

HIP-HOP:

Beyond Beats & Rhymes

A FILM BY BYRON HURT



“ A hip-hop head weighs in on manhood in hip-hop culture ”

HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes takes an in-depth look at manhood in rap music and hip-hop culture—where creative genius, poetic beauty, and mad beats collide with misogyny, violence and homophobia. This groundbreaking documentary is a “loving critique” of certain disturbing developments in rap music culture from the point of view of a fan who challenges the art form’s representations of masculinity.



PLANNING A SCREENING

Topics Relevant to HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes

HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes provides an excellent prompt to discuss a range of thought-provoking issues. You might begin by choosing one or two key themes from the list below to focus on in your post-screening discussion.

- Hip-hop, youth culture, youth voice
- Gender roles, construction of masculinity and representations of manhood
- Sexuality, homophobia
- Violence, gender violence, sexual violence, black-on-black violence
- African American history, culture
- Media accountability, media influence, media ownership and media literacy
- Race and power, race and class
- Public health, community wellness

Event Planning Checklist

A screening of HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes can be used to spark dialogue on a range of topics, as well as to inspire individual and community action. Using the checklist below will help ensure a high-quality/high-impact event.

Set realistic goals. Will you host a single screening or use the film to spur ongoing efforts? Are there relevant community partners with whom you should team to sponsor your event? Will you steer a discussion panel towards a specific topic or let the audience pursue whatever issues it chooses? Being clear about your goals will make it much easier to structure the event, target publicity and evaluate results.

Structure your event to match your event to your goals. Is your goal to share information beyond what is included in the film? Are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges; small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)

Arrange to involve all stakeholders. It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. Do you need an outside facilitator, translator or sign language interpreter? If you expect audience members to plan action that affects people other than those present, decide how you will give voice to those not in the room.

Choose an accessible venue. Is the room comfortable? Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? Can you provide clear signage? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration of the room allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have? Can everyone easily see the screen and hear the film?

Leave time for the audience to help plan for action.

It is important that people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic—even when the discussion may have been difficult. Allow enough time to plan next steps and facilitate networking. Ask attendees to sign in at the door so people can share contact information. Let participants know exactly how that information will (and won't) be shared.

“I sometimes feel bad for criticizing hip-hop, but I guess what I am trying to do is get us men to take a hard look at ourselves.” Byron Hurt



Facilitating a Productive Conversation

The film raises many complex and emotionally charged issues around race, gender, sexuality, power and identity. The role of the facilitator is to help the group discuss these complex issues by creating a safe space for dialogue. People who feel safe, encouraged, respected and challenged are likely to share openly and thoughtfully. Here's how you can encourage that kind of participation:

Prepare yourself

Identify your own hot-button issues. View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time you are facilitating a discussion.

Consider a Co-Facilitator. With gender as a focal point of the film, it might be helpful to consider co-facilitation as a way to engage all participants.

Be knowledgeable. You don't need to be an issue expert to lead an event, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. Prior to your event, take time to review the Resources at the end of the Guide.

Be clear about your role. A facilitator's role is to remain neutral, keep the discussion on track and moving forward, and manage how information is exchanged. Your personal views should not be shared or imposed on the dialogue.

Know who might be present. It isn't possible to know exactly who will attend a public screening, but if you consider what kinds of groups are present in your community, you may be able to anticipate potential issues in advance. Keep in mind that your audience's demographics—age, race, religion, sexual orientation, geographic region and socioeconomic class—will influence the discussion. Take care to prevent assumptions that members of a particular group share the same point of view.

Prepare the group

Establish ground rules around language and time limits. Prior to starting a discussion or Q&A with a panel, remind the audience of basic ground rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically such rules include no yelling or use of slurs, asking people to speak in the first person ("I think...") rather than generalizing for others ("Everyone knows that..."), and keeping comments within a stated time period. If a speaker breaks a ground rule, gently interrupt, remind them of the rule, and ask them to rephrase.

Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard. Be clear about how people will take turns and indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion.

Explain the difference between dialogue and debate. In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening to each other actively. Remind people that they are engaged in a dialogue.

Encourage active listening. Ask the group to think of the event as a listening, as well as discussing event. Encourage participants to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal "active listening," where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then re-phrase to see if they have heard correctly.

Protect yourself and group members. Think carefully about what you ask people to share publicly so that you are not asking them to reveal things that could place them in legal or physical danger. Let the audience and invited speakers know whether or not press will be present. If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath.

Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience. Who we are influences how we interpret what we see. So everyone in the audience may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. Inviting speakers to identify the evidence on which they base their opinion can help people to understand one another's perspectives.

HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes WILL AIR NATIONALLY ON THE EMMY-AWARD WINNING PBS SERIES, INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2007 AT 10 PM. CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS.

Visit the Independent Lens Web site to take a closer look at HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes and explore the music and the issues. View a timeline of rap and hip-hop, examine songs and lyrics and read what the experts think—all online at www.pbs.org/independentlens/hiphop/ beginning January 2007.

HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes is produced by God Bless the Child Productions in association with the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and the National Black Programming Consortia (NBPC).

ITVS COMMUNITY is the national community engagement program of the Independent Television Service. ITVS COMMUNITY works to leverage the unique and timely content of Emmy Award-winning PBS series Independent Lens to build stronger connections among leading organizations, local communities and public television stations around key social issues and create more opportunities for civic engagement and positive social change. To find out more about ITVS COMMUNITY, visit www.itvs.org/outreach.

