HOW HIP HOP BECAME HIT POP

AMY CODDINGTON

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Radio, Rap, and Race

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Introduction

Formatting Race on Commercial Radio

In July 1992, Seattle rapper Sir Mix-a-Lot topped the *Billboard* "Hot 100" chart with his insatiably catchy hit "Baby Got Back." His ode to ladies who "look like those rap guys' girlfriends" wasn't anywhere near the only rap song that year to do well on the "Hot 100," which recorded the most popular songs in the United States as measured by record sales and radio airplay.[1] By the early 1990s, rap songs frequently and consistently appeared in the chart's upper reaches, indicating the genre's broad popularity. This was an extraordinary transformation: what began in the 1970s as just one element of a minority New York City subculture had become an essential part of the sound of popular music in the United States. And rap's move from the margins to the mainstream, according to Sir Mix-a-Lot, had the potential to reshape racial attitudes. Rap, he thought, had the unique ability to "foster cross-cultural appreciation" by encouraging white audiences to engage with Black culture.[2]

But US listeners tuning in to their local Top 40 radio station to hear the most popular new music might have missed this opportunity. Many Top 40 stations were playing the number one hit every few hours, giving it the airplay appropriate to such an achievement. And, indeed, these stations had contributed to the genre's growth since the late 1980s, when they began regularly adding rap songs to their playlists, thereby introducing rap to new listeners across the country. But there were still some holdouts against rap's radio ascendance: other Top 40 stations refused to play the genre even as they claimed to play all of the hits. Programmers at these stations were so opposed to playing rap that they pressured the nationally syndicated countdown shows to obscure its popularity when counting down the hits.[3] Listeners tuning in to *these* stations and countdowns had an entirely different idea of what music was topping the charts. For them, "Baby Got Back" wasn't on top—it had barely cracked the top twenty.

If you're confused, it's understandable. By 1992, rap was somehow both mainstream and marginal. It was an integral part of musical culture in the United States, selling millions of records, appearing on Top 40 radio playlists, and regularly topping *Billboard*'s charts. But many within the radio industry considered the genre tangential to the popular-music mainstream, and they worked to keep it on the periphery, denying listeners the opportunity to engage with it and denying rappers like Sir Mix-a-Lot the chance to change racial attitudes in the United States. To some, rap was another style of hit music; to others, not so much.

This book interrogates rap's place in the popular-music mainstream in the United States by examining how the commercial radio industry programmed the genre during the 1980s and early 1990s. Above all else, the industry's business model dictated the terms of rap's inclusion within the musical mainstream that Top 40 radio stations broadcast, as these stations negotiated the increasing popularity of the genre against advertisers' demands for more white adult listeners. Many in the radio and advertising industries understood rap to be antithetical to the type of music these profitable audiences wanted to hear. In a country coming to understand its multiculturalism, rap was a sonic symbol of Blackness and a touchstone for white anxiety about the diversification of the mainstream.[4]

Centering the voices of radio programmers fighting over whether to play rap, *How Hip Hop Became Hit Pop* explores how rap songs like "Baby Got Back" came to be played on radio stations aimed at mainstream audiences and argues that this exposure had profound consequences for the genre and the radio industry. Rap changed the radio industry; programmers found space for the genre only once they had reconfigured the industry's race-based organization to make space for multicultural audiences. But the radio industry also changed rap. Artists grappled with pressure to conform to programmers' musical preferences and struggled to maintain the genre's identity as those programmers took control of its mainstreaming. And all of this influenced the racial politics of rap and the cultural identity of the United States more broadly.[5]

Rap music is at the center of this narrative. But this history is really a story about money, about how the business model of the radio industry affected rap's relationship to the mainstream. And it's a story about race, about how the racial prejudice central to radio's business model influenced rap's mainstream potential. But most of all, it's about how these two stories are inseparable: rap's racial politics are inextricably intertwined with its role as a commodity. Offering a sobering account of rap music's history and its political potential, this narrative illuminates the consequences of mainstream exposure and makes clear the political, economic, and social costs of how rap became the most popular genre in the United States.[6]

MAKING RACE AUDIBLE IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRIES

While hip hop scholarship is a gloriously diverse field, most academic and critical work on rap music in the United States focuses on the direct path from musicians to consumers, exploring how artists make music that people engage with. This has resulted in vital and significant work that highlights the music's radical political potential by focusing on artists whose music voices the concerns of marginalized young people of color, whether they are superstars like Public Enemy, Queen Latifah, and Kendrick Lamar or underground voices competing at local cyphers and performing at open mic nights. These accounts present critical reminders of the music's subcultural resistance and associated politics, but often at the expense of acknowledging what could be considered the elephant in the disciplinary room: rap has become the most popular genre in the world, and global superstars including Blondie, New Kids on the Block, the Spice Girls, the Black Eyed Peas, Pitbull, and Ed Sheeran all engage with hip hop's aesthetics if not its more radical politics. This book takes the opposite approach, examining rap's move to the mainstream without highlighting its most politically vocal artists.[7]

The authors who do chronicle rap's growth into the most popular genre in the world typically examine this transition from an insider perspective. Documentaries like *Hip-Hop Evolution* and books such as *The Big Payback* and *Can't Stop Won't Stop* focus on those within the burgeoning rap music industry who advocated for the genre, including hip hop artists, mix-show DJs, rap record-company personnel, and journalists at rap-oriented periodicals such as *The Source*. These works, together with John Klaess's history of rap mix shows in New York City, tell compelling stories of how those devoted to hip hop culture fought for their music by challenging the racism and complacency of the music industries and forcing the mainstream to bend toward hip hop. But the history of rap is far more complicated than this heroic narrative reveals; regardless of how insiders understood the genre, rap music was (and still is) indelibly influenced by mainstream sensibilities as radio programmers and record-label personnel endeavored to sell the genre to an increasingly broad audience. And these industry members, many of whom knew little of the genre's political ambitions and musical nuances, framed it for listeners, often in ways that directly contradicted the aspirations of those insiders invested in hip hop culture.

To understand how rap became mainstream, it's necessary to look to those who construct the mainstream. This entails turning toward the spaces between creators and consumers, to see how the genre sifted through the various layers of the music industries and how its position within these industries influenced its racial politics.[8]

For most of the last century, the recording industry has been organized according to two intertwined principles: the assumption and subsequent demand that

Black and white artists make different styles of music, and the simplification that consumers and performers of a genre share similar racial, ethnic, or class identities. This organizational structure influences how music is produced, promoted, and consumed. Record companies separate music made by and for people whom they consider outside the mainstream into Black, Latin, country, or other departmental divisions, and these departments encourage artists to design their musical wares for what they consider to be the same sorts of nonmainstream audiences.[9] While this structuring is most often described using the language of genre, it is primarily about identity. "No other industry in America," reported the NAACP in 1987, "so openly classifies its operations on a racial basis."[10]

The organization of the music industries affects how music sounds its politics of race, how it can, in musicologist Loren Kajikawa's theorization, "make race audible."[11] In their work on racial identity in the United States, sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant write that racial categories are formed through "historically situated *projects* in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized," projects that become ways of making sense of people in the world through repetition and reproduction.[12] The record industry is one such racial project; its organization of musical activities produces and reproduces understandings of race.[13] While racial categories in the real world are far more complex than a simple Black/white binary, the music industries primarily operate along this axis of racial categorization, demonstrating what scholar Jennifer Lynn Stoever describes as the "deliberately reductionist racial project constructing white power and privilege against the alterity and abjection of the imagined polarity of 'blackness.'"[14] Even as artists' own work expresses their complex identities, the recording industry tidily boxes them into this reductive racialized framework to more efficiently sell their music.

Cultural intermediaries such as radio programmers, promoters, disk-jockey pool organizers, and record store owners also affect popular music's meaning.[15] As artists work, the eventual placement of their music by intermediaries on Spotify playlists, festival bills, and record-store shelves is taken into consideration. These intermediaries don't just put music into consumers' ears; they also influence its production and consumption. Creating additional layers of (mostly race-based) organizational frameworks for songs to navigate on their way to consumers, cultural intermediaries "reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines," contributing to the process of racial formation.[16]

The commercial radio industry in the United States introduces an additional wrinkle. To an average listener, a radio station is another intermediary, responsible for introducing music to the public. But a radio station is also a cultural producer, selling the attention of a specific audience (most often defined by race, gender, and age) to companies that place ads on the station.[17] Music, in this business model, is merely an "evocative and economical" tool that stations use to cultivate specific audiences.[18] Relying on understandings of musical taste that link musical

TABLE 1 Five most important radio formats in the 1980s

Format name	Intended audience	Music
Album-Oriented Rock (Rock, AOR)	White men over 18	New and older rock
Country	White listeners of a wide age range	New and older country
Adult Contemporary (AC)	White women, 24–39	Soft pop and rock, some oldies
Top 40 (Contemporary Hits Radio, CHR)	White listeners, 12–34	New pop or pop-adjacent music, the "Top 40"
Black-Oriented (Urban, Black, Urban Contemporary)	Black listeners over 16	R&B, soul, jazz, funk

consumption with sociocultural differentiation, radio programming uses musical taste as a proxy for demographic difference to create sellable audience segments out of the diverse US public.[19]

Since the 1970s, the radio industry has used the "programming weapon" of music to divide local audiences in similar ways across the country, creating a national organizational structure defined by formats.[20] The term *format* has two meanings: the industry's grouping together stations that play similar music to attract similar types of listeners and an individual station's programming, including music, advertising, and DJ patter.[21] During the 1980s, five music formats emerged as the most important to the radio and record industries, as shown in table 1.[22] These formats neatly aligned with record-company divisions and altered these companies' musical products; the radio industry exerted influence over the sound and popularity of musical genres because record companies—cognizant of radio's promotional role—paid close attention to what found space on playlists.[23] But formats are also bound by the economics of the radio industry, as the demographic preferences of companies advertising on the radio determine a format's viability. In the 1980s and 1990s, most of these companies targeted white adult audiences and, in particular, prized white women under the age of fifty, who they thought controlled household spending and were willing to experiment with new products. A format's advertising rate—and thus its profitability—depended on its playlist attracting advertiser-friendly adults, rather than the young audiences that were the primary consumers of records.[24]

By drawing a direct line from playlists to audiences, radio programming systematizes the ambiguous relationship between musical sound and people. In so doing, the radio industry participates in the construction of racial identity in the United States; it produces and reproduces correspondences between songs and racially defined audiences.[25] Prior to the development of the contemporary format structure, radio played an important role in the creation of what Stoever terms the "sonic color line," the expectation that certain racialized people produce certain

types of sounds.[26] In the first half of the twentieth century, nationally broadcast shows like *Amos 'n' Andy* and local shows alike helped produce a sonic Black/white binary, reinforcing white identity among assimilating European immigrants by rendering Blackness in opposition to this melting-pot white identity.[27]

But contemporary formatting more thoroughly connects identity to sound. Radio programmers—those who determine a station's playlist—act as both producers and pedagogues of identity, creating and teaching what Omi and Winant term racial "common sense" for understanding who listens to what.[28] Designed to deliver specific demographics, station playlists offer a window into racial attitudes, delineating whom the music and advertising industries deem certain styles of music to be for. And although the radio industry is often incapable of accurately measuring audiences' complex identities, playlists also articulate the intersection of race with other social identities such as gender, sexuality, and class.[29] Paying attention to the logic of radio programming thus lends insight into the relationship between musical style and audiences, illuminating how genres come to be understood as for some people and not for others. In rap's case, looking at its inclusion on radio playlists reveals the genre's transforming audience and its shifting relationship to the popular-music mainstream throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s.

DEFINING THE MAINSTREAM

While the more literal meaning of *mainstream* brings to mind the combination of disparate strands into a major tributary, the mainstream is not a natural representation of popularity or consensus. Rather, it is a profoundly ideological term, delineating which people, ideas, and behaviors fit within a historically contingent set of norms and which fall outside into more "marginal" categories.[30] Whether referring to political viewpoints or belief systems, media sources or artistic movements, the term is about belonging, about who and what has been deemed part of the ideological center. The media is a central actor in framing discourse about belonging, helping consumers make sense of what is part of mainstream behavior and what deviates from these norms.[31] The cultural mainstream of the United States throughout most of the twentieth century was white; within this mainstream, "the interests and values of white people [were] positioned as unmarked universals by which difference, deficit, truth, and justice [were] determined."[32] But the boundaries of all mainstreams are constantly in flux, as new ideas and movements push their way in and force those in power to adjust their conception of the ideological center.[33]

Within the realm of popular music, the ideology of the mainstream finds grounding in the music industries' business practices.[34] Recent academic work on the popular-music mainstream expands beyond the oppositional understanding prevalent within the cultural studies tradition, where the concept of

the mainstream gained salience in distinction from a subculture or a marginal genre. Scholars including Alison Huber and Jason Toynbee have lent shape to the concept of the popular-music mainstream, arguing that mainstreaming is a process rather than a fixed characteristic of a type of music.[35] The boundaries of the mainstream, Huber argues, indicate power relations within the music industries in ways that replicate systemic inequalities. She writes, "a musical mainstream consists of music that is culturally dominant because of practices that coalesce to produce that dominance; there is no inherently 'mainstream music.'"[36] But the music industries—those in the best position to produce cultural dominance—turn this process into a product, profiting from the construction of a center through the creation, marketing, and sale of particular styles.

As with other mainstreams, the media shapes the popular-music mainstream's contours. No segment of the music industries more conspicuously defines the boundaries of what counts as mainstream popular music than the commercial radio industry, which unceremoniously decides which artists have the correct demographic appeal to become superstars.[37] Radio formats throughout the twentieth century, scholar Eric Weisbard contends, have constructed multiple, overlapping mainstreams flowing alongside each other so that hits can cross over from one "rival mainstream" to another.[38] But in the 1980s and early 1990s, these rivalries were lopsided, as one mainstream carried the most weight within the music industries: the Top 40 format.[39] During these years, the Top 40 format was one of the clearest examples of the popular-music mainstream, dictating the terms of inclusion into this ideological center.[40]

Since its establishment in the 1950s, the Top 40 format has primarily played the music that is charting well on the *Billboard* "Hot 100" (in the twentieth century, the chart was calculated by combining reported airplay on Top 40 stations with sales figures).[41] As a chart measuring the most popular songs in the country, the "Hot 100" is made up of songs in a variety of genres, and the relative popularity of any one of these genres changes from month to month or year to year. The Top 40 format's dependence on the "Hot 100" has often led to stylistically heterogeneous playlists throughout its history: in the 1970s, it wouldn't have been surprising to hear Captain and Tennille's syrupy yacht-rock classic "Love Will Keep Us Together" alongside the perhaps rightfully uncommon occurrence of a piccolo melody in the disco anthem "The Hustle" by Van McCoy & the Soul City Symphony.[42]

But by the 1980s, this musical variety was mostly passé, as financial realities prompted Top 40 programmers to tighten their playlists to appeal beyond the format's longstanding teen base to white adult female listeners. Even as they claimed to play all the hits, Top 40 programmers in the 1980s centered their stations' playlists around the historically white genre of pop and carefully managed the inclusion of other genres.[43] Most Black artists had to find their way onto these playlists through a circuitous process known as *crossing over*, developing their act in their record company's Black division and proving themselves on Black-Oriented

stations before being considered by the Top 40 format.[44] In an attempt to adhere to the sound of pop music played on the Top 40 format, most artists hoping to cross over reduced other genre-specific stylistic characteristics.[45] Attuned to these crossover nuances, record-company employees and radio programmers routinely thought about songs in relation to format expectations, describing songs in ways that referenced their ability to fit within a format, such as "urbanish but not too urban."[46]

Defined by its intended consumption by particular listeners as well as its stylistic proximity to other music played on Top 40 stations, mainstream popular music in the 1980s and early 1990s resembled a genre. As a general concept, mainstream popular music doesn't necessarily suggest a specific sound or genre; rather, it is music aimed at a particular idea of what a mainstream audience is. But as Weisbard contends, radio formats since the 1970s have adopted the logic of genres (matching a "set of songs and a set of ideals") in place of the logic of formats (matching a playlist to an audience of people).[47] In her work on genre, philosopher Robin James reduces Weisbard's distinction between formats and genre to "formats categorize people; genres categorize music." But on the radio, music implies people and vice versa. The more that programmers buy into the connection between playlists and audiences—which they have done increasingly since the 1980s to pacify advertisers looking for more targeted audiences—the less difference there is between a format and a genre.[48] Indicating both a set of listeners and a set of musical expectations, Top 40 playlists in the 1980s and early 1990s were, like genres, "musico-discursive *process[es]*" that stabilized as listeners, programmers, and musicians created expectations for what the format should sound like.[49]

Top 40 radio's business model of playing music for a mostly white audience determined the popular-music mainstream's racial identity. Neither the Top 40 format nor the mainstream music it played were explicitly characterized as white.[50] The format has historically been a primary channel through which Black artists have been marketed toward white audiences, and today all of the music these stations play takes influence from Black American musical traditions regardless of a performer's racial identity. But whiteness is rarely so overtly stated; instead, it is apparent within the industry structure. Like the more general concept of the mainstream, the Top 40 format implied mass popularity and yet its playlists were bound by ideological constraints concerning the profitability of its audiences. By claiming that it played the top hits (regardless of whether it did), this format constructed consensus, turning the musical tastes of its mostly white audience into the sound of the popular-music mainstream.[51] In order to be played on Top 40 stations, Black artists needed to make music that Top 40's mostly white programmers would think had appeal among their mostly white audiences, indicating that many Top 40 programmers and record companies considered the mainstream potential of Black artists to be conditional.[52] The crossover process turns mainstream inclusion into what T. Carlis Roberts describes as "an arena of racial confrontation and

negotiation," where entry onto playlists indicates what sorts of Black identities and sounds are considered part of the popular-music mainstream.[53]

MAKING THE MAINSTREAM MULTICULTURAL

For rap to cross over into the popular-music mainstream, it had to convince white programmers of its multiracial appeal. Black artists performing in other genres throughout the 1980s were doing just that, prompting Top 40 programmers to expand the boundaries of the popular-music mainstream. At the dawn of the 1980s, Top 40 radio playlists were mostly white; concerned about disco's declining popularity and the moral panic regarding disco's non-white and nonheteronormative identity, programmers added fewer songs by non-white performers to their playlists.[54] But by the mid-1980s, their discriminatory programming practices had loosened to embrace Black superstars like Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, and Whitney Houston, all of whom were pressured by their record labels to make crossover music aimed at wider (and whiter) audiences.[55] In 1985, *Billboard*'s Paul Grein reported that the year's charts featured an increased number of crossover artists: Prince and Billy Ocean both cracked the top ten in the year-end tallies for three different radio formats; Kool & the Gang appeared in the top twenty in four different formats; Stevie Wonder's "Part-Time Lover" reached number one on four different charts during the course of the year; and Sade appeared on year-end charts in five different formats.[56] A year later, Grein heralded what he saw as the "breakdown of the color line between pop and black radio," as six out of the top seven pop hits were by Black artists.[57] Further down the chart, almost a third of the top 100 pop singles that year were by Black musicians. White artists too participated in this crossover moment by appropriating Black musical styles in a "reverse crossover"; three of the top ten songs on the "Hot Black Singles" chart in 1986 featured white performers.

Many people working in the music industries praised the abundance of crossover music. Some commentators thought that the increased mainstream acceptance of Black artists might prompt record companies to more equitably distribute resources and compensate artists.[58] Critic Greg Tate, for example, hoped that what he called "the age of Radio Utopia" would push record companies to grant Black musicians more artistic latitude.[59] But for others, the diversification of radio playlists indicated changing racial attitudes: Benny Medina of Warner Bros. connected the increase in Black artists on Top 40 stations to an "intermingling of the races" outside the music business, and *Billboard* columnist David Nathan wrote that the popularity of crossover music was "reflective of important social developments [such as] the effects of integration in high schools."[60] Musical taste perhaps signified something more than sonic preference.

These interpretations of the diversification of the popular-music mainstream aligned with contemporary attention to the diversity of the United States' cultural

mainstream. Increased immigration from Asian and Latin American countries following the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 as well as the (slow and unequal) desegregation of public spaces in the post–civil rights era made the United States a more noticeably diverse place, and racial and ethnic diversity was to continue increasing.[61] Radically minded artists, activists, and educators throughout the 1960s and 1970s advocated for a new understanding of cultural affinity in the United States, one which cast aside the assimilationist impulses of the melting-pot ideal of monoculturalism and advocated for the redistribution of the nation's resources. Multiculturalism, as the movement came to be known, demanded recognition of the diverse ethnic and racial groups in the US and advocated for reinventing public school curricula, highlighting minority artists' work, and creating ethnic studies departments at colleges and universities.[62] But by the 1980s, what had once been associated with more radical politics was simply a new way of making sense of the United States' population.[63] The country was no longer a melting pot but instead—according to one market professional—a salad bowl, where all of the different "pieces comingle in one setting, juxtaposed yet distinct." Together, this multicultural medley could "yiel[d] complex, but harmonized flavors—each ingredient contributing its unique essence to the mix."[64]

This move toward a multicultural understanding of the cultural mainstream was visible in popular and consumer culture more broadly: on nationally broadcast network television shows starring non-white actors, at local community events celebrating a myriad of cultural traditions, and in stores selling tortillas and collard greens in one aisle and children's toys with a diverse range of skin tones in another.[65] As historian Lizabeth Cohen notes, the roles of citizen and consumer were linked in the United States throughout the twentieth century, meaning that the increased recognition of the diversity of the US population went hand in hand with selling to these various segments.[66] Many companies in the 1970s and 1980s began using marketing techniques targeted toward Black and Hispanic consumers that highlighted and recognized racial, ethnic, and cultural differences.[67] What the industry referred to as *multicultural marketing* understood race and ethnicity as foundational to how minorities consumed, and these practices incorporated more diverse actors and more targeted approaches. Dockers, for example, began casting Black and white models in its ads, and Avon started translating its lipstick commercials into Spanish.[68]

RAP'S DISTANCE FROM THE MAINSTREAM

As some non-white Americans were welcomed into marketplaces, enacting multicultural inclusion through consumption, others, including those involved in hip hop's creation, were systematically excluded from this possibility.[69] A devastating combination of racial segregation in housing, employer abandonment of major urban areas, and rampant workplace discrimination led to racialized poverty in urban areas in the post-war period, including in the South Bronx, where hip hop

was about to be born. The federal government further exacerbated these inequities by cutting entitlement programs aimed at helping these communities, meaning that those without the means to move out of cities—including the young people of color who began tagging, breaking, rapping, and DJing in the South Bronx—were left without jobs and social services in neighborhoods that had little hope of increased government investment.[70]

The South Bronx in the 1970s was about as far from the mainstream as one positioned within this ideological center could imagine. As the government demolished and failed to adequately rebuild the neighborhood, and as city officials abdicated their responsibility to local citizens through planned or unplanned shrinkage policies, the South Bronx became what critic Nelson George describes as "America's dark side," the national representation of urban decay in movies like *Fort Apache: The Bronx* and Tom Wolfe's novel *Bonfire of the Vanities*.[71] By the mid-1970s, many outside the neighborhood saw it as a "spectacular set of ruins, a mythical wasteland, an infectious disease," as Jeff Chang writes.[72] A 1981 *CBS News Sunday Morning* special report, for instance, described the neighborhood using a Kurt Vonnegut quote about World War II ruins in Dresden: "It was like the moon now, nothing but minerals."[73] And as politicians and pundits debated solutions, they called attention to perceived differences between upwardly mobile people who resided elsewhere and the people of color who lived in similar neighborhoods; for example, *Time* magazine cast economically disadvantaged people living in urban areas like the South Bronx as "the unreachables" in a 1977 story about this "group of people who are more intractable, more socially alien and more hostile than almost anyone had imagined."[74] Sociologist Herman Gray argues that the media particularly cast socioeconomically disadvantaged Black men outside of the multicultural normative public such that they acted as the "symbolic basis for fueling and sustaining panics about crime, the nuclear family, and middle-class security."[75] Reagan-era discourse shifted public perception of inequality to questions of personal responsibility, rendering young people of color such as those participating in hip hop culture as menaces to "law and order," framing typical of the times that disguised race-baiting as moral panic.[76]

When rap music expanded out of the South Bronx, it assumed many of these racialized outsider associations. Multiple studies have demonstrated that, as it was introduced to those outside of the New York area through print media, rap "was constructed such that [it] was aligned with, or homologous to, the social category of race" and was characterized as "the expression of an essential racial difference: an authentic expression of 'blackness' and particularly of urban underclass 'blackness.'"[77] This connection has, if anything, strengthened in the intervening years, such that the genre—regardless of an individual performer's racial identity—is inextricably linked to its Blackness.[78]

The music industries were hesitant to incorporate the genre into their diversifying mainstream. In part, this was due to its racial identity. While rap's audience and its creators were never exclusively Black—since the genre's beginnings,

rap songs have been produced and consumed by a racially and ethnically diverse public—the genre was created, marketed, and bought by people who understood rap to be the sound of urban Black teenage life.[79] Rap's racial identity influenced its placement within the segregated record industry; rappers were most often signed to small Black-music–focused record labels, and as major labels gained interest in rap they either directly signed rappers into their Black divisions or signed distribution deals rather than get involved with artist development and promotion.[80] Either way, this separated rap from the white mainstream divisions at record labels.[81]

But rap's perceived distance from the mainstream went further than the music industries' understanding of who the music was made by and for—after all, Top 40 stations regularly played Black artists. Rap music was developed in spaces outside of the typical purview of the profit-seeking music industries, its very essence crafted from the materials and creative possibilities of the South Bronx. The music industries didn't instantly recognize the potential of a genre consumed by economically disadvantaged Black and Latinx teens in community rooms and at block parties.[82] Hip hop's musical components repurposed old records in ways that seemed impossible for the record industry to profit from. Even its most famous early practitioners (including Lovebug Starski and Grandmaster Flash) were so convinced that what they were doing could not sell records that they initially turned down record contracts.[83]

Sonically, rap was also considered outside of the mainstream. Many journalists throughout the 1980s described the genre as breaking with preestablished ideas of what constituted music, characterizing it as lacking melody and instead emphasizing rhythm. It was, according to reporter Hugh Downs in an early *20/20* episode on the genre, "all beat and all talk."[84] Rap, wrote critic John Rockwell, "has its limits, in that it eschews the melodic element that has been essential to most popular music."[85] Others noted that rap sounded unwelcomely noisy: *Los Angeles Times* writer Robert Hilburn described it as "a jittery sonic assault," and Jon Pareles of the *New York Times* acknowledged that many people found rap confusing, like "rude, jumbled noise."[86] One letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* made this quite clear, stating unequivocally, "The fact of the matter is quite simple, really. This is not music in any definition of the word. This is garbage, it's boring and insulting to anyone of any intelligence at all!"[87] Even other contemporary artists criticized the musicality of the genre, including Black artists like Chaka Khan, who featured rapper Melle Mel on her 1984 hit "I Feel for You." She'd previously been "creating masterpieces, mixing jazz and rock and funk." Adding rap was "really *the pits*. The lowest thing you can do from an artist's standpoint."[88]

For the radio programmers who created the popular-music mainstream, all of these characterizations of rap—regardless of their accuracy—were concerning. Programmers didn't think that rap had the same crossover potential as the other music by Black artists they played on their diversifying playlists because it represented a type of Blackness that wasn't marketable; the race, age, and socioeconomic

class of rap's audience was a hard sell to advertisers just beginning to incorporate multicultural marketing practices.[89] Some programmers expressed concern about the genre's "obscene language" and "negative stereotypes" that might cause "instant tune-out" from members of their audience—largely unsubstantiated complaints that likely masked unease about the race of the performers—continuing a long tradition of claiming fears about moral decay as an excuse to not program music by Black artists.[90] And as Top 40 programmers coalesced their sound around the genre of pop to pacify white adult female listeners, they complained about the sonic distance between rap and other music on their playlists. White programmer Neil McIntyre thought that rap records in the late 1980s sounded "less like music" and more "like Jack Kerouac poetry."[91] The genre was "very hard to program," reported another white programmer, because it didn't "sound like anything else and [was] difficult to line up next to a ballad, a [Top] 40 hit, even Van Halen."[92] And one Black Boston programmer said that rap's general emphasis on the rhythm rather than on the melody "was the first real substantial break in the music chain. It didn't really follow the link through blues to rock 'n' roll to R&B. Rap completely threw out the melody at first, and it jolted people."[93]

These individual opinions are hardly historically accurate descriptions of 1980s rap, but they informed how radio programmers thought about the genre.[94] Comments about the difficulty of programming rap and tips about what songs were easier to play appeared frequently in radio trade journals throughout the 1980s and beyond. The genre's mainstream trajectory would be dependent on changing programmers' minds; it would require convincing them that what they considered to be financially unviable Black noise was actually mainstream popular music.

So while this is story about rap music, it features an unusual cast. At the center of this story are not MCs, DJs, producers, or label owners, although these characters all play important roles. Instead, the real power over rap's inclusion in the mainstream was found in the back offices of commercial Top 40 radio stations, where programmers debated whether including rap's Black sound on their playlists would alienate listeners or, worse, the companies who paid for advertising spots on their stations. To make sense of rap's relationship to mainstream popular music in the United States during this period and beyond, it's necessary to acknowledge the economic constraints of that mainstream and to recognize how these financial realities informed radio stations' playlists.

SELLING HIP HOP AS HIT POP

In many ways this book tells the story of how it was possible for me—a white girl growing up without a TV in a mostly white town in a mostly white state—to find rap by turning on my radio. Growing up in Eugene, Oregon, I heard rap on my local Top 40 station, which in 1987 offered to give away tickets to a Beastie Boys show to anyone over 55 who would actually admit that they wanted to see

the group's frat-party antics.[95] By 1990, Eugene's Top 40 station was playing rap songs by MC Hammer and Snap! alongside poppier hits by Phil Collins and Taylor Dayne, like most other Top 40 stations in the country.[96] Rap was just like pop, another component of the mainstream this station broadcast.

The station's attitude toward rap didn't change as the '90s progressed. The most common musical question I was asked in the hallways of Roosevelt Middle School when I started 6th grade in 1997 was not whether I preferred Nas's or OutKast's recent second albums but whether I was more into Blackstreet or the Backstreet Boys. Despite the artists' similar names, the latest singles by these two groups had little in common. Blackstreet's "No Diggity" started with a rapped verse by gangsta-rap luminary Dr. Dre (who reportedly first offered the beat for the song to Tupac) and featured lyrics from the all-Black group about being infatuated with a sex worker. The only remotely sexual thing about the Backstreet Boys' bubblegum pop concoction "Quit Playing Games (With My Heart)" was that the white group members took their shirts off in the rain-soaked music video, which discouraged MTV from playing it.[97] These groups ostensibly operated in two different genres: one was the latest creation of new jack swing innovator, producer, and singer Teddy Riley; the other was a Max Martin–produced pop boy-band sensation on their way to selling twelve million copies of their record. But they were comparable in our small world, because our Top 40 station KDUK played both during the bus ride to school. Hearing these groups on the same station taught me that they were intended for the same audience: rap, at least in the form of Blackstreet, was part of hit pop.

As middle school turned to high school, I continued to hear rap and pop nestled together on KDUK's top ten countdown. Listening to KDUK taught me to love Lil Jon & the East Side Boyz and Snoop Dogg just as it taught me to love Kelly Clarkson and Ashlee Simpson, erasing any distinctions between these artists as the station seamlessly transitioned from one to another. Hearing rap on KDUK didn't teach me anything about the genre; in fact, the station ignored rap's racial politics as it smoothly segued between hits. And if I've learned anything from writing this book, it's that my experience was in no way unique, that millions of others in the United States likely found rap through pop. Rap wasn't sold to us as the political expression of marginalized Black Americans but instead as the sound of belonging to a hip, commodified, young America.

Focusing on Top 40 stations like KDUK and their role in making rap mainstream highlights a form of media overlooked in hip hop scholarship. Influenced by artists' denunciations of radio stations refusing to play rap, scholars and journalists have often given MTV credit for launching rap into the mainstream, as its show *Yo! MTV Raps* introduced the genre to white suburban male audiences in the United States during the late 1980s.[98] While the show was a remarkable success, it did not by itself make rap mainstream. Instead, it relegated rap to a specialty show on a specialty subscription channel that was aimed primarily at white suburban

men in their late teens and early twenties.[99] Even as they broadcast the show, the channel's programming staff considered much of the rap they played on *Yo! MTV Raps* unfit for inclusion on their regular playlists, and limited the show to, at most, fourteen hours a week.[100] But over on Top 40 stations, it was possible to hear rap broadcast for free at all times of day, whether it was Technotronic on the drive home from school, Young MC on a Saturday morning, or Salt-N-Pepa during the evening hours.

Tuning in to how commercial radio stations contributed to rap's growth during this era focuses on how the genre became popular with listeners beyond its assumed core audience of young men of color and MTV's core audience of young white men. In particular, it highlights the critical role female and Latinx listeners played in making rap mainstream. While few of the main characters in this narrative are female or Latinx—most of them are white men—this story is about catering to female and Latinx musical tastes, or at least what the white men programming radio stations thought these tastes were. Histories of rap typically disregard or simply overlook the tastes of these audiences; indeed, Black masculinity is characterized as such an essential part of rap's identity that scholars and journalists alike have bestowed canonical status upon a group like Public Enemy, whose "formula," according to group member Chuck D, was to make "records that girls hated."[101] But in order for rap to become mainstream, artists had to make music that appealed beyond Chuck D's intended audience.

In telling the story of how rap came to be heard on a white-oriented Top 40 radio station in Eugene, Oregon, this book highlights yet another instance of what Jason Tanz has described as "white people entertaining themselves with, and identifying with, expressions of black people's struggles and triumphs."[102] I draw attention to this ceaselessly repeating American cultural tradition not to diminish the genre's Black identity, nor to discount the potential of its racial politics, but rather to offer an honest portrayal of how rap's politics of race were sold. Rap can be revolutionary: by acting as a megaphone for marginalized artists to articulate their inimitable identities, it does the sociocultural work that Black popular music in the United States at its best accomplishes.[103] But like all other popular music genres, it does all this while selling records, subsidizing the extractive music industries that were built on the unpaid labor of colonized people worldwide and Black musicians in the United States.[104] While the mainstreaming of rap has put money into the hands of Black musicians and businesspeople, Greg Tate notes that it has failed to change the material realities of most Black Americans and has not "fully dismantled the prevalent, delimiting mythologies about Black intelligence, morality, and hierarchical place in America."[105]

Attending to this perspective does not negate rap's radical potential but rather allows for a more honest and sympathetic appraisal of the genre. For even as rap music voices resistance, as historian Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar writes, it can also "affir[m] the racial status quo."[106] Pointing out how rap was forced to accommodate the

rampant anti-Blackness embedded within the commercial radio industry's business model holds the music industries accountable for their racism and gives us an opportunity to more clearly comprehend the considerable pressure put on artists. Not overselling musicians' power to operate outside of the constraints of capitalism and what journalist Norman Kelley deems the music industries' "structure of stealing" requires us to more kindly evaluate the work that artists do.[107] And in tackling the forces of capitalism head-on, this book helps clarify how the popular-music mainstream came to incorporate rap's Black aesthetics without making space for the Black people associated with the genre, and how the genre became the most popular one in the world without enacting substantive change toward making that world more equitable. For all the important work popular music does in our contemporary world, it's still just another way for companies to profit.

METHODS

The story told in the following pages comes from archival research based mostly in radio trade journals, including *Billboard*, *Radio & Records*, the *Gavin Report*, *Black Radio Exclusive*, and *Jack the Rapper*. Playlists, charts, editorials, commentary, and programmer interviews found in the pages of these trade journals, as media scholar Kim Simpson demonstrates, "provide a useful opportunity to map out one angle, at least, of the rather messy business of cultural change."[108] But these sources are biased. Playlist reporting in the pre-SoundScan era was incorrect, due to record companies regularly paying programmers to list a song on their playlist regardless of actual airplay, a notorious practice known as *payola*. Incorrect reporting coupled with radio trade journals' opaque chart-compiling methods meant that their charts often failed to accurately depict the popularity of a given song. Programmer interviews, editorials, and commentary are also biased. Some programmers, influenced by payola, lied about what they were playing and why; editorials offer a narrow account rather than registering general attitudes; and plenty of commentary is based on the faulty information found in published playlists and charts. And programmers were rarely experts on the genres they played, meaning that their statements about audience tastes and the music they broadcast must be understood within the context of their stations' financial imperatives.

These notes on the inaccuracy of trade journals, ironically, highlight the utility of these primary sources. Even if they didn't always accurately represent what was happening in radio-station offices, they set industry expectations, impacted how programmers did their jobs, and articulated ways of understanding the complexity of the United States' radio audience. It isn't just that, as scholars Anthony Kwame Harrison and Craig E. Arthur argue, trade journals provide *researchers* with a vital source of information; rather, they provide that same information to other programmers figuring out how to engage with contemporary music.[109] Trade journals record and reinforce a way of thinking about what is happening on the

radio, creating a basis for industry discourse and influencing programming decisions, despite their prejudiced perspectives and general unreliability.[110]

To provide a large-scale quantitative sense of how radio playlists shifted to incorporate rap during the period in question, a remarkable team of undergraduate research assistants and I categorized the songs listed on several *Billboard* charts according to general stylistic parameters; our results can be found throughout the book. These song categorizations are simplistic at best; because rap is a diverse musical genre, and because radio programmers in the 1980s and early 1990s often didn't know much about it, accurately measuring the increase in the number of songs that programmers would have classified as rap is an impossible task. As a historically informed simplification of this task, we analyzed songs for the inclusion of rapped vocals, defined as more than a second of rhymed, mostly nonrepeating spoken vocals aligned with the beat of the song.[111] Throughout I refer to songs fulfilling these criteria as "songs with rapped vocals" rather than "rap songs" to indicate the overly capacious definition of rap used by radio programmers and music-industry publications, which typically described songs with these sorts of vocals as rap or rap-adjacent.

Beyond this, we categorized styles according to how the songs would likely have been classified by the overlapping, racially-defined organizational frameworks of the radio and recording industries: ballads, for slow-tempo songs; rock, for up-tempo songs sung or performed by white performers that prominently featured electric guitars; freestyle, for songs in the genre defined by upbeat, electronic, bubbly dance beats and for songs by groups associated with the freestyle club scene; R&B, for up-tempo songs sung or performed by Black performers; country, for songs that had clear crossover trajectories from Country stations; and pop for everything else. Songs of course fell between categories or into more than one, but in an attempt to mimic the sorts of programming categories that radio stations used we prioritized membership into these categories in the order listed here, as that most closely represents how Top 40 programmers described the composition of their playlists during this period.

WHAT'S TO COME

Chapter 1 opens with a comment typically attributed to legendary Black programmer Frankie Crocker, that rap was "too Black" to be played on his Black-Oriented New York radio station. Rap's racial identity proved to be a problem for rappers hoping to be played on commercial radio stations, but this was not the only reason they had trouble attaining that airplay in the early 1980s. This chapter begins by narrating a short critical history of the Black-Oriented radio format and analyzing how pressure from advertisers for radio stations to deliver wealthier demographics limited rap's airtime on these stations. It then turns to the record industry, evaluating how race-based expectations for Black musicians and biases against

Black audiences influenced rap's potential during its first half-decade on record. Together, these industry pressures made rap a rarity on Black-Oriented stations in the first half of the 1980s. Until a substantial shift occurred in the structure of the radio industry, their reluctance to play the genre kept rap from crossing over to other formats.

Chapters 2 and 3 explore the two sides of hip hop becoming hit pop. Chapter 2 highlights a structural change in the radio industry, one that upended the usual pathway through which music by Black artists made its way to the mainstream. This story begins in Los Angeles in 1986, when white programmer Jeff Wyatt began working at Power 106, a station that would inspire the radio industry to reconfigure its approach to programming for diverse audiences. Making waves in the radio industry by refusing to have his station pigeonholed into the segregated structure of contemporary radio formats, Wyatt programmed up-tempo music for a coalition of white, Black, and Hispanic listeners. This station, and the others that were developed in urban areas across the nation in the wake of its success, challenged conventional radio formatting. Coalescing into the format known during the late 1980s as Crossover, these stations intentionally targeted a multicultural public, playing styles of music that appealed across racial lines. This included songs with rapped vocals, which Crossover programmers noted had equal appeal across their diverse audience.

The Crossover format was the first in the commercial radio industry to regularly play a substantial amount of rap. But the racial politics of these stations were complex, as they decentered individual minority groups' interests in the name of color-blindness and inclusion. While Crossover stations embraced the sounds of young people of color, this format failed to disrupt the pervasive structural racism of the radio and recording industries; after all, the business model of Crossover stations depended upon its very existence. As Crossover stations made space for rap on the radio, they wrested control of rap out of the hands of Black-Oriented stations and became the new gatekeepers of its Black sounds.

The flourishing Crossover format, and the rap hits it played, did not go unnoticed at Top 40 stations across the country, which swiftly followed its lead and started playing rap as well. By the early 1990s, listeners across the country—not just in New York and Los Angeles, but in Topeka, Missoula, and yes, Eugene—heard rap as part of the everyday sound of Top 40 stations. Chapter 3 tunes in to the rap songs that these stations played, reconstructing how once-hesitant programmers introduced rap to their audiences. For rap to be played on Top 40 stations, it needed to demonstrate its appeal to the format's most desired demographic: white women over the age of twenty-five. Top 40 programmers in the mid-1980s worried that rap was too noisy and unmelodic to appeal to this demographic, to whom they were feeding a steady diet of Whitney Houston's melismatic vocals and the rich, synthesized chordal textures of Madonna's anthemic dance numbers. But within a few years, Top 40 programmers, influenced by Crossover stations, began

playing rap songs that shortened the sonic distance between rap and pop by foregrounding melodies and conforming to preestablished pop styles such as ballads. By the beginning of the new decade, rap was all over Top 40 radio; songs with rapped vocals by artists like LL Cool J, MC Hammer, Young MC, Technotronic, and Vanilla Ice made up about a quarter of Top 40 playlists. The popularity of rap on the radio had substantial consequences for the genre, and I end this chapter by considering how rap's mainstreaming affected its politics of race.

As rap's Black sound became a central component of the Top 40 format—as it became part of the popular-music mainstream—the mainstream shifted in reaction to its inclusion. Chapter 4 analyzes the development of two rap-free Top 40 subformats at the turn of the decade. The first of these subformats, aimed at rock fans, barely lasted a year. The second, a still-existent format called Adult Top 40, offered older audiences the chance to rewind to the days before rap was popular and before Crossover stations incorporated the musical tastes of a multicultural public in the mainstream. Influenced by research firms whose consultants' models showed a US public irreconcilably divided over rap's appeal, programmers of both subformats resegregated the nation's airwaves, redrawing the boundaries of the mainstream to exclude rap and articulating a distinct shift in racial attitudes. As stations within the Top 40 format divided the US public into insular segments defined by their attitudes toward rap music and its multicultural audience, the ideological mainstream of the format crumbled.

To conclude, I turn to the present. More than forty years after its debut on record, rap has grown into the most popular genre in the United States, if not the world. Radio, on the other hand, has significantly decreased in popularity, as many listeners have switched to on-demand streaming services to curate their music. And yet, these streaming services rely on a similar business model to that of commercial radio: both use music to define listeners that they sell to advertisers. The book concludes by expanding its central ideas into the contemporary moment, interrogating how the way popular music is sold influences the social and cultural work that this music can do.

1

Too Black, Too Noisy

Frankie Crocker, Black programmer at New York City Black-Oriented station WBLS, swore that he heard his station everywhere in the summer of 1980: "We can walk out in the street and hear the sound on both sides of the street. Go to any park [and] you're going to hear WBLS."[1] The numbers confirmed his observation; over the previous twelve months, WBLS reached more radios than any other station in the metro area. Crocker's achievement was noteworthy. A Black-Oriented station had never before topped the New York City market—the largest radio market in the country—for an entire year. And Crocker, to many observers, was the brains behind this achievement. To mark the occasion, trade journal *Black Radio Exclusive* dedicated an issue of its weekly magazine to WBLS and deemed Crocker the "radio active catalyst" behind the station's remarkable success. "Special tribute," the journal declared, should be awarded to Crocker, as "God has blessed us all through [his] talents."[2]

Listeners tuning in to WBLS, however, weren't hearing what would become the most influential sound of the decade: rap. The week that *Black Radio Exclusive* published these accolades, it calculated that the fourth-most-played single on Black-Oriented radio stations was Kurtis Blow's "The Breaks," the first rap release on a major label and the first rap record certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). But the genre, the story goes, was "too black" for Crocker to play on his station, even though WBLS belonged to the radio format that played music by mostly Black musicians for a mostly Black audience.[3]

The following summer, Black-Oriented radio trade publication *Jack the Rapper* (known within the industry as "Jack the Rapper's Mello Yello" for the not-at-all-mellow color of paper it was printed on) published some far-less celebratory coverage about Crocker. A cartoon printed on the back page of an August 1981 issue depicts him walking into WBLS while holding hands with two white women. What appear to be two young Black men follow behind, asking if he will "play our rap record please?" Crocker responds, laughing, "I don't play Black owned companies [*sic*] records!"[4]

These two portrayals of Crocker—the dynamic talent behind the country's most successful Black-Oriented station and the programmer unwilling to play rap—encapsulate the world of Black-Oriented radio into which rap was born. Throughout the early 1980s, Black-Oriented stations were reluctant to play the genre for reasons that emerge through the examination of two intersecting narratives.

The first is a story about the economics of the radio industry. Rap emerged as a commercial genre just when many Black-Oriented stations were changing their programming to attract whiter and wealthier audiences while downplaying ties to local Black communities. To attract advertisers notoriously biased against Black audiences, stations widened—and whitened—their target demographics, choosing music that they hoped would attract middle- and upper-class Black and white adult listeners. While songs by Black musicians were increasingly popular with white audiences, programmers didn't consider rap music to have the same crossover potential. Stations later known as Urban (or Urban Contemporary) were looking for precisely the opposite audience of that which rap attracted, according to programmers. Rap wasn't just too Black to be played on stations like Crocker's; the genre's listeners were reputed to be too poor, too young, *and* too Black.

The second story concerns the music itself. Industry support for genre-blending music by white artists combined with pressure on Black artists to cross over made it difficult for rap to find airplay on Urban stations. In the early 1980s, most record companies and radio stations were more inclined to support white artists than Black ones, even if the two made the same style of music. White artists—blithely ignorant or not of the prejudices facing rap as it entered onto radio—began incorporating rapped vocals in their music, providing radio programmers with a whiter version of the genre. Meanwhile, the recording industry encouraged Black artists to make music aimed at white audiences even as these artists endured criticism from listeners for doing just that. Together, these blended musical styles left little room for Black rap artists on Black-Oriented station playlists. While a few rap acts such as Whodini found airplay on this format, these stations' reluctance to play rap prevented it from crossing over to other formats.

BROADCASTING TO BLACK LISTENERS

The history of Black-Oriented radio in the US begins not with stations, but with shows. In the 1920s, some stations targeting a diverse range of listeners broadcast several hours of programming for Black audiences.[5] For example, in 1929, Chicago station WSBC began broadcasting what DJ Jack L. Cooper claimed was the first program produced by Black Americans, "The Negro Hour," alongside programming aimed at listeners of Italian, Jewish, Lithuanian, Polish, Slovenian, and other backgrounds.[6] In 1954, *Sponsor* magazine tallied 398 stations that played

material designed for Black audiences, though usually for less than ten hours a week.[7] Presenting shows made for Black audiences, of course, didn't preclude non-Black listenership; for example, radio has often provided an access point for white audiences "listening in" on media representations of Black life.[8] But even as stations facilitated this type of encounter, in playing these shows they demonstrated just how segregated the industry—not to mention the world around it—was.

By midcentury, some stations began targeting their programming more consistently toward Black audiences. In the late 1940s, two white station owners in Memphis increased the amount of programming for Black listeners on their station WDIA until it became the first station that aimed all of its programming toward this audience. While its owners were motivated more by economics than a social imperative, WDIA and stations like it understood minority listeners to be the majority of their audience, and so created an uninterrupted space for Black expression and politics. WDIA, in the words of its co-owner John Pepper, "became more than just an entertainment medium. . . . It became sort of a spokesman, a part of the black community."[9] Stations like WDIA often supported the growth of Black-music–focused record labels; in Memphis, for example, connections with WDIA helped Stax Records promote their artists.[10]

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, what came to be known as the *Black* format expanded in response to demographic changes and increasing major-label support of Black artists. Most notably, in the 1970s, the Columbia Record Group invested in several Black-music–focused record companies and signed a significant number of Black artists, prompted by a commissioned Harvard Business School student report about the financial viability of the Black music industry.[11] Other record companies followed suit. Enticed by major label backing and the associated promotional support, some station owners began dabbling in Black-Oriented radio in the 1970s; by 1985, 8 percent of all US radio stations were aimed at Black audiences.[12]

As Memphis's WDIA illustrated, Black-Oriented programming did not always correspond with Black ownership. Ownership not only financially benefits local Black communities, but allows these same communities to freely interpret issues and express opinions. As Cathy Hughes, the founder of Black-Oriented communications company Radio One Inc., insists, "the ability to interpret who you are . . . is the difference between life and death for our community. It's the difference between slavery and liberation."[13] In 1970, only sixteen of the more than eight thousand stations in the country were Black-owned, and seven of these had some white investors.[14] Black ownership levels began rising towards the end of the decade thanks to a 1978 federal minority ownership incentive program, which authorized loans to minority buyers and offered tax credits to those selling stations to minorities.[15] By 1986, *Black Radio Exclusive* counted 150 "Black-Owned/Controlled" stations across the country in many formats including Urban Contemporary, Country, Oldies, Top 40, and Spanish/Talk.[16] The incentive program was short-lived, lasting only until 1995, but during its existence close to three hundred radio licenses were

sold to owners of color, raising the proportion of minority-owned radio stations to around 3 percent nationally, more than half of which were Black-owned.[17]

As the Black-Oriented format grew, it became a "major force in constructing and sustaining an African American public sphere," whether that meant broadcasting specific songs to covertly call protesters to the streets during the 1963 civil rights struggle in Birmingham, staying on the air all night (despite white owners' objections) to support Black communities following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, or highlighting community voices and holding voter registration drives during the Los Angeles uprising in 1992.[18] These stations typically hired Black DJs who advocated for their local Black listeners and engaged in political activism; one programmer soberly noted that if these stations didn't pay attention to Black communities, "nobody else [was] going to."[19] Of course, this community focus wasn't solely altruistic; community commitment, according to many pieces in trade journals, was one strategic advantage Black-Oriented stations had over other formats.[20]

By the 1980s, Black-Oriented radio was understood to have a larger and more persuasive reach than other types of media aimed at Black Americans, including newspapers and the recently launched Black Entertainment Television network.[21] One programmer estimated at the beginning of the decade that Black audiences listened to the radio for around 20 percent of their day, at least six days a week. The format not only entertained but could "control, dictate, [and] captivate" the Black public.[22] It did this, in part, through its music selection, playing mostly songs by Black artists; many programmers considered music to be central to how their local Black community expressed its identity.[23]

So in the fall of 1979 when Sylvia and Joe Robinson, the Black owners of Sugar Hill Records, released "Rapper's Delight," a song in which Black musicians rapped on top of a beat taken from a song performed by other Black musicians, Black-Oriented radio seemed the natural place to promote the record. But Black-Oriented radio stations in New York proved hesitant.[24] The track had a strange and novel sound, a spoken-word record response to the summer's disco hit "Good Times," and it was released on a rebranded, independent label whose owners were making a sharp stylistic shift (Sylvia Robinson was best known for her sensual 1973 disco track "Pillow Talk," released on the couple's label All Platinum, which later went bankrupt). More importantly, the song's racial identity was a problem: "Rapper's Delight" was the record that *Billboard* reported Frankie Crocker thought was "too black" to play on his station.[25]

Luckily for the Robinsons, a programmer at a Black-Oriented station in East St. Louis took a chance on the record and the song quickly proved popular.[26] Back in New York, one of the first stations to program the record played it as a joke, which led to "thousands and thousands of calls" requesting it.[27] And the rest is history, although there's no official record of how many copies the track sold since the Robinsons refused to pay the RIAA to audit their books in order to certify these sales.[28]

As the Robinsons used their earnings from "Rapper's Delight" to finance other rap singles, including Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "Freedom" and the Sugarhill Gang's follow-up single "8th Wonder," they noticed that their records hardly received any airplay despite selling well. The major obstacle, as Sylvia Robinson revealed in an interview published in *Black Radio Exclusive*, was that some Black programmers said that Sugar Hill's "product was too black for them."[29] What did it mean for a style of music to be "too black" to be played on stations aimed primarily at Black audiences? To make sense of this, it's necessary to understand the economic pressures that Black-Oriented stations faced at the time.

MONETIZING BLACK AUDIENCES

While record companies make money by selling records to people, radio stations invite another actor into this system, using music to sell listener attention to advertisers who buy time on their station. For a radio station to turn a profit, the income from advertisements needs to at least offset the costs of hiring staff, running promotions, keeping the lights on, and in many cases paying off the loan from the initial purchase of the station.[30] Covering these costs at many Black-Oriented stations was difficult because of an industry-wide disparity between advertising rates at Black-Oriented stations and those stations aimed primarily at white audiences.

Advertising agencies buying time on radio stations in the 1980s and early 1990s defined target audiences primarily through five categories: income, gender, race, ethnicity, and age. The companies that radio stations employed to measure audience size and composition during this era, however, only regularly measured gender and age, and programmers compensated for this lack of information by using music to approximate the other characteristics.[31] Assuming a reflective correspondence between performer and listener, programmers roughly estimated the racial and ethnic makeup of their audience by looking at the artists on their playlists, although stations often commissioned additional research to verify these claims. Income was perhaps the hardest of these categories for stations to measure, and throughout this era race and musical taste were often used as proxies for socioeconomic class. Advertisers and programmers simplistically assumed that non-white listeners were less wealthy than their white counterparts and that classical and jazz listeners were more "upscale" than other audiences.[32]

While multicultural marketing practices were increasing the profile of Black consumers within the advertising industry, many companies that advertised on the radio refused to buy time on Black-Oriented stations. These biases were often based on racist assumptions that Black listeners didn't have the financial resources to buy their goods or didn't make a habit of doing so, indicating the extent to which race often stands in for socioeconomic class in the United States.[33] For example, the general manager of a station in Houston reported in the early 1980s that he had been told that "blacks don't eat pizza" after approaching a pizza chain to buy

advertising time on his station.[34] Similarly, in the mid-1990s, members of the National Association of Black-Owned Broadcasters recalled being told that "Black people don't eat beef" and "Black people don't eat mayonnaise."[35] Tom Joyner, the Black DJ who famously spent part of his career commuting daily from Dallas to Chicago for two different shows, divulged in the late 1980s that these prejudices came from all sorts of companies—including A&W, Moosehead Breweries, Johnson & Johnson, and a major airline—all of which refused to buy time because of "no ethnic" or "no black" mandates.[36]

Other companies believed that targeting Black consumers would limit their products' appeal because they assumed white consumers would not purchase products associated with the Black public.[37] For example, one marketing expert stated that Japanese car companies worried that featuring a Black driver in their ads would "diminish the value of the car because [white audiences were] not seeing themselves behind the wheel."[38] Plenty of companies obfuscated how race informed their audience preferences by claiming that they wanted an older audience, saying that they simply felt "more comfortable" airing their commercials on other stations, or using vague "no-ethnic" mandates that helped shield them from accusations of racial discrimination.[39] But, according to WBLS's general manager Charles Warfield, it was clear to Black-Oriented stations that the primary concern was "the color of your audience."[40]

These widespread prejudices made it more difficult for Black-Oriented stations to operate because they decreased advertising rates on these stations. A study found that in 1986, Adult Contemporary stations could charge advertisers about twice as much as Black-Oriented stations (for a comparably sized audience), and that rates at AOR, Top 40, and Hispanic-Oriented stations split the difference; these rates remained relatively unchanged over the next decade.[41] Indeed, respondents to a 1996 study estimated that advertiser prejudice against minority audiences reduced the price of around 60 percent of their ads.[42] It's worth noting that these sorts of mandates didn't apply equally to all stations aimed at minority listeners; some "no ethnic" directives applied only to Black-owned, rather than Black-Oriented, stations.[43] Put another way, who was getting paid—and who controlled a station's image and messaging—could matter more than who the audience was.

FROM BLACK TO URBAN

Speaking of getting paid, this all meant that stations looking to increase profits had two choices: change advertisers' minds or change the station's audience. Changing advertisers' minds wasn't impossible, although it took time and effort. Some Black-Oriented programmers thought that quantitative metrics would help stations demonstrate the size of their audience and urged their colleagues to improve their long-term numbers as measured by Arbitron, a major audience-measurement service that was regularly criticized for underrepresenting minority listeners.[44] Other

stations created individual market profiles for advertisers who they believed were incorrectly biased against Black audiences. One Philadelphia station, for example, designed a survey to help persuade a local car dealership to advertise on the station after being told by an agency that "Blacks don't buy this kind of car. Blacks don't have the money to buy it. And if they did buy it, you'd . . . have to repossess it inside of three months."[45]

Many programmers, however, opted to change their audience. Recognizing that Black and white listeners' tastes were expanding to include much of the same music, some stations began trying to attract more white listeners. Relying on the integrationist idea that Black musicians could have mass appeal, these stations played music by Black performers—such as Prince, Michael Jackson, and Lionel Richie—but also added similar-sounding music by non-Black performers like Hall & Oates, Michael McDonald, and Culture Club.[46] Music scholar David Brackett claims that by cultivating an audience defined not by race but rather by their ability to consume, these stations "render[ed] the format more attractive to advertisers."[47]

As the format's previously popular name, Black, overtly referenced the race of its primary audience, a race-neutral rebranding was necessary to indicate to advertising agencies these stations' distance from a Black audience. Consequently, these stations most often called their formatting *Urban* or *Urban Contemporary*.[48] Like all format names, Urban/Urban Contemporary indicated both the style of music played on these stations and the desired audience demographic that programmers hoped to attract with that music. These stations played "contemporary music for urban dwellers," though of course not everybody who lived in an urban area was Black, as one programmer made sure to note.[49] This format was noticeably "not as ethnic" as the Black format, so much so that programmer Al Parker of Pascagoula, Mississippi hoped that "the white listener, at times, doesn't even realize he's tuned to an Urban Contemporary station."[50] This "linguistic evasion," as *Billboard* columnist and critic Nelson George describes the format change, was an attempt to catch the ears of Black professionals and like-minded white listeners rather than young and less economically advantaged populations, such as those that rap was associated with.[51] It wasn't coincidental that the name Urban Contemporary closely resembled Adult Contemporary: both catered to adult listeners.[52]

Arguably the first station to make this change was Frankie Crocker's WBLS, which expanded its programming to "include an unobtrusive mix of new music derived from other cultural sources," including artists whose music Crocker thought "transcend[ed] the color of the skin."[53] His choice of music corresponded to an idealized audience comprising college-educated middle-class adults of all races and ethnicities. George notes that, though Crocker's audience base at WBLS was Black, these listeners were "hardly his primary concern," a philosophy highlighted in the station's mid-1970s rebranding from "The Total Black Experience in Sound" to "The Total Experience in Sound" and its advertisements featuring beautiful white women a few years later.[54]

It wasn't just the music that differentiated WBLS and other Urban stations from Black stations: their presentations—their *stationalities*—differed as well. Urban stations often employed DJs who they hoped would connect with a multiracial audience. These DJs, white and Black alike, took "a more mass[-]appeal approach in their on-air presentations" than those on Black stations, departing from the more identifiably Black presentation styles used by DJs of previous generations that have been cited as precursors to rappers' flow.[55] Urban radio personnel hoped that these "smoother personality presentations" would appeal to middle-class, older, and non-Black demographics.[56] In so doing, these stations embraced the *politics of respectability*, a term initially coined by scholar Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham to describe racial-uplift strategies employed by Black women in the early twentieth century that has since been used to describe ways that minority communities counter negative racial stereotypes by aligning their behavior with white, middle-class, mainstream norms.[57]

For focusing on their role as a "business enterprise," in the words of one programmer, Urban stations were regularly criticized for ignoring Black communities.[58] At a musical level, their sound, as critic Chuck Eddy wrote in 1985, "implie[d] a socioeconomic progress that doesn't exist in real life."[59] And by playing music by white artists, these stations took away airtime previously allocated for Black ones. More broadly, while Urban stations often claimed that their stations voiced the concerns of local Black listeners, the economics of Urban radio made doing so nearly impossible; by focusing on middle-class and older Black audiences, these stations could not represent the diversity of Black experiences in the United States. As Black stations turned into Urban ones they often failed to advocate for the entirety of their local Black communities, precluded by the financial constraints inherent to this format change.

As radio stations changed their nomenclature, so too did the music trade charts. Back in 1982, in the seventh-such name change since the chart's inception in 1942, *Billboard* had renamed the "Hot Soul Singles" chart as the "Hot Black Singles" chart to respond to the rise of disco and funk, genres which weren't immediately recognizable as soul.[60] But as radio stations began shying away from using Black as a format descriptor, and as the use of the word itself was called into question by activists like the Reverend Jesse Jackson (who encouraged the use of the term African American), the name of the chart was once again up for debate.[61] In 1986, Nelson George justified the chart's name by arguing that, while the term might be offensive to some, "Black" proudly reflected the racial makeup of the artists on the chart and the consumers who listened to their music, as well as the racist realities of the world around them.[62] Six months later, competitor *Radio & Records* changed the name of their corresponding chart to Urban, noting that this name highlighted that working in the Urban radio industry was a choice, not a racially predetermined appointment.[63] *Billboard* didn't adopt a name change until three years later, after George had left his post as the editor of the Black music section

and after the magazine published a letter to the editor claiming that "*Billboard* itself is partly responsible for the racism that still pervades the record business, and it will continue to be fostered until you change the name of your black chart to R&B (or something else)."[64] A little over six months later, the editors of *Billboard* changed the chart name to "Hot R&B Singles," writing that although "there is no consensus against the use of the term 'black music,' it is apparent that, for many, it is becoming less acceptable to identify music in racial terms."[65]

While Terri Rossi, the editor of what were now the *Billboard* R&B charts, wrote that "of all the events of 1990, the most important for me was the name change," the impact of the format change from Black to Urban could be more clearly seen in who actually got paid.[66] This transition decreased the economic power of some Black radio professionals as the mostly white owners and operators of Urban stations used Black musicians' popularity to finance their stations and hire non-Black employees.[67] Industry commentator and legendary Black DJ Jack "the Rapper" Gibson, a frequent critic of white involvement in Black-Oriented stations, often encouraged readers of his *Jack the Rapper* newsletter to fight back against these inequitable practices, asking them to, for example, protest the hiring of white programmers and consultants at Black-Oriented stations.[68] But Gibson didn't just target white music-industry professionals; he also directed criticism at the Black professionals who were "justifying the rape of our music and culture."[69] Overall, while larger audiences might have increased individual stations' profits, they did little to improve working conditions for most Black music industry professionals. Perhaps, as Nelson George posits, "a more committed effort at self-sufficiency, in politics and economics, would have given (and still might give) blacks a better base from which to work for integration and practical power."[70]

But self-sufficiency and diverse representation be damned: Urban stations won out. The financial model of the industry incentivized minimizing radio's vital form of community connection to cater to already-well-catered-to white audiences.[71] Given the chance to advertise on an Urban station or a Black station, many national companies found it easier to align with a station that didn't overtly advertise the race of its audience. This reality, together with the well-publicized success of stations that had switched from Black to Urban, encouraged many to change formatting; by the end of the 1980s, over two-thirds of Black-Oriented stations referred to themselves as Urban, up from 22 percent in 1983.[72]

"TOO BLACK"

At the same time that Sugar Hill Records was recording the sounds of Black youth rapping, Black-Oriented radio stations were losing interest in that very demographic. When questioned, some programmers provided sonic reasons for not playing rap very often—it was music, after all. For example, one Black programmer who described the genre as "inherently redundant" thought that rap songs

didn't warrant repeat plays, asking "Who wants to sit in their living room and listen to rap records on the radio, anyway?"[73] Rap labels' own descriptions of the music, occasionally, didn't help: Def Jam cofounder Rick Rubin bragged in 1985 that his label, for example, "put out the *worst* records, records that other labels would not wanna put out. No radio stations will play them for the most part . . . . This is the least commercial, most progressive form of rap . . . that the real audience wants to hear most."[74] However well-targeted these records were for rap's record-buying audience, characterizing them as "the least commercial" version of rap surely didn't help get airplay on commercial stations.

Furthermore, the genre quickly developed an undeserved reputation for sexual or profane lyrics.[75] For Black-Oriented programmers worried about violating the FCC's indecency policy, this general reputation for objectionable lyrical content could be enough to keep them from playing a song that had not been carefully vetted. Rap's reputation also dissuaded those programmers invested in the politics of respectability from playing a style of music reputed to align with such a common racist stereotype of Black culture. As respectability politics depends upon the existence of a "shameful other" to juxtapose against a more "respectable" group, rap may have gained this reputation in part to create such a distinction.[76] Urban programmers' stance against rap thus helped define their stations as more proximate to the white mainstream.

But more compelling were the economic reasons for stations' reluctance to play rap. Beholden to their sales departments, programmers needed to play music that appealed to more profitable older audiences. Rap, as they understood it, did anything but that. In Def Jam cofounder Russell Simmons's experience, stations "justify keeping rap off the air by insisting that it's simply a matter of demographics—that rap appeals to a listenership that's too young and that doesn't have enough money to buy the big ticket items, and that therefore companies selling cars and fur coats and whatever won't advertise on stations that play rap."[77] Shifting to an Urban format intensified the pressure for many stations to deliver older audiences for advertisers, and some programmers flatly refused to even try courting young listeners.[78] One operations manager of an Urban station aimed at adults railed against playing rap and other dance records, wondering why "many black adults over the age of 25 have to endure music they don't particularly care for?"[79] The generational antagonism may well have been mutual; Simmons's Def Jam colleague Bill Stephney claimed that rap was "not just a 'Fuck you' to white society, it was a 'Fuck you' to the previous black generation as well."[80] Even so, the attitude of rappers toward an older Black generation was hardly the determining factor. The power of exposure lay in the hands of Black-Oriented programmers who were actively seeking profitable listeners.

But Urban stations' failure to play rap was about more than the actual socioeconomic status of rap's fans. One of the most common assumptions about race in the United States is that it aligns with class. Due in no uncertain way to the

centuries-long legacy of legalized inequality, race, as scholar Patricia Hill Collins writes, "intersects with class to such a degree in the United States that race often stands as proxy for class."[81] Drawing attention to this relation, Simmons deemed some Black-Oriented programmers' hesitancy towards rap "racist" because they "just don't like black street music."[82] While the day-to-day lives of upwardly mobile Black radio professionals may have confounded the grossly oversimplified alignment of race and class, this association also dictated many of their business models—it had made the transformation from Black to Urban worth thinking about.

This conflation also influenced their perspective toward rap. While the genre was made by and for an ethnically and racially diverse group of people, making it perhaps a good fit for Urban stations working to attract a multiracial audience, rap was considered anathema to the upwardly mobile, middle-class, urbane sophistication that these stations were trying to convey.[83] Programmers, whose jobs depended on cultivating profitable audiences, needed to demonstrate the financial capacity of their Black listeners despite oversimplified mainstream assumptions about the relationship between race and class. One way to do that was through embracing respectability politics, adopting white mainstream behaviors to signal class distinction and juxtaposing these behaviors against others' assumed unwillingness to act appropriately (thereby denying their own entry to the supposedly equal post—civil rights market economy).[84] For Urban stations, rap could be this "other," as it voiced the concerns of Black youth disproportionately affected by systemic inequality and a lack of social mobility, structural barriers all too easily cast as behavioral ones by those hoping to distinguish themselves through the politics of respectability. The concern about the age and socioeconomic class of rap's audience was in part a smokescreen for concerns about the type of Black identity that rap represented. Rap, as Simmons claimed, reminded Black adults "of the corner, and they want to be as far away from that as they [could] be."[85] "Too black" didn't just say something about race; it said something about economics. Rap's audiences weren't valuable.

URBAN STATIONS' CROSSOVER SOUND

But rap's absence from radio wasn't just about demographics. For radio programmers, generating specific types of audiences meant playing certain types of music. Fully understanding Black-Oriented radio's reluctance to play rap requires consideration not only of audiences but also of the music these audiences would have heard.

One of the reasons that Urban stations found success in the 1980s was that record companies were putting out lots of music that appealed to the broad, aspirationally middle-class audiences these stations were trying to attract. As noted earlier, major labels began investing in Black-music–focused record divisions during the 1970s and 1980s, but in many cases they considered the Black consumer

market quite limited. Clive Davis of Arista Records, for example, thought that Black artists could not recoup recording costs without appealing to a non-Black audience.[86] Many record companies thus encouraged Black artists to maximize their potential audience and its associated profits by making music that appealed to multiple radio formats. Any given album release by a Black artist at PolyGram Records, for example, was designed to have "two or three cuts to cover the black base," according to the label's vice president of Black music A&R. The rest of the album would typically consist of songs the label hoped would "generate Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie[,] or Prince numbers"—music that crossed over to non-Black listeners—because "the industry [could] no longer deal with a narrow-minded mentality in making and marketing music."[87] Black artists were expected to try for mainstream success.

So how did artists generate Lionel Richie numbers? One way that Richie himself crossed over was by collaborating with white artists who were already popular on other formats, creating duets that overtly signaled their broad appeal by combining their demographic-specific sounds and techniques.[88] In 1986, Richie used this crossover technique on "Deep River Woman," a collaboration with white country band Alabama, who had recently crossed over to adult pop audiences. The song begins with a descending guitar run combining double stops and hammer-ons, lending the introduction a country sound aimed at Alabama's core audience. But when Richie comes in with the chorus his supple voice smooths over Alabama's twangy vocal harmony, creating a sound that is not quite country, not quite R&B. Instead, it's crossover music, a calculated blending of genres intended to maximize audience reach.

Richie was hardly alone in recruiting artists of other races to help him cross over. In the early 1980s, white-oriented stations were particularly reluctant to play music by Black musicians in the wake of the infamous Disco Demolition Night and subsequent backlash by white audiences against disco and other Black styles, as well as the marginalized populations associated with these styles.[89] In 1980, Top 40 radio played less music by Black artists than in any year since 1968 and, two years later, *Radio & Records* reported that Top 40's "resistance to playing black records" had climbed to "an all[-]time high."[90] But when paired with a famous white musician, Black artists had a far easier crossover journey. For example, in 1982 and 1983, Paul McCartney lent his white industry privilege to Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson, releasing three interracial duets that all peaked at number one or two on the *Billboard* "Hot 100" and in the top ten of the "Hot Black Singles" chart. These sorts of duets, one *Billboard* contributor wrote, were of "tremendous sociological, artistic and media significance" because they helped break down the racial barriers between radio formats.[91] And the floodgates opened. In 1984, Diana Ross and Julio Iglesias released "All of You," and R&B singer James Ingram teamed up with country artist Kenny Rogers for "What About Me." The next year brought "the ultimate crossover recording": the blockbuster charity musical event "We Are

the World," featuring the distinct vocal styles of Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen, Lionel Richie, Stevie Wonder, Cyndi Lauper, and Ray Charles, among many others, singing over a generic pop groove.[92]

Many of these crossover songs were ballads, a capacious musical form which granted multiple singers the space to show off their genre-specific vocal stylings. Ballads, furthermore, had a long history of facilitating crossover; music scholar David Metzer writes that Black artists in the 1950s crossed over to white female audiences via this "style that was familiar to white audiences and did not have strong African American resonances, the combination of which made the singers seem less off-putting and more approachable."[93] By the mid-1980s, as one *Billboard* writer put it, ballads by Black artists were "safe" to play on many Top 40 stations.[94]

But even without the help of duet partners, most high-profile Black artists were expected to design songs to appeal across racial lines. The radio industry had a set procedure for crossing Black artists over: all songs by new Black artists and nearly all first singles from established Black performers' albums were initially marketed towards Black listeners.[95] Only after these songs charted well with this core audience would labels consider marketing them more widely, a process that cheapened the industry role of Black radio audiences "to auditioning records geared to white audiences."[96] This exclusionary practice helped reinforce the whiteness of the Top 40 mainstream. And for Black musicians, it demanded that they create two distinct styles of music, the "two or three cuts to cover the black base" and the music aimed toward a broader audience. Radio programmers and musicians were acutely sensitive to Black artists' crossover moves, tracking the sonic modifications that major artists made as they crossed over. For example, one Black-Oriented radio programmer described Prince's 1986 release "Kiss" as "the original Prince before he went for that big crossover appeal sound"; a Top 40 programmer, meanwhile, questioned how his format was going to deal with the song because it was "more like that old funky Prince than his rock or disco outings."[97]

Like Prince, other Black artists accomplished this sort of demographic shape-shifting through stylistic modification, mixing musical elements typically aimed at Black audiences with the white-coded sounds of pop or rock. The A-side of Lionel Richie's "Deep River Woman" did just that: "Ballerina Girl" sounds like any other soft-pop ballad of the mid-1980s with its sweeping string section, slight guitar syncopation, twinkling electric piano, and—importantly—not too much vocal ornamentation, which might have been heard as too Black.[98] Looking for the same multiracial audiences as these genre-blending songs were intended for, Urban stations embraced these crossover styles, creating a positive feedback loop in which Black artists were rewarded for creating music intended, at least in part, for white audiences.[99]

Regardless of—or, just as often, because of—their success, Black artists were criticized for acquiescing to these types of industry demands. One of the most

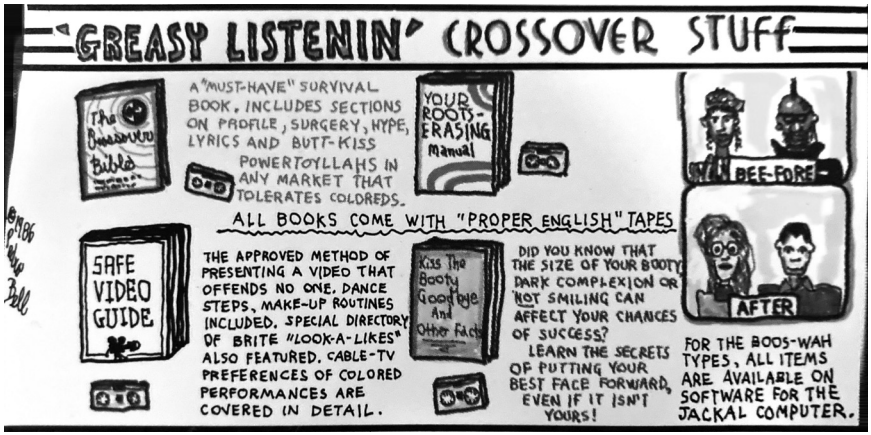

FIGURE 1. Detail, George Clinton, *R&B Skeletons in the Closet*, Capitol Records, 1986. Note the change in appearance in the before-and-after pictures.

scathing critiques of crossover music from this period appears as album artwork on George Clinton's 1986 album *R&B Skeletons in the Closet*, which mocks both the white music executives that rely on the marketing ideologies detailed above and the artists careerist or spineless enough to make music that denies their racial heritage. The back cover art, drawn by Clinton's go-to artist Pedro Bell, displays a book collection for Black musicians who want to cross over, including "Your Roots Erasing Manual" and "Kiss the Booty Goodbye and Other Facts" (figure 1). The results of paying attention to these books and the accompanying cassette tapes which teach "proper English" are found in a set of before-and-after pictures: after crossing over, the artists are shown with lighter skin and smoother hair, indicating that they have become less Black.

Critical assessments such as these fail to make space for artistic intention and autonomy, as scholar Jack Hamilton has argued, and do not fully account for the diversity of artists' lived experiences.[100] Responding to criticism that his music sounded too white, Lionel Richie stated in a 1987 *Ebony* cover story that he intentionally made music distinct from what some might consider authentic Black music, that he was trying "to break the stereotype that says to satisfy Black people you have to play something funky."[101] While Richie endured criticism for being one of those crossover singers who "get on their high horse and forget where they came from," Richie himself noted that his music represented his own complex identity, informed by being raised within the Tuskegee University community in Alabama: "For people to say I've left my roots [is] ridiculous. *These* are my roots."[102] Authenticity, however, wasn't the central concern of radio stations. Programmers, beholden to their station's business model, preferred artists whose self-representation fit within the bounds of what they thought a profitable audience would want to listen to.

Thanks in some part to its own roots in low-income minority urban neighborhoods, rap wasn't considered to have much crossover potential. As one Black record company employee put it, "You're not going to get on Johnny Carson doing hip-hop."[103] This attitude reduced major-label support for rappers in the early 1980s, but it didn't stop artists from making crossover rap. For example, Kurtis Blow worked his rap ballad "Daydreamin'" to Black-Oriented radio in 1983; his manager described the song as "part of the pop-rap mainstream," meaning that it could "fit on black radio formats easily."[104] But the problem for Black rappers was that in the early 1980s, record companies just as easily could—and would—look to white artists to make music in this "pop-rap mainstream."

ON THE OTHER SIDE

Over on the other side of the musical color line, white artists were also interested in creating music that blended the latest Black styles with genres more commonly associated with white performers. In the early 1980s, some white New York City musicians grew infatuated with hip hop, dabbling, incorporating, and appropriating various elements of the culture into their music.[105] Spurred by their initial interest in graffiti, other downtown Manhattan-based artists such as Charlie Ahearn and Fred Brathwaite invited MCs, visual artists, dancers, and DJs from the Bronx and other boroughs to perform at art gallery openings, rock clubs, and experimental venues. At these events, promoter Michael Holman claims, white impresarios like himself forced the four elements of what would come to be known as hip hop together; he and others were "toying with evolution," by creating a new culture out of these four distinct artistic activities.[106] While Black artists such as Afrika Bambaataa have made similar claims, Holman's assertion that white gatekeepers contrived a multidimensional artistic culture out of various activities created by Black and Latinx youth from the South Bronx highlights the considerable power that white stakeholders had, not only in these early-1980s moments but also in the following years as such narratives circulated.[107]

One of the first pieces of music from this uptown-downtown mingling to find radio play was Blondie's "Rapture," a glitzy disco reimagining of a sweat-filled hip hop party. In the song, Debbie Harry recites a memorably inane rap that, while paying tribute to hip hop icons Fab Five Freddy and Grandmaster Flash, centered its attention on a Martian eating just about anything that rhymed with the fourth planet from the sun, including bars, cars, and guitars.[108] In a rebuke to those who thought that disco was dead—instead it had merely rebranded as "dance music"—the song was a huge hit, topping the *Billboard* "Hot 100" in early 1981.

Radio's embrace of this song reveals how race-based programming decisions across formats informed rap's lack of airplay up to this point. Sylvia Robinson claimed that radio programmers, regardless of race, were more receptive to "Rapture" than to any of Sugar Hill Records' releases, pointing out that Blondie's

song started on at least three times more stations than one of Sugar Hill's releases might eventually be played on.[109] Robinson's friend Joe Medlin thought that Black-Oriented stations' receptivity towards "Rapture" indicated that programmers didn't object to rap records generally. Instead, they didn't "want to play no *black* 'rap' record."[110]

Debbie Harry seemed to have caught the rap bug: a few months after "Rapture" hit number one, Harry released her solo album *KooKoo*, which featured two songs with rapped vocals. The more popular of the two, "Backfired," was produced by Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards of Chic and ventured even closer to rap than "Rapture" had. Atop a funk-inspired groove Harry's vocals blur the lines between rap and sing-songy speech, and at two points in the song she more clearly embraces a rapped tone as she trades rhymes with a male vocalist. But this song failed to replicate the success of "Rapture," perhaps because of its abundant rapped vocals; discussing her use of "black idioms" on the album, *Billboard* concluded that "Harry may have waded into waters which are too deep for her."[111]

The waters were full of such waders. In the early 1980s, white artists such as Teena Marie, the Clash, Tom Tom Club, Wham!, and Falco all released songs with rapped vocals in them. Many of these artists were influenced by the genre-blending work of Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force, whose electro-defining hit "Planet Rock" combined funk and vocoder-rapped vocals with Kraftwerk-inspired synthesizer riffs to "appeal to the white crowd and still keep the sound that would appeal to the hip hoppers."[112] For example, "Buffalo Gals" by Malcolm McLaren "scratches and do-si-does at the same time" by combining a square-dance-caller rap (performed by McLaren and backed in a more traditional style on side B of the record) with a beat (programmed by producer Trevor Horn) and scratching (performed by the World's Famous Supreme Team).[113] According to Horn, the song originated when McLaren flew the World's Famous Supreme Team to England, where Horn began the session by asking them what their favorite beat was. After spending hours replicating the beat, he asked them to rap the lyrics to "Buffalo Gals," as performed by Peyote Pete on a Smithsonian Folkways recording. The group refused, saying "we can't do that—that's Ku Klux Klan shit. That's what the Ku Klux Klan dance to."[114] Seeming to brush this critique aside, Horn finished the track two weeks later after getting a rhythmically challenged McLaren to rap the lyrics. At its best, the song, in the words of McLaren, was "bringing various cultures together" on the dance floor by using sampling to accumulate culturally diverse sounds and scratching to glue these sounds together.[115] But at its worst it was exploitative, another example of a white man using music's so-called universality to steal musical material from those afforded less power.[116]

Many in the music industries were excited—and confounded—by these hip hop–inspired, genre-mashing songs. Due to the diversity of sounds integrated together, industry personnel referred to songs like McLaren's, as well as other genre-bending music that didn't quite sound like anything else, by the mind-bogglingly

vague title *new music*.[117] And they were impressed by the multiracial audience associated with the style. In the wake of the aforementioned death of disco, *Billboard*'s dance music columnist Brian Chin was surprised to see "the rockers who established their own all-but-totally-segregated clubs to escape the black music of the time" interested in hip hop.[118] Black acts began touring new wave clubs, and "rock DJs," Chin wrote, regularly "play[ed] an entire evening of Arthur Baker/Tommy Boy music to a crowd of the fashionably punk." Because the fans of this scene and the music they listened to "refuse[d] to be logical or predictable," he forecasted that "standards and formats [would] start crumbling."[119] And they did, at least according to *Billboard*'s rock columnist Rollye Bornstein, who thought that white musicians playing Black styles helped loosen Top 40 and Rock stations' segregated programming by 1983.[120]

But that was after white artists became popular by appropriating rap, leaving little room for Black rappers to appear on the radio. As is clear from Trevor Horn ignoring the World's Famous Supreme Team's lyrical objections, Debbie Harry's outsized success when compared to the careers of artists on Sugar Hill Records, and the control that white gatekeepers had during the early uptown/downtown exchanges, the optimistic possibilities of music which stirred together these Black and white influences failed to account for the legacy of structural racism in and outside of the music industries. For the most part, the people who made money and gained radio airplay from these cultural exchanges were white, even though the music had roots in Black musical styles.[121]

The record industry in the early 1980s thus presented two interlocking problems for Black rappers. First, many Black artists were being encouraged to make crossover music that had supposed long-term appeal beyond a Black audience. In the early 1980s, rap was, by most appraisals, a dance craze considered unworthy of major label investment. Even as the genre proved more durable, major labels' disinterest continued because, like Black-Oriented radio stations, major labels were interested in appealing to older Black audiences rather than rap's younger audience, who they feared did not have sufficient disposable income to regularly purchase records. Second, white artists were taking up whatever space might have been given to rap and rap-adjacent sounds with new music styles. And white artists had a significant advantage; as one club DJ and record distributor noted, labels were often just "inherently against black music" because it made more financial sense for a major label to sign a white artist than a Black artist making a similar kind of music.[122]

Major labels' feeble support of rap swayed Black-Oriented programmers' opinions about the genre. Bobby Robinson, president of Enjoy Records, noticed that major labels' initial reluctance "made a clear impact at many black-formatted stations" that "sabotage[d] rap's momentum."[123] And because rap had yet to establish its independence from dance and new music in the minds of many industry professionals, the genre competed for radio airplay with non-rap dance music

that radio programmers were often more willing to play, such as Michael Jackson's disco-inflected songs from *Thriller* and Prince's genre-bending hits. If rappers wanted to be played on Black-Oriented radio, they would need to overcome these hurdles.

CRACKING THE CODE

One group that did exactly this was Whodini, who proved to be one of the most enduring rap groups of the mid-decade. Their first single was so explicitly aimed at Black-Oriented radio that it was, well, about the radio. In 1983, Whodini released a tribute to DJ Mr. Magic, who at the time hosted a New York City rap mix show called *Mr. Magic's Rap Attack*. In "Magic's Wand," rappers Ecstasy and Jalil narrate a history of rap, highlighting Mr. Magic's role in popularizing the genre in the Big Apple. Their lyrics are laid in over a groovy bass line, incidental noises that one might hear at a space-themed party, and, importantly, "the most innovative keyboard work heard on a street-oriented disk this year": synthesizer chords and a sinewy chorus melody performed by Thomas Dolby, whose new music hit "She Blinded Me With Science" had caught radio by surprise the previous year.[124] The single captured Whodini's stylistic flexibility; promotional copy noted its crossover potential by stating that the song "came sizzling up from the streets, raised the roof in the clubs, and now is conquering radio."[125]

"Magic's Wand" leapt through some of hurdles the record industry presented. Whodini had roots in rap: they originated from the New York rap scene, and this song, produced and promoted by respected rap figures Larry Smith and Russell Simmons, soundtracked the most important rap mix show on the East Coast. But like other new music artists, Whodini also took rap and mixed it with other influences, exemplified by their collaboration with Dolby. What's more, the group recorded not for a prominent rap label such as Tommy Boy, Sugar Hill, or Profile, but instead for the British label Jive, which was distributed in the United States by major-label-affiliated Arista Records.

However, the song failed to enchant radio. It was a hit on Mr. Magic's station, but other stations in New York City refused to play it. While the program director at one Urban station claimed that he was reluctant to play the song because it was about a rival station (and the group should have "had the intelligence and foresight to have prepared versions for each station"), the reaction of another Urban programmer more clearly articulated Black-Oriented radio's resistance to rap, as he claimed that his station was not "going after the crowd that listens to that type of music."[126]

A few years later, however, Whodini successfully changed the makeup of the crowd who listened to "that type of music" by turning to the tried-and-true crossover vehicle of the ballad with their song "Friends." With a sung chorus, a hummable chord progression, and carefully enunciated lyrics, the song was,

according to an executive at Jive, "a very concerted effort to capture the older, sophisticated demographic and to open them up to rap."[127] Producer Larry Smith echoed this sentiment, noting that since "rap's not just for kids anymore," he had tried to make the group sound "a bit more adult" as compared to his production work for groups like Run-D.M.C.[128] "Friends" offered programmers a version of rap that was closer to R&B; *Billboard* reported that the "universal sentiments and slicker production values" appealed to radio stations.[129] But the rhythm track for the song, notes Jalil, still retained rap's hard-hitting feel by combining sounds from two drum machines for the first time. "When that shit dropped in the studio," Jalil recalled, Smith asked him, "Do you realize how many cats are going to play us in the park for this sound right here?"[130] Combining these beats with adult-friendly melodic elements worked; the song spent twenty-three weeks on *Billboard*'s "Hot Black Singles" chart and peaked in the top five in December 1984.

"RAPPIN' FOR EQUAL ACCESS"

But even with Whodini, Kurtis Blow, and Run-D.M.C. (who will be discussed in chapter 3) occasionally making their way onto Black-Oriented stations, this format did not play much rap in the early 1980s. Hearing rap on these stations was uncommon enough in 1985 that the first-ever trade chart devoted to the genre incorporated airplay from only ten stations across the country.[131] One notable exception could be found in Los Angeles, where AM station KDAY played a considerable amount of rap throughout the 1980s.[132] But in most other areas, the only place rap found a reliable home on the radio was on specialty mix shows programmed by a smattering of radio stations. These shows were mostly broadcast late at night on college radio stations, which were not beholden to the same financial pressures as commercial stations and, in the early 1980s, were developing a reputation for their free-form approach to programming styles of music marginalized by commercial broadcasting.[133] For instance, *Super Spectrum Mix Show*, whose DJs later formed Public Enemy, began broadcasting in 1982 from Long Island on WBAU, Adelphi University's radio station.[134] Some commercial radio stations also broadcast mix shows as a way to fill less-popular programming slots and gain listeners at odd hours. Most famously, a year after enduring criticism for being unwilling to play rap, Frankie Crocker's WBLS began broadcasting *Mr. Magic's Rap Attack*, the mix show later soundtracked by Whodini.[135]

But these shows had only a scattered impact on the radio industry's relationship with the genre. Despite their popularity, they rarely influenced a station's programming during the rest of its broadcasting day. And by segregating rap airplay to off-hour specialty shows, these stations cast rap outside the realm of ordinary broadcasting; rap, according to these stations, was not music for their entire audience. What's more, these shows were usually hosted by someone not on staff at the radio station and their playlists were rarely reported to trade journals, which

meant that playing rap records on these shows didn't affect the radio industry's informal and formal methods of charting hits. Even Los Angeles's KDAY, which played rap far more frequently and regularly than just during mix shows, had a limited impact on the local music industries because the station was only broadcast in AM and was difficult to tune in to from certain parts of the metro area.[136]

Russell Simmons of Def Jam knew that limited mix show exposure wasn't going to cut it. Simmons had witnessed the promise of commercial radio exposure with Run-D.M.C.'s "It's Like That," which saw sales explode from a thousand records per week to over three thousand per day when New York City stations started playing the record. "Radio play helps," he pointed out, maintaining that he "need[ed] it."[137] Other rap label owners agreed, and some considered signing distribution deals with major labels in the hope that this type of exposure might persuade Black-Oriented programmers to play their records.[138]

In 1985, Simmons and his artist management company RUSH Productions took out a nine-page advertising supplement in *Billboard*, presented as a series of articles, to celebrate the company's fifth anniversary.[139] While some articles were intended to help novices learn about the genre—such as one about the "First Authentic Rap Movie" and another directing readers to "What's Popular on the Street"—others portrayed rap as a genre with proven durability and investment potential. Indeed, some headlines in the section could have read as seminar notes on convincing the music industries about the potential longevity and commercial viability of a new genre: "Rush Says Rap, Like Rock, Is Here to Stay" and "It's More than Making Records, It's Building Careers." This sizeable special section not only demonstrated the success of Simmons's company but also revealed his aspiration to find a place for rap within the mainstream by pitching it to *Billboard*'s non-specialized readership. The rap industry was figuring out how to sell itself, marketing the genre not just to those working in the Black sectors of the music industries but to everyone.

A few months later, Simmons continued his campaign, penning a *Billboard* editorial aimed specifically at radio programmers. Hoping to convince programmers across the dial of the promise and utility of playing rap, his "Rappin' for Equal Access to Radio" acknowledges the distinct programming struggles inherent to different formats by addressing Black-Oriented, Top 40, and Rock programmers separately. He pleads with Black-Oriented programmers not to "ghetto-ize rap," to acknowledge that young adults like rap, and to treat rap as they would any other genre by not forcing each rap song to compete with all other rap songs for a few spots on their playlists. He asks Top 40 radio programmers not to treat rap artists as novelties, as doing so would be "racism, pure and simple." And he prompts Rock radio programmers to think back to the golden age of rock 'n' roll, when Black and white artists were heard on the same stations, and suggests that programmers maintaining a "de facto apartheid" by not playing Black artists should "close [their] eyes to differences in color, and open them to similarities in music and overall audience appeal."[140]

While Simmons's diagnosis of the problems rap encountered on each of these formats—ageism, racism, and racism, respectively—was correct, there was virtually no way his entreaty would work, for one simple reason: it ignored how the radio industry normally operated. In order for Top 40 and Rock stations to even consider playing a rap record by a Black artist, the rap record first had to gain airplay on Black-Oriented stations.[141] And as long as these stations mostly restricted rap songs to off-hour mix shows, the industry would not register the genre's popularity and these songs would not have the chance to make an impact on other formats.

This attitude towards crossover records wasn't limited to radio professionals; record labels assumed the same process.[142] In 1985, *Billboard* interviewed eleven major label executives and all but one made clear that, regardless of white audiences' growing interest in music by Black artists, their labels still planned to promote Black artists to Black-Oriented radio stations before attempting to cross them over. For example, while one executive optimistically thought that "the industry is ready to open up," they conceded that they still "wait for a record to go top 10 on the black charts before crossing it over."[143] Without a substantial shift in the structure of the radio industry, Black-Oriented radio's reluctance to play rap precluded the genre's presence on other formats.

Meanwhile, rap's absence from Black-Oriented radio continued.[144] By 1987, Nelson George described a "generation gap in black music" developing between a younger generation, who adored rap and identified with it more than classic R&B styles, and an older group of more influential music industry personnel, who "should know better but don't" and were "nostalgic for the days of 'good music' and expectant (even hopeful) that one day soon hip-hopping and scratching will all disappear."[145] But as we well know, hip-hopping and scratching did not disappear, not even on the radio. For, while Black-Oriented radio would continue to eschew rap, other changes in the radio industry ensured its rise.

2

Broadcasting Multiculturalism—and Rap—on Crossover Radio

Fresh off Def Jam's 1987 national tour, rapper Chuck D penned a rhyme exposing radio programmers' reluctance to embrace rap: "Radio, suckers never play me/ On the mix they just okay me."[1] For any and all of the reasons discussed in the previous chapter, his group, Public Enemy, was rarely played on the radio. Even when DJs occasionally broadcast the group's songs during hip hop mix shows, they would sometimes only play the instrumentals.[2] On the whole, very few rap acts were heard in regular rotation on commercial radio; for instance, in 1987, just under 3 percent of the songs on *Billboard*'s "Hot 100 Airplay" chart featured rapped vocals.[3]

But over the next few years this all changed, as commercial radio programmers across the country began regularly adding rap songs to their playlists. Though Public Enemy's intentionally radio-unfriendly music continued to be left off commercial playlists, plenty of other rap artists found their way onto the airwaves as rap began its long ascent into becoming the most popular genre in the United States.[4] The next two chapters explore how this happened. Just as both economic and musical reasons explain why the Black-Oriented format failed to support rap in its early years, this new transformation concerned both money and sound, as radio stations found ways to monetize rap's audience and rap artists developed music that more easily fit on the radio.

First, we'll examine how the radio industry created space for rap within its segregated format structure. Rap's crossover did not happen through the standard procedure, wherein Black artists first experienced airplay on Black-Oriented stations. Rather, a new radio format produced the industry conditions necessary for rap to become part of the popular-music mainstream in the US. This format, which in the 1980s was most often called Crossover (but is now called Rhythmic or Rhythmic Contemporary), brought together multicultural audiences in mostly urban areas. It's in one of these areas where this story begins.

In 1986, Power 106, the first nationally renowned Crossover station, began broadcasting in Los Angeles. Crossover stations such as Power 106 challenged the radio industry's organization by playing diverse styles of music to an audience of Black, white, and Hispanic listeners. As the format became popular nationally, Crossover programmers carefully created playlists to cultivate multicultural audiences and monetize previously ignored demographics, participating in the broader cultural trend of embracing multiculturalism as a way to understand and commodify the country's increasing diversity. By the end of the decade these playlists regularly included rap songs, as Crossover programmers noticed rap's appeal among their diverse listeners. This format's success inspired Top 40 stations to program much of the same music, ushering rap into the mainstream. For the genre once considered "too black" to be played on the radio, its presence on commercial radio playlists illuminated the changing racial identity of the US mainstream.[5] But rap's inclusion on commercial stations came at the expense of Black cultural ownership, as Crossover stations decentered the interests of people of color in the name of multicultural inclusion.

"NAME THE FORMAT"

In February 1986, white programmer Jeff Wyatt moved to the sunny City of Angels from Philadelphia, where he had been working at Urban station Power 99 for the last three years. In Los Angeles Wyatt became program director at KPWR Power 106, the month-old station owned by national radio group Emmis Broadcasting.[6] Industry insiders celebrated the launch of what *Billboard* called the area's first "high-powered urban outlet," which came on the air playing what the station described as "a fresh new music mix."[7] But Power 106 was not quite an Urban station: Emmis's regional vice president Doyle Rose, who helped create the station, admitted that he was not sure what format it fit into, joking that Emmis was "considering having an industry 'name the format' contest."[8]

Rose's confusion indicated that the station's playlist and audience did not match the standard conception of an Urban station. Many of its up-tempo selections could be found on the "Hot Black Singles" chart, as might be expected for the format. But Power 106 also played songs typically found on Top 40 playlists; about two-thirds of the new music played on local Top 40 station KIIS could also be heard on Power 106. This amount of overlap indicated the extent to which Power 106 was playing what the record industry considered to be crossover music: songs by Black artists aimed at wider and whiter audiences, and songs by white artists aimed at Black audiences. Crossover music was the product of record-company demands for songs that appealed to racially and ethnically diverse audiences, usually accomplished through collaboration or stylistic influence, and it was quite popular on the radio in 1986.[9] Programmers at Power 106 capitalized on this trend while also playing club-oriented twelve-inch mixes of less popular dance and

up-tempo R&B hits, as well as songs with "crossover potential that ha[d] not yet been realized."[10]

The playlist was designed to attract an audience made up of Black, white, and Hispanic young adults, ideally between the ages of eighteen and thirty.[11] While radio stations all over the country had long attracted multicultural audiences regardless of programming intent, contemporary commercial FM programmers rarely designed stations for this sort of audience so explicitly. Perhaps the quickly diversifying Los Angeles area was well-prepared for multicultural programming: R&B stations and local venues, as in many places across the country, fostered similarly diverse coalition audiences in the 1950s; and by the 1980s, punk and rock groups in Los Angeles were breaking down industry and social barriers between various racial and ethnic groups.[12] But Power 106's targeting wasn't a sure bet—reflecting on the station's beginnings, Emmis vice president Rick Cummings claimed that his company did not know whether "something like this could reach two or three ethnic groups."[13] What Cummings neglected to mention was that stations across the country were already reaching "two or three ethnic groups," but programmers usually didn't pay attention to them.

Over the next six months, the station's ratings soared; by July it was the number one station in the Los Angeles area, the second-largest radio market in the country.[14] And Power 106 quickly made its mark on the industry: conventions that year were abuzz with discussions about the new hybrid format, twelve-inch single purchases were on the rise, and Emmis demonstrated their confidence in the concept by creating a similar "Contemporary Hit Urban" station in New York City that summer.[15]

Or at least that was the format description Yvonne Olson of *Radio & Records* used for Power 106. The radio industry did not know what to make of this station and had trouble classifying it within the racially defined format structure—industry professionals found it difficult to make sense of a station aimed at "two or three ethnic groups" given their long-standing Black/white binary. Power 106's playlists, which *Billboard* described as "upbeat, pop/urban fare," did not fit into the radio industry's preexisting categories, although radio journals tried: *Billboard* called it an "urban hybrid" and an "Urban/hit" station, while *Radio & Records* maintained that it was an Urban station.[16]

This word choice was not simply a question of semantics or identity—money was on the line. The station's categorization, which denoted whether audiences were mostly white or non-white, determined advertising rates. Indicating the station's hybridity as well as his unwillingness to commit to one format for fear of financial consequences, Jeff Wyatt described the station as "CHR/Urban" (using one of the industry's terms for Top 40, *CHR*). Urban programmer Lee Michaels agreed with his characterization of its hybridity, noting that it "isn't really Urban and really isn't CHR."[17] The station's music mix deviated from the norms of the commercial radio industry; in the words of *Radio & Records*' publisher, the station

was so "violently different" from the programming status quo that it "qualif[ied] in a whole new category."[18]

Playing music for both Black and white listeners was not, however, the most "violently different" aspect of Power 106's programming. According to the trade journals, radio stations were usually Top 40 *or* Black-Oriented, not some "pop/urban" mixture, and they typically targeted majority white *or* majority Black audiences, not both. But in the mid-1980s, playlists at Top 40 stations were racially mixed; in early 1986, for example, Los Angeles's KIIS reported that half of the songs on their playlist were by Black musicians.[19] And Urban stations were designed to attract Black and white audiences, which was why trade journals wanted to classify Power 106 as one.[20] The stir caused by Power 106's programming revealed the white-centrism of the radio industry. It wasn't that stations hadn't tried to appeal to both Black and white audiences before, but that stations claiming to be white-oriented typically did not so explicitly try to attract Black listeners.

BUILDING A COALITION AUDIENCE

What was harder to explain was Power 106's interest in Hispanic listeners, as the commercial radio industry was only beginning to target this demographic. Like other forms of media, radio was rather slow to woo what are now categorized as Latinx audiences.[21] The recording industry wasn't much faster: the first Latin music division at a major label was created in 1983, and the Grammy Awards added some Latin music categories a year later.[22] In many ways the history of Latinx-Oriented broadcasting aligns with that of Black-Oriented broadcasting; while a few radio stations began broadcasting Spanish-language programming in the 1920s when programmers bought time on English-language stations, the first Spanish-language station came on air in 1946 in San Antonio, Texas.[23] Media scholar Dolores Inés Casillas argues that, following the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967, Spanish-language or bilingual public radio stations have acted as "acoustic allies" for their local communities by acknowledging their presence and voicing their identity and political concerns.[24] However, the number of what Casillas describes as Spanish-oriented stations was limited; in 1980, there were only sixty-seven such stations nationwide, although this increased to 168 by 1986, 390 by 1990, and close to six hundred by 2000.[25]

Defining and monetizing Latinx audiences was complicated. The stations Casillas details defined their audience through language preference, broadcasting mostly in Spanish to attract audiences of Spanish-language listeners. Advertising agencies in the 1980s also used language as a way to classify certain Hispanic audiences; they assumed that more "acculturated" Hispanic consumers, such as those whose families had been in the United States for several generations, were better targeted by English-language media.[26] Within the radio industry, however, language wasn't

such a defining quality. Until 1990, radio ratings measurement firm Arbitron identified potential Hispanic radio listeners by Spanish surname rather than language preference. Further, as Casillas notes, the firm required the listeners they surveyed (or those around them) to have some English proficiency, as Spanish-language surveys were available only if requested in English.[27] This meant that during these years Arbitron failed to accurately measure the audience that Spanish-language stations were trying to cultivate, and almost certainly included English-dominant audiences in their Hispanic audience profile.[28] Until the mid-1980s, however, English-language radio stations rarely catered to these listeners.

Power 106, notably, acknowledged and took into account the distinct tastes and identities of English-speaking Hispanic listeners, creating an intentionally multiethnic audience. Indicating the station's awareness of this audience, a consultant who helped devise the station's programming classified it as part of the "Urban Coalition Format."[29] This formatting, what one programmer deemed "California Urban," reflected the area's large Hispanic population, which another programmer thought made it "diametrically different from any other market in the US."[30] It's important to note that English-speaking Hispanic audiences in Los Angeles had already been listening to other local Top 40 and Black-Oriented radio stations. It was not *their* listening habits that were remarkable; rather, it was Power 106's recognition of and orientation toward this "California Urban" coalition audience that deviated from standard commercial radio programming practices.

The station's monetization of this audience aligned with a wider contemporary shift towards acknowledging and profiting from the multicultural makeup of the United States. Scholar Jodi Melamed argues that during the 1980s and 1990s the left adopted a racial attitude of "liberal multiculturalism," advocating for pluralism in response to the growing diversity of the United States as well as critiques of civil rights–era race-based movements failing to exact equal opportunities for all.[31] In contrast with the "more or less unchallenged ideological common sense of the first half of this century," the melting-pot ideal of monoculturalism, multiculturalism challenged the notion that the diverse US public should assimilate into a single, homogeneous culture.[32] Instead, it highlighted the distinct identities of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Liberal multiculturalism in particular advocated for reforming preexisting institutions and constraints to better represent diverse interests; it inspired heightened visibility of the United States' multicultural population, which could be seen in more diverse reading lists in public schools, the institutionalization of ethnic studies programs in higher education, the politics of Reverend Jesse Jackson's National Rainbow Coalition, and even the creation of new skin-tone colored markers and crayons.[33] Like Power 106, each of these examples of liberal multiculturalism simultaneously recognized *and* commodified minority groups previously ignored by mainstream white America, using inclusion to create larger markets.[34]

The radio industry did not know how to adjust to Power 106's multicultural spin on their racial project. For more than a year, the trade journals debated with the station's staff about whether it should report as a Top 40 or an Urban station, as mainstream or marginal. During this period, *Billboard* and *Radio & Records* offered to include the station's playlists in their Black-Oriented charts, but Power 106's staff refused to report their playlists because they objected to trade magazines trying to "pigeonhole" the station—or, just as likely, because they worried about the financial implications of being classified as a station for primarily Black audiences.[35] For this reason, the station's playlists were not included in *Billboard* chart calculations. This meant that, for over a year, airplay on the most popular station in the second-largest radio market in the country didn't affect official measures of song popularity because the organization of the radio industry couldn't make space for a station that so overtly desegregated its local radio market. Put another way: the playlist at one of the most successful stations in the country was excluded from *Billboard* chart calculations because the trade journal claimed that the station played too much music for Black and Hispanic audiences to count as a Top 40 station, and the station maintained that it played too much music for white audiences to count as anything else.[36]

Power 106 challenged the radio industry's unsophisticated racial logic, which presumed that white audiences mostly listened to Top 40 and other white-oriented stations, Black audiences mostly listened to Black-Oriented stations, and Hispanic audiences mostly listened to Spanish-language stations (if locally available). Even less sophisticated was the industry's presumption that these three groups were it: the industry overlooked all other demographic groups who also tuned in to the radio. While still only attending to three demographic groups, Power 106 made a step toward acknowledging the diversity of its community. Defined by its coalition audience, the station desegregated part of the radio dial, monetizing multicultural audiences and normalizing their existence. In an industry that had conceived of its audiences as racially segregated for decades, Power 106 consciously created a multicultural public.

BECOMING A FORMAT

As the industry debated exactly how Power 106 fit within its preexisting format framework, programmers around the country who were inspired by Power 106's success created similar stations. Using slogans and descriptors such as "power," "hot," "a fresh new music mix," and "danceable top 40 without any hard-edged rock records," these stations played up-tempo dance music for multicultural audiences throughout the United States.[37] White programmer Joel Salkowitz, for example, designed Emmis's WQHT in New York to have "enough of a twist to appeal to the typical [Top 40] audience, and a great percentage of Hispanics and some blacks."[38] The popularity of these stations across the United States—in places

such as Milwaukee, New Orleans, San Antonio, and Honolulu—moved MTV, the music-video outlet famous for its reticence toward playing artists of color, to create a Friday night show of multicultural dance music.[39] Power 106, in turn, was likely inspired by a similar station in Miami, which had successfully been programming pop, R&B, and dance music for Hispanic, white, and Black audiences since early 1985.[40] Across the country, the ethnic and racial makeup of each station's audience varied depending on each city's demographics and the local radio market's makeup. For example, nine months after Power 106 came on air, research showed that at least half of their audience comprised non-Black listeners; on the other coast, Emmis's New York station WQHT reported after a year of broadcasting that their audience was "57% white, 31% Hispanic, and 12% black."[41] By the fall of 1987, *Billboard* tallied thirteen hybrid stations like Power 106 in the United States, mostly in urban areas, and thirteen more with playlists that hewed a little closer to either Top 40 or Urban playlists.[42] Together, these stations struck a blow to the radio industry's simplistic assumption that Hispanic, Black, and white listeners by and large tuned in to separate stations.

But these demographic terms failed to capture the diversity of each station's listeners. Mainstream understandings of race and ethnicity in the United States have often separated Black and Latinx populations into discrete, nonoverlapping identities, even though the government has officially measured those who identify as non-white Hispanic since the 1980 census. Radio industry personnel were no different, largely thinking about their Black, white, and Hispanic listeners as three distinct groups.[43] Arbitron and trade journals grouped together all listeners who self-identified as Hispanic even though, at the most superficial level, the musical tastes—not to mention the racial identities and cultural backgrounds—of the self-identified Hispanic listeners tuning in to Power 106 in Los Angeles were distinct from those tuning in to Milwaukee's Crossover station.[44] And by limiting their audience profile to these three demographic groups, stations failed to acknowledge other minority groups that may have made up sizeable portions of their audiences.

Just over a year after Power 106 launched, *Billboard* resolved the problem of how to categorize stations aimed at a multicultural coalition audience by introducing a new chart recording airplay at these stations, the "Hot Crossover 30."[45] Radio industry personnel often used the "Crossover" chart name to describe this burgeoning format, also referring to it as Rhythmic, Rhythmic Contemporary, and Churban. Programmers at these stations praised the creation of the chart, as they previously had been operating without the benefit of knowing programming trends in their format. And the chart demonstrated the popularity of certain songs that were not charting elsewhere because their airplay on Crossover stations had previously not been recorded. It also highlighted the rigidity of the radio industry, making it clear that the stations successfully challenging the racially demarcated radio landscape could not fit within previously existing categories. What's more,

the chart's acknowledgment of this format made it easier for Crossover stations to avoid the advertising stigma associated with Black-Oriented programming. By recognizing the uniqueness of this format, the chart gave these stations an identity separate from the Black-Oriented and Top 40 formats, meaning that, as one programmer put it, the stations could exist without having to be "lumped in with something we're not really doing."[46]

But the chart also lumped *individual* Crossover stations in with something they were not really doing. Like many charts, the "Hot Crossover 30" consolidated data from stations across the country, despite vast and obvious differences in geography, demographics, and local radio markets, and despite Crossover programmers' insistence that local demographics mattered more to programming their stations than any chart did.[47] *Billboard* acknowledged part of this complexity by categorizing Crossover stations according to their proximity to the Top 40 or Urban formats. But the diversity of these stations did not stop there; the particular backgrounds of the Hispanic segment of a Crossover station's audience—such as the large proportion of listeners of Mexican heritage in Los Angeles, Cuban heritage in Miami, and Puerto Rican heritage in New York—accounted for what *Billboard* recognized were "significant programming differences."[48]

A "FRESH NEW MUSIC MIX"

Due to the complex demographic makeup of their audiences, each Crossover station played a unique set of songs that often reflected the precise demographic profile of the intended audience. What united Crossover stations was their appetite for up-tempo pop, dance, and R&B, and their avoidance of the guitar-driven rock songs so popular on traditional Top 40 stations. The week that *Billboard* created the "Hot Crossover 30" chart in February 1987, for example, most Top 40 stations in the United States were playing quite a bit of pop and a fair amount of rock; their playlists contained Journey and Huey Lewis and the News, as well as Bon Jovi's number one single for three weeks running "Livin' on a Prayer."[49] These songs didn't appear on the Crossover chart. Instead, Crossover stations played music that listeners might have heard in the club: up-tempo music with audible roots in disco or other Black dance-music styles. In Jon Pareles's belittling but largely accurate words, Crossover stations played a lot of songs that "percolate[d] and kick[ed] with an electronic drumbeat, an overlay of gleaming keyboard sounds and Latin percussion and, most important, a chirpy, girlish vocal dispensing come-ons or back-offs."[50] In the last week of February 1987, this included up-tempo R&B music (by artists such as Club Nouveau and Cameo), dance-pop derived from disco (by artists such as Samantha Fox and Cyndi Lauper), and freestyle (by artists such as the Cover Girls and Exposé). But the week's chart revealed that Crossover stations also played more stylistically diverse songs such as Janet Jackson's shimmery ballad "Let's Wait Awhile," actor Bruce Willis's first foray into music with a cover of

the Staple Singers' 1970s soul hit "Respect Yourself," and the Beastie Boys' rock-rap hybrid "(You Gotta) Fight for Your Right (To Party!)."[51]

At Power 106, programmer Jeff Wyatt honed in on a target audience of women ages eighteen to thirty-four, basing his playlists on what he heard while strolling the Santa Monica pier. He claimed to take notes at the beach of what tapes "Hispanic kids" were playing and advised other programmers to "be damned" with what was popular nationally because it didn't "make a lot of sense to care about anything but your audience."[52] Despite a burgeoning local rap scene that "Hispanic kids" were almost certainly paying attention to, the station didn't play much rap. Instead, it played mostly up-tempo dance and R&B songs, with some ballads thrown in for balance.[53]

Across the country in New York, WQHT's Joel Salkowitz considered the most acute similarity between his station and Power 106, the two biggest Crossover stations in the country, to be their "general affinity for uptempo, high-energy songs with a lot of high-end in the mix—like the 'Miami sound.'"[54] Power 106 and WQHT were not alone in this regard: many Crossover stations centered their playlists around the "Miami sound," the genre more often called *freestyle*. Occasionally referred to as "Latin hip-hop," freestyle arose in the 1980s out of the same New York communities from which hip hop emerged; venues would often play freestyle records in between rap songs or would alternate between rap and freestyle nights.[55] The genre combined the electronic-rich, fast-paced beats of electro songs like Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force's "Planet Rock" with vaguely Latin-inspired syncopation, repetitive synthesizer riffs, and often rather stifled female vocals.[56] Singer K7 of TKA, one of the few male freestyle groups, claimed that his group took the "same breaks and beats, the hardness of, say, a Rakim track," but sang instead of rapped because "we weren't being embraced as rappers."[57]

As K7 describes, freestyle arose in response to the marginalization of Puerto Rican musicians as rap, gaining popularity, became understood as something created primarily by African American musicians (African American–male musicians in particular).[58] Complicating the common perception that hip hop originated in African American neighborhoods in New York City, Puerto Rican artists were integral members of New York's hip hop communities in the 1970s and early 1980s.[59] But by the mid-1980s, Puerto Rican musicians were largely excluded from the culture's center; journalist Raquel Z. Rivera argues that a "growing African Americanization of hip hop" occurred during the second half of the 1980s largely due to the media's misrepresentation of the culture, which articulated a "reductive notion of blackness as exclusively African American and suffer[ed] from severe cultural-historical amnesia."[60] Freestyle, writes Rivera, offered Puerto Rican and other New York Latinx populations a style of music that uniquely belonged to them, giving people from these marginalized communities a chance to become stars. Songwriter and producer Andy Panda, for example, thought that freestyle

gave Puerto Rican musicians a "sense of identity" and provided opportunities for Puerto Rican artists to thrive in the music industries.[61] As Salkowitz's allusion to the "Miami sound" indicates, freestyle was popular in Miami's clubs; it also was frequently played on Crossover stations across the country.[62]

To those not in touch with local community tastes, the mix at Crossover stations might seem a little odd. Bill Tanner, who at separate times programmed both of Miami's Crossover stations, noted that club tracks might "seem like strange bedfellows" with more standard crossover pop and R&B. But for him and his listeners the mashup of genres was "perfectly correct."[63] These stations, according to dance-music journalist Brian Chin in *Billboard*'s 1987 special issue on dance music, didn't try to cultivate a certain sound so much as they programmed records that other stations "generally ignored for an audience that was not directly served."[64]

THE "COMMON DENOMINATOR"

Programmers reading Chin's article on Crossover stations had only to turn the magazine page to find two articles covering another style of music (and associated audience) that was also being "generally ignored": rap. It should not be surprising that in 1987 rap would make an appearance in *Billboard*'s special issue on dance music; throughout the 1980s, the music industries often classified rap as dance music due to its popularity in nightclubs, the assumed racial identity of its performers, and its use of dance beats.[65] But the first article about rap in that issue didn't associate it with dance; it claimed that rap's popularity was growing despite radio's lack of support.[66]

The second article, however, highlighted styles of rap that could easily fit on Crossover station playlists. In it, author David Peaslee profiled "radiowise" rappers and producers who were making music that would work well on commercial radio stations. While rap was "originally developed as an alternative to radio," he writes that by 1987 it was "often produced with radio exposure as a prime consideration."[67] Peaslee primarily focuses on a style of rap characterized by its use of long, recognizable samples of non-rap songs. Inspired by early rappers' "cover tunes," as Kool Moe Dee called them, artists in the late 1980s were helping make rap legible for outsiders by repackaging the unfamiliar sounds of rap with a recognizable song.[68]

One example of this trend, released in 1988, was the Fat Boys' rap version of Chubby Checker's "The Twist." In this song, the Fat Boys alternate their contemporary slang—infused rapped verses with an updated chorus by Chubby Checker, accompanied by a synthesizer-driven cover of the song's original instrumentals. This style of rap was not all that different from the music typically played on Crossover radio stations, as the chorus was upbeat, memorable, and sung. What's more, the song's production style was familiar to Crossover audiences who regularly heard the work of its producers, the Latin Rascals, on freestyle hits.[69] The

week of its release, the music director of a Crossover station in Charlotte, North Carolina recommended the song to *Billboard*'s readership, and the Crossover format embraced it.[70]

Other artists in the late 1980s made songs with rapped vocals that similarly attracted Crossover-station programmers' attention because the tracks sounded similar to the pop, R&B, freestyle, and other dance music played on Crossover radio. Occasionally these songs replicated the multicultural environment out of which freestyle and rap originated: freestyle group Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam teamed up with R&B-rap group Full Force on the 1987 track "Go For Yours," and Romeo J.D. of the Boogie Boys rapped on freestyle group Sweet Sensation's 1989 hit "Sincerely Yours." New jack swing artists, like freestyle artists, based their sound on rap's beats, and their blend of upbeat R&B and rap made the style easy to program on Crossover stations. Bobby Brown's "Don't Be Cruel," for example, peaked at number two on the "Hot Crossover 30" chart and featured Brown singing and rapping atop a sparse, metallic beat styled after rap's sound.[71] And pop-rap artists used sung choruses and upbeat rapped lyrics to close the sonic distance between rap and pop; the chorus of Young MC's 1989 hit "Bust A Move" had a catchy, sung melody, and the album on which the song appeared featured lyrics that Janine McAdams of *Billboard* noted were "inventive, humorous" and "don't offend."[72] Songs such as these, which shortened the sonic distance between rap and other contemporary popular genres, are the topic of the next chapter.

Developing playlists that appealed equally across their multicultural audience was a problem for many Crossover programmers, whose careers in the radio industry relied on recognizing (and generating) correspondences between musical styles and racially defined audiences—that is, reproducing the commercial radio industry's racial project. Despite a plethora of new releases designed to cross over between the R&B and pop charts, programmers found it challenging to please their coalition audiences, as their listeners' tastes did not always align.[73] Often, programmers' complaints about the difficulty of programming to a multicultural audience revealed a reductive understanding of their audience, one which racialized Hispanic listeners as a group separate from Black and white listeners regardless of the actual racial identities of those Hispanic listeners. Miami programmer Duff Lindsey, for example, described his station's playlist as a careful negotiation between the tastes of the Black, white, and Hispanic segments of his audience. During music meetings, the staff would "openly discuss" whom they thought a song "would appeal to, and who would be turned off by it," and they tried to only play songs that they anticipated would find favor with at least two of the three discrete demographic groups they assumed constituted their audience.[74] Another programmer recounted the "nightmare" experience of trying to "balance the sound" at his station, especially because it was difficult to find musical common ground between Hispanic and Black listeners.[75] Other programmers found that freestyle divided their coalition audience, as they thought it was more

popular with Hispanic listeners than Black or white listeners. All of these accounts demonstrate the inability of a multicultural framework to make sense of diversity *within* individuals or groups; multiculturalism, as scholar Angie Chabram Dernersesian writes, presupposes that diversity occurs as "a mixture on the outside of us," rather than one that is also on the inside.[76]

For all these apparent complications, many Crossover programmers began noticing that all their audience segments seemed to agree on one style: melodic, upbeat songs with rapped vocals.[77] From the most unsophisticated programming perspective, freestyle-adjacent rap and pop-rap songs could solve programmers' woes because these songs combined genres that were each associated with a different demographic group. But some programmers acknowledged this was too simplistic of an understanding. According to a group of program directors surveyed by *Billboard*, their Hispanic listeners' tastes were "becoming blacker," meaning that the listeners they categorized as Hispanic increasingly liked the same music as those they categorized as Black.[78] While this development likely failed to push programmers to acknowledge the diversity of their Hispanic listeners (or consider the possibility that many of their Hispanic listeners might already have also identified as Black), it made programming their stations easier because all members of their diverse audience agreed on one style of music. Indeed, listeners liked this style so uniformly that in 1990 *Billboard*'s Sean Ross hypothesized that rap or rap-adjacent artists like Bell Biv DeVoe and MC Hammer were safer to play on Crossover stations than the stations' freestyle selections because not all listener demographics liked freestyle. Rap, on the other hand, was a "common denominator" between the three parts of Crossover stations' multicultural audience, meaning that rap songs were easy and convenient additions to playlists.[79]

This new understanding of musical taste, however, didn't solve perhaps the most pressing concern programmers had about rap: adults' reported dislike of the genre. Most radio formats were designed to appeal to more profitable older audiences, meaning that they were unlikely to play rap. Crossover stations' upbeat dance mix, however, often attracted larger teenage audiences than Top 40 or Urban stations did.[80] Adding rap would only compound this demographic weighting, as older listeners continued to express their disdain for the genre; a 1989 study printed in *Radio & Records*, for example, showed programmers reading the periodical that most listeners over the age of twenty disliked rap.[81]

But many Crossover stations questioned contemporary sales practices that privileged older audiences, and sales staff at these stations resisted the idea that they had to pander to adult tastes to remain solvent.[82] One Crossover programmer theorized that his station made "a lot of money" from generating adult listeners despite playing teen-oriented music because "almost all teens have parents, and teens often control the radio in the home and especially in the car." He believed that while teens often got into new music first, women ages eighteen to thirty-four quickly followed their lead; programming for teens implied future adult listeners.[83]

Power 106's general manager agreed, insisting that it was "bullshit to think you can't make money with teens."[84] Crossover stations often modified their sales strategies; for example, rather than try for the highly coveted advertising accounts that preferred adult audiences ages twenty-five to forty-nine, Power 106 worked to find advertisers who wanted audiences between age twelve and thirty-four because there were "more dollars available per station" for that demographic.[85] The station also priced commercial spots by demographic, charging more for commercials aimed at teens. With enough teen and young adult advertisement buys, it did not have to work with companies who wanted older audiences.[86] This meant that Power 106 and other stations like it did not need to cater to the tastes of older listeners, making it easier to add rap to their playlists.

RAP AS CROSSOVER MUSIC

Rap rapidly became an integral part of the sound of Crossover stations. The percentage of songs with rapped vocals on the "Hot Crossover 30" increased substantially between 1987 and 1990, from about 7 percent of the chart to one-third of it, and many other songs appeared on the chart that lacked rapped vocals but were otherwise sonically indebted to rap's musical texture.[87] In 1989 and 1990, songs with rapped vocals charted better than any other style—pop, R&B, ballads, freestyle, rock—that the format played. And by 1989, Crossover stations were playing more rap than any other commercial radio format.[88]

Many of the most popular songs on the "Hot Crossover 30" chart featured rapped vocals. Jody Watley's "Looking for a New Love," which not only coined the term "Hasta la vista, baby" but also featured a Blondie-esque rap toward the middle of the song, spent ten weeks in the chart's top five in 1987.[89] The following year, two of the ten most successful songs on the chart were by new jack swing vocalist Bobby Brown, including his aforementioned "Don't Be Cruel," which featured Brown rapping about his romance woes. The most programmed song the next year was Milli Vanilli's boppy pop-rap song "Girl You Know It's True," which spent twenty weeks on the chart in 1989, appeared at number one for six weeks, and was the second-most-played song across the chart's four years of existence. And in 1990, the top three songs on Crossover radio all had rapped vocals in them: MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This" and two singles, "Do Me!" and "Poison," by new jack swing–group Bell Biv DeVoe. While it simplifies categorization, only examining songs with rapped vocals doesn't fully capture rap's impact on Crossover radio as many of the format's most popular songs were influenced by rap's beats, including one of the longest-charting singles, Bobby Brown's new jack swinger "My Prerogative."

Songs that combined elements of pop, dance, and R&B with rap were Crossover stations' bread and butter, but these stations also played songs by less crossover–inclined rappers. In June 1989, Philadelphia's Crossover station added Slick Rick's

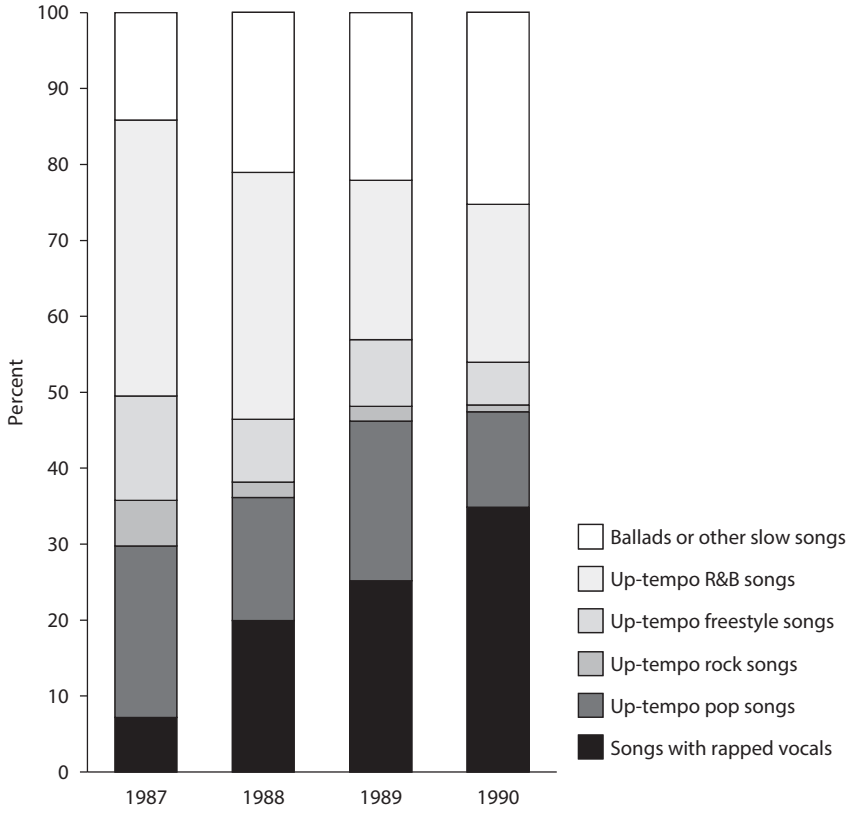

FIGURE 2. Stylistic composition of the *Billboard* "Hot Crossover 30" and "Top 40/Dance" charts, February 28, 1987–December 8, 1990 (the chart was renamed on September 9, 1989).

"Children's Story" and LL Cool J's "I'm That Type of Guy" to its playlist, which for much of the summer included De La Soul and Rob Base & DJ E-Z Rock in its top ten. A year later, Chicago's B96 played Digital Underground, Salt-N-Pepa, and Mellow Man Ace; the year after that, Crossover radio in Miami played Monie Love, Ice-T, Chubb Rock, and local artists DJ Laz and Danny "D."[90] Tuning in to Crossover stations, by the new decade, meant hearing rap.

Playing this much rap was extraordinary, and looking more closely at the format's programming makes clear that programmers understood rap's appeal across their multicultural audience. Prior to rap's arrival on these stations, programmers had mostly played three up-tempo styles of music—pop, R&B, and freestyle—which they associated with distinct demographics: white, Black, and Hispanic listeners, respectively. As shown in figure 2, airtime for these three up-tempo styles all shrank between 1987 and 1990 to make room for songs with rapped vocals: up-tempo pop decreased by nearly half, from 23 percent to just 13 percent; up-tempo

R&B decreased from about 36 percent to 21 percent; and freestyle from 13 percent to less than 6 percent. The increase in rap songs on this chart came at the expense of every other style except ballads. And even considering the stylistic and demographic categorization of the ballads that Crossover stations played, the same trend emerges: rap increasingly took the place of styles previously chosen to appeal to any of the three groups within Crossover stations' coalition audiences.

While almost all of the songs with rapped vocals that Crossover stations played featured Black musicians, this style did not only take the playlist spots previously allotted to Black artists. Stations added rap in place of music by Black, Latinx, and white musicians, indicating that programmers not only understood songs with rapped vocals to be distinct from other styles by Black artists; they also used these songs to reach across their diverse audience. Rap, at least on these stations, was considered crossover music.

MAKING RAP MAINSTREAM

As Crossover stations tinkered with their playlists they exerted influence on more mainstream Top 40 stations, including those in suburban and rural parts of the country. Programmers typically look to their peers within the same format to evaluate whether to play a crossover style on their station; as sociologist Gabriel Rossman has shown, the "intrinsic qualities of the song are insufficient to motivate adoption."[91] But the Crossover and Top 40 formats had plenty in common. Most of the operating staff at Crossover stations had experience working at Top 40 stations, were familiar with Top 40 audiences, and understood the game of how to simultaneously satisfy conservative advertisers and more adventurous listeners. Recognizing these similarities, many Top 40 programmers treated Crossover playlists as testing grounds for songs they were considering for their own stations, and began adding some of the most popular Crossover songs to their playlists.[92] Indeed, when *Billboard* debuted the "Hot Crossover 30" chart in early 1987, New York programmer Joel Salkowitz noted the format's potential to sway programming on mainstream Top 40 stations, claiming that were *he* programming a Top 40 station he would "certainly be looking at this chart to pick up a competitive edge with some fresher music."[93] In 1988, *Billboard* made this type of monitoring easier by relocating the "Hot Crossover 30" chart closer to the "Hot 100" chart.[94] Early that year, the *Los Angeles Times* found that all but one of the fourteen songs that had reached number one on the "Hot Crossover 30" chart since its inception had made it to the top five on the "Hot 100," demonstrating that Top 40 programmers were regularly and frequently incorporating the popular songs from Crossover stations into their playlists.[95] And so as Crossover stations embraced so-called "common denominator" rap songs to help soothe their programming troubles, they inspired many Top 40 radio programmers across the country to add these songs to the mainstream they broadcast.

Toward the end of the decade, what had once been the "violently different" programming on Crossover stations so shaped Top 40's playlists that the two formats became virtually indistinguishable. In 1988, *Billboard* chart editor Michael Ellis described the relationship between the formats by writing that Crossover stations "play a music mix that's a twist on top 40" that could be "the new top 40 for some large urban markets, particularly those with a large Hispanic population."[96] A year later, *Billboard* renamed the "Hot Crossover 30" chart the "Top 40/Dance" chart, deeming Crossover a subformat associated with the Top 40 format.[97] By the end of 1990, the "twist" that distinguished the subformat from Top 40 was so negligible that *Billboard* eliminated the recently rebranded chart altogether. While some Crossover stations had moved closer to a Top 40 sound since the chart's inception, this was not the reason *Billboard* cited for the change. Rather, the periodical claimed that the format's "success has influenced the Hot 100 Singles chart to such a great extent that a separate chart to break out dance titles is no longer necessary."[98]

A formatting idea once so foreign that it demanded its own chart was now simply Top 40. The playlists that had once been only for specially cultivated multicultural audiences in urban areas were now mainstream; they were music for all of the United States, extending from the cities, through the suburbs, and into rural areas.[99] And on these playlists was rap, the genre once considered "too black" to even be played on Black-Oriented stations. Top 40 programmers—taking their cue from programmers on Crossover stations—rearticulated the boundaries of the mainstream, inviting danceable rap into the center.

BROADCASTING MULTICULTURALISM

In recognizing and monetizing young, diverse audiences, and by acknowledging the presence and unique tastes of Hispanic listeners, Crossover stations reshaped the radio industry's understanding of local markets. In so doing, Crossover programmers capitalized on one of the fastest-growing demographics in the United States: the Hispanic population grew by over 50 percent during the 1980s.[100] The number of Spanish-language radio stations increased five times over the same period, but Spanish-language stations did not always meet the needs of young, language-diverse Hispanic listeners, who were the "linchpin" of Crossover station audiences.[101] Many Crossover programmers, like Jeff Wyatt walking along the Santa Monica pier, intently focused their programming on Hispanic audiences. San Antonio Crossover programmer Bob Perry, for example, understood his demographic target as "Hispanic, aged 18–34," or more precisely as a "25- or 26-year-old woman who likes dance music and thinks she's up to date on music, movies, fashions, and the new nightclubs and restaurants. She may not be a trendsetter, but in her mind she is."[102] But the musical preferences of his oddly specific target listener were changing. By 1990, Crossover station programmers recognized

that musical taste was not bound by demographics—their multicultural audiences agreed on melodic, danceable rap—and they acknowledged that their Hispanic listeners' tastes were not all that different than those of their other audience segments. "If you go to the Spanish clubs where they play Tejano music," Perry noted, "you'll discover those artists and songs sound like Exposé or Bobby Brown."[103] By playing music for a coalition audience of Black, white, and Hispanic listeners, and by recognizing the commonalities and distinctions between these demographic groups, Crossover stations embraced the type of pluralism associated with liberal multiculturalism.

But like other commodities aimed at a multicultural audience, representation on playlists did not often extend to corporate power or cultural ownership. Crossover programming, as scholar Lisa Lowe writes about multiculturalism more generally, "obscure[d] the ways in which . . . aesthetic representation [was] not an analog for the material positions, means, or resources of those populations."[104] Most Crossover stations were owned and operated by white radio professionals who hired mostly white DJs, program directors, and sales staff with experience at Top 40 stations.[105] And although these stations' playlists were racially and ethnically diverse, their nonmusical presentations rarely represented the diversity of the artists they played. Knowing that to do otherwise would endanger their advertising rates, many programmers tried to maintain a Top 40 identity, usually by encouraging white-sounding DJ patter from their live hosts to give their stations a white stationality.[106] When asked how a Black DJ could get a job at a Crossover station, white New York programmer Joel Salkowitz replied that any DJ he would consider hiring needed to sound like they fit on his radio station, implying verbal whiteness as the norm regardless of the station's multicultural mix of music.[107] But representation perhaps wasn't all that important to some listeners: one study done by a Black-Oriented station revealed that listeners knew the programming staff at the local Crossover station was white "but they really didn't care."[108]

As Crossover stations generated multicultural audiences by capitalizing on the popularity of rap, a genre mostly made by Black artists, these same stations often failed to represent their local Black communities. Some Crossover stations, such as KMEL in the Bay Area, programmed music and community-affairs shows that directly engaged local Black listeners.[109] But others, in the words of one consultant, "ha[d] a problem aligning themselves with the black population."[110] In his critique of multiracial political movements of the 1990s, scholar Jared Sexton demonstrates that, although these movements claimed to be the "logical extension of the civil rights movement," they had profound anti-Black effects.[111] Indeed, Black activists during that decade criticized multicultural movements, such as the one proposing a multiracial census category, for their potential to weaken Black political power and civil rights protections.[112] Sexton writes that multiracialism instead acted as a "rationalizing discourse for the continued and increasing social, political, and economic *isolation* of blacks," as the coalition politics of these movements decentered

Black interests.[113] Stations like Power 106, which Jeff Wyatt claimed was "not defined in color" but was instead "defined in sound," similarly downplayed their Black audiences, rarely playing advertisements from identifiably Black businesses and denying the station's closeness to Black-Oriented stations because of advertiser prejudice.[114]

Black-Oriented programmers often criticized these "zebra" stations for playing Black artists while failing to engage with their local Black listeners.[115] An Urban programmer in Norfolk, Virginia complained that Crossover stations were "*not going into the projects*. They [were not] going into black neighborhoods—not even affluent black neighborhoods—because they [did not] want to 'damage their image.' . . . [They] will play black music, but they don't want to be black."[116] San Antonio programmer Bob Perry reported that his multicultural audience wasn't even all that interested in hearing about certain Black communities; they would rather hear "a record about cruising the park trying to get laid" than one about "inner-city ghetto life in New York."[117] The rise of Crossover stations led one white programmer from Pittsburgh to agree that "white people like black music, but they're not really into the black experience."[118]

The format that historically *was* into the Black experience, the Black-Oriented format, continued for the most part to only offer tepid support to rap. For example, of the twenty-eight rap songs that appeared in the top forty positions on *Billboard*'s 1988 chart measuring sales and airplay of songs aimed at Black audiences, only sixteen ever appeared on the chart measuring just airplay on Black-Oriented stations. This indicated that Black-Oriented programmers considered certain rap songs inappropriate for their playlists regardless of their demonstrated popularity. A *Billboard* columnist calculated at the year's end that Black-Oriented programmers would have to play at least three times as much rap in order for Black-Oriented airplay to be commensurate with rap's sales.[119]

Record companies like Def Jam kept promoting rap records to Black-Oriented stations. One advertisement in *Black Radio Exclusive*, shown in figure 3, even made the case that the popularity of rap would help, rather than hinder, Black-Oriented stations. Stylized like a football-play diagram, the advertisement shows that rappers—not the non-rapping artists so regularly played on Black-Oriented stations—are the Black-Oriented format's offensive-team players capable of thwarting the Top 40 (CHR) defense. But for the most part, Black-Oriented programmers in the latter part of the 1980s tended to follow the lead of Top 40 stations and play the rap records Crossover stations chose for their mass-appeal sound.[120] And Top 40 and Crossover stations noticed Black-Oriented stations' reluctance to take Def Jam up on the "best offense"; one Top 40 programmer remarked in June 1988 that he was "elated" to pick up the slack from these stations, noting that he would "get their numbers . . . and they'll pay the price in their ratings."[121]

Crossover stations' failure to fully represent minority listeners had financial payoffs. Regardless of how committed to the community these stations were,

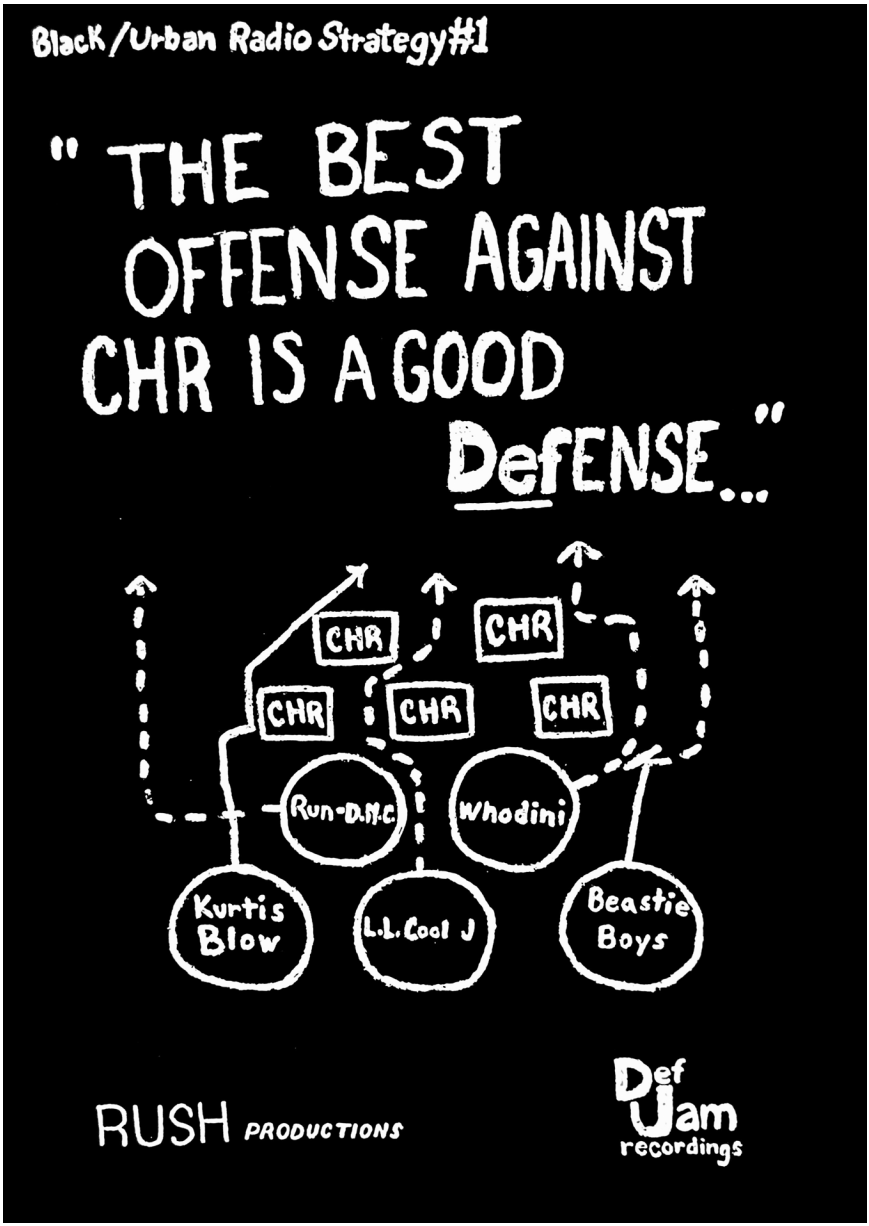

FIGURE 3. "The Best Offense against CHR Is a Good Defense," *Black Radio Exclusive*, June 27, 1986, 41. Note how Def Jam's rappers are depicted as the offensive line against the Top 40 (CHR) team in this game play diagram.

they played music by Black and Latinx artists while trying to avoid "no Black/no ethnic" advertising mandates. And perhaps because their multicultural coalition audiences were not always reflected in the stations' almost-entirely white management structures or political leanings, these stations could choose to eschew these audiences when necessary to reap financial rewards. This didn't always work out for stations, as their local competitors were all too happy to reveal just how nonwhite Crossover stations' listeners actually were, demonstrating what a critical role race played in the economic evaluation of radio stations.[122] So while Crossover stations helped incorporate marginalized listeners and their musical tastes into the mainstream, they failed to dismantle racist advertising practices as many stations within the format benefited from their existence. *Radio & Records* columnists Walt Love and Sean Ross pointed out in early 1987 that the presence of Crossover stations alongside Black-Oriented stations raised the specter of "two separate but not very equal drinking fountains dispensing similar music": one with industry connections and advertiser backing and the other fighting for solvency.[123]

REDESIGNING CROSSOVER

While Crossover stations didn't directly replace Black-Oriented stations in most urban areas, they chipped away at the cultural and economic power of the Black-Oriented format by monopolizing the crossover process.[124] Previously, crossing over onto Top 40 stations was dependent upon a Black artist's track record on Black-Oriented stations. These stations (typically managed by, sometimes owned by, and certainly intended for Black Americans) thus had editorial control over which Black artists crossed over to the mostly white audiences at Top 40 stations.[125] But as the Crossover format prospered, Top 40 programmers gained a new source for determining which songs by Black artists had mass appeal. Instead of looking at Black-Oriented playlists, they began watching the playlists at Crossover stations—chosen by mostly white programmers looking to please a multicultural audience—which many Top 40 programmers came to consider a better indicator of what new songs their listeners might like. By the late 1980s, most songs by Black artists needed to demonstrate popularity on Crossover stations, rather than on Black-Oriented stations, before Top 40 programmers would consider playing them.[126]

This meant that crossing over was no longer just a process, a reconfiguration of a sonic identity to modify potential audiences. Instead, crossover was a relatively stable sonic location that artists could pitch their music toward. Crossover stations didn't just promote multicultural mass-appeal music, but rather carved out a space within the industry for this type of music to flourish, a place that existed somewhere between Urban, Spanish-language, and Top 40 stations. The new format created a committed market for music that appealed across diverse audiences.

But this new market altered existing ones. As Crossover stations established control over the crossover process, record companies changed their promotional strategies, noticing that Black-Oriented stations had lost some of their influence.[127] In 1990, the director of A&R for MCA's Black music division revealed to *Billboard* that labels no longer waited to see how Black acts did on Black-Oriented stations. They instead marketed the artists towards Black-Oriented, Crossover, and Top 40 stations at the same time, meaning that labels "almost [didn't] really need black radio."[128] And it increasingly seemed that perhaps labels no longer needed their Black music divisions. As songs by Black artists became more mainstream in the 1990s, thanks to the influence of Crossover stations, several major labels reduced the size of these divisions without finding other jobs for the mostly Black staff.[129]

All of this affected the racial politics of the rap these stations played, in ways the following chapter will further elaborate. As Crossover stations became the go-to place for Black artists to enter the mainstream, the importance of Black-Oriented stations decreased. In many cities, play at Crossover stations became the standard of commercial radio success for rap acts, meaning that white programmers and white station owners looking out for the interests of a multicultural audience controlled the radio airplay of the genre. And the music came to reflect that. Rap, at least on the radio, was out of the hands of Black consumers, Black-music–focused record labels, and Black DJs, and was now controlled and consumed by white corporations eager for profits and a multiracial population eager for new sounds.

"WHERE HIP HOP LIVES" IN LOS ANGELES

To see one effect of this change, let's return to Los Angeles, where Power 106's Jeff Wyatt hadn't contributed to the mainstreaming of rap nearly as much as the national format he'd ushered into existence. Wyatt was not a strong advocate for rap; in the early 1990s, he claimed that playing a considerable amount of rap could be "dangerous" for a Top 40 station because rap was "so polariz[ing] that the gains can be outweighed by the losses if you're not careful."[130] Power 106 had moved toward a mainstream Top 40 sound since it initially came on air, playing up-tempo dance music—what white programmer Rick Cummings derisively described as "every cha-cha record in existence"—for mostly white and Hispanic listeners.[131] But as the 1980s came to a close, the popularity of freestyle (and dance music more generally) decreased, and Wyatt watched as his once-solid dominance over the Los Angeles market withered. By the fall of 1990, the station had fallen to third in the market, receiving its lowest Arbitron rating in the nearly four years since the station began broadcasting; a year later it sagged to eighth in the market (figure 4).

In response to the station's rapid decline, Emmis hired radio-research firm Coleman Research to conduct focus groups aimed at helping the station reformulate its music mix. Coleman's findings backed up trends that Crossover

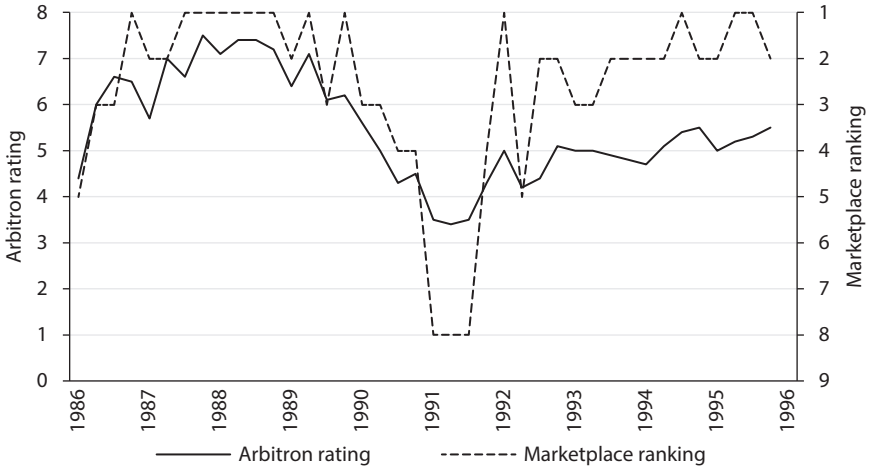

FIGURE 4. Power 106 Arbitron rating and Marketplace ranking, 1986–1996.

programmers across the country had noticed: their target audience (young Hispanic women) was no longer listening to freestyle, and was instead listening to "rap you can dance to."[132] Additional market research indicated that the station had two options: either move poppier and compete directly against Top 40 station KIIS, which could be difficult due to KIIS's popular morning show with DJ Rick Dees, or "go more 'street.'"[133] Emmis decided on the latter and Jeff Wyatt resigned in protest, landing at rival station KIIS.[134]

Following this, Cummings voluntarily took a demotion to run music programming at Power 106. He immediately got rid of the endless cha-cha records (the freestyle and dance the station had been playing) and began researching and playing whatever music was popular at area high schools.[135] This was rap, unsurprising to almost anyone who knew the demographics of the genre's audience. By the end of 1991, nearly half of the songs Power 106 reported playing had rapped vocals in them.[136] The station's incorporation of rap coincided with the demise of local AM rap station KDAY, which had been in a tailspin after switching to an all-rap format for its last two years.[137] Taking KDAY's place as Los Angeles's rap station, Power 106 rebranded to become the place "Where Hip Hop Lives" on the West Coast; sister station WQHT in New York made a similar programming move a couple years later, in time adopting the same slogan and becoming what is arguably the most important rap radio station in the country today, Hot 97.[138] Cummings claimed that the turn toward rap was unintentional. He wanted "to go from being sound-driven to being hit-driven," and he had trouble finding new dance records that performed as well as the rap he was playing.[139] Hit-driven playlists generated audiences, and the station immediately turned its numbers around, as figure 4 shows.[140]

A few years later, Cummings hired local brothers Eric and Nick Vidal to host "Friday Nite Flavas," a rap mix show. Known professionally as the Baka Boyz, the brothers had produced records for a variety of Los Angeles rap acts and had previously worked as co-music directors, hosts, and DJs of a mix show on Bakersfield station KKXX.[141] Thanks to this history the duo was familiar with the Los Angeles rap scene, and their Power 106 show proved very popular. By welcoming rappers into the station and making these artists "feel loved and comfortable," the Boyz helped bridge the divide between the rap game and the sterile corporate environment of Power 106.[142] But Cummings credited the pair's success to what he thought was their difference from others associated with rap music; rather than having this "compulsion to be hard-core gang rappers," the two were "fun" and "positive."[143]

Within eight months of the Boyz arrival at Power 106, the station promoted them to host the morning show, where they minimized talk, increased the number of songs, and—most uniquely—invited listeners to call in and freestyle along with them. During the "rap roll call" listeners noted their location, connecting regional affiliation in rap with the oft-repeated "where are you calling from" discourse of radio call-in shows. After this introduction listeners would participate in a sort of virtual cypher with the Boyz, trading bars as the hosts rapped mostly pre-written lines that hyped up the roll-call segment while occasionally copying phrases from the callers. By hiring the Baka Boyz to host one of the regular segments of commercial radio programming, the morning show, Power 106 institutionalized rap, making the genre and those associated with it part of the organizational fabric of the station. In a market dominated by older morning hosts who had long-ago perfected their light morning banter, the Baka Boyz were notable for their lack of experience and "hip-hopping, spontaneous style" which was, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, "completely unlike anything else on the dial."[144] Their distinctive show captivated the Los Angeles market, and its popularity, along with afternoon and evening DJ sets by Big Boy and a rap-filled playlist, reinvigorated the station. By the end of 1994, Power 106 was tied for first place in the market.[145]

In many ways, the Baka Boyz represented the type of public fostered by Power 106 and the Crossover format more generally. The Boyz were proudly Latino, boisterously describing themselves as "2 Fat Mexicanz," and fit within the eighteen-to-thirty-four age profile of the station's desired audience.[146] And they understood the "common denominator" nature of rap. Nick Vidal claimed in late 1994 that "rap music is bringing everybody together" to the extent that "pop culture is rap music right now." Aside from its base audience of "Latin females," he found that his show attracted a diverse audience including film executives and "40-year-old guys who live in Beverly Hills and own helicopter companies."[147]

But like Crossover stations, the Baka Boyz were criticized for their lack of commitment to local minority communities.[148] In 1994, they were accused of propagating negative stereotypes when they appeared on a billboard that showed them eating a pizza while sitting on the toilet, captioned with their signature slogan "2 Fat

Mexicanz."[149] Power 106 took down the billboard, replacing it with one of the pair holding a surfboard, and worked with a local organization to come to a compromise on the duo's description, changing the text on the billboard to "2 Fat Proud Mexicanz."[150] This, however, wasn't the first time the station had upset local minority leaders. A year earlier, as gangsta rap became popular in part because of airplay on stations like Power 106, the Stop The Violence, Increase the Peace Foundation asked Power 106 to stop airing "violent, sexist, and racially demeaning" songs.[151] Nationally, many Black-Oriented stations responded to these requests by editing out certain profanities and deleting more offensive songs from their playlists.[152] But Power 106, like other Crossover and Top 40 stations that "didn't have to deal that much with community pressures and . . . advertising concerns," continued playing songs like Onyx's "Throw Ya Gunz" or Dr. Dre's "Dre Day" regardless of community concerns.[153] Indeed, Power 106 justified playing these songs by pointing to its multiculturalism, maintaining that the station only played songs that "unifie[d] the largest possible multicultural audience."[154] Only after members of the local Black community launched a boycott of companies advertising on the station did Cummings decide to bleep three of the most offensive words, including the n-word. Although he did not want to "tell Snoop Doggy Dogg how to address his homies," he conceded that the station might be "doing harm by legitimizing the word for other cultures that can't or don't understand the black culture."[155]

Cummings's comment points to the unremarkable fact that simply playing rap music without acknowledging what scholar and activist Angela Y. Davis describes as "the political character of culture" would not dismantle the structural racism of the music industries.[156] While some Crossover stations made clear their political commitments, attending to the concerns of their audiences and working to represent their diverse communities, others simply did not.

Crossover stations altered the structure of the radio industry in the late 1980s, creating a space for rap to cross over into the mainstream. These stations transformed the sound of the mainstream and changed the nature of crossover by creating a multicultural, though white-owned and white-operated, space toward which Black artists could direct their music. They also challenged the identity of the previously de facto white mainstream, consciously creating multiracial playlists while acknowledging and bringing together multicultural young listeners, a novel concept in an industry based on segregating audiences by race. But although Crossover stations challenged the racial segregation of the radio and record industries by commodifying multiracial publics, the musical color line was simply too ingrained, and they failed to dismantle these industries' structural racism. Instead, they helped turn hip hop into hit pop, as the next chapter will explore.

3

Hip Hop Becomes Hit Pop

The video says it all: rap's crossover potential could not be contained. On one side of a wall are a couple of white rock legends from the band Aerosmith on stage performing their 1975 hit "Walk This Way"; on the other side are young Black rappers Run-D.M.C. in the studio recording their 1986 cover of the song. But the separation just can't last. First, Aerosmith's Steven Tyler bashes a hole through the wall to provide some chorus vocals; eventually, the rappers climb through the hole to introduce rap to Aerosmith's white audience. The video ends with Run-D.M.C.'s name in lights descending from the rafters while Tyler and the rap group perform a synchronized dance over the wails of Joe Perry's guitar solo.

This song has often been mythologized as the key to unlocking rap's crossover. Like its video, the song gestures to a multiracial audience by mixing rap with the white-coded genre of rock, employing the widely used crossover technique of combining two styles to appeal to a larger audience.[1] Run-D.M.C. had tried this on a prior single, "Rock Box," but it hadn't ensured crossover success. The group wasn't entirely comfortable with the genre mix and asked the label to make an alternate version of the song because they "didn't want the guitar version playing in the hood."[2] "Walk This Way," however, had two additional advantages: Aerosmith's (albeit fading) star power, and the song's structure. A mostly faithful cover of the original, the Run-D.M.C. version uses pop's most ubiquitous musical form: verse-chorus alternation. These two elements eased the song's crossover; producer Rick Rubin noted that the song "showed people that rap was 'music'" by giving them a "familiar reference."[3] By equating rap with, or substituting rap into, rock's typical role as the music of youth rebellion, Run-D.M.C. repackaged it as something white audiences could understand and "encouraged listeners to hear breakbeats as capturing the same defiant, youthful, and care-free attitude that electric guitars had long symbolized."[4] For all of these reasons, "Walk This Way" has often been credited with crossing rap into the mainstream; it is a song considered so significant, so monumental,

that critic Geoff Edgers claimed without a trace of irony that it "would change not just music but society itself."[5]

Here's the problem. While this version of rap's history helps rationalize Run-D.M.C.'s astounding record sales, it doesn't explain how rap became part of the mainstream in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yes, the five years following the release of "Walk This Way" were the same years during which rap crossed over onto Top 40 radio stations. But very little of this rap sounded anything like Run-D.M.C.'s song.[6] While the group's genre-mixing model pointed a way forward for rap to be played on Top 40 stations, it needed some sonic and demographic refinement. Rap's crossover on the radio would come from a different source: rather than taking influence from rock, rap turned toward pop.

As the Crossover format grew in popularity in the late 1980s, mostly in urban areas, programmers at Top 40 stations all over the country took notice and began adding many of the rap songs Crossover stations made popular onto their playlists. By the end of the decade, songs with rapped vocals made up about a quarter of Top 40 playlists, and pop artists were incorporating rap's sonic vocabulary into their music. As alluded to in the last chapter, the Crossover format's influence on Top 40 stations transformed rap from an underground musical genre heard only on regional late-night mix shows to something heard on almost every Top 40 station in the country. Playing rap on these stations made rap mainstream.

The Top 40 format's distinct financial pressures informed how these stations programmed rap, considerations that had lasting consequences for the genre's style, identity, and racial politics. While Crossover stations programmed rap because it appealed widely across a young multicultural audience, Top 40 stations, especially those in less diverse areas, had a unique demographic puzzle to solve. They had to consider the tastes of a different coalition audience: white women (the demographic advertisers prized) and younger listeners. Top 40 programmers needed to balance young listeners' interest in rap with station concerns that rap was too noisy, offensive, and unmelodic to appeal to white women. They found a solution in pop-influenced rap songs made by artists who made a slight adjustment to the crossover technique Run-D.M.C. used, combining genre-specific sounds to shorten the sonic distance between rap and Top 40's typical pop. By the new decade, this style of rap was all over the airwaves, from artists as legendary as LL Cool J and Salt-N-Pepa to those as commercially craven as Vanilla Ice and the Party.

Many rappers, however, weren't interested in making it onto these stations' playlists. Rap's crossover into the mainstream prompted some to create and enforce a dichotomy between pop-influenced rap and authentic rap, as well as between pop-influenced rappers and authentic creators of hip hop culture. In distinguishing between the real and the fake, rappers and critics defined authenticity against the sound of rap on Top 40 radio and against the format's audience.

TOP 40'S AGE-DIVERSE AUDIENCE

While the Top 40 format is defined by playing current hits, its playlists—like all commercial radio playlists—are delimited by economic constraints.[7] In the 1980s and early 1990s, one of the format's long-standing financial problems was how to monetize its age-diverse audience, because younger listeners were rarely of interest to companies that advertised on the radio.[8] Station management, who needed to generate advertiser-friendly audiences, often pressured programmers to deliver older demographics; programmers, who thought that teen listeners were important for the vitality of the format, worked diligently to balance the tastes of both age groups.[9]

In the 1980s, Top 40 stations were often conceptualized as stations for white teens and tweens, and white women in their twenties and thirties—young listeners gave the stations hipness and energy, and "moms" paid the bills.[10] And more often than not, the stations' playlists prioritized the tastes of listeners footing the bills. This was a recent change; according to *Billboard* chart editor Michael Ellis, Top 40 stations in the 1960s played all of the contemporary hits. This shifted during the 1980s to the point that the format "target[ed] an audience (usually 18–34-year-old females) and only [sought] to satisfy that group."[11] The mostly male programmers at these stations worked to make sense of their listeners' perspectives: to better understand the station's prototypical listener "Katie," Pittsburgh station WMXP, for example, developed a fake budget and spending habits for her; another programming consultant stayed familiar with his target audience by watching TV and reading magazines that he imagined "Darlene" might like.[12] Minority audiences were tolerated but rarely catered to; similarly, male listeners weren't sought after.[13]

The format's target audience aligned with a more common perception about the feminization of Top 40 stations and the pop music they played. At the most general level, mass culture is often conceptualized as feminine in opposition to serious, rational high culture.[14] But pop music—the bread and butter of Top 40 playlists—is further relegated to the purview of feminized white audiences. Scholar Diane Railton argues that "rock culture" in the late 1960s and early 1970s intentionally distanced itself from the youth-oriented pop music of the early 1960s "by masculinising itself, and by introducing a particular way of enjoying music that eschewed the feminine, emotional and physical response of early 1960s pop fans in favour of cool, laid-back and thoughtful appreciation of the music."[15] As rock culture distilled throughout the 1970s into Album-Oriented Rock stations, its new format distanced itself from the hit parade played on Top 40 radio and those stations' younger audiences, whose tastes were rendered feminine in opposition to the tastes of older teens who had graduated onto what were considered more masculine genres.[16]

To appeal to these feminized audiences, Top 40 stations in the 1980s played pop music and well-produced songs of other genres that didn't sound too much

like they belonged on another format. These stations tried to find a Goldilocks middle ground between the soft-pop hits that programmers agreed white women liked and what consultant George Burns considered more masculine music: "grittier, harder-sounding music" that programmers thought might be better suited for other formats.[17] What exactly constituted hardness depended on genre norms—another consultant considered markers of hardness to be "rock, twang, rap, etc., depending on format"—as well as promotion—Burns claimed that "asking for album cuts" was also "a very male thing."[18] On the other side of the spectrum, programmers were careful not to play too much soft music lest they sound too similar to an Adult Contemporary station. A ballad with some sort of catchy beat was ideal, as this type of song captured the upbeat nature of hit radio. Sacramento programmer Chris Collins, for example, liked Freddie Jackson's "Have You Ever Loved Somebody," claiming that "this record is the epitome" of what he played on his station aimed at women over eighteen because "it's not too hard, not too soft. It's a bouncy ballad with a very fine production—just a perfect record for us."[19] Also considered to be good bets with Top 40's adult listeners were songs that reworked older styles, such as the Beach Boys' "California Dreamin'" and the Mary Jane Girls' remake of "Walk like a Man" by the Four Seasons; songs with extramusical associations; and songs by good-looking men such as "handsome soap star" Jack Wagner's "Too Young," which *Billboard* reported was "doing particularly well with the ladies" on one Boston station in 1985.[20] While these purported connections between audience and musical style were, of course, oversimplified, they were an essential part of how programmers made their livings.

Top 40 programmers also carefully considered the racial identities of the musicians they played. In the mid-1980s, the format played many contemporary songs by Black musicians that were popular on Black-Oriented stations but balanced its mix to limit these crossover songs. Stations tried to avoid playing too many songs by Black artists—lest they be confused with Crossover or Urban stations—or playing songs that sounded "too Black," as they worried these would not appeal to their white audience members. Playing too much of either had financial ramifications, as advertising rates within the industry were tied to audience demographics. These assessments were, of course, fluid: the amount of crossover music by Black artists that Top 40 stations played increased substantially throughout the 1980s, and programmers' assessment of whether a song was "too Black" was both malleable and culturally contingent.[21]

Together, these programming philosophies led Top 40 programmers to tread a cautious middle ground between the pop hits they thought white women liked and crossover music from other formats. Most of these programmers in the mid-1980s didn't consider rap songs to be viable additions to their playlists; the genre—at least according to programmers' sense of white women's musical preferences—was too hard, too Black, and had little chance of appealing to

adults. If a rap song were to be included in the Top 40 mix, it would need the balanced, Goldilocks sound that programmers believed white women would like. Were this to happen, nothing would be able to stop the genre: airplay on Top 40 stations, which simultaneously play and manufacture the hits, turns niche into mainstream and upstarts into stars.

LADIES LOVE COOL RAP

In 1987, Top 40 programmers noticed that Crossover stations had started playing a rap song that adhered quite closely to the sound of their format, something similar to the stated ideal of "a bouncy ballad with a very fine production" that was "not too hard, not too soft." The song, "I Need Love," from LL Cool J's second studio album *Bigger and Deffer*, was a stylistic descendant of Whodini's "Friends," mixing together rapped vocals with ballad instrumentals.[22] In the song, LL Cool J—short for Ladies Love Cool James—raps slowly with careful enunciation on top of a supple melodic accompaniment played on the Yamaha DX7, the synthesizer of choice for 1980s pop ballads by Whitney Houston, Chicago, and Phil Collins, among others. A clear bell-tone melody rings out above sustained chords as LL Cool J waxes about his need for a woman he can treat like a goddess, and another distinct synthesizer melody appears between his rapped verses. With harmonies that gesture to a Top 40 sound by mimicking the four-measure phrase length of a conventional pop song, along with melodies played on a recognizable pop synthesizer, "I Need Love" combines rapping with the musical language of pop.

This style is rarely replicated elsewhere on the album. Most of the other songs have loud, sharply accented drum-machine beats with an occasional melody or bass line repeated in short segments.[23] But this "stark as a moonscape" style of rap, in the words of one music critic, hadn't succeeded in getting LL Cool J onto *Billboard*'s "Hot 100" in the past.[24] Many radio stations had treated his similarly "percussive, minimalist-style" 1985 album *Radio* "with trepidation."[25] But the bass drum and snare on "I Need Love" are quieter and higher in pitch than on the record's other tracks, toning down the "rhythm that'll rock the walls" that LL Cool J promises on the third track of the album.[26]

"I Need Love" gestures toward a different demographic than LL Cool J's other songs. Trying to prove the accuracy of his full name, LL Cool J shows his softer side in this track by combining rap with a ballad rather than combining rap with hard rock as Run-D.M.C. had. Rap and hard rock were both genres primarily listened to by teens and young adults; their combination was intended for the same age demographic.[27] Ballads, on the other hand, appealed to a broader age range, including radio's coveted adult-female listeners, and had historically proved to be successful crossover vehicles. One indication of how well LL Cool J's new targeting worked could be seen on his 1987 tour, when the young men in the audience were noticeably "put off" by "I Need Love."[28] LL Cool J, however, celebrated his wide

appeal, claiming that rap was "no longer a minority music; it's a majority music now."[29]

By combining the edgy sounds of rap—popular with young demographics—with the supple sounds of a pop ballad—a style that programmers believed appealed to women—melodic rap songs like "I Need Love" created what one programmer described as a "more sophisticated" version of rap that proved popular on Top 40, Crossover, and Urban formats.[30] Indeed, Top 40 programmers found LL Cool J's song so compelling that they began playing it before his record label Def Jam released it as a single, likely because they found that it appealed to their adult listeners.[31] The general manager of a Jackson, Mississippi station described it as one of a few rap songs that "adults will enjoy—or tolerate—for a short time."[32] Noting that the song had "more than a teen appeal," one Black-Oriented programmer predicted that it would "generate lots of adult interest."[33] Steve Crumbley of Norfolk, Virginia's Urban station verified this claim, reporting that this was the first rap song that his adult listeners actually requested.[34] Adult ladies, it seemed, loved this style of Cool James, and the song reached number 13 on *Billboard*'s "Hot 100 Airplay" chart.

Following this single, Def Jam continued promoting LL Cool J's music to a crossover audience. His next album featured no fewer than three ballads, and another single from the album, "I'm That Type of Guy," was advertised to radio programmers as a crossover single; in one ad, a Phoenix programmer described the song as "clean family fun for all ages."[35] And LL Cool J himself bragged that his "records [were] universal," that his music wasn't "only for the black kids."[36]

But like the male audience members put off by the female-friendly crossover moves of "I Need Love," many of LL Cool J's original fans rejected his mainstream leanings. In 1989, Dante Ross, the rap A&R person at Elektra, claimed that while LL Cool J "means something to young girls and a younger audience," he didn't "mean anything to the hardcore audience anymore," largely *because* he released "I Need Love."[37] At least according to Ross, rap's "hardcore audience" did not include young fans and, especially, young female fans, an exception that will be discussed later in this chapter. But LL Cool J's reputation problems likely exceeded his association with female audiences; that same year, at a rally protesting the murder of Black teenager Yusef Hawkins by a mob of white teenagers in New York City, the mostly Black crowd booed LL Cool J as he went on stage, indicating a disconnect between the immediate concerns of the audience and their impression of his political and cultural commitments. As he put it, "That crowd wanted me to be on the pro-black, red-black-and-green kick." While some may have considered his crossover techniques a concession to white industry norms, for LL Cool J the demand to perform a specific type of Black identity was also a concession. "I wasn't prepared to compromise myself," he said. "I love my culture—I love being black—but it's not something I want to talk about all day."[38]

"NOTHING BUT A POP TUNE"

In 1989, a strikingly handsome duo from Germany promoted their unique brand of female-oriented rap to radio stations across the United States with their single "Girl You Know It's True." Much like "I Need Love," this song combined the sounds of rap with those of pop, resulting in a style that Top 40 audiences across the nation embraced. "Girl You Know It's True" was the up-tempo version of LL Cool J's pop-rap mixture; in the verses, easy-to-understand raps lay atop boppy synthesizer melodies that would be at home on a Taylor Dayne or Whitney Houston single. The choruses, which were backed by the "Ashley's Roachclip" breakbeat recently used in Eric B. & Rakim's "Paid in Full," improved on LL Cool J's crossover formula in one important way: they featured singing so catchy that critic Tom Breihan likened the song to "the daffy energy of prime Duran Duran" in a retrospective.[39]

This song's combination of traditional pop elements—such as sung vocals over synthesizer-driven, multi-measure chord progressions—with rap's rhymes, chopped vocal samples, and beats proved to be tremendously popular. According to Janine McAdams of *Billboard*, the duo "evinced screams from young suburban white girls that recalled the passion of the Beatles days."[40] But they were also popular with older audiences. The success of "the first adult rap group," as one program director described them, demonstrated to concerned programmers that rap could appeal to an age-varied audience.[41] One or more of the duo's songs were in the top forty of the "Hot 100" for nearly sixty weeks, thanks to heavy airplay on Top 40 radio stations across the country, and two of their songs with rapped vocals topped the chart.[42] The only catch, it turned out, was that the duo did not actually rap or sing—Milli Vanilli were just beautiful front men for their producer's sonic vision.

Much like the music of LL Cool J, Milli Vanilli's songs sonically held Top 40 listeners' hands, guiding them through what programmers considered the foreign terrain of rap by providing something familiar to latch onto while they listened to rapped vocals. But unlike LL Cool J, Milli Vanilli didn't come from rap's traditional birthplace, geographically, or culturally. Even if they had been the ones rapping, they had no relationship with the genre's New York City origins and no connection to the hip hop elements of MCing and DJing, although one of the pair competed in breakdancing competitions.[43] Indeed, their distance from hip hop culture was great enough that their popularity sparked a conversation about what exactly rap was.

As the popularity of rap continued to grow and as pop artists continued incorporating rap into their musical language, it became increasingly difficult for industry publications to distinguish between rap and other genres. In March 1989, this issue came to a head when *Billboard* premiered a new chart, "Hot Rap Singles," which tracked the sales of rap singles—as defined by store employees—at seventy-seven record shops across the country.[44] The chart immediately caused controversy.

On the first rap chart, *Billboard* recorded Milli Vanilli's "Girl You Know It's True" at number five, ahead of songs by Eric B. & Rakim, Ice-T, and N.W.A.[45] A letter to the editor two weeks later complained about this song appearing on the same chart as these rappers; Tom Phillips of Delaware argued that despite using rapped vocals and a commonly sampled breakbeat, "Girl You Know It's True" was "not rap." The song was "nothing but a pop tune." Phillips suggested that *Billboard* "reconsider what [they] call rap" and proposed that *Billboard* should define inclusion on this chart by "what the inner-city kids call rap."[46]

Chart editor Terri Rossi responded to this letter, claiming that the line between rap and pop "is a subjective matter."[47] Rap, for Rossi, was not easily characterized. She wrote that the issue centered around whether the presence of rapped vocals defines a rap song: "Is a rap record a record in which the vocal performance is spoken rhythmically, or is it a record that contains a rap-style performance?"[48] Her confusing distinction between these two performance acts is telling. It's unclear from reading her column what the difference between "a rap-style performance" and a "vocal performance . . . spoken rhythmically" actually is (not to mention which of these Milli Vanilli was doing), indicating that even the chart editor couldn't explain what defined the genre.

Rossi wasn't the only person having trouble differentiating between genres. Top 40 programmers—who were far from experts on the matter—thought that their audiences weren't sure what rap was, although they disagreed about the extent of their audience's confusion. According to one consultant, adults believed En Vogue's 1990 beat-driven song with no spoken vocals, "Hold On," was rap. Denver program director Mark Bolke complained that some of his listeners categorized Bobby Brown, Madonna, and New Kids on the Block as rap artists.[49] Denver listeners weren't alone in their confusion about New Kids on the Block; *Radio & Records* reported in 1990 that 5 percent of participants classified the boy band as a rap group in a study about how audiences categorize artists.[50]

A few months after printing Phillips's letter about Milli Vanilli, *Billboard* changed its policy and removed Milli Vanilli and other rap-adjacent songs from the rap chart. Because the chart was supposed to measure the popularity of rap songs that didn't have enough radio airplay to appear on other charts, Rossi wrote that it didn't make sense to include what she referred to as "R&B records that include rap," as their "mainstream exposure . . . would prevent a real rap record from charting." In the beginning of June, *Billboard* began manually removing songs it didn't think were "all-rap records" from the chart so that its charts would "represent pure musical genres," a decision that defined rap, at least according to *Billboard*, by its sound.[51]

A month later, Milli Vanilli's downfall began. During a concert televised live on MTV the record ostensibly playing their backing track skipped, causing a small snippet of the recording—which was no mere backing track, as it included the song's vocals—to loop over and over. While a looped breakbeat was precisely what

rap had been built on, the duo didn't know what to do when their lip-synched vocals also looped, and group member Rob Pilatus ran off the stage. Throughout the next year, the duo rode high even as criticism mounted, and they won the Best New Artist Grammy in 1990. But by the end of that year, their lip-synching truth was revealed, their Grammy award was revoked, and they settled multiple class-action lawsuits in which they were accused of deceiving their fans.[52]

While most listeners moved on to something new, the music industries did not, for Milli Vanilli's influence was long-lasting. Few working within the growing rap-music industry embraced the duo; record executive Bill Stephney, for example, described them as "tragically unhip."[53] But their style of pop-rap, soul-rap, or whatever one might call the combination of beats and rhymes with soulfully sung pop choruses, inspired Top 40 music for decades to come.[54] From Biz Markie and Salt-N-Pepa singing about relationships on their respective turn-of-the-decade singles "Just a Friend" and "Do You Want Me," through Puff Daddy and Kanye West building their careers on sampled melodic hooks, and Bone Thugs-N-Harmony (and later Drake) obliterating the distinction between rapping and singing, this musical formula has continued to facilitate mainstream success. Top 40 programmers love a melody.

"REAL SMOOTH" RAP

In late 1991, the combination of rapped verses and sung choruses took the rap duo P.M. Dawn's "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss" to number one on the "Hot 100." Working out of a UK recording studio, brothers Prince Be and DJ Minutemix had recorded what *Billboard* described as a "pop/rap reinvention of Spandau Ballet's 'True.'"[55] Combining the synthesizer introduction from Spandau Ballet's 1983 multiformat hit with—yes, again—the "Ashley's Roachclip" breakbeat, "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss" used the standard crossover technique of combining instrumental sounds from various genres. P.M. Dawn's vocals also combined pop and rap styles, as they wistfully sang during the choruses and rapped about existential questions and general romantic longing during the verses. Together, these elements created a sensual song that their label's general manager noticed "[didn't] scare anybody away," not only because of the familiar Spandau Ballet sample, but also because "the rest of it [was] real smooth and easy to take."[56] More to the point, the song didn't scare *adults* away; the same manager reported, "the comment that comes back from radio is that this works for adults," who may have especially felt catered to in the first verse, which references a Joni Mitchell song.[57] With all of these adult-friendly qualities, the song did extremely well, rising to number one on the *Billboard* "Hot 100" within two months of its release.

With songs like this, rap was officially white women–friendly, at least according to many programmers and their limited conceptions of listener preferences. By bringing pop's enduring love themes and catchy, sung melodies to the hippest new

genre, rappers created music that appealed to older audiences. Did these songs obscure whatever line had previously been imagined between the genres of rap and pop? Of course they did. That's why programmers, looking as always for the latest Goldilocks style, played them.

But programmer acceptance didn't always correspond with critical acclaim. When hip hop–magazine *The Source* asked artists and journalists what the best album of the year was at the end of 1991, the results made clear the difference between what programmers were playing and what "the people of the Hip-Hop Nation" were listening to. Very few of the albums listed were by artists who appeared on the "Hot 100 Airplay" chart that year, and the top two albums, listed by almost half of respondents, were A Tribe Called Quest's *The Low End Theory* and Brand Nubian's *One For All*, albums with singles that never made it onto the "Hot 100" and only peaked in the lower half of the "Hot R&B Singles" chart.[58] Perhaps this was just a symptom of who "the people of the Hip-Hop Nation" were, a community whose tastes—informed by periodicals like *The Source*—were quite distinct from the tastes of radio programmers. Or at least that's what programmer Dave Allan thought. "The true rap fan," he claimed, "is always striving for finding something new that they can turn their friends onto first. To the true rap fan, once a song makes it to radio, it's not happening."[59]

RAP THAT MOMS *AND* KIDS LIKE

Happening or not, ballad-inspired rap songs pointed one way forward for Top 40 programmers. But they couldn't focus solely on white women to the exclusion of younger listeners, the other major portion of their audience. Adolescents, especially those twelve-and-older who were the youngest demographic Arbitron measured, were important to Top 40 stations. Easy targets for the hip new music that these stations claimed to play, adolescents helped boost the size of a station's audience. Programmers also believed that young listeners brought in the older listeners that Top 40 stations wanted, because families listened to the radio in their cars.[60] This meant that hit music needed to appeal to young listeners while not alienating their parents, who might be listening along with them.

One of the rap groups who skillfully appealed to this mixed-age audience was DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince. Their 1988 song "Parents Just Don't Understand" neatly outlines how a song could appeal to multiple demographics at the same time. Atop a sample of a 1977 Peter Frampton tune, the Fresh Prince raps about a classic teenage conundrum: parents not having a clue. But he's not angry about this, which might have alienated adult audiences; rather, the song exposes the inanity of teenage opinions. The first verse details a middle-class story of going back-to-school shopping where the parent and child disagree about what to buy. As might happen on a sitcom, other kids point and snicker at the Fresh Prince when he shows up to the first day of school "dressed up in those ancient artifacts."

The second verse is more serious: he takes his mom's new Porsche joyriding, and along the way picks up a twelve-year-old who has run away from home. When the Fresh Prince's parents come to pick him up from jail, they are upset. Recounting the ride home, he raps that they "took turns, one would beat me while the other was driving"; he is incredulous at their anger, claiming "I just made a mistake." A clear exaggeration of a parent-child conflict, the story is told with an obviously humorous tone. So while expressing that it's the parents who "just don't understand," the song simultaneously demonstrates how clueless children are, themes easily agreed upon by all parties driving home from school.[61]

This song and the group's subsequent singles were crossover smashes. In part this was due to their kid-friendly rhetoric; the group was so beloved by this age bracket that they won a Nickelodeon "Kids' Choice Award."[62] But their singles also appealed beyond rap's younger fans; they were, as the Fresh Prince put it, "what your mother might want your sister to marry, and you may not like us, but your girlfriend does!"[63] While "Parents Just Don't Understand" lacks the sung vocals that programmers were coming to rely on when pitching rap to an adult audience, other elements make up for this. The track samples a recognizable song and is easy to follow, beginning with a sing-songy couplet that introduces the catchphrase of the song and repeats after every verse. These techniques likely placated at least one adult: the Fresh Prince's mom, who claimed in an interview about the album that she could "stand to listen to it."[64] Black-Oriented programmers commended the song's age-diverse appeal; one noted its "universal message whether you are young or old," and another noticed that "it seem[ed] to fill the generation gap."[65] Top 40 programmers also praised it: one claimed the "new reaction record" was the third-most-requested song on his station after only a week of airplay, and Twin Cities programmer Brian Phillips remarked that "if you just fool around with it a little bit at night, it goes out of control."[66] Phillips, whose station was not regularly playing rap, thought that the song "transcend[ed] the normal boundaries of rap." And this was precisely why major label RCA agreed to distribute the group's record; the label's vice president Rick Dobbis believed that it was "a universal track that would appeal to a large audience," provided it could "get past the limited 'tag' that's been put on rap."[67]

For radio programmers this transcendence likely had something to do with musical sound, but it was also part of the group's marketing. The press often characterized the duo as suburban- and middle-class-friendly, and less stridently political than other rappers. They also highlighted the Fresh Prince's scholastic aptitude, making it clear that this MIT-accepted teen who got 1470 out of 1600 on his SATs was anything but your average rapper.[68] Ann Carli, vice president of artist development at Jive, claimed that the group's pop appeal was one reason she signed them since she wanted each artist in her roster to fill a different niche (at the time, her roster included Boogie Down Productions and Kool Moe Dee).[69]

The artists themselves had a complicated relationship with their pop appeal, and many of the songs on the album featuring "Parents Just Don't Understand"

didn't so overtly target a pop audience. While DJ Jazzy Jeff described their music in a 1988 *Spin* interview as "pop, humorous," the Fresh Prince was wary of this categorization—in the same interview he stressed that it was "not pop. Definitely not pop. Wrong word." Pop, for the Fresh Prince, was music for white audiences, and he wanted nothing to do with that. "Our music," he noted, "is definitely 100 percent geared to a black audience. The music that we make, it's coming from our background. It's real, it's us. It's not like we sit down, like some other guys, and say 'Well, we [want] pop radio to play this.' Or, 'We want this kind of person to listen.'"[70] The major difference between his group and other rap artists, he believed, was that the DJ and the rapper came from the middle-class suburbs of Philadelphia. This gave them a unique perspective; they could talk about "problems that relate to everybody," likely meaning middle-class families. But while the Fresh Prince was hesitant to call his music pop, he acknowledged that the duo had a specific goal that sounded a bit like the music industries' perception of rap's crossover: they "want[ed] to bring rap out of the ghetto."[71]

The thirty-first-annual Grammy Awards, the first to feature a "Best Rap Performance" award, clinched the group's adult appeal, as the all-adult panel of voters chose the duo's "Parents Just Don't Understand" over songs by Kool Moe Dee, LL Cool J, Salt-N-Pepa, and J.J. Fad.[72] That same year, Disney—a company devoted to designing adult-friendly content for children and teens—hired the pair to create a rapped remake of "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" for the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of Disneyland, hosted by Tony Danza and broadcast nationwide on NBC. And the group's age-diverse audience bought into the latest music marketing scheme: the 900-number "Jazzy Jeff Rap Hotline" that charged two dollars for the first minute and thirty-five–to–forty-five cents for every additional minute, a fair chunk of change when the album itself cost between ten and fifteen dollars.[73] The first hotline made specifically for musicians, the promotion proved to be more popular than expected, and within six months the number had been dialed over two million times.[74] Parents seemed to understand paying for the hotline; *Billboard* reported that there had been no complaints about "excessive calls."[75]

RAP'S SUPERSTARS

Around the same time that DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince released "Parents Just Don't Understand," Capitol Records signed an up-and-coming rapper from Oakland who had made a name selling his self-produced album out of his car: MC Hammer. Initially, Hammer had trouble getting his music played on the radio, but—perhaps recognizing the industry's preference for mass-appeal acts—he soon decided to rethink his approach. "The time was right," he told his biographer, "for a different style of music that was more danceable and that appealed to both young and old."[76] The industry, looking for just that style, noticed him. In May 1989, Terri Rossi of *Billboard* wrote that his song "Turn This Mutha Out" was being played

on Black-Oriented radio stations that usually didn't program rap because, she assumed, the music video featuring his unique dancing was popular on MTV.[77]

But this song was soon forgotten when another of his singles swept across the country. Sampling Rick James's 1981 hit song "Super Freak"—but carefully not including any references to how kinky the super freak was—MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This" was a certified smash. The album, which most fans had to buy because Hammer's label only sold the single on twelve-inch vinyl and as a maxicassette, went diamond in a little over a year.[78] And despite its label-induced tough odds, in the early summer of 1990 the song made it to number eight on the *Billboard* "Hot 100," less than two months after its release. Radio embraced the song in large part because some programmers thought it exceeded what they considered to be the limitations of other rap songs. Songs like this, according to one programmer, didn't "get classified as *real* rap records" because they "[fell] outside of the genre and [became] 'special' rap records."[79] Over the next year, Hammer had three top-ten singles—all with family-friendly lyrics and recognizable samples—and his album *Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em* topped the *Billboard* album chart for twenty-one non-consecutive weeks. The album was so popular that it held one of the top-two spots on the chart for longer than any album since the mono and stereo charts had merged in 1963.[80]

Looking only at radio airplay and sales, however, doesn't reveal the breadth of Hammer's accomplishments or the depth of his entrepreneurial spirit. Over the next couple of years, he starred in advertisements for Taco Bell (where he jumped off a roof and used his parachute pants to help him land directly in front of one of the chain's restaurants) and Pepsi (where, during a concert, the cool refreshing taste of the soda gave him the energy to transition from a boring ballad to a spirited up-tempo dance-rap tune), created his own Saturday-morning cartoon for ABC (*Hammerman*), appeared on the soundtrack of a successful movie (*The Addams Family*), sold his signature pants pattern to a sewing magazine, signed a deal with toy company Mattel to put out a doll in his likeness (complete with a noise-making boom box), released his own feature film, licensed branded backpacks and chewing gum, and sold a board game where players could rap or dance their way to victory.[81]

Hammer's rapid transformation into a superstar was scorned by some at *The Source*, which had become the most important magazine for hip hop fans. These detractors thought that he was more of an entertainer—or, worse, a dancer—than a rapper.[82] Hammer was such a source of consternation that the magazine dedicated a fifth of their 1990 reader survey to questions about his popularity. While some readers commended his professionalism, fewer than a quarter of respondents confessed to owning his album, and readers rated his rapping ability at only a 1.7 out of 5, around half of the score they gave his overall talent and personality.[83] One critic applauded his business acumen, but acknowledged that "he needs a definite lesson in the roots of rap."[84] Others made clear that Hammer's quick rise to fame and

subsequent commodification were also a problem: comparing him to Too $hort, another writer claimed that for an "average Oakland rap (not pop) music fan[,] Too Short is cool because he came up in Oakland and stayed in Oakland, not just whizzed through on his way to the Arsenio show."[85] Hammer acknowledged this criticism, noting that some fans would rather "keep rap in a small box only for the hard-core inner-city people." But Hammer had at least one vocal advocate among hip hop enthusiasts; Chuck D told the *Washington Post* "that brother's bad," and said that those criticizing Hammer "don't know enough. . . . [H]e's built a whole environment around him that's real."[86]

Hammer's family-friendly rise to fame motivated another rapper, who we all knew must be coming at some point in this narrative: Vanilla Ice. "The bionic pop star constructed by the record company's market research and A&R departments to defeat the invincible M.C. Hammer," as one critic jokingly referred to him, Ice studiously followed Hammer's career.[87] Six months after Hammer found his way to the upper reaches of the chart, Ice rose to fame by also releasing a danceable number with family-friendly lyrics atop the bass line of a hit from 1981. But unlike Hammer's song, "Ice Ice Baby" zoomed all the way to the top spot on the *Billboard* "Hot 100." Ice certainly benefited from his record label's releasing his single in several more popular formats but, more importantly, he had easier access to Top 40 playlists because he was white. Two months after his single reached number one, Vanilla Ice took over the top position on the *Billboard* album chart from Hammer. While Ice didn't sell a signature pants pattern, he released his own board game, action figure, bubble gum, backpacks, and t-shirts. Like Hammer, he appeared in his own feature film (although Ice's received a theatrical premiere in close to 400 theaters, most of which dropped the film in a few weeks) and was featured on a popular 1991 kids' movie soundtrack (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze*).

HIP HOP IS HIT POP

But the popularity of rap at the turn of the decade cannot be represented by these two artists alone. To borrow from the overly staid and sober comments the president of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences made when he introduced the new Grammy category for rap, comments that betrayed the music industries' enduring characterization of Black music as marginal, what had once been "an urban black music form" had "evolved into something more than that."[88] Rap was everywhere. Turn on the TV and you'd not only see rap music videos but also find shows starring Kid 'N' Play and the Fresh Prince, shows that scholar Mark Anthony Neal writes lacked "even the taint of oppositional realities that marked [hip hop's] emergence."[89] If you changed the channel, you'd hear a judge rapping on the math show *Square One Television* or the multicultural cast of *Kids Incorporated* rapping about conflict resolution. Regardless of channel choice, you'd hear

rap soundtracking commercials for kid-oriented products like Lego, Nintendo, and Fruity Pebbles, not to mention the chubby doughboy with the coincidentally appropriate MC name Poppin' Fresh rhyming on behalf of Pillsbury.[90] Substitute in the Fat Boys or Kurtis Blow and you'd get commercials for Swatch or Sprite. At schools in the early 1990s, you could hear rap not just emanating from boom boxes in the hallways but also in classrooms, as educational companies capitalized on the popularity of the genre and released rap-based lessons that taught history, reading, geography, multiplication, and more. In the library, you could find picture books featuring hip hop retellings of classic fairy tales as well as Gini Wade's *Curtis the Hip Hop Cat*, which tells the story of a fat school-aged cat who gains confidence through learning how to breakdance.[91]

Driving around, if you were to turn to your local Top 40 station, you'd hear a lot of rap. During the summer of 1990, as "U Can't Touch This" first ascended the charts and then remained in the top ten for nearly two months, about 15 percent of the songs Top 40 radio stations played had rapped vocals, including Bell Biv DeVoe's new jack swing slammer "Poison," Snap!'s hip-house jam "The Power," and Bobby Brown's duet with Glenn Medeiros on "She Ain't Worth It." As the year continued, this percentage would only increase.

To offer a little perspective, let's rewind to the mid-1980s. During these years, Top 40 stations played very few songs with rapped vocals in them. And most of the songs with rapped vocals that these stations played between 1984 and 1986—for instance, the number one singles "West End Girls" by the Pet Shop Boys and "Rock Me Amadeus" by Falco—were by white new music artists taking influence from rap. From a contemporary vantage point those songs might not even be classified as rap, but programmers in the mid-1980s considered these songs at least rap-adjacent. *Billboard* described the latter record as "rap-edged," and one programmer described the former as "sort of a rap with a neat musical hook."[92] Another popular song with rapped vocals during these years, British singer-songwriter Murray Head's performance of "One Night in Bangkok" from the musical *Chess*, sounded enough like a rap song to mid-1980s ears that the singer was mistaken for a Black rapper and was courted by a Black agent to do nightclub performances in the United States.[93] But even using such an expansive definition, these songs made up only a tiny portion of playlists; between 1984 and 1987, songs with rapped vocals never accounted for more than 4 percent of *Billboard*'s "Hot 100 Airplay" chart (figure 5).

By 1990, this had all changed. As noted in the previous chapter, songs with rapped vocals constituted a significant portion of Crossover station playlists by the beginning of the decade, but Top 40 stations weren't far behind them. In 1990, over 17 percent of songs on the "Hot 100 Airplay" chart had rapped vocals, and between 1991 and 1993 this was true for about a quarter of songs on the chart (figure 5). This included hits by all of the rappers this chapter has discussed, as well as songs by hip-house artists, which typically featured rapped verses and sung choruses atop

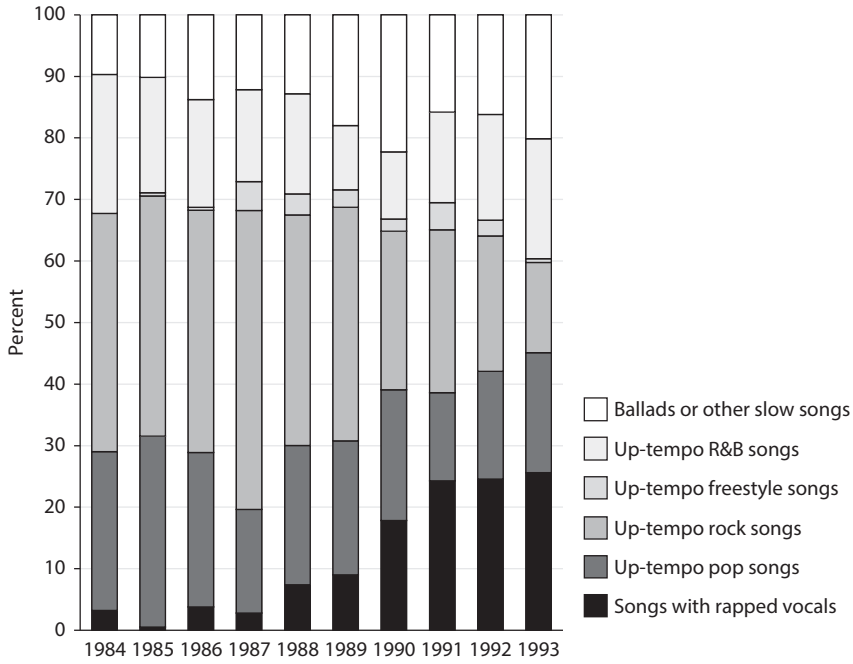

FIGURE 5. Stylistic composition of the *Billboard* "Hot 100 Airplay" chart, October 20, 1984–July 17, 1993.

a slamming house beat. But just as often, already-successful singers were adding rapped verses into their songs, clearly indicating the genre's popularity. Michael Jackson's producer Bill Bottrell rapped on "Black or White"; Paula Abdul hired Derrick Stevens, who was portrayed in the music video as an animated cat, to add a rapped verse to "Opposites Attract"; and even Tammy Wynette got into the spirit, collaborating with rappers and house musicians KLF on their song "Justified and Ancient."[94]

While Top 40 stations were playing an astonishing amount of rap, this was hardly the only avenue through which listeners could find the genre. By the turn of the decade, most Black-Oriented stations had added rap to their playlists and hosted mix shows where DJs showcased tracks that didn't make it into regular rotation. Mix shows broadened the scope of what one might hear on the radio: while nearly every DJ that reported to *The Source* in December 1990 was playing LL Cool J, for example, some also played more underground artists such as Kool G Rap and Poor Righteous Teachers, as well as local acts like Trenton, New Jersey's Blvd. Mosse. Shows on community stations such as Dallas's KNON played Queen Latifah and Special Ed alongside Vanilla Ice, and college radio shows across the country played X Clan, N.W.A, Monie Love, and Ice Cube.[95] While the rap on MTV and BET's regular rotation was pretty similar to what you'd hear on commercial radio stations, their shows *Yo! MTV Raps* and *Rap City*, as well as the New

York City–specific show *Video Music Box*, played plenty of songs that an average DJ wasn't spinning. Across the country, viewers could call to request their favorite videos on what was at that time called the *Jukebox Network* (later shortened to *The Box*), which would play just about anything that was requested at any time of day. In late 1990, that meant playing a lot of rap, including less mainstream artists like A Tribe Called Quest and Two Kings in a Cipher alongside Top 40 stars Bell Biv DeVoe and Salt-N-Pepa.[96] Late 1980s movies like *Colors* and *Do the Right Thing* featured rap soundtracks that similarly mixed more mainstream hits with lesser known acts. Rap fans could find album recommendations and the latest on their favorite artists in a host of rap periodicals that began publishing in the late 1980s, including *The Source* and *Rap Pages*.[97] And once these readers found their way to local record stores, there was an easy way to find songs that were almost guaranteed to be outside of the Top 40 mainstream: a parental advisory label, stuck right on the front of the record.

These other avenues presented a viable alternative for artists not interested in making music for a more mainstream audience. So while C+C Music Factory's radio-friendly hip-house album was the best-selling rap record in 1991, multiple other rap records—including Ice Cube's *Death Certificate*, N.W.A's *EFIL4ZAGGIN*, Public Enemy's *Apocalypse 91… The Enemy Strikes Back*, and Too $hort's *Short Dog's in the House*—went platinum without a wisp of Top 40 airplay.[98]

But unlike these other ways that listeners encountered rap music, Top 40 radio playlists had a particular ideological power. The format's acceptance of the genre repackaged it as part of the sound of mainstream popular music in the United States. By regularly playing rap, rather than separating it onto a mix show, these stations made rap into an integral part of their everyday mainstream, forcing listeners interested in hearing hit music to confront the genre. But this confrontation was hardly difficult, as hearing rap in this context required little knowledge of hip hop's culture, politics, and history.[99] Tuning in to these stations, audiences heard a rap song as just another pop hit. Hip hop had become just that: hit pop.

A three-panel cartoon by André LeRoy Davis published on the back page of *The Source* in late 1991 (figure 6) made this abundantly clear. Picturing a white man talking to a Black man about rap, the drawing shows rap's transformation—and the shift in how white audience members reacted to it. Rap, which once was "crap" that "only blacks like," had become music "for everybody."[100]

"IT'S FOR EVERYBODY"

But what did it mean for rap to be "for everybody," regardless of race? And how did the genre's incorporation into the mainstream influence its racial politics? Some answers can be found by examining three of the many diverging yet interdependent paths that the genre took. First, we'll turn to rap at its poppiest, fully integrated into the sounds and marketing practices of the mainstream, to see how its politics of race were visually represented.

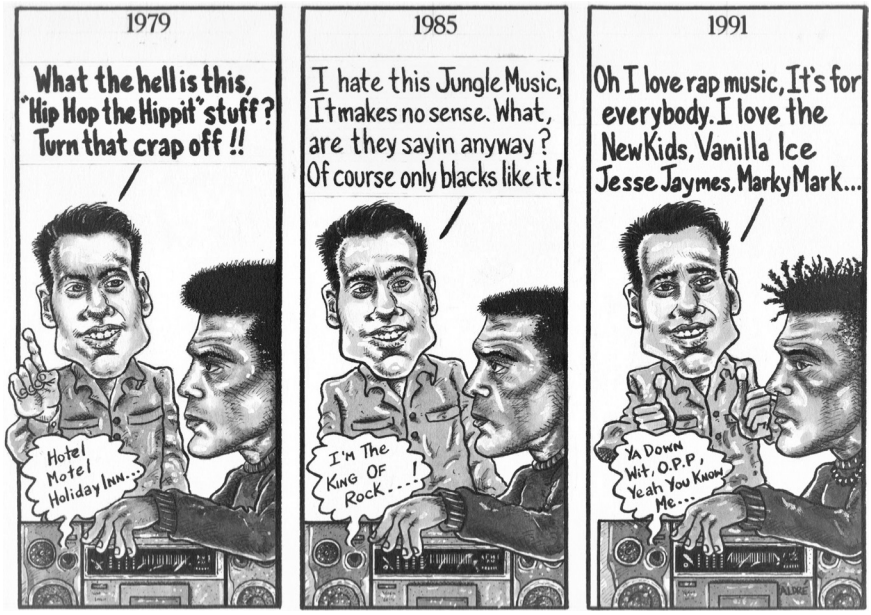

FIGURE 6. André LeRoy Davis, "White Fans Evolution with Hip Hop." Originally published in *The Source*, November 1991, 64.

In the summer of 1990, a New Kids on the Block–inspired quintet called the Party, formed from the cast of the *Mickey Mouse Club*'s latest season on the Disney Channel, released the aptly named song "Summer Vacation." Its music video begins with the five teens on a beach but quickly moves into a classroom, where group member Chase Hampton acquires a large boom box. The Party is visibly multiracial—during the verses, white Houstonite Damon Pampolina alternates rapped lines with Albert Fields, a Black performer from Indiana, while Virginian of Filipina background Deedee Magno and white Los Angeleno Tiffini Hale sing the song's choruses. The other member of the Party, redheaded Hampton, only vocalizes occasionally on the song and is shown carting around a boom box, carefully placed on his shoulder (highlighting the lines cut into the side of his haircut), as he raps the song's catchphrase "tune in, groove on, bust out."[101] Toward the end of the song, the lyrics name hip hop, and Fields references a line from Eric B. & Rakim's 1987 song "My Melody" (later interpolated in Eazy-E's not-appropriate-for-Disney 1988 song "Eazy-Duz-It").

Disney had recently begun incorporating rap into their adult-friendly youth-oriented music, so much so that every episode of the *Mickey Mouse Club*'s recent reboot ended with the genre's trendy sounds. The sequence began with a conspicuously multicultural group of kids, standing together in solidarity, slowly and solemnly singing the signature "M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E" song. Then, the beat

dropped and a dance party erupted on stage accompanied by a rap song complete with record scratches and beatboxing, encouraging those in the live audience to "wave your hands in the air, and wave them like you just don't care" for the famous mouse whose name was rhymed with "rock the house."[102]

Like Crossover stations, both of these Disney-affiliated songs used rap's multicultural appeal—its "common denominator" quality—to bring together age-diverse, racially diverse audiences and artists to dance, to celebrate the start of summer, and to show just how joyful being a young person could be. These songs, like those of DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince, weren't solely for kids: adults tuning in alongside them could sing along to the choruses while finding little to object to in the upbeat positive verses. Using hip hop culture as a conduit to cool fun, these songs take the multicultural promise of rap and commodify its easily salable qualities while neatly sanding over its potential rough edges.[103]

As tweens listening to the *Mickey Mouse Club* in 1990 grew into teens, they could see rap music as a proxy for trendiness in a song by white teen idol Jeremy Jordan, whose first single "The Right Kind of Love" was featured on the *90210* soundtrack in 1992. A mid-tempo, doo-wop-inspired love song, "The Right Kind of Love" is replete with multipart vocal harmonies, perhaps modeled on the many New Edition offshoots that Michael Bivins was involved with, such as Bell Biv DeVoe, Boyz II Men, and Another Bad Creation. Below the vocals, synthesizer chords bop along in regular eighth-note pulses above a sparse bass line and funky guitar and synthesizer fills. As was entirely normal by 1992, a rap is inserted right at the moment where a 1980s-pop listener might expect a bridge; Jordan switches into a slightly whispered tone as he raps at an easy pace about how well he is going to treat his girl.

Jordan's musical relationship with hip hop culture was tenuous at best. Although he raps in "The Right Kind of Love," his record company didn't classify this vocal act as hip hop in their track titles for the multiple versions of the song, which included a "Main Mix," a "Main Mix (No Rap)," and a "Hip Hop Jeep Mix."[104] The title of the "Main Mix (No Rap)" version indicates that his record company—and likely radio stations who received a promotional copy of the single—would have heard Jordan's rapped vocals as rap, but the "Hip Hop Jeep Mix" does not include the rap. Rather, it sets Jordan's sung vocals atop something close to the breakbeat from the Honey Drippers' "Impeach the President," indicating that hip hop, to his record company, meant something other than Jordan's rapping.

The music video makes clear how Jordan's engagement with Black culture only went so far. The video begins with five guys (one white, four Black) playing basketball. When the vocals begin, there's a moment of potential ambiguity over which of these people is Jordan; it's not until around thirty-five seconds in that the white guy moves out of the periphery as he dances, sings, and looks sultry while framed by Black teammates. Back in the mid-1980s, a musician's white identity would have been all but assumed on MTV; by the early 1990s, the logic of multiculturalism

had so taken over pop music that Jordan obscures his racial identity, using his Black friends as cultural capital.[105]

By the end of the rapped section, however, the political limits of multiculturalism are laid bare when Jordan makes clear his choice of romantic partner. Throughout the video, Jordan is seen primarily with two girls, one Black and one white. During the rapped section of the song Jordan exclusively dances with the Black girl, but as soon as he finishes rapping he finds the white girl and stays with her until the end of the song. As fun and trendy as engaging with Blackness might be, the video suggests that "The Right Kind of Love" for Jordan was a white girl; as Jared Sexton reminds us, "the politics of interracial sexuality are fundamental to racial formation," as white supremacy produces itself in relation to the threat of miscegenation.[106] Jordan himself acknowledged his appropriative relationship with Blackness; he said in a 1999 interview that after the release of his first album and his subsequent popularity as a teen idol, he began to reckon with his sound and with "being this thing, this white guy trying to sound black."[107]

As these two songs demonstrate, rap being for everyone meant that anyone, regardless of race, could profit from the genre. Like many Crossover stations, this sort of rap used the genre's cultural capital without fully attending to its racial politics; at its worst, it deracinated rap into depoliticized multiculturalism that centered white interests even as it showcased Black musicians.

"HIP HOP, SMOOTHED OUT ON THE R&B TIP, WITH A POP-FEEL APPEAL TO IT"

Although teen performers of all races have continued to casually borrow from rap, this wasn't the only way forward for the genre. An alternative form of racial politics can be heard in new jack swing, the R&B-rap–hybrid style that filled the airwaves between 1987 and 1992.

Two months before Milli Vanilli brought their mix of rap and up-tempo pop to the airwaves, singer Keith Sweat, who was at the time a brokerage assistant at New York firm Paine Webber, released what is considered to be the first new jack swing single.[108] The song, "I Want Her," was produced by musical prodigy and fellow Harlemite Teddy Riley, who had previously produced songs for rappers Kool Moe Dee and Heavy D & the Boyz. At Sweat's request, Riley made him a couple of beats, including the one for "I Want Her," and together they added Sweat's melodious and seductive sung vocals.[109] The song shared more with rap than just its beats; in his name-coining article on the genre, screenwriter Barry Michael Cooper wrote that Riley "used the verbal animus of rap to enter his beastmaster subconscious, and when he found himself inside, he slammed the door and swallowed the key."[110] Sweat and Riley's genre combination became a crossover smash; the song hit number one on the "Hot Black Singles" chart in late January 1988, and it reached number five on the "Hot 100 Airplay" chart a few months later.

Teddy Riley is often credited with developing the new jack swing sound, which he originally called "street funk" because he intended to transform Parliament-Funkadelic's complex grooves and keyboardist Bernie Worrell's playing into something more modern and street-savvy.[111] New jack swing shared with rap an interest in 1970s funk; rap frequently sampled Parliament-Funkadelic as well as James Brown and Rick James. While new jack swing songs often relied on a jaunty, dotted drum-machine rhythm—the "swing" of the genre name—that differed from the steady beats in rap songs of the era, the style was influenced by rap's emphasis on the beat rather than on mid-range frequency synthesizers. This was, as Riley puts it, a product of growing up with rap.[112] Balancing the frequencies in a song was vital to producing his beast-mode sound; Riley told *Billboard* that "You've got to have the bottom and the highs so people [can] really feel the music. If you don't have that I don't think your record will do very well."[113] This aesthetic came out of his work with rappers; in a 2012 interview commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sweat's first album, Riley disclosed that he "had no plans to do R&B music. New Jack Swing would've been just rap if I didn't get with Keith Sweat."[114]

Their success inspired many other singers to combine melodic vocals with rap's beats—including Bobby Brown, Riley's group Guy, Al B. Sure!, and New Edition—and inspired many other producers to draw from rap's emphasis on the beat—including Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, and L.A. Reid and Babyface. Black-Oriented stations welcomed these songs even when they were still hesitant to accept rap wholeheartedly; these stations "embraced [rap's] progeny" while still "thumbing their noses at rap" because new jack swing songs aligned to the format's R&B-filled playlists more closely than rap songs without melodies did.[115] In 1989, *Billboard* columnist Nelson George observed that "it is one of the ironies of the moment that this new direction in R&B . . . may be a big long-term threat to rap. If an act can rap and sing adequately . . . they may soon be able to outposition their rap-only counterparts."[116]

The hybrid style easily made it onto Crossover and Top 40 playlists. New jack swinger Bobby Brown, the "rapper trapped in the body of an R&B singer," had six top-ten *Billboard* "Hot 100" singles in less than a year, including the number one hit "My Prerogative."[117] Brown, wrote Peter Watrous of the *New York Times*, "fully incorporate[d] rap's beats, rhythms and hard street attitudes into a pop-music format" that appealed to diverse audiences.[118] New jack swing–group and New Edition–offshoot Bell Biv DeVoe described their music in a similar way, as "hip-hop, smoothed out on the R&B tip, with a pop-feel appeal to it."[119] Their record company promoted their album by emphasizing its integration of hip hop with pop, its "juxtaposing hip-hop's beats and samples with pure pop's deepest aural beauty secrets."[120]

Incorporating pop sounds as a means to cross over was risky. As chapter 1 notes, Black artists were regularly criticized for their overtures to white audiences. But many contemporary critics understood new jack swing to have crossed over

without losing its Black identity. Nelson George applauded Bobby Brown's crossover, claiming that the "hard hip-hop/R&B" record "My Prerogative" reaching number one on the *Billboard* "Hot 100" was "a major cause for celebration." "Yeah, Brown crossed over," George writes, "but not by catering to any racist assumptions about what whites would accept; it was because the kid 'got busy' and MCA supported his funk all the way."[121] New jack swing artists seemed to effectively balance the hardness of rap with the romantic or soft qualities of R&B into what ethnomusicologist Kyra D. Gaunt describes as a "fusion of opposing urban styles and sexual identities."[122] This meant that even while they sang and danced, new jack swing artists were not characterized as feminine; record executive and journalist Bill Stephney, for example, wrote in *The Source* that Brown "rhymed and danced with a Black machismo not seen outside of rap in years."[123]

Another artist who took advantage of this new type of crossover was LL Cool J, who in 1990 released "Around the Way Girl." The "inventive R&B/rap mosaic" that "cleverly blend[ed] both formats" to the extent that it "nearly create[d] its own genre" discusses LL Cool J's interest in finding a woman, but not just any woman.[124] Unlike "I Need Love," which carefully keeps the description of the girl vague and universally applicable, "Around the Way Girl" makes it clear that LL Cool J wants a specific type of girl: a girl with extensions in her hair who talks with street slang and can dance to the rap jams. This is no white suburban mom; this is a Black woman from an urban neighborhood, one who knows that Bobby Brown used to be a member of New Edition, who has homegirls, and who is "as sweet as brown sugar with the candied yams."[125] Even with its lyrical specificity, the song was sold as legible to the Top 40 audience. In an advertisement for the song, one programmer described it as "cool, mass-sounding rap," and another noted that "the sophisticated production and strong melody line makes this much more than a rap record."[126]

What "mass-sounding rap" *was* had changed, in large part thanks to Crossover radio stations. Crossing over had once entailed making aesthetic decisions that were often poorly received by Black listeners, at least according to critics of crossover artists like Whitney Houston, who was booed at the 1989 Soul Train awards because some Black listeners felt she "wasn't theirs anymore."[127] But rap's crossover was distinct. Def Jam publicist Bill Adler gives his business partner Russell Simmons credit for reengineering the racial politics of crossing rap over; at Def Jam, he recalls, they had the philosophy of doing "what we do at full strength and pull[ing] the mainstream in our direction. We didn't cross over to them. They crossed over to us."[128] Mighty as Def Jam was, a single record label wasn't solely responsible for this change. Crossover stations were one major way in which the mainstream was pulled toward rap, as this format turned crossover from a musical process that traded Black audiences for white ones into a sonic location that multicultural audiences bought into. Rather than reaching a mainstream audience by adopting techniques found in George Clinton's "Your Roots Erasing Manual," Black artists like LL Cool J could keep their roots because Crossover radio stations had moved the mainstream closer to rap.[129]

This new crossover space afforded additional credibility to what one MC referred to as "rent-a-rapper" collaborations between rappers and R&B singers.[130] As the name indicates, these duets might have been seen as yet another craven attempt by the music industries to cash in on the latest hip Black style. Following in the footsteps of crossover songs like Lionel Richie's "Deep River Woman," "rent-a-rapper" songs used artist features rather than solely stylistic modification to broaden their potential audience. Joyce "Fenderella" Irby admitted as much: striking out on her own after singing in the R&B group Klymaxx, she featured Doug E. Fresh on her 1989 song "Mr. DJ" because "Rap is very hot, and has a large important audience I want to reach."[131] Reaching that audience meant working hard to capture rap's street credibility, which Irby tried for by prominently featuring Fresh in the video and using samples that Public Enemy and Eric B. & Rakim had used on their recent albums.

But a better indication of the potential of this new crossover space could be found in a different "rent-a-rapper" song from the same year: "Friends," the second single off of Jody Watley's second album, featuring Eric B. & Rakim. The new jack swing song highlighted Watley's sassy-yet-flexible vocals above a shuffling beat alongside Eric B.'s record scratching and Rakim's characteristically agile rhymes. While not directly influenced by Whodini's radio-friendly song of the same name, both songs expand on their family-friendly titles to offer real talk about difficult relationships.[132] "In groove and attitude [Watley's] answer to Bobby Brown's *Don't Be Cruel*," the song was a hit on Crossover stations and crossed over onto Top 40 stations, landing at number fourteen on the "Hot 100 Airplay" chart in the late summer of 1989.[133] While *Billboard* didn't consider Rakim's feature substantial enough to include the song on their "Hot Rap Singles" chart, appearing on a chart-topping, genre-blending crossover hit did nothing to harm Rakim's credibility among rap critics and fans. His following album received one of the first-ever five-mic reviews from *The Source*, and to this day he ranks among the most celebrated MCs of all time.

And LL Cool J, who had been booed for his apparent disconnect with Black audiences, seemed to gain back some credibility with "Around the Way Girl" and the rest of his 1990 album *Mama Said Knock You Out*. Listeners at a Michigan Black-Oriented station, one programmer reported, had "been calling in for [the song] frantically."[134] The album—released by Def Jam and certified gold within two months—was rated the fifth-best album that year by readers of *The Source*.[135]

"RAPPERS AGAINST PHONY ENTERTAINERS"

As one strand of rap became fully integrated into pop, and as another more convincingly combined "hip-hop's beats and samples with pure pop's deepest aural beauty secrets," some rappers found another path in disavowing rap's popification.[136] One example of this third possibility can be found on 1991's *Derelicts of Dialect* on Def Jam, which went gold almost as quickly as LL Cool J's album had.

In the video for the album's lead single, which samples Stevie Wonder's "Superstition," two rappers spend the song aggressively criticizing the crossover moves of Vanilla Ice and other "phony entertainers." This culminates near the end when they beat a depiction of Ice, played with freakish accuracy by punk-icon Henry Rollins. While the rappers denounce using radio-friendly, familiar samples, they themselves utilize this tried-and-true crossover technique. And, while the rappers claim that the rap songs topping the pop charts are not "real hip hop," this song just so happened to be played on Top 40 stations and peaked at number nineteen on the *Billboard* "Hot 100." Likely referencing the race-based formatting structure that lent Vanilla Ice easier Top 40 access as compared to a Black rapper, the duo claims that the music scene in 1991 might appear to be different but that it's still the "same old Klan." What's notable, and perhaps ironic, about this critique is that the song—"Pop Goes the Weasel" by 3rd Bass—is performed by two white rappers alongside their Black DJ.[137]

Vanilla Ice's success—and subsequent fall from grace—provided a nameable specter for many advocates of rap who were fearful of how going mainstream would change the genre. Like jazz and rock before it, they worried, rap would become dominated by white performers.[138] The last panel of *The Source* cartoon about rap's mainstream turn (figure 6) put race at the center of this move, listing off 1991's crew of white rappers as evidence of the genre being "for everybody."[139] Phife Dawg—of A Tribe Called Quest, the group that claimed in a 1991 single "rap is not pop, if you call it that then stop"—was also concerned about the presence of white rappers and worried about "a little white boy named Bobby in, say, Indiana or Montana, and he sees the number one act is Vanilla Ice, and he says, 'Oh, that's hip[-]hop.'"[140] Journalist Kim Green wrote in *The Source* that a Vanilla Ice concert, evocative of a minstrel show, "managed to take an art form that we have crafted, and turned it into a star-spangled pop-sickle," one which she feared had "iced out" Black audiences as well as rap's core audience.[141] And 3rd Bass rapper MC Serch's fears manifested physically in real life, not just on video: when a writer for *The Source* presented him with white rappers' cassettes, Serch destroyed them, "repeatedly smash[ing] his fists into them," "shattering the cases," and "flinging the remains to the floor." Explaining his issue with these rappers, he despaired that "it's every horror that I ever contemplated or imagined" because "now it's like any white boy can rhyme and make a rap record. Any Caucasian kid who grew up in the demographics between 15–25 can make a fuckin' rap record; it's all bullshit."[142]

But white rappers were just that, a specter, a ghost standing in for the actual terror. The issue was far more complicated than a fear of white performers. For MC Serch, this was likely obvious—after all, audiences may have seen *him* as just another Caucasian kid making a rap record. A letter to the editor in the February 1992 issue of *The Source* made clear the complexity of the problem; a reader wrote that while "the white establishment has diluted the rap market somewhat by allowing knucklehead muthafuckas like Lavar, Vanilla Ice, and Jesse Jaymes to release

albums, you must look deeper to the real sellouts." White artists were not such a serious problem; rather, "[Queen] Latifah, [MC] Lyte and Heavy D have hurt rap worse than Vanilla Ice ever could with their sappy R&B songs." While these artists once had been "hardcore," they had decided to "experiment in R&B to 'expand their audience' and 'increase their sales.'"[143] Rather than being concerned about the racial identity of its performers, this writer balked at the hybridization of rap with other genres.

An incident involving "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss" by P.M. Dawn revealed that this writer wasn't the only one concerned about rappers putting out "sappy R&B songs." Just six weeks after P.M. Dawn's song reached number one on the pop charts thanks to steady airplay on Top 40 stations, the group was slated to perform the song at Manhattan's Sound Factory for the January 1992 televised birthday show of T Money, host of *Yo! MTV Raps*. As the song began, rapper KRS-One of Boogie Down Productions and his crew jumped on the stage, forcibly removed P.M. Dawn, shouted something like "Don't test BDP," and "proceeded to rock the house to heights of frenzy," as writer Havelock Nelson reported in the first weekly column devoted to rap in *Billboard*.[144]

The ruckus was directly linked to Prince Be's criticism of KRS-One's racial politics. Be claimed that he wasn't interested in racial identity, telling *Details* magazine that "Once you consider yourself black or white, you're stupid. The prejudice thing is so stupid. If you are prejudiced, you are stupid." In comments perhaps indicative of widening cultural and socioeconomic disparities among Black Americans due to the diverging outcomes of racial integration in the second part of the twentieth century and more recent defunding of federal entitlement programs, he said that "Public Enemy and people like that—they just make mountains out of molehills." Shifting his aim, he asked, "KRS-One wants to be a teacher, but a teacher of what?"[145]

While an argument over rap's changing racial politics seems particularly apt for this moment, Nelson, among others watching the fracas, believed the fight also represented more general creative differences. "Regardless of their individual philosophies," he writes, "rap artists need to make room for diversity. Whether it incorporates Spandau Ballet riffs or George Clinton grooves, homeboy swagger or nice-guy charm, rap's roots are black. As the browning of America continues, all African Americans should revel in the fact that their culture is becoming universal. They should strive to become hip-hop business people instead of warring among themselves. They should feel proud that they are movin' on up."[146] Rap's mainstreaming, here, was something to be embraced because it gave Black artists access to financial, and perhaps even social, capital. Rappers could become businessmen.

KRS-One didn't agree. He apologized for the incident, saying that he "simply got carried away."[147] But in his group's song that came out only a few weeks later, he doubled down on setting boundaries around a coalescing hip hop community, the insiders invested in the culture. In "How Not to Get Jerked," he describes rap as

music solely for rebels, claiming that any rapper who isn't part of hip hop culture is "a vulture" who "makes money on the culture." He ends his verse by characterizing artists that aren't "pushin' rap to another level," as simply "usin' rap like the devil."[148] KRS-One, as he put it, answered P.M. Dawn's question: he was a "teacher of respect," both concerning himself and the art form that had so utterly transformed his life.[149] P.M. Dawn had disrespected the culture—whether through their sound, their pop success, or their criticism of less mainstream artists. More likely, it was all three.

"PUSHIN' RAP TO ANOTHER LEVEL"

Rap's crossover focused the attention of many in the rap-music industry on keeping it real in the face of increasing opportunities to sell out. And those concerned did this by defining realness as something other than radio-friendly music.[150] One of the first artists to articulate this distinction in their lyrics was Ice-T in his 1988 song "Radio Suckers," in which he stated that his "hard," "real," "no sell-out" version of rap will never be played on the radio, which he characterizes as a censor afraid of the truths he might tell.[151] When interviewed by *Billboard* a year later, he claimed that there was a difference between the "very generic form of rap on the airwaves" made by rappers willing to "bend to the format" and his music, which he referred to as "true rap."[152]

While Ice-T put the discussion on wax in the late 1980s, this discursive shift became an obsession by the early 1990s. At the 1991 New Music Seminar, for instance, nearly every panel on rap devolved into a discussion about how to "keep rap pure."[153] One of the clearest examples of this concern is the bluntly titled 1992 track by EPMD, "Crossover." Over an ironically catchy sample that helped the song sell more copies than any of their other singles, the group rails against rappers bending to the format, rappers who have changed their style as they try to make "a pop record, somethin' made for the station." For EPMD, crossing over meant crossing out: changing one's appearance, selling out, and making music that was no longer "a Black thing."[154]

But it wasn't just radio-friendly *music* that rappers defined realness against. For by the early 1990s, rap had a problem: what had once been music made by and for minority youth was suddenly music made by and for everybody. How could the genre born out of its distance from the white mainstream—whether musically, socioeconomically, or geographically—maintain this separation while simultaneously enjoying the financial benefits of its mainstream popularity?[155] In other words, how could real rap fans make space for 3rd Bass's Top 40 single, but not those by P.M. Dawn and Vanilla Ice? In a word: audience, for the audience-defined formatting structure of commercial radio made negotiating these boundaries much easier.

Like all Black crossover artists before them, rappers were forced to walk the careful tightrope of making music for their core audience while their success relied

on creating songs for a mainstream, or at least a white, audience. MC Hammer, for example, attempted this high-wire routine following the crossover triumph of "U Can't Touch This." As *Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em* was sitting atop the *Billboard* charts, Capitol Records sent out 100,000 mailings that included a cassette of Hammer's latest single and a letter signed by the artist imploring the recipient to give the song a shot. The specifics of the intended recipients reveal how important maintaining "Hammer's core audience" was: 70 percent of the mailings went to male teenagers in Black or Hispanic households.[156]

And indeed, this connection with a core audience was coming to define rap, at least according to *Billboard*. In response to the outcry over Milli Vanilli's inclusion on the "Hot Rap Songs" chart in 1989, the editor had claimed that musical qualities determined inclusion on the chart. But by 1992, *Billboard*'s criteria had shifted. The genre, according to Havelock Nelson, was so diverse in sound that it was hard to determine when "a track with a rhyme stop[s] being rap"; rap's identity was "intangible," yet dependent on a "cultural code." Suzanne Baptiste, the chart manager, wrote that songs included on the "Hot Rap Songs" chart had to have certain musical characteristics: the "verses have to be rap, and the music has to be hip-hop." But beyond that, it was up to the "hardcore enthusiasts" to decide what was rap.[157] The genre was no longer just a sound, made by musicians—it was also defined by its distance from the mainstream.

The boundary between "hardcore enthusiasts" and the mainstream was of course complex, in ways that T Money's reaction to the P.M. Dawn incident highlights. In a roundtable published in *The Source*, T Money, the guy at whose birthday party this scuffle occurred, questioned what the mass popularity of a group like P.M. Dawn meant for the genre, ultimately drawing a line between the group and whom he considered to be part of the hip hop community. While T Money was partially responsible for bringing rap into the mainstream—he was, after all, the host of *Yo! MTV Raps*, a primary conduit by which rap reached a white suburban audience—he was also worried about rap reaching that same population. He conceded that P.M. Dawn were "entertainers," but was adamant in saying, "I don't think they're hip-hop, that's not what hip-hop was built on. Have we gone that far away from the base?"[158] His comment reveals the difficulty of defining a hip hop community, given rap's expanding audience: T-Money's career depended upon broadening rap's base to include some Top 40 audiences but also demanded the establishment of an authenticity framework that separated real rap from the pop stuff.

SELLING REALNESS

Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, rap music became deeply invested in realness; the debate about authenticity, as Michael P. Jeffries described it in 2011, "dominates entire songs, albums, and careers."[159] Realness in rap is itself a performance, one that has often aligned with a specific type of decontextualized, Black, urban hypermasculinity. This is regularly characterized by, as journalist

Miles White writes, "emotional rigidity, a rejection of the feminine acted out in misogynistic behavior, nihilism, and an adherence to a code of the street that prioritizes illicit material gain, ostentatious consumption and the defense of territory defined as both personal and geographical space."[160] The boundaries of this characterization, like all performances of identity, are developed in complex dialogue with hegemonic societal norms which include reductive and downright racist discourse about Blackness in the United States. As scholars Imani Perry and bell hooks both argue, rap artists' identities are defined in relation to the historical feminization of Blackness as well as the white male objectification of Black male bodies.[161] But nuanced self-representation wasn't really at play here: after all, there was music to sell. As scholar Regina N. Bradley writes, "constructions of racial discourse in popular culture cannot be divorced from the effects of capitalism."[162]

Jon Shecter noted in *Billboard* that rap fans at the beginning of the 1990s could no longer look to the lack of commercial success as a distinguishing quality of rap; the genre now had mainstream popularity. Instead, fans had to negotiate a "web of blurred distinctions," one that record companies, artists, and radio stations investing in the genre were also attempting to navigate.[163] Rap's move to the mainstream via Top 40 radio lent this web of blurred distinctions far more clarity because it provided an audience to redefine the genre against. And so artists, labels, and fans constructed boundaries around their genre: real rap was hard, Black, urban, masculine, and underground; Top 40's white, commodified, suburban, feminized audience came to symbolize everything that rap should not be.[164] While the outsiders programming Top 40 stations likely had no idea, their playing rap helped insiders define the genre and their hip hop community. For artists who did prove popular, this construction of realness helped protect against criticism that they too had sold out.[165] Rap's commercialization became its "cultural emasculation," in the words of critic Nelson George.[166]

This meant that there was something worse than a middle-American white male listener—the specter Q-Tip and MC Serch raised, and the intended audience of Run-D.M.C.'s rock-rap hybrid "Walk This Way." And that something was a white girl from middle America listening to rap. Chuck D dismissed Vanilla Ice on the basis that his audience had nothing to do with rap, saying that he "sells 7 million to 13-year-old white girls who wear braces and hang his poster on the wall. That's his thing. It has nothing to do with me, with rap."[167] In her review of a Vanilla Ice concert, Kim Green makes the same point, reassuring herself and the rap fans reading the review that Vanilla Ice's popularity is "not an issue of rap" because "he is a teen idol for God's sake," with fans that she describes as "screaming white children," "little girls," and "begging teenagers." His audience doesn't comprise real rap fans; his listeners are "people [who] don't listen to, understand, or like rap." "They are they," she writes, "and we are we."[168]

Redefining real rap in opposition to white and mostly female fans, however, did little to dissuade these same fans, who bought into these new authenticity frame-

works just as easily as they had bought Vanilla Ice posters.[169] These frameworks also helped white-owned major labels predict which artists would resonate with this audience and were thus worth signing.[170] By the summer of 1991, the development of this authenticity framework paid dividends for Priority and Ruthless Records, when they released the second album by the self-proclaimed "World's Most Dangerous Group," N.W.A, whose music producer Hank Shocklee described as "like going to an amusement park and getting on a roller coaster ride" for white listeners.[171] White America wanted to experience this ride; when *Billboard* redesigned their album chart to count sales via barcode scans in mostly white suburban areas as opposed to inaccurate record store reports in mostly big cities, the album zoomed to the top of that chart.[172] And white consumption of rap only increased over the 1990s; according to an often-cited but not well-supported estimate, 70 percent of rap-record buyers were white at the end of the decade.[173]

And as realness came to be synonymous with reality, as rap's businessmen (to paraphrase Jay-Z) turned into businesses themselves, number one albums by Snoop Dogg, Tupac, and Biggie Smalls were accompanied by tabloid stories of their unassailable realness in the form of gang affiliations, murder accusations, and domestic-violence charges.[174] Despite—or more likely because of—these artists' evident distance from most of the fans who bought their records, rap's sales continued to climb.[175] Throughout the 1990s, these artists made their way onto Crossover station playlists; Death Row Records, in a brilliant promotional maneuver, turned radio's insistence on selling advertising against itself and bought commercials featuring a minute of Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg's "Nuthin' But a 'G' Thang" to prompt listener requests on stations that refused to play the song.[176] All the while, white consumers, white-owned major labels, and white-owned radio stations continued supporting hip hop–influenced hit pop. And as Crossover stations increasingly became where rap lived on the dial, these same white stakeholders also supported the allegedly more real rap, these easily sellable versions of hip hop realness that were defined against the very songs they shared playlists with. Rap was decidedly opposed to pop, according to some. But on the radio? This music—regardless of whether it was Snoop Dogg, MC Hammer, or Marky Mark—was everywhere. It was mainstream.

4

Containing Black Sound on Top 40 Radio

By 1992, Rick Dees, prominent Los Angeles DJ and syndicated Top 40 countdown host, was ready to pull the plug. In a full-page advertisement on the fourth page of trade journal *Radio & Records* (figure 7), Dees mused that while "it was fun while it lasted," Top 40 radio had now "stopped rapping and resumed entertaining." Featuring an image of a gravestone inscribed "R.I.P. RAP, 1988–1992," his advertisement declared dead a genre much older than his tombstone suggested, and proposed that the Top 40 format had moved in a different direction, to "mainstream hits." Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, many in the music industries believed rap would be a passing fad and had waited for it to go the way of the pet rock, as a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* put it.[1] But Dees's advertisement went further; not content with rap slowly waning in popularity, Dees wanted it dead immediately.

Rap, however, wasn't Dees's only target. He also objected to the relatively recent rise in quantitative analysis within the industry, increasingly wielded by the growing number of radio consultants, who were typically successful programmers hired by other stations to improve their targeting. Near the bottom of the advertisement he declared, curiously relying on rap-inflected wording, that "Rap and stats don't cut it no more!" But why would a man whose livelihood depended upon tabulating the hit parade encourage the demise of a style of hit music and the method that determined the hits?

In short, rap and stats were making Dees's job difficult. Over the past half decade, Top 40 programmers had cautiously and methodically added rap songs they believed would appeal to most of their broad, age-diverse audience. But as rap became a ubiquitous sound on their stations, some programmers still worried that it could not sustain long-term mainstream appeal. Those working in the growing field of radio consulting agreed, as the increasingly complex data they collected and analyzed depicted a US public who would never agree on rap.

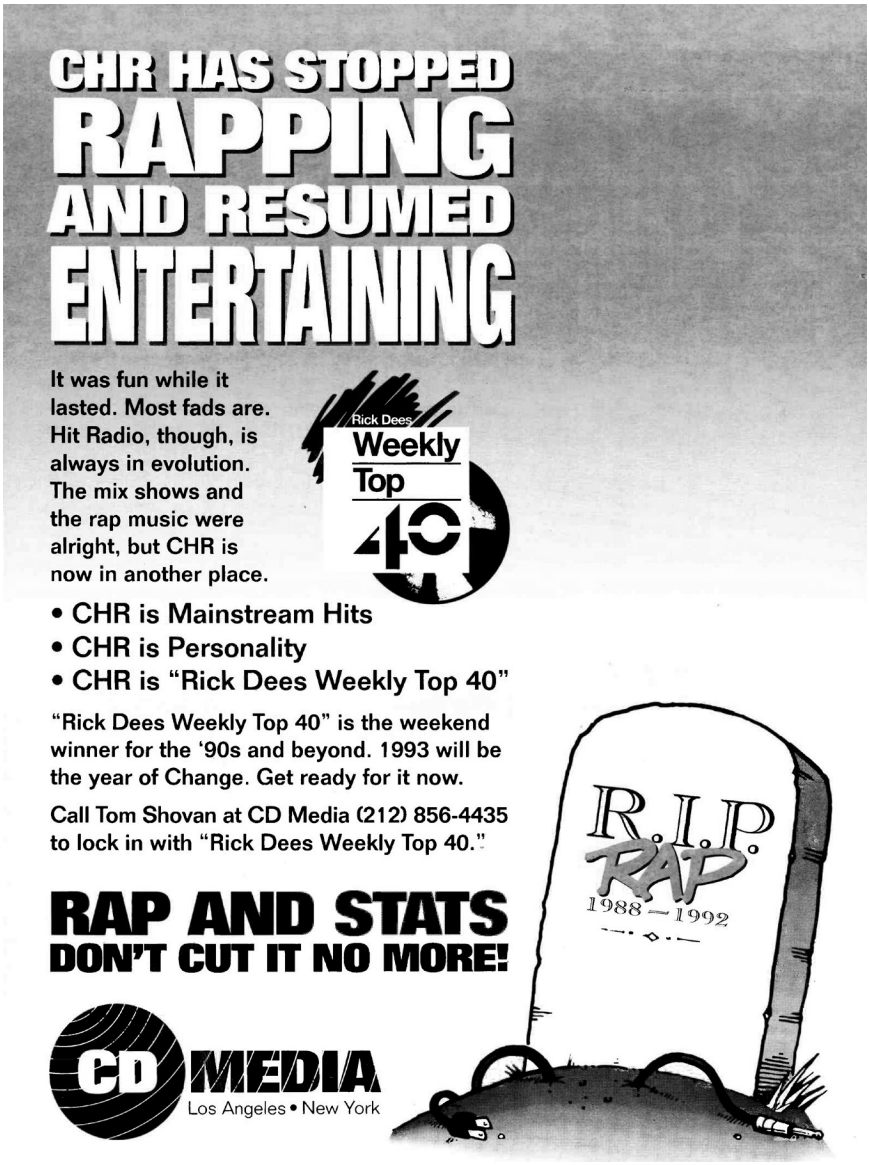

FIGURE 7. "CHR Has Stopped Rapping and Resumed Entertaining," *Radio & Records*, October 30, 1992, 4. Note the various plugs coming out of the gravesite, indicating that rap has already been eradicated from the airwaves.

This chapter isn't really about rap—it's about the fear of rap, about what rap's mainstream inclusion might mean for a mainstream previously conceived of as white. And so it documents two Top 40 subformats that emerged at the turn of the decade in response to rap's popularity. The first, rock-oriented Top 40 stations, attempted to appeal to the tastes of white men by de-emphasizing rap and R&B. But these stations proved unsuccessful and the industry turned back to targeting a more lucrative audience: white adults. These listeners' purported dislike of rap fostered the growth of the second subformat, Adult Top 40 stations, which proudly advertised their rap-free playlists with exclusionary rhetoric. Despite the passage of time and many of rap's fans maturing into adults, this format lasts into the present. Comparing this subformat to another contemporary form of exclusion, gated communities, highlights how Adult Top 40 stations reflected a new understanding of race in the multicultural United States, as these stations promised safe, segregated spaces through colorblind rhetoric. Together these two subformats, informed by the radio-consulting industry and the consumer-preference data that so bothered Dees, created alternate mainstreams that ignored rap and the multicultural publics Crossover radio stations cultivated.

Dees's 1992 advertisement forecasting rap's early demise drew attention to the struggle over rap's place in the Top 40 mainstream, proclaiming his allegiance to a mainstream where rap didn't belong. But he also highlighted the crumbling nature of that very mainstream. For it was not rap and stats that died in the early 1990s—rather, it was the dominance of Top 40 radio and its coalition politics that perished as the format disintegrated into niche subformats, each targeting only a part of the American public.

CREATING A MAINSTREAM MIX

By 1990, rap had "become very much a part of mainstream America," at least according to Taco Bell's spokesperson Elliot Moore.[2] Betting on the genre's newfound role as music for everybody, the company had recently launched a series of commercials featuring rappers. Young MC's television commercial for the chain, for example, featured four racially and ethnically diverse backup dancers alongside the "clean cut ALL American college boy" rapping about the merits of collectible soft-drink cups emblazoned with the *Yo! MTV Raps* logo. This commercial, and the company's others, made visible and audible rap's new role as the sound of hip, young multicultural America.[3] Whether it was the sound of someone rapping or scratching a record, or the hard beats and empty middle registers of new jack swing, by the new decade rap was a ubiquitous part of mainstream popular music's sound.

Not everyone, however, endorsed Moore's vision of mainstream America. Playing Taco Bell's rapped advertisements on Rock radio stations led to listener complaints. "Every single time the thing plays, the phone rings. And it's *scary*," reported one Las Vegas programmer, who suggested that someone from Taco Bell

listen to these phone calls because "some of these people are angry." At another Las Vegas station, programmer Richard Reed recounted a particularly irate call from a listener who insisted that "we deal with these people with their ghetto blasters every damn day. We sure don't need to hear that on our favorite station."[4]

These negative calls indicated rap's precarious position in the mainstream. Rock stations at the turn of the decade weren't interested in being mainstream in the same way that Top 40 stations were; they often defined themselves against the sound and identity of Top 40 stations. Murphy's station, for example, ran advertisements bragging about *not* playing MC Hammer and New Kids on the Block. Rather than articulating the center, these stations delineated one edge of the Top 40 mainstream, as Rock station playlists partially overlapped with those of Top 40 stations; this space of overlap shows what sort of rock-influenced music crossed over into the centrist mainstream.[5] Not even five years earlier, rap had occupied this space, as some Rock stations had been receptive to Run-D.M.C.'s rock-rap hybrid "Walk This Way"—even Richard Reed's Las Vegas station had played the song![6] But by 1990, rap was no longer welcome on these stations. As one consultant put it, listeners hearing Taco Bell's commercials may have been tuning in to a Rock station "to *get away from* Young MC."[7] Stations such as San Diego's KGB banned rap advertisements because, according to one programmer, a lot of their listeners "find rap *extremely* annoying."[8]

Top 40 programmers also worried about the sonic differences between rock and rap. Creating a consistent and familiar sound was important for Top 40 programming; one consultant urged programmers to "define your limits—how far from the 'center' of your format you can go," because meeting expectations is the "only reason" listeners tune in to a particular station.[9] "Unfamiliarity can get people tuning out," longtime Top 40 countdown host Casey Kasem insisted, claiming that "people want to know where you're taking them, and they want to be led by the hand. They feel comfortable when they know that you've embraced them and that you and they have the same interests and loves in music. And they feel good about that as long as you're driving the bus. But the minute the driver of the bus walks away from it, they get nervous."[10]

To keep their "riders" from getting too nervous, programmers worked to keep their playlists within certain parameters, creating a consistent Top 40 sound.[11] Since the format's beginnings in the 1950s, most Top 40 stations played almost all the national hits the *Billboard* "Hot 100" recorded. Indeed, the viability of the Top 40 format depended on the songs in the upper reaches of the *Billboard* "Hot 100," ostensibly the nation's most popular songs, being mainstream hits that most people in the Top 40 audience would at least tolerate.

But by 1990, programmers found it harder to imagine how a group of songs on the "Hot 100" (for example, R&B singer Michel'le's rap-tinged release on Eazy-E's label Ruthless Records "No More Lies," Mötley Crüe's metal thrasher "Kickstart My Heart," and gravel-voiced British singer Joe Cocker's "When the Night Comes,"

which appeared side by side in February's top thirty) might appeal to a single person, much less an entire segment of a given city's population.[12] One way programmers minimized the impact of less broadly popular songs was to *daypart*, or limit the hours their station played these songs. Crossover stations in the late 1980s took this approach to the extreme, eschewing most rock songs and filling those playlist spots with dance, freestyle, R&B, and rap. Other stations responded in exactly the opposite direction, leaning more heavily towards rock.

"WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE"

In March 1989, radio listeners in Los Angeles were invited to turn their dial to the newest Top 40 station in town, KQLZ Pirate Radio, when they got "tired of all the disco on Power 106."[13] Owned by radio-syndication company Westwood One, Pirate Radio had recently invaded Los Angeles, announcing its presence in the market with the screaming guitars of "Welcome to the Jungle" by Guns N' Roses and the aggressive chatter of DJ Scott Shannon. Shannon was also the host of syndicated countdown show *Scott Shannon's Rockin' America: The Top 30 Countdown* and, before his move, the most popular morning DJ in New York City.[14] The swashbuckling Los Angeles station began broadcasting a full two weeks before anyone in the industry expected it to, hastily constructing a makeshift studio out of plywood in the back of Westwood One's warehouse and going on air before installing listener request lines.[15]

Initially the station claimed to play "free-form Top 40." Its DJs created a sense of lawlessness on the air, proclaiming a "why the hell not" attitude toward playing supposedly untested music and listener requests—once the phone lines were in. Early playlists included pop-oriented artists Madonna, Rod Stewart, and Milli Vanilli alongside hard-rock legends Bon Jovi, Van Halen, and Def Leppard.[16] The initial programming team hotly debated what dance-oriented pop it was willing to play, spending "four days just deciding whether to play New Kids On The Block, Debbie Gibson, and the Bangles."[17] But listeners complained about the musical diversity on the station, expressing dislike and confusion about hearing, for example, Tone Loc's rap single "Wild Thing" alongside hard rock, despite the song's prominent Van Halen sample.[18]

As the station matured it either abandoned or ignored its musical diversity and began overtly marketing itself as an escape from the "disco" other stations played, assuming listeners would understand the disparaging connotation of the musical style since rebranded as dance music. Listeners were encouraged to call in and "flush" the dance-oriented sounds of Power 106 and Los Angeles's straight-ahead Top 40 station KIIS. As Shannon defined his playlist in opposition to the music on other Top 40 stations, Pirate Radio's sound coalesced around a rock-leaning hits-driven playlist that split the difference between Rock and Top 40 stations.[19] By September 1989, an afternoon on Pirate Radio featured songs by Van Halen,

	Billboard Crossover
1	Paula Abdul – "Cold Hearted"
2	Milli Vanilli – "Girl I'm Gonna Miss You"
3	Surface – "Shower Me with Your Love"
4	New Kids on the Block – "Hangin' Tough"
5	Gloria Estefan – "Don't Wanna Lose You"

	Billboard "Hot 100"
1	New Kids on the Block – "Hangin' Tough"
2	Paula Abdul – "Cold Hearted"
3	Gloria Estefan – "Don't Wanna Lose You"
4	Warrant – "Heaven"
5	Richard Marx – "Right Here Waiting"
6	Surface – "Shower Me with Your Love"
7	Milli Vanilli – "Girl I'm Gonna Miss You"
8	Jeff Healey Band – "Angel Eyes"
9	Cher – "If I Could Turn Back Time"
10	Skid Row – "18 and Life"

	Billboard Rock 40
1	Warrant – "Heaven"
2	Skid Row – "18 and Life"
3	Richard Marx – "Right Here Waiting"
4	Tom Petty – "Runnin' Down a Dream"
5	Jeff Healey Band – "Angel Eyes"

FIGURE 8. Comparison of *Billboard* charts, September 9, 1989.

Def Leppard, New Order, Skid Row, Living Colour, Aerosmith, and Europe. There was a noticeable lack of Paula Abdul (whose song "Cold Hearted" was number two on the "Hot 100" the week of September 9) and Milli Vanilli (who topped the chart two weeks later). According to Shannon, the poppiest song the station had played in recent memory was Martika's synthesizer-heavy ballad "Toy Soldiers," but he admitted to playing Prince's "Batdance" once after being inundated by listener requests.[20] Six months later, the station ran an advertisement featuring Milli Vanilli and New Kids on the Block sound-alikes, who told listeners "you don't hear us on Pirate Radio because we suck."[21] This rocking mix proved popular; the station rose to third in the Los Angeles radio market six months after its dramatic launch.[22]

As Pirate Radio settled on a playlist of current rock and heavy metal, it joined a growing number of stations programming rockier-pop songs and poppier-rock songs in what came to be called the Rock 40 format. Reinforcing the libertarian positioning DJs expressed on these stations—Scott Shannon insisted that his music choices were informed more by "attitude" than format—playlists weren't consistent across Rock 40 stations.[23] Instead, the format's identity was based on exclusion, their bet that local listeners had grown weary of upbeat R&B, dance, and rap. Rock 40, according to Pirate Radio's operation manager, was "defined more by what we don't do than what we do," and he emphasized, "we don't play dance music."[24]

In its September 9, 1989 issue, *Billboard* acknowledged the presence and influence of the Rock 40 subformat with its own chart, just as it had done for Crossover stations two years earlier. Playlists at Crossover and Rock 40 stations differed wildly, as figure 8 shows. Together, what *Billboard* now classified as the two Top 40

subformats played almost all the top ten songs on the "Hot 100," but they had none of their top five songs in common; the only point of agreement was Richard Marx's heartfelt ballad "Right Here Waiting," which appeared at number thirteen on the Crossover chart and number three on the Rock 40 chart.[25]

For *Billboard* this lack of overlap required rethinking what a Top 40 station was, because its longstanding definition, "stations that play all the hits in their local market, regardless of sound," was not "useful or accurate" anymore.[26] No longer a coalition format that played all the hits, Top 40 could be thought of as comprising multiple subformats, each with its own sound only loosely based on *Billboard*'s "Hot 100" chart. In response, *Billboard* began classifying stations as Top 40—and including their playlists in calculating the "Hot 100"—as long as they played *some* variety of contemporary hit music aimed at a younger audience.[27] The mainstream had begun splintering.

"IF YOU AIN'T CRANKIN' IT, YOU MUST BE YANKIN' IT"

While Pirate Radio was not the nation's first Rock 40 station, its appearance in the Los Angeles market caused quite a stir within the industry: it was "primal radio that turned a lot of radio people on."[28] The industry's excitement had less to do with Pirate Radio's music mix than with its renegade persona, as other stations across the country had similar playlists. For the station's first two weeks on the air it refused to sell advertisements, attracting listeners with its anti-corporate stationality.[29] It regularly used mild profanity in station liners, which pushed listeners to not "be a dickhead" and to "crank it up, open your windows, and piss off your neighbors," because in Los Angeles "you gotta be loud to cut through all the crap."[30] While most promotions for the station used the slogan "Welcome to the Jungle," one shirt the station printed read "If you ain't crankin' it, you must be yankin' it."[31]

This shirt made clear the intended demographic of Pirate Radio's audience: men who had the necessary genitalia to "yank" lest they be accused of being the "wimps" another station liner forbade from listening to the station.[32] The industry designed the Rock 40 format for young men; programmers referred to it as Male CHR or CHR-for-boys.[33] These stations created spaces where the masculine norms of rock were reasserted, spaces free from Crossover stations' playlists full of freestyle, dance, R&B, and rap, and those genres' associations with women, queer people, and people of color. For it wasn't just young men that Rock 40 stations were designed for—it was young white men.[34]

Various other radio formats, at least according to the industry's simplified understanding of musical taste, have ignored local minority audiences by excluding most musicians of color from their playlists. Since the 1970s, Rock stations have played music by mostly white male artists for a majority white male audience.

Rock, of course, wasn't always the purview of white men; musicians of color were vital participants in early rock 'n' roll and the genre's origins as dance music centered women as active consumers. But in the late 1960s, Album-Oriented Rock stations began to create spaces of "masculine identity experimentation" at the same time as rock became a white genre through white critics and fans' development of authenticity frameworks that deliberately excluded people of color, casting them as primitive sources rather than contemporary creators.[35] And in the early 1980s, backlash against disco inspired many Top 40 stations to program whiter playlists.[36] By the mid 1980s, however, most Top 40 stations returned to programming a more racially diverse mix, and the growing influence of the nascent Crossover format contributed to Top 40's increasingly diverse playlists.[37]

As officially part of the Top 40 format, Rock 40 reimagined what the mainstream was, casting rap and dance music as peripheral others. Rock 40 reasserted white male taste in the musical mainstream, articulating a vision of the public whiter and more masculine than that fostered by Crossover stations. Just as Crossover stations were beginning to convince straight-ahead Top 40 programmers that rap's Black sounds belonged in the musical mainstream, Rock 40 stations pushed back, moving the musical center towards rock and rock-aligned pop. By excising almost all music by Black artists from their playlists, Rock 40 stations resegregated Top 40 radio.

Throughout 1989, these stations blossomed across the country.[38] Westwood One, Pirate Radio's corporate owner, began distributing a Rock 40 show nationally, creating an opportunity for Scott Shannon and his merry crew of bandits to seize affiliates' airwaves for five hours on Saturday evenings.[39] Record companies warmly welcomed Rock 40 stations, noticing that the format gave their already-signed rock groups access to a different audience.[40]

But despite early signs of potential, Rock 40 stations didn't provide the radio industry with a stable and lasting source of income. Young white men proved to be an unprofitable and hard-to-please audience. Given the choice, advertisers preferred the older audiences at standard Rock stations, who they assumed had more money than the young white men at Rock 40 stations. And listeners, too, appeared to prefer conventional stations over the hybrid format which was "too wimpy for the real rockers and too hard for mainstream people."[41] By the end of 1990, few Rock 40 stations remained.[42] While Pirate Radio held on for a few more months, the station's ratings steadily declined until February 1991, when Westwood One fired Shannon and switched formats to straight-ahead Rock.[43]

Scott Shannon blamed his station's failure on Los Angeles's ethnic diversity, suggesting that the demographic makeup of the area couldn't support an additional station that played mostly music by white artists.[44] It's likely that Westwood One agreed; they continued recording their syndicated program even after their flagship station failed, distributing the program to areas where, perhaps, audience demographics were more conducive to the format's success.[45] Other programmers

concurred with Shannon; one claimed that in the Midwest a rock-leaning Top 40 station was "a very universal concept," but "in markets with ethnic influence its potential may be limited."[46] And *Radio & Records* gestured toward the same understanding. Confronted with offshoots of the Top 40 format, the journal decided in 1990 to compile its charts by market size, noting that two-thirds of stations in large cities (centers of racial and ethnic diversity) played much more dance and rap than stations in small towns, 95 percent of which took a "mainstream approach."[47] The use of this description is telling, indicating at least one major radio industry publication's inability to understand rap as part of the mainstream despite its diverse fan base. Mainstream, in other words, was about more than just popularity.

TROUBLE AT TOP 40

In the fall of 1990, as Rock 40 stations were failing, the Top 40 format received some unwelcome news. Across the country its audience was shrinking. Summer was usually friendly to Top 40 stations because teens and tweens, a large portion of their audience, were out of school and could listen to the radio more.[48] But that summer, listeners of nearly every demographic stopped tuning in to Top 40 stations.[49] As fall turned to winter and winter turned to spring, the format's future looked increasingly grim.

At a conference in September 1991, moderator Steve Rivers plainly stated the facts: in the previous six months, 9 percent of the nation's Top 40 stations had shuttered, switching to other formats or going off the air completely.[50] The format was coming off a recent boom; while Adult Contemporary stations outperformed all other formats in the 1980s, towards the end of the decade, Top 40 rose to a close second, reaching around 18 percent of listeners in the United States (see figure 9). But between spring 1990 and spring 1991, Top 40 stations lost over 4 percent of the total national audience, decreasing from 17.9 percent to 13.8 percent.[51] Things just kept getting worse, as figure 9 demonstrates.

Programmers posited many explanations. The start of the Gulf War in the late summer of 1990 drew many listeners to News/Talk stations, and some programmers believed that the brief economic downturn during that year drew listeners to formats that played music programmers deemed less challenging, such as Country, Oldies, and Adult Contemporary.[52] And while it's easy to notice that Top 40's downturn temporally aligned with the demise of the Rock 40 format, most people in the radio industry did not.[53] In fact, one programmer blamed the decline on not paying enough attention to male listeners, claiming that Top 40 didn't have enough "dance tracks tolerable for males."[54] Perhaps it was difficult for programmers to admit that they had made a mistake with Rock 40, perhaps they found it hard to fault the record industry's long-standing darlings—young white men—or perhaps the timing was coincidental. In any case, radio programmers looked elsewhere to account for the format's troubles, zeroing in on a more popular scapegoat: rap.

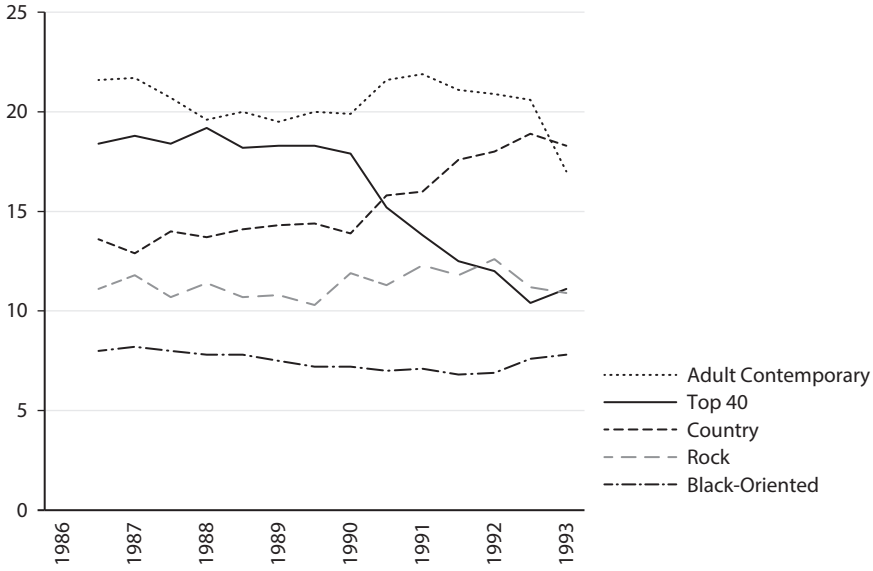

FIGURE 9. Percentage share of national audience, 1986–1993, as calculated by *Radio & Records*. Data comes from the "Format Reach Charts" in *Radio & Records Ratings Report & Directory* from these years.

In a December 1990 *Radio & Records* article titled "What the Hell's Wrong with CHR?," seven programmers blamed Top 40's decreasing ratings on their music choices: one New York City programmer claimed that the format had "overindulged in disposable dance and rap product," and Dallas programmer Randy Kabrich—who also described the music mix of the previous four years as "disposable"—questioned how often a station could play Milli Vanilli or Paula Abdul, artists who had sold millions of records over the last year. Sales, for Kabrich, didn't ensure playability because a rap song could sell well but still be a "huge turn-off for the audience." Age, he thought, best determined whether someone would like rap; he claimed listeners in their late twenties found it difficult to "relate to rap on a consistent basis," neglecting to note that many rappers were themselves in their late twenties.[55] But another program director presented a more nuanced opinion, although his language choice betrayed the reductive nature of radio programmers' conceptions of their audience: he blamed the format's downturn on programmers who had overemphasized dance and rap to seem hip when faced with "increased ethnicity" among younger listeners in their markets, and advised other programmers to find new music with a "texture" that was amenable to listeners over twenty-five.[56]

Of course, adults disliking rap's "texture" was not news to programmers, who had spent the last four years playing only a specific type of rap, such as Milli

Vanilli, that they thought would not irritate older listeners.[57] But trade journals reported that adults still weren't sold on the genre. A 1989 study published in *Radio & Records* found that over half of respondents over the age of twenty disliked rap, while 60 percent of twelve-to-fifteen-year-old respondents liked the genre.[58] In 1990, Sean Ross of *Billboard* stated that rap caused a "sociological rift" between younger and older Top 40 listeners, and many programmers concurred: in Minneapolis, Young MC's "Bust a Move" was a favorite with younger listeners but was purported to be "death" for those over twenty-five; and Guy Zapoleon, program director of national radio conglomerate Nationwide Communications, claimed that he did not know of "any market in the country . . . where rap is not perceived poorly with adults."[59] For Top 40 programmers already struggling to maintain their audiences, playing the genre that a Bakersfield, California programmer characterized as "the biggest thing that would get anybody to [change the station]" could perhaps be the difference between financial viability and a format switch.[60] Over a decade after programmers first played rap on the radio, many worried that they hadn't convinced their listeners that rap was part of the mainstream.

"A BETTER MIX"

Noting adults' dislike of the genre, many Top 40 programmers in the early 1990s reduced the amount of rap they played to better target the lucrative adult portion of the Top 40 audience. One of these programmers was Scott Shannon who, after being fired from Pirate Radio, came back to New York. Instead of returning to his previous employer, he set out in April 1991 to revive its Top 40 rival and the station he was famous for criticizing on the air, WPLJ, now called Mojo Radio.[61] Full of fanfare as always, he deemed his double-crossing return "the mother of all radio battles," and began his first shift by apologizing for the station's programming over the previous eight years, saying "we know we sucked."[62]

Within Shannon's first couple weeks, Mojo Radio reduced the number of "dance-beat type records" on its playlist and added rock songs from the early 1980s that hadn't been popular in New York when they first came out.[63] Shannon wasn't fully responsible for this shift away from dance music and toward older hits; the station had added some oldies such as the Commodores' 1978 hit "Three Times a Lady" before he arrived. But under his direction the station moved in a noticeably adult direction, using the slogan "A better mix of music without all that rap" to describe their playlist.[64]

Just as with Pirate Radio, Shannon drew inspiration from other programmers when developing Mojo Radio. One of the more influential programmers of the era, Guy Zapoleon, had made a similar programming decision in Houston in 1990, hoping to fill what he saw as a hole in the market with a contemporary music station aimed at adults ages twenty-five to fifty-four.[65] Zapoleon's employer, Nationwide Communications, had recently softened the music mix at many of

their Top 40 stations to attract older demographics, toning down the amount of rap, dance, and hard rock. At their namesake station in Columbus, Ohio, Nationwide described this mix as "not too hard, not too lite"; on their Phoenix station, Nationwide was a little more specific about what "too hard" sounded like, employing a "no rap, no hard rock" slogan for a couple months.[66] In Houston, Nationwide carefully put together a superstar team of consultants who, alongside Zapoleon, completed months of research before launching KHMX Mix 96.5 in July 1990.[67] The station highlighted its data-driven programming in advertisements; an early commercial for the station claimed that the consultants had asked thousands in the Houston area what they wanted from the station, resulting in "a better mix of music from artists like Phil Collins, Steve Winwood and Fleetwood Mac" without "a lot of meaningless talk."[68]

Initially, Mix 96.5 came on air with a Top 40 stationality but a playlist that fit somewhere between Adult Contemporary and Rock.[69] The station targeted women in their late twenties and early thirties by playing a mix of oldies—including classic rock songs like Jackson Browne's "Running on Empty" and the Eagles' "Peaceful Easy Feeling"—and softer new songs by artists like Mariah Carey, Taylor Dayne, and Celine Dion.[70] What Mix 96.5 didn't play was much hard-hitting crossover music, as Zapoleon was convinced that most of his target adult audience wasn't interested in "anything funkier" than Mariah Carey or Whitney Houston.[71] This distinctive music mix garnered Zapoleon the high praise of "a musicologist," and his creative programming won over local listeners.[72] In its first couple months, the station did well, drawing listeners from Top 40 stations, Adult Contemporary stations, and even from the local Classic Rock station.[73]

"NO KIDS, NO RAP, NO CRAP"

In a moment of format uncertainty, Scott Shannon wasn't alone in copying Nationwide's model of leaning toward more profitable adult audiences. For some programmers, appealing only to adults seemed simpler than a more traditional approach. One complained that the tastes of eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds were "becoming very fragmented, more than any other cell . . . . You'll find 10% of the demo that likes hardcore dance, 10% that likes rap, 10% that likes modern rock, 10% that likes hard rock, and so forth." People ages twenty-five-to-thirty-four, he thought, shared more musical tastes, making them an easier target audience.[74]

Many Top 40 stations—staring at declining ratings with no end in sight, reports about how much adults disliked rap, and directives from advertising accounts who preferred white women—took the easy road and simply stopped playing rap. In the spring of 1990, most new stations in big markets were stations that played "uptempo, familiar, adult-oriented music . . . styled like a top 40," which the industry was starting to categorize as Adult Top 40 or Hot Adult Contemporary.[75] For example, one Washington, DC, station became a hits station "that it was alright

for 25- to 40-year-old women to listen to"; and Nationwide replicated Mix 96.5's formula in Boston to create a station that was "picking you up and making you feel good."[76]

Adult Top 40 stations often played more older music than standard Top 40 stations, but more new music than Adult Contemporary ones, which tended to play softer hits once they had proved popular on Top 40 stations. One programmer described his station's mix as "currents that are appealing to adults, but which aren't necessarily [Adult Contemporary] records."[77] Guy Zapoleon insisted that Mix 96.5 wasn't a Top 40 station, because "to be top 40, you have to play the majority of the records that are on the charts."[78] But other Adult Top 40 programmers weren't entirely sure, or didn't care, how to classify their stations. Unlike Crossover stations, whose advertising rates depended on their relationship to minority audiences, it wasn't as financially important for Adult Top 40 stations to indicate a relationship with a preexisting format. *Billboard* classified these stations as Top 40, claiming that most of them "operate as part of the top 40 community" because they paid more attention to the Top 40 charts and positioned themselves against their Top 40 competitors rather than against Adult Contemporary.[79] Adult Contemporary programmers, for their part, were fairly unconcerned by the newest subformat, which seemed unlikely to steal core Adult Contemporary listeners.[80]

Some programmers had theoretical concerns about the new subformat, whose soft mix perhaps too-closely resembled Top 40 programming of the early 1980s. Reacting to disco and concerns about an aging population, programmers in the early 1980s had made Top 40 "wimpy"; this was "the format's nadir," what Zapoleon described as "a terrible era" when "stations put people to sleep."[81] Zapoleon, however, claimed that he was doing something quite different. He wanted to "force Top 40 to go back to the middle," away from its dance and rap lean; he hoped the format would return to the sound of Top 40 from 1982–85.[82] This meant turning the programming clock back to before Crossover stations brought into the mainstream rap and dance music made by people of color, and before the sounds of rap permeated pop music. And, for the most part, Adult Top 40 programmers returned to this "middle": Adult Top 40 stations avoided what another Texas programmer described as "extreme" music, because "adults won't tolerate it."[83]

What Adult Top 40 programmers thought their listeners might tolerate was quite subjective. Some stations, like WKQX Chicago, believed their audiences didn't want to hear anything too dancey, meaning that the station drew the line just beyond Janet Jackson's "Miss You Much" or Paula Abdul's "(It's Just) The Way That You Love Me."[84] Nearly all Adult Top 40 stations avoided rap and hard rock, but they would often play edits of popular songs that eliminated the unwanted sounds of these genres.[85] Robin Jones, programmer for Satellite Music Network's Adult Top 40 stations, reported that her company's affiliated stations would play most of what was played on the Top 40 format, except for music that was "too young, too rock, or too urban" for the ears of her audience who, she imagined,

"think [Top 40 stations] are a little too rough and traditional [Adult Contemporary stations] are a little too boring."[86] Her affiliated stations, she recounted, didn't play music by artists like Ugly Kid Joe, Mary J. Blige, Snow, Shai, Silk, and Joey Lawrence. Of her avoidance of music that was "too young, too rock, or too urban" for listeners, in this instance "too urban" made the greatest difference in determining whether or not the stations would play a song: four of the six artists or groups were Black, and five of the six had recent rap-adjacent singles.

At Adult Top 40 stations, listeners could rest assured that they would never be bombarded with the "extreme" sounds of rap. These stations were direct responses to the rise of Crossover stations, creating space for listeners who weren't served by Top 40 leaning "too far to the urban side," as Zapoleon put it.[87] But Adult Top 40 was also designed to be a refuge from standard Top 40 stations, where adults might be bothered by the rap programmers had added after seeing its popularity on Crossover stations. By leaning "more adult"—which *Billboard* claimed "usually translates to 'less rap,'"—radio programmers were creating, according to Scott Shannon, "comfort zones" that were key to the format's success.[88] An Albany, New York programmer claimed that being more centrist in his music choices made his station "more palatable to older listeners."[89] And some programmers understood their programming to have psychological effects; one Orlando program director described recent changes at his station, which included cautiously controlling rap's airplay, as making it "safer to listen to the radio station."[90]

Adult Top 40 stations and others that forbade rap often commissioned new slogans and jingles advertising their unwillingness to play rap. Baltimore Top 40 station WBSB began using a "no rap and no hard rock" slogan in 1990, and Mix 96.5 used "no Kids, no rap, no crap" and "no rap and no heavy metal" to advertise the music mix on its station.[91] One consultant explained to *Billboard* that he was "just looking for the most descriptive terms that touch on what the adult hates to hear."[92] But the slogans did more than describe music. Vocal no-rap stances, a programmer revealed, "sen[t] a message" to certain segments of the audience that the station was "for them" (and, by extension, not for other people).[93] Through these slogans and through their playlists, Adult Top 40 stations separated their audiences from the sounds of rap, but also from the people—predominantly Black youth—associated with rap.

When broadcast on television, these no-rap slogans gained a visual dimension, adding embodied identities to the people associated with the stations. In an advertisement from the early 1990s, Mix 96.5 asked listeners, "Why do you listen to Mix 96.5?" Most respondents, all of whom appear to be white, say some variation of the station liner: "it makes you feel good." But one working-age white man, dressed in a collared shirt and tie, claims that he likes that the station doesn't play certain styles: there's "nothing banging [his] head out."[94] Here, the advertisement indicated that feeling good as a white working professional meant not having to be bothered with music that banged, likely meaning rap or hard rock. Another advertisement

from around the same time—a variation of which was also broadcast in Boston for sister-station WBMX—showed a white hand pulling gold chains and a spiked collar out of a radio while a voiceover advertised the station as having a rap– and heavy metal–free "better mix."[95] Music, in this commercial, represented something more than sound: it was fashion, a lifestyle, and perhaps even a type of person that this white hand wanted to shut out. Not everything—or everyone—was part of the mainstream these stations wanted to play.

MANUFACTURING EXCLUSION

An easy analog to the growing divisions in the Top 40 format could be found by looking to the physical landscape: as programmers made it "safer to listen to the radio," developers and contractors all over the country built physical spaces that aimed to protect upper- and middle-class Americans from purportedly undesirable characters.[96] Through the 1980s, the US public became increasingly concerned about crime, despite the violent-crime rate dropping by 25 percent.[97] Capitalizing on these fears, gated communities sprung up around the country in the late 1980s and 1990s; one study estimated that by 1997 there were three-million units in gated communities across the United States.[98] Most gated communities were in urban areas, including Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Houston, Phoenix, and Chicago, places where rap was more likely to be heard on Crossover and Top 40 stations due to these cities' high concentration of non-white listeners.[99]

Like Adult Top 40 stations, gated communities offered the promise of safety through exclusion. Physically set apart by walls from less desirable areas and policed by guards, these private spaces separated upper- and middle-class Americans from perceived unlawful activity on the streets and soothed "anxiety about the spread of urban lawlessness."[100] These communities provided residents with a sense of belonging in a place where everyone was "one of them," where they didn't have to worry about outsiders intruding on their safety and comfort, and where kids could play in the streets without parental oversight.[101] Like Adult Top 40 stations playing older music, they promised a new spin on an idealized version of the past, claiming to be "your new hometown" or "an old community setting," ideas that relied upon a nostalgic ideal of small-town life.[102] Advertisements for gated communities featured pictures of private "public" spaces such as parks and pools where residents would find people like them behind the gates and concrete walls keeping others out.[103]

From its beginnings, hip hop invited urban youth to occupy physical spaces in their communities as DJs stole power from streetlights to fuel their parties, b-boys and b-girls took over public parks, and graffiti artists claimed city structures as their own.[104] As rap transitioned to a recorded medium its sound was separated from embodied performers, but it often still took up physical space just as a person might. Boom boxes, car stereos, and other loud sound systems

asserted the presence of youth of color in public spaces where they were often otherwise silenced. Volume had political meaning; blasting rap wasn't simply an aesthetic choice. Rather, songs were "weapons in a battle over the right to occupy public space," as historian Robin D.G. Kelley writes.[105] For those on the receiving end, these weapons were often unwelcome. In an article discussing rap's critics, *Billboard* writer Sean Ross recounted that his mom, like others her age, disliked rap in part because she rarely heard it by choice. Instead, young people walking around with boom boxes or driving with their windows down imposed the "invariably noisy, hostile, and dirty" music upon her.[106] In the words of the listener complaining about rapped Taco Bell commercials, rap forced unsuspecting listeners to "deal with [those] people with their ghetto blasters every damn day."[107] But in gated communities residents didn't have to hear this "noisy" music, because they lived in privatized spaces designed to attract an idealized quiet public.[108] Just as programmers at Adult Top 40 stations reclaimed the slots that rap had filled on Top 40 playlists, gated communities exerted control over the once-public places where hip hop had begun, making sure their residents were not bothered by unwanted people or sounds.

This exclusion, at least on the face of it, was not about race. Rather, gated communities were bound by socioeconomic class, by the ability to buy in. And programmers at Adult Top 40 stations too insisted that their programming had nothing to do with race; indeed, Black performers like Luther Vandross and Whitney Houston were some of Adult Top 40's most popular artists. While Rock 40 stations had used the language of genre to select an idealized white audience, playing genres that were closely connected to white audiences, Adult Top 40 stations nuanced this practice, making it more colorblind. In their musical selections these stations were racially ambivalent, allowing any music onto their playlist that fit their sound.

John Sebastian, one of the programmers who popularized the controversial "no disco" slogan in the early 1980s, denied that advertisements touting "no rap" had anything to do with race. He claimed that were it applicable for his current station, he would use a similar slogan because "rap and disco are not very good musically. Neither is heavy metal. I would probably try to attack them in a similar fashion and position my station as the one playing real music." Sebastian said of his "real rock and roll, and no disco" slogan from the 1980s that he "really, sincerely [didn't] believe [there was a racist appeal] involved. I'm a liberal Democrat who was really at the other extreme. Did the audience turn it into that? I hope not. It certainly wasn't the intention." According to him, "people who are racist today don't necessarily carry it into their musical tastes. There are a lot of racists who love black music. Instead, it [stems from] a lack of melody and musicianship springing forth from top 40, not just rap. There's just a real lack of great artists. . . . I think [the no rap–hard rock slogan] will spread quickly. I think the positioning will work because it's necessary right now."[109]

"A THREAT TO THE VALUES OF MAINSTREAM AMERICA"

But this positioning had everything to do with race. At least in the press, rap was quickly coming to symbolize more than just a musical style. Throughout the 1980s, reporting on rap shows lent the genre a violent reputation due to substantial coverage of fights at concerts across the country; subsequent articles described concert insurers and the Fraternal Order of Police refusing to work with rap acts.[110] But in the late 1980s, the tenor of news stories about rap changed, following the release of N.W.A's *Straight Outta Compton*. In response to an album that they characterized as threatening to the social fabric of mainstream life in the United States, the media cultivated public panic by publishing articles devoted to the possible criminal activity of rappers.[111]

By the new decade, rap was cast as the face of obscenity, antisemitism, and violent sex crimes in judicial hearings and incidents up and down the eastern seaboard. 2 Live Crew were arrested for obscenity, Public Enemy's Professor Griff was criticized for antisemitic comments, and one of the wrongfully convicted members of the Central Park Five (who had reportedly sung Tone Loc's "Wild Thing" behind bars) delivered what the *Washington Post* described as a "rambling, angry rap poem" at his sentencing hearing.[112] Washington notable Tipper Gore offered a greatest-hits version of these concerns in a frenzied editorial in the same paper, fear-mongeringly titled "Hate, Rape, and Rap."[113] *Newsweek*'s 1990 cover stories on the genre depicted it as the face of everything white mainstream America should be scared of: a "culture of attitude [that] is repulsive," that is "bombastic, self-aggrandizing and yet as scary as sudden footsteps in the dark," with "coded language, mystic monikers and Martian-sounding background noises [that] *keep* outsiders outside."[114] Readers didn't even have to read the magazine to get the point. The photos, journalist Abiola Sinclair notes, "were designed to frighten white readers, or at least make white readers agree that Black rappers were vile and gross."[115] This sort of coverage influenced radio programmers; one consultant claimed many in the industry were "scared to death of rap" because, like some other musical trends of the past, it "threaten[ed] to take over the planet."[116] In *Billboard*, Janine McAdams wrote that some considered rap's crossover "a threat to the values of mainstream America."[117]

Of course, not everyone was caught up in the hysteria. Much of this reporting was criticized for its lack of context and heavy-handed race-baiting, and 2 Live Crew won their obscenity trial after the jury (including an assistant middle-school principal who freestyled raps on the bus between the courtroom and the sequestration hotel) found artistic merit in the group's music and humorous vacuity in the prosecution's bumbling case.[118] But rap's reputation aligned with the press's general characterization of socioeconomically disadvantaged urban-minority communities. Media outlets during the 1980s constructed a sense of panic about increasing drug use, crime, and violence among young residents of color in urban

communities, all the while employing Reagan-era color-blind discourse that cast crime, joblessness, and violence as the fault of those lacking the moral fiber to achieve a mainstream middle-class life.[119]

Some rappers *were* making music during this era that directly confronted white mainstream norms. Afrocentric groups and collectives like Boogie Down Productions, Public Enemy, X Clan, and Native Tongues introduced listeners to the work of Black Power activists and the teachings of the Nation of Islam in their songs. Boogie Down Productions' 1990 song "Blackman in Effect," for example, criticized the absence of Black history in the public-education system and reeducated listeners indoctrinated on white mainstream versions of history. Other rappers like N.W.A and the Geto Boys spoke back to racist preconceptions of Black youth, offering vital critiques of dominant racial narratives while playfully engaging with the stereotypes typically ascribed to them.[120] While these complex stories weren't often heard on the radio, a simplified version was readily available to viewers watching television coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles uprising following the acquittal of the four officers videotaped beating Rodney King. This event verified for white mainstream audiences rappers' depictions of life in urban neighborhoods, and listeners would hear its sounds later sampled as an accompaniment to the vivid storytelling on Dr. Dre's *The Chronic*.

Few of these artists found success on commercial radio, but their challenge to the white mainstream was felt more broadly than radio exposure might have enabled anyway. Together, rap artists' Afrocentric rhetoric and Black-nationalist ideas created what scholar Jeffrey Louis Decker describes as a "collective challenge to the consensus logic of U.S. nationalism."[121] Rap's revolutionary potential was in its confrontation of white norms, a fact vividly illustrated on the cover of Ice-T's 1993 album *Home Invasion* (figure 10). Rap here is presented as an intruder, albeit one willingly summoned by a white kid wearing an Afrocentric necklace, listening to a stack of rap tapes, and sitting next to a book by Malcolm X. But the genre's threat to establishment figures is clear, as the cover also depicts multiple Black figures assaulting, presumably, the child's white guardians.

For all these reasons, rap was more than just music. It was a sign of the perceived difference between the mainstream and racialized urban residents, one that, as scholar D. Marvin Jones writes, pitted "urban culture versus mainstream culture and urban space versus suburban space."[122] Never mind, of course, that rap *was* mainstream: as 2 Live Crew's obscenity case took center stage in national news, NBC premiered *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* starring the rapper-turned-actor whom the network considered key to their primetime lineup.[123] And never mind that mainstream suburbanites weren't wholly disinterested in what happened in urban spaces.[124] Rap became a symbol for racial difference and, in a country geographically demarcated by residential segregation, a symbol of the physical distance between the mainstream and an assumed Black other.

FIGURE 10. Ice-T, *Home Invasion*, Rhyme $yndicate Records, 1993. Note how rap's "invasion" doesn't harm the young listener, just the white adults surrounding him.

RECONFIGURING RACE

As rap became a stand-in for race, a way to allude to the subject without naming it as such, the format that advertised its unwillingness to play rap suggested a new way of thinking about race in the age of multiculturalism. Adult Top 40's discourse of exclusion reflected a shift in racial attitudes in the United States that sociologist George Yancey describes as the move from a "white/nonwhite dichotomy" to a "black/nonblack dichotomy." This shift expanded the white category in ways that reflected the United States' growing racial diversity; he writes that "instead of evaluating the social acceptance of a group by how 'white' they are," in a black/nonblack dichotomy "social rejection of a group [is assessed] by how 'black' they are."[125] Multiculturalism, here, depends upon the assimilation of Blackness into

some sort of multicultural identity, where racial exceptionalism doesn't exist; those who highlight their racial identity are seen as exceptions, unable to be reformed into civil and consumer society.[126] Rap came to symbolize this sort of Blackness that couldn't easily be incorporated into the United States' multicultural mix; its sound rendered it racially distinctive and thus "relegated to the sidelines of a properly post-racial society."[127] Importantly, this new racial attitude protected the non-Black population against charges of racism, because the non-Black population was racially diverse.

The growing number of Black-Oriented stations that also refused to play rap helped make the case that no-rap slogans weren't about race.[128] Throughout the late 1980s, the Urban Adult Contemporary (Urban AC) format grew in popularity as Black-Oriented programmers struggled to balance the musical tastes of their age-diverse listeners while Crossover stations were "taking large bites" of their rap-friendly audiences.[129] By 1992, *Billboard* chart editor Terri Rossi calculated that 10–15 percent of Black-Oriented stations targeted adults and would not play rap; a year later, *Billboard* began releasing two separate Black-Oriented airplay charts, one for adult-oriented stations and one for more age-diverse stations, recognizing that their playlists varied quite considerably.[130] When *Radio & Records* began running two separate charts, it was clear that the industry defined Urban AC stations by what they failed to play; the journal described them as playing "smooth R&B music instead of hip hop/rap."[131] One record company executive credited rap with the proliferation of Urban AC stations, noting that "the kids who want to hear rap—or rather the adults who *don't* want to hear rap—are the reason why there's a lot of success at the Urban AC stations these days."[132]

The presence of these stations revealed just how hard Black radio professionals were working to disassociate race with economic class in the hopes of gaining higher advertisement rates. Urban AC stations were often programmed with offices in mind. In 1988, a Black Raleigh programmer told *Billboard* that many government workers were not allowed to play rap at the office, and that playing too much rap would cause "sophisticated places" to switch stations, indicating that rap's identity was incongruous with the economic mobility these white-collar jobs represented.[133] The Urban AC format, one Black Philadelphia programmer thought, was a good fit for offices because "it [was] inoffensive."[134] Nearly a decade after rap had first been played on Black-Oriented radio, some in this segment of the industry were still using the genre as a way to signal their respectability, casting rap as antithetical to an appropriate work environment. Even as rap became more popular and as rap's audience aged, public places such as offices continued to avoid playing the genre.[135]

But many people working in the radio and advertising industries still understood race as a proxy for class. Unlike housing in gated communities, which was sold to a group of people defined by their economic status, Adult Top 40 and Urban AC stations had to define their audience through racially identified musical

styles. They reconfigured their stations' politics of race by aligning their audiences with the non-Black normative public, redefining young Black urban life as the outsider while playing other Black artists like Whitney Houston and Luther Vandross. For these stations, rap was a way to signal their racial politics to advertisers and listeners alike without explicitly mentioning race, a necessity in the colorblind yet multicultural United States. Playlists, as they always had, stood in for racial attitudes, and music, the *Newsweek* staff opined in 1992, seemed to as well. "After nearly three decades of reflecting the promises of integration," they wrote, "pop music—from country to hard-core rap—has become our most pointed metaphor for volatile racial polarization."[136]

This polarization was sure to continue, for the marginalization of rap on Adult Top 40 and Urban AC stations ensured a future where rappers' Black identities would remain in the periphery of the communities these stations cultivated. These stations encouraged a musical separation between rap and other popular music, encouraging a "narcotic elitism in listeners," as DJ Robert A. George wrote in a *Billboard* editorial, by loudly claiming that the "better mix" didn't include rap.[137] Promoting rap-free stations as safer and more desirable than more traditional Top 40 stations took advantage of *and* fueled apprehension about rap, and programmers failed to assuage these concerns, refusing to educate their listeners about the style. Instead, rap-free stations reinforced criticisms of rap and fostered an audience division between people willing to listen to rap and those who were against rap of any sort. Individual dislikes transformed into group condemnations as these stations created communities made up of listeners and critics who found the music, and its associations, unwelcome.

Stations defined by not playing rap created a "musical apartheid," media scholar Susan J. Douglas writes, that "in a corrosive, subterranean fashion legitimate[d] geographic apartheid as well."[138] But rap-free stations weren't subterranean; they were shouting that rap was distasteful from the rooftops, emphasizing the differences between the US cultural mainstream and a racialized other, and contributing to the mainstream's steady disinvestment from urban minorities. Gatekeepers in every sense of the word, programmers articulated a colorblind-yet-segregated vision of the mainstream US.

SPLITTING THE MAINSTREAM

Common sense might dictate that separating local listeners into those who liked the "bad elements," as deemed by one white Detroit programmer, and those who liked the "best hits" would hurt stations, because splitting a format's audience into several groups created smaller audiences.[139] But after a couple years of refining playlists and sales strategies, Adult Top 40 and Urban AC stations proved their solvency.[140] From an advertiser's perspective, a smaller, more discrete audience of women was preferable to a larger, more youthful audience.[141] So while

one Baltimore programmer acknowledged that his station's "no rap" slogan would alienate some of his listeners and that others "aren't going to come in to replace them as quickly," it was a gamble he was willing to take because "the research showed a hole that we wanted to fill before someone else did."[142]

In 1993, *Billboard* began adding Adult Top 40 stations' play counts to its "Hot 100" chart, acknowledging Adult Top 40 as a Top 40 subformat.[143] In so doing, it publicly recognized both the strength of the format and also its version of the mainstream that did not include rap. Adult Top 40's idealized audience held clout when it came to controlling the charts; at the end of 1993, out of the 190 Top 40 stations that *Billboard* monitored for chart purposes, sixty were Adult Top 40 stations, compared to seventy-four standard Top 40 stations and thirty-two Crossover stations.[144]

The popularity of adult-oriented stations translated to record sales. Indicating their belief in the potential of these stations, several record companies created new subsidiary labels to support adult-oriented releases.[145] So in 1993 when a quasi-ten-year reunion occurred on Adult Top 40 stations with programmers playing new music by pre-Crossover format hitmakers such as Tina Turner, Phil Collins, Huey Lewis and the News, and Kenny Loggins, sales soon followed.[146] These new songs were designed for cross-generational appeal; producers such as David Foster, who worked on Natalie Cole's *Unforgettable* and the soundtrack to *The Bodyguard*, helped update artists' older styles.[147] Adults, who were often not considered to be reliable record buyers, bought these albums in droves; for example, in July 1993, Barbra Streisand unseated Janet Jackson at the top of the *Billboard* albums chart with an album of Foster-produced Broadway hits.[148] One regional music buyer noticed that teens, surprisingly, were also buying adult-oriented pop because they "think it's OK to listen to this kind of stuff and it isn't considered lame."[149]

Adult Top 40's success didn't save the Top 40 format, however, as the ratings decline continued. In 1992, Cleveland program director Keith Clark proclaimed that the reign of Top 40 was over, as the "glory of our beloved medium [was] fading."[150] But it wasn't entirely clear what the beloved medium *was* anymore, because among the stations still in the format there wasn't much agreement of what they should play. Michael Ellis of *Billboard* had been shocked in 1989 that "the total number of 'pure' top 40 stations—those that play all the hits—is under 100," but by 1991, not a single song was played by all of the Top 40 stations *Radio & Records* surveyed, a trend that the magazine recorded for the next two years as well.[151] The growing popularity of gangsta rap and grunge, together with the industry's development of more accurate measures of their popularity, only added to the general impression of audience fragmentation. When *Billboard* debuted its revised album chart that measured sales of records via the SoundScan barcode reader, the music industries were forced to face the actual popularity of genres previously assumed to have niche audiences.[152] By the end of 1992, new subformats of Top 40 had become

so popular that *Radio & Records* sarcastically noted that their competitor *Billboard* needed five different Top 40 charts to keep up with the format's fragmentation.[153]

Keith Clark put the blame for Top 40 radio's decline squarely on his colleagues, claiming that "programmers—desperate to create new versions of contemporary formats for which they can take credit and become consultants—have ruined the marketplace for the almighty mainstream CHR."[154] And these consultants needed data, the stats that Rick Dees had complained about in his advertisement declaring rap dead. Rap may have been a wedge between teens and adults. But it was the overly ambitious programmers armed with data, hoping to make a name for themselves, and tired of competing for New Kids on the Block exclusives (as one programmer joked was the reason for the rise of Adult Top 40), that were holding the hammer.[155]

GIVING LISTENERS "WHAT THEY WANT EVEN BEFORE THEY KNOW THEY WANT IT"

Many stations in the late 1980s and early 1990s hired radio consultants to help develop their playlists. These consultants were often programmers who had successful-enough careers to peddle their instincts—made valuable with a heap of substantiating survey data—to less effective programmers.[156] Like other types of industry analysis, radio consulting in the 1980s and 1990s was informed by psychographics, a form of demographic research that matched particular lifestyle habits with consumer choices. In the 1980s, programmer Lee Abrams began using psychographic research and advocated for playing more "horizontal" music because it could appeal to multiple psychographic groups; horizontal, here, was another term for crossover.[157]

But psychographics could also be used to fashion narrowcast stations, allowing programmers to target exactly whom advertisers wanted. Throughout the 1990s, narrowcasting became more common, as the number of stations across the country increased.[158] More stations in a market allowed programmers to divide audiences into finer, more homogenous, and perhaps easier-to-please segments: one programmer jokingly claimed that psychographic methods allowed him to target just "men between the ages of 25 and 29, with vasectomies, who are left handed and have red hair."[159] While this wasn't their intended audience, this sort of narrow targeting was prevalent at stations playing rap—or those adamantly opposed to it. Narrowcasting often reduced revenue at individual stations; assuming a stable amount of advertising dollars, an increase in the number of stations in a given market often meant a decrease in each station's potential profits.[160] Understanding this math, many stations targeting niche audiences reduced their expenses by entering into agreements with other local stations to merge parts of their operations.[161]

In the early 1990s, the FCC endorsed this cost-saving measure when it raised station-ownership limits, legalizing local duopolies. Previously, companies could

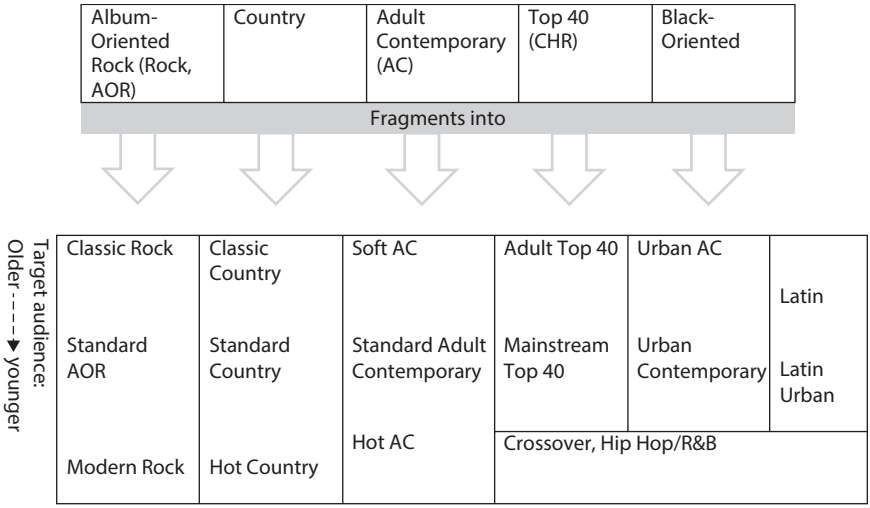

FIGURE 11. Radio format fragmentation in the mid-1990s.

own just one FM and one AM station in a market; in 1992, the FCC increased this to as many as six stations, depending on market size.[162] Consolidating staff from their multiple stations helped owners cut costs. And owning more than one station in a market could boost advertising rates if owners strategically chose formats with nonoverlapping audiences and sold these audiences in combination.[163] A company could own, for example, both a younger-leaning Adult Top 40 station and an older-leaning Adult Contemporary station to corner the adult female listener market. Duopolies could potentially provide owners with "lots more latitude" because they could "combine impact in demographics and psychographics and shade each station in different directions to broaden the appeal."[164]

With the freedom and economic incentive to "shade" stations, owners more carefully targeted specific audiences, continuing the fragmentation of not just Top 40 but all formats on the radio dial (see figure 11). In Baton Rouge, for example, the two Black-Oriented stations Chris Clay programmed "ha[d] an almost exclusive lock on the market's black listeners" by 1994 because they played different music: at night, one played rap while the other played a softer and jazzier show style called Quiet Storm.[165] If programmers were confused by the increasing number of formats or didn't know what the best station combination for their area might be, they needn't worry: consulting agencies developed "duopoly simulation" services to "reveal which format combinations will attain maximum market shares."[166]

More generally, increasingly sophisticated computer models enabled radio stations and radio-consulting agencies to finely tune their programming, reinforcing fragmentation. As computing power and data increased throughout the end of the twentieth century, so did demand for more intricate models predicting consumer

habits.[167] New data about listeners, scholar John Klaess contends, "occasioned new formats, and new formats occasioned novel listeners," giving momentum to the already-incipient divisions within the Top 40 format.[168] Radio-ratings agencies such as Arbitron and Birch also increased the specificity and accuracy of their findings, providing more numbers for consultants and programmers to gather and assess.[169] In response to this granular information, radio stations shifted from bluntly dividing an area's population by age and race—hoping that the time-tested association between an audience's demographic profile and a performer's race and musical style would apply—to programming music informed by consultant-guided, data-driven research, which demonstrated a correspondence between specific audiences and individual songs or styles. By 1995, these models were so sophisticated that *Radio & Records* offered an online service where stations could request an automated custom–Top 40 chart based on information about their local market and their desired subformat, eliminating the need for a human programmer.[170]

In 1995, Coleman Research published "The Music Clustering of America," a 300-page study that represented just one form of market-segmentation research. The first study to examine "the various bodies of tastes within the American radio listening audience," it employed cluster analysis, the same method that the PRIZM modeling system had used in the 1970s to map consumer preferences onto zip codes.[171] Michael Weiss describes the potential of such modeling systems for businesses: "Today, with the click of a computer mouse, businesses can pinpoint the one neighborhood within three miles of a store where they'll find the highest number of college-educated, Toyota-owning camera buffs between the ages of 25 and 34 who live in $175,000 homes. Increasingly, consumer maps and market profiles are helping marketers in their tireless efforts to give consumers what they want even before they know they want it."[172]

Predictive modeling—giving listeners "what they want even before they know they want it"—was precisely what Top 40 music programmers *did*, albeit previously without highly sophisticated computational grounding, when they forecasted what new hits might best appeal to their audience.[173] Improving predictions by using computerized models to create playlists might have made programmers' jobs easier, but using models also had potential benefits for listeners. According to Weiss, cluster modeling didn't just make selling things easier but also benefited consumers: "Target-marketing attempts not only to steer selected products toward selected people—say, baby formula toward expectant families in suburban homes—but to keep the same products away from those who aren't interested, such as childless couples living in urban apartments. The goal, say marketers, is to eliminate waste for businesses and reduce information clutter for consumers."[174]

Reducing information clutter could seem noble—who wants to hear an ad for something they will never buy on the radio? And, perhaps more importantly, what company wants to pay to target the wrong consumer? But these cluster models

assumed that consumer taste and buying preferences were semistatic and required companies to make decisions based on already-existing data. This allowed companies to "give consumers what they want even before they know they want it," but it also limited consumer choice because it didn't introduce them to other, less familiar options. Coleman Research's cluster modeling of musical taste revealed that while the people they surveyed didn't agree on much, the styles of music they most commonly liked were older: Motown hits, standard Oldies radio fare, and even classical music.[175] Coleman was quick to note that liking a style did not necessarily equate to listening to a format playing that style, but it's easy to imagine that programmers and musicians interested in mass appeal might use this information to create formats and music that relied on the easily palatable sounds of the past, rather than work to introduce listeners to newer styles such as rap.

"The Music Clustering of America" displays just how difficult playing rap on Top 40 stations could be. One graphic, a "Music Map of American Tastes," indicated the degree to which age determined musical taste by depicting a giant chasm between the music younger listeners enjoyed and styles older audiences listened to. Grunge and Pop Alternative—two styles most liked by twelve-to-twenty-nine-year-old white males—and Churban and Pop Urban—two names for rap-friendly Crossover format sounds young female audiences listened to—are shown on one side of a two-dimensional graph, separated by a conspicuous white space from all other format sounds: Adult Contemporary, Country, New Soft Adult Contemporary, Jazz, Classical, Urban Adult Contemporary, Motown, Classical, Oldies, Soft '70s, '70s, Classic Rock, and AOR.[176] Bleakly showing the lack of overlapping taste among younger demographics *and* between younger and older demographics, the authors demarcate the segmentation of musical taste with a giant white space.[177] Elsewhere, the study supported programmers' age-based concerns about rap's uneven appeal, reporting that no listeners they surveyed over the age of thirty-five preferred the genre.[178] A few years later in a follow-up study, Coleman recommended that all Top 40 stations lean either toward rap or rock due to a "continued incompatibility between the most popular sounds" in the Top 40 format.[179] Straight-ahead Top 40 stations might temporarily receive strong ratings, Coleman found, but in the long term it was unlikely that these stations would survive, especially if a more narrowcast station were to begin broadcasting in their area.[180]

THE DEMISE OF THE MAINSTREAM

While splitting the Top 40 format into tiny insular segments may have made financial sense for individual owners, some in the music industries believed that this shift had far-reaching and detrimental effects. In early 1992, recording studio president Paul Wickliffe pessimistically noted that "slicing the mainstream record-buying public into narrow 'demographically correct' formats has all but killed off pop radio and will never produce a mega-hit."[181] It seemed that once Top

40 subformats had separated listeners into niche categories, it was difficult to put them back together because narrowcast stations didn't expose listeners to a wide variety of styles. Subformats reinforced what might have been already diverging tastes: "traditional mainstream tastes," one station manager in Washington, DC, worried, "don't exist anymore."[182]

The format built on broadcasting mainstream tastes—Top 40—was correspondingly foundering. Between 1989 and 1993, Top 40 lost over 38 percent of its national audience, and by 1994, there were only 358 Top 40 stations in the country, down from 931 in 1989. This made it the ninth-most-popular format, trailing format juggernauts Country and Adult Contemporary.[183] Rap, many programmers believed, was behind the decline, because it was incompatible with most other pop music. According to one Dallas programmer, a Top 40 station just *couldn't* play Michael Bolton, the Breeders, and Snoop Dogg. "Top 40," he postulated, "made a big mistake when it so heartily embraced extreme music and left most of the audience behind."[184] Radio consultant Alan Burns agreed, recounting that his study of over one thousand radio listeners revealed that Top 40 listeners were switching to other stations because, as one twenty-three-year-old woman put it, "I just don't like the music anymore—there's too much rap for me."[185]

For stations, it wasn't just rap that was the problem—its associated listeners were also to blame. In a prescient 1988 article about the Top 40 format, programmer Bill Tanner wrote that the "presence of ethnic minorities" was causing the format to break apart.[186] By the new decade, people of color, which one Houston programmer clumsily described as having "higher levels of ethnic composition," were being blamed for Top 40's fragmentation.[187] While rappers were selling their records to a diverse public, radio programmers hadn't figured out how to, didn't want to, or couldn't monetize rap's multicultural audience. Instead, this audience was a problem for a format whose mainstream had previously been conceived of as white. And record companies too noted the splintering of the mainstream; one record-label executive thought that because of listener demographics, "certain stations are able to support a type of music that others can't touch."[188] Despite its popularity, programmers had never succeeded in making rap for everybody.

"THE NATURAL SELECTION"

And this brings us back to Rick Dees. Without a unified Top 40 and enough Top 40 stations to sell his show to, his countdown just didn't work. Dees, it should be said, was doing better than his competitor, Shadoe Stevens, who hosted *American Top 40*. For a few years, the two shows had been using different sources for their countdowns, with Dees using *Radio & Records*' airplay-only charts and *American Top 40* using *Billboard*'s "Hot 100." Using the "Hot 100" was risky because that chart often included rap and heavy metal songs that were selling well but were not played on many stations broadcasting the countdown. For example, in 1989,

playing 2 Live Crew's song "Me So Horny" during the broadcast of *American Top 40* caused controversy because, according to one radio professional, it was too "urban-sounding" to appeal to "the typical *American Top 40* clientele." In response, the show shortened the song and Stevens declined to say the name of the song after its first week on the countdown.[189]

Using airplay charts made Dees's countdown an easier sell. In 1991, he pitched the show as "America's PURELY Top 40 show," insinuating that incorporating sales data might sully the musical purity of the Top 40.[190] But even this didn't guarantee Dees a spot on all Top 40 stations, because those stations moving in a more adult direction were wary of any music—like Sir Mix-a-Lot's "Baby Got Back"—that might challenge their audience, despite countdown shows being an easy opportunity to showcase new music.[191] And so Dees, trying to ensure the marketability of his countdown, proclaimed rap dead in 1992, hoping that by publicly aligning his countdown with the demise of rap, rap-weary radio stations would sign on. This, of course, did little to halt the genre's quickly growing popularity.

In 1994, Stevens's *American Top 40* folded, in large part because of the decline of the Top 40 format. This was a lucky break for Dees, who gained the affiliate stations of his major competitor. But Dees still struggled to make a countdown work, as more than 60 percent of Top 40 stations had switched formats in the previous five years.[192] Reflecting the precarity of the format, Dees's new contract was contingent on creating an Adult Top 40/Hot AC version of the show, because even though the original show was designed to be "sensitive to the needs of Top 40 programmers," Dees's company claimed "we can't clear Rick in seven of the top ten markets."[193]

In July 1994, Dees took out another full-page advertisement in *Radio & Records*, this time claiming that his countdown was "the natural selection."[194] Above this text were six mammals wearing polka-dot shorts, each slightly less hunched over and less hairy than the previous. Supposedly evolving, the first mammal finds a pair of headphones, the second picks them up, the third puts them across their shoulder, the fourth around their neck, the fifth finds the other end of the auxiliary cable, and the sixth plugs it into a radio with a picture of Rick Dees—leaning back, relaxed, with an easy smile—plastered across it. Tuning in to a countdown that barely recorded the musical tastes of the nation, it seemed, was the desired result, the way nature intended the Top 40 mainstream to sound.

But if that were the case, Dees was leading that mainstream to a natural extinction. Rap and research, as Dees predicted, had killed Top 40. But not for the reasons Dees was concerned about. Instead, Adult Top 40 stations and Dees's countdown shifted Top 40's focus to adults rather than younger listeners, creating a generation for whom Top 40 radio was no longer as important. By the mid-1990s, Top 40 was a mere shadow of its former self; in *Radio & Records*' 1995 format-reach survey, the format hit single-digit ratings for the first time since the magazine had started calculating them. Country and Adult Contemporary each had almost twice as many

listeners as Top 40. And this was an optimistic outlook, one that bundled together the many fragments of the format, each of which, one scholar has aptly described, was no longer "*the* Top 40" but instead "*a* Top 40."[195]

The demise of the Top 40 format had financial implications for record companies, artists, managers, radio stations, and DJs, to name just a few of the affected parties. But the consequences of the format's decline extended far beyond the finances of these individual people and companies. As the Top 40 format fragmented into stations willing to play rap and stations intentionally excluding these sounds, one Black DJ noted that what "used to be a coming-together place . . . [is now] a segregating place," emphasizing that he meant segregating in "all senses of the word."[196] For the musical mainstream heard on Top 40 had served a greater purpose than just representing popularity—it brought people together. Top 40 radio, at its most idealistic, broadcasts solidarity and unity, integrating new styles into the mainstream. On stations where listeners were *not* encouraged to listen to different types of music, their audiences' "patience for different kinds of music . . . shriveled" meaning that narrowcast radio formats only reinforced polarizing tastes.[197] By fragmenting Top 40, by including some and excluding others, Adult Top 40, Rock 40, and Crossover stations destroyed Top 40's coalition audience, troubling the cohesion of the popular-music mainstream in the United States. Fragmentation, stemming from radio programmers' reactions to rap, segregated Top 40 radio. It separated the popular-music mainstream from a Black other. It closed listeners' minds, strengthening negative perceptions of urban people of color. And most insidious of all, it did so under the guise that this was what listeners wanted.

Conclusion

Formatting Race in the New Century

By 1995, rap had been swallowed whole by the record industry and spat out as West Coast gangsta rappers and their East Coast hard core rivals. The genre was well on its way to becoming the most popular genre in the country even as activists and politicians continued to condemn its influence. It had found a stable home on some commercial radio stations, including Crossover stations like Hot 97 and Power 106 as well as some in the still-fragmented Urban format. And the genre would continue expanding: over the next few years, Puff Daddy and his crew at Bad Boy Records would redefine the mainstream potential of rap with their shiny suit releases; the never-officially-solved murders of rap's two most popular stars, the Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur, would fuel the popularity of the East and West Coast scenes; the Fresh Prince, now known as Will Smith, would inaugurate his own intensely mainstream version of rap; *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* would become the first rap album to win the Grammy Award for Best Album; the Wu-Tang Clan would develop their aesthetic into a multi-million-dollar clothing brand; and southern rappers such as OutKast, Juvenile, and Master P would explode the sonic and thematic parameters, not to mention the commercial potential, of the genre. Rap in the late 1990s would become a force to be reckoned with.

As would the radio industry. While the identity-challenged Top 40 format lost half of its listeners between 1985 and 1995, other stations picked up the slack. In particular, the Country format expanded thanks to superstar Garth Brooks's growing popularity and rap's lack thereof. Or, at least, that was what country-music producer and executive Jimmy Bowen thought: "Every morning" he claimed, "I get up and thank God for rap music, 'cause it runs people to country."[1] But it was the Telecommunications Act, a 1996 piece of federal legislation that increased the limit on how many stations an individual company

could own, that would ultimately change the industry's future. Station prices soared amidst a catastrophic wave of industry consolidation into a few large media conglomerates.

And things were about to get more interesting. By the end of the decade, two teenage computer whizzes and their file-sharing platform Napster threw the music industries into disarray, the advertising industry found new ways to target increasingly connected consumers as they adjusted to new digital marketplaces, and rap surpassed rock and country as the most popular genre in the country—if not the world.[2]

This conclusion analyzes the commodification of music listening in a media economy altered by these regulatory and technological changes. It offers a brief analysis of how music consumption and the methods of monetizing this consumption have changed since the mid-1990s, how the technological innovations of the twenty-first century have challenged the concept of the mainstream, and what the ever-growing popularity of rap says about our contemporary world.

THE NEW BUSINESS OF RADIO

In 1996, the US Congress passed the Telecommunications Act, which deregulated the radio industry by increasing the number of stations that a company could legally own. The industry had initially brought the idea of changing station-ownership limits to Washington's attention during a brief moment of unprofitability in the early 1990s, and the FCC responded in 1992 by increasing the number of stations a single company could own in a local market to as many as six.[3] But by the time Congress passed the Telecommunications Act, the industry had recovered and had plenty of capital to throw around to purchase new stations.[4] Within a year of passing the law, over 2,000 stations changed hands.[5] By the early 2000s, a study found that 70 percent of stations in virtually every radio market were owned by only four companies, including Clear Channel, whose stations reached 27 percent of all commercial radio listeners in the United States.[6] While the Telecommunications Act changed the fortunes of many in the industry, it didn't alter the industry's format structure, which continued to fragment as owners were able to offer advertisers ever more narrowly targeted stations.[7]

The Black-Oriented format, still divided into two subformats defined by their attitude toward rap, rose in popularity throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s.[8] Ownership consolidated as growing corporations priced individual owners out of local markets: by 2007, about 30 percent of Black-Oriented listeners heard white-owned Clear Channel's stations; another 20 percent tuned in to stations owned by the largest Black-owned radio conglomerate in the country, Radio One.[9] And despite concerns that corporate owners might destroy the format, Black-Oriented stations persist as perennially underfunded platforms on which Black artists gain exposure.[10]

The Top 40 format rebounded following its mid-1990s nadir. By the early 2000s, the format was firmly under the control of Clear Channel, whose stations were heard by nearly half of the nation's Top 40 listeners and around a third of those listening to Rhythmic Top 40 stations (the latest name for Crossover stations).[11] While Rhythmic Top 40 stations still played plenty of pop-influenced rap, they lost some of their coalition audience as many Black listeners tuned to Black-Oriented stations and some young Latinx listeners found better-targeted programming on the growing Latin Urban format.[12]

While the Top 40 format was still divided into various subformats, the ideological power of its mainstream held in some part, thanks to media conglomerates' top-down programming decisions. Some programmers hoped that consolidation might prompt innovation, but many corporate owners were wary of experimenting with new formats and instead increased profits by cutting local programmers and news teams.[13] These cost-cutting measures reduced listeners' options; by 2000, Guy Zapoleon concluded that owners slashing programming budgets to please investors had led to the "homogenization of radio programming, reduced creativity and huge spotloads."[14] So while those paying attention to record sales noticed that consumer taste was rapidly decentralizing, on the radio the concept of the popular-music mainstream—or several rival popular-music mainstreams, as Eric Weisbard has theorized—was still plausible because only a few programmers chose playlists for hundreds of stations.[15]

Rap was part of this consolidated mainstream. In the latter half of 2002, Nelly and Eminem fought over the top chart position on the "Hot 100," and singles by Fat Joe (featuring the year's debut star, Ashanti) and Linkin Park peaked at number two. That year, *Billboard* reported that Top 40 stations were "resembling R&B radio more than ever before. There are still genre hits that don't cross over, but they are rare."[16] Record companies seized on this crossover moment. One A&R executive claimed, "[my boss] just wants to cash in right now. We have records to sell, and that's what he cares about. There'll be something or someone else to cash in on tomorrow, after we've tapped this out."[17]

Cashing in, but at what costs? As had long been the case, playing rap didn't mean that stations had the political interests of artists or their diverse listeners in mind. Rather, the business model of the radio industry incentivized catering to white listeners, regardless of a station's music selection. A memo leaked in the late 1990s revealed one company's utter lack of interest in programming music for "ethnic" consumers because, in their words, "when it comes to delivering prospects, not suspects, the Urbans deliver the largest amount of listeners who turn out to be the least likely to purchase."[18] To deliver "prospects, not suspects," radio stations playing rap would need to demonstrate their appeal to white consumers, a requirement that influenced the music they played. For example, legal scholar Akilah N. Folami argues that large white-owned corporations' orientation toward

white listeners contributed to the rise of the "gangsta image" as "the defacto voice of contemporary hip hop culture."[19] It's no wonder that rap has been accused of profiting off of racist and misogynistic stereotypes when the genre is often targeted toward white listeners who are often less attuned to the potential damage of these tropes.[20]

Consolidation disempowered local minority communities.[21] Locally owned stations, which often had strong community ties, suffered in a consolidated industry because advertisers often preferred working with larger companies that had designed their station portfolios to facilitate selling multiple specifically targeted demographic packages. When local stations were sold to large radio groups, community advocates found it difficult to sway programming, because stations' corporate owners had little connection to their communities.[22] What's more, stations being programmed by someone half a country away didn't often pay attention to local acts.[23] The smaller scenes from which hip hop developed were rarely highlighted by large radio corporations more interested in maintaining their easy—and lucrative—relationships with major labels. As one programmer put it, "I know Mary J. Blige is a winner. . . . What's gonna make me give up that slot?"[24]

One other development in the radio industry exacerbated the move away from local content: the development of satellite-radio stations that broadcast the same material across the country. In the early 2000s, Sirius and XM (at the time two separate companies) began offering subscription-based radio programming; by 2010, the united company known as Sirius XM controlled the largest share of the radio marketplace. Advertised as an alternative to the standardized playlists heard on consolidated terrestrial stations, satellite radio offered listeners over a hundred narrowcast channels devoid of local programming. Tuning in to "The City" on XM or the multiple stations devoted to Howard Stern on Sirius, listeners could find music and talk more closely targeted toward who they were, or, in the case of a station like XM's "Sunny," how they were feeling. But within a few years programming narrowed, after Sirius and XM realized that niche stations weren't as profitable; while they could subsidize an experimental station with the rest of their portfolio, it made more financial sense to broadcast more standard formats.[25] And listeners tended toward more traditional formats; in 2008, *Billboard* reported that the most popular music station on both of these services was the Top 40–styled one.[26] Like their terrestrial counterparts, satellite-radio companies catered to the tastes of adult listeners for financial reasons. As satellite receivers were available primarily in new cars, these companies skewed their programming towards music they believed new-car purchasers would be interested in hearing. In 2002, this meant that nearly a quarter of the sixty music channels on Sirius were devoted to rock programming; rap and R&B programming had nine dedicated channels, two of which played only older songs, reflecting the new reality that rap's audience had aged into a more easily commodifiable demographic.[27]

BEYOND BROADCASTING

But radio's new corporate owners had only a few years to enjoy their economic gains before the rising popularity of the internet shifted the ground beneath the music industries' feet. At first, the internet had only a marginal effect on the radio industry, although the same couldn't be said for the record industry, which virtually imploded in the late 1990s following the development of file-sharing networks.[28] Most radio programmers were enthusiastic about connecting with their listeners online. Stations used their websites to solicit contest entries, share news about artists, connect advertisers with listeners, display pictures of DJs previously known only by their voices, and ask listeners to test music.[29] As social media became more important to how users engaged with the internet, radio stations connected with listeners via this medium as well.[30] And in the early 2000s, before the royalty rate for simulcasting radio stations had been formally considered, many terrestrial radio stations broadcast their programming over the internet.[31] Listeners appreciated the possibilities internet radio afforded them, as they could tune in to broadcasts from anywhere.[32]

But the relevance of the radio industry has slowly dwindled over the past two decades. Radio-research companies and advocacy groups like Arbitron, Edison Research, and the Radio Advertising Bureau continue publishing research indicating that radio maintains a steady listener base despite competition from other media platforms. In 2006, Arbitron measured that 93.5 percent of the US public listened to the radio, a percentage that far exceeded the reach of newspapers and network TV; in 2018, the company reported that a similar percentage still tuned in to AM/FM radio five days a week, more than consumed streaming audio, podcasts, satellite radio, TV broadcasts, or videos on a smartphone.[33] CEO of Spotify Daniel Ek corroborated the study, noticing that same year that "the vast majority of the minutes that are being spent on radio today haven't yet moved online."[34] But in recent years, even the industry's own surveys have noted decreased listening. In 2021, Nielsen found that 86 percent of people over the age of eighteen in the United States listened to the radio on a weekly basis, tuning in for about twelve hours a week. Younger listeners, the study revealed, more often listened to music online, but the 77 percent of teens who listened to the radio tuned in for an average of seven hours weekly.[35]

In 2000, tech columnist Walter Mossberg forecast that the internet would cause "a tremendous shock to the system of radio as we now understand it," although he wasn't sure of the timeline. The internet, he warned radio programmers, would offer listeners a new option: by pressing a couple of buttons they would be able to generate a station (or, in modern parlance, a playlist) that closely corresponded with their musical tastes. Deriding the radio industry for its "incredibly rigid playlist formats," he wrote that people "listen to [the radio] because that's all they have."

Presented with an alternative that better fit their needs, they wouldn't hesitate to change their behavior.[36]

And that's precisely what has happened over the last two decades. Each successive launch of a myriad of music sites and services such as Last.fm (2002), the iTunes Store (2003), MySpace (2003), Pandora (2005), YouTube (2005), SoundCloud (2007), Bandcamp (2007), Amazon Music (2007), Deezer (2007), Spotify (2008), Tidal (2014), Apple Music (2015), and TikTok (2017) has taken a bite of radio's audience. By 2016, Spotify claimed that their free version's market reach was greater than that of many terrestrial-radio stations, and a 2020 report found that 33 percent of music listening happened via streaming services versus 16 percent on the radio.[37] And increasingly, many people don't even own a terrestrial-radio receiver. Radio groups have tried their best to stay relevant: in the early 2000s, Clear Channel designed a website that allowed listeners to personalize stations, and later they tried to emulate Pandora's success by creating branded artist channels on their iHeartRadio streaming platform.[38] But the declining relevancy of commercial radio stations began affecting advertising rates starting in the late 2000s; in the first nine months of 2009 alone, industry revenue fell by 21 percent.[39] While radio play still matters to many artists because it helps their prospects on the *Billboard* "Hot 100," radio stations no longer do the work of exposing audiences to new music; rather, airplay "helps extend the life of the streaming," according to a major-label commerce chief interviewed in 2021.[40]

All the while, rap has become the most popular and influential style of the last fifty years—musically, it is not so much part of the mainstream as it *is* the mainstream.[41] In part, this is because rap's aging fans have become valuable demographics, a fact visible in the dozens of ads each year featuring rap. Whether they are targeted by throwback acts like Tag Team rewriting the lyrics of their early 1990s hit for GEICO or newer artists like Chance the Rapper shilling for Doritos, rap is now music for people who have money. But it's also because the genre has taken over popular culture: from Snoop Dogg hosting the Puppy Bowl to Kendrick Lamar winning the Pulitzer Prize for music, from the global popularity of K-pop boy band BTS's rapped verses to country artists incorporating trap beats while maintaining some vocal twang, and from rap soundtracking almost every sports arena to Jay-Z and Beyoncé filming a music video in the Louvre.

But even as it has become the most popular genre in the United States, if not the world, rap has retained its outsider status. Each of the above examples, breathlessly reported as a remarkable accomplishment rather than the norm, demonstrates how rap's mainstream inclusion remains unfinished and provisional. Those in positions of power have systematically failed to afford the Black Americans associated with the genre the privileges typically extended to those within the mainstream. For, as media scholar Bill Yousman writes, there are "profound differences between acts of consumerism and acts of citizenship."[42] A half-century after rap first soundtracked parties in the South Bronx, Black Americans still continue

to experience economic inequality, disenfranchisement, police brutality, disparities in public education, housing discrimination, racism in the workplace, and mass incarceration.

Just as it was when radio ruled, the reasons for this become clearer when looking at how the music is sold. While scholar Eric Weisbard argues that the Top 40 format has historically been a place for "social outsiders looking to become symbolic insiders," the economic conditions of the late 1980s and early 1990s didn't allow this transformation to occur because rap's radical potential didn't extend to how it was sold to the US public.[43] And the same is true in the contemporary streaming economy.

WHERE HIP HOP LIVES, ON THE INTERNET

Music-streaming services such as Spotify and YouTube combine the radio industry's traditional role of music discovery with the recording industry's traditional role of selling listeners access to music.[44] To help listeners manage their seemingly infinite offerings, these services offer playlists and recommendation systems that prioritize certain artists and styles in much the same way that radio stations do.[45] Appearing on one of the more popular playlists can translate into millions of streams and thousands of dollars; being featured in the top position on Spotify's most important music-discovery playlist, "New Music Friday," for example, was estimated to be worth over $55,000 in 2021.[46] These new means of discovery influence musical production. Labels employ promoters to pitch their songs to playlist curators, and—like they do with the radio industry—make music intended to fit on particular playlists.[47] Only, on streaming services, they have incredible amounts of data to work with.

By combining the point of promotion and consumption, streaming services are able to calculate exactly how a listener engages with a song. While radio programming once depended upon assumptions linking listener and performer, streaming services can now track users' every move, recording what songs get repeated, what songs get downloaded for offline listening, and at what point listeners decide they are ready to change audio content.[48] Obtaining this sort of information in the past took days of surveying; now, streaming services and labels can quickly capitalize on a popular style and more precisely target the sound of a playlist. Closely attending to these data, some critics submit, has led to musical homogenization. Mood-based playlists, which use musical language to keep a listener at a particular emotional level, are certainly some of the clearest examples of this, but genre-based playlists have the same potential.[49]

Since the advent of the internet, critics have forecasted its potential to decentralize media consumption; given access to all music in the form of a "celestial jukebox," why would everyone choose to listen to the same things?[50] But whether because of listeners' crowd-following tendencies or streaming services subtly directing listener

choices, this hasn't happened.[51] Instead, listening habits have consolidated to the point that 90 percent of all Spotify streams in 2020 were of just 1 percent of total artists on the platform.[52] And listeners, as they long have, continue to listen to older music, often in lieu of supporting new artists. In 2021, new releases were responsible for only about a quarter of the US music market, and the 200 most popular new songs accounted for only about 5 percent of streams.[53] Many of these new releases are the natural descendants of LL Cool J's and P.M. Dawn's pop-rap hybridity: just as those artists' singles fit the economic constraints of their intended format, so too do Bad Bunny, Drake, and Future, whose songs fill playlists intended to keep listeners engaged across the same emotional level without disruption. While the concept of a popular-music mainstream is harder to imagine in our fractured contemporary-media ecosystem, and while the sound of the mainstream has shifted as rappers from across the globe dominate streaming numbers, streaming platforms replicate the sorts of inequalities long pervasive throughout the music industries.[54] Perhaps the gatekeepers have different titles, but the unequal power dynamics fundamental to creating a mainstream remain the same.

But this mainstream is disconnected from the sort of coalition building that programming Top 40 radio entailed, because the business model of streaming services monetizes individual consumers rather than audiences. Using cookies, "the little data breadcrumbs that you leave behind you as you move around" on smartphones and other digital devices, streaming services collect detailed data about a listener's current state, including their whereabouts, the outdoor temperature, their previous search history, and—if audio assistants like Alexa or Siri are used—their emotional or physical health as analyzed via voice capture.[55] This information is sold in real time to companies hoping to catch consumers in a susceptible state.

Or, rather, information is sold to companies hoping to catch *the part of* a consumer that might be most persuaded by their advertisements. While using consumer information to segment the US public into progressively smaller groups has been standard marketing practice since at least the 1980s, recent technologies allow for more precise targeting.[56] Advertisements on radio stations in the 1980s were targeted toward the specific group of people who listened to each station, but the new world of big data–based personalized marketing divides each listener into granular parts and targets them at exactly the moment they are supposedly most vulnerable to purchasing a particular product, be it listening to Spotify's "Sunday Morning Jazz" while lazily browsing travel destinations or realizing the fridge is empty as they park their car at home at the end of a busy day.

Music helps segment individual people into these discrete parts: switching from "Sunday Morning Jazz" to "Rap Caviar" or "Backyard Barbeque" indicates that a listener is in a different consumption space. Indeed, streaming services sell this kind of information as a valuable and intimate look into a consumer's immediate state.[57] Spotify, for example, claims to have "a personal relationship with over 191 million people who show us their true colors with zero filter," which provides

them with "a lot of authentic engagement with our audience: billions of data points every day across devices!"[58] Listening to music via a streaming service lends marketers insight into who users are and how they might be feeling: turn on a "Sad Songs" playlist via your Spotify app and your Facebook feed might feature an ad for a virtual therapy service; listen to a workout-themed playlist and an ad for a local gym might find its way to the next YouTube video you watch. As music scholar Eric A. Drott writes, "playlists increasingly function as a means whereby music consumption taking place *within* the digital enclosure erected by streaming platforms can be used to track who we are, how we feel, and what we do *outside* this digital enclosure."[59] The mood- or activity-based playlists so popular on streaming services only make this work easier.

So what, then, does it mean that rap is the most popular genre in a media economy where music listening is used to divide us into discrete parts to better facilitate consumption? If we are constantly being treated as composites of separate consumptive parts, can listening to music—even on our individual devices, walled off via headphones—still be a means of forging community? Throughout the twentieth century, radio stations acted as a social adherent, bringing local listeners together if only for a song or two. This didn't create an equitable coalition, as the business model of the industry dictated whose voices were centered. As we've seen throughout this book, the mainstream created by Top 40 stations in the 1980s was deeply flawed: the format prioritized white listeners and ignored those that weren't profitable. But at the very least the music the format played was chosen to bring an audience together, turning private consumption into some sort of community where a mainstream American identity was forged, contested, and disseminated.[60] Playing music had ideological weight, at least according to the radio industry's business model.

When rap broke onto Top 40 playlists in the late 1980s, it demonstrated the music and advertising industries' recognition and subsequent bolstering of a diverse mainstream. What had once been marginalized, kept off playlists due to concerns that its fans would lower advertising rates, became part of the sound of musical consensus. And this only happened because programmers reshaped the industry's organization, monetizing multicultural audiences and broadcasting the genres they listened to. Creating music for this new coalition audience changed the genre, as some rappers chose to conform to programmers' musical preferences while others refused to pander to these gatekeepers and their limited conception of what their audiences would tolerate. But even with these alterations, rap's inclusion within the mainstream remained provisional, as one part of the mainstream inched closer to certain styles of rap and their multicultural audiences while another backed away, demonstrating how divided the United States was over multicultural inclusion.

And in the three decades since, the mainstream has continued to disintegrate, as digital media has largely given up on the sort of coalition audiences that the Top

40 format was designed to create. This has made it infinitely more possible to commodify listening to a subcultural genre like rap once was, as personalized marketing techniques can find value in just about anyone's digital footprint (or at least certain parts of it). But rap becoming more commodifiable on its own should not be mistaken for changing racial attitudes, for listening to rap has regularly failed to provoke listeners to tackle the racial divisions so entrenched in US society. As they always have, the financial imperatives of the music industries dictate the terms of rap's inclusion, the terms of the conversations these songs can invite. While popular music itself may offer listeners a chance at solidarity, the contemporary media economy incentivizes the reverse: each time we listen, we participate in the rendering of the public into ever smaller and more siloed moments of consumption. So even as artists continue prompting us to address systemic inequality, listening to these songs in our contemporary world participates in the very economy that has long contributed to social and economic marginalization.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION: FORMATTING RACE ON COMMERCIAL RADIO

1. Sir Mix-a-Lot, "Baby Got Back," *Mack Daddy*, Def American Recordings, 1992.

2. Charisse Jones, "When Culture Crosses Over," *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1992, E4.

3. Durkee, *American Top 40*, 204–6.

4. Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 7.

5. Programmers in this text include music directors, program directors, DJs, and often general managers at smaller market stations. See Norberg, *Radio Programming*, 46.

6. While the title of this book, riffing from 3rd Bass's "Pop Goes the Weasel," uses the term *hip hop*, throughout the book I use the term *rap* to refer to the genre of commercial music that emerged out of hip hop's four-part culture (DJing, MCing, breaking, and tagging). 3rd Bass, "Pop Goes the Weasel," *Derelicts of Dialect*, Def Jam Recordings, 1991. Throughout the genre's history, these two terms have each gained and lost their own political salience. They have been conflated by many just as they have been redefined by some, first to help distinguish between commercialized rap and more "real" hip hop, and again to distinguish between rap dominated by rapped vocals and more melodic R&B-influenced hip hop. See Sister Souljah, quoted in Gil Griffin, "Confab Hip to Evolution of Hip Hop," *Billboard*, March 16, 1991, 22; Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?*, 23; Fernando, *The New Beats*, 287.

7. For this reason, this book should be read alongside other indispensable work on this era such as Tricia Rose's *Black Noise*, Joseph C. Ewoodzie's *Break Beats in the Bronx*, Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, Nelson George's *Hip Hop America*, Imani Perry's *Prophets of the Hood*, and many others.

8. Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, xx. For more on the use of the term *music industries*, see Williamson and Cloonan, "Rethinking the Music Industry." My understanding of rap's politics is influenced by Michael Eric Dyson, who writes that politics is "the art of making

arguments over how social resources are distributed, cultural capital is accumulated, and ideological legitimacy is secured." Dyson, *Know What I Mean?*, 82.

9. Miller, *Segregating Sound*; Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*; Negus, "The Business of Rap," 538; Morrison, "The Sound(s) of Subjection"; Hammou, "La racialisation musicale comme action conjointe."

10. Quoted in Jon Pareles, "Who Decides the Color of Music?," *New York Times*, May 17, 1987, H32.

11. Kajikawa, *Sounding Race in Rap Songs*, 3. See also Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*, 28.

12. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 55–56.

13. Johnson, "Chance the Rapper, Spotify, and Musical Categorization in the 2010s," 178.

14. Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 21.

15. For more on the concept of cultural intermediaries, see Powers, "Intermediaries and Intermediation." Excellent work on cultural intermediaries, as Powers defines them, can be found in Mall, *God Rock, Inc.*; Bruenger, *Create, Produce, Consume*; Hendricks, "Curating Value in Changing Markets"; Brewster and Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, 183–86; Peterson, "Measured Markets and Unknown Audiences."

16. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 56. In the mid-1980s, this unequal distribution of resources reduced earnings for Black musicians by over half-a-billion dollars every year. See Robert Rosenthal in "Publisher's Page," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 1, 1987, 3. Gayle Wald notes that even the organization of music charts participates in racial formation, writing that "the endurance of [*Billboard*'s chart] categories has the effect of bolstering the public imagination of distinct racial identities ('Black' music for black people; 'Pop' for those others who are apparently racially 'unmarked') and encouraging segregated patterns of consumption." Wald, "Soul's Revival," 144. See also Hakanen, "Counting Down to Number One," 108.

17. Ahlkvist, "Around the Dial," 47, 307.

18. O'Donnell, Hausman, and Benoit, *Radio Station Operations*, 47. See also ibid., 51.

19. This use of music to define audience segments resembles sociological theories of taste such as those by Pierre Bourdieu, who wrote that "nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class,' nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music." Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 18.

20. Norberg, *Radio Programming*, 63.

21. Adams and Massey, *Introduction to Radio*, 178. Throughout, I've capitalized the names of radio formats to draw attention to their role as categories, as the way the industry makes sense of its organization.

22. Simpson, *Early '70s Radio*, 87–88, 120–24, 195–97; O'Donnell, Hausman, and Benoit, *Radio Station Operations*, 73–90; Adams and Massey, *Introduction to Radio*, 180–86; White, "Radio Formats and the Transformation of Musical Style," 3–4. For simplicity, I refer to stations programmed primarily for Black audiences as *Black-Oriented* unless discussing changing format names, such as in chapter 1. Similarly, I refer to stations that played current hits as *Top 40*, although many in the industry also used the format name *CHR* (Contemporary Hits Radio).

23. Frith, *Performing Rites*, 78. See also White, "Radio Formats and the Transformation of Musical Style," 2.

24. Turow, *Breaking Up America*, 61; Keith, *Radio Programming*, 19; Gandy, "Audience Construction," 6. As John C. Hajduk writes, younger listeners have rarely been of interest

to companies that advertised on the radio. Hajduk, *Music Wars*, 132. In 1994, the top three advertisers on the radio were Sears, AT&T, and General Motors. See "Radio is Big Business," *Radio: America's Voice for Over 75 Years*, September 5, 1995, 13, https://worldradiohistory.com/BOOKSHELF-ARH/History/Ad-Age-Radio-at-75-1995.pdf. Because of these types of advertiser preferences, investors considered Adult Contemporary stations "safe bets"; see Shane, *Cutting Through*, 160–61.

25. When discussing specific stations' demographic targeting as well as historical conceptions of audiences, I use the terms *Hispanic*, *Black*, and *white* to accurately reflect the terminology that the radio and advertising industries used during the 1980s and early 1990s. I capitalize the terms *Hispanic* and *Black*, but not *white*, to call attention to the unequal power in the social construction of these identities, although industry publications of the era did not capitalize *Black*. While the term *African American* gained popularity in the late 1980s, it was not widely used by the radio and advertising industries until later. Most businesses in the 1980s used the census term *Hispanic*, which has been criticized for emphasizing a connection to colonial Spain while collapsing a variety of populations with diverse backgrounds, language preferences, and cultural histories into a single category; to account for these criticisms, I use the (also-criticized) term *Latinx* when referring more generally to people with Latin American heritage living in the United States. See Isabel Wilkerson, "'African-American' Favored by Many of America's Blacks," *New York Times*, January 31, 1989, A1, A14; "What's in a Name? African-American or Black," *Ebony*, July 1989, 76, 78, 80; Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 11; Cobas, Duany, and Feagin, "Introduction," 9; Dávila, *Latinos, Inc*., 15; Aparicio, "(Re)Constructing Latinidad," 57; Jiménez Román and Flores, "Introduction"; Rodríguez, "Counting Latinos in the U.S. Census," 40–41; Laó-Montes, "Afro-Latinidades."

26. Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 7; Stoever, "Black Radio Listeners in America's 'Golden Age,'" 131.

27. Hilmes, *Radio Voices*, xix; Vaillant, "Sounds of Whiteness"; Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom*.

28. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 60. See also Gandy, "Audience Construction," 16. For more on listeners pushing back against programming, see Newman, *Radio Active*. For an example of how a programmer practically understands the relationship between race/ethnicity and musical taste, see Shane, *Cutting Through*, 89–90.

29. Kandaswamy, "Gendering Racial Formation," 27.

30. Huber, "Mainstream as Metaphor," 11. Stuart Hall makes this point about "the popular" more generally; see Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" 234. See also Ferguson, "Introduction: Invisible Center."

31. Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology'"; Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'"; Gitlin, "Prime Time Ideology."

32. Perry, "White," 244.

33. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, 3.

34. Steinbrecher, "Mainstream Popular Music Research," 408.

35. Huber, "Mainstream as Metaphor," 5–8; Huber, "Top 40 in Australia"; Toynbee, "Mainstreaming, from Hegemonic Centre to Global Networks." Sarah Thornton, by contrast, in her groundbreaking research on subcultures, rejects the term mainstream, suggesting that it is "an inadequate concept for the sociology of culture." Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 114. For a paradigmatic example of the mainstream conceptualized in opposition to a subculture, see Hebdige, *Subculture*.

36. Huber, "Top 40 in Australia," 272.

37. In 2002, Simon Frith claimed that "radio is still the most important source of popular musical discourse, defining genres and genre communities, . . . determining what we mean by 'popular' music in the first place." See Frith, "Music and Everyday Life," 41. See also Watkins, *Hip Hop Matters*, 135. For more on the term *mainstream popular music*, see Steinbrecher, "Mainstream Popular Music Research," 410.

38. Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*.

39. Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 285; Garofalo, "Black Popular Music: Crossing Over or Going Under?," 235; Huber, "Top 40 in Australia," 271.

40. One indication of this is how authors often conflate the terms *pop* and *Top 40* with *mainstream*; see, for example, Regev, *Pop-Rock Music*, 83; Sernoe, "'Now We're on the Top, Top of the Pops,'" 639; Rick Sklar in Keith, *Radio Programming*, 59.

41. Molanphy, "How Streaming Services Are Remaking the Pop Charts."

42. These songs sat at numbers one and two on the *Billboard* "Hot 100" on July 5, 1975. See also Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 284.

43. Gabriel Rossman credits this change to the rise of the Contemporary Hits Radio (CHR) format, a version of Top 40 with a slightly tighter playlist, in the early 1980s. Rossman, *Climbing the Charts*, 74.

44. Garofalo, "Culture Versus Commerce," 277.

45. Kelefa Sanneh writes that, in the 1970s, the term *pop* was "used to describe the *absence* of a particular musical marker." Sanneh, *Major Labels*, 407. See also David Brackett's discussion of country crossover in Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 286–93.

46. Programmer John Raymond, quoted here, is describing Information Society's "What's on Your Mind (Pure Energy)." Quoted in Yvonne Olson, "Outa the Box," *Billboard*, July 30, 1988, 15.

47. Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 14. See also Krogh, "Formats, Genres, and Abstraction."

48. James, "Songs of Myself." See also White, "Radio Formats and the Transformation of Musical Style," 1.

49. Szabo, "Why Is(n't) Ambient so White?," emphasis mine. See also Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 3–4; Kronengold, "Exchange Theories in Disco, New Wave, and Album-Oriented Rock," 45.

50. As John Fiske writes, "a key strategy of whiteness is to avoid definition and explicit presence." Fiske, *Media Matters*, 41.

51. Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 38n48.

52. Roberts, "Michael Jackson's Kingdom," 23; Toynbee, "Mainstreaming, from Hegemonic Centre to Global Networks," 154; Viator, *To Live and Defy in LA*, 165.

53. Roberts, "Michael Jackson's Kingdom," 23. See also Steinbrecher, "Mainstream Popular Music Research," 410.

54. Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 181.

55. Fred Goodman and Nelson George, "Majors See Black Music Boom," *Billboard*, January 25, 1986, 1, 72. For more on Michael Jackson's crossover, see Matos, *Can't Slow Down*, 150–67.

56. Paul Grein, "Charts '85," *Billboard*, December 28, 1985, T-4.

57. Paul Grein, "Chart Recap: Whitney is Top Artist," *Billboard*, December 27, 1986, 93.

58. Goodman and George, "Majors See Black Music Boom," 1, 72. See also Perry, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough."

59. Tate, *Flyboy in the Buttermilk*, 54.

60. Medina, quoted in Goodman and George, "Majors See Black Music Boom," 1; David Nathan, "The World of Black Music," *Billboard*, June 18, 1988, B-1. Interpreting shifts in musical taste as a signal of changing racial attitudes has a longer history; see, for example, Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 42; Al Perkins, "Publisher's Notes," *Black Radio Exclusive*, April 10, 1981, 3. Scholar Josh Kun argues that popular music can serve as a point of contact between cultures, where the music creates what he calls *audiotopias* that he defines as "sonic spaces of effective utopian longings." Kun, *Audiotopia*, 23. See also Ramsey, *Race Music*, 77; Pratt, *Rhythm and Resistance*, 36.

61. Rosa-Salas, "Making the Mass White," 31.

62. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 29–30; Gordon and Newfield, "Introduction," 6; Chang, *Who We Be*, 67–77.

63. Gordon and Newfield, "Introduction"; Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions," 11; Garcia, "A Multicultural America," 30; Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*.

64. Sison, "Editorial: One Size Does Not Fit All, Or Does It?," 167. Angela Y. Davis uses this same analogy to critique multiculturalism, writing, "Who consumes multiculturalism is the question begging to be asked." Davis, "Gender, Class, and Multiculturalism," 45.

65. Rossman, *Multicultural Marketing*, 147–48. For a critique of this type of representation, see Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 37.

66. Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*; Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark*, xv; Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 61. The radio played an important role in creating and maintaining the link between citizens and consumers; as Susan J. Douglas observes, it "hastened the shift away from identifying oneself—and one's social solidarity with others—on the basis of location and family ties, to identifying oneself on the basis of consumer and taste preferences." Douglas, *Listening In*, 5.

67. Rosa-Salas, "Making the Mass White," 31; Franklin, "Are You Reaching the Black-American Consumer?"; Dávila, *Latinos, Inc*., 12–13; Báez, *In Search of Belonging*, 12. See also DeVera Little, "Retail Corner," *Black Radio Exclusive*, December 11, 1981, 12.

68. Rossman, *Multicultural Marketing*, 2, 77, 127; Rosa-Salas, "Making the Mass White," 31–33. See also Dávila, *Latinos, Inc*., 186–87.

69. Dávila, *Latinos, Inc*., 238–40.

70. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, xxxvi; Rose, *Black Noise*, 30; Watkins, *Representing*, 24.

71. George, *Hip Hop America*, 10. For more on the South Bronx during hip hop's early years, see Ewoodzie, *Break Beats in the Bronx*, 17–31.

72. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 17.

73. Ed Rabel, "1981 Special Report South Bronx," *CBS News Sunday Morning*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7g-ANr7MEwQ.

74. "The American Underclass," *Time*, August 29, 1977, 14.

75. Gray, "Black Masculinity and Visual Culture," 402.

76. Lipsitz, "We Know What Time It Is," 19; Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*; Gordon, *The Return of the Dangerous Classes*; Reeves and Campbell, *Cracked Coverage*; Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 49; Rose, *Black Noise*, 104.

77. Appelrouth and Kelly, "Rap, Race and the (Re)Production of Boundaries," 302; Fenster, "Understanding and Incorporating Rap," 225.

78. Obadike, summarized in Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 7. See also Obadike, "Low Fidelity: Stereotyped Blackness in the Field of Sound."

79. Flores, "Puerto Rican and Proud, Boyee!," 91. From its earliest accounts of the genre, the press characterized rap as Black music that originated in Black urban youth spaces. See, for example, Lisa Robinson in Steve Fox, "Rappin' to the Beat," *20/20*, ABC, July 9, 1981; John Rockwell, "Rap: The Furious Five," *New York Times*, September 12, 1982, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/12/arts/rap-the-furious-five.html; Jay Cocks and Stephen Koepp, "Chilling Out on Rap Flash," *Time*, March 21, 1983, 90. Anthony Kwame Harrison writes that "despite rap's multiracial fan base, through most of its thirty-year history an enduring aspect of virtually all authentic hip hop musical performances has been their near complete reliance on black racial identities." Harrison, *Hip Hop Underground*, 28. See also Ewoodzie, *Break Beats in the Bronx*, 151–53; Kajikawa, *Sounding Race in Rap Songs*, 5; Rose, "Hidden Politics," 237; Kitwana, *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop*, 150; Appelrouth and Kelly, "Rap, Race and the (Re)Production of Boundaries"; Fenster, "Understanding and Incorporating Rap."

80. Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 117, 128.

81. Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*, 88; Garofalo, "Black Popular Music: Crossing Over or Going Under?," 242–44; Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 14–15.

82. Rose, *Black Noise*, 34; Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 14–15; Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 40.

83. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 129–30.

84. Steve Fox, "Rappin' to the Beat," *20/20*, ABC, July 9, 1981.

85. John Rockwell, "Rap: The Furious Five," *New York Times*, September 12, 1982, 84, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/12/arts/rap-the-furious-five.html.

86. Robert Hilburn, "Getting a Bad Rap: The Creative Energy of the Black Street Music Shouldn't Be Buried Under Racism and Misinterpretation," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-06-24/entertainment/ca-1085_1_creative-energy; Jon Pareles, "How Rap Moves to Television's Beat," *New York Times*, January 14, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/01/14/arts/jpw-rap-moves-to-television-s-beat.html.

87. Keith Evans, "Hilburn's Defense of Rap—Fans and Foes React: What Role Models?," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-07-08/entertainment/ca-168_1_role-models-rappers-impulse.

88. Quoted in David Keeps, "Chaka Khan," *Smash Hits*, November 8–21, 1984.

89. Tanz, *Other People's Property*, 84; Rose, "Contracting Rap," 139; Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 130.

90. KDAY Los Angeles programmer Lisa Canning, quoted in Yvonne Olson, "As Rap Goes Pop, Some Say Black Radio Is Missing Out," *Billboard*, June 18, 1988, 68; WJLB Detroit programmer Dayna Farris, quoted in Janine McAdams, "The Rap Against Rap: Sexist Images Put Down Women on Road to Big Sales," *Billboard*, June 17, 1989, B-14; and Nelson George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, June 4, 1983, 38.

91. Quoted in Brian Chin, "Top 40 Explosion Changing New York 'Street' Sounds," *Billboard*, November 10, 1984, 21.

92. Ric Lippincott, quoted in Olson, "As Rap Goes Pop, Some Say Black Radio Is Missing Out," 68.

93. Steve Hill, quoted in Janine McAdams and Deborah Russell, "Rap Rates with Adults, Say Radio, Retail," *Billboard*, September 21, 1991, 91. For a record executive's sense of what made a rap song radio friendly, see Davis and DeCurtis, *The Soundtrack of My Life*, 404–5.

94. Harrison and Arthur, "Reading Billboard 1979–89," 322.

95. "Bits," *Radio & Records*, July 3, 1987, 36.

96. "CHR Adds and Hots," *Radio & Records*, August 3, 1990, 94.

97. Weatherby, "'It's What America Needed at That Time.'"

98. Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 240–3; George, *Hip Hop America*, 97–101; Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?*, 3; Jones, "Crossover Culture: Popular Music and the Politics of 'Race,'" 110; Lopes, "Innovation and Diversity in the Popular Music Industry, 1969 to 1990"; Neal, *What the Music Said*, 143. Two notable examples of songs criticizing radio for not playing rap are Public Enemy, "Rebel Without a Pause" (1987), and Ice Cube, "Turn Off the Radio" (1990).

99. The first episode of this show, broadcast in 1988, was seen by three times the typical number of viewers of MTV's other shows, with an audience primarily made up of white suburban men in their teens and early twenties. See Steven Dupler, "The Eye," *Billboard*, August 20, 1988, 46; Samuels, "The Rap on Rap," 152. By this same year, there were over 100 music-video programs broadcast in the United States, most of which were not focused on rap. See Viator, *To Live and Defy in LA*, 190.

100. Melinda Newman, "The Eye," *Billboard*, November 10, 1990, 75. MTV programming chief Abbey Konowitch estimated in 1989 that teens made up less than one-third of MTV's audience, and that 50 percent of viewers were likely to turn off the station if they heard rap or heavy metal. Quoted in Dupler, "The Eye," *Billboard*, July 22, 1989, 50.

101. Chuck D, quoted in Ogg and Upshal, *The Hip Hop Years*, 94. See also Rose, "Never Trust a Big Butt and a Smile," 110; Farrugia and Hay, *Women Rapping Revolution*, 6. One important exception to male-focused scholarship is Kyra D. Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play*. Female audiences are rarely discussed in popular music scholarship but are vitally important to the record industry; in 2000, half of the record-buying public was estimated to be girls between nine and fourteen years old. See Dubecki, "The Knowledge; Young People and Music," 2.

102. Tanz, *Other People's Property*, xi. See also hooks, *Black Looks*, 21.

103. Michael Jeffries writes that "there is nothing *essentially* revolutionary or progressive about hip-hop, despite its beginnings as the product of marginalized peoples." Jeffries, *Thug Life*, 15.

104. Kelley, "Notes on the Political Economy of Black Music."

105. Tate, "Introduction," 12. See also Schur, "Authentic Black Cool?," 184.

106. Ogbar, *Hip-Hop Revolution*, 39.

107. Kelley, "Notes on the Political Economy of Black Music," 7.

108. Simpson, *Early '70s Radio*, 6.

109. Harrison and Arthur, "Reading Billboard 1979–89," 309. See also Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 28.

110. N. Anand and Richard Peterson make this point about music charts; see Anand and Peterson, "When Market Information Constitutes Fields," 275.

111. See, for example, Mark Bolke quoted in Sean Ross, "'No Rap' Slogan Rings Loud & Clear," *Billboard*, October 13, 1990, 15.

1. TOO BLACK, TOO NOISY

1. Crocker is quoted in Sidney Miller, "Publisher's Notes," *Black Radio Exclusive*, July 25, 1980, 10.

2. Miller, "Publisher's Notes," 3.

3. Jean Williams, "Soul Sauce," *Billboard*, October 13, 1979, 50.

4. "This is a funny ass cartoon . . . ," *Jack the Rapper*, August 19, 1981, 2.

5. Barlow, *Voice Over*, 19–26; Newman, *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride*, 86.

6. Vaillant, "Sounds of Whiteness," 38. For more on Cooper, see Barlow, *Voice Over*, 50–58.

7. Newman, *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride*, 90.

8. Douglas, *Listening In*, 18. See also Hughes, *Country Soul*, 17.

9. Interview with John Pepper, quoted in Newman, *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride*, 118. For more on WDIA, see Barlow, *Voice Over*, 109–24.

10. Hughes, *Country Soul*, 54–55.

11. Sanjek, "Tell Me Something I Don't Already Know," 66; Simpson, *Early '70s Radio*, 142–44; George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 135–36.

12. Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 64.

13. Hughes, quoted in "Black Radio: Telling It Like It Was," Episode 8. See also Ofori, *Blackout?*, ix. The first Black-owned station in the country, WERD, began broadcasting out of Atlanta in 1949; see Barlow, *Voice Over*, 136.

14. Three of the stations were owned by James Brown. See Ferretti, "The White Captivity of Black Radio," 36.

15. Barlow, *Voice Over*, 249–53.

16. "Black Ownership," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 22, 1987, 77.

17. The number of stations owned by and programmed for Hispanic audiences also increased, and by 1995, 100 stations across the nation had Hispanic owners. Ofori, *Blackout?*, xvii, 179. See also Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*, 27.

18. Barlow, *Voice Over*, xi; Ward, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South*, 202; Johnson, *KJLH-FM and the Los Angeles Riots of 1992*, 59, 135. For more on radio stations' involvement in Black politics, see Barlow, *Voice Over*, 204–29.

19. Al Wallace, quoted in Candis Bonner, "WXOK's Al Wallace: Making an Impression," *Black Radio Exclusive*, October 8, 1982, 6.

20. See, for example, Kim Freeman, "Black Radio Fights to Retain Identity Through Format Wars," *Billboard*, June 15, 1985, BM-4, BM-12; Earl Boston, quoted in "The Programmers Speak Out," *Black Radio Exclusive*, June 3, 1988, 112; Walt Love, "WEDR Holds On . . . and Proves the Point," *Radio & Records*, May 22, 1987, 47.

21. Don Mizell, "Positive Moves for Black Radio," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 7, 1982, 3, 57, 58.

22. J.B. Stone, "Future Projections of Black Radio Programming," *Black Radio Exclusive*, December 24, 1982, 32.

23. Sanneh, *Major Labels*, 95. Anthony Kwame Harrison and Craig E. Arthur note that commodified music is a "key site" for discussions about Black identity. Harrison and Arthur, "Reading Billboard 1979–89," 319. See also Shank, "From Rice to Ice," 263.

24. Daly, "The Sole Track That Launched Commercial Hip-Hop in 1979."

25. Williams, "Soul Sauce," *Billboard*, October 13, 1979, 50.

26. Ibid; Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 43.

27. Sal Abbotiello, quoted in Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 69.

28. Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 50.

29. "Sylvia Robinson 'the Queen of Rap,'" *Black Radio Exclusive*, February 13, 1981, 6. While this phrase is typically ascribed to Crocker, he was but one of many media professionals wary of rap; for example, Jack "the Rapper" Gibson hypothesized that the Sugarhill Gang were "too black" to be invited onto *Soul Train*, the dance show aimed at Black audiences. See "Puzzles the Rapper . . . ," *Jack the Rapper*, February 11, 1981, 2.

30. In the mid-1980s, almost half of radio stations did not turn a profit. See Sandra Salmans, "Battling to Be No. 1 in Radio," *New York Times*, February 22, 1984, D-1, https://www.nytimes.com/1984/02/22/business/battling-to-be-no-1-in-radio.html.

31. Turow, *Breaking Up America*, 56; Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 236.

32. White, "Radio Formats and the Transformation of Musical Style," 4.

33. Ofori and Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy, "When Being No. 1 Is Not Enough," 33–34. See also Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*, 181; Newman, *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride*, 36.

34. John Hiatt, quoted in Walt Love, "Black Radio's Most Quotable Quotes," *Radio & Records*, December 17, 1982, 34.

35. Ofori, "When Being No. 1 Is Not Enough," 2.

36. Tom Joyner, "Losing National Buys," *Radio & Records*, September 25, 1987, 56; Walt Love, "Ad Dollar$: Still Fighting Bias," *Radio & Records*, March 18, 1988, 46.

37. Ofori, "When Being No. 1 Is Not Enough," 36.

38. Ken Smickle, quoted in ibid.

39. "Washington Report," *Black Radio Exclusive*, July 25, 1986, 33; Charles Warfield, quoted in "Publisher's Notes: An Interview with WBLS' Executive Brain Trust," *Black Radio Exclusive*, March 25, 1983, 3.

40. Quoted in "Publisher's Notes: An Interview with WBLS' Executive Brain Trust," *Black Radio Exclusive*, March 25, 1983, 3.

41. "AC Still Leads the Way," *Radio & Records*, January 15, 1988, 51; James H. Duncan, Jr., "The Relationship between Radio Audience Shares and Revenue Shares," October 1987, https://worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Duncan-American-Radio/Duncan-1987-Revenue.pdf; Duncan, Jr., "The Relationship between Radio Audience Shares and Revenue Shares," April 1996, https://worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Duncan-American-Radio/Duncan-1996-Revenue.pdf.

42. Ofori, "When Being No. 1 Is Not Enough," 32. A 2001 survey of minority radio professionals reported that 91 percent had encountered a "no Urban/Spanish dictate" and that they experienced an average of twenty-six of these directives annually. See Ofori, "When Being No. 1 Is Not Enough," 29.

43. Ibid., 28.

44. See Barry Mayo in "The Future of Black Radio," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 7, 1982, 41.

45. Peter Drialo, quoted in Tyrone Van Hoesen, "Fair Share," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 22, 1987, 76. Convincing agencies of the value of Black audiences was time-consuming. See John Hiatt in Love, "Black Radio's Most Quotable Quotes," 34.

46. Jerry Boulding, "A Matter of Money," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 4, 1979, 13–15; Al Perkins, "Publisher's Notes," *Black Radio Exclusive*, April 10, 1981, 3; David Nathan, "The World of Black Music," *Billboard*, June 18, 1988, B-1, B-12, B-22. According to Los Angeles Black-Oriented consultant B.K. Kirkland, his stations were looking for songs by Black or white artists with "a bass line (strong rhythmic content) with the drums or guitar." See Terry Atkinson, "Black Radio Crosses the Color Line," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1983, W56.

47. Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 297. See also Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*, 15. Sidney Miller of *Black Radio Exclusive* notes that this format change didn't always mollify advertisers who retained "secretly designated 'black—no buy'" policies. See Miller, "Publisher's Page," *Black Radio Exclusive*, March 28, 1986, 3.

48. "The Future of Black Radio," 41; Jerry Boulding, "Stay Tuned," *Black Radio Exclusive*, September 17, 1982, 34, 38.

49. Marv Dyson, quoted in Walt Love, "Combatting the Negative Selling Crisis," *Radio & Records*, February 27, 1987, 52.

50. Parker is quoted in Keith, *Radio Programming*, 148. See also Andre Marcel, quoted in Walt Love, "WDKX: Winning an Uphill Battle," *Radio & Records*, November 21, 1986, 64.

51. George, "R&B World Circa 1979 & the Black Music Association." See also Hammou, "La racialisation musicale comme action conjointe."

52. See, for example, Charles Warfield, quoted in "Publisher's Notes: An Interview with WBLS' Executive Brain Trust," 3, 9.

53. Jodi Williams, "WBLS: New York's Creative Airforce," *Black Radio Exclusive*, March 25, 1983, 6; Crocker, quoted in Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 296. For an oral history of WBLS's early days, see WBLS, *WBLS – 'In A Class by Itself' – The 1970's, Frankie Crocker, Building a Station*. For more on WBLS and Crocker's programming, see Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*, 32–62.

54. George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 130. See also ibid., 159; Barlow, *Voice Over*, 235; Simpson, *Early '70s Radio*, 151.

55. J.C. Floyd, quoted in Walt Love, "Consultants Confront Format Issues," *Radio & Records*, February 24, 1989, 44.

56. Kim Freeman, "Urban Stations Score as Heavyweight Contenders in Major Arbitron Races," *Billboard*, September 27, 1986, B-6.

57. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*; Harris, "Gatekeeping and Remaking"; Pitcan, Marwick, and Boyd, "Performing a Vanilla Self," 165.

58. Ernie Jackson, quoted in "Airwaves," *Black Radio Exclusive*, November 27, 1987, 16. See also "Hard News," *Black Radio Exclusive*, October 24, 1980, 3, 30.

59. Eddy, *Rock and Roll Always Forgets*, 171.

60. Nelson George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, November 29, 1986, 24–5; "Chart Histories," *Billboard*, 100th Anniversary Issue, 1994, 262–9, 271–3. David Brackett writes that the many name changes "speak to a struggle over racial classification itself." See Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 236.

61. Isabel Wilkerson, "'African-American' Favored by Many of America's Blacks," *New York Times*, January 31, 1989, http://www.nytimes.com/1989/01/31/us/african-american-favored-by-many-of-americas-blacks.html.

62. George justified this by noting that "95% of the artists on the black chart are, in fact, black. The overwhelming majority of the music sold on that chart starts with black record

buyers. Whether you call it urban or black radio, the overwhelming majority of people who listen to such stations are black." See George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, November 29, 1986, 24.

63. Walt Love, "The Change to Urban," *Radio & Records*, May 1, 1987, 44.

64. Adam Dobrin, "Reverse Racism?," *Billboard*, February 3, 1990, 11.

65. See "Billboard Adopts 'R&B' as New Name for 2 Charts," *Billboard*, October 27, 1990, 6.

66. Terri Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, December 22, 1990, 35.

67. Ronda Robinson, "Radio Report," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 28, 1982, 11.

68. See, for example, "We'd Be Less!," *Jack the Rapper*, September 26, 1984, 1; "More!! Bad Vibes . . . ," *Jack the Rapper*, November 7, 1984, 9.

69. "Open Letter to Black Music People," *Jack the Rapper*, April 21, 1982, 11.

70. George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 199.

71. George notes that "Self-sufficiency alone has never been the answer to the problems of black America. The interaction between blacks and the mainstream culture are too intimate for a total separatist philosophy to work in the United States." Ibid. See also Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*, 57–60.

72. Walt Love, "UC, Black Stations Reverse Popularity," *Radio & Records*, July 21, 1989, 60.

73. Julian Wright, quoted in Leo Sacks, "Indies Keep Rap Product Popping," *Billboard*, July 17, 1982, 59.

74. Quoted in Carolyn K. Martin, "DEF JAM: Black Music for White People, Or White Music for Black People," *RockAmerica*, June 1985, https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/defjam/exhibition/simmonsrush/index.html.

75. Regarding this reputation, see Jeri Stephens, quoted in Ralph Brown, "Philly Connect," *Black Radio Exclusive*, December 24, 1982, 39; German Womack, quoted in Robinson, "Radio Report," *Black Radio Exclusive*, July 31, 1981, 12; and Erik Nuri, "Dear Jack," *Jack the Rapper*, October 15, 1980, 2. *Jack the Rapper* waged a lengthy campaign against dirty lyrics in the early 1980s; see "We're Up to Here," *Jack the Rapper*, June 1, 1983, 1; "Total War," *Jack the Rapper*, June 22, 1983, 1; "War is Still On," *Jack the Rapper*, April 11, 1984, 1.

76. Pitcan, Marwick, and Boyd, "Performing a Vanilla Self," 165.

77. Russell Simmons, "Rap Visionary Russell Simmons 'It's More Than Making Records, It's Building Careers,'" *Billboard*, April 20, 1985, R-2.

78. See, for example, WKYS's Skip Finley in Sean Ross, "Urban Rebound Spurs Churban Changes," *Billboard*, February 10, 1990, 20.

79. Marc Little, "The Reality of Black/Urban AC," *Billboard*, November 9, 1985, 20.

80. Quoted in Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 212. However true this was for a group like Stephney's own Public Enemy, artists like Whodini, whose music was aimed at older Black listeners, likely felt differently.

81. Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*, 181.

82. Simmons, "Rap Visionary Russell Simmons," R-2.

83. Cobb, *To the Break of Dawn*, 6–7.

84. Harris, "Gatekeeping and Remaking," 213.

85. Simmons, "Rap Visionary Russell Simmons," R-2.

86. "BRE Conference '86 Recap," *Black Radio Exclusive*, July 18, 1986, 12.

87. Jerome Gasper, quoted in Nelson George and Fred Goodman, "Majors See Black Music Boom," *Billboard*, January 25, 1986, 1.

88. Musical styles and genres are characterized by distinguishing instruments, as T. Carlis Roberts and Griffin Mead Woodworth write, and crossover often involves combining these distinct elements. See Roberts, "Michael Jackson's Kingdom," 28; Woodworth, "Just Another One of God's Gifts," 90. But as David Brackett notes, "what makes the process of crossover possible in the first place is that these genres were already mixed. That is, hard rock as employed in 'Beat It' and 'Black or White' already has 'blackness' as part of its buried history, 'forged' as it was out of blues." See Brackett, "Black or White?," 177.

89. During the intermission of a White Sox doubleheader, Chicago AOR programmer Steve Dahl promised to blow up the disco records of any attendee, whose contributions to the pyrotechnics lent them reduced admission. The event proved far more popular than expected and the stadium quickly reached capacity. But closing the doors didn't stop the anti-disco fervor: crowds of people climbed over the stadium walls to throw their disco records into the fire while screaming "Disco Sucks" and were so charged up that the Sox cancelled the second game due to safety concerns. That summer, additional "Disco Sucks" rallies popped up across the country, protesting not only the musical style but also the marginalized people associated with it. See Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 63; Garofalo, "Black Popular Music: Crossing Over or Going Under?," 240; Lawrence, *Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor*, 232.

90. Joel Denver, "The Lack of Black Crossovers on CHR," *Radio & Records*, January 29, 1982, 22; see also Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 63.

91. Mike Harrison, "Breaking Down Barriers," *Billboard*, May 8, 1982, 27.

92. Garofalo, "Crossing Over: 1939–1989," 113.

93. Metzer notes that the act of crossing over reinforced the musical color line, as the popularity of artists like Nat King Cole among white women "stoked the entrenched racist anxiety of black men seducing and sexually overcoming white women." Metzer, *The Ballad in American Popular Music*, 48.

94. Harry Weinger, "Widening World of Crossover Sparks Black Radio Resurgence," *Billboard*, June 16, 1984, BM-10.

95. Duff Marlowe, "Full Force," *Black Radio Exclusive*, November 27, 1987, 9, 18.

96. Geoffrey Stokes, quoted in George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 150. The crossover process also reduced Black record promoters' influence; according to entertainment consultant David Braun, they were encouraged to "get it started—get it rolling and then [white promoters will] take over and finish it for you." Quoted in Ralph Brown, "82 Conference General Session Seminar 'The Recording Company '82,'" *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 21, 1982, 14.

97. San Francisco programmer Marvin Robinson, quoted in Kim Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, February 22, 1986, 14; KIIS Los Angeles programmer Mike Schaefer, quoted in Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, February 15, 1986, 14.

98. Robert Rischar writes that vocal ornamentation—especially in live performance—is a particularly Black-coded musical practice. See Rischar, "A Vision of Love," 408–9.

99. Programmer Dave Allan of WOCQ Ocean City, for example, used the Urban categorization because he played a considerable amount of crossover music. Walt Love, "OC-104 Scores its First TD," *Radio & Records*, September 26, 1986, 59.

100. Hamilton, *Just Around Midnight*, 35, 84. See also Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?," 110–11.

101. Quoted in Charles Whitaker, "Lionel Richie: Superstar Copes with Crossover Problems," *Ebony*, February 1987, 136. One fan agreed in their letter to the editor, noting that jealousy and prejudice made some listeners unable to realize that "we have different people within our race with regard to what kind of music satisfies our inner feelings." See F. Jackson, "Letter to the Editor," *Ebony*, April 1987, 16.

102. Lynn Tolliver, quoted in Adam White, "'Penguins' Under Fire, Etc.," *Radio & Records*, August 1, 1986, 39; Richie is quoted in Whitaker, "Lionel Richie: Superstar Copes with Crossover Problems," 138; emphasis in original.

103. Rusty Cutchin, "The Rhythm Section," *Cash Box*, June 23, 1984, 22.

104. "Rap Rocks," *Billboard*, May 28, 1983, 50. For more on Blow's pop influences, see Reeves, *Somebody Scream!*, 26.

105. Rollye Bornstein, "New Music Bringing AOR, Urban Together," *Billboard*, July 9, 1983, 21. For more on the uptown/downtown scene, see Brewster and Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, 231–66.

106. Quoted in Lawrence, *Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor*, 177. Lawrence points out that these white gatekeepers didn't limit this attitude to hip hop, writing that "a swarm of party-conscious artists, musicians, and filmmakers from all over the city gathered to reinvent culture on a nightly basis, often through the interweaving of different cultural forms. Above all else, downtowners were drawn to the idea of synergy, or the belief that separate elements could resonate with a new and unexpected force when brought together, and so the fashioning of hip hop by the likes of Brathwaite, Holman, and Blue was in many respects rooted in their nightly work." See Lawrence, *Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor*, 183.

107. Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 49.

108. Myers, "The Rap in Blondie's 'Rapture.'"

109. "Sylvia Robinson 'the Queen of Rap,'" 6.

110. Quoted in ibid.

111. "Top Album Picks," *Billboard*, August 15, 1981, 80.

112. Lawrence, *Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor*, 289.

113. Brian Chin, "Dance Trax," *Billboard*, December 11, 1982, 46.

114. Quoted in Horn, "Key Tracks."

115. McLaren, quoted in Roman Kozak, "McLaren's Journey from Pistols to 'Gals,'" *Billboard*, February 5, 1983, 55; *Time* described the album as an "anthropological jamboree." See "The Best of 1983," *Time*, January 2, 1984, 89.

116. Stuart Hall describes the products of this sort of postmodern inclusion of racial difference as "a kind of difference that doesn't make a difference of any kind." See Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?," 106.

117. Theo Cateforis writes that within the industry, "new music" came to mean synthesizer-driven music. As the synthesizer became more popular, the title lost whatever meaning it once had. Cateforis, *Are We Not New Wave?*, 62–64.

118. Chin, "Dance Trax," *Billboard*, April 30, 1983, 41.

119. Brian Chin, "The Truth about New Music," *Billboard*, December 24, 1983, TA-10. See also Matos, *Can't Slow Down*, 221.

120. Bornstein, "New Music Bringing AOR, Urban Together," 21.

121. In the words of booking agent Norby Walters, white artists were once again getting famous from "playing black licks." Quoted in Nelson George, "With Rare Blend of Heart, Soul, and Sense—Nobody Books it Better than Norby Walters," *Billboard*, December 17, 1983, NW-13. See also Cateforis, *Are We Not New Wave?*, 202.

122. Judy Weinstein, quoted in Nelson George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, January 19, 1985, 51.

123. Quoted in Sacks, "Indies Keep Rap Product Popping," 59. When major labels did release rap records, the potential was clear: in 1985, Capitol Records released the Boogie Boys' "Fly Girl," which peaked inside the top 20 on the *Billboard* "Hot Black Singles Airplay" chart, a noteworthy success for a rap record that year. Capitol's vice president for Black music promotion Ronnie Jones noted that the record's success was not only due to its "solid grass-roots appeal," but also because of Black radio. "With airplay behind them," noted Jones, "the record became a phenomenon." Jones, quoted in "Boogie Boys 'Fly' on Capitol," *Billboard*, September 28, 1985, 63.

124. "New on the Charts: Whodini 'Magic's Wand,'" *Billboard*, December 11, 1982, 54. See also "Radio's Having a Rap Attack!," *Jack the Rapper*, December 8, 1982, 5. Rap mix shows also played Dolby's hit, see WBLS, *WBLS – 'In A Class By Itself' – The 1980's Rap Attack Era*, 45:32–46:05.

125. "Radio's Having a Rap Attack!," 5.

126. Carlos De Jesus and Barry Mayo, quoted in Leo Sacks, "The 'Magic' is Missing from Two N.Y. Stations," *Billboard*, December 18, 1982, 52.

127. Barry Weiss, quoted in Harry Weinger, "Whodini Makes 'Friends' at Radio, Retail," *Billboard*, December 1, 1984, 60. Whodini's later single "Funky Beat" got a similar response from Berkeley programmer Jeff Harrison, who thought that the song's "strong musical bed" drew in adult listeners. Quoted in Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, May 17, 1986, 10.

128. Quoted in Weinger, "Whodini Makes 'Friends' at Radio, Retail," 61.

129. Weinger, "Whodini Makes 'Friends' at Radio, Retail," 60.

130. Quoted in Williams, "Key Tracks: Whodini's Escape."

131. George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, September 7, 1985, 46.

132. By 1988, programmer Greg Mack reported that rap songs made up about 40 percent of KDAY's playlist. Cross, *It's Not About a Salary*, 38, 156. For more on this station's targeting see Viator, *To Live and Defy in LA*, 18.

133. Rubin, "'College Radio,'" 47. See also Jewell, *Live from the Underground*.

134. Rivers, "The Mad Science of Hip-Hop," 201. In California during the same year, E.Z. Mike began DJing a rap mix show on Thursday mornings from midnight until 3 AM on KSPC, Pomona College's radio station. See Rivers, "The Mad Science of Hip-Hop," 199.

135. Joni Williams, "Big Apple," *Black Radio Exclusive*, August 6, 1982, 34. This show began as a disco show broadcast on WHBI, a New York-area community radio station where aspiring radio personas could pay the station for broadcasting time. See Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 73. For a detailed history of Mr. Magic's show on WBLS and rap mix shows on WHBI, see Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*.

136. Arnold, "The Effects of Media Consolidation on Urban Radio"; WBLS, *WBLS – 'In A Class By Itself' – The 1980's Rap Attack Era*, 49:38–50:15.

137. Simmons, "Rap Visionary Russell Simmons," R-2. For another label's perspective on the importance of radio, see Michael Martinez, "Tommy Boy Records: Best of Both Worlds," *Black Radio Exclusive*, August 22, 1986, 31.

138. Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 163.

139. This supplement can be found in *Billboard*, April 20, 1985, R-1–9.

140. Russell Simmons, "Rappin' for Equal Access to Radio," *Billboard*, October 12, 1985, 10.

141. In 1980, Sidney Miller, editor of *Black Radio Exclusive*, reported that "if we don't get our records played on black radio, we're dead. They won't even consider it until it becomes a success on black radio." Quoted in "Leon Huff: Musical Longevity," *Black Radio Exclusive*, August 15, 1980, 6.

142. Larkin Arnold of CBS noted that "generally it would be crazy if a pop promotion department started promoting an unknown black act before it's promoted by the black promotion department." Quoted in Brown, "BRE 82 Conference: General Session Seminar 'The Recording Company '82,'" 14.

143. Johnson, quoted in Jim Bessman, "Majors Look to Youth Movement to Spread Gains, Challenge Platinum," *Billboard*, June 15, 1985, BM-14.

144. For more on the Black-Oriented stations that *did* play rap, see Viator, *To Live and Defy in LA*, 168.

145. Nelson George, "Rap Spoken Here," *Billboard*, December 26, 1987, Y-14.

2. BROADCASTING MULTICULTURALISM—AND RAP—ON CROSSOVER RADIO

1. Public Enemy, "Rebel Without a Pause," *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, Def Jam Recordings, 1988.

2. Reeves, *Somebody Scream!*, 70. For one exception, see Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*, 112–13.

3. An offshoot of the "Hot 100" chart, the "Hot 100 Airplay" chart measured airplay of singles on stations that reported to the "Hot 100."

4. Keith Caulfield, "U.S. Music Consumption Up 12.5% in 2017, R&B/Hip-Hop Is Year's Most Popular Genre," *Billboard*, January 3, 2018, https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/chart-beat/8085975/us-music-consumption-up-2017-rb-hip-hop-most-popular-genre. For more on Public Enemy's aesthetic, see Janine McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, August 25, 1990, 21, 26; Shocklee, quoted in Clover, *1989*, 33.

5. Jodi Williams, "The Big Apple," *Black Radio Exclusive*, January 21, 1983, 34.

6. Kim Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," *Billboard*, February 22, 1986, 14.

7. Kim Freeman, "Welcome Mat Out for KPWR Los Angeles," *Billboard*, January 25, 1986, 12; Joel Denver, "KIIS 'Powered' from Number One by a Hair," *Radio & Records*, July 25, 1986, 42.

8. Quoted in Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," 14.

9. Paul Grein, "Chart Recap: Whitney Is Top Artist," *Billboard*, December 27, 1986, 93.

10. Doyle Rose, quoted in Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR"; see also Freeman, "Welcome Mat Out for KPWR Los Angeles," 12.

11. "Emmis Turns On 'Power 106,'" *Radio & Records*, January 17, 1986, 3, 9.

12. Lipsitz, "Cruising around the Historical Bloc," 169; Johnson, *KJLH-FM and the Los Angeles Riots of 1992*, 56; Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*. Mike Davis notes the potential fragility of the "poly-ethnic" alliances that Lipsitz celebrates in Davis, *City of Quartz*, 87–88. For more on Los Angeles's demographics, see Judith Cummings, "Changing Demographics, and Politics, in Los Angeles," *New York Times*, August 24, 1986, E5.

13. Quoted in Yvonne Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," *Radio & Records*, September 12, 1986, 70.

14. Kim Freeman, "L.A.'s Power 106 is Tops in Spring ARBs," *Billboard*, July 26, 1986, 1, 76. That year, Power 106 fought over the top spot in the market with Top 40 rival KIIS. See Kim Freeman, "Urban Outlets Hot in Summer ARBs," *Billboard*, October 25, 1986, 1, 86; Kim Freeman, "Newcomers Make Strong Show in Gotham, L.A. Arbs," *Billboard*, January 17, 1987, 1, 69; Kim Freeman, "Winter Arbs: Hot and Cold," *Billboard*, May 2, 1987, 1, 81.

15. Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," 70. See also Adam White, "'Penguins' Under Fire, Etc.," *Radio & Records*, August 1, 1986, 39; Joel Denver, "Radio '86: Not a Programmer's Delight," *Radio & Records*, October 3, 1986, 46; Adam White, "The 12-inch Single: Healthier Than Ever?," *Radio & Records*, October 3, 1986, 43.

16. Kim Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, January 31, 1987, 10; Freeman, "L.A.'s Power 106 is Tops in Spring ARBs," 1; Kim Freeman, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, December 20, 1986, 15; "Gilmore Returns as KJLH PD," *Radio & Records*, April 18, 1986, 3.

17. Wyatt is quoted in Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," 14; Michaels is quoted in White, "'Penguins' Under Fire, Etc.," 39.

18. Dennis McDougal, "L.A. Turn-On is a Top 40 Turnoff: Power 106 Top Local Radio Station, but Dispute Over Trade Publications' Hit List is Proving a 'Black' and 'White' Issue," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1987, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987–01–08-ca-3078-story.html.

19. Freeman, "Welcome Mat Out for KPWR Los Angeles," 12; Walt Love, "WDKX: Winning an Uphill Battle," *Radio & Records*, November 21, 1986, 64.

20. Nelson George characterizes the Urban format as "supposedly a multicolored programming style tuned to the rhythms of America's crossfertilized big cities." George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*, 159. Reebee Garofalo calls Urban Contemporary a "seemingly progressive" format because of its multiracial programming. Garofalo, "Black Popular Music: Crossing Over or Going Under?," 240. Some Urban stations were also designed to attract Hispanic audiences; see Hammou, "La racialisation musicale comme action conjointe."

21. In certain regions, advertisers paid more attention to Latinx audiences beginning in the mid-1940s. See Rodriguez, *Making Latino News*, 31–34.

22. Matos, *Can't Slow Down*, 86.

23. de La Torre, "Sonic Bridging," 448; Acosta, "KCOR."

24. Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 24.

25. Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 17; Casillas, "Listening to Race and Migration on Contemporary U.S. Spanish-Language Radio," 97. For more on Spanish-language radio, see Báez, *In Search of Belonging*; De La Cruz, "Latino Airwaves"; de La Torre, "'Programas Sin Vergüenza (Shameless Programs)'"; de La Torre, "Sonic Bridging."

26. Dávila, *Latinos, Inc*., 79.

27. Casillas, "Lost in Translation," 215.

28. Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 140–42. Arbitron's polling system had trouble accurately accounting for linguistically diverse Hispanic audiences and was criticized in 2002 for undercounting Spanish-speaking audiences. See Casillas, "Lost in Translation," 218.

29. Don Kelly, quoted in Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," 70.

30. Chris Collins and Tony Gray, quoted in White, "'Penguins' Under Fire, Etc.," 39.

31. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 26–27. See also Hall, "The Multicultural Question."

32. Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions," 11. See also Garcia, "A Multicultural America," 30; Newfield and Gordon, "Multiculturalism's Unfinished Business," 76.

33. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*; Christine, "National Rainbow Coalition"; McLaren, "White Terror and Oppositional Agency," 51.

34. See, for example, Halter, "Latinos Inc.," 92.

35. McDougal, "L.A. Turn-On is a Top 40 Turnoff."

36. *Billboard* listed Los Angeles station KIIS-FM, which KPWR overtook in ratings in early 1987, as one of the five largest stations in the country. "Power Playlists," *Billboard*, January 17, 1987, 18.

37. Brian Chin described these stations as "so-called top 40/urban hybrid/crossover/hot/power radio stations." See Brian Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," *Billboard*, July 18, 1987, D-3.

38. Quoted in Joel Denver, "Grappling for the Apple," *Radio & Records*, September 4, 1987, 60.

39. Brian Chin, "Dance Trax," *Billboard*, May 16, 1987, 33.

40. Linda Thornton, "Miami Outlets Go for Pieces of Pie," *Billboard*, September 20, 1986, 10, 13. In 1986, another Miami Top 40 station converted to this format; see ibid., Coddington, "Hip Hop Becomes Mainstream."

41. Lee Michaels, "Crossover Begins on Urban Radio," *Billboard*, October 4, 1986, 9; Denver, "Grappling for the Apple," 60.

42. Kim Freeman, "Crossover Outlets Prove Their Power," *Billboard*, September 5, 1987, 1, 80.

43. Jiménez Román and Flores, "Introduction"; Rodríguez, "Counting Latinos in the U.S. Census," 40–41; Laó-Montes, "Afro-Latinidades." For more on the prevalence of racializing Latinx groups, see Rumbaut, "Pigments of Our Imagination." Miami programmer Jerry Rushin acknowledged this complexity; see Walt Love, "WEDR Holds On . . . and Proves the Point," *Radio & Records*, May 22, 1987, 47. Jorge Duany argues that the Black/white racial binary in the mainland United States rarely made sense for Afro-Hispanic Puerto Rican migrants who "have African as well as European backgrounds and range phenotypically across the entire color spectrum from black to brown to white." Duany, "Neither White Nor Black," 164. While acknowledging their influence on his musical programming, Joel Salkowitz of New York's WQHT didn't disclose how his station's listeners of Puerto Rican background may have identified.

44. In the late 1980s, Arbitron asked survey recipients to self-identify their race/ethnicity. See, for example, "Radio Hispanic Market Report: Los Angeles," The Arbitron Company, 1989, https://www.americanradiohistory.com/Archive-Arbitron/ARB-LA-Hispanic-1989-Winter-Spring.pdf, 1. Radio-research firms' questionnaires likely informed programmers' simplistic understanding of the racialization of Hispanic audiences; in 1987, Arbitron reported asking listeners if their household was "black, white, or other." See Bosley and Tobkes, "Presentation to Black Broadcasters Group," 6.

45. Kim Freeman, "Hot 30 Crossover Chart Tracks New Breed of Radio," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 1, 83.

46. Dave Allan, quoted in ibid., 83.

47. See, for example, Terry Wood, "Jeff Wyatt Plays It by Ear at KPWR Los Angeles," *Billboard*, July 4, 1987, 21.

48. Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," D-3.

49. "Power Playlists," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 20.

50. Jon Pareles, "Critic's Notebook: Clones of Madonna," *New York Times*, April 9, 1987, C25.

51. "Hot Crossover 30," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 16.

52. Quoted in Wood, "Jeff Wyatt Plays It by Ear at KPWR Los Angeles," 21.

53. Sean Ross, "The Mellowing of B/U Radio," *Radio & Records*, October 10, 1986, 52.

54. Quoted in Jeff Green, "New York's HOT 103: Dancing in the Streets," *Radio & Records*, March 20, 1987, 34.

55. Verán, "Let the Music Play (Again)"; Rivera, *New York Ricans From the Hip Hop Zone*, 88, 93. For more on the Puerto Rican roots of hip hop and other Puerto Rican influences on American popular music, see Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*.

56. Toop, *Rap Attack 3*, 174–75; Vazquez, "Can You Feel the Beat?," 111.

57. Quoted in Verán, "Let the Music Play (Again)."

58. Verán, "Let the Music Play (Again)"; Vazquez, "Instrumental Migrations," 180; Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*, 128.

59. Rivera, *New York Ricans From the Hip Hop Zone*, 1.

60. Ibid., 89.

61. Quoted in ibid., 90.

62. Freestyle was also popular on the West Coast with other minority groups, such as the Filipino communities profiled in Wang, *Legions of Boom*. See, for example, page 159.

63. Quoted in Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," D-3.

64. Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," D-3.

65. Harrison and Arthur, "Reading Billboard 1979–89," 313; Matos, *Can't Slow Down*, 143; Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 153. Alex Ogg and David Upshal argue that rap grew directly out of disco, appropriating the style because the physical spaces of disco were unavailable to urban youths. See Ogg and Upshal, *The Hip Hop Years*, 18.

66. Stephanie Shepherd, "Rap's Amazing Sales-Without-Airplay Muscle," *Billboard*, July 18, 1987, D-4, D-6, T-8.

67. David Peaslee, "Radiowise Musicians Plug in Rap's Greatest Beats to Stir Up Media Culture in Fresh Way," *Billboard*, July 18, 1987, D-4.

68. Quoted in ibid.

69. "Fat Boys Are Coming Back Hard Again," *Billboard*, June 11, 1988, 1.

70. Chris Bailey, in Yvonne Olson, "Outa' the Box," *Billboard*, June 18, 1988, 10.

71. "Hot Crossover 30," *Billboard*, September 24, 1988, 92; Coddington, "'Check Out the Hook While My DJ Revolves It.'"

72. McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, October 7, 1989, 21.

73. Sean Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," *Billboard*, October 6, 1990, 1, 13.

74. Quoted in Walt Love and Sean Ross, "The Return of the Zebra," *Radio & Records*, January 2, 1987, 44.

75. Bob Perry, quoted in Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," 13.

76. Dernersesian, "Chicana! Rican? No, Chicana-Riqueña!," 288.

77. Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," 13.

78. Ibid., 1.

79. Ibid., 13.

80. For example, in February 1988, Power 106 generated the largest teen audience of all Los Angeles radio stations, while mainstream Top 40 station KIIS generated the largest audience aged eighteen to forty-nine. See Joel Denver, "Power 106 Leads L.A. Market Again," *Radio & Records*, February 19, 1988, 40, 42. According to Phoenix programmer Rick Stacy a half decade later, making money at a Crossover station was difficult because "the median age of [a] station was 19, and you can't live on that." Quoted in Phyllis Stark, "Top 40 Swinging Mainstream?," *Billboard*, February 12, 1994, 111.

81. Mike Shalett, "Rap, Heavy Metal Attract Same Demo," *Radio & Records*, May 19, 1989, 40.

82. Joel Denver, "Power 96 Extends Lead in Three-Way Battle," *Radio & Records*, February 12, 1988, 39, 40.

83. Mark Shands, quoted in Joel Denver, "Teen Titans," *Radio & Records*, October 6, 1989, 46. Power 106's numbers validated his theory, as the station was also first in the market for listeners between eighteen and thirty-four in 1988. See Denver, "Power 106 Leads L.A. Market Again," 40, 42.

84. Phil Newmark, quoted in Joel Denver, "Teens: Not a Tough Sell," *Radio & Records*, October 13, 1989, 50.

85. Phil Newmark, quoted in ibid. See also Denver, "Teen Titans," 46, 48.

86. Denver, "Teens: Not a Tough Sell," 50.

87. See the introduction for more details on genre categorization. To account for popularity, figure 2 tallies the sum of the position from the top of the chart for each song in a given style for all weeks charted.

88. Leo Sacks, "The Majors," *Billboard*, December 16, 1989, R-3, R-25, R-28, R-32.

89. Jody Watley, "Looking for a New Love," *Jody Watley*, MCA Records, 1987.

90. "Power Playlists," *Billboard*, June 10, 1989, 79; "Power Playlists," *Billboard*, June 16, 1990, 22–23; "Power Playlists," *Billboard*, June 1, 1991, 18–19.

91. Rossman, *Climbing the Charts*, 116.

92. Sean Ross, "PDs Struggle with Crossover Logic," *Billboard*, January 28, 1989, 1, 12.

93. Quoted in Kim Freeman, "New Crossover Chart Tracks New Breed of Radio," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 83.

94. Michael Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, September 24, 1988, 92.

95. Paul Grein, "Mass-Appeal Dance Music Still Calling the Tune: But Some Record Producers Are Hoping for a New Voice to Break Through," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 1988, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-01-06-ca-22857-story.html.

96. Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, September 24, 1988, 92.

97. Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 84.

98. "Billboard Drops Crossover Radio Airplay Charts," *Billboard*, December 8, 1990, 84.

99. Dan Charnas gives young rap-friendly Crossover programmers credit for "basically end[ing] the cultural segregation that had reigned in American radio since its inception in the early twentieth century." Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 351.

100. "Radio Plays Key Role in Hispanic Target Ads," *Radio & Records*, September 6, 1991, 1; Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 17.

101. Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," D-3.

102. Quoted in Joel Denver, "KTFM: Dancin' to Dominance," *Radio & Records*, June 14, 1991, 42. This targeting differentiated Crossover from the Disco format, a white/Black coalition format that briefly trended in the late 1970s before the "Disco Sucks" movement caused its hasty demise at the end of the decade. See Sean Ross, "A Decade After Disco: Some Rock, Some Dance," *Billboard*, April 22, 1989, 10, 12, 20.

103. Quoted in Denver, "KTFM: Dancin' to Dominance," 42.

104. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 86. See also Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 34.

105. Walt Love, "Mixed Blessings," *Radio & Records*, December 12, 1986, 111–3; Mark Gunn, "Racism in Radio?," *Radio & Records*, April 10, 1992, 13; Ross, "PDs Struggle with Crossover Logic," 1, 12.

106. Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 320.

107. Sean Ross, "'Why' Questions Rule Radio Panels," *Billboard*, July 30, 1988, 10. For more on racialized voices, see Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*; Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*.

108. Ron Atkins, quoted in Sean Ross, "Urban Rebound Spurs Churban Changes," *Billboard*, February 10, 1990, 10.

109. Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 293–325.

110. Tony Gray, quoted in Ross, "Urban Rebound Spurs Churban Changes," 20. In 1993, *Billboard* revealed that one way they distinguished between Crossover and Urban stations was by their commitment to local Black communities. See McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, February 27, 1993, 26. See also Coddington, "Hip Hop Becomes Mainstream."

111. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*, 49.

112. Williams, *Mark One or More*, 5.

113. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*, 35, emphasis in the original. For more on the longer history of industry concerns about the effects of racial integration on Black-Oriented radio, see Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 253.

114. Quoted in Joel Denver, "Power 106 Closes in on KIIS," *Radio & Records*, August 14, 1987, 43. See also Love and Ross, "The Return of the Zebra," 44; Sean Ross, "Top 40s Let Black Audience Slip to Urbans," *Billboard*, March 9, 1991, 5, 17, 22.

115. See, for example, Michelle Santosuosso, quoted in Phyllis Stark and Carrie Borzillo, "Gavin Attendees Playful & Serious," *Billboard*, March 5, 1994, 75. Some stations even broadcast their concerns on air; see Ross, "Urban Rebound Spurs Churban Changes," 1, 10, 20.

116. Steve Crumbley, quoted in Walt Love, "Facing the Churban Challenge," *Radio & Records*, July 19, 1991, 46.

117. Quoted in Phyllis Stark, "NMS Panel Fights AC Radio's Bum-'Rap' Slogans," *Billboard*, July 27, 1991, 9.

118. Keith Clark, quoted in Stark and Borzillo, "Gavin Attendees Playful & Serious," 75.

119. Dan Stuart, "The Rap against Rap at Black Radio," *Billboard*, December 24, 1988, R-8, R-21.

120. For more on what Black-Oriented stations were willing to play, see Walt Love, "Rap's Role in Mainstream Radio," *Radio & Records*, October 18, 1991, 56. Critic Mark Reynolds writes that older Black-Oriented station listeners "hated rap . . . and preferred the softer R&B sounds of the Luther Vandrosses and Patti LaBelles of the world." This meant that, going forward, Black audiences would split into those who listened to rap and those who would be "oblivious to any and all of hip-hop's style and brashness and proud of it, thank you very much." Reynolds, "Gerald Levert and the Black Pop Nobody Knows, but Should."

121. Paul Christy, quoted in Yvonne Olson, "As Rap Goes Pop, Some Say Black Radio Is Missing Out," *Billboard*, June 18, 1988, 68.

122. Ross, "Urban Rebound Spurs Churban Changes," 1, 10, 20. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore notes, forms of "official anti-racism" such as liberal multiculturalism have "steadied, rather than dissolved, race as a structuring force of capitalism." Gilmore is quoted on the cover of Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*. See also Kelley, "Polycultural Me."

123. Love and Ross, "The Return of the Zebra," 44. More tangibly, in the first year of the Crossover format, Ross counted more new Crossover stations than new Urban stations. See Ross, "B/U Fall Wars '86," *Radio & Records*, November 14, 1986, 64, 68.

124. Ross, "Urban Rebound Spurs Churban Changes," 1, 10, 20.

125. Garofalo, "Culture Versus Commerce." See also George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, March 18, 1989, 27; Terri Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, December 2, 1989, 67.

126. Ross, "PDs Struggle with Crossover Logic," 1, 12.

127. Ibid.; George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, March 18, 1989, 27.

128. Kenny Ortiz, quoted in Janine McAdams, "Competitive R&B Climate Poses A&R Challenge," *Billboard*, September 8, 1990, 24.

129. See Walt Love, "Top-of-Mind Issues Facing UC PDs," *Radio & Records*, April 28, 1995, 37.

130. Quoted in Craig Rosen and Janine McAdams, "Rap Music Has the Blues as KDAY L.A. Calls It Quits," *Billboard*, April 13, 1991, 15.

131. Quoted in Joel Denver, "Power 106: A Successful Turnaround," *Radio & Records*, May 29, 1992, 42.

132. Quoted in Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 328.

133. Sean Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, April 25, 1992, 69.

134. Ibid.; "KPWR Adjusts Format After Wyatt Exits," *Radio & Records*, September 13, 1991, 1, 54; "Cummings Takes on Power 106 PD Duties," *Radio & Records*, October 4, 1991, 1.

135. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, April 25, 1992, 69; Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 330.

136. See, for example, "CHR P1 Playlists," *Radio & Records*, December 20, 1991, 71.

137. Greg Mack in Cross, *It's Not About a Salary*, 156.

138. Steve Hochman, "All Shook Up: For Power 106 and the Beat, Sometimes Even Good Ratings Are Not Enough," *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 1998, sec. Calendar; Eric Boehlert, "Hip-Hop Takes Manhattan, with Help from Hot 97," *Billboard*, September 17, 1994, 1, 91, 111.

139. Quoted in Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, April 25, 1992, 69.

140. The station's Arbitron ratings continued to improve, perhaps helped by the ratings company more heavily weighing Hispanic listener habits in response to 1990 census data that more accurately estimated Los Angeles's rapidly growing Hispanic population. See Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, April 25, 1992, 69.

141. "10 Questions With . . . The Baka Boyz." For more on the early career of the Baka Boyz, see Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 336–41.

142. Nick Vidal, quoted in Joel Denver, "Baka Boyz Fuel Power 106," *Radio & Records*, August 5, 1994, 22.

143. Quoted in Claudia Puig, "Boyz Hip-Hop to L.A. Big Time," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1994, F-5.

144. Claudia Puig, "Boyz Hip-Hop to L.A. Big Time," F-5. See also Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 349–50.

145. Claudia Puig, "KPWR-FM Hip-Hops to a Top Share," *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1994, B-8, B-9.

146. Puig, "Boyz Hip-Hop to L.A. Big Time," F-1, F-5.

147. Quoted in Mike Wyma, "Chillin' with the Baka Boyz: The Morning DJs Talk About Rap, Their Generation and 'Taking It to a Whole New Level,'" *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1994, I-22.

148. Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 407–9. Sister station Hot 97 was similarly criticized in 2000, when they interviewed a police officer during their public-affairs show about the acquittal of the police officers that killed Amadou Diallo. See Johnson, *KJLH-FM and the Los Angeles Riots of 1992*, 72.

149. Mario Garcia, "'Mexicans Have Some Serious Catching Up to Do' in the Media," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1994, B-5; Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 407–8.

150. Scott Harris, "Boyz Will Be Boyz, Despite Flap over Ads," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 1994, B-3.

151. "Street Talk," *Radio & Records*, December 3, 1993, 16; Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 403–7.

152. Phyllis Stark et al., "Gangsta Rap Under the Gun," *Billboard*, December 18, 1993, 1, 141.

153. Sincere Thompson, quoted in Havelock Nelson, "Rapping Up '93," *Billboard*, November 27, 1993, 31.

154. Doyle Rose, quoted in "Street Talk," *Radio & Records*, December 3, 1993, 16.

155. Quoted in "NY, L.A. Stations Announce Curbs on Questionable Songs," *Radio & Records*, December 10, 1993, 1.

156. Davis, "Gender, Class, and Multiculturalism," 47.

3. HIP HOP BECOMES HIT POP

1. For more on how rock became "white," see Hamilton, *Just Around Midnight*.

2. D.M.C. is quoted in Tannenbaum and Marks, *I Want My MTV*, 274. See also Broughton, "Making a Difference." Profile Records did release two versions of the song: side A of the single had prominent rock guitars; side B, according to Profile owner Cory Robbins, was more "black-oriented" and was included to prevent "alienat[ing] black stations." See "High Profile for Profile Label," *Billboard*, March 3, 1984, 50.

3. Rubin is quoted in Ogg and Upshal, *The Hip Hop Years*, 83–84. See also Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 202.

4. Kajikawa, *Sounding Race in Rap Songs*, 69. See also Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 151–53. Maureen Mahon writes that within rock, the "expression of rebellion against mainstream social constraints has been articulated from White, heterosexual male perspectives." See Mahon, "African American Women and the Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Genre in Rock 'n' Roll," 289.

5. Edgers, *Walk This Way*, 2. See also Viator, *To Live and Defy in LA*, 99.

6. Forman describes the song as the "antithesis of mainstream commercial pop" in *The 'Hood Comes First*, 155. Run-D.M.C. famously rejected disco's sound. Rick Rubin noted that he and Russell Simmons "both liked and disliked the same things in music, except that we came to it from different directions. Russell like[d] beat-oriented material derived from r&b, and I liked beat-oriented material based in rock, like AC/DC and Aerosmith. In both

cases, it was dance music that was a reaction against boring disco." Rubin, quoted in Adler, *Tougher Than Leather*, 106. Kelefah Sanneh writes that Rubin "succeeded not by teaching rappers to imitate pop stars but by teaching rappers *not* to imitate pop stars." Sanneh, *Major Labels*, 293.

7. Keith and Krause, *The Radio Station*, 41.

8. Hajduk, *Music Wars*, 132.

9. Some programmers also dealt with this problem in nonmusical ways, such as creating content blatantly aimed at adults (for instance, promotions about child safety). Kim Freeman, "Panel: Top 40's Sounding Good," *Billboard*, September 27, 1986, 10; Joel Denver, "Teen Titans," *Radio & Records*, October 6, 1989, 46, 48.

10. See, for example, "The R&R Interview: 20 Questions with Buzz Bennett," *Radio & Records*, March 6, 1987, 16.

11. Michael Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, May 19, 1990, 80. See also Russell Reid, "CHR Inspires Big Seminar at NAB/NRBA Convention," *Cash Box*, September 29, 1984, 7, 18.

12. Shane, *Cutting Through*, 82; Norberg, *Radio Programming Tactics and Strategy*, 76.

13. According to Las Vegas programmer Jerry Dean, "the majority of people who listen to top 40 are women." Quoted in Sean Ross, "Fems Take to Hard Rock, Radio Call-Out Suggests," *Billboard*, October 8, 1988, 1. When polling listeners to determine what songs his Top 40 station should play, influential programmer Guy Zapoleon only surveyed women; at a conference in 1988 he claimed that "tracking men is a luxury. . . . If you really have to target for men, then use men, but it's generally dangerous to look at a combined [audience]." Quoted in Sean Ross, Peter Ludwig, and Ken Schlager, "NAB Convention: The Good, The Bad, The Breezy," *Billboard*, October 1, 1988, 12.

14. See Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman."

15. Railton, "The Gendered Carnival of Pop," 324. Daphne Brooks notes that female music fans have complex commitments to music. Referencing Ann Powers, she writes that "girl-fans" have "strong and confident ideas and tastes of their own that have long been overlooked and disregarded as trivial and visceral rather than lofty and cerebral." See Brooks, *Liner Notes for the Revolution*, 59.

16. Bickford, *Tween Pop*, 24.

17. Burns, quoted in Charlene Orr, "Consultant Sees 'Masculinization' in Music Tastes," *Billboard*, July 16, 1988, 10. See also Rodman, "Radio Formats in the United States," 247; Simpson, *Early '70s Radio*, 70. Often rendered in opposition to "hard" musical styles like rock, rap, or outlaw country, softer styles of music such as soft rock, ballads, and country-politan have long been understood as intended for female or younger audiences. See, for example, "rockaballads" and rock power ballads in Metzer, *The Ballad in American Popular Music*; the soft-shell/hard-core dialectic in Peterson, *Creating Country Music*; and soft rock in Gale, "Sounding Sentimental."

18. Shane, *Cutting Through*, 119; Burns, quoted in Orr, "Consultant Sees 'Masculinization' in Music Tastes," 12.

19. Quoted in Kim Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, February 7, 1987, 10.

20. Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, November 2, 1985, 12. See also Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, June 21, 1986, 10; Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, July 12, 1986, 10; Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, October 4, 1986, 10.

21. Coddington, "Rap on the Radio"; Dowd and Blyler, "Charting Race," 99.

22. David Metzer writes that this song takes stylistic influence from slow songs by artists like Isaac Hayes and Barry White. Metzer, *The Ballad in American Popular Music*, 175.

23. One exception is the song "Go Cut Creator Go," which mimicked Run-D.M.C.'s rock-rap crossover technique by combining LL Cool J's rapping atop a sample of the guitar lick from Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven."

24. Don Howland, "SPINS: Platter Du Jour," *Spin*, August 1987, 25.

25. Fred Goodman, "LL Cool J is Rapping on the Door of Widespread Success," *Billboard*, April 26, 1986, 25.

26. LL Cool J, "Get Down," *Bigger and Deffer*, Def Jam Recordings, 1987.

27. This demographic was also gendered; Deena Weinstein argues that "the heavy metal sub-culture, as a community with shared values, norms, and behaviours, highly esteems masculinity." Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 104.

28. Annette Stark, "Def Not Dumb," *Spin*, September 1987, 54. At a show in London, the rapper "was booed by the mainly male crowd" when performing this song. Smash, *Hip Hop 86–89*, 7; see also Toop, *Rap Attack 3*, 166.

29. Quoted in Michael Martinez, "L.L. Cool J: His Frosty Rap Is Hot with True Grit," *Black Radio Exclusive*, February 7, 1986, 11.

30. Steve Hedgewood, quoted in Sean Ross, "Beaumont/Port Arthur's Major Market FM," *Radio & Records*, September 11, 1987, 100.

31. Gueraseva, *Def Jam, Inc.*, 122.

32. Carl Haynes, quoted in Walt Love, "WJMI/Jackson Wins Big Again," *Radio & Records*, August 28, 1987, 60. Two weeks later, Steve Hedgewood of station KHYS in Beaumont/Port Arthur noticed that many Top 40 stations played "I Need Love" before Urban stations did. See Ross, "Beaumont/Port Arthur's Major Market FM," 100.

33. Brian Castle, quoted in "Programmer's Poll," *Black Radio Exclusive*, July 31, 1987, 29.

34. Quoted in Betty, "Inside Urban Radio," *Gavin Report*, June 26, 1987, 55.

35. Bob Case, quoted in "It's a Proven Fact: L.L. Cool J 'I'm That Type of Guy' Is a Huge Hit!," *Radio & Records*, June 30, 1989, 30. The *Rolling Stone* review of the album noted its number of ballads; see David Browne, "Walking with a Panther," *Rolling Stone*, September 7, 1989, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-album-reviews/walking-with-a-panther-189784.

36. Quoted in Kim Gordon, "Meaty Beaty Big and Bouncy," *Spin*, September 1989, 52.

37. Bruce Haring and Janine McAdams, "Rappers Gain More Staying Power," *Billboard*, August 19, 1989, 78. Ballad artists of many genres were often accused of selling out; for example, rock artists in the 1970s were criticized for putting out power ballads. See Metzer, *The Ballad in American Popular Music*, 146.

38. Quoted in Michel, "L.L. Cool J," 86. For more on this moment, see Dan Charnas, "Mama's Boy," *The Source*, October 1990, 51–55.

39. Breihan, "The Number Ones: Milli Vanilli's 'Baby Don't Forget My Number'"; see also the review of "Girl You Know It's True" in "Single Reviews," *Billboard*, December 17, 1988, 57.

40. Janine McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, August 12, 1989, 24.

41. Keith Naftaly, quoted in "Radio Already Dialing up Milli Vanilli's Hot New Number," *Gavin Report*, April 14, 1989, 21.

42. While this is remarkable, other artists such as Roxette and Paula Abdul achieved this feat during the same period. And while Milli Vanilli were far more successful on Top 40

and Crossover radio stations (and charted on the pop charts before charting on *Billboard*'s "Hot Black Singles" chart), all of their singles charted in the top fifteen of the "Hot Black Singles" chart, indicating substantial airplay on Black-Oriented radio stations.

43. Chuck Philips, "'We Sold Our Souls to the Devil': In a Wide-Ranging Interview, the Duo Tell the Whole Story about What It Was Like to Live a Lie," *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1990, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-11-21-ca-4670-story.html.

44. See Terri Rossi, "Hot Rap Chart Debuts," *Billboard*, March 11, 1989, 3.

45. "Hot Rap Singles," *Billboard*, March 11, 1989, 27.

46. Tom Phillips, "Interloper on Rap Chart," *Billboard*, March 25, 1989, 9.

47. Her response is published directly following Phillips, "Interloper on Rap Chart," 9.

48. Terri Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, March 25, 1989, 27. She ends her comments by prefiguring this very book, writing that "Musicologists may now add this topic to their academic food for thought." Bill Stephney weighed in on this matter; see "Funda-Mental Hip-Hop," *The Source*, January 1991, 36, 38, 40.

49. Sean Ross, "'No Rap' Slogan Rings Loud & Clear," *Billboard*, October 13, 1990, 12, 15. Bill Stephney wrote that En Vogue's "Hold On" "qualifies accurately as hip-hop," but doesn't count as a rap song, because there's no rapper on it. Bill Stephney, "Funda-Mental Hip-Hop," *The Source*, January 1991, 38.

50. Mike Shalett, "How Music Consumers Categorize Artists," *Radio & Records*, September 28, 1990, 34.

51. Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, June 3, 1989, 29.

52. Philips, "'We Sold Our Souls to the Devil.'" For one example of fans' disappointment with the group, see Jeff Meyer, "Milli Vanilli Meltdown Angers Former Fans," *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-11-17/entertainment/ca-4262_1_milli-vanilli.

53. Stephney, "Fundamental Hip-Hop," 40.

54. *Billboard*, in the course of a year, describes their music as "pop/rap" ("Single Reviews," *Billboard*, April 29, 1989, 73), "commercially-tailored, rap/pop ballad" ("Single Reviews," *Billboard*, August 5, 1989, 81), "pop-soul" (McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, August 12, 1989, 24), and as inhabiting a "gray area" (Sean Ross, "New Kids Hysteria Reminds Top 40 PDs of Beatlemania," *Billboard*, September 23, 1989, 99). For the persistence of Milli Vanilli-style songs on the radio, see, for example, the review of Ice MC's "Easy" in "Single Reviews," *Billboard*, April 28, 1990, 73.

55. Jim Richliano, "P.M. Dawn Set Adrift on Wave of Pop-Radio Success," *Billboard*, November 16, 1991, 28.

56. Andy Allen, quoted in ibid., 31.

57. Ibid. The first two lines reference Joni Mitchell's "The Boho Dance."

58. "What are Your 5 Favorite Albums from 1991?," *The Source*, January 1992, 57–62.

59. Quoted in Pistol Pete, "Rap and Radio: No Way Out?," *The Source*, November 1988, 5.

60. According to programmer Mark Shands, building this coalition audience was "an interconnected process. . . . When building familiarity on a new record, callouts and requests kick in first with teens, build to women 18–34, and then spread to men." Shands is quoted in Denver, "Teen Titans," 46.

61. DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, "Parents Just Don't Understand," *He's the DJ, I'm the Rapper*, Jive Records, 1988.

62. "Kids Finger Favorites in Nickelodeon Poll," *Billboard*, February 18, 1989, 67.

63. Quoted in Smash, *Hip Hop 86–89*, 18.

64. Quoted in "Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince, Rap's More Mild than Wild Guys," *People*, October 3, 1988, https://people.com/archive/jazzy-jeff-and-fresh-prince-raps-more-mild-than-wild-guys-vol-30-no-14/.

65. Bill Sharp, quoted in "Programmer's Poll," *Black Radio Exclusive*, April 22, 1988, 17; Earl Boston, quoted in "Programmer's Poll," *Black Radio Exclusive*, May 6, 1988, 17.

66. Guy Zapoleon, quoted in "Outa' the Box," *Billboard*, April 30, 1988, 10; Phillips, quoted in Sean Ross, "Outa' the Box," *Billboard*, July 16, 1988, 10.

67. Rick Dobbis, quoted in David Nathan, "Major Labels Are Suddenly Singing a Different Tune While Indies Grow Stronger as Rap Emerges as the Most Popular and Vital New Music Form of the '80s," *Billboard*, December 24, 1988, R-19.

68. See, for example, "Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince, Rap's More Mild than Wild Guys"; J. Allen Levy, "Hip Hop for Beginners: DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince Get Stupid," *Spin*, October 1988, 45–46; Patrick Goldstein, "A Rappin' Big Year for Little Jive Records," *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1988, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-06-19-ca-7788-story.html.

69. Nathan, "Major Labels Are Suddenly Singing a Different Tune," R-1, R-5, R-10, R-14, R-18, R-19.

70. Quoted in Levy, "Hip Hop for Beginners," 45–6.

71. Quoted in "Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince, Rap's More Mild than Wild Guys."

72. Joe Coscarelli, "The Boycott Before: Rap and Resentment at the 1989 Grammys," *New York Times*, February 10, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/11/arts/music/the-boycott-before-rap-and-resentment-at-the-1989-grammys.html.

73. Whitburn, *Top Pop Albums 1955–1996*, 223.

74. Stephen Holden, "The (900) Numbers to the Stars," *New York Times*, January 24, 1989, C15.

75. Bruce Haring, "Hot Line Pushes RCA's Jazzy Jeff," *Billboard*, July 16, 1988, 34.

76. Krulik, *M.C. Hammer and Vanilla Ice*, 3.

77. Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, May 13, 1989, 25. Hammer distinguished himself by noting that other rappers just stood around while rapping. See Krulik, *M.C. Hammer and Vanilla Ice*, 14.

78. Craig Rosen, "M.C. Hammer Shoe Promo Plugs His New Label Acts," *Billboard*, September 8, 1990, 6, 70.

79. Todd Lewis, quoted in Walt Love, "Rap's Role in Mainstream Radio," *Radio & Records*, October 18, 1991, 56.

80. Paul Grein, "Chart Beat," *Billboard*, December 15, 1990, 9.

81. Linda Miller, "Briefly Speaking," *The Oklahoman*, June 9, 1991. For more on the Pepsi commercial, see Love, *Soda Goes Pop*, 184–92.

82. See, for example, Stephney, "Funda-Mental Hip-Hop," 36, 38, 40. This view was also held by other critics; see Jon Pareles, "M.C. Hammer, the Star and Onstage Impresario," *New York Times*, October 1, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/01/arts/review-rap-mc-hammer-the-star-and-onstage-impresario.html.

83. "Hip Hop Survey," *The Source*, January 1991, 32–4.

84. "Record Report," *The Source*, Summer 1990, 44.

85. Billy Jam, "Regional Reports: Bay Area," *The Source*, December 1990, 41.

86. Both artists are quoted in Richard Harrington, "Smooth Moves," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1990, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/style/1990/07/29/smooth-moves/6522e99c-f2c0-4c46-9c68-9f04d42be1b4/.

87. Joe Brown, "Crossing Over and Cashing In," *Washington Post*, January 18, 1991, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1991/01/18/crossing-over-and-cashing-in/a37da665-90ac-4b59-bd80-1b4731b74523/.

88. Mike Greene, quoted in Ken Terry, "Grammys Get New Categories," *Billboard*, June 4, 1988, 6. Murray Forman writes that "th[is] quote offers a classic example of the continuing devaluation of rap, and of black cultural expression in general, in the culture industries." Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 172.

89. Neal, "The Post-Civil Rights Period," 371. For a similar interpretation of the incorporation of subcultures, see Hebdige, *Subculture*.

90. Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, 214–15.

91. See, for example, Kehrer, *Queer Voices in Hip Hop*, 6; Caudle, *Multiplication Rap*; Jones, *Map Rap*; Wade, *Curtis the Hip-Hop Cat*.

92. Paul Grein, "Was It a Hit—Or a Miss?!," *Billboard*, December 27, 1986, Y-46; Gary Wall, quoted in Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, March 1, 1986, 11.

93. Dennis Hunt, "Head Masters the Rap in 'Bangkok,'" *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1985, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-05-12-ca-18460-story.html.

94. In 1991, Derrick Stevens put out a full-length album as this same rapping cat, *The Adventures of MC Skat Kat and the Stray Mob*, that A.V. Club perhaps unfairly deemed to be the "least essential album of the '90s." See Phipps, Rabin, and Thompson, "Least Essential Albums of the '90s." See also Derrick Ivory, "Ivory's Notes," *Black Radio Exclusive*, November 16, 1990, 12.

95. "Radio Charts," *The Source*, December 1990, 52–3.

96. "The Clip List," *Billboard*, December 8, 1990, 69.

97. Chang, "Word Power: A Brief, Highly Opinionated History of Hip-Hop Journalism"; McLeod, "The Politics and History of Hip-Hop Journalism."

98. "1991 Official RIAA Certifications," *The Source*, January 1992, 51.

99. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 425.

100. André LeRoy Davis, "The Last Word," *The Source*, November 1991, 64.

101. The Party, "Summer Vacation," *The Party*, Hollywood Records, 1990.

102. See, for example, *MMC End Credits 126*.

103. Hebdige, *Subculture*, 94–96.

104. In Japan, where the song proved popular, the record company released additional special versions of the single on *Jeremy the Remix*, including a "Sex Mix" and a "Rock Solo" version.

105. Sarah E. Turner notes that twenty-first-century Disney Channel programming "present[s] diversity in such a way as to reify the position and privilege of white culture and the white cast members." Turner, "BBFFs: Interracial Friendships in a Post-Racial World," 239.

106. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*, 15. See also ibid., 25.

107. Quoted in Bell, "Never Say Never."

108. "Keith Sweat: Can an Ex-Mailroom Clerk from the Projects Find Happiness and Stardom in 2 Atlanta Dreamhouses?," *Ebony*, September 1992, 84.

109. Williams, "'We Gave R&B a New Lifeline.'"

110. Cooper, "Teddy Riley's New Jack Swing."

111. David Peaslee, "Keith Sweat's Single Brings Back '70s Funk Sound," *Billboard*, January 9, 1988, 26.

112. McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, July 18, 1992, 19, 22. See also Ripani, *The New Blue Music*, 131.

113. Riley is quoted in Havelock Nelson, "Teddy Riley Moves Away from Hit-Making Sound," *Billboard*, October 29, 1988, 26. DJ Kool Herc, nearly a decade earlier, gave Grandmaster Flash similar instructions; see Hager, *Hip Hop*, 35.

114. Quoted in Williams, "'We Gave R&B a New Lifeline.'"

115. James T. Jones IV, "New Jack Swing Beats the Rap," *USA Today*, December 28, 1989, 4D. Indicating new jack swing's success, Jones that same year described the Black music charts as "overrun for the past year by teeny-boppers and twentysomethings who either rap, sing with rappers, rap and sing or sing over rap beats." See Jones, "Black: After a Rap Attack, It's Time to Fire up the Soul," *USA Today*, September 18, 1989, 4D.

116. Nelson George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, May 6, 1989, 27.

117. Sanneh, *Major Labels*, 122. Tom Breihan writes that although "'My Prerogative' isn't a rap song . . . [it] is really the first #1 rap hit—in spirit, if not, strictly speaking, in sound." See Breihan, "The Number Ones: Bobby Brown's 'My Prerogative.'"

118. Peter Watrous, "Bobby Brown Brings a New Attitude to Pop," *New York Times*, February 19, 1989, http://www.nytimes.com/1989/02/19/arts/pop-view-bobby-brown-brings-a-new-attitude-to-pop.html.

119. DeVoe, quoted in Bill Francis, "New Edition Trio Steps into Spotlight," *Billboard*, March 31, 1990, 21.

120. "The Mental Smash Hit Ready to Sky Rocket to Multi-Platinum," *Radio & Records*, June 29, 1990, 11.

121. George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, January 21, 1989, 29. See also Deborah Wilker, "Bobby Brown Getting Bigger with Every Little Step," *Sun Sentinel*, April 21, 1989, 3.

122. Gaunt, "'The Two O'Clock Vibe,'" 388.

123. Stephney, "Funda-Mental Hip-Hop," 40.

124. "Single Reviews," *Billboard*, November 10, 1990, 91.

125. LL Cool J, "Around the Way Girl," *Mama Said Knock You Out*, Def Jam Recordings, 1990.

126. Brian Phillips and Tom Mitchell, quoted in "What's the *Real* Rap on Top 40 These Days?," *Radio & Records*, November 23, 1990, 21.

127. Lynn Norment, "Whitney Houston Talks about the Men in Her Life—and the Rumors, Lies, and Insults That Are the High Price of Fame," *Ebony*, May 1991, 112.

128. Quoted in Gonzalez, "Photographing Hip-Hop's Golden Era."

129. Coddington, "Commentary: Crossing Over."

130. See Daddy-O in Stephney, "Funda-Mental Hip-Hop," 40.

131. Charles E. Rogers, "Joyce Irby's 'Mr. D.J.' 'Rents-a-rapper,'" *New York Amsterdam News*, May 6, 1989, 28.

132. According to Watley, the song was inspired by a Shalamar song of the same name. See "Jody Watley."

133. Joe Levy, "Spins," *Spin*, July 1989, 110.

134. Sammie Jordan, quoted in "Programmer's Poll," *Black Radio Exclusive*, November 23, 1990, 37.

135. "Hip Hop Survey," *The Source*, January 1991, 32–34.

136. "The Mental Smash Hit Ready to Sky Rocket to Multi-Platinum," 11.

137. 3rd Bass, "Pop Goes the Weasel," *Derelicts of Dialect*, Def Jam Recordings, 1991.

138. Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?*, 3.

139. Davis, "The Last Word."

140. Phife is quoted in Moira McCormick, "Mainstream vs. Mean Streets," *Billboard*, November 23, 1991, R-20. The song referenced is A Tribe Called Quest, "Check the Rhime," *The Low End Theory*, Jive Records, 1991.

141. Kim Green, "The Iceman Cometh," *The Source*, May 1991, 17.

142. In the same interview, MC Serch notes that part of the problem is that there's just no vetting process for new rap acts, saying that he "would love to see anyone of these people go to a real hip-hop spot and kick any of the bullshit that they kick on these records." Reginald C. Dennis, "The Great White Hoax," *The Source*, October 1991, 54.

143. MC Felony, "Who's the Real Sell-Out?," *The Source*, February 1992, 12.

144. Havelock Nelson, "The Rap Column," *Billboard*, February 1, 1992, 26.

145. Quoted in William Shaw, "Here Comes the Dawn," *Details*, January 1992, 100. See also Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*, 9.

146. Nelson, "The Rap Column," *Billboard*, February 1, 1992, 26.

147. Quoted in ibid.

148. Boogie Down Productions, "How Not to Get Jerked," *Sex and Violence*, Jive Records, 1992.

149. Quoted in Matos, "The Shove Felt Round the World."

150. McLeod, "Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation"; Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?*, 79.

151. Ice-T, "Radio Suckers," *Power*, Sire Records, 1988.

152. Quoted in Craig Rosen, "Rap on Radio: Don't Expect to Hear Much, if Any—but that's OK with Music's Creative Optimizers," *Billboard*, December 16, 1989, R-34.

153. Cameron Barr and Amy Duncan, "Black, White & Rap All Over," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 8, 1991, http://www.csmonitor.com/1991/1108/08121.html.

154. EPMD, "Crossover," *Business Never Personal*, Def Jam Recordings, 1992.

155. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 439–40.

156. Craig Rosen, "Direct-Mail Campaign Scores a Hit with Youthful Fans of Rapper M.C. Hammer," *Billboard*, June 9, 1990, 96.

157. Nelson, "The Rap Column," *Billboard*, April 25, 1992, 22; Baptiste quoted in the column.

158. Quoted in "Rap Session," *The Source*, April 1992, 23.

159. Jeffries, *Thug Life*, 120.

160. White, *From Jim Crow to Jay-Z*, 25. For more on the performance of realness in rap, see Jeffries, *Thug Life*, 60; Bradley, "Contextualizing Hip Hop Sonic Cool Pose in Late Twentieth– and Twenty–First–Century Rap Music"; Gray, "Black Masculinity and Visual Culture," 401; Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 25.

161. Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, 118–22; hooks, "Feminism Inside."

162. Bradley, "Contextualizing Hip Hop Sonic Cool Pose in Late Twentieth– and Twenty–First–Century Rap Music," 57.

163. Jon Shecter, "Talkin' Talent: In Search of the Fountain of Hip-Hop and the Ultimate Lyrical Experience," *Billboard*, November 24, 1990, R-3.

164. McLeod, "Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation," 139. Equating inauthenticity with pop audiences is not unique to rap. Eric Weisbard writes that such undervaluing is common in many genres, as rejecting the mainstream "registers entitlement and privilege: middle-class, male, white, heterosexual, northern, hipster, genre, or some other form." See Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 20.

165. Ogbar, *Hip-Hop Revolution*, 109.

166. George, *Buppies, B-Boys, Baps, And Bohos*, 94. See also Rose, "Never Trust a Big Butt and a Smile," 110–11. Equating pop and femininity with inauthenticity is clear in Michael Jeffries's 2011 ethnographic study of self-identified male rap fans, who define "inauthentic and 'bad' hip-hop" as not only "characterized by commercialism [and] mainstream appeal," but also by its female audience. Jeffries, *Thug Life*, 191, 160–2.

167. Quoted in Janine McAdams, "The Icing on Rap: 'It's a Black Thing,'" *Billboard*, September 28, 1991, 89.

168. Green, "The Iceman Cometh," 17.

169. Wimsatt, *Bomb the Suburbs*.

170. These frameworks also influenced the music that artists created after being signed; for example, one partner at the Geto Boys' record label claimed that he encouraged the group to make their music hard after "market research had shown demand for harsher lyrics." See Jon Pareles, "Gangster Rap: Life and Music in the Combat Zone," *New York Times*, October 7, 1990, H29.

171. Quoted in Samuels, "The Rap on Rap," 153.

172. Samuels, "The Rap on Rap"; Deborah Russell, "N.W.A Displays a Winning Attitude," *Billboard*, June 22, 1991, 7, 76.

173. Wang, "Who Buys Hip-Hop?"

174. Kanye West ft. Jay-Z, "Diamonds from Sierra Leone (Remix)," *Late Registration*, Roc-A-Fella Records, 2005. For more on hip hop branding, see Stoute, *The Tanning of America*; Schur, "Authentic Black Cool?"; Charnas, *The Big Payback*. For more on realness in rap music and its relationship with reality television, see Harvey, *Who Got the Camera?*

175. Reeves, *Somebody Scream!*, xi; Kitwana, *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop*; Jeffries, *Thug Life*, 7; Wimsatt, *Bomb the Suburbs*.

176. Stoute, *The Tanning of America*, 88.

4. CONTAINING BLACK SOUND ON TOP 40 RADIO

1. Patrick Cervantes, "He Says Rap is Like Rock . . . the Pet Rock," *Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 1991, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991–02–24-ca-2390-story.html.

2. Quoted in Harvey Kojan, "Taco Bell's Rap Attack," *Radio & Records*, September 14, 1990, 110.

3. Smash, *Hip Hop 86–89*, 2.

4. Jeff Murphy and Reed are quoted in Kojan, "Taco Bell's Rap Attack," *Radio & Records*, 108; emphasis in original.

5. See Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 18.

6. Charnas, *The Big Payback*, 162. Richard Reed's station KOMP added "Walk This Way" on August 15, 1986; see "AOR Tracks," *Radio & Records*, August 15, 1986, 71. The greatest

number of AOR stations that played the song as reported by *Radio & Records* was twenty-eight, or around 17 percent of the stations they surveyed. "AOR Tracks," *Radio & Records*, August 1, 1986, 70–1.

7. Jeff Pollack, quoted in Kojan, "Taco Bell's Rap Attack," 110; emphasis in original.

8. Ted Edwards, quoted in ibid., 108; emphasis in original.

9. Norberg, *Radio Programming*, 66.

10. Kasem is quoted in Durkee, *American Top 40*, 240.

11. Straw, "Music Video in Its Contexts," 249.

12. See "Hot 100," *Billboard*, February 3, 1990, 80. It is even harder to imagine someone liking these three songs *and* Jive Bunny and the Mastermixers' "Swing the Mood," a rollicking remix medley of jazz tunes and early rock and roll hits atop a rockabilly beat, which appeared a few positions lower on the same chart.

13. Sean Ross, "A Decade after Disco: Some Rock, Some Dance," *Billboard*, April 22, 1989, 10.

14. Dennis McDougal, "N.Y.'s Shannon Invades L.A. Radio," *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 1989, V1, V8; Craig Rosen, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 24, 39. The station debuted on St. Patrick's Day, 1989; see Sean Ross, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, April 1, 1989, 10, 15.

15. Shields, "KQLZ-FM," 79.

16. Claudia Puig, "KQLZ-FM 'Pirate Radio' Captures No. 3 Spot in L.A. Ratings," *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1989, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-06-09-ca-1824-story.html; Joel Denver, "Swashbuckling Songs," *Radio & Records*, March 24, 1989, 42.

17. Shannon, quoted in Denver, "Swashbuckling Songs," 42.

18. Jerry Del Colliano, "Pirate Radio," *Radio Only*, May 1989, scan found at http://www.kqlz.com/images/pradio-radioonly1.pdf.

19. Craig Rosen, "The Days of Scott Shannon, Rock 40 End on Pirate Radio," *Billboard*, February 23, 1991, 1, 86.

20. Rosen, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 24, 39.

21. Sean Ross, "Shannon Wants Bigger Success for Pirate," *Billboard*, March 24, 1990, 12.

22. Rosen, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 24, 39.

23. Joel Denver, "Shannon Launches Pirate Radio," *Radio & Records*, March 24, 1989, 42.

24. Quoted in Ross, "Shannon Wants Bigger Success for Pirate," 76.

25. "Billboard Crossover Radio Airplay," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 87; "Hot 100 Singles," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 82. The charts were named "Top 40/Dance" and "Top 40/Rock."

26. Michael Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 84.

27. Ibid. Including Rock 40 stations' playlists in the "Hot 100" chart robbed Tone Loc's "Wild Thing" of the number one spot on the "Hot 100" despite mammoth sales and Top 40 airplay. See Sean Ross and Ken Terry, "Labels Praise Rockin' Top 40s," *Billboard*, May 6, 1989, 1, 90.

28. Industry publication editor Steve Butler, quoted in Claudia Puig, "KQLZ's Low Ratings Make Pirate Radio Walk the Plank," *Los Angeles Times*, February 14, 1991, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-02-14-ca-1672-story.html. The station generated such excitement that owner Westwood One set up a 900-number listening line that charged a dollar per minute to interested parties outside of the local listening area who wanted to

hear the station. It caused enough of a stir outside the industry that *USA Today* published a story about the station on the front page of their Entertainment section. See Ross, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, April 1, 1989, 10.

29. Brian Lowry, "First Ad on KQLZ Sets a Rate Record," *Daily Variety*, April 3, 1989, 1, 20.

30. "Pirate Radio Surprise Attack Clears Decks for L.A. CHR War," *Radio & Records*, March 24, 1989, 32.

31. Many thanks to the work of archivist fans who have kept much of this history alive; see http://www.kqlz.com/pirateradio3.html and https://www.ttdila.com/2019/08/neon-signs-galore-valley-relics-museum.html.

32. Joel Denver, "Liner Notes," *Radio & Records*, March 24, 1989, 42.

33. Harvey Kojan, "Coming to Terms with Rock CHR," *Radio & Records*, March 24, 1989, 46–7.

34. Shields, "KQLZ-FM," 81–82.

35. Simpson, *Early '70s Radio*, 92. See also Hamilton, *Just Around Midnight*, 85.

36. Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 63, 181.

37. Paul Grein, "Chart Recap: Whitney Is Top Artist," *Billboard*, December 27, 1986, 93.

38. Harvey Kojan, "Whatever Happened to Rock 40?," *Radio & Records*, July 20, 1990, 60.

39. Craig Rosen, "Networks and Syndication," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 16.

40. Ross and Terry, "Labels Praise Rockin' Top 40s," 1, 90.

41. Lee Abrams, quoted in Kojan, "Whatever Happened to Rock 40?," 60.

42. "Billboard Drops Crossover Radio Airplay Charts," *Billboard*, December 8, 1990, 84.

43. "Changes Rock WW1 Radio," *Radio & Records*, February 15, 1991, 1.

44. See Puig, "KQLZ's Low Ratings Make Pirate Radio Walk the Plank." Shannon claimed that the large number of young Hispanic listeners in Los Angeles "creates a problem for this format." Quoted in Rosen, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 39.

45. Rosen, "Networks and Syndication," *Billboard*, March 2, 1991, 12.

46. Brian Burns of Kansas City, quoted in Joel Denver, "KXXR Rocks Competition," *Radio & Records*, February 10, 1989, 36.

47. Joel Denver, "New CHR Music Features for a Changing Format," *Radio & Records*, October 26, 1990, 40.

48. Sean Ross, "Every Other Teen Snubs Top 40," *Billboard*, November 17, 1990, 10, 17.

49. Sean Ross, "National Arbs: Top 40 Down, AC Up Even with Teens," *Billboard*, November 17, 1990, 1.

50. Joel Denver, "A Serious Dose of Reality," *Radio & Records*, September 20, 1991, 48, 51.

51. See "Format Reach Charts," *Radio & Records Ratings Report & Directory*, Fall 1990, 4; and "Format Reach Charts," *Radio & Records Ratings Report & Directory*, Fall 1991, 4.

52. Sean Ross, "News, Country Rise in Fall Arbs," *Billboard*, February 9, 1991, 1, 18, 65.

53. Pirate Radio, for example, lasted from March 1989 to February 1991; between the spring of 1989 and the spring of 1991, Top 40 radio's national format rating declined from 18.3 to 13.8.

54. Rick Alexander, quoted in Joel Denver, "What the Hell's Wrong With CHR?," *Radio & Records*, December 7, 1990, 36. Young men tuned out of commercial radio throughout the 1990s; their time spent listening decreased across the decade. See Rossman, *Climbing the Charts*, 92.

55. Steve King and Randy Kabrich are quoted in Denver, "What the Hell's Wrong with CHR?," 35–36.

56. Todd Fisher, quoted in ibid., 35.

57. "Radio Already Dialing Up Milli Vanilli's Hot New Number," *Gavin Report*, April 14, 1989, 21.

58. Mike Shalett, "Rap, Heavy Metal Attract Same Demo," *Radio & Records*, May 19, 1989, 40. The study recorded a more exaggerated version of the same trend regarding heavy metal.

59. Sean Ross, "Why Mom Hates Rap, Why It Doesn't Matter (and Other Notes on the Top 40 Crisis)," *Billboard*, November 3, 1990, 12; Brian Philips and Zapoleon are quoted in Sean Ross, "Teens, Adults Split on Top 40 Hits," *Billboard*, February 3, 1990, 12, 18.

60. Chris Squires, quoted in Ross, "Teens, Adults Split on Top 40 Hits," 18.

61. Sean Ross, Craig Rosen, and Phyllis Stark, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, April 13, 1991, 12, 15; "Shannon Exit Adds to N.Y. Radio Turmoil," *Billboard*, January 28, 1989, 1, 75.

62. Quoted in "Street Talk," *Radio & Records*, April 5, 1991, 22; Ross, Rosen, and Stark, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, April 13, 1991, 12.

63. Tom Cuddy, quoted in Sean Ross, "'80s Gold Decorating Many Mainstream, Top 40 Outlets," *Billboard*, May 18, 1991, 21.

64. Ross, Rosen, and Stark, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, August 17, 1991, 13.

65. Sean Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, January 26, 1991, 32.

66. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, July 1, 1989, 19; and Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, October 27, 1990, 18.

67. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, January 26, 1991, 32.

68. *RARE! Debut Ad for Houston's Mix 96.5 KHMX*, 0:08–0:17.

69. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, January 26, 1991, 32.

70. Ibid.; Sean Ross, "Can Top 40 Really Play Classic Rock?," *Billboard*, December 15, 1990, 10.

71. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, January 26, 1991, 32.

72. Sean Ross, "Some Station Standouts from Radio's Static-Filled Year," *Billboard*, December 22, 1990, 18.

73. Ross, "Can Top 40 Really Play Classic Rock?," 10.

74. Steve Perun, quoted in Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, February 24, 1990, 26. See also Sean Ross, "The '80s; Broadcasters Remember 'Money Decade,'" *Billboard*, January 6, 1990, 16, 19, 22, 26. Forward-looking programmers were also adjusting to projections that showed the American public aging over the next decade, which would impact the success of the teen-friendly Top 40 format. See Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, February 24, 1990, 26; Gary Wall, "Radio on Radio," *Radio & Records*, June 5, 1992, 34; and Denver, "What the Hell's Wrong With CHR?," 35–6.

75. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, January 6, 1990, 25; Sean Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," *Billboard*, August 18, 1990, 1, 15.

76. Sean Ross, "Anatomy of a Change: WRQX, WGH," *Billboard*, October 6, 1990, 12; and Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, November 16, 1991, 13.

77. Steve Perun, quoted in Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, February 24, 1990, 26. See also Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," 1, 15.

78. Quoted in Ross, "Teens, Adults Split on Top 40 Hits," 18.

79. Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," 1. Exceptions included WRQX in Washington, DC, whose programmer Lorrin Palagi claimed that he considered his market

competitor to be an Adult Contemporary station. See Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, May 25, 1991, 14.

80. Sean Ross, "ACs Face Growing Format Encroachment," *Billboard*, September 22, 1990, 12, 20.

81. Quoted in Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," 15; Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, January 26, 1991, 32.

82. Quoted in Craig Rosen and Sean Ross, "Censorship Still an Issue at NAB," *Billboard*, September 29, 1990, 17. See also Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," 1, 15.

83. Tony Davis, quoted in Mike Kinosian, "Victoria Adult CHR's Dayparting Factor," *Radio & Records*, October 18, 1991, 51.

84. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, October 28, 1989, 26.

85. Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, May 25, 1991, 14.

86. Quoted in Phyllis Stark, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, May 1, 1993, 67.

87. Quoted in Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," 15. See also Ross, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, October 28, 1989, 26.

88. Craig Rosen and Janine McAdams, "Rap Music Has the Blues as KDAY L.A. Calls It Quits," *Billboard*, April 13, 1991, 15; Shannon is quoted in Eric Boehlert, "'80s Redux: Top 40/Adult Radio Goes Back to Future," *Billboard*, October 16, 1993, 81.

89. Todd Pettengill, quoted in Will Hughes, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, January 13, 1990, 19.

90. Adam Cook, quoted in Stark, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, July 25, 1992, 61.

91. Sean Ross, "'No Rap' Slogan Rings Loud & Clear," *Billboard*, October 13, 1990, 12. "No Kids" likely referred to the New Kids on the Block. As is evident from the stations' slogans, heavy metal was similarly banned on these stations. But the terms of heavy metal's absence from their playlists were entirely different than those of rap, for, as Tricia Rose notes, the "ideological position on black youth" distinguishes attacks on rap from stations' concerns about heavy metal. Rose, *Black Noise*, 129; see also Binder, "Constructing Racial Rhetoric," 765.

92. Mike McVay, quoted in Ross, "'No Rap' Slogan Rings Loud & Clear," 12.

93. Steve Perun, quoted in ibid.

94. *KHMX—Why Do You Listen to Mix 96*, 0:16–0:17.

95. *KHMX—Mix 96.5—1994.Mpg*, 0:12–0:13. See also Phyllis Stark, "NMS Panel Fights AC Radio's Bum-'Rap' Slogans," *Billboard*, July 27, 1991, 9.

96. Adam Cook, quoted in Stark, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, July 25, 1992, 61. As Joseph Turow notes, gated communities were physical manifestations of the media's fragmentation of the American public. See Turow, *Breaking Up America*, 194. Murray Forman writes that the "'othering' of funk and rap generally parallels the cultural and geographical ghettoization of black communities in American cities and thus can be reimagined in terms of a cultural geography of the radio bandwidth and, by extension, of the entire contemporary music industry." Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First*, xvi. See also Douglas, *Listening In*, 348.

97. Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America*, 100.

98. Ibid., 7.

99. This information comes from Martha Conway of the Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California at Berkeley, and is reprinted in Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America*, 6.

100. Macek, *Urban Nightmares*, ix.

101. Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America*, 71.

102. Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America*, 18; see also Grant, "The Function of the Gates," 298.

103. Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods*, 130.

104. Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 87.

105. Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 206.

106. Sean Ross, "Why Mom Hates Rap," 12.

107. Richard Reed, quoted in Kojan, "Taco Bell's Rap Attack," 108.

108. For more on the racial disciplining of space, see Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place.*

109. Quoted in Ross, "'No Rap' Slogan Rings Loud & Clear," 15.

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111. McCann, "Contesting the Mark of Criminality," 369; McLaren, "Gangsta Pedagogy and Ghettocentricity," 29.

112. Michael Specter, "N.Y. Jogger's Assailants Given Maximum Sentences," *Washington Post*, September 12, 1990, A3; Quinn, "'Never Shoulda Been Let out the Penitentiary,'" 71. See also Mark Jenkins, "Recordings: Hip-Hop Without the Bad Rap," *Washington Post*, March 25, 1990, G7.

113. Tipper Gore, "Hate, Rape and Rap," *Washington Post*, January 8, 1990, A15.

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115. Abiola Sinclair, "Newsweek Raps Rap," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 14, 1990, 32.

116. Jerry Clifton, quoted in Rochelle Levy, "Urban Panel Studies State of Black/AC," *Billboard*, February 22, 1992, 69.

117. Janine McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, April 7, 1990, 24.

118. Sara Rimer, "In Rap Obscenity Trial, Cultures Failed to Clash," *New York Times*, October 22, 1990, A12.

119. Hawdon, "The Role of Presidential Rhetoric in the Creation of a Moral Panic"; Elwood, *Rhetoric in the War on Drugs*, 103; Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*, 6; Rose, *Black Noise*, 126.

120. Roberts, "Ladies First"; Decker, "The State of Rap"; Watkins, "A Nation of Millions."

121. Decker, "The State of Rap," 54. S. Craig Watkins notes that Public Enemy's Black nationalism helped them carve out a place in the marketplace. See Watkins, "A Nation of Millions," 388.

122. Jones, *Fear of a Hip-Hop Planet*, 159. See also Rose, *Black Noise*, 104; McLaren, "Gangsta Pedagogy and Ghettocentricity," 36.

123. Rick Du Brow, "Will Rap Flap Damage NBC's 'Fresh Prince'?," *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1990, F1, F10.

124. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 270.

125. Yancey, *Who Is White?*, 15.

126. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*.

127. Burton, *Posthuman Rap*, 64.

128. Ross, "'No Rap' Slogan Rings Loud & Clear," 12, 15.

129. Dan Stuart, "Black Radio: Searching for Quality Songs More in Today's Key of Life," *Billboard*, June 17, 1989, B-26. In 1990, Urban AC was the hottest topic for Black-Oriented programmers attending the *Jack the Rapper* convention. See Janine McAdams and Sean Ross, "AC Issue Charges 'Rapper' Confab," *Billboard*, September 1, 1990, 4, 82.

130. Terri Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, June 13, 1992, 23; Terri Rossi, "B'board Launching R&B Monitor, Two New Airplay Charts Featured," *Billboard*, September 4, 1993, 5.

131. "R&R Urban Panel Divides in Two," *Radio & Records*, July 28, 1995, 1.

132. Dwayne Cunningham, quoted in "Label Execs Bullish on Urban Format's Future," *Radio & Records*, June 16, 1995, 52. The very creation of *Billboard*'s "Hot Rap Singles" chart reflected this reality, as it became increasingly clear throughout the late 1980s that many rap songs would not gain sufficient airplay on Black-Oriented stations to chart. See Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, March 11, 1989, 29.

133. Sean Ross and Yvonne Olson, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, November 5, 1988, 24.

134. Kernie Anderson, quoted in Sean Ross, "Black AC Sound Spreads Through Major Markets," *Billboard*, May 27, 1989, 12. Adult Contemporary stations also aimed their broadcasting toward workplaces and courted working women; see Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 150.

135. See, for example, Walt Love, "Dayparting: A Sound Practice," *Radio & Records*, May 7, 1993, 42.

136. Newsweek Staff, "Rap and Race," *Newsweek*, June 28, 1992, http://www.newsweek.com/rap-and-race-199550.

137. Robert A. George, "'No Rap' Slogans Reflect Radio's Poverty," *Billboard*, January 12, 1991, 12. See also Turow, *Breaking Up America*, 196.

138. Douglas, *Listening In*, 356.

139. Steve Weed, quoted in Mike Kinosian, "CHR Lite's All Right in Motown," *Radio & Records*, October 18, 1991, 51.

140. Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," 1, 15; Stark, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, May 1, 1993, 67.

141. David Browne, "Pop Radio Suffers a Midlife Crisis," *New York Times*, July 28, 1991, https://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/28/arts/pop-radio-suffers-a-midlife-crisis.html.

142. Steve Perun, quoted in Ross, "'No Rap' Slogan Rings Loud & Clear," 12, 15.

143. Kevin McCabe, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, June 12, 1993, 77.

144. McCabe, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, December 4, 1993, 85.

145. Ross, "Some Labels See Virtue in Adult Top 40," 1, 15.

146. Boehlert, "'80s Redux: Top 40/Adult Radio Goes Back to Future," 1, 81.

147. Craig Rosen, "Fostering the Resurgence of Adult Pop," *Billboard*, October 9, 1993, 89–90.

148. Fred Bronson, "Chart Beat," *Billboard*, August 7, 1993, 82.

149. John Artale, quoted in Carrie Borzillo, "Mature-Pop Buyers Bust Genre Stereotypes," *Billboard*, August 7, 1993, 81.

150. Quoted in Joel Denver, "CHR in the '90s: The New World Order," *Radio & Records*, September 25, 1992, 36.

151. Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, October 14, 1989, 89. See also Ken Barnes, "Tracking the Trends in CHR Add Patterns," *Radio & Records*, May 11, 1990, 72, 74; Joel Denver, "Music Notes from 1991," *Radio & Records*, December 13, 1991, 41; Joel Denver, "Music 1992: Hitting the High Notes," *Radio & Records*, December 11, 1992, 43; and Joel Denver, "1993's Significant Action: The Music," *Radio & Records*, December 10, 1993, 36.

152. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 416.

153. "Street Talk," *Radio & Records*, October 2, 1992, 25, 26, 28, 30.

154. Quoted in Denver, "CHR in the '90s," 36.

155. Ross, "ACs Face Growing Format Encroachment," 12, 20.

156. Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*, 98.

157. Martin, "Would You Buy the Future of Radio from This Man?" See also Eddy, *Rock and Roll Always Forgets*, 297.

158. In June 1983, the FCC increased the number of FM licenses in the country by almost 30 percent, which allowed for more stations in a given market. Bob Savage, "More FM Competition Ahead," *Radio & Records*, May 20, 1983, 6; "FCC Clears Massive Addition of 1000 FM Drop-Ins," *Radio & Records*, June 3, 1983, 4. See also Ofori, *Blackout?*, 20.

159. Quoted in Ahlkvist, "Around the Dial," 148.

160. Jeff Wyatt, who created the pioneering Crossover station Power 106 in Los Angeles, forecast in 1990 that the days of getting high numerical ratings were over and that, in the future, many stations would all receive equally good but minute ratings. See Joel Denver, "Power 106 Feels the Fragmentation," *Radio & Records*, August 3, 1990, 47–48.

161. Eric Boehlert, "LMAs Are Not Always Agreeable," *Billboard*, July 18, 1992, 65, 69.

162. Bill Holland, "FCC Raises Ownership Cap," *Billboard*, March 21, 1992, 13.

163. According to Tom Gammon of American Media, owning more than one station in a market was "an opportunity to have more market power." Quoted in Phyllis Stark, "FCC Ownership-Rule Changes Are Seen as Good News by Most, a Bad Move by Some," *Billboard*, August 22, 1992, 68. See also Phyllis Stark and Eric Boehlert, "FCC Ownership Edict Generates Flurry of Deals," *Billboard*, November 14, 1992, 1, 78.

164. Emmis CEO Jeff Smulyan, quoted in Mike Kinosian, "Five Experts Eye Duopolies, LMAs," *Radio & Records*, January 22, 1993, 40. See also Joel Denver, "Charting the Format's Future," *Radio & Records*, January 1, 1993, 32.

165. Stark, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, April 16, 1994, 88.

166. Phyllis Stark, Eric Boehlert, and Carrie Borzillo, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, September 19, 1992, 81.

167. Weiss, *The Clustered World*, 33.

168. Klaess, *Breaks in the Air*, 99.

169. Napoli, *Audience Economics*, 93.

170. Tony Novia, "R&R Introduces First Custom Format Charts," *Radio & Records*, June 16, 1995, 27.

171. Coleman Research, "The Music Clustering of America"; Weiss, *Latitudes and Attitudes*, 6–7.

172. Weiss, *Latitudes and Attitudes*, 7.

173. Boston programmer and consultant Joe White, for example, said in the late 1980s that he added new records based on "gut instincts" but followed up with research to determine how often and when to play the song. See Kim Freeman, "Fresh Formats Are on the Increase," *Billboard*, July 25, 1987, 10.

174. Weiss, *Latitudes and Attitudes*, 7.

175. Coleman Research, "The Music Clustering of America," 35.

176. Ibid., 57. Later in the study Coleman broke down these data even further, detailing correlations between music taste and many other qualities including club participation, race, food preferences, music consumption, hobbies, and TV show preferences.

177. A 1994 study by research firm Odyssey led Marilyn A. Gillen to question whether a mainstream still existed, or whether there were "just a lot of little streams each running independently?" Gillen, "Tracking Multimedia's Fragmented Audience," *Billboard*, March 5, 1994, 60.

178. Coleman Research, "The Music Clustering of America," 21.

179. Coleman Research, "CHR Segmentation," 4.

180. Ibid., 20.

181. Paul Wickliffe, "Great Music Still Exists," *Billboard*, January 25, 1992, 8.

182. Jay Stevens, quoted in Joel Denver, "Programmers' Round Table (Part One)," *Radio & Records*, October 8, 1993, 33. See also Sean Ross, "If You Build It, They Will Cume," *Billboard*, March 28, 1992, 61, 63.

183. There were around 2,600 Country and 1,800 Adult Contemporary stations nationally. The numerical relationship between a format's station count and audience size is complicated, as Country and Adult Contemporary stations are often more numerous in less populated areas. Phyllis Stark, "Labels Rethink Radio as Top 40 Slips," *Billboard*, June 19, 1993, 1, 83; Phyllis Stark, "Format Trends Confirm Top 40's Slide," *Billboard*, November 12, 1994, 101; and Tony Novia, "Is CHR an Endangered Species?," *Radio & Records*, May 10, 1996, 28.

184. Sean Phillips, quoted in Stark, "PD of the Week," *Billboard*, February 5, 1994, 90.

185. Alan Burns, "Changing Music and Radio Tastes," *Radio & Records*, January 29, 1993, 31. Mobile DJ Paul Beardmore noted similarly that "the mainstream audience of top 40 has become completely turned off by a disproportionate number of rap groups hitting the top 40." Beardmore, "Mainstream Malady," *Billboard*, July 10, 1993, 5.

186. Quoted in Dave Sholin and Annette M. Lai, "Ten Years of Top 40: 1978 to 1988," *Gavin Report*, December 2, 1988, 18. Tanner forecasted that "the numbers are on the side of the stations that understand how to court the ethnic people within the city and make the station palatable enough to be acceptable to the non-ethnics who live in the suburbs." Ibid.

187. Dave Elliott, quoted in Joel Denver, "Adjusting for the Future," *Radio & Records*, November 1, 1991, 46.

188. Polly Anthony, quoted in Sholin and Lai, "Ten Years of Top 40: 1978 to 1988," 16. See also Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 184.

189. Durkee, *American Top 40*, 204. Two years later, *American Top 40* switched to using an all-airplay chart. This meant that the countdown could downplay the popularity of rap; for example, rather than celebrate Sir Mix-a-Lot's chart-topping hit "Baby's Got Back," Stevens could declare that the number one song in the country was Mariah Carey's slow and gentle cover of the Jackson 5's "I'll Be There." Ibid., 205–6.

190. "We Don't Wimp Out!," *Billboard*, October 12, 1991, 17.

191. When approached by Dees's staff about playing the countdown, a station owner in Texas replied that he'd "have to look at the music." See Fong-Torres, *The Hits Just Keep on Coming*, 250.

192. Phyllis Stark, "Stevens a Shadow as ABC Crowns Dees Top 40 King," *Billboard*, June 18, 1994, 6, 95; "Dees Crosses to ABC Radio," *Radio & Records*, June 17, 1994, 1, 24.

193. "Clean Sweeps and Custom Tailoring Keep the Countdown Up," *Billboard*, September 11, 1993, RD-8; Durkee, *American Top 40*, 216–17. Dees's other major competitor, Casey Kasem, recorded three different versions of his countdown (one for Top 40, one for Adult Contemporary, and one for Adult Top 40). See Carrie Borzillo, "The 'After' of Countdown Show Makeovers," *Billboard*, August 19, 1995, 81.

194. "The Natural Selection," *Radio & Records*, July 29, 1994, 7.

195. MacFarland, "Rethinking the Hits," 39; emphasis in original. MacFarland's claim here is similar to Eric Weisbard's argument that each format operates by similar rules and has its own mainstream. See Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 2.

196. George, "'No Rap' Slogans Reflect Radio's Poverty," 12.

197. Douglas, *Listening In*, 354. David T. MacFarland makes this point as well, writing that "format differentiation begat audience segmentation." MacFarland, "Rethinking the Hits," 33. More broadly, Hmielowski, Beam, and Hutchens have shown that an increase in television-media options correlates with the polarization of viewpoints. See Hmielowski, Beam, and Hutchens, "Structural Changes in Media and Attitude Polarization."

CONCLUSION: FORMATTING RACE IN THE NEW CENTURY

1. Quoted in Newsweek Staff, "Rap and Race," *Newsweek*, June 28, 1992, http://www.newsweek.com/rap-and-race-199550.

2. Knopper, *Appetite for Self-Destruction*; Turow, *The Daily You*; Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 9–10.

3. Bill Holland, "FCC Raises Ownership Cap," *Billboard*, March 21, 1992, 13.

4. Drushel, "The Telecommunications Act of 1996 and Radio Market Structure," 4–5.

5. Fratrik, "Radio Transactions 2001," 8.

6. DiCola and Thomson, "Radio Deregulation," 24, 31.

7. Drushel, "The Telecommunications Act of 1996 and Radio Market Structure," 18.

8. Tricia Rose proposes that niche targeting and consolidation "have exaggerated, if not manufactured, the development of a contentious generational divide in the black community." Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 10.

9. Ofori, *Blackout?*, 47; Wirth, "Format Monopolies," 152, 154.

10. Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 242. See also Huntemann, "Corporate Interference," 399.

11. Tony Novia, "CHR Survival Guide," *Radio & Records*, September 16, 2000, 51. In 2007, Todd L. Wirth determined that 59 percent of all Top 40 audiences listened to Clear Channel stations. See Wirth, "Format Monopolies," 151.

12. Ross, "Hip-Hop."

13. Tony Novia, "Where Do We Go From Here?," *Radio & Records*, October 18, 1996, 35. From 1993 to 2002, Clear Channel's annual rate of return to their investors was 26 percent, demonstrating remarkable profits in an industry with historically slim profit margins. Foege, *Right of the Dial*, xx. In 2004, the top four companies accounted for half of all radio advertising revenues. DiCola, "False Premises, False Promises," 5.

14. Guy Zapoleon, "A Guy's View of the Radio World," *Radio & Records*, September 16, 2000, 96. See also Wirth, "Nationwide Format Oligopolies," 252; Wirth, "Direct Format Competition on the Radio Dial and the Telecommunications Act of 1996," 33. Scholars have continued to argue about the effects of the Telecommunications Act on diversity within the radio marketplace, an argument which largely rests on one's definition of diversity. See

Polinsky, "The Factors Affecting Radio Format Diversity After the Telecommunications Act of 1996"; Chambers, "Radio Programming Diversity in the Era of Consolidation"; Aufderheide, *Communications Policy and the Public Interest*, 92. Two notable exceptions to the lack of format innovation are the rap throwback format and the format based on the iPod's shuffle listening, typically labeled with an average white dude's name like JackFM or BobFM. For the latter, see James, "Songs of Myself."

15. Eric Weisbard, "Pop in the 90's: Everything for Everyone," *New York Times*, April 30, 2000, http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/30/arts/music-pop-in-the-90-s-everything-for-everyone.html; Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*; DiCola and Thomson, "Radio Deregulation," 63.

16. Fred Bronson, "The Year in Charts," *Billboard*, December 28, 2002, YE-10.

17. Larry Flick, "Declining Sales in 2002 Trigger Desire for Less Hype, Better Records, Fresh Blood," *Billboard*, December 28, 2002, 17.

18. Quoted in Huntemann, "Corporate Interference," 399.

19. Folami, "From Habermas to 'Get Rich or Die Tryin,'" 238.

20. Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 25, 84–91.

21. Ibid., 19; Huntemann, "Corporate Interference," 390.

22. Ofori, *Blackout?*, 66.

23. A 2011 study of mostly Upstate New York residents found that more than three-quarters of respondents thought their local radio stations played "none" or "very little" local music. See Saffran, "Effects of Local-Market Radio Ownership Concentration on Radio Localism, the Public Interest, and Listener Opinions and Use of Local Radio," 288.

24. Arnold, "The Effects of Media Consolidation on Urban Radio."

25. Bettig and Hall, *Big Media, Big Money*, 140–1.

26. Ken Tucker, "Station Break," *Billboard*, April 26, 2008, 5.

27. Sirius and XM's 2002 programming can be found here: https://s1.q4cdn.com/750174072/files/doc_financials/annual2002/SIRI-2002-10k.pdf and here: https://investor.siriusxm.com/investor-overview/press-releases/press-release-details/2002/XM-Reshapes-Its-100-Channel-Lineup/default.aspx.

28. In the late 1990s, Arbitron reported that people who used the internet listened to the radio around three hours less per week. See Frank Ahrens, "The Radio Waves of the Future: Internet Stations Give Listeners a New Way to Tune In," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1999, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1999/01/21/the-radio-waves-of-the-future-internet-stations-give-listeners-a-new-way-to-tune-in/a3449d53-1565-4c52-8396-288c1000e7a5/.

29. Tony Novia, "To Internet or Not to Internet?," *Radio & Records*, October 26, 2001, 34, 38.

30. Gary Graff, "The Year Radio Woke Up," *Billboard*, December 23, 2006, 26.

31. Clea Simon, "Some Web Radio Broadcasts Are Halted Over Fees," *New York Times*, April 30, 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/30/business/some-web-radio-broadcasts-are-halted-over-fees.html; Steve Wonsiewicz, "The Future of Webcasting," *Radio & Records*, October 26, 2001, 1, 30; Frank Saxe, "Consolidation, Technology Changed the Face of Radio in 2000," *Billboard*, December 30, 2000, 81–82.

32. Ahrens, "The Radio Waves of the Future: Internet Stations Give Listeners a New Way to Tune In."

33. Graff, "The Year Radio Woke Up," 26; "As the Audio Landscape Evolves, Broadcast Radio Remains the King."

34. Quoted in "Spotify Pieces Together Strategy Amid New Questions About Growth."

35. Data from The Nielsen Company, *The Nielsen Total Audience Report March 2021*, 27, 30.

36. Quoted in "The Internet Gets Personal: Can Radio and Records Keep Up?," *Radio & Records*, September 16, 2000, 66, 71.

37. Resnikoff, "Turns Out Spotify Free Is Bigger Than Almost Every American Radio Station . . ."; Mayfield, "As Streaming Dominates the Music World, Is Radio's Signal Fading?" Much of this listening happens on mobile devices; see Edison Research, "Mobile Device Share of Listening on Track to Surpass Traditional Radio Receivers in the U.S."

38. "The Internet Gets Personal," 66, 68, 71; Paul Heine, "The Empire Strikes Back," *Billboard*, December 29, 2010, 34. CBS Radio launched one such platform in 2008 called Play.it. See Buskirk, "CBS Quietly Rolling Out Play.it Streaming Radio."

39. "Top Five Radio Stories of '09," *Billboard*, December 19, 2009, 32. Record companies noticed this development and in turn shrank their promotional departments by as much as half. See Mayfield, "As Streaming Dominates the Music World, Is Radio's Signal Fading?"

40. Quoted in Mayfield, "As Streaming Dominates the Music World, Is Radio's Signal Fading?"

41. Kun, "Two Turntables and a Social Movement," 580–81; Sanneh, *Major Labels*, 355.

42. Yousman, "Blackophilia and Blackophobia," 369.

43. Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 27.

44. Hesmondhalgh and Meier, "What the Digitalisation of Music Tells Us about Capitalism, Culture and the Power of the Information Technology Sector," 1565. This combination of functions is reflected at the monetary level; while terrestrial radio stations only pay performance royalties (to songwriters and publishers), interactive streaming services pay performance *and* mechanical royalties (to songwriters, publishers, and artists/labels)—Spotify, for example, reportedly pays out around 80 percent of its earnings to labels and publishers. There has, however, been a recent effort to change this. See Evers-Hillstrom, "Musicians, Broadcasters Battle in Congress over Radio Royalties"; Drott, "Music as a Technology of Surveillance," 236.

45. Ugwu, "Inside the Playlist Factory"; Tofalvy and Koltai, "'Splendid Isolation,'" 6–7.

46. Aguiar and Waldfogel, "Platforms, Power, and Promotion," 686.

47. "The Dying Art of the Great Song Intro"; Goldschmitt and Seaver, "Shaping the Stream," 72; Hesmondhalgh, "Streaming's Effects on Music Culture"; Pelly, "The Secret Lives of Playlists."

48. Morris and Powers, "Control, Curation and Musical Experience in Streaming Music Services."

49. Chayka, "Can Monoculture Survive the Algorithm?"; Pelly, "Big Mood Machine"; Hesmondhalgh, "Streaming's Effects on Music Culture"; Rindner, "How Streaming Changed Rap."

50. Goldstein, *Copyright's Highway*; Mann, "The Heavenly Jukebox"; Sun, "Paradox of Celestial Jukebox."

51. Johnson, "Chance the Rapper, Spotify, and Musical Categorization in the 2010s"; Wilson, *Celine Dion's Let's Talk About Love*; Tofalvy and Koltai, "'Splendid Isolation.'"

52. Emily Blake, "Data Shows 90 Percent of Streams Go to the Top 1 Percent of Artists," *Rolling Stone*, September 9, 2020, https://www.rollingstone.com/pro/news/top-1-percent-streaming-1055005/.

53. Gioia, "Is Old Music Killing New Music?"; MRC Data, *2021 MRC Data Year-End Report*.

54. Rindner, "How Streaming Changed Rap"; Tofalvy and Koltai, "'Splendid Isolation,'" 1; Aguiar, Waldfogel, and Waldfogel, "Playlisting Favorites."

55. Alex Pentland, quoted in Turow, *The Voice Catchers*, 20.

56. Turow, *The Voice Catchers*, 12.

57. Drott, "Music as a Technology of Surveillance," 239.

58. Quoted in Pelly, "Big Mood Machine."

59. Drott, "Music as a Technology of Surveillance," 256; emphasis in the original.

60. Douglas, *Listening In*, 6.

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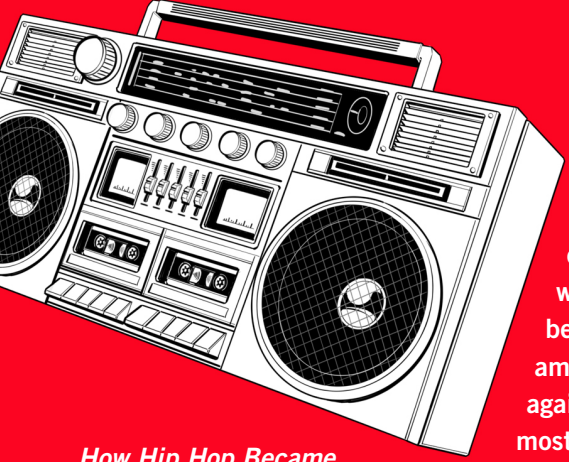

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