

Hip-hop dance reflected in today's movies

BY MARIAN LIU
KIRT CAMPUS

Hip-hop dance is infusing pop culture as never before, moving from street corners and music videos to fitness centers, dance studios and television shows.

And now Hollywood has noticed.

"Right now dance is the key focus, the main focus of everything going on," said Shane Sparks, a choreographer from "You Got Served." "Honey," another hip-hop dance movie, opened late last year.

The hip-hop dance of today is a more choreographed form of street and club dancing, as opposed to the more free-form moves of earlier styles, such as break dancing.

"Each move now that Britney Spears or Justin Timberlake does takes a little bit of this and that from break dancing—locking, popping moves—and blends it all in," said Beto Lopez, a hip-hop dancer

from Stockton, Calif.

The choreography also has become a mainstay at concerts.

"If you eliminate all the dancers and keep the artists there, I don't think the shows would be as incredible," said Sparks, choreographer for B2K, IMx, Ginuwine and Brandy.

"There's a definite surge in the white neighborhood that wouldn't necessarily be exposed to hip-hop in their everyday life," said Keith Pinto, an MC and hip-hop dance teacher at Dance Attack in Los Gatos, Calif. "They watch MTV, see other kids doing it and want to be a part of it. You can pretty much go to any dance studio in the Bay Area and they'll have a hip-hop class."

To see how hip-hop dance is being mainstreamed, look no further than high schools and fitness centers.

"That's the music ... at school dances, so we want to learn how to dance to that," said Diana Schnabel, a 17-year-old junior from

Willow Glen High School in San Jose.

Her high school's drama shows once showcased mostly singing and skits, but recently they have been taken over by hip-hop dance routines, she said.

Fitness centers are also taking advantage of the trend, citing it as the newest fad in exercise after yoga and Pilates.

Amanda Arnold started teaching hip-hop in June at three 24 Hour Fitness Centers in San Jose. She said that even aerobics conventions have started to include hip-hop in their repertoire.

"I grew up when hip-hop was pretty popular, and as I got older, I went to the clubs where we danced to rap and hip-hop," said Arnold, a San Jose resident. "But now I'm 26 and it's old school to go clubbing, so this is what I want to do when I work out."

People like Arnold have grown up with hip-hop and now are old enough to promote it.

"We're in control of it now," said Lopez, director of a break dancing documentary called "The B-boy Connection" set to be released in time for the next year's Sundance Film Festival. "We may not have Hollywood power or money, but we can promote our own events and sell our own clothing."

Even as hip-hop dance and fashion are becoming more pervasive, some say it comes with a downside. Aiko Shirakawa, a hip-hop dance instructor at San Jose's Roosevelt Community Center, said that although this trend has paved the way for many dancers, it also has fostered more suggestive dance moves.

"The young generation is getting out there and feeling energized and inspired, but girls are left with the dances that are slutty, like striptease dancing," said Shirakawa, 35.



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Hip-hop dance is showing up everywhere in movies with the continuing interest from today's youth.

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Halftime

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it's hard to escape the sexing-up of America's kid culture.

"I call it the 'adultification of kids,'" said David Walsh, psychologist and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family, a Minneapolis-based research group with no religious affiliation. "We keep exposing them to more and more adult content."

Although the flap may be over Jackson's breast, Lawrence Shapiro, author of "The Secret Language of Children," believes kids won't be affected by a momentary glimpse of Jackson's breast. What should outrage parents were the other halftime performers.

"The dancers are half-naked, grinding their bodies, suggestive," Shapiro said. "That's the real message children are getting. It's literally not seeing the forest for the trees."

No one should be surprised at the Super Bowl backlash, said Elayne Rapping, women's studies professor at the University of

Buffalo. The nation's Beavis and Butthead juvenile approach to sexuality is teaching children the wrong message about sex. "Ten-year-old boys are learning to think and act that way from television," she said.

But shouldn't 10-year-old boys be allowed to watch the Super Bowl? And, perhaps a greater question for our society is this: Is the Super Bowl designed for family viewing?

Maybe not. "We can read the lips of angry players ... and it's filled with beer commercials," said Robert Thompson, director for the Center for the Study of Popular Television at Syracuse University. "If we thought the whole family gathered around the TV set, we should be more upset about the alcohol than a breast at 50 yards."

Others disagree. "Kids by the millions are watching that show," Walsh said. "It is probably the one television event when most families come together all year. It is the ultimate 'family hour,' and they (CBS) treated it like it was Guys' Night Out."

"The Super Bowl ads and the

halftime show demonstrate the nation's schizophrenic view of sexuality," Rapping said.

"We're very juvenile about sexuality," Rapping said. And stunts like Jackson's tearaway costume reduce the issue of sexuality "down to the level of a frat-boy kegger."

"The family television hour has been eroding for years," said Rob Simon, curator of the Museum of Television & Radio in New York. The reason? Cable television.

"To stay in the game, networks obviously have increased sexual innuendoes in dialogue or are overtly borrowing from MTV video sexuality," Simon said. "It's not just Janet Jackson."

But Jackson, Timberlake and MTV were hotly criticized Monday even by the target demographic.

"The vast majority of folks—90 percent—think it (the tearaway) was staged," said Pete Snyder of New Media Strategies, an Internet research firm that polled 1,500 Web users Monday. "They don't think it was particularly exciting," he said, because Janet Jackson "is a total has-been."

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