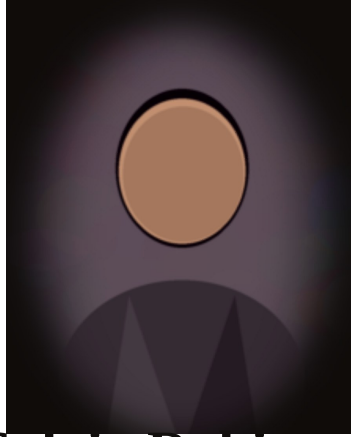




Sylvia Robinson

May 29, 1935 - September 29, 2011

Secaucus, New Jersey

Sylvia Robinson - American singer, songwriter, and label executive who helped turn hip-hop from Bronx block parties into a recorded industry - died in Secaucus, New Jersey, on September 29, 2011. She was seventy-six. Born Sylvia Vanterpool on May 29, 1935, in New York City, she recorded as Little Sylvia, scored with Mickey & Sylvia on "Love Is Strange," then reinvented herself again with the sensual chart hit "Pillow Talk" before building Sugar Hill Records in Englewood with her husband Joe.

"Rapper's Delight" in 1979 put a long party rhyme on vinyl and into suburban bedrooms; "The Message" later proved the new music could carry social weight as well as bounce. She auditioned talent, shaped arrangements, and fought the business wars that come with inventing a market. Friends called her the Mother of Hip-Hop; rivals learned that a former R&B singer could out-negotiate a room full of men who still thought the genre was a fad.

Meadowlands Hospital in Secaucus closed a career that had spanned doo-wop, disco, and the first gold rush of rap. She died of congestive heart failure, leaving a catalog and a template for Black women executives in popular music.

Harlem stages taught phrasing; New Jersey studios taught leverage. She heard a street form and insisted the tape keep rolling.

She died in Secaucus on September 29, 2011. Somewhere a breakbeat still opens under a party chant that changed the century's soundtrack.

Robinson's gift was commercial imagination - hearing the next American vernacular before the charts caught up. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 29 remembers the New York-born producer who put hip-hop on the national shelf.

Services

Died in Secaucus, New Jersey, September 29, 2011. Singer and producer; Mickey & Sylvia; Pillow Talk; Sugar Hill Records; Rapper's Delight.

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