Any educator of popular music would be wise to seek enlightenment in perhaps the most widespread and polarizing cultural movement from the past three decades: hip-hop. Since its 'birth' on 11 August 1973 at DJ Kool Herc's 'Back to School Jam', hip-hop culture has spread from the streets to museums, from ghetto blasters to packed stadiums and smartphones, emanated from the outskirts of mainstream media to the forefront of American and global consciousness, and more recently has gained appreciation in academia as a valuable lens for understanding the interconnectedness between artistic human expression and cultural capital. For those new to the scene as well as hip-hop heads looking to broaden their understanding and appreciation of this complex and often misappropriated culture, Justin A. Williams's The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop stands out as a valuable addition to one's library.

Designed to 'compliment, rather than replace' a host of popular and well-written books, this volume in particular aims to incorporate fresh perspectives in hip-hop scholarship through incorporating 'foundational ideas' while 'taking the form in new directions'. Perhaps the most novel approach taken in this book is the inclusion of an extensive range of topics proffered by a multitude of scholars with impressively distinct backgrounds. Content is presented through diverse application of rigorous analysis, explorations of culture and identity rooted in critical theory, and the sharing of salient case studies in a way that is both enjoyable and powerful to the reader. Each chapter situates and operationally defines terms and concepts such that those outside the sphere of hip-hop influence may ultimately come to understand and appreciate this complex culture.

The book is organized into three thematic sections with seven chapters on 'Elements', eight chapters on 'Methods and concepts' and ten on 'Case Studies' of both American and global representations of hip-hop. The first section, Elements, could easily stand alone as a useful text. Chapter 1 articulates the evolution of MC lyrics and flow, influenced by and related to, yet distinctly separate from, jazz and poetry. The second chapter is an essential contribution to the underrepresented, complex and often misunderstood modes of hip-hop dance. The visual hip-hop art of 'graff' is concisely documented from subway car to museum in the third chapter. The final universally recognized element of hip-hop, DJ-s and turntablism, is...
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