



The New York Public Library
Photographs and Prints Division. Schomburg Center for
Research in Black Culture

Guide to the

Fab 5 Freddy photographs

1971-2009

SCP 186081

Processed by Stacey Ference in 2022.

Summary

Creator: Fab 5 Freddy, 1959-

Title: Fab 5 Freddy photographs

Date: 1971-2009

Size: 8.42 linear feet (21 boxes); 361.78 kilobytes (1 computer file)

Source: Purchased from Boo-Hooray in 2019.

Abstract: Fab 5 Freddy is an African American director, TV host, graffiti artist, and a key personality in the history of hip-hop culture. The Fab 5 Freddy photographs highlight both his professional and personal lives, including images taken behind-the-scenes at musical video shoots and on the set of Yo! MTV Raps, album artwork and photoshoots, as well as candid images of figures within the hip hop world.

Preferred citation: Fab 5 Freddy photographs, Photographs and Prints Division. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Stacey Ference in 2022.

Separated Materials:

Photographs transferred from Fab 5 Freddy papers in Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books, Schomburg Center.

Creator History

Biographical note taken from the Fab 5 Freddy papers, written by Amelia Carlin in 2020.

Fab 5 Freddy is an African American director, TV host, graffiti artist, and a key personality in the history of hip-hop culture. He was born Frederick Leroy Brathwaite to Theresa Florence Brathwaite and Frederick Leroy Brathwaite in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, in 1956.

His god-father was the jazz trumpeter and composer, Max Roach. Fab 5 Freddy was instrumental in connecting the New York uptown worlds of graffiti, rap, MC, and breakdance artists, with the downtown modern art scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1983, he worked on the seminal hip-hop film *Wild Style* and later gained widespread fame as a host on the MTV series *Yo! MTV Raps* (1988-1995). He has directed a number of music videos, including his debut work for Boogie Down Productions' release "My Philosophy" (1988), as well as clips for a number of other artists. He has worked in music and event production, on major motion pictures, and in television roles. He studied communications for a period around 1978 at Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn.

Fab 5 Freddy was one of the members of the graffiti crew "The Fabulous 5" alongside the noted graffiti artist Lee Quiñones. The group were key participants in the movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s that saw graffiti move into more established art spaces. Both Fab 5 Freddy and Quiñones were invited to exhibit their work in at the Galleria La Medusa in Rome, in 1979. Fab 5 Freddy's most well-known graffiti work is a series of soup cans painted on a New York City subway train circa 1979-1980, referencing pop artist Andy Warhol's "Campbell's Soup Cans."

Fab 5 Freddy exhibited works at various galleries including the Fun Gallery; in the *Times Square Show* (1980), which also featured Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat; in the *Beyond Words* show at the Mudd Club (1981) that Fab 5 Freddy co-curated with graffiti artist Futura; and in *New York/New Wave* at P.S. 1 (1981).

During this period, Fab 5 Freddy frequented the tapings of *TV Party*, Glenn O'Brien's cable access show, where he met Debbie Harry, and other members of the new wave band Blondie. He is famously referenced in Blondie's track "Rapture," in the phrase "Fab 5 Freddy told me everybody's fly," and appeared in the song's 1981 music video together with Quiñones and Basquiat.

At the *Times Square Show*, Fab 5 Freddy met director Charlie Ahearn. Together they developed the concept for the film *Wild Style* which depicted the burgeoning New York rap, break dancing, and graffiti scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Fab 5 Freddy created the original music for the film and played the role of "Phade," a nightclub owner.

In 1982, Fab 5 Freddy released the single "Change the Beat" on Celluloid Records. The B-side of the EP contained a French version of the song by the rapper Beside. At the end of this version of the song is the line "This stuff is really fresh," which has become one of the most sampled pieces of music of all time. This single, and five others were recorded to promote the "New York Rap City" tour. The tour brought Fab 5 Freddy, and a group of MCs, DJs, break dancers, graffiti writers, and the Fantastic Four Double Dutch team to France and the United Kingdom in November of 1982.

Fab 5 Freddy is best known as the host of the MTV series *Yo! MTV Raps*. This was the first television series to present hip-hop and rap music videos, and is often credited with disseminating the genre throughout the United States and other parts of the world. The concept was developed by Ted Demme and first aired in 1988 with Fab 5 Freddy as the host, broadcasting every Saturday night. Owing to its popularity, MTV developed a daily format of the show that was filmed in-studio, with Ed Lover and Doctor Dre as the weekday hosts. The program featured interviews and performances with many of the most popular, widely regarded rap, hip-hop, and R&B acts of the time. The show was broadcast until 1995.

In the same year the first episode of *Yo! MTV Raps* aired, Fab 5 Freddy made his music video directorial debut with the Boogie Down Productions' track "My Philosophy" (1988). He directed Queen Latifah's "Ladies First"; Snoop Dogg's "Who Am I (What's My Name)?"; "One Love" by Nas; several Shabba Ranks songs; and videos for artists such as Sharissa, and Ziggy Marley and The Wailers.

During his career, he has directed more than 70 music videos.

Through the 1990s and early 2000s, Fab 5 Freddy and business associate Roy Cormier headed several ventures in the music industry, including F&R Records, and In the Middle Entertainment. Cormier, an American recording executive, was an early promoter of hip-hop and rap events in the 1980s, moving on to become a talent manager, and record producer. Together, they were co-presidents of Pallas Records, a label distributed by Universal Records, the biggest record label in the industry at the time. At Pallas they were responsible for launching the Chicago hip-hop/rap group Crucial Conflict's first full-length album, *The Final Tic* (1996). After leaving Pallas, Fab 5 Freddy and Cormier ran F&R Records for a short period around 1997-1998, where they worked with the artists 45 King and Boogie Shoes. Following this venture, they co-founded the independent urban record label In the Middle Entertainment. By 1999, they had signed four acts; one group and three soloists: Ill Street, Tikki, Gee Pierce and Mike Ransom.

Fab 5 Freddy's media projects have included acting parts in the feature films *New Jack City* (1991), and *American Gangster* (2007), on which he also worked as a production consultant. In 2001, Fab 5 Freddy hosted a web based hip-hop lifestyle series *The Fab 5 Freddy Show* on GetMusic.com. He has been involved with the VH1 Hip Hop Honors awards since its inception in 2004, working as co-producer and host on a number of the shows. He regularly participates as a speaker and panelist in programs at galleries, schools, and conferences.

His writings include a dictionary of contemporary hip-hop terminology entitled *Fresh Fly Flavor: Words and Phrases of the Hip Hop Generation*, published by Longmeadow in 1992, and several articles in commercial magazines. From the 1990s, he has collaborated with other writers on several film projects with themes of rap and hip-hop culture. He continues to create art works, and direct, produce, and appear in television and film productions.

Scope and Content Note

The majority of the collection consists of approximately 200 rolls of commercially developed film prints. These prints were originally housed in their commercial lab envelopes and this order has been maintained. Many of these rolls have accompanying negatives, which are housed alongside their prints.

The subject matter in the photographs are not always clearly delineated or described; Fab 5 Freddy's professional and personal work, as presented in this collection, overlap quite a bit. The rolls of film also have a tendency to overlap in terms of the subject of the photographs. Additionally, the vast majority of the images were not titled or dated; Fab 5 Freddy's original titles have been used wherever possible. Those subjects that can be identified have, but there is a large component of this collection that remains untitled and can best be described in terms of approximate dates.

Subjects include backstage photographs from *Yo! MTV Raps* and Fab 5 Freddy-directed music video shoots, such as Nas' "One Love," Queen Latifah's "Ladies First," Brand Nubian's "Wake Up (Reprise in the Sunshine)," and Snoop Dogg's "Who Am I (What's My Name)?" Also included is artwork for Crucial Conflict's album *Good Side Bad Side* (1998), slides of artwork that were included in *Wild Style*, and headshots.

There are also a number of personal photographs of friends and family, as well as candid shots of famous figures or work-related shots from projects Fab 5 Freddy was not directly associated with, such as yachting with Ice-T and his family, images of Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg during the production of the former's *Doggystyle*, Ted Demme's 1994 wedding, attending the 1994 US Open Men's final with Shep

Gordon, and P. Diddy's 2002 birthday party in Morocco. In the Middle Entertainment-signed artists appear to make up a significant part of the collection, mostly notably a photoshoot for Mike Ransom. Additionally, there are images related to broad subjects that interested Fab 5 Freddy, such as the development of rap culture in Brazil and the dancehall scene.

Occasionally non-photographic elements are interleaved. These include postcards without writing, a call sheet from *American Gangster*, and notes.

It should be noted that this collection includes images shot by famed hip hop photographers Lisa Leone and Doug Rowell.

Arrangement: Alphabetical arrangement is used.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Contact sheets
Negatives (photographs)
Photographs
Slides (photographs)

Subjects

Hip-hop -- United States
Hip-hop in motion pictures
Music videos
Music videos -- Production and direction
Rap (Music) -- New York (State) -- New York
Rap musicians -- United States

Occupations

Television personalities.

Titles

Wild style (Motion picture)

Names

Afrika Bambaataa, 1957-
Demme, Ted, 1963-2002
Diddy (1969-)
Dr. Dre, 1965-
Fab 5 Freddy, 1959-
Ice-T ((Musician))
KRS-One (Musician)
Nas (Musician)
Queen Latifah, 1970-
Snoop Dogg, 1972-
Crucial Conflict (Musical group)

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Afrika Bambaataa circa 1990s
Photographed by Jonathan Mannion.
- b. 1 f. 2 African Street Carnival and "Roses" Video Shoot 1992
- b. 1 f. 3 Alpo 80's -- Harlem Drug Dealers circa 1980s
- b. 1 f. 4 Artwork Polaroids
- b. 1 f. 5 Bab's -- Central Park, Met Museum -- Spring 1994
- b. 1 f. 6 Boogie Down Productions -- "My Philosophy" circa 1988
- b. 1 f. 7 Brand Nubian -- "Wake Up (Reprise in the Sunshine)" 1990
- b. 1 f. 8-9 Brazil 1993-2002
- b. 1 f. 10 Bronx Zoo
- b. 1 f. 11 Bushwick Bill, Nicole, Ted Demme 1992
- b. 1 f. 12 Campbell's Soup Graffiti circa 1980s
- b. 1 f. 13 Central Park -- Summer 2000
- b. 1 f. 14 *Chi-Town for Common Yo! Shoot* 1994
- b. 2 f. 1 Chi Town with Daure, Maregeux, Cliff Love Clowning, and Roy 2000 July, August 2000
- b. 2 f. 2 Chicago and San Fran
- b. 2 f. 3 Chill Hill with Babs -- J. Khan circa 1993
- b. 2 f. 4 Christmas 2001-2004
- b. 2 f. 5 Computer Printed Photographs/Notes
- b. 2 f. 6 Copies of Older Photographs
Crucial Conflict
- b. 2 f. 7-10 1996
- b. 2 f. 11-12 And Others circa 1996
- b. 21 f. 2-4 *Good Side, Bad Side Album Artwork* 1998
- b. 2 f. 13 "Hay" Video Shoot circa 1996
- b. 3 f. 1 Photoshoot circa 1996
- b. 20 f. 1
- b. 21 f. 1
- b. 20 f. 2 Promotional Materials circa 1996
- b. 3 f. 2-3 Cuba 2001-2007
- b. 3 f. 4 Cuban Postcards and Tiki circa 2000s
- b. 3 f. 5-7 Dancehall 1992
- b. 3 f. 8 DC -- Bre With Roy and U. Ditt in Car circa 1992-1993
- b. 3 f. 9 Def Jam Christmas Party 1994
- b. 3 f. 10 Jonathan Demme, Jac, Statue of Liberty 1993
- b. 3 f. 11 Ted Demme's Wedding circa 1994
- b. 3 f. 12 Disney World 1995
- b. 4 f. 1 Dr. Dre and Others circa 1990s
- b. 4 f. 2 Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg -- Dr. Dre in Studio 1993
- b. 4 f. 3 Dru Hill circa 1999

- b. 4 f. 4-7 "Erase Racism" Video Shoot 1992
- b. 4 f. 8 Easter Parade -- Monie Love 1993
 - Fab 5 Freddy
 - b. 4 f. 9 1983-1991
 - b. 4 f. 10 1998
 - er. 1 circa 1980s
(1 computer file 361.78 kilobytes)
- b. 21 f. 6 circa 1990s
- b. 5 f. 1 circa 2000s
- b. 5 f. 2 Anita, CA 1992
- b. 5 f. 3 Family and Friends circa 1990s-2000s
- b. 20 f. 4 Master Package with Slide Sheet 2002
Contains exhibition programs and slides for visual artist Milton Bowens.
 - b. 5 f. 4 *One Must Die Script*
 - b. 5 f. 5 Photoshoot Polaroids
 - b. 5 f. 6 Polaroids circa 1980s-1990s
 - b. 20 f. 3 Promotional 1982-1991
Portfolio including headshots, slides of *Wild Style* and Blondie's "Rapture," photographs featuring Freddy with artists such as Rammellzee and Kool Moe Dee, photographs of art, flyers, and a signed *Yo! MTV Raps* trading card.
 - b. 5 f. 7 With Ben Hinkley, DJ Hurricane
 - b. 5 f. 8 With Ice-T
Includes images of Crucial Conflict and others.
 - b. 5 f. 9 With Lady Pink circa 1980s
 - b. 5 f. 10 With Others
 - b. 5 f. 11 Fab's Godson Timmy
 - b. 5 f. 12 Fam Picnic with Mom and Dad
 - b. 21 f. 5 Daniela Federici 1993
Photograph Federici took of Anna Nicole Smith, autographed by Federici to Fab 5 Freddy.
 - b. 5 f. 13 Friends
 - b. 5 f. 14 The Groomsmen / The Sopranos Comp Card
 - b. 5 f. 15 Hanging on Hancock Street 2000
 - b. 5 f. 16 Harlem Week and Harlem 2000
 - b. 5 f. 17 Debbie Harry and Others circa 2000s
 - b. 5 f. 18 Debbie Harry / Hip Hop Honors Program Schedule circa 2004
 - b. 5 f. 19 Headshots
 - b. 5 f. 20 Hip Hop Honors -- Bone, Kahn's House 2004
 - b. 5 f. 21 Hip Hop Photographs Sent to Fab 5 Freddy
 - b. 5 f. 22 Hip Hop -- Some Portraits and Sent Photographs
 - b. 6 f. 1 House Renovations 1998-1999
 - b. 6 f. 2 Hunter Halloween Ball 2004
 - b. 6 f. 3 Ice-T and Others
 - b. 6 f. 4 Impact in Nashville with Wendel and George

- b. 6 f. 5 In the Middle Entertainment Photoshoot
- b. 6 f. 6 iNi Kamoze
- b. 6 f. 7 JA. Island Village 1994
- b. 6 f. 8 J.A. with C. Blackwell 1992
- b. 6 f. 9 "Jac's B-Day with Usual Suspects" circa 1994
For Jac Benson II. Includes diagram of the cake.
- b. 6 f. 10 Jackie Robinson Show circa 1991
- b. 6 f. 11 Jamel, Mansion, Sparkle, Kurt, and Camila 2004
- b. 7 f. 1 Jamaica with M. Sayeed 1993-1994
- b. 7 f. 2-5 Japan 1993-1994
- b. 7 f. 6 Quincy Jones and Others circa 1993
- b. 7 f. 7 Kasper, Lefty, JBoogie 1997
- b. 7 f. 8 Kimyatta and Auto Show / Mom and Pop 1994
- b. 7 f. 9 KRS-One circa 1988
- b. 21 f. 7
- b. 7 f. 10 Spike Lee Shoots a Jaguar Industrial at 411 Convent Ave 2000 March
Original title; it reflects the contents of the negatives.
- b. 7 f. 11 Lisa Leone Photoshoot -- Untitled
London
- b. 7 f. 12 With Jac, K. Swain, Indea / Renovations
- b. 7 f. 13 With P. Tomas 1992-1993
- b. 7 f. 14 With Sharon 2000 March
Los Angeles
- b. 8 f. 1 1993 with Grenada Hills, CA -- Treach, Snoop 1993
- b. 8 f. 2 1994 February
- b. 8 f. 3 Spring 1994
- b. 8 f. 4 1999
- b. 8 f. 5 Black Antiques, Kelly and Tikki -- Fab 1999 May
- b. 8 f. 6 With Roy, Alonzo, Some Critics circa 1990s
- b. 8 f. 7 *The Mack Lobby Cards, Photograph* 1973
- b. 8 f. 8 Malik's Birthday circa 2000s
- b. 8 f. 9 Maui, Hawaii 2000
- b. 8 f. 10 Debi Mazar and Jimmy Alt and Lisa / Tupac and Madonna at Versace Party --
Spring 1994
- b. 8 f. 11 Debi Mazar at Party circa 1990s
- b. 8 f. 12 Miami at Bobbi's circa 1990s
- b. 8 f. 13 Miami with Kimyatta 1994
- b. 8 f. 14 Model Slides
- b. 8 f. 15 Mr. Freeze circa 1980s
Photographed by Sophie Bramly.
- b. 20 f. 7 MTV -- Tom Freston 1994-1998
Contains a cover letter from Freston, headshot, and a photograph of Freddy with Melvin Van Peebles and others.

- b. 9 f. 1 Music Video Shoot circa 2000s
- b. 9 f. 2 Nas circa 1994
- b. 9 f. 3 Nas -- "One Love" Video 1994
- b. 9 f. 4 New Jack Entertainment Event circa 1999
- b. 9 f. 5 Nigeria 1990-1991
- b. 9 f. 6 North Carolina 2004
- b. 9 f. 7 Notes circa 2000s
- b. 9 f. 8 Office and Friend circa 1990s
- b. 9 f. 9 Connie Orlando with Peaches in Miami 1994
- b. 9 f. 10 Paris -- Guru and MC Solaar Video circa 1993
- b. 9 f. 11 Paris Barclay, Luki, Peter Tomas in my Old Apartment 1993
- b. 9 f. 12 Party at James DuBose's House 2002
- b. 9 f. 13 Party at Franki's House with N'Dea, Lisa Meets Sparkle and Connie Orlando -- Spring 2000
- b. 10 f. 1 P. Diddy circa 2000s
- b. 10 f. 2-4 P. Diddy -- Birthday Party in Morocco 2002
- b. 21 f. 8
- b. 10 f. 5 Max Perlich / Stush and Co 1992
- b. 10 f. 6 Petey Pablo circa 2002
- b. 20 f. 5 Photograph by Lisa Leone circa 1990s
 Unidentified subject.
- b. 10 f. 7 Pine Ridge with Aunt Lu, Essa, and Ernest 2004
- b. 10 f. 8 Amos Poe, D. Cortez, Malik Sayeed, James Nares, Hilton Als 1994
- b. 10 f. 9 Polaroids circa 1990s
 Includes images of Spike Lee, Queen Latifah, and others.
- b. 10 f. 10 Postcards
- b. 10 f. 11-12 Puerto Rico 2005
 - b. 11 f. 1 Queen Latifah -- "Ladies First" Video circa 1989
 This roll also contains images from Nas' "One Love" (1994).
- b. 11 f. 2-4 Mike Ransom circa 1999
- b. 20 f. 6
- b. 11 f. 5 Mike Ransom and Others
- b. 11 f. 6 Restaurant Event circa 1980s
- b. 11 f. 7 Max Roach Tribute 2002
- b. 11 f. 8-10 San Francisco 1993
 Includes photographs taken during the production of the music video for Snoop Dogg's "Who Am I? (What's My Name?)."
- b. 11 f. 11 *San Francisco with The Chronic* circa 1992
- b. 11 f. 12 "Satellite" Painting circa 1980s
- b. 11 f. 13 Scotland -- King Tut's Wah Wah Hut circa 2000s
 - b. 12 Shabba Ranks -- "Trailer Load A Girls" 1992-1993
- b. 12 f. 3 Rev. Al Sharpton circa 1980s
 Signed by Rev. Al Sharpton.
- b. 12 f. 4 Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre 1993
 Dates to the production of the music video for Dr. Dre's "Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang."

- b. 12 f. 5 Snoop Dogg and Others 1993
- b. 12 f. 6 "Sophia Cries" 1994
- b. 12 f. 7 Stonewall Anniversary with Babs 1994
Includes photographs from a signing event with Richard Avedon.
- b. 12 f. 8 Studio with Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg circa 1992
- b. 12 f. 9 T-Boz Book Release circa 1999
- b. 12 f. 10 Tokyo -- 12/93 1993
- b. 12 f. 11 Uptown Unplugged -- LA with Taharka circa 1993
- b. 12 f. 12 US Men's Open with Shep Gordon, Peter May 1994
- b. 12 f. 13 Melvin van Peebles circa 1990s-2000s
- b. 13 f. 1 Various Music Videos -- Gang Starr; "Erase Racism" circa 1990
- b. 13 f. 2 Joan Vass Fashion Show
- b. 13 f. 3 Walrod, A. Logadia, A. Smalls 1993
- b. 13 f. 4 Wes Johnson
- b. 13 f. 5 *Wild Style Artworks, Graffiti, Chalfant* 1980
- b. 13 f. 6 *Wild Style Interview* circa 2000s
- b. 13 f. 7 *Wild Style Promotional Photographs* circa 1982
- b. 13 f. 8-9 Wine Country 1999
- b. 13 f. 10 Writing Cinderella's with Suzanne Brokerick
- b. 13 f. 11 Woodstock '99 1999
- b. 13 f. 12 Yachting with Ice-T and Family -- LA 1994
Yo! MTV Raps
- b. 20 f. 9 Common circa 1994
- b. 13 f. 13 Negatives circa 1990s
- b. 13 f. 14 Onyx on Brooklyn Bridge, Roy, Max Perlich 1992
- b. 14 f. 1 Photographs circa 1990s
- b. 14 f. 2 Promotional Photographs circa 1988
- b. 14 f. 3 Shoot circa 1980s
- b. 14 f. 4 *With Queen Latifah and Mad Rap Stars for Yo! Shoot* 1994
- b. 20 f. 8 West Indian Parade circa 1990s
Includes Debi Mazar.
- Untitled
Contains images of friends and family, as well as professional situations, that were untitled and have not been identified.
- Photographs
- b. 14 f. 5 1981-1992
- b. 14 f. 6 1992-1994
- b. 14 f. 7-8 1994
- b. 14 f. 9 1995-1996
- b. 14 f. 10 1999-2002
- b. 15 f. 1 circa 1980s
- b. 15 f. 2-6 circa 1990s

Untitled (cont.)

Photographs (cont.)

- b. 15 f. 7-10 **circa 2000s**
- b. 16 f. 1-8
- b. 17 f. 1-9
- b. 18 f. 1-7
- b. 18 f. 8 **Contact Sheets** circa 1990s-2000s
- b. 18 f. 9 **Polaroids** circa 1990s
- b. 18 f. 10-13 **Negatives** circa 1990s-2000s
- b. 19 f. 1-7
- b. 19 f. 8-13 **Slides** circa 1971-1990s