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Soul into Hip-Hop

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Call it soul, call it funk, call it hip-hop; the deep-down core of African-American popular music has been both a center to which performers and audiences have continually returned, and a centrifuge which has sent its styles and attitudes outwards into the full spectrum of popular music around the world. The pressure -- both inward and outward -- has often been kept high by an American music industry slow to move beyond the apartheid-like structures of its marketing systems, which, though ostensibly abandoned in the days since the "race records" era (the 1920's through the 1950's), continue to shadow the industry's practices. However much cross-over there has been between black and white audiences, the continual reiteration of racial and generic boundaries in radio formats, retailing, and chart-making has again and again forced black artists and producers to navigate between a vernacular aesthetic (often invoked as "the street") and what the rapper Guru calls "mass appeal" -- the watering-down of style targeted at an supposedly "broader" (read: white) audience. So it has been that, within black communities, there has been an ongoing need to name and claim a music whose strategic inward turns refused what was often seen as a "sell-out" appeal to white listeners, a music that set up shop right in the neighborhood, via black (later "urban contemporary") radio, charts, and retailers, and in the untallied vernacular traffic in dubbed tapes, DJ mixes, and bootlegs. The tensions across this divide have been perpetuated, indeed exacerbated by the growing economic distance between whites (and middle-class blacks), whose buying habits have shaped the industry's conception of "success," and the urban underclass who have been caught on a one-way street of commercialization, unable to sustain control over the very artforms they themselves created.

In the 1950's, when success came swiftly to labels, such as Memphis's Sun Records, that crossed over this imaginary line in the vinyl, the troubled terminological crossroads between "rhythm and blues" and "rock 'n' roll" set the tone for things to come. Certainly, many white "rock 'n' roll" artists were originals in their own right, not simply

appropriators of someone else's music. The emergence of "rock 'n' roll" onto pop radio created a huge new audience for black music, and eventually displaced altogether the blend of crooners and lightweight swing that had defined "pop" itself. Yet the recording industry's practice of knocking off cover versions of the songs of successful black artists, such as Pat Boone's relentless series of Little Richard covers, exacerbated existing tensions by siphoning off profits. White cover versions, given heavy rotation on the biggest commercial stations, generated profits for publishers and labels far exceeding the meager songwriter royalties of their black originators. Thus, even as the R&B gained a larger white audience, its artists did not receive their share of the money being made from the Rock "revolution." So it was that R&B, like jazz before it, had to come to terms with its continual appropriation, both economic and artistic, by white musicians, producers, and record labels.

Black musicians responded to this appropriation in a variety of ways. Some went for major-label contracts, looking for their own piece of the official pie; others worked around the white recording industry by relying on touring for most of their income and signing contracts with smaller record labels which were more closely cued to black audiences. One result of this situation was that, while "rock 'n' roll" as it appeared on the Billboard charts was a relatively homogenous affair, black R&B remained more heterogeneous, disseminated as it was via black concert venues (the old "chitlin' circuit") and record labels whose local and regional identities were still highly distinct. Yet at the same time, trends moved freely among this 'grapevine' of localities, as R&B matured into its own trademark styles of dance, ballad, and vocal style. The ground was already being prepared in the '50's by artists such as Ray Charles, who brought rich gospel intonations into secular bluesy ballads, and Big Maybelle, whose gospel-rooted shouts shook up the R&B world.

"Soul" is one name for this music that took R&B to the next level during the very years -- 1955-67 -- that Rock 'n' Roll was increasingly dominating the music industry. But what was it? Soul was slower-burning yet hotter, more improvisational, more distinctly flavored by the vocal character of its performers, and more participatory. If Rock 'n' Roll, along with the faster-paced R&B styles, were in a sense *extroverted*, Soul was more *introverted*, implicitly addressed to 'soul' brothers and sisters, an invocative, centripetal force. It took many of its vocal cues from gospel, but its beats were, if anything, *more* supercharged -- even when slower in tempo -- than the clap-along "R&B" of the mid-fifties. Often recorded by bands, such as James Brown's Famous Flames, which gave hundreds of live performances a year, it was dynamic and rough, angry and reflective, danceable yet unpredictable. For instance, it rarely occurred to white producers

or record labels to ask musicians to "jam" in the studio and just let the tape roll, but soul musicians did it all the time. James Brown, recording in the late '50's and early '60's on Cincinnati's King label, recorded studio jams that bled over onto two, three, or four sides of a vinyl single. Brown was not just a singer, but an exhorter; his trademark screams and yells drove his band and audiences alike to new levels of excitement. Brown's music constituted an ongoing dialogue with his audience, not only via live performances, but also through his incessant re-working of his material, which he would often release in an updated form after he had taken it on the road for a time. This was the kind of dialogue with an audience that was little understood by the executives at major record labels, who relied on radio and sales charts to assess the value of the music they released, and were rarely persuaded to issue the same song twice, unless it was with a different performer.

The majors also relied on the smaller labels to bring artists to their attention, and alert them to trends that they ought to follow. These small labels maintained their own ties with local Black radio stations and retailers, and yet also had distribution links to the industry such that a major label could "pick up" a record if they thought it had "national" potential. Such was the arrangement at Memphis's Stax, to many the quintessential label of 60's Soul. Stax started back in 1960 in a disused Memphis movie theater, when a white banker (and former country fiddle player) teamed up with his sister to borrow enough money to buy a single Ampex reel-to-reel tape machine. That theater, later featuring the legendary neon marquee of the Stax of Wax, eventually housed more talent to the square inch than any recording studio in the country. Some of it was due to fortuitous urban and cultural geography; keyboardist Booker T. Jones was a gangly sixteen-year-old who lived just around the corner; songwriter David Porter worked at the Big Star grocery store across the street; Rufus Thomas hosted a popular show on Memphis's WDIA. But the neighborhood feel belied the nationwide audience of these artists: at 50,000 watts, WDIA was one of the most powerful Black radio stations in the country, with over 1.2 million black Americans in its listening area -- over 10% of the black population of the U.S. at the time. Stax's deal with Atlantic in 1961 connected it with the latter's nationwide distribution and promotion, and guaranteed Stax artists a better royalty rate.

Motown, the yin of Soul beside Stax's yang, was no less successful, but represented the other version of the record industry's uneasy bargain with Black musical forms. Motown's Berry Gordy worked his artists hard, sending them on grueling bus tours to promote the label, and paying as little as a fifth of the standard royalties. Gordy relied on the cross-over appeal to pop music radio and retailers, and generally went for ballads or light-handed dance numbers, each of which was vetted by an in-house "quality control" team to make sure it fit smoothly into the Motown style. Instrumentalists received

only a basic wage, were almost never given a credit in compositions they helped bring to fruition -- and they were strictly prohibited from recording on their own. Stax, on the other hand, sought a distinctly heavier, "live" sound built around its in-house band, which had an independent career as Booker T. and the MG's, and was generous in giving writing credits when credit was due. And, even though its owner and A&R manager were white, Stax made a stronger commitment to black artists, songwriters, and promotion via black radio. While Motown aimed itself directly at the pop charts -- and white consumers -- Stax always went for the R&B audience first, even when, in 1963-5, Billboard magazine stopped listing R&B charts altogether. As Mable John -- one of Gordy's first signees -- said when defecting to Stax in 1965, "Motown is not basically a soul company -- it's more pop and I'm not a pop singer. Gordy had no soul writers or producers, so I asked for a release." Still, despite John's discontent, Motown served as the launching-pad for artists, such as Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder, who were able to challenge the limits of its house format, and eventually came to be as central to any meaningful definition of "soul" as Stax giants such as Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, or Carla Thomas.

There were many other regional and local labels which functioned much as did Stax and Motown. Besides Cincinnati's King, there was Chicago's Chess and Vee-Jay, L.A.'s Specialty and Modern, New Orleans's Minit and Josie (home of the Neville Brothers and the Meters), Houston's Peacock, Philadelphia's PIR, Newark's Savoy, and New York's Atlantic (itself a major among minors with its own stable of labels). Together, these smaller companies kept the crucible of soul burning through the '60's, though not without a certain underlying cost. Black artists still only intermittently enjoyed the kind of national distribution and promotion given comparable white artists, and the large industry players still didn't have a clue as to what black audiences really wanted to hear. These small labels, to an extent, had worked as prosthetic taste buds for the white-controlled music industry. Yet with the dawn of the '70's, the fault lines shifted; Atlantic was gobbled up by Warner's, and its distribution deal with Stax was canceled; the major labels read their tea leaves and decided it was time to skirt the minors and sign direct contracts with all the Black talent they could find, even if they weren't quite sure what to do with it. The results were mixed; some performers found themselves saddled with producers who just couldn't resist a fistful of violins, or A&R departments that had no idea how to get airplay. The major labels were reluctant to issue an album without a "hit" single, and their definition of "hit" involved sales figures that newly-signed artists could rarely reach, given inept promotion. At the same time, some artists found a golden opportunity; Isaac Hayes's 1970 album "Hot Buttered Soul," flushed through the overloaded pipeline that temporarily

connected a sinking Stax to CBS records, was an unexpected success, and started a new movement towards a more slinky, sprawling, jazzy brand of Soul.

Others were less fortunate; some, such as the Meters -- who, along with the MG's, were the most influential soul instrumental groups of the decade, were stranded in major labels unwilling to release whole albums worth of fine material, even as they released strings of singles by less talented artists in hopes of finding chart success. Their philosophy then -- and still now -- was to throw it all against the wall and see what stuck. The artists themselves were often further victimized by corrupt managers and promoters, and many of the greats went from stardom to bankruptcy in record time. The result of all this was a serious decline in the range and talent of commercial R&B recordings, a situation that critic Nelson George has called "the death of rhythm and blues." Still, there were already multiple musical developments that augured a coming rebirth: in Harlem the Last Poets were dropping rhymes over funky backup from Kool and the Gang; in the midwest Funkadelic and Parliament were reformulating R&B and Rock into their own brand of funky gasahol; and out in Hollywood, Isaac Hayes, Curtis Mayfield, and Willie Hutch were creating a new symphonic soul soundtrack, one that would last long beyond the '70's blaxploitation films for which their songs were written. All three of these forms were primed to come into their own as the '70's progressed, though their arrival was slowed by the music industry's bumbling attempts to pick up the ball.

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The first pivotal link between the hard-working beats of 60's R&B and the more heavily syncopated rhythms of hip-hop and 90's Soul, Funk is the middle child of black musical forms, always looking for (and getting) plenty of attention. With its roots in the same midwestern industrial cities that had been the destination of the blues a generation before, Funk grew up on the cusp of the collapse of heartland industries. Instrumentally, it came directly off the uptempo soul of James Brown, and two of its pre-eminent instrumentalists, Bootsy and Catfish Collins, got their start in Brown's back-up band. Funk's headman and impresario-for-life, George Clinton, rustled up the Collins brothers along with a motley crew of rock and R&B musicians to form the collectives variously known as Funkadelic, Parliament, and (in the '90's) the P-Funk Allstars. Clinton was in many ways the godfather of rap, dropping wisdom with his inimitable pointful wandering, like a late-night DJ with a live band. With such tracks as "Chocolate City," Clinton brought together the reflective elements of soul's ballad tradition with hefty bass lines and beats from more dance-oriented forms. Funk was slow, not because it couldn't be fast, but

because it didn't need to be. Slowness, and lowness are its recurring tropes, both verbal and musical, while in the upper registers rhythmic ninth-chords and punctuating horns -- the more the better -- gave syncopated accents and fills. Funk also, significantly, reclaimed some sonic territory from rock 'n' roll, cranking up the fuzz guitars and thumbing its nose with tracks like Funkadelic's "Who Says a Funk Band Can't Play Rock !?"

Funk had its showier aspects -- George Clinton descending from the cosmic Mothership in ten-inch-high rhinestone-studded platform shoes, or Bootsy Collins with his star-shaped glasses and superwide bell-bottom pants, but ultimately it was the music that sustained its audiences. Stadium shows were fine --and in a decade dominated at first by arena rockers, lasers and smoke never hurt -- but funk, like the hard-driving R&B before it, was party music, music whose sonic and psychic universe rotated around social ritual and sexual desire. Many funk bands also gave their own imprint to the soul ballad tradition, adding extra bass and slowing the rhythm to a sensuous grind; groups such as Earth, Wind and Fire played in as many dim-lit bedrooms as they did in crowded stadiums. Funk, ultimately, kept the flame of soul through a time when the music industry, flailing about in search of a trend, hit on disco and worked the music for every sure-fire hit it could find.

If the fumbling of the ball by the major labels in the early '70's was the "death of rhythm and blues," the commercialization of disco was the torch for the funeral pyre. Which is not to say that disco was, as its detractors claimed, crassly commercial from the beginning; it evolved directly out of uptempo R&B and funk, and came of age in the gay club scene in the U.S. and Europe, both black and white. In terms of its social performance, disco was, at first, a progressive musical force with a strong collective element (though now at the level of consumption rather than production, since disco was by definition "pre-recorded"). There were tensions in this audience -- as much of social class as sexuality -- but also a degree of solidarity. Looking at the larger history of dance club music, the recording industry's appropriation of disco can be seen more accurately as a temporary incursion into an established continuum of dance music, which spans from 60's soul into 90's house, techno, and jungle. But this time, the commodification of the music was so rapid and thorough that the doppelgangers arrived on chain-stores shelves before the originals, and many latter-day listeners had no means to reference disco within its generic or historical contexts; to them it seemed pre-fabricated from the start, a "phony" music forced on an apathetic public.

The central challenge for the recording industry was that disco, to a far greater degree than earlier dance musics, circulated primarily in clubs -- that it was, despite having no live "performers," the music of a live scene rather than a product for home

consumption. As a result, “unit” sales -- of individual records -- were low, since DJ’s were the purchasers as intermediaries with the audience. The industry managed, however, to redirect disco into larger, mass-media phenomena; films such as 1977’s *Saturday Night Fever*, consciously or otherwise, worked to shift the connotations of disco away from gayness and blackness, staging it instead as a theater of class mobility, a place where ordinary, presumptively hetero, working stiff could go to dress to the nines and dance their troubles away. The sales of singles -- disco’s primary medium -- were channeled back into albums, including soundtracks and concept albums, and sales soon reached astronomical levels. Yet since these records were more the product of the industry, rather than the DJ’s and crowds that sustained the form, there were few means for big-label disco to grow or respond to its audiences. And, with a bird in its hand, the industry saw no reason to keep searching the bushes; they no longer looked to black radio for new talent and test marketing, and veteran black artists could either get with the trend or get lost. Even well-established performers such as James Brown and Isaac Hayes ended up recording “disco” imitations of disco’s imitations of themselves.

Artists were losers all ‘round, as pre-fab groups were readily assembled by record companies, and new studio techniques enabled vocals and beats to be infinitely substituted. It’s worth nothing, however, that these new technologies were not inherently uncreative, but rather that the tools were not yet in the hands of the new generation of black artists. It wasn’t until “street” rockers such as Afrika Bambaataa and Davy DMX (named after his favorite drum machine) got their hands on the beat boxes and programmable keyboards in the early ‘80’s that disco regained the funkiness of its R&B roots, but by then the majors weren’t listening. Thus, ironically, it was the industry’s rapid-fire cloning of the disco sound that prevented it from being sufficiently in touch with the dance scene to hear the emerging sound of forms such as hip-hop and electro-funk. Long after stacks of overstocked Donna Summer albums were dumped into the bargain bins, dance music was still going strong, though it was now flying well under industry radar.

There was one other important yet (on a mass-market level) barely visible musical innovation of this time, one that predated and was to markedly influence hip-hop. There had always been a talking school of soul; love rappers like Laura Lee and heart-to-heart talks like James Brown’s “King Heroin” were part of a time-honored tradition that stretched back to 78 rpm-era preacher/singers like the Reverend J. M. Gates. Yet the full range of black verbalism, the toasts, the dozens, or the ‘hustler’ rhymes spun the likes of H. “Rap” Brown and Iceberg Slim, had rarely made it onto recordings. Back in Harlem, though, a new generation of politically-conscious young street poets was emerging, improvising rhymes over conga beats and delivering a more militant kind of sermon. Gil

Scott-Heron, the angry young man of "Small Talk at 125th and Lenox," gained national prominence with his anti-apartheid anthem "Johannesburg,," while back in their Harlem loft, the loose collective known as the Last Poets was jamming with percussionist Nilaja. The Poets, though their roots lay in the Black Arts movement and its devotion to Afrocentric jazz, were ready to take on new sounds and new directions; while they started with congas and African drums, by mid-decade they were getting backup from funksters such as Eric Gale and Kool & the Gang. Lead Poet Jalal Nuriddin was no stranger to R&B, and when he shifted from Jazz poetry to hustler rhymes on 1973's "Hustler's Convention," he was making a connection that would be made again, though this time by a bunch of street kids whose sharp-edged sensibility would soon make Jalal's hustlers sound like porch-swinging grandfathers.

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Much has been written about the emergence of hip-hop in the seemingly arid music landscape of the late '70's . What is often missed is that hip-hop, like previous Black musical forms, was not *fundamentally* new; black kids (and adults) had been Signifyin' and trading verbal toasts since slavery days and beyond. What was different was that this hitherto overlooked art, joined to breakbeats lifted from old records (and, later, a "beat box" or drum synthesizer), made for a combination that had both a novel sound (many of the industry insiders at first derided rap itself as a "novelty" act) and an intense, danceable beat. There were plenty of precedents -- you could argue that Big Maybelle's 1952 "Gabbin Blues," or for that matter Pigmeat Markham's 1929 "Heah come de Judge" were raps -- but hip-hop, like soul, was much more than its component parts. Hip-hop's roots were not only deep but wide, drawing on (and influencing) Jamaican toasters such as I-Roy and Big Youth, dub poets Linton Kwesi Johnson and Ranking Anne, and militant jazz verbalists the Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron. Hip-hop, unlike R&B before it, was born in a global age, where the space of a few years would see b-boy style spread from New York to Tokyo, from London to Dar-es-Salaam, an age of cultural cross-references and fifteen-second soundbytes. Yet it still had an intense sense of locality, with some of its earliest turf wars (such as the Queensbridge/South Bronx rivalry of BDP and the Juice Crew) taking place over a few city blocks. Disdained at first by many of those who belatedly lauded R&B as a national treasure, perversely pumping out original sounds by (ab)using the techniques of prefabrication, hip-hop was here to stay.

Hip-hop, it's commonplace to say, includes not only rap music but also graffiti and breakdancing. And, while breakdancing has faded from view in the decades since, there is

a commonality to these hip-hop arts. They share a sort of scratch aesthetic -- a re-valuation of arts that are inscribed upon the decaying infrastructures of city walls, old vinyl records, and cardboard crates. In the same way that a pawnshop guitar and a broken bottle made the blues a vernacular art, the old turntables, jury-rigged faders, and lamp-post electricity of a 1970's "party in the park" made hip-hop an intrinsically urban, youth art. A Black Art, certainly, though Puerto Rican and white DJ's and breakdancing crews were an intrinsic part of its earliest scenes, and a vernacular art, though never very far from the shadow of mass media (and later, to some, *overshadowed* by them). And, like other such arts, it was not immediately recognized as anything of great commercial value, even by those who invented it. Grandmaster Flash, one of the first and greatest "old-school" DJ's, used to sell homemade cassette tapes of his work for a dollar a minute, but he wasn't the first one into the studio. He had to undergo the painful initiation of hearing a pre-fab hip-hop crew, the "Sugarhill Gang," rapping on record before he was able to get his own piece of the action. And even then, it was a while before any rapper -- and it happened to be Kurtis Blow -- landed a major-label contract, and longer still before Kurtis's protégés Run-D.M.C. proved that hip-hop could top the charts.

Part of this was due to the inevitable time it takes any new musical genre to gain a foothold. But it was also a factor of the industry's reluctance to take on any musical form whose primary appeal was to young Black audiences, since those audiences didn't have the pocket-money to drive massive sales. And, throughout its history, hip-hop has been dogged by the same troubled racial dichotomies that pursued R&B; if an artist addresses him or herself to the aesthetics and concerns of Black communities, he or she will not leap up the pop charts, whereas those artists that make their music white-listener-friendly are far more richly rewarded. Inevitably, even the quest for authenticity produces its own weird backlash; white preconceptions about what constitutes authentic "blackness" mean that a middle-class black rapper who dons a gangsta headrag and baggy pants may well outsell his sister who cuts equally funky rhymes in a flannel shirt and overalls. And, as in previous decades, the major labels' A&R departments are still predominantly white, and persistently clueless as to finding and developing Black talent. It's a telling fact that hip-hop's first home was on black-owned labels, huddled survivors of the R&B era, such as Winley, Sugarhill, and Enjoy, though it didn't take as long this time for the major labels to take notice.

In the earliest, "old school" days (1976-83), hip-hop was primarily dance music, with feel-good call-and-response lyrics ('everybody say hey . . . ho,' 'ho-tel, mo-tel, ho-li-day-inn,' etc.) and synthesized beats and noises. The DJ art of cutting in and 'scratching' samples of previous recordings, a fundamental part of the music in parks and

clubs , didn't carry over substantially onto commercial recordings until later in this period. Grandmaster Flash, in his masterpiece "Adventures on the Wheels of Steel" (1983), cut up his *own* records for the most part, and it wasn't until Run-DMC's "Peter Piper" (1986) that Jam Master Jay became the first to bring actual, scratched-up vinyl (in the form of Bob James's "Mardi Gras") into a studio recording. But from the start, hip-hop's samples ran the gamut of genres, defying anyone who would delimit hip-hop's palette, and in fact rock samples (Jeff Beck, Def Leppard, Aerosmith) were as common as R&B ones (James Brown, Bobby Byrd, or the Meters). One curious result of this cross-talk was that when Run-DMC blew up in 1983, it was its collaboration with Aerosmith on "Walk This Way" that brought hip-hop to rock radio and chart success. For the next few years, in fact, hip-hop was treated by some as a form *within* rock, and many of the old-school giants (Kurtis Blow, Grandmaster Flash) stumbled on this stylistic speed-bump, since predominantly white rock audiences still reacted negatively to anything that reminded them of disco. It wasn't until the mid-80's, when hardcore rappers such as LL Cool J and Public Enemy "brought the noise" back that hip-hop fully secured its spot as an independent genre. By then, scratchy samples were being run out of AKAI digital samplers, and if the record wasn't scratchy you could digitally add some. In much the same way as rock in the wake of the Beatles' "Sergeant Pepper," rappers exploited the full capabilities of sampling, multi-track recording, distortion, and sound effects.

Public Enemy's "Fear of a Black Planet" (1990) marked the height of this "scratch aesthetic"; with the aid of the production talents of the "Bomb Squad," tracks such as "Welcome to the Terrordome" melded backwards loops, street chants, unrecognizably distorted samples, and DJ Terminator X's ripcord scratches into a dense sonic unit, over which Chuck D's insistent vocals dropped knowledge like a tire running over hot asphalt. This album also made use of non-music bridging tracks, another hip-hop trademark, which sampled the "hype" itself: radio talkshow hosts, incensed callers, and commercial voice-overs were sliced and diced and spread out over the music like toppings on a pizza. It was a move that took the hip-hop world by storm, even as it deliberately piqued the anger of those who sought to ban the music altogether. For if the blues , to its detractors, was the devil's music, and Jazz the tonality of wanton sensuality, hip-hop was white America's worst nightmare set to music, a sonic uprising in which personal, political, and economic resentment were all merged into one frightening noise.

Yet ironically, even as congressional committees looked into the "dangers" of rap music, and "voluntary" parental advisory labels were slapped on just about every hip-hop record, the political momentum stirred by activist artist such as PE, Paris, the Coup, and the Disposable Heroes of Hip-Hoprisy began to fade, eclipsed by so-called "gangsta" rap.

While it was a label first popularized by its detractors, "gangsta" had its distinct elements: the beats were slower, and more likely to sample George Clinton than James Brown, and the rhymes, eschewing political commentary, returned to the "hustler" style of some of the earliest rappers, centering on money, cars, and women. It was much more than simple machismo, as many of these new "gangsta" rappers were women (the Bo\$\$, Bigga Sistas, the Conscious Daughters, or Heather B); what it seemed to mark was the loss of faith in any sort of a better future enabled via political action of expression. If the Reagan '80's and the decline in aid to cities gave mid-school hip-hop its rage and frustration, the '90's were the ashes of that fire, as rage gave way to despair in many black communities. Hip-hop, like soul before it, reflected the mindset of black youth, and the sensibility of this new generation -- young enough to have been born after "Rapper's Delight" -- was one of desperation and hurt pride. The music industry, never one to waste a fire over which its dogs could be roasted, seized on "gangsta" artists, and released as many as they could find, often regardless of talent. The result has been that the most powerful voices of hip-hop in the late '80's -- Chuck D, Paris, even Ice T -- have found themselves out in the cold with old-school exiles such as Kool Moe Dee and Whodini.

Yet even as the 'gangsta' style played itself out, hip-hop has continued to branch out in multiple directions across the full range of the musical spectrum. Jazz, once a stranger to the hip-hop- scene, found its way in through the offbeat beats and vibraphone loops of "bohemian" rappers such as A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, and the Digable Planets. The rapper Guru, along with his Gang Starr partner DJ Premier, sought out jazz musicians to see if the admiration was mutual, and recruited Donald Byrd, Roy Ayers, and Lonnie Liston Smith to his "Jazzmatazz" project (1993). Before long, other jazz veterans were trying their hand at hip-hop grooves, among them Ornette Coleman, Herbie Hancock, and Branford Marsalis, while at the same time a new generation of rappers arrived who could plunge far deeper into a jazz groove, such as the Roots. This productive collaboration and cross-influence seems likely to continue, and has the effect of revitalizing moth musical forms, lending a mellow sophistication to hip-hop and a street credibility to jazz.

There are also regional (and aesthetic) yins and yangs in hip-hop as well. If soul seemed at times to be divided along north-south lines, with Detroit at one end and New Orleans at the other, hip-hop has an east-coast/west coast divide, with the bass-heavy, car-speaker funk of California trading barbs and influences with its older, faster, brother in New York. Houston, with a hybrid mix of these tendencies, forms one sort of epicenter, as does Atlanta, a city increasingly pivotal to Black culture in the multimedia age. Loosely-defined schools within hip-hop have come (and gone), among them the bohemian-

hop Native Tongues Posse, the crypto-funky Hieroglyphics crew, and the hardcore Islamic clans who subscribe to the Five Percent Nation. There's even a small school of gospel hip-hop, led by the Washington-based D.C. Talk, and even the hardcore pair known as the Black Sheep have teamed up with the gospel group Sounds of Blackness to record "We Shall Not Be Moved." Wherever hip-hop is headed, there can be little question that it is as vital a force within black music as any of its precursors, and is still a part of them however stark some of its aural contrasts.

Even as hip-hop has moved through an accelerated mid-life crisis, the other scattered children of the interstices of technology and dance continue to multiply. Starting from Afrika Bambaataa's foundational "Planet Rap," which took its groove from German techno-rockers Kraftwerk, the school of "electro-funk" has followed its own divergent path. Moving from New York to Detroit in the '80's, it evolved to test the capability of new technology in digital samplers, sequencers, and synthesizers, eventually giving rise to higher beats-per-minute forms such as Techno and Rave. Techno also experienced a UK translation not unlike the one rock underwent in the '60's, with spontaneous "rave" parties springing up in the old abandoned warehouses of Britain's redbrick industrial cities. There, encountering the ongoing resonance of reggae, dancehall, and dub, the forms hybridized further, emerging as "jungle," a dubby, spacey sort of techno that retains something of a Jamaican accent. And, in the outskirts of London, hip-hop, reggae, and West Indian Bhangra made another unlikely alliance, producing artists such as Apache Indian, whose popularity was as high in India and the U.S. as it was in the U.K. In France, rapper MC Solaar dropped rhymes in rapid-fire French over sounds taken from the soundtracks to "spaghetti westerns"; in South Africa, the "Prophets of the City" took the pulse of their nation after apartheid, and in Japan Scha-dara-parr (Englished as "Tower of Nonsense") rocked roomfuls of would-be b-boys and b-girls. Hip-hop has become part of a global diasporic mix, and whatever its domestic fortunes, it has formed another link in the rhythmic pathways of postcolonial sound.

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Whence R&B in the hip-hop era? Interestingly enough, hip-hop has actually spurred an R&B rebirth; after a decade and more of a relatively static "smooth" soul sound with interchangeable parts, R&B in the early '90's regained its own footing. Hip-hop has increasingly brought the beat, but it's been more than a rhythmic overhaul; gospel has once again lent a vocal flame, and rock has kicked in a guitar lick or two. Part of this has been due to the idiosyncratic ministry of musicians such as The Artist Formerly Known as

Prince, whose Paisley Park studios have brought together rock, funk, and hip-hop into a hazy yet uptempo groove, while giving new impetus to the careers of veterans such as Mavis Staples and George Clinton. Yet Paisley Park records, T.A.F.K.A.P.'s private demesne, has gone the way of most inside-the-label labels -- belly up -- and the future of his innovative blends is far from certain. Still there are numerous other threads in R&B's new coat, ranging from gospel-inflected ensembles such as the Sounds of Blackness and the Sisters of Glory to the husky sonorities of Sade or Me'shell Ndegeocello, both returning to the roots and cultivating new ground. Healthy shots of revival have also come from the UK, where artists such as Soul II Soul (who took their name from a famous concert in Ghana by U.S. soul musicians) broadcast the beat of "house," a distinct blend of vocal divas (often brought in by way of a digital sample) and hip-hop or trance DJ beats. And Jamaica, always a sonic funhouse mirror to U.S. black musics, has brought dancehall and reggae beats together with the more ballad-like styles of singers like Beres Hammond (not to mention the rougher stuff of such as Patra, Buju Banton, or Shabba Ranks), giving both R&B and hip-hop new angles on themselves.

Following along in all of this, as usual, the global music industry (and with Columbia now part of Sony and RCA owned by Bertelsmann, the industry is as multinational as the music it seeks to capitalize upon) has continued to boldly go where black music has already gone, hoping to pick up a hint or two. Yet, just as before, the "shadow" audience of the black community has been left out of the loop of its own music, while automated services such as Sound Scan automatically tally sales in major retail outlets, bootlegs, mix tapes, and taped radio go uncounted, and at \$15 a pop the listeners with the cash are those who will be counted. The *modus operandi* of the '90's industry, as before, has been to sign young black talent right and left, only to leave artists stranded if their first album sells under 100,000 units. Even among those acts who make it that far, the "sophomore curse" derives from the fact that album number two is often an unhappy compromise between the label's desire to force artists into the latest trend in order to recoup the label's investment, and the artist's desire to grow and develop in their own way. With the reactionary right and industry critics ready to pounce on anything seen as extreme, a remarkable number of follow-up albums have been canceled at the last stage, with review copies becoming the only copies. The industry continues to sign expensive deals with established artists, and often uses new acts only as a sort of insurance policy to be sure they don't accidentally miss out on a trend or a come-from-nowhere artist. But, more often than not, the artists who come from nowhere go back there too, and when 100,000 units is considered a failure, the odds aren't good. Hip-hop has always made do with less radio exposure, but ultimately it has limited the number of ways to get around the industry

chokehold. R&B and hip-hop are still dominated by the major corporate players, and the few independents such as Priority and Profile have never quite mustered the depth of a Stax or Motown. The biggest semi-independent, RUSH Associated Labels (run by old-school impresario Russell Simmons), still has had to rely on outside distribution deals (first with Sony, then with Polygram) to get its product in stores.

Yet ultimately, the record industry's continual drive to catch the next trend in black music has been self-defeating. The old sounds have never gone out of date, and in every new development there are multiple resonances of what has gone before. Hip-hop has always been generous in dishing out the props; the careers of veterans such as James Brown and George Clinton were given new life by their re-appearance as samples and scratches, and in many cases whole songs have been reprised as a backdrop for overlaid raps, such as Naughty By Nature's OPP (which samples the Jackson Five's "ABC") or the Fugees' cover version of Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly With His Song." Black music has always been a continuity, has always found renewal in return, and -- at least until there are more black-owned labels and A&R managers -- will always elude the music industry's craving for predictability. There has been some progress -- thanks to Sound Scan, at least it's clear that hip-hop musicians, however they may offend the tastes of "middle America," can consistently top the sales charts, whereas in the past stores tended to inflate the figures of geriatric rockers that the industry had seen as its bread and butter. Black filmmakers have gained important ground in the '90's, and have brought with them the soundtrack of young black American music, both R&B and hip-hop. In the wake of corporate acquisitions of large blocs of the commercial radio spectrum, college and community stations have become the new proving ground for young talent, black and white. And, despite the air of machismo that has surrounded hip-hop from the start, many women rappers, among them Queen Latifah, Salt 'n' Pepa, and MC Lyte have shown that they are as central to the artform as any men, and no less capable of sustaining success in an area where even getting a third record *released* makes you a survivor. And on the level of poetry itself, hip-hop constitutes the most vibrant and provocative turn in the history of African-American poetry, and an uptown throwdown to those who think poetry can only be found on a page. Sermon, diatribe, invective, exhortation; dance music, trance music, street music, feet music -- hip-hop, in performance poet D-Knowledge's phrase, is "all that and a bag of words."

6,905 words