

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

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

INTERVIEW WITH RAHFEAL GORDON - HIP HOP SAVED MY LIFE - PART 2

FM: Who are some of your favorite Hip Hop artists?

Kendrick Lamar is awesome and Wale's pretty good. I'm a big J. Cole fan! J. Cole is just awesome. I just got his new mixtape. But I'm still big on Nas and Jay. Jay Z's always been my favorite. I imagine it's because I grew up on him. I also like that, even though I grew up on them that they're still relevant today and putting out new work.

FM: What has Hip Hop culture allowed you to accomplish that you may not have otherwise had the opportunity to do?

This is the reason I entitled my seminar "Hip Hop Saved My Life". I think without Hip Hop, I wouldn't have been able to see certain individual that I hold as successful, and not even just financially, but just because of where they've been. Even just watching videos, they allowed me to see things outside of the ghetto. Like, when Diddy did a video in Egypt. I think being able to see entrepreneurship from Russell Simmons, FUBU, Karl Kani, and even how endorsements and partnerships are made and how deals are brokered. I'll use LL Cool J as an example, how he went from being a great musical artist in Hip Hop but then to show others that this gift that he has actually also allows him to become an actor and show another gift. Hip Hop is very diverse and it's all about being who you are. That's one thing that Hip Hop helped with in terms of finding who I am and what I love and being okay with that. I don't know if anyone ever talked about this but when I think about a Hip Hop song, it's broken down into three verses and artists tend to make the first verse about their struggle or what they're dealing with or whatever the emotion is that's in their forefront. The second verse is always like the transition and the third verse is like the ending which is the accomplishment. I felt that Hip Hop allowed me to see my life in three different parts, where I had my struggle, then there's a point where I'm going through my transition, and then there's the success side, the coming into my Promised Land. When I get there, I'm a great album. And how do you become a great album? These artists who talk about whatever it is, it's all funneled into them being who they are. Even with the aspect of family, when you think about breakdancers, everybody plays into a family type. It shows you need unity and you need a group of individuals who can share a vision and can all come together to create something. That's what I did as an entrepreneur. I love keeping a family oriented situation. And letting people know ... hey, be you. If you dance, be the best dancer. If you sing, you rap, do it to the best of your ability. If you're a designer, do it to the best of your ability. But when we come together, we're a dynamic group and we're gonna put together the best album that anyone can hear and see.

FM: What are the challenges you face today as an adult and how has Hip Hop continued to help you meet those challenges?

As an adult, I realize I still have a lot of life issues and things I still have to confront that I've carried with me throughout the years. So, with Hip Hop, I look at artists and people who grew up in the culture who have developed and matured and became older. I think Hip Hop is now in its teen years. It's still young. For me, Hip Hop allows me to see individuals who I grew up with and see how they've prospered. And even the ones who have failed. They gave a view of what is real and what is not. Even the individuals who grew up with Hip Hop, but with a naivete to the culture itself and then realized that they need to come back to the essence of the culture because they strayed too far from what the actual meaning of Hip Hop is. I was just reading an article about a rapper who did his thing and then became a lawyer*. I was really impressed by that. You know, I was a kid listening to this guy. So, for me to be able to see individuals like this and many others who have become great at what they do and also give back, that is what Hip Hop is showing me now. And, being that I'm a part of it, I'm also another person saying hey, this is what the music has done to me. This is what the culture has done to me. This is me dressing like I wanna dress and me dancing, whatever, for me to be free. This is what the culture allowed me to be and look at who I am now. I can never deny the culture and say that Hip Hop culture never did this for me or helped create who I am today.

*One example is rapper turned lawyer Tracey Lee.

FM: Where do you see future potential with Hip Hop?

Seeing anyone in the culture of Hip Hop creating a foundation for the next generation. Seeing current artists get old, like 80, 90 years old. There's gonna be a time when that happens and that's when you get to see them with their kids and how they will take over and how they'll prosper. To see how the legacy will go on and, hopefully, God willing, not make the mistakes that ones before have done and how they'll take the culture to another level and preserve the culture as a whole.

FM: What advice do you have for youngsters within Hip Hop culture who might be facing difficult situations but are seeking to better themselves?

My quote is always, "Your location is not your destination." No matter how old or young we are, we are never in the same

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position, whether it's a good position or a negative position, but that decision is on you. You always have to remember that wherever you are, it is not going to be permanent. Two birds in the same sky, you may see them together and think they look amazing and that they're flying high, but what you may not be seeing is that one is rising while another is falling. While you're not ever in the same position, you have to decide whether you're going to be the one going up or the one going down.

FM: What can you say to people who think their difficulties are too great to overcome?

You gotta have faith, faith with persistence. If you say someone's name and it gives you a bad taste in your mouth, or if you go home and you don't wanna be there, you gotta question, why do I feel this way? Then you gotta figure, what can I do to change that? Do I gotta move out the house? Do I need to talk to someone about somebody I'm dealing with in my house? Why do I hate going to my job? If I don't like it, why do I keep going back instead of creating a new resume and pursuing a new direction? The problem that you feel is too big, you have to know, a problem is just a problem. It's not big. It's not small. It's just a problem, and you can solve it when you take time to step back and analyze why you have this problem. We can all make the decisions necessary to make changes, but you have to be thorough and strong in your decisions and you have to have no fear. I was in that position where I felt that I had problems that were too big to overcome. But there was a point that someone said to me, "do you understand that you have all the tools you need to break down that boulder? You have the faith and power to move a mountain. You can pick it up and lift it over your head and you can create them and you can drop them." But first, you have to be aware of what kind of problems there are and what mountains you're facing and realize what tools it is going to take to move them. You always have to analyze and a good way to do that is what's called an inventory check. You do it in the morning and the night. In the morning see where you are, what you have, what you don't have, think about whatever you are trying to pursue and think about what you need to do to accomplish or attain it. Then, at night, you do the same thing. You think about what your day was like. You think about who you talked to, what did work and what didn't work. Then, the next day, you don't fall into the same pits and you don't have the same conversations that you had yesterday, because you already know what you gained out of it, so now it's time to create new ones. You make more friends and new connections. You gotta be smart and embrace your problems. Do not view them as a negative thing. If you are able to solve a problem, you become smarter. The problem may never even arise again because you already know how to solve it. And, if it does arise, you can solve it quickly or become aware of it before it is even able to become a problem. You can become an expert to someone having the same problem and let that person know exactly what you did because of the experiences that you went through.

FM: What are the ways people can bring the benefits and work of RahGor to them?

They can shoot us an email or go to www.rahgor.com. We're really good with responding to emails and phone calls at the office. Contact us and let us know what they're looking for. I do a lot of consulting for people who are doing business development, personal development, entrepreneurship or those looking to get books published. That's also how they can get one of my workshops set up in their area.

FM: What's one thing that you usually aren't asked or doesn't often come up in interviews with you?

I took my "Hip Hop Saved My Life" seminar and created a book called "Hip Hop Saved My Life". And, I don't even know if they have it online anymore, but I priced the book at one million dollars (laughs). It was just like really ambitious, you know, typical young, Hip Hop type guy. And I remember someone asked me, "Why did you do that?!" And I was like, "I want people to know the value of education and also the value of a book." People don't understand that you can read as many books as you want but the information inside of one book can be so valuable. And, if you realize that, you can make your own life so valuable.

HIP HOP WORD OF THE WEEK

Hype Man: Someone who usually accompanies a rapper on stage to pump up the crowd before, during or after performances.

EX: "Flavor Flav was one of the first true hype men in Hip Hop. He led the way for freelancers like Fatman Scoop."

Song reference: "Back When" by Nas: "I'm not a wack performer / Standing near a corny hype man / I got the Don-ism in me / I'm here to enlighten"

BONUS: NAME ANOTHER SONG/ARTIST THAT HAS USED THIS HHWOTW

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) What opportunities has Hip Hop given you that you might not otherwise have had?
- 2) Where do you see future potential with Hip Hop? (How can it grow? What can it still achieve? What is the next level?)
- 3) Name a book that Rahfeal Gordon has authored.