

Black Music Month 2014: June 30 musical salute to Da Brat



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It's Black Music Month. Enjoy the 2014 series. Support the artists. Buy their licensed music. And turn up as you dance along.

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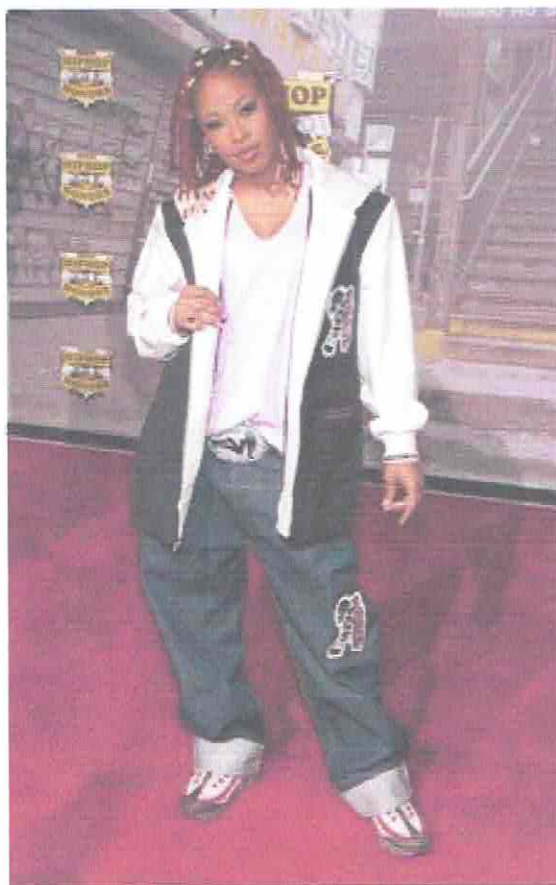


Photo by Bryan Bedder/Getty Images

Brief history: In 2010, I wrote a music series honoring Black Music Month on Associated Content's site (republished on **Examiner**). The focus was to honor new R&B singers, veteran R&B singers, solo rappers, and evenly split the musical salute between female and male rappers. The only artists I was not willing to split up were Salt n' Pepa because they worked as a unit. In 2014, it's about time to salute more artists, but in the spirit of Salt n' Pepa's legacy, R&B groups and rap groups will be included. The pattern in 2014 will be newer R&B singers (from 2000 to present), R&B and/or hip-hop groups, veteran R&B singers, and then solo rappers, still evenly split between women and men.

Black Music Month Turn Up Factor "Turn down for what?": In the middle of female rappers being rough around the edges or way too risqué, Da Brat was a happy medium. It wasn't totally unthinkable to see her in a bathing suit or bikini wrap ("What Chu Like") or makeup (Total's "No One Else"), but her fans were more likely to see her with braids ("Sittin On Top of the World") or beads ("That's What I'm Looking For"). She wasn't the type of female rapper to be territorial and could easily mesh well with other female artists (ex. Destiny's Child "Survivor [Remix], Kelly Rowland's "Like This" with Lil Kim, Missy Elliott's "Sock It To Me," MC Lyte guest appearance on "Give It To You"). But she was content to work as a solo artist and rock with Jermaine Dupri's So So Def crew. Fully clothed with barrettes or beads, she was respected by both men and women. Her fame came from talent, not her booty, and lyrics, not her beauty. It never hurts to have all four, but she made a point of not solely relying on being in somebody's spank bank to sell records.

My Connection/First Memory to Artist: One of my childhood friends (mentioned in the feature on **Total for Black Music Month**) and I used to love watching The Box and Video Soul to keep up with the latest videos. And as Chicagoans, clearly we paid attention to any music coming out of the Windy City. Da Brat made a point of representing Chicago and even narrowed it down to her ZIP code (60644). Although my friends and I were from the south side of Chicago, she was a proud hip-hop representation for all of Chicago's neighborhoods. And she was talented so we pretty much memorized all of her lyrics. Considering several other of my friends -- including myself -- had a crush on Chris "Daddy Mac" Smith, it didn't hurt to see her working with Kris Kross either. We thought that was "Da Bomb" (pun intended). And she was about the only rapper ever who made it perfectly acceptable to wear barrettes, a man's suit, makeup and her bra slightly showing while *still* dropping lyrics on a song (ex. "Live and Die For Hip Hop").

Numbers Don't Lie: "Funkdafied" skyrocketed to number six on the Top 100 Billboard Charts and stayed on the charts for 20 weeks. The song also did well on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs charts, peaking at number 20 and staying on this chart for 21 weeks. "What Chu Like" peaked at number nine and stayed on the latter chart for 20 weeks. Her top 20 songs included "In Love Wit Chu" on the Hot Rap Songs charts (peaked at number 12, stayed on charts for 10 weeks), "Ghetto Love" on the Top 100 charts (peaked at number 16, stayed on charts for 15 weeks) and "That's What I m Looking For" on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs charts (peaked at number 18, stayed on charts for 20 weeks).

Additional Two Cents: As with the **Chris Brown post**, these entries are *solely* on the

strength of musical talent. I do not condone violence nor do I agree with the actions that lead to Da Brat's **\$6.4 million lawsuit** and three-year prison term for the 2007 bottle attack. I do, however, hope for the best with former Atlanta Falcons cheerleader **Shayla Steven's** health conditions.

Recommended Reading:

MC Lyte still a rock in the rap industry

*For the first series of Black Music Month artists republished on Examiner (originally on Associated Content), **click here** to see all 30.*

*Shamontiel is also **The Wire Examiner**, and for the gladiators, she's the **Scandal Examiner**, too.*

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