

Latino Rap – Part 2

Intro/History

As we discussed last time, many Chicano/Latino rappers do have a gang background (see my prior article on "Chicano Music: An Influence on Gang Violence and Culture". At one time was on the NAGIA http://www.nagia.org/latino_rap.htm) Sgt. Ron Stallworth of the Utah Dept. of Public Safety has written four books on the subject of gangster rap and even testified at a capital homicide trial in Texas in which rap lyrics were the subject of the case in point. Law Enforcement around the country has become more and more concerned each year with the rap industry's growing influence on gangs and crime. Det. Wayne Caffey of LAPD has also documented gang ties to many of these gangster rap groups.

Rap is part of the Hip-Hop culture that started on the East Coast in the mid-seventies with such groups as the Sugar Hill Gang, Curtis Blow, and Grandmaster Flash. It is a diverse music style and one sub-group could be classified as "Gangster Rappers". Chicano/Latino MC's may rap in English, Spanish, or Nahuatl, or whatever. Increasingly, non-Latino artists are mixing Spanish lyrics in their music in an effort to reach out to the growing Latino market.

Latinos have always been a part of the Hip-Hop scene. Early on, in New York, hip-hop break dancers like the Rock Steady Crew and "graffiti artist piecers" like Fidel Rodriguez were involved in the scene. But Latino MC's did not enjoy that much success at first. One of the old school rap legends was Prince Whipple Whip (a Puerto Rican). In the early 1980's, 1580 AM KDAY, had a rap show in L.A. called "The Mix Master Show". The DJ's were Ralph M, Tony G, and Julio G. who earned respect in the hip-hop world, especially on the West Coast. Ralph M, Julio G, and Tony G later became rap music producers. Tony G and Julio G would go on to work with many top Latino Artists and Ralph M would hook up with Son Doobie to create Funkdoobiest.

West Coast Chicano Rap

Some of the early Chicano rappers came out first on "Familia Records", (not to be confused with Darkroom Familia) owned by Murray Brumfield, a black guy from the Norwalk, California area who saw a potential money maker. After witnessing the underground success of Familia records, business acquaintances of Murray helped sell his product in their own areas at small independent record stores, at "tienditas", and also discovered local talent in their hometowns.

Around the same time, the L.A Chicano Rap Scene was creating a buzz all over Southern California and it wasn't long after when San Diego began busting out with local talent of their own including a young Robert Flores (a.k.a. Lil Rob) and his DJ Sir Crown who together made tapes which they sold out their car trunk. They put it out at all the local swap meets and mom and pop stores in the barrio. Murray Brumfield, while selling CD's in San Diego, picked up one of their cassettes and contacted Lil Rob. Soon after, Lil Rob's "Crazy Life" Album hit the streets on the Familia Records label. Lil' Rob's latest album "Natural High" is often promoted in street magazines like "Teen Angel's".

Now of course, during this time there were few Major Record Companies who even thought Chicano Rap would make it. Some talent scouts in L.A. began to hunt for local homegrown talent at car shows, night clubs, talent shows, etc. since at the time, that was the only place to find Chicano Rappers. One of the first and most successful were DTTX and ODM, aka Lighter Shade of Brown who songs off their "Brown & Proud" Album, invaded the radio waves. Lighter Shade of Brown's (Robert is originally from Pomona, CA) "On a Sunday Afternoon" with Chicana rapper "Teardrop" was a big hit with the gangster crowd. The song disses' the Police who pass by checking for alcohol. "But what Ruben had was simply apple juice. Looking like a fool, he (cop) didn't know what to do!"

One of the first hardcore Chicano rappers was Kid Frost (later known as Frost on Hit-a-Lick Records, Death Row backed) who started rapping in the early 1980's in Spanish Calo but did not catch on until the late eighties. When Chicano Rap fan's all over demanded a more hardcore sound, Kid Frost's "Hispanic Causin' Panic" answered the call. His first single, "La Raza", became an overnight hit and was in heavy rotation on southern California's radio stations. Later in 1995, as he became older, he dropped the "Kid", and became just "Frost"

Mellow Man Ace also blew up about the same time with his song "Mentiroso" (Liar) which mixed Santana samples of "Ain't Got Nobody" off of the 70's Abraxas album which got extensive airplay on the Hispanic market radio. MTV played the video often which gave this Latino rap style even more exposure to non-Hispanic listeners.

Soon other Latino rap groups caught on, N2Deep sold more than 800,000 albums and close to 1,000,000 singles with their big hit "Back To The Hotel". ALT's (Another Latin Timebomb) remake of "Tequila", Latin Alliance's (with Frost's and ALT's backing) remake of "Lowrider", and N2DEEP made major labels take notice. A rapper whose career Frost and LSOB helped start, was Slow Pain who started rapping about 1992. He was part of a group name Street Mentality. The group had Three members Slow Pain, Lil-V (now dead from a gang related shooting) and a guy called "Bandit". Street Mentality would go to every show that L.S.O.B. (A Lighter Shade of Brown) would perform at, and would demand to open for them. This caught the attention of L.S.O.B. They went on a U.S. tour in 1993 with LSOB, A.L.T., and the Lost Civilization.

The tour ended and Slow began to tour with his new partner. A.L.T. and Slow did a song together called "Coupe de Ville". They formed a new group with Frost called "Three Deep". They were in negotiations and about be signed by Ruthless Records when Eazy-E passed away. Frost moved to Celeb-entertainment for "This Was Then This Is Now Vol. I & II". Thump Records released Frost's Greatest Hits record, "Greatest Joints" in 2001, followed by "Greatest Joints 2" in 2003. The same record company also brought out his 8th release "Welcome to Frost Angeles" produced almost entirely by Frost and his son, Scoop De'Ville. Slow Pain also signed with "Thump Records", the Lowrider Magazine owned label, and got air time on the one of L.A.'s biggest radio stations, Power 106. ALT went solo again. Currently he is doing a yet unnamed group project with Frost, Mellow Man Ace and Blvd. Knights (A.L.T. and O.G.enius) working with Ruthless Records cofounder Jerry Heller which will be produced by Tony-G, Julio-G, and others.

Proper Dos, rapper Frank Villareal and producer Ernie Gonzales out of the West L.A. community of Santa Monica, dropped a song "Mexican Power" off a One Way Old School groove "Cutie Pie". Proper Dos was interviewed by Chicano music historian David Reyes who wrote a book "Land of a Thousand Dances: Chicano Rock 'N' Roll from Southern California". They are on the Low-Profile Records label. One of Proper Dos' works features the colors of the Mexican flag and an obviously heavily tattooed Chicano incarcerated with bars on the cover titled "Overdose"! Meanwhile in San Diego, another local Rapper named Royal T had a maxi-single of his own entitled "Royal T & The Raza Crew" which became an underground hit. Royal T also began performing his songs at Lowrider Car Shows throughout the Southwest U.S. which helped spread the new "Chicano Rap-style".

The undisputed "Kings of Latino Rap" are still Cypress Hill. This group blatantly promotes the use of marijuana and have sold more than 6,670,000 albums and 1,500,000 singles in the U.S alone! Their biggest hit "Insane In The Membrane" alone sold more than 600,000 singles. When Cypress Hill (Mellow Man Ace related) really caught on fire even with non-Latino audiences, Latino rap was a permanent fixture in the music industry.

New groups with gang affiliations are popping up just about everyday. Wicked Minds is a group of Latino rappers and are big into promoting SUR Streetware. MC Wreck from Cudahy, CA in Southeast L.A. County is the main rapper for them. It is said that he is the Wicked Mind and the "S" (for Sureno) is whoever raps with him. Angel was with the same label and the first so-called Latina gangster rapper from the Southern Cali.

The rap group "Delinquent Habits" from East L.A. works for "Station 13" records (hmm, wonder where they got that name?) and sold an astonishing 345,000 with their work "Tres Delinquentes". In the mid-'90s, this trio received a lot of attention. Their first release was produced by Sen Dog of Cypress Hill. Their second release was produced by Mellow Man Ace. This group also got exposure on MTV lowriders and all, They were known by the monikers "Kemo (later left the group), Ives, and O.G. Style" and collectively known as Delinquent Habits. They have been compared to Cypress Hill and their latest work is "Merry Go- Round" has been selling ok via the underground "Spanglish network".

Big Baller Click put out "Hood-Times". This group included rappers Nino B and Slow Pain from the G' Fellas and Southern California rhymers Baby, Playa, Boobie Trap, Little Playa and Baby Banks. Their rap message told of hard-edged stories of tales of the their varrio and gangster life. Lil Blacky from Riverside, CA is one of the hotter young Chicano rappers on the scene. He just made the follow-up to his breakout album, "Still World Famous, Young and Dangerous". His new collection featured guest appearances by Slow Pain, ALT, ODM, and Maro. He received 6 valas (shot outs) from Teen Angel's which is the highest rating for gangster rap. Old School Rapper MC Boulevard comes from Clantone on the West Side of L.A. New on the scene, DJ Rex allegedly has ties to 18th Street.

Another new-school rapper is Capone-E from the San Gabriel Valley, he allegedly has ties to the Cyclones 13 gang. He has been affiliated with Hi-Power Soldiers named after the high power gang modules in the L.A. County Jail. Along with Creeper, he was depicted in violent and sexually explicit depiction on "Cali-Lifestyle" videos and DVD's as well mostly sold at swap meets. He was caught dissin' the Nortenos on "Southside Loonies" and even raps about killing Sir Dyno and the rest of the Darkroom Familia. He singles them out and disses' everyone single of them! Capone-E is also featured with Conejo, Sniper, Crook, Big Spider and others on the hardcore Sureno Compilation CD "Southland Gangsters" which was produced by

Mister-D. It is not fully known yet if La EME will try to tap into the growing money generated by these Sureno rappers...if it has not already?

Norteno Rappers

On the Norteno side, the Generation of United Nortenos (G.U.N.) was one of the first Norteno based groups to join individual rappers together. They put out a few CD's sold mostly in small varrio stores. Many of these rappers will then go on to produce solo works and create spin-off groups. The idea of GUN even caused the Surenos to start a Generation of United Surenos (G.U.S.) website! The GUN producer, Robert "Huero" Grant/Gratton, later became an informant for the Operation Black Widow case against the NF. Although if he was an NF Captain as he alleges, it could not have been for very long, much of his story was fabricated.

Originally Dark Room Familia was with Doggday Records but later broke off on their own. DRF's Sir Dyno is from Tracy, CA and has performed Norteno rap for the past ten years. DRF's co-founder Duke is from Hayward and the two met up and started what would later become known as DRF. They got the name Dark Room due to the fact that their first studio was made to be very dark. This production group also makes cheap gangster subject videos like "Penitentiary Chances" and "Veteranos" which they sell off their website. He also rapped on the GUN CD and was indicted on the OBW RICO with most of the Nuestra Familia prison gang OGB/Mesa and other NF members and made songs which brought about a lot of heat including "Kill a Pig", "I Got Crank", and "14 Ways To Kill You"!

Some of the other members of DRF were E-Clips, Cutty Face, A.L.G., Never, Hurrikaine J, Lil Wyno, Mickey D, Duke, Crooked, Dj M.T., Negative1, Low, Mr. Ace, and Drew. The DRF production company was started in 1993. Dj M.T. is also from Tracy. E-Clips, Cutty Face and Low were from Modesto, Ace was from Turlock, Drew was from Madera, Never, Hurrikaine J, Lil Wyno, Negative 1, Mickey D all from Merced. A.L.G. was from le Grand, Duke and Crooked are from Hayward, CA, and Young-D from Stockton. The first Chicano rap album all in Spanish was probably Dark Room Familia's "Matan Mi Gente".

Another major Norteno record company is Black-n-Brown Productions based out of the Bay Area. Many of the rappers in this company have known gang connections and are involved in criminal activities. On the CD "17 Reasons" by Black-N-Brown Entertainment, you can listen to a Norteno rapper bragging about shooting up 19th Street gang members (SUR13) in San Francisco (and of course, it happens to be the 14th track on the CD.) One of B-n-B's main player is Sean "Gold Toes" Sanchez. Gold Toes and Dyno produced "United We Stand", a play off of 9/11, and both as a message to the cops that they would not be intimidated.

Ryan Mitchell Wood, also known as Woodie, is the co-Owner of Co. Co. County Records out of Contra Costa County, CA, in the East Bay. He produced many releases of the "Northern Exposure Volumes" While his website has lots of Nortenos, XIV, and red all over it, he claims not to appreciate the "negative attention" given his label and rap forum.

The Fresno Bulldogs who are rivals of the Nortenos also have their own group called "Dogs4Life". They are produced by Mafia Hits Records. The songs are about typical street gang issues with chanting of either "Eastside Bulldogs" or "Fresno Bulldogs". The main rappers are a "Ciro" and "D-Lok". Recently, the Bulldogs are alleged to have put out a violent video which was used against them by law enforcement.

Tejano and Mid-West Rappers

South Park Mexican's founder Carlos Coy grew up in Houston's ghettos. He embraced a thug lifestyle and developed a quick reputation for selling the best dope in the varrio. On the streets, Carlos witnessed many of his childhood friends become dope fiends, incarcerated or lose their lives. After almost losing his own life, he decided to get into rap. He got financial backing from his oldest brother "Tudy" and started hustling a new kind of dope (his music). SPM combines lyrics with environmental influences, He says, "I came up with the title "Power Moves" because that's exactly what's going on at Dope House. We're putting our money back into the mix making us more powerful." His new release LP is entitled "3rd Wish to Rock the World". Coy was later convicted of a sex crime and incarcerated.

Salty Water records is a relatively unknown label that has about a dozen rappers working for them. One of them goes by the stage name of "Pancho Villa". Spanish Fly is from Houston, Texas and a well known rapper whose album sales have reached 92,000 with singles sales of 58,000. In Texas, South Park Mexican and Capone did the independent route and were able to get success. In Denver, Deuce Mob was a local hit.

A group called Kinto Sol (the 5th Sun which was the legendary last world of the Aztecs) comes out of the Mid-West. The East and West Coast Sound have taken the spotlight, but the Midwest has rap groups too. KS' lyrics speak of street life, hardcore Hip-Hop, and some Latin influences. The first album is generally about life and it's everlasting struggles with politics and "la vida loca". KS Rappers are Malo, Skribe, Mr. Wicked. The KS music production is put together by "Payback" Garcia who began his legacy in the underground scene at a young age in the Mid-West Area. The rap group "Los Marijuanos" also hail from Chicago.

East Coast Sound

As far as the East Coast, it is still mostly Black rappers on the scene with some who have ties to the Crips and quite a few with ties to Blood gangs. A Puerto Rican rapper out of New York who signed on with major label BMG was Big Pun whose hit single, "I'm Not A Player," made him one of the top solo Latino rappers. His album sold more than 1.3 million units; was the first solo Latino rapper to go platinum. When he died he was made out to be a rap hero, but he also had "Cop Killer" lyrics!

This is the rap that got Big Punisher his first break to record with Fat Joe. What they call "spitting into the mike with dope rhymes":

"Yo, I cause a bloody bath to make my
buddies laugh and gig My nutty wrath'l l
live as long as I'm a nasty kid <I blast a pig
and slit his throat>
just for Toom and El (Ed. Payback on the cops)

My skills are human still

Joker puffin' boom in hell
I doom the world like I was god
and <throw my gun away>
Then snatch the moon out the sky
and blow the sun away

Me and my brothers play hardball
Strictly <hardcore> lyrics
'til I'm finished breakin' God's laws
My job's raw, but I gotta do it I'm
feelin' high then buddahead
So you <might get shot and lose a lot of fluid>

The spot, I blew it, at an early age
ever since the curly braid
I would earn a wage <with a 30 gauge>
There's <dirty ways to get paid>
if you got the balls just <load the Glock>
and cause <the hardest cop to drop his drawers>
Don't stop or pause let the shotty go up his butt (Ed. Shoot at cops)

To finish up, punchin' body blows and upper cuts!"

Hmm, nice guy, huh? Unfortunately, he will become another hero for the Hip-Hop generation like Tupac, Biggie, and Eazy-E. The lyrics are becoming more and more bold...

Also in New York, "The Terror Squad" produced by Big Pun and Fat Joe exposed the Puerto Rican side of hip-hop rappers. The Latino Rap scene is even moving to Mexico and other Latin American countries rap-punk rock groups are also gaining in popularity. "Rage Against the Machine's" Zack De La Rocha often sports images of revolutionary Che Guevarra, "Tha Mexakinz/Malafia", "The Psycho Realm", "Brownside", "Cuban Link", "Cisco the Frisco Mack", "Aztlán Underground", "Los Tumbados", "Latino Velvet", "Junebug Slim" (Sacra) are other Latino rappers that are out and about. Even Ozomatli has rappers on some of their cuts.

Rap is here to stay! It is the biggest growing market in America. But maybe some should take a look at negative effects and write more creative, positive, and intelligent lyrics? Again, many rappers are not gangsters and considered soft-core and even mainstream, but there are some Latino rappers out there who may have criminal connections. Unfortunately, there may be a stronger role of Latino Gangster Rappers on both coasts. Parents, Law Enforcement, and Corrections need to keep current with "the beat out on the street and know the jailhouse rap".

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