

B-Beats Under Bombardment: Hip-Hop's Splintering and Frontiers

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Senior Division

Paper

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## Process Paper

I chose the topic through a look at what were some of the defining themes in the rich history of Hip-Hop. Throughout its history there has always been struggles from the community with outsiders as well as from within the community. This tug-of-war for the soul of Hip-Hop was what I wished to examine.

Beginning with poets and DJs in dank basements, much of the earliest work and documentation is poorly preserved. I essentially worked backwards to find the early work, I started with a major record and worked my way back through interviews prior with the artists or related figures. After the 70s it became easier to find this information, much of the information is documented online, home-computers were popularized by this point. There is a contrast in how events pre and post 1996 were researched. The challenge was just how poorly archived early written works about the genre are, you have to sift through thousands of poorly scanned magazines from the 70s and 80s. Probably the best example of this would be Robert J. Ford's landmark article "B-Beats Bombarding Bronx". Tucked away on the 76th page of a 1978 issue of billboard is the first major published writing on the growing DJ movement that eventually matured into hip-hop. Something that was readily available was industry figures and data. Through organizations like the RIAA and longstanding publications like billboard much of that information is readily available.

I structured my project as if it were a retelling of the history of the music, but within that was a focus on the youth culture at the time as well as the major ongoing events impacting the black community. Through this I could give viewership to not just the artists but the listeners and the people in the background throughout.

There is a symbiotic relationship between hip-hop and black liberation, both at their core are battles by young people for resources and agency. The genre has become in popular culture the main representative of black liberation. Major funding for legal and social battles has been drummed up through the music, major changes in culture have come through the music, and the artform is now at the forefront of American culture.

There is a misunderstanding of hip-hop's value. It is easy to view Hip-Hop in the lens of "popular-culture", but in reality it is representative for young-people across the nation. It dominates US music charts and is the most popular genre for ages 12-35. Hip-Hop serves as a voice for minority youth throughout the US. Subjects in Hip-Hop also shift, in the 80s to early 90s a lot of the music just chronicles the day to day and structured political movement, rather than the focus on the abject poverty and results of it that better known records have.

## Paper

There has never been an artform with such an intense reverence for its predecessors along with a deep drive for radical change and immediacy, as Hip-Hop. Through respect as well as necessity, the young men and women who molded the genre molded it in the shape of the music of their parents and community elders. This in turn made a medium that served as a great unifying culmination of black music and its messaging. However, as the genre left its time worn Bronx basements and clubs and made its way into the rest of the United States, it began to fracture. The unity it once possessed in the hands of the New York born Jamaican diaspora was replaced with regional and stylistic sectarianism, and greatest of all intense pressure from corporations to strip artists of their agency. This decades-long process of struggle left the genre exceptionally diverse but at the cost of its ability to direct change through organized and consistent messaging. Hip-Hop's beginnings seem incredibly quaint in comparison to the massive force that it has become. Hip-Hop served as a natural outgrowth of the DJ Movement within the Bronx. DJing began as a way to take cheap classic records and make new music out of it. As for a reason for this artform, DJ Kool Herc, a founding turntable artist stated that, "On most records people have to wait through a lot of strings and singing to get to the good part of the record. But I give it to them all up front"<sup>1</sup>. This Turntablist movement spread through New York and was developed by artists like GrandMaster Flash and Grandwizard Theodore. At the same time, there was an underground spoken word scene dubbed The Last Poets<sup>2</sup>. That movement formed the art of rapping. While never a member of the official group, the most prominent member of this movement was revered artist, Gil Scott-Heron. In Heron's records he laid his poetry over: soul, and rock tracks; Heron's poetry was often hyper-political. His lyrics

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<sup>1</sup> Ford, Robert, Jr. "B-Beats Bombarding Bronx." *Billboard*, 1 July 1978, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> "Our History." *The Last Poets*, [www.thelastpoets.com/our-history](http://www.thelastpoets.com/our-history). Accessed 24 Jan. 2023.

highlighted the injustices of 70s America and the struggles he and the black community experienced daily. Gil covered a wide breadth of talking points in the black community, stating in an interview at the University of Massachusetts, “We've done a lot of those things because we try to represent a lot of points of view from the community ... People can go back and pick "B Movie" and "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" and say it's political. But then they can pick "Your Daddy Loves You" or "I Think I'll Call It Morning" or "Lovely Day" or "Bobby Smith.”<sup>3</sup> Gil clearly provides an example of the wide range of topics his music covered and why he made it in the first place. Heron’s work served as the inspiration for many artists and his poetry eventually helped birth the art of rapping. The rapping of this era that the spoken word movement inspired was based around telling the stories of the day-to-day in the black community. Songs like “Rappers Delight”<sup>4</sup> and “Superrappin”<sup>5</sup> spoke about what the youth were doing for fun and the disco inspired party cultures of their neighborhoods. However, just like how the disco themed music reflected the environment at the time, as the decades changed and conditions seemed to worsen, the music changed with it.

Moving into the 80s there was a major change in how Hip-Hop presented itself, in the early part of the decade the complex topics of The Last Poets were brought back into play. The two earliest notable examples of this shift were Brother D’s “How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise”<sup>6</sup> and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five’s single, “The Message”<sup>7</sup>. Both tracks detailed the grittier parts of the daily black existence that Hip-Hop chronicled. “How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise” derided the party music that Hip-Hop for the most part had served to be, while “The Message” described the stress and trauma from the visceral experiences

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3 Scott-Heron, Gilbert. "Giving Back to the Community! Interview with Gil Scott-Heron," Interview by Amilcar Shabazz. UMass Amherst, 13 Nov. 2006

<sup>4</sup>The Sugarhill Gang. "Rapper's Delight." Recorded 1 Jan. 1979.

<sup>5</sup>Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five. "Superrappin." Recorded 15 May 1979.

<sup>6</sup> Brother D. "How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise." Recorded 1980.

<sup>7</sup> Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Flash. The Message. Recorded 1 July 1982.

caused by living in impoverished and increasingly criminal environments. “The Message” served as a moderate success peaking at 64 on Billboard’s Hot 100 Chart<sup>8</sup>. Both of these created the beginnings of a divide within hip-hop, with its still massively successful party focused contemporaries. More and more artists began to follow the leads of Flash and Brother D, artists and groups like: Melle Mel, Run DMC, and Afrika Bambaataa made music highlighting the conditions Black Americans were being subjected to in the early 80s.<sup>9</sup> The aforementioned Bambaataa had prior in the late 70s formed an organization known as the Universal Zulu Nation, formed out of the joining of various Bronx street gangs. The Zulu Nation is a prime example as one of the earliest major Hip-Hop organizations, as well as one of the earliest instances of gang culture’s involvement with Hip-Hop.<sup>10</sup> However, as the 80s introduced complexity into the art itself corporate bodies began to take notice of Hip-Hop’s meteoric rise. Early artist founded label Sugarhill Records grappled with their artists for creative control, leading to the lawsuit and very public exit of Grandmaster Flash and his band.<sup>11</sup> Along with the growing tension between artists and record labels, Hip-Hop received its first brand deal with Run DMC and Adidas 1.5 million dollar deal in 1986.<sup>12</sup> While the 80s served as a period for artistic growth in Hip-Hop the cracks began to form in the foundations of the genre and would only get larger.

As the United States prepared itself to enter the 1990s Hip-Hop underwent a radical shift in the content of the music, and where it was coming from. Through 1986-1988, artists like Slick Rick, LL Cool J, Public Enemy, and the duo, Eric B and Rakim all released groundbreaking records which featured a deeper level of complexity in their production and lyrics.<sup>13</sup> Additionally the afro-centerist undertones of Hip-Hop took centerstage through artists like Public Enemy and

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<sup>8</sup> "Grandmaster Flash." Billboard, Billboard Media, [www.billboard.com/artist\\_grandmaster-flash/](http://www.billboard.com/artist_grandmaster-flash/).

<sup>9</sup> "1973-1983." Chuck D. Presents This Day in Rap and Hip Hop History, Hachette Books, 2017, pp. 5-16.

<sup>10</sup> "What is The Universal Zulu Nation?" Zulu Nation, Universal Zulu Nation, [www.zulunation.com/about-zulunation/](http://www.zulunation.com/about-zulunation/).

<sup>11</sup> Hinckley, David. "Flash Gets Freedom." New York Daily News, 22 Mar. 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Blanco, Alvin. "Run-DMC Recall 'My Adidas' Impact, 25 Years Later." MTV, Viacom International, 11 Nov. 2011, [www.mtv.com/news/sn2aa5/run-dmc-my-adidas](http://www.mtv.com/news/sn2aa5/run-dmc-my-adidas).

<sup>13</sup> "1986-1988." Chuck D. Presents This Day in Rap and Hip Hop History, Hachette Books, 2017, pp. 30-44.

their wildly successful yet, intensely politicized musical stylings as seen in records like “Yo Bum Rush the Show”.<sup>14</sup> Also going on in New York was the appearance of acclaimed rap group, A Tribe Called Quest, which cemented the headquarters of Hip-Hop squarely within the burrough of Queens. While this migration occurred, the music of New York was taking root in the West Coast. In the late 80s and early 90s, LA based rapper Ice T built off the work of artists like Captain Rapp<sup>15</sup> and rose to prominence with his debut record “Rhyme Pays”<sup>16</sup> in 1987. Shortly after Ice T’s professional debut, Compton California based Group NWA burst onto the scene and popularized the underground movement known as Gangsta Rap. NWA’s debut studio record “Straight Outta Compton” followed the trend set by Ice T through its inclusion of a spotlight on the criminal element found amongst the impoverished in the American Black Community, as well as on the conditions that had created that criminal element in the first place. NWA achieved massive commercial success while facing a tidal wave of media backlash and slander. Possibly the greatest example of the uproar against the group was a desist letter sent by the FBI to NWA’s record label over the song “F\*\*\* Tha Police”.<sup>17</sup> That song in particular best surmised the backlash as it was a raw and energetic series of verses about the groups experiences with the Los Angeles Police Department and their hatred of it. Despite, or possibly due to, the constant media attention, Straight Outta Compton sold incredibly well, achieving gold certification by the RIAA eight months after its initial release.<sup>18</sup> The breakout success of the group cemented Gangsta Rap as an accessible mainstream subgenre of Hip-Hop and inspired other artists to achieve a similar image. Former manager of Billboard Magazines Hip-Hop chart Raully Ramirez wrote, “90s rappers ‘would create this persona,’ portraying themselves as thugs and gangsters because that

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14 Public Enemy. Yo! Bum Rush the Show. Recorded 10 Feb. 1987. Def Jam Recordings, 1987.

15 Cross, Brian. It's Not about a Salary ... Rap, Race and Resistance in Los Angeles. London, Verso, 1993.

16 Marrow, Tracy Lauren. Rhyme Pays. Recorded 1 Jan. 1987. Sire Records, 1987.

17 Hochman, Steve. "Compton Rappers Versus the Letter of the Law: FBI Claims Song by N.W.A. Advocates Violence on Police." The Los Angeles Time, 5 Oct. 1988.

18 "Gold and Platinum: Straight Outta Compton." RIAA, [www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab\\_active=default-award&se=Straight+Outta+Compton#search\\_section](http://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=Straight+Outta+Compton#search_section).

was “the character [they] had to be to succeed.”<sup>19</sup> As California secured its position as a Hip-Hop stronghold and the dynamics of New York’s boroughs shifted, those early cracks in the music’s foundation began to take on water.

During the first half of the 90s, the music industry had undergone sweeping transformations, chief among them was just how people listened to music. In 1996, the FCC passed the Telecommunications act, allowing broadcasters to consolidate much of the market<sup>20</sup> Prior to this, Sony and Philips collaborated on the Compact Disc, a new portable low cost audio format<sup>21</sup>. The ecosystem they developed for it would be incredibly successful as by 1991 the CD made up over half of all recorded music revenue<sup>22</sup>. These changes made music a much more profitable venture, and in turn led to record labels behaving in a far more controlling and cutthroat manner. The changing nature of the music industry could be seen firsthand in the way that NWA fell apart. Arabian Prince left first, after the release of Straight Outta Compton – due to royalty disputes. Following Prince’s exit, main writer Ice Cube very publicly split with the group and label. The final nail for NWA was the departure of main producer Dr Dre. All three of these exits occurred over one primary issue, payment. When asked about why he left, Ice Cube said in a 1990 issue of the magazine SPIN, “Financial reasons, man. I wasn’t getting paid. When you contribute to the sale of three million dollar albums, you expect more than 32,000<sup>23</sup> Dre had also left the group over a dispute with his share of the revenue although he was considerably less

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19 McNulty-Finn, Clara. "The Evolution of Rap." Harvard Political Review, Apr.2014, [harvardpolitics.com/evolution-rap/](http://harvardpolitics.com/evolution-rap/). McNulty-Finn, Clara. "The Evolution of Rap." Harvard Political Review, Apr.2014, [harvardpolitics.com/evolution-rap/](http://harvardpolitics.com/evolution-rap/).

20 PBS NewsHour. "The Future and Past of Broadcast Radio." PBS NewsHour, NewsHour Productions, 4 May 2005, [www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/media-jan-june05-broadcast\\_05-04](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/media-jan-june05-broadcast_05-04). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

21 Shapiro, Devon, et al. "The Invention of Compact Discs." Tuck at Dartmouth, Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, 9 Nov. 2012, [faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/images/uploads/faculty/ron-adner/dup-1EIS\\_Main\\_Project\\_Compact\\_Disc\\_Paper.pdf](http://faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/images/uploads/faculty/ron-adner/dup-1EIS_Main_Project_Compact_Disc_Paper.pdf). Accessed 18 Dec. 2022.

22 "US Recorded Music Revenues by Format." RIAA, Recording Industry Association of America, [www.riaa.com/u-s-sales-database/](http://www.riaa.com/u-s-sales-database/).

23 Article Owen, Frank. "Hanging Tough." SPIN, Apr. 1990, pp. 32-34.



vocal about it than Ice Cube<sup>24</sup>. The death of NWA served as a shining example of the underhanded maneuvering that record labels used in the 90s and going forward to deprive their artists of revenue they had brought in. The death of Ruthless Records and its premier group lead to the creation of one of the twentieth century's largest labels, Death Row Records. Primarily founded by: former NWA members The D.O.C and Dr Dre, along with label executive Suge Knight<sup>25</sup>. Death Row as an imprint of major label Interscope Records, had many of its artists catch large waves of media buzz for their artists provocative and politically controversial lyrics. Jimmy Iovine, then head of Interscope, said in a Rolling Stones interview about the draw to Death Row in particular that, "I think it's the spirit, the abandonment, the excitement of those records," he says. "How they reflected and what they captured of society through music."<sup>26</sup> This entrance of new figureheads and concepts in the music as well as further melding of corporate and media interests within Hip-Hop lead to the almost overnight shift of the genre a few years after.

By the mid 90s, the hardcore sounds of underground Los Angeles had come back to Hip-Hop's birthplace of New York and had been taken and been infused with sounds born out of New York City. Mobb Deep and Wu Tang Clan were stylistic siblings but each took their own paths in incorporating the hardcore street edge into their music, with the former taking queues out of the surrounding Sicilian Mob and the latter from classic Hollywood Kung-Fu portrayals. In 1994, the city's artists drew deeper from that sound with the debut records from: The Notorious B.I.G and Nas. The American South, which had long been written off as derivative<sup>27</sup>

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24 Kautz, Justin. "N.W.A." Encyclopedia Britannica, 3 May. 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/NWA>. Accessed 23 January 2023.

25 "Death Row Records: About." Death Row Records, [www.deathrowofficial.com/about.html](http://www.deathrowofficial.com/about.html). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

26 "Wild, David. "Interscope Records: Inside the Hit Factory." Rolling Stone, 3 Apr. 1997.

27 Morgan, Joan. "Book Review: 'Rap Capital,' by Joe Coscarelli." The New York Times, 18 Oct. 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/books/review/rap-capital-an-atlanta-story-joe-coscarelli.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/books/review/rap-capital-an-atlanta-story-joe-coscarelli.html). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

began to form its own unique sound. The South incorporated the music and aesthetics of the 1970s particularly funk and blaxploitation films portrayals of Pimps, this could be seen no better than with artists such as: UGK, Outkast, or 8Ball and MJG. All of these artists took the music in wildly different directions but created many divides amongst fans of the genre, and this could be seen no better than in the 1995 Source Awards. The Source Magazine for many years was the largest and most respected publication for Hip-Hop and in 1995 the sectarian divides that had been brewing in the artform truly came to the forefront<sup>28</sup>. It began with the early section of the show where Death Row head kicked off his public feud with Sean “Diddy” Combs, head of major New York label Bad Boy Records. This feud lasted years after and resulted in the personal feuds of each label's premier artists, The Notorious B.I.G. and rap legend Tupac Shakur. Further cementing the bad blood between the East and West coasts, LA performers Snoop Dogg and Dr Dre were booed on stage by the NYC based crowd. Finally, Southern newcomers Outkast were booed after what was perceived as a robbery of fellow newcomer Nas of the award for Best New Rap Artist(s), to an unruly crowd they proclaimed, “...The South got something to say...” This one moment truly emphasized just how far the genre had gone and just how deep the battle lines were.

In almost three decades, Black America built up an artform that seemingly combined all its stylistic heritage into one cohesive form of expression. That artform however took on a life of its own. In that long period of time between the onset of the DJ and the splintering of Hip-Hop, the nation and its people had changed. Hip-Hop and its artists could no longer act as one body. There was no longer the ability to produce one specific kind of sound. As the music traveled the country each region it touched molded to that region's sensibilities. Along with regional changes, what was marketable had changed, much of the period's music was easily produced, mass media.

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<sup>28</sup> The Source Awards (1995). The Source Magazine, 3 Aug. 1995.

Stepping outside the lines record labels drew was an easy way for an artist to lose out on millions. By 1995, all of these shifts and changes came to a head and Hip-Hop was never the same. Tensions and movements that simmered under the surface for years exploded. A Pandora's Box had been opened, and it couldn't be closed. In the place of street movements housed exclusively in cramped burroughs were thousands of unique sounds that reflected the vast spectrum of the Black American Experience, in all its complexity and beauty.

## Works Cited

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Run-DMC and their collaboration with Adidas set a variety of precedents within rap and the fashion industry that continue to this day. Their work is the basis that the continuing investment hip-hop makes with sneaker culture as seen through collaborations by artists like De La Soul, Kendrick Lamar, or Travis Scott. Along with this the collaboration introduced the idea of Hip-Hop brand deals, something that would become increasingly prevalent in the 80s through things like malt liquor collaborations. There has been massive pushback to how much Hip-Hop involves itself with corporate branding and that issue basically begins with this moment.

Brother D. "How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise." Recorded 1980. How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise, Clappers Records, 1980. Youtube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-HQR2-s1J4&ab\\_channel=victornewman06](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-HQR2-s1J4&ab_channel=victornewman06). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Brother D provides a standout example of the two paths that rap would take, and the major route that it would take exiting the seventies. Brother D and Grandmaster Flash's work set a trend within Hip-Hop and opened an avenue for artists to speak on their conditions and struggles while still being commercially viable within Hip-Hop.

"Death Row Records: About." Death Row Records, [www.deathrowofficial.com/about.html](http://www.deathrowofficial.com/about.html). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Death Row controlled west-coast Hip-Hop in a relatively unprecedented way. Death Row had a near monopoly on the biggest stars in California Hip-Hop, it was like that from the start due to picking some of the biggest parts of Ruthless Records. Furthermore due to their connections with Interscope they had massive amounts of resources and assets at their disposal.

Ford, Robert, Jr. "B-Beats Bombarding Bronx." *Billboard*, 1 July 1978, p. 76. Archive.org, [archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_9CQEAAAAMBAJ/page/n75/mode/2up?q=%22B-Beats%22+Bombarding+Bronx](http://archive.org/details/bub_gb_9CQEAAAAMBAJ/page/n75/mode/2up?q=%22B-Beats%22+Bombarding+Bronx). Accessed 2 Oct. 2022.

This article is small unimportant and hidden away within its own publication. But it is still a standout due to the simple fact of it being the first. It gives insight into a long ended movement and to people now well into the latter halves of their lives as teenagers and young adults. Much like the DJs it covers the article will become the foundation for something much greater

"Gold and Platinum: Straight Outta Compton." RIAA, [www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab\\_active=default-award&se=Straight+Outta+Compton#search\\_section](http://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=Straight+Outta+Compton#search_section). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Provides solid and industry approved numbers for this records sales. RIAA is the go to database for sales numbers and data in the music industry. Its incredibly just how wildly successful SOC

was for the conditions it released in. SOC also has held up much of its popularity, its platinum rating came out well after its release. NWA is still upheld as one of the greatest groups of its era and its sales reflect that acclaim.

"Grandmaster Flash." Billboard, Billboard Media, [www.billboard.com/artist/grandmaster-flash/](http://www.billboard.com/artist/grandmaster-flash/). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Like with NWA's RIAA data this provides solid tangible numbers for the success of the artist and their projects. Flash's most commercial success is the one that was the most out of place in the environment it was released under. Flash's music has aged much like his peers work and often feels out of place in the society we live in currently, and so the project that best reflects the current state of things is the one that has held up the most.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. "The Message." Recorded 1 July 1982. Sugarhill Records, 1982. Youtube Music, [music.youtube.com/watch?v=JfnFkJDuDM0](https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=JfnFkJDuDM0). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

The Message was the standout from a record that shared its name. Flash and his group were already very incredibly successful as Flash was a longstanding DJ and member of the community and his group had been early to come into the genre. This record is heralded by many as the introduction to the idea of "conscious" Hip-Hop. This song in particular would inspire many and serve as a launch point for many developments within the genre.

Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five. "Superrappin." Recorded 15 May 1979. Superrappin, performance by Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, Enjoy Records, 1979. Spotify, [open.spotify.com/album/3hbzPlq4GgUHIUPaaNMNvg](https://open.spotify.com/album/3hbzPlq4GgUHIUPaaNMNvg). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Superrappin is a prime example of the kind of music major Hip-Hop artists and groups had been making at the time. The song is incredibly flashy and ego driven and like its contemporaries focuses on the party culture of much of the black youth within New York City. Superrappin has become relatively dated and is often ignored in conversations about the storied history around Flash's discography.

Hinckley, David. "Flash Gets Freedom." New York Daily News, 22 Mar. 1984. Cornell University Library, [digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:9061192](https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:9061192). Accessed 13 Oct. 2022.

This article will in time become one of the first instances of the battle between hip-hop artists and the record industry for control. Flash's publicized court battles would display that there was much unrest in the space, as well as a growing desire for control from recording labels. This instance will be built upon much after.

Hochman, Steve. "Compton Rappers Versus the Letter of the Law: FBI Claims Song by N.W.A. Advocates Violence on Police." The Los Angeles Times, 5 Oct. 1988, [www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-10-05-ca-1046-story.html](http://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-10-05-ca-1046-story.html). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

The fact that the FBI took a stance against the group shows just how transgressive hip-hop was and has always been. There is a long history of the FBI taking a stance against black artists and political figures and their conflict with NWA is no exception. Their stance that the song "F\*\*\* the Police" was harmful was often shared by much of the media at the time. In hindsight

however it can be argued to have been an apt statement from the group considering the assault of Rodney King was only a few years after.

Marrow, Tracy Lauren. Rhyme Pays. Recorded 1 Jan. 1987. Sire Records, 1987. Spotify, [open.spotify.com/album/267xiIVnif2CUxhbRQk115](https://open.spotify.com/album/267xiIVnif2CUxhbRQk115). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Ice-T is a large part of the foundation of Hip-Hop in California. This record was groundbreaking for its time, despite not being involved in much of the subject matter spoken about on the record, due to his proximity Ice-T could weave complex stories in his music. This work helped to detail much of the struggles the black community was having within California at the time.

"Our History." The Last Poets, [www.thelastpoets.com/our-history](http://www.thelastpoets.com/our-history). Accessed 24 Jan. 2023.

The Last Poets are often overlooked by general audiences, but by hardcores they are an incredibly respected institution of early Hip-Hop. It is interesting to contrast the idea of The Last Poets movement with the actual artists that inspired it. Often times they are overlooked in favor of their contemporaries but unlike those contemporaries the group claims their status within Hip-Hop music.

Owen, Frank. "Hanging Tough." SPIN, Apr. 1990, pp. 32-34. Google Books, [books.google.com/books?id=GJ2P1hu6nToC&pg=PA34&lpg=PA34&dq=spin+Ice+Cube+wanted+to+continue+with+N.W.A,+but+he+just+wasn%E2%80%99t+getting+paid&source=bl&ots=-NyOoAU7MU&sig=pzR98pPJbGRQTaisQLKisoCZxZs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi1-POm5fbOAhUGox4KHe54DT8Q6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=spin%20Ice%20Cube%20wanted%20to%20continue%20with%20N.W.A%20C%20but%20he%20just%20wasn%E2%80%99t%20getting%20paid&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=GJ2P1hu6nToC&pg=PA34&lpg=PA34&dq=spin+Ice+Cube+wanted+to+continue+with+N.W.A,+but+he+just+wasn%E2%80%99t+getting+paid&source=bl&ots=-NyOoAU7MU&sig=pzR98pPJbGRQTaisQLKisoCZxZs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi1-POm5fbOAhUGox4KHe54DT8Q6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=spin%20Ice%20Cube%20wanted%20to%20continue%20with%20N.W.A%20C%20but%20he%20just%20wasn%E2%80%99t%20getting%20paid&f=false). Accessed 3 Jan. 2023.

Ice Cube is incredibly candid about what went wrong between him and Ruthless Records. Ice Cube was the main writer for the group and was a large portion of its success, and yet was paid in scraps. He is a major example of the at the time growing trend of artists being underpaid despite bringing in piles of revenue. Sadly Ice Cube was not the last artist to be treated in this way as it is a common complaint among artists that their labels have mistreated them.

Public Enemy. Yo! Bum Rush the Show. Recorded 10 Feb. 1987. Def Jam Recordings, 1987. Spotify, [open.spotify.com/album/0YI9ihAQIC63jyDuP5d6DN?autoplay=true](https://open.spotify.com/album/0YI9ihAQIC63jyDuP5d6DN?autoplay=true). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Public Enemy were ahead of their time in many aspects. They provided the basis for many artists that are overtly political in their music. They introduced more afrocentric elements and figures in their music and for many that was their first exposure to that line of thinking. Afrocentrism is baked into the foundation of many Hip-Hop subgenres as a long standing way of thinking for many in the black community.

Ridenhour, Carlton Douglas. "1986-1988." Chuck D. Presents This Day in Rap and Hip Hop History, Hachette Books, 2017, pp. 30-44.

This book was essential to this project. Chuck D is a well respected and beloved figure in Hip-Hop who's art has stood the test of time. This section in particular shows just how gradual the changes from 86-88 were and also how there were still two different ends to Hip-Hop at that time. All while Run DMC was reaching their peak Uncle Luke was achieving national

controversy. However by the end of 1988 Hip-Hop was a different landscape than it was when the mid 80s had started.

---. "1973-1983." Chuck D. Presents This Day in Rap and Hip Hop History, Hachette Books, 2017, pp. 5-16.

This section of the book outlines the founding decade of Hip-Hop. It outlines what birthed the music and how prior to the end of the 70s the two genres that would combine and form Hip-Hop were completely separate from one another. DJing and spoken word were radically different art-forms that served wildly different purposes and audiences. As well as the prior point the early parts of Hip-Hop reflect much of the preconceptions that it still has, as mindless party music to be easily consumed.

Scott-Heron, Gilbert. "'Giving Back to the Community!' Interview with Gil Scott-Heron," Interview by Amilcar Shabazz. Scholarworks @UMass Amherst, UMass Amherst, 13 Nov. 2006, scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=afroam\_faculty\_pubs. Accessed Feb. 1995.

I think this interview gives great insight into both the perspective of Hip-Hop fans on Heron's influence as well as Gil's own views on the place of his work. As he entered the later period of his life he was less detached by moreso cautious about the labeling of him and his art as proto-hiphop. I think its also interesting to see his perspective on the idea of the revolutionary and how he still holds that mindset but is not part of the force actively causing change anymore.

The Source Awards (1995). The Source Magazine, 3 Aug. 1995.

The source awards changed everything for Hip-Hop. It is the nexus point for some of the genres highest highs and lowest lows. The source awards lit the spark in a room full of gasoline. The entire award show was constantly disrupted and oftentimes the audience was an integral part of that disruption. The 95 source awards also provided some of the most famous moments in Hip-Hop history, it birthed the storied East-Coast, West-Coast beef and gave southern artists something to prove, leading to the road were on now where the south dominates the art.

The Sugarhill Gang. "Rapper's Delight." Recorded 1 Jan. 1979. Rapper's Delight, Warner Strategic Marketing, 2005. Spotify, open.spotify.com/album/62On5bjWyNy2EDf6bztFW0.

Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Rappers Delight is perhaps the original smash hit Hip-Hop track. While there has been controversy around the idea of stolen music or production at the time this song spread across radios like wildfire. Its lyrics center around all the desires the group have and much like the rest of the music at the time drew heavily from disco.

"US Recorded Music Revenues by Format." RIAA, Recording Industry Association of America, www.riaa.com/u-s-sales-database/. Accessed 18 Dec. 2022. Chart.

The RIAA provides a wonderfully detailed graph that provides much needed context on the sales end of these time periods. As music becomes more accessible from portability sales spike and this coincides with the ongoing story of corporate interests intersecting with hip hop. We can see that the rise in popularity of the genre is going on at the same time as this massive growth in

sales is happening. It creates a fairly simple story of why we see these major labels divesting more and more into the music.

"What is The Universal Zulu Nation?" Zulu Nation, Universal Zulu Nation, [www.zulunation.com/about-zulunation/](http://www.zulunation.com/about-zulunation/). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

While The Zulu Nation has been surrounded by controversy lately, in the early 80s it was a Hip-Hop powerhouse. Zulu nation was for the most part the original major organization for Hip-Hop, it had some of the most popular artists of its era. Perhaps its most famous example of members was Q-Tip of A Tribe Called Quest, Q-Tip was and remains an icon in Hip-Hop and has been incredibly influential as a rapper and producer. That influence and many others trace directly back to the Universal Zulu Nation.

Wild, David. "Interscope Records: Inside the Hit Factory." *Rolling Stone*, 3 Apr. 1997, [www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/interscope-records-inside-the-hit-factory-118720/](http://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/interscope-records-inside-the-hit-factory-118720/). Accessed 18 Dec. 2022.

Article provides a much welcomed at the time look from the people running one of the largest labels of the era. We see in the article that the type of people heading these newly found major labels were often younger somewhat more involved but at the same time fiercely competitive We can see at the time the controversy hip-hop was garnering from white america, but also how that controversy was used as a draw towards the music.

#### Secondary Sources

Cross, Brian. *It's Not about a Salary ... Rap, Race and Resistance in Los Angeles*. London, Verso, 1993.

Provides a solid overlook at the history of Los Angeles Hip-Hop. Much of LA's Hip-Hop beginnings gets lost due to how much was going on in New York at the time. Provides much needed context to an often overlook but incredibly important portion of Rap history.

McNulty-Finn, Clara. "The Evolution of Rap." *Harvard Political Review*, Apr. 2014, [harvardpolitics.com/evolution-rap/](http://harvardpolitics.com/evolution-rap/). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

A fascinating article on all the twists and turns this music has taken in its 50 year old existence. Provides much needed context from figures well connected within the music industry and is a short piece that details much of the major events in Hip-Hop. Furthermore the article itself is well written and delivers a comprehensive story well.

PBS NewsHour. "The Future and Past of Broadcast Radio." PBS NewsHour, NewsHour Productions, 4 May 2005, [www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/media-jan-june05-broadcast\\_05-04](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/media-jan-june05-broadcast_05-04). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

Radio was an american institution that has basically devolved into low budget local broadcasts and stations with ads to bring back the gold standard. The decline in quality of radio after FCC deregulation is stunning and it seems the consolidation of the broadcast market has been its undoing. Radio no longer is a cheap and accessible way to listen to new and unheard music but rather a media form that is incredibly concerned with losing even more money and so plays things incredibly safe.



Shapiro, Devon, et al. "The Invention of Compact Discs." Tuck at Dartmouth, Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, 9 Nov. 2012, [faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/images/uploads/faculty/ron-adner/dup-1EIS\\_Main\\_Project\\_Compact\\_Disc\\_Paper.pdf](https://faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/images/uploads/faculty/ron-adner/dup-1EIS_Main_Project_Compact_Disc_Paper.pdf). Accessed 18 Dec. 2022.

A fascinating look at the development of the compact disc technology and the onset of portable stereos as a whole. The paper shows a desire from major audio companies for cross compatibility with their new major formats. There is a lesson learned from the prior failures of other audio and video formats. This unified push on a new portable inexpensive audio format would allow for greater sales in the industry.

#### Tertiary Sources

Kautz, Justin. "N.W.A." Encyclopedia Britannica, 3 May. 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/NWA>. Accessed 23 January 2023.

Provides a basic rundown on the groups history from a respected source. There is insight from other sources here that I didn't find or have the time to find as apt to the paper itself. A reputable source for the reasons behind the exit of Dr Dre which is a major event in rap history.

Morgan, Joan. "Book Review: 'Rap Capital,' by Joe Coscarelli." The New York Times, 18 Oct. 2022,

[www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/books/review/rap-capital-an-atlanta-story-joe-coscarelli.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/books/review/rap-capital-an-atlanta-story-joe-coscarelli.html). Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.

The south has a long and complicated history in Hip-Hop. At the start of its prominence it was largely treated as a younger brother to the east and west coasts but its unique inspirations and styles created a sound that many gravitated towards. Now in modern day in which the south has a choke-hold on Rap music it is interesting to see where it all started from and how its meteoric rise took place.