



History of RAP

More than a century before rap exploded onto the American music scene, West African musicians were telling stories rhythmically, with just the beat of a drum for accompaniment. Meanwhile, folk artists from the Caribbean Islands were also telling stories in rhyme. Indeed, these singing poets from Africa and the Caribbean lay the foundation for modern-day American rap music.

Rapping essentially involves the speaking or chanting of rhyming lyrics, often set to a beat. The rhyming created by rappers is considered by many to be one of the most sophisticated styles of poetry. What's more, these rhymes often address provocative subjects such as sex, violence and socio-political issues.

Rapping first gained popularity in the U.S. in the 1970s as a kind of street art, especially among African-American teenagers. But it wasn't until 1979, when the Sugarhill Gang released their breakaway hit, 'Rapper's Delight', that record producers took notice of this emerging musical genre. Once they did, numerous rap acts, including Run-DMC and N.W.A. surfaced, and rap's audience began to swell. It wasn't just African-American male rappers getting in on the act, either. By the 1980s, white rap bands such as the Beastie Boys and female rap bands such as Salt-n-Pepa were reaching the top of the charts.

By the 1990s, rap matured from an old-school-style – which was based on relatively simple lyrics – to a new-school-style, which was louder and included more complex lyrics. Artists such as The Notorious B.I.G., Snoop Dogg and Tupac ruled the charts during this time, as did Eminem – one of the most popular white rappers of all time.

Rap has stood the test of time and its popularity rages on with today's artists such as 50 Cent, Ludacris and Jay-Z churning out hit after thought-provoking hit. The beat truly does go on.

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