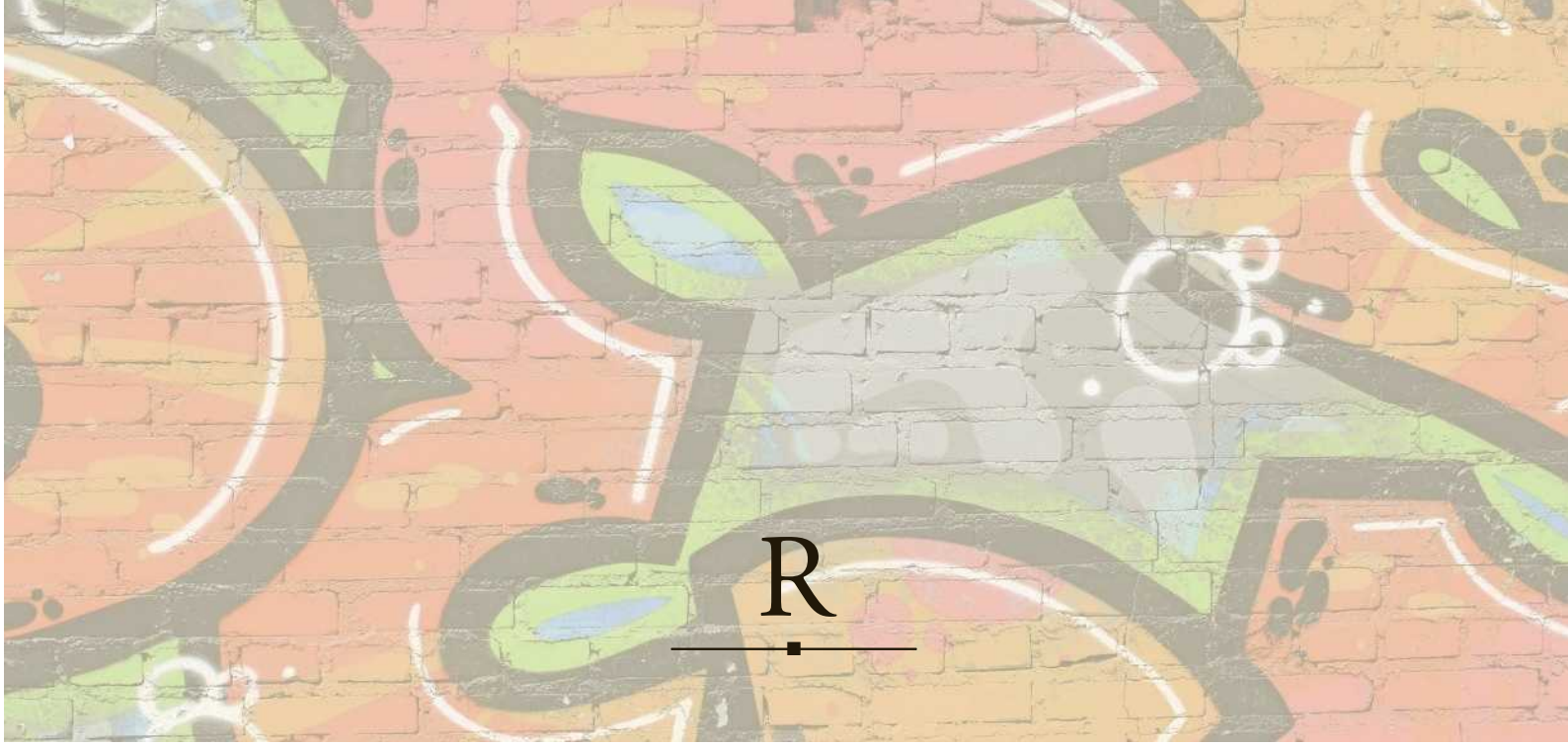


R

RADIO

SEE *Hot 97; Lady B; Mr. Magic's* Rap Attack; *Payola*; The Stretch and Bobbito Radio Show.

RAP

The rhythmic delivery of speech, usually in rhyme and accompanied by a beat. Rap is often divided into three distinct elements: *content* (the words being spoken), *flow* (the mutual interaction between rhyme and rhythm), and *delivery* (the tone and cadence of the speech). The word *rap* is also used broadly to refer to all music that incorporates rapping, as well as to hip hop music in general. Practitioners of rap are known as *rappers* or *MCs.*

SEE ALSO *Flow; MCing*

James Overholtzer

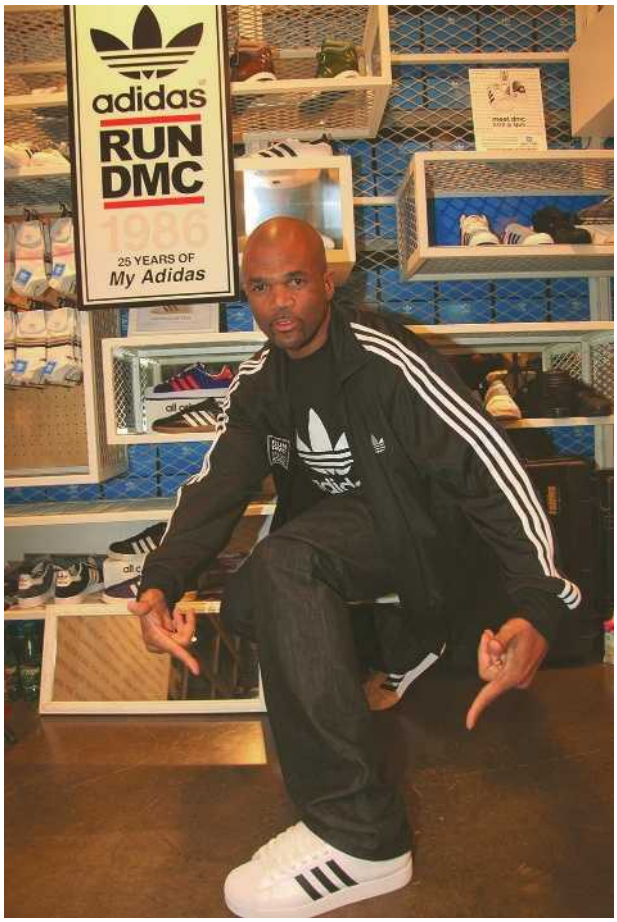
RAP AS MARKETING, ADVERTISING, AND BRANDING

Rap and hip hop music became major tools for advertising, marketing, and branding in the mid-1980s. It is likely the perception of cool that works well for advertisers, coupled with the ever-growing popularity of the genre among younger audiences. Over the years rap has been used as a means of drawing in consumers not familiar with it but fascinated with its elements, as well as rap fans seeking to emulate popular artists. Since the mid-1980s, rap has been used to sell everything from clothing to cars, cell phone providers, computers, beverages, food, lint rollers, and dolls.

MAINSTREAMING OF RAP MUSIC AS A MARKETING TOOL

In the early 1980s hip hop mogul Russell Simmons (1957–) of Def Jam Recordings sought a way to make his rap duo Run-D.M.C. more relatable to a younger, rap-buying generation. Using that mind-set, Simmons suggested that the group don their everyday street clothing on stage as opposed to the extreme costuming of acts in earlier years. The street clothing consisted of Adidas or Puma track suits and matching sneakers, gold rope chains, and Kangol hats. Simmons was mostly looking to increase record sales, but what he stumbled on was the birth of a new era of advertising—rap as a marketing tool.

The members of Run-D.M.C.—Joseph "Rev Run" Ward Simmons (1964–), Darryl "D.M.C." McDaniels (1964–), and Jason "Jam Master Jay" William Mizell (1965–2002)—had become cultural influencers. Noting how Adidas brand sneakers seemed to have become the shoe of choice for rap fans, Simmons recommended that the duo create a song as an ode to the brand. They agreed, later revealing in the 2005 documentary *Just for Kicks* that the song also served as retaliation against an anti-sneaker song called "Felon Sneakers" by Gerald Deas. The song "My Adidas" was released on May 29, 1986, as the first single from Run-D.M.C.'s third album *Raising Hell*.



Darryl "D.M.C." McDaniels of Run-D.M.C. visits an Adidas store in New York City in 2011. The relationship between Run-D.M.C. and Adidas was one of the first and most successful hip hop marketing partnerships. **JOHNNY NUNEZ/GETTY IMAGES**

Understanding that there was potential to make more money off the song, Russell invited Adidas representative Angelo Anastasio to attend the July 19, 1986, leg of Run-D.M.C.'s *Raising Hell* tour at Madison Square Garden in New York. The song "My Adidas" was performed to the sold-out arena, which at capacity held 20,789 people. At the request of front man Rev Run, audience members were to hold up their Adidas sneakers. As thousands of sneaker-wielding hands went up, the group began to perform its song with much suspense, holding onto the opening "My" for more than ten seconds, followed by an explosive crowd screaming "A-didas."

Anastasio, who was a senior Adidas employee at the time, is widely credited with bringing his concert experience to Adidas's New York City headquarters. He pitched the idea of having the members of Run-D.M.C. serve as spokespeople for the apparel company. Not only was Run-D.M.C. the first hip hop group to receive a million-dollar endorsement deal, but it was also the first nonathletic entity to pick up an endorsement for an athletic apparel company. Based on the success of both ends of the deal, rap became a tool of choice for advertisers hoping to market to a younger audience, and so began the trend of rap and rappers in advertisements.

BEVERAGE INDUSTRY'S ONGOING EXPLORATION OF RAP CULTURE

The Coca-Cola Company's Sprite brand has used rap as a marketing tool since 1986, when it aired a commercial featuring Def Jam Recordings artist Kurtis Blow (Kurtis Walker, 1959–) rapping about Sprite. The rap incorporated Sprite's "Now more than ever" slogan and included a diss (a song or line primarily intended to disrespect a person or group) to its competitor 7-UP. Sprite also ran advertising spots featuring rap acts reciting original lyrics about the product. Some acts even dressed to match the lemon and lime flavors, such as Heavy D and the Boyz, which debuted the slogan "I like the Sprite in you" (1990), and Kid 'N Play (1991). Both spots included rap/hip hop culture with the use of backup dancers and breakdancing. "I like the Sprite in you" continued with rap duo Kris Kross in 1993.

Sprite's "Obey Your Thirst" slogan, introduced in 1994 by Pete Rock (Peter O. Phillips, 1970–), CL Smooth (Corey Brent Penn Sr., 1968–), Large Professor (William Paul Mitchell, 1973–), and Grand Puba (Maxwell Dixon, 1966–), was the next big thing in its arsenal of rap advertising. In the commercial, which features an after-studio cypher (two or more rappers freestyling together in an informal context) about Sprite, the audience is introduced to a less flashy version of hip hop. This represents the brand's attempt to grab the attention of rap fans as opposed to using the allure of rap music to reel in other potential customers. That year Sprite also featured A Tribe Called Quest (1994) using a more poetic form of rhyme. The advertisement focused on Sprite's "Image is nothing—Thirst is everything" campaign.

In 1995 Sprite revisited one of rap's greatest battles (in which two rappers go head to head) between MC Shan (Shawn Moltke, 1965–) of Juice Crew and KRS-One (Lawrence Kris Parker, 1965–) of Boogie Down Productions. In keeping with this nostalgic approach to rap, a 1997 spot featuring Nas (Nasir Bin Olu Dara Jones, 1973–) and AZ (Anthony Cruz, 1972–) of The Firm paid tribute to the graffiti and breakdance blockbuster *Wild Style* (1983), wherein the rappers pay homage to rap duo Double Trouble as featured in the film. Using a back-and-forth singsong style of rapping that was wildly popular in the 1980s among rap duos and groups, Nas and AZ introduced elements of hip hop through their clothing and with the iconic handshake they used to end the spot.

Also in 1997, a spot featuring The Lost Boyz showed Sprite on the party scene, honing in on images of breakdancing and DJing. In 1998 Missy Elliott (Melissa Arnette Elliott, 1971–) took part in a basketball court battle rap featuring basketball players Kobe Bryant (1978–) and Tim Duncan (1976–) in an advertisement that showed rap in an everyday setting.

A 2010 ad opens on a lethargic Drake (Aubrey Drake Graham, 1986–) in the studio struggling to find inspiration. After taking a sip of Sprite, he begins to morph into a droid-like subject, and, when he is once again whole, he steps to the microphone and successfully raps his lines. In this advertisement rap fans are shown a style of marketing wherein the beverage is needed to achieve the level of success the talent encompasses.

Over the years many other soda brands followed Sprite's lead, including its parent company's staple Coca-Cola, as well as Pepsi and Mountain Dew. However, none was as wildly successful at using rap in its advertising as Sprite had been.

The marriage of rap and Sprite continued in 2016, with commercials and even a seasonal campaign called the Summer Sprite Cold Lyrics Series, in which six lyrics appeared on sixteen-ounce Sprite cans and twenty-ounce Sprite bottles available only in the summer months. The campaign launched with a commercial featuring rap legend Rakim (William Michael Griffin Jr., 1968–), who enters a New York City bodega to purchase a Sprite, only to find that rap lyrics are magically appearing on the cans. Viewers then learn that they can purchase the cans and bottles for a limited time.

Although hip hop is widely used in Sprite's marketing, the brand's representatives maintain that its relationship to the genre is one of authenticity, noting that they embrace the culture and ingrain themselves as a part of it. To that point, Jamal Booker, manager of Heritage Communications for Coca-Cola said, "The thing Sprite did differently was that it didn't go after the most well-known artists or celebrities. They went to artists who had an appreciation of the culture, and the commercials had an authentic tone. Part of what made Sprite successful is the appreciation of the art form and culture" (Smith 2016).

Soda companies were not the only ones to attempt authentic ties to rap. In the early 1990s, during the wake of the gangsta rap era, advertisers sought rappers to sell urban-angled alcohol products, such as malt liquor brands St. Ides and Colt 45. The advertisements focused on the products' forty-ounce packaging, which at the time was already wildly popular in urban settings.

Throughout the early 1990s, St. Ides held one of the most popular campaigns featuring such rappers as Rakim, Snoop Dogg (Calvin Cordozar Broadus Jr., 1971–), the Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher George Latore Wallace, 1972–1997), Ice Cube (O'Shea Jackson, 1969–), Wu-Tang Clan, 2Pac (Tupac Amaru Shakur, 1971–1996), EPMD, MC Eiht (Aaron Tyler, 1967–), DJ Pooh (Mark Jordan, 1969–), the Geto Boys, and Cypress Hill. To polish off its campaign, the malt liquor brand even released a mixtape in 1994 that featured unreleased verses from Scarface (1970–), Nate Dogg (Nathaniel Dwayne Hale, 1969–2011), Warren G (Warren Griffin III, 1970–), and Ice Cube, as well as extended bits from Snoop Dogg, MC Eiht, and Wu-Tang Clan's commercials.

St. Ides may have yielded some of the most iconic advertisements featuring rap, but rappers and their music have been used to sell a variety of beverages over the years. There have been endorsements for Heineken (JAY-Z [Shawn Corey Carter, 1969–]), Absolut vodka (Kanye West [1977–]), Ciroq (Diddy [Sean Combs, 1969–]), Courvoisier (Busta Rhymes [Trevor George Smith Jr., 1972–]), and even less toxic beverages such as Vitamin Water (50 Cent [Curtis Jackson III, 1975–]). In the early 2000s rappers were used to promote premium alcoholic beverages such as cognac, wine, and champagne. The endorsements have been done in a number of ways throughout the years, including television and radio advertising and product placement in songs.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT IN RAP LYRICS

In 1986 McDonald's released a flashy commercial dubbed "Hot Food Rap" featuring unknown African American talent rapping about its fast-food options. During the spot, elements of popular rap songs of the time were referenced, including the sound of a DJ scratching a record and a Kurtis Blow–esque "Ha-ha-ha-hot." Although McDonald's is noted as the first mainstream food company to use rap music in its commercials, it was not until 2005 that the company partnered with the marketing firm Maven Strategies to infuse its products into hip hop music. Through that arrangement rappers would write their own music mentioning a McDonald's product. McDonald's representatives held final approval on the lyrics, and artists were paid between $1 and $5 each time the song was played commercially.

Run-D.M.C.'s "My Adidas" proved such an excellent example of product placement, it is not surprising that other companies would seek mentions in rap songs. Run-D.M.C. received a monumental payout of $1.5 million for the endorsement; by comparison, under the McDonald's–Maven Strategies arrangement, an artist would need his or her song played a minimum of 300,000 times at the $5 pay rate to earn the amount Run-D.M.C. received from its 1986 deal with Adidas. To understand how this type of product placement is profitable on both ends, as opposed to the television commercial route many marketers had taken, one need only look to how times have changed. During the early twenty-first century, music sales spiked

through the advent of streaming applications and MP3-formatted music. As this trend appeared, cable subscriptions began to slump.

According to a 2014 *Consumer Reports* article, reports released by the Federal Communications Commission show that traditional cable television subscriptions in the United States are slowly declining. By the end of 2013, cable subscriptions were at 54.4 million. Meanwhile, reports from BGR and *Forbes* show that Spotify has 50 million paid subscriptions, whereas Apple Music has boasted more than 27 million subscribers since its 2015 launch. Overall, paid subscription streams grew 69.3 percent, totaling 78.6 percent overall. Further, the numbers show that listeners are choosing hip hop and rap above other music genres.

According to BuzzAngle, a company that provides music consumption charts twice annually, music fans listened to hip hop and rap more than other genres in 2017, commanding 20.6 percent of all album consumption. A 2015 blog post by marketer Brandon Gaille notes that almost two-thirds of the hip hop audience is between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four. As such, it is not surprising that in 2005 a McDonald's spokesperson told Gil Kaufman, a reporter for MTV News, that the company's hip hop outreach campaign seeks to find culturally relevant ways to connect with eighteen- to thirty-four-year-olds.

RECLAIMING HIP HOP CULTURE THROUGH BRANDING

Rapper JAY-Z is widely cited as the first hip hop artist to reclaim his brand. In the earlier years of his more than twenty-year career, he fell into the popular trend of mentioning products that held no endorsement value in his songs. As his popularity grew, the business mogul began to understand not only his own value but also the value of rap culture and its influence.

JAY-Z almost single-handedly ended the trend of hip hop artists and fans donning NBA throwback jerseys (sports uniforms styled to resemble the uniforms that a team wore in the past), much to the chagrin of David Stern (1942–), the NBA commissioner at the time. It was a lyric in his 2003 single "Change Clothes" off *The Black Album* that inspired the movement away from NBA apparel—"throw on a suit, get it tapered up, and let's just change clothes and go." Shortly thereafter, the NBA noted a decline in its jersey sales. In his 2012 book *The Tanning of America: How Hip-Hop Created a Culture That Rewrote the Rules of the New Economy*, author and well-known marketer Steve Stoute writes, "NBA commissioner David Stern—noticing the steep decline in sales of licensed sports apparel—asked me 'Maybe you could ask JAY-Z if he would change clothes back again?'" (201).

However, rap music is no stranger to clothing endorsements or spinning a narrative to best represent the needs of the culture. In a 1999 commercial for the Gap, rapper LL Cool J (James Todd Smith, 1968–) wears a cap from the African American–owned clothing line FUBU as a means of product placement. He also inconspicuously throws in a line mentioning FUBU by the acronym's definition, saying in his rap "For Us by Us, on the low."

Rappers have since entered into bidding wars with companies seeking their endorsements. Kanye toggled between Nike and Adidas when he was considering a company to host his Yeezy line, which he announced in 2013 and which was officially released by Adidas in 2015. Rappers have also encouraged urban consumers to support black-owned companies, thus stripping business from companies such as Cristal and Tommy Hilfiger clothing, among others. Some are even emulating the Run-D.M.C. school of endorsement deals by using the product first and getting a deal later, as in the case of Drake and lint rollers.

In 2014 Drake lint-rolled his pants while seated courtside at game two of the NBA playoff bout between the Brooklyn Nets and Toronto Raptors. After widespread social media attention, the Toronto-born MC partnered with Bounce for a limited-edition lint roller featuring the Raptors logo and the OVO owl. More than 1,000 rollers were distributed at game five of the Eastern conference playoffs. Later it was noted that one lint roller sold for $55,100 on eBay.

TREND OF HIP HOP AS ADVERTISING CONTINUES

From Run-D.M.C.'s monumental million-dollar Adidas deal to Mattel's 1992 Rappin' Rockin' Barbie doll to hamsters in gold rope chains dancing to rap music in car commercials, hip hop has been a major cultural maven in the advertising world. It has become such a widely supported means of marketing that even unsigned rap artists have landed large endorsements, such as Chance the Rapper (Chancellor Johnathan Bennett, 1993–) and his Kit Kat commercials. It is clear that marketers have a great understanding of how to reach their target demographic through rap music, as they have successfully displayed over the last three decades. Justly, rappers have proven the ability to make or break a company and influence the pockets of the common people. As rap/hip hop has shown itself to be an undying art, the use of it as marketing, advertising, and branding remains a constant across many products.

SEE ALSO *Battle, Battling; Bling; Breakdancing; Busta Rhymes; Combs, Sean; Def Jam Recordings; DJing; Elliott, Missy; Eric B. and Rakim; Fashion; Gangsta Rap; Graffiti; Ice Cube; JAY-Z; Juice Crew; Kid Rappers; Mixtape; Nas; Native Tongues; The Notorious B.I.G.;*

Run-D.M.C.; Scarface; Simmons, Russell; Sneakers; Snoop Dogg; A Tribe Called Quest; 2Pac; West, Kanye; Wu-Tang Clan

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Leslie D. Rose

RAP AS POETRY

As hip hop entered the mainstream in the late 1980s, rap—hip hop's most publicly visible embodiment—became the subject of widespread debate. Academics and cultural critics wrangled over its artistic merits, its place in the broader culture, and its effect on young people, whether uplifting, corrupting, or both. At the center of this debate is a question that, though simple in form, has proven extremely challenging to answer: Is rap poetry?

At first the question might seem to have little practical import. But for many commentators, it has profound implications in terms of how rap is treated as an art form. Some argue that placing it under the umbrella of poetry associates it with millennia of literary tradition, making it a natural subject for academic discourse. Some critics see such an association as mutually beneficial, whereas others describe it as an awkward engraftment of two separate art forms. To further complicate the debate, the definition of poetry is hardly a settled matter. Even outside of hip hop, poetic masterpieces run the gamut from written texts to one-off spoken-word performances. For these and other reasons, a consensus on the relationship between rap and poetry seems unlikely. Nonetheless, the issue remains an important one for critics engaged in the study of hip hop and its broader cultural legacy.

RAP AS POETIC PERFORMANCE

For MCs and rap aficionados, the answer to the "Is rap poetry?" question may seem an obvious yes. The spoken-word albums of the Last Poets, widely claimed as an early influence on hip hop culture, have seldom been critiqued as anything but poetry. Several prominent twenty-first-century performers such as JAY-Z (Shawn Corey Carter, 1969–) and Chance the Rapper (Chancellor Johnathan Bennett, 1993–) have asserted that their works are poetry and have invited listeners to engage with them as such. But when pressed to explain why rap is poetry, writers and practitioners have offered vastly different takes on the relationship between the two art forms.

Some, including pop culture critic Adam Bradley, have described rap as poetry in terms of its effects on the audience. In *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop* (2009), Bradley describes "the poetry of hip hop" as a force that changes the listener (x). "Every rap song," he explains, "is a poem waiting to be performed" (xi). However, he acknowledges that rap's influence goes well beyond any one performance or recording.

For this reason, critics have sometimes likened rap to poetry in terms of its general cultural impact, often as part of a broader analogy between the two art forms. Poet and critic Dana Gioia explores such a relationship in his 2003 essay "Disappearing Ink: Poetry at the End of Print Culture," claiming that the flourishing rap culture of the day offers "official" American poetry its best hope of reinvigorating itself (24). Rap, Gioia asserts, is a "new form of popular verse" that has all but eclipsed traditional poetry in terms of its popular appeal, commercial success, and overall cultural relevance (25). However, he is careful to distance rap from more conventional, academically respected poetry: "I do not,"