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RAW URBAN Vernacular in Full Effect...

by Bob Bryan, Filmmaker

FRIDAY NITE IN CULVER CITY WITH GUEST JUDGE FILMMAKER BOB BRYAN

16 BAR BOUT #10

Hosted by Wo'se Kofi & Jimmy Skee

I was invited to be a judge at the **16 BAR BOUT #10** by Wo'se Kofi and Jimmy Skee, co-producers and hosts of the event.

Having never judged an competition like this before I decided to do my due-diligence. I took my role very seriously, so I watched the youtube videos of each of the previous 1-8 bouts, to acquaint myself to as much of the territory as I could absorb. The fact was that I was never provided with any ground rules for the event. I was going in cold! Nevertheless I was game...

"Rules and models destroy Genius and Art"

--- William Hazlitt, English Writer

"There were no losers here, this is live, so if you screw up and forget your lyrics just "pick it up" and freestyle something else. "Deal with it." Just don't drop the ball and stand there and apologize. This is HH (Hip-Hop), we don't stop!"--- declared, Judge #1 (Ellay Khule), admonishing the Emcees

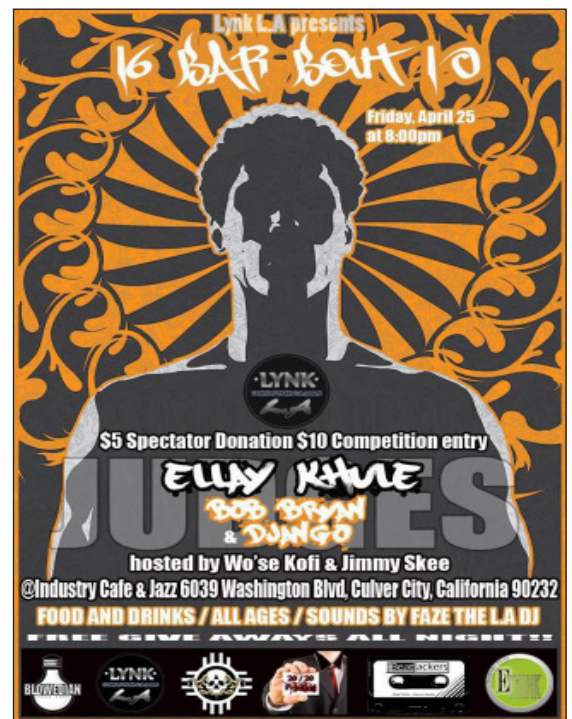
JUDGES: Ellay Khule,
DJango *and*
Bob Bryan, Filmmaker (www.graffitiverite.com)

The reality was that battle-worn Vets this evening were competing with newbie's and on any given nite, anyone can rise. On this verbal combat battlefield anyone can be prey, and everyone is a potential mortal enemy... competitively speaking.

What an amazing and uniquely exhilarating experience it turned out to be!



Filmmaker Bob Bryan





Asad III - Winner

THE EMCEE COMPETITORS:

- Emanuel English
- Be Brave
- Maku
- MC 360
- Larz Truman
- Suburban Truth (*Runner -Up*)
- Eli
- Asad III (*Winner*)
- Iwari DeWees
- Garrett Brown (*Noah the Monster*)
- Raw Dre (*2nd Runner-up*)
- Devi Wonder

Traditionally, Hip-Hop Emcee Battles are more than intense or complicated. It's downright democratic in an insipid revolutionary kinda-sorta way. Lemme explain...

In my minds-eye and experience whenever human beings come together to communicate, whether via HH (Hip-Hop) battles or just simple differences of opinion which erupt in casual-face-to-face conversations, individuals' education, world view, personal experiences and attitudes all come to play in the pregnant dynamic moment.

The genius of HH (Hip-Hop) is that the battlefield is really of the mind. Twisted, pernicious ideas are thrown around like candy by the emcees. Some of the ideas you may like and some will just completely turn you off. However, many ideas are supremely esoteric and others more faux confrontational, imbued with hyper-ghettoizms and implied verbal intimidations.

Yet, if you're a convo freak like me, there is a downright tactile and real joy in witnessing this battle for it's inherent organic performance value.

Structurally, there is a presentation round (*every MC introduces themselves by spitting a 16 Bar piece*), elimination rounds (*4 emcees are eliminated per each round*) and ultimately head-to-head rounds. The winner in the real-world is decided by the judges. That's as basic as it got.

Along the way, (*in this alternate universe*) rules got amended, judgements are thrown out like appeals to the Supreme Court.

Established battle laws and rules were summarily overturned by the mob, leaving audience members both unhappy or conversely happy with the new rulings. The over-zealous force of "people power" ultimately determined the winner and/or which emcee moved up in the competition. All this sideway action progressed even in the face of the established written voting record of the judges. Confused? welcome to my world dude?



This night, I experienced revolution and I had a front row seat. I found myself angry and elated at the results. As a judge, at the time of the overthrow, I felt spurned, dissed and totally powerless. Yet, everyone else seemed to be having a great time; so what did I know?



This 16 Bar Bout was much more than hustle and flow and certainly this wasn't 8 Miles to perfection. It finally dawned upon me that this ritual was not abt lil ole' me, at all!

Listen yall, HH is a living, peaceful revolution and "the people" oftentimes speak louder than any preconceived concept of order. Basically this process established a new order birthed from perceived disorder.

Tonight, the light shone on the people and ultimately the people won the day. If I ever get a chance to judge another 16 Bar Bout, I will double down on my appreciation of what being a mere judge really means.

Preciously, I came to the bout taking my responsibilities and my "absolute power" so seriously. I abruptly rediscovered the joys of "people power." It's actually kinda refreshing, that the "jury of your peers" concept hasn't been lost, regardless of this fresh application. A thrilling experience in HH democracy. It was glorious, this Order-in-Chaos paradigm. It's all love.

Everyone should experience being a HH battle judge just once in their lives. Forget abt American Idol, this was raw, fresh and literally off-the-chain. We're talking about civilized mob rule, ideas flowing, multi-racial challenges to your psyche...a realignment of power.

There were moments when the audience seated right behind me (*I could physically feel the waves of their passion on the knap of my neck*) erupted with spontaneous excitement and approval of our (*the judges*) decisions: "Good job Judges." I felt empowered. Short lived....

But at other times, when they disagreed with you and one of their favorite emcee was eliminated, the house would explode with palpable anger, confusion and spectacular emotive disagreement. "Ah man, no way, that's wack, boo boo, that's bullshit!"

Now this being my first time as a judge I assumed the judges decisions were final and would stand, irregardless of where the audience stood.... BUT I was soooo wrong!

During the highly emotional elimination process (*4 emcees were dismissed at a time for low scores*) we actually had a dissenting fellow judge (*there were three of us*) stand up and wade into the maddening crowd, agreeing with them, practically becoming an instigator and inciting them, preaching "Yall are right, I totally agree with you. The other two judges are wrong." "What?" was my reaction.

In effect, this judge was provoking and stoking the flames of revolution! As a result of this insurrection, decisions were flipped and thrown out, redo's were demanded, assumed rules of engagement were discarded and re-written on the spot. Chaos seemed eminent. Damn!

Paradoxically, while these "waves of change" lit up the spot, I never for a moment felt intimidated, or in fear of my life or frankly scared. What I was experiencing as a newbie judge was simply put... mystifying.

I was amazed at how an experienced judge (*I was the only newbie*) could leave the judges bench (*actually couch*) and incredibly become the leader of the revolution. "You can't do that man! You can't reveal your thoughts to the mob? U a judge!"-- I exclaimed.



Producer Bob Bryan with Soccer Star Pele' at the World Cup (Studio Pele')

In the end I was wrong... this was not AI, this was not a normal democracy; but rather a hybrid of mob rule and symbolic representative democracy at work.

The Hip-Hop battle ethos require flexibility and also demand that the politics of cru, fan-based affiliation and the emotional sensibilities of the crowd be respected. Logic be damned!

If the crowd felt so moved, by say, an elimination of their fav, they were not going to be silent, not this vocal-majority! They were not going to have it! Throw the damn tea in the pond!

They, the masses, were not going to sit passively by and let this injustice occur. They would petition the powers that be (*the producers*) to stop the proceedings and not allow this travesty to exist or move forward.

In this specific case, the mob being led by a rogue judge only emboldened, encouraged the changing of the rules and eventually the re-dos. The head-to-head battles were reconstituted, reconstructed and previously eliminated candidates were gifted with other chance to battle and see another day.

That fact that I strongly disagreed didn't matter at all... this was Hip-Hop and I was simply one man, one minority Supreme Court Justice. I learned my lesson the hard way.... These experienced audiences had the power! I was symbolic, not omnipotent. Powerful lesson to learn, ego be damned.

Throughout the evolving process, I remained staunch and resolute in my opinions, even when my opinion was contrary to the other judges or even the evocative crowd. I didn't care. I was not going to be intimidated by anyone! By the conclusion of the evening, I witnessed the evolution of a process and the coronation of the "peoples king."

The good news is that objectively speaking, by any rubric, the winners, near winners, runner-ups and the eliminated were supremely talented Emcees. In any cipher they would have killed the competition. My decisions were hardly easy to come to.



It was a real honor to be part of this process.

As I was leaving the venue, the penultimate celebrations broke out after the final winner was crowned. I could still hear the reverberations of that celebration ringing in my ears. It was joyousness.

I walked to my car feeling like I was ampted up on a dozen cups of caffeine, my blood was afire and my head was as vivid and as sharp as it's ever been. So exciting!

In the car, I couldn't help but pull out this yellow pad and put pen-to-paper. Driving down Washington Blvd, in the hood, after midnight, on a rainy night, scribbling insights onto paper. Traffic buzzing past my slowly creeping car... Who am I kidding?

These notes demanded my full attention, so I obediently pulled over and let my pen do the talking and THIS is just part of what emerged.



(l) Judge Bob Bryan,
(r) Suburban Truth at the Mic



Judge Bob Bryan, Ellay Khule, & Django



CUT TO DAYS BEFORE THE BOUT:

Locked up in my man-cave... editing, writing, self-directing temp tracks for my new doc **“MYTH, MAGIC AND RITUALS”** kept me in this self-imposed isolation; an internal process where I patiently grow a rangy “Duck Dynasty” type of beard and resist taking showers for days on end.

Fearing to step away from the editing, fearing of losing my mojo, fearing to miss a single beat of inspiration. Abstention from the world seemed to be the proper attitude to have.

But this “16 Bar Bout Competition thang” was an opportunity I just couldn’t resist. “I can actually get out of the house,” I thought to myself.

Nothing however, prepared me for this passionate Friday Nite experience.

People please keep in mind that Hip-Hop is a living breathing organism... driven by love and spontaneous emotion. Engineered by multi-ethnic emcees, committed to creativity and the demolition and acknowledgement of inner demons; boldly attacking them with a verve that demanded that they speak nothing less than the truth, regardless of where it takes them. PC be damned!

When they get it right, it takes us way beyond the tender atmosphere of planet earth, way beyond current time and space, deliciously exploring the echo of one’s DNA, the historical tribal imaginings and dreams of our fathers.

To timid outsiders “the battle” may look totally confrontational and almost threatening. But nothing could be further from the truth. “The battle or bout” is a dynamic and real in-your-face entertainment competition. After all, this is for the throne and the exorcistic tribal pride demands complete unmitigated commitment.

The Emcees words and performances reflect the dramatic realities lived by self, their predecessors and the village at large. Call them possessed griots, spirit-speakers on behalf of the community.

So hypnotic were the performers that spit so loudly, so passionately, the microphone itself was irrelevant and discarded early on.

The MC’s with their “mad gaze” (as **Poet Wanda Coleman** would say) were within spitting distance to my face. I could taste their hot sweat sprayed upon my lips. Here, I was mere inches from the epic-center of their frustrations and fiery imaginations.

This experience was so smart, so dynamically real--so necessary, I intuitively understood the multi-faceted reasons why Hip-Hop will never die.



Man Cave aka Fortress of Solitude



This procreated and nurtured village ritual has been going on since the dawn of time. I celebrate the “16 Bar Bout “and now understand more of what it truly represents.

Obviously, what I’m talking abt here is much more than simple competition.

It is a primal tribal ritual where only the most spiritually passionate and intelligent performers can expect to win. The winner is indeed “the best of the best” on any given night. No colors, no cru’s, no violence, no BS.

The Truth won out.

I was schooled at the feet of the people. The culture can be whatever they want it to be. Now that’s evolution!!!

Kudos to Wo’sse Kofi and Jimmy Skee for producing a magnificent and impressive event.

Respect!

by Bob Bryan, Filmmaker

About the Filmmaker:

Bob Bryan’s Personal Journey - <http://www.graffitiverite.com.Bio.htm>



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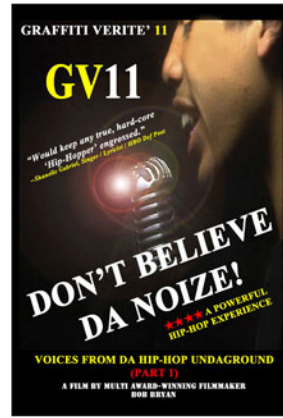
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BEST SHORTS COMPETITION
Winner of the “Award of Excellence”

“In the **GV11: The Hip-Hop Emcee** Bob Bryan tells the story of one of the most creative yet most misunderstood Artists in music, the underground Hip-Hop emcee. Bryan traces the roots of the Hip-Hop from the raw essence of the Bronx all the way to its current dilemma of “bling or not to bling”. The foundation of Hip-Hop is now on the verge of vanishing, as many think that “Hip-Hop has become pop”. However, as Bryan shows in his latest masterpiece, there are plenty of hungry emcees who want to keep the Rap Real.

Bryan also balances the sensitive issue of race by interviewing emcees of all ages, color and gender and people that know “you don’t have to live in the ghetto to empathize with the plight of America today”. Rap has gone from regional to global, from the breakers on cardboard, to CEO’s in boardrooms. **GV11** paints a picture of the where the genre started, where it is, and where it is going, but as we all know now, how we get there is in the hands and the mic of the emcee.”

---Jeffrey “The Rhymecologist” Walker, Emcee, Poet, Author, Teacher

“This well-produced examination of an underground Art form, explained by the Artists who created it will add a new dimension to Art Classes & to Library Video Collections. We recommend its use in High School & College Art Classes.”

- School Library Journal



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BWP Press, Hollywood CA -- The most critically reviewed indie-produced Hip-Hop Documentary Series in America is "Celebrating!" the simultaneous release of Four (4) Brand New Hip-Hop Documentaries **GV8 - GV11**. Recipient of The National Educational Media "Gold Apple", Telly, Indie Fest, Platinum EMPixx Awards and multiple CINE Golden Eagles, the producers of the **GV Series** are proud to have been Awarded over 85 Prestigious Award and Festival Honors since 1995. Touted as the thinking person's educational Documentary guide to undaground Hip-Hop, the **GV Series** is Executive Produced and Directed by indie-filmmaker Bob Bryan. Mr Bryan has earned special recognition and respect amongst his industry peers and educators as a pioneer in revealing the raw integrity and intellectual thought-process behind Undaground Hip-Hop practitioners.

"There is so much more to Hip-Hop than the stereotypical "Gangsta-ism, Bling-Bling focus" and the insulting overt fetish-like glamorization of "Big Booties" which unfortunately as an media image (in many consumers minds) has become emblematic of what commercial Hip-Hop is all about," says Bob Bryan.

If the truth be told, besides it being a real sub-culture, which consists at least 5 specific elements (Beat-Boxing, Hip-Hop Dance, The Emcee, The DJ, Graffiti Art). Hip-Hop is a huge communication paradigm that enables and encourages a free-flowing multi-intelligence model, allowing artists with various talents to express themselves freely, in a socially constructive & dynamically positive way.

"Gives an amazing view of the appreciation of Hip-Hop culture."

---Angie "Hip-hop Angel" Griffin, Temple of Hip-Hop, Universal Zulu Nation