

CALL FOR PAPERS

Cyphers: Hip Hop and Improvisation

Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation invites submissions for a special issue with the theme "Cyphers: Hip Hop and Improvisation," guest-edited by Rebecca Caines and Paul Watkins. This special issue of *CSI* will draw together artists *and* academics to investigate the crucial role improvisation plays in the international field of Hip Hop, and in the related field of critical Hip Hop studies. We seek contributions from artist/practitioners and from scholars working across the disciplines.

Derek Bailey's notion of improvisation as being the most practiced, yet the least understood, of all musical activities, is particularly pertinent to the immense and constantly burgeoning field of Hip Hop praxis from around the world. Although most scholars are aware of the integral nature of improvisatory practices in Hip Hop, few critically explore how improvisation is a viable form of analysis in Hip Hop, as well as a model for social change. Improvisation plays a central role in African-American, Hispanic, and Caribbean based Hip Hop practices in the US, and continues to be a core element in Hip Hop music, dance and visual art across the globalized forms of this interdisciplinary art practice. We encourage contributors to pursue new conversations, interventions even, about how we think of improvisation vis-à-vis the larger milieu of Hip Hop. Critical academic essays are encouraged, and the editors also welcome for consideration artist statements, commentaries, reviews, interviews and experimental textual forms. We intend to showcase a variety of live artist performances and invited papers at a launch event for this Special Issue. *CSI/ÉCI* encourages the submission of audio and visual content to accompany texts. It is the responsibility of the author to ascertain copyright and gain permissions.

Potential topics include:

- How do Hip Hop artists combine idiomatic and non-idiomatic improvisation in their work?
- What artistic, social, and economic pressures face Hip Hop artists who foreground the improvisatory in their work?
- How does improvisation in Hip Hop reflect, develop, or contrast the social practices and pressing political issues of the communities in which it appears?
- What role does improvisation play in the creation of academic disciplinarity and "Hip Hop pedagogies" both inside and outside educational institutions? How might the ubiquity of improvised DJ performances inform knowledge formation, and provide critical tools for pedagogues?
- How does scholarship in Hip Hop studies respond to the improvisatory nature of the practice?
- What role does improvisation in Hip Hop play in the recontextualization of cultural and intercultural identity?
- How do Indigenous communities across the world improvise, translate,

- transform, and indigenize the US form of Hip Hop arts practice?
- Since Hip Hop has often traditionally been described as “noise” by many conservatives and academics who uncritically profile Hip Hop artists and fans of all genders, races, and classes, might dissonance compel us to think about how disruption can function as a model for critical practice?
 - How are the five primary elements of Hip Hop—dance (notably breaking), urban inspired art (markedly graffiti), deejaying (turntablism), beatboxing and emceeing (rapping)—negotiated under improvisatory practices and amalgamations?
 - In what ways are orality and textuality (what we might think of as recording) tied to Hip Hop and how might either form limit or broaden the art?
 - Houston A. Baker Jr. argues, poetry, like rap, is intended to be a “disruptive performance [...] as an audible or sounding space of opposition” (*Rap* 96). In what ways are Hip Hop and poetry related?
 - What are the relationships between technology, accessibility, and Hip Hop culture?
 - How do DJs improvisationally rework archival material that is often dormant, thus creating new repertoires from the past?
 - While misogyny is bigger than Hip Hop, we welcome papers that explore how gender is improvised and performed in Hip Hop.

Submissions should be 4000-6000 words (shorter essays may also be considered at the discretion of the editors). Please submit completed essays to the journal website by April 16, 2014. Information on the submission process and examples of previously published work can be found at www.criticalimprov.com. Inquires can also be directly made to csi-eci@uoguelph.ca.

Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation is an open-access, peer-reviewed, electronic, academic journal on improvisation, community, and social practice housed at the University of Guelph. The editorial and advisory boards are made up of leading international scholars spanning diverse disciplines. *CSI/ÉCI* publishes twice a year, in May and December. The journal publishes scholarly essays by artists, activists, and intellectuals, as well as reviews of books, performances, and films.