With all the talk about hip hop being dead, we can see one development that is growing like a cancer in the hip hop and rap community. It is not a well know development that is known by the fans of the hip hop culture, but it does exist and it is having a bad effect on the future of hip hop and rap music; and it is touching all genres of music from hip hop to rock-n-roll.

Pay to Play has not only infiltrated radio, it also now has wormed its way into the show and concert arenas.

Instead of the artists getting paid to play, the promoters are all looking for ways to make their money, so they charge the artist for a time slot on stage. This type of activity is hurting the quality of artists who are available for shows and air play.

In the old days promoters and label reps ‘worked’ their artists and shows. Now days promoters expect to have the artists sell (or buy) tickets to their venues so they have a guaranteed take before they even take the stage. Are the promoters lazy now or just looking for their piece of the hip hop pie?

It may look good on a hip hop artists resume to see they were on stage with big name hip hop and rap artists, but you have to think if they deserve to be on stage with them or are they there just because they have enough money to pay to play with them.

Some radio stations still charge, or try to charge, independent and unsigned artists to get their music played on air. Many of them see that to play an independents music is a commercial; and should be charged as such. No it is not a commercial, it is offering your listeners a wider range of talent and a chance to hear hip hop and rap that has not been ‘homogenized’ by the major record labels.

This is one reason we are seeing hip hop become ‘stale’ and in a way ‘neutered’. If the hip hop artist has no outlet for his music what is he or she suppose to do? Most independent artist spend what money they have getting a project together and the expense of then having to pay again to have it played narrows the field of available talent to put in front of a live crowd.

This kind of pay to play has become the norm in the hip hop circles. With all the little ‘clicks’, we can see how come we do not see many well deserving up and coming artists getting a chance to show off their skills.

All artists pay their dues but that does not mean to literally pay to be an artist. At this rate anyone with a bank account can grace a hip hop show – if they have enough money.

All of this stems from the actual established artists pressuring promoters for paid shows. Promoters and Clubs are not doing there job as good as they used to, for instance when promoting a show of any kind you get sponsors to flip the bill and put there recognized name behind it as follow: Budweiser, Coca Cola, Nike, Tower Records etc. This is how they used to get there name out there even before the artists and sponsor commercials for publicity.

However on the other hand Violence in Hip Hop has crippled the outlet for sub-mainstream local acts to get there foot in the door because of the violent fan base and cancer that Hip Hop is now well known for, making the sponsors weary of putting their own name behind something that may end up in a killing.

So if you think about it, the wanna be B-Boys or so called Rap fans are our worst enemy because they affect where and when we can have a concert. Everyone wants to ‘Thug’ and ‘Floss’ but where can we do this with out bullets flying?

There is a lot to see in all of this but at this point the promoters see this as an opportunity of cashing in on the hungry artist. This list gets bigger not only looking at the Promoters but, mixtape DJ's, Radio station favorites and events and even Record labels and or freestyle battle contest.

There are too many artists and no outlets to show case. So all we have now is to stay put and make more catalogue to be heard but where? This Cancer is bigger than we all suspected with wannabee's, fakes, wankster's all having the possibility of cashing in on what the actual artist deserve.

Fans are not the one's who pick the artist anymore because it is manipulated by the ‘pay to play’ and manipulation of commercial radio spins.

This power is isolated by very few in the business and some get lucky enough to get connected and the others are just lab rats used to get creativity their own writings and ideas and the artists that steal it and some have big names cash in on what the poor hungry artist will never get to see in a lifetime.

How do we, the fans, get to be the voice again and be the ones to pick our favorites? What is happening in our democracy in our government is also carrying on and flooding Hip Hop with injustices’; while the ones that can stop it turn the other way.

‘Gangster Rap’ has no chance because the time of ‘Gangsters’ is actually being lived in a reality more than ever before and no one cares about the lyrics only what chorus has a mother goose rhyme in it.

Pay to play has also hit the record labels, and some of the big one's. One company in Century City Calif. has a package that if you give them 5 grand they will give you distribution but you must supply marketing and promotion.

One record company in Brea Calif. will charge 35,000 to provide distribution through Universal and an extra 90,000 for radio play through out the United States.

At the rate that the ‘cancer’ is growing maybe NAS was right and hip hop is dead; or maybe it is time, at last, to retire it into a rest home.

The symptoms of this ‘cancer’ in hip hop are easy to see and diagnose. Greed, people only out for them selves, lack of respect for anyone who is not connected with their ‘click’, and a lack of respect for hip hop culture.

Hip hop use to be about skills; who had them and how they could portray that to an audience. Now hip hop is all about the ‘Benjamin’s’ – how fast can you make it and it doesn’t matter how you make it.

When all those involved in hip hop think that they are more important than the artist, and when artist get to the point where they think the only ones that should be in the business are themselves and their ‘click’, then we end up with the same stale sound that is so prominent in hip hop today.

We need to have the Old School pioneers of hip hop counsel the artists and the hip hop business community on what hip hop really is and how it was conceived and developed. Hip hop is now slop hop or pop hop and true hip hop is getting harder and harder to find. Part of the problem has been diagnosed, now what can we do about it. As with any ‘cancer’, gone untreated, it will cause death; and hip hop does not need to die off.

Have feedback on this article? You can reach the writers at the emails below. Give some feedback.

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