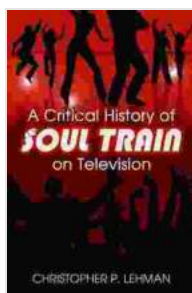


The Critical History of Soul Train on Television: A Journey Through Pop Culture's Most Impactful Dance Show



A Critical History of Soul Train on Television

by Christopher P. Lehman

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 3621 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 241 pages

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Soul Train, the iconic dance show that aired for over 30 years, had a profound impact on popular culture. From its humble beginnings in Chicago in 1970, the show quickly became a national sensation, showcasing the latest in soul music and dance moves. Soul Train also played a significant role in the civil rights movement, providing a platform for black artists and performers to share their music and message with a wider audience.

This article explores the critical history of Soul Train, examining its influence on music, fashion, and the civil rights movement. We will also take a look at the show's legacy and its continued impact on popular culture today.

The Early Years

Soul Train was created by Don Cornelius, a former radio DJ who was inspired by the success of American Bandstand. Cornelius wanted to create a show that would showcase the latest in soul music and dance moves, and he believed that television was the perfect medium to reach a wider audience.

The first episode of Soul Train aired on August 17, 1970, on WCIU-TV in Chicago. The show quickly became a hit, and was soon syndicated to other stations across the country. By 1971, Soul Train was airing in over 100 cities, and was reaching an audience of over 10 million viewers.

The early years of Soul Train were marked by the show's innovative format. Cornelius introduced a number of new features to television, including the "Soul Train Line," where dancers would form a conga line and dance down a runway; the "Hot Seat," where celebrities would be interviewed by

Cornelius; and the "Dance Battle," where two dance teams would compete for a prize.

Soul Train also played a significant role in the civil rights movement. The show provided a platform for black artists and performers to share their music and message with a wider audience. Cornelius was a strong supporter of the civil rights movement, and he often used the show to promote social justice.

The Golden Age

The 1970s and 1980s are considered the golden age of Soul Train. During this time, the show reached its peak in popularity, and became a cultural phenomenon. Soul Train was the number one dance show on television, and it was a regular feature on the awards show circuit.

The golden age of Soul Train was marked by the show's iconic hosts, dancers, and musical guests. Cornelius was the show's charismatic host, and he was known for his smooth delivery and his signature catchphrase, "Peace, love, and soul." The show's dancers were some of the most talented in the world, and they were known for their innovative dance moves and their stylish outfits. Soul Train also featured a wide range of musical guests, including some of the biggest names in soul, funk, and R&B.

Soul Train had a major impact on popular culture during the golden age. The show helped to popularize soul music and dance, and it introduced a new generation of black artists and performers to the mainstream. Soul Train also played a role in the fashion industry, as the show's dancers and guests often wore the latest trends.

The Decline

Soul Train began to decline in popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The show's ratings began to drop, and it lost its place as the number one dance show on television. Soul Train also faced competition from new dance shows, such as MTV's Video Music Awards and BET's Rapsody.

In 1993, Cornelius sold Soul Train to MadVision Entertainment. MadVision made a number of changes to the show, including changing the format and the hosts. However, these changes were not successful, and Soul Train continued to decline in popularity.

In 2006, Soul Train was cancelled after 36 seasons. The show's cancellation was a major loss for the music and dance community. Soul Train had been a cultural institution for over 30 years, and it had helped to shape popular culture in a number of ways.

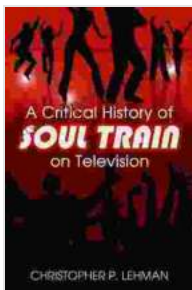
Legacy

Soul Train's legacy is undeniable. The show was a pioneer in the field of television dance shows, and it helped to popularize soul music and dance. Soul Train also played a significant role in the civil rights movement, providing a platform for black artists and performers to share their music and message with a wider audience.

Soul Train's influence can still be seen today in popular culture. The show's dance moves and fashion trends have been imitated by countless artists and performers. Soul Train also continues to inspire new generations of dancers and musicians.

In 2009, Soul Train was inducted into the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Hall of Fame. This honor recognizes the show's significant contribution to the music industry.

Soul Train was a cultural phenomenon that had a profound impact on popular culture. The show showcased the latest in soul music and dance moves, and it provided a platform for black artists and performers to share their music and message with a wider audience. Soul Train's legacy continues today, inspiring new generations of dancers and musicians.



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