

Throwback: Digital Underground - The Humpty Dance



“The Humpty Dance” is the second single from Digital Underground’s first album, *Sex Packets*. Shock G produced the thick whirling beat using three samples of songs by Sly and The Family Stone and Parliament plus a kick drum, snares, bass, guitar, and hi-hats. George Clinton’s Sirnosedevoidofunk alter ego inspired Shock G’s Humpty Hump character. Sir Nose had a big nose and was in distress about being forced to dance. Humpty’s backstory was that Edward Ellington Humphrey III was the lead singer of the group Smooth Eddie and the

Humpers who became a rapper after somehow burning his nose in an accident with a deep fryer, hence the fake nose. Humpty Hump is a ladies' man, and the whole song is about his encounters with various women, most famously one he met in a Burger King restroom. Shock G not only wrote, produced, and performed the song, but he also drew the artwork for all of their releases. Digital Underground was another bridge between funk and hip-hop that was made easier thanks to George Clinton's early understanding and acceptance of sampling and hip-hop. Tupac Shakur made one of his earliest public appearances in the background of the hilarious video.

"The Humpty Dance" updated those grooves for Gen X, who had a seamless understanding of Digital Underground because they had grown up listening to Clinton on the radio. P-Funk's profound influence on West Coast hip-hop was being shown in contrast to New York rap, which relied more on soul samples. The single charted well, making No. 1 on the Rap Singles chart, Top Ten on the R&B chart, and Top 40 on the pop chart, but despite its heavy popularity and influence it was not nominated for any awards. Today, "The Humpty Dance" is celebrated as one of the most creative and eminent songs in hip-hop and of the era. Artists have sampled "The Humpty Dance" over 100 times in other songs and Shock G's left-field approach to hip-hop is a precursor to California rap weirdo Tyler, The Creator. Shock G's *The Piano Man* album of solo piano improvisations was posthumously released on TNT Recordings after his 2021 passing.