

The Rock Hall Of Fame Misses The Boat On Hip-Hop

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Twenty-six years ago Run DMC stormed into the museum of rock and put their trademark Stetson fedoras on top of mannequin heads designed to look like The Beatles. The late actor Calvin DeForest tried to shoo them out by yelling, "You don't belong here" but Darryl and Run refused to leave while white rockers played in the background. "King Of Rock" is a landmark song because it announced to the world that white guys with guitars were no longer the main arbiters of volume and style.

Rap music became the new rock and Black kids mostly from the ghettos were the artists. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation was created in 1983, had its first ceremony in 1993 and by 2007 it had inducted its first rap act with Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five. This year The Beastie Boys will be the third hip-hop band inducted gaining favor over Eric B. & Rakim who were also nominated. The hall uses musical excellence and influence as the primary factors in determining who is eligible for the honor at least 25 years before the date of induction. Rakim's microphone cool and Eric B.'s mathematically correct production set forth one of pop culture's most recognized quote books and sonic beacons in their 1987 magnum opus [*Paid In Full*](#). Their music caused innovation in the genre by offering some of the most influential James Brown samplings and Rakim's unflappable delivery of clever internal rhymes.

The Beastie Boys made rap appetizing to suburban white youth who would have never been receptive to the music in another context. White skin, frat boy energy and the incorporation of rock guitar made their image translate to kids who could only

relate to urban life as a safari. The Rock Hall's choice of the Beastie Boys before Eric B. & Rakim is a critical weakness in the assessment of the culture. Guitar rock has been a dying art since the commercial inception of rap music. The racist exclusion of Black rock and rollers from the mastheads of the mainstream doomed the direction of the music. Kurt Cobain's passing some 18 years ago left an artistic dearth in rock that no one has been able to eliminate. Rock artists like The Black Keys have [publicly commented](#) on the death of rock and blamed it on the cynical ways of record executives that gave rise to the success of bands like Nickelback.

By ignoring the obvious heft of Eric B. & Rakim's contributions, the hall loses credibility and gives credence to the idea that the museum's hip-hop blind spot is born of racism. [Hurricane](#), the Black DJ for the Beastie Boys will not be acknowledged either.

If the hall is to have true relevance it will have to make the inductions of rap music reflect the global dominance the art has held for 30 years. The Beasties inspired many kids to create bands modeled in the old style of rock while Eric B. & Rakim influenced the entire culture of new street music practitioners. There have been more young people in the past three decades to embrace a turntable and microphone than guitars and amplifiers. The guitar star is not the pop culture hero anymore because kids want to be Jay-Z instead of John Mayer. At the end of the "King Of Rock" video DeForest's character has been forced to accept Run DMC as the kings from queens and ultimately the paradigm shift in the culture. Unfortunately the rock hall has not made that acceptance yet. And if rap artists and fans are uncomfortable with the hall's process and selection they should contact KRS-One and Afrika Bambaataa to get a hip-hop museum off the ground. Because at the rate the museum is going LL Cool J, Slick Rick, MC Lyte, The Cold Crush Brothers and so many more important figures will never make it into the hall and receive the

recognition that the most influential genre of music of to span the last five US presidents deserves.