



When the Beat Was Born: DJ Kool Herc and the Creation of Hip Hop (Coretta Scott King - John Steptoe Award for New Talent)

By Laban Carrick Hill

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A John Steptoe New Talent Award Winner

Before there was hip hop, there was DJ Kool Herc.

On a hot day at the end of summer in 1973 Cindy Campbell threw a back-to-school party at a park in the South Bronx. Her brother, Clive Campbell, spun the records. He had a new way of playing the music to make the breaks?the musical interludes between verses?longer for dancing. He called himself DJ Kool Herc and this is *When the Beat Was Born*. From his childhood in Jamaica to his youth in the Bronx, Laban Carrick Hill's book tells how Kool Herc came to be a DJ, how kids in gangs stopped fighting in order to breakdance, and how the music he invented went on to define a culture and transform the world.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 3-5—As a child in Jamaica, Clive Campbell aspired to be a DJ. At 13, he moved to the Bronx, where he gained the nickname Hercules because he grew to be more than six feet tall. He shortened the name to Herc, added Kool, and is credited as a pioneer of hip hop. He created a new art form for his parties when he plugged in two turntables to create longer breaks for dancing and began chanting the names of his friends during the breaks. Hill's descriptive writing is paired with Taylor's vibrant artwork, which features large crowds dancing, close-up shots of breakdancing, or Herc's hands masterfully spinning the dual turntables. This is a fine introduction to the topic, and the extensive time line, which spans from 1973 to 1986, will help students with reports and show them how this American art form was created.—Glynis Jean Wray, Ocean County Library, Toms River, NJ(c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From [Booklist](#)

This picture-book biography introduces one of the unsung creators of hip-hop, Clive Campbell, who was born in Jamaica in 1955. He was entranced by the massive dance parties thrown by a neighbor, and when his family moved to the Bronx, he took up the name Kool Herc and created the innovative techniques behind hip-hop DJing. Stacking musical breaks on top of each other to fuel long stretches of dancing frenzy, calling the kids with the best moves “break-dancers,” and sending shout-outs to friends and little offhand rhymes over the music—Kool Herc unique and hip-hop wouldn’t exist without any one of these flashes of inspiration. By the time rap music really took off, in the early 1980s, he was already out of the limelight but not without leaving a massive legacy. Aside from the bouncy bio of the book’s star, Hill also highlights the positive social force of hip-hop and the boundless energy of musical joy. It’s all matched by Taylor’s freewheeling artwork. A treat from an underrepresented corner of music history. Grades 2-4. --Ian Chipman

Review

“...an expert biography of a hip hop and rap pioneer, and a not-to-be-missed picture-book debut by Taylor, a Washington, D.C. –based artist” *?Publishers Weekly*

“Hill also highlights the positive social force of hip-hop and the boundless energy of musical joy. It's all matched by Taylor's freewheeling artwork. A treat from an underrepresented corner of music history.” *?Booklist*

“Hill's descriptive writing is paired with Taylor's vibrant artwork, which features large crowds dancing, close-up shots of breakdancing, or Herc's hands masterfully spinning the dual turntables.” *?School Library Journal*

“Hill's narration deftly balances detail and momentum, addressing technical innovations while conveying the excitement of listeners on the scene at the birth of something new. Taylor's delicate linework is swept with streaks of earthy browns and muted greens and reds, suggesting swirls and blasts of sound bombarding the old school crowds.” *?BCCB*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bonnie Skelton:

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Craig Harrison:

Is it an individual who having spare time subsequently spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just resting on the bed? Do you need something new? This When the Beat Was Born: DJ Kool Herc and the Creation of Hip Hop (Coretta Scott King - John Steptoe Award for New Talent) can be the answer, oh how comes? A book you know. You are thus out of date, spending your time by reading in this completely new era is common not a geek activity. So what these publications have than the others?

Jerry Hull:

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