



2010-2020:

The Apex of Black Music & Social Media

By Trevor W. Coleman II

At the end of a decade, and approaching a new, the dominating presence of hip hop and R&B is operating on a new foundation – social media.

The influence an artist has on pop culture and music quality almost always coincides with the artist's presence on social media.

When looking back at the songs that will form the popular music for the 2010 decade, such as Drake's 2016 single *Hotline Bling*, or this year's *Old Town Road*, these songs can't be mentioned without noting their respective memes and the social media commotion that trailed these songs for months after their releases. The unification of social media and hip hop music is the source of influence in which established and emerging artists benefit. When a song is popular on social media, the artist has all they need to establish a fan base even before recording a full-length album or releasing another single.

This year has been the biggest example of rappers emerging from social media: Megan Thee Stallion off the *Hot Girl Summer* hashtag and Lil Nas X with the buzz of *Old Town Road* stemming from video-sharing app TikTok earlier this year.

The influence that these songs have had on pop music throughout 2019 is an example of black social media's influence on pop culture. The format of these popular songs was changed to accommodate the public's demand for a new social media lightning rod. Tracks are shorter to increase playback potential on streaming services; mixing is more focused on emphasizing the drums and higher-pitched countermelodies in production, which will sound recognizable and tolerable when being played on just your iPhone speakers.

These tactics are not new but have since been revitalized for a new purpose. They were once rejected for fear of a lack of creative control.

These characteristics of a popular song in 2019 stem from contemporary rap music and how it's presented on the internet. As short, repetitive songs they become more of a slogan that can be repeated and recited by the masses. Instead of wearing the music down with length, they utilize loud and busy production for the short amount of time they need to reach the hook and then repeat the hook after one more verse before the end.

Hip hop has reached an era where time has expanded it to an array of sub-genres that regularly blur the lines of authenticity when classifying rap music. The wave of hip hop that emerged from the music sharing website SoundCloud 12 years ago has evolved into a counterculture that displays its influence on

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When it comes to the careers of artists who have had a long-time impact on popular culture, **social media** becomes a safeguard that continuously rejuvenates the image of these artists by focusing on their personal opinions, business endeavors, and everyday life.

'Dangerously in Love' Beyoncé and Jay-Z are Hollywood's Most Powerful Couple

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Newswire Senior Correspondent

When Beyoncé married Jay-Z in 2008, the skeptics were as loud as the audience at a sold-out Destiny's Child concert.

At its worst, critics expected that the marriage would be Bobby and Whitney all over again – a hip-hop bad boy meets a sexy songstress with a squeaky-clean, all-American image.

Some of those critics believed the marriage would only last as long as the union between Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley – an odd and uncomfortable 20-month marriage that ended with Elvis' daughter filing for divorce citing irreconcilable differences.

After a dozen years, hundreds of millions of records sold – and one infamous elevator fight at a Met Gala between Jay-Z and Solange Knowles, (Beyoncé's little sister) – Hollywood's preeminent power couple are still "dangerously in love."

"I believe Beyoncé and Jay-Z have been successfully married as a Hollywood power couple for so long because they can see beyond the wealth, fame and materialism that comes with a Hollywood lifestyle," stated hip-hop artist and activist Sean XGL Mitchell.



"The music business can be brutal so artists and couples who are grounded, in touch with reality and are consciously aware of who they are, have the keys to success and longevity," Mitchell noted.

"In particular, when you watched Beyoncé's Super Bowl performance a few years ago, she paid tribute to the Black Panthers while performing her new hit 'Formation.' Their costumes and cho-

reographed dance routine, which included a fist in the air, was a true sign of self-knowledge and pride," Mitchell added.

"It was equally apparent in Jay-Z's lyrics in the song the 'Story of O.J.' When you have two people who are more than just artists, who can transcend power, you have the making of a successful partnership and marriage," he said.

According to medium.com, the average divorce rate of Hollywood celebrities is 52 percent, slightly higher than that of the general public. The length of celebrity marriages can be as short as hours, while the average is about six years, the website reported.

That Jay-Z and Beyoncé have doubled that time and are still going strong, doesn't exactly surprise experts who've followed their careers and relationship.

Dr. Fran Walfish, a Beverly Hills family and relationship psychotherapist and regular expert child psychologist on CBS-TV's "The Doctors," said it's no secret the power couple has overcome big problems in their marriage.

At a Met Gala event in 2014, cameras caught Solange hitting and kicking Jay-Z as Beyoncé watched quietly. Later, it was revealed that Solange confronted her brother-in-law over cheating rumors, and things quickly escalated.

"The critical key is that they hung in together with a solemn commitment to each other and the couple ship," Walfish stated. "Today, it seems, they are doing better than ever and are parents to a 7-year-old daughter and two-year-old twins."

In a 2017 interview with The New York Times Style Magazine, Jay-Z opened up

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about his infidelity and the near demise of his marriage.

"You know, most people walk away, and like the divorce rate is 50 percent or something because most people can't see themselves," Jay-Z told the Times. "The hardest thing is seeing pain on someone's face that you caused, and then have to deal with yourself. So, most people don't want to do that. You don't want to look inside yourself. And so, you walk away."

Walfish stated that Jay-Z's interview with the Times was telling.

"The hardest part for him was seeing the pain on his wife, that he caused," Walfish said.

"That is accountability and owning up to a huge mistake. Beyoncé, on the other hand, had to be open to forgiveness. Her love and non-judgmental character, along with probable therapeutic help, allowed for repair in the relationship. The secondary gain is that this type of relationship deep repair can bond a couple even more strongly together than before," Walfish added.

Born Sean Carter in Brooklyn, NY in

1969, Jay-Z has won 22 Grammy Awards with hits that include "Hard Knock Life," "99 Problems," and "Run this Town."

With a net worth of more than \$1 billion, Jay-Z also has produced several films, and he owns the streaming service, Tidal, and other companies.

Born in 1981 in Houston, Texas, Beyoncé rose to fame with the singing group "Destiny's Child" in the 1990s. Her solo career took off in 2002 with the release of the album, "Dangerously in Love," which included a collaboration with Jay-Z.

Beyoncé has won 23 Grammy Awards and owns and operates Parkwood Entertainment, a company that includes various brands of music, movies, videos, and fashion. Forbes Magazine has placed Beyoncé's net worth at approximately \$500 million.

"These two powerhouse moguls understand the nature of engagement that is vital in a marriage," stated Dr. Allana Da Graca, a psychologist, and self-styled persistence expert.

"I think they both understand the arduous journey to fame that can also blur lifelines of meaning and authenticity amongst themselves. They hold one another accountable and maintain the muse of each other," Da Graca said.

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contemporary music through coarse and unconventional rapping, low sound quality, sparse production, and controversial subject matter. This music and the social media presence of the major artists that emerged from it have had a lasting effect on the evolution of the genre throughout this decade.

When it comes to the careers of artists who have had a long-time impact on popular culture, social media becomes a safeguard that continuously rejuvenates the image of these artists by focusing on their personal opinions, business endeavors, and everyday life. We have seen this both increase public perception towards an artist and their work as well as decrease the public's perception of the artist as an "artist" but instead as a public figure.

The presence of Kanye West in the past five years has been just as controversial as any other period of his fame, but the difference is the impact of the music that he has released since 2016. After Life of Pablo, the accolades for Kanye's 2018 album Ye and this year's Jesus is King have been fewer than ever before.

The base of his influence in hip hop is fueled by his legacy built from the string of classic albums he has released since 2004, his ongoing presence on social media, and his fashion line. Throughout this year Kanye has posted snippets of his Sunday Service project, weekly performances of Kanye leading an ensemble of musicians and a gospel choir with his Ensoniq sampler in various locations around southern California. These concerts led up to the October release of Jesus is King to mixed reviews which further established his place as more of a current social media influence than the musical vanguard he began at the start of the previous decade.

The rise of social media in the early 2000s has now established itself as the main platform hip hop artists use for a closer connection to their fan base and a public receptor of their work.

As the 2020s approach us, we are exiting this decade with a new apparatus of creative expression.

(Trevor W. Coleman II is a Los Angeles-based musician and musicologist. He is originally from Michigan)

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