

Seattle Hip Hop 2006 End of Year Wrap Up

Written by Julie C ID3221

Thursday, 11 January 2007 00:02 -

The Emerald City 2006 End of the Year Wrap-Up: Part 1 - By Julie C

206 Stand Up! The Emerald City has a lot to celebrate as we bring in the New Year! As 2006 winds to a close, the momentum of the thriving Seattle Hip Hop scene is only gaining as the city gears up to solidify the Northwest's spot on the national radar.

Blue Scholars and Common Market had Seattle on the tip of the tongue of Hip Hop fans all over the country- the camp made history in the founding year of Mass Line Media as the first local Hip Hop groups to sell out Seattle's Showbox since the days of Sir-Mix-a-Lot. Gabriel Teodros' new solo joint Love Work, which will be Mass Line's third national release due February 2007, is already getting raving reviews left and right.

Choklate's self-titled CD, with production by local champs like Vitamin D, Bean One, and Amos Miller, won honeysoul.com's 2006 Best of Soul Award. Seattle's own Jake One got signed to Money Management, 206 vet DJ B-Mello was honored as the 2006 West Coast DJ of the Year at the MixShow Power Summit, the emcee trio Unexpected Arrival sold their 10,000th unit, and these are only a few shining examples of how the town put it down - check 4 more detailed highlights below!

But beyond the stage and behind the art, Hip Hop's undeniable influence as a mobilizing force in the Northwest is also becoming an area of focus for the scene. dRED.i Movement's story, featured on daveyd.com and syndicated on KPFA's Hard Knock Radio, went beyond the pioneering local group's music, shedding historical perspective on the racial politics of police terrorism in the city. Incidents like the brutalization of DJ DV One and the FBI's harassment and monitoring of spoken word poet and long-time activist Freedom Siyam this year have brought the issue back to the forefront of community concerns.

Media Reform activism was another area where the Seattle Hip Hop community's growing presence became notable. Several events this year shaped the scene's next collective moves on the issue- Prominent icons in Seattle Hip Hop culture were spotlighted in an urban arts panel discussion before a crowd of 200 plus media reps from the region at the Northwest Community Radio Summit organized by Reclaim the Media. The discussion, moderated by Charles Mudede of The Stranger newspaper, focused on how mutual support between Hip Hop communities and independent media can cultivate activism and create better economic opportunities for young

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people in the city. The panel featured a mixture of artists, activists, and grassroots media reps including Silver Shadow D, dRED.i Movement's GCLI, Dr. Daudi Abe, DJ B-Girl Chillz from oseao.com, Khazm of Zulu Radio, and Miss Noni Shanay of Coolout TV Network.

Hip Hop also represented strong at the FCC Hearing on Media Ownership, where over 400 people showed up to testify against push backs on corporate ownership. Currently, leaders in the community like Jace of Silent Lambs Project, Moorpheus of dRED.i, and E.Mandisa are building with Davey D, KBCS, Reclaim the Media, and The Stranger Newspaper, on how to empower communities through creating new, more accessible media outlets, and how existing platforms can be utilized more effectively as a tool for social change.

Hip Hop made its mark in schools and on campus as well in 2006. Ninth Trybe Studies, a student group at the University of Washington centered around the urban arts in alternative education, is made some major moves with Hip Hop on campus, breaking academic ground, and attracting attention from several different publishers with their work. Members of the student group also collaborated with the non-profit advocacy group Justice Works! to raise awareness of racism in the criminal justice system.

Ninth Trybe faculty advisor Georgio Roberts was the featured keynote speaker at Portland State University's Hip Hop Activist Conference in November, after winning a 2006 Best and Brightest Excellence in Teaching Award for her seminar courses that looked at Hip Hop and literature, including "The Textual Appeal of Tupac Shakur."

In 2007, Ninth Trybe officers will be studying abroad in South Africa while laying a foundation for solidarity between South African Hip Hop communities and the Northwest. They are asking hip hop heads and activists from the surrounding communities to join this dialogue by contacting ninthtrybe@hotmail.com for more information.

Dr. Mako Fitts, faculty advisor for the Seattle University chapter of Hip Hop Congress has been busy bridging the gap between the campus and community. The assistant professor of sociology and her colleague Gary Perry have teamed up their students with local groups like Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, Tenants Union of Washington State, Central Area Senior Center, and the Central Area District Council in a service-learning project, The State of Seattle's Central District. The project raises awareness on the issue of gentrification and builds allies in the struggle to preserve the cultural legacy of the neighborhood.

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While some repped Hip Hop in higher education, others utilized it as a tool to reach and teach the youth. In August of 2006, the Seattle Debate Foundation, with executive director Jennifer Johnson, made history when their two-week residential Summer Seattle Debate Institute at the University of Washington became the first Urban Debate League in the country to fully incorporate Hip Hop throughout their curriculum.

By bringing dozens of Hip Hop artists from communities around the Northwest and California together with high school, middle school, and elementary students, the foundation made strides in giving voice to over 350 young people, many underrepresented in the world of debate.

Portland Hip Hop artists Toni Hill from Siren's Echo and Mic Crenshaw partnered with the foundation in September to facilitate a rap battle and public debate on disaster relief, using Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita to examine race, class, and cultural inequalities in the United States at the National Race and Pedagogy Conference at the University of Puget Sound.

Beyond being featured in Newsweek Magazine and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, SUDL's accomplishments have been awarded with a generous grant from Comcast and will launch the Tacoma Urban Debate League in 2007 in partnership with the University of Puget Sound. For more information visit www.seattledebate.org

206 Zulu, the Seattle Chapter of Universal Zulu Nation also brought Hip Hop to several Seattle schools this year, working with El Centro de la Raza's Hope for Youth program. Students gained knowledge and experience writing, performing, and even recording their own work while exploring concepts of race, gender, and identity.

206 Zulu also facilitated workshops in conjunction with Festival Sundiata at Seattle Center and CONSEJO Latino Youth Conference, and members participated in Elevate! Using Hip-Hop to Educate summer's teacher's institute in Cleveland, Ohio. Chapter leader Daniel "King Khazm" Kogita was also appointed as the West Coast Regional Coordinator for UZN, and honored with the 2006 Mayor's Award for Excellence in Hip Hop for Community Activism and Leadership.

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For the New Year, the organization is preparing Hip Hop workshops and discussions for Highline Community College with the Latino Liberation Movement, collaborating with the Oregon Chapter of UZN to participate in Your Voice, Your Conference at Oregon State University, developing a new website, and is looking forward to the long-awaited return of Hip Hop 101 TV.

Tune in to Zulu Radio every Saturday night 10pm-1am at KBCS 91.3fm or broadcasted online at www.kbcs.fm and peep www.206zulu.com and www.hiphop101.tv for updates.

Seattle Arts Commissioner, emcee, and spoken word artist Laura "Piece" Kelley Jahn, got down in the classrooms too with her curriculum that has captured national recognition for its creative use of the urban arts in middle school and high school basic skills and media literacy education. This pioneer of the local teaching artist movement brought Hip Hop to five schools and three community centers this year through the youth service non-profits ArtsCorps, The Power of Hope, Nature Consortium, Seattle Young People's Project, and her own organization, the Think Big Foundation.

Piece also mounted her theatrical production "Street Smarts" at Langston Hughes Cultural Center earlier this year. The play, which spotlights local Hip Hop history and critically examines the gentrification of Seattle neighborhoods, was picked up by the African American theater company Brown Bucks Productions, and will be remounted in April.

And while we're on the topic of plays, be on the look out for the next series of Back to the Roots, the annual event from Melissa Noelle Green and Diamond Life Productions. This year's run explored Hip Hop history and generational divides through the legacy of Black American music. Green is currently working on "Movement" Hip Hop Back to its Roots Pacific NW Tour, set to run from February to April.

But all this is only the tip of the iceberg. We gotta lot more wrap-ups and preludes to the New Year from Seattle greats including Remix Marketing & Communications, Coolout Network, Music Inner City TV, Seaspot.com, and Sportn" Life Records, so be on the look out for the next issue, coming soon!

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