

# LOUISIANA MUSIC: A PRIMER

## Volume 1, No. 7: RAP and HIP-HOP

Whatever the style of music, Louisiana musicians enjoy giving it a flavor of its own. Louisiana's rap and hip-hop, like its blues and jazz, often boasts a rhythmic and/or lyrical stamp that sets it apart.

Hip-hop culture originated in the streets of New York City in the '70s as emcees, DJs, street artists and dancers cultivated a sound and a style that embodied the reality of contemporary urban life. For many years, it was an underground phenomenon in New Orleans as well. One of New Orleans' primary contributions to hip-hop is a style known as bounce. Emerging in the early '90s, it relies heavily on the call-and-response vocal chants similar to that used in the Mardi Gras Indian tradition and gospel choirs, and is often constructed around samples from or rhythms similar to Cameron Paul's "Brown Beat" and the Showboys' "Drag Rap" (commonly referred to as the "Triggerman beat"). As the name implies, bounce is dance music that comes from a dance-crazed town.

In '91, DJ Jimi's city-wide hit "Bounce for the Juvenile," showcased the swagger of aspiring teenage New Orleans rapper Juvenile. Eight years later, Juvenile's booty-dropping anthem "Back That Azz Up" brought bounce music to the mainstream and introduced the world to New Orleans' Cash Money Records, DJ Mannie Fresh's infectious beats and another aspiring, underage Crescent City phenom: Lil Wayne. Alongside fellow Cash Money label mates Turk and B.G., Juvenile and Wayne formed the rap super group, the Hot Boys, and ushered in the "Bling-Bling Era."



Lil Wayne

Today, bounce subgenre sissy bounce, which features gussied-up bounce beats and the lyrical stylings of gay, bisexual and/or transgendered emcees, is pushing its way into the public eye as Big Freedia, Sissy Nobby, Katey Red and other budding New Orleans performers shake their way into the spotlight. It's interesting to note that New Orleans has a cross-dressing tradition in entertainment with many early rhythm and blues shows having been hosted by female impersonators. The most famous was vocalist Bobby Marchan, who regularly emceed at the legendary Dew Drop Inn club and hit the charts with his release, "There Is Something On Your Mind." Thus, sissy bounce has roots in New Orleans' tradition of challenging societal norms.

Of course, all New Orleans hip-hop wasn't in the bounce mode. Prior to Cash Money's ascent, Master P's No Limit Records put New

Orleans hip-hop on the map. Behind a stable of local rappers including Mystikal, Mia X, and Kane & Able, in addition to Master P's brothers C-Murder and Silkk the Shocker, the No Limit Soldiers brought the turbulent, violent and unhinged side of New Orleans' streets to the forefront, riding hard-hitting musical samples of legendary production team Beats by the Pound to the top of the mid-90s' gangsta rap movement. More importantly, No Limit's aggressive DIY guerilla marketing tactics in combination with Master P's no-holds-barred negotiating style (the label retained ownership of master recordings and had final say over the recording process), forever changed the game.

New Orleans' indigenous brass band musicians also embraced the hip-hop of their peers and could often be found side-by-side on stages and in the studios with the rappers. The Soul Rebels' landmark double LP *No More Parades* was one of the first brass band albums to incorporate hip-hop. Guests on the Rebirth Brass Band's CD, *Hot Venom*, include rappers Cheeky Blakk and Soulja Slim. Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews, who's been making a big splash in the funk/soul/pop field, has been spotted onstage with 5th Ward Weebie. Even funk band Galactic has collaborated with Big Freedia and other rappers.



Dee-1 (Photo: High ISO)

The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival took a long time before it featured local rap artists at its event but now they are regularly seen on the Congo Square Stage. On the other hand, the annual Voodoo Music Experience, held in the fall in City Park, was quick to book national rap artists like Snoop Dogg. This year's Essence Music Festival on July 5-7 includes rap superstar LL Cool J. What would have one time been considered unimaginable, New Orleans' prestigious Ogden Museum of Southern Art presented an exhibit called "Where They At: Hip Hop and Bounce in a World of Sound and Pictures." New Orleans hip-hop culture gained even more recognition when it was featured on the second season of HBO's music-heavy series *Treme*.

Though New Orleans is at the pulse of hip-hop in Louisiana, the state's capital city has jumped into the game with its annual Baton Rouge Hops Festival and Celebration of All Things Hip-Hop. The wordy name indicates that the event, held August 12-14, goes beyond being only a music festival and will present a variety of activities including poetry jams, dance sessions, fashion events and more. It will be held at the Manship Theatre and the Hartley/Vey Workshop at the Shaw Center for the Arts. Dee-1, a former Baton Rouge school teacher who has made a name for himself as a profanity-free rapper, headlines at the Hops Festival.



Master P

Once considered by some as a passing fad, hip-hop is now a part of Louisiana's—and the world's—musical weave.

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the many genres that  
define Louisiana music, check out  
[LouisianaSoundtrack.com](http://LouisianaSoundtrack.com).