

Take Back the Music Hip Hop Songwriting Contest Final Vote

Written by Robert ID3620

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The Take Back the Music campaign by Essence magazine and Boston's Berklee College of Music have narrowed the search for the newest voices in hip-hop. From the collection of songs entered by hip hop teens from all over the U.S., in the second ESSENCE and Berklee Take Back the Music Hip-Hop Songwriting Contest, 10 have been chosen as finalists.

Five winners from the group will be selected by a panel of hip-hop celebrity judges—legendary rap artist and hip hop hood legend Chuck D; Jean Grae and Spinderella—and Berklee scholars—Professors Prince Charles Alexander (music production and engineering); Susan Kean Cattaneo (songwriting); Danielle Scott (ensemble); and Berklee student Ryan Williamson (contemporary writing and production). The five winners, who will receive free music education from Berklee, will be announced in early May.

Unsigned musicians, producers, and songwriters ages 15 to 18 entered their original songs in the contest earlier this year. Judging is based on clever, innovative lyrics, as well as melody and composition. Prizes include: 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).

ESSENCE's Take Back the Music Campaign, an in-depth examination of the ways in which Black women are depicted in popular 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 present their second hip-hop songwriting contest.

The final offerings are now available for listening at www.essence.com/takebackthemusic and www.Berklee.edu

. The public is also invited to vote on their favorite in an online poll.

The 10 final songwriters are:

Keithon Stribling, 17, Denver, CO

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Aaron "A. Butta" Howell, 18, Detroit, MI

Ronke "Young Roc" Owens, 17, Detroit, MI

Shondell Moore, 18, Los Angeles, CA

Al "MC Premonition" Mask, 17, Chapel Hill, NC

Justin "Jae Guttah" McGibbon, 17, Keasbey, NJ

Jacob "Icee Jake" Bragg, 16, Columbus, OH

Nicholas "Phantom" Garcia, 18, Lodi, NJ

Stedman "Sted D." DeVoe, 17, Ft. Eustis, VA

Danielle Carr, 18, Mullica Hill, NJ