

Joel Elizaga's

U.S. Hip Hop History Libretto

For Phoebe.

Get in school, so you can get an education, get a degree, and take a vacation.

[11/8/14, 8:38:33 PM] **Joel Elizaga:** while arranging this megalith of a document
i prompted myself, "hey joel, why the fuck do you listen to so much rap music, when you hated
it as a kid?"

young joel was a contrarian douchebag who hated what was popular
in 2005, rap was popular

it was scary, and alien, and foreign, and everybody liked it
as my parents taught me; "if everybody likes it, it's probably bad for you"

but as i return to my childhood tribulations—most notably, the music my generation listened to,
which i hated

i realize how damn relatable i find it
how the genre's roots are in the pain of being marginalized and vilified
all the elements are there: it's a discussion of vice, violence, losses, and triumphs
all the core human experiences rolled up in loud, sensationalist music, decorated with bass
a lot of it's crap, but in the end, it was made for people by people
with very little pretension
everybody can relate to it

E.

EAST

Hip hop was born in the Bronx.

E.

Hip hop is born: Hip hop culture grows out of the South Bronx during the 70's, becoming a viable commercial art by the 80's. The term originates from when Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five would perform with disco artists, who would call them "hip hoppers" (since they frequently scattered "hip," "hop," and "hippity" while improvising lyrics). In theory, hip hop acts as a vehicle for every imaginable subject, with topics ranging from basketball to your friend's mom's bad food to rapping better than the other MCs. The Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" hits the charts and spreads the culture across the nation, while Grandmaster Flash's brutally honest (for the time) depiction of the Bronx in "The Message" foreshadows the themes to come in future hip hop. This formative period of entrepreneurship in the east coast is followed by a malaise: N.W.A. and west coast rappers capture public scrutiny (and record sales) with gangster rap, thus virtually bulldozing all interest in old-hat non-gangster-rap, as well as the Bronx itself.

1. *Basketball* - Kurtis Blow (1984)
2. *Rapper's Delight* - The Sugarhill Gang (1979)
3. *The Breaks* - Kurtis Blow (1980)
4. *Wipeout* - The Fat Boys (1987)
5. *Walk This Way* - Run-DMC (1986)
6. *Push It* - Salt-N-Pepa (1987)

Licensed to Ill: The Beastie Boys, formerly a punk rock band, release their debut album, *Licensed to Ill*; it's the first hip hop album to top the Billboard 100.

7. *Fight For Your Right* - Beastie Boys (1986)
8. *No Sleep Till Brooklyn* - Beastie Boys (1986)
9. *Ain't No Half Steppin'* - Big Daddy Kane (1988)
10. *Jail House Rap* - The Fat Boys (1984)
11. *The Message* - Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (1982)
12. *How Many MC's...* - Black Moon (1993)
13. *I Get the Job Done* - Big Daddy Kane (1989)
14. *Paid In Full* - Eric B. & Rakim (1987)

The east coast returns: East coast rappers are embittered by the success of N.W.A. and their own inability to survive the gangster rap tide despite being the progenitors of hip hop itself; Tim Dog capitalizes on this resentment by making every single one of his songs a diss at the west. Dr. Dre and Snoop respond in "Dre Day," simultaneously taking shots at Eazy-E. Nas, Public Enemy, and Wu-Tang Clan rise to meet the challenge, taking a

E.

slice of the rap-controversy pie that had been fermenting during the Clinton administration. Nas drops *Illmatic*, which is widely acclaimed for its potent messages of desolation, corruption, and poverty in the projects of Queens where he grew up, while the conscious lyrics of A Tribe Called Quest and Public Enemy serve as a foil to the west coast's caustic revelry in violence. Wu-Tang Clan's colorful variety of powerful flows and moody, scratchy beats put Staten Island ("Shaolin") on the map.

15. Fuck Compton - Tim Dog (1991)

16. Mama Said Knock You Out - LL Cool J (1990)

17. Survival of the Fittest - Mobb Deep (1995)

18. NY State of Mind - Nas (1994)

19. Cream - Wu-Tang Clan (1993)

20. Scenario - A Tribe Called Quest (1992)

21. Wu-Tang Clan Ain't Nothin' ta' F' Wit - Wu-Tang Clan (1993)

22. 911 Is a Joke - Public Enemy (1990)

23. U.N.I.T.Y. - Queen Latifah (1993)

24. Whatta Man - Salt-N-Pepa (1993)

25. They Reminisce Over You (T.R.O.Y.) - Pete Rock & CL Smooth (1990)

26. The City - Wu-Tang Clan (1997)

27. The Sound of da Police - KRS-One (1993)

28. Fight the Power - Public Enemy (1989)

29. For Heaven's Sake - Wu-Tang Clan (1997)

30. The World Is Yours - Nas (1994)

Nobody signs Jay-Z: Jay-Z makes millions of dollars selling crack cocaine in the projects where he grew up, and decides to switch to rap music. Nobody signs him, so he resorts to selling CDs out of his Range Rover, before forming Roc-A-Fella Records (with his dope money) as a label for his music, using it to drop *Reasonable Doubt*, which charted on the US Billboard for 18 weeks. Jay-Z pioneers the "mafioso-style" themes popular in contemporary hip-hop; embellishing in one's material gains, wealth, women, and status. His former high school classmates, The Notorious B.I.G. and Busta Rhymes, begin their own careers. Producer P. Diddy (Puff Daddy, Sean Combs) signs Biggie to Bad Boy Records after listening to one of his mixtapes. Biggie's first album, Ready to Die, hits #13 on the Billboard 200. The combined successes of Jay-Z and Biggie bring back the public's attention to the east coast. Nas disses his former high school friend, Biggie, on "The Message," declaring him a "fake thug," saying

E.

that there can only be “one king.” Ironically, 2Pac takes this as an attack on himself (the east vs. west feud was full-throttle at the time).

- 31. *Can't Knock the Hustle* - Jay-Z (1996)**
- 32. *Hypnotize* - The Notorious B.I.G. (1997)**
- 33. *Reunited* - Wu-Tang Clan (1997)**
- 34. *Everyday Struggle* - The Notorious B.I.G. (1994)**
- 35. *Dead Presidents II* - Jay-Z (1996)**
- 36. *The Message* - Nas (1996)**
- 37. *Big Poppa* - The Notorious B.I.G. (1995)**
- 38. *Bucktown* - Smif-N-Wessun (1995)**
- 39. *Triumph* - Wu-Tang Clan (1997)**
- 40. *Guess Who's Back* - Rakim (1997)**
- 41. *If I Ruled the World* - Nas (1996)**
- 42. *Juicy* - The Notorious B.I.G. (1997)**

Biggie is assassinated: While visiting Los Angeles in 1997 after releasing *Hypnotize*, Biggie is shot and killed in a drive-by perpetrated by a man in a blue suit. The assailant is never caught. The east coast stagnates, with no notable figures but the Wu Tang Clan (who begin suing each other for money) and Jay-Z to fill the vacuum, until DMX signs to Columbia Records and 50 Cent rises through the mixtape circuit to collaborate with Eminem. Jay-Z spends the rest of his career reminiscing about all the dead rappers he knew (“Lucifer” is on the deaths of Biggie and Biggie’s brother, “Bobalob”) and rapping about his money and his girlfriend Beyonce. With his role as a creepy hype man now nullified, Puff Daddy is forced to release debut album (which is entirely ghost-written and talentless) and wins a Grammy in 1998, much to the chagrin of Ol’ Dirty Bastard, who pulls a Kanye West at the ceremony. The audience is delighted.

- 43. *I'll Be Missing You (feat. Faith Evans & 112)* - Puff Daddy (1998)**
- 44. *Lucifer* - Jay-Z (2001)**
- 45. *Mathematics* - Mos Def (1999)**
- 46. *My 1st Song* - Jay-Z (2003)**
- 47. *Step Into a World (Rapture's Delight)* - KRS-One**
- 48. *99 Problems* - Jay-Z (2003)**

- 49.** *Where's the Hood At?* - DMX (2003)
- 50.** *Heart of the City* - Jay-Z (2001)
- 51.** *X Gon' Give It to Ya* - DMX (2003)
- 52.** *In da Club* - 50 Cent (2003)
- 53.** *Show Stopper* - Danity Kane (2006)
- 54.** *Dirt off Your Shoulder* - Jay-Z (2003)
- 55.** *Intergalactic* - Beastie Boys (1998)
- 56.** *Definition* - Black Star (2002)
- 57.** *Party Up (Up in Here)* - DMX (1999)
- 58.** *Break Ya Neck* - Busta Rhymes (2001)
- 59.** *PMW (All I Really Need)* - A\$AP Rocky (2013)
- 60.** *Rich Niggaz* - J Cole (2013)
- 61.** *I Can Feel It* - DMX (1998)

Hip hop is dead: Disillusioned with the inauthentic and hollow content of charting hip hop songs (as well as looking for a marketing ploy), Nas declares hip hop dead.

- 62.** *Radio Daze* - The Roots (2010)
- 63.** *Dear God 2.0* - The Roots (2010)
- 64.** *How I Got Over* - The Roots (2010)
- 65.** *You Can't Hide, You Can't Run* - Dilated Peoples (2006)
- 66.** *New York Times (feat. 50 Cent & Bas)* - J Cole (2013)
- 67.** *Hip Hop* - Mos Def (1999)
- 68.** *Harder Than You Think* - Public Enemy (2007)
- 69.** *Lost One* - Jay-Z (2006)
- 70.** *Hip Hop Is Dead* - Nas (2006)
- 71.** *Y'all Should All Get Lynched* - NYoil (2007)
- 72.** *Let Nas Down* - J Cole (2013)

E.



The South Bronx, 1980's: America flew to the suburbs, leaving the Bronx without the tax revenue to fund the municipal fire department; it became commonplace for landlords to set fire to their own buildings in order to collect insurance money. During the 1970's, there was approximately 120,000 fires a year in just the Bronx: thirty every two hours, giving the district the appearance of a warzone. Roger Starr, housing commissioner of New York, diverted city funds to neighborhoods that "can be saved," while leaving the Bronx and similar decaying boroughs to rot, coining the strategy "urban shrinkage." The remaining small business were often money laundering operations, making legitimate employment a sort of pipe-dream.



Malcolm X & the Nation of Islam, 1960's: During his tenure as the face of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X popularizes Islam among the black community of the east coast as well as Detroit. Many notable rappers from the east (Nas, Rakim, WuTang Clan, Brother Ali) adopt names and customs derived from the Nation.

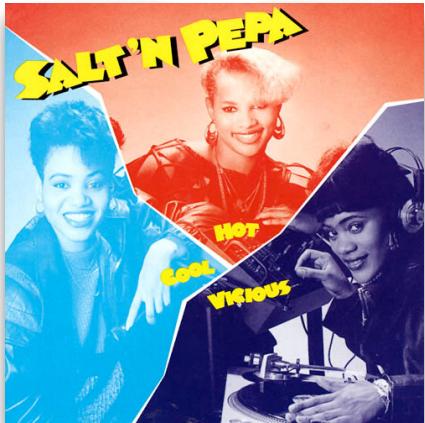




DJ Kool Herc, 1960's: Dubbed "Hercules" by local South Bronx classmates, Kool Herc is credited for originating hip hop while DJing at house parties. He'd take two identical records (James Brown, mostly) and isolate a small, beat-based section of the song—the "break," and loop it.



1520 Sedgwick Avenue, South Bronx, 1960's: Credited as the birthplace of hip hop, there are still some preserved (if yellowing) invitations to Kool Herc's parties.



Hot, Cold, & Vicious, 1986: The debut album of Queens-originated Salt-N-Pepa, the first acclaimed female hip hop act.

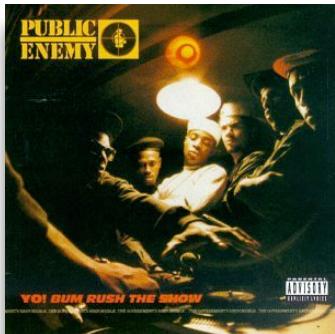


Queensbridge, Queens, 1980's: Housing approximately 7,000 residents, Queensbridge is the largest public housing project in the United States. Nas, Mobb Deep, and many New York hip hop artists grew up in Queensbridge.

License to Ill, 1986: 1.) The plane's reminiscent of a smoldering blunt. 2.) Mirrored, the tail says "EAT ME."



E.



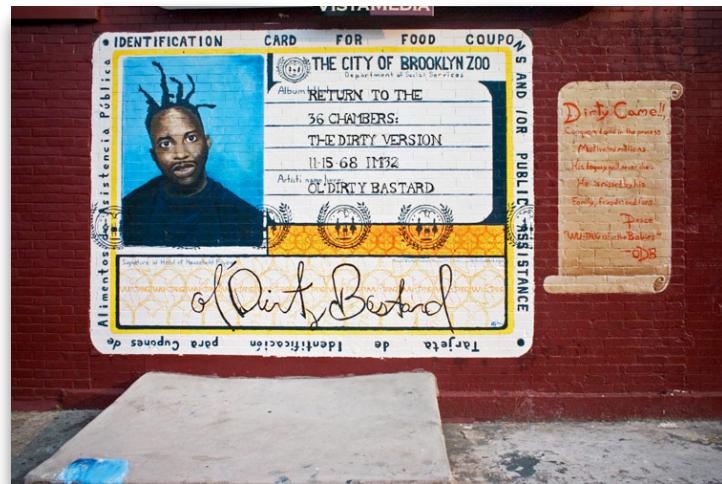
Yo! Bum Rush the Show, 1987: You wouldn't think it, but before Flavor Flav was looking for love on cable television, he was, and still is, a part of the politically-charged black nationalist hip hop group, Public Enemy.



Tim Dog, 1991: Tim Dog's legacy being dissing Compton and calling Snoop Dogg a "bitch with a perm," it's no wonder that 2Pac had to bail him out of a physical altercation in Los Angeles.



All Hail the Queen, 1989: Queen Latifah's debut album, released when she was 19.



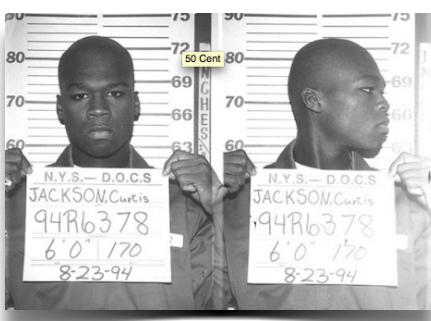
Old Dirty Bastard, 1995: An intoxicated Old Dirty Bastard promoted his debut album by taking MTV and his family to pick up some food stamps... in a limo. His food stamp ID was used as inspiration for the album cover.



2Pac & Biggie, 1994: A rare photo of 2Pac and the Notorious B.I.G.—stoned.



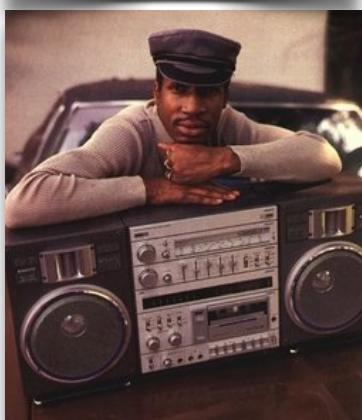
Bad Boy Entertainment, 1993: After being fired from Uptown Records for being too good at his job, Puff Daddy poached Notorious B.I.G. from Uptown and started Bad Boy Entertainment. Diddy never had much musical talent, but there was that one time he threw an AIDS fundraiser and nine people died in the resulting stampede in 1991.



50 Cent, 1994: Ever wonder why 50 Cent's a slow and crappy rapper? It's because he was shot in the face in 2000. The bullet went through his left cheek and ripped through his tongue, giving him a slur from the swollen scar.



E.



W.

WEST

The west pioneered gangster rap.

Ruthless Records & N.W.A.: Death Row Records, founded and financed by ex-dealer Eazy-E, releases the very first gangster rap album—*Straight Out of Compton*. Although rap artists from the east coast had made attempts to illustrate the violent and impoverished environment of America’s ghettos, Compton-based N.W.A.’s sensationalist lyrics (backed by producer Dr. Dre’s beats) unabashedly shoved the reality into the public eye, causing untold controversy from the largely sanitized climate of the conservative Ronald Reagan era. The F.B.I. personally threatens the group over “Fuck tha Police.” 2Pac begins rapping for Interscope Records in 1991, after moving to California at 17 and working as a backup dancer in Digital Underground. In 1992, the ghettos of Los Angeles are subject to a week-long cataclysmic riot over a police brutality incident involving the video-taped beating of a local, Rodney King—it’s the perfect era for gangster rap’s rise.

1. *Straight Out of Compton* - N.W.A. (1988)
2. *Eazy-Duz-It (feat. Dr. Dre and MC Ren)* - Eazy E (1987)
3. *Fuck tha Police* - N.W.A. (1988)
4. *Boyz-n-the-Hood* - Eazy-E (1987)
5. *Born and Raised in Compton* - DJ Quik (1991)
6. *The Ghetto* - Too \$hort (1990)
7. *Trapped* - 2Pac (1991)

The dissolution of N.W.A.: Ice Cube, arguably the most skillful rapper in N.W.A. (he wrote half the lyrics of *Straight out of Compton*, and nearly all of Eazy-E’s lyrics), leaves N.W.A. in 1988 over a disagreement about his contract with Ruthless Records co-founder, Jerry Heller. N.W.A. disses Ice Cube as a “Benedict Arnold,” Ice Cube responds with hit, “No Vaseline.”

8. *No Vaseline* - Ice Cube (1991)
9. *Tired of Being Stepped On* - The Click (1992)
10. *I Want to be Free* - Too \$hort (1992)
11. *Brenda’s Got a Baby* - 2Pac (1991)

The Bloods & Crips: Meanwhile, the local gangs of Los Angeles, the Bloods and Crips, rise to national notoriety over their seemingly constant warfare over the cocaine market of the metropolis. Producer Ronnie Ron organizes a peace treaty between the rival gangs in order to have them cooperate on his album, *Bangin’ On Wax*, the project intended to compete with the massive successes of Ruthless Records and Death Row Records, which many actual participants of gang warfare thought of as artificial. Ronnie selects the best rappers from the Bloods and Crips and has them “bang on wax” rather than the streets, with DJ Quik (a Blood) composing the majority of the beats. After the project ceases, most of the participants are killed by status quo violence.

- 12.** *Colors* - Ice-T (1988)
- 13.** *Nationwide Rip Ridaz* - Crips (1995)
- 14.** *Piru Love* - Bloods (1993)
- 15.** *Do You See* - Warren G (1994)
- 16.** *Steady Dippin* - Crips (1993)
- 17.** *Damu Ride* - Bloods (1995)

Death Row Records: Dr. Dre wants to leave Ruthless Records, citing Jerry Heller's fiscal mismanagement, but Eazy-E refuses to release him from his contract. Suge Knight, a Piru bouncer working for Ruthless, decides to collaborate with Dre in order to start his own record label, Death Row Records. Eazy-E finally releases Dre from his contract after Suge threatens to murder his family. Dre and Suge Knight build Death Row Records, enlisting the help of Long Beach rapper Snoop Dogg (and his friends) and a handful of ex-Ruthless rappers. Death Row's releases are infinitely more successful and expertly produced than those of Ruthless, in part because of Dre's lucrative producing, as well as their massive catalog of artists.

- 18.** *Murder Was the Case (Death After Visualizing Eternity)* - Snoop Dogg (1993)
- 19.** *Nuthin' But a G Thang (feat. Snoop Dogg)* - Dr. Dre (1992)
- 20.** *Let Me Ride* - Dr. Dre (1992)
- 21.** *Who Am I (What's My Name)* - Snoop Dogg (1993)
- 22.** *Regulate* - Warren G (1994)
- 23.** *Gin and Juice* - Snoop Dogg (1993)
- 24.** *This Is How We Do It* - Montell Jordan (1995)
- 25.** *Lil' Ghetto Boy* - Dr. Dre (1992)
- 26.** *Gangsta's Paradise* - Coolio (1995)

Ruthless Records vs. Death Row Records: Dr. Dre lampoons Eazy-E on *The Chronic* in "Fuck Wit Dre Day," the music video consisting of an actor parodying Eazy's sycophancy for Heller and ultimately getting sniped by Dre for fuckin' with him, leaving Snoop Dogg to have a stab at Tim Dog on the same track. Eazy is shocked by the diss, and retaliates with his own track, "Real Muthaphuckkin' G's," wherein he blasts Dr. Dre as a privileged "studio gangster" who wore lipstick and pumps as a techno producer during the 1980's (which is true), and was never a legitimate criminal until he was a millionaire (with lawyers who could bail him out of anything—which is also true). He then mocks Dre and Snoop over the (true) rumors that Death Row was a highly hostile environment ran by the volatile Suge Knight. Eazy-E dies of AIDS in 1995, taking Ruthless with him.

- 27. Fuck Wit Dre Day (And Everybody's Celebratin')** - Dr. Dre (1992)
- 28. Real Muthaphuckkin' G's** - Eazy-E (1993)
- 29. It's On** - Eazy-E (1993)
- 30. Girl (feat. Crooked I)** - Luniz (1995)
- 31. This DJ** - Warren G (1994)
- 32. Just Another Day** - Too \$hort (1993)
- 33. I Got 5 on It** - Luniz (1995)
- 34. Somethin' To Ride To (Fonky Expedition)** - The Conscious Daughters (1993)
- 35. Sick Wit Tis** - Mac Mall (1993)

Suge Knight pays 2Pac's bail for a contract: Tupac Shakur, a Harlem-based rapper known for his socially conscious songs, is charged with sexual assault in 1995. Death Row CEO Suge Knight pays his \$1,400,000 bail on the understanding that 2Pac would take his contract to work for Death Row. 2Pac's lucrative work at Death Row becomes highly acclaimed, though, as time rolls on, his lyrics become darker and more embellishing of the life of excess he leads at Death Row. As 2Pac rises as Suge's favorite and Death Row becomes entrenched in police corruption, fear-mongering, gang politics, and drug trafficking (and that one time Suge dangled Vanilla Ice off a hotel balcony for "Ice Ice Baby" royalties), Dr. Dre drops off the label and goes MIA, refusing to release any music until his contract ends in 1999.

- 36. California Love** - 2Pac (1995)
- 37. Ambitionz Az a Ridah** - 2Pac (1996)
- 38. Shorty Wanna Be a Thug** - 2Pac (1996)
- 39. Dear Mama** - 2Pac (1995)

West Coast vs. East Coast feud: In 1994, 2Pac is shot outside of a studio during a collaboration with friend, similarly successful and Brooklyn-based rapper The Notorious B.I.G.. 2Pac flips his shit and ignites a feud between the two. The record companies capitalize on this, simplifying the complex situation by calling it a rivalry between the rappers of the coasts. CEO of Czar Entertainment, Jimmy Henchman, admits to organizing the shooting in 2012 when he's arrested for using his enterprise as a mammoth narcotics-trafficking front--however, it was found that the F.B.I. documents that authenticated his story were forged by a member of the Italian mafia, Jimmy Sabatino.

- 40. Big Poppa** - The Notorious B.I.G. (1995)
- 41. Hit 'Em Up** - 2Pac (1996)
- 42. Can't C Me** - 2Pac (1996)

43. Me Against the World (feat. Dramacydal) - 2Pac (1995)

44. Come and Take a Ride - CJ Mac (1995)

45. 93 'Til Infinity - Souls of Mischief (1993)

46. Gs & Locs - Bloods & Crips (1994)

47. Slow Yo Roll - Nini X (1995)

2Pac dies: 2Pac is shot in a drive-by by an unidentified man during a tour in Las Vegas. The bullet-riddled BMW 7-series, driven by Suge Knight, crashes during a panicked attempt to find a hospital. 2Pac dies, Suge is left with shrapnel in his skull. The situation is exacerbated by the tight-lipped and corrupt nature of Las Vegas police, as well as their silent counterparts in Los Angeles. Rumors spark that the incident was an assassination attempt made by Suge Knight, the Crips, the federal government, or crooked cops. The Rampart scandal breaks a year after 2Pac's death, exposing the employment of Los Angeles Police Department anti-gang unit officers (C*R*A*S*H) under Suge Knight and various trafficking organizations; LAPD loses \$125 million in lawsuits.

48. Staring Through My Rearview - 2Pac (2001)

49. Thugz Mansion - 2Pac (2002)

50. Changes - 2Pac (1998)

The end of the west coast: Following 2Pac's death, Death Row Records collapses under shoddily produced music, poor management, and lack of viable talent. Los Angeles-dominated west coast hip hop effectively dies. In 1999, Dr. Dre drops 2001, marking his return to the industry, but the scene is largely stagnated by the consumption of smaller labels by the major monopoly labels (who finance and dictate all radio content). The old trend of hip hop regionalism decays with the advent of the internet, allowing the mass distribution of music across the planet, thus eliminating location-based niches. Suge Knight struggles to stay relevant by appearing on reality TV and getting into bar fights. The Black Eyed Peas, who were discovered in middle school by Eazy-E and signed to Ruthless Records in the late 1980's (SURPRISE!), drop *Elephunk*, spearheading the cynical blend of pop and hip hop we have today. Kendrick Lamar is crowned contemporary king of the west coast after Game somehow manages to make everybody on both the west coast and the east coast feel awkward with his endless shoutouts, features, and references.

51. Ghetto Theme - Mac Mall (1993)

52. Still D.R.E. (feat. Snoop Dogg) - Dr. Dre (1999)

53. Deception - Blackalicious (1999)

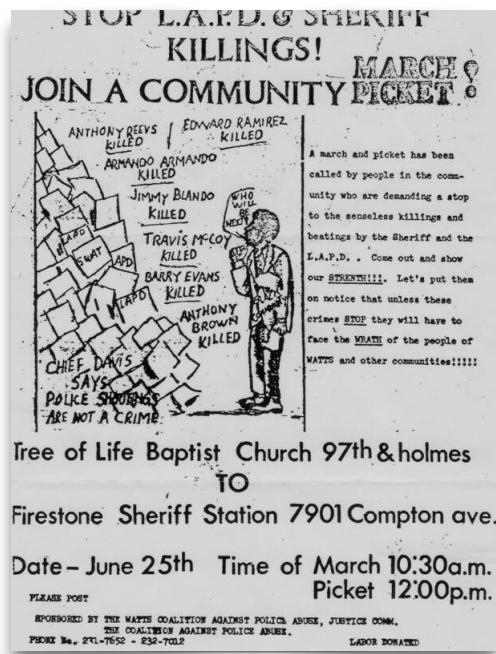
54. Forgot About Dre (feat. Eminem) - Dr. Dre (1999)

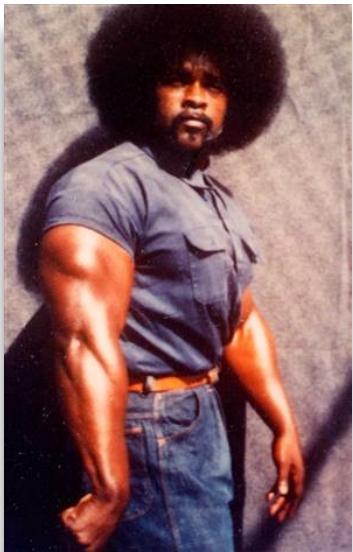
- 55.** *Drop It Like It's Hot* - Snoop Dogg & Pharrell Williams (2004)
- 56.** *My Humps* - Black Eyed Peas (2005)
- 57.** *What's the Difference (feat. Eminem and Alvin Joiner)* - Dr. Dre (1999)
- 58.** *Hate It or Love It* - Game (2008)
- 59.** *Don't Phunk With My Heart* - Black Eyed Peas (2005)
- 60.** *The Next Episode (feat. Snoop Dogg)* - Dr. Dre (1999)
- 61.** *A.D.H.D.* - Kendrick Lamar (2011)
- 62.** *Angel (feat. Common)* - Game (2008)
- 63.** *Hood Mentality* - Ice Cube (2008)
- 64.** *m.A.A.d city (feat. MC Eiht)* - Kendrick Lamar (2012)
- 65.** *Hardest Man In Town* - Nate Dogg (1998)
- 66.** *Black Boy Fly* - Kendrick Lamar (2012)
- 67.** *My Life (feat. Lil Wayne)* - Game (2008)
- 68.** *Compton (feat. Dr. Dre)* - Kendrick Lamar (2012)
- 69.** *Gettin' It* - Too \$hort (1996)
- 70.** *Nobody Does It Better* - Nate Dogg (1998)
- 71.** *It Was A Good Day* - Ice Cube (1993)
- 72.** *Imagine (feat. D'Angelo & Dr. Dre)* - Snoop Dogg (2006)



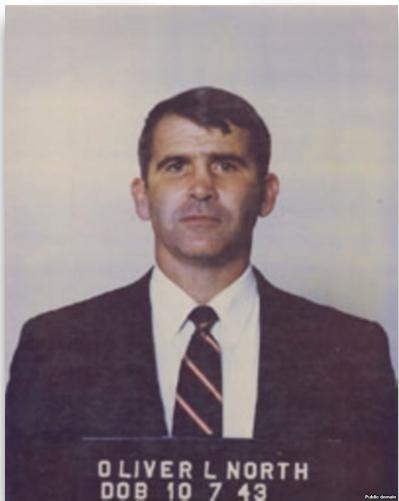
The Black Panther Party, 1966: The Los Angeles Police Department stayed as far away from the ruins of South Central as possible, leaving the Black Panther Party to restore order and act as a “Citizen’s Army,” recruiting members from the citizens of the city. That is, until J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI decides that the Black Panther Party is a threat to the nation, and devises COINTELPRO, an elaborate scheme to assassinate the upper echelons of the party and arrest the rest. President Truman grumbled about Hoover turning the F.B.I into “his own Gestapo.” The collapse of the Black Panthers results in the splintering of South Central into dozens of street gangs.

The Watts Rebellion, 1965: A massive influx of blacks and latinos traveled to the west coast in order to evade racial segregation during the 1960’s, generating demand for housing in Los Angeles. Construction companies responded to this demand by building low-income housing in Compton, a predominately white suburb. With every new black family on the block, real estate prices dropped, making it increasingly affordable for housing developers to buy more homes in South Central L.A. and sell them to more black families at an inflated price. The newly-made Compton residents were bombed, shot at, and got crosses burnt into their lawns in hostile response to the tide of black residents, while the police harassed them whenever they ventured into “white” areas. Tensions finally snap in 1965, when a week-long race riot results in nearly 3,500 arrests and \$40,000,000 in property damage. The California National Guard crushes the rebellion, leaving an anarchic neighborhood with abysmal property values.

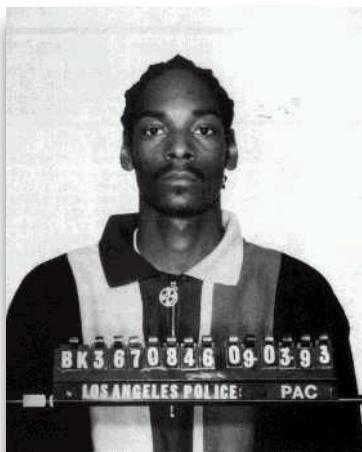




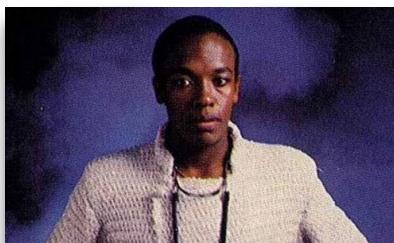
"Big Tookie" Williams, 1969:
Co-founder of the Crips, Tookie would travel around South Central to fist-fight with every gang he saw until they would capitulate and join his organization, bent on being the leader of the "biggest gang in the world." The Bloods formed as an alliance of gangs who either refused to join the alliance or broke off (Pirus), always about half the size of the South Central Crips.



The Iran-Contra Affair, 1985:
President Reagan's administration was caught collaborating with the government of Israel to sell weapons to Iran (subject to an arms embargo at the time) in return for the release of American hostages. The money from these deals financed the Contra's attempt to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. More importantly, the Kerry Committee Report found that several known drug kingpins were on the U.S. State Department's payroll for assisting the Contras. Some say that this is how cocaine infested South Central LA.



Snoop Dogg, 1980's: Snoop Dogg's day job was selling cocaine with the Rolling 20's Crips, while he made mix tapes with Warren G and his cousin, Nate Dogg, under the name "213" (Long Beach's old area code).



Dr. Dre, 1985: Dr. Dre as an electro-funk DJ in the World Class Wreckin' Cru. Ain't nothing but a g thang.



Eazy-E dined with the Republican political elite in D.C.

Eazy-E & George Bush, 1991: After donating to a South Central charity, Eazy-E was put on the Republican National Convention mailing list and randomly chosen to attend the RNC luncheon with George Bush. According to Jerry Heller, "Nobody's been that stoned in the White House since Gerald Ford's kid Jack smoked dope on the White House roof. And Eazy had better weed than Jack Ford ever did."

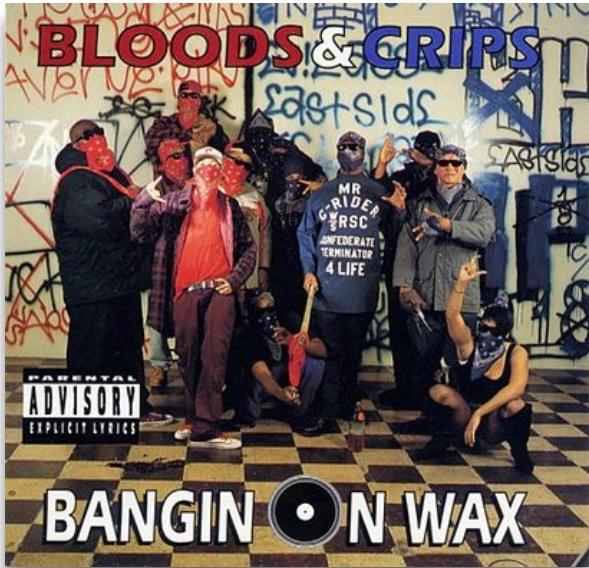


Funkadelic & Parliament, 1970's: Legendary psychedelic-funk bands that dropped so much acid that they would call down a giant, spark-spraying, technicolor UFO prop during concerts while chanting, "SWING DOWN, SWEET CHARIOT STOP, AND LET ME RIDE." Dr. Dre, rabid fan, heavily sampled Funkadelic and similar acts in his productions, dubbing it "gangsta-funk," or "g-funk."

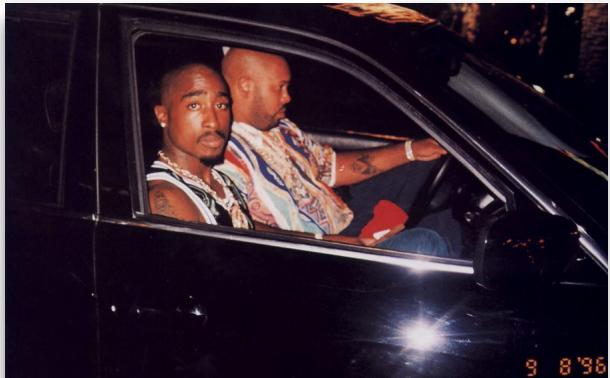
W.



South Central Riots, 1992: They didn't have camcorders in 1966, but they did in 1992. A videotape of police assaulting Rodney King goes viral, resulting in a cataclysmic riot that ends in over \$1,000,000,000 in property damages, 11,000 arrests, and more deaths than any civil unrest in America since the 19th century. During the riots, militant Salvadoran gangs organized, composed of ex-child soldiers and rebels from the El Salvadoran Civil War, while the Koreans armed themselves with AK-47s to stave off looters. The media postulated that gang warfare might be an integral component to the meltdown, but the Bloods and Crips had an active peace treaty at the time.

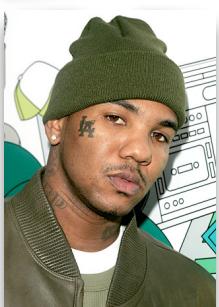
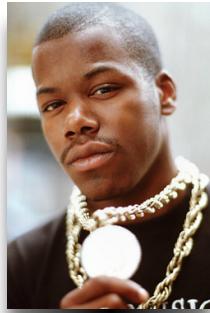


Bangin' on Wax, 1993: By the 1993, the Bloods and Crips had been at war for over twenty years. Once violence had peaked in the early 90's, treaties were organized to curb the phenomenon. *Bangin' on Wax* was born of this period. Despite mutual efforts to end the bloodshed, the economic incentives (unemployment, a ready market, a ready supply) still stood, and proved too powerful to resist.



2Pac & Suge Knight, 1996: The iconic final photo of a living Tupac Shakur. It's worth noting that Suge Knight owed 2Pac \$60,000,000 in royalties at the time of 2Pac's death, had crooked LAPD cops on his payroll, and was competing with 2Pac's rising Makaveli label.

W.



S.

SOUTH

The dirty south made modern music.

Houston, Texas: Los Angeles and New York are the focal points of hip hop from its conception all the way to the 1990's. There's simply no reason for major record labels to search the south for talent, when there's plenty of rappers sitting right on their doorsteps. Geto Boys, hailing from Houston, Texas, begin producing albums. When one of their members, Bushwick Bill, shoots himself in the face, the group takes it as a photo opportunity and uses the picture of the resulting emergency room visit as the cover of *We Can't Be Stopped*. The album establishes the Houston's prominence as a viable rap capital; the frontman of Geto Boys, Scarface, begins a successful solo career. Inspired by Geto Boys' success, southern rappers flock to Houston in an attempt to find their fortune, among them including UGK (Pimp C & Bun B) and 8Ball & MJG. The Goodie Mob (Atlanta, Georgia) coin the term "dirty south" in 1995, while UGK popularize the slang, "riding dirty" (riding with illicit drugs).

1. *Mind Playing Tricks On Me* - Geto Boys (1991)

2. *Dirty South* - Goodie Mob (1995)

3. *Ridin' Dirty* - UGK (1996)

4. *Smile* - Scarface, 2Pac, & Johnny P. (1997)

The Screwed Up Click: DJ Screw takes every single southern hit he can get his hands on, and slows them to a comically sluggish, menacing pace with turntables, in order to emulate (and enhance) the effects of purple drank (cough syrup codeine + soda), the beverage of the dirty south—this technique becomes known as “chopped and screwed.” This attracts attention from every rapper on the Houston mixtape circuit, cultivating a massive, cult-like collective of rappers that becomes the “Screwed Up Click.” The Screwed Up Click, directed by DJ Screw organizes shows and tours on the underground circuit, and becomes a powerful force in the south despite never hitting the American charts. DJ Screw releases hundreds of album-sized compilations before dying in 2000 from (of course) codeine overdose. Drank becomes inseparable from southern rap, leading to the deaths of prominent figures such as Big Moe and Pimp C. Devin the Dude begins showing up on everybody’s singles because he can’t rap about anything but weed when he’s alone.

5. *Swang and Bang* - E.S.G. (1995)

6. *Diamonds & Wood* - UGK (1996)

7. *Welcome To Texas* - DJ Screw (????)

8. *Swang On 4's (feat. Big Moe & Cl'Che')* - Z-Ro (2000)

9. *Barre Baby (feat. Ronnetta Spencer)* - Big Moe (2000)

10. *Wanna Be a Baller* - Lil Troy (1998)

New Orleans, Louisiana: Baby (aka Birdman) and his brother, Slim, found Cash Money records in 1991, publishing the works of local Louisiana artists. Cash Money signs 13 year-old Lil Wayne in 1995. Like Jay-Z and Biggie, Cash Money’s niche is grand mafioso-type lyrics reflecting lifestyles of unprecedented wealth and

debauchery. Much to the contrary, however, they hardly have any money until Baby starts borrowing money in order to finance his music videos (which include cars and parties he couldn't afford) which then blow up his company into national prominence during the mid-00's. Baby and producer Mannie Fresh join as the Big Tymers duo.

- 11.** *Stun 'n* - Big Tymers (1998)
- 12.** *Street Life* - Scarface (1992)
- 13.** *Jump* - Kris Kross (1992)
- 14.** *Tops Drop* - Fat Pat (1998)
- 15.** *They Don't Dance No Mo'* - Goodie Mob & Lil Will (1998)
- 16.** *No Tears* - Scarface (1994)
- 17.** *Fuck My Car (feat. Mr. 3-2)* - UGK (1996)
- 18.** *Double Ashtray* - Devin the Dude (2002)
- 19.** *Black Ice* - Goodie Mob & Outkast (1995)
- 20.** *Beautiful Skin* - Goodie Mob (1995)
- 21.** *Space Age Pimpin'* - 8Ball & MJG (1995)
- 22.** *Still* - Geto Boys (1996)
- 23.** *I Seen a Man Die* - Scarface (1994)
- 24.** *One Day* - UGK (1996)
- 25.** *Hand of the Dead Body* - Scarface (1994)
- 26.** *Ghetto Ride* - Dirty (2002)
- 27.** *Lacville '79* - Devin the Dude (2002)
- 28.** *Po Folks* - Nappy Roots (2002)

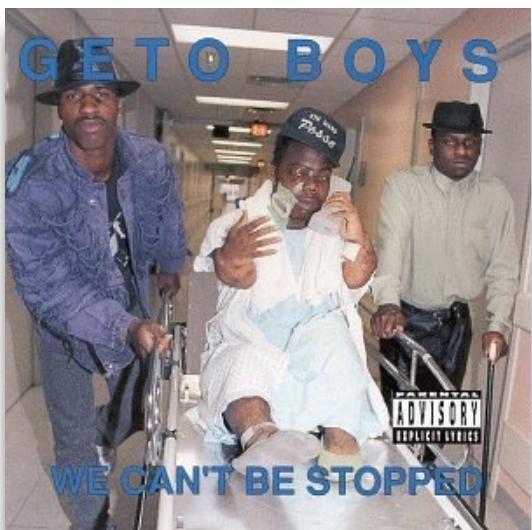
The radio goes southern: UGK is featured on Jay-Z hit, "Big Pimpin'," marking the explosion of southern hip hop. From 2002 to 2004, southern hip hop artists occupy 60% of America's charts. Cash Money Records grows to unwieldy proportions as Mannie Fresh begins producing hit after hit with dance-fused beats ("bounce"), paving the way for Lil Wayne's celebrity, while Outkast's experimental blend of pop and rap proves to be irresistible. Girl bands become a fixture of the 90s, with notable Southern-originating pillars Destiny's Child and TLC enjoying success until their members die or get too much plastic surgery. Southern hip hop makes use of brand endorsements (shoes, cars, alcohol) to fuel further success (this technique becomes standard in the American music industry), thus snowballing into an unstoppable monster. This period essentially seals hip hop's inescapable permeation throughout the entire American music industry.

- 29.** *Lost Souls* - David Banner (2005)
- 30.** *Ridin'* - Chamillionaire (2005)
- 31.** *Back That Azz Up* - Juvenile (1998)
- 32.** *Awnaw* - Nappy Roots (2002)
- 33.** *Yeah! (feat. Lil Jon & Ludacris)* - Usher (2004)
- 34.** *Say My Name* - Destiny's Child (1999)
- 35.** *Milkshake* - Kelis (1999)
- 36.** *Front, Back & Side to Side* - UGK (2003)
- 37.** *Hustlin'* - Rick Ross (2006)
- 38.** *Still Fly* - Big Tymers (2002)
- 39.** *Wayne's Takeover 1* - Mannie Fresh (2004)
- 40.** *No Scrubs* - TLC (1999)
- 41.** *Ms. Jackson* - Outkast (2000)
- 42.** *Hustla* - Nappy Roots (2002)
- 43.** *Stay Fly* - Three 6 Mafia (2005)
- 44.** *This Is How We Do* - Big Tymers (2003)
- 45.** *Wayne's Takeover 2* - Mannie Fresh (2004)
- 46.** *The DJ* - Mannie Fresh (2004)
- 47.** *Real Big* - Mannie Fresh (2004)
- 48.** *Money Maker* - Ludacris (2006)
- 49.** *Lose Control (feat. Ciara & Fat Scoop)* - Missy Elliot (2005)
- 50.** *Roses* - Outkast (2003)
- 51.** *Big Pimpin' (feat. UGK)* - Jay-Z
- 52.** *Bossy (feat. Too Short)* - Kelis (2006)
- 53.** *Hey Ya!* - Outkast (2003)
- 54.** *Survivor* - Destiny's Child (2001)
- 55.** *Leather So Soft* - Birdman & Lil Wayne (2006)
- 56.** *You're Everything* - Bun B, 8-Ball, MJG, David Banner & Rick Ross (2010)
- 57.** *On Everything (feat. Twista)* - David Banner (2005)

S.

- 58.** *In the a (feat. T.I. & Ludacris)* - Big Boi (2012)
- 59.** *Drop the World* - Lil Wayne (2010)
- 60.** *Ride On 4's* - J-Dawg (2008)
- 61.** *Fuck You* - CeeLo Green (2010)
- 62.** *The Game Belongs to Me* - UGK (2006)
- 63.** *Wanta Be Like You* - DJ Paul (2009)
- 64.** *Dead and Gone (feat. Justin Timberlake)* - T.I (2008)
- 65.** *One Day at a Time (feat. K.B. & K-Dee)* - Devin the Dude (1998)
- 66.** *They Got Us* - Big K.R.I.T. (2010)
- 67.** *God Bless Amerika* - Lil Wayne (2013)
- 68.** *Stay Fly* - Trae (2006)
- 69.** *Life Goes On* - 8Ball & MJG (2010)
- 70.** *It's Been a Pleasure* - Bun B (2010)
- 71.** *Can't Make It Home* - Devin the Dude (2008)
- 72.** *Mind Playin' Tricks 94* - Scarface (1994)

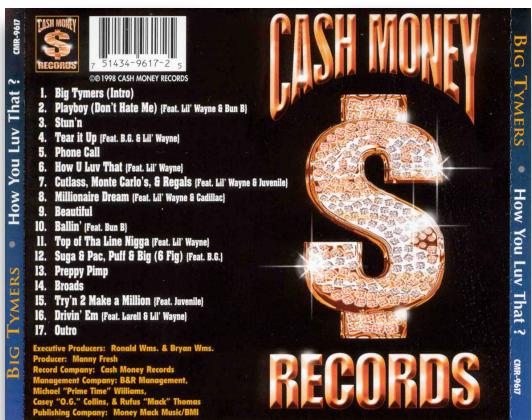
S.



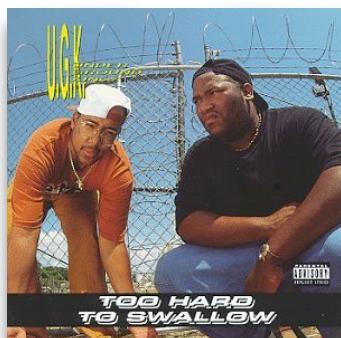
We Can't Be Stopped, 1991: Bushwick Bill's mind was playing tricks on him.



Rick Ross, 1995: Obligatory reminder that Rick Ross was a corrections officer for two years.



How You Luv That?, 1998: Birdman's planning a new Big Tymers album, with Drake and Lil Wayne—and no Mannie Fresh. That isn't a Big Tymers album. That's a Lil Wayne album.



Too Hard to Swallow, 1992: You've probably noticed that Pimp C's gimmick was rapping the most obscene shit possible and giving UGK some edge, but what you probably don't know is that he produced most of UGK's instrumentals. He was a multi-instrumentalist.



On the TLC Tip, 1992: The members of TLC declared bankruptcy in 1994 because production costs leached all their money and Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes had to pay insurance for literally burning down her ex-boyfriend's house.



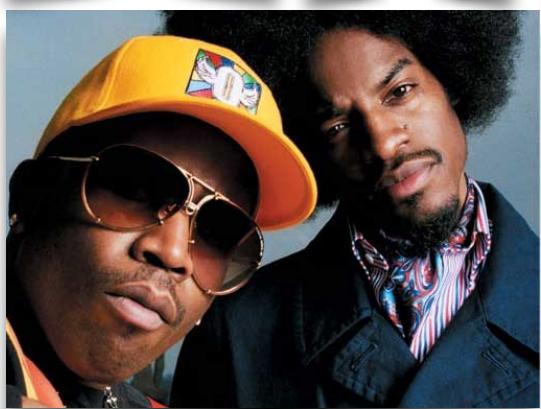
A Screw Tape, 1994: One of the hundreds of codeine-inspired mixtapes DJ Screw composed.



Purple Drank: While most rappers risk assassination, being a southern rapper burdens one with a special risk factor for dying from sippin' too much syrup. See: a substantial proportion of the Screwed Up Click.



Rims, 00's: Compton has gargantuan Impala low-riders, New York has the bus—the south has gaudy chrome rims: "wagon-wheels," 24's, 26's, 28's, 30's.



M.

MIDWEST

Weird shit comes out of weird places.

Eazy-E signs Bone Thugs-n-Harmony to Ruthless: Cleveland rap group Bone Thugs-n-Harmony take a bus to Los Angeles to seek a record deal, ending up lost in Compton. Eazy-E signs them to Ruthless Records, and their debut album, E. 1999 Eternal, sets the precedent for midwest rappers with dark, mysticism-inflected lyrics and “chopping” –rapping with the speed of an AK-47 (a “chopper”). Twista wins the Guinness World Record for “fastest rapper” in 1992; he can pronounce 598 syllables in a single minute.

1. *1st of tha Month* - Bone Thugs-n-Harmony (1995)
2. *Passing Me By* - The Pharcyde (1992)
3. *Breaker 1/9* - Common (1992)
4. *Thuggish Ruggish Bone* - Bone Thugs-n-Harmony (1994)
5. *Adrenaline Rush* - Twista (1997)
6. “*Eternal*” - Bone Thugs-n-Harmony (1995)

Aaliyah signs to Jive Records at 12: Based in Detroit, Michigan, Aaliyah releases her first album, *Age Ain't Nothing but a Number*, at 14, produced and written by R. Kelly. After R. Kelly’s infamous statutory rape scandal, another one arises when rumors leak that R. Kelly and Aaliyah had a secret wedding ceremony. R. Kelly never really gets around to confirming or denying this.

7. *One in a Million* - Aaliyah (1996)
8. *Mo Murda'* - Bone Thugs-n-Harmony (1995)
9. *Welcome to Strangeland* - Tech N9ne (2011)
10. *Hall of Illusions* - Insane Clown Posse (1997)
11. *I Used to Love H.E.R.* - Common (1994)

Dr. Dre signs Eminem to Aftermath: Dr. Dre listens to a demo tape Eminem released, and has Jimmy Iovine hunt him down. Eminem bolsters his image by dissing his mom, his ex-wife, every celebrity he can name, the Insane Clown Posse, and Courage the Cowardly Dog. Courage is a puppet.

12. *Lose Yourself* - Eminem (2002)
13. *Worldwide Choppers* - Tech N9ne (2011)
14. *What Is a Juggalo?* - Insane Clown Posse (1997)
15. *My Name Is* - Eminem (2005)
16. *My Axe* - Insane Clown Posse (2000)
17. *The Real Slim Shady* - Eminem (2000)

18. *Without Me* - Eminem (2002)

19. *Kill Us All* - Twista (2004)

20. *Shake That* - Eminem (2005)

21. *Hot In Herre* - Nelly (2002)

22. *Right Thurr* - Chingy (2003)

Kanye West rises: Kanye West comes to prominence after a few years of producing beats for Ludacris, Alicia Keys, and Janet Jackson. You know all those beats with chipmunk voices? That's Kanye West. Having worked on Jay-Z's "The Blueprint" in 2001, Kanye West releases his debut album, "College Dropout" (he dropped out of Chicago State U. to focus on music), under Jay-Z's Roc-A-Fella label.

23. *Heartless* - Kanye West (2008)

24. *Flashing Lights* - Kanye West (2010)

25. *Drive Slow* - Kanye West (2005)

26. *4 Page Letter* - Aaliyah (1996)

27. *Slow Jamz* - Twista (2004)

28. *Can't Tell Me Nothing* - Kanye West (2010)

29. *Love Sosa* - Chief Keef (2012)

30. *Uncle Sam Goddamn* - Brother Ali (2007)

31. *I Don't Like* - Chief Keef (2012)

32. *Little Weapon* - Lupe Fiasco (2007)

33. *Hate Bein' Sober (feat. 50 Cent & Wiz Khalifa)* - Chief Keef (2012)

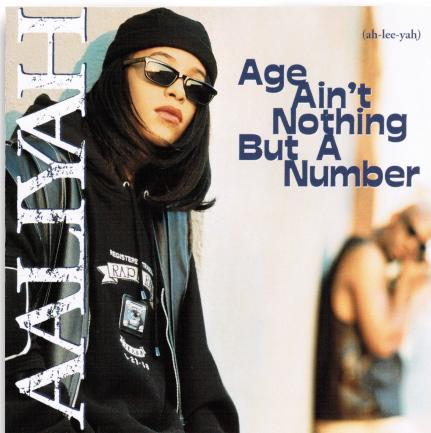
34. *Bitch Bad* - Lupe Fiasco (2012)

35. *Forest Whitaker* - Brother Ali (2003)

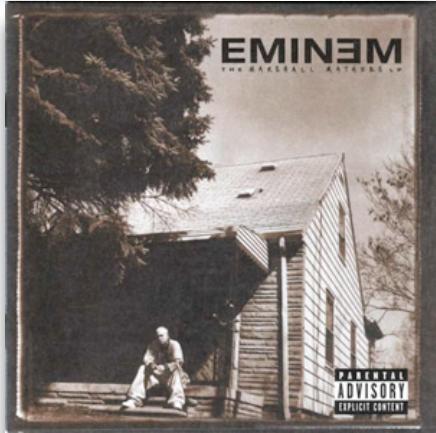
36. *The 6th Sense* - Common (2005)



Iceberg Slim, 1967: Born in 1918, Iceberg Slim was a Chicago-based pimp with what amounted to a small prostitution empire. In 1967 he moved to California and penned *Pimp: The Story of My Life*, articulating and making popular the pimp “image.” Rap artists often pay tribute to Iceberg Slim with references—Ice Cube and Ice T both derived their names from Iceberg.



Age Ain't Nothing But a Number, 1996: Aaliyah's stuff is saccharine as hell. I dunno why Kendrick likes it. You'll notice that I haven't included any R. Kelly; that's because R. Kelly sucks.



The Marshall Mathers LP, 2000: Eminem's *The Marshall Mathers LP*, produced by Dr. Dre, sold 1.76 million copies within the week following its release, breaking Snoop Dogg's *Doggystyle* sales record.

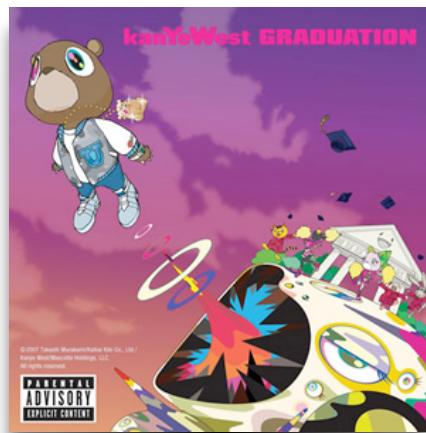
Graduation, 2007: Released in September, this album got ridiculous air time when I was in eighth grade, along with Britney Spears' *Blackout* and Chris Brown's *Exclusive*, all released in Fall 2007.



E. 1999 Eternal, 1995: Bone Thugs-n-Harmony's debut album, dedicated to Eazy-E.



The Great Milenko, 1997: Recorded by Insane Clown Posse and released under Disney's Hollywood Records. *Disney released this.* They took it off shelves hours after the release, citing an “oversight” by their review board.



M.

