

"True" Hip-Hop Is About Peace and Fun, Pioneers Say

Contributed by Jeuron Dove - Black College Wire
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Three old-school hip-hop artists school a new generation at North Carolina A&T.

When people think of hip-hop's important female MCs, some of the first names that come to mind are MC Lyte, Queen Latifah and even Lil' Kim. But before all of them there was Sha-rock, who became the first recognized female MC when she rapped alongside the group the Funky Four, founded in 1979, at age 16.

She also recorded one of the longest hip-hop records of all time, "Rapping and Rocking The House," which was 15 minutes.

Sha-rock, also known as Sharon Green, was one of three old school hip-hop artists who came to North Carolina A&T State University to educate the current generation about "true hip-hop."

"We dealt with the streets and gangs, but hip-hop was a way to get away from all that negativity. The culture itself is not negative and rap music should not be all about violence," said Sha-rock.

She emphasized that rapping is just one aspect of hip-hop and encouraged audience members to embrace all of it. The four elements of hip-hop are rapping, beat-boxing, graffiti and break

dancing.

Two other early MCs, Busy Bee and Grandmaster Caz, were also at the event, which featured break-dancing by A&T students.

"The Origins of Hip Hop" was the result of a collaboration between the Residence Hall Association, the Eta chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and Segwick and Cedar, a New York-based clothing company that attempts to preserve hip-hop culture. Brian Tennie, president of the association, was working with the Segwick and Cedar to produce a basketball game. The company had the old-school rappers under contract, and Tennie made a

deal to bring them to A&T. On March 16, students learned the true history of hip-hop from some of its earliest pioneers.

Busy Bee is often considered the first official solo hip-hop MC. He was known as the "Original Chief Rocker" for his ability to start block parties and keep the attention of the crowd with his shout-outs. Bee was involved in one of the first beefs of hip-hop when he battled the equally legendary Kool Moe Dee.

"When I first started doing this in '76, people thought that this hip-hop thing would last no more than about three weeks, but it's 2007 and the culture of hip-hop has taken over the world," said Busy Bee, also known as David Parker.

He stressed that hip-hop was built on the principles of peace, love, unity and having fun.

Grandmaster Caz, also known as Cassanova Fly, was an original member of the pioneering hip-hop group the Cold Crush Brothers.

He said he wrote some of the original lyrics to the 1979 hit "Rapper's Delight," but was not credited.

"I started out as a graffiti artist because that was what the girls liked in high school. I had no idea that I wanted to be a DJ or an MC until I went to a party that DJ Kool Herc threw, and from that point on, I knew that there was nothing else I wanted to do," said Caz, whose real name is Curtis Fisher.

Caz said he harbored no bad feelings over the "Rapper's Delight" incident because he had new worlds to conquer. He helped make the Cold Crush Brothers one of the most memorable groups in hip-hop history.

After the panel discussion, students asked questions ranging from who the speakers considered the best MC today to the role of female rappers and the purpose of "beef" in today's hip-hop scene.

Grandmaster Caz named Ludacris as his choice for best MC, citing his creativity and consistency. Sha-Rock chose Black Thought of the Roots for his socially conscious subject matter. On beefs, Busy Bee said that nothing should be taken personally. It is strictly about skill on the mic and the quarrels should be kept respectful, he said, adding that violence should never be a part of them. Sha-rock said the music industry forces women MCs to dumb themselves down, selling their bodies for records, instead of being strong and intelligent, as is an artist such as Lauryn Hill.

Before the event was officially over, all three MCs performed. They had the crowd rocking with them, although these artists were making tracks before most of the students were born.

Grandmaster Caz performed his 2000 response track to "Rapper's Delight," "MC Delight."

Attendees said they found the event informative and learned something.

"I'm into old-school hip-hop, and I can't believe that I got the chance to see some real rap legends in person," said junior Reggie Warren, a business major.

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