

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

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

THE STATE OF THE HIP HOP UNION - 2012 EDITION - DANCE

Every year, the President of the United States gives a speech to express to Congress how the country is doing and what his plans are for the coming year. FUNKMODE usually focuses these lessons on subjects that tend more towards the timeless. However, we also want to occasionally address where Hip Hop is at the present time, to give you knowledge on Hip Hop culture as it exists right now. In this lesson, we will address the current state of Hip Hop dance.

Before we get into what's big right now in dance, it is important to acknowledge that the heart of Hip Hop dancing has never changed. Hip Hop dance started in the streets. The first dances that formed the foundation of Hip Hop were created at House and Block Parties. Even less formally, many of the moves that would later be included in the essentials of Hip Hop were made by small groups of friends getting together and enjoying their favorite music. Of course, many of the basics were also invented and expanded upon by dancers while battling one another. This street-level creation of Hip Hop dance is the same today as it was in the 1970s. Hip Hop dance is still an informal art that comes from individual creators and small group collaborations. The major difference today is that this creation is now happening on a far grander scale than ever before. There are more battles, more dancers, more groups, more music and many more opportunities than anyone has ever seen in the history of Hip Hop.

Learning Hip Hop dance has changed quite a bit. Hip Hop dance classes are everywhere. There are major conventions where the most well respected professionals in dance teach the public and aspiring professionals how to excel at their art. One of the coolest things about being a Hip Hop dancer today is that you can learn directly from the dancers who created the styles back in the 1970s. Many of the original B-boys, B-girls, Lockers, Poppers, Wavers and Boogaloo dancers are actively teaching all around the world. For example, Popin Pete (the real innovator of the Popping style) taught a class last week in New York. Mr. Wiggles, also from the Electric Boogaloos, is currently touring the whole world and this season will be New York, Hong Kong, Korea and Mexico. While we never forget where the art came from, Hip Hop dance has gone far beyond these originators. Classes taught by some of the best current dancers in the world are available almost everywhere. There are many dance studios around the country, but the biggest for Hip Hop are in New York and LA. These studios employ choreographers who are actively working in music videos, performance tours, TV, movies and Broadway. In New York, you can take such classes at Broadway Dance Center and Steps. In Los Angeles, two of the top studios are Millenium and The Edge. If you can't travel but live close to a big city, sometimes the best dancers will come to you. The Monsters of Hip Hop Tour is the biggest in the US and comes to every major city with the biggest names in professional Hip Hop dance today.

Being entertained by Hip Hop dancers is easier than ever before too. Hip Hop crews have started moving from being back-up dancers for recording artists to performing in their own major shows. The Jabbawockeez have their own show in Las Vegas and perform there nearly every day of the week. Some crews have started touring as a result of having been made popular through dance TV shows like "America's Best Dance Crew" (ABDC) on MTV or "So You Think You Can Dance" (SYTYCD) on Fox. The Season 3 winners of ABDC, Quest Crew, have gone on to appear in movies like "Kingdom of the Crystal Skull", "Alvin and the Chipmunks 2" and "Honey 2" as well as TV shows. SYTYCD has a tour every year that features the best performers from the current and past seasons of their show. In addition to TV, Hip Hop dancing continues to hit the big screen around the world too. The "Step Up" movies have been very popular in the dance community as have the "StreetDance" movies internationally.

Beyond working for money, you can also see the top Hip Hop dancers battle it out in competitions all over the world. In fact, the biggest B-boy championship in the world, called the "Battle of the Year", happens annually in France (previously in Germany). The past few winners have all been from non-US countries such as Vagabonds Crew (2011, 2006, France), Jinjo (2010, S. Korea), and Gamblerz (2009, 2004, S. Korea). Amazingly, though there is ample representation in the competition from every major country in the world, either South Korea or France has won this competition every year since 2001.

As for what is coming up from the streets, you can see many dance styles emerging all across the country. For

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example, Southern California has been busy creating styles such as Krumping, Jerking and The Dougie (originally from Texas but made popular in LA). Northern California has been continuing to develop Turfing. New York has made popular the Flexing or Bone Breaking style which combines waving and popping with contortionist-like moves of the shoulders back and hips. Chicago has pioneered the Footwork style which evolved quick foot movements from having to match the super fast tempo of Chicago Juke music (combo of Hip Hop and House). Shuffling is big in the dance music scene today courtesy of combining the Melbourne Shuffle from Australia with New Jack Swing moves from the US.

There are so many more dancers, choreographers, studios, competitions and dance styles that could be named here but, unfortunately, we don't have the space to list them all for you. The point of this lesson is to get you started learning about the bigger world of Hip Hop dance around you. Take time to delve deeper into the aspect(s) of Hip Hop dance that interest you the most. Educate yourself on what is happening in the culture and then get out there and become a part of it. More importantly, get out there and become a contributor to the culture. Maybe one day, you'll become another lesson in the long and awesome history of Hip Hop dance.

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Blowin Up: Something that is becoming quickly popular.

EX: "That kid got his song featured on YouTube and ever since then it's been blowin up!"

Kill(ed/in) it: To do something in a completely dominant, thorough and/or impressive way.

EX: "Busta Rhymes absolutely killed that last verse! He was rappin' like a million words a minute."

Skerrd: A varied pronunciation of the word "scared". To be afraid of something.

EX: "Hey, look. I know we're 'bout to dance in front of the whole school in this talent show, but don't be skerrd."

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Name the last American crew to win the "Battle of the Year" competition.
- 2) Name a Hip Hop dance show that you can see in the Bay Area (not mentioned in this lesson).
- 3) Look up a dance class at one of the major dance centers of LA or NY mentioned in this lesson that you would like to take if you could travel there instantly.