

Dominique Whelan
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Fashion Film Critique Essay
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Fresh Dressed: Hip Hop and Self-Expression

The movie *Fresh Dressed (2015)* is a film about fashion, hip hop, and self expression beginning in the pre-war (Civil War) period in America. The term “Fresh” in the title is used to describe the term in fashion meaning, being freshly dressed, up to date with fashion and the current trends. The movie focuses mostly on the birth of streetwear fashion in New York City during the time. It begins to speak about the start up of gang fashion, all the way up to famous fashion runways. During the streetwear origin era in New York City at the time, people could tell which borough you were from, just based on how you dressed. The documentary film goes into great detail about how hip-hop fashion took in all that was around it, and based their fashion choices on the influences of streetwear, which soon then exploded into a staple of fashion.

Learning more and more about how streetwear started is so fascinating to me. To think that a huge fashion era started in the streets of New York City around where I live is an amazing feeling. This film showed a very informative and intriguing way of learning all about the birth of streetwear. The film speaks about how originally, hip-hop fashion’s colors started with graffiti. *Fresh Dressed (2015)* speaks on the hip-hop designer based brand Cross Colours, introducing the baggy pants that were fitted to your waist, but baggy down the leg. The film has interviews with rappers and designers like Karl Kani, Kanye West, Pharrel Williams, and Damon Dash. Back then, people would design their own denim jackets to add style, ironing or stitching their own designs to the back. In the 90s, another popular clothing trend began when people started to put

their names down the side leg of their jeans. Shirt Kings, originating in Jamaica, Queens, got discovered when LL Cool J wore a design made by them that appeared in magazines at the time. Dapper Dan stood out to me in this film for many reasons. Dapper Dan was a streetwear fashion icon in the 80's, starting out by taking a huge leap into taking designer brands and customizing them in his own way. He would take these luxury brands, and put them on any article of clothing, such as hats, shirts, and pants. He started becoming very well-known, and eventually got caught for copyright infringement, although it really was genius.

Another intriguing fact that I learned watching this film is learning that the co-founder of Lo Lifer, Thirstin Howl, spoke about the term “boosters” or shoplifters, would go into brand name stores, like Ralph Lauren, and steal an obscene amount of high-end merchandise, then reselling it in the ghettos for a profit. The film also spoke about how Tommy Hilfiger would come to the ghettos, open the hood of his car, and give away articles of clothing to promote his brand in the beginning, everyone needs to start somewhere! Hilfiger was smart to do this at the time because the more people wore his brand, the more of a want it was to come to buy it in the upcoming years. The founders of Cross Colors, as mentioned before, to promote their brand more, they asked *Fresh Prince Of Bel Air's (1990)*, Will Smith, to wear their clothing on the show (and we all remember all the crazy colors he wore to this day!) Cross Colors was one of the first brands to promote and be transparent with incorporating ethnicity, along with current fashion trends with lots of bold colors.

Fresh Dressed shows a great way of how black-owned companies were just starting up and becoming established, while mainstream fashion companies depended on hip-hop music to generate their fashion designs. It dives into great detail about how young people found a way to dress to fit into society, while hip-hop became a huge upcoming influence around them. Overall,

this film was a joy to watch and indulge in, learning how and where streetwear originated was truly fascinating.

Fresh Dressed (2015)