

# KNOW IT WHEN YOU HEAR IT

This guide is intended for use with students in grades 6-12 who are in the early stages of their musical studies. The experiences outlined below will introduce them to basic concepts and vocabulary as they explore four closely related American musical genres, the blues, jazz, rhythm & blues, and hip hop. Content is presented in 2 or 3 “sessions,” each broken into smaller 10 to 15 minute segments designed to give students the opportunity to listen and respond to the music they hear. Each session features brief suggested selections from a “Playbill” that can be accessed [here](#). Additional teacher information and suggestions for activities are provided in “Sidebars” throughout the guide. [The Bicentennial Issue of NOTE magazine](#), published by Classical Music Indy provides a rich source of information about Indianapolis connections to various musical movements and genres.

## GOAL

Students will become more appreciative and informed listeners as they examine four related American musical genres: the blues, jazz, rhythm & blues, and hip hop. They explore the origins and development of these genres and the influence of the musicians who create and perform groundbreaking music.

## VOCABULARY

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| blues             | jazz           |
| call and response | keyboard       |
| digital sampling  | rap            |
| drum machine      | rhythm         |
| genre             | rhythm & blues |
| gospel music      | syncopation    |
| harmony           | synthesizer    |
| hip hop           | turntable      |
| improvisation     |                |

## INTRODUCTION - LISTEN UP!

**Class Discussion:** Ask students to explain what kinds of music they like and why they like it. Encourage them to think about the special characteristics that make this music interesting. Ask students if they think they have influence in making the music they like popular. If so, how? Help students understand that, in both the past and present, young people have had a big role in creating new musical styles and making them popular.

## LESSON 1 – WHAT MAKES JAZZ, JAZZ?

Students listen to brief selections (1 to 2 minutes) from performances by jazz artists using a variety of instruments and begin to identify the ways jazz is similar to and different from other genres. They identify syncopated rhythmic patterns and improvisation as key elements of jazz.

### SESSION 1 – ALL ABOUT THE BEAT

Playbill: [The Stars and Stripes Forever](#), [Dirty Dozen Brass Band](#), [Olympia Brass Band](#)

1. Ask students to listen to a brief segment of a familiar marching band favorite, such as [The Stars and Stripes Forever](#). Have students clap or tap out the rhythm in 4/4 time.
2. Ask students if they have ever listened to jazz. Does it sound like the march they just heard? What is different?
3. Have students listen to a jazz selection, such as a New Orleans-style brass band and clap or tap out the rhythm. Ask: How is the rhythm of the jazz selection different from the other march? Which one would be the most fun to play? Why?
4. Explain that the jazz selection also is in 4/4 time but sounds very different because of the way the beat is accented, or emphasized. This is called **syncopation**, the result of shifting the emphasis to what otherwise would be a weak accent or by carrying the accent over to the next beat or half beat. How would [The Stars and Stripes Forever](#) sound with a syncopated rhythm?
5. Have students listen to another jazz band selection. As they listen for the syncopated rhythm have them clap or tap it out using common objects, such as paper cups and pencils to follow the rhythm.
6. Ask students to consider what they have learned about jazz when they listen to their personal music selections at home. Do they hear examples of a syncopated beat in their own favorites?

### SESSION 2 – MAKING IT UP AS YOU PLAY ALONG

Playbill: [Miles Davis](#)

1. Introduce students to a selection by a jazz combo and have them to listen carefully to identify the different instruments being used. Ask students to describe the role that each instrument is carrying out, such as establishing the beat, carrying the melody, supporting or embellishing the melody, or performing a solo.
2. Ask students if they think that everything they are hearing is part of a written musical composition. Do they think that perhaps part of the piece is improvised, created at the moment of performance? Which parts of the piece might be invented on the spot?
3. Explain that **improvisation**, composing music as it is being performed, along with syncopated rhythmic patterns, are two key elements of jazz.
4. Ask students to consider the kinds of skills a musician would need to be able improvise while playing with other musicians.
5. Help students try improvising on a simple song. Place students in small groups and ask each group to sing or hum the melody while one member of the group claps out or taps the rhythm. When each group is able to establish a rhythm and melody, ask group members to take turns as they add variations to the beat or melody. As they add variations remind students to listen to each other and maintain the beat.
6. Debrief students and ask what they learned from their experiences with improvisation. Do they ever improvise as they sing along to their favorite music?



A New Orleans brass band marching through the street.

## LESSON 2 – AFRICAN ROOTS

Students explore the origin of the blues and jazz in African-American history and culture. They listen to selections of Afro-Caribbean drumming styles and discover how drumming and call and response singing helped enslaved people communicate and develop a sense of community.

### SESSION 1- OUT OF AFRICA

Playbill: [Olympia Brass Band, Drum Solo, Afro-Caribbean Drumming](#)

#### Day 1

1. Play a brief selection from the New Orleans jazz band. Ask students: Where does jazz come from? Who invented it? Explain that jazz has a history that began over 200 years ago in New Orleans.
2. Have students use a map to find New Orleans. Ask them to consider the city's location on the Mississippi River near the Gulf of Mexico. This made New Orleans an important port city and people from various cultures settled there in Colonial times.
3. Ask students to find the present-day nations of Haiti and Cuba on the maps. In the late 1700's, French and Spanish colonists immigrated to New Orleans from these Caribbean islands. They brought slaves with them, including many who had been taken recently from Africa.
4. Ask students to think about what it meant to be transported to another country as a slave. Slaves were separated from their families and communities in Africa.. They had only the clothes on their backs but they carried memories of their music and culture with them. They brought their songs and drumming traditions from Africa to the Caribbean and then to New Orleans. In the New World, slaves began to recreate their music and musical instruments. As they did this, they also began to create something new.

5. Ask students: If you were in a new place with no musical instruments how would you create music? What would you do? If you decide to make a musical instrument what would it be? How would you make it? What materials would you use?

#### Day 2

1. Play a brief selection of an Afro-Caribbean drumming group. Ask students to imagine they are listening to a conversation. If the drums could speak, what would they say?
2. Have students listen to a jazz selection featuring a drum solo. Discuss the role of the drums in the group. Do the drums just help to carry the rhythm or is it something more?
3. Help students create a drumming circle using a variety of objects as drums. Students can start by playing in small groups and gradually expand to one large group. Suggest that students listen to each other as they drum.
4. Ask students: How was drumming in the small groups and the larger group different? Which did you like best? Why? Did they feel they were communicating with other drummers?
5. As students continue to listen to the selections of music featured in this guide remind them to notice how musicians listen to and communicate with each other.

### SESSION 2 – CALL AND RESPONSE

Playbill: [Oh! Freedom, Sweet Honey in The Rock](#)

1. Play an African-American traditional “call and response” selection. Remind students of their earlier conversations about how slaves brought to America carried their songs and musical traditions with them from Africa.
2. Ask students: Why were call and response songs important in slave communities in the New World?
3. Remind students that slaves were not able to bring musical instruments or other possessions with them from Africa. They came from different regions, spoke different African languages, practiced different religions, and had different musical styles.
4. Play one or two selections of traditional African-American call and response religious songs.
5. Explain that some slave holders would allow slaves to have Christian church services of some kind on Sundays. Without books or hymnals, call and response songs enabled slaves to worship together as a community.
6. Have students try a well known song, such as a school song, in a call and response format as half of the group sings one line and the other half repeats or responds to the line.
7. Ask students what kinds of musical skills they used to perform the song. What was it like to be part of their half of the group? What was it like to be part of the whole group?

## LESSON 3 – BEGINNING WITH THE BLUES

Students trace the origins of the blues in early African-American religious music and gospel songs and in the movement of people in the late 1890's and early 20th century, from rural areas to cities in the South and to Northern cities, such as New York and Chicago. "The Great Migration" brought African Americans, new immigrants, and Americans from many origins together. In this creative atmosphere, blues and jazz musicians began to use European instruments such as the trumpet and the piano to experiment with new musical styles and sounds,

### SESSION 1 – FEELING BLUE

*Playbill:* One or two gospel songs, such as [Down by the Riverside](#); one or two blues selections, including [Bessie Smith](#) or others; *Hound Dog*, a blues song first recorded by [Big Mama Thornton](#), or the rock & roll version by [Elvis Presley](#).

#### Day 1

1. Have students listen to a selection of one or two African-American gospel songs. Explain that as African Americans began to organize their own churches, they developed their own forms of musical worship.
2. Have students clap out the rhythm to a gospel selection such as "[Down by the Riverside](#)" as they listen. What do they hear that reminds them of the call and response songs?
3. Play one or two selections by blues artists, such as [Bessie Smith](#), the most popular blues singer of the 1920s and 30s. Ask students if they can hear any similarities between these songs and the religious songs they heard earlier.
4. Have students listen and clap along to the beat. Explain that the heavily accented rhythm of the blues is related to earlier African-American religious music but the subject matter of the blues is very different.
5. Ask students to describe the mood of each song. What kinds of emotions does the singer express? Are students familiar with the expression "feeling blue?"
6. Explain that this means feeling sad or lonely. The music we call "the blues" is usually a lament about losing or being apart from someone we love, feeling homesick for a place where we once felt at home, or the difficulties of trying to make a living.
7. Ask students do you ever "get the blues?" What kinds of music do you listen to if you are feeling blue? Does the music help you feel better?
8. Play brief selections from one or two blues songs by artists such as [Bessie Smith](#), called The Empress of the Blues. Do the songs seem to tell about a problem or tell a story? What is this story about?

First recorded by [Big Mama Thornton](#) in 1952, *Hound Dog* became a rock & roll hit for [Elvis Presley](#). If there is time, playing and comparing these two recordings could help students hear the different characteristics of the blues and rock & roll.



*Bessie Smith was called The Empress of the Blues.*

## Day 2

1. Remind students of the blues songs they listened to earlier. Why do they think the blues developed in African-American communities?
2. Explain that after the end of slavery in the 1860s, life was still very hard for African Americans. Many continued to work in rural areas for low wages. In the late 1900's and early 20th century, people began moving in large numbers to cities in both the North and South searching for jobs.
3. Talk with students about how it feels to move from one place to another. Several may know from personal experience. In the case of African Americans in the early 20th century, this meant that people were often separated from their family and friends and living far away from the places where they grew up.
4. Ask students to think about how this might have impacted African-American music. Be aware that many students have had challenging experiences. Most students will have some understanding of the sadness or loss that can be heard in many blues songs.
5. Explain that blues songs aren't always sad. They can also express resilience, the ability to survive and bounce back. Sometimes the blues can be humorous as the singer makes fun of him or herself or others.
6. Try playing "Hound Dog." Ask: Who is the singer describing or complaining about? What kinds of feelings is the singer expressing? Would singing this song make you feel better?
7. Ask students if there is a topic, sad or funny, they would like to lament or complain about. It could be something serious that makes them "blue" or it could be something lighter, such as "I've got the homework blues." Can they turn those feelings into a song?
8. Place students in small groups and give them the opportunity to create the lyrics to their blues song. Groups can perform the song in their group or for the class.



Louis Armstrong, "Satchmo"

## INDIANAPOLIS JAZZ CONNECTIONS - INDIANA AVENUE

Like several other cities, Indianapolis had a neighborhood that was the hub of jazz creativity and performance. In the 1850s and 60s, the area along Indiana Avenue, on the near northwest side of Indianapolis, began to develop as an African-American neighborhood. It soon became a center Black culture, commerce, entertainment, and music, especially jazz. In the 1950s and 60s many clubs along the Avenue where people could listen to their favorite musicians and dance. Indiana Avenue hosted top performers on the national and local scene and helped many young Indianapolis musicians gain national prominence. The neighborhood began to decline in the late 1960s as many middle-class African-American families were displaced to other parts of the city and businesses began to close. Sadly, in the early 1980s, instead of renovating the area, large parts of the neighborhood were demolished. The IUPUI campus expanded into parts of the neighborhood and Interstate highways crisscrossed the area. In 1987 some of the area was designated a national historic district and some buildings, such as the Madam Walker Theatre were restored. Today there are performance venues throughout the city showcasing both local and national jazz artists.



CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS, DEPARTMENT OF METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

## SESSION 2- COME BLOW YOUR HORN!

Playbill: [Stars & Stripes Forever](#), [Dirty Dozen Brass Band](#), [Olympia Brass Band](#), [Classical Piano \(Margaret Bonds\)](#), [Louis Armstrong Cornet](#), [Duke Ellington Piano](#)

1. Ask students if they have seen marching bands at a football game or parade. Which instruments do they like listening to the most? Why?
2. Play a brief selection from a marching band. Explain that military bands became popular in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century. Most cities and even some towns had their own bands. This was a major form of entertainment.
3. Explain that when African-Americans moved to urban areas in this time period they began to use brass band instruments like the trumpet and trombone in the jazz music they were beginning to create.
4. Play a brief selection of [classical piano](#) music. Explain that in the cities at this time there were orchestras performing symphonic music in concert halls. Pianos were important classical instruments and also were often used in church music. People who could afford to bought pianos for their homes. Of course, someone in the family would have to learn how to play!
5. Play brief selections of jazz musicians, such as [Louis Armstrong](#) and [Duke Ellington](#), playing cornet and piano.
6. Explain that these two artists were masters of their instruments but began their careers very differently. Armstrong learned to play the cornet at the age of 11 or 12 in a New Orleans boys' home. Ellington was a classically trained pianist. In some ways, they represent many of the different elements that come together to create jazz.

## OH YOU KID! YOUNG PEOPLE, INVENTIONS, AND JAZZ

In the 1920s and 30s, young people were crazy about dancing to jazz, particularly a style called swing. Benny Goodman, a notable clarinet player from Chicago, also was the leader of one of the top dance bands in the country. He was known as the "King of Swing." Benny and his band toured the country playing concerts in large venues, packed with dancers, but Goodman also made recordings and performed on the radio.

As audio technologies developed, other jazz artists used them to create new musical effects. As a singer, Billie Holliday used the microphone to modulate her voice. Other musicians used new recording techniques to layer sounds. Thanks to these inventions, people everywhere could listen to new forms of jazz.

Ask students: Who decides which songs and performers are big hits today? How do they know what is the newest thing in the music they like to listen to. Do they dance to their music? How do they learn the latest dances? What if the technology they use today to enjoy music was not available? Ask students to think about how people listened and danced to music in the 1920s and 30s when Jazz was popular. Discuss the role of young people and new inventions of the time (radio, the phonograph, and movies) in making jazz and new dance styles a national and international sensation.



7. **Gumbo:** People in New Orleans like to say that their culture is like gumbo, a popular dish that is made up of many ingredients. The same thing could be said about jazz.
8. Ask students to work in their small groups to create a recipe including all the ingredients for the "gumbo" that is jazz. Have them use their talents as artists to create a poster illustrating their recipe.

**Reference:** See [The Bicentennial Issue of NOTE magazine](#), published by Classical Music Indy, Inc. to learn about Indianapolis jazz musicians and the national influence of Indianapolis jazz.

## LESSON 4 – RHYTHM AND BLUES

Students listen to Rhythm & Blues, or R&B selections and begin to identify its connections to blues, jazz, and earlier African-American music. They listen to selections by the pioneering Indianapolis vocal group, the [Ink Spots](#), and explore the ways various R&B artists use their voices to convey emotion. Students begin to explore the ways that communications, recording technologies, and the emerging recording industry helped to make R&B popular.

### SESSION 1 – THE BEGINNING OF R&B

*Playbill: Selections from the [Ink Spots](#) and [Little Bitty Pretty One](#), by Thurston Harris*

1. Play a brief segment of a song by the [Ink Spots](#) and explain that this Indianapolis vocal group performed on Indiana Avenue, the area of Indianapolis that is known for its contributions to jazz.
2. Ask students if this music sounds similar to any of the musical selections they heard earlier. Explain that the [Ink Spots](#) were singing early versions of a new type of music. Later it would be called Rhythm and Blues. As its name suggests, R & B has its roots in jazz and the blues, as well as African-American religious music.
3. Ask students to listen closely and try to hear how the [Ink Spots](#) “layer” the sounds of their voices to produce harmony.
4. If students don’t have experience in singing different vocal parts, place them in three groups and ask each group to hum a different tone, such as C-E-G, to produce one harmonic cord. How does it feel to produce that sound?
5. Have students tap out the rhythm of the song as they listen. Do the rhythm and the harmony remind them of African-American gospel music?
6. Explain that, like jazz and the blues, R & B is connected to earlier African-American music. It’s sometimes called “soul music” but it isn’t religious. R&B was originally created by African-American musicians for African-American audiences but it soon gained world-wide popularity.
7. Have students listen to a selection from [Little Bitty Pretty One](#). Thurston Harris, who started his career as a young vocalist with the [Ink Spots](#), recorded this song in 1957. It soon became a big hit!
8. Ask students why they think people liked this song. Play it again and ask students to try to sing along. Afterwards have them identify things they liked about the music, such as fun lyrics and a lively beat. Ask: Would this song be a hit today? Why or why not?



*The Ink Spots, who formed in Indianapolis and rose to international acclaim.*

## SESSION 2 – R & B TOPS THE CHARTS!

Playlist: [Nat King Cole](#) – *Unforgettable*; [Ray Charles](#) - *Georgia on My Mind* and *Hit the Road, Jack*; [Aretha Franklin](#)– *Respect* and *Chain of Fools*; *Diana Ross & the Supremes*, *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*; [Gladys Knight](#) – *I heard it Through the Grapevine*; [Smokey Robinson](#) – *Tears of a Clown*

1. Listen to brief selections from recordings by R & B vocalists, such as [Ray Charles](#), [Aretha Franklin](#), or Marvin Gaye and to a vocal group, such as Diana Ross & the Supremes.
2. Explain that these songs were rhythm and blues hits in the 1950s, 60s, 70's, and 80's. One of the reasons they were so successful is that teenagers began buying R & B records.
3. Remind students that at this time people could attend live performances or listen to music on the radio and TV. They could also use a record player to listen to music. In the 80's people began buying high-tech equipment turntables and speakers to create home sound systems.
4. Ask students: Why do you think young people over the years have liked R & B?
5. Play brief selections from

*Unforgettable*, [Chain of Fools](#), *I Heard it Through the Grapevine*, and/or *Tears of a Clown*. Ask students to listen to the rhythmic patterns and content of each selection.

6. Ask: Do you think this was popular dance music like jazz? Would you dance to this music or would you rather just listen?
7. Ask students: What are most of the R & B songs about? If you were writing a R & B song, what would you write about?
8. Ask students to work in small groups and take a few minutes to brainstorm unique titles for some new R & B songs. Then share them with with the whole group.
9. Remind students that R & B has lasted a long time and it still influences new music, so their new titles might turn out to be hits!



Aretha Franklin



Gladys Knight



Ray Charles

## R & B CITIES

Midwestern cities had a major influence in the development and impact of Rhythm and Blues as genre. In addition to serving as a venue for seminal groups like the [Ink Spots](#) and 1960s R&B bands like The Moonlighters, Indianapolis was the home of Lamp Records, which recorded The Vanguards and the Ebony Rhythm Band. Chicago's many dance clubs and venues provided a showcase for both established and emerging groups. Detroit became an R& B recording powerhouse with the creation in 1959 of Motown, an African-American owned recording label that created the "Motown Sound." Motown used the latest recording technology to layer, enhance, and modify sounds. Although other record labels were competing, Motown became the leader in a movement that would transform the way we listen to music and music itself.

## LESSON 5 - HIP HOP

Students discuss their favorite music and learn about the the origins of hip hop and rap in urban youth culture. They follow hip hop back to its connections to the blues, jazz, and rhythm & blues and learn about the ways that digital technology has inspired and shaped this new type of music. As a culminating experience, students celebrate their new musical knowledge by planning a Dance Party.

### SESSION 1 - WHAT IS HIP HOP?

Playlist: [Fu Schnikens](#), [Ring the Alarm](#), [De la soul](#), [Me Myself and I](#), and [Poor Righteous Teachers](#), [Holy Intellect](#)

1. Ask students: Of the musical styles we've studied so far, which one is your favorite? Why do you like it?
2. After briefly discussing students' preferences, ask students what kind of music they like to listen to at home or with their friends.
3. Students may identify hip hop or rap as their favorite. Ask why they like it. Is it the rhythm, the words, or something else? Who are their favorite artists? Why are they great?
4. Play a brief section of a rap such as [Ring the Alarm](#) by [Fu Schnikens](#), [Me Myself and I](#) by [De la soul](#), or [Holy Intellect](#) by [Poor Righteous Teachers](#). from the Playlist. Ask students to listen to the words. Ask: How is what you are hearing now different from the blues, jazz, and R & B music you listened to before? How is it similar?
5. Students will recognize that rap music has words but they do not sound like the lyrics in the other musical styles. It also has a great beat.
6. Explain that the lyrics in rap are not sung like they are in the the blues, R&B, and some jazz music, but it does have a message. Like the blues, jazz, and R & B songs, rap is a way of telling a story or expressing thoughts and feelings.
7. Listen to another brief rap selection and have students tap out the rhythm. Like jazz and the blues, rap has a special beat. Also, like jazz musicians, rap artists often improvise.
8. Ask students, how does the rapper use his or her voice in ways that are different from other music? Discuss how the voice is used to create rhythm.
9. Explain that rap is made up of words spoken with rhythm. Sometimes it's called rhythmic speech, a kind of poetry.
10. **Rhymin'Raps:** Just for fun, ask students to experiment with the rhythm of rap by turning a familiar nursery rhyme into rap. Try Mary, Mary Quite Contrary or Little Boy Blue with a rap rhythm. It's a challenge, but once students get the beat they may want to improvise with a few lines of their own.

### SPEAKING TRUTH TO MUSIC

Rap isn't the first genre to use spoken words with music. There are precedents in early African-American work songs and call and response songs. There are contemporary examples in the African-American church when a preacher preaches or someone testifies as music plays or a choir sings in the background. The musical traditions of Northern Africa, Jamaica, and other parts of the Caribbean also have examples. In the 50's and early 60s, some blues, jazz, and R & B songs included a spoken phrase or two along with the music. Also in the 1950s and 60s the "beat generation" poets performed spoken-word and jazz poetry. In this case, the message of the poetry was emphasized while jazz set the mood and provided background atmosphere.

### HIP HOP AND RAP

Are hip hop and rap the same thing? Often, the terms are used interchangeably. Many people in the world of hip hop see it as a cultural movement beginning in the 1970s. This cultural shift involves music, visual arts, dress, politics, and social concerns. Rap is an important aspect of that culture, giving voice to social issues as well as being a form of personal and cultural expression.

## SESSION 2 – ELECTRIFYING SOUND

Playlist: [Fu Schnikens](#), [Ring the Alarm](#), [De la soul](#), [Me Myself and I](#), and [Poor Righteous Teachers](#), [Holy Intellect](#)

1. Play a selection from the Playlist, such as [Ring the Alarm](#) by [Fu Schnikens](#), [Me Myself and I](#) by [De la soul](#), or [Holy Intellect](#) by [Poor Righteous Teachers](#). Ask students to listen closely. Do they think rap has any connections to blues, jazz, and R & B? Like these musical styles, hip hop was created by young people and it has African roots.
2. Explain that rap started in New York City in the Bronx in the 1970s at large outdoor block parties with DJs and hundreds of young people dancing.
3. Ask what would that be like? Can you imagine being in the crowd? What kind of music would you hear?
4. Like the majority of the people in the neighborhood, most of these young people were African American, Latino, and Jamaican. They brought their own musical and dance styles to the party.
5. Ask students if they have ever attended a big outdoor event. Was there music? How could you hear it? What kind of audio technology do you think the block parties needed?
6. Explain that in the early 1970s, DJs had records, turntables, and speakers and used PA systems, like the ones used for baseball games or other big events to amplify the music.
7. **Rappin' the Classics:** To round out their exploration of rap, ask students to try turning one of the blues or R & B songs they've heard into a rap, with a change in rhythm and some changes or additions to the lyrics. What would *Hound Dog* or *I Heard it Through the Grapevine* sound like as rap? Classic poems also could inspire a rap.

### CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

To celebrate all they have learned, have students work in groups to plan a “dance party” featuring at least one selection from each of the genres students have studied. The party might be planned for a class period at the end of a semester or grading period. Student selections of music should be screened by the teacher before the party to make sure all selections are age appropriate.

### INDY RAPS

Indianapolis musicians have contributed a great deal to the early development and growth of rap music. Indianapolis-grown musicians, Babyface Edmonds and Reggie Griffin, both got their start in a funk band called *Manchild*. After the band broke up, Edmonds became a soul music star while Griffin's talents with drum machines and synthesizers led him to work at Sugar Hill Records in New Jersey, where he used those skills to arrange the recording of *Rapper's Delight* in 1979. Griffin's connections with Sugar Hill also led to the first Indianapolis rap record to be released, *Ladies Rights*, in 1980. Since that time, up to the present, rap has continued to increase in popularity with numerous clubs and concert venues featuring both local and touring performers.

**Reference:** See Kyle Long's article *Mister Everything* in [The Bicentennial Issue of NOTE Magazine](#) for more about Reggie Griffin and the growth of hip hop and rap.

### THE BIRTH OF RAP - DJ AND MC ARTISTS

Block parties usually had DJs who played a critical role in the development of rap music. Using the sound technology of the 70s, DJs began to modify the music they played. They would manipulate the turntable (called “scratchin”) to produce special effects and, because people liked to dance to the drum segments or “breaks,” they would extend the breaks by using two turntables and playing the drum sections from two different recordings, an early form of sampling. By the late 1970s and early 80s, digital sampling technology and drum machines used in recording studios became less expensive. Soon, the technologies were combined into MPCs, Music Production Centers. Block parties also had MCs to introduce the music and talk to the crowd. Sometimes one person was both DJ and MC. Often, whoever was “Mceeing” would talk or “rap” over the music with witty, rhyming commentary and rap was born! In 1977, a group call *The Sugar Hill Gang* created *Rapper's Delight*, the earliest rap recording. By the early 80's rap was part of the mainstream music scene and a growing segment of the recording industry in the United States. By the 1990s it had gained international popularity.

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