

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

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

EMCEES IN THE ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME - PART 1 - RUN-DMC

As of the writing of this lesson, only a small handful of Hip Hop artists have been voted into the prestigious Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In this series of lessons, we will learn more about each of these legendary artists.

At first thought, it may seem odd that there would be any rappers in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. However, the Hall has expanded the scope of the honor awarded to go beyond the Rock and Roll genre to include any artist who has, according to their website, "demonstrated unquestionable musical excellence". They also add that they "shall consider factors such as an artist's musical influence on other artists, length and depth of career and the body of work, innovation and superiority in style and technique, but musical excellence shall be the essential qualification of induction." This expansion has created room for Hip Hop inductees who have achieved notoriety and excellence within their genre but have also had a strong influence on Rock and Roll.

In the history of Hip Hop, there has been no group with a greater influence on Rock and Roll than Run-DMC. Not only have they been noted by many respected critics and industry professionals as the greatest Hip Hop group of all time, but they pioneered the entire Rap Rock sub-genre of music. They were inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009, after decades of setting sales, video and radio play records. Run-DMC are pioneers in nearly every sense of the word. They were responsible for so many firsts in rap, Hip Hop and music in general that their status as leaders in the industry is easily elevated above all others. Run-DMC were the first Hip Hop group to have a video on MTV, the first to have an shoe endorsement deal (Adidas, 1986), and the first to appear on the cover of "Rolling Stone" (a rock magazine). Not only that, but Run-DMC were the first to have a gold album (over 500,000 record sales), a platinum album (over 1,000,000 record sales) and even a multi-platinum album (over 2,000,000 record sales) as rap artists.

Run-DMC was founded in the Hollis, Queens area of New York City by one of the most important people in Hip Hop history, Russell Simmons. Russell's little brother Joseph wanted to become part of the growing Hip Hop scene and Russell was promoting parties in the area as well as starting to manage rap artists. His number one talent was a young man by the name of Kurt Walker (aka Kurtis Blow). You may remember Kurtis from one of our earlier SCHOOL'd lessons. Russell got Joseph involved with Kurtis by having him serve as his DJ, calling him "DJ Run, The Son of Kurtis Blow". This relationship soon led to Joseph wanting to rap himself. He teamed up with a friend from Queens named Darryl McDaniels and started working on their rhyming skills. One day, Darryl and Joseph were at a local park known for having DJs perform and battle (Two-fifths Park), hoping to get to show off their raps to one of them. They got the attention of a popular DJ named Jason Mizell who, after hearing them rhyme, became a good friend. For a while, Joseph begged Russell to help promote him and Darryl as a rap act, but it is said that Russell didn't like Darryl's rap style. However, persistence paid off and Joseph finally convinced Russell to back him, Darryl and Jason as a group. Joseph's stage name was "DJ Run". Darryl's stage name was "Easy D" and Jason was going by "Jam Master Jay" at the time. Russell convinced Darryl to change his name to DMC (Darryl M.C. Daniels) and insisted they use the group name "Run-DMC". Russell was then able to get them signed to Profile Records and, in 1983, the group produced their first single, entitled "It's Like That/Sucker MCs". The song did better than Russell or the group had imagined and therefore it gave them the courage to actually release an entire album. In 1984, they put out their self-titled album "Run-DMC", which eventually went gold. They followed up this success with the release of their album "King of Rock" in 1985 which went platinum. Their sound and style was completely different than any Hip Hop act which had come before. They had a much harder, rock driven musical style, with much simpler beats and more aggressive rhyming. DJ Run and DMC switched back and forth in the vocal delivery of the verses of their songs, a style that became very popular with audiences and amongst other artists who imitated these rhyming dynamics. Also imitated by fans and artists was Run-DMC's fashion, which came directly from Jam Master Jay's personal b-boy/street style of dress.

Run-DMC made such an impact on the Hip Hop world and music industry that nearly every rapper or executive or anyone important in the history of Hip Hop counts Run-DMC as one of their biggest inspirations and influences.

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The group is also largely responsible for bringing Hip Hop music into the mainstream. "Rapper's Delight" had been released by the Sugar Hill Gang many years before. However, the song was seen by many as a novelty album, not the beginning of a musical genre with real staying power. Run-DMC's success demonstrated the true commercial and popular potential of Hip Hop and made it known throughout the world. It is no surprise then, that they found their way into a musical Hall of Fame. They are one of the most important musical groups of the last 100 years. All of us who count ourselves as part of the Hip Hop culture should know their story and recognize them for their contribution to the artistic world we enjoy so much today.

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Ridin Shotty: To ride in a car in the passenger's seat. Commonly also known as "shotgun".

EX: "I got to ride shotty in a Nascar last weekend when the race was in town."

Ballin on a Budget: To live like you are rich even without having to have a lot of money. Usually by finding good deals and implementing your personal style to make lesser priced items look more expensive and higher quality than they actually are.

EX: "I just got some new white pants and used my spray paints to design them with my own graffiti pattern. I saw some at a store last weekend for a lot of money, but I'm ballin on a budget so I did my own thing."

Frosted: Wearing a lot of jewelry, especially diamonds or sparkling accessories.

EX: "I can't believe she got a real diamond necklace for her birthday." "Yeah, she sure must be cold cuz her neck is straight frosted!"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Name the other Hip Hop inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- 2) Watch the video on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website @ <http://rockhall.com/story-of-rock/video-series/video/7640/> and summarize what Chuck D. describes as the problem with the way Hip Hop/black music is often portrayed today.
- 3) What famous group is Chuck D. from?