Introduction to Hip Hop Culture

Week 2: Origins
• Hip Hop culture is more than just music
  – MCing/Rapping and DJing
• Therefore it may be wrong to refer to the music as hip hop
  – From this perspective, the music is called rap and the culture is hip hop

• 4 Pillars of Hip Hop
  – MCing, DJing, Graffiti, Breakdancing
  – We will explore the non-musical areas next week
The Foundational Years

• Approximately 1973-1979
  – “First” rap recording is in 1979

• Local and informal

• Cassette tapes of live shows

• Events advertised by word-of-mouth and flyers
Three Hip Hop Pioneers

- Early hip hop culture (early to mid-70s) was all about the **DJs** and dancers, not the MCs
  - DJ Kool Herc
  - Afrika Bambaataa
  - Grandmaster Flash

Important term: The Break

DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell)

- Jamaican influence
- Semi-mythical 1973 party
- “Father of the South Bronx DJ Party Scene”
- On the mic
- Influence
  - The Break
  - The Merry-go-round
- Recordings

Video Ex: Kool Herc – Merry Go Round Technique

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lz7wn9N_CnA
Afrika Bambaataa

• Live DJ by 1976
• Black Spades
• Universal Zulu Nation
• Extensive use of MCs

Ex: Afrika Bambaataa feat. Cosmic Force
   – “Zulu Nation Throwdown” (1980)
      (start, then 3:00)

• MC Lisa Lee
• Typical early hip hop party vibe
Grandmaster Flash

• Electronics
• DJ techniques:
  – The “Quick-Mix” (backspinning)
    – Video Ex: Michaela applies Grandmaster Flash’s Quick Mix Theory
      https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HevT5sHn0QQ
  – Punch Phrase
  – Clock Theory
  – The Scratch
    • Grand Wizard Theodore

• Turntablism
Grandmaster Flash

Ex: Grandmaster Flash


• Recorded live
• Uses all of the aforementioned techniques
• First time scratching is put on record
Grandmaster Flash

• Turntablism

Clip from *Wild Style* (1983): “Grandmaster Flash”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHlsNQ3eh2g

Video Demo: Flash demonstrating the Quick-Mix/Backspinning technique
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17yX-OdrBz8
(12:20-14:15)

• Also known as **beat juggling**
Other DJs

Disco Club DJs
• Often excluded from hip hop history

Eddie Cheeba
DJ Hollywood
More DJ Examples

• Records (Vinyl)
• Breaks/Break beats
• Beat Juggling

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEKRAn-ZleM

Clips: *Scratch* (film 2002)
• 17:00-19:30 demo
• 15:00 – new song out of old
• 28 – beat juggling example
• 62:30 – creating your own vinyl
Earlier Experiments with Turntables

John Cage – “Imaginary Landscape No. 1” (1939)

• Piano, Chinese cymbal, 2 turntables switching between 33 1/3 and 78 RPM

• Classical and Avant-Garde music world
More Turntables in the Classical World

Ex: Gabriel Prokofiev

– *Concerto for Turntables and Orchestra* (2007)

• Royal Albert Hall, London

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38atRejUORM
Separation of DJ and MC roles

• Early DJs filled the role of MC
• c. 1975, separation of DJ and MC function
• By 1977, MCs in all hip hop crews
• By 1978, MCs started to take the spotlight from DJs
  – Even more so with the early recordings which didn’t use the DJ at all
• One of the first big rap groups: Cold Crush Brothers
  Ex: Clip from *Wild Style* (1983)
• First hip hop film: unites 4 elements
• Grand Wizard Theodore and the Fantastic Five & Cold Crush Brothers
  (live South Bronx, 1982)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZjSO3IAJfU
(Start at :30, CCB at 4:50)
Ex: The Sugarhill Gang – “Rapper’s Delight” (1979)

- “First” rap recording
- Building a wider audience for rap (crossover)
- Backing track
  - What older song was the basis for this beat?
- Mood/themes typical of early rap
- Controversy in hip hop community
  - “Authenticity”
  - Lyrics
Kurtis Blow

- Solo Artist
- “Son of Eddie Cheeba”
  - MC with Cheeba’s crew
  - Street Cred

Ex: Kurtis Blow – “Christmas Rappin’” (1979)
Changes in Rap Music: Afrika Bambaataa

- Eclectic taste

Ex: Afrika Bambaataa & the Soul Sonic Force
  - “Planet Rock” (1982)

- Roland 808 drum machine

- Influence of Kraftwerk

- Producer-oriented
Changes in Rap Music: “Rockit”

- Herbie Hancock
- First hip hop-jazz fusion?
- Turntablism to wider audience

Ex: Herbie Hancock and Grandmixer D.ST.
   – “Rockit” (1983)

Video Clip: Live at the Grammy Awards, 1983
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DaG7QQ_kT0