

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

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

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF FUNKMODE - PART 2 (The Company Begins)

FUNKMODE has been bringing you many informative lessons on the origin and history of Hip Hop, but what is the origin and history of FUNKMODE? (continued from PART 1 @ <http://bit.ly/rMofPm>)

When Mighty met Cara, a whole new world opened up to him. Cara had years of experience in the world of professional dance and he began to spend as much free time as he could with her soaking up that knowledge. At the same time, Mighty's lack of experience actually started to benefit Cara. He asked questions that caused her to think differently about what was possible in the world of dance and performing which allowed her to start thinking out of the box. Together, they started to ask questions that would lead them to the formation of FUNKMODE. For example, Cara had a background in theater and Mighty pointed out that there were really no Hip Hop based theater shows, which seemed strange since both Hip Hop and theater had been around for decades. They began to imagine what they would do if they had the chance to produce such a show. It could combine both of their skill sets in a way neither of them had done before.

One night, as they sat in one of their now FUNKMODE famous brainstorming sessions, they asked each other what would happen if they were to combine Cara's skills in Ballet and Modern dance with Mighty's skills in Hip Hop. "What would you even call that?", they wondered. "Balle-funk!" ... "Funk Modern!" ... "Ballet Hop!" ... and then it happened. To this day, no one knows who said it first, but the word was said that would set in motion a wave of events that would change their lives forever. "FUNKMODE!" They both looked at each other in awe, realizing that something very special had been said. They immediately went to write it down on note paper and put it on the fridge. At the time, it was just a cool name, but both of them knew that there was something there that could become so much more.

Months passed without anything concrete happening but that night did set off a series of conversations about exactly what this "FUNKMODE" would be. They both realized that they wanted to start a dance company of their own. They also realized that eventually they wanted their own studio, to have their own crew and to produce their own shows. It seems like FUNKMODE was going to be the way. Eventually, the talking ended and action began. They filed for a business license and got to work on designing a website. FUNKMODE.com launched in late 2005 as a very simple site with big aspirations. For years, Mighty has been video recording his class choreography and they decided to use the new website to post these videos. Though there are literally hundreds now, the first FUNKMODE class video was posted in February 2006. Through the website and their videos, more and more people began to find Mighty and Cara and it became clear that this increased exposure was proving to be just the boost they needed to break out on their own. In the Summer of 2006, Mighty and Cara left their other teaching jobs and officially began holding FUNKMODE classes at the Diablo Theatre Company building in Pleasant Hill. More students enrolled than they had dreamed and it was clear that this was going to a real success for both of them. What they didn't know at the time, was that this one success would eventually build until it opened the door to all of the other dreams they had for themselves both professionally and personally.

The success of the studio led them to take action on their next dream of having their own dance company. They held auditions and brought in some of their long time friends and students. The first official company members were Shiva, Moe and Baby T. Their first major project together would be to make FUNKMODE's first video in early 2007. They created a video to represent the Bay Area ("Rep the Bay") and traveled from Oakland to SF to get footage of them dancing in front of all its best landmarks. The success of this project encouraged them to go after their dream of producing a Hip Hop theater show. In Spring of 2007, they created FUNK-O-VISION, a completely original live Hip Hop show that combined comedy, music, dancing, acting and improv. The show sold out was a huge hit with both the performers and audiences.

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2007 continued to be a great year for FUNKMODE. They produced their first video to reach one million views on YouTube ("Low") and brought in two new company members (Kim Do & Cassamba). But it was 2008 that would bring a whole new level of success and firsts. Because the "Low" video was such a hit online, FUNKMODE produced their first instructional video for the dance and made it available for free online. They also decided to start planting the seeds for the next generation of FUNKMODE by creating a youth performance company made up of their very best young performers and named them "miniMODE". In the Spring of 2008, FUNKMODE produced its second original live Hip Hop theater show called "The Factory" about a toy factory run by toys. While they worked on this show, they started to lay the groundwork for their biggest and most ambitious live project ever. FUNKMODE partnered with Bay Area Hip Hop legends New Style Motherlode to create a show unlike anything that had ever been done in the Bay. Together they assembled 11 of the Bay Area's hottest dance crews as a single cast for a one-night-only Hip Hop musical theater performance held at the Kofman Theater in Alameda. To this day, they count this show as one of the projects they are most proud of in the history of their company. Having achieved so many of their dreams locally, in 2009, FUNKMODE set out to go international. Using contacts that Mighty had made while working years earlier in Asia, FUNKMODE organized a trip to perform and teach in Singapore for one month. Mighty, Cara, Baby T and Moe taught all ages from five to adults and even had time to produce a performance video for the kids ("Boom Boom Pow – Singapore Edition").

Upon returning from Singapore, FUNKMODE found that they had been bestowed with a great local honor. The studio had been voted as being the "Best in the East Bay" by Diablo Magazine. Of course, this made the studio more popular than ever and the time had come to add more company members. FUNKMODE held a six-month long audition called "Project FUNKMODE". This exhaustive (and exhausting) process produced a great new video and added KMDZ, SarahAngel and Bex to the FUNKMODE family. Together, they worked to handle the increasing student load while continuing to produce FUNKMODE performance projects. 2010 was their busiest year yet, as they produced more class/performance videos and shows than ever before. And while so many of the things Cara and Mighty had initially imagined were accomplished many times over, there were still new goals to be reached.

In 2011, based on the popularity of the music they had created for years for their live Hip Hop theater shows, FUNKMODE released their first album entitled "All Love". The album provided the soundtrack to their Spring 2011 show "You Gotta See This Show" which enjoyed an entire weekend of sold-out success. In the Summer, FUNKMODE had an opportunity to partner with Diablo Theatre Company to produce a Hip Hop inspired version of "The Wizard of Oz". The show was played at the Dean Leshner Regional Center in Walnut Creek for 17 shows and was seen by thousands while receiving excellent reviews from audience members and local theater critics.

What FUNKMODE will do in 2012 is top secret for now, but you can bet that it will be filled with even more funktastic firsts and opportunities to bring joy to all of the fabulous people that have helped make FUNKMODE what it is today.

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Flava: style

EX: "That kid's got more flava than a whole plate of seasoned curly fries!"

O.G. : Original Gangster. Someone who has been doing something for a long time or since the thing began.

EX: "In my School'd lesson from FUNKMODE, I was learnin' about OGs like DJ Kool Herc."

Serve: to beat someone, especially in a battle.

EX: "I saw those two in a freestyle rap battle yesterday and that homie over there straight got served, yo!"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) What would you name your own crew if you had one?
- 2) What cool thing(s) would you like to do if you had your own dance company?
- 3) What styles of dance would you teach if you had your own dance studio?