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It used to be two turntables and a microphone, now HipHop is worldwide and is inside everyone's home.

If you take a trip down history lane you can trace the origins of the HipHop culture to its beginnings in the black and Latin neighborhoods and communities of the South Bronx. A music that was made by people whom had nothing and in terms of society at large would never have anything. Amidst this strife and hard living HipHop was born. A musical genre that was defined on the essence of storytelling, message passing, and talking fly. HipHop had become the new conduit to which inner city youth of New York, and it's surrounding areas, became attracted to in droves.

Somewhere within it's 25+ year existence, however, HipHop had found it's way out of the neighborhoods to which it was birthed and is now seen throughout the world as a culture as diverse as the people whom make up it's community. HipHop became a packaged commodity that is sold to the youth not only across this country, but also in countries where English is a second language. HipHop grabbed hold of the world and refused to let go.

Why was this culture seemingly so embraced by so many people? How does a culture that is defined, in some circles as black music, reach and touch so many? Never before has a culture and musical genre brought so many people together from across race, age, and ethnic divide, done so more profoundly then the HipHop culture. So whether you're downloading it as your ring-tone, shaking your booty at the club, or getting through the day by reciting your favorite Tupac song; you're probably a part of the HipHop culture and don't even know it.

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A TRIP, DOWN HISTORY LANE. Indeed it was two turntables and a microphone. From the shores of Kingston, Jamaica, a man who would later go by the legendary name 'DJ Kool Herc' came to the concrete jungle known as New York City;

the south Bronx to be exact. Taking two 12-inch vinyl records and a pair of turntables that his mother bought him for his birthday, DJ Kool Herc would create a sound that would later evolve into what is now rap music. By taking these two records and finding a break within the music DJ Kool Herc discovered a space that looped the breaks continuously, Kool Herc had revealed how to extend the dancing portion of a record, or in other words how to 'keep the party going'. From this simple discovery an entire culture began to emerge; a culture that gave a voice to the voiceless, a culture that allowed the impoverished and the poverty stricken to feel as if they had something that was priceless.

THE BIRTH. Cultivated on the streets of the inner city as a conduit to pass messages along through the art of spoken words, expressive dance movements, and aerosol murals HipHop burned like wild brush fire through the boroughs of black and brown New York. In the beginning the art form of DJing was the prominent source of HipHop, anybody that could get their hands on a set of turntables would eventually become a makeshift DJ. These hood stars, every neighborhood had at least two DJ party aficionados, would gather in public areas and commence to rock the party with blends and mixes of disco's more popular records. Unfortunately the beginning of HipHop marked the end of disco. However, before HipHop could officially become it's own, other factors had to weigh in. Taking these break beats and extending the instrumental parts into a dancing melody prompted the DJ to incorporate a call and response between them and party patrons. This was MCing in its infancy; an emcee or MC was the host or master of ceremonies at a party. Early on the MC would simply take notice whom was at the party and do shout outs and/or talk shit. Their job in these early days was not to rap but give props to the DJ. The MC at this point was a secondary accessory to the DJ.

THINGS CHANGE. A change was on the horizon, the DJ still held the spotlight at the block parties and jam sessions but now the MC seemed to be getting their 'shine' on as well. The MC went from hosting the parties, to becoming a party's showcase. Now the reason some people came to an event was to catch the fly rhymes from those who had become nice with their witty wordplay and metaphorical similes. Some of the more popular at this time were Dana Dane, Scott La Rock, Theodore Teddy and countless others emerged from the woodwork. At this point in time the main focus was to sound

original and fresh; to bite another persons style could get you beat down with the quickness. These MC's would become hood stars for real, engaging in activities that included but were not limited to MCing parties, passing along news and information (similar to Negro Spirituals sung by African slaves) and to battling; or head to head rhyming competitions for the purpose of finding the best rapper. Reasons like these would be reason enough for rappers to exist. MC versus MC became great tools for selling tickets to parties, the only place where these rappers could get their shine. Enter the Sugar Hill Gang; this is the first rap group to press up a 12-inch vinyl of their own. Disco is dead. The Sugar Hill Gang became notoriously well known off of this endeavor, their record Rappers Delight is and was one of the greatest rap records of all time, it eventually became so popular that a music video was spawned from its inception. This move would later become a major precursor to the movement that is HipHop. Eventually other rappers and rap groups would come from this, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Kurtis Blow, The Funky 4 Plus One, and Roxxane Shante; a female MC that was revered for being able to play hard in the New York 'boys club'.

A NEW YORK THING. It's true, during this point and time New York was the only place one could go to get a taste of HipHop music and culture. NY had a strangle hold on the game and refused to let it go. But what happened next was not on anybody's radar, in the late 80's a group from the wild, wild west came in and changed the game forever. Enter NWA, this was HipHop's street culture's cousin on steroids and armed with automatic weapons and machine guns. Gone were they days of happy rappers enjoying themselves with simple wittiness and metaphorical prowess. Those elements were still there, but now they had become infused with a bunch of four letter words and loud foul talk. If New York HipHop was the voice of inner city youth trying to speak for the first time, then California HipHop was that voice telling those that be they weren't taking this shit any more. NWA rapped about crooked cops, dealing drugs, and surviving in the streets. It was less bohemian and more brutal belligerence. Off of this came other rappers with similar points of view and it showed in their music, rappers like Ice T, Too \$hort, and E-40 were some the prominent names involved in the pioneering of West coast life in HipHop. These rappers showed that it wasn't just a New York thing anymore they pushed the HipHop lifestyle forward and forced it to become a staple in the fabric of

American culture. America loves its bad guys and now it had fallen for some that wore Dickie khakis suits, black Chuck Taylor Converse, dark sunglasses and a jehri.

IT'S EVERYWHERE. With the acceptance of west coast HipHop, the culture began to show up everywhere on the continental United States. It seemed every area had it's own brand of music and put it's own twist and stamp on it. The birth of Southern HipHop began. Luke and 2 Live Crew in Florida reached high lights when the US grand Jury deemed their music to explicit and in effect caused HipHop to tout the now infamous Parental Advisory sticker and label on the musical genre's album covers. The Dirty South came with their brand of the HipHop sound. At the first annual Source Awards (an award show that is dedicated to the advancement of HipHop Music and Culture) held in New York, a little known southern group from Atlanta named Outkast, was awarded artists of the year and were showered with boos. It seems that the pioneers of the HipHop movement was not ready to see a culture that they believed was theirs become so successful beyond their borders. Unfortunately it wasn't up to New York or it's artists, HipHop was everywhere now.

WHAT AM I DOING? The premise this project started as a study to see whom did the HipHop culture belong to, what it evolved into, however, was a living testimonial of HipHop told through the words of those who use it to deal with their lives. In other words, I went to places where HipHop was showcased locally (Southwestern Michigan) and documented it in its true forms. MC's emceeing; DJ's keeping the parties going, and B-Boys break-dancing. I have taken steps to interview and question the artists that make up the local community to find out if this generation of artists, 5 times removed from the original strand still shows traits and/or ideals that were prevalent within the founding pathos. Also I hope to shed light and shine to artists here in Michigan, one reason for this is because I believe that it is time for the Mid-West to have its time in the sun. Never before has the Mid-West had a showcase strangle hold on HipHop like the afore mentioned areas. I intend to use artists that are doing it on a local level and an intra-local level to find out what it is that makes them tick. What are the reasons to which they are doing it and so forth? My cause is to see why the culture of HipHop has crossed through barriers and made so many from different backgrounds come together so harmoniously, I bet it has something to do with those two turntables and that damn microphone.

Works Cited...

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- Most of the information also came from studying HipHop from 20 plus odd years of experiencing the lifestyle I still live.