

Movie Review: Something From Nothing The Art Of Rap



Ice-T's *Something From Nothing: The Art Of Rap* is an attempt to establish rap's reputation as an art form. In his quest for rap's respect he interviews a number of his peers to find out why rap is still seen as lucrative but inferior noise. Critics always label rap as un-creative derivative drivel hi-jacked from the work of others. Grandmaster Caz addresses this assertion at the start of the film when he says, "Rap did not invent anything but reinvented everything." Other rap legends offer their perspectives on the problem unapologetically with humor and candid confessions. Juice crew luminary Marley Marl blames divisive attitudes within the culture and compares it to the unity of other genres like blues, rock and jazz. DJ Premier believes that one must speak the language of hip-hop to comprehend its values. He uses his 80-year old mother anecdotally to make a point about the way a person in her age group could never understand the concept of "Fresh." And Nas points to the pervasiveness of racism that forever casts rap as outsider music that continues to rattle white America. Rap's artistic credibility starts to unveil itself in discussions about the actual craft. Rakim explains his usage of 16 dots to arrange the words in his raps. The mathematical methodology he uses is on par with the way any kind of pop music composer fits notes into ordered time signatures. Despite this general similarity with other song structures rap does not need comparisons to anything else outside of it because hip-hop's Mesmer-like appeal largely comes from its demand to be understood on its own terms. Rapping is also about the emotional purging embedded in the creative process that defines the work of a solid 16 bars. Joe Budden's verses about inner-city struggle

are a grown-man exhalation that feels like he needed to spew it out or implode. Immortal Technique's freestyle about Americana conspiracies was one of the best in the film and had the urgency of trying to stop Jeffrey Amherst's blankets from getting to the Native Americans. *The Art Of Rap* only disappoints when it comes to representing female rappers. Ice-T blamed his shortlist of women (Salt and MC Lyte) to him only knowing a small group and their lack of availability. However, it's almost criminal to not have Roxanne Shante, Lauryn Hill, Lil' Kim, Rah Digga and Queen Latifah offer the real complexity of female rappers onscreen that keeps getting obscured by one-dimensional marketing plans. Ice-T has already admitted to the film's weakness in this area and concedes to recommending an entire film be dedicated to the subject. By showing the actual toil of the emcee, *The Art Of Rap* demystifies the music and brings forth a substantial documentary that will educate the most obstinate naysayers.

[youtube]h46tzQ7cZV0[/youtube]