

Unexpected Collaborations That Work

Last week Talib Kweli announced on Twitter that he'd done a song with bling-happy rapper Gucci Mane. A blogger who follows him declared the collaboration to be "the end of conscious rap." Well I believe that Gucci and his audience need to hear from Kweli. Sometimes unlikely collaborations predictably flop and other times they are pleasant surprises. I decided to make a list of unusual collaborations that turned out good.

[youtube]1nPPRQeTxTY[/youtube]

1. Meshell Ndegeocello and John Mellencamp's "Lonely Night."

Ndegeocello was already known for bringing the funk and Mellencamp had history as an '80's rock icon. No one would've expected these two to get together and cover Van Morrison's song. At the time when people asked Meshell about this track she said that "Everyone needs some of the funk."

[youtube]632PKsMxr7I[/youtube]

[youtube]hxa4Um9ICgk[/youtube]

2. Michael Jackson and Mick Jagger "State Of Shock."

Michael recorded this song originally with Freddie Mercury but the Mick Jagger version was released. This was the biggest song from The Jacksons' Victory album. How cool is that Michael and Mick were able to sound good on this song being themselves?

[youtube]5gWvBXS2t4A[/youtube]

3. Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney "Say Say Say."

Michael and Paul also did "The Girl Is Mine" but "Say Say Say" is my favorite. After this recording Michael was able to say

he had hit songs with a Rolling Stone and a Beatle.

[youtube]HsyJyQpKkGo[/youtube]

4. Nas and Damian Marley *Distant Relatives*.

Most people like me thought the sum of these two people would be very boring and pretentious. They surprised us by recording an album of inspired songs about life. And they can say they made Lil' Wayne rap about something worthwhile for a change and that in itself is rare.

[youtube]4B_UYYPb-Gk[/youtube]

5. Aerosmith and Run DMC "Walk This Way."

When this happened MTV had an orgasm because it combined demographics and made it easier for them to stomach rap. But it's cool because both bands had mutual respect for each other and you can hear it.

[youtube]_Pu0Fn1oRN4[/youtube]

6. Annie Lennox and Aretha Franklin "Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves."

Annie and Aretha did something strong and genuine without forced crossover intentions. Lennox holds her own with the queen and Franklin is gracious with the younger newer talent.

[youtube]6f6SG8S8YU0[/youtube]

7. Goldie Featuring KRS One "Digital."

How many rappers do you know can rap over a drum and bass beat? Well KRS One did it and this song made a lot of fans want more of this sound.

[youtube]nMIs3WYLZbY[/youtube]

8. Norah Jones and Q-Tip “Life Is Better.”

This was not Norah’s first time working with a rapper because of her song with Andre 3000 from The Love Below. However, there is something hip and fluid about Tip and Norah’s duet that makes it a fly standout.

[youtube]ne7fPpxAnuM[/youtube]

9. USA for Africa “We Are The World.”

Everybody but the kitchen sink was in for this session and the results are a sappy charity song that became a part of American consciousness.

[youtube]AuU0cJ_iW8w[/youtube]

10. Aretha Franklin and George Michael “I Knew You Were Waiting For Me.”

George Michael fulfilled a dream by singing with Aretha on this one. In turn Aretha got another hit song and more familiarity with the younger crowd. Today the song is standard radio fare but when it first came out people were shocked to see Aretha singing with a white boy from England.

[youtube]fC5sNomuilU[/youtube]

11. Fishbone and Curtis Mayfield-“He’s A Fly Guy.”

From the I’m Gonna Git You Sucka soundtracks comes a working together of a soul minister and the legendary punk ska funk band Fishbone. It’s rattling enough that Fishbone exists but then they collaborate with the conventional but innovative Mayfield to do a song for blaxploitation spoof.

[daily]x14hgh[/daily]

[youtube]RBw7sGbsRb0[/youtube]

12. Prince and Sheena Easton “U Got The Look” and “Arms Of

Orion.”

In most cases a “joint effort” with Prince is really a Prince production. Sheena Easton got lucky and was able to sing on the track, appear in the video and be produced by Prince. Oh and she just happened to be dating him at the time too.

[youtube]CEwKCu0P89c[/youtube]

13. Public Enemy and Anthrax “Bring The Noise.”

The urgent vitriol of PE with Anthrax’s metal thrashing created another strain of punk rock because they complemented each other so well.