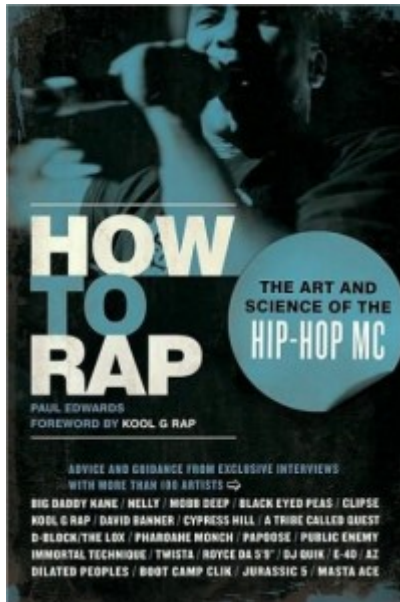


Book Review: How To Rap: The Art And Science Of The Hip-Hop MC By Paul Edwards



How To Rap: The Art And Science Of The Hip-Hop MC is a book of anecdotes from a wide survey of rappers who explain their praxis to author Paul Edwards. The book writes itself in the words of each rapper's personal prose on the approach to content, flow, the creative process and 11 other mercury-ruled tasks. Edwards is keen to let the artists tell their stories because in hip-hop it is the compelling personalities that always take precedence over the actual work. However, the detailed breakdown of the MC process elucidates not only the work of the rapper but a sociological truth about the way rap is still seen as "emotional" "primal" music. Twenty something odd years of scholarship on hip-hop has mostly consisted of volumes on the socio-political forces behind rap because even after the billions it has earned, justification for its existence is still the dominant dialogue. Yet those histories of displaced kids like Basquiat and Kurtis Blow finding their voice among the detritus are highly significant to remember in the context of ubiquitous corporate rap that

obscures the ethos of the art.

[youtube]B5egwRoiFe4[/youtube]

When the commercial success of subpar rappers completely submerges those artful firepitters who are motivated by more than money distortion settles into the discourse. Writers spurred by the need to properly contextualize hip-hop usually become so immersed in the task of rap's origins that too often the serious labor utilized to make hip-hop is obscured. The kinds of literature dedicated to uncovering the production of jazz, R&B and even rock music is still not afforded to the mental diligence of the rapper. Edwards's book does uncover the toil of the emcee but without critiquing the culture or at least one quote from KRS One, *How To Rap* does more harm than good. Chuck D's compressed quote on his inspiration from the Bronx that started his passion for hip-hop creates an appetite for more details. Q-Tip's philosophy on the creation of his music seems rushed and sterile.

[youtube]m4nF5-JkBb8[/youtube]

It is the balance between the technical aspect of the work and world it comes from that would make *How To Rap* an ideal read. KRS One's *Hip-Hop Bible*, which is a continual proclamation about hip-hop's cultural origins and commitment, makes a book like Edwards's incomplete. At no time does Edwards offer any insight into the heartbeat of rap or even give descriptions of each rapper's role in hip-hop except for the Wikipedia styled biographies at the back of the book. Kool G Rap's page and half foreword offers the richest writing because he tells his story. Those days he spent in the park listening to Melle Mel and others sparked his passion for storytelling and those communal experiences cannot ever be undervalued because that is why hip-hop exists. In spite of a long list of 200 quoted wordsmiths *How To Rap* is a bland uninformed read steered by a tone of glib cultural greenhornism.