

## CHAPTER 9

### THE MID-80s & BEYOND—ALTERNATIVE, RAP, LATIN & ELECTRONICA

#### INTRODUCTION

In the mid-1980s, mainstream rock began to take on an extremely aggressive stance, as a variety of styles emerged from the underground. Punk and Hardcore mutated into "Thrash," "Grunge" and other "Alternative" styles, while Black/Jamaican influences gave rise to "Rap."

#### I. ALTERNATIVE ROCK STYLES

Like the term "New Wave" that preceded it, "Alternative" is essentially meaningless—being used as a catch-all classification for post-punk artists who came on the scene as "New Wave" began to fade around 1984. Alternative pop-rock grew out of Punk, but it also incorporates elements from New Wave and Hardcore, as well as from a wide variety of earlier rock genres—especially 60s Pop and Heavy Metal. Today, "alternative" IS a mainstream rock format; however, it was definitely an underground/anti-establishment movement when it began in the 80s with groups like R.E.M. and Hüsker Dü.

##### *Early Alternative-Rock Bands*

**Husker Dü** (formed 1979/disbanded 1988)

*Bob Mould/guitar-vocals; Grant Hart/drums; Greg Norton/bass*

Though only able to attract a "cult" following, this trio's blend of punk and pop changed rock in the late 80s/90s by effecting the transition from punk to alternative. More importantly, they accomplished much of this on a major label (Warner Brothers) and without a political stance. Their most successful song was "Turn on the News" (1984).

**R.E.M.** (formed 1980)

*Michael Stipes/vocals; Peter Buck/guitar; Mike Mills/bass; Bill Berry/drums*

When R.E.M. emerged in 1981, it marked the moment that post-Punk changed into "Alternative." Although they were clearly derived from Punk—with a pounding drumbeat and Stipes' mumbled vocal delivery and cryptic lyrics, they also had a 60s's Byrds-like acoustic guitar sound supported by a 60s Pop/McCartney-ish melodic-bass. Since their approach did not fit into the standard Top 40 mould, R.E.M.'s music remained underground for several years. Without much airplay, they were able to attract a widespread fan base through constant tours and songs like "Radio Free Europe" (1982). In 1987, they hit the commercial mainstream with their Top 10 hit "The One I Love," and became MTV regulars, and by the end of the decade they were one of the most famous rock bands in the world, spawning countless imitators. In 1991, they recorded the crossover song "Radio Song" with rapper K.R.S.-One (see "Rap" below).

##### *Thrash-Metal*

In the mid-/late-70s, Disco and Punk caused the popularity of Heavy metal to decline. Metal groups like **AC/DC** struggled for existence until the commercial ascent of **Van Halen** in 1978. On the coattails of this success, many British-metal bands came from the underground as the so-called "New Wave of British Heavy Metal" (NWBM).

### 70s Metal/NWBHM Bands

**AC/DC** (Bon Scott/vocals; Angus Young/guitar; formed in 1974)

This Australian Heavy metal band eventually rose to prominence in the late 70s/early 80s with *Highway to Hell* (1979), *Back in Black* (1980), and *For Those About to Rock [We Salute You]* (#1 album in US for part of 1981).

**Motörhead** (formed in 1975; featuring “Fast” Eddie Clarke/guitar; Philthy Animal [Phil Taylor]/drums; Lemmy Kilmister/bass-vocals): *No Sleep Till Hammersmith* (#1 album in UK for part of 1981)

Similar Bands:

**Iron Maiden • Judas Priest • Diamond Head • Saxon • Venom • Angelwitch**

In the mid-80s, a crossbreed of Heavy metal/Punk known as "Thrash" or "Speed Metal" swept across the US, with bands such as **Metallica**:

**Metallica** (featuring James Hetfield/guitar-vocals and Kirk Hammett/lead guitar)

This L.A.-based group established the "thrash"/"speed metal" genre in the mid/late 80s by speeding up the tempo of West Coast punk (mostly out of anger at disgruntled audiences). Even with no MTV support and little radio airplay, they developed a loyal, cult-like following, primarily through tours (such as their 1986 tour with Ozzy Osbourne).<sup>1</sup> Top 10 commercial success finally came with *And Justice For All* (1988) and *Metallica* (1991). At the turn of the millennium, Metallica gained international attention for filing (and eventually winning) a lawsuit against the mp3 upstart, Napster, for their part in illegal distribution of compressed digital files over the Internet.

Similar Bands: **Megadeth** (Dave Mustaine) • **Slayer** • **Anthrax**

### Grunge

"Grunge" (a mixture of Hardcore and Metal) was initiated in Seattle by **Bruce Pavitt** (an alternative disc jockey & fan-magazine journalist). Pavitt founded **Sub Pop Records**, which was a critical force in establishing the downtrodden punk/metal Northwest look (faded flannel shirts/T-shirts, ripped jeans/baggy shorts, worn boots/tennis shoes). At first, this underground style received little or no radio support, so Sub Pop initiated a "single-of-the-month" subscription service and courted the national press to portray the Northwest as “America’s latest musical mecca.”<sup>2</sup> Important Seattle-based Grunge-oriented bands include

**Soundgarden**: (featuring Chris Cornell/vocals)

This Alternative/Pop-metal band was the first to popularize post-Punk "noise-metal" in the Seattle underground during the late 80s. Until 1991, they had a stronger following than Nirvana, garnered through such songs as "Big Dumb Sex" and "Hands All Over" (both 1990).

---

<sup>1</sup> Hetfield was an avid Black Sabbath fan.

<sup>2</sup> In the late 80s, TV jumped on this trend by setting shows such as *Twin Peaks* and *Northern Exposure* in the Northwest.

**Nirvana** (formed in 1987—featuring Kurt Cobain/guitar-vocals; Chris Novoselic/bass; Chad Channing/drums—replaced by Dave Grohl in 1990)

Nirvana was a Pop-metal/Punk hybrid with influences from The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Black Flag. After several years as a local underground band, they became a national phenomenon in 1991 when "Smells Like Teen Spirit" from *Nevermind* was put into heavy rotation by MTV—symbolically knocking Michael Jackson's, *Dangerous* off the top of the album charts. In 1992, they made a major appearance on NBC-TV's *Saturday Night Live* and were featured in *Rolling Stone* magazine. Unfortunately, by the end of that year, Cobain was hooked on heroin. At the height of his success—Cobain shot himself to death on April 5, 1994.

**Pearl Jam** (formed in 1990—featuring lead singer Eddie Vedder)

With their blend of 70s Stadium-rock and 80s Punk angst, Pearl Jam became the leading rock and roll band of the 90s. Their debut album *Ten* (featuring the hit song "Alive") did not sell well when it was first released in 1991, but it took off shortly after the sudden ascent of Nirvana in 1992. Despite their popularity, Pearl Jam has refused to follow accepted conventions of the music industry. For example, in 1993, they did not offshoot any singles or videos from their second album, *Vs.*; in 1994, Pearl Jam chose to play smaller venues (including college campuses) instead of stadiums, and then they cancelled their summer tour, claiming that Ticketmaster was forcing promoters to inflate their prices.

Other successful Northwest Grunge-metal Artists:

**Neil Young • Alice in Chains • Green River • Hole<sup>3</sup> • Offspring**

### ***California-based Alternative Rock***

In the late '80s and early '90s, California-based bands such as The Red Hot Chili Peppers and Green Day took "alternative" rock into the mainstream by fusing together a hybrid of elements from post-punk, metal, funk, and even rap. (By this time, however, these groups had little real impact on the underground "alternative" movement, which was dividing into many independent factions across the country.)

**The Red Hot Chili Peppers** (featuring Anthony Kiedis/vocals and Flea [Michael Balzary]/bass). When it formed in the early 80s, this L.A.-based group offered a forward-looking mixture of Funk, Punk, Rap and Metal. Their big commercial breakthrough came with *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* (1992), which includes the song "Give It Away" (widely-promoted by its visually-spectacular MTV music video).

**Green Day** (Billy Joe Armstrong/guitar-vocals, Mike Dirnt [Mike Pritchard]/bass, Al Sobrante/drums)

This group ascended to the top of the charts in 1994 with their third album, *Dookie*, which sold over 8 million copies and included the hit single "Long View" and "Basketcase." Their musical style is hyped-up Power-pop with elements of The Clash. A more political approach came in 2004 with their *American Idiot* album.

---

<sup>3</sup> Hole features lead singer Courtney Love—wife of the late Kurt Cobain.

### **Industrial Rock**

"Industrial Rock" (named after Throbbing Gristle's *Industrial* record label) was a dissonant, harsh genre that emerged out of the electronic experiments of post-Punk underground bands like Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret, and Voltaire. It was primarily an electronic sound, with fast/pounding drum machines/samples, as exemplified by **Nine Inch Nails**. Though industrial artists such as Nine Inch Nails employ hard rock formulas, Industrial Rock maintains experimental dance elements that distinguish it from traditional rock conventions.

#### **Nine Inch Nails** (featuring Trent Reznor)

Reznor's one-man band brought the "Industrial Rock" sound to the masses. His mantra of self-judgmental despair and anger is seen in works such as *Pretty Hate Machine* (1989), *Broken* (1992) and *The Downward Spiral* (1994).

Other Industrial-based bands:

**Ministry • Skinny Puppy**

### **Other Alternative U.S. Bands of the late 80s/90s**

- **Offspring** (featuring Brian "Dexter" Holland/vocals and Kevin "Noodles" Wasserman/guitar)—Alternative/Punk-metal: *Smash* (1994; highlighted by the MTV hit "Come Out and Play"—incredibly sold over 4 million albums on the independent label Epitaph.
- **Living Colour** (featuring Corey Glover/vocals and Vernon Reid/guitar)—Alternative-pop blended with Jazz/Funk: "Time's Up" (1990)
- **Big Black** (featuring Steve Albini)—Noise-metal
- **Jesus Lizard** (featuring David Yow)—Noise-metal
- **Jane's Addiction** (featuring Perry Farrell)—fused Art-rock, Punk, Funk and Metal
- **The Pixies** (featuring Black Francis [Charles Thompson]/vocals-guitar)—Punk-pop
- **The Butthole Surfers** (featuring Gibby Haynes)—shock-rock blended with Hardcore, psychedelia and avant-garde.
- **The Violent Femmes** (folk-rock influenced)
- **The Feelies** (featuring Glenn Mercer/guitar-vocals)—Alternative-pop
- **Smashing Pumpkins** (featuring Billy Corgan/guitar-vocals)—Alternative-pop
- **The Goats**—combination of reggae, blues, rap and metal: "Rumblefish" (1995)
- **Pornos for Pyros** (featuring Perry Farrell)—fused Art-rock, Punk, Funk and Metal
- **10,000 Maniacs** (featuring singer Natalie Merchant)—Alternative pop-folk rock
- **Phish**—a wildly eclectic mix of rock, folk, country, bluegrass, jazz and pop

### **The New "Alternative" Music in America**

Once underground groups such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Green Day hit the mainstream, the American underground split off into several factions—all united by the desire to remain underground. Most important are the so-called "Lo-Fi" artists such **Beck**, **Sebadoh** and **Pavement**—labeled as such because of the poor quality of their usually homemade recordings. Other noteworthy "New Alternative" groups include **Superchunk** (a North Carolina-based neo-Punk band) and **Unrest** (a minimalist-pop band).

***British "Alternative" Music***

The British counterpart of "Alternative Rock" differs from the US prototype in that it is much more pop/dance oriented and it usually has a tendency to address specifically-British concerns. For these reasons, British Alternative has not gained much popularity in the US. The most important representatives of this style are

- **The Smiths • The Jesus and Mary Chain • The Cure • New Order**
- **Joy Division • Sisters of Mercy • Mission • Stone Roses**
- **Happy Mondays • My Bloody Valentine • Primal Scream**
- **Suede • Blur • Parklife • Elastica • Supergrass • Pulp**

<b>Selected Examples of Alternative Rock</b>
--

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nirvana:</b> "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (1991)</li> <li>• <b>Pearl Jam:</b> "Alive" (1991)</li> <li>• <b>The Red Hot Chili Peppers:</b> "Give It Away" (1992)</li> <li>• <b>Green Day:</b> "Long View" and "Basketcase" (1994)</li> <li>• <b>R.E.M. (with K.R.S.-One):</b> "Radio Song" (1991)</li> <li>• <b>The Goats:</b> "Rumblefish" (1995)</li> </ul> |
|---|

**II. RAP STYLES**

Over the last two decades, Afro-American urban youths have faced great hardships. Unemployed, with free time, little money and little supervision, many turned to drugs (especially the relatively cheap form of cocaine called "crack") and to gangs (such as the notorious/warring Crips and Bloods in Los Angeles). In the late 1970s, Blacks in the ghettos of New York City began developing **Rap** as a means to describe their plight and, in some cases, to create a community of support.

***From Jamaican Dub to Early Rap***

In 1972, **King Tubby** (birthname Osbourne Lawrence; a Jamaican electronics engineer and sound system owner) began making **dub versions** of ska/reggae songs in Kingston.<sup>4</sup> The "Dub" process—developed in step with Jamaican reggae—involved filtering out the majority of a song's vocals with a mixing board, leaving behind the drum & bass music and the residue of other instruments, which were then intensified by heavy echo effects. These "dub" versions were originally put only on acetate masters or on dub plates, but eventually they were regularly released on the flip side of reggae singles.<sup>5</sup> **U-Roy** (a DJ who worked with King Tubby), began to improvise his own jive-talk raps/toasts at "dub" dances, as exemplified by "Go There Natty" (1976).

When the US disco craze hit in the mid-1970s, DJs began to play for parties in the Bronx and Harlem. Dancers began asking the DJs to play only the short instrumental breaks on albums, instead of the entire song. Soon, the Jamaican disc jockey, **Kool DJ Herc**, took samples of some of the funkier excerpts and fashioned them into "dub"

<sup>4</sup> A "sound system" was a forerunner of the mobile disco, but had much greater amplification power and fullness.

<sup>5</sup> In the 1990s, new digital techniques revived and enhanced the "dub" art.

versions, with filtered special effects and an altered/echoed/reverberized rhythm track. Then, using a special record stylus (phonograph needle), Herc and others such as **Theodore Livingston** rotated (“scratched”) the records back and forth to produce a unique rhythmic pattern. Herc used two turntables to fades such sounds in and out of one another, then in the style of U-Roy started to rap along with the rhythmic background, using phrases that were current on-the-street slang (“To the beat y’all”, etc.). Other early rappers were **Afrika Bambaataa** (“Planet Rock,” 1982) and **DJ Hollywood**, who both were DJs at the Apollo Theatre during intermissions.

### ***Early Rap and the Development of Hip-Hop***

DJs began to ask friends to rap (emcee/“MC”) for them. The first bonafide MC was **Cowboy** (Keith Wiggins) from **Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five**, with Grandmaster Flash (Joseph Saddler) as the DJ with his speedy “Quick-Mix Theory”/double-turntable scratch technique. DJs began to challenge/battle each other, with possible loss of career on the line. The most renowned DJs moved to jobs at the leading New York discos, but the increased crowds gradually outgrew each successively-larger disco club, until Rap Music made its way to The Roxy—playing to over 3,000 every Friday night by late 1976.

Inner-city rap fanatics began to mimic the DJ style and language on the street, wearing heavy disco jewelry and perfecting break-dancing. This image was brought to the public eye in films such as *Flashdance* (1983) and *Breakin’* (1984) Conversely, poor, urban rappers repelled the extravagance of disco and adopted a street element to rap, called “hip-hop.” Hip-hop fashion had baseball caps with upturned bills, Adidas/Pro Keds sneakers, and T-shirts; its street jargon included “chill out “ (calm down); “dope” (great); “posse” (gang); “def” (good); “wack” (bad); hip-hop artists and gangs used trains and buildings as their graffiti canvases. In the late 70s, Rap/Hip-Hop music was circulated only on ‘bootleg’ cassette tapes. Then, in 1979, **Sugarhill Records**—a small upstart independent—began recording Rap songs such as The Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" (the first song to actually use the term "rap"). The biggest group to record with Sugarhill was **Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five**:

#### **Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five (formed 1980)**

DJ: **Grandmaster Flash**

MCs: **Cowboy** (Keith Wiggins); **Melle Mel** (Melvin Glover); **Kurtis Blow**; **Kid Creole** (Nathaniel Glover); **Duke Bootee** (Ed Fletcher)

This supergroup infused rap with a social awareness that shook the rock music world in the early 80s with "The Breaks" (1980—rapped by Kurtis Blow), "The Message" (1982—with the foreboding ghetto perspective of rapper Melle Mel), and "White Lines [Don't Do It]" (1983—anti-cocaine).

### ***Rap Hits the Commercial Mainstream***

Rap was first brought to commercial viability by **Run-D.M.C.**

**Run-D.M.C.** (formed 1982)DJ: **Jason Mizel** ("Jam Master Jay")MCs: **Darryl McDaniels** (DMC) and **Joseph "Run" Simmons**

This trio is Rap's most influential group. They brought Rap/Hip-Hop to the mainstream, and introduced it to white crossover fans in 1984 when MTV put "Rock Box" into heavy rotation. In 1986, they brought massive popularity to Rap with their rap/heavy metal makeover (with its hilarious MTV music video) of the Aerosmith classic "Walk This Way," recorded in collaboration with Steven Tyler and Joe Perry. In the 1990s, they suffered a bit of a decline, then reemerged as born-again Christian rappers.

**Gangsta Rap**

While some enlightened rappers such as Afrika Bambaataa, Kurtis Blow, Duke Bootee and Melle Mel were forming Artists against Apartheid, a new breed of rappers emerged on the West Coast with a more frightful perspective on gang warfare, drugs and race relations:

**N.W.A.** (Niggaz With Attitude)—Compton-based group*Straight Outta Compton* (1988)—"Express Yourself"; "F\*\*k the Police"**Ice Cube** (Oshea Jackson, formerly of N.W.A.)*Amerikkka's Most Wanted* (1990)—"Dead Homiez"; *Kill at Will* (1990); *Death Certificate* (1991)**Ice-T** [birthname Tracy Marrow]—one of Hip-hop's most articulate and intelligent spokesmen; became embroiled in controversy in the early 1990s

In 1987, Ice-T recorded the theme song for gang-violence film *Colors*. In 1991, he began acting career in the film *New Jack City*. That year, he released *O.G. [Original Gangster]*—which included "Escape from the Killing Fields." He also took his **metal/thrash band** ("Body Count") on the road in 1991, performing on the first Lollapalooza tour. There, he premiered the controversial song "**Cop Killer**", which was later put on one of the tracks of his band's album *Body Count*. (1991). The song stirred up such an international public controversy that Time-Warner eventually bowed to intense pressure and refused to release the album. Surprisingly, in 1997 Ice-T was cast in a starring role in the NBC television series, *Players*.

**Public Enemy** (formed 1982; featuring rapper **Chuck D** [Carlton Ridenhour], who is idolized by legions of black and white youths around the world as rap's leading theorist/philosopher/proselytizer for Black pride.)

*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (1988); *Fear of a Black Planet* (1990; includes "Fight The Power"—written for Spike Lee's film *Do The Right Thing*; 1989); *Apocalypse '91—The Enemy Strikes Black*.

### **Other Black Rap Artists**

- **K.R.S.-One** [Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone]  
(featuring rapper KRS—Kris Parker/Head of Boogie Down Productions)  
1988: Abandoned Gangsta Rap and organized *Stop The Violence*  
1989: Convinced other rappers such as Chuck D to denounce gang warfare in a joint recording effort “Self-Destruction”—The \$500,000 in royalties were donated to the National Urban League to combat illiteracy  
1991: Started H.E.A.L Yourself (Human Education Against Lies) with Queen Latifah and Run-D.M.C. to print/distribute books to high schools; Rapped on R.E.M.’s “Radio Song” (*Out of Time*)—MTV airplay  
1992: Joins with rapper Sister Souljah to advocate a 10-point program to empower Black Americans

Note: KRS-One is not all 'love and kisses'—he has, at times, been very pro-violence in regards to upholding his reputation under condemnation from other rap artists—“If negativity comes with a .22 then positivity comes with a .45; If negativity comes with a .45, then positivity comes with an Uzi: The light has to be stronger than the darkness.”

- **Salt ‘N’ Pepa** (featuring MCs *Cheryl “Salt” James* and *Sandy “Pepa” Denton* with DJ *Dee Dee “Spinderella” Roper*)  
“Let’s Talk About Sex” (1990; *Black’s Magic*)—in response to L.A. Laker basketball star Magic Johnson’s revelation of being H.I.V. positive.
- **Puff Daddy** (Sean "Puffy" Combs)—changed name to **P. Diddy** and **Diddy**  
Combs was the most amazing success story of 90s commercial music. In 1991, after a successful internship at Uptown Entertainment, he became CEO of Bad Boy Entertainment, and introduced rap stars Notorious B.I.G., Craig Mack, Faith, Total, 112, Mase, and the L.O.X., and sold more than 12 million albums in three years (5 platinum/10 gold). In 1994, he won ASCAP's prestigious "Songwriter of the Year" Award. Similar to Berry Gordy of Motown, Combs attempted to turn Bad Boy Entertainment into a positive-image inspirational model for young blacks. Recently, he has recorded his own material, including the mega-hit "I'll Be Missing You"—a tribute to his late friend/rapper Notorious B.I.G. (#1 for six consecutive weeks).<sup>6</sup>
- **L.L. Cool J.** (James Todd Smith)
- **Queen Latifah** (Diana Owens)—opened doors for female rappers in the 90s
- **Sister Souljah** (Lisa Williamson)

---

<sup>6</sup> In 1995, The Notorious B.I.G. (Brooklyn-born rapper Chris Wallace) became involved in a heated turf rivalry with West Coast rapper Tupac Shakur. When Shakur was shot to death in 1996 in Las Vegas, it was widely assumed that B.I.G. (and perhaps Combs) was responsible. In retaliation, Wallace was murdered in a drive by shooting in March 1997 while returning to his hotel in Los Angeles after attending a Soul Train Awards party. From 1997 through 2002, Combs was involved in a flurry of lawsuits, accusations of involvement in other shootings (prompting his name change in 2001), and constant media coverage of his short-lived relationship with the Latin pop-rock singer/actress **Jennifer Lopez**.



- **MC Hammer** (Stanley Kirk Burrell): "U Can't Touch This" (1990; pop-rap)

The March 17, 1997 issue of *Newsweek* featured a series of detailed articles entitled "Black Like *Who?*—Rap, Respect and The New Generation Gap"—featuring insights from Quincy Jones, Bill Cosby, basketball star/rapper Shaquille O'Neal, Ice Cube, etc. What is clear is that "Black families in the '90s are divided over hip-hop culture, just as whites were in the '60s over Vietnam/Psychedelia.

### **White Rap**

**The Beastie Boys** (comprised of: MCA [Adam Yauch]; Mike D [Mike Diamond]; Ad-Rock [Adam Horovitz])

Initially a Hardcore band, this trio turned to rap in the early '80s, recording *Licensed to Ill* (with "You Gotta Fight For Your Right [To Party]")—one of hip-hop's major commercial breakthroughs. In 1989, the group released *Paul's Boutique*, a dense collage of pop and literary references that virtually defined the multi-culturalism and junk culture aesthetic that dominated much of the popular alternative rock of the '90s. However, *Paul's Boutique* was a commercial failure. When the Beastie Boys released *Check Your Head* in 1992, they had returned to playing instruments and created a record that fused punk with hip-hop. In 1994, they released *Ill Communication* (includes "Sabotage").

**Vanilla Ice** (Robert Van Winkle)—MC Hammer copy-cat pop-rapper

### **Selected Examples of Rap/Hip-Hop-related Styles**

#### **Dub**

- **U-Roy**: "Go There Natty" (1976)

#### **Rap/Hip-Hop**

- **Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five**:  
"The Breaks" (1980, Kurtis Blow); "The Message" (1982, Melle Mel)
- **Run-D.M.C.**: "Rock Box" (1984); "Walk This Way" (1986, with Tyler & Perry)

#### **Gangsta Rap**

- **N.W.A.**: "Express Yourself" (1988)
- **Public Enemy**: "Fight The Power" (1988); "Shut 'Em Down" (1991)
- **Ice-T**: "Escape from the Killing Fields" (1991); "Home of the Body Bag" (1991)
- **K.R.S.-One** (with R.E.M.): "Radio Song" (1991)

#### **Pop-Rap**

- **Salt 'N' Pepa**: "Let's Talk About Sex" (1990)

#### **White Rap**

- **The Beastie Boys**: "Sabotage" (1994)

### III. LATIN STYLES

#### *Latin Pop/Rock and Latin Rap*

In the mid-to-late 90s, Latin pop/rock (often collectively mislabeled as “Salsa”) dominated the charts, with a wide range of Afro-Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and South American styles. Artists from the 70s and 80s, such as **Carlos Santana**, **José Feliciano**, and **Gloria Estefan** enjoyed renewed popularity, while crossover artists such as **Ricky Martin** (“Livin' la Vida Loca”—1999), **Marc Anthony** (“I Need to Know”—1999), **Selena**, **Enrique Iglesias**, **Jennifer Lopez**, and **Christine Aguilera** brought Latin Pop/Rock into the American commercial mainstream.

Latin Rap (hip-hop performed in English or Spanish, featuring Latino rhythms) became popular with groups such as **The Beatnuts**, **Tha Mexakinz**, **Mangu**, and **Los Tres**.

### IV. TEEN POP-ROCK

Although pop-rock aimed specifically at teenagers has been around since the “teen-idol” era of the late '50s, the biggest wave of “teen pop-rock” began flourishing in the late 1980s as **Tiffany**, **Debbie Gibson**, and the **New Kids on the Block** rose to stardom with their light, catchy, commercial dance-pop tunes and adult contemporary ballads. In the late '80s when the grunge style of **Nirvana** began to dominate the mainstream, teen-pop appeared to be on the wane, but that all changed when the photogenic and cleverly-marketed **Spice Girls** released their debut single, “Wannabe” in the summer of 1996. Their success opened the doors for a wave of teen pop that was stronger than that in the late '80s. **Hanson** was the first out of the gate in 1997 with their spruced-up oldies rock, and then the **Backstreet Boys** eclipsed all of their peers during 1998 with a string of hit singles. Others followed in their shadow, whether it was the very similar **'N Sync** or the Spice Girls-styled **All Saints**. In 1999, teen pop showed no signs of decline, as it produced a new trend—the pop Lolita: **Britney Spears** and **Christina Aguilera** were not yet out of their teens, but they strutted like Madonna in her prime and had music that was nearly as suggestive. By the late '90s, Spears and Aguilera had sold mega-millions of records, just like the Backstreet Boys and 'N Sync, proving that teenage girls were not the only ones buying “teen pop-rock.”

### V. ELECTRONICA

The generic term “**Electronica**” includes many different types of electronic music designed both for at-home listening and night club dancing (since many electronica artists are club DJs as well). Of these, the most popular variety is generally referred to as “**techno**.”

#### *Techno*

**Techno**'s roots date back to the so-called electronic “**house**” music developed in Detroit during the mid-'80s. Whereas “house” always maintained an overt connection to disco,

“techno” is strictly electronic music designed for a specific audience. The first techno producers and DJs—**Juan Atkins** and **Derrick May** (among others), enhanced the synthesized beats first established by **Afrika Bambaataa** (electro-funk) and **Kraftwerk** (synth-rock). In the late 1980s, “techno” broke into the mainstream in England, but it remained an underground movement in the U.S.

By the early 1990s, dance-club “techno” began to fragment into many subcategories such as “**hardcore techno**” (with incredibly fast, undanceable tempos), “**jungle**” (almost as aggressive as “hardcore” but with reggae elements), “**ambient**” (used as a calmer break from hardcore and jungle through slower tempos and more fluid electronic textures). In order to offer DJ lots of material to mix within a set, most of this dance “techno” was made available on 12-inch singles or various-artist's compilations so the songs could run for a long time. In the mid-'90s, however, a new breed of techno artists—most notably **ambient** groups like **The Orb**, and even harder-edged artists like **The Prodigy**, began making albums that were not specifically intended for mixing. By 1997, these groups— particularly **The Prodigy**—hit the U.S. mainstream, propelled by increasingly-popular underground party events called “**raves**” where “techno” is played and large quantities of drugs (particularly “ecstasy”) often are abundant. At the turn of the millennium, despite increasing crackdowns by local governments in both the U.S. and Britain, raves still thrived through word-of-mouth promotion and hand-made fliers.

\* \* \*

## FEATURED SONGS FOR CHAPTER 9

[w] = Audio and/or lyrics available on the class website

[Time-Life Video] = Time-Life History of Rock and Roll Series

### ALTERNATIVE STYLES

- NIRVANA: "Smells Like Teen Spirit" [w] (1991; Time-Life DVD 5a)
- PEARL JAM: "Alive" [w] (1991)
- THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS: "Give It Away" [w] (1992; Time-Life DVD 5b)
- GREEN DAY: "Long View" [w] (1994; Time-Life DVD 5b);  
"Basketcase" [w] (1994; Time-Life DVD 5a)
- R.E.M. (with K.R.S.-One): "Radio Song" [w] (1991; Time-Life DVD 5b)
- THE GOATS: "Rumblefish" [w] (1995; Time-Life DVD 5b)

### RAP STYLES

#### *Dub*

- U-ROY: "Go There Natty" (1976; Time-Life DVD 5a)

#### *Early Rap*

- AFRIKA BAMBAATAA: "Planet Rock" [w] (1982)
- GRANDMASTER FLASH AND THE FURIOUS FIVE:  
"The Breaks" [w] (1980; Time-Life DVD 5b); "The Message" [w] (1982; Time-Life DVD 5b)
- RUN-D.M.C.:  
"Rock Box" [w] (1984; Time-Life DVD 5b); "Walk This Way" [w] (1986; Time-Life DVD 5b)

#### *Gangsta Rap*

- N.W.A.: "Express Yourself" [w] (1988; Time-Life DVD 5b)
- PUBLIC ENEMY: "Fight The Power" [w] (1988; Time-Life DVD 5b); "Shut 'Em Down" [w] (1991; Time-Life DVD 5b)
- ICE-T: "Escape from the Killing Fields" [w] (1991; Time-Life DVD 5b); "Home of the Body Bag" [w] (1991; Time-Life DVD 5b)
- K.R.S.-One (with R.E.M.): "Radio Song" [w] (1991; Time-Life DVD 5b)

#### *Pop-Rap*

- SALT 'N' PEPA: "Let's Talk About Sex" [w] (1990; Time-Life DVD 5b)

#### *White Rap*

- THE BEASTIE BOYS: "Sabotage" [w] (1994; Time-Life DVD 5b)

### LATIN STYLES OF THE 90s

- SANTANA: *Supernatural* (1999)
- RICKY MARTIN: "Livin' la Vida Loca" (1999)
- CHRISTINE AGUILLERA: "Genie in a Bottle" (1999)

### ELECTRONICA

#### *Techno*

- THE PRODIGY: "Firestarter" from *The Fat of the Land* (1997)