

The History of Rock Music: 1989-1994

Raves, grunge, post-rock

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The Golden Age of Hip-hop Music

(These are excerpts from my book ["A History of Rock and Dance Music"](#))

Generally speaking, the rule for hip-hop music of the 1990s was that behind every successful rap act there was a producer. Rap music was born as a "do it yourself" art in which the "message" was more important than the music. During the 1990s, interest in the lyrics declined rapidly, while interest in the soundscape that those lyrics roamed increased exponentially. The rapping itself became less clownish, less stereotyped, less macho, and much more psychological and subtle. In fact, rappers often crossed over into singing. Hip-hop music became sophisticated, and wed jazz, soul and pop. Instrumental hip-hop became a genre of its own, and one of the most experimental outside of classical music.

East-Coast rap

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The most significant event of the early 1990s was probably the advent of [Wu-Tang Clan](#) (1), a loose affiliation of rappers, including Gary "Genius/GZA" Grice, Russell "Ol' Dirty Bastard" Jones, Clifford "Method Man" Smith and Dennis "Ghostface Killah" Coles, "conducted" (if the rap equivalent of a classical conductor exists) by Robert "RZA" Diggs, the musical genius behind **Enter the Wu-Tang** (1993), a diligent tribute to old-school rap. It was RZA's three-dimensional sound experience and his cerebral gutter beats (and occasional philosophical/mystical tone-poems) that gave meaning to the voices of those rappers, although the sumptuous arrangements of **Wu-Tang Forever** (1997) threatened to take away precisely that meaning. This "clan" (not "gang") spun off a number of successful solo careers. [Ol' Dirty Bastard's Return to the 36 Chambers](#) (1995), [Method Man's Tical](#) (1994), Raekwon's **Only Built 4 Cuban Linx** (1995) and [GZA/Genius' Liquid Swords](#) (1995), the most dramatic and cinematic of the bunch, were produced by RZA. However, when the Wu-Tang Clan began a rapid artistic decline, it was [Ghostface Killah](#) who emerged as the voice of his generation with the brutal, death-obsessed

cinematic storytelling of **Supreme Clientele** (2000), **The Pretty Toney Album** (2004) and **Fishscale** (2006).

The Wu-Tang clan were one of the few East Coast acts that stood up to the past standards of the city's hip-hop. A number of New Jersey acts, in particular, cast a doubt on the future of hip-hop: the duo [P.M. Dawn](#), with **Of the Heart of the Soul of the Cross** (1991), [Naughty By Nature](#), with **Naughty By Nature** (1991), [Kris Kross](#) (the pre-puberal duo of Chris "Daddy Mack" Smith and Chris "Mack Daddy" Kelly), produced by teenager Jermaine Dupri, with the disco energy of **Totally Krossed Out** (1992), and the trio of the [Lords of the Underground](#), with **Here Come the Lords** (1993), produced by Marley Marl. Washington multi-instrumentalist [Basehead](#) (Michael Ivey), with **Plays With Toys** (1992), was also crossing over into pop and soul territory. Trevor "Busta Rhymes" Smith's **The Coming** (1996) was as bizarre as it was accessible (basically an extension of the absurdist style of Public Enemy's William "Flavor Flav" Drayton). The nonsensical dialectic of [Das Efx](#) (Andre "Dre" Weston and Willie "Skoob" Hines) on **Dead Serious** (1992) was only functional in creating novelty acts.

[Main Source's Breaking Atoms](#) (1991), [Poor Righteous Teachers'](#) second album **Pure Poverty** (1991), permeated by Islamic philosophy, **Mecca and the Soul Brother** (1992) by producer [Pete Rock](#) (Phillips) & rapper C.L. Smooth (Corey Penn), Reggie "Redman" Noble's **Whut? Thee Album** (1992), **Enta Da Stage** (1993) by short-lived trio [Black Moon](#), and [New Kingdom's](#) tribal-psychedelic **Heavy Load** (1993) were among the few albums that dared to experiment. East Coast hip-hop was losing to the West Coast. If nothing else, Kendrick "[Jeru the Damaja](#)" Davis's **The Sun Rises in the East** (1994) briefly brought back party-rap's original sound.

New York's duo [Organized Konfusion](#) (Larry "Prince Poetry" Bakersfield and Troy "Pharoahe Monch" Jamerson) refined the dramatic/poetic skills of rap music, from the ghetto vignettes of **Organized Konfusion** (1991) to the psychological hip-hopera **The Equinox** (1997)

Philadelphia's The [Goats](#) (1), led by Oatie Kato (Maxx Stoyanoff-Williams), orchestrated the "hip-hopera" **Tricks of the Shade** (1992), a concept album built around the evils of the USA way of life, with both samples and a live band, deep grooves and a canvas of jazz, funk and rock.

["Prince Paul"](#) Huston (1), the producer of De La Soul's **3 Feet High and Rising** and the equally psychedelic **My Field Trip To Planet 9** (1993) by [Justin Warfield](#), penned [Gravediggaz's](#) gothic **6 Feet Deep** (1994) with Wu-Tang Clan's Robert "RZA" Diggs, and the solo albums **Psychoanalysis: What Is It?** (1997) and especially the concept album **A Prince Among Thieves** (1999).

Philadelphia-born Roots' collaborator [Ursula Rucker](#) was a black spoken-word artist who coined a new form of art with her single *Supernatural* (1994), a dance hit created by a-capella vocals. After being a mere novelty on other people's songs, she emancipated her voice and her stories of black women on **Supa Sista** (2001).

Alien to the street culture of much hip-hop, New York's [J-Live](#) (Justice Allah) was one of the MCs who turned rhymed storytelling into a veritable art, both on **The Best Part** (1996), released five years after being recorded, and **All Of The Above** (2002).

Gangsta-rap

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On the West Coast, "gangsta-rap" was the dominant theme. Schoolly D had invented it in 1984, but, starting with Ice-T in 1986, it was in Los Angeles that the form found its natural milieu. In 1992, when racial riots erupted (following the police beating of a black gangster), Los Angeles was said to have 66 gangs of teenagers, mostly black, with daily shootings among them. They reached a temporary truce in april. It is not a coincidence that gangsta-rap became a national phenomenon in the following twelve months. Gangsta-rap was not so much about gangster lives as about a metaphorical, solemn, doom-laden recreation of the noir/thriller atmosphere of the urban drug culture. It was more than a mere depiction of their lives, just like psychedelic music had been more than a mere reproduction of the hallucinogenic experience. Gangsta rap was about the mythology and the metaphysics of the gang life, with sexual and criminal overtones. As Greg Kot wrote, "The gangster rappers depict a world in which gangbangers and crack-heads fester in a cesspool of misogyny, homophobia and racism". Invariably dismissing women as teasers or sluts, these rappers indirectly revealed the sordid and desperate conditions of the women of the ghettos. Their justification was that they were not promoting that kind of violence, but merely documenting it: gangsta-rap was a documentary of daily life in the ghetto. Furthermore, the arrogance of these self-appointed super-heroes was often accompanied by a fatalistic mood: gangsta-rap was not about immortality, albeit about survival. [N.W.A.](#) (1), or "Niggaz With Attitude", formalized "gangsta-rap" on **Straight Outta Compton** (1988), and two of its former members, [O'Shea "Ice Cube" Jackson](#) with **AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted** (1990), a total immersion in a nightmarish atmosphere, and [Andre "Dr Dre" Young](#) (1) with **The Chronic** (1992), featuring rapper Calvin "Snoop Doggy Dogg" Broadus, and later with **2001** (2000), gave it its masterpieces. The latter, heavily influenced by George Clinton's psychedelic funk, also coined a subgenre called "G Funk".

Houston's [Geto Boys](#), featuring young rapper Brad "Scarface" Jordan, were one of the first crews from the South to become known nation-wide, thanks to the the terrifying gangsta-rap of their second album **Geto Boys** (1990). Robert-Earl "DJ Screw" Davis, who died at 30 of an overdose, became a Houston legend by slowing down ("screwing") rap hits into psychedelic, dilated melodies.

Gangsta-rap became mainstream via albums such as **Doggystyle** (1993) by Los Angeles native Calvin Broadus, better known as [Snoop Doggy Dogg](#) (1), produced by Dr Dre, and **Me Against The World** (1995), the third album from Oakland's [2Pac](#) (aka Tupac Shakur, born Lesane Parish Crooks, shot to death in 1996), produced by Sam Bostic, which was followed by **All Eyez on Me** (1996), the first double album of hip-hop music.

As gangsta-rap generated sales, rappers found it almost obligatory to spin the usual litany of hard-boiled tales of drugs, sex and murder.

One of the main sources of creativity for the Los Angeles scene was the [Freestyle Fellowship](#) crew, responsible for the elaborate collages of **To Whom It May Concern** (1991) and especially **Inner City Griots** (1993). The second album, **A Book Of Human Language** (1998), by [Aceyalone](#), a founding member of the "Freestyle Fellowship" crew, was lavishly arranged by Matthew "Mumbles" Fowler, and retained a literate approach that contrasted with the old "gansta" style. **Magnificent** (2006) featured beats by Jon "RJD2" Krohn.

Los Angeles was also the birthplace of Latino hip-hop, which debuted with **Escape From Havana** (1990) by Cuban-born [Mellow Man Ace](#) (Sergio Reyes) and **Hispanic Causing Panic** (1991) by [Kid Frost](#) (Arturo Molina). Kid Frost's *La Raza* (1990) and Mellow Man Ace's *Mentiroso* (1990) became the reference standards for all subsequent Latin rappers. The artistic peak of West-Coast rap was probably reached by a semi-Latino group, [Cypress Hill](#) (1), the project of producer Lawrence "Muggs" Muggerud and rapper Louis "B Real" Freeze, with their hyper-depressed trilogy of **Cypress Hill** (1992), **Black Sunday** (1993) and **Temples of Boom** (1995). The large Latino collective [Ozomatli](#) offered ebullient salsa-funk-rap on **Ozomatli** (1998), featuring wizard turntablist Cut Chemist (Lucas MacFadden).

Oakland was the headquarters of most black rappers from the San Francisco Bay Area. The main acts were the crew [Digital Underground](#) (1), the brainchild of Greg "Shock G" Jacobs and the main hip-hop purveyors of George Clinton's eccentric "funkadelia", notably on **Sex Packets** (1990); and rapper [Del tha Funkee Homosapien](#) (Teren Delvon Jones), also inspired by the P-funk aesthetics on **I Wish My Brother George Was Here** (1991). The [Mystic Journeymen](#), formed by rappers Pushin' Suckas' Consciousness (PSC) and Vision The Brotha From Anotha Planet (BFAP), were important not so much for their **4001: The Stolen Legacy** (1995), but as founders of the Oakland collective "Living Legends".

San Francisco produced some of the most virulent agit-prop rap of all times: the [Beatnigs](#), with **Beatnigs** (1988), [Consolidated](#) (1), with **The Myth Of Rock** (1990), and the [Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy](#) (1), with **Hypocrisy Is The Greatest Luxury** (1992).

Gangsta-rap reached the East Coast with [Onix](#)'s **Bacdafucup** (1992), Nasir "Nas" Jones' powerful **Illmatic** (1994), the [Notorious B.I.G.](#) (Christopher "Biggie Smalls" Wallace)'s **Ready to Die** (1994), produced by Sean "Puffy" Combs and others (Wallace was shot to death in 1997), and [Mobb Deep](#)'s second album **The Infamous** (1995), featuring Albert "Prodigy" Johnson.

[Fat Joe](#) (Joseph Cartagena), the first major Latino rapper from the Bronx, also embraced the gansta-rap aesthetic, notably on his second album **Jealous One's Envy** (1995). Fat Joe was the most notorious member of New York's rap collective D.I.T.C. (Diggin' In The Crates), formed by Joe

"DJ Diamond D" Kirkland and first tested on Diamond D's **Stunts, Blunts & Hip Hop** (1992). The other notable member, Lamont "Big L" Coleman (shot to death in 1999), released perhaps the best of their albums, **Lifestylez Ov Da Poor & Dangerous** (1995), produced by Anthony "Buckwild" Best.

Progressive-rap

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Progressive-rap of the kind pioneered by Public Enemy thrived with works such as [Arrested Development](#) (1)'s **3 Years 5 Months and 2 Days In The Life** (1992), the product of Atlanta-based rapper Todd "Speech" Thomas and disc-jockey Timothy "Headliner" Barnwell; [Movement Ex's Movement Ex](#) (1990), a concentrate of stereotyped conspiracy theories from Los Angeles; Oscar "Paris" Jackson's second album **Sleeping With the Enemy** (1992), from the Bay Area; Public Enemy associate "[Sister Souljah](#)" (Lisa Williamson)'s **360 Degrees of Power** (1992); [Brand Nubian's One For All](#) (1990); [X-Clan's To the East Blackwards](#) (1990) from New York, [KMD's Mr Hood](#) (1991), featuring rapper Daniel "Zen Love" Dumile (later known as MF Doom), and **Return Of The Boom Bap** (1993) by former Boogie Down Productions mastermind [KRS-One](#) (Lawrence Krisna Parker). These groups harked back to the radical, militant, Afro-nationalist ideology of the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam. They basically represented the "positive" alternative to gangsta-rap: instead of advocating rape and murder, they confronted issues of both local and global politics. Even feminism found its hip-hop voice: Yolanda "[Yo-Yo](#)" Whittaker, who debuted with **Make Way for the Motherlode** (1991) and founded the "Intelligent Black Woman's Coalition" to promote self-esteem among women.

This subgenre reached a fanatical peak with **Steal This Album** (1998) by Oakland's duo [The Coup](#), that reads like Mao's "Red Book" or a Noam Chomsky pamphlet.

Jazz-hop

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This was also the decade of "jazz-hop" fusion. Jazz-hop fusion had distinguished predecessors. Some consider Miles Davis' **On The Corner** (1972) the precursor of hip-hop. For sure, in the 1990s the [Last Poets](#), a Harlem-based trio of former jail convicts who had converted to Islam (led by Jalal Mansur Nuriddin), were using "spiel" (as rap was called in those days) over a jazz background: their political sermons inspired by Malcom X relied on the arrangements of jazz producer Alan Douglas on **The Last Poets** (1970), which became a hit, and developed into "jazzoetry" on **Chastisement** (1972).

Within the rap nation, jazz-hop was pioneered by: Grandmaster Flash's remixes of jazz master Roy Ayers; scratcher Derek "D.ST" Howells's collaboration with jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, *Rockit* (1983); the [Jungle Brothers' Straight Out the Jungle](#) (1988), possibly the first example of full-fledged jazz-hop fusion; **And Now The Legacy Begins** (1991), the

eclectic multi-stylistic manifesto of Toronto-based duo [Dream Warriors](#) (with the prophetic *My Definition of a Boombastic Jazz Style*); A Tribe Called Quest's **The Low End Theory** (1991), which featured guest musician Ron Carter; Carlton Douglas "[Chuck D](#)" Ridenhour's big-band tribute to Charlie Mingus (1992). Jazz returned the favor with post-bop saxophonist Greg Osby's **3D Lifestyles** (1993), with Miles Davis' very last recording, **Doo-Bop** (1992), and with the "acid-jazz" scene of San Francisco (such as Broun Fellinis and Alphabet Soup).

Besides being one of the first groups to follow in the footsteps of Public Enemy's militant hip-hop, [Gang Starr](#) (1), rapper Keith "Guru" Elam and producer Christopher "DJ Premier" Martin, pioneered the mature exploitation of jazz on **Step In The Arena** (1990) and **Daily Operation** (1992), and then ventured beyond jazz-hop on **Moment of Truth** (1998). Martin's extensive use of jazz sampling and percussion loops revolutionized the way "raps" ought to be orchestrated.

Jazz-hop became the sensation of 1993 with [Guru](#) (1)'s own **Jazzmatazz Volume 1** (1993), [US3](#)'s **Hand on the Torch** (1993), for which British producer Geoff Wilkinson mined the Blue Note catalog, the [Digable Planets](#)' **Reachin'** (1993), from Boston, [Pharcyde](#)'s dadaistic, carnivalesque **Bizarre Ride II the Pharcyde** (1993), from Los Angeles, and **Plantation Lullabies** (1993) by Washington's [Me'Shell Ndege' Ocello](#) (Mary Johnson). The trend was amplified in the following years by albums such as **One Step Ahead of the Spider** (1994), the third album by Dallas' white rapper Mark Griffin, better known as [MC900 Ft Jesus](#) (1), the [Fun Lovin' Criminals](#)' **Come Find Yourself** (1996).

Philadelphia's [Roots](#) (1) approached jazz not via samples but through live instrumentation, led by the rhythm section of drummer Ahmir-Khalib "?uestlove" Thompson and bassist Leon "Hub" Hubbard and by keyboardist Scott Storch, on **Do You Want More** (1994), the album that introduced spoken-word artist Ursula Rucker. A quantum jump in arrangements (notably James "Kamal" Gray's electronic keyboards) made **Phrenology** (2002) a case in point for the marriage of technology, composition and performance, transforming hip-hop music into avantgarde architecture; and its successors **Game Theory** (2006) and **Rising Down** (2008) refined their invention (catchy, agitprop, beat-based and cross-stylistic music) by wedding those lush production values with dark and high-energy vibrations.

The horizon further expanded with Chicago's [Common Sense](#) (Lonnie Rashied Lynn), who evolved from the mellow jazz-hop of **Resurrection** (1994) to **Electric Circus** (2003), an experiment reminiscent of psychedelic and progressive-rock, and with New York's Dante "[Mos Def](#)" Smith (1), who reacted to gangsta-rap by bring back the serious-minded philosophy of the "Native Tongues" posse while at the same time accomodating rock, soul and funk on the phantasmagoric **Black on Both Sides** (1999).

Basically, hip-hop music had fragmented along three seismic faults of rebellion: one could vent negro anger as a gangsta, as an Afronationalist militant or... by playing jazz music.

Hip-hop domination

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By the mid 1990s, hip-hop had dramatically evolved from an art of "messages" that were spoken in a conversational tone over an elementary rhythmic base to an art of cadenced speech in an emphatic and melodramatic tone over an intricate rhythmic collage. Regardless of the "message" that was now being broadcasted, the sense of black self-affirmation had moved to the forefront. The main continuity with the original form of Grandmaster Flash was in the "urban" setting of the music: except for free-jazz, no other form of black music had been so viscerally tied to the urban environment.

During the 1990s, hip-hop spread outside of its traditional bases (New York and Los Angeles), reaching the far corners of the globe.

Acid-rap, a morbid style related to Gravediggaz's horrocore, was coined by Detroit's rapper and producer [Esham](#) (Rashaam Smith), both on his solo album **Boomin' Words From Hell** (1990), recorded when he was 15, and on the harsh and disturbing **Life After Death** (1992), credited to his group [NATAS](#) ("Satan" spelled backwards).

Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik (1994) by Atlanta's [Outkast](#) (1), the duo of Andre "Dre" Benjamin and Antwan "Big Boi" Patton, was representative of the rise of southern hip-hop, with its emphasis on soul melodies and pop arrangements. Outkast turned hip-hop into a new form of space funkadelia on their sumptuous kaleidoscopes of aural ecstasy, **Aquemini** (1998) and **Stankonia** (2000) Another product of the Atlanta school was [Goodie Mob's Soul Food](#) (1995), fronted by vocalist Thomas "Cee-Lo Green" Callaway and credited with starting the "Dirty South" movement; while Master P assembled the No Limit posse in New Orleans.

The limitations of Southern gangsta rap were well represented in Texas by [UGK](#) (Underground Kingz), the rapping duo of Bun B (Bernard Freeman) and Pimp C (Chad Butler), who debuted with **The Southern Way** (1992). The "hard" sound of that album rapidly disappeared in favor of a smooth radio-friendly sound, leading to the bestsellers **Ridin' Dirty** (1996) and **Underground Kingz** (2007). While Pimp C died in 2007 from a drug overdose, the effervescent [Bun B](#) launched a successful solo career with the eclectic and star-studded **Trill** (2005) and **II Trill** (2008).

In Britain, [Fundamental](#), the brainchild of Aki "Propa-Gandhi" Nawaz, attempted an original and brutal fusion of hip-hop, industrial music and world-music on **Seize The Time** (1994), propelling his agit-prop raps with a style reminiscent of Tackhead, Consolidated and Public Enemy. And [Asian Dub Foundation](#), a London-based sound system of ethnic Indian musicians halfway between Tackhead and Clash, concocted the militant ethnic-punk-folk-dance music of **Rafi's Revenge** (1998).

Irish communist rappers [Marxman](#) sounded like the British version of Public Enemy on **33 Revolutions Per Minute** (1992), but without the musical talent.

The most influential idea was perhaps the one pioneered by the [Ragga Twins](#) (Trevor and David Destouche) on **Reggae Owes Me Money** (1991): the fusion of reggae and hip-hop breakbeats (that would lead to a whole new genre, "jungle").

[MC Solaar](#) (Senegal-born Claude M'Barali) catapulted French hip-hop to the forefront of the international scene with the brilliant **Qui Seme le Vent Recolte le Tempo** (1991) and **Prose Combat** (1994).

Assalti Frontali, the leading hip-hop posse of Italy, unleashed the confrontational manifestos **Terra di Nessuno** (1992) and the hardcore-tinged **Conflitto** (1996).

Instrumental hip-hop

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Crucial for the development of an atmospheric pseudo-dance genre was instrumental hip-hop.

Instrumental hip-hop was largely legitimized by a Los Angeles native resident in London, [DJ Shadow](#) (1), born Josh Davis. A legendary turntablist, Davis used prominent bass lines and scratches to detonate his extended singles *Entropy* (1993) and *In/Flux* (1993), and basically bridged classical music and hip-hop on elaborate, multi-part compositions such as *What Does Your Soul Look Like* (1995). **Endtroducing** (1996) was possibly the first respectable album of all-instrumental hip-hop, entirely composed on the sampler but nonetheless lushly orchestrated.

The dub-tinged soundscapes of New York's Skiz "[Spectre](#)" Fernando (2) were best deployed on the imposing gothic, post-apocalyptic trilogy of **The Illness** (1995), **The Second Coming** (1997) and **The End** (1999), each of them the hip-hop equivalent of a William Blake poem.

Japanese dj [DJ Krush](#) added a jazzy tinge to the idea on **Strictly Turntablised** (1994) and **Ki-Oku** (1998), featuring trumpeter Toshinori Kondo.

With DJ Shadow, Spectre and DJ Krush operating in three different regions, the genre of instrumental, sample-based hip-hop became an international koine.

Urban soul

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"Urban" was the nickname grafted to the smooth and sophisticated rhythm'n'blues ballad of the late 1980s, best personified by [Janet Jackson](#) (Michael's sister) and [Whitney Houston](#). Jackson debuted with **Control** (1986), crafted by producers Jimmy Jam (James Harris) and Terry Lewis that offered urban soul music tinged with hip-hop beats to propel her sensual whisper. Houston exploded with *Saving All My Love For You* (1985), *How Will I Know* (1985), *Greatest Love Of All* (1985), *I Wanna Dance With Somebody* (1987), *Didn't We Almost Have It All* (1987) and

One Moment In Time (1988).

Urban soul came to dominate pop music as well, thanks to the Los Angeles-based stars of Shalamar's singer [Jody Watley](#), [Brandy](#) Norwood and [Macy Gray](#) (born Natalie McIntyre), revealed by the moribund growl of *I Try* (1999), a rousing ballad composed with keyboardist Jeremy Ruzumna, bassist David Wilder and guitarist Jinsoo Lim.

The fact that black female artists such as Whitney Houston and Janet Jackson came to dominate the charts and set new sale records was, if nothing else, proof that black artists and female artists had made tremendous progress in being accepted by a world that used to worship only male white idols such as the Beatles and Elvis Presley.

Urban soul became a much more rhythmic affair in 1988, after Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis produced Janet Jackson's **Control** (1986), Antonio "L.A." Reid and Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds produced the [Pebbles'](#) **Pebbles** (1987) and after Teddy Riley produced [Keith Sweat's](#) **Make It Last Forever** (1987). Finally, Teddy Riley's own group Guy and [Bobby Brown's](#) second album, **Don't Be Cruel** (1988), also produced by L.A. Reid and Babyface, fused urban soul with hip-hop to create "new jack swing". Bobby Brown had been a member of teenage-group New Edition, whose biggest hit, *Cool It Now* (1984), was probably the first to use rapping in a pop-soul context. Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis topped everybody else with Janet Jackson's second album, **Rhythm Nation 1814** (1989). Later, the style was perfected by producer Sean "Puffy" Combs on [Mary J. Blige's](#) **What's the 411?** (1992), and by producers/writers Tim "Timbaland" Mosley and Melissa "Missy" Elliott on the second album by teen-idol [Aaliyah](#) (Haughton), **One In A Million** (1996).

The most successful of the new jack swing artists were Philadelphia's [Boyz II Men](#), who established their "hip-wop" style (new jack swing plus four-part harmonies a` la doo-wop) with **Cooleyhighharmony** (1991), produced by Michael Bivins of the New Edition, and churned out colossal hits such as the Babyface-penned *End of the Road* (1992), that broke a record held by Elvis Presley since 1956, *I'll Make Love to You* (1994), another Babyface creation (which even beat the previous record), *On Bended Knee* (1994), produced by Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis (a hit which beat their own record), and *One Sweet Day* (1995), a duet with Mariah Carey (which, again, broke their own previous record). The era of new jack swing ended with multi-instrumentalist Robert "[R](#)" Kelly, whose double album **R** (1998) marked a revival of classic soul music. Kelly later premiered his campy, cartoonish television soap hip-opera **Trapped In The Closet** (2005-07) that looked like a parody of the whole scene.

The spiritual message and the Caribbean-pop-rap fusion of London-born [Des'ree](#) Weekes came to focus on **I Ain't Movin'** (1994).

Assembled in 1988 by Los Angeles writers/producers Denzil Foster and Thomas McElroy (both former Club Nouveau), the female quartet [En Vogue](#) rejuvenated the concept of the "girl group" for the video age with their second album **Funky Divas** (1992). However, the new vanguard of female rhythm'n'blues groups was represented by [TLC](#), the brainchild of producer Dallas Austin, that debuted with **Oooooohhh** (1992). They, in

turn, inspired Houston's [Destiny's Child](#) (featuring the rising star of Beyonce Knowles), who came to dominate the charts at the turn of the century.

The Minneapolis sextet [Mint Condition](#) was the most competent combo of mainstream rhythm'n'blues throughout the 1990s, from *Breakin' My Heart* (1991) to *What Kind of Man Would I Be* (1996).

A revival of soul music, updated to the technology of the hip-hop era, was heralded by [D'Angelo's Brown Sugar](#) (1995), and by [Maxwell's Urban Hang Suite](#) (1996), a sumptuous Marvin Gaye-style romantic concept album.

In fact, the soul revival had been predated by, yet again, the influential production duo of L.A. Reid and Babyface, for example on [Toni Braxton's](#) two massive bestsellers, **Toni Braxton** (1993) and **Secrets** (1996), the latter containing one of the most famous ballads of all times (*Un-break My Heart*, composed by Diane Warren).

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