

Starr-Waterman

American Popular Music

Chapter 14: “Smells Like Teen Spirit”: Hip-Hop, Alternative Music, and the Entertainment Business

Key People

“Eazy-E” Wright (1973–1995): Former drug dealer, member of N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude), and later solo rap artist in the 1990s.

Alan Jackson (b. 1958): Versatile country singer from Georgia who sings in a full-voiced manner, clearly articulating the lyrics.

Ali Farka Touré (1939–2006): Guitarist and traditional praise singer (*griot*) from the West African nation of Mali.

Alison Krauss (b. 1971): Vocalist and fiddler who demonstrates both her close connections to traditional bluegrass and her interest in creating a distinctive and original development of those connections in her work with the band Union Station.

Andre “Dr. Dre” Young (b. 1965): The influential and economically successful member of N.W.A who founded an independent record label (Death Row/Interscope) and developed a distinctive hip-hop production style christened “G-Funk.”

Ani DiFranco (b. 1970): Folk singer known for critically recognized albums like *Not a Pretty Girl* and the successful live album *Living in Clip*.

Chuck D (b. 1960): MC and songwriter best known for his work with Public Enemy.

D.M.C. (b. 1964): MC with the breakout hip-hop trio Run-D.M.C. known for his edgy, rapid-fire delivery.

Dave Grohl (b. 1969): Drummer well known for his work with Nirvana and the Foo Fighters.

Eddie Vedder (b. 1964): Singer best known for his work with Pearl Jam.

Flavor Flav (b. 1959): MC who provided streetwise commentary on recordings by Public Enemy.

George Strait (b. 1952): Texas-born country singer whose songs specifically acknowledge his country backgrounds and country traditions.

Gloria Estefan (b. 1957): Cuban born singer who has sold over 90 million albums worldwide. Her formula alternates dance-oriented pop, English-language love songs, and Spanish-language tracks aimed at an international Latin American audience.

Gretchen Wilson (b. 1973): Country singer known for songs like “Redneck Woman.”

Ice-T (b. 1958): Recorded the theme song for *Colors*, Dennis Hopper’s violent film about gang-police warfare in South Central Los Angeles.

Jam Master Jay (1965–2002): DJ known for his influential work with the hip-hop trio Run-D.M.C.

Jello Biafra (b. 1959): Lead singer of the hardcore punk rock band Dead Kennedys.

Johnny Cash (1932–2003): Influential country/rockabilly recording artist and television host who first found success in the 1950s and experienced a career resurgence in the 1990s.

k. d. lang (b. 1961): Canadian recording artist whose early work showcases the influence of Patsy Cline who later recorded successful pop material.

King Sunny Adé (b. 1946): Leader of a Nigerian group called the African Beats who released *Juju Music* in 1982.

Krist Novoselic (b. 1965): Bassist and cofounder of the Seattle-based band Nirvana.

Kurt Cobain (1967–1994): Singer, guitarist, and cofounder of the Seattle-based band Nirvana whose suicide deeply affected many music fans.

Lauryn Hill (b. 1975): Hip-hop artist whose work is a self-conscious alternative to the violence and sexism of rap stars such as Dr. Dre, the Notorious B.I.G., and Tupac Shakur.

M. C. Hammer (b. 1962): Hip-hop crossover artist whose 1990 album *Please Hammer Don’t Hurt ’Em* became the bestselling hip-hop album of all time.

N.W.A.: Rap group that upped the ante with recordings that expressed the gangsta lifestyle and were saturated with images of sex and violence straight out of the prison toast tradition. Included Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, and Eazy-E, among others.

Notorious B.I.G. (1972–1997): Rapper with independent label Bad Boy Records who was shot to death. Like Tupac Shakur, he recorded prophetic raps that ended with the narrator speaking from the grave rather than standing in bloody triumph over his victims.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948–1997): Musical performer and Sufi mystic who became the first *qawwali* artist to command a large international following.

O’Shea “Ice Cube” Jackson (b. 1969): Rapper and actor best known as a founding member of the gangsta rap ensemble N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude).

Professor Griff (b. 1960): “Minister of Information” with the influential hip-hop

ensemble Public Enemy until he was forced to resign after making anti-Semitic comments.

Public Enemy: Influential hip-hop ensemble emerging in the late 1980s known for trenchant social and political commentary, sophisticated work-play, and dense, complex beats.

Queen Latifah (b. 1970): The most important woman in the history of hip-hop, in terms of both her commercial success and her effectiveness in establishing a feminist beachhead on the male-dominated field of rap music.

Ralph Stanley (b. 1927): Influential bluegrass musician featured on the soundtrack to the movie *O Brother Where Art Thou?*

Ravi Shankar (1920-2012): Indian classical musician who released the album *Live at the Monterey Pop Festival*, which reached number forty-three in 1967.

Run (b. 1964): MC with the breakout hip-hop ensemble Run-D.M.C.

Run-D.M.C.: Perhaps the most influential act in the history of rap music who established a hard-edged, rock-influenced style that was to influence profoundly the sound and sensibility of later rap music.

Ry Cooder (b. 1947): Singer and guitarist who produced the album *Talking Timbuktu*.

Sean “Puffy” Combs (b. 1969): producer, rapper, and CEO of the New York-based independent label Bad Boy Records.

Selena (1971-1995): Texas-born singer called “The Queen of Tejano (Texas American) music” and posthumously characterized as “the Mexican Madonna.”

Snoop Doggy Dogg (b.1972): Influential West-coast rapper known for his laid-back but lethal persona who emerged in the 1990s initially as a protégé of Dr. Dre.

Taylor Swift (b. 1989): “Teen idol,” singer-songwriter pop phenomenon, and self-identified country artist achieving massive crossover success in the late 2000s.

Terminator X (b. 1966): DJ with the influential hip-hop group Public Enemy.

Toby Keith (b. 1961): Oklahoma-born country performer whose music suggests a strong continuity with honky-tonk and frequently incorporates a strong backbeat.

Tupac (2Pac) Shakur (1971-1996): Rapper with Death Row Records whose mother sued for the rights to his tapes after his death by shooting. Like Notorious B.I.G. he recorded prophetic raps that ended with the narrator speaking from the grave rather than standing in bloody triumph over his victims.

Union Station: Influential bluegrass-inspired ensemble featuring Alison Krauss.

Vanilla Ice (b. 1968): White rapper considered hip-hop's icon of "wackness" (weakness) who achieved massive commercial success with his album *To the Extreme* (1990).