

Davey D's 2007 End Of Year Hip Hop Awards

Written by Davey D ID4112

Wednesday, 02 January 2008 03:14 -

Well folks it's that time of year again for the annual **Davey D 2007 End of Year Hip Hop Awards**. This is where we dig deep and reward those for their distinguished and dubious accomplishments within the world of Hip Hop and urban music. Let's get right to it and kick things off...

Can't Get Rid of You Award: This is for the artist who seemingly showed up everywhere from award shows to guest spots on people's records. Leading the pack were artists like

T-Pain

who did songs with everyone from

Kanye West

to

Twista

to

R.Kelly

to

Fabulous

just to name a few. We had the Dark Prince of Senegal-

Akon

who sung hooks on songs put out by everyone from

Snoop Dogg

to

David Banner

to

50 Cent

to

Wyclef Jean

to

Joell Ortiz

Now T-pain tried to keep himself in the spot light by making some bugged out comments earlier this year. Y'all may recall long before embattled Idaho Senator **Larry Craig** played footsies with another man in a bathroom stall and then held a press conference declaring that He was not Gay, we had T-Pain make the same assertions. T-Pain's

"I'm Not Gay"

remarks came on the heels of him watching the infamous

Ray-J

-

Kim Kardashian

sex tape video and than publicly commenting on how he was impressed with the size of Ray-J's private parts. Hell let's give T-pain the "

The No Homo But...Award"

On the rap side we had **Lil Wayne** who is rumored to have done guest spots on people's records for free. He got down with everyone from

Fat Joe to

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Enrique Iglesias

to

Jay-Z

to

Scarface

. Of course we can't forget the mega hit he had called

"Duffle Bag Boy"

with

Playaz Circle

Simply put, dude was everywhere. I counted over 21 different artists Lil Wayne teamed up with in 2007.

Now initially I was gonna give this award to Akon as he seemed seemed to be ahead of the pack but that all changed when we opened up the new **Britney Spears** album *"Blackout"* and saw Lil Wayne cheesing it up and rapping on the remix of her hit song

"Gimme More"

. Lil Wayne and Britney? Need I say more? Dude went there.

Winner: Lil Wayne

Also we can't front. While I will emphatically disagree with Lil Wayne's mis-guided assertion that he's the greatest rapper alive, I will have to say he did step his rap game up considerably. He gets **"Most Improved Artist of the Year Award"**

The How Da Hell Did that Make It Big? Award: Every year we experience a crazy gimmicky type song or artist who comes along and momentarily captures our imagination. They either have a crazy hook or saying or they have a weird look or they act strange. But in any case they leave us scratching our collective heads asking "How" and "Why". Case in point was the 2006

DJ Webster

and

Young B

"Chicken Noodle Soup"

song. We were all left wondering how that made it on the charts.

This year the theme was to dumb it down and keep it simple. Thus we looked at several songs including **Hurricane Chris's** *"A Bay Bay"* which spawned several spin-offs and parodies. Also in the running was that mega smash hit *"Dance Like a Cholo"* by **Do**

wn

aka

Kilo

.

The cut that absolutely took the cake and left many of us scratching our heads was one that even sparked an in-depth *Village Voice* newspaper article. This write up came complete with pie charts, graphs and analysis of the song's lyrics. The song I'm talking about came from a

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gifted rapper who can really spit.

In 2007 this particular artists decided to prove an important point which was by completely dumbing down your lyrics and flowing over a hot beat can not only get you a hit song, but sadly can leave even the best among us singing along.

Winner: Mims "This is Why I'm Hot"

Cha Cha Electric Slide Award: This goes to the artist who got all of us doing the updated version of the urban line dance called the **Electric Slide**. In 2007 we saw ourselves doing variations of the 2 Step thanks to artists like Oakland's

Clyde Carson

"2 Step"

and Atlanta's

Unk

's

"2 Step"

which was a step up from last year's hit song

"Walk It Out"

. Of course we can't forget Philly rapper

Cassidy

who upped the ante a bit and told us to hold our drink while we 2 Stepped (

My Drink N My 2 Step

)

But in spite of the 2 Step craze, this year's winner brought to the table a more energetic dance. Unlike in years past where the urban line dances are enjoyed by all generations at weddings and family functions, this year's winner provided us with a song and dance that seemed specifically designed for those under 30. Anyone older caught doing the dance around this song will be seriously questioned and will lose quite a bit of status. No matter what you say or think there is simply no justification for anyone over 30 to be yelling and jumping around like superman.

This years winner Hands down we have to give it to **Soulja Boy** and that annoying song *"Crank Dat Souljah Boy"*

. There's even a version for women called

'soulja Girl"

... and if that's not enough we have Bay Area artist

Ashkon

and his recently released politicized version of the song called

'soldier Boy"

which embraces an anti-war theme.

Winner: Soulja Boy "Crank Dat Soulja Boy"

Nice Guys Finish Last Award: There's an old saying, "No good deed goes un-punished and

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that was definitely the case for
her for the hit song

'Monie in the Middle'

. She was also the sister who rapped alongside

Queen Latifah

on the female anthem

"Ladies First"

.

Monie Love. Folks may know

Well earlier this year Monie Love who had traded in her emcee mic for a radio host mic was interviewing Atlanta rap star **Young Jeezy** on a Clear Channel owned radio station WUSL in Philly. During their conversations things got heated and bit ugly when the topic of whether or not Nas was right when he said Hip Hop was dead. Monie who is long time respected vet in the game tried to gently school Jeezy as to Hip Hop's history and what Nas really meant when he coined the phrase Hip Hop was dead. Unfortunately, Young Jeezy wasn't trying to hear it or respect Monie Love.

Word of the debate spread around the industry like wild fire. The next thing you know Monie Love was unceremoniously let go with many speculating that Young Jeezy's record label Def Jam having something to do with it. Of course it's an allegation that both Def Jam and Clear channel deny. Monie for her part has remained silent although you can read between the lines when she gives interviews and know that the circumstances surrounding her sudden dismissal were foul. Is Hip Hop dead? Apparently it is in the corporate media world of Clear Channel and in the mind of Young Jeezy at least when it shows up in the form of Monie Love.

Winner: Monie Love

What the Hell Were You Thinking? Award: This award is pretty self explanatory. 2007 was the year a lot of folks simply made a lot of dumb moves that left us asking "Why Lord Why?"

Case in point earlier this year, G-Unit artist

Tony

Yayo

rolled up and smacked the 14 year old son of 50 Cent's arch rival

Jimmy Henchman

who is also manager to The Game. It was a foul move that sparked a protest and left us asking what was dude thinking?

Another dumb move was **Cam"ron** sitting up on 60 Minutes acting all smug while doing an interview about the *Stop Snitching Movement*. Instead of taking advantage of being in front of a large nationwide audience and talking about all the scenarios where hundreds of innocent people get locked up on the coerced & false testimony by government informants who oftentimes have questionable and shaky backgrounds, he tried to act cool and wound up making us all look bad and sound stupid when he said he would never snitch even if it was a child molestor living next door to him. All sorts of folks got on Cam"ron's case after the show aired and he later apologized, but the damage was done and all of us were left asking "What the hell was he thinking?"

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Next we have Brooklyn rapper Ms **Foxy Brown** who had a long list of transgressions. First, she decided to violate her parole by leaving the state without permission, second, she almost running down a woman with her range rover. Third, she refused to show up to court on time for her hearing until she changed her outfit and did her hair. It angered a judge who was going to be sentencing her. If that wasn't enough, after amassing a lengthy record of violations that seemed certain to send her to jail for a year or so, Ms Brown then announced that she was pregnant as a ploy to gain sympathy from the sentencing judge. Foxy was NOT pregnant. What was she thinking? We gotta give Foxy Brown the

Bad Girl Gone Wild Award

A close runner up to this award and someone who gets honorable mention for the What the Hell Were You Thinking Award goes to **Remy Ma** who is accused of shooting her best friend **Makeda Barnes-Joseph**

this past summer outside of a Manhattan nightclub after 2000 bucks came up missing. She supposedly did this in front of a dozen witnesses. Later Remy was accused of witness tampering after one witnesses' boyfriend got assaulted. Now for the record Ms Ma has pleaded innocent to all charges, but many of us within the Hip Hop world know not to mess with that woman's money. Again we ask "What the Hell Were You Thinking?"

With all that being said we have to give this award to our hands down winner Atlanta rapper **T.I.**. He started off this year on a serious roll. He had a slamming album

TI vs. TIP

and high profile movie roles in flicks like *"American Gangster"*

. He was starting to garner favorable press for his charity work in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and for his entrepreneurial endeavors. T.I. owns his own successful construction company. He was doing it big in 2007.

Sadly just hours before he was to appear on the **BET Hip Hop Awards** this past October, he got arrested for allegedly trying to purchase machine guns from an under cover cop. What made this even worse is that T.I. is a convicted felon. To top it off, it was his bodyguard of two months who set him up and dropped a dime on him. Many of us are still scratching our heads wondering how a street wise cat like T.I. could slip and let his new bodyguard in on something that should've been done on the extra down low? We also are hard pressed wondering why he allow himself to even get in this dire situation when he had so much going for him?

Winner: T.I. Getting Arrested for allegedly trying to purchase Machines Guns

The Rapper Gone Wild Award or the **Stand Your Ground Award**: Goes to the colorful and engaging Mississippi native **David Banner**

. Banner is a large man who is passionate and speaks forcefully about things he believes in including an artist's right to express himself. He prides himself on standing up to today's power brokers and establishments that he feels maligns the young, poor and disenfranchised. He'll even go at it with other rappers who he feels may be misconstruing or stepping on the toes of other artist's right to express themselves. This was demonstrated when he sat on a panel with

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Master P

during

All Hip Hop Week

. He got into a somewhat heated back and forth with P. Banner is seen by many as a humanitarian who gives unselfishly back to the community, while those in power see him as a rapper gone wild...

..=283 alt="" src="http://www.daveyd.com/davidbannersowl-225.gif" width=225 align=left border=0>Case in point his war of words with Civil Rights leader **Al Sharpton** who he felt wanted to censor artists. Banner via the press said Sharpton was out of touch and the only worthwhile thing he could do was orally stimulate his private parts. Sharpton's camp infamously responded by thanking Banner for the offer but declined citing that the good reverend often receives sexual advances, but he's not gay and therefore could not accommodate Banner... That retort gave Sharpton the coveted **"Comeback Response of the Year Award"**

Some more colorful words were exchanged and soon Banner set his sights on **Jesse Jackson** who he also feels is also out of touch. During an interview Banner asserted that Jesse needs to get his butt kicked but since he has respect for his elders, Banner offered to roll up and slap Jesse's son Congressman

Jesse Jackson Jr.

His assertions drew lots of howls and gleeful laughter until it was pointed out that Jesse Jr is a martial arts expert (3rd degree Black belt) who trains regularly. We haven't heard too many remarks about boxing since this was made known.

In spite of these mis-steps we still celebrate Mr Banner. He appeared on the cover of the **Source Magazine**

where he talked about politics. He is shown in a recently released popular You Tube video giving away money and lots of toys deep in the hoods of Mississippi with his

Heal the Hood Foundation

.Here he challenges fellow gansta rappers and so called civil rights leaders to follow suit. Check the video out here...

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=u5falXw8md8>

Winner: **David Banner**

Feud of the Year: So what would Hip Hop be without a feud? We already highlighted the feud between **David Banner** and Civil Rights leaders. Now lets be clear there's a difference between a feud and a battle. A feud in Hip Hop is a battle gone bad. Battles are good. They're healthy. They test our skillz, sharpen our wit etc, but feuds on the other hand, they unfortunately tend to be conflicts designed to capture the public's attention which then oftentimes leads to their un-invited involvement.

Case in point was several years back at a concert in LA where fans of **50 Cent** squared off against fans of

T

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he Game

. Anyway 2007 had its share of feuds. We saw feuds within the ranks of Dipset.

Jim Jones vs. Cam"ron

. This came on the heels of the spirited exchange between 50 Cent and Cam"ron. We saw tension within the ranks of G-Unit with

Young Buck

supposedly having issues with 50 and the crew. Remember how the public clamored for that to explode? We saw 50 take shots

Nas

and

Diddy

. But should we be surprised.

The most over-hyped up feud of the year went to **50 Cent vs. Kanye West**. Many people saw this as an epic battle between two of rap's biggest superstars who were releasing their albums on the same day-September 11th. At first Kanye tried to duck a challenge issued by 50 who wanted to see who would sell the most albums that week. Kanye wisely told the public September 11th should be viewed as a day when people have an opportunity to purchase good music.

50 on the other hand saw this as a great marketing opportunity and raised the stakes by offering to quit if Kanye outsold him. This bold assertion set the marketing wheels in motion at Universal records which is the parent company for both artists. Once their gears started running, the "epic" battle between "Fiddy" and "Ye" got projected as *Gangster rap vs. Backpack rap. Negative Hip Hop vs. Positive Hip Hop*

or

Street Rap vs College Rap

. Kanye's eventual victory was seen as a referendum against gangsta rap. The 50 vs. Kanye battle became the topic de jour on MTV, BET and damn near every major news network. For many this was a nice distraction and a great water cooler topic. The reality is it was a great marketing gimmick for Universal who saw them sell more albums between their two stars than was initially expected. We'll give 50 cent the

Marketing Genius of the Year Award

Over hyped feud of the Year: 50 Cent vs Kanye West

One of the dumber feuds that comes to mind is the "epic battle" was producers **Timbaland vs. Scott Storch**

These two exchanged a few barbs in songs with Timbaland maybe edging out Mr. Storch by calling him

"Piano Man"

. Actually I don't think being called Piano Man is that bad. After all, Storch is nice on the keyboards. Anyway it was a pointless feud. Both are good producers but I'll be honest, I'll take a

a

DJ Premier

or

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Dr Dre

track over any of theirs any day. And hey if we really wanna keep it real, if Storch or Timbaland were to pass away tomorrow, I just can't see fans riding for them like they did the late

J-Dilla

. Nope, I just can't see legions of people wearing t-shirts saying *Scott Storch or Timbaland changed my life.*

..

Dumb Feud of the Year: Timbaland vs.Scott Storch

The Feud of the Year:Lupe Fiasco vs. Tribe Called Quest & Hip Hop backpack fans. Who could forget that one? It was a bloggers dream as hordes of scorned backpack fans screamed, howled and disowned Lupe forever.

This memorable feud started out during this past fall's **VH1 Hip Hop Honors** when Lupe was asked to take part in a tribute for

Tribe Called Quest

. For many of us it seemed like a natural fit considering the type of vibe and heady lyrics Lupe kicks. Many saw Lupe as the re-emergence of the Native Tongue, tribe vibe era in Hip Hop

The problem was Lupe admitted in a blog prior to the performance that he never listened to Tribe and didn't really check for their music that much. That became apparent when he fluffed some of the lines to their songs during the performance. This enraged fans from coast to coast. As people got on Lupe's case, Lupe he became defiant and repeated his claim of not listening to Tribe. He went a step further, by saying that he was from the Westside of Chicago land grew up listening to artists like **Spice 1** and other gangsta rappers. He then went on to say that **Q-Tip** reached out and asked him to do the performance. This was something that annoyed Q-Tip who said he never did any such thing, and that it was the record label and VH1 folks that insisted that Lupe be a part of the performance.

To make a long story short, things got heated, backpackers all around the world united and said "*Fuck Lupe*". They felt he was exploiting certain symbolisms that one may associate with Tribe and groups like them. On the other hand, Lupe raised some valid points about fans unfairly putting him in a box. He rejected the notion that he or any other rapper had to adhere to what he saw as a false set of standards in terms of who one listens to or embraces. Although Lupe didn't come right out and state it, this feud revealed a generational divide of sorts within Hip Hop. Many people seem to forget that Lupe was 11 or 12 when Tribe was at their height and so its understandable why he may not have come up without checking for Tribe.

At the end of the day, Lupe Fiasco went and released his new album "*The Cool*" and many of those same Lupe haters have been secretly buying the album and singing Lupe's praises. You simply can't deny good music.

Feud of the Year: Lupe Fiasco vs Backpack Tribe Called Quest Fans

R&B Meets Hip Hop Award: I recall a time in Hip Hop when having R&B artists on the song

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singing the hook was seen as treason of the highest degree. I've attended music conventions where topics like R&B singers diluting Hip Hop were discussed. In 2007 that has all changed. Today, many R&B singers seem to kick a lot more flava then their Hip Hop counterparts. Yep I will take a **Jill Scott, Erykah Badu, Anthony Hamilton or Amy**

Winehouse

or even a

Beyonce

track over whole lot of mediocre cats who dropped "Hip Hop" albums this year.

2007 had some memorable moments of R&B artists shining on Hip Hop records. I enjoyed **Diddy**

getting down with

Keyisha Cole

on the song

"Last Night"

. She really stood out on the song

"Dreamin"

with

Young Jeezy

.

R. Kelly

got down with

Snoop Dogg

on the cut

"That's That Shit"

. Hell Snoop caught the R&B bug and went out and sung his own hooks on the song

'sexual Eruption'

and came off sounding like

T-Pain

. Check out the video here:

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=-lgGzgX5LII>

Speaking of which, T-Pain was everywhere but really shined on Kanye's joint *"Good Life"*. We also have to give up to soul singer

Dwele

who got down on Kanye's song

"Flashing Lights"

.

Jill Scott teaming up with **Lupe Fiasco** for the song *Day Dreamin'* was a good look.

Amy Winehouse was huge. Her hooking up with **Jay-Z** and **Ghostface** on separate cuts was a nice look. Her *"Back*

to Black"

album was incredible and earns her "

Breakout Album of the Year Award

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" You listen to this joint and its style and sound takes you back to a time and place where music had special meaning above and beyond album sales.

Also we can't forget **Justin Timberlake**. The man who supposedly brought sexy back did his thing with **Timbaland** and **50 Cent**.

Nas had a couple of R&B flavored cuts that stood out in 2007 including "*Let There be Light*" featuring newcomer

Tre Williams

who sounds like Anthony Hamilton. The other one the

Nat King Cole

inspired

"*Can't Forget About You*"

featuring

Chrisette Michelle

I loved **Pharoahe Monch's** joint "*Desire*" which features his back up singers **Mela Machinko** and

Showtyme

. The gospel-like vocals is what made this an off the hook song coming off one of the better albums of the year.

We can't forget **Ludacris** and **Mary J Blige**. They hooked up and did a heartfelt socially conscious song called "*Runaway Love*". That was definitely nice.

But the award has to go to **Rihanna** and **Jay-Z** for the monster smash *Umbrella*. How can you deny the potency of that cut? The Cinderella remix featuring Jay-Z and

Chris Brown

was equally dope. Rihanna was this year's R&B Queen.

R&B Meets Hip Hop Award: Rihanna w/ Jay-Z "*Umbrella*"

The R&B king for 2007 has to go to **Akon** who can seemingly do little wrong as a guest performer or producer. This year he hooked up with artists like

50 Cent

and

Bones Thugs & Harmony

and gave life to their songs. Now Akon may do lots of harm at a show. Just ask singer

Gwen Stefani

or that fan he tossed off the stage. Better yet listen carefully to his song

"*sorry Blame it On Me*"

. Hell I think I'm gonna give Akon the

"Worlds Most Dangerous Performer Award"

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Hip Hop Song of the Year: This was tough to decide. 2007 presented a whole lot of memorable moments. Singles ruled the day as way too many artists put out subpar albums. On the mainstream side we had a host of gimmicky songs like *"Lip*

Gloss"

by

Lil Mama

, and

Soulja Boy

's

"Crank Dat Soulja Boy"

. Those were balanced out by some dope songs like

UGK

's

"International Player's Anthem"

featuring

Outkast

or

Chamillionaire

's

"Hip Hop Police"

. I was also feeling

Crime Mob

's

"Circles"

as well as

Common

's two stand out jams the Gil Scott inspired

"The People"

and

"I Want You"

. Hip Hop artists who embraced melodies and harmonies are what caught my ear this year.

On the underground tip, cuts like **Brother Ali's** heartfelt cuts *"Faheem"* and *"Walk Away"* stayed locked in my CD player.

KRS-One & Marley Marl's autobiographical cut *"Rising to the Top"* was on point. He and Marley also killed it with the controversial hard hittin" song.

Nas' "Let There Be Light" was dope and a big hit on my station Breakdown FM. **Scarface's** joint

"Neve

r" was

a chart topper as was Oakland native

Jennifer John

's tribute to Hip Hop DJs"

"For the Love of the DJ"

.

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I have to give a shout out to another Oakland based group **Christion** who dropped a gem of a song warning us about the dangers of the streets called "*No Place*"

. Its off the

Project Plato

album.

Another stand out song came from **Public Enemy** who celebrated their 20th anniversary. "*Harder than You Think*"

was a throwback to the hey days of this legendary group.

We have to give **Brother J** of the group **X-Clan** major dap for his slept .. "*Prisons*" featuring jazz artist Christian Scott. This was off the album

"*Return to Mecca*"

NY Oil formerly known as **Kool Kim** of the **UMCs** shook things up in '06 with his controversial song and video "*Y'all Need to Get Lynched*".

As many of y'all recall he took shots at gangsta and negative rappers and images and put them on full blast. In 07 he came back with a heartfelt song and video dedicated to Black women called

"*You're a Queen*"

Check out the video here:

<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=6167767>

We also have to put a spot light on **Queen Nasim** out of Portland, Oregon she had a couple of cuts off her independently released album "*Fr*

esh"

including the fun, old school inspired

"*Pumps (In my B-Girl Stance)*"

and her recently released Trip Hop inspired

"*Get Down*"

A dope Hip Hop song that seized the time and made its mark came from the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was from **Jasiri X** who is a minister in the Nation of Islam and a member of the community police watch group **One Hood**. He delivered a stinging song called

"*Free the Jena 6*"

which got national attention when radio talk show host

Michael Baisden

started playing it.

Using a slamming beat from famed producer **Jus Blaze**, Jasiri summed up everything that was going on in the case and how the rest of the nation was feeling in less than 4 minutes. He gets the

Year Award

Hip Hop Political Song of the

check out the video

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here:

<http://uk.youtub>

e.com/watch?v=Pjv8jHiRETY

For me the song of the year a favorite for many of us who get to program radio, but rarely saw the light of day because folks were too scared to go there. I'm giving the award to **Pharoahe Monch** and

his incredible jam

"Push"

. The lyrics to the song set the theme for this year encouraging us to put our shoulders to the grind and push for new heights. A big gas face goes out to all those who slept on this song and let it go by.

Winner: Pharoahe Monch "Push"

Video of the Year: I'm not the biggest video fan in the world. It just seemed like I seen one two many that harked on the *I Got Money* or *I Got Girls* theme. At least thats what I tend to see when I watch the popular video channels. But the one video that stood out and really caught my eye was from

Chamillionaire

. The video for his song

"Hip Hop Police"

featuring

Slick Rick

was absolutely brilliant. Its off his album "Ultimate Victory" which is pretty damn good. He proved to everyone that you don't have to course and act all gangsta to have a slamming album. He brought forth the type of creativity that has long been missing. At the same time he made a serious social-political statement without being preachy. Check out the video and give Chamillionaire his props...

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=oQlgJQgoytk>

Winner: Chamillionaire "Hip Hop Police"

Album of the Year: 2007 was a year for mediocrity. It just felt like a lot of folks weren't putting in the work. There was a time that people spent a year or two working on an album, nowadays cats spit these things out in two weeks and sell that as a major accomplishment. You can't deliver a masterpiece which will have us wanting to rewind every song and pay close attention to the lyrics as well as embrace and explore the concepts behind a project when you put something out that quick.

Far too many people try to be like **Jay-Z** who supposedly doesn't write down his rhymes and records albums like *"American Gangster"* in 3 weeks time. I always like to point out that Jigga sold himself short. If AG was a good album-and it is. It by far one of the better albums for 2007, but I can't help thinking that it could've been so much better had he taken more time. In other words, his album is good, but it was mediocre for a guy

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of his talents especially when compared to some of his other albums. We've heard and seen jigga do all this before. The bottom line is fine wine doesn't come in two weeks time and neither does a great album.

With that being said...I've been re-listening to all the stand out albums that came out this year. They include;

Common's excellent "*Finding Forever*". Common is consistent. he year after year delivers good product. This album has some solid songs-many of which I like and play. I still think he has yet to reach his peak. There's a missing ingredient with him and I think all of us are waiting for him to take us there and give us that ultra classic album that is on par with landmark offerings like *Paid in Full*

,
Takes a Nation of Millions

or

36 Chambers

. Now that he's getting more into acting, it'll be interesting to see if Common continues to deliver on the level he has in years past.

Kanye West's ok "*Graduation*". I like Kanye and this album was pretty cool. While he did resonate with fans more than 50 in their much lauded "battle", he still fell short of the mark when you compare this album with his last one *"Late Registration"*

Talib Kweli's pretty good "*Eardrum*". Talib seems to finally be coming into his own. He along with his partner **Corey Blacksmith** started their own label, signed a strong stable of artists including

Jean Grae

and

Strong Arm Steady

. Then Talib did what any President of a label should do, he kicked things off and set the standard with his best album in years.

Pharoahe Monch's slept on "*Desire*". I have no idea why this album which came out on SRC/Universal was underplayed. What more did they want Pharoahe to do. The man had a great band, great back up singers, did great shows, ghost wrote for a few mega-stars and delivered one of the dopest albums to come out in years. Unfortunately far too many taste-makers and program directors would rock Mr Monch in their cars and not on the radio. His album was Hip Hop's Best kept Secret in 2007

M.I.A.'s incredible "*Kala*" How can one go wrong with M.I.A.? Her album didn't penetrate the mainstream the way it should, but within other circles this was top notch. Her cuts push the envelop as far as U.S. ears are concerned and hopefully in time what she brings to the table will be commonplace. M.I.A. has a world wide sound that is infectuous. Favorite cuts include "*Come Around*"

w/

Timbaland

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Written by Davey D ID4112

Wednesday, 02 January 2008 03:14 -

and "The Turn"

KRS-One & Marley's hard hitting, on point *"Hip Hop Lives"*. This album came right on time and reminded us that while Nas made valid points about Hip Hop being dead because of corporate takeover, that as long as you have legends like KRS and Marley Marl in the building the only thing dead will be wack emcees and the foolish people who market them.

Public Enemy's 20th Anniversary landmark Gem *"How to Sell Soul to a Souless People Who Sold Their Soul"*. Too bad we allowed outside forces to define Hip Hop in such narrow terms. Hence Hip Hop stars when they celebrate their 20th anniversary its placed far in the back burner with radio programmers and consultants claiming that such groups are too old for their audience. Contrast that with their rock counterparts. The agism that exist within Hip Hop led to this brilliant album slipping through the cracks. That has got to change in 08.

We be remised if we did not give special mention to the Public Enemy led project "A Tribb to JB" which is to date the only Tribute to the late great Godfather of Soul James Brown. They use the name The Peeps of Soul Funk and it features Public Enemy, artists off Chuck D's Slam Jamz label and their back up ban the The Banned getting busy recreating James brown classic. Special shout out to Johnny Juice who held down the production. Yes folks PE did big things in 07.

Jennifer John's incredible "Painting on Wax". She made the Bay Area proud and is well on her way to redefining what it means to be a Hip Hop Queen. She has an incredible voice that will send chills up your spine. Her flava is intoxicating. Rarely does her album leave my CD player.

Lupe Fiasco's triumpheth album *"The Cool"* As I mentioned earlier. All those backpack Tribe Called Quest fans who swore to forever disown Lupe, have now quietly placed his picture back upon the mantle. This man refused to be denied in 2007.

Amir Sulaiman's slept on "Like a Thief in the Night". If you can find this album pick it up and trut me you will not be disappointed. Amir brings serious heat like no other. And for those of you who ignorantly claim spoken word artists aren't emcees, you will be forced to change your mind after listening to this album which features the Last Poets and Mos Def among others.

Marco Polo's Under rated *"Port Authority"* I loved this joint and can't believe more people didn't know about it.

Redman's pretty damn cool *"Redman Gone Wild"*. Way too many people including his Def Jam label slept on this guy who delivired an excellent album. This was big miss for the marketing department and now former President Sean Carter.

DJ Jazzy Jeff's Magnificent *"Return of the Magnificent"*. DJ Jazzy Jeff is a long time fixture in the game who has quietly innovated (brought us the transforming scratch) and pushed Hip Hop to new heights. We all know and love him as the sometimes 'sidekick' of

Will Smith

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when he was known as the

Fresh Prince

. The irony is when they first started it was the other way around. It was Jazzy Jeff and his incredible deejaying that drew the large crowds.

Nowadays Jazzy has gotten behind the mixing and production boards and delivered groups and albums that remind us just how good Hip Hop can be. This years album lived up to its name. He brought the best qualities out of the many artists featured on this LP including **Method Man, De La Soul**

Jean Grae

Big Daddy Kane

and

J-Live

to name a few.

Kellie Maize's Woman centered strong album "*Age of Femine*" (She's the pride and joy of Pittsburgh and the head of the

N

okturnal Movement

which empowers women artists. She rolls with a serious crew of female emcees and singers who have proven time and time again in their home town they are the truth. Look for her to blow up in 2008.

50 Cent's disappointing "**Curtis**". 50 said earlier that he was going back to his grandma's house and was gonna lock himself in the basement and deliver us an album that brought out the emotions and vibe he was experiencing when he was just coming up. I don't know what happened, but this could not possibly be that album. This guy has lots of talent and he seemed to be lazy on this "highly anticipated offering.

Blu & Exile's "*Below the Heavens*" is the best debut album of 2007. I will have to go along with the good folks over at Okayplayer.com who gave them

Rook

ie of the Year

. We're giving this dynamic duo from Los Angeles the same honor..

This is just a few of the many albums that came across the decks this year..

As for the album of the year, I'm gonna have to give it up to **Brother Ali** out of Minneapolis's Rhymesayers camp. His landmark album

"Undisputed Truth"

was an important shot in the arm. He reminded everyone that Hip Hop has a lot of responsibility to speak truth to power in the most compelling way.

You listen to Brother Ali and you feel that every word he utters has meaning. All the songs on this album served a purpose. In other words he was not rhyiming for the sake of riddlin" and he didn't provide us with tons of filler material. He delivered a masterpiece. From songs like "*Walk*

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Away"

which explains in great detail the demise of his ten year marriage to the politically laced songs like

"Letter to Government"

, to the stinging barb blasting the US government

"Uncle Sam Goddamn"

to the moving ode to his son "Faheem". Brother Ali was the absolute truth in 2007 Enuff said.

Hip Hop Book of the Year: 2007 was a great year for Hip Hop scholars and writers. More and more classes are being taught at Universities and along with those classes are more books being written about Hip Hop and Hip Hop related topics. In 2007 we say books like

"Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip Hop"

by

Michael Eric Dyson

"Check the Technique (Liner Notes for the Hip Hop Junkie)

" by Brian Coleman.

"Total Chaos: The Art And Aesthetics of Hip-hop"

by esteemed author

Jeff Chang

Born in the Bronx

by

Joe Conzo

and

The Hip Hop Education Guidebook Volume 1

by

Marcella Runell & Martha Diaz

are just a few of the stand out publications I peeped this year...

The book that gets the award hands down is *Snitch (Informants, Cooperators & the Corruption of Justice)* by **Ethan Brown**. Many of y'all may

know Ethan for his excellent book

"Queens Reigns Supreme"

. This book breaks down the entire Stop Snitching ethos and how and why it came about via the government. Ethan should've been on 60 Minutes explaining things and not

Cam"ron

. This is a must read book for anyone and everyone within Hip Hop. The most compelling chapter is the story behind the shooting of

2Pac

and the role snitching played. It'll blow you away...

Winner: Ethan Brown 'snitch'

Hip Hop Documentary of the Year: This year I saw several that really stood out. One of my

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favorites was

Bling: a Planet Rock featuring **Raekwon**, Tego Calderon and Paul Wall is incredible. A look at this film will make you re-think wearing diamonds. Big shout out to director Raquel Cepeda who put this together. Major shout out to Paul Wall who came back and completely changed the way he does business in the diamond industry. Check out an excerpt here:

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=4NGNbC4bons>

Bastards of the Party is a dope documentary with serious impact. It goes into great detail showing how the Bloods and Crips came about. It traces the direct links back to the Black Panther Party and the FBI's Cointel-Pro program. Big shout out to Blood gang member

Bone

who put this together its a must see film for anyone who likes to talk about gang banging and street culture in their rhymes...Check out clips here:

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=4NGNbC4bons>

We have to pay homage to the documentary "*The Otherside of Hip Hop*" which was put out by famed Hip Hop photographer

Ernie Paniciolli

. It features

Afrika Bambaataa

,

Chuck D

and many others and was recently featured at the

Tribeca Film Festival

and it was awarded Best Documentary in the

Big Apple Film Festival

. Now that's major. check out

www.ourgang62.com

There were two excellent documentaries that took on Hip Hop media and showed us how things operate behind the scenes. Both documentaries were done guerilla style with very little money but had great impact. The first one is "*Turn Off Channel Zero*" featuring **Professor Griff** of **Public Enemy**

.

The concept behind this documentary came about when people on the popular Luv4Self Listserve started expressing their frustrations and disappointment with the VH1 reality show *Flava of Love*

. People from all over the country decided to pool their resources and up and coming film maker

Opio Oskoni

made it happen. He held screenings all over the country and got people fired up as he exposed many of the ways corporate media works in distorting Hip Hop culture and Black people. The film takes aim at viacom chairman Sumner Redstone Check the excerpts here:

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=3vNBVDr6jZk>

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The other documentary was the infamous "*Confessions of a BET Producer*" by former BET programming assistant

D Brad

. He does the ultimate expose and tells us how things really go down behind the scenes at Black Entertainment Television. He exposes the payola practices, the questionable decision making process. He even talks about being sexually harrassed by his former boss Stephen Hill. This made for Youtube documentary was off the hook.

Shortly after D Brad posted things on line, BET came after him and tried to prevent him from posting things up on **Youtube** and **myspace**. So you may have to check around for viable links to see all 4 parts. We gonna give D Brad the **Blow**

the Whistle Like Too Short Award

.. "cause homeboy really did blow up BET's spot in a big way.

Check out the excerpts here: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=lm0mEfL8S9s>

The winner of this years award is *Hip Hop beyond Beats and Rhymes* by **Byron Hurts**. This documentary kicked things off in a major way as Hip Hop went on a journey of self examination. Hurts does a great job dealing with the issue of misogyny within Hip Hop culture and helps get us to change our ways. The highlights of the film was his the conversation he had with young rappers in front of Power 105 in New York who explained the type of pressure they were under by mega corporations to produce certain material. The other highlight was Hurts confronting music mogul

Russell Simmons

and BET's VP of programming

Stephan Hill

Check out the excerpts here:

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=53tvVk8jxi0>

Five Low Moments in Hip Hop in 2007:

1) Hip Hop pioneer **Afrika Bambaataa** was not voted not the **Rock-N-Roll Hall of Fame** this year. It was a big disappointment especially when you consider all that Bam has done. Here's a guy who helped spearhead the movement to turn gangs around and make them productive.

We all know the story behind the notorious **Black Spades** that routinely terrorized the Bronx back in the 1970s becoming first the

Organization

and later **Mighty** and now the

Universal Zulu Nation

. We know about Bam introducing Hip Hop not only around the world, but also introducing the early Hip Hop crowds to world music like

Fela Kuti

. back in the days Bam was known as the Master of Records because of his wide range of musical tastes and influences.

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We know that Bam was a positive force who used his music and popularity to raise money for **Nelson Mandela**

and the

African National Congress

when South Afrika was under Apartheid Rule. We also know that Bam was the first in Hip Hop to do a song with

James Brown

. He later went on to push the envelop by teaming up with Punk Rockers like

Johnny Rotten

and later on Funkateers like

George Clinton

. This is just small portion of the many things Afrika Bamabaataa has done..

The Gas Face goes out to the Rock-n-Roll Hall of Fame and all those who voted. How can you not put one of the founders for the biggest music genres in the world inside the Rock-n-Roll hall of Fame? Talk about Disrespect

2) One of Hip Hop's lowest moments came in January of 2007 when the **RIAA** (Recording Industry Association of America) teamed up with the police to raid the offices of

DJ Drama

and

DJ Cannon

in Atlanta. It was a foul move when you consider that for years the industry especially on the Hip Hop side has depended upon mixtape deejays who usually at great expense to themselves have gone out and literally laid the foundation and blown up the careers of the artists they featured.

Mixtape deejays have long been a bigger asset then the marketing departments at many of these labels Drama and Cannon are the best of the best and too see and hear about their offices getting raided and them getting arrested was about one the lowest moments we had this year. In my opinion the motivation behind the raid was about exerting control, not loss of revenue.

Nowadays the RIAA wants to bring their gestapo tactics to the average consumer. They are now pushing a case through the court system to make it illegal for purchasers of a CD to copy music onto their computer. How low and how sad is that?

3)The death of soul legend and longtime **James Brown** sidekick **Bobby Byrd**. Folks within Hip Hop know Byrd best for the song "I Know You Got Soul" which was immortalized by rap stars

Eric B & Rakim

.

4)The untimely death of **Kanye West's** mother **Dr Donda West**. For people who had an opportunity to meet her she was a down to earth incredible woman who had made name for herself teaching for 31 years in the Chicago school system. Many of us felt we knew Dr West personally because Kanye always talked about her and even wrote a heartfelt song about her.

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Our hearts broke alongside the young rapper when it was learned she died during a routine surgical procedure.

5)The sudden death of rap star **Pimp C**. He was an icon who was one half of the group UGK. They are credited with helping establish southern rap. When Pimp C wound up going to jail he sparked a two or three year campaign with fellow rappers and fans calling for his freedom. He was released this year and quickly made noise by giving colorful interviews where he spoke out against phony rappers who he felt were soiling the game and diluting the music. UGK along with fellow southerners Outkast had one of the hottest songs of the year with "*International Players Anthem (I Choose You)*". Pimp was on a roll and his death came as a huge shock to his peers and fans.

Ten High Moments in Hip Hop for 2007

1)**Master P** stepping up, apologizing to Black woman and making a promise to turn things around and release positive music. He came across as an esteemed elder statesman and repped us well during the contentious Congressional Hearings last Summer.

2)**Byron Hurt's** award winning documentary **Hip Hop Beyond Beats & Rhymes** which addressed misogyny in Hip Hop and forced us all to take along hard look.

3)**The Paid Dues** and **Rock the Bells Tour**. These two concerts sold out in many cities and let us clearly know that Hip Hop was alive and well inspite of dire predictions from so called experts and critics. The highlight of these tours was seeing all the great acts that now have stellar back up bands...

4) **KRS-One**, **Lord Cashus D** and the Chicago Hip Hop community that came out in full force and lit things up at the FCC hearings around the issue of media consolidation in Chicago. There were attempts to stifle voices but folks in the Chi weren't having it.. Hip Hop was in the building. You can peep KR'S speaking at those hearings here:

<http://odeo.com/audio/16884193/view>

Big shout outs are in order to the Seattle Hip Hop community who followed suit and came out in force at the FCC hearings in Chicago. **206 Zulu Nation** members came through and let the FCC Commissioners know that Hip Hop folks were alive and active and very much against the type of dribble being offered up daily on commercial stations.

5)Watching **Mos Def** on **Bill Maher** show alongside **Dr Cornel West** speaking out and let the world know about the plight of the

San Francisco 8

political prisoners. as well as the

Jena 6

. Maher tried to over talk Mos Def and throw all sorts of crazy arguments his way, but Mos swatted them away and went on repped for us real hard. It was beautiful thing.

check out the video here: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=EvO5kD4yr1Y&feature=rela>

ted

A couple of months later Mos Def showed up in Jena, Louisiana to show support for the Jena 6 and then upon seeing that many of his fellow artists weren't there he went ahead and organized a nationwide school walk out.

A couple of months after that Mos Def came to San Francisco and put on a benefit concert to raise money for the SF8 who he feels are being unfairly prosecuted and railroaded for crimes they were acquitted of over 30 years ago.

Mos not only put on a full fledged 3 hour concert complete with a dope back up band, but he also held a standing room only town hall meeting in one of the housing projects in the Fillmore section of SF to bring attention to this issue. He had two of the SF8 on stage with him. Mos for President in 08.

6) In the same vein props goes out to **Talib Kweli** who started off the year by completing his **Right to Return Tour**

which was designed to bring attention to the plight of those displaced by the floods in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Like Mos Talib did fund raising concerts and then held well attended town halls.

7)**The Freedomland Project** Out of New Orleans. Say what you want about the 504, but many of the artists from that area stepped it up and put in work to save lives at the height of the Katrina floods and many are on the ground putting in work now. The Freedomland Project pulled together many of the city's grimmest artists and had them put together a heartfelt song that expressed the angst frustrations and hope they have in the aftermath of Katrina. The project and video are off the chain. Its a shame so many slept on this.

Check out the video and tell me that ain't fresh...

http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=gDEqm9VNm_Y

8) In the same vein we have to give it up to New Orleans artists like **Sess 4-5** who not only dropped some lyrical bombs with songs like "Stayed in the Ghetto" and "Blackman", but he was one of those artists who has long put his money where his mouth was. When I was out there in August for the Hurricane Katrina Tribunal he was out there leading the march through the ravaged lower 9th Ward. He was out there standing tall with the people helping lead the charge to stop the recent demolition of public housing. We give Sess 4-5

The Unsung Hero Award

9) Long time Hip Hop head and professor Jared Ball entering into the Presidential race. This past summer Jared Ball who is best known throughout the Washington DC area for his Freemix Mixtape Radio show announced that he would be running for President under the Green Party banner. He is our first Hip Hop presidential candidate. No, Ball doesn't get regular press on the nightly news, nor does he get quoted in the NY Times every week, but his ideas and concepts are so on point and resonate with all who hear him. He inspires hope and people should definitely give him a listen..

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=-TBSSaeR0c>

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10)The formation of the **Hip Hop Chess Federation** in the Bay Area and witnessing **Rza** and his fellow Wu-Tang family members

Gza

and

Black Monk

take the championship for the federation's first tournament. Big shout out to long time journalist Adisa Banjoko who put this together. he brought together a gang of chess playing Hip Hop artists ranging from

Casual

of

Heiro

to

Paris

to pioneers like

Popmaster Fabel

to

DJ Q-Bert

to

Raaka

from

Dilated Peoples

to

Sunspot Jonz

of Living Legends along with martial arts experts and chess masters to go head to head in the ultimate thinking game. Things went so well this past summer that HHC is gearing up for a own's chess tournament called the

Queens Invitational

. Banjoko noted that its important to get people to think long term and if they're gonna battle, battle on the 64 squares as you comtemplate your next move opposed to having meaningless battles in the streets over nonsense. Check out Rza winning the tournament.

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=LEa8aOZYcTY>