

Why is Hip-Hop so Powerful?

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Hip-Hop radiates worldwide! At this present moment, rap music is dominating the billboard charts, urban attire designed by hip-hoppers sells at record-breaking numbers, advertising agencies are using hip-hop to market everything from children's toys to sports cars, and meanwhile the larger society stands in awe of all this action.

From New York to New Zealand, Boston to Berlin, Portland to Paris, the hip-hop culture has influenced not just the lifestyles of the youth that support it, but also the world economy within which it's structured.

Why does this relatively new cultural expression have so much influence over so many people? Why within a few years of hip-hop's official beginnings in the South Bronx of New York, does its character bring together so many different nationalities? How do the hip-hoppers themselves create the music, rhymes, dance and ad campaign that stimulate our imaginations?

These questions have puzzled me often. I've attempted to answer them based on the fact that I was raised as a hip-hop enthusiast, and therefore believe I know the 'real' reasons why we do so well nowadays. Some of my conclusions hit the truth right on the head. Others can be, and have been, argued by my peers in the industry, which forces me to rethink my thinking.

Most recently I received an answer to a question I've had for years concerning what brain skills we hip-hoppers use to create our art and learn new information. Where the answer came from was just as bizarre as the answer itself.

I discovered a specific field of brain research while in Paris, France called, "Whole-Brain Thinking", pioneered by the leading business consultant on creativity, Tony Buzan. His findings on the brain and how it works while involved in creative activities began to show me why the hip-hop culture is leading in the fields of music, film and advertising.

I discovered that the right half of the brain deals dominantly with the following skills: color, daydreaming, space, imagination, music, and rhythm. These skills are usually referred to as: creative, artistic, emotional, musical, intuitive, sensory, and visionary.

I also found out that the following cortical skills were found on the left side of the brain: analysis, linearity, lists, logic, numbers, sequence, and words. Psychologists and brain researchers refer to this side of the brain as: intellectual, academic, judgmental, and technical.

Tony and his companions mentored me on the ways I could apply the research on the brain to the work I do as a hip-hop artist/consultant.

I began to see the connections between the "creative" side of hip-hop and the "technical" side of it.

When we use Rap songs to communicate a message, we are using both the left and right sides of the brain: music, the right side; words, the left side; imagination, the right; logic, the left; rhythm, the right, and so on. Essentially, that is whole brain thinking! This helps people to remember more of what's being communicated because more brain skills are being engaged in the process.

In a similar way, when Graffiti art is used as a logo for a brand, the following brain skills are being activated: color, right; words, left; images, right; sequence, left; and space, right.

As we observe the many companies using hip-hop concepts to strengthen their image and increase sales, we need to keep in mind the powerful activity of the brain and see the connection it has to the bottom line. The urban scene has proven once again to the world that 'genius ideas' can come from anywhere.

Wyatt Jackson is the founder and President of Mo'Genius University - a contemporary multi-media content provider for fortune 500 companies and educational organizations. He was featured in The Source Magazine, VH1, BET, Harvard University's School of Education Newsletter, and The Boston Globe. Visit www.mogeniusu.com to sample creativity measurement tools for your company or organization.