

Essence's 2nd Annual Teen Hip Hop Songwriting Contest

Written by Keith ID3294

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Essence Magazine's Take Back the Music campaign, along with Boston's Berklee College of Music, are once again looking for the next generation of hip-hop stars. ESSENCE's Take Back the Music Campaign, an in-depth examination of the ways in which Black women are depicted in popular hip hop and rap music and videos, was first announced in January 2005, and continues its effort to promote balance in mainstream hip-hop's messages as the two groups announce their second hip-hop songwriting contest.

The contest deadline is March 9 and three winners will attend a high school music program at Berklee this summer, while runners up get a free course at Berkleemusic.com. Complete details are posted at www.ESSENCE.com and www.Berklee.edu.

"ESSENCE is pleased to partner with the Berklee College of Music once again to expose new voices in hip-hop that otherwise might not be heard, and give new talent the opportunity to develop through music education," said Angela Burt-Murray, Essence editor-in-chief.

The 10 finalist songs from last year's contest were posted on both www.ESSENCE.com and www.Berklee.edu, and were heard by more than a quarter of a million listeners. Two of last year's winners have also applied to the college for full-time study.

Students 15 to 18 who are unsigned songwriters and/or producers have until March 9, 2007, to submit their original songs. Five winners will be selected by a panel of hip-hop celebrity judges and Berklee music scholars: Chuck D (legendary rap artist, co-founder of Public Enemy), Spinderella (former Salt-N-Pepa DJ, co-host of the syndicated classic hip-hop radio show The Backspin), Jean Grae (rapper, songwriter, producer), Berklee professors Susan Kean Cattaneo (songwriting), Prince Charles Alexander (music production and engineering), Danielle Scott (ensemble), and student Ryan Williamson (contemporary writing and production major, founder of Rykeyz Productions).

Judging will be based on clever, innovative lyrics, as well as melody and composition of songs. Three winners will be admitted into the 2007 Berklee Five-Week Summer Performance Program that immerses students in all aspects of performance, music theory, and the latest innovations in music technology, while electives focus on songwriting, music synthesis, and the music business. For complete contest rules and an entry form, visit www.essence.com/takebackthem

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[usic](#)

or [berklee.edu](#).

The contest includes: Grand Prize: Two winners will be admitted into the 2007 Berklee Five-Week Summer Performance Program and receive a full scholarship, including tuition and room and board (each valued at \$6,480); Second Place: One winner will receive a tuition-only scholarship (valued at \$3,895); Runners-Up: Two runners-up will each receive one online music course at BerkleeMusic.com (valued between \$595 and \$1,250).

About Essence: With eight million readers, ESSENCE is the preeminent lifestyle magazine for African-American women. Published by Essence Communications Inc., it is the leading source of cutting-edge information relating to every area of African-American women's lives. For over 36 years, ESSENCE has celebrated personal achievement, chronicled social movement, documented struggles, showcased beauty, defined and set trends and illustrated the incredible journey of a resilient and splendid race. Additional information about ESSENCE is available at [essence.com](#).

About Berklee: Berklee College of Music was founded on the revolutionary principal that the best way to prepare students for careers in music was through the study and practice of contemporary music, be it hip-hop, rock, jazz, country, gospel, electronica, Latin, or funk. For 60 years, the college has evolved constantly to reflect the state of the art of music and the music business. With over a dozen performance and nonperformance majors, a diverse and talented student body representing over 70 countries, and a music industry "who's who" of alumni, Berklee is the world's premier learning lab for the music of today — and tomorrow.