

# Throwback: Whodini: Five Minutes Of Funk



Whodini's "Five Minutes Of Funk" was recorded for their 1984 sophomore album, *Escape*. They were inspired by The Isley Brothers' rock output, but when they couldn't find a Minimoog synthesizer, Run DMC's "Rock Box" pushed them in the direction of an R&B sound. Jalil and Ecstasy rapped to a general crowd about their emcee skills and talked seduction to the ladies. Larry Smith produced the album, and his suggestion to use the Fender bass and a pitchy synthesizer was atypical of most hip-hop records at the time. Smith was instructed by the label to make Whodini's album sound like Run DMC, but he did not see that for them because their image was more mature and kids were no longer the only ones listening to rap music.

"Five Minutes Of Funk" was a hit on the radio and in the clubs, and it, along with "Freaks Come Out At Night," also on *Escape*, were Whodini's biggest songs. *Escape* was recorded in 16 days at Battery Studios in London, and Smith's sound choices are the reason *Escape* has been credited as an influence on New Jack Swing. *Escape* was the first hip-hop album to enter the top 40 of Billboard's Top Pop Albums chart. The trio from Brooklyn already made history with their debut

single, "Magic's Wand," which was the first rap song to have a video. *Escape* along with Run DMC's *Raising Hell*, signaled that rap was the future of pop music and not a fad. John "Ecstasy" Fletcher passed in 2020, leaving behind Jalil and Grandmaster Dee to represent Whodini's legacy. Steve XLG announced in May 2024 plans to do a [docuseries](#) on Whodini, JJ Fad, and Kool Rock-Ski of the Fat Boys.

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## Media Questions Of The Week



NEW YORK DISK JOCKEY WILLIAM B. WILLIAMS SHOWS WHAT SPURS THE PAYOLA—THE HOT COMPETITION OF THE 8,000 RECORDS A DEEJAY RECEIVES EACH YEAR

## Gimme, Gimme, Gimme on the old PAYOLA

As probers turn from TV to radio, clear evidence of disk jockey bribery crops up

With the facts of TV-quiz corruption firmly fixed, evidence has begun to turn up of wholesale corruption in radio—among the entertainers who dominate that field today, the disk jockeys. The U.S. was becoming familiar with a new word, "payola," trade jargon for bribes to promote certain records over the air. The Harris subcommittee in Washington considered public hearings on payola in December. Preliminary investigation indicated that there was plenty for the probers to dig up—and so does the lively slang prevalent among the disk jockeys themselves (*right*).

The climate for deejay corruption is created by the enormous output of popular records. Many more are produced than can be played

over the air—and moreover, as New York's William B. Williams (*above*) says, "If a disk jockey had to listen to all these records, he'd go to the kookie house."

Bribes in cash or goods are paid by music publishers to plug a song in all its recorded versions, by record companies to boost their own disks and by record distributors to promote the makes they handle. Besides the deejays, others in a radio station who can influence music selection are paid.

Many disk jockeys like Williams, who makes \$65,000 a year, do not have to rely on payola. But on the following pages *LIFE* shows how payola does work, in stories by a disk jockey (*pp. 46, 47*) and a record executive (*p. 48*).

### DEEJAY SLANG GLOSSARY

Dead Presidents—\$20 bills with Andrew Jackson portrait, \$50s with Ulysses Grant portrait, etc. used in payoffs  
 Bread—the cash involved in payola  
 Schlockmeister—a master at accumulating the schlock, or loot  
 Freebie—plug for a record given without payola  
 Charts—hit record lists in music trade magazines  
 Happening—a record making the charts  
 Breaking—a record moving up on charts  
 Ride—to play a record repeatedly  
 Hying a platter—overselling a record  
 Bomb—a terrible record

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Does Drake's [lawsuit](#) against Universal Music accusing them of using bots and payola to boost streams for Kendrick Lamar's "Not Like Us" have merit?



Credit: Ben P L

Can Victor Willis of the Village People successfully sue anyone who calls "Y.M.C.A." a gay anthem?

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## Doechii Does Tiny Desk

Doechii does Tiny Desk and performs an eight-song set with her all-woman band. The majority of the songs are from her 2024 mixtape *Alligator Bites Never Heal*, and she closes it out with "Black Girl Memoir" from her debut EP, *Oh The Places You Will Go*. The singer and rapper also appeared on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert* and was on the lineup at this year's Camp Flog Gnaw Festival. She completed her *Alligator Bites Never Heal* tour last month.

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## Kendrick Lamar Releases GNX +



# Video For Squabble Up



Kendrick Lamar surprised fans and released the mostly unannounced *GNX* album. His sixth studio album comes just months before his much-talked-about Super Bowl show. It's been 13 years since his *Section.80* debut, and today he is an icon dealing with usual life issues and the burdens of success. *GNX* is the first album released on his PNG Lang label after leaving Top Dawg Entertainment and Interscope. He kicks off the album, which is named after a Buick model, with "wacced out murals," reporting on haters and how he dismisses them over horns and sirens, made for an epic drama. Lamar sets the tone and then raps about rappers with fake identities, his upcoming Super Bowl performance, love, success, and of course, the feud with Drake that led "Not Like Us" to become the biggest single of 2024.

Everything is not about being a weary rap king though; "Squabble Up" flips Debbie Deb's freestyle classic, "When I Hear Music," to become a twerk-worthy anthem. Sza is one of the guests, and she joins Lamar for the R&B duet "luther," which is a tribute to the late crooner Luther Vandross and '80s soul siren Cheryl Lynn. Lamar picks up where Mary J. Blige and Method Man's "All I Need" and Nas and Lauryn Hill's

"If I Ruled the World" left off. The responsibilities of being a rap king and the attending accolades (Pulitzer, platinum status, and plenty of money), won't change the fact that *GNX* sounds like there is still a mountain or two left for him to climb. "Man at the Garden" could be his take on Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight" with its melodramatic and almost suspenseful atmosphere. Lamar demands more recognition and luxury lifestyle signifiers, signaling a hunger to reach another level of status in the Western world. Fans are still obsessing over the Drake thing, especially now that the Canadian rapper filed a lawsuit against the record label for allegedly using Payola to make Lamar's "Not Like Us" a hit. *GNX*'s release comes at the perfect time because it will be promoted on one of the biggest stages in the world at the game next year. Additionally, it reminds everyone that Lamar stands out as one of the most competent and creative voices of his generation, not just as the guy who beat Drake in a battle.