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Fresh Dressed

*Fresh Dressed* showcased the history of Hip Hop Urban fashion and the rise of its popularity from plantations to 1920s gangs in the South Bronx to business organizations and everything in between. There's an importance of wanting to express yourself and having a sense of individuality and the way to do this was with fashion. During the 1970s Hip Hop culture was born, it was not exclusively about music culture but it was a lifestyle. Individuals who were living in the struggles fashion gave a feeling of hopefulness, there was more to whatever their situations may have been. In African American culture especially in the 20th-century clothes were always a very prominent part of people's identity, your clothes were the way you presented yourself to the world. Essentially your clothes were your armor, especially in a time like the 70s in the South Bronx your armor was the most important thing to leave your home with. There was a dynamic shift when Hip Hop was born, there were no longer wars on the street in the South Bronx, they were battling with their words. Conflicts were getting settled on the dance floor, microphone and turntables. These urban individuals were reliant on music that described their struggle and this music was rap. Identifying themselves with Artists who knew these struggles, music formed a sense of liberty. These artists were wearing Puma, Lees, BVD tank tops, Cazals, and Kangos; these fashions were derived from the influences behind the music and culture. During this time there wasn't a definitive style or a sense of uniformity among urban individuals. One of the greatest issues during this time was the insecurity of not having any money, the only way to showcase what you did was by the clothes you wear. There was a sense of status depending on what you wore which directly reflects where you are at economically. People took great pride in the way they dressed. Dapper Dan is a fashion designer who would remix designer brands like Louis Vuitton, Brands that people were aspiring to wear. These brands were unattainable and Dapper Dan made them attainable**.** Dapper Dan wanted to serve the black community so he made these designs for black people and 10 years later those same designs were stolen from him, he was never credited for it but the black community knew exactly who the visionary was behind the original idea there was no denying that. Not only what you wore was incredibly significant but the shoes you had were the most important thing you can own. Fashion was a competition just like everything in the hood, you had to be the freshest. Details were everything down to the laces and how they were laced up. Urban young people are always attracted to or addicted to fashion because it's an expression of aspiration, it's something you can't always have but you need it. Hip Hop became mainstream in the 90s through music videos and television. There were tv shows like Fresh Prince of Bel-Air and In a Living color that were showing looks that were not just designer brands but brands you can relate to like Cross Colors. Cross Colors took inspiration from New Yorkers who were wearing jeans 3 sizes too big, he adapted this baggy silhouette with a smaller waist. Karl Kani took the New York hustle and mentality to California, he gave his clothes to celebrities like biggie smalls and Tupac to promote his clothing. In Europe Tupac was a huge influence, Consumers seeing him in Karl Kani helped his brand take off globally. Although these brands were incredibly successful, department stores didn't want to hold these types of brands due to the “urban customers” however they carried demand. It was assumed that this was a fad, it was going to last from music to fashion. Then we see brands like Roca wear which don't want to be exclusive to the urban market but for everyone adding more sophistication not only doing urban fashion but high fashion in an urban space. Sacha Jenkins did an outstanding job depicting the influences people of color in New York had on the whole world as a cultural movement. It's not about listening to Hip Hop music, it's about embodying it. What shaped my perspective from this film is that Most urban people don't want pieces made by other urban people, they want things that are unattainable from brands that have much more staying power that represent a social class and luxury that was desired to be at. As a collective for people of color, we need to stop waiting on external approval because fashion is about authentic experiences. *Fresh Dressed* did not shape my perspective; it simply reinforced the information I was aware of being born and raised in The Bronx. Growing up in an economically insecure neighborhood it's not bizarre that fashion has held such a great significance in self-identity and self-expression, especially among the youth. The importance of a name brand, looking good, and feeling good is more important than generating generational wealth.