

wise men couldn't see it in they dreams
but up rose the poets from the speed queens and the weed fiends
speaking dissection deciphered by the undernourished purists
no longer is it a get over situation
- **"Molly Cool" - Atmosphere**

Hip-hop is always plagued with many misconceptions. The average person associates the genre with materialism, sex and violence. Many are unaware of where all this stems from. Hip-hop culture is unique in the sense that a greater truth is told behind lies. Unlike its predecessor, the blues, Hip-Hop doesn't touch upon existential views as much, it overwhelms it. It laughs in the face of sadness. Rappers take on a persona, a stage name; they inhabit a new body to portray their truth. The misunderstood materialistic aspect of hip-hop, is the rappers persona dealing with his "Blues." Its overcoming his emotions, his fears and despair. Its showing that you will succeed despite how unlikely. The violence is a way of portraying life, although sometimes used to portray an image, it also tells a story. Exaggeration is used not just to portray an image but, to make you feel what the rapper. Exaggeration is a tool to make the listener a protagonist. The biggest goal of the rapper is to instill emotion to a foreign audience. Hip-hop is the blues, spoken word poetry, and rhythm.

Hip-hop was being formed slowly, from the earliest tribes of Africa, until their ancestors, the slaves. They were limited to the arts they could enjoy, but still embodied the rhythm of there old culture. Preachers were their first taste of art. Although, these secular preachers were limited to there speech, what they said with there words is what made them ancestors of modern hip-hop. Its in the way they said it, its the way they made the crowd feel with such simple words, backing it with strong emotion. Africans shackled into a new language made speech into a metaphor for identity.

These preachers had to convey a message in a foreign language but still wanted to deliver it with more complexity than linguistics could offer. To fill the gap they use various schemes that the modern MC utilizes: call and response, and verbal shot gaps, to instill his emotion on to his audience. Early baptist practices such as "hooping" can be seen as a very early form of hip-hop. A form of a preaching between spoken word and singing, using organ riffs and samples.

This practice of preaching, formed one of the first African-American genre – the blues. The blues was rooted in exposing the social experience of blacks in America. A topic that is still heavily influenced in modern hip-hop. The surroundings changed, but the emotion still convey a very similar message. The relationship between voice and instrumentation are very similar in both genres, and sampling is the bridge that makes Hip-Hop music transcend genres of all ages.

The modern MC takes all of his surroundings, his background, culture, and subconsciously nurtured what hip hop is today. The genre is a mix of all African contributions to western music, and uses instrumentation that bridges the gap between time. The modern MC tried to overcome his despair by exploiting it, by showing that he is better than sadness. The history of America, racism, and upbringing plays a big part in a MC's poetry. Most importantly, Hip Hop came from despair. From the preachers struggling to adapt to a new language yet still speaking their emotions, to the blues musicians voicing their sadness of their lives over simple instrumentation. Hip-Hop came from this. From sadness and the need to express emotion. Yet, it expresses it positively

I will now provide various examples of songs that truly use the hip-hop canvas to its greatest artistic extent. The songs I have chosen will show hip-hop's poetic side that is often not as popular as the rap music most people associate the genre with. I have discussed the misconceptions in hip-hop, and hope to refute these arguments with a few examples. I will touch upon the old-school era, and give a few examples of contemporary artists and the revival of hip-hop we are witnessing today.

For my first example, I will use the song “Impossible” on the Wu-Tang Clan's sophomore album *Wu-Tang Forever*, and “Truth” By Alexander featuring The RZA of the Wu-Tang Clan. The Wu-Tang clan is another example of a common misconception in hip-hop culture. People always associate this group for nine rowdy men yelling nonsense into a microphone, and many only know

them for their catchy hooks and base their criticism on that only. Their lyricism and energetic flow often goes unappreciated. Like Masta Killa says on the song “Triumph” “The dumb are mostly intrigued by the drum”

In these verses The RZA ingeniously instills religion, his surroundings, his philosophy, and his past struggles:

Fusion of the five elements, to search for the higher intelligence
Women walk around celibate, living irrelevant
The most benevolent king, communicating through your dreams
Mental pictures been painted, Allah's heard and seen
everywhere, throughout your surrounding atmosphere
Troposphere, thermosphere, stratosphere
Can you imagine from one single idea, everything appeared here
Understanding makes my truth, crystal clear
Innocent black immigrants locked in housing tenements
Eighty-Five percent tenants depend on welfare recipients
Stapleton's been stamped as a concentration camp
At night I walk through, third eye is bright as a street lamp
Electric microbes, robotic probes
Taking telescope pictures of globe, babies getting pierced with microchips
stuffed inside their earlobes, then examined
Blood contaminated, vaccinated, lives fabricated
Exaggerated authorization, Food and Drug Administration
Testing poison in prison population
My occupation to stop the inauguration of Satan
Some claim that it was Reagan, so I come to slay men
like Bartholomew, cause every particle is physical article
was diabolical to the last visible molecule
A space night like Rom, consume planets like Unicron
Blasting photon bombs from the arm like Galvatron
- **“Impossible” - Wu-tang, The RZA 1997**

Beautiful was the proof in the truth, and it shows in the youth
When they just do what they naturally do, truth is natural
It's actual, and it's factual
Perfection, pragmatic and practical
Unabbreviated, that which has not been deviated
Imperishable and can not be alleviated
It's the language of god, for it's he who created it
And made it, even when a man is cremated
Down to his ashes, his essence remains in the gases
Lies disintegrate as all time passes
Although illusions has been accepted by the masses
And they teach us lies every day in high school classes
Divine and sublime, unaffected by space, motion or time
The truth, the intensive nature of the mind
It's correct, for man has miscalculated
He misrepresented and they misinterpreted
If he feels light in the darkness, regardless
Your pure heart or heartless, it's the truth, it's the proof

- Alexander Ft. RZA – Truth 2011

For my second example, I will use Eydea's Verse off of the song "Paradise" off the album *E and A*, where the late MC (died of a heroin overdose) speaks of the unspoken subtle rituals in relationships, stemming from our fear to die alone. He begins with the start of courtship, and as the song progresses, love doesn't exist, just a parasitic dependence. In the end he feels free when his happiness is when he is alone.

What a beautiful world, so fragile and fertile
Pain filled the void, when boy met girl
He's a puppet to nature, one year later now
So deeply and sickly in love, it makes him hate her
The average romanticized american relationship sinks
Capsized when either side becomes a slave to it
Conditioned, dependent, afraid to be alone
He needs that feeling that he can't create all on his own
He despises the fact she has a life outside of them
It drives him crazy to think she's not insanely consumed with him
Give her the guilt trip
And maybe she'll quit livin to stay behind these prison walls
And lose all individualism
Well this is happiness, masochistic torture, plagued by the decadent, craved for affection
The needle digs deep to push contentment through his blood stream, it drowned now - hollow
The pothole of a junkie
If he could only hear her sing he wouldn't wanna break her wings
But emptiness has such a warm subtle sting
She makes up for what he lacks - trapped
He can't imagine life without someone like that
- Paradise, Eydea 2005

For my final example, I will give a relevant song of an MC who has recently gained some acclaim in the industry. Kendrick Lamar on this sophomore album *Good Kid, M.a.a.d* released in 2012 *City* tells the story of a week in Compton, California. Through the use of Skits, and voice-overs the album plays like a movie. Each song plays like a chapter. This concept has been done many times before (Redman's *Muddy Waters* album uses this to a great degree) but Kendrick Lamar's degree of complexity in his story-telling is unparalleled. This album has to be listened to in order to fully grasp its genius. Songs like "Backseat freestyle", "Swimming Pools (drank)", and "Bitch dont kill my vibe" often make people associate Kendrick Lamar with the misconceptions that all hip-hop songs fall under. But when the album is listened to in order, it's clear that those songs are to signify Kendrick's ignorance as a adolescent, and as the album progresses, he is faced with reality and in effect, his lyrics

become more complex and philosophical.

Death plagues where ever he goes in his neighborhood, and he is forced and pressured in many situations. Kendrick instills a sense of vicariousness as we follow his journey of violence in his neighborhood. The song “ Sing about me/ I'm Dieing of Thirst” happens towards the end of the album when Kendrick is faced with a death of a close friend, David. This death gives him a new perspective, and makes him question his life, his fear of dieing, and his uncertainty of his future.

The song takes on three perspectives: David's Brother in the first verse , A teenage prostitute (Keisha's sister, of the song “ Keisha's story” on Kendrick's album *Section 80*) in the second, and finally his own.

[Verse 3:]

Sometimes I look in a mirror and ask myself
Am I really scared of passing away
If it's today I hope I hear a
Cry out from heaven so loud it can water down a demon
With the holy ghost till it drown in the blood of Jesus
I wrote some raps that make sure that my lifeline
Rake in the cent of a reaper, ensuring that my allegiance
With the other side may come soon
And if I'm doomed, may the wound
Help my mother be blessed for many moons
I suffer a lot
And every day the glass mirror gets tougher to watch
I tie my stomach in knots
And I'm not sure why I'm infatuated with death
My imagination is surely an aggravation of threats
That can come about
Cause the tongue is mighty powerful
And I can name a list of your favorites that probably vouch
Maybe cause I'm dreamer and sleep is the cousin of death
Really stuck in the scheme of, wondering when I'm a rest
And you're right, your brother was a brother to me
And your sister's situation was the one that put me
In a direction to speak of something that's realer than the TV screen
By any means, wasn't trying to offend or come between
Her personal life, I was like "it need to be told
Cursing the life of 20 generations after her soul"
Exactly would have happened if I hadn't continued rappin
Or steady being distracted by money drugs and four
Fives, I count lives all on these songs
Look at the weak and cry, pray one day you'll be strong
Fighting for your rights, even when you're wrong
And hope that at least one of you sing about me when I'm gone
Now am I worth it?
Did I put enough work in?

I said when the lights shut off
And it's my turn to settle down
My main concern
Promise that you will sing about me
Promise that you will sing about me

Hip-Hop is the voice of urban America. Hip-Hop is music. In essence, it is a mixture that transcends all genres, but still has its own identity. Hip-Hop, is every genre in one, its all music in unison. It was slowly being created subconsciously, until the final product: the creation of spoken word and internal rhythm that has always existed, but never put on an artistic canvas. Its history is as deep and as rich as the culture it portrays. Its about struggle, philosophy, courtship, love, and pain- all to a single rhythm, a simple beat. Its beauty is in its simplicity but, its simplicity lets the genre take on a whole layer of complexity unlike that of any genre. All you need is a beat, and a mic. Everything else is secondary. Since rap is conveyed on such a simple canvas, the MC must fill that void with complex poetry, flow and lyricism. Hip-hop is the complex art of dealing with pain, its the science of making struggle into art.

I will now end with the genius that is Danny Brown:

In ya babymomma crib not flushing after I piss
I'm Ferris Bueller with Frank Muellers
You blank shooters on stank hooters
I'm in aruba sippin wine coolers
Mind ruler flow sort of like hypnotism
That's why all these white bitches wanna get with em
I smack me up flip em like Mik Bivens
And to me your flows like Ronny Devoe's
My hoes got pretty toes in expensive high heels
And your hoes toes is fucked in beauty supply sandals
I'm a vandal handling any situation
I smoke blunts to the face to stay motivated
Irritated when I'm not sedated
I fuck her face like I was obligated
And still fucking with them freak hoes
Stank pussy smelling like Cooler Ranch Doritos
- **“Monopoly”**

Recommended:

Joey Bada\$\$ - Don't Front
Atmosphere – sound is vibration
Black Star – Brown Skin Lady
Black Star – Thieves in the night
Shing02 – luvsic Part 2
The Flatbush Zombies – Amerikkkan Pie, Nephilim
Nas – Life's a bitch
Dr. Dre – Lyrical gangbang
immortal technique – You never know
Elzhi – scattered Pictures
Binary Star – Reality Check

Eyedeas – Infrared Roses
Gavintoo - L.I.F.E ft The 49ers & Loco Jive
AZ- Doe or Die
Blu & Exile – Fly (Song of Liberation)
Eyedeas And Abilities – The dive Pt. 1