

- Ife Oshun: [00:00](#) Look into my eyes. You will see who I am. My name is Lucifer. Please take my hand. Those lyrics are from a song called nib recorded by black Sabbath in 1970. Hi, I'm Ife Oshun, and today we'll talk about Satanism in popular American music. Wikipedia's Satanism page states The following, prior to the public practice, Satanism existed primarily as an accusation by various Christian groups toward perceived ideological opponents rather than a self identity. Religious studies scholars say that the very definition of the term has a history of being a designation made by people against those whom they dislike. It is a term used for othering and in the Bible, Satan, the word was used as an ordinary noun, meaning the adversary, the terms Satanism and Satanist first appear in English and French during the 16th century, and Satanism didn't become an official religion until 1966 when the church of Satan was established by Anton LaVey.
- Ife Oshun: [01:10](#) Besides being a philosopher and a cultist, Lavey was a musician who played multiple instruments including the organ in addition to his infamous satanic mass album other albums would be released by Lavey in the nineties. This leveraging of music by the very person who established the church of Satan made historical sense in context, particularly regarding art and entertainment where the concept of Satan has long been used as a symbol of expression. Many classical compositions were said to be a vehicle for the devil, particularly due to the use of a specific combination of notes, a unique chord within music itself that was associated with evil, known as the devil's chord. The notes when played together as many other names including Diabolus in musica, Latin for devil in music or the devil's interval, the tri tone, the triad, and the flatted fifth basically it's a combination of notes that when played together in a chord become the musical equivalent of the heebie jeebies.
- Ife Oshun: [02:11](#) The chord can be found in compositions from Beethoven and Wagner and even jazz composition such as the girl from Ipanema and the song Maria from West side story fender.com actually gives budding guitarists a tutorial on how to create the devil's chord and it serves as a great description of what it is. So I'll read it. Quote, in simple terms, a triad or a triad is a fifth played one fret down to play a flatted fifth with a G power chord. Place your first finger on the third fret of the low E string. That's the root note, or the G. now put your third finger, two frets up on the fifth fret of the a string. That's the fifth in this case, the D to complete the power cord, placed your fourth finger next to your third finger on the next string over the D string.

- Ife Oshun: [03:01](#) That's the octave of the root. Note. Another G strummed together. These three strings create a pleasant sounding chord, G, D, G, but if you take your second finger and play at a fret down as a D flat instead of a D, it creates a flatted fifth when played after the first G or plucked slowly in a G root note, G octave D flat flatted fifth progression. It creates a dissonant or ugly tone, especially with distortion, and that is the devil's chord in their infancy. The genres of blues and jazz were routinely referred to as the devil's music. Partially due to the innate rebellion within the sound and the lyrics themselves, but also partially due to an institutionally dehumanized regard of black musicians and black people in general. The devil's chord first appeared in rock music when Jimmy Hendrix used it in the opening of his classic song purple haze.
- Ife Oshun: [03:57](#) It would later become a staple in the repertoire of black Sabbath who are cited as one of the pioneering bands of the heavy metal genre and it would be heavy metal that took the devil's cord and ran like a bat out of hell with it, with numerous metal bands such as Metallica, Slipknot and Slayer who even named their 1998 album Diabolus in musica, but it was Black Sabbath, perhaps more than any other modern band that made the devil's chord part of American mainstream music. The band which like every rock band at the time was originally rooted in blues. They first called themselves the Polka Tulk blues band and then later they called themselves earth. It was the latter name earth that presented a challenge as it was being used by another English group. At the same time, they were also inspired by 1963 horror film called black Sabbath that starred the legendary Boris Karloff.
- Ife Oshun: [04:51](#) They saw that a local horror movie theater had a line of people waiting to buy tickets and intrigued by the appeal of this type of content. They went ahead and wrote a song also titled black Sabbath. The lyrics were based on a horror story and a nightmare. One of the members of the band had these horror movie lyrics combined with the foreboding introduced by the devil's chord, helped the band create an unprecedented experience in music. According to Wikipedia, the new sound was a quote stark contrast to the popular music of the late 1960s which was dominated by a flower power, folk music and hippie culture, and an attempt at creating the musical equivalent of horror films and quote, the commercial success of this new sound came despite being initially critically panned along with marketing stunts such as releasing titles on Friday the 13th and recording music in dungeons it was clear that dark side in music was connecting with audiences. It would be black Sabbath's commercial embrace of the devil's chord along with

horror and symbolism and themes that influenced every metal act that followed and laid the groundwork for every sub genre from the blackest and truly demonic to grunge, to popular bands such as Nirvana, van Halen, sound garden, and Marilyn Manson. This formula for commercial success would be later replicated in another music genre, a genre that would eventually overtake and bypass rock in mainstream popularity. Rap music. Fast forward to the nineties North America is still in the throws of what was called the Satanism scare. A moral panic brought on by numerous claims of satanic rituals being perpetuated along with murders and child molestation. It is also the time when Anton LeVey drops his last two albums and inducts, his friend Marilyn Manson as a minister of the church of Satan.

Ife Oshun:

[06:51](#)

Shortly before Manson's 1994 debut album portrait of an American family is released and it is also the golden age of rap. In 1993 a young MC known as Big L steps to the mic with a song called devil's son. The lyrics go like this. On my skull. The six 66 no tricks when I catch fits, my mom picks up the crucifix and I killed chumps with the cheapest price. I'm rolling with Satan, not Jesus Christ. The late Big L, a brilliant lyric says to once put the fear of God in Nas and is unarguably one of the most underrated MCs of all time. Talked about his inspiration for the lyrics. He said, quote, I've always been a fan of horror flicks. Plus the things I see in Harlem are very scary, so I just put it all together in a rhyme and quote. Big L would later be cited as one of the pioneers of the rap sub genre known as horrorcore, a hybrid of gangster rap, which incorporated horror themes, satanic iconography and shock lyrics and grew in popularity.

Ife Oshun:

[07:54](#)

In the late nineties horrorcore would elevate, satanic marketing of music to dizzying heights. That rock never did do in part to it being a perfect vehicle for storytelling. Other pioneering groups included geto boys who raised the stakes with extreme violence, psychosis and general deranged lyrics that were also based in part on social politics. They would go ahead and influence a generation of rappers and rock artists, Marilyn Manson, 2pac, Eminem, goodie mob, little Wayne, Rick Ross, insane clown posse and many more. The sub genre eventually evolved to mirror and eventually eclipse the evolution and content of heavy metal. Explicit and masterful lyrics were often inspired by horror movies. But this time performed over atmospheric dark rap beats and in the case of Detroit MC Esham, it was evil devil inspired lyrics, spat over heavy metal beats. Esham credited as a pioneer of horrorcore and acidcore was heavily influenced by death metal.

Ife Oshun: [09:00](#) He released his self produced debut album, booming words from hell in 1990 when he was only 13 years old on the album he depicted the city of Detroit as synonymous with hell. He would go on to develop a cult following that was outside of the rap genre and referred to as acid rap followers included Insane clown posse and Eminem who referred to himself as quote a mixture between Manson Esham and Ozzie and quote Esham was also partially responsible for starting the more mainstream rap rock genre and influenced groups such as Korn and kid rock. The rapper who was credited for putting the Detroit rap scene on the map never broke the mainstream, but he did scare people according to the Metro times. He said, quote, people were literally scared of my records. They'd get into an accident and be like, I got into an accident because I was playing that tape end quote.

Ife Oshun: [09:53](#) Despite his seminal influence, Esham remained in the darkness of the underground. While other horror core acts such as the rap super group, grave diggaz and six feet deep garnered more popularity, but at the apex of this genre was three six mafia, a Texas group whose name was based on the biblical definition of the Mark of the beast as told in the book of revelation, their extremely violent. Often satanic lyrics, spin tales of violence that make a clockwork orange read like Sesame street according to okay, player.com their first single and biggest hit stay fly was the subject of a strange theory driven by rap forums. The claim was that the sample featured in the chorus of the song, which was a song called, tell me why has our love turned cold by Willie Hutch was speeded up to sound like a woman singing you are God, you are King. Lucifer. This theory was eventually debunked, but it illustrated how this group managed to crawl underneath the mass rap psyche to instill literal fear of the devil with their music and when it came to leveraging the public's fascination with horror into sales. Three six mafia made black Sabbath's commercial embrace of Satan look like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich as okay player went on to point out despite the impact the music had, the group members saw it all is simply characters that they were portraying with the group's founding member DJ Paul saying, well, we were into horror movies and serial killers. It's more like a character. I'd say like Robert DeNiro playing the devil or Al Pachino and quo. Okay. Player would also go on to say that Paul was raised in a religious family who went to church every Sunday and that he still goes to church every Sunday.

Ife Oshun: [11:42](#) The commercial success of three six mafia became even more incredible when they went completely mainstream. Something, many acts, both rock and rap, including black Sabbath, were

never able to fully pull off. They eventually cleaned up their act, ditching the hyper violence and devil worship and changing their name to triple six mafia. They became the first rap group to win an Academy award for best original song with. It's hard out here for a pimp from the film hustle and flow by now. Mainstream rap artists also dabbled in devilish imagery. Take DMX fresh from ruff ryders collective. He releases his number one debut album titled it's dark and hell is hot. The followup is called flesh of my flesh based on another biblical reference involving Jesus Christ in the last supper and it featured DMX on the album cover naked and drenched in blood. It also includes a track called omen Damien 2, which features a guest appearance from our friend Marilyn Manson.

Ife Oshun:

[12:39](#)

Today, younger artists such as Tyler, the creator, tap into the same formula for record sales in his early career before his alternative hip hop collective odd future gained in popularity. His lyrics drew heavily from horrorcore. Tyler's embrace of so-called satanic iconography such as inverted crosses, also fueled rumors that he was a devil worshiper, but his work quickly evolved into more creative expression that crossed boundaries into multimedia, art, merchandising, and television. Tyler was a huge influence on Billie Eilish, who in turn has embraced hellish and demonic vibes in her videos for songs like all the good girls go to hell. A 2019 video, which shows her as a winged demon from hell, but it's actually a commentary on climate change. Like so many of the rap artists she was inspired by. Eilish understands that demonic imagery is a surefire way to capture the attention of the public and get a message across.

Ife Oshun:

[13:37](#)

Also offering a unique message is a 21 year old rapper called saw baby who embraces inverted crosses and the Mark of the beast. Six six six saw baby started a movement called unknownism, which is a life philosophy. He claims is not about Satan, but about empowerment. Ironically, the thinking behind unknownism echo strangely of the church of Satan. Philosophy penned by Anton Lavey who didn't believe in Satan as anything more than a symbol of quote, pride, individualism, and enlightenment and quo. It would seem that the concept of Satanism and the utilization of satanic iconography has come full circle in American mainstream music. What started out as a marketing adventure morphed into extreme messaging and quickly took on a life of its own. Today it is very much alive, firmly rooted in multiple genres and represents the very thing that it claims. It's not about Satan, the antithesis of that which is regarded as the norm. The other, the darkness that lurks behind the door, underneath the bed and beyond the stair, the expansive freedom and consequences of unbridled expression

and the brutal communication of experiences and ideas is alive and thriving. And today's mainstream music.