

Lecture 1: The Cultural Meaning of Black Music

Date: September 5, 2024

- Black music = more about culture than history. It's like a resistance tool against oppression (slavery, Jim Crow, discrimination).
- It's how African Americans reclaimed identity and humanity.

Features of Black Music:

- **Call and Response:** Leader + audience = interactive vibe.
 - **Polyrhythm:** Multiple rhythms at once, very West African.
 - **Improvisation:** Making stuff up as you go = survival skill in life AND music.
 - **Vocalization:** Voice as an instrument, so cool.
 - **Functionality:** Music isn't just for fun; it's for life—ceremonies, rituals, etc.
- West African Roots:** Rhythm = everything. It's why African American music is so rhythmically rich.

“African Americans had to improvise to live regular lives.” –

Lecture 2: Musical Impulses and Early Influences

Date: September 9, 2024

3 core musical impulses = vibes:

1. **Blues Impulse:**
 - Tragic but resilient
 - "Autobiographical disaster" = feels.
2. **Gospel Impulse:**
 - Hope + redemption = perfect combo.
 - Creating an ideal world (liberty, freedom).
3. **Jazz Impulse:**
 - New world vibes, break old rules, innovate everything.

Key terms:

- **Blackface:** Ugh, white performers copying Black art .
- **Masking:** Hiding real feelings/messages behind symbols.

Artists/Songs:

- Mahalia Jackson – *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* (gospel queen).

- Sister Rosetta Tharpe – rocked the electric guitar (*Up Above My Head* = gospel + early rock).
-

Lecture 3: R&B and Rock and Roll Origins

Date: September 12, 2024

Before R&B/R&R:

- **Jump Blues:** Blues + swing = upbeat vibes.
- **Doo-Wop:** Romantic harmonies.

Pioneers:

- Jimmie Rodgers: Early country vibes .
- Ray Charles: Gospel + blues + jazz = R&B GOAT.
- Fats Domino: New Orleans magic, rhythmic genius.

Where it all happened:

- **New Orleans:** Jazz/funk birthplace, syncopation everywhere.
- **Chicago:** Great Migration = melting pot for blues/jazz.

Chuck Berry: “Father of Rock and Roll.” Wrote about teenage life, so relatable.

Lecture 4: Rock and Roll’s Cultural Impact

Date: September 17, 2024

Elvis Presley:

- Grew up in Memphis around Black culture; brought Black music to white audiences.
- Broke barriers but got mixed reactions.

Cold War Era:

- Containment ideology = society freaked out over fast change (aka Black music’s influence).

Key stuff:

- **Payola Scandal:** DJs took \$ to promote songs
 - Little Richard – *Tutti Frutti*: Wild energy, broke norms.
 - Sam Cooke – *A Change Is Gonna Come*: Civil Rights anthem.
-

Lecture 5: The Motown Era

Date: September 19, 2024

Detroit = The Arsenal of Democracy (AND Motown's home).

- **Berry Gordy Jr.:** Genius behind Motown's "sound of young America."
- Early hit: *Money (That's What I Want)* by Barrett Strong.

The Funk Brothers:

- Motown's house band
- James Jamerson = bass legend.

Hits:

- Stevie Wonder – *Uptight*
 - The Temptations – *My Girl*.
 - The Supremes – *Stop in the Name of Love*.
-

Lecture 6: Southern Soul

Date: September 24, 2024

Country Soul Triangle: Memphis, Nashville, Muscle Shoals = Southern soul powerhouses.

- **Stax Records:** Started out looking for white talent but leaned into R&B.
- **Founders:** Jim Stewart + Estelle Axton.

Stax Highlights:

- *Green Onions* – Booker T. & the MGs.
 - *Soul Man* – Sam & Dave.
 - Otis Redding = legend
-

Lecture 8: Vietnam and Black Power

Date: October 1, 2024

The '60s: Civil Rights → Black Power → counterculture rebellion.

- Bob Dylan = introspective lyric vibes (*Like a Rolling Stone*).
- Sly and the Family Stone = unity (multiracial/gender band).
- Hendrix = electric guitar god (*Star-Spangled Banner* performance, chills).

Black Power Movement Music:

- Marvin Gaye – *What's Going On*.
 - Curtis Mayfield – *(Don't Worry) If There's a Hell Below....*
-

Lecture 9: Funk and Philly Soul

Date: October 3, 2024

James Brown: Funk pioneer. It's all about groove over melody.

Other Funk Kings:

- Stevie Wonder: Synth + meaningful lyrics.
- George Clinton: Funkadelic psychedelic vibes.

Philly Soul:

- Smooth, orchestral, universal appeal.
- Gamble + Huff = geniuses behind the sound.
-

Lecture 12: Old School Hip-Hop

Date: 10/15/2024

Reagan Era Politics and Hip-Hop

- Reagan's approval ratings were pretty high, but for African Americans, it was a whole different story—only 12% were onboard.
- The 80s were all about image over substance, focusing on wealth and power, with a strong "us vs. them" mentality.

Key Figures & Contributions

- **Russell Simmons** co-founded Def Jam Records, shaping hip-hop's mainstream sound.
 - **Run-DMC**: These guys made hip-hop more mainstream, even mixing in rock with tracks like “Walk This Way” (1984).
 - **Rick Rubin** helped define hip-hop's early sound, especially at Def Jam.
 - **The Beastie Boys**: They brought hip-hop into new spaces, with songs like “Fight For Your Right To Party” (1986).
 - **Eric B. & Rakim**: Rakim’s lyrical complexity and emotional range made him a pioneer, with hits like “Paid in Full” (1987).
 - **Public Enemy**: They brought social commentary to the forefront, with anthems like “Fight The Power” (1990).
-

Lecture 13: Michael Jackson

Date: 10/17/2024

The Jackson 5 & Michael’s Breakthrough

- Michael started as a kid star in The Jackson 5, noticed by Berry Gordy for his mature voice.

Thriller & Beyond

- *Thriller* (1983) was a monster album, with hits like “Billie Jean” and groundbreaking music videos.
- *“Black or White”* (1991) was all about racial unity.

Michael's Influence

- Worked closely with Quincy Jones, revolutionizing pop music.
 - Combined cutting-edge music with iconic visual storytelling—Michael basically set the bar for modern pop.
-

Lecture 14: MTV and Megastars

Date: 10/22/2024

Madonna & Prince

- **Madonna**: Pushed boundaries, making waves with songs like “Material Girl” (challenging consumerism) and “Like A Prayer” (mixing Catholic imagery).

- **Prince:** Innovated with tracks like “Purple Rain” and explored deep themes of identity and social issues.

Bruce Springsteen

- “Born in the USA” became an anthem, but its message was actually a critique of America’s policies, highlighting the struggles of working-class people.
-

Lecture 15: Gangsta Rap

Date: 10/24/2024

Origins of Gangsta Rap

- Inspired by tough street narratives, **Ice-T** and **N.W.A.** (notably their song "Straight Outta Compton") brought raw, unapologetic lyrics to the mainstream, reflecting the harsh realities of urban life.

Los Angeles Uprising

- The 1992 LA riots, sparked by the Rodney King trial, had a massive influence on gangsta rap, with tracks like **N.W.A.’s** “Fuck Tha Police” expressing deep frustrations with systemic racism.
-

Lecture 16: Hip-Hop Crossroads

Date: 10/29/2024

Wu-Tang Clan & Tupac Shakur

- **Wu-Tang Clan’s** “C.R.E.A.M.” (1993) became a classic for its raw portrayal of street life.
 - **Tupac** combined activism and gangsta rap, with tracks like “Trapped” (1991) and “Changes” (1998) that explored systemic issues and personal pain.
-

Lecture 17: Hip-Hop & R&B

Date: 10/31/2024

Whitney Houston & Mariah Carey

- Both became global icons by blending R&B and pop, dominating the charts and showing off vocal power.

Women in Hip-Hop

- **Salt-N-Pepa** were pioneers for women in hip-hop, using songs like “Let’s Talk About Sex” (1991) to break taboos around relationships and contraception.
 - **Method Man & Mary J. Blige’s** collab on “I’ll Be There/You’re All I Need To Get By” (1995) mixed hip-hop and soulful R&B, winning major love.
-

Lecture 18: Conscious Rap & Neo-Soul

Date: 11/5/2024

Conscious Rap

- This style of rap started as a response to the materialism of mainstream hip-hop, with artists like **De La Soul** and **Queen Latifah** pushing socially aware messages.

Neo-Soulx

- **D’Angelo** and **Lauryn Hill** blended old-school soul with modern themes, with songs like **Lauryn Hill’s** “Doo Wop (That Thing)” (1998) challenging materialism and gender norms.
-

Lecture 19: The Dirty South

Date: 11/7/2024

Southern Hip-Hop Origins

- Southern cities like **Miami, Atlanta, New Orleans,** and **Houston** started shaping their own styles of hip-hop in the 90s, mixing regional influences with mainstream rap.
 - **OutKast’s** “Hey Ya!” (2003) became one of Atlanta’s biggest hits, blending funk and hip-hop into something fresh.
-

Lecture 20: The TRL Era

Date: 11/12/2024

Teen Pop Takes Over

- *TRL* (Total Request Live) turned boy bands like the **Backstreet Boys** and **Nsync** into household names, while pop stars like **Britney Spears** and **Miley Cyrus** took teen pop to the next level.
 - TV channels like Disney and Nickelodeon also played a huge role in shaping the careers of these stars.
-

Lecture 21: 21st Century Superstars

Date: 11/14/2024

Jay-Z and Kanye West

- **Jay-Z's** "99 Problems" (2004) reflected his rise from the streets to the boardroom.
 - **Kanye West** with "Jesus Walks" (2004) blurred the lines between gospel and rap, pushing boundaries in both sound and content.
-

Lecture 22:

Date: 11/19/2024

Cultural Shifts

- The 2000s saw hip-hop respond to major events like 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Great Recession. Artists like **Kendrick Lamar** and the **Black Eyed Peas** addressed political issues through their music.

Black Lives Matter Movement

- **Beyoncé's** "Formation" (2016) became a bold anthem of black pride, while **Kendrick Lamar's** "Alright" (2014) became the soundtrack for the Black Lives Matter movement.
-

Lecture 23: The Soundcloud Era (Pt. 1)

Date: 11/21/2024

Soundcloud Rap's Rise

- **Lil Uzi Vert** and **Juice WRLD** became icons for their raw, emo-rap style. **Lil Nas X's** "Old Town Road" (2019) blended country and rap, going viral through TikTok.
-

Lecture 24: The Soundcloud Era (Pt. 2)

Date: 12/3/2024

Streaming & Globalization

- music became more about the vibe than the genre. Artists like **Metro Boomin** and **Tyler, the Creator** are mixing influences to create new sounds.
 - **Nicki Minaj** and **Cardi B** helped redefine female hip-hop, with tracks like "Anaconda" and "Bodak Yellow" showing off their bold, empowering styles.
-