Introduction to Hip Hop Culture

Week 4: The Golden Age
General changes in this era (roughly 1985-1992)

- Song structure
- Narratives and stories, message raps
- Different kinds of flow for MCs
- Backing tracks
- Greater role of women
- Non-NYC artists
- Growth of industry
Run-DMC

• The old vs. the new
  – Fashion
  – Beats
  – MC style


• What is different about the backing track?
Ex: Run-DMC – “Walk This Way” (1986)

- Aerosmith
- Huge crossover rap hit (rap-rock fusion)
- Music Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B_UYYPb-Gk
Def Jam

- Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin
- 1984
- Seen as the end of Sugarhill era
- New, “street” style
- Deal with Columbia

Clip: Rolling Stone, Rick Rubin returns to NYU dorm

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBHADseIls-w
LL Cool J

- James Todd Smith aka Ladies Love Cool James
- First album *Radio* (1985)
- LL was 17

Rap Ballads

• Earlier example: Spoonie G – “Love Rap” (1980)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEUX-HYRtUA

• First true rap ballad
• Redefined the possibility of a rap song and what a rapper can be
• Vulnerable
• Teen Idol-appeal
• Delivery
Beastie Boys

• Adrock, Mike D, MCA
• Brooklyn
• Punk rock origins
• Rap style

Ex: Beastie Boys – “Fight For Your Right” (1986)
License To Ill (1986)

- Biggest-selling Def Jam album
- Lyrics: drugs, alcohol
- White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

First National Rap Tours

- Fresh Fest
  - 1984: 27 cities
  - 1985

- Raising Hell
  - 1986
  - UK
Women in Rap in the 1980s: New School

- Dis tracks/response raps
- Little to no major label support

- Range of topics and issues
  - Response to female sex roles in rap
  - Agency
  - Platform for female empowerment

- R&B/rap fusions
Response Rap/Dis Tracks

• Musical history
• The Dozens connection
• Sexist criticism of a woman
• First response, 14 years old
• With UTFO, meant to shut down Shanté
Salt-N-Pepa

Cheryl James (Salt)
Sandra Denton (Pepa)
Deidra Roper (DJ Spinderella)

• Expanded possibilities for women in hip hop
• Challenging a male-dominated industry and conventions for female artists
  – In what ways is the music industry male-dominated?
  – What are these conventions?

MC Lyte

- Musical family
- First full album by a solo female MC (1988)
- Style

Ex: MC Lyte – “I Cram To Understand U” (1988)
- Narrative storytelling style
- Crack
- Lyrics
Queen Latifah

- R&B elements
- Boast, feminist twist

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLB5bUNAesc

- Challenge to “man’s world” of rap
Eric B. and Rakim

• Rakim’s groundbreaking style

Video: Rapping, deconstructed: The best rhymers of all time (Vox)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWveXdj6oZU

• Hardcore
• lyrics
Slick Rick

- Storytelling narrative flow
- Style and Influence

*The Great Adventures of Slick Rick* (1988)

Ex: Slick Rick – “Children’s Story” (1988)

- Lyrics