

## The History of Hip Hop in Chicago by Davey D

Written by Davey D ID2903

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Gangs, Politics & House Music: The History of Hip Hop in Chicago. An interview with Jitu of the pioneering hip hop group Ten Tray By Davey D

Nowadays it's hard to turn on the radio and not hear music from one of Chicago's many music superstars. Common, Twista, Da Brat, Shawna, R Kelly, Doe or Die, Crucial Conflict, Lupe Fiasco, and of course Kanye West seem to have firmly positioned themselves on the nation's airwaves.

If you dig a little deeper and check out Hip Hop's underground, you'll discover that very few people are willing to roll up and do battle with esteemed Chi-town lyricists like M'Rald, Rhymefest and of course Juice. Others like DJ Third Rail and the late DJ Pinkhouse to name a few have not only made names for themselves as deejays not to be toyed with but also provided important platform for local artists.

Yes, the Chi seems to have established itself in the world of Hip Hop, but it wasn't always like that. In fact much of the Chi-Town's success is a direct result of organized effort by it's pioneering Hip Hop community that grew frustrated from being locked out by the industry that saw Chicago, more as a consumer market as a opposed to a place where stars are born.

Many within the music industry were only willing to embrace the nation's third largest city as the

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Mecca for House Music and somehow managed to disconnect that music form from Hip Hop when in many ways the two are intertwined, especially along the lines of deejay culture.

The battle to establish 'Tha Chi' within Hip Hop was about as brutal as its political landscape. Unsung heroes like Dr Groove, Lord Cashus D, DA Smart, Black Allies, Sugar Ray Dinky, George Daniels, World wide Posse, God Squad, The Chi Rock Nation, Ill State Assassins, and the late DJ Pink House all played crucial roles in organizing, pushing the envelop and seeing to it that the Windy City get its respect. They used to roll up on nightclubs, radio stations and even label executives demanding to be recognized. Many will forget that back in the late 80s there was a movement called the New World Order which brought many of Chicago's Hip Hop community together as they fought for change and respect.

Sadly despite those heroic efforts of the past, today, many local artists who are not signed to a major record label or coming out of Kanye or Common's camp find that many outlets like radio and even nightclubs are closed to them. This is now spurning up a new generation of Chi-Town Hip Hoppers to start organizing to bring about change.

During the recently held National Hip Hop Political Convention we sat down with one of Chicago's premier pioneering emcees, Jitu the Juggernaut of the group Ten Tray. For those who are unfamiliar ten Tray was the first group to be signed to major label. Back in 91, Jitu the lead rapper was and to this day remains an activist who saw the power of Hip Hop and decided to use his talents to spark political thought and hopefully change.

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In our interview he gave a serious rundown of the city's history. He also cleared up a lot of perceptions. For example, he talked about Hip Hop first emerging in the Chi around the late 70s. He talked about how Afrika Bambaataa's Universal Zulu Nation set up a chapter under pioneer Lord Cashus D in '78.

Jitu broke down the important connection between Hip Hop and House. He reminds us that House is a Black music genre that at least in the Chi was enjoyed by cats that lived in the hood. He talked about the Hip House movement that came about in the late 80s with key players like Fast Eddie, Tyree, JMD and the late Kool Rock Steady being not only household names in the Chicago, but in many ways ambassadors for the city around the world. Jitu goes into depth about the important role Kool Rock Jay played.

He also talked about how the House music deejays forced everyone to step up their deejay skillz and that it was not unusual to have b-boys and b-girls at House music parties and events. He also drew parallels to how the lack of public school after school programs and music classes forced many to turn to deejaying as a way to express themselves musically. A good part of House music was born out of that void.

Jitu also talked about The Chi's early graf scene with pioneers like Warp One.

What really stood out in our conversation was Jitu talking about the early club and open mic scene. He talked about how the now defunct El Rukin street gang (formerly the Blackstone

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Rangers) had a building on the Southside complete with an auditorium where they would hold weekly emcee battles.

Jitu details the influence Chicago's highly organized, legendary street gangs have had the scene. He also talks about how other groups like the Nation of Islam and the legacy of the Black Panthers which had its largest and most organized chapter in the Chi have also had influence on folks as they were coming up and into Hip Hop.

Lastly Jitu goes into detail about the politics and the layout of the city. He talks about the differing cultures that exist on the historic Southside, the Westside and the Northside of the city. He also runs down a report card of sorts about some of Chicago's famous people and organizations and the role they played or 'have not' played in terms of elevating Hip Hop.

Jitu finds himself back on the scene after coming out of retirement and ready to drop a new album called 'Necessary Ingredients' which is being backed by the Universal Zulu Nation.

Below is a brief timeline of Jitu and his career courtesy of decentexposure.com  
<http://www.decentx.com/artist.asp?id=472>

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Jitu is an African name, given to him in 1995 meaning “A giant among men.” Jitu is a youth program coordinator and community organizer on the south side of Chicago. He swarmed the game in 2002, entering battles and open mics. Leaving crowds in a state of disbelief, Jitu has humbled emcees all over the country, blending a once in a lifetime voice with an expansive vocabulary and ferocious delivery. On the underground, many call him the best they have ever heard! A short look at his accomplishments: • 1986-Winner of “Battle of Chicago Rappers” at El Rukn Fort

- 1989-2nd Place-“Battle of Chicago Rappers”

- 1989-Formed “New World Order” along with Cashus D of the Universal Zulu Nation, to organize rappers, dancers, singers and dj’s in Chicago. Was the largest such organization in the country with over 200 members.

- 1989-Organized, with Dr. Groove (Source Magazine) and DA Smart, a massive hip-hop community protest of the opening of “Sarafina” at the Regal Theatre for refusing to recognize DA after he won a national talent competition with his rap, “Black People ain’t Prejudiced, They Just Mad.” They recognized DA as the winner of the contest.

- 1991-With group Ten Tray, signed to Smash Polygram records to become the first rap act in Chicago on a major label.



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- 2003-3 Time Champion-Microphone War @ Subterranean
  
- 2004-Represented Chicago in national BRAINSTORM rap battle in Seattle (semi-finalist)
  
- 2004-2nd Place-Rhyme Spitters emcee battle and documentary (see enclosed DVD...we got shafted!)
  
- Joined and helped develop veteran hip-hop alliance, "FIGHT CLUB"
  
- 2005-Begin work on album, "NECESSARY INGREDIENTS."

On this album, entitled NECESSARY INGREDIENTS, Jitu brings pure, unbridled passion and energy with ridiculous beats provided by the likes of Harvy Allbangers, Tony Baines, Joe Blaque, Ty Hill and Issues. Jitu blends real street cuts and bruises, consciousness, passion and skillz to deliver the gz-noods on this project. This album is a holy book for emcees, as Jitu blends subject matter, lyrics, delivery, flow, energy, breath control to give you what we believe,

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is ONE OF THE BEST ALBUMS IN THE HISTORY OF HIP-HOP.

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