

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

I AM HIP HOP (A 5-PART SERIES) - PART 4: FASHION

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of any culture is its style of dress. Hip Hop culture is no exception. Hip Hop has very distinct fashion which has changed and evolved over the decades. The one constant and the thing that characterizes Hip Hop clothing the most is a desire to establish oneself as unique through personal style while standing out in a crowd. To put it another way, Hip Hop style is loud and proud. If you enjoy being creative and noticed for what you wear, you are a prime candidate to say "I am Hip Hop" through fashion.

As usual, if you are going to represent Hip Hop culture's fashion sense, you have to know where it came from and where it's going. FUNKMODE has written two very informative SCHOOL'd lessons on the subject that we highly recommend going back to read. These two lessons will not only give you a good look through the most popular types of fashions that have existed within Hip Hop but also many useful ideas on how to participate and contribute to the culture.

A History of Hip Hop Fashion

<http://www.funkmode.com/schoold/Hip%20Hop%20Fashion%20-%20School'd%20by%20FUNKMODE%20-%20L15.pdf>

A Visual History of Hip Hop Fashion

<http://www.funkmode.com/schoold/AHistoryOfHipHopFashions.html>

How to Contribute to Hip Hop Culture Through Fashion

<http://www.funkmode.com/schoold/How%20to%20Contribute%20to%20Hip%20Hop%20Culture%20-%20P3%20-%20School'd%20by%20FUNKMODE%20-%20L24.pdf>

If you are to eventually contribute to Hip Hop culture through fashion, it is essential to learn about its history for two critical reasons. For one, you may find that you really love certain styles which have existed in the past and want to build on them in your personal style. You obviously cannot build on existing fashion trends if you don't know what they are in the first place. Secondly, if you don't know which styles have come before, you may invest a large amount of time developing an "original" style which has, in fact, already existed and perhaps even still exists.

As opposed to dancing, rapping, DJing, MCing and graffiti writing, wearing clothes is one thing most of us have to do every day. If you are one of these people, you get daily opportunities to participate in Hip Hop fashion. The first lesson above lists many different fashion lines started by Hip Hop artists and important people within the culture. The lines contain everything from shoes to hats to accessories and even suits. Some items can be very high priced but other things are just as affordable as anything else you might normally buy. Knowing who the players are in Hip Hop fashion and then including a few of their items in your wardrobe is a great way to participate in the culture. Another way to participate is to pay respect to past styles by putting together such outfits today. The punk style was one of the first in Hip Hop and many of the individual clothing items that created that style are again available today. Many people wear old school Adidas track suits and three-stripe shell-toed shoes like Run DMC wore in the 1980s. Kangol brand hats have been a constant in Hip Hop style since the beginning and can still be bought easily online or in most malls. Accessories like wristbands and fingerless gloves have also been Hip Hop fashion mainstays for years and can still be found all over. There are many other choices, which you will see once you take the time to research Hip Hop fashion thoroughly.

Contributing to Hip Hop through fashion is arguably the most fun of the three aspects of representing the culture. As mentioned previously, Hip Hop fashion is first and foremost about originality. Putting together clothes in new ways that represent your personal style is the essence. You really have no limits to what you can create. As you can see from the lessons above, P. Diddy created a trend out of expensive, high fashion clothes while Hip Hop punk fashionistas create their style out of torn and tattered clothes. If you create styles that are inspired by your personal experience of Hip Hop culture, wearing those styles is all you need to do to contribute. It doesn't matter if a single other person imitates your style or if it becomes popular in stores. What does matter is the style being a unique expression of your relationship with Hip Hop. However, if you do want to take your personal style to the streets to be worn, imitated and built upon, you can wear your style in groups, show off your fashion ideas online or start developing connections to get your ideas mass produced for the public to wear. Remember, you want to be original and noticed. If you are doing those two things with your personal style, you are Hip Hop fashion.

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HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Coolin': Taking it easy, hanging out or just generally being cool.

EX: "I'm coolin' in my ride bumpin' my favorite track."

Crib: A living space.

EX: "We're chillin' at my crib until my friend gets here and then we're bouncin' to a show."

Down: Ready, in agreement, available and/or willing.

EX: "I am so down to go to Six Flags this weekend. Let's do it!"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Name two fashion trends mentioned in the SCHOOL'd lesson titled, "A History of Hip Hop Fashion".
- 2) Do you participate in the fashion aspect of Hip Hop culture? If so, how?
- 3) Do you contribute to the fashion aspect of Hip Hop culture? If so, how?