

Opinion & Review

Is Gangsta Rap An Artform?

Abusive Lyrics Corrupt Rap

By Bill Campbell

Here's a joke; maybe you've heard it.
Q. How do you know when public education isn't working?
A. When every piece of s— produced passes for art! Tda tdum.
 Okay, so maybe that wasn't funny. It's probably not even worthy of being called a joke. But then, much of what's called art and many who are called artists aren't worthy of those titles either.

Take rap music for example. The October 12 issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* said that rap is a dying art form. Good, I thought, perhaps some of the attraction of "gangsta rap" will subside and real education efforts can be put in force?

I didn't always think this way. Not when I was in the sixth grade hanging out on the street corner listening to Run DMC and LL Cool J, and break-dancing. You see, Run DMC and LL, along with other old-school rappers, were, in fact, artists: they were creative, they had universal appeal to the particular culture they represented, and they generally worked towards the better development of that culture.

But something has happened to rap music since then. The advent of "gangsta rap" brought new players and new tactics to the game. With NWA spouting lyrics like, "F— the police!" and "All women are bitches; all bitches ain't s—!" a whole new audience formed and rap wore a whole new face: the face of violent dissension.

While these original "gangsta" rappers were still artists in the sense that they were creative, they sent a message that wannabe rappers could be real rappers. All the wannabes needed was to be pissed-off, sexually explicit, and obnoxious and to degrade every authority figure they could think of.

This set the stage for an onslaught of no-talents who insisted they were artists and who were not in the least bit creative. In short, instead of creating cultural cohesion these bandwagon rappers did nothing but widen the rift between inner-city gangs and the culture around them.

Now, rap can't drum up support because venues that once sponsored these pseudo-artists won't let them play. After all, who wants a bunch of faddish phonies spouting violent dissension in their club? In their community? No one.

So rap has been forced to tone down. And because contemporary rap has no artistic value, its toned down version is not interesting. Rap is losing popularity because, through abuse and a decline in creativity, it has lost its ability to express angry, sometimes legitimate, concerns.

Now, all of this is not to say that rap can't make a come-back and restore its original artistic and cultural value. Producers are obviously trying, via pay-per-view television. But, it will take more than that. Rappers will have to cultivate and hone their skills, something that lately has been unheard of.

No Meaning to Today's Rap

By Pete Howard

I need a gangsta bitch. But don't we all?

What can we learn from Snoop, Dre, Cube, and Bone Thugs? Are they sending the wrong message?

But do we need to learn something from these guys? Are we looking for the pothagorean thereom in a recipe for oatmeal cookies? Why must we learn from everything?

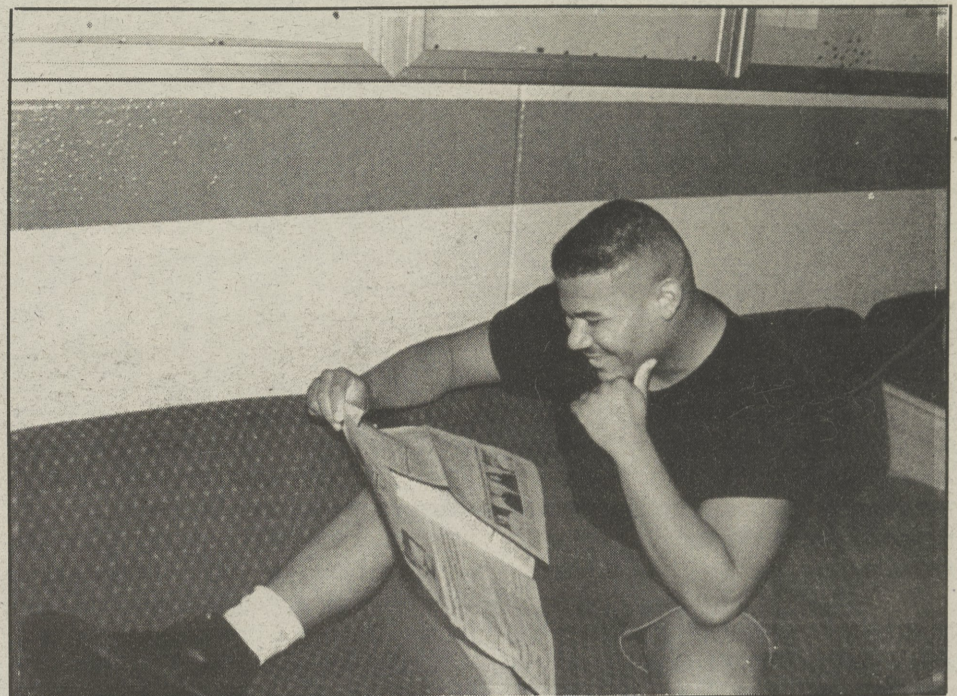
Did we get anything except a painful visual when we heard Jerry Lee Lewis singing "Great Balls of Fire"? That was in the fifties and we looked for no message. Throughout the years we also heard about "Lucy in The Sky With Diamonds" and "Muskrat Love".

How much have we learned from the music industry in general? We learned that Jenny's number was 867-5309 and that girls just wanted to have fun, but who has ever taken any of these lyrics seriously?

Only now when rap groups start acting aggressive do we start to blame some of the senseless violent acts on the musical message. But there has been gang warfare long before rap music. Sure, it has increased in the past few years, but Gangsta Rap hasn't served as a Bible to which gangs practice, it's just been their soundtrack.

If someone shoots a person because of the music, that's their problem. We also had this problem in the eighties with heavy metal. I mean come on, like Judas Preist's lyrics are really that compelling as to coerce two teenage boys into killing themselves.

Rap is just another form of expression (yes, art) that is having its day in the sun. Another form of music will come to the forefront in a while, and we'll blame McDonald's upping the price of a Happy Meal on the message that the music is sending.



Linn Christopher enjoys relaxing in the lounge and following campus issues in the Lion's Eye.
 Photo by: Janine Furillo

Campus Survey

By Judy Chrupcala

Campus Survey:

Do You Think OJ Is Guly Or Not Guly?

Carol Heller (1st semester sophomore, Marking) "He is guly because there was so much evidence against him in court. Besides, if he wasn't guly why did OJ run from the police in the first place?"

Michele Mattach (1st semester sophomore, DUS) "I think the verdict was fair because there was reasonable doubt, however I believe he had something to do with it, but not necessary the murders."

Mychau Nguyen (1st semester freshman, Health and Human Development)

"Yes I think he is guly. He showed it in his reactions in court. The evidence was good enough to prosecute him and

send OJ to the slammer."

AJ Russo (3rd semester sophomore, Earth Science) "He is not guly because they judged him as not guly. They should not hold that against him and let the case go."

Kenyetta Sandridge (1st semester sophomore, Speech Communications) "I think he didn't actually commit the murders, but I think he could of played a part in it."

Lynn Christophre (3rd semester sophomore, Business) "Yes, I think he is guly of murder. At first I thought he was innocent, but all the evidence that they had against OJ changed my way of thinking."

Jenn Kerr (1st semester, sophomore, Business) "I feel OJ is guly of killing Nicole Simpson and Ronald Goldman. I felt really sad for the families of the victims."

'Me And My Girl' in Media

By Jaelyn Fried

Now playing at the Media Theatre for the Performing Arts is a three time Tony Award winning Broadway musical. The cast includes Lesley Blumenthal, an actress that graduated from Harvard University, and Christopher Sutton, an actor that has made appearances on both "ER" and "Central Park West." Behind the scenes there is even a Penn State graduate, Gerry God. This crew comes together beautifully in their production of *Me and My Girl*.

It is the story of a bloke named Bill Snibson (played by Christopher Sutton) who comes from the wrong side of London. He is informed that he is the heir to the honorable and very valuable Lord Hareford estate. With a *My Fair Lady* type twist, the rest of the affluent Hareford family insists that before Bill can claim his inheritance, he must first learn to act like the blueblooded gentleman that he truly is. However, Bill refuses to

leave his uncivilized, commonplace girl, Sally Smith (played by Crystal Kachulis).

Using physical comedy, Sutton (as Bill) does a wonderful job of keeping the audience laughing. The show fulfills the meaning of the expression "toe tapping and knee slapping." Intertwined with the non-stop laughter, the choreography even includes a bit of tap dancing. In all of this fun and dancing, the strength of Bill and Sally's love is seen in a serious light. It is a perfect mix of humor and love.

Although ticket prices that start at twenty-three dollars may seem expensive for the average college student, it is definitely money well spent. The theatre itself is gorgeous, and the play will have you singing all the way home.

So take yourself and a friend down to the Media Theatre, now through November 19, for a terrific production of *Me and My Girl*.



Christopher Sutton as Bill Snibson and Crystal Kachulis as Sally Smith in Rockwell's *Me and My Girl*, now playing at the Media Theatre.