

My experiences with hip hop for the first seventeen years of my life are few and far between. When I was growing up, my family was ardently opposed to hip hop music. Ironically, my brother was the first person to introduce me to hip hop when I attended a Dave Matthews Band concert in Philadelphia. The opening acts were Santana and The Roots. I had no idea who either of these bands were because this was before the era of Santana's "Supernatural," which introduced him to the younger mainstream audience. Nevertheless, I had never heard a hip hop song in my life. As we were entering the stadium, I heard the end of the unbearable Roots set. The obnoxiously loud thumping bass, terrible rhythm, and total lack of any vocal competence at that moment spawned my hatred of all hip hop. It would be another five years until I wanted to hear another hip hop song.

On the second date with my current girlfriend, hip hop reentered my life in another, peculiar fashion. On the back of her cell phone was a sticker of a black man. I had no idea who this was so I asked and she informed me that it was "Chingy." Curious about this "Chingy," I went home and listened to his current hit, "One Call Away." I was floored to say the least. I actually enjoyed this song. This song made me delve slightly deeper into hip hop and I discovered other songs such as Nelly's "Shake Ya Tailfeather," Twista's "Overnight Celebrity," and Ludacris's "Welcome to Atlanta" that I enjoyed as well. From time to time my girlfriend still tries to diversify my rap collection, but I never really grew fond of any of these new songs as I did these first few. Nevertheless, she still opened my eyes to a new genre that I might like.

While I might have been introduced into the rap scene, I am still quite detached from rap altogether. A coworker informed me that all of the rappers that I liked were

from the South and Mid-West and all were definitely from the pop segment of hip hop. If someone had told me I listened to the pop rock segment I would be infuriated, but with hip hop I don't care. The aspect I dislike most about hip hop is the lack of talent.

Similarly, rock music might have been initially viewed as the new corruptor of the nation, but so many songs contain profound lyrics. Hip hop may have been innovative in the beginning, but all of the hip hop I've listened to is devoid of any meaning whatsoever.

Maybe I don't understand because I've never lived in the "hood," but the lyrics are often about pointlessness such as: pimps, bitches, ho's, bling, low rida's, etc. Music is supposed to express emotion, whether it is a cheesy love story or a meaningful metaphor for life. For a genre to maintain a pop segment, the other segment has to have talent and feeling. Personally, I can't find either of these in any of the "non pop" rap songs I've ever heard. It is possible the commercialization of rap has corrupted the genre.

Nevertheless, as a casual listener, I find myself basing my opinions about rap songs by the beat because if I listen to the words I will automatically be turned off.

Another personal predicament with hip hop arose as I became heavily involved in high end car audio. It just so happens that beside tonal notes, the best way to test your low end (20hz-80hz) is rap. All of its songs' beats are based off these low tones. This presents problems for the casual listener because midbass speakers (typical car speakers) cannot reproduce these tones at high volumes or accurately. For this reason, hip hop truly expanded the use of subwoofers in car audio for the everyday consumer. This revolution presents one of the biggest problems I have with hip hop music. Who hasn't been at a stop light only to have their car shaken by someone next to you or three blocks away's subwoofer? Not only is this disrespectful, it gives audiophiles a bad reputation

because we are classified with these people. Also, many noise ordinances have been enacted because of ignorant people blaring their subwoofers late at night and their utter lack of courtesy. I also went through my “big-bass” stage, but look back on it with much disdain as one of the most immature periods of my life. Conversely, I always showed courtesy towards other drivers and people trying to sleep late at night unlike most “bass-heads.”

From my earliest encounters with hip hop I’ve never been really impressed. A few songs have worked their way into my CD collections, but they are few and far between. At this stage in my life, I dissociate myself with rap as much as possible because of the distinct lack of talent and the immature nature of its fans. And because of this, hip hop and me will still remain a story that never was.