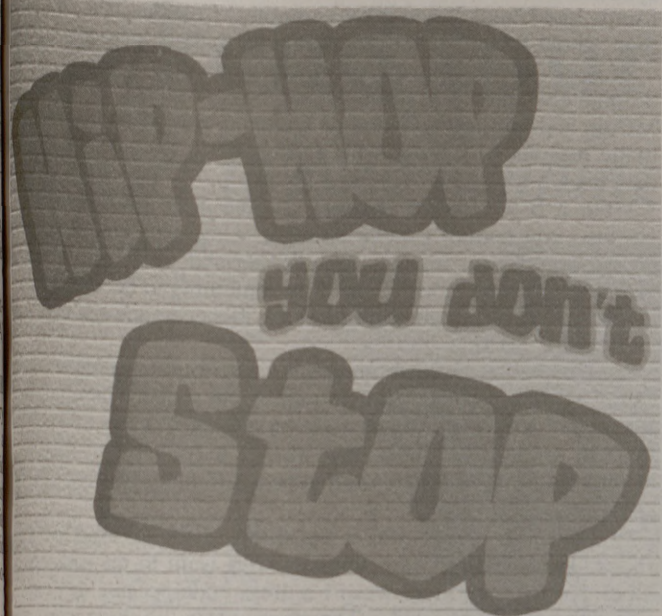


AGGIELIFE

FASHION
THE BATTALION

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By Lauren Smith
THE BATTALION

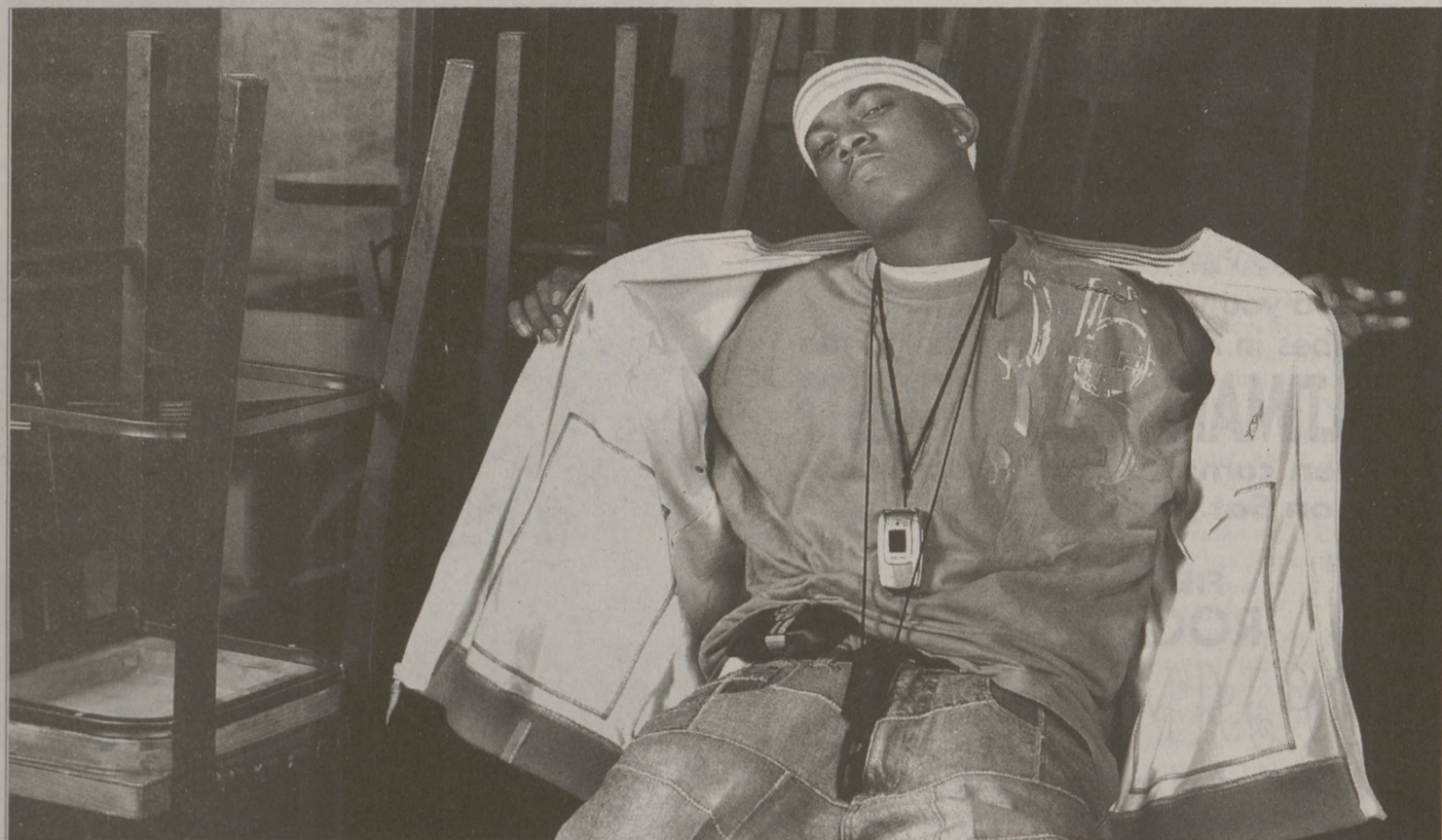
"Hip-hop started out in the heart, now everybody trying to chart," begins Lauryn Hill's "Superstar" from the "Miseducation of Lauryn Hill." Hip-hop culture has evolved and is not just about rappers, the clothes they wear and rhymes they drop, but is instead a rich culture with knowledge and authenticity at its heart. In being real, hip-hop fashion stays true to its roots and remembers the history behind the present.

"The concept of authenticity is essential to those who actually live the culture. A lot of what is on MTV and BET is built on someone's view of what a rapper should look like, so subconsciously, that is what you think is popular or hip," said Adam Williams, a senior mechanical engineering major and a founder of Texas A&M's Hip-Hop Society. "Rappers do have a large influence on how some dress, but people more in tune to who they are individually will make the styles their own."

Although rappers may not be the sole influence of hip-hop fashion, dropping brand names in a song can start a craze such as Nelly's "Air Force Ones" or Q-Tips of A Tribe Called Quest saying, "And others couldn't figga, How me and Hilfigga, Used to move through with vigga."

Finnie Coleman, an A&M professor who teaches a course on hip-hop culture at A&M, said many mainstream hip-hop artists will get contracts for making a brand popular, although some companies, such as Timberland, do not want to be associated with urban culture.

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Shorty Dawg, a sophomore philosophy major, coordinates from head to toe. Shorty is immersed in the hip-hop culture and often travels to

a recording studio in Houston. Despite all the color Shorty is wearing in the picture, he loves his trusty white T-shirt.



Hip-hop fashion is not all about rap music, and it is definitely not Eminem. What fascinates me most about hip-hop fashion and its culture is that creativity and individuality are at its forefront. Two people could be wearing exactly the same thing, but it will look completely different because people who are a part of the culture pay special attention to detail, and color coordination is a top priority.

Hip-hop fashion has this unique ability to update an ordinary piece of clothing in a way that is fresh and striking. Converse All-Stars, for example, have been around for decades, but those fashionable in the hip-hop world will put a new twist on it. It's about bringing the new, but remembering the old; what has worked in the past will probably come up again.

Another way the fashion is innovative is in the way two colors that you could never imagine putting together somehow perfectly match. Throwback jerseys, which range in price anywhere from \$75

to \$500, are available in not only the traditional colors, but pastels and neons as well. The throwback jersey is a billion-dollar industry that although is still thriving may have recently hit its downslope.

As Jay-Z put it in his November release, "The Black Album," "And I don't wear jerseys, I'm 30-plus. Give me a crisp pair of jeans, Button up," members of the hip-hop culture often grow out of their throwback jerseys and opt for the more mature look of the suit. But, don't expect this to be anything like your dad's old suit. There is definitely some flare to whatever it is; the stripes and color are ever-present.

Whether it's Adidas with fat laces or LeBron James' shoes, "kicks" are an essential part of putting an outfit together. They are the cherry on top, if you will, as they always seem to unify the colors from the jersey with the colors on the hat. For women on dressier occasions, the heels are never too high, and there is no such thing as too much color. Women also sport the colorful tennis shoes of Puma, Nike or Converse.

The hip-hop world is diverse, accepting and full of life. From the bright colors graffiti artists use to anything throwback, the history is still alive and inspires much of what today's hip-hop fashion is.

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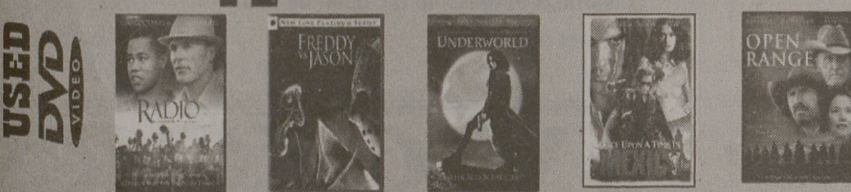
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