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WEEKEND MISER

The Story of Hip-Hop

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The rap superstar Jay-Z performed eight concerts in September to open the Barclays Center in Brooklyn. It was a crowning moment both for the borough and for this native son, born Shawn Carter, who grew up in the Marcy Houses just up the street in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

And yet, if on the wings of Jay-Z's success Brooklyn can lay claim to being the center of the hip-hop universe these days, he would surely be among the first to concede that the culture was really born in another borough, a few miles to the north. It was in the "Boogie Down" Bronx, beginning in the late 1970s, that the elements of hip-hop culture were first codified.

Courtesy of the artist
Joe Conzo Jr., who documented the early days of hip-hop, in a self-portrait.

The spirit of those freewheeling early years was captured in "Style Wars," the 1983 PBS documentary by Tony Silver and Henry Chalfant. The film features figures like Mayor Edward I. Koch and the break dancers Rock Steady Crew offering perspectives on the nascent culture, which had spread into the other boroughs and was poised to capture worldwide attention. A screening of the film on Friday night, followed by a question-and-answer session with Mr. Chalfant, anchors this weekend's Bronx Rising! events at the Bronx Music Heritage Center Lab.

Clinton Kyle Hollister
Henry Chalfant in front of a wall of Mr. Conzo's pictures.

On Saturday night an exhibition of photographs by Joe Conzo Jr. culled from his book "Born in the Bronx" will go back even further into hip-hop history, providing a visual document of the musical energy born in the parks, playgrounds and abandoned warehouses of the borough in the late 1970s. Mr. Conzo will be on hand to discuss his work.

Admission to each event is free, with a $5 suggested donation.

("Style Wars," Friday at 8 p.m.; "Born in the Bronx," Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; 1303 Louis Niñé Boulevard, at Southern Boulevard, Crotona East; bronxmusic.org.)