MUSIC 17 - Week Three
Paper #1 was due today. Questions?

...

New to the class? See the course page and the syllabus. Talk to your TA if you have any questions about how the class functions.

...

Quiz # 2 question:

What is the backing music on Sugar Hill gang, Rapper's Delight?

...

Note about quizzes in general. I will be giving them every week, but I will drop the lowest two scores.

...

Note about final paper strategies. Recall that throughout the lecture I flag what I think might be interesting research topics, and I propose starting points for research.
To do, Apr 15.

1. Review last week's lecture. Note: there were several listening assignments we didn't do in lecture, which are nevertheless highlighted on the course page.
   - Today, we'll revisit two of them: Grandmaster Flash, Superrappin' and Afrikaa Bambaataa, Planet Rock

2. We discuss the landmark hip hop film *Wild Style*

3. Then, on to today's materials:
   1. Mainstreaming Hip Hop and Technological Advances
   2. Discuss our readings: Imani Perry. How to hear music and lyrics together, literary styles of listening to rap.
   3. Listening (put readings into practice)
      - Run DMC, the Roxanne Wars, LL Cool J, Erik B and Rakim, Native Tongues (De La Soul, Tribe Called Quest, Stetsasonic)
Review from last week
Differences between DJs in the South Bronx vs. Other DJs

1. Emphasize just the "breaks," just the "good parts" of a track
2. Break dancing vs. partnered dancing
3. Smaller, less lucrative venues for SB DJs
4. Outdoor parties, all ages vs. 21-and-up clubs of Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens
5. Informal attire vs. formal

All these differences are decisive for the formation of a distinct Hip Hop culture.

Recall Grandmaster Flash on Rapper's Delight:

I was approached in '77. A gentleman walked up to me and said, 'We can put what you're doing on record.' I would have to admit that I was blind. I didn't think that somebody else would want to hear a record re-recorded onto another record with talking on it. I didn't think it would reach the masses like that. I didn't see it. I knew of all the crews that had any sort of juice and power, or that was drawing crowds. So here it is two years later, and I hear 'To the hip-hop, to the bang to the boogie', and it's not Bam, Herc, Breakout, AJ. Who is this? (quoted in George 1993, p. 49)
What was hip hop? What is hip hop?

- One answer is embedded in this title: Steven Hager, *Hip Hop: The Illustrated History of Break Dancing, Rap Music, and Graffiti*, 1984

- That is, it was a confluence of things. It happened at parties, in real life, with face-to-face interactions.

- It wasn't a recording, and it wasn't necessarily poetry either.

- What is going on in the transition from broadly conceived, aesthetically integrated practice to 33mm single? (a lot)

- "Black CNN" (Chuck D) -- Today, we'll be seeing a lot of rap that is much more like this than, say, Busy Bee.
Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Superrappin', 1979

- **Superrappin' Recording**
- This recording is Flash's reluctant acceptance of the recording industry.
- Crucial to imagine the live performance this would be imitating. Chang does a good job of this, p. 133.
- Note "beat box going...and....and...and...and..."
- Chang: "In the original routine, the Furious Five would pause and point to Grandmaster Flash as he banged out frenetic fills on his electronic drum machine. But on the record, Flash is MIA."
- Like Rapper's Delight, this recording has studio players recreating a record that Flash would have spun live. **This is not a sample, but rather a re-performance, an imitation.** Whole Darn Family, Seven Minutes of Funk
  - Which is sampled by Jay-Z and and Foxy Brown, Ain' no N****
Afrika Bambaataa

• Born Lance Taylor, South Bronx, 1957

• Inspired by his experience traveling to Africa, and by the film Zulu, gains a following as the leader "zulu nation."

• Kept elements of gang culture but focused on liberation, self-support, community, art.

• Recorded classic pioneering music bridging electro, hip hop, and funk.

• In 2016, resigned from UZN after multiple allegations of sexual abuse.
Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force, Planet Rock, 1982

• Note the new sonic palate: synths rather than samples of, say, James Brown.
• Samples Kraftwerk's "Trans Europa Express", 1977. So called "robot pop."
• Uses the brand new Roland Transistor Rhythm 808
  ◦ Demonstration of someone programming the beat to Sexual Healing, and the actual song
  ◦ Demonstration of someone programming the Planet Rock beat
• This song famously connects the Electro sound with Hip Hop culture, the tradition of Afrofuturism, and an Afrocentric, cosmological liberation manifesto.
Planet Rock, lyrics/analysis

("crowd sounds")

Party people Party people Can y'all get funky? Soul Sonic Force - can y'll get funky? The Zulu Nation - can y'll get funky?

Yaaah! Just hit me

(beat enters -- but note that Bambaataa is already in time)

Just taste the funk and hit me Just get on down and hit me Bambaataa's gettin' so funky, now, hit me Yaaah! Just hit me

It's time to chase your dreams Up out ya seats, make your body sway Socialize, get down, let your soooool lead the way Shake it now, go ladies, it's a livin' dream Love Life Live

Come play the game, our world is free

Do what you want but scream
(Robot talks)
Rock rock to the Planet Rock, don't stop
The Soul Sonic Force - Mr. Biggs, Pow Wow, and M.C. Globe We emphasize to show, we got ego
Make this your night, just slip it right, and by day As the people say, live it up, shucks

**No work or play, our world is free. Be what you be.**

(spooky theme, robot)

**You're in a place where the nights are hot, where nature's children dance and say the chants**

On this Mother Earth, which is our rock
The time has come, and work for soul, show you really got soul
Are you ready hump bump bump, get bump, now let's go, house
Gotta rock it, don't stop Keep tickin' and tockin', work it all around the clock
Everybody keep rockin' and clockin' and shockin' and rockin', go house
Everybody say, rock it, don't stop it ("Crowd" repeats) Well hit me, Mr. Biggs (Crowd repeats) Pow Wow (Crowd repeats) G-L-O-B-E (Crowd repeats) The Soul Sonic Force
There is such a place that creates such a melody

Our world is but a land of a master jam, get up and dance

It's time to chase your dreams Up out your seats, make your body sway Socialize, get down, let your soooouul lead the way Shake it now, go ladies, it's a livin' dream Love Life Live

(instrumental "solo")

Zih Zih Zih Zih Zih....

(even the nonsense syllables are bizarre and surreal. there's no "badidiba" here.)

Everybody say, rock it, don't stop it ("Crowd" repeats) Everybody say, shockin' and clockin'
Everybody say, ichi ni san shi

(counting to four in Japanese)

Say, Planet Rock It's the sure shot Say, Planet Rock It's the sure shot

(note the "crowd" -- it's synthesized, just like the drums)
Afrika Bambaataa
Live in performance
Planet Rock Album
Some iconography/references from this album cover:

- **Headdress:** Mardi Gras Indians
- Bambaataa's Staff: messiah
- **Space:** Sun Ra, George Clinton
- Gown: medieval -- distinctively western/European?
- Afrika Bambaataa was also heavily influenced by Yellow Magic Orchestra. *YMO, Computer Game, 1978* ...
- YMO is deliberately satirizing Western Orientalist attitudes. Why do you think this (as well as the sound of the music itself) would appeal to Bambaataa?
  - In other words, what is Afro-Futurism all about?
Renegades of Funk, 1983

- What does this music sound like?
- What does this music represent?
- Does this music have a political charge? If so, is it different from "Planet Rock?" Can you think of other music that we've heard so far that has political content in it?
Movies Again -- *Wild Style*

We've seen some important movies marking important moments in 20th century popular music history.

- *The Harder They Come*, 1972, brings Reggae into popular consciousness.
- *Taxi Driver*, 1976, shows the world just how disgusting NYC is.
- *Saturday Night Fever*, 1977, does the same for Disco.
- *Wild Style*, 1983, did much the same for hip hop.
  - A fictional film about a Graffiti artist, but it did feature many true participants in Hip Hop culture. Produced by artist Charlie Ahearn.
  - Deals with the issues we've been talking about, especially the transit of Hip Hop from street/local practice to commercial music.
• E.g. Grandmaster Flash's scene, or this scene featuring Busy Bee

• Basketball Court Scene from *Wild Style*

• Finale scene from *Wild Style*

...

• After Wild Style, a flood of hip hop movies that aren't as good.
  ◦ *Breakin*, 1984
  ◦ “On paper, tis was the historical equivalent of landing Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday...for a feature film about jazz.” (Chang, p. 192)
  ◦ *Beat Street*, 1984
  ◦ *Body Rock*, 1984
  ◦ *Fast Forward*, 1985
  etc.
Hip Hop moves into the mainstream

- By around 1982, the scene depicted in *Wild Style*, the place where Kool Herc/Flash/Melle Mel/Busy Bee etc, made their living, has largely come to an end.

- The art world's interest in Graffiti wanes, focus shifts back to the music.

- This had many consequences for the music, most prominently that the *text* becomes all important. Think back to why it sounds so much like Busy Bee is badly defeated by Kool Moe Dee.

- "Black CNN" (Chuck D)

- Other changes in the music at this time:
  - length of songs (shorter)
  - "hooks," which are really a phenomenon originating in the popular song.
  - Other song forms: verse/chorus, bridge.
  - Shifts in subject matter.
• Also changes for the working methods of the artists:
  ◦ Party is replaced by the studio as the site of creative activity. a new way for a new piece of music.
  ◦ Wider audiences, more money to be made.
Technological changes

• New technologies, **like the 808, discussed above (planet rock)**. Also, crucially, **samplers**.
  ◦ Samplers: [Fairlight CMI, 1979](#) and [Akai MPC, 1988](#)
  ◦ The CMI cost $25k! **IN 1979**!

• Sampling: the act of taking one sound ("sampling a recording") so that you can use it in a new piece of music.

• **Herbie Hancock demonstrates the Fairlight CMI on Sesame Street**

• Samples become the main ingredient in beat making.
• Illustrative example of the kind of thing this makes possible: "orchestral hit"

• The "actual," or original sample: The Infernal Dance of All of Kaschei's Subjects, from Stravinsky, the Firebird, 1910.

• A sample of this piece comes preloaded as "ORCH5" on the CMI (developers were Australian classical musicians Kim Ryrie and Peter Vogel)
"ORCH5"
Kraftwerk, *Trans Europe Express* cover art

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*Special thanks to Maurice Seymour for photos. Copyright 1977, 1979, 2009 Kraftwerk, Inc. All rights reserved.*
• Orchestral hits:
  • Afrika Bambaataa, Planet Rock, 1982
  • Keith Sweat, I want Her, 1987
  • Backstreet Boys, It's Gotta be You
  • Michael Jackson, Dangerous, 1991
  • Britney Spears, Hit me Baby One More Time, 1998
  • Bruno Mars, Finesse, 2018
  • Anyone think of others?


...or just watch this excellent video on the history of the orchestra hit "ORCH 2"
Planet Rock =

Stravinsky + German Electro + DJing + rapping + Afrofuturism + drum machine programming + Gang culture (turned into Universal Zulu Nation)

What do you make of this mixture? Does this all amount to a coherent "message?"
Readings
Imani Perry, "Stinging like Tabasco"

- An article essentially about hip hop as a literary form.
- Marks the new symbolic importance of violence in post-1980s rap. "Ego assassination."
- Also marks its transition into a more literary domain (from the party domain). Thus
- It draws heavily on the work of literary theorist Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifyin(g) Monkey*, 1988. You should know the basics of what is meant by this lit-crit concept.
Relying on Henry Louis Gates’s call for a vernacular-based literary criticism in *The Signifyin(g) Monkey*, Sam Floyd describes the meaning of Signifyin(g) when applied to the black music tradition: “Signifyin(g) is a way of saying one thing and meaning another; it is a reinterpretation, a metaphor for the revision of previous texts and figures; it is tropological thought, repetition with difference, the obscuring of meaning—all to achieve or reverse power, to improve situations, and to achieve pleasing results for the signifier.” As Nelson George says, “Recontextualizing someone else’s sounds was, after all, how hip hop started.” It is a Signifyin(g) form in its origins.
• In establishing "Signifyin'" as an essential part of the hip hop aesthetic, this text partly explains why Rapper's Delight doesn't sound quite right.

• Theorizes the aesthetic of "liveness" that persists in Hip Hop music, even stuff that's made in a studio for private listening.

• Establishes precedent for the scholarly/literary treatment of hip hop music, runs through a handful of ways rap can work, structurally:
  ◦ Re-signifying
  ◦ Narrative ('the yarn')
  ◦ Description
  ◦ Battle
  ◦ Allegory
  ◦ Realism ("keep it real"):
"The Real is the location where an individual remains committed to his or her community, professes that allegiance, and remains honestly and organically rooted in his or her position in the world." (88)

"Calls to keep it real in hip hop, however, have included celebrations of the social effects of urban decay and poverty, for example, assertions of a paranoid vigilance in protecting one’s dignity, which leads to violent action or ruthless individualism." (87)
Listening
Run DMC, It's like That, 1983

- Grew up in Hollis Queens, basically suburban Long Island
- Managed by Russell Simmons, brother of one of the main figures
Unemployment at a record high
People coming, people going, people born to die
Don't ask me, because I don't know why
But it's like that, and that's the way it is
People in the world try to make ends meet
You try to ride car, train, bus, or feet
I said you got to work hard to want to compete
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Huh!
Money is the key to end all your woes
Your ups and your downs, your highs and your lows
Won't you tell me last time that love bought you clothes?
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Bills fly higher every day
We receive much lower pay
I'd rather stay young, go out and play
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Huh!
War's going on across the sea
Street soldiers killing the elderly
What ever happened to unity?
It's like that, and that that's the way it is
Disillusion is the word
That's used by me when I'm not heard
I just go through life with my glasses blurred
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Huh!
You can see a lot in this lifespan
Like a bum eating out of a garbage can
You notice one time he was your man
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
You should've gone to school, you could've learned a trade
But you laid in bed where the bums have laid
Now all the time you're crying that you're underpaid
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
Huh!
One thing I know is that life is short
So listen up homeboy, give this a thought
The next time someone's teaching why don't you get taught?
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
If you really think about it times aren't that bad
The one that stretches for success will make you glad
Stop playing start praying, you won't be sad
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
Huh!
When you feel you fail sometimes it hurts
For a meaning in life is why you search
Take the boys on the train, drive to school on the church
It's like that, and that's the way it is
Here's another point in life you should not miss
Do not be a fool who's prejudice
Because we're all written down on the same list
It's like that (what?) and that's the way it is
Run DMC, It's Like That -- Turn to your neighbor and discuss.

• What's the production like? What does the music sound?
• What are the techniques you think went into producing this?
• What is the message of the lyrical content?
• Is there a relationship between their music and their visual presentation?
Run DMC, "Rock Box," 1984

- A little more "rock-ish" sound, which becomes the signature Def Jam sound, produced by Rick Rubin
- Features strange opening monologue by the comedian Irwin Corey
- The characteristic sound is that electric guitar lick.
  - cf. Beastie Boys, License to Ill, 1986, also Slayer

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People LOVE slayer:
UTFO (Untouchable Force Organization), Roxanne Roxanne, 1984

- Pop/rap crossover
- Kangol Kid, Doctor Ice, Educated Rapper, Mix Master Ice
- Note the sung hook "roxanne roxanne"
- Rap portions function as the "verses" answered by the "chorus" -- pop song form
- Led to a string of “answer” records, e.g. Roxanne Shante, "Roxanne's Revenge"
Roxanne Shante, "Roxanne's Revenge," 1984

• Answer to UTFO's Roxanne track, using their original beat
• First big hit by producer Marley Marl
• Famously recorded by a 13 year old Roxanne Shante (Born Lolita Shante Gooden) in one take!
• One of the most important early female rappers
• Spurred the "Roxanne Wars," a string of answer/diss records all on the "Roxanne" motif
  ◦ The Real Roxanne
  ◦ Roxanne Shante, Bite This
  ◦ Dr. Freshh, Roxanne's Doctor - the Real Man, 1985
  ◦ Tanganyika, I'm Lil Roxanne, 1985
  ◦ and, actually, many others...

• Big hit for Def Jam records, the label built by Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin

• Rick Rubin takes the Marley Marl sound and makes it somewhat more palatable for rock/mainstream radio audiences.

• LL raps in a more traditional boast style than the stripped down Run DMC
Erik B and Rakim, "Paid in Full", 1987

- Debut album for this super-influential duo.

- Production techniques: sampled drum loops (rather than synths), scratching solo (cf. Jazz influences), quirky flute lick.
  - Drums from the Soul Searchers
  - Bass from Dennis Edwards

- Understated style of delivery, subtle and intricate rhyme schemes are totally unlike anything we've heard so far. Rhyming "across the bar," and just generally way more complex.

- Ironically, it was the subject of a 2003 legal between the artists and the label surrounding whether or not they'd been appropriately compensated.
Erik B and Rakim. "Follow the Leader." 1988

- More samples, groundbreaking complexity
- Proto gangsta aesthetic appropriates mafia don representations.
**Erik B and Rakim, Follow the Leader**

Follow me into a solo, get in the flow
And you can picture like a photo
Music mix, mellow maintains to make
Melodies for emcees, motivates the breaks
I'm everlasting, I can go on for days and days
With rhyme displays that engrave deep as x-rays
I can take a phrase that's rarely heard
Flip it - now it's a daily word
I can get iller than 'Nam, I kill and bomb
But no alarm - Rakim'll remain calm
Self-esteem makes me super, superb and supreme
But for a microphone, still I fiend
This was a tape, I wasn't supposed to break
I was supposed to wait, but let's motivate
I want to see you keep following and swallowing
Taking and making, biting and borrowing
Brothers tried and others died to get the formula
But I'mma let you sweat, you still ain't warm, you a
Step away from frozen, stiff as if you're posing
Dig into my brain as the rhyme gets chosen
So follow me and while you're thinking you were first
Let's travel at magnificent speeds around the universe
What could you say as the Earth gets further and further away
Planets as small as balls of clay
Astray into the Milky Way, worlds out of sight
Far as the eye can see not even a satellite
Now stop and turn around and look
As you stare in the darkness, your knowledge is took
So keep staring, soon you suddenly see a star
You better follow it, 'cause it's the R
This is a lesson if you're guessing and if you're borrowing
Hurry hurry step right up and keep following the leader
[Verse 2]
This is a lifetime mission, vision a prison
Aight, listen
In this journey you're the journal, I'm the journalist
Am I eternal? Or an eternalist?
I'm about to flow long as I can possibly go
Keep you moving 'cause the crowd said so
Dance! Cuts rip your pants
Eric B on the blades bleeding to death, call the ambulance
Pull out my weapon and start to squeeze
A magnum as a microphone, murdering emcees
Let's quote, a rhyme from a record I wrote
(Follow the leader) Yeah, dope
'Cause every time I stop it seems you're stuck
As soon as you try to step off you self-destruct
I came to overcome before I'm gone
By showing and proving and letting knowledge be born
Then after that I live forever. You disagree?
You say never? Then follow me
From century to century, you'll remember me
In history, not a mystery or a memory
God by nature, mind raised in Asia
Since you was tricked, I have to raise ya
From the cradle to the grave
But remember - you're not a slave
'Cause we was put here to be much more than that
But we couldn't see because our mind was trapped
But I'm here to break away the chains, take away the pains
Remake the brains, rebuild my name
I guess nobody told you a little knowledge is dangerous
It can't be mixed, diluted, it can't be changed or switched
Here's a lesson if you're guessing and borrowing
Hurry, hurry step right up and keep following the leader
[Verse 3]
A furified freestyle - lyrics of fury
My third eye make me shine like jewelry
You're just a rent-a-rapper, your rhymes are minute-maid
I'll be here when it fade, I'll watch you flip like a renegade
I can't wait to break and eliminate
On every traitor or snake, so stay awake
And follow and follow because the tempo's a trail
The stage is a cage, the mic is a third rail
I'm Rakim, the fiend of a microphone
I'm not him, so leave my mic alone
Soon as the beat is felt, I'm ready to go
So fasten your seatbelt, 'cause I'm about to flow
No need to speed, slow down and let the leader lead
Word to daddy...indeed
The R's a rolling stone, so I'm rolling
Directions is told then the rhymes are stolen
Stop buggin' a brother said dig him, I never dug him
He couldn't follow the leader long enough so I drug him
Into danger zone he should arrange his own
Face it, it's basic, erase it change your tone
There's one R in the alphabet
It's a one letter word and it's about to get
More complex from one rhyme to the next
Eric B. be easy on the flex
I've been from state to state, followers tailgate
Keep coming but you came too late, but I'll wait
So back up, regroup, get a grip, come equipped
You're the next contestant, clap your hands, you won a trip
The price is right don't make a deal too soon
How many notes, can you name this tune?
Follow the leader is a title/theme/task
Now you know, you don't have to ask
Rap is rhythm and poetry, cuts create sound effects
You might catch up if you follow the records E wrecks
Until then keep eating and swallowing
You better take a deep breath and keep following the leader
**Complexity**

Follow me into a solo, get in the flow  
And you can picture like a photo  
Music mix, mellow maintains to make  
Melodies for emcees, motivates the breaks  
  • note the alliteration, the double entendre, the looseness, the self-reflexivity, the proximity to gibberish but not quite.

Brothers tried and others died to get the formula  
But I'mma let you sweat, you still ain't warm, you a  
Step away from frozen, stiff as if you're posing  
  • Incredibly clever word play  
  • In what sense are you sweating? But you're still not warm -- no, you're cold, almost frozen, and you're posin -- i.e. a poser.
Politics and Cosmology

I can get iller than 'Nam, I kill and bomb
  • Nam?
...
This is a lifetime mission, vision a prison
Aight, listen
In this journey you're the journal, I'm the journalist
Am I eternal? Or an eternalist?
...
From century to century, you'll remember me
In history, not a mystery or a memory
God by nature, mind raised in Asia
  • Asia?
Five percent nation, or the Nation of Gods and Earths

- A sort of splinter community from the Nation of Islam, founded in 1964
- A pseudo-religious theology and philosophy popular among some rappers of the 1980s. "God Hop"
- Afrocentric theology: black man ("Asiatic") is God. Women are "earths." (hence gods and earths). Children are moons.
- A set of distinctive catch phrases:
  - calling eachother "god" rather than "man"
  - "Word is Bond"
  - "I am God"
  - "Supreme Mathematics" and "Supreme Alphabet"
  - Arabic names for various urban areas in USA. Brooklyn = Medina. Harlem = Mecca. New Jersey = New Jerusalem.
  - "civilized the uncivilized," i.e. 85% of the world's population.
Other Five Percenters:

- **Big Daddy Kane, Ain't no Half Steppin**, note the influence of Rakim
- **Lakim Shabbazz, Black is Back, 1988**
- **Wu Tang (more on them later)**
- **Busta Rhymes on Five Percent Nation**

...interested in the Five Percent Nation?

- **Try *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission* by Felicia M. Miyakawa, 2005**
Stetsasonic, “Talking All That Jazz,” 1988

- Samples Jazz - upright bass. Lonnie Smith, Expansions
- note double entendre on Jazz
- It's a rap song about sampling as a serious aesthetic working method.
- Note in-group mentality specifically addressed at outsiders, using the concept of sampling as the wedge.
Tribe Called Quest, Scenario

- Very significant and influential track featuring a young Busta Rhymes
- Also featured Dinco D, who, with Busta Rhymes, would found the Leaders of the New School
Tribe Called Quest, Bonita Applebaum

- What's the vibe? How is it achieved?
- Samples 1970s soul-jazz: Ramp, Daylight
- Sitar sample
De La Soul, Me Myself and I

- Satirizes commercialized Hip Hop industry
- Uses a wide array of samples: language instruction, hippie stuff, rock, etc.