

Remember Real NY Hip-Hop

Written by Robert ID911

Saturday, 19 February 2005 02:02 -

Remember when hip-hop was more about B-boys than bling? When the Rock Steady Crew was winning emcee battles in the South Bronx, and Run and DMC were kings of Queens?

The rap artist of today remember those old-school days, and they're bringing them back, says Jeff Chang, author of a new book, "Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation."

"There's definitely a nostalgia factor going on," Chang tells The Post. "Things have come full circle."

Whether it's in art galleries, hip downtown boutiques or even the Brooklyn Public Library, 1980s hip-hop is back.

Get the look:

If you need any evidence of old-school influence on fashion, just stop into any of your local streetwear shops, says Emil Wilbekin, the former editor of Vibe and current vice president at Marc Ecko.

"I see the '80s influence in almost every store, from A Bathing Ape to H&M, Macy's, even Barneys," Wilbekin says.

"Back then, everybody used to wear Adidas tracksuits or jeans from Calvin Klein, Jordache, Gloria Vanderbilt or Sergio Valenti," he adds. "They'd crease the jeans and bleach the creases."

If you're looking for your own old-school look, Barneys Co-op, 236 W. 18th St., between Seventh and Eighth avenues, (212) 593-7800, carries many of the '80s designer jeans - often

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pre-creased and bleached - as well as retro T-shirts with designs by quintessential '80s New York hip-hop artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.

For rare, vintage, mint-condition Nikes and Adidas kicks, try the Lower East Side sneaker boutique Alife, 158 Rivington St. at Clinton Street, (212) 375-8128.

Or check out a Japanese hipster twist on old-school design at A Bathing Ape, SoHo's hottest new contemporary urban streetwear shop, co-owned by Pharrell Williams of the Neptunes, 191 Greene St. between Houston and Prince streets, (212) 925-0222.

The cult designer behind A Bathing Ape, a former deejay from Japan named Nigo, is heavily influenced by old-school fashions from the '80s.

Just take a look at his signature sneakers, which resemble 1985-era Reeboks with their perforated fronts and thick white soles.

Bone up on your history:

But maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves.

If you're the type who thinks that Grandmaster Flash was a chess champion, you can learn all the key points of hip-hop history in "Can't Stop, Won't Stop."

Chang's book, published in early February, chronicles hip-hop's journey from a street-level movement in the South Bronx to a global phenomenon, and includes interviews with rap pioneers like Afrika Bambaataa.

A number of those pioneers, including Ghetto Brothers founder Benjamin Melendez, DJ Kool

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Herc and the Original Jazzy Jay, will take part in a panel discussion at the Bronx Museum of the Arts next Wednesday at 6:30 p.m., at 1040 Grand Concourse at 165th Street, (718) 681-6000. The event is free.

Chang will also read and speak Tuesday at the Hue-Man Bookstore and Caf in Harlem, 2319 Frederick Douglass Blvd., between 124th and 125th streets, (212) 665-7400. The fun starts at 6 p.m.

If reading isn't your thing, you can take a photographic trip back to the early days of hip-hop with "The Hip-Hop Files: Photographs, 1979-1984," a book of pictures by Martha Cooper, which can also be seen at an accompanying exhibit through March 5 at PowerHouse Gallery in SoHo, 68 Charlton St. between Hudson and Varick streets, (212) 604-9074.

Cooper took photographs of break dancers, before she even knew what they were.

As a photographer for The Post in 1980, she was sent to Washington Heights to photograph an alleged riot.

"I called back and said, "There are kids spinning on their heads! This is incredible!" " she recalls. "I didn't know what I was seeing."

Cooper will appear with Chang tomorrow afternoon at a "joint multimedia lecture" at the Brooklyn Public Library at Grand Army Plaza, where her photos are on display in the main lobby through March 20. The free event is in the second-floor auditorium at 1:45 p.m. Call (718) 230-2100 for info.

In another look back at hip-hop's golden era, Public Enemy's 1988 classic, "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back," will be the subject of discussions at NYU next Friday and Saturday.

Public Enemy's Chuck D will join producers, engineers, journalists and Def Jam executives to

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discuss the making of the groundbreaking record and its impact on music and pop culture. Events include a screening of the film "London Calling," which documented the group's U.K. tours; a journalists' panel; and a discussion among members of the group.

The events, all free, will be held at the Tishman Auditorium, 40 Washington Square South, between MacDougal and Sullivan streets. Call (212) 992-8405 for more info.

Music and dance:

If all this talk has you itching to hear some old-school music, head for Fat Beats, 406 Sixth Ave. at West Eighth Street, (212) 673-3883, where a whole wall is devoted to classics like Run-DMC, Slick Rick, Kurtis Blow and LL Cool J.

"These artists never go out of style," said store manager Amore, who's also a producer and deejay. "A lot of kids come in asking for this stuff. I'm surprised at what they know."

Breakdancing is coming back, and you can see some vintage examples of it next Saturday at the Skylight Gallery at the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corp., at the opening celebration of a new exhibit chronicling the work of Brooklyn graffiti crews in the 1980s. The open-to-the-public party for "The Written War: A Retrospective on the Graffiti Crews of Kings County" begins at 6 p.m., at 1368 Fulton St. between Brooklyn and New York avenues, third floor. Call (718) 636-6949.

Breakdancers and old-school deejays - including members of the legendary Rock Steady Crew - will be in-house for the festivities.

"We're going to make the opening an authentic hip-hop fest of that golden age," says curator Carl Hixson.

"Hip-hop has become so dominant, I wanted to go back to the grass roots of what has

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blossomed in our culture."

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