

“The Diary” Tracklist Hater’s FAQ

Any self respecting rap nerd (and I count myself amongst that group I guess) will tell you that there’s nothing that rap nerds like better than to pick apart a mixtape tracklisting. Judging by the number of people that are asking about this by email and on forums etc, there’s probably going to be some picking apart to be done.

In the interests of fair play (and avoiding the need to answer all those questions) I thought I would post this handy ‘Hater’s FAQ’. Enjoy!

Why so few tracks from 1979-1987?

I started collecting hip hop records and records in general in about 1988. I wanted this mix to reflect the music that I have bought and enjoyed over the years and not be some fictitious retrospective based on published hit lists. That said 1979-1987 is too important a period in the genre’s history to ignore altogether so I threw some of my favourites from those years into the intro.

I can’t believe you didn’t include [insert name of classic record here].

It was never going to be possible to include every classic rap tune ever made and everybody has their own opinions about what the true classics are. There were some tough decisions to be made but mostly I had to just go with whatever was going to fit in the mix and sound good. (Amusingly, on the majority of occasions that somebody has asked something like this, the song that they claimed had been excluded was actually included in the mix).

I can’t believe you didn’t include [insert name of impossibly rare record here].

There’s a time and place for showing off about your rare records and that place is ebay where you should let your money do the talking.

I think you’ll find that [insert name of any record on the list here] was actually released in [insert year other than that listed].

All the records were dated by the copyright or publishing dates on the sleeves. These might differ slightly from the actual release dates. There is one genuine mistake resulting from two records by the same artist accidentally ending up in the same sleeve. A prize goes to the first person to spot it.

Why so few tracks from 2006/2007?

I actually never planned for the mix to go that far up to date. I started doing bits and pieces toward the mix in late 2005 naively thinking that I would get it done before the year was out. I did quite a lot more in 2006 but lost interest for a while and picked it up again properly in 2007. It seemed a little odd to release it in 2007 but for the mix to end in 2005 and closing with the ‘hip hop is dead’ / ‘hip hop died?’ / ‘hip hop lives’ debate seemed too convenient an ending to pass up.

Anyway, didn’t somebody already do a mix like this?

Well, the short answer is ‘yes’. If you’ve read any of the reviews of The Diary, the frequent references to Jaguar Skillz’ ‘Hip Hop Odyssey’ mix won’t have escaped your notice. That mix came out in late 2006 when I was about two thirds done with The Diary. No such thing as an original idea eh? Anyway, when Jaguar Skillz heard The Diary he

got in contact and passed on his compliments and I've got time for anybody who takes time out to do that.

So what's up with having 250 odd tracks in the outro?

If I'm being completely honest, the main reason was the amount of attention that the Hip Hop Odyssey mix received on the basis that it was a world record of sorts. (Although that mix claimed 800 tracks, there were, as I understand, actually 'only' around 600 in the published tracklist and I'm not sure that has ever been explained). Anyway, I had originally 'only' intended to have 500-600 tracks in The Diary but the challenge of a new world record persuaded me to go for 801 - so I squeezed the extra snippets into the outro. The secondary reason was to show that whilst it is hard to put together a coherent and detailed mix it's not necessarily so hard to have an enormous tracklist.

Nice records but so what? These days anybody with broadband and enough time on their hands could download all those records.

Every record used in the 'main' mix was taken direct from the original 12 inch or LP with the exception of about 4 or 5 tracks where I had to resort to using vinyl comps. However, for the intro and outro I did use some CDs, vinyl comps and even some cassettes.

OK, so why not do it live? You must have used Acid or a sequencer or something?

Everything except the intro and outro was recorded live from the turntables onto Cubase which I used purely as multi track recorder. There's some heavy layering. I did process some of the recordings to boost levels and use the odd bit of echo effect here and there but there was no automatic quantizing or syncing.

But where's Missy, Busta, DMX, Jay-Z, Pharrel, Luda, Lil' Jon-Scrappy-Wayne-Flip, Mannie Fresh, Cassidy, Chamillionaire, Eminem, Ja Rule, Young Buck-Joc-Gunz-Jeezy, I mean all this shit I've been vibing to, clubbing to, driving to, where is it?!?!? Maaaaan it's not good when dj's got attitudes!!!

I just couldn't resist including this. Believe it or not this is an actual quote and what's funnier is that it was taken from the forum on the Public Enemy website (yes the same Public Enemy that released some of the most politically potent and timeless rap records of all time). For the record, I have never bought, nor am I ever likely to buy a record by 'Young' anybody or 'Lil' anything else. I can appreciate a good club record as much as the next man, but timeless recordings the majority of them are not. I'm not convinced that having selective taste and having an attitude have ever been the same thing, although I probably just proved myself wrong about that by posting this sarcastic reply.

Where do you get off calling yourself the mixtape champion of the world? Haven't you ever heard Tony Touch Tape 50 or [insert name of revered underground rap tape here]?

Amazingly, nobody has taken this up, but it goes without saying it's not meant to be taken seriously. Come on now, lighten up people.