



Lecture 7: Hip-Hop Production

MUS 17: Hip-Hop

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Hip-Hop Production

The Business and Industry of Hip-Hop

Side Notes...

- I am fully aware that we are missing a lot of great Hip-Hop artists here who made extraordinary contributions to the development of Hip-Hop.
- We are giving a quick and rough overview of the evolution of Hip-Hop and using a few songs as studying examples. It's far less than what happened in the grand Hip-Hop world.
- There are also many great producers but it's impossible to cover all of them in one lecture. Here are some incomplete lists of the historical producers:
 - [The Best Hip-Hop Producer Alive, Every Year Since 1979](#)
 - [Sonic Genius: The Hip-Hop Producers Who Defined the '80s](#)

Hip-Hop Records

- The early impresarios, like Sylvia Robinson, who invested in recording and marketing Hip Hop neither understood, nor valued the **centrality of the DJ**. Most of them were musicians from an earlier era of music making that used bands to record tracks for vocalists.
- DJs playing continuous breaks, pushing low-end frequencies was central to Hip Hop musical expression when it was an event-based practice. The techniques DJs used for making music did not translate to the studio when the opportunity to record songs arose in 1979.
- The label executives all used instrumentalists to replay the breaks they heard for the rappers on their labels, during the early 1980s.

Kurtis Blow - The Breaks (1980)

- This is an example of the band-based sound of the late 70s and early 80s.
- Many followers of Hip Hop do not hold the sound of early band-based tracks in high esteem.



Grandmaster Flash - The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel (1981)

- Grandmaster Flash was sidelined and marginalized in the Sugar Hill Records recording studio. In 1981, he was able to record a mix routine using three turntables. The result was the piece "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel." The achievement of recording this piece didn't change the mind of Robinson.
- This routine features Flash cutting between and scratching a number of famous break records: "Apache", "Good Times" and current pop hits (some of which included mentions of his name) by Queen, Blondie, Sugarhill Gang and the Furious Five.
- It is also one of the first records to feature scratching and DJ crafts.



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SH-557-A

Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five
Rhythm Nation
Summer Jam '83
Columbia Music

33 1/3 RPM

SH-557-A

Time: 7:18

LONG PLAY

THE ADVENTURES OF GRANDMASTER FLASH
ON THE WHEELS OF STEEL

This is A Sylvia & Jerry Robinsons, Jr. Production

Special Thanks to DMC (Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five)
and to the other DJs who have helped make this record possible.
Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, 1983
Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, 1983

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The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash... Samples

Chic - Good Times



Incredible Bongo Band - Apache



The pioneers...They made a lot of records...The earlier Sugar Hill songs and a lot of the earlier — like the Fat Boys and a lot of the earlier Kurtis Blow productions were great songs and great hooks. But it wasn't really touching what made me love rap, and I'm sure it wasn't touching what made people fall in love with rap...When you got the rap tapes from Harlem back in the day and the Bronx you would hear scratching, echoes, beat-boxing and just the element of breakbeats...You gotta think: It wasn't on the radio. There was tapes that people would record right from their box, straight off the microphone, and those tapes would resonate throughout the city. That's how most of the people who loved hip-hop in the early-'80s, late-'70s — this was our smoke signals, those tapes, those early tapes coming out of Harlem and the Bronx.

— Marley Marl



RUN DMC



The Album

MANTRONIX
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MANTRONIX



Dr. Dre – The Chronic

The album [The Chronic] now remains an industry standard of perfectly produced, mixed, and mastered rap production—even though it came out nearly three decades ago. "The Chronic is still the hip-hop equivalent to Stevie Wonder's Songs in the Key of Life," Kanye West wrote in a [2005 article for Rolling Stone](#). "It's the benchmark you measure your album against if you're serious."



DR. DRE



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THE CHRONIC



Thank You!