

Hip-Hop Trends Future

Written by Robert ID1268

Tuesday, 26 April 2005 11:48 -

From hip-hop and rap fore runners: Afrika Bambataa and Run-DMC in the beginning, to the late rap icons Tupac and the Notorious B.I.G. in the recent past, to rap artists 50 Cent and Ludacris today, rap music has lasted the test of time.

Students at Brookdale Community College got a history lesson on Friday from some of those who have been around the genre, and those who have covered it extensively.

“Hip-Hop Movement — Evolution, Impact, Reality and Myth” was the advertised theme of the program, but it was more than just these items that were discussed by the panelists.

Much of the program was devoted to the current state of hip-hop and the driving forces behind it. Ernie Paniccioli has been photographing hip-hop artists for over 30 years and says that the art form is “stronger than ever because now it is global.” But while this may be the case, he thinks that one of its leading men may be on the outside looking in sooner than later.

“I think 50 Cent, lyrically, is not very good, and eventually the people will realize it, and he’ll be out of this game we call hip-hop,” Paniccioli said. “His music is transparent, and he brings nothing new to the art form. Two years from now, he won’t even be remembered.”

Author Mark Anthony Neal, also an associate professor of black popular culture at Duke University, tended to agree with what Paniccioli said.

“50 [Cent] is really just a walking zombie. He ain’t dead yet, so people feel like they can just market that aspect of his life,” Neal said, in reference to the rapper’s survival after being shot nine times many years ago in Queens, N.Y. “A dead rapper has been on top for so long, [the late Tupac Shakur, who was killed in Las Vegas in 1996], and so 50 Cent is the closest thing.”

Neal also went on to say that even though 50 has sold millions of albums, it may not be because of his lyrical skill level.

“He may not have done so well financially because he was good. He really just has a good marketing plan at this point,” Neal said.

The discussion eventually turned to how some artists have enough clout to turn the tables on others in the industry who also choose to use a microphone as a way to survive.

Neal brought up the recent “beef” between rival New York rappers Nas and Jay-Z. Initially, many rap fans heard the constant back-and-forth on the airwaves and in print, and thought it was a draw. That was, until Nas dropped “Ether,” a song that put an end to all of the bickering between the two, with many rap fans proclaiming the Queens native the unofficial “King of the Streets.”

“I can appreciate Nas and what he has done for rap over the years,” Neal said. “He is mature because he made the art form bigger than the actual beef itself. He can go after Jay-Z because he has been around for a while and made plenty of great albums. That was a real statement that he made in the industry. He let people know he was in charge at the time and he still is.”

Paniccioli also took the time to praise the man commonly referred to as “The King of Queens.”

“Nas is the present and future of rap because he has such a great understanding of the power of words,” he said.

Another topic of conversation among the panelists was the degradation of women. Marla Stewart, a Georgia State University sociology Ph.D candidate, expressed her sentiments on the matter.

“Most women do not even care about being half-naked on television,” Stewart said. “They just want to be seen in the videos.”

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Paniccioli said the average fee that the women receive for being in a music video is about \$100, and that is for about a 20-hour work day.

“Money does not matter,” he said. “It’s ... that these women find it appealing. These women do not put any price on their own pride most times.”

At one point during the session, Paniccioli showed off some of the photographs that he has snapped over the years, and made special mention of the ones that have been most influential over the years.

“KRS-One and Chuck D (of the rap group Public Enemy) are two guys that really set themselves apart. KRS was the one that first brought knowledge to the game. Chuck D was the first one to fill up stadiums, and most of the fans were actually white,” he said.

Paniccioli also told the tale of an aspiring musician that he met while in Atlanta at a Jay-Z performance six years ago.

“I was walking to the venue from the hotel, and this girl comes up alongside of me and helps me with my equipment. It was only a 10-block walk, but still, it was a lot of stuff,” Paniccioli recounted. “I told Alicia Keys that if singing didn’t work out for her, she could work for me. I knew right then that she’d be a huge success because she was so humble. Even today, she hasn’t changed a bit.”

At the end of the day, Paniccioli, who is currently being filmed for a documentary titled “One Love” to be released next year, talked about the state of hip-hop and where it may be going.

“Hip-hop is like a relay race in that one generation passes the baton to the next in the hopes that the legacy continues to grow,” Paniccioli explained. “And it has been growing for a long time and is doing very well now, but I think the baton may be getting dropped very soon.”

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Paniccioli took the time to single out those who may not be able to get hip-hop to the next leg of its journey.

“People like 50 Cent and The Game are nonsense,” he said. “They’re not very good at what they do. They bring nothing new to the art form. People want to emulate jackasses like 50 Cent, and it’s not going to do any good for hip-hop.”