

The Voices of Madison Hip-Hop, a Summary

Background and Methods

The Urban Community Arts Network (UCAN) has worked with UW Madison Community and Environmental Sociology Students on several research projects aimed at understanding and improving the state of Hip-Hop in Madison. The most recent project consisted of interviewing members of the Hip-Hop scene to understand how they perceive Madison Hip-Hop and what they would like to see happen in the future. We conducted 32 interviews over six months with DJs, rappers, producers, dancers, promoters, etc., all over Madison to gather general themes felt throughout the community.

The Scene

- Under-recognized, Invisible
- Under-supported
 - Lack of support for Hip-Hop from venues and those in control of the entertainment scene in Madison, despite there being an audience
 - When venues are receptive to Hip-Hop, they are often looking for a certain type that is not representative of local artists
- Lack of Solidarity & Heightened Competition
 - Limited number of venues willing or able to play Hip-Hop, inevitable tension rises
 - Local artists find it much more difficult to find success in Madison than in other cities

Barriers

- Underrepresentation in Media
 - Negative media coverage and a lack of coverage
 - Participants pointed to media's language, how it's racially coded, and speaks negatively about Hip-Hop and Hip-Hop fans
 - Negative media representation keeps harmful stereotypes alive
 - Lack of local radio play
- Misconceptions & Lack of Education
 - Lack of deep knowledge about the scene and the culture
 - Impact of Hip-Hop being a predominantly Black form of cultural expression
 - Most implied that residents, police, and venue owners hold both conscious and unconscious racial biases
- Venue Issues
 - Difficulty booking shows for specifically Hip-Hop artists
 - It's not just venue owners, but also the Madison police and businesses
- Lack of Solidarity within Community
 - Issues include not supporting one another, not respecting one another, and not working with one another
 - There is a sense of clique-ness and exclusion felt by some.

Strategies

- Improve the perception of Hip Hop in Madison
 - Community support needs to be built through community and school outreach
- Increase venue and radio access, and improve police relationships
 - Better access to venues and the radio to showcase their music
 - Better relationship between Hip-Hop and police
- Promote unity within the scene