

## The Start of Rap



In the late 1960's, **DJ Kool Herc** (Clive Campbell) moved from Kingstons, Jamaica to the West Bronx in New York. DJ Kool Herc was a musician from Jamaica who sang rhymes over *instrumental sections* (sections of music with no lyrics) of reggae records; people from Jamaica called this *toasting*. Because the instrumental sections on the reggae records were short, DJ Kool Herc used two record players to cut back and forth between two separate records which allowed him to 'toast' as long as he wanted to. DJ Kool Herc would chant things like "Throw your hands in the air and waive 'em like ya just don't care!". This type of crowd pleaser was not known as rap yet, but as MCing. Other common phrases were known as **shouts**. Shouts were little shouts acknowledging people at a party or popular phrases such as "*Yo this is Kool Herc in the join-ski saying my mellow-ski Marky D is in the house*", and "*Davey D is in the house, an he'll turn it out without a doubt*".

About 1970, DJ Kool Herc let his friends, Coke La Rock, and Clark Kent take over the lyrics while DJ Kool Herc was at the turntables DJing. This was rap music's first band, and they called themselves **Kool Herc and the Herculoids**.

It didn't take long before other rap groups to be formed. **The Sugar Hill Gang** produced one of the first rap albums "**Rappers Delight**". It became the best selling 12 inch record, selling over 2 million copies world wide.

It was because of this record that the word "**hip hop**" was coined; they used beats and base lines from the disco track "Good Times." Utilizing beats from old gospel, jazz, James Brown/Motown soul, funk, disco, drum machines, then remixing them became the musical core of hip hop; this process became known as **sampling**.



Rap music quickly became popular for many reasons. One reason was that it allowed urban (inner city) New Yorkers a chance to freely express oneself. Another reason was that this new form of music did not require a lot of resources such as instruments or lessons. Rapping (MCing as it was known) is a verbal skill that can be practiced anywhere. One other reason was that this new form of music had no rules, and one could rap about anything.

## The 1980's: Public Enemy Past and Present

Public Enemy formed in Long Island, New York in 1982. The band was started by three good friends who were students at Adelphi University located in Long Island. Carlton Ridenhour, Bill Stepheny, and Hank Shocklee shared a love of hip-hop and politics which gave them a vision for a new direction in hip hop. In 1987, they released their first album “*Yo! Bum Rush the Show*”. In 1988, they released the revolutionary album “*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*”, which performed much better in the charts than their previous release. The album “*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*” is considered by many to be one of the most significant hip hop albums of all time. The album contains politically charged lyrics with controversial statements with the aim to uplift the black youth. It is a varied record with mixed elements of funk, jazz, and rock that produced a new sound that is “in your face” and is often described as militant.

The New York Times named “*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*” to their list of 25 most significant albums of the last century. In 2003, the TV channel VH1 named “*It Takes a Nation of Millions..*” the 20th greatest album of all time. It was ranked 93rd in a 2005 survey held by British television's Channel 4 to determine the 100 greatest albums of all time. It was also named the second greatest album in *Spin Magazine's* listing of the 100 greatest albums released since the magazine's founding in 1985 (Radiohead's *Ok Computer* was number one). It was the top ranked hip-hop album in the List of Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time; number 48



Public Enemy were pioneers in many ways. They were pioneers of a new “hardcore” hip hop using poetic rhymes with jazzy backbeats that was politically revolutionary. Chuck D rhymed about many social problems, especially those in the black community, while condoning revolutionary tactics and social activism. In the process, he directed hip-hop toward self aware black consciousness.

Terminator X elevated DJing to a more refined art. Some of his most innovative scratching tricks can be heard on the song "Rebel Without A Pause".

They were the first rap-group having extended world tours, which led to huge popularity and influence in Hip-Hop communities in Europe and Asia. They also changed the Internet's music distribution capability by being the first group to release MP3 albums, a format virtually unknown at the time.”

Public Enemy were also pioneers by collaborating with the heavy metal band, Anthrax, in 1991. The rock and rap collaboration was nothing new as Run D.M.C collaboration with Aerosmith in 1986 producing the song “*Walk This Way*”. Public Enemy’s collaboration with Anthrax produced more of an alien genre of rap/rock mix which gave birth to the bands “Rage Against the Machine” and “Linkin Park”.

## **More Recently**

Public Enemy’s recent release, “*Fear of a Black Planet*”, was selected for preservation in the Library of Congress. It included the song “*911 is a joke*”, which criticized emergency response units for taking more time to service people in the black community than those in the white community.

They still continue to perform and write, though with some attrition. Terminator X took early retirement and was replaced by Atlanta native DJ Lord as the group's main DJ. Chuck D and Professor Griff are also members of a band named Confrontation Camp, a funk/rock band. Chuck D's lecture series on "Rap, Race, Reality & Technology" has been used as the basis for his lyrics on "We Are Gathered Here", an album by the group Fine Arts Militia - which he is a member of.

In 2004, Flavor Flav appeared on the VH1 reality show *The Surreal Life*, and can now be seen on the VH1 program *Strange Love*. His portrayal on that show, however, has been the subject of much dispute, especially between fans and the other members of the band. Many fans and Chuck D himself have publicly lambasted Flavor for his actions on the show, including being indignant to his children and his ex-wife. Flavor also recently appeared on UK reality TV show "The Farm". Oddly enough, maybe as a show of their respect for all types of music, PE was scheduled to perform the cancelled hardcore and metal festival, Hellfest '05 and would have shared the stage with heavy bands including Between the Buried and Me, Ed Gein, From a Second Story Window, Ion Dissonance, Pig Destroyer, and Suffocation.

In September of 2005, Flavor Flav reunited with Public Enemy to record a rap protest song, *Hell No We Ain't All Right!*, criticizing policy issues surrounding the response to Hurricane Katrina, and the George W. Bush administration in particular.

## 1990's: The West Coast and Gangsta Rap

Until the late 1980's, the rap scene was dominated by east coast rapper's. Much of the early rap music was "party music" by artists such as Sugar Hill Gang. Soon later music became heavier in style and lyrics contained more serious subject such as politics and racial equality like music from Public Enemy.

In the late 1980's, rap artists on the west coast were becoming popular with a new "hard core" rap with lyrics about life on the streets with new styles such as **gangsta** and **G-funk**. West Coast bands such as N.W.A, Ice T, Ice Cube, and Snoop Doggy Dog are only a few of the bands that brought the spotlight of rap music from the east coast to the west coast.

In 1988, the same year when Public Enemy released "*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*", N.W.A came out with the album "*Straight Outta Compton*" with lyrics about life on the streets including violence, drugs and guns. This album aggravated many citizens, politicians, and government organizations such as the FBI. In 1990, it was discovered that founding member Ice Cube was put on a government assassination list put together by extremist republican government officials. The national and state governments also began to try to censor many of the songs and artists.



In 1991, Ice T released the album "*Original Gangsta*". Lyrics contained real life experiences about life on the streets including topics about drugs and violence. Ice T gained huge commercial success. As a result, Ice T is claimed by many to be the first gangsta rap artist.



Also in the 1991, the government was successful in trying to limit sales to youth by introducing Parental Advisory Lyrics. Many stores do not sell albums with this advisory, and many limit the sale of these albums to people 18 years of age or older.

A few of the very successful rap artists in the 1990's were Ice Cube, Ice T, Coolio, Snoop Doggy Dog, Dr. Dre, Cypress Hill, House of Pain, The Roots, Wu-Tang Clan, Nas, Warren Griffin, Lil Kim, Queen Latifah, Salt-N-Peppa, Busta Rhymes, Lauryn Hill and 2Pac.