwide audience. The movie is not about b-boying but there is a very short scene that features the RSC. As opposed to "Beat Street" and "Wild Style", "Flashdance" was a worldwide hit and therefore became millions of peoples' first exposure to break and the RSC. This led to international touring, an album deal and far more opportunities than anyone in RSC ever imagined. Still, b-boying did eventually start to die down in the late 1980s. But as we can clearly see today, neither the RSC or break went away completely.

In the late 80s, people started to encourage Crazy Legs to restart the group. He took their advice and the RSC has grown even bigger and stronger since then. In 1991, they created the first popular Hip Hop musical titled, "What Happens Now?" which received great reviews from very important media sources like the Village Voice. They again performed at the Lincoln Center for an audiences of famous dancers and actors and even President Bush. RSC started to allow others to start their own branches of Rock Steady and now there are crews in LA, Las Vegas, Orlando, and even Tokyo, the UK and Italy. All of this success has made the Rock Steady Crew the most important name in b-boying. All breakers owe this crew a debt of gratitude for helping to make the Hip Hop dance culture what it is today.

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HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Vinyl / Wax: a name for a phonograph record, which is made of vinyl or wax.

EX: "I just started DJ'ing and I've been shopping for wax like crazy to build up my collections of jams."

Decks / Wheels (of steel): turntables used to play records. (aka record player)

EX: "But before I went shopping for all that vinyl, I hooked up some sweet decks from Technics."

Cans: headphones.

EX: "The last thing I copped was a new pair of Sennheiser cans. Now I'm ready to cold rock a party, yo!"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Name two other famous members of the RSC.
- 2) Name another famous b-boy crew that battled RSC.
- 3) What was the name of RSC's album?