

James Brown The Basis of Hip-Hop

Written by Robert ID790

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If hip-hop could hold up a mirror, it would see James Brown in the reflection.

Brown - whose autobiography, "I Feel Good: A Memoir of a Life of Soul," comes out Sunday - gave rhythm & blues its soul and invented funk.

But, never a modest man, the S.C. native also takes credit for hip-hop.

"[My music] inspired everything from their melodies to their looks, moves and onstage attitudes," Brown writes. "They took the fierce, positive pride that is the heart and soul of my music and blended it with the anger they felt at injustice."

He's right, says Howard Kramer, curatorial director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland.

"Hip-hop is built on two things: hooks and beat," Kramer said. "No one is better at creating hooks and beats than James Brown. [He] is the basis of hip-hop."

Still not convinced Brown passes the hip-hop paternity test? Try this analogy from "I Feel Good" co-author Marc Eliot: James Brown is to hip-hop what the Beatles are to rock "n" roll.

"Rap is in-your-face. That's all James Brown," Eliot said.

Since its birth, hip-hop has always been about the rhythm, that beat that makes you tap your foot, shake your thang and nod your head.

Whether it was the sparse drumming of Grandmaster Flash or the solid bass lines of Sugar Hill

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Gang and Kurtis Blow, hip-hop has always had a thump.

Brown started the toe-tapping by stripping his songs of the traditional verse-chorus-verse structure and eliminating chord progression so he could drench the sound with its essence: the rhythm.

Brown's rhythm starts with the "one" - on the upbeat. Compare, for example, the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand," a typical rock "n" roll song with its emphasis on the two and four beats, with Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)" or "Hot Pants, Pt. 1," with their emphasis on the one and the three.

The "one," Brown writes, is the key to the movement of his music, as well as hip-hop.

"I think I can take a little credit for influencing the beat of rap ... the one/three that much of rap is based on," he writes.

Hip-hop DJs continue to spin Brown records in the club. You shouldn't be surprised to hear "I Got The Feelin'" or "Super Bad" getting tipsy with Usher's "Yeah," Destiny's Child's "Soldier" and Snoop Dogg's "Drop it Like it's Hot."

In the studio, producers have dog-eared Brown's records for hits since hip-hop began.

DJ Shekeese, co-founder of Non-Stop Hip-Hop Live, knows the effect of a Brown record when it touches his fingertips.

"The music that James played and sung on became the foundation of hip-hop sampling," he said. "He was supplying the youth of the '70s and '80s with future break beats and samples to reconstruct and record rhymes over."

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Don't think Brown doesn't know DJs and producers owe him a lot, especially respect.

"They knew and I knew that underneath it all was James Brown, who had taken them as babies from gospel to soul, from soul to funk and now from funk to hip-hop," Brown writes. "I became the most sampled artist of all time."

[Source](#)