

Edutainers are rappers who have increasingly become politically and socially conscious of the status of African-Americans. Edutainers rap about problems in the world as a means to increase awareness and raise the level of consciousness among people. Edutainers also feel that history has downplayed the role of African-Americans, and their song lyrics reflect the need to educate youth about black history. Rappers in this category stress black pride and nationalism, while embracing the ideas of leaders such as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers. Edutainers serve as a guiding force in the struggle for economic social and political equality. The term Edutainment comes from the title of the current LP by *Boogie Down Productions* (BDP). BDP has always been a rap group concerned with the plight of black people. BDP's leader, KRS-1 is a former homeless person who considers himself a cultural historian. BDP came on the music scene in 1987 with its debut LP, "Criminal Minded." The group's new album contains excerpts from KRS-1's recent lectures throughout the country and an interesting rap on greek philosophy. *Queen Latifah*, represents the independent black woman on her debut album, "All Hail the Queen" released in 1989." Latifah's lyrics are very concerned about the treatment of black women on her hit single "Ladies First." Latifah's album is very influenced by reggae, and she dresses in African clothing in her videos and in concert. *Poor Righteous Teachers* (PRT) is a group extremely concerned about the education of black youth. The majority of PRT's songs contain a lot of references to Islam. Their title cut "Holy Intellect" deals with the importance of knowing about your history and culture.

Public Enemy (PE) is the edutainer group that receives the most publicity.

PE is led by rappers Chuck D., Flavor Flav and DJ Terminator X. The group modeled itself after the Black Panther Party by creating a Minister of Enemy Relations and has indeed been called the "Black Panthers of Rap." PE's second album released in 1988, "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back," went to number one on the black album chart. In 1989, they released "Fight the Power," the theme song for Spike Lee's movie, *Do the Right Thing*. Their current LP, "Fear of A Black Planet," contains songs such as "Brothers Gonna Work it Out" and "Welcome to the Terror Dome." Their new album is considered one of the most socially-conscious pieces of music to come out of rap. PE disbanded for a short time in 1989 after Professor Griff, PE's Minister of Information, made anti-semitic remarks in an interview. PE fired Griff in 1989, which led to the formation of *Griff and the Last Asiatic Disciples*. The group's first LP, "Pawns in Their Game", was released earlier this year. The LP deals with how black people have been oppressed in a white man's world.

Edutainment can also be seen in two records produced by groups of rap artists. *Stop the Violence Movement*, was comprised of rappers concerned about black on black crime. The movement included rappers Kool Moe Dee and Heavy D & the Boyz. They released a song in 1988 called "Self Destruction," which talked about how black on black crime destroys the black community. The L.A. All-Stars, a group of west coast rappers, got together in 1990 to fight against gang violence. The rappers included Ice-T, Eazy-E, J.J. Fad and Tone Loc. They released a song earlier this summer titled "We're All in the Same Gang" aimed directly at gang violence in Los Angeles.

"There is no way that you can keep black people down for hundreds of

years and not expect them to get mad," Margo Crawford said. "Rap releases the anger and frustration that they have felt at oppression in society. No wonder rap has become more and more politically and socially conscious with the continued oppression faced by black people."

Commercialization and Acceptance of Hip Hop

Rap music has become so powerful that it can be seen in many aspects of society. The overall acceptance of rap music has become phenomenal. This acceptance can be seen best as the Music Academy created a rap category for the Grammy Awards in 1989. Music Television dedicates 30 minutes a day to hip hop with the showing of "Yo MTV Raps." Rap has become commercialized with artists appearing on television. Young MC raps on Taco Bell commercials, while MC Hammer jams for Pepsi. Heavy D & the Boyz are advertising Sprite on television, radios and in magazines.

The Fresh Prince of Bel Aire is a situation comedy starring the rapper from DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince. The group had already become a favorite on cable television. Kid-N-Play starred in the 1990 movie *House Party*, produced by black independent filmmakers, the Hudlin Brothers. The movie's success inspired a Saturday morning cartoon about the rappers. Black entertainers had not appeared in a Saturday morning cartoon since the mid-70s, when the Jackson 5 had their own show.

The acceptance of rap can be seen, when rap songs "crossover" to the pop charts. Cross over artists produce songs that appeal to white people. Usually crossover artists are the clean-cut types who don't antagonize white audiences. Young MC, Tone Loc, Run DMC and MC Hammer are just a few of the rappers who have crossed over. And with cross-

ing over comes even greater acceptance including possible movie contracts and commercial offers. Is crossing over selling out your people or is it progress?

Margo Crawford said probably the only way for rappers to really become successful is to crossover.

"Rap was always out there, but no one wanted to notice it. You have to get non-black people to look at things for them to be successful. Blacks didn't have the resources to bring rap to the fore. However, rap music is so powerful, that its blackness will survive, even if artists do cross over."

The Future of Hip Hop Music

The hip hop subculture began on the streets and in the ghettos of the nation. Traces of the motherland seem to dominate all of the aspects of the subculture. Rap within hip hop links together all people of African descent. No one can deny that there is something unique about the way black people participate in hip hop from graffiti artists to rap music. When rappers released their first recordings, critics called hip hop music a passing fad. Music critics did not understand that rappers had nothing to lose because most of them only knew the pains of street life. So what you have is a whole genre of music that evolved from the backgrounds of oppressed people. It is amazing how the most down-trodden, powerless people in society, have created a revolutionary art form to empower themselves. In this sense, rap music is another level in the oral history of African-Americans that will help shape the futures of black youth, as they struggle to overcome oppression in the United States.

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