

Reality through a Guinness record: Arkano and twenty four hours of Hip Hop culture

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Abstract

Hip hop culture is represented in the media as a dangerous social environment with negative ideas. This thought only disappears when someone begins to know something about some of the artistic tendencies of this culture (Rap, Graffiti, Breakdance, Djing, etc.). In this process of discovery the researcher finds a world full of principles based on self-improvement, personal growth and the search of a better future. Nevertheless the negative idea remains in the public. Hip hop culture presents a wall that, apparently, seems impossible to tear down to achieve a better understanding. But during the next lines we'll see how all these imaginary barriers are simply in our heads and the reality turns out to be different.

In the year 2016 MC Arkano proposed himself a new challenge: do freestyle rap for twenty four hours, without making any stop for rest or eat. With the sponsorship of the Red bull Company a stage was prepared, a team was assemble, and a live broadcast on the internet was prepare and all the necessary means to achieve a Guinness record that surpassed the expectations of the Spanish artist who in the end made more than the expected twenty four hours planned. Throughout it many themes emerged (politics, education, art, friendship, and so many other topics), comments and ideas that demonstrated the creativity that Hip Hop Culture contain and how wrong are the stereotypes about this culture.

Keywords: Rap, Hip hop, Arkano, Guinness, Reality, Culture.

Introduction

What is Hip Hop? By the first guess many people would define the concept as a type of music mark by egocentricity, banality, exhibitionism and some people would even say it's misogynistic. What the people

ignore about Hip Hop is that it's not just music. It's a culture full of ideas that pursuit the concept of achieving a better future through artistic experiences. One of its main concepts is that no matter how bad a situation can be you will be able to get over it.

This culture appears in the United States in the neighborhoods of New York such as the Bronx and Harlem in the second half of the twentieth century. During the last years of the seventies decade these zones develop problems such as organized criminal gangs and the massive expansion of the drug dealing affecting the young population of the area. Inside this situation the elements of Hip Hop culture were develop by young artists and musicians as a getaway option for escaping of this dangerous reality.

The new artistic tendencies of Hip Hop were born through something called bloc parties organized by Dj Kool Herc, a Jamaican immigrant that came to New York as result of the political problems in his homeland. When he was a teenager he start to play with his record collection and eventually he became a dj. Inside these parties he played instrumental parts from the songs because he realized that people love these parts of the songs because it was when people preferred to dance.

Djs often talk through microphones to make people dance or to prepare people to hear a new song. But when the djs techniques became complicated, through the appearance of scratching by Dj Grandmaster Flash, djs weren't able to entertain their public because they were too busy controlling the progress of the music in their equipment. In that time the figure of the rapper appear to substitute the voice of the djs on the microphone.

The Bboying for example came from a variety of disco music known as the Hustle. In this kind of dance a group of people dance together in a bloc and everybody makes the same moves at the same time. Bboying appears when someone walks out

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of the group and start to dance differently to stand out.

Progressively the evolution and expansion of the different elements of this culture started to attract the attention of the authorities and the media: the first one was the Graffiti, it gain attention by its way of overtake barriers to achieve their goals and spread their artwork, being persecuted by New York Police office for their activity at the subway's trains; afterwards the music created by djs inspired to created and develop Bboying (the dance part of Hip Hop) and Rap (one of the vocal artistic tendencies), which would turn out to be the most recognize element of Hip Hop culture at a commercial level.

With the development of the Hip Hop commercialization (mainly with Rap music), especially with the success of Gangsta Rap with groups like NWA or MCs such as Ice T, the opinions about Rap start to become negative, affecting also the general view of Hip Hop Culture. Many times these opinions were used by the media for sensationalist news, never mentioning the good ideas or the benefits.

By only judging the outside image of Rap, for example, Hip Hop culture looks like a movement that has no principles or ethics. But that's not the truth. During the reading of these pages we'll study the ethics behind the frivolous and materialistic image. Finally we'll read about how these ideas can be shown through big events like the last Hip Hop's Guinness Record: the twenty four and a half hours of freestyle perform by the Spanish MC Arkano, that happen this past year.

1. The Hip Hop's declaration of Peace by KRS One

After many decades of development nationally and internationally through movies, records, books, research institutes, news, events and some scandals Hip Hop culture became an international movement. This capacity of adaptation to any cultural background or atmosphere, without losing its original message, makes the movement famous. But such diversity also needed a guide to answer questions.

Answering to this need of guidance for those new to this culture KRS One, also

known as *the teacher*, wrote and present in 2001 before the Organization of the United Nations a fundamental document to all those who love and live the Hip Hop culture: The Hip Hop declare of Peace.

The document is a declaration of ideas to guide all the people that live following the ideas of Hip Hop Culture. The document contains eighteen principles to establish what pursuit Hip Hop and what it is against. The document is a summary of ideas and concepts of the book entitled *The Gospel of Hip Hop. First Instrument*, also written by KRS One.

Now let's go through some extracts of the mentioned text to analyze them with some of the most common stereotypes related to Hip Hop Culture. And later we will contrast them with some of the moments of Arkano's record Guinness.

The second Principle:

Hip Hop Culture respects the dignity and sanctity of life, without discrimination or prejudice. We shall consider our duty to protect the development of life, over and before our individual free choice to destroy it or seek to alter its natural development. (KRS One 2009, 553)

There is a general belief among the people that don't understand the movement: Hip Hop culture's followers don't have any respect for life. This thought is false, according to the principle just mentioned. Where these negative images come from? We have mentioned before that Hip Hop was born in New York poor neighborhoods. The laws in these areas were established by organize gangs. The young people that joined these groups received protection, shelter, weapons and money but they end up in a criminal world.

It was through actions like Kool Herc's bloc parties and Africa Bambaataa's Zulu Nation, responsible for the beginning of the negotiations for the peace between the criminal gangs, that the youth of these areas begin to have other references to look up to, away from violence and the drug dealing of the streets. But the humble origins of these actions weren't attended by the media.

With the commercial expansion of Rap music this negative vision became a general opinion. Why? At the end of the

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80's the group NWA became one of the most successful and notorious gangsta rap groups. But his music and lyrics were considered detrimental and quickly that opinion hit the media. They were accused of violence, exalting gangster's way of life and drug dealing. There were even protest against the music and the group such as the protest of the reverend Calvin Butts who ask his followers to destroy a pile of records with a road roller (Toner, 1998: 96).

What people usually ignore is how gangsta rap was born. In the 80's at the west coast of the United States the music scene was very different from the New York's scene; the main type of music was techno. It was all about making music for parties and in those parties the masters were the djs. But the true leaders of the social movement were the criminal gangs that were known as the most dangerous of the United States.

In one of those gangs, The Crips, there was a boy that started to do rhymes for entertain some of the gang members, that boy was Ice T. He was one of the first rappers to make rhymes that could reflect the experiences of the poor neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Many people was shock by these kind of songs but other people feel identify because they were listening to music that talk about things they were seeing daily on the streets. (Hip Hop Evolution 2016).

When crack arrive to the streets the situation became worst and the music turn darker. The gangsta rap wasn't exalting the drug dealing or defending it. It was a way of expressing what was happening in the streets.

The third Principle:

Hip Hop Culture respects the laws and agreements of its culture, its country, its institutions, and those it does business with. Hip Hop does not irresponsibly break laws. (KRS One 2009, 553)

At first sight this principle seems contradictory. How can Hip Hop culture respect law when it looks like Graffiti always breaks it? This misunderstood is explained when we study the theory of Graffiti as a practice.

Nowadays we move in an urban world that is characterized for its massive population where you can mix yourself and no one has to know you. The person became just another part of a large group of people. In addition because of the needs for space you reduce your personal recreational to your home abandoning the idea of using the public space. For Graffiti writers this means losing the chance to be known and recognize and that's the moment when they start to work. Graffiti is not simply the act of painting a wall. It's the act of leaving your trace in a place and be known by it.

Graffiti writers don't see their acts as breaking the law. They consider that their actions is a claim for having the right to use the public space for expressing themselves and battle back the powerful influence of advertising that bombs daily the streets.

The fourth Principle:

Hip Hop Culture encourages womanhood, manhood, sisterhood, brotherhood and family. We are also conscious no to bring any disrespect to the dignity and reputation of our ancestors. (KRS One 2009, 553-554)

Here we face one of the most known stereotypes of Hip Hop Culture based on the image transmitted by media with the commercial vision of Rap: Hip Hop is sexist. The truth turns out to be different and for make our point clear we will use an example: the song *Anaconda* by Nicki Minaj.

This song was really criticized by the visual content of the video that was focus on the idea of women who have a big butt. The controversy wasn't new. In the year 1992 Sir Mix a Lot published a song call *Baby got back*, where he talk about the same topic. If Hip Hop movement is really sexist Hip Hop women shouldn't be able to sing about this matters but that's not the case. The positive idea of this situation is that women are able to talk about the same items that men do. Some people may be against this kind of song or be in favor of them. But the advance of the equality is undeniable.

2. Arkano's record Guinness.

Guillermo Rodríguez, also known as Arkano, was born in Alicante Spain. Only with fifteen years, in 2009, he won in Spain the national Red Bull *Battle of the Roosters*, one the most known competition of

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freestyle rap in Spanish. Since that moment he worked in different projects like his records *Rareza Antropológica* (2012) y *Hoy puede ser un gran día* (2011) but he also collaborate with other Spanish Hip Hop artists like Acción Sánchez, Hazhe, Da Zoo Bros, Chojin, Rayden, Dj Joaking, Dj Saot ST y La Estirpe Rap. At all of these works he proved himself and active member as a Spanish Hip Hop artist. Always defending the culture he represents.

But this MC from Alicante kept doing freestyle rap: in 2015 he was proclaimed the Red Bull Battle of the Rooster international champion and he did won the championship twice. One day he decided to take his abilities in freestyle to a new label: achieve a Guinness Record.

The challenge was rapping without stop for twenty four hours. For achieving that purpose he joined the Red Bull Company for getting prepare and build the project that would give him the the a Guinness Record.



Image 1: Promotion poster #RETOARKANO24H
<https://www.facebook.com/smootharkano/photos/a.461825416901.248238.243969776901/10154140804721902/?type=3&theater> [Access 24/04/2017]

The commercial campaign was launched in the social networks (Facebook and Twitter) to advertise the event. Quickly the campaign gained the attention of the young Spanish rap followers in Spain and, specially, Madrid where twenty thousand people gather to watch the MC. But the logistic of the event was complicated:

- The location:

The chosen city for the record was Madrid and the specific location was *Puerta del Sol* Square. This place is famous in Madrid for being one of the most visited points of the city. His surface gave the organization an opportunity for build a temporary building

where Arkano could achieve the record and be in contact with the public at the same time.



Image 2: View of the temporary building for Arkano's Record at Puerta del Sol (Madrid)
<https://www.marketingdirecto.com/marketing-general/tendencias/arkano-rompe-record-mundial-rap-improvisado> [Access 24/04/2017]

- The open room:

The building made was a structure that was divided in two floors:

1. The ground floor:

At the front line was the see-through room where Arkano would spend the time of the record. This room was prepare with a little living room with screens, to see the suggestions that fans made through social networks, an arm chair to sit and rest and a bathroom. In addition there was a space for musicians and djs to help Arkano and provide music. Behind it the production room was in control of the logistic and technical needs for broadcast everything that happen to Arkano. And in the end an open reception room for attending the visitors.

2. The flat roof:

At the top of the building a set was prepare for hosting the broadcast program and realize interviews to all those who came to visit and support the MC.

- The entertainment:

The public was one of the most important things for achieving the record. They could come to the square to observe, make any suggest for Arkano's rhymes or simply give support to the young MC. The building was prepared with big TV screens at the outside for anyone that couldn't be close but wanted to watch what was happening. But you could also do that from your own house. The Red bull company with the

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social media was prepared to collect the ideas and transmit them live to Arkano's to your own house. In addition the broadcast transmission was prepared as TV show with interviews and reports for entertain the internet audience.

- The incentives and health concerns:

Arkano wasn't alone during the challenge. Red Bull Company prepares some things to inspire him and help him to rhyme during the process. The first one was the TV screens located in the frontal corners of the room that project ideas, words, pictures and suggestions from the fans. Outside of the room there were assistants that carry mobiles to the crystal windows with ideas from the public.

Beside this help the surprise was the visitors. Every two or three hours Arkano received surprise visits. The established condition for allow any of this visits was that none of them could talk to him, for avoiding distractions or a possible fail during the process. They only could write words on a board to suggest ideas to him.

The health of the MC was also a concern. He couldn't eat anything or sleep during the process. The Record Guinness offered him a time for rest for every couple of hours but Arkano prefer to rest only three seconds for drinking water. He only could drink water, vitamin juices and energy drink during the process. He was also accompanied by assistants to attend him in case he needed anything.

3. Guinness Record's moments and Hip Hop culture by Arkano

The record was achieved with a time of twenty four hours thirty seven minutes and twenty four seconds. Arkano celebrate his triumph but didn't rest because after the end he went to perform a concert.

The event had many interesting anecdotes and in the next lines we'll comment some of them and how Arkano represented the ideas of Hip Hop Culture that we mention before:

Moment number 1: the attempt to boycott the record

Achieved the first half of the record something negative happened. A gentleman appeared, probably after a night of party, to do insulting gestures to Arkano. According to the words of the MC this man started to make gestures to him but it was just a moment and he decided to not pay any attention to him. But later, after exactly five hours, the gentleman came back to keep making mean gestures and trying to discourage the artist.

According to stereotypes in Hip Hop culture, that establishes that rappers are rude and violent, Arkano should have to start insulting the man who was disrespecting him, making fun of him and trying to make the gentleman feel inferior to him. But nothing like that ever happened. Instead of being rude or misbehaving he answered with calm voice and education. He asked understanding from the gentleman because he couldn't listen what he was saying or trying to communicate. He even asked him if he wanted a microphone and even offered to speak with him when the record was finish to understand why he was so upset. At the end this man disappeared and Arkano tell the media later that he has never see him again.

Moment number 2: Political critic

The third principle, mention before, talks about how Hip Hop militants can't break the laws of their countries but it doesn't say that they can't critic their actions or political decisions. Arkano talks at many moments of the record about political topics in Spain such as corruption, education, the new president and many others. He simply establishes his personal opinion about this matters, sometimes with humor and sometimes seriously, but never with intention to offend or insult anyone. Acting in such way he demonstrates the critical view of Hip Hop sometimes very annoying for some people but sometimes necessary to create consciousness about the present moment we are living today.

Moment number 3: The visits

- Hip Hop visitors and time of arrival during the Guinness Record:

Langui and Dj Keru's appearance: In 01:36:22- Out 02:02:40

Mbaka's appearance: In 02:52:20- Out 03:14:25

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Dobleache's appearance: In 03:25:30- Out 04:00:11

Frank T's appearance: In 04:56:13- Out 05:06:59

Chojin's appearance: In 20:08:56- Out 20:23:26

The visits just mentioned are some famous people from Spanish Hip Hop Culture that came to support the MC from Alicante and help him with ideas for his rhymes. During all of these visits all of them were referred as friends or brothers, never as enemies or rivals. This shows how Hip Hop culture is not only based in competition. In these moments we see a perfect example of the forth principle, mention before. Arkano did show respect for his ancestors, the members of Old School Spanish Rap, as prove of his consciousness as Hip Hop militant.

He also made many references to cds, MCs, projects and songs from the Spanish Hip Hop old school proving he has a good knowledge about Spanish Hip Hop culture and he doesn't only dedicate to do rhymes. An example of this respect for Old School is shown in one of the last visits. Chojin is one of the most respected members in the Spanish Hip Hop community; he also has a Record Guinness for being able to rap nine hundred and twenty one syllables in a minute. When he appeared Arkano showed respect to him mentioning all his achievements in his rhymes.

In the first visit he talks about equality with Langui, an MC well known for his pursuit for equality with people who has mobility issues. He made a reference to this matter when Langui showed him the words: *Barreras arquitectónicas* (architectural barriers). This is another example of the forth principle where the equality is to be achieve by anyone.

Around the seven hour of the record two ladies enter Arkano's room. The artist didn't know what was happening but suddenly the idea was clear. The girls carried boards were they put their age, name and profession.

The proposal was to make Arkano rhyme to conquer one of the present girls. At this moment Arkano could just make cheap insulting rhymes to refer to the women, according to the stereotype that says that

Hip Hop culture and its members are sexist. But the artist preferred to talk nicely to the girls and not enter in the game of seduction proposed by the company. This moment proves the idea established in principle number forth where says that Hip Hop culture encourages womanhood, manhood, sisterhood, brotherhood and family.

Conclusion

Arkano's record Guinness of freestyle wasn't just only an individual great achievement coordinated by an international company as Red Bull. It became a window display where it was prove, for twenty four hours thirty four minutes and twenty seconds, the values of love, peace, and unity that Hip Hop culture tries to teach to those who love and live this movement as a way of life. Battling prejudice and stereotypes use by people who only see this culture in a superficial way without trying to see all the good it can provide to society. He had many chances to make cheap and insulting rhymes but he refused to do that and always kept his sense of humor as the clue of his success.

In Spain Hip Hop Culture is marginalized movement by the institutions and the media. After thirty one years of activity it seems that there is something to prove to gain the approval of the public. The impose image of isolation produce in Spain contrast with the records and books sales of some artist of this gender and the sold-out concerts at many musical festival through all the country. Some radio programs try to battle this situation but the hours of emission are late hours and the capacity for getting in touch with the public is limited to the internet and the social networks.

The question that the militants of Spanish Hip Hop culture make themselves seems to be still without a clear answer. ¿What is missing inside the Spanish movement to have the missed approval? How many Guinness Records will be necessary to achieve the recognition and knock down the remaining barriers?

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