

Versus Hip Hop On Trial Debate

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A cast of thinkers, rappers, poets and academics assembled in London on June 26th at the Barbican for the Intelligence Squared and Google+ debate titled, 'Hip-Hop on Trial: Hip-Hop Doesn't Enhance Society, It Degrades it.' The debate was streamed live and moderated by Jemima Khan who took questions from online posters. The problem with all of these 'Hip-Hop is bad, dead or going to the dogs' debates is that they are always centered around a very slim segment of corporatized hip-hop. So what happens is that people are debating the merits of hip-hop based on a small section of music instead of "Is The Corporation Promoting A Certain Kind Of Hip-Hop And Why." It is especially shameful that Versus would promote this kind of discourse in 2012 when we live in a digital age where people are grabbing all kinds of music from everywhere. And this kind of focus keeps hip-hop in a subjugated place when it is still empowering people all around the world. How can the most popular art form of the past 30 years not function at all as folk music because of the music business establishment? These type of "intellectual" notions are the reason why Ice-T just released *Something From Nothing: The Art Of Rap*. No matter how ridiculous Lil' Wayne may look hip-hop still saved his life and is doing the same for several kids around the globe who will never reach his commercial status. It is also important for hip-hop fans to understand that hip-hop is the only popular art form that Blacks still dominate hence the singularity of Eminem. So to say that the music is "dead" destructive" etc. is tantamount to racism because you are blaming people of color creatives for society's problems. The nasty things that some rappers say may not be pleasant to hear but it's important that society hear their outsider status

because it tells us what needs to improve. These kind of propaganda attacks disguised as "debates" totally ignore the fact people on this very panel like Q-Tip, KRS-One and The Roots defy all of these static ideas about hip-hop.