The Evolution of Hip-Hop Culture

Jan Devos

o.l.v. de heer Ludo Timmerman

bachelor secundair onderwijs algemene vakken
Preface

First and foremost, I would like to thank my mentor Mr Ludo Timmerman for allowing me to devote my memoir to the evolution of hip-hop culture. I would also like to thank him for all the useful tips that he has given me throughout the writing of my memoir.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal for compiling one of the most interesting and comprehensive books on hip-hop culture, namely That’s The Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader.

I would also like to thank Ronald Turner for his insightful and credible contribution to my chapter on the authenticity of ‘gangsta’ rap music.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank Evan Nielson for designing the cover image for my memoir.

Jan Devos
Inhoudsopgave

1 The evolution of rap music

1.1 The development of rap music

1.1.1 The origins of rap music

1.1.2 A groundbreaking record

1.1.3 Rap and politics

1.1.4 The beginning of popular rap

1.1.5 The beginnings of gangsta rap

1.2 How rap music conquered the charts

1.3 Rap music: a springboard for other career moves

1.3.1 Rappers and Hollywood

1.3.2 Rappers and independent record labels

1.3.3 Rappers owning companies

1.3.4 Rappers and adult entertainment

1.4 Gangsta rap and its authenticity

1.5 Rap music and responsibility: two contradictory items?

1.6 Commercialisation of the rap music youth subculture

1.6.1 The development of a subculture towards a commercial product

1.6.2 Important factors in the commercialisation of rap music

1.6.2.1 The importance of popular producers

1.6.2.2 The importance of guest appearances

1.6.2.3 The importance of singles

1.6.2.4 The importance of videos

1.6.2.5 Payola in today’s music industry

1.6.2.6 My personal experience with record label politics

1.7 Rap crossing over

1.7.1 Rap and rock

1.7.2 Rap and pop music

1.7.3 Rap and R&B

1.8 Rap’s European take-over

1.8.1 The popularity of rap music in France

1.8.2 The popularity of rap music in the Netherlands

1.8.3 The popularity of rap music in Belgium

2 The evolution of breakdancing

2.1 The origins of breakdancing

2.1.1 “The fountain”

2.1.2 The history of breakdancing

2.1.2.1 How slavery and Russians played a role in developing breakdancing

2.1.2.2 The importance of the breakbeat
2.1.2.3 The development of breakdance crews .................................................... 57

2.2 How breakdancing became popular ...........................................................60
2.3 Breakdancers and fashion ........................................................................62

3 The evolution of turntablism ...................................................................63
3.1 The roots of hip-hop turntablism .................................................................63
3.2 Turntable contests ......................................................................................63
3.3 The role of the turntablist in contemporary rap music..................................64
3.4 DJ’s and mixtapes ......................................................................................65

4 The evolution of graffiti ............................................................................66
4.1 The history of graffiti ................................................................................66
4.2 Modern graffiti ............................................................................................67
4.3 The pioneering era .....................................................................................67
4.4 The politics of graffiti ................................................................................69
4.5 The use of graffiti in our contemporary society .........................................71

5 The evolution of beatboxing .....................................................................72
5.1 A history of beatboxing ...........................................................................72
5.2 Beatboxing and the Internet .......................................................................73
5.3 Beatboxing in Belgium ..............................................................................74

6 Glossary ....................................................................................................75
7 Bibliography .............................................................................................77

8 Practical part: teaching hip-hop culture in secondary education .............78
8.1 Discussion of two rap songs .....................................................................78
8.1.1 Lyrics “Auphelia Payne” ........................................................................86
8.1.2 Lyrics “Propaganda” ............................................................................88
8.2 Analysis of a rap song ..............................................................................90
8.2.1 Lyrics “Changes” ................................................................................93
8.2.2 Gap-filling exercise based on the song “Changes” ...............................95
8.3 Discussion of video extracts ....................................................................97
8.3.1 Handout video extracts .........................................................................100
8.3.1.1 Handout video extracts (pupils) ......................................................100
8.3.1.2 Handout video extracts (teacher’s guide) .......................................104
8.4 Discussion of the surveys on hip-hop culture ........................................107
Introduction

“We should be willing to take a scholarly look at hip-hop for no other reason than the art form and culture has grabbed global attention and sparked emulation in countless different countries and among widely varied ethnicities. Hip-hop is being studied all over the globe, and the methodologies of its examination are rightfully all over the map. They are multidisciplinary in edifying, exemplary fashion, borrowing from sociology, politics, religion, economics, urban studies, journalism, communications theory, American studies, transatlantic studies, black studies, history, musicology, comparative literature, English, linguistics and many more disciplines besides.”¹ – Dr. Michael Eric Dyson

What initially was a relatively small subculture phenomenon eventually became one of the biggest and most popular phenomena the world had ever seen. What is the reason behind the fact that the culture of hip-hop managed to increase its popularity throughout the years even though it was under attack – from both the media and the government – at the same time?

In search of an answer to that question, I decided to devote my memoir to the evolution of hip-hop culture. Five chapters were spent on discussing each pillar of hip-hop culture: rap music, breakdancing, turntablism, graffiti and beatboxing. In each chapter I discussed the roots of the element in question, its evolution and its current state. One will notice that the chapter on rap music is rather comprehensive compared to the other ones but this is solely due to the fact that rap music has evolved the most compared to the other pillars of hip-hop culture, and therefore I have devoted a lot of attention to the evolution of rap music.

I have used several credible sources to write my memoir, but one will notice that most of my information comes from That’s The Joint – The Hip-Hop Studies Reader, a book published in 2004 by Routledge. The following is a short book review: “That’s The Joint brings together the best-known and most influential writings on rap and hip-hop from its beginnings to today. Spanning 25 years of scholarship, criticism and journalism, this unprecedented anthology showcases the evolution and continuing influence of one of the most creative and contested elements of global popular culture since its advent in the late 1970s. That’s The Joint is essential reading for scholars and hip-hop fans alike, and rewarding for anyone who seeks to understand the profound impact of hip-hop as an intellectual, aesthetic and cultural movement.” The book was edited by Murray Forman – Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Northeastern University – and Mark Anthony Neal – Associate Professor of Black Popular Culture in the Program in African and African-American Studies at Duke University.

In my memoir, I have tried to present a global and objective overview of the culture of hip-hop and yet I decided not to shy away from giving criticism either. While I do have a lot of respect for hip-hop culture myself, I felt the need to address certain important issues – especially in the chapter on rap music.

My memoir consists of two parts: a theoretical one and a practical one. The theoretical part deals with the discussion of the five pillars of hip-hop culture. The practical part contains a discussion of 100 hip-hop survey questionnaires filled in by teenagers and three lessons specifically designed for a third year of English. The lessons deal with the analysis of a rap song, a discussion of two rap songs and another lesson is based on a hip-hop documentary.

Hopefully this memoir will provide the reader with newly developed insights concerning both the culture of hip-hop and its evolution.
Theoretical part
1 The evolution of rap music

"From the very beginning of its recent history, hip-hop music – or rap, as it has come to be known – has faced various obstacles. Initially, rap was deemed a passing fad, a playful and ephemeral black cultural form that steamed off the musical energies of urban black teens. As it became obvious that rap was here to stay, a permanent fixture in black ghetto youth’s musical landscape, the reactions changed from dismissal to denigration, and rap music came under attack from both black and white quarters."² Is rap really as dangerous as many critics argue? Or are there redeeming characteristics to rap music that warrant our critical attention? I will attempt to answer these and other questions as I explore the culture of hip-hop.

1.1 The development of rap music

1.1.1 The origins of rap music

In rap, the basic beat comes from hard funk rather than Jamaican rhythms, and it is true that there are important differences between rap and reggae. But the process leading to the production of reggae and rap is basically the same. The artists rap their lines in time to rhythms taken from records. And the content of these raps is similar, too. There are boast raps, insult raps, news raps, message raps or party raps, just as there are in reggae. There are also other similarities. “Just as reggae is bound up with the idea of roots and culture, so rap is rooted in the experience of lower class blacks in America’s big northern cities. Rap did for poor blacks in America in the 1980s what reggae had done for the ‘sufferers’ in Jamaica a decade earlier. It got them noticed again and it helped to forge a sense of identity and pride within the local community.”

Like reggae, the music later found an international audience. And then the sense of identity and pride that went along with rap became available to other people who listened to the music. The hip-hop attitude and culture grew up with the music wherever rap was performed or played.

Both reggae and rap grew out of city slum environments. Rap started in the South Bronx of New York, which had been a mainly black and Hispanic ghetto for decades. By 1930 nearly a quarter of the people who lived there were West Indian immigrants. And most of the Spanish speakers living in the Bronx nowadays either came originally from Caribbean islands like Puerto Rico and Cuba, or they are the children of Caribbean immigrants. The Cubans began arriving in the Bronx in the 1930s and 1940s and the Puerto Rican community goes back even further. The Bronx had never been prosperous. But in the 1960s it went into a sudden decline and by the end of the decade it had become the poorest, toughest neighbourhood in the whole of New York City.

In 1967 a DJ called Kool Herc emigrated to the States from Jamaica and came to live in the West Bronx. Herc knew the Jamaican sound system scene and by 1973 he owned his own system. This was much louder and more powerful than other neighbourhood disco set-ups, and it had a much fuller and crisper sound. But when Herc began dee-jaying at house parties he found that the New York black crowd would not dance to reggae. So he began talking over the Latin-tinged funk that he knew would appeal. “To start with, he merely dropped in snatches of street slang. He would shout ‘Rock on my mellow! This is the joint!’ The talk was meant to keep the people dancing and to add the excitement that comes from live performance. Gradually he developed a style that was so popular that he began buying records for the instrumental breaks rather than for the whole track. The lead guitar or bass riff or sequence of drumming that he wanted might only last fifteen seconds. Rather than play the whole record straight through, he would play this same part several times over, cutting from one record deck to the other as he talked through the microphone. This meant buying several copies of the same record. And it also meant that Herc had to have a very precise sense of timing. He used the headphones that DJs use to cue up their records so that he could cut from one copy of a record to another at exactly the right point.”

---

4 Hebdige, Dick, o.c.
The technique Herc had invented became known as the ‘beats’ or the ‘breakbeats’. He can also be credited with another invention. As the switching between record decks got faster and more complicated, it required a lot of concentration. Herc couldn’t rap and operate the records at the same time. So he employed two MCs to do the rapping for him.

The early role of the MC was to introduce the DJ and the music and to keep the audience excited. MCs began by speaking between songs, giving greetings to audience members, jokes and anecdotes. Eventually this practice became more stylized and became known as rapping. The MCs would put on a show for the crowd, dancing in front of the decks and bouncing lines off each other. The first MC dance team had arrived.⁵

“Trying to pinpoint the exact origin of rap is a tricky process that depends on when one acknowledges a particular cultural expression or product as rap. Rap can be traced back to the revolutionary verse of Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets, and even to Bessie Smith’s rapping to a beat in some of her blues. We can also quote ancient African oral traditions as the antecedents to various contemporary African-American cultural practices.”⁶

In any case, the modern history of rap probably begins in 1979 with the rap song Rapper’s Delight, by the Sugarhill Gang. Although there were other (mostly underground) examples of rap, this record is regarded as the signal barrier breaker, birthing hip-hop and consolidating the infant art form’s popularity. The first stage in rap record production was characterized by rappers placing their rhythmic, repetitive speech over well-known (mostly R&B) black music hits. Rapper’s Delight was rapped over the music to a song made by the popular seventies R&B group Chic, titled Good Times. The Sugarhill Gang was signed to Sylvia and Joey Robinson’s Sugar Hill label. Thanks to Sylvia Robinson’s soul music and background, the first thirty seconds of Rapper’s Delight were indistinguishable from the disco records of the day: light guitars, high-hat drumming and handclaps over a deep funk bass line. What followed will most likely be familiar to anyone who listened to the radio in the summer of 1979:

I said, hip-hop, the hippie to the hippie
The hip-hip-hop and you don’t stop
Then rock it out to the bang bang boogie, say up jump the boogie
To the rhythm of the boogie, the beat

---

⁵ Hebdige, Dick, o.c.
⁶ Dyson, Michael Eric, o.c.
1.1.2 A groundbreaking record

Shortly thereafter, Sylvia Robinson signed a seven-member set from the Bronx known as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, creators of the most politically charged rap record of the early 1980s: *The Message*. Lead rapper Melle Mel’s scathing realism caught the music scene off guard, for there was nothing to compare *The Message* to. "The Message was a window into the urban underworld that was never heard before on the radio – and unlike most rap records, it was heard on the radio. The despair, anger and claustrophobia of life in the inner city was brought to the public uncensored:

I can't take the smell, I can't take the noise
I got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice

As the voice of a forgotten social stratum – poor black males from the inner city – Flash and his mates served a political function, by giving a voice to the voiceless." Not since Marvin Gaye’s *What’s Goin’ On* in 1971 had social commentary been taken as seriously. *The Message* was the first significant political recording produced in the post-soul era, representing an astute critique of the rise and impact of the Reagan right on working-class and urban locales.

“Melle Mel’s narrative portrays the transformation of the individual spirit within a context that offers little or no choice or freedom for those contained within it. Within Melle Mel’s text, the fate of the individual spirit living within the parameters of the post-industrial urban landscape has been consigned at birth to live a short and miserable life. Representative of the genre, hip-hop was perhaps the first popular form of black music that offered little or no hope to its audience. The fatalistic experience has become a standard trope of urban-based hip-hop – *The Message* is but one clarion example of this. Juxtaposing diminishing hope and the rampant materialism of the underground economy of the urban landscape, Melle Mel identifies a ghetto hierarchy that ghetto youth have little choice but to invest in. Here, Melle Mel proves that he is aware of the ‘role model’ void and the lack of quality institutions to compensate for the influence of the illicit underground economy. In this context, Melle Mel identifies the failure of inner-city schools to provide a necessary buffer against urban malaise."^8

1.1.3 Rap and politics

“Rap has also retrieved historic black ideas, movements, and figures in combating racial discrimination. Rap music has also focused renewed attention on black nationalist and black radical thought. This revival has been best symbolized by the rap group Public Enemy.”

---

Public Enemy announced its black nationalism in embryonic form on their first album Yo! Bum Rush The Show, but their vision sprang forward full-blown in their important It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back. The album’s explicit black nationalist language and cultural sensibilities were joined with a powerful mix of music, beats and rhythms from the streets. Public Enemy also speaks of the criminality of prison conditions and how drug dealers fail the black community.  

Such rap displays the power and pitfalls associated with the revival of earlier forms of black radicalism. The aspect of the historical revival is that it raises consciousness about important figures, movements and ideas, prompting rappers to express their visions of life in American culture. This renewed historicism permits young blacks to discern links between the past and their own present circumstances, using the past as a source of social reflection, cultural creation and political resistance.

“On the other hand, it has also led to perspectives that do not provide critical reflection on the past. Rather, many rappers attempt to duplicate the past without challenging or expanding the past. Thus, their historical insight fails to illumine the current cultural problems as powerfully as it might, and the present generation of black youth fails to benefit as fully from the lessons that it so powerfully revives. This is an unfortunate result of the lack of understanding and communication among various segments of the black community, particularly along generational and class lines, problems symbolized in the black community’s response to rap. Historical revival cries out for contexts that render the past understandable and usable. This cannot occur if large segments of the black community continue to be segregated from one of the most exciting cultural transformations occurring in American life: the artistic expression, cultural explorations, political activity and historical revival of hip-hop artists.”

1.1.4 The beginning of popular rap

Nowadays, rap is considered to be one of the most popular genres in the music industry. A lot of rappers have several platinum albums under their belts, and rap videos are in constant rotation on T.V. stations such as TMF, JIMtv and MTV. However, the degree of popularity hasn’t always been this high. Therefore, I would like to explain how popular rap – often referred to as ‘mainstream’ rap – has evolved.

Rap records had managed to cross over to the pop charts as novelty hits on occasion, beginning in 1979 with the startling Top 40 success of the Sugarhill Gang’s Rapper’s Delight. But it was not until the release of the album Run-DMC in 1984 that rap music managed to break through the underground scene. The rap group Run-DMC made an impressive debut with their self-titled album, and their 1985 follow-up group effort, entitled King of Rock, even sold over a million copies. However, the group sounded tired. The title song and its video were funny, but the in-your-face rhymes and scratching style seemed stale.

---

9 Dyson, Michael Eric, o.c.
10 Dyson, Michael Eric, o.c.
If 1985 was hip-hop’s most desperate hour (the rap magazine *The Source* recently referred to this era as “The Hip-Hop Drought”), in 1986 it rose triumphantly from the ashes. Run-DMC was at the forefront of this renaissance, but it was the group’s producer, Rick Rubin, who inspired it. He thought that a cover, a remake of a familiar song, would be a way to make the group’s new album ‘a more progressive record’. Rubin brought Aerosmith’s lead singer Steven Tyler and guitarist Joe Perry into the studio with Run-DMC and the resultant *Walk This Way* collaboration made rap palatable to white, suburban youth across the United States. It reached number 4 on the pop singles charts and catapulted the *Raising Hell* album to multimillion selling heights. Ever since then, *Walk This Way* has been referred to as the first mainstream rap song.

“Rap was established as a viable pop form, at least as long as its connections to the traditional rock and roll spirit were made explicit. Nowhere was that connection more obvious than with the next major development in hip-hop. Hot on the heels of the *Raising Hell* came the Beastie Boys’ *Licensed to ill*, at the time the biggest-selling debut album in history. The Beastie Boys were three white Jewish New Yorkers who had played together in a punk-hardcore band before discovering rap and hooking up with producer Rick Rubin. For them, rap was not a way to establish racial pride or document hard times: it was a last vestige of rock and roll rebellion, a vaguely threatening, deliberately antagonistic use for their bratty, whiny voices. *Licensed to ill* sometimes rang hollow when the Beastie Boys rhymed about a criminal, decadent life beyond the fantasies of their listeners, but when it worked – as in their breakthrough hit *Fight For Your Right (to Party)* – you could hear young America laughing and screaming along. Their rhymes were simple and unsophisticated compared to those of Run-DMC, but that made it easier for their audience to follow.”

The strongest legacy of the album, however, was purely technical. *Licensed to ill* introduced a newly expanded rap public to the concept of ‘sampling’. Until this time, rappers were backed up by DJs who would spin records, cross-cutting between favourite beats on multiple turntables. “The advent of the digital sampler meant that a machine could isolate more precise snippets of a recording and loop or stitch them into a denser, more active backdrop. One drumbeat or a particularly funky James Brown exclamation could form the backbone of an entire track, or could just drift in for a split second and flesh out a track.” The Beasties were the perfect group to exploit this technology, because the musical accompaniment they sought was the sound they and Rubin had grown up with, heavy on Led Zeppelin riffs and TV show themes, and packed with in-jokes and fleeting goofy references.

After *Walk This Way* made suburban America a little more open to the idea of rap, the Beasties, including their personalities, attitude and sound (and, of course, their colour), won huge battalions of teenagers over to the form.

---

12 Light, Alan, *o.c.*
13 Light, Alan, *o.c.*
Rap’s single biggest pop hit in 1988 did not come from New York, but out of Philadelphia. DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince (the Fresh Prince is perhaps better known under his real name, Will Smith) released a pleasant trifle chronicling of teen suburban crises called Parents Just Don’t Understand, which hovered near the top of the pop charts all summer. Their debut album, He’s the DJ, I’m the Rapper, sold over three million copies, boosted by their enormously successful single, the aforementioned Parents Just Don’t Understand. This record, which rapped humorously about various crises associated with being a teen, struck a chord with teenagers across the racial and class spectra, signalling the exploration of rap’s populist terrain.

A third, and last, example in the beginning of popular rap is Los Angeles-based rapper Tone Loc. “His success expresses rap’s division between ‘hardcore’ (social consciousness and racial pride backed by driving rhythms) and ‘pop’ (exploration of common territory between races and classes, usually devoid of social message). This division also means that companies and willing radio executives have increasingly chosen pop rap as more acceptable than its more realistic, politically conscious counterpart. This bias is also evident in the selection of award recipients in the rap category at the annual Grammy Awards. Tone Loc’s first single, Wild Thing, sold over two million copies, topping Billboard’s Hot Singles Chart, the first rap song to achieve this height. The success of such artists as Run-DMC, DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince and Tone Loc inevitably raises the spectre of mainstream dilution, the threat to every emergent form of cultural production in American society, particularly the fecund musical tradition that comes from black America. For many, this means the sanitizing of rap’s expression of urban realities, resulting in sterile hip-hop that, devoid of its original fire, will offend no one. This scenario, of course, is a familiar denouement to the story of most formerly subversive musical genres. Also, MTV’s avid acceptance of rap and the staging of rap concerts run by white promoters willing to take a chance on rap artists add further commentary to the sad state of cultural affairs in many black communities: the continued refusal to acknowledge authentic (not to mention desirable) forms of rap artistry ensures rap’s existence on the margin of many black communities.”

1.1.5 The beginnings of gangsta rap

Gangsta rap is a subgenre of rap music that involves a lyrical focus on the lifestyles of inner-city gang members, pimps or drug dealers. One might presume that rappers themselves came up with the term ‘gangsta’ rap, but when one goes back to the origins of this subgenre, one will find out that the media was responsible for this particular title. “Unlike the moralistic preaching, escapism or sentimentality that defines most popular music, gangsta rappers – also referred to as ‘hardcore’ rappers – detail the unemployment, miseducation, discrimination, homicides, gang life, class oppression and police brutality that dominate the lives of many black youngsters. The macho boasting, misogyny, violent fantasies and false consciousness exist side by side with an immature, but clear, critique of authority, a loathing of the oppressive character of wage labour, a hatred of racism and an exposé of Reaganism.”

---

14 Dyson, Michael Eric, o.c.
Although crime and violence in the inner-city have always been a part of hip-hop lyrics, before the rise of gangsta rap the subject was not often addressed so blatantly. Philadelphia rapper Schooly D is often referred to as the pioneer of gangsta rap. He released the 12 inch single P.S.K. (short for Park Side Killers) in 1986, in which Schooly D makes direct references to his gang as well as descriptions of putting his pistol against another rapper’s head.

In the same year, Los Angeles-based rapper Ice-T released 6 In The Mornin’, which is often regarded as the first gangsta rap song. Ice-T’s debut album Rhyme Pays was the first hip-hop album to use the words nigga and ho (slang for ‘whore’), and included references to guns and pimping.

Not surprisingly, there have been moves to censor rap. One organization active in this is the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), founded by Tipper Gore (wife of former vice president Al Gore) and Susan Baker (wife of Bush’s campaign manager, James Baker). In 1985, PMRC led the movement that forced congressional hearings on record labelling. Record companies succumbed to the pressure and began to put warning labels on rap and rock music felt to be obscene and too explicit. The first album to have a warning label placed on it was Ice-T’s Rhyme Pays. Ice-T’s lyrics also contained strong political commentary, and often walked the thin line between glorifying the gangsta lifestyle and criticizing it as a no-win situation.

Meanwhile, on the East Coast, the New York duo KRS-One and DJ Scott La Rock formed a rap group called Boogie Down Productions. In 1986 they released the songs South Bronx and 9mm Goes Bang. In the latter KRS-One describes shooting rival drug dealers after they’ve tried to kill him in his home. The album Criminal Minded followed in 1987. Schooly D, Ice-T and Boogie Down Productions are what one might call ‘pioneers’ of gangsta rap. However, it was not until the arrival of rap group N.W.A. that the controversial subgenre achieved widespread commercial success without radio play or many other conventional mainstream promotions.

N.W.A. (which stands for Niggaz With Attitude) is a group hailing from Compton, a city located in southern Los Angeles County. They released the groundbreaking Straight Outta Compton in 1988 and many consider it a wake-up call to the problems that were going on in many black communities, particularly in South Central Los Angeles. The group has acknowledged that the situations portrayed in the album are entirely fictional, and say they were not meant as any kind of biographical statement. Most of the album’s songs dealt with topics related to life in the ghetto. Some of the lyrics were considered highly dangerous, especially those of Fuck Tha Police, their most notorious song. It resulted in the FBI sending a warning letter to N.W.A.’s record label Ruthless Records and its parent company, Priority, suggesting that the group should watch their step. But as one might have expected already, the FBI’s letter only served to draw more publicity to the group.
Aside from Ice-T and N.W.A., other gangsta rappers from the West Coast include C.M.W. (which stands for Compton’s Most Wanted), King Tee, Too Short and Kid Frost. Each of these rappers grew up in Southern California’s inner-cities and are known for influencing West Coast hip-hop’s gangsta rap style. On the East Coast of the U.S., New York’s Kool G Rap began to use more and more crime related themes in his lyrics towards the end of the 1980s.

From then on, the popularity of gangsta rap increased significantly. This will become clear as I elaborate on this topic in the following chapter.
1.2 How rap music conquered the charts

On 1 March 1991, Soundscan, a computerized scanning system, changed *Billboard magazine*’s method of counting record sales in the United States. Replacing a haphazard system that relied on big city record stores, Soundscan measured the number of records sold nationally by scanning the bar codes at chain store cash registers. Within weeks the number of computed record sales leapt, as demographics shifted from minority-focused urban centres to white, suburban, middle-class malls.

“So it was that America awoke on June 22 1991, to find that its favourite record was not *Out of Time*, by college-boy rockers R.E.M., but *Niggaz4life*, a musical celebration of drug dealing and gun shooting ‘gangstas’ by N.W.A., a rap group whose records had never before risen above No. 27 on the Billboard charts.”

That particular day, 22 June, proved that although rap was still proportionally more popular among blacks, its primary audience was white and lived in the suburbs. Apparently, the more rappers were packaged as violent black criminals, the bigger their white audiences came.

In this chapter I would like to explain how rap music catapulted itself onto the charts of the United States during the 1990s, and how rap has managed to maintain that position in the charts until today.

On 15 December 1992, rapper/producer Dr. Dre released his debut album *The Chronic*. Having split from controversial Compton rap group N.W.A., Dre’s first solo album established him as one of the biggest rap stars in his era. *The Chronic* brought the genre now known as G-Funk (the ‘G’ stands for ‘gangsta’) to the mainstream. G-Funk is a genre defined by relatively slow beats, melodic synthesizers and female background vocals combined with P-Funk samples from the 1970s; most notably from P-Funk pioneer George Clinton.

*The Chronic* is widely regarded as the album that redefined West Coast hip-hop, demonstrated gangsta rap’s commercial potential as a multi-platinum commodity and established G-Funk as the most popular sound in hip-hop music for several years after its release. Furthermore, the album’s success established Death Row Records as a dominant force in mid-1990s hip-hop.

However, releasing *The Chronic* was not as simple as it may seem. Originally, Suge Knight – CEO of Death Row Records – wanted the album to be distributed by Sony. But due to the contractual status of some artists on Death Row Records, Sony refused to distribute the album. But the contractual status was not the sole problem for Sony. In the *Welcome To Death Row* documentary DVD, Jeffrey Jolson-Colburn – former music editor for *Hollywood Reporter* – says the following:

“Part of the major record companies’ fears, in dealing with rap acts, is that some of these gangsta rappers might turn out to be real gangsters.”

---


After the let-down by Sony, Suge Knight and his business associates negotiated a deal with BMG. But when the CEO of BMG heard the lyrics of The Chronic, he did not want to put the record out. Apparently, CEO’s of major record companies were afraid of distributing rap albums with a Parental Advisory - Explicit Lyrics sticker on them. Ultimately, Death Row Records managed to get a distribution deal from Interscope – a record company that stood on the verge of bankruptcy at that particular moment. Luckily for Interscope, The Chronic did very well in the charts. With The Chronic being certified three times platinum just 11 months after the album had been released, it became clear that rap music was far from a passing fad, but instead a genre on which major record companies could capitalize.

The next rap album that conquered the charts was the debut album of Long Beach, California rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg, entitled Doggystyle. The album – released in November 1993 – was a breakthrough success for Snoop, who had already established a fan base with his extensive contributions to Dr. Dre’s The Chronic, so that fans knew they could expect a quality album. And indeed, the album received great reviews in many music magazines and Doggystyle became the first debut album in history to enter the Billboard Music Charts at #1. With the infectious single Who Am I? (What’s My Name) climbing up the charts in a lot of countries, including Belgium, the album went on to go four times platinum in the U.S., according to the RIAA website. However, the music itself was not the only reason the album pushed so many copies. There was a lot of controversy surrounding the release of Doggystyle because of its album cover. Civil rights leader C. Delores Tucker – who had worked together with Martin Luther King Jr. in 1965 – had been on a crusade against gangsta rap for several years. But when she saw the Doggystyle album cover, depicting a young woman as a dog, she was appalled. Her infamous crusade – in which she demanded major record companies not to release such albums – was followed closely by the media. Ultimately, her political pressure bore fruit, as Time Warner – the parent company of Interscope – decided to sell its 50% share of Interscope Records back to that company, in hopes of distancing itself from the whole situation. The well-publicized C. Delores Tucker vs. Snoop Doggy Dogg situation only led to Doggystyle continuing to do well in the music charts, which brings us to the apparent conclusion that controversy sells.

Although Who Am I? (What’s My Name) was the first gangsta rap song to enter the European charts, it was the song Gangsta’s Paradise by Coolio that made gangsta rap a household name in Europe and the rest of the world. The song appeared on the Dangerous Minds (starring Michelle Pfeiffer) movie soundtrack in 1995, and also on Coolio’s second album, entitled Gangsta’s Paradise. The song begins with a – now famous – line from Psalm 23 from the Bible: As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but then diverges with I take a look at my life, and realize there’s nothing left. The song’s lyrics are tragic and serve as criticism of the violence and tragedy surrounding the gangsta-lifestyle. The bridge, sung by L.V., is proof of this:

Tell me, why are we, so blind to see
That the ones we hurt, are you and me

The gloomy beat, the catchy chorus and Coolio’s vivid depiction of a juvenile delinquent made Gangsta’s Paradise the first gangsta rap song to hit number one in the U.K. singles chart, and the album went on to sell three million records in the States.

18 Recording Industry Association of America, www.riaa.com (note: platinum = one million copies sold)
By 1996, rap music had managed to establish itself as a permanent force in the U.S. charts, and the release of rap star 2Pac’s album *All Eyez On Me* in February 1996 brought rap music to another level. The double-disc album was certified nine times platinum by the RIAA on 18 June 1998, making it a memorable hip-hop album. In order to have a successful album, an artist needs a good first single. And 2Pac surely had one: *California Love*, which was produced by and featured Dr. Dre, became an instant rap classic not just in the U.S., but in the rest of the world as well. In the song, which samples a catchy tune from Joe Cocker’s song *Woman To Woman*, 2Pac and Dre pay homage to the state of California: ranging from its climate, women and its boulevards, to its weed and its inner-cities, such as Compton, Long Beach and Watts.

*California Love* became Billboard’s *Hot 100* number one single on 13 July 1996 and the song’s popularity became evident in the European charts as well. The aforementioned album, *All Eyez On Me*, was released by the (in)famous Death Row Records and went into history as a groundbreaking album. Despite the fact that 2Pac had already released four albums in his pre-Death Row era, his 1996 Death Row Records debut finally gave him the exposure he had been craving for and he became a cultural icon worldwide.

Six months after the release of *All Eyez On Me*, West Coast rap star 2Pac was gunned down in Las Vegas. Many believe that his death was due to his often violent lyrics and lifestyle. In March 2007, just six months after 2Pac’s death, the biggest East Coast rap star at the time – Notorious B.I.G. – was shot dead as well.

The deaths of these rappers brought the gangsta rap industry to a pause. Had the ancient saying “live by the gun, die by the gun” finally caught up on them? Were they victims of their own tough-talk lyrics? Is it really necessary for gangsta rappers to sort of glorify the gangsta-lifestyle? Many questions were brought up and many rap conferences were held in 1997 in order to clear up those questions, with as ultimate goal: to stop the violence in rap music.

In the wake of the 2Pac and Notorious B.I.G. killings, an attempt came to release more peaceful and more positive rap. Will Smith’s first solo album, *Big Willie Style*, which was released in November 1997, is a prime example of this.

Will Smith wisely decided not to change his style too much on *Big Willie Style*, the first record he released since becoming a major movie star with leading roles in *Independence Day* and *Men In Black*. Instead of trying to toughen his image, Smith continued with the friendly, humorous pop-rap that has been his trademark since *He’s The DJ, I’m The Rapper*. He gave his music a glossy modern sheen in order to prove that he was still hip – and it worked. The *Top 10* hit singles *Gettin’ Jiggy Wit It*, *Men In Black* and *Miami* were responsible for pushing the album to sell an astounding nine million copies. Rap music had never been *that* popular before.

Despite the success of Will Smith’s solo album, many gangsta rappers were still standing in line for their claim to fame.
And with the focus being shifted from West Coast to East Coast hip-hop, the opportunity came for a young up-and-coming hardcore rapper named DMX to release his debut album. From the early 90s until 1996, West Coast rappers knew a great deal of success because of their unique G-Funk sound that fans kept looking for. During this period, a handful of East Coast rappers received great reviews for their albums, but these – often innovative – albums were unfortunately overlooked by mainstream America mainly because it didn’t appeal as much to the fans as West Coast hip-hop. There was also a major West Coast vs. East Coast rap war going on at that time, which ultimately led to a lot of East Coast rappers pointing their fingers to West Coast rappers for all the violence in hip-hop. After the death of West Coast rap star 2Pac, it felt as if a dark cloud suddenly overshadowed the West Coast rap scene and simultaneously, East Coast hip-hop was put more into the spotlight – as it had been in the late 80s, with rap acts such as Public Enemy, LL Cool J and KRS-One. It was then that DMX took over as the reigning, undisputed king of hardcore rap. He had the charisma that would appeal to the mainstream audience, and at the same time he had ‘street credibility’, meaning that he actually came from an inner-city – Yonkers, New York – where his only way of survival was robbing people and dealing drugs, which ultimately led to several run-ins with the law. In May 1998, DMX released his debut album *It’s Dark and Hell Is Hot* which debuted as number one on the pop charts. The album has been certified four times platinum as of 18 December 2000. What distinguished DMX from the occasional gangsta rapper was that he was the first artist ever to have his first four albums enter the charts at number one.

In September 1998, another East Coast rapper climbed his way up to the charts: Jay-Z. He had already released two strong albums, but failed in having any commercial success. His career took a drastic turn when he released *Vol. 2: Hard Knock Life*. The title track became famous because of its sample *It’s a Hard Knock Life* from the Broadway play *Annie*. The catchy song helped *Vol. 2: Hard Knock Life* go platinum five times and become Jay-Z’s mainstream breakthrough.

Thus far, I have explained how rap music gradually climbed the charts, both in the U.S. and overseas. Over the years, several rap stars had given more exposure to the genre by releasing number one hit singles, but 1999 is a year that truly stands out when it comes to hip-hop’s global popularity.

On 23 February of that year, the world saw the release of *The Slim Shady LP* by a then-unknown white rapper named Eminem. In the early and mid-90s, there had already been a few white rappers trying to get their 15 minutes of fame in the rap industry, but none of them had succeeded. All of that changed when Dr. Dre stumbled upon Eminem’s demo. Dre realized that Eminem was not just an ordinary rapper trying to make money off the rap hype, but instead a very talented lyricist who knew how to make songs. Eminem’s talent led to Dre signing him to his own Aftermath record label and the two immediately started working in the recording studio. Eminem’s debut *The Slim Shady LP* sold an astonishing four million copies, which was unheard of for a white rapper.

---

19 Recording Industry Association of America, *o.c.*
The record sales of Eminem’s sophomore album *The Marshall Mathers LP* are even more outstanding, as he managed to sell 1.7 million copies in the week following its release, so that it became the fastest-selling rap album in history at that time. Eminem’s third album *The Eminem Show*, which was released in 2002, was the best selling album of 2002, with 7.6 million copies by year end.

With every Eminem album being certified multi-platinum, one starts to wonder if Eminem and Dr. Dre – the albums’ executive producer – have a magical formula. After having studied Eminem’s songs over the past few years, it struck me that the strategy was very simple, yet very efficient. Each time Eminem released a new album, it was accompanied by a poppy-sounding first single – far from hardcore rap. By doing so, he not only caught the attention of rap fans, but also – and more importantly – of pop music fans. When the first single had stayed in the top 10 chart for several months, Eminem released a second single, which had more of a hip-hop vibe to it, earning him the respect again of hip-hop fans. This powerful combination of rap fans and pop fans buying his albums generated a multi-million dollar revenue each year.

A second, and perhaps more apparent, factor causing Eminem’s popularity is his skin colour. In the 1990s, the only popular rebellious rappers were black, and although a lot of white suburban kids obviously bought their albums, they could not fully relate to the lyrics that often involved drug dealing, pimping and acts of violence. Eminem became the first rapper that ‘white America’ could relate to. His profane lyrics also contained a certain amount of violence, but he managed to present the songs with a sense of humour, which apparently appealed to white rap fans.

A third, and already common, factor in the music industry for selling albums is: controversy. Eminem is notorious for the commotion surrounding many of his lyrics. With the enormous success of his sophomore album *The Marshall Mathers LP* following its release in May 2000, and its subsequent nomination for four Grammy Awards including *Album of the Year*, critics such as GLAAD – Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation – denounced his lyrics as homophobic, while others protested it was misogynistic and promoted violence. Despite the controversy and many attempts from organizations such as GLAAD to ban Eminem’s music from radio and television, he continued to do well in the charts.

The ninth – and last – rapper I’d like to discuss in this chapter is 50 Cent, as he also played a major role in bringing rap to the mainstream audience.

The product of a broken home in the rough Jamaica, Queens neighbourhood in New York, 50 Cent had to sell drugs during his adolescent years in order to make ends meet. In search of a better way-of-living, he began his rapping career after Jay Master Jay from Run-DMC took him under his wing, and he ultimately signed with Jay’s label in the late 1990s. He then went on to sign with Colombia Records in 2000 and recorded his first full length album, entitled *Power of the Dollar*. Unfortunately, in May 2000, 50 Cent was shot three times in a drive-by style shooting. It is widely stated that he was shot nine times, though this is reportedly an exaggeration; evidence proves that he was shot at nine times but hit three times. Though not critically wounded, the incident won him enough attention to scare Colombia Records into dropping his deal without ever releasing the album.
In 2002, Paul Rosenberg – Eminem’s manager – handed Eminem an underground album of an unknown New York gangsta rapper who went by the name of 50 Cent. Blown away by the rapper’s ability of making good songs, Eminem and Dr. Dre signed 50 Cent to a seven-figure contract in 2002 and helmed his quick rise towards crossover success in 2003. 50 Cent’s debut album *Get Rich or Die Tryin’*, released on 6 February 2003, reached platinum status just one month after its release, and was certified six times platinum by the RIAA in December of that same year. His first single, *In Da Club*, became a hit record worldwide. During the second week of March 2003, Arbitron – a radio audience research company in the U.S. – radio ratings estimated that at some point during that week, 200 million people had listened to the song.

In March 2005, 50 Cent released his sophomore album, entitled *The Massacre*. The album sold 1.5 million copies in its first four days of release, making it the sixth fastest-selling album since Soundscan began tracking sales in 1991.
1.3  Rap music: a springboard for other career moves

Rap music is big business. According to the Los Angeles Times, in 1990 rap brought in $600 million. In that year, two rap albums alone – MC Hammer’s debut album and Vanilla Ice’s To The Extreme – sold 14 million copies just in the United States. In 1991, sales rose to about $700 million. I do not have any figures regarding how much rap music brought in last year, but comparing the popularity of rap music in the early 90s with its current situation, the amount must be somewhere high in the billions.

And even though a lot of rappers have multi-platinum albums under their belts, many of them do not take satisfaction with that. Several rap stars have started their own clothing company while others have starred in big Hollywood productions. But it does not stop there. From getting endorsement deals by shoe companies to releasing hardcore porn DVD’s and to even owning independent record labels, some of today’s biggest rap stars have experience with all of this. In this chapter I am going to shed some light on each of these career moves.

1.3.1  Rappers and Hollywood

Rap’s impact on the Hollywood film industry has been significant. Across the spectrum, rap has found its way into the soundtrack and themes of movies both big and small. In the early 1990s, Hollywood produced an avalanche of films targeted at the black community: from violent action dramas, such as New Jack City – starring Wesley Snipes and rap star Ice-T – to absurd comedies, such as Sister Act. Director Spike Lee, along with other black directors, actors and producers, has attempted to create a new generation of black films that honestly reflect black youth culture.

Hollywood has been willing to produce these types of films for a very simple reason: with a relatively small investment there was the potential for large returns. While African-Americans constitute only about 12% of the U.S. population, they make up about 25% of the movie-going audience. Director John Singleton’s Boyz N the Hood, for example, which starred rapper Ice Cube, cost about $6 million to produce and raised at least $57 million. This translated into a profit of roughly $51 million, so that Hollywood realized that big bucks were to be found in this genre of movies. Spike Lee’s Jungle Fever cost about $13 million and raised $31 million in sales. The dirt cheap Straight Outta Brooklyn cost $327,000 and brought back $2,173,000.

In all of these films and many more, the background music is rap. From the political rap of Public Enemy to former N.W.A.-member Ice Cube’s gangsta rap, every genre of rap is represented. Many rappers also find it a smooth move from rapping to acting. Hardcore rapper Ice Cube was one of the first rap stars that played a leading role in big Hollywood productions. His résumé is quite impressive: more than 20 movies in 15 years, and at the same time releasing number one rap albums on a regular basis. In Three Kings – released in 1999 – he played alongside Hollywood big-shots George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg.

---

Another rapper who has an impressive acting career is LL Cool J. This New York rapper has starred in more than 20 movies as well, including *Any Given Sunday*, directed by Oliver Stone. Just like Ice Cube, LL Cool J continued to release number one hit albums.

One of the most successful movies that featured a rapper in the leading role is undoubtedly *8 Mile*. In this movie – released in 2002 – rap star Eminem made his acting debut, and contrary to what many people thought at the time, he impressed all nay-sayers with his powerful, yet believable acting performance. Acclaimed movie critic, Roger Ebert, had the following to say about Eminem’s debut: “Eminem survives the X-ray truth-telling of the movie camera, which is so good at spotting phonies. He is on the level. Here he plays, if not himself, a version of himself, and we understand why he has been accepted as a star in a genre mostly owned by blacks. I would love to see a sequel (maybe ‘8 ½ Mile’) in which Rabbit – Eminem’s character – makes millions and becomes world famous.”

*8 Mile*, with its estimated $41,000,000 budget, brought in an astounding $215,300,000 worldwide.

Academy Award-winning film *Crash* – released in 2005 – starred rap star Ludacris. The film is about racial and social tensions in Los Angeles, with Ludacris playing one of the leading roles. In the 1990s, rappers were often given ‘bad guy’ roles because of their ‘bad guy’ image that most of them had, but this stereotypical casting has evolved over the years. Ludacris’ character in *Crash* was a carjacker – so, again a ‘bad guy’ – but he succeeded in giving his character some depth, making it no longer a superficial performance but instead one where Ludacris put down a convincing real-to-life person.

The list of rapper-turned-actor goes on: 2Pac, Will Smith, Dr. Dre, 50 Cent, P. Diddy, DMX, Snoop Dogg, Ja Rule, etc... All of them had some rather successful movie careers, proving that rap music can be used as a stepping stone towards an acting career.

### 1.3.2 Rappers and independent record labels

“In the laissez-faire capitalist atmosphere that dominated the early years of modern rap, a number of black entrepreneurs were able to enter the business and become highly successful.”

No one symbolizes these entrepreneurial aspirations better than Russel Simmons and his phenomenal achievements with Rush Communications and its rap label, Def Jam. Rush Communications is huge. It is home to top rap groups such as Public Enemy, Run-DMC, LL Cool J and the Beastie Boys. Def Jam became just one piece in Simmons’ corporation, Rush Communications, which included a management company, a clothing company called Phat Farm, a movie production house, a cable comedy series called Def Comedy Jam – on HBO, a cable television network in the U.S. home to popular series such as *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*, *Rome* and the critically acclaimed series *The Wire* – a magazine and an advertising company.

---

24 Lusane, Clarence, *o.c.*
With all of the above, Simmons had transformed what was essentially a small basement operation into a $100-and-plus million conglomerate. Rush Communications is the thirty-second largest black owned business in the United States and the second largest black-owned entertainment company as of 1992. Since then, the company has expanded tremendously.

Although Russel Simmons himself is not a rapper – he is the brother of Run, of Run-DMC fame – many rappers view him as the ‘father’ of hip-hop record labels. In search of ways to benefit from the popularity of rap, a lot of rappers decided to set up their own record label. One of the first entrepreneurial rappers was Jay-Z, who founded the independent Roc-A-Fella Records – a wordplay on Rockefeller, a rich and powerful New York family – in 1995. The label is part of The Island Def Jam Music Group – home to Russel Simmons.

After seeing how Roc-A-Fella Records became highly successful, many rappers decided to follow into Jay-Z’s footsteps, and to launch their own record labels. Rap star Ja Rule has founded Murder Inc. Records, which also falls under the Def Jam umbrella. Next in line was Atlanta, Georgia rapper Ludacris, who founded Disturbing Tha Peace Records. Again, this independent record label is distributed by Def Jam. In 2004, Def Jam was sold to Jay-Z for $140 million.

Each of the above-mentioned record labels have signed various successful rap acts, which only brought in more money, making a way for other investments. This brings me seamlessly to the next sub-chapter, rappers owning companies.

1.3.3 Rappers owning companies

Hip-hop clothing is extremely popular nowadays. The aforementioned Phat Farm clothing line was one of the pioneers in hip-hop clothing. Shortly after Phat Farm’s success, Jay-Z started his own clothing company, called Rocawear. In 2005, Jay-Z – whose real name is Sean Carter – bought out Rocawear co-founder Damon Dash for an estimated $30 million and has sought to expand the company’s reach by developing the S. Carter high-end clothing line. Jay-Z also has a line of Reebok sneakers aptly named The S. Carter Collection, which holds the record for fastest-selling Reebok shoe in history and made him the first non-athlete to have a signature line of sneakers. In the spring of 2006, he collaborated with Swiss luxury-watch maker Audemars Piguet.

Apart from his clothing company, Jay-Z co-owns the 40/40 Club, an upscale sports bar which started in New York City and has since expanded to Atlantic City, New Jersey. There are plans in work for having 40/40 bars in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Singapore. Jay-Z is also a part owner of the New Jersey Nets NBA team. All of these businesses combined make Jay-Z one of the most successful entrepreneurs in hip-hop.

The next rapper who turned out to be a highly successful entrepreneur is Sean Combs, also known as Puff Daddy or P. Diddy. His clothing line Sean John became so popular in the 2000s that Combs was named Best Menswear Designer of 2004 by the prestigious Council of Fashion Designers.

---

Aside from the clothing company, Sean John also launched its first fragrance, a men's scent called Unforgivable, manufactured by Estée Lauder. The fragrance became a big hit: sales were over 200% beyond expectations, and in less than two months, it displaced Giorgio Armani's Acqua di Giò as the top-selling men's fragrance in the United States. Sean Combs also owns the upscale restaurant chain Justin's (named after his son) with locations in New York and Atlanta.

Combs is one of the wealthiest and most entrepreneurially-minded men in the American entertainment industry. In 2002, he was featured on Fortune magazine’s 40 Richest People Under 40 list and in May 2006, Combs was featured in Time magazine’s 100 Most Influential People list.

50 Cent is another popular rapper who has built himself a rather impressive empire in just three years’ time. His empire includes: a record label (G-Unit Records, a division of Interscope Records), apparel/footwear ventures (G-Unit Clothing and footwear, joint ventures through, respectively, the Ecko Clothing Company and Reebok), vitamin water (Formula 50, through Glacéau’s Vitamin Water), watch line (G-Unit Watches, through Jacob & Co), and a video game (50 Cent: Bulletproof, through Vivendi Games). His future plans are to dominate the film and television worlds through two new G-Unit ventures in film and television and his most prized project: the non-profit organization The G-Unity Foundation, which aims to better the life of urban youth.

Each of the above mentioned companies – from the ones that Jay-Z owns to the ones owned by 50 Cent – know a great deal of success, and not only in the United States. The clothing lines Rocawear, Sean John and G Unit Clothing are all distributed worldwide. When new G-Unit or S. Carter sneakers are released in Belgium and the rest of Europe, they get sold out very quickly – despite the expensive price tag.

1.3.4 Rappers and adult entertainment

“Hip-hop has lately taken a turn towards the bourgeois, with prominent rappers renouncing violence, embracing philanthropy and donning pinstripe suits. But in deliberate defiance of this newfound respectability, some top acts have begun to pursue a less-than-wholesome sideline: commercial pornography. Pop music has always pushed sexual boundaries, of course, and rap has never shied away from gleefully smutty lyrics. But now, some stars are moving beyond raunchy rhetoric into actual pornographic matter, with graphic videos, explicit cable TV shows and hip-hop-themed girlie magazines.”

50 Cent, whose Get Rich Or Die Tryin’ was the best-selling album of 2003, was at the Adult Entertainment Expo in Las Vegas in January 2004 to promote a deal with a company called Digital Sin. The result is an interactive DVD called Groupie Love, featuring 50 Cent and his group G-Unit, that allows the viewer to select partners, sexual positions, camera angles and even the dispositions of the women (‘naughty’ or ‘nice’).

27 Edlund, Martin, o.c.
The newly launched music-meets-porn magazine *Fish 'n' Grits* gives rappers and porn stars equal play in its pages. Rapper Method Man shares the magazine's first cover with an adult film star.

And in January 2004, Playboy TV introduced a new hip-hop-themed series – the first of several planned in the next years – called *Buckwild*. The show features mainstream stars like Snoop Dogg, Nelly, Outkast and Busta Rhymes having fun with a frisky troupe of women called *The Buckwild Girls*, who seem to fall out of their clothes whenever a camera approaches. Ken Francis, the creator, producer and host of the series has the following to say about the series: “It was inevitable. Hip-hop is a billion-dollar-a-year industry. If you don't do it, you're going to miss the boat.”

The first mainstream rapper to do a feature-length commercial porn video was Snoop Dogg, whose *Snoop Dogg's Doggystyle* was distributed through Hustler Video in 2001. Set in his Los Angeles home, it featured sex scenes combined with video clips of 11 previously unreleased songs. Like other rappers who have released porn videos, Snoop Dogg does not actually have sex on camera; instead, he plays master of ceremonies, presiding over the festivities. In an industry where a video that sells 4,000 copies is considered a hit, *Snoop Dogg's Doggystyle* sold somewhere "in the hundreds of thousands," according to Larry Flynt, president of Larry Flynt Publications, which owns Hustler Video. It was named the top-selling tape of 2001 by the porn trade publication *Adult Video News* and was the first hardcore video ever listed on the Billboard music video sales chart. The sequel, *Snoop Dogg's Hustlaz: Diary of a Pimp*, was named top-selling tape of 2003.

Another rapper who has recently released a porn DVD is Lil' Jon – producer of the number one hit single *Yeah*, which was certified 4 times platinum in the U.S. in 2004 and featured singer Usher and rapper Ludacris. The DVD, which is called *Lil' Jon and The East Side Boyz: American Sex Series* was released in 2004 through adult video stores and the Internet.

Other successful hip-hop inspired porn DVD's include the *Sex & The Studio* series, in which famous rappers such as Snoop Dogg, Chingy, Xzibit and many others take a look at exclusive events behind closed doors. The following is a brief description of the DVD series: “Sex and the Studio has created an alternative style of interviewing artists. Each interview covers issues such as their latest album or upcoming projects. The sexy hostesses extract a more erotic side of each artist by asking questions of a sexual nature, while exposing themselves. The outcome is entertaining, when each artist's unique perspective and sexual experiences are revealed to their fans.”

---

28 Edlund, Martin, *o.c.*
1.4 Gangsta rap and its authenticity

“Rap is black America’s CNN”\textsuperscript{30}, that is what Public Enemy front man Chuck D has said in several interviews. On the same note, rappers are often referred to as ‘street journalists’, as they tell the world what really happens in the inner-cities. The question is: how objectively do they report to the masses? When one listens to gangsta rap songs, one might start to believe that living in the ghetto of Compton, California is similar to living in war infested countries such as Iraq. With all the talk about automatic rifles, car jackings, ruthless street gangs, extortion and so on, one starts to wonder how much of it is actually true.

In search of a credible answer to that question and other ones related to the gangsta rap topic, I decided to conduct an interview with 21-year-old Ronald Turner, who grew up in Gardena, California – a city in Los Angeles County – and who is currently studying at Florida A&M University. This interview was conducted via e-mail.

First off, can you give us a brief introduction of yourself?

My name is Ronald Turner, and my ‘stage name’ or alias is R-Tistic. I am 21 years old and I am going into my last year at Florida A&M University where I am studying Computer Information Systems. I was born at a hospital in Downtown Los Angeles, and I spent the first three years of my life in Inglewood, California, before moving to Gardena, California, in July of 1988. I spent my entire life there until I left for college in 2002. I grew up between the cross streets of Crenshaw & 135th St., and Van Ness & Rosecrans. My neighbourhood was a somewhat typical neighbourhood for Los Angeles, but it had a mixture of everything. Most of the houses ranged lower middle class to middle class value, but the apartments that were located directly behind my house consisted of many families who were on Section 8 housing\textsuperscript{31}. The main gang in my neighbourhood was Shotgun Crip, and I actually grew up next door to two of the originators. When I’m not in school or working, I spend much of my time producing music, playing video games, talking on several Internet discussion boards, and going out to any music related functions.

Since the early 1990s, gangsta rap has managed to stay non-stop in the pop charts. Artists such as Dr. Dre, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Jay-Z and 50 Cent have multi-platinum albums under their belts by talking about the gangsta-lifestyle. Why do you think gangsta rap is so popular among teens?

Gangsta rap has remained consistent on the pop charts in the last 15 or so years for various reasons. Although I didn’t get into rap until 1993, I have heard many logical explanations that may explain why it has been such a huge phenomenon. For one, there are many different elements that seem to appeal to a large number of people for different reasons. When listening to older gangsta rap, the music itself was heavily inspired by funk and soul acts such as George Clinton, Roger & Zapp, Ohio Players, Sly & The Family Stone and many others.

\textsuperscript{30} Light, Alan, o.c.
\textsuperscript{31} Section 8 is a public housing program sponsored by the U.S. government.
Because of that, the music appealed to many teens that grew up listening to their parents who played music from this generation, although they grew up in the era of hip-hop. But aside from the music, gangsta rap seems to appeal to many people who have a rebellious attitude against society and even their own parents, and this ends up covering a large number of individuals. Therefore, it appeals to everyone: from the minorities and those who grow up in poverty – because of the subject matter and because they discuss things that can be seen in these neighbourhoods – to upper-middle and upper-class youth who purposely rebel against their parents and upper society because of their adolescent nature. Many teens have a naturally negative attitude, and even if they can’t relate to the lyrics and subject matter that is heard in gangsta rap, they love the energy and the hardcore attitude that is present in gangsta rap. For those who don’t listen to gangsta rap because of the gangsta elements, many of them end up loving it because of the catchiness of the songs, and because of the talent that many gangsta rappers possess.

**Gangsta rap has been popular for roughly 20 years now. Would you say that gangsta rap has evolved into a more marketable genre, or has it managed to maintain its roots?**

Gangsta rap has evolved and morphed into many different things since its conception. There are also many forms of gangsta rap. When it first came out in the 80s, it appealed because of the fact that it was so blunt, realistic and shocking, although it is rumoured that some gangsta rappers didn’t live the lifestyle that they rapped about. It quickly evolved into a marketable form of music, in which many people believe started with Dr. Dre’s *The Chronic* album in 1992. He was able to incorporate the attitude, lyrics and shock effect of the 80s gangsta rap into the melodic and catchy music that was most appealing at the time. At this time, gangsta rap became more and more acceptable into the mainstream, with several gangsta rappers becoming icons in communities that would not have accepted them 10 years earlier. Because of this, the entire rap world started to shift toward the elements that gangsta rap possessed, because of the potential for marketability and financial success.

In the early 90’s, there was a variety of rap that could be considered as gangsta rap. There were the artists and groups that received a lot of mainstream attention, such as Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre, and they usually rapped about different elements that can be seen in poverty-ridden areas. However, there were more extreme forms of gangsta rap that were too controversial to even have mainstream success, and these songs lacked the marketability of the other artists. For example, there were albums released from the Bloods and Crips[^32], that only spoke of Los Angeles gangbanging and the negativity that was going on at the time. These artists didn’t serve as just commentary, but they made several threats and insults to the rival gangs at the time. Coincidentally, most of the artists who appeared on these albums are either incarcerated, or have been murdered. The West Coast was the primary source of gangsta rap from the 80s until 1996, and only some people will consider many of the current artists who are presently enjoying commercial success as being gangsta rap artists. Some of the rappers who are considered ‘rap stars’ now, such as Young Jeezy, T.I. and Dip Set, come from the southern and eastern regions of America.

[^32]: Bloods and Crips are two of the most notorious street gangs in Southern California.
Whether or not one would consider these artists as being ‘gangsta rappers’, it is very obvious that the subject matter, style and overall attitude that they are most famous for was heavily inspired by the West Coast’s gangsta rappers from the 90s. There are many common themes: from the cars driven, to the guns that are most commonly referred to and the negative attitude towards women, that seem to bridge the gangsta rap of the 90s to the current rap acts.

In gangsta rap songs, rappers often talk about the violence that occurs on a daily basis in their neighbourhoods. In their lyrics, they regularly send out a warning message to listeners, for instance: “If you’re not from Compton, don’t come around here or you’ll get yourself killed”. Would you agree with that statement? Do people who come from a Long Beach, California neighbourhood for example easily get killed if they ‘trespass’ Compton-territory?

Many people from Los Angeles may not want to admit it, but the movies and gangsta rap from the 90s ended up giving the L.A. area an image that is definitely not an accurate portrayal of what it is like to live in Los Angeles. However, there are many different ways to answer this question. Most of these statements were made to create fear to those who were not from L.A., and from what I have learned, most people outside of L.A. didn’t really take these threats seriously until they saw what happened in the 1992 riots. It is not as simple as, “you are not from Compton, so when you cross the borders, you will get shot” or “if you wear red or blue, you will immediately be shot if a Crip or Blood sees you”.

Compton, as well as most neighbourhoods in the L.A. area, can be very dangerous at times. However, there is a very strict, yet logical, etiquette that has to be followed. It all depends on where you are, who you are with, and how you look and act. Someone from out of town does not really have a reason to go to any bad neighbourhood in Compton or Los Angeles unless they have a friend or relative there, and in those cases, they are generally safe as long as they don’t do or say anything that will cause them to be in trouble. Anyone from Long Beach, Gardena, South Central or anywhere else can drive through Compton or even Watts, but they have to make sure to avoid certain streets and neighbourhoods. There is not a ‘Compton patrol’ of gang members who are actively seeking to kill or even rob anyone who’s not from there. But if someone happens to drive through a bad neighbourhood, and if they look suspicious in any way, then they might have to deal with a few consequences. When people say Long Beach and Compton don’t get along, they are usually speaking of the gangs that don’t get along, and not just the individuals. There is always tension between different gangs in Compton, and that is where most of the violence ends up coming from. But it’s a city of 90,000 people, and they don’t just look for outsiders to kill just to prove how violent and irrational they are. I would estimate that most of the activity comes from people who are between the ages of 15 and 25.

33 The dress code of Blood gang members is ‘red’ and Crips wear ‘blue’ clothing.
When I began listening to hip-hop in 1998, it struck me that a lot of rappers took pride in representing their neighbourhood, especially West Coast rappers. Is there a reason behind that?

It is natural for most people, especially minorities, to represent their neighbourhood or city. However, on the West Coast, Los Angeles in particular, the pride may be due to the fact that everyone in L.A. seem to represent their neighbourhoods more than their cities or states, and this could be because most gangs are separated by neighbourhoods. Many people place high value on a person’s credibility or relationship with those in their neighbourhood, and this value can be even higher than what they will place on someone for being successful. For example, some rappers may claim to be from a certain neighbourhood, and they may be one of the most successful rappers, athletes or entertainers…but if the people in the neighbourhood don’t accept them or represent them, the rest of the city will not give them the credit they may deserve.

Can you give us a brief explanation of Bloods and Crips? What exactly are they?

For those who may not know, Bloods and Crips are two gang ‘umbrellas’ that were given their titles in the 70s. Most neighbourhoods that are under these two ‘umbrellas’ originated as smaller neighbourhood cliques back in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Stanley “Tookie” Williams, the person who received a lot of media attention last year during his quest for redemption before ultimately being killed by the death penalty in 2005, was one of the originators of the Crips, along with Raymond Washington, who was killed sometime in the 70s. The Crips and the Bloods have been rivals since the 70s, but many people don’t know that there is not just one gang called ‘Crips’ and one called ‘Bloods’. Each of them serve as collections of different neighbourhoods which are spread throughout the Los Angeles area, and each neighbourhood goes under a different ‘set’ name. Some of the most commonly heard Crip sets are Rollin 60 Crip, Grape St. Crip and Long Beach Rollin 20 Crip. One thing that most people from outside of L.A. don’t realize is that many sets within Crips and Bloods don’t get along at all. One of the biggest rivalries that has been going on since the 70s is between Rollin 60 Crip and Eight Tray Crip. In my neighbourhood where the Shotgun Crips are present, there are not many Blood sets close to us, and much of the tension that happens with the members from this set ends up going on between other Crip sets. Most Crip and Blood members are African American, although there are a few sets who come from Mexican or Samoan descent, as well as a few other ethnicities.

In songs from West Coast gangsta rappers, you often hear rappers saying: “Out here, you’ll get killed if you wear a shirt with the wrong colour”. Would you agree with this? For instance, if a tourist walks around in a Watts, California neighbourhood where there are predominantly Bloods, and he’s wearing a blue T-shirt, is his chance of getting killed real? Or is that warning message only directed to other gang bangers?

This definitely has some truth to it, but it’s not as severe as it sounds. In the situation you mention, it is a very high chance that a person could get killed, but that is a very rare situation that only an ignorant individual would perform. Watts is one of the most notorious places for gang activity, and I’d say that it may even have the highest poverty rate in the entire county as far as African Americans go.
And if a person was in a Blood neighbourhood, it would most likely be in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Projects, which is home to the Bounty Hunter Bloods, who are definitely some of the wildest gang bangers in the county. So if someone was to walk through this neighbourhood in a blue shirt, and no one knew who he was, he would definitely be questioned by anyone who happened to be outside at the time, and there is a good chance that he would be attacked in some form.

But that is just one situation that you mention, and in L.A., everything depends on timing, location and what you have on exactly. One of the most shocking things I have seen in Los Angeles that is related to this is when I was at the intersection of Crenshaw and Slauson, which is located in Rollin 60 Crips neighbourhood. The police had recently placed an injunction on them, in which their members could be arrested for anything from being in a group of three or more members at once, to even shouting out their set name or throwing up their gang sign. However, I remember seeing a young man standing in front of a shop near the intersection wearing a red Chicago Bulls jacket, and a red Boston Red Sox hat, which are both very strong indicators of being a Blood. And at first I thought that this person was going to get jumped by some Crips who were walking on the other side of the street at that particular moment, but ultimately nothing happened. This proves that colours are not always as big of a deal as people may believe they are. It was a lot worse in the 80s and early 90s. Nowadays, most gang members won't wear their colours as flagrant as they did in the past. In most cases, you can wear red or blue in moderation, depending on how it is worn, and where you are exactly. If you are not located in gang territory, there is not as much of a chance of being confronted due to your choice of colours, unless you are wearing an item that is specific to gang banging, such as a certain style of hat, Converse Chuck Taylors, bandanas, belts or solid colour T-Shirts. If you are in your own neighbourhood, most people will not even pay attention to the fact that you are wearing a colour that is opposite of the gang located there.

At the same time, it is not always about colours, but what you have on. There is a Fatburger located on Manchester Ave. and Crenshaw, and at certain times of the day, you may end up seeing a large number of Blood members who are probably from the Inglewood family set. If I was to walk in front of them with a black Seattle Mariners hat, white T shirt, black jeans, and blue Converse Chuck Taylors, they would definitely confront me, because those items are still related more to being a Crip, although there is no blue worn. But if I had on a blue and white button-up shirt, blue jeans and dark blue dress shoes, they might not even pay attention to me unless they just wanted to start something.

Another thing that you often hear West Coast rappers talking about, is “Out here, don’t stop at a red light unless you want to get carjacked.” Has the violence in those neighbourhoods really escalated to such a level that people should ignore traffic signs, just for the sake of not getting carjacked?

That is something else that rappers will portray in songs that is definitely not true at all. It really depends on where you are, as everything else does, but also what you are driving. I was on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, and I saw two guys in a convertibile, stuck in traffic at a red light. There were about 12 Crips walking on the street, and as soon as they spotted them, they ran up to the car and started punching both of them and pulling them out of the car. However, the cops ended up coming from out of nowhere, and they all scattered.
These guys were driving some sort of luxury convertible, and they looked like easy prey, so I can see why they were targeted.

But this only happens on rare occasions, mainly when there is a large number of gang members together at once on a main street. This is usually prevented because the police target any African Americans or Mexicans who look suspicious and are together in a large pack. But when it does happen, it's usually because a person is driving a very nice car, and they do not look as if they have a gun or anything to prevent the situation from happening.

**Gangsta rappers are between 18 and 30 years of age and they are supposed to 'represent' their neighbourhood. But how do older people from the neighbourhoods, who don't take part in gangbanging, look at gangsta rap? I assume that not all people who live in those neighbourhoods are (former) gang members.**

As far as the older adults who aren't involved with gangbanging, but happen to live in neighbourhoods that are considered to be gang territory, many of them are against gangsta rap. It really depends on the generation and age, and it seems as if those who grew up with gangsta rap probably still like it because of the music. But most of them won't agree with the subject matter, and some of them still won't want their kids to hear it. For the adults who were never into rap or gangsta rap, they are strongly against most of it. My father is 60, and he never wanted me to listen to gangsta rap inside the house when I was growing up.

**When asked about the reasons why youngsters decide to join a gang, West Coast rapper The Game stated in an interview that "All these kids are born into gangbanging. That's all they've ever seen in their life. So for them it's normal to become a gang member." Do you agree with this statement? Why is it that you manage to go to college, but many other people of your age decide to become a gang member?**

I agree with that statement for the most part, but it all depends on what kind of family a person is raised by, and how serious the gang situation is in their neighbourhood. With The Game, he grew up with parents that were gang members, and almost everyone in his life was a gang member, so it was natural. If your parents are gang members, it is a very high chance that you will end up being one, unless they do something to keep you away from it. Both of my parents have a college education, and they wouldn't even consider letting me become a gangbanger if I had wanted to choose that path. However, many people grow up in households similar to mine, but they still end up in gangs. This is usually because of the pressure they have to deal with from their peers, and many older gang members actively recruit gang members through their neighbourhoods. In some people's eyes, there is appeal to the lifestyle, which has to do with getting respect, having protection and being accepted. It gets confusing, because in Los Angeles, black neighbourhoods aren't always divided on class as much as white or even Hispanic neighbourhoods. So in some parts of Gardena, Carson, Inglewood, Long Beach and even in Compton, there will be a neighbourhood that has a family with two adults that have their Master's degrees, a struggling family headed by a single mother on Section 8, a family headed by two older grandparents and a family that has a few drug abusers or 'crack heads'. This might sound confusing or almost at a conflict of interest, but this is because there will be some houses worth 500,000-600,000 dollars on one street, but then there will be apartments located directly behind it that are all based on Section 8.
So that means the kid whose parents have their Master's will end up attending school and walking home with the kid whose mom is on Section 8, and whose brother may be on drugs, and that makes it possible for kids who come from decent backgrounds to end up in the gangbang lifestyle, even if it is done behind their parents' back.

**Thank you for this interview.**

**Conclusion:**

After having analyzed the answers from Ronald Turner – someone who obviously grew up in the same environment as a lot of gangsta rappers – I came to the conclusion that a lot of gangsta rap lyrics are to be taken not with a pinch, but with a pound of salt.

Sure enough, there *is* violence in Los Angeles' inner-cities and statistics are clear proof of this: according to the *FBI's 2005 Homicide rates*[^34], the city of Los Angeles is confronted with a lot of homicides.

As far as gang violence is concerned, it is obvious that gangbanging has become a part of street life in Los Angeles, so in a way it is only normal that rappers will talk about this in their lyrics. But why exaggerate? The way I see it, 'boasting' has always been a part of hip-hop. Since the days of Run-DMC in the 1980s – when the group boasted about how cool they really were – rap fans learned to understand that 'rapping' and 'boasting' are closely intertwined. So when a gangsta rapper talks about how tough his neighbourhood really is, he does not just try to paint a picture of life in the inner-city, he also tries to make clear that his neighbourhood is the toughest, and that all the other gangsta rappers should take notice of it.

Even though these rappers claim they represent their neighbourhood, it is clear that not all residents of these neighbourhoods share the same state of mind as gangsta rappers. Those who do not take part in the gang lifestyle – but instead try to lead a legitimate life – are clearly dissatisfied with the way gangsta rappers portray their neighbourhood. Therefore I think that these rappers should weigh their words more before putting them on record.

Another aspect I would like to touch on is the sense of despair that rappers spread through their music. I often hear rappers talking about how hard it is for youngsters to grow up in the gang-ridden streets of Los Angeles. And while I do believe that it must indeed be hard to grow up in such circumstances, Ronald Turner is a prime example of someone who proved that it is possible to overcome these same circumstances. However, as Ronald said, a lot of it has to do with the way one was brought up. When a child grows up in a family where each family member is in a gang, then it is not hard to see that this child will eventually end up being a gang member as well. But in my opinion, gangsta rappers have the potential to bring a change in all of this. A lot of these inner-city kids look up to successful gangsta rappers such as Snoop Dogg. And it is sad to see that an artist as Snoop Dogg only talks about the 'violent' lifestyle he leads instead of trying to spread a positive message towards the youth ('violent' is put between brackets because I refuse to believe that someone who has sold over millions of albums still leads a violent lifestyle until this day).

[^34]: [www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius)
I do have to mention that every now and then, Snoop Dogg states in his songs that it is
good to stay in school. But when 95% of his album is about drugs, sex, guns and so on, it
is obvious that the positive element will become overshadowed.

Snoop Dogg – and other successful gangsta rappers – can play a major role in trying to
send a positive message to the youth, which would help them get rid of that sense of
despair. In other words, rappers should take more responsibility, which seamlessly brings
me to the next chapter, *rap music and responsibility: two contradictory items?*
1.5 Rap music and responsibility: two contradictory items?

Rap music is currently one of the most popular genres in the music business. But with fame comes responsibility. My question is: how seriously do rappers take their responsibility? Allow me to take multi-platinum artist Snoop Dogg as an example.

When I went to see Snoop Dogg at Forest National in February 2005, I was amazed at the number of little kids – aged 8 to 13 give or take – who were also anxious to see him perform. However, my amazement was followed by a question: how do these young kids look at Snoop? Do they see him as a role model or just as someone who makes entertaining music? I hoped it was the latter, because Snoop Dogg is far from a role model. As I have already discussed in chapter 1.3.4 Rappers and adult entertainment, Snoop is heavily involved in this particular business. On the cover of these adult DVD's, there are promotional slogans such as “includes 11 previously unreleased x-rated video clips by Snoop Dogg!”. But with Snoop having lots of die-hard fans who want to see literally every video clip he has made, I wonder how many underage Snoop Dogg fans have seen those video clips by now.

Although those DVD's cannot be sold to anyone who is under the age of 18, I seriously doubt that store owners ask to see some I.D. when a 15-year-old customer wants to buy it. And even if they do refuse to sell the product to minors, it should not be very hard nowadays for youngsters to get their hands on the DVD by means of the Internet. With a quick search on the Web, one can easily get access to websites or forums where you can download x-rated movies for free. These die-hard fans may not be interested in the x-rated material itself, but they surely are confronted with it when they watch those videos. I am sure that Snoop Dogg is aware of the above-mentioned dangers of the Internet, so I wonder why he still associates himself with adult entertainment. At the end of the day, the dilemma that a popular rapper is often confronted with is “Do I think about my fans or do I think about my money?” Given the releases of Snoop’s x-rated DVD’s, it is obvious that Snoop Dogg decided to increase his income, even if that meant taking the risk of exposing 13-year-old fans to adult movies.

But Snoop’s involvement in adult entertainment is not the only thing that worries me. In the past few years, Snoop Dogg has created a ‘pimp-image’ for himself. Whenever he goes out to big events such as the MTV Music Awards, he dresses up as a pimp – a colourful Armani suit, a ‘typical’ pimp sunshade, a ‘typical’ pimp hat and a drink cup with diamond-encrusted letters on it that says ‘P.I.M.P.’.
I even vividly remember seeing footage of Snoop arriving on the red carpet with two scantily clad women walking next to him. “No big deal”, one might say. But what struck me is that these two women were tied up with chains to Snoop, as if they were dogs. Big award shows such as the MTV Music Awards draw millions of viewers across the world, including thousands of 8 to 18-year-old Snoop Dogg fans. So when those same fans see their favourite artist treating women as dogs, I wonder: what kind of effect must that image have on those kids?

Apparently, being a pimp has become something cool. On TV stations such as TMF and JIMtv, there are regularly ‘dating shows’. I normally refuse to watch these types of programmes, but I happened to catch one episode where an 18-year-old was talking about the clothing he was wearing which was meant to impress a girl, and he said something along the lines of: “I am looking very cool now. I may not have on a suit as Snoop Dogg, but I got the sunshades and fancy shoes which make me look like a pimp as well. P.I.M.P!” I was literally speechless. Since Snoop Dogg first introduced the pimp-image to his fans a few years ago, youngsters seem to use the word ‘pimp’ as if it is normal. Because of the fancy image that Snoop has created, those kids have obviously forgotten that pimps beat women. Then again, it is not Snoop Dogg’s responsibility to raise children. Parents continue to play a major role in the way their children look at women for instance. But in my opinion, someone as popular as Snoop Dogg should not try to present himself as a ‘pimp’ just for the sake of having a ‘cool’ image.

I used Snoop Dogg as an example because he is not only one of the most popular rappers, he is also someone who has clearly shown his pimp-image to the outside world by means of his songs, video clips and dress style. Unfortunately, Snoop is not the only one with such an image. Other popular artists, such as 50 Cent and Lil’ Jon, all have created a pimp-image in the last couple of years.

Rappers need to be aware of the major influence they can have on their fans, so therefore they need to start considering taking more responsibility. But a fancy image often leads to being talked about in the media and to having great album sales, so when a rapper has to choose between setting an example for the youth or selling millions of albums, it is sad to see that nine times out of ten they will go with the platinum albums.
1.6 Commercialisation of the rap music youth subculture

1.6.1 The development of a subculture towards a commercial product

Rap music has moved out of the inner-cities and into the mainstream of popular culture. Mass media advertisers have recognized the value of using rap to sell their products, even though they do not always fully understand the subculture from which it came. Pepsi Cola, Coco Cola, Reebok and many other big corporations have all signed popular rap artists to promote their products. While there are a few rappers who have greatly benefited from this level of commercial success, others are concerned that as rap moves into the mainstream, it will become more and more simplistic in order to appeal to mainstream audiences. “Black artists may have good reason for concern. Historically, blacks have not been able to reap the financial rewards from the musical forms that were uniquely theirs. The blues, jazz, gospel, soul, funk and rap are all musical styles that originated within the black community.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, most major record producers were interested in promoting only white artists, such as Elvis Presley, to perform rock and roll music that had previously been recorded by black artists. The white performer was instrumental in promoting the acceptance of the musical style among mainstream audiences. The development and acceptance of rock and roll was in many ways similar to the development of rap in the late 1980s and the development of jazz in the 1920s. Some of the first rap concerts, like some of the first rock and roll concerts, were plagued by riots, leading people to believe that this new music was corrupting today’s youth.”

(In this chapter, I decided to use a lot of quotations because the matter I am about to explain is rather complicated. The authors I quote explain it systematically and logically and are therefore often quoted literally.)

How does a subculture phenomenon such as rap become integrated into the mainstream of mass culture? In the past, a number of other youth subcultures have gained some level of popularity (e.g. the punk rock subculture), but few have achieved the same level of commercial success that has been achieved by the rap subculture. What is it about rap that has captured the interest and dollars of so many people?

“Youth subcultures have often been organized around music. For instance, there was the punk rock subculture, which originated in England in the 1970s. A typical punk concert involved gathering together to hear a live band, while slamming into other concertgoers, jumping up and down or jumping off the stage into the audience. Rude and antisocial behaviour was highly encouraged, so that this music would remain more meaningful as an expression of rebellion than overly-commercialized pop music. The heavy metal subculture also provided an identity for young people who were disenchanted with home, school, jobs and churches, the acceptable institutions of their parents.”

36 Blair, M. Elizabeth, o.c.
James Lull – Professor Emeritus of Communication Studies at San Jose State University, California, specializing in media and cultural studies – called these types of movements (including rap) ‘oppositional’ subcultures, because they represent loosely organized resistance to social institutions, values and practices. A common bond develops between performer and listener through shared meanings, not only in the lyrics but also in the style and sound of the music itself. In the 1950s, sociologist David Riesman observed that young people were using popular music to create socially shared meanings and common states of awareness.

Historically, a lot of subculture music has come from oppressed groups defined by socio-economic class. For many youngsters, rap has become a voice reflecting not only rebellion against adults but alienation from the majority culture.

Because of its emphasis on borrowing previous hits and altering them to fit the rap style, it is not surprising that the first widely-successful national rap hit was a remake of a popular rock tune. This introduction of rap into the mainstream was accomplished by a three-man group known as Run-D.M.C. Their interpretation of the song *Walk This Way* – originally a hit for the white rock group Aerosmith, sold 3.3 million copies, and demonstrated to both artists and producers that rap was not just a passing phase. Since that time, rap has changed considerably and much of the recent rap music could be described as a crossover between rap and another style, such as pop, funk or R&B.

“The criticism that rap has become too commercialized stems from a similar criticism that has often been expressed about all types of popular music. To some, the industrialisation of music means a change from active musical production to passive pop consumption, the decline of cultural traditions and community. Pop music is a classic case of what Karl Marx called *alienation*, when something human is taken from us and is returned in the form of a commodity.”

“Since the 1970s, several sociologists have proposed that Marxian hegemony theory provides a good explanation of how a subcultural trend, such as rap, becomes popular and is then commercialized by the mass media. The concept of hegemony means the way in which an entire ideological complex of beliefs, values and attitudes that function for the sustenance of the ruling class comes to dominate every aspect of society. Though originally proposed by Karl Marx in *The German Ideology*, the idea was further elaborated by the Italian theoretician Antonio Gramsci. He viewed hegemony as a process where the dominant class uses its privileged access to ideological institutions of that society, such as religion, education and the media to propagate its values and reinforce its position. Gramsci believed that the most effective aspect of hegemony is found in the suppression of alternative views through the establishment of parameters that define what is legitimate, reasonable, sane, practical, good, true and beautiful. A consequence of the hegemonic process is that groups who do not benefit from the dominant view, that are farthest outside the mainstream, tend to have value systems that are fragmented, inconsistent and confused. This tendency for views to become increasingly fragmented as one descends the class structure is due to the fact that their ‘alternative’ viewpoints are suppressed by forces in the dominant ideology.

---

Mark Gottdiener – professor of sociology at State University of New York – proposed a model of mass culture that is inspired by Marxian hegemony theory, but is at the same time critical of that theory. He suggests a semiotic approach for explaining the influence of various subcultures, particularly youth subcultures associated with certain musical styles, on the mass culture. The semiotic approach assumes that the production of meaning takes place by virtue of a social relation, such as reciprocal linkages between producers and users as mediated through mass cultural objects. By focusing explicitly on symbols and their exchange, the model can specify where meaning is created, communicated and received. This model assumes that social groups of all kinds including powerful as well as less powerful groups are understood to be bearers of meaning. ‘Mass’ culture is made up of various individual subcultures, which vary in the extent to which they interact with the dominant ideology in society. Before there is a ‘mass’ culture there must be ‘culture’, meaning the conceptual forms and accumulated knowledge by which social groups organise everyday experience. The ‘mass’ culture develops as a result of dynamic meaning creation from groups that may or may not be closely allied with the dominant ideology.\(^{40}\)

“Gottdiener visualised the production and control of ideological meanings as operating in three separate stages. In the first stage, producers produce objects for their exchange value, whereas purchasers of these objects desire them for their use value. The link between the producers and consumers occurs when the producers communicate an image for the product, usually through advertising. Products are surrounded with a web of social significance from the outset through advertising as a further inducement to purchase, creating value above and beyond the basic utility of the product. For example, a pair of trousers is no longer just an article of clothing, but also a social symbol, promising the wearer youthfulness or an exotic aura, making him look like a ‘man of the world’ or whatever else the imaginative variations of the advertising experts on the theme of trousers might be. The manufacturers of Reebok, Puma, Nike and Adidas sneakers are making huge profits because their shoes have become accepted not only as the most technologically advanced, but also as stylish and prestigious. These manufacturers did not intentionally market these products to appeal to the rap subculture, but their products were subsequently adopted by this group, becoming part of its identifiable look.

In the second stage, users modify objects of mass consumption in order to express certain cultural symbols, or in connection with specific group practices, or for use in subcultural activities. This is when culture is actually created by the users of the object. The primary use value of the object is transformed, so that the object becomes a sign of belonging to a subculture. In some cases, the commodity may have become so personalized that it is no longer effective in its primary function. Throughout the history of popular music, youth subcultures have used insignificant everyday objects to develop a material context of cultural behaviour that is stable enough to allow those meanings and values which the music embodies for them to be projected onto these material possessions. The meanings are often class specific and are based upon the particular experiences of the interpreter. It is for this reason that commercial entities cannot completely exploit and manipulate consumers.

\(^{40}\) Blair, M. Elizabeth, *o.c.*
Even though advertisers have been accused of controlling the consciousness of the purchaser, most advertisers would testify that their efforts to ‘control’ consumers are often unsuccessful. The youth subcultures transform everyday objects to show that they are different from the mainstream, using clothing and hairstyles as weapons or visible insults in a cultural war.\textsuperscript{41}

“Rap is possibly the commercial equivalent of what the Marxist writer Adorno called part-interchangability or pseudo-individualisation, two methods of capitalist production. Part-interchangability is when mass-produced parts from one product line are used in another ‘different’ product. In rap music, this process occurred when the DJ took old recordings from a number of artists ranging from James Brown to the Rolling Stones, pieced them together and extended the drum break to form a new instrumental composition. Pseudo-individualisation is when the ‘same’ products are made to seem different by the use of individual gimmicks, such as promoting a particular ‘star’ image or adding some guitar licks or drum riffs that are characteristic of a particular performer.”\textsuperscript{42}

“During the third stage of Gottdiener’s model, the producers of mass culture decide to capitalize on these subcultural trends. The transfunctionalised objects produced by the subculture become the raw material for cultural production by mass producers – such as advertisers – into more marketable, less radical meanings. A rather pessimistic Marxist would probably view this third stage as being extremely important to the process of ideological control, the ideology that benefits capitalist production. It is evident that big business is making big money from the impact and influence of the rap culture. Major record companies have signed popular rap artists and advertisers are using these stars and their music to promote products. Gottdiener concludes that Marxist theorists who advocate ideological domination fail to appreciate the importance of the relative autonomy of subcultural life. It is true that the consumption habits of individuals are so manipulated by the mass culture industries as to transform the production of meaning by subcultures into a managed market purchase. But this does not always happen because consciousness itself cannot be controlled. There are no two people in the world who will perceive any given stimulus musical or otherwise in exactly the same way. Fortunately, there will always be groups who desire to distinguish themselves from the mainstream and produce meanings for cultural objects that are independent of the logic of exchange value and dominant cultural sensibilities. Interestingly, these two sources of cultural production – mass-producers and subcultures – are dependent on each other.”\textsuperscript{43}

Television advertising provides an excellent medium for examining the influence of rap on the mainstream audience. Because children and teens are the major consumers of rap music it is only logical that rap would be used to promote products to these age groups. In the United States, nine hours of children’s Saturday morning television were videotaped on three consecutive Saturdays from the three major networks. All the ads were examined carefully to determine whether or not rap was used. In October 1990, there were 11 commercials that contained rap. To be considered as rap music, words had to be spoken in rhythm or not sung to a melody.

\textsuperscript{43} Blair, M. Elizabeth, o.c.
Rap music was usually accompanied by typical fashion and behaviour, such as wearing sneakers, baseball caps, speaking into microphones and breakdancing. Big corporations such as McDonalds, Barbie and Lego all have created commercials with ‘rap’ as a central theme.

Rap is not only being used in commercials in the U.S., but in Belgium as well. Numerous companies have used rap music to promote their products. Perhaps the most popular and the most memorable commercial is the one by Mora – the Dutch company known for making snacks such as hamburgers or chicken nuggets. In the commercial, a group of old men stands in front of a Mora shop. Suddenly two old men walk towards the pavement and they start rapping to each other, as if it is a real rap battle. That commercial was indeed hilarious, but it shows just how much rap music has become commercialised. It is sad to see that the mass culture industries have the power to dominate the development and diffusion of rap music. This is the most unfortunate outcome for a subculture in which many young people hoped that rap would be a ‘way out’ and a chance that others might listen to what they had to say.

1.6.2 Important factors in the commercialisation of rap music

Although the media plays a major role in commercialising rap music, there are other noteworthy factors I would like to discuss. Producers, guest appearances, singles, videos, payola and record label politics in general are crucial in making a rap artist more appealing to the mainstream audiences. In this chapter, I am going to explain why.

1.6.2.1 The importance of popular producers

A music producer can have many roles: controlling the recording sessions in the studio, coaching and/or guiding the artists and supervising the mixing and mastering processes. In rap music, the producer is nine times out of ten the person who creates the beat. He is responsible for programming the drums, the bass line, the guitars, the samples and the vocals arrangement. At the end of the day, the producer is responsible for the end result. Just like recording artists, producers have to work their way up the ladder if they want to become more popular. And if they are lucky, they might end up working with a popular recording artist, which will give the producer – next to a big pay check – a lot of exposure. For example, there is a big chance that the producer will be mentioned in music magazine articles or his name might be brought up during an interview with the rap artist.

In rap music, there are already several producers who have created many great beats and hit singles: Dr. Dre, Rick Rubin, Timbaland and most recently, Kanye West, Scott Storch, Lil’ Jon and Pharrel Williams. Every single one of them has created multiple hit singles, hit albums or both.

When a rap artist has been in the music industry for more than 6 years and he just cannot seem to have a breakthrough-hit with his current producer, chances are rather big he will try to work with one of the above-mentioned hit producers – if his budget allows it, that is – in hope of also having a number one hit single. When the collaboration finally goes down and the album is completed, the promotion can start.
Rap magazines are crucial in promoting an artist. Not only do they interview artists or review albums, they also allow space for promotional ads. Take any popular rap music magazine – such as *The Source* or *XXL* – and one will notice that literally 50% or more of the magazine's content consists of ads. I have been reading these magazines since 1999 and it has come to my attention that the layout of those ads has changed over the years. When I look at an ad for a rap artist from 1999, the layout mentioned several things, such as the artist's name, the name of the album, the record label on which it was released, the names of the guest appearances (cfr. next sub-chapter 1.6.2.2 The importance of guest appearances) and the name of the first single. But over the years, more and more ads started mentioning the producers who worked on the album as well.

In a way, this is understandable. I will use Dr. Dre as an example. From the 1990s until 2006, Dr. Dre served as the executive producer for 11 rap albums. Each of these rap albums have sold anywhere from one million copies to nine million copies. None of them have sold fewer than one million units. That is why Dre is often referred to as the producer with the Midas touch, since everything he touches turns into gold – or in his case, platinum. So over the years, Dre has managed to create a solid reputation for himself. And other rap artists – who have not worked with Dre – take notice of that too. They start thinking, “If I get Dr. Dre to produce my album, then I will go platinum as well!”. And the ball starts rolling. If the artist eventually succeeds in getting Dre to produce his album, it is safe to say the promotional ad will mention in big letters “*produced by Dr. Dre!*”. So when people who buy the magazines read that particular ad, they realize “Oh, this artist has production from Dr. Dre. The album *must* be worth checking out then!”. I am not trying to generalise, but quite often that is simply how it goes. And Dr. Dre is just one example of this.

It seems to me that a lot of people buy albums not necessarily because they think they will like the album, but because of the hype surrounding it. If an artist has a popular producer on his album, then a lot of people will conclude that the album *must* be great simply because of that reason.

Having famous producers on a rap album is just one step in trying to appeal to the mainstream audiences. Having famous guest appearances are of equal importance.

1.6.2.2 The importance of guest appearances

Basically, having popular guest appearances on an album has the same effect as having a popular producer. Promotional ads with slogans such as “*Includes features from Jay-Z, 50 Cent & Eminem!*” automatically draw attention.

The above-mentioned artists are known for having hit singles or hit albums. A logic result of this is that they have a rather big fan base. So when a new young up-and-coming artist convinces those artists to make a guest appearance on his album, he will get a lot of exposure as well. The Jay-Z fans for example will end up checking out the album from the new artist – because their favourite artist is featured on it – and the same can be said about the 50 Cent and Eminem fans. That way, the new up-and-coming artist not only makes a name for himself, he also tries to draw the fans of those big artists towards him. And having more fans means having more cash. So again, some people tend to lose themselves in the hype surrounding an album, and they end up buying an album they might not even like.
I wish to stress that not every person gets caught up in this type of hype, but apparently a lot of people do, because otherwise I do not see the use of spending thousands of dollars on promotional campaigns based on creating a hype if it does not generate outstanding record sales.

1.6.2.3 The importance of singles

More than anything else, a good first single is of major importance. If it is a new artist, then that first single is his introduction to the audience. If it is an already established artist, the first single of his new album is still important because he has to make some sort of comeback and convince the audience he still has what it takes. In both cases, having a hit single is important if you want to cross over to mainstream audiences.

If you have a look at today’s rap singles, you will notice that 90% of the singles are ‘club singles’. This means that the lyrics are about having a good time at a party or a club. Topics can range from getting drunk to flirting with girls, but each time the main theme is ‘the club’. The person responsible for this club-frenzy is 50 Cent, who had a massive hit worldwide with his single *In Da Club* in 2003.

Apparently, in order to appeal to pop fans, an artist has to make a record with a ‘feel-good’ sound to it. If the song is catchy – meaning: a melody or chorus that easily gets stuck in one’s head – chances are big the song will blow up in the music charts.

Picking the first single is not only important for the artist, but even more for the record company he is signed to because ultimately the record company wants to recoup the money it has spent on the artist – promotion, studio time, etc…. So therefore, having great record sales is important and having a number one hit single is a key factor for an artist. A lot of people think that artists are in full control of the music they release. Sadly enough, that is not true. Artists can record an entire album of songs which they think are really good, but if the CEO of their record company is not satisfied with the album, it will not be released. Each time when a major artist – think Eminem, Jay-Z or 50 Cent – has finished recording an album, a listening session is organised for the ‘big shots’ at the record company. The CEO of the record label, the vice-president of the label, the artist’s manager, the executive producer of the album, the artist himself and a few other people all gather around a table to listen carefully to the album. During or after the listening session, opinions are exchanged and possible changes that should be made to the album are suggested. It is actually normal that the CEO has the right to postpone the release of an album – even when the artist thinks his album is great. Because when it is all said and done, that particular album somehow represents that record label. And when the album turns out to be a failure in the pop charts, also the reputation of the record label will be damaged. So while people sometimes may wonder “why has he released such a terrible single?” a lot of times it is not even the artist’s fault, but simply a result of record label politics. Nowadays, a lot of mainstream rap artists tend to be less and less creative. In fear of getting dropped by their record label, they all try to record the best club single as possible.

Now, what does one need to have a good club single? First of all, a good beat, which brings us to the aforementioned role that producers play. And secondly, having a guest appearance from a famous artist on the club single cannot do harm either.
At the very beginning, hip-hop fans might have liked these club records. It is indeed entertaining and the melodic choruses are often catchy. But when this same formula—making club singles—is repeated year after year, it is not hard to understand why a lot of rap fans get sick and tired of hearing these songs on the radio.

What these mainstream rap artists do not seem to understand is that they serve as ambassadors for hip-hop. They are the ones who are responsible for presenting contemporary rap music to mainstream audiences. But when those same audiences keep hearing the same type of records over and over again, they ultimately start thinking that rap music is exactly what they hear on the radio: party music. In my opinion, those rap artists have allowed hip-hop’s reputation to get damaged for the sake of money.

But with all the talk about these commercial rap artists, one might start to wonder what happened to the ‘regular’ rapper who spoke about poverty, teenage pregnancy, violence among teens and politics. Luckily, there are still hundreds of these rap artists who continue to make quality music, who still show love for the culture of hip-hop and who are not willing to degrade their music just because of the money. And even though they do not get the credit they deserve or the exposure they should have, real hip-hop fans still have something substantial to listen to while the mainstream audiences keep swallowing what is being shoved into their throats by major record companies such as Universal Music Group.

1.6.2.4 The importance of videos

Scantily dressed women, Italian sports cars, multi-million dollar mansions, Versace suits, exotic resorts, Moët et Chandon champagne bottles and diamond-encrusted necklaces. Combine each of these elements with a mainstream rapper and you have a prime example of today’s rap videos. What is it with rappers constantly trying to show off?

In the early 1990s, a handful of rappers already started making videos with the abovementioned elements in them. But given rap’s flourishing period, it was a bit normal that those young rappers tried to enjoy their success as much as possible. Most rappers grew up with nothing, so when the opportunity presented itself to star in a video in which they were surrounded by women, cars and champagne bottles, then of course they would have no problem doing that.

The difference with today’s rap videos however, is that one can clearly see that the rappers from the 1990s were actually having fun during the taping of those videos. Nowadays, that same rap video scenario has simply become another formula that record labels like to use. Ask any 15-year-old boy and he will tell you right away that he likes watching videos by rap artists nowadays in which he often sees beautiful women and fast cars. The same can be said about a lot teenage girls who most of the times enjoy seeing muscular rap artists full of tattoos. And yes, the record labels are well aware of this.

Having popular videos in constant rotation on TV stations means more exposure for the artist. More exposure leads to more record sales. More record sales lead to record labels once again capitalising on rap music. And again, these rap stars continue to lower rap’s image for the sake of the almighty dollar. I guess money is indeed the root of all evil.
1.6.2.5  Payola in today’s music industry

“In the music business, the practice of record companies paying money for the broadcast of records on music radio is called payola. It is illegal in the United States. Under United States law, a radio station has always had the ability to play a specific song in exchange for money; however, this must be disclosed on the air as being sponsored airtime, and that play of the song should not be reported as a ‘spin’. Some radio stations report spins of the newest and most popular songs to industry publications, which are then published. The number of times the songs are played can influence other stations around the country to play or pass on a particular song. On influential stations (and particularly on television) payola can become so commonplace that it becomes difficult for artists to get their records/videos played without offering some sort of payment.”

On 25 July 2005, New York state’s attorney general Eliot Spitzer made a controversial announcement: Sony Music had been found guilty in the state’s investigation of payola. Memos from both Sony's Columbia and Epic Records’ senior vice presidents of promotions circa 2002-2003 — whose names are modified in the reports but are well known in the industry — spell out who to pay and what to pay them in order to get the company's records on the air.

The following is one of the memos that Fox News published on 25 July 2005:

“Please be advised that in this week’s Jennifer Lopez Top 40 Spin Increase of 236 we bought 63 spins at a cost of $3,600.”

There is evidence of plasma TV’s, laptop computers and PlayStation 2 players being sent to DJ’s and radio programmers in exchange for getting records on the air. And not just electronic gifts went to these people either. According to the papers released on 25 July 2005, the same people also received expensive trips, limousines and lots of other incentives to clutter the airwaves with the disposable junk that now passes for pop music. In November 2005, Warner Music Group was also charged with payola. According to a state legal brief, Warner offered free trips, iPods, airline tickets to exotic destinations, computer equipment, trips to the Super Bowl, the World Series and MTV Awards to radio personnel in exchange for boosted airplay.

In one instance, a Sony/BMG executive contemplated a plot to promote rapper Killer Mike’s A.D.I.D.A.S single by sending DJ’s one Adidas sneaker. DJ’s would receive the other sneaker after playing the single ten times.

After being charged with payola, Warner Music group – whose artists include rappers Missy Elliot, Fat Joe, T.I., Paul Wall and Mike Jones – has vowed to stop the practice and pay $5 million to settle the state investigation.

Sony/BMG has agreed to a $10 million settlement payoff.

So with record labels controlling the airwaves – and thus brainwashing today’s listeners – it is not hard to see why those club singles are in constant rotation. Some of them are indeed catchy, but the game should be played fairly. There is no way that up-and-coming independent record labels or artists can afford to spend their money on things like payola. They need all their money to afford studio time and to set up an effective marketing plan.

44 www.wikipedia.com
Moreover, if the major record labels keep buying radio play, where will it stop? Reports prove that nowadays, it costs a couple of hundred dollars for one spin, but if payola is not put to a stop, it may go up to a couple of thousand dollars for one spin. The music business should be about the music, but the more our society evolves, I get the feeling that the business side is taking over.
1.6.2.6 My personal experience with record label politics

The information I have just given about the abovementioned items – producers, guest appearances, singles, videos and payola – are based upon my personal experience. I did not find that information in books, because as far as I know, no books have been written about the methods that record labels use to make rap music cross over to the mainstream. Since the age of 12 I have been heavily interested in rap music. In 1999, I bought my first rap music magazine. I learned a lot about the process that goes into making an album and the power that record companies have.

Although reading magazines each month was a great learning experience for me, I learned most when I was working for an independent record label from 2003 until 2005. The Internet had always been a source for me to get to know new rap music. And in early 2003, I stumbled upon the website of Los Angeles-based independent record label IV Life Records. After being blown away by some of their songs, I decided to promote the IV Life Family – as the group was called – on various hip-hop forums on the Internet. Even though I was not paid to promote them, I did it anyway because I felt that they had major talent. I kept in touch with the producers and artists who worked at IV Life Records through their own message board and gradually I found out what was going on behind the scenes in the music industry.

The group had already recorded so many songs that they could release three albums. The only problem was that they did not have a distributor yet – in other words, a major record label that falls under the umbrella of companies such as Universal Music Group or Warner Music Group. As one might expect, these ‘majors’ do not sign distribution deals to anyone who wants one. They need to have some certainty that they will be able to recoup their money. And thus, the first thing the majors look for is an independent record label with ‘potential’. Since the potential is to be found in the music, they decide to listen to the music. IV Life Records had been struggling to get a distribution deal – and in fact, they still are – for more than 3 years. And even though they managed to get ‘high calibre’ artists such as Snoop Dogg and Ice Cube on their album, it was not enough to satisfy the majors. In early 2005, I found out why IV Life Records still did not have a distribution deal. In February 2005, Crisstyle – recording artist for IV Life Records – told me that he had just got back from a meeting with Sony, where he and the other members of the IV Life Family were told that they would get a distribution deal on one condition: their first single had to be produced by either Kanye West, Scott Storch or Lil’ Jon – three of the most popular producers in rap music nowadays.

Even though the offer was very tempting, IV Life Records did not agree with it because they did not want to compromise the integrity of their music by releasing a single under pressure from a major record label. Since the start of IV Life Records in 2000, the artists kept making music with the IV Life Family until three of the four members left the group in late 2005. The members decided to part ways with IV Life Records because after having spent five years at the label, they still did not have a distribution deal and they ran out of patience. Currently, Crisstyle is the only recording artist left at the label along with DJ Slip – IV Life Records’ main producer. They are still negotiating distribution deals with majors until this very day.
1.7 Rap crossing over

With rap music being one of the most popular genres in the 1990s, it came as no surprise when other genres – such as rock, pop and R&B – started incorporating influences of rap in their sound.

1.7.1 Rap and rock

The members of metal band Body Count are often regarded as the first ones who started to experiment with rap music and heavy metal. Body Count is a hardcore band formed in 1990, based in Los Angeles and headed by rapper Ice-T. They are believed to be a predecessor of many ‘nu-metal’ bands to come, although Ice-T never rapped in any of their songs up until their last album.

In 1992, a rock band called Rage Against The Machine appeared on the music scene and they surprised the world with a new sound: heavy guitars mixed with rapping. Although Body Count had already laid the foundations of rap combined with rock, it was Rage Against The Machine who made the genre immensely popular worldwide. Rage is known for their vocal radical leftist beliefs, which is why they stirred up so much controversy, especially in the United States. The band primarily saw its music as a vehicle for social activism. Tom Morello – guitarist of Rage Against The Machine – said the following in a February 1997 interview with Guitar World magazine: “America touts itself as the land of the free, but the number one freedom that you and I have is the freedom to enter into a subservient role in the workplace. Once you exercise this freedom you've lost all control over what you do, what is produced, and how it is produced. And in the end, the product doesn't belong to you. The only way you can avoid bosses and jobs is if you don't care about making a living. Which leads to the second freedom: the freedom to starve.” Rage Against The Machine drew inspiration from rap group Public Enemy, who are known for having strong political messages in their rhymes. So again, rap was used as a voice for the oppressed.

In 1994, rock group Korn released their self-titled debut album, which was a mix of metal and hip-hop. They are often credited with creating the ‘nu-metal’ genre – a combination of alternative metal and hip-hop. Since their 1994 debut, Korn have sold over 25 million records worldwide – including 16 million in the U.S. – making them one of the best selling metal acts of the last twelve years.

Korn also paved the way for metal band Limp Bizkit, who released their debut album in 1997. Limp Bizkit are the ones responsible for widening the popularity of nu-metal across the world. With Limp Bizkit, lead singer Fred Durst became one of the biggest rock stars of the late 1990s. Limp Bizkit's first big hit, a cover of George Michael's late '80s hit Faith, gained much popularity thanks to heavy airplay on MTV.
1.7.2 Rap and pop music

Rap music did not just leave its imprints on rock, but on pop music as well. In June 1999 Jennifer Lopez released her debut album *On The 6*. The album features guest artists such as Big Pun and Fat Joe – two rappers who grew up in the same neighbourhood as Lopez, the Bronx, New York. It was one of the first albums released by a pop artist with a clear hip-hop influence. In 2001 Lopez released her sophomore album *J-Lo* with the successful single *I'm Real*, which featured multi-platinum rap star Ja Rule on the remix version. Since that song, rap has been a permanent force in pop music.

After having seen Jennifer Lopez’ successful combination of pop and rap music, pop singer Britney Spears decided to experiment with her sound as well. In 2001 she released the single *I'm A Slave 4 U*, which was produced by hip-hop producers The Neptunes. The song had an obvious hip-hop influence and the beat was far from pop music material.

With Lopez and Spears both using hip-hop in their music, the line between rap and pop music was clearly crossed. Were the two singers trying to create a new genre? Or did they decide to work with hip-hop artists and producers in hope of attracting a larger fan base? Whatever the case might have been, their formula was successful.

Female pop stars were not the only ones who incorporated hip-hop influences in their music. Pop star Justin Timberlake – former member of the boyband *NSYNC* – released his debut solo-album *Justified* in 2002. Producers who worked on the album included The Neptunes and Timbaland – known for working with hip-hop artists. Although one might presume the album would have had a pop-sound, it eventually turned out to be an album with clear R&B and hip-hop influences. The Timbaland-produced single, *Cry Me A River*, made Timberlake win a Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance in 2004. His album was certified three times platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America on 5 August 2003.

The list of pop stars who have incorporated hip-hop influences in their music goes on: Mariah Carey, Shakira, Christina Aguilera and the Pussycat Dolls.

1.7.3 Rap and R&B

Another genre that uses rap music is contemporary R&B. Originally, it was a genre that had lots of rhythm and blues – hence the abbreviation ‘R&B’ – but nowadays, most popular R&B artists do not sing over bluesy rhythms anymore, but instead over thumping hip-hop beats. Once again, one could say that they are simply trying to create a new genre, but in my opinion, given rap’s popularity, they are seeking for ways to draw more fans, which ultimately leads to having more money in their bank accounts. R&B artists do not only use hip-hop sounds in their music, they also use hip-hop artists. Since 2000, the majority of R&B singles featured a verse from a popular rapper. R&B artists such as Beyoncé, Ciara, R. Kelly, Jagged Edge and many more have all used this technique and apparently it is a successful formula. Over the past few years, R&B and hip-hop have become so closely intertwined that many people do not know the difference between the two anymore.
1.8 Rap’s European take-over

With its roots laying in the Bronx, New York, rap music has evolved quickly and reached countries across the world. In this chapter I will briefly discuss the evolution of the French, Dutch and Belgian rap scene.

1.8.1 The popularity of rap music in France

Paris is often called the ‘second capital of hip-hop’ and there is a reason for that. In the 1970s, some DJs started playing R&B, soul and funk in French clubs. One DJ in particular – DJ Sidney – was introduced to rap music in 1979 when he first heard *Rapper’s Delight* by the Sugarhill Gang. Sidney even managed to host his own radio show on Radio 7 called *Rapper Dapper Snapper* in 1982. In November 1982, the famous *New York City Rap Tour* was brought to Paris and a generation of French kids were introduced to the hip-hop culture at this event. In 1984, Sidney – who was still hosting his own radio show – was noticed by someone who worked at TF1 and was asked if he wanted to present a show on television that would deal with hip-hop culture. Sidney immediately jumped on the offer and his show – which was simply called *Hip Hop* – came on every Sunday just before the popular *Starsky and Hutch* TV series. It is important to point out that this was the first hip-hop show on television – in the U.S. they did not have a show dedicated to hip-hop culture until 1988. Ironically, the show’s success led to its downfall. The more *Hip Hop* became popular in France, the more Sidney’s bosses tried to experiment with the show. At one point, Sidney had to play videos by pop artists as well, making the show’s original urban spirit disappear.

In 1984, an up-and-coming artist who went by the name of DJ Dee Nasty released the first French rap album – *Panam City Rappin* – and he is therefore credited with being the pioneer of French rap music. In 1988, Dee Nasty and his friend Lionel D were given the chance to host a new radio show *Le Deenastyle* on Radio Nova. It was through this show that rap music was introduced to an even larger audience. The first major star of French rap music was MC Solaar, whose 1991 debut album *Qui sème le vent récolte le tempo* gained enormous success. Solaar is known to be very open and positive in his rhymes and he has proved to be a talented lyricist, which is why he eventually became the first French rapper to have a platinum album. Following MC Solaar’s breakthrough, two styles emerged within the French hip-hop scene: artists such as MC Solaar, Dee Nasty and Alliance Ethnik championed a more mellow style, while more hardcore performers such as Assassin and Suprême NTM preferred a more aggressive style. Many of the latter artists found themselves at the heart of controversies over lyrics that were seen as glorifying the murder of police officers and other crimes, similar to outcries over violent lyrics in American gangsta rap.

Through the nineties, the music grew to become one of the most popular genres in France. In 1997, rap group IAM’s release *L’école du Micro d’Argent* sold more than 1 million discs, and rap group NTM shifted more than 700,000 copies of their final album *Supreme NTM*. In the 2000s, similar to developments in the U.S., a gap has begun to appear in French hip-hop between artists seen as belonging to the mainstream and more credible independent artists.
1.8.2 The popularity of rap music in the Netherlands

The French language turned out to be very appropriate for rapping, and hip-hop fans in the Netherlands took notice of that. Given French rap's popularity, they decided to rap in their mother tongue as well. Osdorp Posse was one of the first groups to make rap music in the Dutch language. Due to their fairly hard and extreme views on everyday life portrayed in their songs, the group soon had a large fan base in the Dutch underground scene. Their debut album Osdorp Stijl – released in 1992 – contained songs like Moordenaars, Katholieke Trut and Commerciële AIDS. This album set the tone of the group’s sound by using hardcore beats combined with a hardcore message shouted out by a seemingly furious Def-P – the group’s leading rapper. The main topics that were touched on in their songs were the poor quality and lack of creativity in commercial music, religious fanaticism and alcohol abuse.

But there were also Dutch rappers who chose not to go the hardcore route but instead aimed for a more commercial approach. Already in 1986, Dutch rap duo MC Miker G and DJ Sven had a Top 10 hit across Europe with Holiday Rap, which sampled Madonna’s Holiday. Other popular Dutch rap artists include Postmen – who mixed rap with reggae – Ali B., Extince, Opgezwolle and Brainpower. The latter received a TMF Award in 2002 in the category Best National Hip-Hop Act. In that same year, Brainpower’s single Dansplaat was released and topped the charts in both the Netherlands and Belgium. In 2006, rapper Jawat won the Grote Prijs van Nederland for his very original and unique style.

1.8.3 The popularity of rap music in Belgium

The Belgian rap scene started in the late 1980s with a U.S.-based hip-hop/techno group called Technotronic. The group had an MC called Ya Kid K who eventually became known worldwide with the massive hit single Pump Up The Jam.

In the early 1990s, De Puta Madre – a rap crew from Brussels – started rapping in both French and Spanish. They became an underground success and are still highly respected in today’s rap scene. In the late 1990s two successful rap groups appeared on the Belgian rap scene. Wallonia has Liège-based group Starflam, who had a moderate hit in 1997 with Ce Plat Pays in which they criticise the Belgian government during the Agusta affair. Flanders has Izegem-based group ’t Hof Van Commerce, who rap in their own West Flemish dialect. When the group released their debut album En In Izzegem in 1998, they started getting radio play on Studio Brussel. Although they were very popular in the region of West Flanders, their breakthrough did not come until 2002, when they released their third album Rocky 7. In 2005, they topped their success with their fourth group effort Ezoa En Niet Anders. They are one of the most successful bands in Belgium – not just in the rap genre – and have played at the renowned Werchter festival in 2005 and at a sold-out Ancienne Belgique in that same year.

I can conclude that rap gradually spread throughout Belgium in the 1990s with the help of the abovementioned groups, but I would like to discuss a few more items related to the popularity of rap music in Belgium.

45 www.wikipedia.com
I remember watching *Coolsweat* – the programme on TMF that only plays hip-hop and R&B videos – in 1999. The programme was a one-hour show on Sunday at 12 PM, making it a terrible moment to watch, since nearly everyone is having lunch at that time. However, as the popularity of rap music grew in Belgium – especially since rap star Eminem became famous in the late 1990s/early 2000 – so did *Coolsweat*. Over the years, the show’s programming changed regularly. In 2004 and 2005, the programme was extended to a two-hour show and even included a host – a ‘VJ’ - whose job was to present the videos, which was not the case in 1999. On top of that, *Coolsweat* received primetime programming, with the show being aired at 6 or 8 PM, which is to TMF’s standards the moment where a lot of youngsters tune in to watch the station.

Another aspect that I have seen evolving during the course of the years is the rap music division in popular music stores. When I went to a Free Record Shop in 1999, there were 30 rap albums I could choose from, give or take. This is unbelievable compared with today’s rap music division. I recently paid a visit to the Free Record Shop in Roeselare to see how many rap albums were available now, and I counted roughly 90 albums, which is a remarkable evolution for what once was a musical genre with little or no interest.

Also the number of rap concerts in Belgium has evolved over the years. In the late 1990s, hip-hop fans were lucky if one popular rap artist performed in Belgium during the course of a year. Nowadays, fans can expect approximately 6 popular rap artists who perform in Belgium each year, depending on how many new releases there are in that particular year.

In 2003, the first hip-hop club in Kortrijk opened its doors. *Da Shake* – as the club is called – is now an extremely popular club not only for Belgian rap fans, but for French as well. On any given Saturday, one will meet about 70 people from across the border – most of the times the region of Lille – who come to *Da Shake* because of the club’s reputation.

So to sum it all up, the abovementioned examples – TV programmes, the rap music division in stores, concerts and clubs – clearly show how rapidly rap has evolved in Belgium.
2 The evolution of breakdancing

Breakdancing is a style of competitive, acrobatic and pantomimic dancing. It began as a game – a friendly contest in which black and Hispanic teenagers tried to impress one another with outrageous physical contortions, spins and back flips. Although breakdancing – or ‘breaking’, as it is often referred to – may not be as well-known to people as rap music, it is the part of hip-hop culture that has made hip-hop a media obsession. When people discuss the culture of hip-hop, they will undeniably start talking about breakdancing because it is simply part of the culture. Just like rap music has its roots in the Bronx, New York, so does breakdancing. A Bronx-based DJ who went by the name of DJ Kool Herc was responsible for making the first hip-hop beat – ‘the breakbeat’. The breakdancers used these beats to dance to as they perfectly fit their dance style. In this chapter I am going to discuss the roots of breakdancing and how this dance phenomenon has evolved throughout the years.
2.1 The origins of breakdancing

2.1.1 “The fountain”

In the spring of 1975 the 77th Street fountain in New York City’s Central Park was the place to be. On weekends, youngsters from all the boroughs – The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island and Queens – came down to the fountain. With their radios – better known as ‘ghetto blasters’ or ‘boom boxes’ – they made the fountain a popular park scene.

The fountain is situated in a cobblestone area and is cut out of the trees and grass of Central Park. The majority of the people who were present at the fountain were black, Hispanic, Italian and Irish. There were also some tourists who came down to see what exactly was going on. Radios were blaring music, teenage boys were trying to impress girls, old men were playing cards and dominoes, vendors were selling ice cream and families were having picnics on the grass hills surrounding the square. Everybody was dancing to the music that came out of the radios: James Brown’s soul music or, at other moments, funk and disco music. There were also Afro-Cuban conga players who made the sound a little more lively. If the boys were not rapping or dancing with girls, they were dancing in large groups with each other. They danced in three-, four- or five-man routines. “They were in a dance formation I recognized as the bus stop, also known as the L.A. hustle. The bus stop was a dance where three or more people joined in military like platoon formation (people in rows side by side). All of the people in the bus stop formation marched forward in unison three steps, then three steps to the side, then three steps to the other side, then stopped and clicked heels, stomped their feet, turned around in place and started again. There were sometimes thirty or more people in the bus stop formation.”

What happened during the spring of 1975 in Central Park were the beginnings of a dance style that would evolve and later become an international phenomenon called breakdancing.

2.1.2 The history of breakdancing

2.1.2.1 How slavery and Russians played a role in developing breakdancing

Like most American dances, breaking owes much to eighteenth-century American slavery, when African and European dance styles began to mesh. In early America, the European and British Americans introduced the minuet, the waltz and the quadrille. The African-American slaves introduced a shuffle step dance called the juba. If you were a slave, it was a common thing to imitate the master’s dances in a mocking way while incorporating some of your own moves and rhythms. But unlike the highly civilized, properly timed European dances, African dance was about leaps, hops, skips, falls, drops and turns done to unrelenting beats and rhythms. The slave masters often let the best of the dancers compete against other slaves. This was the beginning of the ‘battles’, which eventually became extremely popular in 20th century-breakdancing.

In New York, 1915, a black tap dancer named Dewey Weinglass started experimenting with Russian steps after seeing the Russian dancer Ivan Bankoff at a Broadway theatre. He borrowed moves like drops, sweeps, splits, tumbles and flips and added them to his own dance routines. These Russian influences have clear connections with today’s breakdancing.

2.1.2.2 The importance of the breakbeat

In the 1960s and 1970s, James Brown created the ultimate dance music because of its unrelenting repetitive beats and rhythms. By the late 60s and early 70s, at the height of funk influence, popular dance also changed. Dances that imitated characters or animals like a monkey gave way to simple dance steps that were about movement and body control. As music became more structural and steady in rhythm due to the emergence of funk, popular dancing evolved into an even greater art form. New York, with its history of typical black dance and its street-wise culture, was first to develop and perfect street style dancing. Also made popular by James Brown were the bridges or breaks – in tempo and rhythm – in songs. He changed the rhythm and the tempo of the song’s main part to a new high intensity pace for about 15 tot 20 seconds, then dropped back to the original beat without losing any timing or rhythm. The breaks lasted such a short time because they were too intense to fill the whole song and were a nice change of pace which made the song more interesting to listen to. However, these short rhythm and tempo changes in the songs were not sufficient for the street style dancers in the early 1970s – they used the more intense breaks to dance to. An up-and-coming DJ from the Bronx, New York who went by the name of DJ Kool Herc recognized the frustrations of these freestyle dancers and would elongate the breaks in the record by using two of the same records on two turntables and a mixer. He mixed back and forth from record to record, never leaving the break. With more break time, dancers developed new moves and styles to match the length and intensity of the special mixed breaks. Hence the term ‘breakdancing’ as they simply danced to the breaks in the songs. As steps by these dancers became more spectacular and unique, competition to see who was best became more intense.
These dancers of the early and mid-70s – who danced during the breaks of funk and disco records – were called B-boys or Break boys, and are the fathers of modern breakdancing.

2.1.2.3 The development of breakdance crews

The first real breakdancers were the gang members of black gangs in the Bronx in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They did a dance called the Good Foot, from James Brown’s record of the same name. The Good Foot was the first street style dance that incorporated moves involving drops and spins and resembled the beginnings of breakdancing. The best way to describe the Good Foot is to imagine a majorette marching in a parade taking steps raised high at the knee but keeping the leg raised at the knee in the air for a beat before dropping it down and simultaneously raising the other leg. When the gangs disappeared, these dancers started hanging out with the party crews, and as the party crew DJ’s started developing their techniques, the dancers began to develop their own moves. As the DJ’s invented new ways to elongate the break beats in the records, dancers had more time to invent and experiment. Footwork came in when the dancers started using their arms and hands to support their bodies in order to free the feet and legs to do gymnastic steps, shuffles and sweeps. In Brooklyn, New York a new step inspired by these drops was being developed called the Brooklyn Rock. Once the first early break moves had been established, a definite style began to develop. The first and longest lasting style was comedy.

Comedy style was developed by the ex-Black Spades Good Foot dancers who had joined with the DJ Kool Herc Part Crew called The Herculoids. DJ Kool Herc would throw a party and The Herculoids would put on a show of dance style moves called comedy that involved all kinds of pantomime, mime and acting. In their shows they would do moves ranging from simple Charlie Chaplin penguin steps and drop routines – in which they would catch each other in step and on beat – to involved pantomime acts, like dropping to the floor in a freeze while hiding their faces and coming up wearing shaving cream, with a razor in their hand. They would then shave the cream all off and on beat in an attempt to make their audience laugh.

Soon other breakdance crews were challenging The Herculoids with less comedy and more breakdance moves. “In 1977 another gang called The Organization – which later became the world famous Zulu Nation – put together a breakdance crew called The Zulu Kings. This crew was the first organized breaking crew to travel around the Bronx challenging other lesser known crews to battles. The Zulu Kings had moves like ass spins, spider walks, footwork and mime similar to the electric boogie.
There were also girl breakdancing crews in the Zulu Nation called the Zulu Queens and the Shaka Queens. The Jackson 5 and other soul groups were the main inspiration for the routines the girls did. Their dances were choreographed to particular records and at certain moments in the song each girl would do a solo.\footnote{Holman, Michael, o.c.}

As breaking became more popular in the Bronx, battles between breakers would take place in school during lunchtime in the cafeteria or in the hallways. A school was a very popular place for the early breakers to practise their moves as many schools had hard marble floors, perfect material for dancing.

In 1977 a dance emerged called \textit{The Freak}. The Freak dance was a whole new sensation, again started by black youngsters, in which two or more guys would dance with one girl. The two guys would create a circle around the one girl and start dancing with her in a “bump-and-grind” type-of-way. This dance eventually became so popular that breaking itself started losing popularity. The Puerto Ricans were impressed by what the black kids were doing in the 1970s and they were just getting into breakdancing a little behind the black kids. But their interest in breaking was much more serious. They were the ones who started taking it to even higher levels of acrobatics and gymnastics.

During 1977-1978 a lot of breakdance crews were formed that involved Puerto Rican kids who wanted to learn more about breakdancing: The Bronx Boys, East Side Juniors, Rock City Rockers, Cold Crush Crew, Rock Steady and many more. The Rock Steady crew had a very talented young breakdancer – Crazy Legs – who was inspired and influenced by older breakers. Crazy Legs is considered by many to be the main focal point of the transition from old school to new school breakdancing. Having invented many of the new breakdance moves like backspins and windmills, Crazy Legs is the one who many of the new school breakers of today are indebted to. But also other breakers along the way had influence on breaking. Not only breakdancers, but famous actors like Bruce Lee and other Kung Fu film stars and martial artists had a major influence on breakdancing culture.

The popularity of Kung Fu films during the 1970s has had a great impact on breakdancing style. Many of the breakdancers were avid fans of martial artists like Bruce Lee. A large number of martial arts moves were incorporated into breakdancing. \textquote{The Chinese, like many other folk around the world, mainly the Russian peasants and African slaves in early America, had a dance that was influenced by the animals on which they depended for survival.}
Instead of manifesting itself in a dance like Africa, or through sports like the gymnastics of the Eurasians and eastern Europeans, the Chinese animal emulation was expressed through martial arts. Styles like the white crane, tiger style, five star praying mantis, eagle and monkey style were means of expressing body movement and fighting techniques through the imitation of animal movement. By imitating animal movement a human was able to do body movements that served as martial art. Kung Fu’s heavy emphasis on style and rhythm was a natural influence and inspiration to breaking. The films featuring Bruce Lee appealed to the working class of the Bronx and the rest of New York’s street kids. Crazy Legs, of the Rock Steady crew, knew the potential impact of Kung Fu moves on breakdancing and he was an exceptional breakdancer himself. His skills and abilities in breaking were matched only by his ability to create new moves.  

The only crews to survive from the late 1970s and early 1980s were the Rock Steady crew, The Dynamic Rockers from Queens and the Floormasters who then reformed to become The New York City Breakers. The latter and Rock Steady were the most successful of all the crews to emerge in the 1980s.

\[48\]

Holman, Michael, o.c.
2.2 How breakdancing became popular

"By 1984 only a hermit could not have known about breakdancing. It had arrived, not only in the United States, but also in Canada, Europe and Japan. Breaking had been featured in the 1983 Hollywood film Flashdance, the independent hip-hop musical film Wild Style and the documentary Style Wars served as the inspiration for the 1984 films Breakin' and Beat Street. Countless how-to-breakdance books and videos hit the market. Breaking had been spotlighted on national news shows, talk shows and ads for Burger King, Levi’s, Pepsi-Cola, Coca-Cola and Panasonic. One hundred breakdancers even heated up the closing ceremonies of the 1984 summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

Breaking made the cover of Newsweek in 1984. Newspapers all over the country regularly carried stories on its latest ups and downs. The paradox emerged, as you flipped the pages of the Washington Post or the Los Angeles Times, that breakdancers were banned from city streets and shopping malls for causing disturbances and attracting undesirable crowds, while at the same time middle-class housewives would learn to breakdance in their spare time at classes proliferating throughout the suburbs. Doctors added to the form’s acceptability by giving medical advice on how to survive it without any bruises. And the New York Times began using breaking as a metaphor even in articles that had nothing to do with hip-hop culture."49

The media hype about breakdancing has changed both its form and its meaning. So to talk about breaking you have to divide it into two stages: before and after the media. Before the media turned breakdancing into a dazzling form of entertainment, it was a fusion of sports, dancing and Kung Fu fighting. After the media had exerted their influence, participation in breakdancing was divided into two levels: professional and amateur. For the pros, breakdancing had become a theatrical art form with a technique that could be refined and expanded. On this level, competition took on new meaning. It was no longer a battle for control of the streets, for neighbourhood fame or to win your opponent’s “colours” – T-shirt with crew insignia. Now cash prizes, roles in Hollywood movies and European tours were at stake. For the amateurs, the element of competition had diminished. The appeal was a mixture of getting physically fit, tackling the challenge of breaking’s intricate skills and even becoming like street kids, who had suddenly become stylish thanks to the emergence of hip-hop culture.

Breaking first entered the media when Martha Copper, a photographer who had for years been documenting graffiti, was sent by the New York Post to cover a riot and found some kids – members of the High Times Crew – who claimed they had been dancing, not fighting, in a subway station. Since May 1981, when Henry Chalfant presented the Rock Steady crew at Common Ground in SoHo as part of a graffiti show, breaking has become very popular.

The first article on the dance form appeared in the *Village Voice* just before the concert, giving breakdancing instant visibility. By the end of that summer, breakdancers had appeared outdoors at Lincoln Center and at other festivals. The Rock Steady crew signed up for an appearance in the Hollywood movie Flashdance and kids were already learning to break not from older brothers and cousins on the street, but from watching Rock Steady on TV. Breaking had entered the public eye and left the underground for the mainstream.

Nowadays, it is common to see breaking in popular music videos. Pop star Christina Aguilera used breakdancing as the main theme in the music video for her single *Can’t Hold Us Down*. Throughout the video, male and female breakdancers show off their dancing skills on a New York street. Each character in the video is dressed in what one could call a typical “breakdance outfit”: sweat suits and sport shoes.

Breakdancing has not only been widely shown through music videos, but through promotional ads as well. In recent *HUMO* magazine issues, one can see a Lipton Ice Tea ad that shows a breakdancer standing on one arm while holding his legs in the air with the other – a typical breakdance move.
2.3 Breakdancers and fashion

For most breakdancers, fashion is a defining aspect of identity. Breakdancers of the 1980s often sported flat-soled Adidas, Puma or Fila shoes with thick laces. A lot of breakdancers even matched their hats, shirts and shoes to show uniformity within a breakdancing crew. B-boys also wore nylon tracksuits which were functional as well as fashionable. The slick, low-friction surface allowed the breakdancer to slide on the floor much more steadily than if he or she had been wearing a cotton shirt. Hooded nylon jackets allowed dancers to perform head spins and windmills with relative ease. B-boys today dress differently from b-boys in the 80s, but one constant remains, and that is dressing 'fresh'. Due to the spread of b-boying as an artform from the inner cities out into the suburbs and to different social groups, different senses of ‘fresh’ have arisen. Generally the rule that one's gear needs to match has remained from the 80s, along with a certain playfulness. Kangols – a certain type of hat – are still worn by some while track pants and nylons still have their place combined with fresh sneakers and hats. Trucker hats were reintroduced on the scene in the late 1990s, well before the mainstream pop culture began wearing them again in numbers.

Function is heavily intertwined with b-boy fashion. Due to the demands on the feet in b-boying, b-boys look for shoes with low weight, good grip, and durability when given pressure to the sole as well as elsewhere. Headwear can facilitate movement with the head on the ground, especially headspins. Bandanas underneath headwear can protect from the discomfort of fabric pulling on hair. And wristbands placed along the arm can lower friction at a particular place as well as provide protection.
3 The evolution of turntablism

Turntablism is the art of manipulating sound and creating music using turntables and an audio mixer. Most turntablism occurs within the musical genre of hip-hop and emphasizes manipulation of a vinyl record. One who engages in turntablism is a ‘turntablist’. This term was created in 1994 by DJ Supreme to describe the difference between a DJ – who just lets records play – and one who actually manipulates the sounds of a record. Turntablists use turntable techniques like scratching or beat juggling in the composition of original musical works. Turntablism is generally focused more on turntable technique and less on mixing. Although turntablism is an art form in itself and does not solely belong to the culture of hip-hop, it is one of the five pillars of hip-hop culture. In this chapter I am going to explain when and where turntablism started and how this art form evolved throughout the years.

3.1 The roots of hip-hop turntablism

Hip-hop turntablism can be traced back to the 1970s. New York-based DJ Kool Herc was the one responsible for introducing the ‘breakbeat’ on the hip-hop scene. In old soul records there were very often breaks in the song – a moment in which the tempo and the rhythm changes – and these breaks were elongated by Kool Herc so that breakdancers could dance to it. Elongating these breaks by means of two turntables and an audio mixer was the very first act of turntablism, but it was DJ Grand Wizard Theodore who came up with something groundbreaking. One day he accidentally created the most important technique in turntablism: as he was spinning some vinyl records, he put his hand on a record – to silence the music while his mother was calling out to him. He thus accidentally discovered the sound of scratching moving a vinyl record back and forth with your hand while it is playing on a turntable. More sophisticated methods of scratching were developed later. They involve moving the fader on the mixer in a rhythmic manner while scratching, giving a wide variety of different sounding scratch effects. Others use effect pedals to alter or manipulate the sound.

3.2 Turntable contests

Like many other musical instrumentalists, turntablists compete with one another to see who can develop the fastest, most innovative and most creative approaches to their instrument. The selection of a champion is based on the culmination of battles between turntablists. Battling involves each turntablist performing a routine – a combination of various technical scratches, beat juggles and other elements including body tricks – within a limited time period. Once the DJ has finished his routine, his act is judged by a panel of experts. The winner is selected on the basis of a score. These organized competitions evolved from actual old school battles where DJ’s challenged each other at parties and the judge was usually the audience, who would indicate choice by cheering louder for the DJ they thought performed better. Often, the winner kept the loser's equipment and/or records.

50 www.wikipedia.com
3.3 The role of the turntablist in contemporary rap music

In the 1980s most rap groups had their own turntablist. Whenever the group had to perform, the turntablist was put in the spotlight and he received a few minutes to show off his skills to the audience. Quite often, these skills included body movements such as turning his back on his turntables while continuing to scratch the vinyl records with his hands. Throughout the years, rap music became more important sales-wise and the turntablist was somewhat left in the background.

Nowadays, when a rapper performs he usually has a DJ with him – someone who lets the artists’ records play – but his role is not very notable anymore. Whereas in the past a lot of turntablists received their 15 minutes of fame during a concert, contemporary turntablists or DJ’s are present at a concert to give the rapper some back-up, as the DJ often hypes up the crowd through his microphone. Nevertheless, some rap groups still have their own turntablist – such as Los Angeles-based rap group Dilated Peoples’s DJ Babu – because they do not want the role of the turntablist to go unnoticed by the audience. The New York-based group The X-Ecutioners is a group of hip-hop turntablists known for producing beats and for allowing rappers to rap over their beats. In the songs, you can hear The X-Ecutioners scratching or performing other tricks with the record. They are one of the few popular hip-hop artists who keep the legacy of turntablism alive.
3.4 DJ’s and mixtapes

A mixtape is a compilation of songs recorded in a specific order – traditionally onto an audio cassette. By the 1980s, a lot of mixtapes made by beatmatching the songs and creating overlaps and fades between the end of one song and the beginning of another became more popular. Hip-hop DJ’s took notice of this trend in the 80s and they decided to make their own mixtapes – with rap music only. Throughout the years, creating and distributing mixes in the form of a CD has become the contemporary method of choice, but the term ‘mixtape’ is still commonly used. In the late 1990s, a few popular hip-hop DJ’s from New York were seeking ways to make their mixtapes more special. And so they began putting rap songs on their tapes that were recorded specifically for that mixtape. On the cover of these mixtapes promotional slogans were to be found such as “includes two exclusive songs by Snoop Dogg!” The next step in the development of mixtapes was letting a rapper host the mixtapes: his job was to introduce each song and artist. These two steps – exclusive songs and rappers hosting mixtapes – turned out to be a successful formula as popular hip-hop mixes sometimes sell thousands of copies in the United States. Popular mixtape DJ’s include DJ Kay Slay, DJ Whoo Kid – who is part of rap star 50 Cent’s G Unit Records –, DJ Big Mike and Funkmaster Flex. All of these mixtape DJ’s were located on the East Coast of the U.S., but over the past few years hip-hop DJ’s in other regions of the United States – most notably the West Coast and the South – started picking up on this popular trend. In Los Angeles for example, DJ Skee has made a name for himself by releasing exclusive mixtapes with rap star The Game. Each mixtape consists of exclusive songs only, and since these songs are nowhere else to be found, Skee’s mixtapes are in high demand throughout the U.S.

On 5 October 1995 the first annual Mixtape Awards were held in New York. The Mixtape Awards – the first national awards ceremony for DJ’s – were created to bring recognition to the most influential DJ’s in the hip-hop industry. Founded by marketing and promotion mogul Justo Faison, the Mixtape Awards celebrate the promotional achievements of the ‘The Mixtape’. Categories in this award show include: Best Club Mixtape DJ, Best East Coast Mixtape DJ, Best West Coast Mixtape DJ, Best Female Mixtape DJ and many more.51

Although these mixtape DJ’s are not known for their turntablism skills – but instead for releasing popular mixtapes – they do mix the songs and very often the listener will hear scratches by the DJ throughout the mixtape.

I conclude that the art of turntablism is no longer as prominent as it was in the 1980s, but it has certainly paved the way for other successful routes in the hip-hop industry, such as the popularity of mixtapes. In the early years of hip-hop, the DJ’s were the stars, but their limelight has been taken by rappers since 1979, thanks largely to the rapper Melle Mel of Grandmaster Flash’s crew, The Furious Five. However, a number of DJ’s have gained stardom nonetheless in recent years. Famous DJ’s include Grandmaster Flash, Mr. Magic, DJ Jazzy Jeff – the partner of Will Smith’s alter ego The Fresh Prince, DJ Scott La Rock from Boogie Down Productions, DJ Muggs from Cypress Hill, Jam Master Jay from Run-DMC, Funkmaster Flex, Tony Touch and DJ Clue.

51 www.themixtapeawardsonline.com
4 The evolution of graffiti

An age-old practice, graffiti hold special significance as one of the elements of hip-hop culture. Graffiti as an urban art form have existed since at least the 1950s but began developing in earnest in the late 1960s and flourished during the 1970s and 80s. Graffiti began as a way of ‘tagging’ for one's crew or gang and developed during the 1970s on the subways of New York and later expanded to the walls of the city. This movement from trains to walls was encouraged by the efforts of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority to eradicate graffiti on their property.

The first forms of subway graffiti were quick spray-painted or marker signatures (‘tags’), which quickly evolved into large elaborate calligraphy, complete with colour effects, shading and more. As time went by, graffiti developed artistically and began to greatly define the look of urban areas. Many hip-hop crews have made a name for themselves through their graffiti such as DJ Afrika Bambaataa's Black Spades crew. By 1976, graffiti artists like Lee Quinones began painting entire murals using advanced techniques. Today, there are also strong graffiti scenes in Europe, South America, Australia and Japan. Graffiti have long been denigrated by those in authority and are associated with gangs, violence and street crime. In most countries, creating graffiti art on public property without permission is a criminal offence punishable by fines and/or incarceration.

In this chapter I am going to explain the roots of graffiti and its evolution throughout the years.

4.1 The history of graffiti

Originally, the term ‘graffiti’ referred to the inscriptions found on the walls of ancient ruins as in the Catacombs of Rome or at Pompeii (see picture). Usage of the word has evolved to include any decorations – inscribed on any surface – that one can regard as vandalism or to cover pictures or writing placed on surfaces – usually walls – without the permission of an owner. Thus, inscriptions made by the authors of a monument are not classed as graffiti.

The first known example of ‘modern style’ graffiti survives in the ancient Greek city of Ephesus – in modern-day Turkey – and appears to advertise prostitution, according to the tour guides of the city. It stands near the long mosaic and stone walkway and consists of a handprint, a vaguely heart-like shape, a footprint and a number. This purportedly indicates how many steps one would have to take to find a lover, with the handprint indicating payment.

The Romans carved graffiti into their own walls and monuments, and examples of their work also exist in Egypt. The eruption of the Vesuvius preserved graffiti carved on the walls of Pompeii, and they offer us a direct insight into street life: everyday Vulgar Latin, insults, magic, love declarations, political consigns. In contrast to typical modern graffiti, alphabets and quotations from famous literature – especially the first line of Virgil's Aeneid – have been found scribbled on the walls of Pompeii, either for the pleasure of the writer or to impress the reader with one's familiarity with letters and literature.

52 www.wikipedia.com
4.2 Modern graffiti

Modern graffiti are intertwined with the culture of hip-hop as one of the 5 main elements of the culture – along with rap music, breakdancing, turntablism and beatboxing – and are often viewed as a misunderstood art form. The art of graffiti has been part of hip-hop culture since the 1970s. The reason for this is that graffiti were mainly practised in the same area where the other four elements of hip-hop were evolving as art forms: New York. However, many graffiti artists dispute the alliance with hip-hop. This is mainly because graffiti are seen as a link with the anti-establishment punk rock movement of the 1970s. So throughout the years, there have been discussions as to “who started the art of graffiti: punk rockers or fans of hip-hop culture”?

4.3 The pioneering era

The time between 1971-1974 is referred to as the ‘pioneering era’ when graffiti underwent a surge in styles and popularity. Fab Five Freddy was a popular graffiti figure of this time, often credited with helping to spread the influence of graffiti and rap music beyond its early foundations in the Bronx. Barbera 61 and Eya 61 were a big part of the spawning of graffiti in New York and they were also the first known females to write graffiti. As the influence of graffiti grew, Brooklyn began a graffiti movement as well with such prominent artists as Friendly Freddie. Also taking place during this era was the movement from outside on the city streets to the subways. Graffiti also saw its first seeds of competition around this time. The goal of most writers at this point was to have as many tags and bombs – big colourful tags – as possible, in as many places as possible which was called ‘getting up’. Writers began to break into subway yards in order to hit as many trains as they could with a lower risk, often creating larger elaborate pieces of art along the subway car sides. Around this time, ‘tags’ – the writer’s nickname – began to take on their signature calligraphic appearance – this was due to the huge number of writers and they needed a way to distinguish themselves.

Aside from the growing complexity and creativity, tags also began to grow in size and scale. Spray paint use increased dramatically around this time as writers began to expand their work. For example, many writers had begun to increase letter size and line thickness, as well as outlining them in colour. ‘Top-to-bottoms’ made their first appearance around this time as well. These are tags which span the entire height of a subway car. The overall creativity and artistic maturation of this time period did not go unnoticed by the mainstream. An example of this is Hugo Martinez, who founded the United Graffiti Artists (UGA). The UGA consisted of many top writers of the time, and aimed to present graffiti in an art gallery setting. By 1974, writers had begun to incorporate the use of scenery and cartoon characters into their work. The many new styles and innovations that emerged during this era eventually broke into what some refer to as the climax of the culture.
After the original pioneering efforts, which culminated in 1974, the art form peaked around 1975-1977. By this time, most standards had been set in graffiti writing and culture. Also during this time, top-to-bottoms evolved into whole cars. Pieces the size of entire subway cars became rather commonplace. Most note-worthy in this era proved to be the forming of the ‘throw-up’, which are more complex than simple ‘tagging’, but not as intricate as a ‘piece’. Throw-ups are tags written in bubble letters. Not long after its introduction, throw-ups lead to races to see who could do the most the fastest. Writing was becoming very competitive. Throw-ups and whole cars were the jewels of this time period. Eventually, the standards which had been set in the early 70s began to become stagnant. These changes in attitude lead many writers into the 1980s with a desire to expand and change.

The late 1970s and early 1980s brought a new wave of creativity to the scene. It was also the last wave of true graffiti writing before the Transit Authority made graffiti eradication a priority. The MTA – Metro Transit Authority – began to repair yard fences and remove graffiti consistently. With the MTA combatting the writers by removing their work it often lead many writers to quit in frustration, as their work was constantly being removed. It was also around this time that the established art world started becoming receptive to the graffiti culture for the first time since Hugo Martinez’s Razor Gallery in the early 1970s. In 1979, writer Lee Quinones and Fab Five Freddie were given a gallery opening in Rome by art dealer Claudio Bruni. Slowly, European art dealers became more interested in the new art form. For many outside of New York, it was the first time ever being exposed to the art form.
4.4 The politics of graffiti

In 1972, subway graffiti became a political issue in New York City. In that year and the two following, a variety of elected and appointed city officials devised and debated graffiti-related policies and programs and issued numerous public statements on the subject. By the summer of 1971, the appearance of the mysterious message ‘Taki 183’ had sufficiently aroused the curiosity of New Yorkers to lead the New York Times to send one of its reporters to determine its meaning. The result of this search, published on 21 July 1971, revealed that Taki was an unemployed seventeen-year-old with nothing better to do than pass the summer days spraying his name wherever he happened to be. He explained, “I just did it everywhere I went. I still do, though not as much. You don’t do it for the girls; they don’t seem to care. You do it for yourself. You don’t go after it to be elected president.” The reporter interviewed other neighbourhood youngsters, including Julio 204 and Ray A.O. – for “All Over” –, who were following in the footsteps of Taki, who they referred to as “the king”, and he spoke with an official of the MTA who stated that more than $300,000 was being spent annually to erase graffiti. Patrolman Floyd Holoway, a vice-president of the Transit Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association questioned by the reporter as to the legal machinery relating to graffiti writing, explained that graffiti were barred only by MTA rules, not by law. Thus writers under the age of sixteen could only be given a lecture, not a fine or jail time, even if they were caught in the act of writing on the walls. Adult writers could be charged with malicious mischief and sentenced to up to a year of imprisonment.

Taki confessed that as he grew older, he worried more about facing adult penalties for writing graffiti but admitted, “I could never retire. Besides, it doesn’t harm anybody. I work. I pay taxes too. Why do they go after the little guy? Why not the campaign organizations that put stickers all over the subways at election time?”

The Times article presented Taki as an engaging character with a unique and fascinating hobby and this seemed to have a profound effect on the city’s youth. Taki became something of a folk hero and the ranks of graffiti writers increased enormously. In the spring of 1972 another article on graffiti appeared in the press. It was intended not to help familiarize New Yorkers with the writers but to declare war on them. On 21 May city council president Sanford Garelik told reporters, “Graffiti pollutes the eye and mind and may be one of the worst forms of pollution we have to combat.” He called upon the citizens of New York to band together and wage ‘an all-out war on graffiti’ and recommended the establishment of a monthly ‘anti-graffiti day’ on which New Yorkers – under the supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency – would scrub walls, fences, public buildings, subway stations and subway cars.

---

55 “Taki 1983 Spawns Pen Pals”, o.c.
Taking his cue from both the *Times’s* and Garelik’s suggestions, Mayor Lindsay announced his own anti-graffiti programme in late June. The mayor’s proposal called for the fining and jailing of anyone caught with an open spray can in any municipal building or facility. The General Welfare Committee submitted a graffiti bill to the city council in mid-September stating that the use of markers and spray paint to write graffiti has ‘reached proportions requiring serious punishment for the perpetrators’ and that such defacement and the use of ‘foul language’ in many of the writings is ‘harmful to the general public and violative of the good and welfare of the people of the city of New York.’  

The bill proposed to eliminate graffiti by making it illegal to carry an aerosol can of paint into a public facility unless it was completely enclosed in a sealed container. The graffiti bill was approved unanimously by the full city council on 11 October 1972.

“Early in 1973 Steven Isenberg announced that over the year the police had arrested 1,562 youths for defacing subways and other public places with graffiti. On 26 February the New York City Bureau of the Budget completed a detailed work plan for Mayor Lindsay’s graffiti task force. The report began by stating that anti-graffiti efforts in 1972 had cost the city $10 million, yet they had not been sufficient to reduce the city-wide level of graffiti defacement below fifty percent surface coverage. The Bureau proposed that the city should engage in a graffiti prevention project that would seek to reduce the level of defacement to an acceptable 10 to 20 percent. The cost of such a project was estimated to be $24 million.”

Despite Mayor Lindsay’s efforts to combat graffiti, many subway trains kept being ‘tagged’ on by graffiti writers. In an interview with Norman Mailer, Lindsay explained that his aggravation with graffiti was due to the fact that it tended to nullify many of his efforts to provide the city’s subway passengers with a cleaner and more pleasant environment.

After 1975 there was little press coverage of graffiti, a reflection of the city government’s reluctance to publicize the city’s continuing failure to control the graffiti phenomenon. In September 1981 the mayor’s office broke its silence when Mayor Koch declared that ‘New Yorkers are fed up with graffiti’, and announced a 1.5 million dollar program to provide fences and German shepherd watchdogs for the Corona train yard.

To test the effectiveness of the fences and dogs, all of the trains stored at the yard were painted white. For the following three months the trains were watched closely and no graffiti appeared on the outsides of the trains. The reason for this was because graffiti writers did not find the subway line interesting enough. Ali – a graffiti artist – had the following to say: “If they fence a popular yard like Pelham or Coney Island, the writers won’t be stopped by razor wire or dogs. We’ll get past the fences. Wait and see.”

By mid-1986 the MTA was winning their war-on-graffiti and the number of active graffiti writers diminished.

---

58 Castleman, Craig, o.c.
4.5 The use of graffiti in our contemporary society

Some of the most popular tags in graffiti are the ‘rest in peace-tags’. These are dedicated to the memory of a deceased person and they have been spotted on walls all over the world. In some cases, writers have achieved such elaborate graffiti – especially those done in memory of a deceased person – on storefront gates that shopkeepers have hesitated to cover them up. In the Bronx, after the death of rapper Big Pun in 2000, several murals dedicated to his life appeared virtually overnight.

Similar outpourings occurred after the deaths of rappers The Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur. Princess Diana and Mother Teresa were also memorialised this way in New York City.

Hip-hop clothing companies also use the art of graffiti. Many of these companies – such as Ecko, Fubu, Enyce and many others – design graffiti-inspired logos which they then print on their shirts.

Tattoo artists are also among the people who use the art of graffiti in their work. Numerous tattoos with graffiti-styled-letters have been placed on body parts since graffiti became popular in the 1970s and 1980s.
5 The evolution of beatboxing

Beatboxing is considered by many to be the fifth element of hip-hop culture. It is the art of creating beats, rhythms and melodies using the mouth. It can also involve singing, vocal scratching – the imitation of turntable scratching, the simulation of musical instruments and the replication of sound effects. Since beatboxing is a part of hip-hop culture that received little media attention, there is not much information to be found about this topic. I therefore used the Wikipedia encyclopaedia as my main source of information. In this chapter I would like to explain how beatboxing came about, how it became part of the culture of hip-hop and how the art form evolved throughout the years.

5.1 A history of beatboxing

Throughout a series of concerts in 1969, John Mayall introduced the acoustic style of the blues. Without drums and for the most part electric guitars, Mayall and the band performed a song called Room to Move, which included a middle section of pure beatboxing. The concerts were recorded on an album called Turning Point.

In 1970, British band Mungo Jerry released In the Summertime, eventually selling 23 million copies worldwide. An interesting fact of the song is that no traditional percussion was used, but instead all rhythms and percussion were generated by vocalists. Viv Fisher, a frustrated amateur British musician and sound engineer released a 7” vinyl single in 1978 entitled Blaze Away on which he performed all the parts of a brass band. He used his mouth to satisfy his desire for an accurate portrayal of the many instruments and depth of sound in a real brass band.

The art of beatboxing gained in popularity during the 1980s. Many people’s introduction to the art form came when rap artists Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick released their single La Di Da Di in 1985. During the song, one can hear Doug imitating a beat by making use of his mouth. Consequently a lot of people were intrigued by it as this had never been done before in rap music. Also the rap group The Fat Boys are known for introducing beatboxing to a broader audience.

In the 1990s, rap music became extremely popular in the United States. Consequently, the other elements of hip-hop culture were somewhat left in the dark – including beatboxing. Although many people kept the art form alive at talent shows, it was not until the release of Make The Music 2000 – an album by hip-hop artist Rahzel – that beatboxing came back into the spotlight. Not only did this artist help put beatboxing back onto the stage, he introduced its modern form – an impressive combination of rhythms, vocal scratching and simultaneous lines of melody and singing. Rahzel himself acknowledges that he combined his influences of pioneer Doug E. Fresh, jazz vocalist Bobby McFerrin and sound effect master Michael Winslow – of Police Academy fame – to create this modern format. In the song If Your Girl Only Knew, Rahzel wows his audience by singing and beatboxing simultaneously – a trick now considered easy by the growing young beatboxing community.

59 www.wikipedia.com
On several tracks, he introduced the idea of simulating turntable scratches with his throat, something even underground beatboxers upholding the art form in the early 90s years had not even heard until the album’s release. Using his commercial appeal, Rahzel paved the way for the migration of beatboxing to the centre of the stage, both literally and metaphorically. In its beginning, beatboxing was relegated to a supporting role or gimmick, like a side show. With increased popularity of beatboxing, Rahzel began touring the U.S. and Europe doing solo shows.

5.2 Beatboxing and the Internet

The largest beatboxing community on the Internet is Humanbeatbox.com, created in 2002 by U.K. beatboxer Alex Tew – also known as A-Plus – and Gavin Tyte. This website has greatly fuelled the recent resurgence of beatboxing. Beatboxers from countries all over the world have used this site, and the Internet in general, as a means to meet up with fellow beatboxers as well as organising the first Human Beatbox Convention, which took place in April 2003. Tyte developed the first Internet-based beatboxing tutorials as well as the first video tutorials and this has helped tens of thousands of people get started in beatboxing. The central feature of HumanBeatbox.com are the community forums where beatboxers and non-beatboxers alike converge to share and discuss their interest in this art form.

In 2004, beatbox company www.micism.com completed development of the non-profit International Beatbox Association. The IBA, as it became known, was created to aid beatboxers in getting paid work, and thereby to help beatboxing attain the public level of credibility as a musical art form deserved of remuneration. Through the IBA, it is now possible for professional beatboxers to be contacted directly by individuals wishing to book them, without artists having to make their personal contact details publicly available. In this way, beatboxers can now be safely contacted by promoters, agents, talent scouts and record labels worldwide.
5.3 Beatboxing in Belgium

Just like in many other countries, there is a strong underground beatboxing scene in Belgium. When rap music became extremely popular in Belgium – around the change of the millennium – beatboxing also gained in popularity. In 2005, the first Belgian Beatbox Championship was held: the best beatboxers of Belgium were given the opportunity to compete with one another and the winner was allowed to participate in the Beatbox World Championship. In 2006, the second Belgian Beatbox Championship took place on 2 September and the winner received a ticket to the World Championship in Asia, where he had to participate with the world’s best beatboxers.  

In the summer of 2006, there were even workshops held in Belgium where beatboxers could improve their skills. Belgium’s best beatboxer – Roxorloops – hosted these workshops and he gave instructions and tips to other beatboxers on how to develop their beatboxing skills.  

---

60 www.beatbox.be  
61 www.trixonline.be
6 Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beat juggling</td>
<td>Beat juggling is the mixing of beats. It is a term which is frequently used by DJ's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beatboxing</td>
<td>Beatboxing is the art of creating beats, rhythms and melodies using the mouth. It is considered by many to be the fifth element of hip-hop culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breakbeat</td>
<td>In old soul records there were very often breaks in the song – a moment in which the tempo and the rhythm change – and these breaks were elongated so that breakdancers could dance to them. DJ Kool Herc invented this technique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gangsta rap</td>
<td>Gangsta rap is a subgenre of rap music that involves a lyrical focus on the lifestyles of inner-city gang members, pimps or drug dealers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hip-hop</td>
<td>Hip-hop is a culture made up of five elements: rap music, breakdancing, turntablism, graffiti and beatboxing. The term ‘hip-hop’ is also frequently used to refer to rap music (e.g. “I love listening to hip-hop.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Abbreviation of ‘Master of Ceremonies’. In the 1970s and 1980s, the term MC became associated with rap music and is the traditional title for a person who today is commonly called a ‘rapper’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixtape</td>
<td>A mixtape is a compilation of songs recorded in a specific order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nu-metal</td>
<td>Nu-metal is a musical genre that combines metal with hip-hop influences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>payola</td>
<td>In the music business, the practice of record companies paying money for the broadcast of records on music radio is called ‘payola’. It is illegal in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>producer</td>
<td>In rap music, the producer is nine times out of ten the person who creates the beat. He is responsible for programming the drums, the bass line, the guitars, the samples and the vocals arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rap</td>
<td>Rap is one of the five elements of hip-hop culture. Synonyms for this genre include “hip-hop”, “hip-hop music” and “rap music”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIAA</td>
<td>The Recording Industry Association of America is the trade group that represents the recording industry in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scratching</td>
<td>Scratching is a DJ or turntablism technique. It is produced by moving a vinyl record back and forth with your hand while it is playing on a turntable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoundScan</td>
<td>SoundScan is an information system that tracks sales data for singles, albums and music video products in Canada and the United States for Billboard and other music industry companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tag</strong></td>
<td>A graffiti tag is a signature sprayed upon publicly viewable surfaces by a graffiti writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>throw-up</strong></td>
<td>A throw-up is a tag written in 'bubble' letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>top-to-bottom</strong></td>
<td>A top-to-bottom is a tag that spans the entire height of a subway car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>turntablism</strong></td>
<td>Turntablism is the art of manipulating sound and creating music using turntables and an audio mixer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Bibliography

The Internet sources are mentioned in the memoir and in footnotes, and are not listed again here. Only books, DVD’s and newspaper articles are mentioned in this selective bibliography.

Primary source

Secondary sources
Xenon Pictures, Inc., Welcome To Death Row, 2001. (DVD)
“Taki 1983 Spawns Pen Pals”, o.c.
8 Practical part: teaching hip-hop culture in secondary education

8.1 Discussion of two rap songs

---

**Naam:** Jan Devos  
**Klas:** 3 Frans  
**Lesnr:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leerjaar:</th>
<th>4 Handel</th>
<th>Leraar:</th>
<th>Datum:</th>
<th>Leraar:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School:</strong></td>
<td>Instituut de Pélichy - Izegem</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Datum:</strong></td>
<td>/</td>
<td><strong>Uur:</strong> 8u10 – 9u05</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesopgave</th>
<th>Vak:</th>
<th>Onderwerp:</th>
<th>Leerboek:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vak:</strong></td>
<td>Engels</td>
<td>Discussion of two rap songs</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onderwerp:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leerboek:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Doelstellingen**

- Pupils are able to summarize a rap song by means of keywords
- Pupils are aware of the fact that there are several forms of rap music
- Pupils can explain why most rap videos have the same concept

**Leerplancitaat**

3.2.6.1 Luisteren (ET 1, 2, 3, 4)

De leerlingen kunnen:
het globale onderwerp bepalen en de hoofdgedachte achterhalen (skimming)
met een gerichte luisteropdracht relevante informatie selecteren (scanning)
de gedachtegang volgen

een persoonlijke mening/appreciatie vormen

Deze teksten kunnen zijn: nieuwsitems, reclameboodschappen en mededelingen, film- en feuilletonfragmenten, reportages, songs, korte verhalen, eenvoudige gedichten.

3.2.5 Vaardigheid binnen de culturele component

3.2.5.1 Algemeen

tenslotte kunnen de leerlingen door de kennismaking met de cultuur van land en volk waar de
doelstaal gesproken wordt beter genieten van de confrontatie met typische uitingen van de
vreemde cultuur: song, gedicht, verhaal, soap, tv-reeks, musical, film, toneel, videoclip …

**Attitudes (ET 8)**

De leerlingen zijn bereid:
- belangstelling op te brengen voor wat de spreker zegt
- grondig en onbevooroordeeld te luisteren

**Geraadpleegde literatuur**

Wikipedia.org

**Beginsituatie**

4 Handel (good level of English)

CD-player
Bordschema

Auphelia Payne’s life:

Propaganda:

Verse 1:
Mind control
United States
Miseducation
President

Verse 2:
War
Revolution
Religion
Politicians
Terrorism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Leerinhoud</th>
<th>Werkvormen en leeractiviteiten</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5’     | **1. INTRODUCTION**  
Pupils fill in their diaries. | “Good morning. You can fill in your diaries: discussion of two rap songs.” | BB |
| 10’    | **2. SETTING OF THE SITUATION**  
To introduce the lesson’s topic and to set the situation for today’s lesson, I have a brief class discussion about rap music with the class.  
Possible answers are: 50 Cent, Eminem, Snoop Dogg, 2Pac, etc…  
Possible answers are: women, cars, jewellery, etc…  
I pick out a pupil who raised his hand.  
If the pupil can’t think of a reason, I choose a different pupil and ask him/her the same question. | “Today we are going to deal with rap music. As you all know, rap is a very popular genre nowadays. Who can give me some names of rappers?”  
“Is there anyone in this class who likes watching rap music videos on TV?”  
“Yes [namecard], can you give me a description of what you see in those videos?”  
“Can someone tell me why you watch those videos? Is it because of these elements – women and cars for instance – or is it because of the song that you happen to like? Or is there a different reason?”  
“I will give you a statement now, and you have to tell me if you agree with it or not. If you agree with my statement, you raise your hand: *practically all rap videos look the same.*”  
“[namecard], can you think of a reason why most rap videos have the same concept?”  
“Actually, the answer has already been given in this lesson: most of you like watching rap videos. And those rappers are well aware of that. So that’s why they keep making the same type-of-videos:” |
Possible answers are: clubbing, partying, relationships, sex, etc…

because they already know that the majority of the public will like the concept."

“Enough about rap videos. Let's talk about the lyrics of rap songs.”

“What do most popular rap songs deal with? Think of singles that 50 Cent or Snoop Dogg has released in the past few years. What are those songs about?”

“Exactly. The majority of these popular rap songs are about partying, going to clubs, having a good time, etc…You rarely hear a rap song on the radio about more serious topics – such as poverty, racism, teenage pregnancy, struggling in life, etc…”

“What I want to show you today is that there are many other rappers who do not constantly rap about partying, but instead talk about more serious issues. Very often, these rappers are not extremely popular; for the simple reason they do not make club or party songs, but on the other hand they are highly respected in the hip-hop industry.”

“In this lesson we are going to discuss two rap songs that deal with more serious issues than partying.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20'</th>
<th>3. DISCUSSION OF “AUPHELIA PAYNE”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I decided to explain a few difficult words so that the pupils will understand the lyrics better during the first listening. The focus in this lesson is not on vocabulary but some words just had to be explained in order to understand the lyrics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The first song is called ‘Auphelia Payne’, by Los Angeles-based rapper Crooked I. He's a rather unknown rapper – especially in Europe – but he's one of the most talented up-and-coming rappers.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Let's first have a look at a few difficult words so that you'll understand the lyrics better.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pupils listen to the song for the first time. Afterwards, I ask a few questions to check their comprehension.

I ask the pupils to summarize the verses so that everyone gets to know the content of the song.

I make a small graph of the song’s storyline on the blackboard, so that it becomes clearer to the pupils.

“Alright, we’ll now have a first listen.”

“Listen carefully and pay attention to the lyrics. After the first listen, I’ll ask a couple of questions.”

“Alright, as you can see there are three verses in this rap song. I would like to know if you have understood what this song is about. Therefore, I want you to summarize each verse for me in a few sentences.”

“Who wants to summarize the first verse?”

“The second verse?”

“And the third verse?”

“Very good. Can anyone tell me if there’s anything special about the song title? Have a look at the chorus. There should be something striking about it.”

→ “Indeed. There’s a wordplay: the woman’s name in the song is Auphelia Payne, and that’s a wordplay on ‘I feel your pain’: it sounds very similar”.

“As you have heard, in this song the rapper describes the life of a young woman somewhere in the United States. In the first verse, we get to know Auphelia’s struggles: her family’s on welfare, her brother’s in prison, her father’s an alcoholic and she has to keep two jobs in order to survive.”

“In the second verse, we find out that she goes to school at night.
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|  | She takes care of her looks, she keeps her pride, she’s dreaming of getting a new car and her friends continue to be lazy while Auphelia takes her destiny into her own hands.”  
“In the third verse, we find out that she’s pregnant, she has a Mercedes, she speaks to youth groups, she has her own business and she moved her mother out of the ghetto.”  
“Now that you understand what the song’s about, we’ll listen one more time.” |  | CD  |
| **20’** | **4. DISCUSSION OF “PROPAGANDA”** |  |
| | “The lyrics of the rap song we are going to listen to now deal with something totally different.”  
“Rap music was initially a genre used to address social matters – such as poverty, crime, politics, etc...But in the 1990s, this ‘political rap’ – as it’s called – became less popular. However, nowadays there are still many rappers who are active in this genre of music, and one of the more popular ones is the New York-based rap group Dead Prez.”  
“We’re going to listen to their song ‘Propaganda’.”  
“Is there anyone who can explain the title to me? What is propaganda?”  
“Let’s first have a look at a few difficult words so that you’ll understand the lyrics better.”  
Alright, pay attention to the lyrics, because I will ask some questions about the content of this song afterwards.” |  |
| I ask the pupils to explain the term ‘propaganda’. |  | CD + lyrics |
| I let the pupils listen to the song. |  |  |
| I ask the pupils to give me a brief explanation of this song. By doing so, I check their comprehension. | “Who can tell me what this song is about in a few sentences?”

→ Indeed. This song clearly deals with issues such as politics, the media, the government, etc…

“This song has two verses. I want you to summarize these verses for me by means of keywords. So take a scrap paper and jot down some keywords for each verse.”

“[namecard], what keywords did you write down for the first verse?”

“Someone else.”

“[namecard], what words did you write down for the second verse?”

“How about you?”

“Very good. Let’s have a quick look at the second verse. There’s the line ‘Sign of the times, terrorism on the rise. Commercial airplanes falling out the sky like flies.’ → Doesn’t this sentence make you think of something that happened in 2001?

→ Exactly: the attacks of 9/11. What’s interesting about that line is that it was written in 2000 – before the attacks.

“This rap group doesn’t get any satisfaction by talking about partying or going to clubs. Instead, they want to spread a message to the people through their music. On their album, they tackle issues such as poverty, racism, the U.S.-school system, a healthy lifestyle, activism against governmental hypocrisy and corporate control over the media.” |
```
“Hopefully you all realize now that rap music is more than just partying after today’s discussion of two rap songs.”

“We’ll listen one more time to ‘Propaganda’.”
```
8.1.1 Lyrics “Auphelia Payne”

**Artist:** Crooked I (feat. Sheena)  
**Song:** Auphelia Payne  
**Album:** Young Boss Vol. 2 (mixtape)

This one's dedicated to my home girl, Auphelia Payne.

She was a ghetto little girl who became a young woman  
Did'n't have no kids, didn't plan on one coming  
And niggas who weren’t about shit, she’d run from them  
From a welfare family, look how the slums done them  
Daddy was an alcoholic so her mama dissed him  
Her gangbanging brother was a homicide victim  
One of her other younger brothers locked by the system  
She sent him letters, couldn't describe how she missed him  
Told him: “jobs in the hood ain't plenty  
So I'm part-timing it at Denny's”  
But she didn't tell him at night, she's a strip club waitress serving  
Henny  
Rocking lace stockings and a mini  
Customers ask if they could buy sexual favours  
Even the women want bisexual favours  
But she doesn’t get down like that and so they label a hater  
Go on, baby, tell them what you're made of

**CHORUS:** (Sheena)

You don't know what to do, you gotta make it through  
I feel your pain (Auphelia Payne)  
You gotta keep on fighting and you will get to the better days  
I feel your pain  
Keep pushing, you'll be fine, don't give in, you'll be alright  
I feel your pain

Now she wants to go to school so she enrolled in night classes  
Told her friends about it but they acted like asses  
They don't know we can't let this life pass us  
Jet-black hair, shaded eye glasses  
Standing on the bus stop like a poster of dignity  
Even though niggas push crack in that vicinity  
Keep your identity  
"Rest in peace big bro", tattooed on your left arm in beautiful  
calligraphy  
It'll be a cold day in hell when you give up  
You got a game plan to pull that European whip up  
Get a interior decorator to fix your crib up  
For being sick of the bullshit, I give you big ups  
A lot of your home girls, they ain't built the same  
You tell them to get off their ass but they still remain  
Lead by example though, kill the game  
And one day they can build and change  
I feel your pain

**CHORUS**
She was a ghetto little girl who became a young woman
And three years from now, she got a son coming
Today she in a 600, look at her stunting
While naysayers were fronting, she went and done something
Made it out of school, got two coupes to twirl
On the weekends she speaks at a youth group for girls
Teach them how to properly move through the world
Dropping jewels of wisdom if you choose the pearls
Got her own business and she's barely even 30
She said "I prayed for strength and baby, god heard me"
Got accountants now, employees and attorneys
Found a real nigga who appreciates her journey
Ain't gotta do it alone, got a loan
Moved mamma right out of the criminal zone
Got a front and back bone when little bro come home
Now she even got her own song
I feel your pain

CHORUS

Yeah, you know what I'm saying? This one goes out to my home girl,
Auphelia Payne. You know, sometimes we as men always focus on
our own problems and we ignore the problems that our women are
going through. You know what I'm saying? But if nobody else cares
about your everyday struggles, you gotta know that I do. Smile, baby
girl, it's gonna be alright. We're gonna make it through the storm and
watch the sunshine.

HOOK:

I feel your pain
I know you're going through a thing
Everything will be okay
The sun shines after rain

Hey, I feel your pain
I know you're going through a thing
Everything will be okay
I feel your pain
8.1.2  Lyrics “Propaganda”

Artist: Dead Prez  
Song: Propaganda  
Album: Let’s Get Free

Intro: *(news snippets)*
"Let me now turn, to our program for the future..."
"The economy right now, is extremely supportive of the president and his policies"
"FBI scientists have found chemical traces, *consistent* with a bomb or a missile, on a *piece of wreckage*..."
"Police using *clubs* and tear gas against demonstrators..."
"They called me a mother -(bleeped out)-ing so-and-so...and a white fascist...like they said, 'you're getting some of your own medicine'."

HOOK:
Telling lies, to our children  
Telling lies, to our children  
Telling lies, to our babies  
Only truth can take us away...from here

You can't *fool* all the people all of the time  
But if you fool the right ones, then the rest will fall behind  
Tell me who's got control of your mind, your world view?  
Is it the news or the movie you're taking your girl to?  
Know what I'm saying 'cause *Uncle Sam* got a plan  
If you examine what they telling us then you will understand  
What they planting in the seeds of the next generation  
Feeding our children miseducation  
No one knows if there are UFO's or any life on mars  
Or what they do when they up in the stars  
Because I don't believe a word of what the president said  
He's filling our head with lies, got us hypnotised  
When he be speaking in cold words about crime and poverty  
Drugs, welfare, prisons, guns and robbery  
It really means us, there's no excuse for the *slander*  
*But what's good for the goose, is still good for the gander*  
See...

CHORUS:
I don't believe Bob Marley died from cancer  
31 years ago I would've been a *Panther*  
They killed *Huey* 'cause they knew he had the answer  
The views that you see in the news is propaganda

HOOK
I don't want no computer chip in my arm  
I don't wanna die by a nuclear bomb  
I say we all rush the Pentagon  
Pull out guns and grab the intercom  
My first words will be  
"I believe man made God, out of ignorance and fear  
If God made man, then why the hell would he put us here?"  
I thought he's supposed to be the all loving  
The same God who let Hitler put the Jews in the oven  
We don't fall for the regular shit, they try to feed us  
All this *half-assed* leadership, flipping position

VOCABULARY

overeenkomend  
wrekstuk  
knuppels  

voor de gek houden  
national personification of the United States  
kwaadsprekerij  
proverb: What’s good for a man is equally good for a woman  

Black Panther: a civil-rights activist  
Huey P. Newton: founder of the Black Panthers  

halfbakken/belachelijk
They turn politician and shut the hell up and follow tradition
Boy, your TV screen, is telling lies to your vision
Every channel got some brainwashed cop shit to watch
Running up in niggas’ cribs claiming that they heard shots
It's a plot, but buster can you tell me who's greedier?
Big corporations, the pigs or the media?
Sign of the times, terrorism on the rise
Commercial airplanes, falling out the sky like flies
Make me wonder what secrets went down with Bob Brown
Who’s burning churches to the ground with no evidence found?
It's not coincidence, it's been too many steady incidents
It could've been the Klan who put that bomb at the Olympics
But it probably was the FBI, deep at the call
’Cause if they make us all panic they can start martial law

CHORUS: 2X

BRIDGE:
Police is telling lies, fooling millions
What are they teaching our kids in these school buildings?
Television, enterprise in all the killing
Controlling our lives, this ain’t living
No this ain’t living

CHANT: 2X
FBI, CIA
ATF, KKK
IRS, TNT
CBS, NBC

HOOK

Outro: (news snippet)
"We view each other with a great love and a great understanding and
that we try to expand this to the general black population and also
people, oppressed people, all over the world, and, I think that we
differ from some other groups simply because we understand the
system better than most groups understand the system, and with this
realisation, we attempt to form a strong political base based in the
community with the only strength that we have and that's the strength
of a potentially destructive force if we don't get freedom."
8.2 Analysis of a rap song

Doelstellingen

- Pupils are able to fill in gaps in the rap song “Changes”
- Pupils are able to indicate a rhyme scheme in a rap song
- Pupils are able to write a small text in which they use a rhyme scheme

Leerplancitaat

3.2.6.1 Luisteren (ET 1, 2, 3, 4)
De leerlingen kunnen:
het globale onderwerp bepalen en de hoofdgedachte achterhalen (skimming)
de gedachtegang volgen
Deze teksten kunnen zijn: nieuwsitems, reclameboodschappen en mededelingen, film- en
feuilletonfragmenten, reportages, songs, korte verhalen, eenvoudige gedichten.
3.2.5 Vaardigheid binnen de culturele component
3.2.5.1 Algemeen
Tenslotte kunnen de leerlingen door de kennismaking met de cultuur van land en volk waar
de doeltaal gesproken wordt beter genieten van de confrontatie met typische uitingen van de
vreemde cultuur: song, gedicht, verhaal, soap, tv-reeks, musical, film, toneel, videoclip …
Attitudes (ET 8)
De leerlingen zijn bereid:
• belangstelling op te brengen voor wat de spreker zegt
• grondig en onbevooroordeeld te luisteren

Beginsituatie

4 Handel (good level of English)
CD player
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Leerinhoud</th>
<th>Werkvormen en leeractiviteiten</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td><strong>1. INTRODUCTION</strong>&lt;br&gt;Pupils fill in their diaries.</td>
<td>“Good morning. You can fill in your diaries: Analysis of a rap song.”</td>
<td>BB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td><strong>2. SETTING OF THE SITUATION</strong>&lt;br&gt; To introduce the lesson’s topic and to set the situation for today’s lesson, I have a brief class discussion about 2Pac with the class.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;I show some 2Pac pictures to the class so that the pupils who haven’t heard of him know what he looks like.</td>
<td>“Today we are going to listen to a song from 2Pac. Who has already heard any of 2Pac’s music?”&lt;br&gt;“[namecard], what 2Pac songs do you like listening to?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45'</td>
<td><strong>3. ANALYSIS OF “CHANGES”</strong>&lt;br&gt;I hand out the lyrics of the song and the pupils have to fill in the gaps.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;I choose several pupils to read the lines from each verse out loud. I split each verse into two parts so that more than three pupils get a chance to participate in this activity.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;During the correction of this exercise, I explain some of the words that had to be filled in (e.g.: welfare, distant, etc…).&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;The pupils have to write down the rhyme scheme of the first verse.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;A pupil summarizes the content of the song</td>
<td>“We’re going to listen to ‘Changes’. Listen carefully and fill in the gaps. You will notice that there aren’t many gaps in the first verse. However, the second verse &amp; the third verse have more gaps, so you’ll have to listen carefully and write fast.”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;“Alright. Let’s correct this exercise.”&lt;br&gt;“Who wants to start reading?”&lt;br&gt;“Someone else.”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;“Very good. As you know, this is a rap song. Can someone tell me what’s typical of a rap song?”&lt;br&gt;→ Rhyme&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;“Indeed, rappers use rhymes in their lyrics. I want you to indicate the rhyme scheme of the first verse. Is it AABB, ABAB or ABBA? I’ll give you a few minutes to do this exercise.”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;“Okay, let’s see what you’ve found.”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;“Can someone briefly tell me what this song is about?”</td>
<td>CD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Changes" in his own words.

The pupils have to write a little text. They need to use a rhyme scheme and they have to write about 'changes' they'd like to see in our society.

Every pupil has to come in front of the class to read his or her text out loud. When the pupil has finished speaking, I correct the (possible) mistakes he made.

→ Indeed, 2Pac raps about things that happen in the world and how he would like them to change. He talks about racism and violence for instance. He also mentions that we need to change the way we think.

“Now that all the gaps are filled in, we'll listen to the song one more time.”

“What I want you to do right now is write a small text with a rhyme scheme. It has to be about changes you'd like to see in our society. It can be about school, your parents, your brother or sister, etc… Your text has to have at least 6 lines.”

“I'll give you some time to prepare this. If you need any help with the translation of a word feel free to use a dictionary.”

Alright. Is there a volunteer to present his or her text in front of the class?

“Thank you. Someone else.”
I see no changes, wake up in the morning then I ask myself
"Is life worth living? Should I blast myself?"
I'm tired of being poor and even worse I'm black
My stomach hurts so I'm looking for a purse to snatch
Cops give a damn about a Negro
Pull the trigger kill a nigger he's a hero
Giving crack to the kids: who the hell cares
One less hungry mouth on the welfare
First ship them dope and let them deal the brothers
Give them guns step back, watch them kill each other
"It's time to fight back", that's what Huey said
Two shots in the dark now Huey's dead
I got love for my brother
But we can never go nowhere, unless we share with each other
We gotta start making changes
Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers
And that's how it's supposed to be
How can the devil take a brother if he's close to me?
I'd love to go back to when we played as kids
But things change, and that's the way it is

CHORUS: 2X

That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is
Oh yeah

I see no changes all I see is racist faces
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
We under, I wonder what it takes to make this
One better place, let's erase the wasted
Take the evil out the people they'll be acting right
'Cause both black and white are smoking crack tonight
And the only time we chill is when we kill each other
It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other
And although it seems heaven sent
We ain't ready, to see a black president
It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact
The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks
But some things will never change
Try to show another way but you're staying in the dope game
Now tell me what's a mother to do
Being real don't appeal to the brother in you
You gotta operate the easy way
"I made a G today", but you made it in a sleazy way
Selling crack to a kid, "I gotta get paid"
Well hey, well that's the way it is
CHORUS: 2X

BRIDGE:

We gotta make a change...
It's time for us as a people to start making some changes. Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live and let's change the way we treat each other. You see, the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do what we gotta do, to survive.

And still I see no changes, can't a brother get a little peace?
It's war on the streets and there's war in the Middle East
Instead of a war on poverty
They got a war on drug, so the police can bother me
And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do
But now I'm back with the facts giving it back to you
Don't let them jack you up, back you up
Crack you up and pimps smack you up
You gotta learn to hold your own
They get jealous when they see you with your mobile phone
But tell the cops they can't touch this
I don't trust this when they try to rush I bust this
That's the sound of my tool, you say it ain't cool
My mama didn't raise no fool
And as long as I stay black I gotta stay strapped
And I never get to lay back
'Cause I always gotta worry about the payback
Of some buck that I roughed up way back
Coming back after all these years
rat-tat-tat-tat-tat that's the way it is

CHORUS: 2X

Some things will never change…
8.2.2 Gap-filling exercise based on the song “Changes”

I see no changes, wake up in the morning then I ask myself
"Is life worth living? Should I blast myself?"
I'm tired of being poor and even worse I'm black
My .......... hurts so I'm looking for a purse to snatch
Cops give a damn about a Negro
Pull the trigger kill a nigger he's a hero
Giving crack to the kids: who the hell cares
One less hungry mouth on the ............
First ship them dope and let them deal the brothers
Give them guns step back, watch them kill each other
"It's time to fight back", that's what Huey ..........
Two shots in the dark now Huey's dead
I got love for my brother
But we can never go nowhere unless we share with each other
We gotta start making changes
Learn to see me as a brother instead of two .................
And that's how it's supposed to be
How can the devil take a brother if he's close to me?
I'd love to go back to when we played as kids
But things change, and that's the way it is

CHORUS: 2X

That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is
Oh yeah

I see no changes all I see is racist ...........
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
We under, I wonder what it takes to make this
One better place let's erase the wasted
Take the evil out the people they'll be ............ right
'Cause both black and white are smoking crack tonight
And the only time we chill is when we kill each other
It takes skill to be real, time to ............ each other
And although it seems heaven sent
We ain't ready, to see a black ............
It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact
The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks
But some things will never .............
Try to show another way but you're staying in the dope game
Now tell me what's a mother to do
Being real don't ............. to the brother in you
You gotta operate the easy way
"I made a G today", but you made it in a sleazy way
Selling crack to a kid, "I gotta get paid"
Well hey, well that's the way it is

CHORUS: 2X

BRIDGE:

We gotta make a change...
It's time for us as a people to start some changes. Let's change the way we change the way we change the way we each other. You see, the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do what we gotta do, to survive.

And still I see no changes, can't a brother get a little? It's war on the streets and there's war in the Middle East Instead of a war on They got a war on drugs, so the police can bother me And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do But now I'm back with the facts giving it back to you Don't let them jack you up, back you up Crack you up and pimps smack you up You gotta learn to hold your own They get when they see you with your mobile But tell the cops they can't touch this I don't this when they try to rush I bust this That's the sound of my tool, you say it ain't cool My mama didn't raise no And as long as I stay black I gotta stay strapped And I never get to lay 'Cause I always gotta worry about the payback Of some buck that I roughed up way back Coming back after all these years rat-tat-tat-tat-tat that's the way it is

CHORUS: 2X

Some will never change...
8.3 Discussion of video extracts

Doelstellingen
- Pupils are able to fill in gaps while watching video extracts
- Pupils are able to answer questions while watching video extracts
- Pupils are able to order topics by means of watching a video extracts

Leerplancitaat

3.2.6.1 Luisteren (ET 1, 2, 3, 4)
De leerlingen kunnen:
het globale onderwerp bepalen en de hoofdgedachte achterhalen (skimming)
de gedachtengang volgen
Deze teksten kunnen zijn: nieuwsitems, reclameboodschappen en mededelingen, film- en
feuilletonfragmenten, reportages, songs, korte verhalen, eenvoudige gedichten.
3.2.5 Vaardigheid binnen de culturele component
3.2.5.1 Algemeen
Tenslotte kunnen de leerlingen door de kennismaking met de cultuur van land en Volk waar
de doeltaal gesproken wordt beter genieten van de confrontatie met typische uitingen van de
vremde cultuur: song, gedicht, verhaal, soap, tv-reeks, musical, film, toneel, videoclip ...

Attitudes (ET 8)
De leerlingen zijn bereid:
• belangstelling op te brengen voor wat de spreker zegt
• grondig en onbevooroordeeld te luisteren

Geraadpleegde literatuur
Methodology course, C. Vyncke, second year
Rhyme & Reason DVD, ILC Pictures, Miramax Films, 2002

Beginstatus
4 Handel (good level of English)
CD player
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Leerinhoud</th>
<th>Werkvormen en leeractiviteiten</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5’     | **1. INTRODUCTION**  
        Pupils fill in their diaries. | “Good morning. You can fill in your diaries: discussion of video fragments: Rhyme & Reason.” |       |
| 5’     | **2. SETTING OF THE SITUATION**  
        To introduce the lesson’s topic and to set the situation for today’s lesson, I have a brief class discussion on hip-hop culture with the class. | “Today we are going to watch several video extracts about hip-hop culture. What do you think of when you hear the term ‘hip-hop’?”  
“Does anyone know in which country hip-hop’s roots are to be found?” + “Do you know in which city?”  
“Alright. Well, today we are going to learn more about hip-hop culture, so let’s get started.” |       |
| 20’    | **3. FIRST EXTRACT: “hip-hop culture”**  
        Before I show the pupils the first fragment, I tell them what they have to do while watching the video. | “In this first extract you are going to hear people talking about several topics. You have to find the correct order in which those topics are dealt with.”  
“Alright, let’s correct this exercise. Who thinks he has found the correct order?”  
“We’re going to watch this extract for a second time. Now you have to fill in the gaps.”  
“Let’s correct this exercise.” |       |
| 5’     | **4. SECOND EXTRACT: “the record business”**  
        I explain to the pupils what they have to do while watching the video. | “Let’s watch the second extract. As you see, there’s a true/false exercise and a gap-filling exercise. We’ll only watch it once, so pay attention.”  
“Let’s correct this exercise.” |       |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10'</th>
<th><strong>5. THIRD EXTRACT: “the power of hip-hop”</strong>&lt;br&gt;I explain to the pupils what they have to do while watching the video.</th>
<th>“For this third video extract, there are several questions that need to be answered and there are also two gap-filling exercises.”&lt;br&gt;“Let’s correct this exercise.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5'</td>
<td><strong>6. FOURTH EXTRACT: “Tupac”</strong>&lt;br&gt;I explain to the pupils what they have to do while watching the video.</td>
<td>“Let’s watch this last extract and fill in the gaps.”&lt;br&gt;“Let’s correct this exercise.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.3.1 Handout video extracts

8.3.1.1 Handout video extracts (pupils)

**A lesson on hip-hop culture: Rhyme & Reason**

*First video extract: “hip-hop culture”*

First viewing:
1. Find the correct order in which the following topics are being dealt with. Write the corresponding number in the left column:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>breakbeats</td>
<td>the Bronx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>music genres that gave birth to rap music</td>
<td>graffiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJ-ing</td>
<td>the various elements of hip-hop culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breakdancing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second viewing:
2. Fill in the gaps:

[KRS-ONE]
When you discuss the ………………. of hip-hop, you gotta understand that hip-hop has many starts. Hip-hop had a start in gospel, it had a start in jazz, it had a start in blues, in rock & roll, disco.

[KURTIS BLOW]
Hip-hop is a culture; the mother of four/five different …………………, like rap, scratching, breakdancing and graffiti.

[KRS-ONE]
Rap is something that’s being done, hip-hop is something that is being ……………. A rap artist can be anybody, from anywhere, but you got to visit the Bronx, period. Wherever you are in life, wherever you wanna be, you will always be a rap artist, until you visit the South Bronx. Look at the projects, look at the people. See the ………………….. that hip-hop started in. Go to 123 Park and just stand there, and imagine the birth of a culture happening in this very spot.

[DR. DRE]
Yeah, I was into New York hip-hop. You gotta give …….. when ……….. are due. They originated it. Anybody that doesn’t believe that is tripping.

[SPEECH]
It was like radio shockwaves, with new styles of scratching and stuff. This is one of the …………………... instruments of hip-hop. Us DJs would go nuts and try to learn to know how to do those cuts.

[ICE-T]
So Flash, and people like that, Grand Wizard Theodore would spin these records but they would only play the breaks. And people would dance over the breaks of a ……………..., and these were called breakdancers.
Back then, everybody that I knew that really had mad flavour in B-boying or ‘popping’ used to be a hardcore criminal. ‘Popping’ came along and it made a .................. in my life. You’re too busy learning how to windmill than to rob and steal them. You’re too tired to fight after you done battled somebody and took all your aggression out on some dancing, you know?

Hip-hop ain’t no easy .......... to play. If you ain’t got no style, hang it up.

My characters make people enjoy themselves for how I move my body and everything like that. So I feel it’s a part of fun, popping and breaking and making people ............

It’s not just a hype-thing, something that we’re into just to make money. This goes way ............... than that.

You know, they say ‘breaking is not hip-hop’. Come on! If breaking wasn’t hip-hop, they don’t know the history. Breaking means to me that it’s a way of ................. myself, getting my anger out there, you know? Instead of going out there smoking and fighting, I go to my own little world and I just express myself through breaking. I dance and get ............ I’m just spinning and I feel like I’m flying. And I’m flying in the air man, I’m free.

Graffiti art means: getting out, what a lot of people can’t get out. It’s like, expressing beauty, colour, ................., drama. It’s everything like music.

Second video extract: “The record business”

3. True or false? Correct the statement if necessary.

Small independent record companies didn’t want to give rappers a chance.

..................................................................................................................................

..................................................................................................................................

4. Fill in the gaps:

After 1985, hip-hop and rap made a split. Graffiti art and breakdancing no longer became viable ............... of expressing this piece of culture. Rap became this viable means of expressing this piece of the culture. And it was only because .............. America – massa – deemed it important: “Oh, we can make some money pressing up these records. So, let’s go.”

The record companies are basically like a merchant bank: they ............... you money and they want their money back with fat interest. And the conditions of your contract are basically like the conditions of your loan.
[DR. DRE]
The record business is exactly what it is: record – business. And you have to take care of
……………. I got into it just wanting to make music. I didn’t really give a damn about the
business part of it. I was trusting people. Trusting that they would handle my business the
way it was supposed to be handled. And you get fucked like that. So you gotta be on top of
your own business. Don’t trust no managers, no record company execs, no one.

Third video extract: “The power of hip-hop”

5. Describe the power that hip-hop has:

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

6. Fill in the gaps:

[NAS]
After growing up here and seeing my man that lived upstairs getting killed, and then my
brother shot, that showed me what type of world this shit is. Most of the time I feared about
living here was when I was younger, when I couldn’t ……………. myself from shit that was
going on. Because it were older niggas doing shit and it was a big world, and I was young
and all I had was my mom and my younger brother. So all I did was just handle myself to
get to a position where I can say “I’m gonna hold my ground.” I’m old enough to control my
………………. and not to be bullshitted by no bullshit niggas no more.

7. Why is rap artist Nas thinking of going back to school?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

8. Do you think that Nas is jealous of doctors and lawyers?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

9. Fill in the gaps:

[WISE INTELLIGENT]
As far as messages go, I’m trying to get ……………. several different things. For instance,
there’s one side of me that is totally for the preservation of black youth, because we’re
dying at a rapid rate. The numbers of dying youth is increasing daily in our neighbourhood.

10. What is Wise Intelligent’s opinion on “the ghetto”?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

11. Why did MC Eiht decide to move out of the ghetto of Compton?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
Fourth video extract: “Tupac”

12. Fill in the gaps:

[NEWS REPORTER]
It’s been two days since the shooting that left recording manager Suge Knight ………….. and Tupac Shakur in critical condition. Metro says Shakur and Knight were driving to a club following the Tyson vs. Seldon fight. A car pulled up alongside Shakur’s BMW and gunshots rang out. Police are looking for a late model white Cadillac last seen speeding …………………. on Koval Lane. Meanwhile, family, friends and fans of the rap singer surround UMC, wishing they could share their messages with Shakur.

[TREACH]
Pac was a ……………………. He knew things that none of us could see here, and he put it in his music. His only release was his music. I rolled with Pac. We came up together. And Pac ain’t never let me roll with him to pull no gun on no black man. Pac wasn’t no gangster. Pac was a soldier.
8.3.1.2 Handout video extracts (teacher’s guide)

A lesson on hip-hop culture: Rhyme & Reason

First video extract: “hip-hop culture”

First viewing:

1. Find the correct order in which the following topics are being dealt with. Write the corresponding number in the left column:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>breakbeats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>the Bronx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>music genres that gave birth to rap music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>graffiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DJ-ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>the various elements of hip-hop culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>breakdancing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second viewing:

2. Fill in the gaps:

[KRS-ONE]
When you discuss the history of hip-hop, you gotta understand that hip-hop has many starts. Hip-hop had a start in gospel, it had a start in jazz, it had a start in blues, in rock & roll, disco.

[KURTIS BLOW]
Hip-hop is a culture; the mother of four/five different elements, like rap, scratching, breakdancing and graffiti.

[KRS-ONE]
Rap is something that’s being done, hip-hop is something that is being lived. A rap artist can be anybody, from anywhere, but you got to visit the Bronx, period. Wherever you are in life, wherever you wanna be, you will always be a rap artist, until you visit the South Bronx. Look at the projects, look at the people. See the environment that hip-hop started in. Go to 123 Park and just stand there, and imagine the birth of a culture happening in this very spot.

…

[DR. DRE]
Yeah, I was into New York hip-hop. You gotta give props when props are due. They originated it. Anybody that doesn’t believe that is tripping.

…

[SPEECH]
It was like radio shockwaves, with new styles of scratching and stuff. This is one of the original instruments of hip-hop. Us DJs would go nuts and try to learn to know how to do those cuts.

…

[ICE-T]
So Flash, and people like that, Grand Wizard Theodore would spin these records but they would only play the breaks. And people would dance over the breaks of a record, and these were called breakdancers.
[BREAKDANCERS]
Back then, everybody that I knew that really had mad flavour in B-foying or ‘popping’ used to be a hardcore criminal. ‘Popping’ came along and it made a difference in my life. You’re too busy learning how to windmill than to rob and steal them. You’re too tired to fight after you done battled somebody and took all your aggression out on some dancing, you know?

Hip-hop ain’t no easy game to play. If you ain’t got no style, hang it up. My characters make people enjoy themselves for how I move my body and everything like that. So I feel it’s a part of fun, popping and breaking and making people laugh.

It’s not just a hype-thing, something that we’re into just to make money. This goes way deeper than that.

You know, they say ‘breaking is not hip-hop’. Come on! If breaking wasn’t hip-hop, they don’t know the history. Breaking means to me that it’s a way of expressing myself, getting my anger out there, you know? Instead of going out there smoking and fighting, I go to my own little world and I just express myself through breaking. I dance and get creative. I’m just spinning and I feel like I’m flying. And I’m flying in the air man, I’m free.

[WISE INTELLIGENT]
Graffiti is one of the most beautiful art forms in the world. I’d be looking at some of the stuff Picasso be doing, and I’m like “Well, Picasso ought to have to be there to understand what you’re doing”. But brothers graffiti-ing, they are giving you first-hand what they’re seeing everyday in the ’hood. They’re bringing the news to you. Brothers shooting dice, they had dice there. They had the trains coming by – all in one tag!

[ANDRE CHARLES]
Graffiti art means: getting out, what a lot of people can’t get out. It’s like, expressing beauty, colour, excitement, drama. It’s everything like music.

Second video extract: “The record business”

3. True or false? Correct the statement if necessary.

Small independent record companies didn’t want to give rappers a chance.

[ANSWER: False. Big record companies didn’t want to give rappers a chance.]

4. Fill in the gaps:

[KRS-ONE]
After 1985, hip-hop and rap made a split. Graffiti art and breakdancing no longer became viable means of expressing this piece of culture. Rap became this viable means of expressing this piece of the culture. And it was only because corporate America – massa – deemed it important: “Oh, we can make some money pressing up these records. So, let’s go.”

[SPEARHEAD]
The record companies are basically like a merchant bank: they loan you money and they want their money back with fat interest. And the conditions of your contract are basically like the conditions of your loan.

[DR. DRE]
The record business is exactly what it is: record – business. And you have to take care of both. I got into it just wanting to make music. I didn’t really give a damn about the business part of it. I was trusting people. Trusting that they would handle my business the way it was supposed to be handled. And you get fucked like that. So you gotta be on top of your own business. Don’t trust no managers, no record company execs, no one.
Third video extract: “The power of hip-hop”

5. Describe the power that hip-hop has:

[ANSWER: Hip-hop can grab the nation by the neck and make people realize what's going on. It's a voice for the oppressed people that in many other ways just don't have a voice.]

6. Fill in the gaps:

[NAS]
After growing up here and seeing my man that lived upstairs getting killed, and then my brother shot, that showed me what type of world this shit is. Most of the time I feared about living here was when I was younger, when I couldn't defend myself from shit that was going on. Because it were older niggas doing shit and it was a big world, and I was young and all I had was my mom and my younger brother. So all I did was just handle myself to get to a position where I can say "I'm gonna hold my ground." I'm old enough to control my destiny and not to be bullshitfed by no bullshit niggas no more.

7. Why is rap artist Nas thinking of going back to school?

[ANSWER: His knowledge is limited as of right now. There are a lot of things that he doesn't know about that he can take advantage of.]

8. Do you think that Nas is jealous of doctors and lawyers?

[ANSWER: Not really. He's "21 with a start" so that means he's looking forward to what the future will bring for him.]

9. Fill in the gaps:

[WISE INTELLIGENT]
As far as messages go, I'm trying to get across several different things. For instance, there's one side of me that is totally for the preservation of black youth, because we're dying at a rapid rate. The numbers of dying youth is increasing daily in our neighbourhood.

10. What is Wise Intelligent's opinion on “the ghetto”?

[ANSWER: He can't stand the ghetto. He loves the people in the ghetto, but he does not love the ghetto itself.]

11. Why did MC Eiht decide to move out of the ghetto of Compton?

[ANSWER: He wanted to have a more secure future for his family. He didn't want to look over his shoulder every minute when he's taking a walk outside, so that's why he decided to move to the suburbs.]

Fourth video extract: “Tupac”

12. Fill in the gaps:

[NEWS REPORTER]
It's been two days since the shooting that left recording manager Suge Knight injured and Tupac Shakur in critical condition. Metro says Shakur and Knight were driving to a club following the Tyson vs. Seldon fight. A car pulled up alongside Shakur's BMW and gunshots rang out. Police are looking for a late model white Cadillac last seen speeding southbound on Koval Lane. Meanwhile, family, friends and fans of the rap singer surround UMC, wishing they could share their messages with Shakur.

[TREACH]
Pac was a prophet. He knew things that none of us could see here, and he put it in his music. His only release was his music. I rolled with Pac. We came up together. And Pac ain't never let me roll with him to pull no gun on no black man. Pac wasn't no gangster. Pac was a soldier.
8.4 Discussion of the surveys on hip-hop culture

In the theoretical part of my memoir I have explained how the culture of hip-hop evolved throughout the years. What started out as a relatively small subculture eventually became one of the biggest cultural phenomena the world had ever seen. This culture included a genre of music (rap), a form of dancing (breakdancing), turntablism, graffiti and beatboxing. I have put my main focus on the evolution of rap music since that part of the culture has developed the most popularity-wise. Judging from the music videos that are played on MTV, TMF and JIMtv, rap music is extremely popular among teenagers. I decided to take a survey of the knowledge of hip-hop culture among Flemish 14 to 18-year-olds to find out how much teenagers really know about the culture. In the survey I have also put the stress on rap music, since that is the part of the culture which teenagers are most familiar with. The 100 survey questionnaires are from classes from the ASO, TSO and BSO sections. I would like to thank the ‘Sint-Jozefs College’ and the ‘Instituut de Pélichy’ in Izegem for their help in distributing my surveys.

My first question shows that 62.5% of the pupils likes listening to rap music. The majority of this group listen to rap regularly: some listen to the genre 1 to 5 times a week, others listen to it every day. This same group was aware of the fact that ‘hip-hop’ is not just a genre of music, but a culture as a whole. The vast majority of the other group – the 37.5% of the pupils who do not like listening to rap music – were also aware of this.

The result of one of my most important questions (“Out of which five elements does hip-hop culture exist?”) was – as expected – disappointing: only three pupils were able to give four elements; four pupils were able to give three elements; four pupils were able to give two elements. The majority of the other pupils knew that rap music was part of the culture but were clueless for the other four elements. Only a handful of pupils mentioned ‘beatboxing’. Some of the answers given to this question astonished me. A lot of pupils thought that the following things were part of hip-hop culture: violence, drugs, gangs, women, sex, jewellery, cars, clothes, money, alcohol, power, insulting people and tough guys. Clearly, the image that is being portrayed in rap videos has a strong influence on what teenagers think of hip-hop culture. When asked the question “What is so interesting about rap videos?”, the majority of the 100 pupils surveyed say that they like the song. However, it is important to mention that this same group also ticked off the following answers: ‘in these videos there are very often beautiful women and/or men and nice cars’ and approximately 20% of the pupils watch these videos because they like seeing ‘tough guys’.

The majority of the pupils who like listening to rap music know that the first rap records came out in the 1970s. In the other group, approximately half of the pupils know this. Most of the other pupils think that the first rap records were released in the 1990s.

When asked the question “Who is Kim?”, nearly everyone knew that she is Eminem’s ex-wife, including the pupils who do not like listening to rap music. This clearly shows how much attention popular teenage magazines – such as Joepie – devote to the private life of rap stars. When asked the question “Who or what is Kool Herc?”, the majority of the pupils ticked off the correct answer – to my surprise. My guess is that most of the pupils filled this survey in together and when given a difficult question, they simply took a wild guess, searched the Internet or ticked off the most plausible answer. DJ Kool Herc is a popular figure among hip-hop connoisseurs, but the chance that the average teenager knows him is rather small to say the least.
As for the question “Where does rap music have its roots?”, only a handful of pupils ticked off the correct answer (New York).

Approximately 60% of the pupils who like listening to rap music from the United States also listen to non-U.S. rap. In most cases, they listen to Dutch-language rap groups – such as ‘t Hof Van Commerce – or French rap groups. However, some pupils in that same group said that they do not listen to non-U.S. rap because those rappers are not popular. The question “When is hip-hop’s ‘golden era’ to be situated?” was apparently a rather difficult one: only a handful of pupils knew that it was the 1980s. It is striking that the majority thinks that the 1990s represents hip-hop’s golden era.

The question “Who is your favourite rapper?” was interesting for me, because I had hoped it would show to me if the pupils also knew other rappers apart from the ones they see on television. Unfortunately, the result is disappointing. Nearly every pupil answered by naming a commercial rapper such as 50 Cent, Eminem or Snoop Dogg. Only one pupil named a less known rapper such as Ludacris.

Fortunately the result of the question “Have you ever bought anything because you had seen it in a music video?” was satisfying. Only a few pupils have done this once in their lives, while the majority have never done this.

When given the question “Name one old-school hip-hop artist”, only two pupils came up with a correct answer: Run-DMC and LL Cool J. It is important to point out the fact that the majority think that someone like 2Pac – a rapper from the 1990s – is already old-school to these pupils. On the other hand, it was probably a rather difficult question since I did not explain the term ‘old-school’ in the survey.

Conclusion:

I think it is safe to say that the majority of these teenagers are heavily influenced by the media – television, radio and magazines. Six pupils out of ten like listening to rap music but yet those six pupils only like listening to popular rappers. This raises a question for me: if they really like listening to rap, how come the only rappers they like listening to are the ones they know from television? Why not try to expand your horizons and listen to rappers you do not know from television? Apparently, these pupils seem to think that popularity equals good music. Most pupils also seem to know a lot about the private life of rap stars, most likely by reading magazines such as Joepie. Again, these pupils obviously prefer showing interest in popular rap stars to taking some time to discover other rappers.

On the other hand, this group ranges from age 14 to 18, so it is rather normal that they are influenced by the media. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it is normal, I would like to see teenagers having a more critical attitude towards the media. Therefore I think it would be interesting to have lessons on ‘dealing with the media’ in every section of our school system – ASO, TSO, KSO and BSO. In those lessons pupils would be made familiar with ways of how the media plays a major role in influencing their taste in music, films and so on. Hopefully I will get to see the day when these lessons are taught and be part of such a project.
Onderwijs

RENO

departement lerarenopleiding RENO - campus Torhout - Sint-Jozefstraat 1 B-8820 TORHOUT