

IN THE SPIRITS

WE RECAP 10 KEY MOMENTS IN HISTORY WHEN BLACK CULTURE AND THE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE INDUSTRY CONVERGED

By NINA HEMPHILL REEDER



Circa 1627

Derived from a sugarcane byproduct, rum is purportedly invented in Barbados. With slave labor cultivating the cane, the spirit soon generates a lucrative industry. The toil of one enslaved person could yield roughly 150 gallons of rum annually.



1920–1933

The Prohibition years contribute to the rise of jazz and speakeasies provide platforms for the genre and its Black musicians to gain notoriety. One of the foremost musicians of the time is **Duke Ellington**, who, from 1927 to 1931, leads the Cotton Club's house band.

1980

Miss Black America, Sharon Wright,

appears in a print ad for Riunite. [The Italian wine brand arrived on American shores in 1967, and by 1988, it sold 2.1 million cases, becoming the No. 1 imported wine brand in the United States.]



1980s

Star Wars actor and heartthrob **Billy Dee Williams** appears in Colt 45 commercials, popularizing the slogan "It works every time." Malt liquor, beer brewed with more fermentable sugar, is being increasingly marketed to the Black community, and Williams adds his sex appeal to the lure.



1990s

Malt liquor is still in vogue, and the 40 ounce appears as a hip-hop community staple. With catchy rhymes from the likes of **Ice Cube** and the **Notorious B.I.G.**, St. Ides is among the first brands to employ rappers as ambassadors in commercials for the brew.



1993

Snoop Dogg's hip-hop classic "Gin and Juice" not only heralds the house party, but with references to Seagrams and "his homey **Dr. Dre**" bringing "a gang of Tanqueray," also leads to skyrocketing gin sales.



1999

Budweiser and its "Wassup" guys debut and later score big during a 2000 Super Bowl slot. The urban young-adult-targeted campaign goes on to win several awards, and the greeting is quickly overused by wannabe-hip guys in your crew.



2002

Busta Rhymes, Diddy

and **Pharrell** band together to make the feel-good hit "Pass the Courvoisier, Part II." With the help of the equally vibrant music video, the song leads to a double-digit-percent increase in sales for the French cognac.



2007–present

Diddy pioneers a game-changing partnership with spirit company Diageo that makes Ciroc vodka a household name and bar essential. Celebs including **Jay Z**, **Nicki Minaj**, **Ludacris** and **Trey Songz** follow suit with brands of their own.



2012

Olivia Pope hits prime-time with her designer suits and the ever-present glass of red wine. *Scandal* fans channel their chief gladiator, scouring the Internet for oversized wine glasses and '94 du Bellay—which does not actually exist.