Music 17 -- HIP HOP

Spring 2019

Instructor: Asher Tobin Chodos

WLH 2001, Mondays 6:30 - 9:20 pm
Office Hours: Mondays 4:30-5:30pm at the Art of Espresso Cafe

Syllabus

Course Page for detailed assignments (completed before each lecture)
# TAs and discussion sections (required)

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<td>M 10:00a-10:50a CPMC 136</td>
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Please make sure you know who is your TA!

...and, discussion sections didn't meet this morning (lecture hadn't happened yet), but they will meet this week.
Week 1 -- April 1st

Music Theory and Pre-history of Hip Hop
Theoretical concepts relevant to this course

- Tonal center
- Unstable: *Earl Sweatshirt, Red Water (2018)*, *Wu Tang, Bring Da Ruckus*
- More Stable: *BIG, Big Poppa, 1994*
- Mode
  - Minor (vast majority of rap), e.g. *ASAP Rocky, Praise the Lord*
- Major: *Tupac, Keep ya head up (1993)*,
- or *Jay Z, Hard Knock Life*
• **Kick/snare/ride**
  - Kick: bass drum, kick drum (low percussive sound)
  - Snare: whatever answers the snare. Hand Clap, snare sound
  - Ride: The quickest pulse of the beat, representing what's played on the ride cymbal in a drum kit

• **Pocket:** The Famous Purdie Shuffle vs. Dan Weiss vs. Dennis Chambers

• **Samples/Components**

• **Timbre (vocal/instrumental)** e.g. Break ya Neck, 2001 vs. Slick Rick, La di da di (1985)
The Dozens

- Ritualized insult and performance
- Yo mama jokes
  - Popular in the 1990s, an industry unto themselves.
- Traceable to West African culture
- Long lineage in the United States, primarily but not exclusively in Afro American culture
Dozens in music

- Part of the blues tradition, e.g. Speckled Red, Dirty Dozens
- And the jazz tradition, as in the various back and forth tropes (e.g. trading fours)
- And, of course, in hip hop
Jelly Roll Morton, *Dirty Dozens*

- Jelly Roll Morton is an important figure in early jazz, born in 1890 in New Orleans. Famously started his career playing piano in brothels, but also gained fame as a "formal" composer.
- Tango piano composition, *The Crave*
- Jelly Roll Morton, *The Dirty Dozens* - note how Jelly Roll describes the piece, just something he heard...
  - cf. *Method Man, Biscuits*
Bo Diddley, Say Man (1959)

- Influential figure in early rock and roll, using a signature afro-cuban rhythmic palate to transition from blues to rock.
- On this track, he's going back and forth with his percussionist.
Say man, transcription

Jerome Green: Say, man.
Bo Diddley: What’s that, boy?
JG: I wanted to tell you about your girlfriend.
BD: What about my girl?
JG: Well, you don’t look strong enough to take the message.
BD: I’m strong enough.
JG: I might hurt your feelings.
BD: My feelings are already hurt by being here with you.
JG: Well, I was walking down the street with your girl the other day.
BD: Uh-huh.
JG: And the wind was blowing real hard.
BD: Is that right?
JG: And the wind blew her hair into my face.
BD: Uh-huh.
JG: You know what else happened?
BD: What happened?
JG: The wind blew her hair into her face.
BD: Yeah?
JG: And we went a little further – you wanna hear the rest of it?
BD: I might as well.
JG: The wind blew her hair into the street!
BD: Hey. Since you told me about your girl, I’m gonna tell you about yours. I was walking down the street with your girl.

JG: Yes?

BD: I took her home for a drink, you know.

JG: Took her home?

BD: Yeah, just for a drink. But that chick looked so ugly, she had to sneak up on the glass to get a drink of water.

JG: You got the nerve to call somebody ugly. Why, you so ugly, the stork that brought you in the world oughta be arrested.

BD: That’s all right. My mama didn’t have to put a sheet over my head so sleep could slip up on me.
JG: Yeah, looky here.
BD: What’s that?
JG: Where you from?
BD: South America.
JG: What’s that?
BD: South America.
JG: You don’t look like no South American to me.
BD: I’m still from South America.
JG: What part?
BD: South Texas.
JG: Where your western boots at?
BD: I got ‘em on.
JG: Them ain’t no boots you got on, them Pro-Keds. Hey, looky here.
BD: What’s that?
JG: I been trying to figure out what you is.
BD: I already figured out what you is.
JG: What’s that?
BD: You that thing I throw peanuts at.
JG: Well, looky here.
BD: What's that?
JG: You should be ashamed of yourself.
BD: Why?
JG: Calling people ugly.
BD: I didn’t call you ugly.
JG: What’d you say?
BD: I said you was ruined, that’s all.
JG: You know something?
BD: What?
JG: You look like you been whupped with a ugly stick.
BD: Yeah. I ain't got nothin’ to do with it...
Muhammad Ali talking trash

- Note both the attitude and the "poetics" of his trash talk
- Muhammad Ali trash talk
Toasts

- Stock tales, often in rhyme. Bawdy, sexual, violent, funny.
- "Folk poetry" or "oral epic poetry"
- Distinct from but related to the dozens.
- Folklorists (professional academics) collect and analyze them, often in prisons. See additional readings.
Bruce Jackson, Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me (1976)

- Bruce Jackson is an folklorist and author.
- This is a recording of him reading a transcription of one of his collected poems.
- Important to note difference between this and actual artistic practice of toasts.
Well known toasts, themes

- Animals: The Signifying Monkey
- Iconic folk murder: Stackolee, telling the tale of Lee Shelton's 1895 murder by Billy Lyons
- Drugs (cautionary tales): King Heroin
- Sex: Pimping Sam, Mexicali Rose
Comedy

- Toasts were central in the repertoire of African American comedy, especially in the first half of the 20th century
- Connection to Vaudeville, "Chitlin Circuit"
- Important comedians in this style: Moms Mabley, Pigmeat Markham, Flip Wilson, Redd Foxx and Rudy Ray Moore
Rudy Ray Moore

- Rudy Ray Moore, The Dance of the Freaks, from Dolemite for President, 1972
- Dolemite is the alter ego of Rudy Ray Moore. He's basically the "bad man" figure common from Toasts in general.
- Dolemite, The Signifying Monkey
- This particular performance has been hugely influential for Hip Hop.
Dewey "Pigmeat" Markham

- Markham began performing on the vaudeville circuit in the early 20th century and continued well into the TV era.
- Performed in blackface into the 1940s
- "The Judge" character evolved into a mainstay in his routine, landing him TV appeareances
- And, eventually, this commercial recording, which is widely regarded a proto-rap recording. Cf. 1968 appearance of The Judge

"The explanation of playing the dozens that I want to elaborate is that it is a survival technique, a protective device against being victimized. By playing the game, young black men learn how to face up to an antagonistic society and to deal with conflicts both with the larger white society and within their own family and peer groups. Rather than resorting to physical means to resolve conflicts, a choice that would often be suicidal, the dozens evolved as a way to develop self-control and to handle one's temper."
Dozens activity

- We've covered the Dozens and Toasts because they are important antecedents to hip hop music and culture. Can you think of places in contemporary culture where these practices play a role?
- Turn to your neighbor, learn their name, and take five minutes to try to think of one or two interesting examples.
- If you are thinking of a musical example, can you recall some of the music theory vocabulary we talked about and use it to analyze this music?
Radio Disc Jockeys

- Another forerunner of rap is the presentation style of radio personalities.
- Many of the most popular radio disc jockeys from the 50s through the 70s developed complex styles, often over the top of the music they were playing.
- Influential DJs include Poppa Stoppa in New Orleans and Jocko Henderson of Philadelphia
- E.g. Jocko's 1965 appearance on NYC WADO 1280, and this example
Parliament, Mothership Connection (1975)

- P Funk (Who Wants to Get Funked Up?)
- George Clinton's intro
- The content is afro-futurist and surreal, but the presentation style inherits from the Radio persona
Black Arts Movement

- Alongside the Civil Rights movement, many African American artists become more politically involved.
- Imamu Amiri Baraka, author of *Blues People*, opens Black Arts Repertory Theater in 1965
- Scholarly journals and newspapers focused on Black issues: *Negro Digest* (later *Black World*) and *The Black Scholar*, founded 1969
"The Black Arts movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept"


- "Hustler's Ball" Documentary focusing on Jalal Nurridinn
Last Poets “When the Revolution Comes”

- The Last Poets were a radical performance poetry group that emerged from a writers workshop in Harlem, who took their name from a poem by South African poet and activist Keorapetse Kgositsile.

- When the Revolution Comes
What does my hunger
have to do with a gawdamm poem?

The wind you hear is the birth of memory
when the moment hatches in time's womb
there will be no art talk. The only poem
you will hear will be the spearpoint pivoted
in the punctured marrow of the villain; the
timeless native son dancing like crazy to
the retrieved rhythms of desire
fading
in-
to
memory.
Lightnin’ Rod, “Sport”

- Lightnin' Rod was the alter ego of Jalal Nurrudin, used for his non-political materials
- From album "Hustler's Ball" (note change in tone here), and it's a Toast, based on the familiar "player's ball"
- Note musical differences with Last Poets
  - Instruments
    - Style (studio band includes members of soul groups: Earth Wind and Fire, Kool and the Gang)
- **Sport**
  - Jazz Musicians: catch the reference?
Disco and Reggae: Musical Pastiche

- Hip Hop is often understood as a "pastiche" -- a form of music made from other music.
- This depends on the increased availability of recorded music.
- It also inherits in important ways from two other styles: Disco and Reggae.
Reggae

- Many early figures in Hip Hop were Jamaican
- Impact of Jamaican music is in its sound, but also in its practice
  - Charismatic DJs who talk over music and create party atmosphere
  - The dub practice of reusing instrumental backing tracks of existing songs
- Release in 1972 of *The Harder They Come* makes Reggae visible and commercially viable outside of Jamaica
Jamaican political parties: Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) and People's National Party (PNP)

1972 Michael Manley (PNP), a democratic socialist, wins in a landslide over the traditional, conservative Edward Seaga (JLP).

- Raise minimum wage, free education, promote literacy, ties with unions, strengthen ties to Cuba
- JLP-led government banned Black Power literature, Rasta and Reggae culture tend to favor PNP. "Better Must Come" is Manley's campaign theme.
- Severe violence between PNP and JLP. Reggae music and Rasta culture are initially aligned with the PNP. When the two parties reconcile, Bob Marley performs at the peace concert.
- "Rude boy" culture, cf. "badman" of toasts and "gangsta"
- Marley becomes "a worldwide icon of freedom struggle and Black liberation" (Chang, p. 28)
Interested in the CIA and Jamaica?


2. *Inside the CIA's Secret War in Jamaica*, by Casey Gane-McCalla
Interested in Rastafarianism?

Jah, His Imperial Majestic Haile Selassie I, Amharic Ras Tafari --> Rastafari

1. Jacob S. Dorman, Chosen people : the rise of American Black Israelite religions
Soundsystem

- The primary means of disseminating music in Jamaica in the 1970s was the soundsystem
- Soundsystem refers to a social practice more than a technological one
- It refers to the whole structure of putting on a dance or a party: the speakers, the records, the DJ, the selector, the promoter, the dancers; all of that is meant by the word "soundsystem"
- Rival sound systems engaged in competitions known as "Sound Clashes"
Soundsystem Documentary Footage
“Talkover”

- As in the United States, DJs developed stylized personae while talking over the music.
- This took place in performance and, eventually, on commercial records as well.
Dub

- Word derived from Jamaican "duppy": "ghost." I.e. duplicates of records.
- Came to refer to making replicas of other recordings, while altering some elements. Esp. using reverb and echo.
Dr. Alimantando

- *Best Dressed Chicken in Town*, 1978
- Prominent Jamaican DJ with a surreal sensibility
  - Bill Withers, *Ain't no Sunshine*, 1971
  - Horace Andy, *Ain't no Sunshine*, 1978
  - Dr. Alimantando, *Best Dressed Chicken in Town*, 1978
Big Youth, “Can You Keep a Secret”

- Big Youth was an important DJ, notable also for being first openly Rasta DJ to gain fame
  - Keith Hudson, Melody Maker (1973)
  - Big Youth, Can You Keep A Secret
Disco

- Disco, like hip hop was more of a social practice/subculture than musical style per se.
- Often said to embody values of pluralism, tolerance. E.g. plot to *Saturday Night Fever*
- Connection to gay culture, most famously in the Village People: *YMCA*, from 1978 *Cruising*
- Walter Murphy's Disco-Classical Fusion: *A Fifth of Beethoven*
• Importance of 1977 *Saturday Night Fever*, whose soundtrack featured many Disco hits, esp. Bee Gees. (Stayin' Alive, *A Fifth of Beethoven Scene*)

• Disco DJs played all kinds of records: jazz, African, R&B, hard rock, cabaret etc

• Disco parties were crazy, and *long* -- people needed to dance.

• Disco DJs start to extend records to accommodate this need: Tom Moulton, Nicky Siano, Francis Grasso
Nicky Siano Doc footage

note: For the Love of Money, the O'Jays, 1974 --> Celebrity Apprentice Theme
Eddie Kendricks, “Keep on Truckin”

- This is an R&B song from 1973 that was popular in discos (Kendricks had been lead singer of the Temptations and was trying to launch a solo career)
- Cf. Tom Moulton's edit
- Moulton created mixes for tape, but other DJs actually mixed them live with two turntables, which became the standard practice for Hip Hop DJs.
James Brown, Give it Up or Turn it Loose

• A typical James Brown song from the 70s. Originally, James Brown was a soul singer, but his music came to focus more and more on the groove (less harmony and melody, crooning).

• Groove: repeating musical figures that create a texture or musical substrate on which James Brown can do his thing, and which accompanies dancing.
  • Super influential for Hip Hop production. Live Recording of give it up or turn it loose
Chic, "Good Times"

- Chic was a project of the duo of guitarist Nile Rodgers and bassist Bernard Edwards
- Chic, Le Freak, 1978, or the constantly-sampled Good Times, from Risque of 1979
- Rodgers had a strong jazz background, and had been a member of the Black Panthers, while Edwards came from R and B
- Take the Disco concept of the "break down" and use it to make more complex pop songs
- Cf. James Brown -- it's more streamlined and palatable
- "Good Times" is a nice party message. TV performance
Quiz 1 is up on TritonEd under "content." It must be completed by Tuesday, Apr 2 at noon. After that, lecture slides will be posted and you won't be able to take the quiz.