

The Northside Research Project

Profiling Hip Hop Artistry In Canada

Presented to: The Canada Council for the Arts

Presented by: Motion Live Entertainment & Saada STYLO

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The Mission

"We must do more to support our artists, to fully recognize their status, to provide high quality training at the initial and professional development levels, to ensure they are fairly compensated and to protect and celebrate their creative freedom.

I believe that we also need to foster and recognize the new cultural leadership within our communities, whether it comes from individuals or organizations that are particularly creative and innovative."¹

In 2004, poet/emcee Wendy "Motion" Brathwaite and freelance journalist Saada Branker were approached by Anthony "Nth Dgri" Bansfield, the then-Equity Coordinator at the Canada Council for the Arts. His mission was to explore the idea of increasing recognition and support of Urban Arts and Culture at the Canada Council. Almost immediately, the mission triggered a brainstorm of ideas for research and implementation. Keen on the opportunity to embark on some groundbreaking work, they continued the dialogue throughout the next year.

The go-ahead was finalized at the Canada Council for the Arts, with a newly gathered Hip Hop working committee to guide the project. On January 26, 2006, Motion and Saada arrived in Ottawa to discuss with the Canada Council the focus and scope of the project, and to envision a road for achieving its objectives. Because of the far-reaching definitions and practices of "urban" arts, there was agreement to build on a more focused exposé of Hip Hop: the art, the scene, the history and future of its manifestation in Canada.

To set it off as only Hip Hop would, a moniker was instituted to represent where the pair was coming from on this journey. MotionLive Ent. and Saada Stylo established The NORTHSIDE PROJECT to symbolize the mobilization of Canadian Hip Hop. The plan: Northside would step to the creators of the culture who, in the words of legendary emcee KRS ONE, don't **do** Hip Hop, but **are** Hip Hop.

Northside immediately faced its first challenge.

Question: *How to best represent Hip Hop as an art and culture to a nationally-funded institution, while staying true to the power, the roots and the identity that has spawned from its generation?*

Answer: *Go directly to the people. Ask Hip Hop's stakeholders - the Canadian artists, entrepreneurs and cultural organizers - about their experiences of living, creating and surviving this art. Build on their responses about the strengths and challenges of Canadian Hip Hop.*

Northside then launched as the microphone amplifying artist feedback.

¹ - "Rethinking the importance of culture," By Simon Brault, Excerpt from a speech to the Federal-Provincial Culture Ministers' Conference in Halifax, Oct. 30, 2004. Source: www.canadacouncil.ca.

The Research Objectives

The goal of this Northside Research Project is to advise in the development of a framework outlining how best to support Hip Hop arts and arts organizations in Canada. This framework will address how to achieve this objective through the existing and/or new programs and services at the Canada Council for the Arts.

The overall aims of Northside are threefold, as set out by the Canada Council.

1. Define and describe Hip Hop Arts in Canada
2. Develop a practical profile of Hip Hop arts by identifying key Canadian artists, arts organizations and management models, including a description of their practices.
3. Gauge the degree to which artists working in Hip Hop art forms have access to the Council's funding and services.

Northside's Research Methods

Consultations

- Meetings with program and section officers at the Canada Council for the Arts based in Ottawa on January 26 and 27th, 2006;
- Artist roundtables conducted in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver during the month of February;²

Consultation tools

- Online survey on Urbnet.com and HipHopCanada.com
- Questionnaire provided to Canada Council officers
- Release welcoming feedback and participation in the roundtables.
- E-mail account set up for feedback storage and connecting with participants:
northsideproject@gmail.com

² Method of consultation: audio, video and e-mail interviews with artists and organizations supporting Hip Hop artistry.

Coast 2 Coast 2006

In Halifax, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver, Northside approached a cross-section of artists and their supportive communities, soliciting the opinions that reflected shared and unique experiences in Hip Hop. Given time and travel constraints, the action was a first step in making connections with some regional contacts. These preliminary meetings allowed Northside to develop a snapshot of the experiences, strengths, challenges, influences and cultures emerging throughout Canada. Northside envisioned that this first-phase approach would open the doors for more detailed profiling of major urban centres including Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, and regions throughout the Maritimes and Northern Canada.

In each of the six cities, Northside touched base with artists and organizers who, with no monetary incentive, came out and shared their valuable time. The importance of their contributions cannot be overstated. Only through these kinds of collaborations was Northside able to unearth shared themes and issues affecting Hip Hop's growth.

Ottawa – January 26 - 27

Ottawa was the first stop on the Northside tour. As the home of the Canadian government, this capital city might not be immediately referred to as a major Hip Hop centre. But blocks from Parliament dwell a plethora of MCs, DJ's, spoken wordists, visual artists, dancers (as seen on the Hold It Down DVD) and others who exemplify the tense dichotomy between the most mainstream vs. the deepest grassroots. Urbanwear shop Soul City opened its doors for a meeting of the minds between some of Ottawa's Hip Hop mainstays, including b-boys, DJs, rap radio hosts, edutainers and old school pioneers.

Montreal – February 3 - 5

The concentric city of "Mont Real" was the scene of an intense weekend that included artist rap sessions (i.e. discussion forums), one-on-one interviews, and live-to-air radio roundtables. The issues revolving around Quebec's art scene were steeped in the duality of its languages – a reality that offers the world an enriching culture in Hip Hop production. Questions of access – within Quebec for English-speaking artists, and outside of the province for its French-speaking comrades – encouraged impassioned debate. The themes that prevailed for all were the need for a nationally recognized infrastructure, and the desire to be heard both within and without the two solitudes.

Toronto – February 16 - 22

Tackling Northside's home base of Toronto proved a feat when seeking to assemble a fully representative spectrum of various players supporting Hip Hop. Yet the response was encouraging, as Sony/BMG opened its boardroom for a roundtable of diverse artists, music label reps, dancers, and journalists. The recurring themes highlighted the Business of Hip Hop, and the obvious lack of support for Canadian Hip Hop arts in sectors ranging from media to public funding. One-on-one interviews revealed a burning frustration with the current state of affairs. At the same time, participants referred to the diversity in skills, experience, and energy available to establish Canada as an international source of artistic excellence.

Vancouver - February 25

Canada's left coast has birthed a scene that exists in both isolation and popularity. "Van-city" for example, has made a solid name for itself in building Canadian Hip Hop; successful performers in music and film have raised Canada's profile, as re-iterated in numerous interviews. For Northside, gathering a roundtable in Vancouver - during the same weekend that artists flocked to Toronto for Canadian Music Week - was a no-go. This scheduling glitz did, however, lead to a series of intimate one-on-one interviews, with both established and upcoming artists and organizers. Topics centered

on the city's geographic advantages, specifically its close proximity to the U.S. Music artists' inability to receive adequate airplay (video and radio) in Canada was a consistent source of frustration, as many struggled to make a living from their art at home; they spoke often of setting their sights abroad, as a result. Issues of cultural identity, race, and access to mainstream exposure were also consistent discussion points.

Edmonton – February 26

Northside's next stop in Edmonton proved that what is accomplished in four hours can be as valuable as four days. A mission to amplify the voices of Canada's First Nations creating Hip Hop led Northside to the Sun Moon Visionary Centre, where a gathering of b-boys and b-girls, DJ's, Emcees and entrepreneurs expounded on the realities of Hip Hop in the prairies and reservations of the nation. Here, as in Vancouver, the theme of geographical accessibility was discussed, as well as the challenges of sustaining niche markets v.s. the pigeon-holing of Hip Hop artists. Hip Hop symbolizes survival, expressed by one artist who stated: "Hip Hop saved my life." The role of Hip Hop as a voice and agent of change in this region is reflective of its Bronx-born roots. These artists and cultural organizers intend to be recognized and heard beyond any limiting scope, while at the same time representing the heritage that birthed them.

Halifax – March 3-5

The Eastern side was the final stop on Northside's railroad. History and a long-standing presence of the Hip Hop communities residing in the Maritimes opened many doors for discussion. The YMCA, in the heart of Halifax's Gottigen community, was the scene of an intimate roundtable, which brought together players on various sides of the Hip Hop equation. In reflecting on Nova Scotia, one theme highlighted focused on "venue hate." Namely, artists spoke up about Hip Hop's inability to access venues, funding, and support even within their own regions. Long-established biases - racial, cultural, and economic - are barriers Hip Hop artists in various fields strive daily to overcome. Nova Scotia is producing some names in the underground Hip Hop scene, and the prevailing theme discussed was the need to build infrastructure and mobilization throughout the Maritimes to support them. Articulated was a desire to prevent the consistent brain-drain that lures artists away from the Atlantic side to seek support in larger cities. And strong remained their recognition of a historical bond to their regions - places where born-and-bred Canadians are committed to building with pride.

State of the Arts [past, present, future]

"Hip hop is defined as the mode of consciousness, interaction and understanding that flows forth from its four most developed and basic elements: Emceeing, B-Boying (Breakdancing, Popping, and Locking) Graff Art, and Djyng/Turntabllism."³

In the Beginning...

"Hip Hop started out in the park." These simple lines from Queens, New York-born MC Shan's 1987 rap classic "The Bridge" sums up the grassroots of this 20th century phenomenon. Whether called the "Black CNN" by rap scholar Chuck D, or the "last voice" by "The T'cha" KRS One, Hip Hop has arisen as a bastion of creativity, a soundtrack of the last three generations, and an aural timeline of youth coming of age in concrete jungles worldwide, bridging the moments before and after the millennium.

Hip Hop, though a modern-day phenomenon, is not born of itself. Hip Hop – the music, art, dance and culture – is a direct descendant of cultural movements that can be traced to ancient times:

"...According to Kris Parker (legendary rap scholar) hip-hop consciousness did not begin when the term first appeared in the early 1970s. Rather, Parker sees a kindred spirit between graffiti art and the prehistoric cave paintings of North Africa, between breakin' and 16th-century Angolan martial arts, and between rap artists and the 'griots' and 'djelees' who combined speech with music in ancient Mali, Ghana and Songhay." ⁴

From West African shores to the sands of Jamaica, Hip Hop's beginnings traveled the journey of African descendents. Hip Hop can attribute much of its style and technique to Jamaican dub, a sub-genre of Reggae music and culture, which surfaced almost a full decade before Hip Hop in the U.S. David Toop, in his classic 1984 study, *Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip Hop*, graphs the journey of slaves singing spirituals, field hands unifying through work songs, blues and jazz singers vocalizing pain, and radio DJ's hyping listeners in rhyme. The evolution of this medium solidified Hip Hop into what exists today: an art form steeped in a rich African culture, distinctly North American, and ultimately global. As a cultural force, Hip Hop's rising profile on the global scene has become a tie that binds, bringing new peoples and their cultures into its fold.

³ Excerpt from "Hip Hop Criticism: Hip Hop Culture and Paradigm Shifts" by Shamako Noble at <http://www.hiphopcongress.com/yourworld/crit/paradigm.html>. Noble is a Hip Hop activist and founder of The Hip Hop Congress, based in San Jose, California.

⁴ Source: "A Hip Hop History Lesson" by Brent Cunningham in *The University of Buffalo Reporter*, date unknown.

Back In the Day...

The culture of Hip Hop started out in the parks, where rap godfathers and mothers birthed raw beauty from concrete and bricks. From the moment Jamaican-born DJ Kool Herc displayed the “breakbeat” to the world in 1973, inborn skills would be transformed into the four core disciplines of one of the most influential cultures of the 21st century: **The MC. The Graffiti Writer. The DJ. The Dancer.**

The DJ is the rock on which the temple of hip-hop is built. The DJ mixes and arranges sounds from the heavy crates filled with records of every imaginable type of music. Black vinyl, dusty and scratched, waits to be heard once again, becoming the instruments for many who had none.

The MC is the voice, transferring prose scribbled in rhyme books or improvised from the top of the mind, to the consciousness of a generation of hungry souls yearning for a voice to speak its truth.

The Artist uses talent and vision to transform a gray and brown existence into a kaleidoscope of hope and desire, like hieroglyphs on modern day pyramids, infinitely displayed to the wonderment of human eyes.

The Dancer - B-Boys and B-Girls battle for acceptance, or survival. The dancer unleashes centuries of movements and rhythm, which survived the passage from a mother land to this land, onto an unsuspecting populace that watches in awe.

These four disciplines ignited a fireball of movement and inspiration that refused to be quelled or cooled. It was too cool for that. Too dope. Too funky fresh, y'all. The codes of the streets were carefully guarded by those who had little else to claim but the heartbeat of the streets that pumped the very blood through their veins. Hip- Hop.

Many kilometers to the north, there was a growing population of the children of Caribbean and African immigrants to large Canadian cities like Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa. Here within the northern climes, these first and second generations were more connected to the bass bins and sound systems of beaches and villages on far-away islands than to the heavy rock of radio stations in their new found home. The chatting of dub riddims, the toasting of DJs and the sweet crooning of reggae stars gave these youth a slightly different musical foundation than the Motown sounds of their southern cousins in the U.S. of A.

It would be the strains of this Hip Hop being heard through un-tuned, static-filled radio signals, barely picked up from wire hangers attached to boom-boxes, which started the merging of two styles of music and culture. Treasures in the form of cassette tapes would quickly be reproduced and make their way through countless boom-boxes in the Great White North. Vinyl with names like Sugar Hill and Enjoy were brought back in the bottom of suitcases to be the starting point of many MCs' careers. The b-sides offered beats to write the lyrics that needed to be released or they would soon explode. **Hip Hop.**

Oh Canada...Our home and native land, but native to whom? They never saw any Natives in their classrooms, their schools, their multicultural pots. So they looked to the south, or “back home” for some connection to something greater than the profound and lonely sense of otherness in the land of their birth. **Hip Hop.**

*In Toronto, a Jamaican-born father starts a sound crew with his four sons, playing jam packed basement parties and Sunday afternoon blockos. **Hip Hop.***

*A college radio station in the downtown core opens its airwaves to a young student for a couple of hours every afternoon, which remains the longest running radio timeslot for the music and sounds of this culture in the north. **Hip Hop.***

*A young girl from the west end of Toronto picks up a mic, a pen and a pad, to become the first Canadian lyrical export. **Hip Hop.***

*In the two solitude world to the east, a young man travels southward, importing scratchy cassettes filled with distant sounds of park jams and party rocks over an unaware border. **Hip Hop.***

*Way across on the country's left coast, a young man in search of identity finds soul-filled validation in the first strains of rap sounds to permeate his high school, elevating him from a lonely, insidiously invisible minority, into a person with a face and a name. **Hip Hop.***

Understanding The Elements

The DJ

The 1st element of Hip Hop is The DJ. The trinity of Hip Hop begins with 3 key players: Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash. Each disk jockey is a living legend that created the main components of DJing.

Kool Herc grew up with the rumble of sound systems in the tenement backyards of his native island. The emerging art form of chatters speaking rhythmically over the dub (instrumental) side of 45 records would ingrain in him the intimate relationship between the voice on the mic and the man behind the turntables. When immigrating to Bronx New York, Herc transported the blend of DJ and micman, as well as the technology of large base bins that were perfect for the outdoor transmission of massive sound. This implantation, as well as his discovery of utilizing two records to extend the "break" portions of a song in order to further excite the dancing crowd, solidifies his status as Hip Hop godfather.

Afrika Bambaataa is Hip Hop's first true leader. Developing his reputation as a DJ and the leader of the most notorious youth gangs in the Bronx, the Black Spades, Bambaataa transformed his organizational and artistic skills by founding the Zulu Nation. Through Zulu, Bam unified fragments of a community under one banner, devoted to utilizing music, dance and visual arts to promote peace and progress rather than violence and destruction. . As an avid music lover, Afrika Bambaataa initiated what would become the melting pot of Hip Hop music before there was even a Hip Hop. Following Kool Herc's example, drum breaks would be mined from jazz, rock and soul records that would eventually morph into the loops of Hip Hop production.

Grandmaster Flash is the father of turntablism. His innovations depict the marriage of Hip Hop and technology as a music that changed the way science was utilized in the creation of art. Discovered one evening when he held back a record so he could hear what his mother was saying to him, the Grandmaster inadvertently invented the art of the scratch. His invention single-handedly changed the art of disk jockeying in every genre of music since.

Today, DJs create as solo artists and in sound-crews, while the art of DJing is practiced in live performance, recording and competition. Each manifestation requires an extensive knowledge of music of all genres, study of diverse audiences and implementation of traditional and new technologies. DJs play an crucial role in Hip Hop society, as they make hits, break new artists and

expose trends. Turntablists, employ the turntable as an instrument. DJs use the art of mixing and scratching records to create new musical works from fragments of sound on vinyl.

According to industry expert **David "Click" Cox**, DJs represent the strongest scene in terms of Hip Hop arts practices in Canada. **A-trak** (Montreal) and **Power** (Toronto) and **Kid Koala** (Vancouver) are gaining international presence through touring and remixes. Nova Scotia's **Skratch Bastid**, **Plai Boi** and **RS Smooth**, Toronto's **DJ Scratch**, **Serious** and **P-plus**, Vancouver's **DJ Kemo** and many others have established Canada as a portal of talented turntable wizards. **Turntablist Lil' Jaz** is now on the faculty of the **Royal Conservatory of Music**, teaching the Art of DJing while **DTS** conducts a course on Hip Hop at **Ryerson University**. Most recently, **The Scratch Lab** has emerged as a training school for DJs, and the **Stylus DJ Awards** bring national recognition for DJs working across the country.

The Female DJ is still an anomaly in the lugging-heavy-crates world of male DJs. Groundbreakers like **Jazzy Joyce** provided a role model for women who possessed the determination to be heard and respected. The result: **SiVuPlay**, **Mel Boogie**, **DJ L'Oquenz** and others have stepped up to represent the estrogen element on the wheels of steel.

The MC

In the beginning was the word...rhymes, lyrics, poetry, utterances, written and spoken energy. The role of Hip Hop's 2nd element - the M.C. - cannot be overstated. As lyrical firebrand Pharoah Monche sums up the tools of trade for any serious wordsmith in the 2002 rap hit *My Life*:

My life is all I have – My rhymes, my pen, my pad...

When Chuck D., the rap scholar of the revolutionary group Public Enemy, called Hip Hop the "Black people's CNN," he became one of the most quoted artists of all time. This simple statement sums up the importance of the rapper as the voice, the storyteller, the documenter, the spoken consciousness of the post-civil rights generation.

The introduction of mc/poet **Motion's** book *Motion In Poetry* refers to the legacy of oral literature that survives in the modern day manifestation of Hip Hop:

The words of today's Rappers are most often heard on records, CDs and over mics, accompanied by moving beats and rhythms. Yet each piece is born within the "rhymebook" that holds the lyrics and poetry of the MC who speaks the text. Today's Griots bring soul hitting words that resonate with musical punctuation.

In the article "Promoting Academic Literacy with Urban Youth Through Engaging Hip-Hop Culture," American educators Ernest Morrell and Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade assert the impact of Hip Hop culture on their students, and the opportunity to recognize the literary merit of Hip Hop rhymes, citing:

" Hip-hop texts are rich in imagery and metaphor and can be used to teach irony, tone, diction, and point of view. Hip-hop texts can be analyzed for theme, motif, plot, and character development. Both Grand Master Flash and T.S. Eliot gazed out into their rapidly deteriorating societies and saw a "wasteland." Both poets were essentially apocalyptic in nature as they witnessed death, disease, and decay."

Nova Scotian-born poet and professor, **George Elliot Clarke**, recognizes Hip Hop literature, by including rap and spoken words in his **University of Toronto** English courses. Interestingly, the work and advocacy of spoken word artists and dub poets have set the stage for today's Emcees to be heard and recognized in previously inaccessible spheres.

The Science of Rap

In the documentary film "The MC," rap's most revered lyricists expound on what it takes to be a great M.C. Taking examples from original masters of ceremonies such as Cab Calloway, the first requirement is the ability to "move the crowd." Following is an extensive list that includes: style, flow, innovative rhyme schemes, verbal rhythm, versatility storytelling, freestyle and improvisation.

In KRS-One's rap bible *The Science of Rap*, the "t'cha" (as he is otherwise known) exclaims the foundations that distinguish a "rapper" from an excellent rapper. Taking a scientific approach to defining the roles and styles of the Rapper, he breaks down Emceeing according to four main categories: The fun style, the sexual style, the intellectual style and the violent style.

1. The Fun style speaks to the creation of peace, enjoyment and identity for inner city youth, hailing to dance-inspired music such as lindy hop.
2. The Sexual style addresses a basic human need and desire that relates to every aspect of society. This style calls to fore the covert codes of Calypsonians, the sexual charge of rock n' roll and the blues which was one vilified as "devil's music."
3. The Intellectual style focuses on raising the awareness and consciousness of its audience, carrying on the tradition of The Last Poets, Linton Kwesi Johnson and Marvin Gaye.
4. The Violent style verbally releases internal frustration while emulating the traditional posturing of movie heroes such as John Wayne, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Shaft.

According to KRS:

"a good rapper has fun rhymes, sexual rhymes, conscious rhymes and violent rhymes. A GREAT rapper not only has mastered all four styles of rap, but within one rhyme, can convey to the audience at least two to three of these characteristics at once."

Mic Check, One Two

Emcees are often at the forefront of Hip Hop's movement: recognizable voices, styles, faces and personas. At writing, **HipHopCanada.com**'s homepage features regional heavyweights such as Ottawa's **DL Incognito**, Montreal's **Bless**, Ottawa MC **Belly**, and **Bishop** of Toronto, as well as tracks by **E-Dot** (Edmonton), **Wordsmith** (Vancouver) and **Kardinal Offishal**. The portal promotes the latest artist freestyles, mixtapes, compilations and events that provide mediums for MCs across the country to be heard.

This is only a minute sample of Hip Hop's MC element spitting in Canada.

Graf & Visual Arts

Toronto, Feb. 1st, 2006: A Queen Street Starbucks is frantic. Chatting patrons, scraping chairs, the latte machine roars, and street cars rumble past its frosted front window. Amidst the din, the artist and photographer known as **Justice** is hunched over a thick, hardcover text spread open on a shaky round table. Every so often, he brings his long hands up to meet his face, slap his forehead or wipe his glazed eyes. When asked about what he's looking at, he heaves the heavy book from the table, and exposes the title: **GRAFFITI WORLD: Street Art from Five Continents.**"

An impromptu interview ensues, as Justice willingly proceeds to teach on the ancient art of Graf: Walls as canvas; crevices become galleries; humans leave their imprint on history.

In the Vibe History of Hip Hop, writer Sacha Jenkins transports the reader to Philadelphia circa 1967. In her view, here begins the modern-day era of graf writing and its resulting goal:

"To stretch the tallest, tag the highest, most interesting, most dangerous...to hit the most economic spots-the places with maximum eye gain."

Eye gain is what graf artists such as Newfoundland's **Aerosol X**, Winnipeg's **DEA**, Ottawa's **Daser** and Toronto's **Skam** achieve, without the sanction of elite galleries. Such artists bring art to people, creating imagery in the corners where we live, walk, rest and move. Artist **Elicser** has transformed Toronto's Queen district, where strolling patrons can view his graf-inspired portraits on tree stumps and in elite boutique doorways.

Justice moves excitedly through the winter mid-day crowd. He motions upwards, drawing attention to a fading "piece" that sits high above the sidewalk. He speaks of the code of the street: that no one would ever touch or write over that piece because "it's been there forever. That would just be disrespect!"

The pace quickens. Questions about graffiti art specifics- What's the different styles? What make a great graf artist? Where is graffiti art going? - are met with an incredulous look. "Have you talked to **Zion**? Haven't you been to The Bomb Shelter? Let's go!"

The Bomb Shelter is a downtown shop for graf writers. Artist and founder, Zion educates on the various manifestations of Graf. Street artists often focus on a particular element: murals, freight trains, posterizing, stickering, graphic novels and animation. Though some galleries in Canada have exhibited graf-inspired art, the most interesting venues are the alternative gallery settings such as clubs, cafes and Hip Hop retail shops. **Horus** most recently had a showing in Toronto club/restaurant Gypsy Co-op.

This spring, the **Art Gallery of Calgary** ventured into the gritty world of graf with an exhibit that examines not only the art, but the politics of graffiti. The interactive display encouraged feedback from visitors, evoking response to the questions of the criminalization of graf art. The technicolour publication "Painting Under Pressure" features the work of **AFEX**, **Kido**, **Kaput** and others who stretch the boundary of style.

The streets remain the most accessible gallery for graf. Throughout the country, there are annual events that allow writers to create in open forums without threat of arrest. Concrete Canvas in Hamilton, Ontario is produced by **Eclipse** of Boom Spot. Toronto's **416 Graffiti Expo** attracts thousands to participate in a 3-day festival of Hip Hop art, dance and music. In Montreal, **Under Pressure** graf magazine gets ready to commemorate the 11th year of the **Under Pressure Festival** this summer.

Artists like **Lynn Worrell**, also of Montreal, exemplify the reach of Hip Hop inspired art. Her interdisciplinary arts project Women In Hip Hop spans the range of visual and audio, as she focuses on the process and progress of women making Hip Hop.

Dance

In "Breaking It All Down" from the 1999 The Vibe History of Hip Hop, writer Cristina Veran depicts "the rise and fall and rise of the b-boy kingdom" taking it back to where it all began. Veran documents:

The word "B-boy" is derived from "break boy," the term [Kool] Herc used for those who hit the dance floor during the "break" segments of records like "Apache" and "It's Just Begun."

The word eventually became common urban vernacular to describe any devoted hip hopper..."

The competition of martial arts is paramount when witnessing the phenomenon called The Battle. In the words of legendary New York b-boy, Crazy Legs:

"It was just like the karate flicks - you start going into different areas and saying [in mock kung fu accent] 'Ha hah! You're style is good, but is it better than mine?'"

According to Ottawa's own **Stephen "Buddah" Leafloor**, "b-boying is born in the cipher." Known as the "original b-boy," the 40-something represents the 3 generations of living Hip Hop history.

Educator, advocate, youth worker, Buddah is a b-boy aficionado, and a founding member of **The Canadian Floormasters**, the longest running b-boy crew in the North. At the writing, Canadian Floor Masters are completing a tour of Northern reserves, with the mission of providing mentorship and training in Hip Hop dance to youth in remote locations in Canada, bringing the heat, the speed and the training of the Battle to audiences from coast to coast.

Corrie "Benzo" Daniel of Bag of Trix b-boy crew (Toronto) is a historian and a dance connoisseur who teaches everywhere from local community centers to established schools. Benzo has honed the ability to seamlessly trace the emergence of Hip Hop dance, through African dance, to tap, soft shoe, step and gum boot dancing.

B-Women

Any discussion about the art of Hip Hop dance would be moot without featuring the b-girls. Women have been crucial members of the breakdance genre since its inception. Dancers like **Edmonton's Lunacee of Phreshly Pressed Dance Crew**, **Ottawa's Decypher Cru**, **Toronto's SheBang Crew**, and the **Solid State Collective** hailing from Montreal represent the spirit of pioneering women like the Rock Steady Crew's **Bunny Lee** and **Baby Love**, **Headspin Janet**, and all others who have followed in their footwork.

Big Steps

Though b-boying and b-girling have the crown as the bastion of Hip Hop dance, these alone do not fully represent this kinetic element. Hip Hop dance spans numerous styles and forms, from Stepping to Crumping, and boasts a fiery legacy that changes faster than the mainstream can catch on. Right now, in every community, school and youth center, young kids gather together, collaborating skills and preparing self-taught routines to be presented on local stages. Clubs and dancefloors represent circles of release where bodies can express in full abandon. Dance is the essence of what Hip Hop is.

The evolution of Hip Hop/urban dance-forms continues to transform, with young movers and shakers setting the trends that become absorbed by popular culture. The acclaimed documentary "Rize" records the forms of dance born in the post-Rodney King era of America's West Coast. Writer Paul Arnold, in the June 2006 edition of XXL Magazine, writes of the resurrection of the Hip Hop dance scene, and the fusion of influences that have manifested in such styles as clownin', T.U.R.F. and footworkin'.

Dance agencies like **Do Dat** and **Blaze Entertainment** in Toronto and **Urban Elements Dance School** in Montreal symbolize this consistently evolving synergy, born of the same frenzy as b-boying, yet distinctly its own. These companies as well as Dance Immersion create in the multiplicity of multi-cultural existence, fusing reggae, soca, bangra, and others into a unique styles.

Urban dance companies also provide a necessary infrastructure in Canada; they provide training and promotion, act as agents and special event co-ordinators. The distinct creations of Canadian dance groups attract attention from international casting agents and directors. Canadian-born export, director **Mr. X**, has created videos for international superstars who have been attracted to the unique dance and choreography talents of Canadian-based companies, contributing to the exposure of our skills to a world-wide audience.

Beatbox

Beatbox is often labeled as the **5th element of Hip Hop** but it could actually be the first. Before the first instrument, the drum, was invented by ancient peoples, the body was utilized to create sound. Hums, vocal calls, hand claps, feet taps, guttural wails communicated both rhythm and message.

Beatbox artists continue the legacy of using their might mouths to rock, transforming their tongues, throats, teeth and breaths into percussive and wind instruments. The result: sound effects, beat patterns and complete vocal compositions from a singular source.

Early beatboxers include Buffy the Human Beatbox and the crowd-pleaser Dougie Fresh, both who combined beatboxing and rapping. Canadian pioneer **Mighty Mouth Rock** went head to head with the 80's reigning champion Biz Markie D in the legendary "New York Invades Toronto Battle" of the late 80's.

Today, beatboxers remain amongst the most experimental Hip Hop artists. A recent beatbox battle held at Toronto's El Macombo displayed the innovation that beatboxers must embody. **Subliminal** combines rapping, Djing and beatboxing in an intergrated performance while **Juggular** and **King RC** master the range of percussive sound. Nova Scotia's **EMC** and Ottawa's **Original One** combine beatbox with spoken word into seamless works. At Calgary's International Spoken Word Festival, acclaimed sound poet **Christian Bok** shocked the audience with impressive skills that were decidedly beatbox.

Elemental Dimensions: The Producer

The Hip Hop world grieved a great loss when Detroit-born producer Jay Dee a.k.a J-dilla died in February 2006. His passing reinforced the definitive role that creators of the music play in cultivating an empowered generation, through sound.

Hip Hop producers have transformed the traditional role of the music producer, who would typically oversee a project, working with vocalists, arrangers, writers and a variety of other players to produce a finished product. Hip Hop producers were born of the hands of the DJ- "one- man-band," words used to describe Grandmaster Flash and the late Jam Master Jay of RunDMC.

Notably, the earliest commercial rap recordings were played by live bands backing up MCs, not reflective of what was actually taking place on the street level. But with the growth of drum machines and samplers, musical heads could now access outlets for their musical ideas through technology, opening the next stage of the marriage between beats and rhymes.

Hip Hop production in Canada has erected itself more global prominence over the last ten years. With major signings of artist/producers like Saukrates, k-os and Kardinal Offishall, and independent take-overs of artists from the Battle Axe Records roster, the diversity of Hip Hop sounds emerging from the north have slowly made their mark on listeners.

Yet the uniqueness of Canadian production did not begin with the current generation of artists. The late 80's saw Toronto's **Dream Warriors** pioneer a jazz-influenced Hip Hop perfectly attuned to the

new sounds of rap's "Daisy Age." Dream Warriors hit single "Ludi" set the stage for Canadian-born, culturally relevant rap that was distinctly children-of-immigrant experience.

This influence would later set apart the sounds of **Michee Mee's** Jamaican Funk, **Kardinal Offishall's** "Everyday Rudebwoy" and **Collizhun's** Tuff Dumplin tracks on the world stage.

Most recently, the African-laced rhythms of **K'naan's** rap debut and the acoustic backdrops of **k-os** further translate the art of the sample.

Currently, we are witnessing the age of production houses in Canada, as experienced producers collaborate services and sounds. **Big Black Lincoln** brings together the production heavyweights of Saukrates, Brass Munk and IRS, while Don D mobilizes other producers under the banner of **Tone Masons**. Ottawa-born **Dirty Swift** has joined with cross-border producers to form Midi Mafia, gaining recognition both at home and abroad.

New Media

When the average person hears the term Hip Hop, it would be no surprise if rap music floats to mind. Hip Hop has come to personify the vibrating beats and the steady themes of life through its rhymes. As well, Hip Hop for many conjures ideas of an urban male rapper, dancer or DJ. But that perception excludes the range of diverse artists whose creations are not music but visual composites, moving imagery, thought-provoking documentation, explosive exhibits and any thing else that pushes the parameters of Hip Hop's visual element.

Hip Hop artists today are no longer waiting around for recognition in mainstream media's periphery.

The Digital Age

Today there is a new expanding movement, seen in digital media – the vehicle taking Hip Hop to greater places, popular and remote, in media arts. As digital technology advances in areas of efficiency and creativity, so will media arts advance – in film, video, and audio productions. Conversely, media artistry provides the spaces for its creators to bring digital technology to the production and its promotion.

in education

In the U.K. a collaborative team at Sheffield College created the successful digital tech course entitled, Hip Hop – beats, rhymes and life. Matt Hines, the college's lecturer of English and Communications, has reported that the course targets learners who may have rejected formal education, by providing them an opportunity to create their own music and explore Hip Hop culture. The course carries a digital literacy component, specifically using audio software and digital editing programs. The central goal is to bring disenfranchised learners to college and to provide them a progressive path into formal education.

In Canada, artists and educators are already collaborating. The **411 Initiative For Change** utilizes a multidisciplinary technique in schools, drawing on Hip Hop culture, digital music production and public speaking to educate and empower youth.

in video and film direction

One increasingly expanding point on Hip Hop's visual spectrum revolves around filmmaking – a medium that includes the ever popular video music direction. As said by **Erskine Forde**, a burgeoning Canadian video director known as "Skin", nothing combines the art of cinema, music, and performance the way music videos do. ⁵ And with the digital transformation in media, music direction is shifting in shape to accommodate a greater audience of interactive users. More artists

⁵ Profile interview with Erskine Josephus Forde, aka Skin, on hiphopcanada.com, December 19, 2002.

are utilizing digital technology in the creation, production and screening of their film projects, which include music videos. Now Hip Hop media offers viewers throughout the world a kaleidoscope of visual content from tours, music videos, behind the screens outtakes, short films, feature-length documentaries, and still photographs – all available on DVD or off websites. The digital era has empowered youth following in the footsteps of Canada's son of music video direction, **Mr. X**. Formerly Little X, this visual artist often acknowledges in public forums that mentorship opportunities helped pave his way to becoming an international force in music video direction.

in web sites

The direct relationship between Media Arts and digital technologies is also seen in Canadian websites promoting Hip Hop. Visual artists can exhibit their work, in part or whole, on the Net. All the while their audience grows more global with each new day. Discouraged by the bottlenecking of artists in the media industries, independent Canadian Hip Hop artists have long joined the ranks of people flocking toward online portals to promote, market and distribute their work. It's no accident that myspace.com works as a multimedia clearinghouse for music, videos and films, helping to make it the fifth most popular website in the world.

in multimedia

A fine example of a multidisciplinary approach within media arts comes from **Direct Current Media** - a media-based social entrepreneurship team that helped introduce Hip Hop artist K'naan to the world. As one-third of that team, Vancouver-born **Sol Guy** has focused his experience and expertise on new areas of mass media. His mission is to use music, film, television and Hip Hop culture as a vehicle for global change among youth. Direct Current Media's latest production, entitled **4Real**, takes celebrity artists around the world to connect with leaders affecting change within their communities. Viewers can catch the **4Real** broadcasts as they occur through short videos, blog entries and still photos.

Montreal-based **Urban X-pressions** recently embarked on a ten-year anniversary celebration, which marked the birth of its international Graffiti art expo, **Under Pressure**. Stock footage of previous expos was compiled on a DVD to be sold to the public. As well, **Under Pressure Magazine** ran its 10th Anniversary issue.

Vancouver's **International Hip Hop Film Festival** has steadily moved forward on a mission to expose and explore the varied visual components of Hip Hop's culture. Its Montreal version of the festival unifies Hip Hop supporters throughout the country and abroad, with a great dependence on the Net for networking, marketing, promotion and chronicling all that is Hip Hop. Historic films made north of the border, such as Paul Kell's CAC-supported, "Five Sides Of A Coin" and Alison Duke's "Citizen Kane" can find their audience in a space that explores their themes and artistic methodology.

in news

It's no coincidence that what fuels Canadian Hip Hop to its hottest degree is the Internet. Print publications in the U.S. such as **XXL** and **The Source** are seeing the shift and have responded accordingly by providing web-versions of their product; as have the Canadians. Magazines **Urbanology**, **WORD**, **Exclaim!** and **Pound** provide online coverage of burgeoning urban industries and artists. Clearly, Hip Hop's most devoted fans, also known as Hip Hop heads, are turning to web-based sources for their portions of every and anything having to do with Hip Hop. TNS Canadian Facts, an online research group reported in 2006 that 74% of Canadians who use the Internet read news online. Specifically then, Hip Hop heads are finding their news on Canadian sources such as **Hiphopcanada.com** and **Urbnet.com** and **Cyberkrib.com**. Coverage and announcements about regional festivals, expositions, conferences and competitions make these sites' line-ups, along with artist profiles.

independent

Hip Hop proponents have often said the culture aspect of Hip Hop can flourish on the World Wide Web. Consequently entrepreneurial vision can also thrive. It's through the Internet that all of Hip Hop's elements are presented and explored for a global audience, providing more lucrative ventures for its artists. Again, to Hip Hop supporter, there's no surprise. Historically Hip Hop made its

breakaway evolution through embracing the new, and adding to it a different spin. Today, that growth through digital media is dizzying.

Thanks to digital technologies in media, Hip Hop grows in Canada. It's in these web spaces that art and culture can be promoted and celebrated, as well as marketed. Montreal's Iro Productions might just be one of thousands of independent labels using the Web to market and distribute its music and video clips; but it remains a national leader in promoting French Hip Hop. Globally, fans can feed off the Iro Productions site, embracing another dimension of Hip Hop culture that transcends language and geographic barriers.

There rests a great opportunity for the Canada Council to maximize on what the Internet offers by continuing its support of traditional media arts; contributing to a program structure for such digital innovation; and pulling traditionally isolated artists from the periphery into the core of Canadian art production.

Theatre

Hip Hop is theatre: a world of roles, storylines and drama. Perhaps this is why the line around the Lorraine Kinsma Theatre for Young People in downtown Toronto winds around the building. This is not the stereotypical theatre-going patronage, donning long black trench coats and fur stoles. Rather, wave-caps and various styles of intricately-designed braids represent the head gear of choice. Tonight, the energy holds the electricity of a rap concert, yet this audience is poised to witness the debut of **Da Real Deal**. Produced and conceived by the **ActOut Project**, Da Real Deal is the story of a young and popular Toronto-born DJ who discovers that he is HIV-positive.

Written by youth advocate Roze Jardine, and directed by actor Dean Ifill, Da Real Deal exemplifies the growing popularity of Hip Hop Theatre. The ActOut Project builds on the foundation of popular theatre that is accessible, yet strives to provide valuable training for the young performers who make up the company. Local rap radio shows and street-level promotion were utilized as vehicles to attract a new generation of theatre goers, who have created a demand for the next voices of the stage, both locally and internationally.

"Hip Hop Theatre is a Party for the People" in the San Francisco Chronicle features Oakland, California-based playwright Marc Bamuthi Joseph, who emphasizes that the culmination of Hip Hop and theatre is nothing novel or new. Born in 1975, Joseph reflects: "[Hip Hop] has always been the center of my culture and the dominating force in the theater of my life."

Edutainment and Community Development

The term "edutainment" was made popular during the early 90's by KRS-One. KRS promoted a philosophy based on utilizing the language, culture, music and creativity of the generation to educate it. From the jump-off, Hip Hop and Urban arts & culture has been utilized as a mode for community, artistic and educational development. The first Hip Hop "school" was actually the Zulu Nation, which in 1973, transformed its Bronx community, and ultimately the world, by unifying various elements of youth creative expression with the quest to educate and organize its community.

Northside's quest was to identify collectives, companies and organizations that in the spirit of Canada Council's Artists and Community Collaboration Fund (ACCF) bring together professional artists and the broader community." There are numerous examples of artistic activities implemented in classrooms, arts and cultural centers, dance and music schools, recreation facilities, and youth programs that emphasize training and community development through Hip Hop and Urban Arts. In October 2005, many young educators and arts education organizations from Canada attended the

Hip Hop Education (www.h2ed.net) Conference in New York City. The existence of such a forum proves that today there is a growing acceptance of the arts as viable pathways in teaching and developing communities.

Some still debate the validity of Hip Hop and Urban Arts as facilitators of the community arts precept. Yet many of today's arts educators, teachers, youth and community workers are born of Hip Hop's generation. University required reading lists now include urban poets like Saul Williams and Vancouver's **Wayde Compton**, while a course at University of Southern California is titled "Tupac 101." Toronto's rap radio pioneer **Ron Nelson** now teaches Hip Hop in the Faculty of Music at York University, while DJ **DTs** schools hungry students on the art of DJing in Hip Hop 101 at Ryerson University in Toronto's downtown core. The latest development is the publishing of Hip Hop, a youth-directed textbook created by Canadian urban writer/journalist **Dalton Higgins** and educator Greg Tate, which is now in use in Toronto District School Board schools.

Many artists who were interviewed for this research point to the work started by an innovative youth arts organization called **Fresh Arts**. In 1992, Fresh Arts was founded as a response to a looming crisis surrounding youth in Toronto. The Stephen Lewis Report, released that year after a wave of youth response to police shootings, garnered that youth of color, and low income families were suffering from streaming in schools, lack of preparation for the work place and limited employment opportunities.

Fresh Arts was the initiative of community artists such as storyteller Itah Sadu and dub poet Lillian Allen, who sought to develop an innovative approach to equipping youth with artistic and educational opportunities for mentorship, employment training and access. The emerging professional artists who took over the roles of program directors and instructors were popular DJs, MCs, spoken word artists and Hip Hop writers who designed and delivered unique Hip Hop -inspired artistic training.

Though Fresh Arts later had to close its doors due to lack of funding support under the change of Queens Park's priorities from community to "common" sense, the city-wide organization served youth through employment programs, in-school projects, community rap sessions and correctional institution tours for over 6 years. At this writing, Canadian Heritage has commissioned a research initiative to assess the effectiveness of such programs, utilizing Fresh Arts as the main case study.

From this study has grown the **Re:Mix Project**. The collaborative effort between Toronto's **I.C. Visions**, **FYI (For Youth Initiative)** and other urban youth organizations will provide business training for young artists, in order to encourage self-sustainability. **Urban Noize** is another initiative that builds upon the training potential of rap, spoken word, beatboxing, photography and music production. **BLOCKheadz**, based in Toronto, has initiated inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary projects that focus on edutaining youth on a national level.

Other current-day samples of edutainment-based organizations and programs delivered across the Canada include:

The Boom Box @ Humber Summit Middle School [Rexdale, Ontario]

In 2001, Toronto-based teacher and rap artist Ramon "Rugged" San Vicente spearheaded The Boom Box at his Rexdale area middle school, intended to re-direct the energies of his most challenged students. The result is a fully functioning 16-track studio that has quickly developed into a multi-disciplinary audio/visual enrichment program.

Youth In Motion [Montreal, Quebec]

A staple of the Little Burgundy community in Montreal since 1990, Youth In Motion provides crucial programming for young people. Lead by Hip Hop artist and staff member, Stephen "Zip-loks" Hennessy of rap group Butta Babees, Youth In Motion successfully applies for funding support through the Canada Council for the Arts to release a CD compilation of young MCs, singers and producers, titled On the Rise.

Sun and Moon Visionary Aboriginal Artisans Society [Edmonton, Alberta]

Sun and Moon Visionaries Aboriginal Artisan Society is an Aboriginal Youth controlled, operated and managed center that provides innovative traditional and contemporary arts programming. Among its most popular programs is Better Choice - Better Life, which includes the Wall Art Mural Project, as well as Learning to Spin DJ Music. Sundays, the center is packed with youth who attend to practice the art of break dancing, under the tutelage of professional b-boy Cree-Asian, and the talented b-girl Lunacy, both who have traveled as far as Australia in pursuit of their artistic visions. Currently, the DJ course is on pause due to lack of funding.

Auburn Drive High School [Dartmouth, Nova Scotia]

East Coast spoken word poet, Shauntay Grant, utilizes the power of words to engage youth throughout the communities of Halifax, Cherry Brooke, Preston and Dartmouth. Urban poetry and music projects at Auburn Drive High School and St. Pat's Alexander both yield tremendous results, training youth in writing, stage performance, studio engineering and music production. On March 3rd 2006, the youth of Auburn Drive publish and release their debut anthology of poems and rhymes at the Black Cultural Center. The 4 C's Foundation, which provided community grants for artists in school, has been a supported of such programs.

The 411 Initiative for Change [Ottawa/Toronto]

The 411 Initiative For Change works on development projects aiming for long-term social impacts through bridging the arts, culture and heritage to social involvement. 411 engage artists and music as key agents in social change. In 2005, the Barbershop Show, a "musical theatre" of Hip Hop and urban music performances combined with discourse on topics relevant to youth, toured schools throughout Canada. Reaching thousands of students through modern-day culture and arts, 411 continues to build partnerships, and navigate the rocky terrain of maintaining and thriving in the volatile world of funding support.

Literacy Through Hip Hop [Toronto, Montreal, Hamilton, Vancouver, Brazil]

LTHH is an educational initiative that was piloted and launched in Toronto's Regent Park community in 2005 by Shahmeer Ansari and Jason Shrouder Henry. LTHH provides an innovative educational opportunity for students aged 7-12 who are struggling with literacy. The program teaches basic reading and writing skills using hip hop music as the medium.

Main Themes

Generating a discussion on Hip Hop proved an easy feat. Artists and their supporters (i.e. participants) exposed a range of topics, emphasizing to Northside that Canadian Hip Hop needs space in which to grow. As a practiced creative outlet it has no definitive birth date; but every year, on a variety of levels, the artistic and cultural merit of Canadian Hip Hop is critiqued as it is celebrated at festivals, summits and through the expression of the art itself.

In providing their constructive criticisms, all the participants gave their time to explore with Northside the different roads Hip Hop is traveling, and they did it earnestly. They took advantage of Northside's encouragement that no aspect of Hip Hop was exempt from discussion. During these sessions with the Canada Council section and program officers, to industry and organization executives, to artists working in Hip Hop, Northside inquired about the degrees of Canadian support for Hip Hop artistry. The goal was to determine:

- The **STRENGTHS** of Hip Hop arts and culture;
- The **CHALLENGES** of supporting and applying Hip Hop artistry in Canada and abroad; and,
- The **RECOMMENDED VISIONS** for effectively meeting these challenges.

What surfaced from the “rap sessions” were the common observations and experiences. Northside identified these main themes by noting which general issues were reiterated in interviews, consultations and roundtable discussions. The following themes posed some of the more pressing realities of Hip Hop arts and culture as they relate to support.

Four Main Themes

1. GROWTH: Get ready for a cultural explosion in Hip Hop

Hip Hop is growing and gaining prominence on a global scale. There is ample room for Hip Hop to grow in Canada, to the socio-economic benefit of Canadian arts and culture.

2. COMMITMENT: It's time to step up

There are opportunities for industries and governments to support Canadian Hip Hop. The Canada Council for the Arts is already positioned to take the lead in celebrating creative productions in Hip Hop.

3. PARTNERSHIP: We're in the business of strategic collaborations

Hip Hop as art would progress more effectively through partnerships that focused on addressing the needs of artists. Building stronger artists would be an investment in Canadian arts and culture.

4. ACCESS: It's about equity and equal opportunity

Equal access to resources and equal representation of all artists would raise the bar of creativity and inspire younger generations of Hip Hop practitioners in a plethora of artistic fields.

At a time when Hip Hop arts and its culture are gaining greater international distinction, a variety of challenges affect the artistry and creative production of Canadian Hip Hop. Still, in spite of these challenges, a critical mass of inventive producers continues to build Hip Hop in Canada.

Imagine with more organized support where these innovative creators can take Hip Hop. Think higher, think farther.



FROM CYPHERS TO STAGE: Conventioneers

Photo and cutline credit: *The Montreal Mirror*⁶

⁶ “Locks Gone Pop: Street dancers circle at Bust A Move dance convention” by Erin MacLeod, *The Montreal Mirror*, March 30-April 5, 2006 at: <http://www.montrealmirror.com/2006/033006/dance.html>

GROWTH, COMMITMENT, PARTNERSHIPS & ACCESS: Roots and Race Dynamics

The recognition that Hip Hop's fore-founders were of African descent is an important place from where to begin Northside's exploration. Consultations and interviews with key Canadian Hip Hop supporters emphasized the following:

- ☐ Understand and respect the roots of Hip Hop art and culture
- ☐ Understand the significance of the race dynamics involved in its development.

According to Dalton Higgins, artistic director of the music program for Toronto's Harbourfront Centre, there can be no real or accurate portrayal of Hip Hop in Canada without full consideration of its roots and its emergence. This contention is most talked about by any Hip Hop connoisseur, and Higgins - an author and journalist who is noted for applying his extensive knowledge of Canadian Hip Hop and urban culture - remains one of those people.

During Northside's consultations in Halifax, Montreal and Toronto, points were made about the lack of knowledge around Hip Hop's historic roots; and there was discussion about the public's perceptions of Hip Hop as an inherently criminal practice (not art form) rooted in poor Black communities within Canada.

Unless instigated by someone well-versed in Hip Hop's evolution, the race dynamic isn't usually explored in the general public's discourse of Hip Hop in Canada. Often implications run around in mainstream media's one-dimensional portrayal. That depiction heavily relates Hip Hop to the U.S. There, its seemingly lucrative commercial market is usually juxtaposed to the disenfranchised black urban male, as often reflected by media.

Northside's discussions often referred to a need to recognize and allow space for dialogue on the racial implications and realities of how the public perceives Hip Hop. If the art form is often relayed as being "Black," how then are these perceptions helping or hindering Hip Hop's development, particularly if they are insufficiently informed? Many of Northside's consultants believe there is more institutional acceptance and support of alternative rock culture in Canadian society, as opposed to support of Hip Hop - another alternative and pervasive form of cultural expression empowering youth.

The other phenomenon worthy of exploration revolves around the issue of White artists "appropriating" Hip Hop. Again, herein lies an element of race dynamics that help push more popular perceptions of Hip Hop.⁷

What are the ramifications of non-Black artists applying Hip Hop's art forms? Will Aboriginal and White artists' increased involvement and support of the art generate acceptance among the Canadian public, and most notably the Canada Council for the Arts? Can a perception of Canada's racial bias hurt the Canada Council's efforts to reach out to the "visible minority" communities?

As Hip Hop continues to grow in Canada, there will no doubt be more formal discourse tackling these questions. In other words, as more artists feel a need to explore race dynamics in Hip Hop culture, then these issues will easily emerge through their art - an integral sign of positive growth.

⁷ See Appendix for Media Take: One Canadian Writer's Journey. Presented is an excerpt of "White Kids & Hip Hop" by Tara Henley for *Dose*, May 15, 2006 issue.

Table 1.
The Top 10
The Roundtables' Exploration of Canadian Hip Hop
Strengths, Challenges & Visions

Hip Hop's Strengths 1 - 5	Hip Hop's Challenges 1 - 5	Recommended Visions 1 - 5
1. Sheer amount of talent Hip Hop's prominence encourages more Canadian artists to hone their skills.	Lack of development and training Too many artists need effective management, business training and industry know-how.	Invest in organizations with mandates to develop and train Hip Hop professionals. Achieve this through already existing Canada Council programs.
2. Diversity in styles and sub-genres Cultural diversity breeds an evolution of techniques and styles.	Debilitating fragmentation Too many separate groups and not enough unity even within the provinces.	Support a national federation with networking, advocacy and service capabilities regarding Hip Hop arts.
3. Uniqueness of Canadian talent Each province has its own regional history of influences.	Canada's daunting size Canada's vastness creates difficulties for touring and networking.	Develop a support program specific to the needs of Hip Hop touring to help build and sustain fan base.
4. Ingenuity of artists They create with little or no consistent resources.	Lack of resources Little or no consistent resources compromises the art.	Review and revamp Canada Council grant programs that deem Hip Hop art ineligible.
5. Artists' steadfast motivation Many artists work for the love of the art with little payoff.	Absence of mentorship Very little practical guidance from successful artists; not enough from industry professionals.	Invest in exchange programs that provide management models and training to individual artists and organizations.

Hip Hop's Strengths 6 - 10	Hip Hop's Challenges 6 - 10	Recommended Visions 6 - 10
6. Ability to tap into niche markets Artists constantly bring new marketable ideas.	Availability of funding Need more support funding as well as knowledge of what funding exists.	Develop dynamic orientations that target communities of artists seeking grants.
7. Proliferation of independent labels Music artists are keen to set up their own businesses.	Lack of effective infrastructure No effective national structure to sustain art form long term and represent Canadian Hip Hop globally.	Invest in the capacity building of existing structures.
8. International appeal Diversity of artists attracts global markets.	Lack of diverse media outlets Artists struggle to gain media exposure in Canada.	Support new media (i.e. digital) initiatives that promote Canadian content in respect to arts and culture.
9. Artists' innovation Keen willingness to incorporate digital technology and media.	Myopic media coverage Mainstream media's narrow portrayal fuels the public's negative perceptions.	Ensure peer assessors and program officers are formally and regularly sensitized about Hip Hop artistry.
10. Canada-U.S. geography Proximity to the U.S. (largest entertainment industry) provides range of advantages.	American influence Proximity to the U.S. influences Canadian artists to assimilate their art accordingly.	Encourage the promotion of Canadian Hip Hop artistry in arts education. Support the export

Talking Strengths & Challenges

GROWTH

A. Main Discussion Point:

Canadian Hip Hop may be a fledgling art form in North America, but the pool of talent continues to grow exponentially.

- ***Sheer amount of talent vs. Lack of development and training***
- ***Ingenuity of artists vs. Lack of resources***

Hip Hop artists represent a spectrum of talent in various fields. Annual Hip Hop events, festivals, expositions and summits attract this cross-section of Hip Hop supporters in their event implementation and in their audiences.⁸ In most of these scenarios, Hip Hop music is the force that propels the other elements and sub-genres into the public sphere (e.g. media arts, visual arts, dance etc.)⁹

Many roundtable participants informed Northside that Canada has the most talented urban music scene in the world in terms of artists. Lisa Zbitnew, president of Sony/BMG Canada concurred. "What we lack is the infrastructure around the artist," said Zbitnew. "So lots of great raw talent, but where are the producers, the managers, the agents; where are the people who take that raw talent and turn it into something?"

COMMITMENT

B. Main Discussion Point:

Canadian funders, like the Canada Council, have a role to play in supporting an emerging art form.

- ***Artists' steadfast motivation vs. Absence of mentorship***
- ***Ability to tap into niche markets vs. Availability of funding***

Participants agreed artists in Hip Hop need role models to help them in their career management and marketing. As well, organizations promoting Hip Hop need direction in organizational management and marketing. Canadian funders do offer access to mentorship programs. The Ontario Arts Council and the National Film Board of Canada, as an example recently launched a mentorship program for francophone filmmakers.¹⁰ The Canada Council's Flying Squad Program also encourages the exchange of knowledge between established and emerging professionals working in arts organizations.

⁸ Some annual events promoting Canadian Hip Hop include The Toronto Urban Music Festival www.tumf.net; PhemPhat's Honey Jam showcase of female artists www.phemphat.com, Montreal's Under Pressure Graffiti Exposition and the DMC Canada DJ Competitions www.dmccanada.com.

⁹ Montreal's Urban Elements Dance School, Urbnet.com, and Direct Current Media's 4Real Kenya documentary are examples of Hip Hop's other elements and sub-genres gaining artistic momentum through the music.

¹⁰ The OAC/NFB mentorship program funds four to six francophone filmmakers as they shadow a mentor in their profession including production, pre-production and post-production.

Equity goals and targets - in terms of art councils targeting underrepresented artists – can work particularly well in mentorship exchanges. Addressing the needs of isolated communities of artists should be seen as an investment in Canadian contemporary arts. These forms of exchange can also ensure racial and cultural disparities among artists don't flourish. At the Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver roundtables, participants expressed concern that non-white grant applicants with less knowledge of the funding process are immediately at a disadvantage compared to their white peers. The white artists, they felt, had more role models/mentors in career and organizational management.¹¹

In regards to Canada Council funding, the roundtable participants who spoke up about the agency generally showed disappointment over the absence of Hip Hop in the Canada Council's programs and on its website. These participants described themselves in two groupings:

- i. Participants who were very familiar to somewhat familiar with Canada Council programs
- ii. Participants who knew very little about the agency and its grant programs.

The first grouping (grant applicants and former peer assessors) discussed the Canada Council's website, citing its lack of images and information that better represented youth and/or communities of colour.

The second group expressed interest in Canada Council grant programs (particularly for music) but generally lacked sufficient knowledge of the Canada Council's mandate and/or details of already existing programs.

The participants discussed the grant application process in general citing it as “daunting”, making artists “jump hoops for little money.”¹² Those familiar with the Canada Council concurred that artists had to modify the description of their work (i.e. not use the term “Hip Hop”) in order to increase their chances of receiving some funding.

PARTNERSHIP

C. Main Discussion Point:

Strategic partnering nurtures unity and fosters a critical mass of Hip Hop practitioners.

- ***Diversity In styles and sub-genres vs. Debilitating fragmentation***
- ***Uniqueness of talent vs. American Influence***
- ***Canada-U.S. geography vs. Canada's daunting size***
- ***Proliferation of Independent labels vs. Lack of effective Infrastructure***

There is increasing recognition that Hip Hop resources in Canada need proper documentation and classification. More directory listings are emerging, but there has yet to be an established national database of artists. This kind of listing could help minimize the regional isolation of talented artists.¹³

¹¹ See Appendix for Sko-Shun Tiez' artist statement on the state of Hip Hop in Halifax.

¹² FACTOR, VIDEOFACT, Musique Action and the Canada Council

¹³ Ottawa-based www.hiphopcanada.com offers a listing of resources (under “Links”). Other media resources include Word Magazine's Urban Music Directory at www.wordmag.com, and a range of listings provided by the Urban Music Association of Canada (UMAC) at <http://www.facebook.jp/group.php?gid=6476118698&ref=share>.

Roundtable participants reiterated that the United States should not be the standard to emulate in Canadian Hip Hop artistry. Each of the province's urban centres have their own scene(s) and make their own cultural contributions to Hip Hop. Ontario's strength is based on Toronto's close proximity to the long-established U.S. markets, providing models for standards. Quebec's strength stems from its Francophone and Anglophone Hip Hop scenes. Aboriginal Hip Hop artists are surfacing thanks to groups such as the acclaimed War Party, based in Hobbema, Alberta. Canadian artists, said the participants, stand to benefit from national networking. More unity across all Hip Hop disciplines would increase: the touring initiatives within Canada; artist collaborations on projects; the accuracy and comprehensive nature of media coverage, national advocacy and overall pride in Canadian product.

ACCESS

D. Main Discussion Point:

Mainstream media in North America has contributed to the inaccurate connection of Hip Hop and criminality

- ***International appeal vs. Lack of diverse media outlets in Canada***
- ***Artists Innovation vs. Myopic media coverage***

Hip Hop does get a bad rap in Canadian mainstream media coverage, said several roundtable participants. Too often our media fails to profile the artistic merit of Hip Hop arts and culture and instead focuses on glorifying a narrow representation. Most people can't glean accurate or inclusive information on innovative art involving Hip Hop. Perhaps mainstream media has limited knowledge of Hip Hop's contribution to contemporary arts on a national and international scale. As a major element of public socialization, the media and media arts play a crucial role. They have more opportunity to educate the public on the roots of Hip Hop, help expose its artists, and encourage appreciation for its different dimensions.¹⁴

The Survey Says...

Northside piloted a survey in order to begin the process of gauging the needs of Canadian Hip Hop artists. With the gracious assistance of HipHopCanada.com and Urbnet.com, an online survey was designed and posted on both sites, and at this writing, still continues to tabulate responses.

The survey questions posed were: "*In what area do you require the most financial support?*" and "*What area would you invest in to take your career as a Hip Hop artist to the next level?*" The categories for consideration: Marketing/Promotion, Studio (Recording, Mixing, Editing), Manufacturing, Touring, Distribution, Artist Development, and Management.

Marketing/Promotion was the clear frontrunner in this needs assessment of surveyed artists, eliciting 30%, almost 1/3rd, of responses. The survey results also spoke to the need for investment in Studio/Recording/Editing (16%), and reinforced the consistent discussion around Touring (15%) for Hip Hop artists in Canada. The final third of the needs and investment equation consisted of Manufacturing (12%), Management (10%), Artist Development (9%) and Media Access (8%).

The Northside survey exercise was a valuable one, yet the challenge of this process was designing it to apply to all Hip Hop artforms. Judging by the orientation of the sites, Northside assumes that the majority of respondents represent the musical elements of Hip Hop. Space constraints didn't allow for more detailed explanation of the various categories, nor a gauging of respondents' practiced artforms (e.g. DJ, dancer, filmmaker). Despite these limitations, the process did highlight the

¹⁴ For examples of media's role in exploring Hip Hop's pervasive influence in arts and culture, see Media Takes in Appendix.

challenges of surveying a wide-reaching culture and artform; therefore, identifying the need for a more extensive survey in the near future.

The Struggling Artists

Despite Hip Hop's longstanding roots, Canadian Hip Hop as a *supported* art is in its infancy, according to the general views of many roundtable participants.

Northside's Q7 questionnaire was created to: 1) discern the level of funding support artists are receiving or feel they are receiving as they work to apply their art; and 2) to provoke thought at the start of each roundtable session. Toronto's roundtable, for example, took place at 2pm Sunday February 19th at the Sony/BMG office. As participants casually made their entrance and settled around the boardroom conference table, each was given a questionnaire to complete as Northside waited to start.

Judging from the laughs and interactions among participants, it became apparent to Northside that the most popular questions asked were:

How would you describe your livelihood as an artist of Hip Hop?

What's your average annual income from practicing your Hip Hop art?

Two of the 19 participants (MCs) expressed themselves about the above two questions, citing that they "only wished" they made more money as Hip Hop artists. Others told Northside they planned to generate more income, but were still struggling and had to work another job to financially sustain themselves and apply their art. The Toronto Roundtable was made up of MCs, DJs, dancers, publicists, magazine and webzine editors, writers, and music producers.

Judging from the responses of artists at our roundtables Hip Hop in Canada is made up of artists who have yet to experience financial gain to sustain a living and support their art.

Even if this idea has yet to be proven, participants were comfortable assuming this indeed was the reality not just for them, but for most of their artist peers. So why pursue Hip Hop as an ultimate livelihood? The reasons are diverse and complicated for each individual, of course. But there are strong hints in the very fact that these same individuals describe themselves as "artists" not unlike most of the talented Canadians who apply for funding support at the Canada Council for the Arts.

Infrastructure (Models of Management)

A major contention that came forth from Northside's consultations was the lack of infrastructure for Hip Hop arts and culture. While a myriad of artist organizations and businesses support Hip Hop throughout Canada, a common issue reigns. According to feedback from artists, industry executives, organization representatives and Hip Hop critics, there is a need for effective infrastructures of national scope and interest to serve all Canadian Hip Hop artists. Areas of primary focus in the arguments were:

- networking
- communication
- management and marketing support
- advocacy
- service provision

During collection of FAQ's from staff members at Canada Council, an important question was posed:

If an organization could access strategic targeted funds outside of operating costs, what would be the activities or costs they would like to see funded?

Based on topics explored during the roundtables:

- National and/or regional advocacy services for the Hip Hop arts communities
- Contemporary arts lobbying at Canadian summits and symposiums
- National and/or regional summits and expositions that raise the profile of Hip Hop artistry
- Artist development and training
- Management and marketing training 101 for membership
- National and/or regional networking initiatives, depending on an organization's mandate
- Membership drives and/or development of audience base
- Access to information for members (e.g. database of business establishments and art galleries supporting Hip Hop arts).
- Mentorship exchange programs
- Digital media training 101 for members

Issues of staffing limitations, administrative needs, volunteerism and self-managed artists also came to fore. There needs to be extensive needs assessment of companies and organizations such as **the Urban Music Association of Canada, Chris Smith Management, Paquin Entertainment, Pound Magazine, Phem Phat Productions, The Vancouver International Film Festival, Toronto Urban Music Fest, Direct Current Media, Iro Productions, Urbnet** and **The 411 Initiative for Change**. Independent labels such as **Battle Axe Records** in Vancouver and **Iro Productions** in Montreal also offer burgeoning management structures with which to work. Through them and similar organizations grow artist collectives, demonstrating great potential in the application of resourcefulness topped with an independent and entrepreneurial spirit. These are the kinds of organizations, collectives and businesses that artists recognize as Canadian vanguards in the promotion of Hip Hop arts and culture.

Appendix

Someone has to defend Canadian Hip Hop. But who will support it?



Toronto Graf Art
Credit: www.Choqlat.com



Toronto's DJ L'Oquenz
Credit:



Toronto's ABS Crew: B-Boy Stand
Credit: www.abs.com



Edmonton's DJ Roach at DMC Canada Championships
Credit: www.dmccanada.com

Regional Profiles

Northside embarked on a journey to meet and network with key artists and organizations in various regions across the country. Below is a sample of those who have contributed or have been profiled for this research. The list continues to grow.

Ottawa

History: Perspectives on the development of Hip Hop in Ottawa with artist Captain, Buddah of Canadian Floor Masters and Patrick of Boogaloo Trybe and the 411 Initiative for Change

Dance: Canadian Floor Masters, Decypher Crew

DJ's: DJ Duckats, Ebony & Ivory Sound Crew, Belly

MC's: DL Incognito, Boz Faramone

Spoken Word: Word-Olympics (Oct. 2004)

Visuals: Daser, Vos Media

Music Production: Dirty Swift of Midi Mafia

Media: Hold It Down DVD Volume 1, DJ Duckats of Peaceful Journey (Community Radio CKCU), Daddy Rich of Night Shift (Community Radio CKCU); DJ Rudeboy of Jeep Beats (Campus/Community Radio CHUO), DJ Benjammin

New Media: HipHopCanada.com

Independent Labels: Nine Planets Hip Hop

Edutainment and Artist Development: 411 Initiative for Change

Montreal

History: Perspectives on the development of Hip Hop's two solitudes making up the Francophone and Anglophone scenes from writer and radio broadcaster Duke Eatmon, DJ Donald "D" Robbins, Music manager Danielle Rousseau (music manager to Ray Ray), filmmaker Yannick Létourneau, Iro Productions independent label executive Maxine Truman, and hip hop pioneer Butcher T

DJs : A-Trak, Donald D, Kwhite Sane,

MCs: Butta Babees, Offsides, Nomadic Massive, Gundeï, Frenchi Blanco, Les Architectes, Ray Ray, Muzion, Sans Pression, Bless

Dance: Solid State Breakdance Crew, Urban Elements Dance School

Visual Art: Seaz, Mizery, Kélipso Designs (graphic design)

Infrastructure: Masters Entertainment; Elephriens Network, DMC Canada (branch of DMC based in London, England) Montreal Hip Hop Film Festival (affiliated with Vancouver's International Hip Hop Film Festival)

Media: Malik Shaheed (VJ), Masters at Work CKUT Radio McGill 90.3FM, Weekend Groove CKUT Radio McGill

New Media: DVD 514-411, documentary Chronique Urbaine

Independent Label: Iro Productions

Annual Events: Under Pressure Annual Graf Expo,

Inter-Arts: Lynn Worrell

Education & Community Development: Youth In Motion

Toronto

History: Perspectives on the development of Hip Hop via interviews with Hip Hop pioneers Ron Nelson, Michie Mee, Sunshine Sound Crew, DTS and journalist Dalton Higgins

Dance: Blaze Entertainment, Dance Immersion, Bag Of Trix, School of Mayhem

DJ's: DJ Grouch, P-Plus, DJ L'Oquenz, Son of S.O.U.L, Starting From Scratch, DJ Click, DJ Law

MCs: K'naan, k-os, Kardinal Offishall, JD Era, Skitz, Blake Carrington, Arabesque, Eternia, Rich London, Bishop, Crown A Thornz, Mathematik, Mayhem Morearty

Beatbox: Subliminal, Juggular, King RC,

New Media: TheCyberkrib.com , WORD Magazine, Urbanology Magazine, Big Apple's World,

Media: Project Bounce on Community Radio CIUT 89.5FM, Masterplan Show CIUT89.5FM, Pound Magazine, FLOW 93.5, Real Frequency, OTA Live,

Film: Raisin Kane (NFB), Breakin' In (NFB), the Real Toronto DVD

Infrastructure: Urbnet.com, Sony/BMG Canada, UMAC (Urban Music Association of Canada),

Annual Events: TUMF (Toronto Urban Music Festival), Phem Phat's Honey Jam, Revolution 06 International Hip Hop Fest, UMAC's Urban Music Summit (Canadian Music Week); Style in Progress, Stylus DJ Awards

Management: Paquin Entertainment, REMG, Chris Smith Management

Hip Hop Edutainment/Community Development: Fresh Arts, Royal Conservatory of Music, York University's Faculty of Music, Ryerson University's Hip Hop 101, BLOCKHEADZ – Rush the Vote, 411 Initiative for Change

Vancouver

History : Perspectives on the development of West Coast Hip hop via interviews with urban poet Wayde Compton, Hip Hop activist and mass media producer Sol Guy, Ali Rama of Feel Me Records

MC's: Checkmate, Concise, Hydro, Red One of Rascalz, Swollen Members, Metaforezt, Kyprios, Sweatshop Union, Syndicate Villain, Kinnie Starr, Moka Only

DJ's: DJ Kemo, Kid Koala; J Swing,

New Media: Direct Current Media (Sol Guy)

Media: Jay Swing of The Beat 90.3fm, Pass Da Mic TV on Shaw Cable 10, journalist Tara Henley,

Film: Five Sides Of A Coin (NFB)

Independent Labels: Feel Me Records, Battle Axe Records, Frontside Management

Annual Events: Vancouver International Hip Hop Film Festival

Event Promoters: GMAN and Ris,

Edmonton/Hobbema

History: Perspectives on the development of Hip Hop in Aboriginal community, interviews with Rex Smallboy of War Party, Jaymak of Rezofficial

MC's: War Party, ReddNation, Rexofficial, Jazzy G

DJ's: Kwake

Dance: Cree-Asian, b-girl Lunacee, Phreshly Squeezed Dance Crew

Beatbox: MC Noisy

Media: MC Mother Peace of Fresh Tracks on CJSR 88.5FM, Urban Hang Suite on CJSR,

Edutainment & Community Development: Sun & Moon Visionaries Society Artisans Community Centre

Infrastructure/Independent Label: Red Roc Records (label, touring reserves)

Halifax

History: Perspectives on the development of Hip Hop in Halifax, interview with spoken word poet Shauntay Grant on historical perspective of Black community in Maritimes

MC's: Sko-Shun Tiez, Spesh K, Fax Four, Classifies, Jay Bizzy, Universal Soul,

DJ's: Plai Boi

Beatbox: EMC

New Media: Bradley of Copernicus Films and Animation

Media: Maple Mothership, DJ RS Smooth, CKDU

Inter Arts: Universal Soul (pilot for CBC TV of Hip Hop show utilizing sponge puppets)

Infrastructure: ANSMA (African Nova Scotian Music Association)

Events: Skateboard Park Outdoor Fest

ARTISTS' STATEMENTS

The Future of the DeeJay by DJ L'Oquenz

With the constant evolution of technology, the future of the DeeJay is limitless. The birth of Serato is proof! The deeJay can now travel with 10, 50 to 100 times more crates of music and that amount may increase depending on HD space and ram. I was never big on the CD DJ craze, because I felt it took away from the essence of "digging" and the true skill of a DeeJay. But I have to give it up to Rane (the inventors of Serato) for being mindful of preserving the art by allowing the DJ to juggle between mp3's (off specially created vinyl) or just good ol' vinyl. The challenge now for the deeJay, is to "know" their music and to be crafty enough to move through various genera's. This is where the true test lies. The down side to technology is that you should never fully depend on it, as your laptop can have a melt down or, the cables could be damaged making it difficult to work with the program but for the most part, Serato is reliable. It's one of the best purchases I've made in years and as its popularity continues to grow, it revolutionizes the face of the DeeJay.

The Halifax Hustle by Sko-Shun Tiez

The state of the hiphop scene here in Halifax is lacking corporate and label support for African Nova Scotian (Artists) and its culture; this is a key component to exposing our art form and this system needs to be restructured.

I find most people are not willing to admit the divide of our hiphop scene here in Halifax which happens to be segregated between black artists scene & white artists scene and we have been witnessing opportunities that have not been involving black artists within the province. This is has been part of the reason why our scene is not flourishing as it should be.

There needs to be more avenues for the artists to find funding, demo grants, filming (video) funds, grants, venues for showcases, gigs etc. We need to make these issues priorities within our province to expose and exploit our arts communities. The scene is not being taken seriously or recognized; also it stops short in the Montreal area.

We need government / corporate funded hiphop summits for (artists, managers, public relations, producers, engineers etc). This is the key source of resources for artistic growth and networking. Also radio's (**commercial radio**) needs to be more involved by adding locals (artists) to the stations programming to help break new talent in the industry. Currently I have yet to hear any local hiphop song on the commercial radio in daily rotation if at all.

CKDU 97.5 fm a local Dalhousie university campus radio station has weekly programmed shows pertaining to hiphop music but that's not enough. Or getting all the different styles and artists in the Atlantic hiphop scene airplay, or on the charts, it goes only to a select few.

We need to start: "thinking Canadian, start purchasing Canadian, start building Canadian," this will create a buzz within our own borders and break our own talent (Artists) by ourselves for ourselves. This will allow us to break into other markets on a global basis and soon we will be a global force on exporting Canadian hiphop music and its culture.

In short these are some of the issues we all should be a part of and address to ensure a better foundation for our Canadian hiphop, thanks.

Women in Hip Hop Project by Lynn Worrell

I am engaged in the analytical approach to hip-hop culture and became increasingly aware of the under representation of female emcees. Rhythm and poetry, better known as RAP, became one of the creative ways of expressing the discrimination and injustices, and a tool to raise awareness in this society. Rap became a voice that is more often unheard in this society. I find current male-dominated rap industry gives scant notice to women's concerns and issues.

As a woman and longstanding participant in hip-hop culture, I am inspired to create a body of work of female rappers to address issues of equity for women in hip-hop culture. Through portraits of female emcees as my subject, I continue in the tradition of rap music, letting the unheard be heard. The women who are selected in these portraits are female rappers that have contributed to molding hip-hop music in United States and Canada.

I am creating an installation of portraits of female emcees using a variety of media, including video, sound, painting, print media, and performance. The space of the installation will be at a venue that allows people to relax and enjoy themselves in order to take in the information at ease. The majority of the pieces that contribute to this installation will be displayed on the walls. Spray paint, charcoal and acrylic are some of the materials used on canvas for a variety of different sized mixed media paintings. Prints of video stills will be displayed in light boxes through out the space adding a warm glow to the space. A designated wall space will have a video projection, featuring different footage of female emcees. The sound portraits will use individual speakers throughout the space of the room. Some portraits will be accompanied by a sound portrait.

Hip hop culture's power is partly based on the creative, dynamic interaction between the four elements. The traditional form of hip hop visual art is expressed in the form of graffiti in public places. This installation builds on the four elements of hip-hop culture by including other forms of visual art.

The opening night of the installation will have performances highlighting the other elements of hip-hop. A female deejay will be playing records featuring women rappers throughout the night. B-girls will perform, and there will be performances by female emcees. This installation then ultimately creates a space where women's role in hip-hop can be experienced and celebrated.

Participant's Statement: Amrit Singh's Suggestions for the Canada Council - Feb.20/06

Hey Motion, GREAT meeting on Sunday! Thanks for the invite...here are some thoughts/ notes:

-if the Canada Council does support hip hop more, an information seminar on how to write business plans is a definite! This can also be tied in with FACTOR - I've seen many business plans that were weak, but did not receive feedback on why or how to improve

- Schedule meetings/increase availability of program officers to discuss items with applicant - quite often grants, ESPECIALLY the Canada Council, is very rigid in its terminology - I think they need to simplify the terminology used.

- Create a list of urban jurors - ONLY people from this list are able to judge the "credibility" of the music/art to see if they should receive funding.

- Perhaps a grant should be created for people within the music industry - for them to attain money to perfect their business and craft, if they get better - the quality of work gets better. (publicists, writers, media, managers etc.)

- When submitting applications - resumes or bios of people who are to be used on the team of the artist should be submitted.

Overall the grants are a difficult process and I can see this as beneficial in two ways. Firstly, it weeds out the performers who are not serious about the funding process. If you really want the money, you will get it, and therefore, leaves funding specific to artists who are serious.

As mentioned in the meeting - VideoFACT is taken advantage of - perhaps because their application process is too easy, and it very simple - but this results in a lot of artists creating short term plans around their video and nothing else.

Hands down, the meeting was amazing. I think we definitely touched on great issues and had a variety of people from all aspects of the industry. It definitely got my mind going, especially as someone who handles ALL the funding for Paquin Entertainment management, agency and our artists. Thank you so much for the invite!

- With offices in Winnipeg and Toronto, Paquin Entertainment is a full-service entertainment company comprised of four divisions: Agency, Management, Special Events and Film & Television. Until recently, **Amrit Singh** worked as Artist Representative and Special Events and was part of Paquin Entertainment's management teams for Aboriginal Hip Hop artists War Party and most recently, K'naan. See www.paquinentertainment.com.

MEDIA TAKES: Symbolic Movement

The Smithsonian makes history

"Some 30 years after it emerged from the neighborhoods of the South Bronx, N.Y., hip-hop has evolved into a pervasive and global cultural phenomenon. During a special ceremony in New York today, pioneers from the hip-hop community donated objects to "Hip-Hop Won't Stop: The Beat, The Rhymes, The Life," a major collecting initiative by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

The museum's multi-year project will trace hip-hop from its origins in the 1970s, as an expression of urban black and Latino youth culture, to its status today. By collecting today from Russell Simmons, Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, Kool Herc, Ice T, Fab 5 Freddy, Crazy Legs and MC Lyte (who could not attend) the museum will build an unprecedented permanent collection that will document the undeniable reach of hip-hop and commemorate it as one of the most influential cultural explosions in recent history."

- Excerpt from "Hip Hop Comes To The Smithsonian", press release of the National Museum of American History, February 28, 2006.

One Canadian MC's stand for Hip Hop

Given his opportunity, Kardinal Offishall voiced his reasoning for omitting one particular track from his album *Fire & Glory*, released late last year. In the November 2005 print issue of *Exclaim! Magazine*, the Canadian hip hop MC told Del F. Cowie, the collaboration with American music producer Timbaland did occur, and that it "cost a house to produce the song."

Kardinal also told Cowie he made the decision to exclude the track and instead expose other less established artists, saying "Not 'cause I don't think Timbaland's talented and because the song wasn't sick, but I don't believe that the music I create or the people I work with are any less talented than Timbaland. They just haven't had as much opportunity and maybe don't have the light. A lot of these cats have incredible beats, incredible. The only difference between them and other producers is the opportunity."

Cowie, assistant editor at the Toronto-based national publication, wrote of this featured artist: "Kardinal's not willing to alter his artistic vision for the album as a whole simply for the attention or commercial gain a high profile track might provide."

- Excerpt: "Man on Fire" by Del F. Cowie in *Exclaim!* Cover story on Kardinal Offishall at <http://exclaim.ca/articles/multiarticlesub.aspx?csid1=75&csid2=778&fid1=4464>

Sol Guy uses Hip Hop for global change

"All eyes were on the artists the moment they stepped on to the soil of Freetown, Sierra Leone. In a West African country trampled by a bloody civil war, these people stood out. One dark-skinned man with dreadlocks walked with two other men – a baldhead who was slightly browner than their third partner, a towering 6'4" guy with braided hair. A white film crew traveled alongside. Together they could not have looked more Canadian.

Two of the men were Red 1 and Misfit, also known as the successful Hip Hop duo, the Rascalz. The tall cat was Sol Guy, former manager of the famed Figure IV Productions. It was the spring of 2000 and these young men were part of a sensitization mission sponsored by Much Music and War-Child Canada. Their goal: to produce a documentary about the children victimized by the war.

...two years later as he relays this experience, Guy explains the men watching were probably rebels with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). 'I swear the Hip Hop kept us safe,' he says. 'As soon as they understood we were artists, there was acceptance.'"

- Excerpt from "Sierra Leone: Dying For A Diamond" by Saada Branker for *WORD Magazine*, Toronto's urban culture publication in its 14th year of production

Hip Hop struggles at home

Chuck Demers, The Peak

Director Alison Duke's film, *Raisin' Kane: A Rapumentary* documents the struggle of independent, black, Canadian musicians to be heard despite the corporate music industry hierarchy. The very successful film was recently presented to SFU students (along with a presentation by Ms. Duke) by the Association of Students of African Descent (ASAD)

Raisin' Kane, which was produced by Karen King-Chigbo of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), is Duke's feature-length documentary debut. Chronicling the independent release of "Deliverance," the debut album of Canadian hip hop group Citizen Kane, the film is set primarily in the ghettos of Scarborough Ontario, where West Indian, Canadian, and American cultures synthesis, thrusting up underground hip hop that is worlds away from the "bling! bling!" of commercial rap.

Duke places her thesis, in text, in the beginning seconds of her film: "Hip hop is a worldwide phenomenon, yet independent rappers are not being heard." Nor, the film goes on to show, are they being seen, respected or appreciated.

The audience is confronted with the realities of independent musical production, distribution and publicity: thousands of stickers and spray-painted stencils, offices with four doors and four wheels, deals closed over cell phones while performing one's full-time job inspecting trucks for the government of Ontario. The hardships of Toronto hip hop are indeed a far cry from the instant musicians and fabricated chart-toppers of mainstream music-this is the laboured genius of the working class.

Check www.nfb.ca/raisinkane for more information. Duke's film and Citizen Kane's music most definitely deserve your time, not to mention, your pride and support.

A writer's journey

In the March 15 issue of *Dose*, a free metropolitan daily published by Canwest Global Communications, freelance journalist Tara Henley brings light to the growing discourse on race and culture as it relates to Hip Hop.

Henley has set out on her own nomadic exploration of Hip Hop. On April 25, she'll leave her Vancouver base to travel countries around the world. Her mission: to investigate and document her discoveries about Hip Hop's global influence.

"It's common knowledge in industry circles that 70 per cent of all rap records are purchased by white fans," writes Henley in *Dose*. "Although the exact number is up for debate, the principle remains true — the current generation of white youth is fascinated with hip-hop culture and makes up a good portion of rap's listening audience. This dynamic raises a lot of questions.

"Does white participation in hip hop equal cultural appropriation? Or can it foster cultural understanding, as Jay-Z claimed in 'Come and Get Me,' when he rapped: 'I brought the suburbs to the 'hood/Made them relate to your struggle'?"

According to Henley, the elusive issue of race in Hip Hop culture is gaining greater exposure. Henley cites the written works of respected Hip Hop journalists, Greg Tate (*Everything but the Burden: What White People are Taking from Black Culture*) and William Upski Wimsatt (*Bomb the Suburbs*). Henley goes on to review some of the more recent publications tackling such a complex issue.

- *Dose* excerpt from "White Kids & Hip Hop" by Tara Henley, March 15, 2005 issue.

Henley recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to help support her research for *Global Beat: The Hip Hop Diaries* – her book in progress.

Media Take: Under Pressure for 10 years in Montreal

Writer JBiz says, In the mid-90s a prevailing thought flourished within Montreal's police service that most, if not all, the graffiti created in the city was gang-related and led to criminal activity. In a feature article for *Under Pressure Magazine*, JBiz writes: "Anyone who knows anything about Canada or has ever been to Montreal knows that is probably the dumbest and most ill-informed statement one could make."

Around this time, writes JBiz, Graf writer Seaz (Sterling Downey) organized a graffiti expo to counteract the media's false impression and reclaim control of the public perception about the art form.

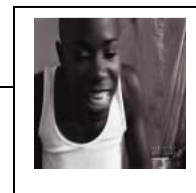
"And so Under Pressure was born – except that the first event was actually called Aerosol Funk...Held in '96, the event featured a dozen local writers, a handful of b-boys, three deejays (including a young A-Trak) and about 500 spectators. The event was a success."

JBiz adds that over the years, writers from as far away as Italy, Switzerland and Australia made the trip to Montreal to paint.

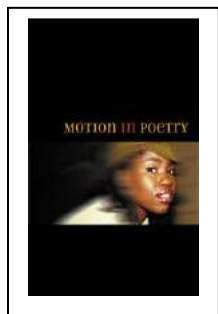
"Heading into the tenth event, Under Pressure has grown exponentially," writes JBiz. "Now featuring over 40 deejays, 30 groups and more than 100 writers, Under Pressure draws 6000 spectators to the FouFoules Electriques parking lot in downtown Montreal. Famed writers like Ces & Sub (FX), Priso, Clark & SMK (FLY ID), Vase & Wizart (UW), Part (TDS), Kem5 & Ges (3A), and many more have come in on their own coin to hang out and paint with their friends..."

Excerpts from "Under Pressure: Ulcers, Beatdowns & Broken Relationships" by JBiz, Editor in Chief of *Under Pressure Magazine* – 2006 anniversary issue of the quarterly publication.

Resources



- ❖ **Hip Hop** by Dalton Higgins & Greg Smith
www.Harcourtcanada.com
- ❖ **Listen Up!: Spoken Word Poetry** Paperback
Published by Ballantine Books
ISBN: 0345428978
- ❖ **Rap – The Lyrics: The Words to Raps 175 Greatest Hits**
- ❖ **Words Just Keep on Coming: Rap is Poetry but Poetry Ain't all Rap**
- ❖ **The Rose That Grew From Concrete : The Poetry of Tupac Shakur**
- ❖ **The Words Just Don't Fit in My Mouth** by Jessica Care Moore [Moore Black Press]
- ❖ **Tales of the Northside CD** by Nth Dgri
- ❖ **Hip Hop Divas**
Published by Crown Publishing Group
ISBN: 0609808362
- ❖ **Long Over Due Poetry** by Dwayne Morgan

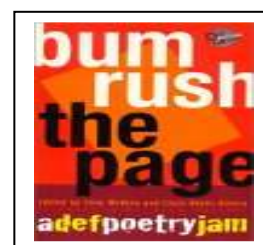


- ❖ **WordLife: Tales of the Underground Griots**
CD Anthology of Poets, Spoken Word Artists and Emcees from
Toronto, Ottawa & Montreal [RevWord]
- ❖ **Motion In Poetry [Women's Press]**
- ❖ **Slam** [film featuring Saul Williams]
- ❖ **Bum Rush the Page Bum Rush the Page: A Def Poetry Jam**
Louis Reyes Rivera, Tony Medina, Three Rivers Press
- ❖



- ❖ [Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry\](#)
Mex Glazner Manic D Press

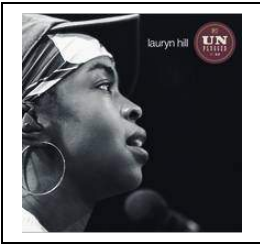
- ❖ **The Spoken Word Revolution (Slam, Hip Hop & Poetry)**



- ❖ **Who's Gonna Take the Weight: Power, Politics, and the Hip-Hop Generation**
by Kevin Powell
Three Rivers Press; ISBN: 0609810448; (July 2003)

- ❖ **Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade**
by Jim Fricke (Editor), Charlie Ahearn (Editor), Nelson George
DaCapo Press; ISBN: 0306811847; (October 22, 2002)





- ❖ **Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip Hop As Text, Pedagogy, and Lived Practice (Intersections in Communications and Culture, Volume 1)**
by Greg Dimitriadis
Peter Lang Publishing; ISBN: 0820451762; (May 1, 2001)
- ❖ **Vibe History of Hip Hop**
by Alan Light (Editor), Magazine Vibe
Three Rivers Press; ISBN: 0609805037;
Cd edition (October 1999)
- ❖ **Motion In Poetry : The AudioXperience**
- ❖ **Hip Hop Poetry and the Classics: For the Classroom**
by [Alan Sitomer](#), [Michael Cirelli](#)

