

Global Hip Hop Studies
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EDITORIAL

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Hip hop's third space: Imagined community and the global hip hop nation

The collection of articles, reviews and alternative format pieces gathered together for *Global Hip Hop Studies* 2.1 reflects our continuing desire to build dialogue across borders and nurture the 'third space' that hip hop provides for people around the world. For so many of us, hip hop has provided one of the few spaces where radical transcultural and global dialogue happens on the regular. As much of the discussion in these pages suggests, hip hop's third space is, to paraphrase Homi Bhabha, 'both the space where the oppressed plot their liberation and, at the same time, where the oppressed and oppressor are able to momentarily coexist' (Bhabha 1994; Oliver-Didier 2016: 4). The second part of this definition asks us to reflect seriously on the quotidian asymmetries and intersectional calculus of our profoundly unequal world. Together, the two seemingly contradictory definitions also paint a strikingly pithy description of hip hop community: an 'underground' place and safe space to organize and plot... and an agora of widely divergent experiences, backgrounds and ideals, where this *polyculture* acts as a common ground – even if only while the ciphers lasts (Chang 2005: 2).

KEYWORDS

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Increasingly, hip hop's third space is also a way out of the either/or double bind of essentializing heritage vs. race-free, technological future. Instead, hip hop has it both ways, lovingly sampling grandma's Nina and Marvin records while mashing them up with a trap pack on Fruity Loops for upload to SoundCloud – heritage remixed. Hip hop is neither beholden to the past nor running blindly into the future – it is a culture of possibility. It is a culture of now. In its heretical approach to heritage, hip hop sidesteps the ossifying traps of cultural orthodoxy instead paying real homage to the ancestors by revitalizing and moving traditions forward – changing the same as Amiri Baraka put it (Bogues 2016; Baraka 1968). Likewise, in its approach to technology, hip hop refuses the capitalist imperatives of intended usage and planned obsolescence, refiguring the master's tools and hacking the future (Jones 2018; Lorde [1984] 2007).

The articles within these pages push our global thinking about hip hop's third space and its polycultural artistry across the elements, from Cuban breaking ciphers and LA Rebellion film, to rapped critiques of ethnic absolutism in Norway and the rise of Dutch hip hop studies, to a meditation on global hip hop's diasporic soul. *GHHS* 2.1 begins with Show & Prove editor, Jacob Kimvall, introducing us to the recent work of legendary graf artist, Carlos Mare – aka Mare139. In this reflection on the *B-Boy Abstracts* project, we learn about how Mare139 transformed his early experience witnessing the dynamic movements of the first generation of breakers in 'Rock Steady Park' into his visual arts practice – representing that dynamism from the street to the gallery. With his kind permission, we have reproduced some of his work on 'simplicity, tension, geometry, and movement' here, including this issue's cover art – an absolutely ill piece that mashes up the four elements by setting his visual arts abstractions of breaker movements along the hallowed staves of sheet music... and, of course, JB's 'Funky Drummer'. RIP Clyde Stubblefield.

The first article, 'Breaking the limits? Exploring the breaking scene in Havana, Cuba, and belonging in a global (imagined) breaking community' by Friederike Frost (aka B-Girl Frost), is a body-centred work that explores a practice researcher's engagement with Havana's breaking community. This auto-ethnographic article examines the limits of and challenges to belonging in hip hop's imagined community, reflecting on both the commonalities, solidarities, asymmetries and disparities of her fieldwork experience. It is Frost's identity as a b-girl that allows her to access Cuba's local hip hop community in a short space of time as a participant-observer. However, she also reflects on the gendered limitations of this engagement whilst also considering her positionality as a white, German interlocutor. Drawing on the work of Hubert Dreyfus, Frost positions herself as a 'hybrid expert' whose research is informed by her 'embodied and cultural knowledge on breaking earned through [her] role as b-girl and hip hop activist [and her] research on dance and perspective as a hip hop scholar'.

The second article, 'An aesthetic of (re)appropriation: Remediating practices as history and identity in LA Rebellion film and hip hop sampling' by Seth A. Wilder, examines the concepts of remediation, counter-memory and counter-history in films associated with the 'LA Rebellion' and in the first two decades of hip hop. While both sets of artists' practices of (re)appropriation and repurposing take place in distinct although overlapping epochs, what makes this comparison fascinating is their challenge to 'white cultural and historical hegemony'. Wilder allows one to reflect on the lines of continuity, rupture and flow in successive generations' challenges to racism.

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GHHS 2.1 continues with Juliette Saetre's article, 'Nationhood, identity and subcultures: A case study of the Norwegian Rap Duo Karpe', which examines the chart-topping group's patient rewriting of what it means to be Norwegian. Through Vestel's 2004 concept of 'grey zones' – alternative cultural spheres where 'diverse traditions get entangled and new hybrids develop' – Saetre elaborates what hip hop's third space means for young Norwegians and details the biting cultural critique of Karpe MCs, Magdi and Chirag.

The fourth article, 'Holland's hip hop hitting the books: The state and status of Dutch hip hop studies', by Aafje de Roest, offers a snapshot of Dutch, néerlandophone hip hop scholarship with the aim of 'putting it on the map'. According to the author, some of the key themes that emerge in Dutch hip hop scholarship include: (1) local and national hip hop identities from a global perspective; (2) (re)definitions of representing and realness; (3) hip hop language; (4) hip hop's 'rebellious' character; and (5) hip hop's legitimisation. de Roest views the paper as both a take on the state of the art and a call to action for researchers to develop Dutch, néerlandophone hip hop scholarship.

The final article is James G. Cantres's thoughtful reconsideration of Kendrick Lamar's catalogue. Instead of focusing on Kendrick's much-hyped Compton upbringing, Cantres asks us to listen for the 'Afrodiasporic longings for home across the US and the Black Atlantic' that lay just beneath the surface in the music of this favourite son of the CPT. The article, 'Articulations of displacement and dissonance from Compton: Kendrick Lamar in the twenty-first century', foregrounds the Black British cultural studies legacies of C. L. R. James, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy and others in order to widen the frame of our understanding of this diasporic yearning – and, in so doing, add Chicago, Kingston, Brixton and Cape Town to the mix of how we hear Kendrick's call from Compton.

Our In the Cipher piece for this issue comes straight out of Bristol, United Kingdom, where James McNally presents a historically insightful trip down memory lane with Krissy Kriss (aka Kinsman) – a key figure in Bristol's era-defining hip hop sound with his crew 3PM and others. This issue's Dive in the Archive section picks up on this important historical work, considering 'the possibilities of archiving ephemerality, especially radio shows and mixtapes' in a thoughtfully generative arts-practice research piece titled, 'Mixtapes and memory making: A Hip hop remix of the traditional archive', by scholar and DJ, Mark V. Campbell (one of our *GHHS* section editors).

GHHS 2.1 closes with three important reviews. The first is Wayne Marshall's review of Dan Charnas's much-anticipated, *Dilla Time: The Life and Afterlife of J Dilla, the Hip-Hop Producer Who Reinvented Rhythm* – a book that, Marshall writes,

stands at once as an archive and argument in its own right and as a model for how others can contribute – not just to a greater understanding of this thing called hip-hop, but to hearing big questions in the little details of all the beats, rhymes, and life.

The second is Jeffrey Ross's review of *Poetic Resurrection: The Bronx in American Popular Culture* by *GHHS* editor Sina Nitzsche – a book that investigates the received knowledges and stereotypes about this iconic birthplace of hip hop. The third is Justin D. Burton's critically incisive media review 'Bel-Air and the carceral system', which reads the fantasy of 'Morgan Cooper's dramatic

reimagining of the iconic 1990s sitcom *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* against the quotidian reality of an unjust justice system.

We are already looking forward to *GHHS* 2.2 – the internet hip hop Special Issue ‘It’s Where You’re @’, expertly guest edited by Steven Gamble and Raquel Campos. Furthermore, we are excited to announce that *GHHS* 3.1 will be another Special Issue of sorts, titled ‘The Hip Hop Atlas’. The issue is an offshoot of a major project by guest editors Greg Schick and Sina Nitzsche that is a sure shot to be a first port of call for global hip hop researchers, featuring a selection of 2000-word introductions from area specialists on a wide range of hip hop scenes ranging from Jamaica and Brazil to Ghana, South Africa, Palestine, Thailand, India, Czech Republic and beyond.

As ever, thanks to our growing community of readers for your patience and support during this difficult time as we get *GHHS* back on its publication schedule. We hope that you will stay tuned as critical readers as we continue our mission to develop and enrich global hip hop scholarship and activism. A special thanks to our editors and guest editors for their hard work, and a final thank you to our ever-expanding ciphers of authors, artists and peer-reviewers – and to our publisher. While the global pandemic has taken a toll on both our personal and professional lives, you know how we do. ‘Can’t stop, won’t stop’.

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