Rap Music Is Australia's Very Own Modern Poetry

Throughout the ages young people have expressed their youth through music, for us Australians, rap music does this for us. Rap music, also known as hip-hop, is a music genre originating from Bronx in New York, USA where one of the first rappers ever, DJ Kool Herc, a Jamaican immigrant, started rapping at parties he hosted at his home. The first party that he ever rapped at was on August 11th, 1973. From this original rap music by DJ Kool Herc evolved the many types of hip-hop we know of today such as: gangsta rap; hipster hop; rap rock; pop-rap; trap among numerous others. In the United States, it was primarily African Americans who took an interest in rapping. However, the primordial origins of rapping lie in West Africa, where griots told stories rhythmically, with the beat of a drum for accompaniment.

Many people associate rap music with poetry, others claiming that the word "rap" itself is an acronym for "rhythm and poetry". Similar to poetry, rap music features expression of feelings and ideas but rap is given intensity by the use of distinctive style and rhythm accompanied by groovy beats and attractive tones from synthesizers, samplers and drum machines. Both rap and poetry use literary devices such as assonance, alliteration, imagery and similes. Rap music uses many more language conventions. Both are spoken, but rap is more a musical-verbal art than poetry which is a verbal-typographical one. The components of rapping include content, flow and delivery. Rap music often addresses provocative subjects such as violence, money, and drugs. However, this is not always the case as some of it is actually aspirational as well as inspirational such as Australian hip-hop.

Hip-hop began in Australia in the early 1980's, imported via television and radio from the Western culture, primarily the United States, where it had developed over the preceding seven years. Australian teenagers started copying dance moves they would see in these American hip-hop videos. The first ever Australian hip-hop record was released in 1987 via Virgin records; "16 Tons/Humber mania Time" by Mighty big Crime – a Melbourne based duo. After this release followed a series of releases of hip-hop songs in Australia. Some of the notable releases include "Bring Me On" by KIC and "Last Train" by MC Opi. Christine Anu's debut album "Stylin' up" garnered platinum status in Australia and won the ARIA Award for Best Indigenous Album. She had a tour in 1993 to raise awareness for Indigenous deaths in custody. The year 1987 saw Perth's first Hip Hop radio station," Scratch FM", hosted by DJ Cut Nice which lasted to 1992. Australian rappers employed authentic and distinctive styles in their music with aspects such as the Australian accent, Australian slang and references to the Australian identity.

Rap music is not only a music genre but it is also a way for rappers to express their views and ideas. In Australia, this incorporates the Australian identity as some Australian hip-hop involves the everyday Australian life experience such as the video for "I love it" by Hilltop Hoods which not only incorporates the Australian terrain but also the Australian music industry in which the Hilltop Hoods had to work hard to get noticed.

Australia has many hip-hop artists some who are popular globally such as Iggy Azalea who was born in Australia but went to the United States at the age of 16 to pursue her music career. She has garnered plenty of awards which include: best music video, top rap artist, top rap song

among others. Other popular Australian hip-hop artists and groups include: Hilltop Hoods; 360; Horrorshow; Justice and Kaos and many others. The Hilltop Hoods have also received awards such as the ARIA Music award for the best Urban album.

In 2018, Spotify revealed that the most streamed song in Australia was Drake's "God's plan" while Apple music's was Post Malone's "I fall apart", both of which fall under the hip-hop genre. The top 2 most streamed artists of 2018 in Australia according to Spotify were Drake and post Malone, both who are rappers. The Hilltop hoods managed to get the 9th spot in most streamed Australian artists. These statistics show how popular rap music is becoming in Australia as more and more people are listening to it.

The changing face of hip-hop in Australia has enabled many youth to join the music industry and build their careers. A good example of this would be Sydney rap solo artist KIC, who in 1991 at only 16 years old, was signed to Sony/Columbia records becoming the youngest artist to sign to a major label.

Rap music is now not only an African American thing but a multicultural culture which anyone can join and express themselves creatively.

"According to early protagonists like Africa Bambaataa, there were also quite a few white kids around too – so rap's origins are, if anything, a multicultural hybrid rather than an expression of an African-American monoculture. This has made it easier for rap to be adopted in other parts of the world…"

This quote by Tony Mitchell, a famous songwriter, depicts the multiculturalism of hip-hop.

Rap music is indeed poetry in motion and a culture that should be preserved for future generations!