Hip Hop Style and Run-DMC

Hank Williams
Hunter College, CUNY
AFPRL 290: Hip Hop History and Culture
Ways Run DMC and Def Jam redefine Hip Hop

- New Visual aesthetic
  - Hard core look based on Adidas, black, and black leather
- New *sonic* aesthetic
  - Hard-edged, rock-influenced sound: shaped by Rick Rubin
  - Helps cross-over to general audiences/ MTV
- MTV breakthrough: first Hip Hop video on the network
- Sales breakthrough: Run DMC albums have unprecedented sales
- Marketing/merchandising
  - $1 million deal with Adidas
- Crossover success
Run DMC’s **New Visual aesthetic**

- Hard core look based on Adidas, black, and black leather
- Black hats/Kangol hats
- Adapted from street styles
- Clean, uncluttered, hardcore
- Promotion via MTV airplay and starring role in *Krush Groove* film spreads their look as the “real”/“authentic” B-Boy look
Run DMC’s **New sonic aesthetic**

- Hard-edged, rock-influenced sound: shaped by Rick Rubin
- Simple focus on drum-machine beats, guitar, lyrics
- Call-and-response rhyming
- Helps cross-over to general audiences/ MTV
Run DMC Sales/ marketing breakthroughs

- MTV (Music Television channel)
  - first Hip Hop video: “Rock Box” *(King of Rock* album, 1985)
- Marketing/merchandising
  - $1.5 million Adidas deal: first hip hop group; opens door for others
  - Magnifies impact of DMC as official trend-setters
  - Adidas’s cross-promotion expands DMC’s reach (see Adidas’s commercial)
- Sales
  - *Raising Hell* (1986): first double-platinum rap album
    - Hits Top 10 in *Billboard* charts
    - “Walk This Way” single hits Top 20 (*Billboard* #4)
    - “My Adidas” (*Billboard* #5)
Run DMC crossover success

• “Walk This Way” Single with rock group Aerosmith
  • *Billboard* #4
  • *Heavy* MTV rotation for video
  • Aerosmith *literally* breaks through wall
  • Expands Run DMC’s audience base to young white rock fans