

**The Interplay of Music and Text in  
Selected Rap Compositions in  
Contemporary Durban.**

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## **Declaration**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music,  
in the Graduate Programme in the School of Music, University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was not used. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Music in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.



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Student Name

07 December 2009

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Date

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## **Abstract**

This study deals with the interplay of music and text in contemporary Durban rap. It would seem that the main intention of rap is to convey messages, particularly messages of protest. Superficially, therefore, it would appear, that the importance of the lyrics outweighs that of the music, and that meaning in rap is derived only from the lyrics. I hypothesise that this assumption will not always be valid, that there will often be an important relationship between the music and text, and that the music itself may play an important role in meaning construction in rap compositions. For this project, I have focused on the music of four established Durban performance groups: Iain 'Ewok' Robinson (also known as Creamy Ewok Baggends), Zuluboy, Spin the Flava and Big Idea.

The theory of semiotics as applied to music by Philip Tagg (1999) and the active-audience theory associated with Lisa Lewis (1992) have been used in this research as both deal with how meaning is constructed by listeners. My data was accumulated primarily through interviews I conducted with band and audience members, and the analysis of specific rap compositions.

Much has been written about hip hop. However, such writing relates predominantly to the history and identity of the subculture, and, with regard to rap, focuses largely on the lyrics. Hip hop aside, there has been a good deal of research in the fields of music and text, and music and meaning, particularly with regard to classical music.

Although there have been many debates over rap's meaning and significance, the musical elements of the compositions have been largely overlooked. It is my hope that the findings of this research will be a starting point to filling this lacuna. As this suggests, my hypothesis also runs contrary to the view that rap is of no musical interest. This study attempts to show that meaning in rap compositions is not created simply from the lyrics, but rather from the relationship between, and interplay of, music and lyrics. As a result, this study has aesthetic implications, since it argues that there is value in the actual music of rap compositions.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1. Background**

Hip-hop music, in the form we recognise today, developed in the United States Bronx in the 1970s as a form of youth expression. It has always served as a form of protest music, and is a medium that resonates particularly with the youth. It was used to express opposition to social and living conditions, and as a means to express dissatisfaction with government. In South Africa, hip-hop culture emerged in the early 1980s during the apartheid years, and initially South African youth identified with rap as a means of expressing opposition to government policy. The music dealt predominantly with the oppression and horrors associated with apartheid. During this time, the South African hip-hop movement “helped fuel some of the most dangerous forms of cultural protest of the era” (Chang 2005:449). Hip hop has been, and is, used to express a response to social issues such as drug use, poverty, unemployment, violence and AIDS. During the apartheid era, hip hop was primarily based in Cape Town and Gauteng. In Durban, the main growth and development of hip hop was seen in the post-apartheid years. The United States hip-hop industry still dominates global hip hop, and there are many parallels that may be drawn between United States and South African rap, the main one being that it expresses a reaction to conditions of poverty, as well as issues of race and oppression by white power structures.

Hip hop has become a global phenomenon with universal appeal. It is a means for the youth to understand the worlds in which they live, no matter where they are from. Rap can be used as a way to “bridge the culture gap” (Chang 2005:xi), as, by sharing in the concerns that rap addresses, young people can be brought together, regardless of ‘race’, gender or nationalities. As such, rap is a powerful force. Rap was the last element of the



hip-hop culture to emerge, but it has become the central form of expression in hip hop (Rose 1994:51).

As Rose (1994:19) has shown, people from vastly different backgrounds identify with rap music, and the emotions that rappers present speak to this fan base for various reasons. Some fans listen to rap so that they might find a voice for their own oppression. For others rappers represent a power in the face of an overwhelming oppression, and some listen to “the music’s powerful and life-affirming rhythms, its phat beats and growling bass lines, revelling in its energy, [and] seeking strength from its cathartic and electric presence.”

## **2. Definitions**

It seems necessary to define the terms ‘rap’ and ‘hip hop’ in relation to the way in which I will be using them in this research, as both these terms are contentious. ‘Hip hop’ will refer to the culture which incorporates different elements, some of which are graffiti art, break-dancing and deejaying. ‘Rap’ is one of these elements of the hip-hop culture, and refers to a particular kind of music. There are also other forms of music that would be labelled hip hop, but that do not include rap. I have also made use of the term ‘hip-hop music’, but in this research it refers to rap. Rap is a form of vocalisation, undertaken by an emcee, where the lyrics are chanted and backed by some form of musical accompaniment, which is often electronic. It is rhythmical speech that leans towards music. John F. Szwed, in ‘The Vibe History of Hip Hop’, has explained that rap “falls somewhere between the worlds of music and talk, but sharing with both,” as speech, to a certain degree, is rhythmic, “with stresses occurring at regular intervals to make sounds easier to understand”, and speech is also musical, as “some words are pitched higher or lower than others.” (1999:4) Adam Krims quotes KRS-One as saying, “rap is something you do, hip hop is something you live.” (2001:10) I found this sentiment reiterated in an interview with local hip hop artist, Iain ‘Ewok’ Robinson (also known as Creamy Ewok Baggends), who feels that:

When you make hip-hop music, there's an awareness in the track of hip-hop culture. ... Hip hop is not just the music, it's the whole culture, and you can only make hip-hop music if it's coming from the culture, you know. ... There's bands coming out now that'll call themselves hip hop, strictly because they've got a guy who's rapping. (Author's interview: Robinson, Durban, 1 May 2008)

Throughout this research I will be referring to the 'music' and 'text', or 'lyrics', as separate entities, in relation to rap compositions. This is not to say that the text itself, which forms the rap component of the compositions in question, does not have musical qualities, or characteristics. This distinction between the text and the music which backs the text is purely for ease of reference, and is in no way meant to disregard the musical value of the text.

### **3. Research Problem**

It would seem that the main intention of rap is to convey messages, particularly messages of protest. As a result, it would appear, at a surface level, that the importance of the lyrics outweighs that of the music, which would play a seemingly secondary role. This would therefore suggest that meaning in rap is derived only from the lyrics. My hypothesis is that this assumption will not always be valid, and that there will often be an important relationship between music and text. Robert Walser states that:

even though many rappers and fans stress the primacy of the message delivered by the lyrics, some ... argue that the instrumental parts are actually more important than the rap because they create the mood, set the beat, and prompt the engagement. (1995:193-194)

Another element of my hypothesis is that the music itself will play an important role in meaning construction in rap compositions. As Christopher Ballantine states:

It is never enough to focus on the lyrics only. If we are to take popular song seriously, we will have to allow the *music* of any song to complicate the picture sketched by the lyrics – even if this introduces the paradoxical, or the

incongruous. Sheerly by virtue of its presence, music anyway always adds, or changes, meaning: it might relate to the lyrics through a process of selective emphasis; or frame the text in a particular way (ironically, for example); or raise matters not directly addressed by the lyrics (such as the topic of globalization); or point beyond – transcend – the words. And music is likely to make available a dimension of subjectivity, of feeling and emotion, whether or not that dimension is expressed by the lyrics themselves. (2002:17)

This research is limited to Durban-based rap as I am based in this area, thus making it more accessible to me. I have focused on four established Durban hip hop performance groups (two bands and two solo artists) as this ensured that there were recordings for me to analyse and performances to attend. The performance groups I have selected are Iain ‘Ewok’ Robinson (also known as Creamy Ewok Baggends), Spin the Flava, Big Idea, and Zuluboy. Further reasons for choosing these performance groups will be discussed in chapters 3 to 6.

#### **4. Reasons for Choosing the Topic**

Much study has been conducted in the field of hip hop. However, it relates predominantly to the history and identity of the subculture, and, with regard to rap, focuses largely on the lyrics. There has been a great amount of research in the field of music and text, and music and meaning in general, particularly regarding classical music. However, there is a lacuna in the field of rap music, particularly South African rap, with regard to the field of music and text, and music and meaning. This will be dealt with more fully in chapter 2 under the section ‘literature review’. Although there have been many debates over rap’s meaning and significance, the musical elements of the compositions have been largely overlooked. It is my main hope that the findings of this research are a starting point to filling the lacuna in the field of music and text with regard to rap, and more specifically, South African rap.

Another reason for choosing this topic is that my hypothesis runs contrary to the view that rap is of no musical interest. This study attempts to show that meaning in rap

compositions is not created simply from the lyrics, but rather from the relationship between, and interplay of, the music and the lyrics. As a result, this study has aesthetic implications, since it argues that there is value in the actual music of rap compositions. The musical elements of rap compositions have been considered superficial, and some of the main reasons rap has been accused of having no musical interest is that “few rappers are formally trained musicians, [they] rarely compose elaborate melodic phrases, [and they] do not frequently play ‘real’ instruments” (Rose 1994:80). Rap music needs to be taken seriously, as music, precisely because its audiences are “taking the music seriously, as music” (Krimms 2001:40).

Secondary offshoots from this research may be that it also encourages scholars to conduct further research into the interplay of music and text not only in South African rap, but possibly in other genres of South African music as well. And through the process of interviewing and discussion between myself and the selected hip hop artists, this research may also encourage the artists to reflect upon their own music in the compositional stages.

## **5. Key Questions to be Asked**

Several key questions need to be considered, the most important of which are: how is the music received, what meanings are constructed by listeners, why are these meanings constructed, and how do these listeners’ perceptions of the relationship between music and text affect the meanings that they construct? The answers to these questions will show that there is an interplay of, and an important relationship between, music and text in the selected rap compositions.

In order to reach the answers, other questions, which stem from the overarching questions mentioned above, need to be raised. These other questions are:

- (a) What are the composer’s intended meanings of the selected songs? This question will be put to the composers of the selected songs. Having these answers will show whether the composer has been successful in relaying his intended

meanings, as the audience's constructed meanings may or may not match the composer's intentions.

- (b) Does the composer form any intentional connection between music and text during the compositional stages, and does the composer believe that the relationship between music and text will help convey the intended message? Again, these questions will be to put the composers of the selected songs. These connections could include a range of musical elements, such as instrument choice (live instruments, electronically based, or a combination of the two), rhythmic groove, and key. After receiving these answers, I will be able to see from the audiences' responses whether or not they have been aware of any of the connections that were intended by the composers. I will also be able to discover whether the audiences find any connections between music and text that were not mentioned by the composer as intentional.

## **6. Broader Issues to be Investigated**

There are broader issues that this study touches on but does not investigate. The most important of these is that this research has relevance to discussions in general about the interplay of, and relationship between, music and text, not only in hip hop, but in all musics, both local and international.

This study also has implications for issues surrounding performativity. Meanings that are constructed by audience members are not only influenced by the interplay of music and text, but also by a range of other factors, such as the venue in which the music is heard (for example whether it is a live performance or listening to a recording in one's home), and the social context in which the music is experienced.

## **7. Overview of the Chapters to Follow**

Chapter 2 includes a discussion of the literature review, theoretical framework and research methodology. The literature review section presents the works this research has

drawn from, and discusses several of these works. The theoretical framework section presents the theories that have informed this research (the theory of semiotics as applied to music by Philip Tagg and the active-audience theory associated with Lisa Lewis), and gives a detailed discussion of these theories. The research methodology section outlines the ways in which the research was conducted.

Chapter 3 covers Iain ‘Ewok’ Robinson (also known as Creamy Ewok Baggends). This chapter begins with a biography of Ewok, and a discussion of the selected pieces follows. This discussion covers “My Mecca” and “Hollywood Burning” from Ewok’s *Higher Flyer for Higher* (2007) album. Each piece is discussed generally, and then the audience responses are discussed and an analysis of each piece is provided.

Chapter 4 introduces Spin the Flava, and follows the same format as chapter 3. This chapter discusses “One Nation” from their *One Nation* (2004) album, and “This is War” from their *Combined Forces* (2005) album.

Chapter 5 discusses Big Idea, and also follows the same format as chapters 3 and 4. This chapter discusses “D to W” and “Amnesty” from their *Hot Box* (2006) album.

Chapter 6 covers Zuluboy, and follows the same format as chapters 3, 4 and 5. This chapter discusses “3 Zulus on da Mic” and “Ulibambe Lingashoni” from Zuluboy’s first album *Masihambisane – Da 1<sup>st</sup> Hip Hop Lesson* (2006).

The final chapter, chapter 7, draws together, and presents a summary of, the main findings of the research, and also gives suggestions for possible future studies.

## Chapter 2

# Literature Review, Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

### 1. Literature Review

As stated in chapter 1, there has been little study in the field of hip hop regarding the interplay of music and text, and music and meaning. Most research in hip hop is predominantly based on the history and identity of the subculture, and any research that has related to meaning has focussed largely on the lyrics. This means that there is a lacuna in the field of rap music, particularly South African rap, with regard to the interplay of music and text, and music and meaning, in rap compositions. There are a few researchers who have conducted studies into the music of rap compositions, and each of their works concerns the relationship between music and text of rap compositions, and as such they have been useful in my own research. These works are by Robert Walser (1995), Simon Stephens (1997), Adam Krims (2001), Joseph G. Schloss (2004), and David Clarke (2005). Krims's book focuses on what he states is a "relatively neglected but crucial aspect of rap music's cultural force: namely, the particularity of its sounds" (2001:3). He wants this book to be a "corrective to the vast majority of rap and hip-hop scholarship which takes the music seriously but gives little, if any, attention to its musical organization" (ibid.). Schloss, whose book focuses on sample-based hip hop, also hopes to fulfil this objective, as he says that in some sense his whole study is devoted to the questioning of Potter's pronouncement that "whatever the role played by samples and breakbeats, for much of hip hop's core audience, it is without question the *rhymes* that come first" (2004:20). Walser's concern in his article is to present a more in-depth analysis of the music of hip hop. He uses Public Enemy's music as a case study because of the band's status in the hip-hop community. Walser states that in most cases, analysis of the music of rap is missing from research because so many people do not recognise rap as music (1995:194). Stephens, in his symposium paper, discusses the cultural

comparisons between United States and South African rap, and in doing so he focuses on the music of South African rap group Prophets of Da City. One of the principal points of Clarke's article is how to deal with music and text that are identified as 'other'.

There have been many general studies which consider the relationship between music and text. Words and music have been combined for centuries, and Stacey states that it can be argued that music's origins can be found in language (1989:9). Scott (2005:11) states that when studying words and music, one needs to "bear in mind the distinction between the way words are *combined* with music and the way words are *treated* musically." There are various ways in which music and words may be combined, such as being sung, half sung or spoken. However, these combinations can be treated in different ways. Walton suggests that when words and music are combined, "the music often makes definite *representational* contributions to the whole, rather than merely accompanying other representational elements" (1997:58). Even though these works pertain mostly to Classical music, they have been helpful in this study in discussing the interplay of music and text of Durban rap. I have drawn from a wide selection of authors, all of whom discuss the relationship between music and text. These authors are Lawrence Kramer (1984 and 1992), Peter F. Stacey (1989), Paul Alpers (1992), Marshall Brown (1992), John Neubauer (1992), Peter J. Rabinowitz (1992), Claudia Stanger (1992), Hayden White (1992), Robert Samuels (1994), Jasmin Cameron (2005), Mike Jones (2005), Derek B. Scott (2005), Bhesham Sharma (2005), John Williamson (2005), and James Wishart (2005).

There are also works that I have drawn from regarding hip hop, but that are not concerned with an analysis of the music. The authors of these works are Tricia Rose (1994), Mark Schwartz (1999), John F. Szwed (1999), and Jeff Chang (2005). I have used these books predominantly for information about the history of hip hop. Chang, Szwed and Schwartz are concerned with documenting a history of hip hop in the United States during different time periods. Rose's book is one of the most frequently cited books on hip hop, and it provides an analysis of the history and development of hip hop.



It also deals with issues such as the politics of culture, that influence hip hop's reception and interpretation.

Much research has been conducted regarding music and meaning, particularly relating to Classical music, but more recently greater attention has been given to popular music. There has also been an interest in popular music audiences and reception, and how music communicates. Through the years there have been numerous debates as to what constitutes musical meaning, and there appear to be two main lines of thought. The first is that musical meaning lies only within the context of the work itself, and the second is the idea that musical meaning is communicated not only through the music itself, but also through the "extra-musical world of concepts, actions, emotional states, and character" (Meyer 1956:1). More recently it has become necessary to use this second opinion when trying to determine musical meaning. One must look not only at the music in order to find meaning, but also at the audiences and the historical and social contexts surrounding the music. Since the days of Plato, philosophers and researchers have believed that music has the ability to evoke emotional responses in listeners. Through the ages listeners have consistently reported that music arouses feelings and emotions within them (Meyer 1956:6-7). I have used some of these studies in order to understand meanings that are constructed from the interplay of lyrics and music of Durban rap compositions. Authors that I have drawn from are Meyer (1956), Carroll C. Pratt (1968), Lucy Green (1988), Charles Hamm (1992), Kofi Agawu (1994), Anthony Pople (1994), Charles Fisk (1997), Kathleen Marie Higgins (1997), Gregory Karl and Jenefer Robinson (1997), Jerrold Levinson (1997), Fred Everett Maus (1997), Anthony Newcomb (1997), Jenefer Robinson (1997), Leo Treitler (1997), Kendall Walton (1997), Lawrence Kramer (2002), Luiz Tatit (2002), and Eric F. Clarke (2005).

There are several other authors I have drawn from in the process of this research who I reference in the bibliography. Most of these relate to discussions of music in general, and some specifically to popular music. Two works that I have used relate specifically to my theoretical framework (which will be discussed next). These are by Lisa Lewis (1992) regarding the active-audience theory, and by Philip Tagg (1999), which relates

specifically to the semiotics of music. Lewis brings together a selection of writers to present a collection of articles, each of which deals with the active-audience theory.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The works of all the authors mentioned in the literature review above have been helpful in one way or another. However there are two theories by two different authors that have proved particularly useful in my theoretical framework. These are the theory of semiotics as applied to music by Philip Tagg (1999), and the active-audience theory associated with Lisa Lewis (1992). Each of these theories deals with how meaning is constructed by the listeners. They have informed many of my key questions, have helped me to articulate how and why meanings are constructed, and have helped with the interpretation of those meanings and the reasons behind their construction. I will now discuss each of these theories in greater detail.

### **2.1. Theory of Semiotics as Applied to Music (Philip Tagg)**

For this research I have drawn substantially from Tagg's theory of music semiotics as explained in his "Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music" (1999). This theory relates to issues of music and meaning, and has been most helpful in the process of analysis of the selected rap compositions. It has also informed several of the key questions discussed in chapter 1. It has helped me to answer the question why certain meanings are constructed, as well as in determining whether the composers' intended connections between music and text were successful or not. I have also used this theory to aid me in finding and examining possible musical reasons behind the meanings that are constructed by audience members.

Tagg believes that we need to make a connection between musical sounds and the society in which it occurs, and in order to do this we need to discover what different sounds mean to different people in various contexts. This process of discovery involves the use of semiotics. To understand these relationships Tagg uses general semiotic theory and

applies this to music. He states that one must first identify music's signifiers and then determine what these signifiers signify.

There are many aspects of Tagg's theory, and these need to be defined and explained. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, particularly with regard to spoken and written signs and their relationships with objects in the physical world. There are three types of signs that Tagg says are used in the process of signification. These signs are 'icons', 'indices', and 'conventional' or 'arbitrary' signs. An icon is a sign that bears a physical resemblance to what it represents. This resemblance can be what Tagg refers to as striking, as in a photograph or painting, or it can be structural, as in a map or diagram. An index, on the other hand, is a sign that is "connected by spatio-temporal proximity or by causality" (ibid.) to what it represents. Tagg's example of a causal index is smoke (meaning fire). He states that this sign type is important in the semiotics of music. Conventional or arbitrary signs are signs that have their particular meanings dictated by convention. The word 'signification' is used to mean 'meaning', and it is used in semiotics "to refer to the whole complex of how something can be a sign of, or a sign for, something else" (6).

Music is polysemic, meaning that it signifies several things at the same time. One particular phrase of music might have several perceptual associations, even though there might not be any connection between these associations. Tagg states that music must be considered an 'alogogenic' symbolic system, "as it is not conducive to being expressed in words" (9). He believes that many of the misunderstandings that arise in musical meaning are as a result of musical meaning having to be expressed in words.

Tagg (9) refers to an 'idea' which moves through a specific process. According to Tagg the 'idea' is the musician's or composer's intended 'message' (that is, what 'message' they want to convey through their music), and it moves from the 'transmitter' through the 'channel' to the 'receiver' who has a 'response'. The 'transmitter' is an individual or a group of individuals that produces the music. The 'channel' can also be referred to as the 'coded message', and this is the music as it sounds. The 'receiver' is any person who

hears the music, be it the transmitters themselves, or audience members. The ‘response’ is the way in which the receiver reacts to the idea that has been transferred to them through this process. It is this process that I will be looking at as I research the way in which a piece of music is received, that is, how the ‘receiver’ ‘responds’ to the initial ‘idea’ or ‘intended message’. There are times when the message or meaning that is received and responded to by the receiver is not the transmitter’s intended message or meaning. Tagg refers to this as codal interference. This occurs when the transmitter and receiver do not share the same “sociocultural norms and expectations” (11).

Tagg (17-18) makes use of the term ‘bioacoustic universals’. This is the relationship between musical sound and the human body, and even though these relationships are “at the basis of all music, the majority of musical communication is nevertheless culturally specific.” Tagg goes on to summarise the basic ‘bioacoustic universals’ of musical code in various relationships, these being the relationships between:

- i) musical tempo (pulse), and the heartbeat (pulse), or the speed of other bodily movements
- ii) musical loudness and timbre, and certain types of physical activity. For example, a gentle musical phrase cannot be achieved by hitting hard objects sharply
- iii) speed and loudness of notes, and the acoustic setting, which means that quick and quiet notes will not be heard if there is too much reverberation, and long, slow, loud notes are difficult to produce and sustain acoustically if there is not enough reverberation
- iv) musical phrase lengths, and the capacity of the human lung. This means that most musical phrases usually last between two and ten seconds

Even though these relationships may be cross-cultural, it does not mean that the emotional attitudes towards these relationships are the same. Tagg states that one reason for this is that the musical parameters mentioned above do not include the way in which musical elements such as rhythm, metre, and timbre are organised in relation to each other. This “*musical organisation* presupposes some sort of *social organisation* and cultural context before it can be created, understood or otherwise invested with meaning.

In other words: only extremely general bioacoustic types of connotation can be considered as cross-cultural universals of music” (18).

Tagg suggests that one’s context and experiences can greatly affect meanings that are constructed when listening to a piece of music. To explain this he gives an example of a movie scene where a letter is being read, but the meaning of this scene is determined by the context which has been set up previous to this scene, and the music that accompanies the visuals. What this means is that to make sense of musical signification, we cannot simply establish semiotic relationships between musical signifiers and what they signify: we also need to place the musical signification into a broader (narrative, social) context (21). One’s previous audio experiences and knowledge of cultural conventions will greatly affect the way in which a piece of music is received and responded to.

By analysing musical production from the transmitting end, that is, how the musicians “take great care in getting the right sounds in the right order at the right time” (21), it is possible to discover “elements or building blocks of musical production” (21) by observing how the musicians change what they do, and how they refer to the sounds they are making, and these elements “can then be posited as structures *within the music culture to which these musicians belong*” (22). Tagg (22) makes reference to intersubjective consistency which occurs when “many musicians in the same culture” use a similar form of expression “to denote the same sort of sonic event,” and these sounds can therefore “be posited as musical structures within that culture.” If one of these sonic events that makes up the musical structure changes, it has the potential to change the ‘meaning’ of the music of any particular style. Musical structure can also be analysed from the receiving end, that is, how audiences receive the music they hear, where intersubjective response occurs when the users of this music listen to the same musical pieces and respond in similar ways. Intersubjective responses allow us to analyse what it is in the music that elicits those responses. From the transmitting end we can determine which musical parameter (such as rhythm or instrumentation) caused the response.

There are four types of musical signs that Tagg describes. These are the ‘anaphone’, ‘genre synecdoche’, ‘episodic marker’, and ‘style indicator’. Tagg discusses in detail the use of anaphones. Anaphone means “the use of existing models in the formation of (musical) sounds” (24). There are three types of anaphones; sonic anaphones, tactile anaphones and kinetic anaphones. A sonic anaphone can be described as an “onomatopoeic stylisation” of a ‘non-musical’ sound. An example of this is musical sounds imitating sounds of a river, or thunder. For a sonic anaphone to work effectively, listeners must firstly be “conversant with the norms of musical stylisation whereby sounds that are not necessarily musical are incorporated anaphonically into the musical discourse” (ibid.). Secondly, listeners need to understand the connotations of the ‘non-musical’ sound. Tactile anaphones are those that imply some sort of touch sensation. The most common example of a tactile anaphone is the sound produced by “slowly moving, romantic string underscores” (ibid.). Because these string sounds lack “audible attack and decay”, they can produce a “thick, rich, viscous sonic texture,” and as a result they can produce “sensations of luxury, comfort and smoothness” (ibid.). A kinetic anaphone has to do with “the relationship of the human body to time and space” (25); that is to say, movement of the human body. These movements, such as walking and running, can be visualised through the music. Kinetic anaphones can also be related to animal movements such as “flights of bumblebees”, or the movements of objects, such as moving trains. A kinetic anaphone can also relate to the “subjectivised movement of objectively stationary objects or beings” (ibid.), such as a human hand making an outline of rolling hills. Most anaphones are sonic, tactile and kinetic at the same time, and when this happens, they are referred to as ‘composite anaphones’. A sonic anaphone is simultaneously kinetic because “all sounds are heard at specific distances from the sound source or in spatial relation to one another and because space and distance both imply movement” (26). Tactile anaphones will also be kinetic because touch implies that there is some sort of movement. Sonic anaphones can also be tactile. For example, the sonic anaphones of a babbling brook could also imply the tactile sensation of the water. Tactile anaphones are not necessarily sonic as not all tactile sensations would be audible to the human ear. Kinetic anaphones can be sonic and tactile at the same time, as all kinetic anaphones “imply potential sensation of sound and/or touch” (ibid.).

A synecdoche is a part-for-whole expression, and Tagg makes use of the term in relation to genre, where he uses the term 'genre synecdoche'. A genre synecdoche can be described as:

any set of musical structures inside a given musical style that refer to another (different) musical style by citing one or two elements supposed to be typical of that 'other' style when heard in the context of the style into which those 'foreign' elements are imported. (26-27)

The citation of this 'other' style then alludes to not only the entire style, but possibly the whole genre that the musical style is a part of. As a result, it may also refer to the complete culture to which the genre belongs (27).

Episodic markers are the third type of musical sign. These are signs that indicate some sort of feeling of time, such as 'after that', 'has just', or 'leading to'. These episodic markers tend to be "short, unidirectional processes along at least one parameter of musical expression, such as short, quick, upbeat, up-bow, initial rising run-ins to new musical material" (27-28). They serve the purpose of acting as lead-ins that point the music in the direction of something new, such as a new theme or section (28).

The final type of musical signs is the features of a style that designate the particular style, and Tagg refers to these as style indicators. These are "any musical structure or set of musical structures that are either constant for, or regarded as typical of, the 'home' musical style by persons in a culture sporting at least two different musical styles" (28). In other words, these are the compositional norms of a particular style. These style indicators can also be introduced into a piece as 'foreign' material, as a genre synecdoche.

Tagg provides a set of checklists of "Parameters of Musical Expression" (28-31), which covers all aspects of the musical structure, including how they (the aspects of musical structure) are related to the world outside the music, that is, "to the social and cultural position, intentions, [and] motivations of those producing and using the music as well as

to the functions and acoustic context of the music” (28). These checklists have proved useful in my own analysis of rap compositions.

There are several other aspects of Tagg’s theory of music semiotics, but these have not been relevant in this particular research.

## **2.2. Active-audience Theory (Lisa Lewis)**

The active-audience theory associated with Lisa Lewis also relates to the issues of music and meaning. In this theory she has challenged Adorno’s types of audience members. Adorno identified two types of listeners. The first was the type who would be “lost in the crowd” and was “easily manipulated by the collectivity.” The second type of listener was the “obsessive individual” who was “alienated from the people around them and not fully integrated into social life” (Negus 1997:10). Lewis suggests that listeners are “imaginative, discriminating people who are capable of making a number of fine distinctions” (ibid.:26), and that they are active in creating meanings that become associated with popular music. As a result, she believes that fans are an integral part of how popular music is, or particular artists are, understood. “Lewis suggests that fans create communities with a collective shared sense of identity that is built around their appreciation of a particular performer” (ibid.), and these groups contribute to meanings that are attributed to the various performers. Lewis’s suggestions have been useful to me in understanding how audiences of Durban rap construct meanings from the music they listen to. This theory has informed many of my key questions mentioned in chapter 1 (specifically, how is the music received? What meanings are constructed by the listeners? How do these listeners’ perceptions of the relationship between music and text affect the meanings that they construct?).

Because audiences are active in constructing meanings from music they hear, it stands to reason that the same genre or musical composition may be engaged with, and enjoyed, in many different ways. Each audience member has different life experiences that will influence the meanings that she constructs when listening to the same piece of music as



other audience members. As a result, it is not easy to express what the meaning of any particular piece of music is, as it could be different for every person (Negus 1997:32).

In Lewis's book, Fiske (1992) declares that "all audiences engage in production, not mere reception" (Lewis 1992:2). He says that fans are both productive and participatory. When the music is transmitted and received by the audience, "the moment of reception becomes the moment of production" (1992:41). Grossberg (1992) also states that the "relationship between the audience and popular texts is an active and productive one" (1992:52). He says that there is not a set of codes that can be consulted to find the meaning of a particular text, and the text itself does not carry its own meaning. There can never be a guarantee as to what the effects of a text will be. The same text will always mean something different to different people because of how each person interprets it and connects it to their own lives and experiences. One particular text can, and will, appear in several different contexts, and it will function differently in each context. As such, it will have different effects on its audience (*ibid.*:52-53). Grossberg states that "both audiences and texts are continuously remade – their identity and effectiveness reconstructed – by relocating their place within different contexts" (*ibid.*:54). Jenkins (1992) states that fans tend to be thought of almost entirely in terms of consumption rather than production (1992:208). She says that:

fans are consumers who also produce, readers who also write, spectators who also participate.... Fans produce meanings and interpretations; fans produce artworks; fans produce communities; fans produce alternative identities. In each case, fans are drawing on materials from their own interests and facilitate their own pleasures." (*ibid.*:214)

Also connected to Lewis's active-audience theory is Higgins's (1997) use of the term 'idiosyncrasy'. She states that she uses the term "polemically to refer to the whole range of responses that depend on the individual listener's particular character and background" (1997:83). To explain this she uses a suggestion made by Steven Feld that "all musical listening involves the listener's active efforts to relate the music to his or her broader experiences" (*ibid.*:96).

Green (1988) states that “‘meaning’ of music is given by its context” (1988:108). DeNora (2000) also makes use of the active-audience theory. She says that “music’s effects come from the ways in which individuals orient to it, how they interpret it and how they place it within their personal musical maps, within the semiotic web of music and extra-musical associations” (2000:61). Musical meaning is derived from many different things, including its intertextual relationship with other musical works, musical-stylistic and historical matters, and its social effects, such as how the music is used and personal associations (ibid.).

Meyer (1956) states that it is one’s past experiences that influence the musical meanings that one constructs. These past experiences include the immediate past, that is, what has already taken place in the particular piece of music. They also refer to the more remote past experiences of similar musical stimuli or situations that occurred in other works, and to past experiences that have occurred during one’s life (1956:36). Hamm (1992:21) suggests that music consists of three processes. The first is the creation or composition, the second is the stage of mediation which involves “publication, production, performance, and dissemination”, and the final stage is one of reception and perception.

In the light of all this information, it stands to reason that there are as many interpretations of one piece of music as there are people who listen to it.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Apart from reading the literature on the subject of this research, I received most of the data I required by conducting interviews and analysing specific rap compositions. I conducted semi-structured interviews with four established Durban hip hop performance groups (two bands and two solo artists). As mentioned in chapter 1, these performance groups are Iain ‘Ewok’ Robinson (also known as Creamy Ewok Baggends), Spin the Flava, Big Idea, and Zuluboy. I have purposely chosen these four performance groups because of their accessibility and the availability of their CDs. I entered each of these

semi-structured interviews with a set of questions. I personally met with Clint Grove (band leader of Spin the Flava) and Ewok. With the permission of these interviewees, I recorded the interviews and later transcribed them so that they could be analysed. At a later stage I also conducted email interviews with them. Quincy Fynn (band leader of Big Idea) and Zuluboy are currently based in Gauteng, so I was unable to meet with them personally. I conducted two interviews with Quincy via email. Zuluboy's interviews were conducted via email and telephone. The first interview was via email and this raised some other questions, which were asked in a second interview conducted telephonically. This telephone interview was recorded and later transcribed for further analysis. These interviews have helped to cast light on the relevance and role of music in the bands' and artists' compositions, and what meanings they intend to convey in their own music through the interplay of music and lyrics. The questions I asked predominantly regarded the way in which the performance groups use music, and the meanings they want to convey.

I attended performances by Ewok, Spin the Flava and Big Idea. Unfortunately there were no performances by Zuluboy in the Durban area during the time framework of this research. By attending performances, my hope was to observe audience members' reactions and responses to the music, and to conduct informal interviews with audience members in order to discover ways in which the music is received, and what meanings are constructed by the receivers. Unfortunately it was not possible to conduct these informal interviews at the performances as audience members were not particularly willing to answer questions at the time. In order to get audience responses, I selected two songs by each of the selected performance groups, I compiled a recording of each of the pieces and gave these to various people who are genre competent (that is, that they listen to hip hop and would attend hip hop performances), and were willing to assist me. They listened to the CD for about a week to familiarise themselves with the pieces, and we then met to speak about them. These interviews were recorded with permission, and later transcribed so as to be analysed. In this way, I was able to receive audience responses, and to discover what meanings are constructed in the various pieces.

In the following chapters I analyse the selected pieces by the specific artists so as to indicate possible reasons for the meanings that are constructed through the interplay of music and text. In these analyses I apply Philip Tagg's use of semiotics as it applies to music. The CDs and songs that I have chosen for each band and artist are discussed, along with the reasons for choosing them, in chapters 3 to 6.

Following the data collection and analyses, I consider the issues pertaining to meaning construction, music and text, and music and meaning, as well as the theories informing my research. Conclusions are drawn and suggestions made for possible future studies.

## Chapter 3

### Iain 'Ewok' Robinson

### (also known as Creamy Ewok Baggends)

#### 1. Biography

I focus first on Iain 'Ewok' Robinson (also known as Creamy Ewok Baggends), a successful and popular Durban rapper with a large following.

Ewok was initiated into the hip-hop culture in his early high school years with a skateboard and a can of paint. At this time he was influenced by United States hip-hop groups such as Cypress Hill, A Tribe Called Quest and Rage Against the Machine. He was raised with an appreciation for the stage and the microphone by his father, who is a professional jazz musician and university lecturer, and his mother, who is a theatre-professional and teacher.

In his later high school years he started writing his own raps, and in his first year of university in 2000 he started his first performing group. At that stage he was involved in rap-metal crossover in the style of Limp Bizkit. In 2002 he started his second performing group, Illuminating Shadows, with his high school friend, Nathan 'King B' Redpath. He began performing his raps as slam poetry in 2003 with the Flatfoot Dance Company. Over the years Ewok has been a part of theatre productions, graffiti crews, and various rap groups, and has been involved in slam poetry. He has taken part in many competitions, and in 2004 and 2006 he held freestyle battle champion titles. He achieved fifth place at the World Slampship in Rotterdam in 2005, and first place in the 2006 Poetry Africa slams in Johannesburg and Durban. His one-man hip-hop show, *Spitfire*, was named Pick of the Festival and Audience Choice in the 2007 Musho Theatre Festival. In 2007 he also released his first solo album, *Higher Flyer for Hire*, and this was followed by his first publication of lyrics and poetry, *Word: Customized Hype*. In 2008 he

was a nominee for *HYPE Magazine*'s "Lyricist of the Year". In the same year he travelled to Germany to take part in the ABC Festival in Augsburg, and to Sweden to take part in the Oordspraak Festival in Uppsala. Ewok is a director of the Life Check Youth Hip Hop Initiative, which is a community based hip-hop platform for local artists.

## **2. Song Choices**

Ewok's first and, thus far, only album is *Higher Flyer for Hire* (2007). He is currently in the process of recording his second album.

The two pieces I have chosen from this album are "My Mecca" and "Hollywood Burning". I chose these two pieces because I found them to have much musical content on which to comment. I will now proceed with a discussion of each of these pieces.

### **2.1. 'My Mecca'**

"My Mecca" is one of Ewok's earliest pieces and was initially performed as part of a Flatfoot Dance Company piece. He was asked to write a piece for this production where one of the themes was The Owl House, the home of Helen Martins. Helen Martins (1897-1976) was a visionary artist who was shunned by her community. She lived alone in the town of Nieu-Bethesda, situated in the Great Karoo. She decided to bring colour and light into her life by embellishing her environment. This she did over a twelve year period with the help of a local builder, Koos Malgas. Together they decorated her home and garden with cement sculptures, and embellished them with hand-crushed glass. Her work was influenced by both Christianity and eastern religions. Her home is now of great historic value and has become a popular tourist attraction

(<http://www.encounter.co.za/article/99.html>). Ewok states that The Owl House was most famously depicted in *The Road to Mecca*, a play written by Athol Fugard which was inspired by Helen Martins's own interpretation of the Islamic holy journey to Mecca, and this play was the inspiration for Ewok's "My Mecca". He originally performed this piece to beatboxing performed by Nathan 'King B' Redpath.

In the second interview with Ewok, I asked what his intended meaning for “My Mecca” was. He said that it is:

a description of the frustration and helplessness that I felt at the time, in terms of my categorization as a ‘young, white South African’ and all of the stigma and rhetorics that came with the label. I didn’t feel like I had a place, and I was jealous of all the other cultures I constantly came into contact with and the way in which people were embraced and nurtured by their culture, while all I seemed to have from mine was guilt and paranoia. (Author’s Interview: Robinson, Durban, 17 April 2009)

Because Ewok originally performed this piece to beatboxing, when he came to recording it on *Higher Flyer for Hire* he had in mind the sound of the beatboxing, and it is this that he was initially searching for when listening to drumbeat patterns to lay down for the track. Ewok said that when it came down to laying the tracks, this was not the sound that he ended up using. Scotty Soul, a beat maker, gave Ewok many instrumental options for these lyrics, and Ewok was looking for something that had an ‘epic’ sound; something that evoked in him the idea of a quest or a journey. He said he was looking for something that sounded like “the soundtrack to a *Braveheart* movie” and that would describe the emotion of the piece (Author’s Interview: Robinson, Durban, 1 May 2008). Ewok decided on a track that contained a lot of strings, which for him has this ‘soundtrack’ effect. He said the instrumental track “sounds like it has a sense of pride to it” (ibid.).

### **2.1.1. Audience Responses to “My Mecca”**

From those who responded to this piece, there were some responses that were similar, if not the same. All the listeners’ constructed meanings corresponded with Ewok’s intended meaning.

Sarah<sup>1</sup>, twenty-three, is interested in all types of music and went through a time when she mostly listened to hip hop. This means she is a genre competent listener. She enjoyed this piece and really related to it, and the meaning she constructed was derived mainly from the lyrics. However, she commented that “Ewok is a writer of words”, and the music “doesn’t get in the way of the words. It provides a background to the lyrics, and is a catchy beat for the listener’s ear” (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009). Sarah made quite an in-depth analysis of the lyrics to arrive at the meaning she constructed. For her, the piece was about:

finding personal freedom, an internal place of purity and peace, and a sacred reality despite a disillusionment caused by continual confrontation of an ‘oppressor’s legacy’, as well as feelings of alienation from our personal ‘culture’ or ‘race’, and being held accountable for the evil acts of a heritage of hatred and how one is to place oneself in amongst all this and regain a ‘faith, hope and trust’ in humanity. (ibid.)

She felt that the second half of the piece was perhaps more powerful because it appeals to the universal rather than just the personal. In reacting to this piece Sarah said that she was greatly influenced by her personal context; that is, how and where she was raised, and her personal spiritual beliefs. She said that she “shares in Ewok’s stance of needing a personal identity within the particular culture in which we find ourselves” (ibid.). She also commented that she internalised this piece more as a mantra than a “get-up-and-dance” tune (ibid.).

“It’s about someone trying to find his place in the world that judges too much, someone who is trying to find a spiritual place” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009) was a comment from Jennifer. She is in her early forties, runs her own business, and is herself a musician. She has been involved with musicians from many genres over the years. She also commented that this piece gave her a “strange and awkward” (ibid.) feeling; that she felt the lyrics were pleading. Ethan, Jennifer’s husband and business partner, is also a musician. He has had similar musical experiences as Jennifer, and said that this piece was “a very real, heartfelt search for the rapper’s spot in ‘the rainbow

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<sup>1</sup> Not her real name. All names of audience members have been changed for purposes of anonymity.



nation’” (Author’s Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009). Ethan felt a connection to this piece because he has experienced these same feelings, particularly in relation to Ewok’s reference to being neither white nor black enough, and that “light skin means sin in a naturally dark place”.

Claire, a visual artist who enjoys hip hop and has attended several of Ewok’s performances, said that this piece immediately pointed to a pilgrimage. She identified this as an inner pilgrimage; “that the Mecca we seek is in fact within” (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). She also interpreted it as being about forgiveness. She said:

the rapper feels scorn for politicians, and he also has a feeling of not fitting in because of race or belief. It is only through inner acceptance that this can be overcome, not by striving for material wealth. The strong feeling of not belonging relates to the sometimes senseless striving we put ourselves through, when really it is only inner searching and letting go of all the preconceived ideas we have of ourselves and others in an often non-functioning racial society that can bring us peace. (ibid.)

She said that at one point the rapper began to include all his listeners as he referred to the Mecca in ‘us’ rather than the Mecca in ‘me’. This ties in with Sarah’s comment that the second half of the piece appeals to the universal. Claire also felt a connection to this piece for the same reasons as Ethan, above.

None of the audience members I had responses from picked up on Ewok’s specific use of strings to produce an ‘epic’ sound quality. In fact, Ethan felt that Ewok could have used more regional instrumentation to put his point across.

Claire happened to pick up on more connections than Ewok himself had stated as being intentional. Her observations were:

In the introduction, the harp-like sounds set the mood. There is also an almost orchestral sound throughout the piece which is as constant as the driving beat. I suppose I identify this sound with an orchestra because I have experienced

orchestras, but many listening to the music may not have. The beat is like an uneven heartbeat, which almost contradicts the other musical elements behind it, but perhaps this enhances the idea of our personal frailty and the desperate seeking and needing of the soul to fit in, even though it is misguided. I notice there is a double-voice saying “I need to believe”, which is musical in itself, and sounds like an echo, or a mantra, that one would carry in one’s mind. There are other parts where there is a double-voice sound, and this reiterates the ideas in the lyrics. In the places where the beat stops it is almost prayer- or chant-like. Towards the end of the piece he says “I love you, journey with me”. I think he is beseeching us to free ourselves and move together. At this point the music goes quiet, then it becomes driving and insistent, as if calling everyone. There is a defiance which comes out strongly in the lyrics, while the orchestral sound in the music conveys both an underlying peace that comes with meditation and spiritual seeking, and the beat emphasises the striving. (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009)

### **2.1.2. Analysis of “My Mecca”**

This piece is in a minor key, which tends to be associated with sadness. This use of the minor key and the way in which the instruments are used could help to explain why Jennifer felt “strange and awkward” when listening to this piece. The music, while being clearly noticeable, is unobtrusive, and this would explain why Sarah commented that the music serves as a background to the lyrics, and “doesn’t get in the way” of them.

Ewok uses a synthesised, arpeggiated, piano (possibly harp) sound that flows throughout the piece. This creates the ‘orchestral’ sound noted by Claire. This orchestral sound could also add to the ‘epic soundtrack’ sound that Ewok wanted to bring out in “My Mecca”, as most ‘epic soundtracks’ consist of orchestral music. As a result, people may relate to this orchestral sound having an ‘epic soundtrack’ sound, as it is part of their past auditory experiences. This piano sound could be seen as a sonic anaphone (Tagg 1999:24) suggestive of the sound of running water, and running water is often associated with the act of cleansing. This piece is about finding one’s own peace, and place in the world. In order to do this, one would expect to cleanse, or rid, oneself of old ideas. The piano sound begins in the eight-bar introduction and is joined by a single note played by synthesised strings, as well as a constant drone of a low string sound, possibly that of a double bass. These three sounds together form the basis of the music that continues

throughout the piece. The constant bass drone could also contribute to the “strange and awkward” feeling experienced by Jennifer, as low sounds are generally felt in the visceral parts of the body. Because these sounds could resonate in the body, they would be considered bioacoustic (Tagg 1999:17).

When the voice comes in for the first time (00:19), the musical base is joined by the first of two repeated string motives. Each of these string motives is six notes long and is looped. The drum pattern also begins when the voice comes in and is also repeated throughout the piece. There are a few places in the piece where the drum pattern or the current string motive cuts out, but the piano sound plays continuously. When the drums first enter (00:19) it is only the kick drum with a cymbal for the first two repeats of “I’m gonna make it to my Mecca/Let my Mecca make me believe/I need to believe”. It is this kick drum pattern that was described as an uneven heartbeat. As such, this could be described as a sonic anaphone (Tagg 1999:24) and could also be considered bioacoustic (1999:17) as it could resonate in the chest area of the body. When the chorus begins (“I’m gonna make it to my Mecca/Let my Mecca make me believe/Once again/In the Mecca in me” (00:40)), in addition to the kick drum and cymbal, the snare drum enters. The kick drum changes its pattern slightly (00:39) to bring in the snare drum and then returns to its original pattern. This new drum pattern, which includes the snare drum, is what continues throughout the piece. There are a couple of places where the pattern either changes slightly or drops out, and this seems to be used to give more impact to the words. There is a slight change in drum pattern in the first verse on the line “Freedom for my eyes to find the sunrise” (01:09 - 01:12). On the words “Even forgiving these puppets” the kick drum changes slightly by missing a beat (02:17), and then it returns to its original pattern. The drums drop out completely on the lines “to my other mother brothers/My other mister sisters/To those I’ve hurt/And those who’ve hurt me/I submit to your mercy/I love you/Journey with me” (02:37 - 02:58) and they remain silent through the first part of the repeated chant of “We’ll make it to Mecca/To let the Mecca in us”. The drums come back in (02:58) with an initial change on the words “Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust” after the repeated chant. The kick drum then changes its pattern slightly in the next repeats of “We’ll make it to Mecca/To let the Mecca in us/

Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust”. At the end of the first verse, after the words “recognise my own east”, the drums cut out altogether, the string motive finishes and then there is a ‘hanging’ moment while the notes are dying. This is between the end of the first verse and the next chorus. This hanging moment emphasises the words that have just been said (“I close my eyes/To recognise my own east”), and creates a momentary sense of peace that would be achieved by closing one’s eyes to reflect on one’s own Mecca.

The first six-note string motive is used in the first two repetitions of “I’m gonna make it to my Mecca/Let my Mecca make me believe/I need to believe” (00:20 - 00:39). When the chorus begins (00:40), the second six-note string motive is used. When the first verse starts (00:58) the first string motive is used again and continues through this verse. The chorus (01:38) then uses the second string motive again. In the first part of the second verse (“I make it to Mecca when I live to forgive ... Even forgiving these puppets” (01:59 - 02:18)) there is no string pattern, only the single note on the strings that accompanies the piano sound. With the words “I have sinned I do sin I will sin again” (02:19) the second six-note string motive returns and continues until the drums come in again on the last repeat of “We’ll make it to Mecca/To let the Mecca in us” (02:58). When the drums return on “Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust” (02:59) at the end of the piece, the first string motive returns and then carries on until the very end of the piece. This reinstated driving beat works well with the lyrics at this point because Ewok is referring to “us”, and this “driving and insistent” beat, as described by Claire, seems to be calling all listeners together.

There are several places in this piece where Ewok lays down a double-voice track. This occurs on the first and third repeat of “I’m gonna make it to my Mecca/Let my Mecca make me believe/Once again/In the Mecca in me” (00:39 - 00:44 and 00:49 - 00:54) in the first chorus at the beginning of the piece; the next time the chorus is performed (01:38 - 01:57), this time through the whole chorus; in the second verse on “I will sin again” (02:21); and on the repeat of “I love you/Journey with me” (02:44) and throughout the chant that occurs after this line up until the end of the text. There is also an echo sound

(also a second track of Ewok's voice) in the second chorus where the second voice says "See I need to believe in the Mecca in me" (01:43 - 01:54 and 01:54 - 01:57) at the end of each line. This double-voice is used to reinforce the lyrics in these particular places, and in certain places, such as the repeat of "I love you/Journey with me" (02:44) and "We'll make it to Mecca/To let the Mecca in us" (03:03), it can be heard, as indicated by Sarah and Claire, as a kind of mantra chant.

## **2.2. "Hollywood Burning"**

Ewok composed the chorus for this piece over a year before he wrote the lyrics. He originally used it as the theme of his one-man theatre show *SPITFIRE*, and it is one that he is still developing. Ewok says that he wants to "make a hardcore metal track out of it, like a Rage Against the Machine-style piece" (Author's interview: Robinson, Durban, 17 April 2009).

Ewok states that, like most of his work, "this piece is an examination of 'balance'" (ibid.), as, for him the track has a dual meaning:

half of me wants to burn Hollywood down in the sense of the commercial, pop, mainstream 'Hollywood', and half of me wants to be rich and famous. It's about which 'fire' you choose to fuel: the fire of destruction or the fire of passion.  
(ibid.)

He says that this piece also describes one's awareness of where one is in life so that one can know where one is going and where one will inevitably end up. He says that in his case, this will probably be, as his lyrics say, "still on the Mic/Kicking Old Man rhymes" as he will be fuelling "the fire of passion".

When asked if he formed any intentional connections between the music and the text of this piece, Ewok said that this is the only track on his album that uses a live bass line, which was written by Duane Nichols (ex Big Idea bassist). This bass line was based on the melody of the chorus, and the drum line was also composed in conjunction with the

rhythm of the chorus. He had an idea of how he wanted the track to sound and he, along with the engineer and Duane, created the instrumental track, along with the chorus, in the studio.

### **2.2.1. Audience Responses to “Hollywood Burning”**

All of the listeners who responded to this piece constructed meanings that related to Ewok’s intended meaning. Jennifer interpreted the lyrics of this piece as being an autobiography of an emcee. Ethan said that it was a piece about the demise of American influence on the world. Claire said that it felt like a rebellion that “shouts out against the trappings of Hollywood” which she saw as a metaphor for “all our material wealth and false idols we aspire to” (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). She also said that the piece “manages to instil a sense of guilt at being part of this rampant consumerism” (ibid.). She said that she relates fire to both cleansing and destroying, and that “Hollywood Burning” relates strongly to the concept of cleansing. For her, the lyrics “From the puddle to the palace” stuck in her mind and made her think about all the rags to riches stories which are often not about upliftment but rather greed. She felt that the rapper was also commenting on the need for people to work hard to fulfil their dreams rather than simply taking what they have not worked for.

Sarah interpreted this piece as “Ewok both defining his method and intention for doing what he does (his personal hip-hop ‘game’), and dispelling any listeners’ misinterpretations that hip hop is all about status, the Hollywood title and ‘bling’” (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009). She said his chorus lines clearly emphasised this, and that by doing his part to break the spell he will be the main “supplier” to people who “believe in nothing but a sound”. She also said that it was a piece about the nature of success, and whether you are still doing what you love “in twenty years time” by having worked hard and being committed, and that is how Ewok is going to “make the switch/From the puddle to the palace”. She felt that the music was used to highlight Ewok’s message that his “game” is his “tongue”; the music is a simple

backdrop. She also felt that the “loop is a bit ‘goofy’, which suits Ewok’s sense of humour” (ibid.).

When it came to the music, the listeners provided many different responses. Jennifer felt that the music in this piece was purely incidental, and Ethan felt that it was musically thin and that more could have been done with the sounds to get the message across, but that the music of this track had a particularly Durban ‘groove’ to it. Claire found several connections between the music and the text. She noticed that there was a prominent bass line and drumbeat with a tambourine sound that played throughout the piece. Perhaps this is particularly noticeable because the bass line was recorded live rather than being electronically generated, and the drum line was composed in conjunction with this bass line. Because these parts were composed in this way, and because Claire heard them prominently, it suggests that the bass and drumbeat were, to the composer, an important aspect of this track. Claire said that ironically her attention was drawn to the bass and drumbeat when they were absent at the end of the piece, and at this point, the impact derives from the lyrics. She found this very effective. She also commented that the constant beat on this track made her think of “our daily slog” (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). She could imagine workmen chained together, all dressed the same, trudging forward slowly one step at a time. She said:

it makes me feel life shouldn’t be like that, and by freeing ourselves from expectations and desires for worldly wealth, we would move as unshackled individuals, not following like sheep and seeking the ‘bling’ of the world. (ibid.)

Claire also commented that the repeated chorus was quite bland and almost like a subliminal message, “as though we follow on autopilot. Yet this makes me feel like fuelling the fire along with the rapper, rather than being part of the blindless following of all that Hollywood means” (ibid.).

### **2.2.2. Analysis of “Hollywood Burning”**

As noted by Claire, this piece has a very prominent bass line. The bass motive opens the piece and keeps repeating throughout. As Ewok stated, this live bass line was based on

the melody of the chorus. Because of this, and the fact that it is heard throughout the piece, the listener is constantly reminded of the words and images of the chorus. Another effect of basing the bass line on the melody of the chorus is that it emphasises and reinforces the words of the chorus when the chorus is performed. The constant rhythm and repeating of the bass line is the “constant beat” that Claire commented on. It is this that led her to think of “our daily slog”. There are only a few places in the piece where there are slight changes in the bass line. The bass drops out on the words “On my shirt you read clearly/Life’s a bitch/And I wear it everyday/Until I make the switch” (00:55 - 00:59) and it comes back in again on “From the puddle to the palace” (01:00). This must be why Sarah and Claire both made reference to the “From the puddle to the palace” line. The final change is on the last repeat of the chorus where the bass line, along with the rest of the instrumentation, drops away so that it is performed *a cappella*. The comment by Sarah that the “loop is a bit ‘goofy’” could be a result of the first beat of each bass cycle, which has a *tremolo* on it.

The introduction includes the bass line and drum hits on beats two and four. This is the bass motive that is looped throughout the piece. When the lyrics begin (00:05), a tambourine (or possibly cymbal) sound is heard on all the off-beats (the second half of every beat). When the bass drops out on “On my shirt you read clearly/Life’s a bitch/And I wear it everyday/Until I make the switch” (00:55 - 00:59), it is only the drums and tambourine sound that is heard; the bass line falls away at this point. On the words “Sit back/Relax” (02:12) the tambourine sound drops out. On “And listen to the news” (02:15) the drums fall away and it is only the bass line that continues. All instrumentation returns for the next chorus (02:17). However, the tambourine sound’s rhythm has changed. On the second repeat of the chorus (02:42) the tambourine sound cuts out. Halfway through this repeat (02:48) the drums change their rhythm by playing fewer beats, and for the third repeat of the chorus (02:54) both the drums and, as discussed in the previous paragraph, the bass-line fall away. This creates much more emphasis on the lyrics at this point, but at the same time, as mentioned by Claire, it also draws one’s attention to the bass line and drumbeat that has just disappeared. Because these parts have



been so prominent throughout the piece, one notices when they fall away because it feels as though something is missing.

Every time the chorus occurs Ewok has laid down a double-voice track, and this is used to emphasise the words. There are also many other places where this double voice occurs to the same effect. Some of these places are: “bling not the backpacks”, “status”, “bling”, “reality check”, “fame”, “the big light the big name”, “life’s a bitch”, “wannabe jerks”, “twenty years time”, and “the man”. In places, Ewok uses a technique where a second track of his voice is used slightly after his main rapping, and this is used as a way of questioning or answering what has just been said. Examples (shown in italics) of where this is used to good effect are: “Just dream on ‘*why*’/Reality check”, “Well I’m a gang star boy ‘*why*’/I put in work/I know where I’m gone be in twenty years time ‘*where*’/Still on the mic/Kicking old man rhymes”, and “Like twenty tic tacs ‘*yes*’”.

Ethan commented that this piece has a particularly “Durban groove”. Durban, as a city, has a reputation for being ‘laid back’ and relaxed, and this track’s tempo and bass line create a ‘laid back’ and relaxed feeling.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Spin the Flava**

#### **1. Biography**

I now focus on Spin the Flava, a Christian hip-hop group. This gives a contrast to the other groups as their intended messages differ greatly.

Spin the Flava were formed in 2001 as a rap, pop and dance group. They have travelled extensively throughout South Africa and have performed in many small towns and all the major cities. There were originally only two members in the band, but this has now grown to four: two vocalists and two dancers. Clint Grove, the founder of the group, is the front man and visionary of the band. Musa Zondi is the group's main vocalist. Geezo Petersen and Gareth Charles are both break-dancers, and Geezo has appeared on some of the recorded tracks as a third rapper. They have used this particular medium to reach out to the youth of South Africa with a message of hope. Musa said that their vision is to "influence people through the medium of music and dance to have a relationship with Christ, raising leaders who would create change in our land". Clint believes that "music is such an influential thing that we need to use it for good and to promote God's commandments and His statutes". The group visits orphanages several times a year and also performs at primary schools and high schools, teaching the youth about morals and values, human decency and respect for parents. They also give workshops on song writing, dance and discipleship

([http://www.spintheflava.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=2](http://www.spintheflava.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=2)).

Spin the Flava have released five albums to date, and are currently working on a sixth one, which is set to be released in 2010. They also have plans to travel internationally, hoping that their influence may spread to other nations in the world. Geezo said that he

wants to see their band “go to international levels and for the youth all over the world to be touched by our ministry and to make god the lord of their lives” (ibid.).

## **2. Song Choices**

Two of Spin the Flava’s albums have been used in this research: *One Nation* (2004), as it combines hip hop with traditional Indian music so that it is more appealing to the large Indian community in Durban, and *Combined Forces* (2005), as this is their most recent album and it has been popular, with high sales.

The two pieces that I have used in this research are, “One Nation” from the *One Nation* album, and “This is War” from the *Combined Forces* album. I chose these two pieces because I felt that they too have a lot to comment on musically, particularly “One Nation”, as it incorporates traditional Indian influences. I will now continue by discussing each of these pieces.

### **2.1 “One Nation”**

Spin the Flava say they composed “One Nation” because they have a large Indian following in Durban. Clint said that they first composed the music so that it would have an ‘Eastern’ feel to it. Once they had the beats and the melody line, they used a Tamil-speaking vocalist who first translated the English chorus into Tamil, and then laid down her vocals for this chorus and the chanting melody she sings throughout the verses. The rappers then laid down their lines after this.

Spin the Flava’s intended message for this piece is one of unity, particularly within South Africa. Clint believes that all of mankind is descended from one man. He said:

the Bible says that Eve is the mother of all. So there are many references to Adam and Eve being literal people, and being the first and the only, and the mother and the father of all mankind. There are 170 living legends of the flood which covered the whole earth, through which only eight people survived. So if we all came from

eight people, basically a family, then we're all from one blood. (Author's Interview: Grove, Durban, 20 April 2009)

Clint said this piece is about all people being part of one nation, and that we need to set aside all prejudices, and the theme of the piece is that “we are all redeemed by the blood, regardless of colour, creed or ‘race’ and that we should all lay aside any prejudices” (ibid.).

When asked what intentional connections they formed between the music and the text, Clint stated that they used the ‘Eastern’ musical sound and the Tamil language in order to achieve a true feel for the ‘Eastern’ genre.

### **2.1.1. Audience Responses to “One Nation”**

There were mixed reactions from the audience members with regard to the chosen Spin the Flava tracks. This is because a few of the listeners regard themselves as spiritual rather than specifically Christian.

Jennifer interpreted this piece as being about “trying to unite people whilst encouraging their differences” (Author's Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009), and it was mainly the text that brought her to this meaning. However, she said that the music also influenced the meaning she constructed, as there was a uniting in this piece of hip-hop and ‘Eastern’ elements. Ethan liked the group's thoughts about our nation – that we should be united and lay aside prejudice – but he said that the band's “Christianity leaves me perplexed: that there is zero tolerance of other religions. This is a stark contrast to Ewok” (Author's Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009). Sarah felt that this piece was “a multi-cultural gospel show proclaiming unity across the races, and that, as human beings, we are all ‘equal’ through Christian spirituality. It is also about the band's true identity: that they are Christian” (Author's Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009). She said that it was both the text and the music that led her to this interpretation. The music played a part in this interpretation because the piece samples Indian vocals and uses ‘Eastern’ instrumentation. She felt this was fitting because Durban “has the largest

population of people of Indian descent outside of India” (ibid.). Jennifer’s and Sarah’s interpretations both correspond to the band’s intended message. Ethan’s only partly corresponds.

Claire attended a Spin the Flava concert with me as she knew it was hip hop but didn’t realise it was Christian until the music began. She felt that this piece, with its ‘Eastern’ musical influence and many references to India and Asia was strongly applicable to its young Indian target audience, but “somehow it misses carrying a true message, and it seems that its sole purpose is to convert people of Asian religions to Christianity” (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). I find this comment quite ironic as, being interpreted in this way, it strongly contradicts what Clint said: that the piece seeks to bring all people together as one nation and to lay aside prejudices. At the concert, Claire thought that the Christian message was not really noticed, as:

in an audience of predominantly young Indians, dancing seemed to be the most important aspect of this music. This seemed to be reinforced when, at the end of the concert, when the rapper began to ‘preach’ his message, the youth began to leave the venue. So one has to wonder whether the artist is actually able to change the attitude of the fans whose main aim seems to be having fun. This piece succeeds on the level of allowing these young people a certain freedom which sometimes ‘religion’ inhibits. (ibid.)

When asked about the music in particular, Jennifer stated that “this piece has a strongly ‘Eastern’ feel, and it is also mellow and relaxed” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009). She felt that the text and the music were “definitely east meets west” (ibid.). Ethan said he really enjoyed the female voice and the instrumentation of this piece.

Sarah said that she felt “mildly frustrated, even bored” when listening to this piece (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009), but she said that this had more to do with her personal beliefs than the music in particular. She felt that this band:

still hangs on to outdated and jaded social mechanics for perpetuating hegemonic normalities so that a basic pyramid scheme of power can operate for purposes of subtle brain-washing. This band shows no artistic progression beyond the ‘media criteria’ they claim not to be ‘governed by’ (ibid.)

Sarah said that her personal family background had certainly influenced her feelings towards this band. She comes from a background of a combination of Anglican, Greek Orthodox, and some atheist heritage. “Through this,” she said, “I first encountered the beauty and celebration of how humans have found joy in this miracle of existence, and how we have evolved with our own personifications of this miracle” (ibid.). She also stated that living in a multi-cultural society, such as our own, had helped her to understand and tolerate other cultures and religions, and she was brought up celebrating any festival and celebration from all religious and cultural beliefs.

Claire felt that the female vocals, although unmistakably Indian and lending a strong ‘Eastern’ flavour to this piece, may not hold any message for many of the listeners who do not understand the language. At the same time, however, “there are places in this piece where the female vocals are so prominent that the rap seems to be of secondary importance” (ibid.). She said that the Indian music used in the introduction may initially attract people of an Indian culture before they realise it is carrying a Christian message. Claire said that the use of the Indian music and the use of the words “multi-cultured” and “one nation” was a “clever ploy to bring Christianity to a wider audience” (ibid.). She also commented on the whistle she heard throughout the piece, and said she felt that it added a light-hearted feel to the piece.

### **2.1.2. Analysis of “One Nation”**

This piece begins with a tabla sound and a melismatic chanting melody by a female voice. There is also a high-pitched whistle sound which follows the chanting melody of the voice. This introduction is immediately recognisable, to most ears, as Indian music, and it establishes this piece’s target audience: the large Indian following the band has in Durban. This use of Indian music would be considered a genre synecdoche (Tagg

1999:26-27), as the particular style indicators of traditional Indian music (the use of the tabla and traditional Indian melismatic singing) have been incorporated into this hip-hop genre so as to represent Indian music as a whole.

When the rapping begins in the first verse (0:19), the instrumentation established in the introduction continues, but it is also joined by a tambourine (possibly a cymbal), a four-note bass line, drum line and string sounds, all of which are synthesised. This fuller instrumentation continues throughout the piece. There are very few places where this instrumentation changes. One place where there is a change is in the second half of the first verse, on the words “because we’re not governed by the media criteria” (00:38 – 00:40), when the tambourine and whistle sounds drop out. Another change occurs on the words “in the streets of India” (00:46 – 00:47) at the end of this first verse. Here the instruments are suspended: that is, they stop playing, but the sound of the last notes that they played continues to die away. At this point there is only the faint string sound in the background that continues playing. This change in the instrumentation serves to emphasise the words. Throughout the rapping in this verse, and in each of the verses that follow, the chanting by the female voice, which was established in the introduction, continues. It is this Indian chanting that led Jennifer to make the comment that this piece has a “mellow and relaxed” feel to it.

The chorus consists of the female voice singing in Tamil, with interjections by the rappers, but these interjections are not a translation of the Tamil. There is a slight change in instrumentation in the chorus as scratching is introduced (00:56). This use of scratching is an inclusion of a traditional hip-hop technique, where a record is rotated backwards and forwards on a turntable, and the sound that this creates is used rhythmically. The whistle sound (which dropped out in the first verse) only returns on the last line of the first chorus (01:21). However, this time it is playing its own melody rather than following the melody of the female voice. All three choruses are performed in the same way. The only change in each chorus is in the activity of the whistle sound. It is this whistle sound that Claire said gave this piece a light-hearted feel. In the second chorus the whistle sound is used throughout the chorus but it plays its own melody.

In the second verse, the whistle sound returns to following the female chanting melody. However, there are places where it also plays its own melody. In the second half of this verse, and in the third verse, it only plays its own melody; it no longer copies the vocal line. Towards the end of this verse the sound of the whistle becomes much more prominent (03:11).

After the final chorus, there is a short coda (03:58 – 04:07) where all instrumentation, except the tabla and string sound, falls away. The female voice sings a short chanting melody that is different to the previous chant which was established in the introduction and used throughout the piece. This is effective as it leaves the listener with the Indian influence.

It seems that the most important connection between music and text in this piece is the use of the Tamil language and ‘Eastern’ music to create an ‘Eastern’ feel. This aspect of the music was the one that the listeners commented on most.

## **2.2. “This is War”**

“This is War” is performed by another Durban Christian hip-hop group, Remixd. Clint stated that this particular piece was co-written: he produced it and composed the music, and Remixd wrote the lyrics.

Clint said that this piece is about spiritual warfare. He believes that when someone has done something wrong, it is sometimes due to chemical imbalances in the body, but these chemical imbalances can also be a result of spiritual ‘attacks’. He said that many people do not think that this is possible, but he believes it is because:

there is a physical side to our bodies and there is a spiritual side: the soul and the emotions. We’re not just metaphysical beings; we’re not just tangible. There are other elements that are intangible within us, you know. Our thinking is intangible; you can’t touch it. So, uh, this piece talks about spiritual war where you put on the



full armour of God. It's not an armour you can touch; it is intangible. But you put on the full armour of God (the belt of truth, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness) to protect you against the attacks of the Enemy. In the Christian faith, *you* don't necessarily attack the Enemy, it's not your part to do that. You just stand with the armour, and when the Enemy attacks you, you just stand, and then God does the attacking, or does the defending. So that's really what the piece is about. (Author's Interview: Grove, Durban, 1 August 2008)

Clint said that the compositional process of this piece was much simpler than that of "One Nation". The beat was composed first, which is how the band usually begins composing. Clint said that "the beat was constructed around a popular hip-hop sound and rhythm at the time" (Author's Interview: Grove, Durban, 20 April 2009). After that the text was put to the beat.

When asked whether the band formed any intentional connections between the music and the text in this piece, Clint said that they did not form any intentional connections, and that it is purely by chance if the music particularly suits the theme of the lyrics. He said that "the lyrics had nothing to do with the sound of the piece: it was just the theme that we wanted to use at that time with that particular melody" (ibid.).

### **2.2.1. Audience Responses to "This is War"**

This piece also had some mixed responses from the listeners, for the same reasons as "One Nation", above.

Although the following interpretations do not completely correspond with the band's intended message for this piece in all particulars, they do all acknowledge that it is about fighting for Christianity. Jennifer said that the lyrics of this piece led her to her particular interpretation that this was a religious piece about having to fight temptations, and needing to give one's life to Jesus. Ethan felt that this piece was sadly ironic; that it was a call to war in the name of Christianity, and history teaches us nothing. Sarah commented that this piece "sounds like a war-cry to arm those poor unsuspecting souls (who are yet

to liberate themselves from the ‘nonsense’) for the ultimate ideological war” (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009). She said that images of violence or war were used “at least 105 times in this piece” (ibid.). Like Ethan, she also wondered how this was “any different from any violence that has come before in the name of this or that god” (ibid.).

Claire, however, interpreted this piece in a different way to the band’s intended message. Clint had said “in the Christian faith, *you* don’t necessarily attack the Enemy.... You just stand with the armour” (Author’s Interview: Grove, Durban, 1 August 2008), but Claire felt that the meaning of this piece could be understood in two different ways: either that “if you do not follow the Christian way, we will fight against you in the name of Christ”, or that “I (the rapper) am a Christian, and if you challenge my beliefs, I will fight against you” (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009).

Regarding the music in particular, Jennifer said that the beat made her want to “get up and dance” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009). Ethan felt that this piece was musically boring and that it was lacking something. He also wondered why there was such a blatant attempt to sound American. Sarah felt that the constant repetition of the words “This is war” was like a crowd chant, and that the music also suited this well. Claire felt that the sound of clapping throughout the piece sounded militant, which related to the military theme of the piece, but at the same time it sounded like it belonged to the “‘charismatic’ church, where congregations clap to the music sung in services. It could also encourage the Christian audience to clap along, thus involving them in the piece” (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). She commented that:

the repetition of the electronic music and the lyrics ‘This is War’ serves to drive the music forward and is used as a motivation to the audience. It is effective in that it would possibly motivate the youth to stand up for their Christian beliefs. (ibid.)

Claire said that there was a low, ominous motive that “almost sounds like a threat as to what could happen if you do not follow the Christian way” (ibid.).

### 2.2.2. Analysis of “This is War”

It is interesting that Clint said that there were not any intentional connections between music and text in this piece, given that there is much in the music that can be connected specifically with the text at particular points in the piece, or with the overall theme (intended meaning) of the piece.

The introduction of this piece makes use of clapping sounds which fall on beats two and four of each bar. In between these clapping sounds are high string sounds. These clapping and string sounds continue throughout the piece. It is these clapping sounds that Claire commented on, saying that on the one hand they sound militant but on the other, as though they are part of a ‘charismatic’ church service. After four bars of this introduction, the rapping begins (00:11). In this introduction the loud, sharp clapping sounds could initially be heard as symbolising gunshot, especially when the rapper says “Let’s take them to war” (00:09 – 00:10). At this point we do not know that the war they are speaking of is not one of violence. This could be seen as a composite anaphone (Tagg 1999:26) as, symbolising gunshot, it is both a sonic anaphone (the sound of gunshot) and a kinetic anaphone (the sound implies that there is movement of the bullet). When the rapper says “Let’s take them to war” there is a low, six-note, bass motive accompanied by a high, three-note, synthesised choral motive (00:09 – 00:10). These two motives occur at the end of every four-bar cycle throughout the piece. The high, three-note motive is a descending pattern that is iconic as it resembles a choir which is associated with church services. The church choir would usually give one a sense of peace, but in this piece it is a rather unnerving sound and makes one feel the need to take action. There is a short, three-note pattern at the end of every low-bass motive at the end of each four-bar cycle (for example 00:21). In the choruses, this three-note pattern is the melody of the words “This is War”. Because this three-note pattern occurs throughout the piece at the end of every low-bass motive, the words “This is war” are suggested throughout the piece.

After this introduction, there is a refrain (00:10 – 00:21) where the lyrics are “Everybody clap your hands, stamp your feet, come on”. In this section we realise that the loud, sharp sounds heard in the introduction are not the sounds of gunshot, but rather the sounds of clapping, and as such are also a composite anaphone (Tagg 1999:26), as it is sonic, kinetic and tactile. It is a *sonic* anaphone as clapping is a non-musical sound that has been incorporated into the musical discourse. It is a *kinetic* anaphone as the sound of clapping is caused by the movement of hands, and thus when the sound is heard there is an association with movement. It is also a *tactile* anaphone as with the sound and association of clapping, comes the sensation of clapping one’s own hands. When this refrain begins the instrumentation is increased. The clapping and string sounds continue and they are joined by a drum line, a bass line and a constant beeping sound. The continuous drum pattern throughout the piece could be likened to war drums, accompanying soldiers into battle, although this is not a war of violence, but one of fighting ‘evil’ with words, faith and truth to ensure ‘peace’ prevails. The beeping sound is heard on the second half of every beat, and its pattern is constant throughout. This beeping sound could be seen as an icon that could be interpreted as the sound of a heart monitor. As such, it could also be considered a sonic anaphone (Tagg 1999:24). The instrumentation that has been established in this section continues throughout the piece.

After the second verse, there is a refrain (02:23 – 02:33) where, between the chanting of the lyrics “This is war”, a distorted voice is used. This distorted voice sounds as though it is being picked up through a two-way radio that would be used to communicate in a combatant situation. This is an effective icon in the context of this piece, especially on the words “Come on, come on, come on” (02:32 – 02:33), as it can be heard as a means of recruiting people; calling them to the congregation to take part in this war for peace. At this point in the piece the drums and clapping sound drop out, and because the instrumentation is quieter, there is more emphasis on the text. All instrumentation returns for the next chorus.

On the words “Protect you from the enemy” (03:36 – 03:37) at the end of the third verse, all instrumentation falls away. This makes the word “enemy” stand out, giving it greater

impact. Following the word “enemy”, the low, six-note, bass motive plays (03:38). This could be understood as establishing this sound as symbolising the enemy. And because this low-bass motive is heard throughout the piece, it could be seen as symbolising the fact that the enemy is ever present. All instrumentation is reinstated for the last chorus.

After the last chorus has been performed, the music continues for another four bars, and the piece ends with the low-bass motive and the high choral sound.

The rapping style of this piece is very forceful and articulated, which aids the transmission of the message. This piece could be likened to a war chant, inciting people into action. This ties in with Claire’s comment that the repetition of the electronic music and lyrics “This is war” helps drive the music forward and helps motivate the audience. Sarah also commented that the repetition of the words “This is war” sounds like a crowd chant. The effects of the music in this piece might be interpreted as jarring and unsettling because of its bioacoustic effects (Tagg 1999:17). These bioacoustic effects are a result of the low-bass and drum parts which seem to resonate in the abdominal regions of the body, and the higher pitched, regular but jarring clapping sounds which seem to resonate in the chest and could be felt like a heartbeat. The low-bass motive that occurs at the end of every four-bar cycle is, through association, unsettling. This is a sound similar to those that have been heard many times in movies, at times when there is a feeling of an unknown outcome, impending doom, or anticipation. As a result, meaning is created from this sound through context. It is this low, six-note, bass motive, heard throughout the piece, that Claire said sounded ominous and felt like a threat.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Big Idea**

#### **1. Biography**

Big Idea is a six-member band, comprising instrumentalists, emcees, and a DJ. They have had great success since their inception in 2004, and have become “the quintessential hip hop/jazz fusion group” (<http://www.music.org.za/artist.asp?id=225>). They fuse the hip-hop style with many other styles to create an interesting mix of genres.

Big Idea “is a combination of a wide range of talents that are brought together through hip hop” (<http://mymusicmatrix.com/Content/Artsit.aspx?id=c181183f-7c61-40ed-bb59-09b9df9c6f32>). They began as a collaboration of artists from diverse backgrounds that “represent the mixed masala of cultures that make up KwaZulu-Natal. Through their music they cross cultural bridges and build new ones where no one had thought they could exist” (ibid.).

Big Idea have performed all over the country, and they appeal to a diverse audience. The band is fronted by Quincy ‘Q’ Fynn, and at the time their first album was produced the band consisted of Gareth ‘2Gees’ Gale on drums, Burton Naidoo on keyboards, Nathan ‘King B’ Redpath as vocalist and emcee, Lee ‘JET’ Wynn as emcee, and DJ LV on decks. They released their debut album, *Hot Box*, in 2006 under their own label, Ruffinery Records.

Quincy describes their music as:

hip hop music that is inspired by many different musical influences, mostly unrelated to hip hop directly. When we first got together, three of the *ous* [guys] were studying jazz at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I had always had a passion for free forms of expression, so jamming was effortless and our first

album was completed in two months.

(<http://www.rage.co.za/readmore.php?id==452&curCat=features&curCity=>)

Quincy was a participant in the 2005 Poetry Africa festival. He describes his work as “Wentworth inspired poetry that both reflects and dispels the stereotype of the urban coloured<sup>2</sup> youth” (<http://mymusicmatrix.com/Content/Artsit.aspx?id=c181183f-7c61-40ed-bb59-09b9df9c6f32>).

He says that:

Big Idea is a South African cultural project aimed at exploring, promoting and expanding our unique style and accent through artistic musical projects. Big Idea has always been about combining hip hop and electronic elements with live instrumentation. (EDY 2009:25)

Over the years Big Idea have used different performers, and since 2004 they have, at different times, had six drummers, five bassists, three keyboardists, and several other performers. In an interview with EDY for *HYPE Magazine*, Quincy summed up Big Idea in the following way:

Big Idea is like a train that a lot of *ous* [people] want to ride because they realise it’s going to an idyllic location. But when they get on and see that in order to get there we pass through dry barren deserts, harsh landscapes and dangerous slums, they get *bang* [scared] and look for the next safe stop. I’m sure all of them enjoyed the ride though. (ibid.)

## 2. Song Choices

*Hot Box* (2006) is Big Idea’s first and, currently, only album. They are busy working on their second album, *Austereville*. Quincy said that this new album will be “a more hip hop album: more conscious and yet more gangster. We will remain edgy and raw, but the

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<sup>2</sup> Coloured is a South African term used for people of mixed colour, for example black and white.

aim is always to be heard and understood (or misunderstood)” (Author’s Interview: Fynn, Durban, 21 April 2009).

The two pieces I have used in this research are “D to W” and “Amnesty” from *Hot Box*. I chose “D to W” because of its ‘laid-back’ sound and particularly Durban content. “Amnesty” was chosen because of the effect it had on me. I will now go on to discuss each of these pieces.

### **2.1. “D to W”**

Quincy said that with “D to W” they wanted to bring the different sections of Durban together in one song. The ‘D’ in the title stands for Durban, and the ‘W’ for Wenties [Wentworth]. Wentworth is traditionally a coloured area based in the Durban South Basin and is notorious for drugs and gangsterism. Over the years the oil refinery has produced much pollution, and it has caused many health problems with the residents of the area who have battled with authorities for many years. Quincy said that at the time they wrote this piece, the band members who lived in Wentworth had been bringing people to the area for the first time in their lives. These people had previously been too afraid to go to the area because of its notorious reputation. However, when Quincy took them there, they realised that it consisted of suburbs of people leading ordinary lives. Quincy said that those of them from Wentworth, who had not spent much time in the affluent northern suburbs, found themselves doing so at the time, because some of the band members lived there. As a result, this piece is an acknowledgement of their cultural exchanges at the time, and “it is a fun song about how different we all are” (Author’s Interview: Fynn, Durban, 21 April 2009).

When asked if they had formed any intentional connections between the music and lyrics, Quincy said that “the only intentional connection is that the vocals and the music both whirl downwards perpetually without ever stopping, until they go a bit mad at the end” (Author’s Interview: Fynn, Durban, 21 April 2009). By this, Quincy means that the



accompaniment moves in a descending pattern that is continuously repeated in the choruses and in the coda.

### **2.1.1. Audience Responses to “D to W”**

All the audience members interpreted the meaning of this piece in a way that corresponded to the band’s intended meaning. Ethan thought that this was “a lovely view of Durban” (Audience Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009). Jennifer interpreted this piece as being about “the love of Durban with all its contradictions: that it is a melting pot of cultures, classes and people” (Audience Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009). “The rapper speaks of knowing Durban ‘like the back of our hand’”, said Claire (Author’s interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). “He questions why people lose their identity when they move into ‘wealthy’ areas: he says they ‘lose their hunger’” (ibid.). She felt that “this piece isn’t really meant to be taken seriously, even though it questions people losing their identities. It sounds light and groovy, and feels like fun” (ibid.). This is exactly what Quincy said the piece was about when he said “it is a fun song about how different we all are” (Author’s Interview: Fynn, Durban, 21 April 2009). Sarah said that this track “locates the band as being from Durban, and it introduces the listeners to what their ‘vibes’ are, and what they enjoy doing” (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009). She said it was a combination of the music and the text that brought her to this interpretation, as the text covers specifically ‘Durban’ issues, and the music reminds her of Durban.

Jennifer commented that, to her, the music “sounded like ‘lift music’” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009). She said the music had a “‘cool’ sound because of the feel of the music, and because the lyrics aren’t aggressive” (ibid.). Sarah said that this piece made her feel “great. These guys make sweet music” (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009). She said that the music was upbeat and fun to listen to, and not just lyrics heavy. This ties in with Jennifer’s comment that the lyrics are not aggressive. Sarah really enjoyed the fact that the band does not just “stick to hip hop sounds; they experiment” (ibid.). She said that she often laughed out loud while listening

to this piece “because of its general humour and awesome rhymes. It’s fun listening to how he plays with words. This is a super composition. It fulfils its claims of being ‘fresh like butter on breakfast toast’” (ibid.). Ethan said that he really liked this band. He felt that the musical accompaniment was “much too clever for traditional hip hop” (Author’s Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009), and that, like Ewok’s “Hollywood Burning”, it had a “very Durban groove” (ibid.).

Claire said that the music in the introduction gave the piece a “laid-back sound, almost giving the feeling of being on holiday. I find the music really brings out the feeling of Durban; it makes me think of the wharfside on a Sunday afternoon. The keyboard in organ mode also adds to the laid back ‘leafy’ Durban feel” (Author’s Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). This ties in with Ethan’s comment that this piece has a ‘Durban groove’. Claire said that the “reverb and manic quality as the music gets faster at the end, puts the mind in turmoil, but the piece ends on the same Durban holiday mood” (ibid.). She noted that there was a “very laid-back sound on the words ‘Man I’m parking in Umhlanga rocks’” (ibid.). Claire really liked the sound of the single descending bass notes after the words “From your toes to your *kroes kops* [slang for the hair of people of colour]”, which she said have the “lazy, slow sound of Durban” (ibid.).

### **2.1.2. Analysis of “D to W”**

The introduction of this piece begins with the drums, hi-hat cymbal and bass line. At the very end of the introduction (00:16) the keyboard comes in and it follows the melody of the bass line, but at a different interval. The keyboard does not use a traditional piano sound, but rather an organ or chorus sound. This then leads into the first verse (00:20). The instrumentation of the first verse is the same as in the introduction, but the melody of each instrument is now different.

This piece has a very ‘laid-back’ quality, particularly due to the way in which the keyboard is used; playing long sustained chords. It is this ‘laid-back’ quality that led

Ethan to say that this piece has a very Durban groove, Claire to say that it sounds like Durban and has a ‘holiday’ sound, and Jennifer to say that it has a ‘cool’ sound.

In the chorus, the keyboard plays a descending melody in double intervals, and the bass line also descends (e.g. 01:26 – 01:28). This relates to the connection that Quincy said they had made between the lyrics and the music: that they both whirl downwards. This creates a rather unnerving sound and one of the listeners described it as ‘spooky’. These low, descending sounds would probably be interpreted as unnerving or spooky because it is these kinds of musical accompaniments that are sometimes used in movies at times when these feelings are evoked. Therefore, these associations would be made through past audiovisual experiences. The chorus ends (01:46 – 01:51) with the same quality of sound that the verses use: a ‘chilled out’ sound. It is a return to the ‘holiday sound’ Claire referred to.

In the second verse, Quincy speaks the words “Chopping up chaps with the panga” (02:01 – 02:03) in a very short, rhythmical, staccato way. The rhythm of these words is followed by the rhythm of the hi-hat to create more of an impact. The way in which these words are performed enables the listener to hear them as a sonic anaphora (Tagg 1999:24), as they could be likened to the sound of ‘chopping’ with a ‘panga’: the words are onomatopoeic, and the hi-hat reinforces this sound. This is another clever interplay of music and text.

Another place where a change in instrumentation gives emphasis to the text is at “You shouldn’t walk slow through Umbilo/’Cause you just never know who’s a *bruin ou* [slang for a coloured person] acting mental” (02:22 – 02:27). Here, the beat slows with the use of triplets, which is different to any other part of this piece. This can also be viewed as a relationship between the music and the text, as the beats slow down and Quincy is talking about walking slowly. This was one of the lines that most of the listeners found humorous. Quincy is a coloured man from Durban, and in this line he is commenting on the idiosyncrasies of Durban coloureds in a particular area of Durban. As a result, people who have experienced Durban would understand and find this line humorous. After this

section (02:27), the keyboard and bass line continue to follow the same melody that was established in the introduction.

With the words “Who god flows, which band lays it down the most/Fresh like butter on breakfast toast” (02:42 – 02:46), the drum, keyboard and hi-hat come together and follow the same rhythm. Because this moves to a more monophonic accompaniment, it sounds as though something is missing; and the text is exposed. As a result, the text, which serves as an affirmation of the band’s ability and success, is emphasised. This then moves into the chorus with the same ‘unnerving’ sound as before.

There are several places where there is a very clever use, and interplay, of music and text, which also adds a humorous touch. Just after the lyrics “When the bass line drops/You feel it from your toes to your *kroes kops*” (00:50 – 01:00), all the instruments drop away and the bass plays a descending line (01:01 – 01:06), thus connecting to the lyrics. It is this descending line that Claire really liked, and which she thought had a slow, lazy Durban sound. There is a play on words where Quincy says “Cool with the *dop* [slang for alcoholic drink]” (01:06), which makes one think of relaxing with an alcoholic beverage, and this imagery is confirmed when he goes on to say “G hit us with a shot/*Eksê* [coloured slang for *ek sê*, meaning, I say] make it a double” (01:07 – 01:10), as the words ‘shot’ and ‘double’ are also drinking terminology. However, knowing that when he tells ‘G’ to hit them with a shot, he is talking to the drummer, Gareth ‘2Gees’ Gale, and knowing musical terminology, we understand that there is also a musical reference here. A ‘shot’ refers to a rim shot, which is when the drummer hits the stick on the rim of the snare drum. If one listens carefully to the music at this point, when he says “hit us with a shot” a single drum hit is sounded (01:08), and when he says “make it a double”, there a double rim shot is sounded (01:10) while the other instrumentation is suspended.

At the end of the last chorus there is a coda (03:06) which goes, as the band intended, a bit out of control. There is heavy reverberation on the vocals which become quite distorted. The keyboard plays an ascending melody which has a short descending passage at the end of its cycle. This is then repeated throughout the coda. The keyboard line

relates to the lyrics “We take you all around Durban and back again”. This section can also be related to Quincy’s saying that at the time they composed “D to W”, they were bringing people into Wentworth for the first time. The lyrics and the music, as described above, in this coda have a very unnerving, almost scary, quality. Quincy says “When we got you over there [Wentworth] man, we got you where we want you”, and this ties in with people’s fears of the area, because of its notorious reputation. Claire described this section as having a manic quality which puts the mind in turmoil. However, the piece ends on the same ‘holiday’ sound of the verses, and this focuses us on the fact that, as Quincy said when discussing their reasons for composing this piece, Wentworth does not always live up to its notorious reputation.

## **2.2. “Amnesty”**

When asked what their intended message for “Amnesty” is, Quincy said that at the time Big Idea wrote this piece,

we had become a little confused by the contradiction that existed in government strategy to combat crime. The levels of crime in South Africa were ever increasing, but the government was asking the public to hand in their firearms, which could be considered a vital form of self-defence. (Author’s Interview: Fynn, Durban, 21 April 2009).

This piece was composed when they were ‘playing around’ with the drum-and-bass groove and the “fast, jerky triplet flow” (ibid.). Quincy said that “the topic of gun amnesty was prevalent in the local media at the time. I was thinking of the irony of asking law-abiding citizens to relinquish what could be their only form of protection in the murder capital of the world that is South Africa.” (ibid.)

The intentional connection that was made between the music and the lyrics in this piece is the rhythm of the hi-hat and the vocals in the first and third verses. Quincy said that they used these to play off of each other. In each of the verses the hi-hat is played on

every beat and off-beat, which makes it a very fast rhythm. The rapping in the first and third verses is also very fast; thus the rhythms of the vocals and hi-hat flow together.

### 2.2.1. Audience Responses to “Amnesty”

Ethan thought that this was a very clever piece. He said that the band members “are disillusioned with a system where there is not sufficient protection for the individuals” (Author’s Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009). Jennifer interpreted the lyrics of this piece as bringing across the message that “honesty doesn’t pay” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009). She said that this piece had a feeling of youth, and of resistance against the system. These two interpretations both relate to the intended meaning of the piece. Sarah said that this piece:

essentially tells the story of one man’s encounter with the law over the possession of *dagga*, but it also discusses the misappropriation of power within the police force and the justice system, and not having freedom of choice over your own lifestyle. It is about the supposed ways the ‘democratic’ system grants ‘amnesty’. What chance is there for change when so few have a voice?” (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009)

It was both the music and the text that brought her to this interpretation, as both were delivered at a fast tempo, and both create a feeling of tension. By making reference to the corruption within the justice system, this interpretation has a basic connection to the piece’s intended meaning, but Sarah does not comment on the topic of gun amnesty.

With regard to the music, Jennifer said that at 03:13 the “overdriven guitar gives a feeling of *angst*” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009). Sarah commented that this piece made her feel tense, and that this was a result of both the music and the text. She said that the music captured and held her attention, and she found that it incited her. At various points in the piece she also felt anger, rage, disbelief and empathy. She said that she identified with the band’s frustration with the justice system. Sarah felt that the music was continuously apt. Ethan felt the piano introduction was a bit long.

Claire found this piece intriguing and listened to it many times. In the process of listening she wrote her thoughts down, and she commented on many aspects of the music. One can also infer from her comments what this piece means to her, and this meaning very much relates to the band's intended meaning for this piece. She wrote that:

the piano introduction is misleadingly slow, and the bass notes give it a slightly ominous feel. The electronic music then comes in and the piano becomes more aggressive. The piano in the beginning could relate to the peace which should come from amnesty, but in this case it doesn't. When the rapping comes in, it is like fast gunfire, too rapid to even make out the lyrics, and this makes you feel lost and overwhelmed by the sounds being thrown at you. The high, simple piano notes are there amongst the cacophony of other sounds, but are hardly noticeable unless you listen hard for them. Then it all drops away as it goes into the chorus. This is effective because it leads from confusion into simple sweet melody for a short time while the rapper says he did a peaceful thing, but at the same time it smacks of mockery and irony. 'I handed in my guns for amnesty/And look at where my honesty landed me', repeated a few times, comes in with an almost sarcastic tone, and the piece becomes melodic in that chorus. This helps to get across the point that the rapper has done this lawful thing by handing in his gun, but it has been to his detriment instead of being a peaceful benefit, because he is now at risk of harm without the self-protection the gun offered him. The confusion in the music seems to relate to the words where the rapper is confused about crime, what crime is, and that even the police seem corrupt. The bass sounds throughout this quieter section continue to carry the threatening 'vibe'. The next part of the piece is also slower, and the piano has repetitive higher notes, almost manic, creating a feeling of no sense. There is a sarcastic laugh, then some heavy guitar, which adds a feeling of tension. Guitar, bass, piano and drums come into the next part and work with it, building tension as it moves forward. In the last of the choruses there is the sound of gunshot, and it reminds one of the crime that surrounds us in South Africa, and in Durban where we live. There is an abrupt ending on the piano, as though the rapper has been silenced. One is left with the question of whether handing in guns is a solution to the crime problem, which seems so big and without solution. Although I find this piece unnerving, and it addresses something that concerns all South Africans, I enjoyed the way the music so cleverly supported the lyrics. (Claire's Written Commentary: Durban, 28 May 2009)

### **2.2.2. Analysis of "Amnesty"**

This piece begins with a slow, arpeggiated piano introduction with low bass notes (00:00 – 00:29). The low bass notes sounded ominous to Claire, probably because of previous

associations with these sounds. Half way through the introduction (00:29), an electronic sound starts to come in, softly at first. This electronic sound gets progressively louder until it takes over (00:39) and the piano cannot be heard any more. Towards the end of this introduction the piano again plays low bass notes (00:41) that follow an ascending pattern. These are the first aspects of the piece that help to build tension, and they partly account for Sarah's comment that this piece made her feel tense. The different sounds in this introduction could be considered iconic. The slow piano beginning could, as Claire commented, be understood as the peace that should come from handing in guns for amnesty. However, as Claire mentioned, this peace does not prevail, and the electronic sound that starts to come in halfway through the introduction begins to corrupt this peace. At first this sound begins to corrupt the slow piano sounds, until, eventually, it just takes over.

When the first verse begins (00:52), the instrumentation includes the drums, cymbals, electronic sound, bass, and piano. The piano plays the same high, arpeggiated notes that were used at the beginning of the introduction, but they are now played much faster. They are also very soft, and almost inaudible. This instrumentation continues throughout the verse. The tempo of this first verse is extremely fast: so fast that most of the words are difficult to follow. The very fast rapping was described by Claire as resembling fast gunfire, and giving a sense of feeling lost and overwhelmed.

The tempo of the chorus is much slower than that of the first verse. Claire said that this part has a "simple, sweet melody", which emphasises the theme of doing a peaceful thing by handing in his guns. The instrumentation in the chorus includes descending string sounds, the electronic sound that was established in the introduction, the drums, cymbal and bass. After the first two repeats of "I handed in my guns for amnesty/And look at where my honesty's landed me" another voice comes in (01:40), rapping above Quincy. This second voice is distorted and it raps, very fast, the same words that Quincy is singing. Claire felt that the bass line in this section carried a 'threatening vibe' through.



The instrumentation in the second verse (01:53) is the same as that of the first verse. The difference now is that the piano is louder and more noticeable, and the rapping is much slower and more understandable. Claire felt that the high piano notes in this section sounded almost manic, and continued to give a sense of confusion.

In the second chorus (02:28), the second voice is now present from the beginning. The instrumentation is the same as in the first chorus. This second chorus is followed by an interlude (02:52). The interlude begins with the same instrumentation as the verses, someone laughs (02:54), and then an overdriven guitar solo enters (03:03). Jennifer said that this guitar solo gives a feeling of *angst*, and Claire commented that it added a feeling of tension. In this section the drums and bass come together to play the same forceful rhythm.

When the third verse begins (03:17), the guitar solo finishes over the first line of the verse: “Sitting in a two man cell with 25 other *ous*” (03:17 – 03:19). The words in this line would make one feel tense when imagining being in a two-man jail cell with 25 other people. Therefore the feeling of tension that was created by the guitar solo is heightened in this line, while the solo is finishing. The instrumentation is the same as in the first two verses, and the rapping is once again fast. Low piano notes are used to interject, and to emphasise certain words (from 03:22) which seem to hold some importance. This occurs on the words “Wenties”, “told you”, “tell me”, “we don’t”, “who should”, “sue me”, “cool it g”, “scene”, “team”, “don’t rap”, and “funds”. After this, the piano beats get faster.

On the last chorus (03:53), the repeated, low piano notes continue. A distorted drum sound now enters. It is this sound that Claire said was the sound of gunshot. As such, it is a sonic anaphora (Tagg 1999:24). It can also be understood as a kinetic anaphora (Tagg 1999:24) as, with the sound of gunshot, there is the association of the movement of a bullet. When Quincy says “I handed in my guns” for the last time, there is a very fast repetition on one low note on the piano, with the drums playing the same rhythm (04:37). This fast repetition could be interpreted as fast gunfire. The piece ends on a short, piano

chord with all the other instrumentation having dropped out, then there is a sudden silence. It is this that led Claire to say it seemed as though the rapper had been suddenly silenced, possibly by being shot.

## Chapter 6

### Zuluboy

#### 1. Biography

I now focus on Zuluboy, who combines hip hop with traditional Zulu elements. This gives his music a more local flavour, as the Zulu culture and heritage originated in KwaZulu-Natal. Because these traditional Zulu elements are combined with hip hop, there are additional social and cultural meanings associated with this music.

Zuluboy is a “multi-talented and new internationally acclaimed ethnic rapper” (<http://www.nativerhythms.co.za/artists.html>). He describes himself as “an uncompromisingly ethnic hip hop rapper” (Zuluboy: <http://www.myspace.com/zuluboyhiphop>). After completing his matric in 2001, Zuluboy left Durban for Johannesburg to study and continue his musical training. When he returned to Durban, he became involved with KwaZulu-Natal’s hip-hop movements, such as *Inqaba* Hip Hop Sessions, and he also initiated a hip-hop show at Ukhozi FM, one of the local radio stations. He was chosen as one of seventeen artists to perform at the First African Hip Hop Summit in 2005. His performance at this summit led to a place at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Hip Hop Summit and Concert in Vancouver, Canada in June 2006. Later that year he released his debut album *Masihambisane – Da 1<sup>st</sup> Hip Hop Lesson*. In 2008, Zuluboy released his second album, *iNqolobane*.

Zuluboy has performed at concerts and festivals throughout South Africa, and he has toured internationally. Some of the countries he has visited include Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Canada, Malawi and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands he performed for B Connected and Music MayDay, and while he was in Europe he conducted workshops with 15-25 year olds, focusing on ethnic music and rap, beat making and compositions (Zuluboy:

<http://www.myspace.com/zuluboyhiphop>). Zuluboy has also performed and recorded with many artists, both local and international.

Zuluboy is a “cultural ambassador and an educator on social issues, such as HIV/Aids, poverty and unemployment” (<http://www.soulcity.org.za/programmes/the-soul-city-series/soul-city-series-9/document.2009-02-05.6582311188/>), and he also has a role in the South African television series *Soul City*. Zuluboy “has a message, and wants to make South Africans better listeners” (<http://www.channel24.co.za/entertainment/music/?p=interview&i=605277>). “He deals with issues that affect us all, the people that surround us all, and the country that contains us all. His influences of maskandi to jazz, to the awe-inspiring sounds of James Brown, keep his music fresh, accessible and truly original” (Banks 2008: 32).

Zuluboy believes that it is important to rap in the vernacular, as it makes one unique and it makes the music even more relevant to the majority of the people in South Africa. In an interview with *Hype Magazine*, he said, “we need to address our people in the languages they speak so that we can get our messages across to them. A lot of people in our country are illiterate and can’t speak the queen’s language” (Moilola 2009:37).

Zuluboy said that when he was performing in North America and Europe, “the only difference I spotted between us and them was the language. Strangely enough, I didn’t feel like I had my signature, you know, that thing that separates me from the next performer” (ibid.). In an interview with Therese Owen, Zuluboy said “I used to feel that if I took my lyrics out of my songs it would sound American. The whole idea behind [my second album] was a fusion of jazz, maskandi and hip hop. That’s why I call it skandi-hop” (2008:<http://www.tonight.co.za/index=php?fsectionId=397&farticleId=4523379>). He now feels that if he were to remove the lyrics from his beats, people might be able to recognise the sound as his own (Moilola 2009:38).

## **2. Song Choices**

Zuluboy's first album, *Masihambisane – Da 1<sup>st</sup> Hip Hop Lesson* (2006), has been used in this research. At the start of my research, this was his only available recording. He has since recorded another album, *iNqolobane* (2008), but this was not available to me during the time of this research.

The two pieces that have been used in this research are “3 Zulus on da Mic” and “Ulibambe Lingashoni” [You will Hold the Sun]. I chose “3 Zulus on da Mic” because of its use of traditional maskanda, and “Ulibambe Lingashoni” because of its use of Spanish-style guitar playing. I will now proceed with a discussion of each of these pieces.

### **2.1 “3 Zulus on da Mic”**

When asked what the intended message of “3 Zulus on da Mic” is, Zuluboy said that it was a platform for three Zulu men from different upbringings to come together to share various issues. There was one rapper from KwaZulu-Natal (Zuluboy), one from Soweto (Young Nations), and one who had grown up in exile in the United States (Pro Kid).

When Zuluboy composed this piece he said he first decided on the musical track and then each rapper was called to lay down their part of the track. Zuluboy said that he didn't form any intentional connections between the music and the lyrics of this track, but he said that he used a 32-bar form instead of the usual 16-bar form (Audience Interview: Zuluboy, Durban, 24 May 2009).

#### **2.1.1 Audience Responses to “3 Zulus on da Mic”**

When it came to interpreting the meaning of “3 Zulus on da Mic”, Ethan, who can also speak Zulu, and has had much experience in the Zulu culture, said that “the first voice is rapping about how hip he is, the second voice is rapping about his identity as a Zulu who grew up in California, and the third voice is rapping about how hip and cool the three of

them are” (Author’s Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009). Thandeka, a jazz voice student in the foundation program at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, said that this piece:

depicts the lives of these three men in modern times, and as emcees they comment on the world they are living in. When I listen to this piece it draws my attention to my own surroundings, and for me it creates a sense of pride and honour in my Zulu heritage. (Author’s Interview: Thandeka, Durban, 2 June 2009)

Sarah’s interpretation related to Thandeka’s, and she felt that this piece:

seems to be representing Zulu identity in local hip-hop culture. The repetition of the lyrics in the chorus reiterates their ‘Zulu-ness’. It also seems to celebrate both Zulu identity and hip hop by giving a more universal voice to cultures all over the world that are subject to urbanisation, consumerism and capitalism. (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009)

Claire was provided with a translation of the lyrics as she does not understand Zulu. She said that:

Zuluboy promotes himself as a rapper, and he sings about his people, and ‘black on black’ violence. He uses references that ordinary South Africans would relate to, such as four people squashed up on a taxi seat. He describes life in the township, and for me, he contrasts the bright colours with the sadness of life that is still prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa. This is a song about reconciliation, not so much between black and white, as between different black clans. It is also about the second rapper being away from home and returning to find that nothing has changed, neither for good nor bad. (Author’s Interview: Claire, 31 May 2009)

All of these interpretations relate to Zuluboy’s intended meaning of the piece that it was a platform for 3 Zulu men to come together to discuss various issues.

When commenting on the *musical* elements of “3 Zulus on da Mic”, Jennifer said that this piece made her think of “inner-city life” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, 14 May 2009). She said that the tone of the lyrics, the beat and the “erratic instrument noises are real urban sounds” (ibid.). Thandeka said that the music did relate to the lyrics “as it has a

maskandi sound mixed with modernised, Zulu hip hop” (Author’s Interview: Thandeka, Durban, 2 June 2009). She said that there were various parts of this piece that made more of an impression on her. These were “when the song begins and the bass line kicks in (absolutely beautiful); where Pro Kid starts rapping at 02:32; and when there is a change of the accompaniment to a sweet melody at 02:54” (ibid.).

Ethan thought that it was interesting how the rappers:

tried to integrate the traditional and unmistakable Zulu guitar line. I liked the fact that the guitar gives it a geographical pointer, as well as a recognition of tradition, but I don’t think it is a match made in heaven. Musically it wasn’t smooth enough. (Author’s Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009)

Sarah said that the “piece begins with the recognizable local elements of the whistle and guitar style” (Author’s Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009). She said that she enjoyed this piece, as it was upbeat, and well composed and mixed. She felt that “the catchy repeated line in the chorus seems like it would easily become a crowd chant, thus making the piece appeal more to the audience, as it is including them in it” (ibid.).

Claire said she really enjoyed the way this piece started, and that it was a sound that she would recognise wherever she was, and it would make her feel homesick if she were away from South Africa, and Durban in particular. Like Thandeka, Ethan and Sarah, she commented on the traditional Zulu music. She said that the beginning of the piece used a “distinctive Zulu sound and starts with ululation and whistling: it almost sounds like praise singing. The piece begins with the traditional music, and it turns into the familiar hip-hop sound” (Author’s Interview: Claire, 31 May 2009). She said that:

the way in which the music changes throughout the piece is effective in conveying the changes in our society. There are moments of discord where traditional and electronic musics are combined. This is particularly noticeable on the lyrics ‘1, 2, 3, three Zulus on da M. I. C.’. (ibid.)

Claire noted that when the second rapper talks about paying his respects to the king, there is a chorus saying “Bayete”, which, she said, is the recognizable way of referring to King

Shaka. She said the rapper seemed to be paying respects to his roots; where he comes from as a Zulu. Claire commented on the whistle that comes in every so often, saying that it:

constantly refers one back to thoughts of Zulu culture. It is a distinctive sound used in traditional warrior dance, and always makes me think of strong men in skins with spears and shields, yet it is used here in a modern hip-hop song, and it seems apt that Zuluboy uses this in the music to hold on to tradition in a changing world. After listening to this piece, I then read the translation of the lyrics, and interestingly found that there is reference to warriors in the lyrics, so Zuluboy must have intended to evoke these feelings in the listener. As a white person who grew up in apartheid South Africa, often the only exposure to Zulu culture was through entertainment and particularly dance, so this sound gives me a feeling of sad nostalgia because in my youth I had no understanding of the injustices in my country and feel I too was cheated out of being part of the big picture. (ibid.)

### **2.1.2. Analysis of “3 Zulus on da Mic”**

As noted by Sarah, Claire, Thandeka and Ethan, this piece begins with recognisably traditional Zulu music. The introduction uses a maskanda guitar line, which is used often throughout the piece, and whistling, which tends to be a part of traditional Zulu music. Maskanda is a musical style that has deep Zulu roots. “It was created in the early twentieth century by Zulu workers migrating between rural homes and jobs in cities” (Pareles 2007:[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/12/arts/music/12ngco.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/12/arts/music/12ngco.html?_r=1)). The content of the songs is usually about home, family memories, roots, and moral questions. The songs are also written “for listeners coping with transitions between country and city, heritage and urban possibilities” (ibid.). This content of maskanda pieces is relevant to “3 Zulus on da Mic” as the rappers are speaking of Zulu culture and heritage within contemporary society. Maskanda is guitar-based music and begins with an improvised introduction before settling into the composed groove of the piece. It also usually includes *izibongo*, the old Zulu tradition of praise poetry. The use of the traditional maskanda guitar line in “3 Zulus on da Mic” would be considered a genre synecdoche (Tagg 1999:17) as the style indicators (ibid.:28) of the traditional maskanda genre are included in another style (hip hop), so as to represent traditional maskanda as a whole. The fast, spoken introduction by Zuluboy (00:02 – 00:17) is delivered in such a way that,



as Claire noted, it could be heard as praise singing. Because praise poetry is a common element of maskanda, it is relevant that the vocal delivery in the introduction of this piece is heard in such a way. As is traditional in maskanda, the guitar in this piece first plays an improvised introduction before moving onto its composed melody (00:08). When the guitar begins playing its composed melody, the drums also begin playing. This is the first time we hear a contemporary sound in this piece. There is a strong interplay between the overall text and music of “3 Zulus on da Mic”, as the text acknowledges Zulu heritage, and the music uses traditional maskanda. It also acknowledges Zulu tradition within a modern society by using a combination of traditional music and the technology of electronic music, and by using the Zulu language, but in the style of rapping. This aspect was commented on by Thandeka.

The first verse (00:18 – 00:58) of “3 Zulus on da Mic” is rapped by Zuluboy. The maskanda guitar line carries on through the beginning of this verse until the electronic music begins (00:38). The bass line enters (00:18) while the maskanda guitar is still playing. Towards the end of the maskanda guitar line, a low-bass sound, which is very prominent, enters (00:28), as well as a few other percussion sounds. Just after the entry of these instruments the traditional guitar line drops out (00:38) and the music becomes purely electronic. From this point to the end of the verse, the instrumentation includes the low-bass sound, a high chorus sound, percussion sounds, and occasionally an arpeggiated piano sound and a distorted, electronic guitar sound. Jennifer described these electronic sounds as being erratic and “real urban sounds” (Author’s Interview: Jennifer, Durban, 14 May 2009). Throughout the piece there is a use of multiple-voices, where the other rappers are speaking at the same time as the rapper of the current verse. This helps to bring across a sense of community, and gives it an ‘everyday’ city-life quality.

When the chorus (a repetition of the words “1,2,3, three Zulus on the M. I. C.”) begins (00:59), the maskanda guitar line re-enters. The electronic sounds that were introduced in the first verse continue. Another electronic sound is also introduced here: a high-pitched motive with an electronic steel drum sound. As a result, there is a mix of traditional and ‘modern’ musics in the chorus.

Pro Kid (the Zulu man who grew up in exile in the United States) raps the second verse in English (01:20 – 02:11). The instrumentation in this verse is the same as in the first verse, except that the maskanda guitar line is missing in the first half of the verse. On one possible reading, this absence might reinforce the fact that Pro Kid did not grow up in South Africa. There is an interesting use of lyrics in this verse that Claire commented on. When Pro Kid says “pay respects to the king” (01:41 – 01:43) the other two voices say “Bayete” (01:43), which, as Claire mentioned, is the traditional way of acknowledging the presiding Zulu king.

The second chorus is a repeat of the first, now with the use of whistling (02:30 – 02:33). Whistling was first noticed in the introduction, although in this chorus the whistling sounds more like the kind one would hear coming from a mini-bus taxi, as whistling is sometimes used to attract the attention of pedestrians who may be in need of transportation. This adds to the ‘urban’ sound that Jennifer said this piece has.

The third verse (02:33) is rapped by Young Nations (the Zulu man from Soweto). The instrumentation is the same as in the two previous verses. Halfway through this verse (02:53), there is a slight change in the instrumentation with some of it falling away so that we are left with the arpeggiated piano sound, the high chorus sound, and the bass and drums.

The third chorus begins with only the electronic music: the traditional guitar line, which was used in the other two choruses, is missing. Once again, at the end of the first repeat of the chorus (03:28), there is some whistling, and on the second repeat (03:35) the maskanda guitar line returns.

Following this chorus there is a coda (03:55) where the maskanda guitar line is once again prominent, which seems to reinforce the Zulu heritage prevalent in this piece. In this section one of the rappers speaks. Towards the end of the coda the voices all drop out (04:15) and the electronic music continues. Then some of the electronic sounds fall away

(04:34) so that we are left with the low-bass sound, the steel drum sound, the high chorus sound, and occasionally the distorted, electronic guitar sound. The piece ends on a single low-bass sound and the arpeggiated piano sound.

“3 Zulus on da Mic” successfully manages to achieve a respect for tradition, while still being relevant and relating to society in Durban today.

## **2.2. “Ulibambe Lingashoni” [You will Hold the Sun]**

When asked what his intended meaning for “Ulibambe Lingashoni” is, Zuluboy said that “this track is about a failed relationship” (Author’s Interview: Zuluboy, Durban, 24 May 2009). He said that the woman he refers to in the piece rejected him because of his lack of money and success, and she could not believe in his dreams.

In composing this piece, Zuluboy said that he found a beat that he liked in an archive, which he then used. His composition was then created around this beat.

With regard to any intentional connections between music and text, Zuluboy said that “when I write my lyrics for the specific beats that I have, I try to incorporate the feeling that the beat gives me, and then write in that context. That’s what I did with this piece” (ibid.).

### **2.2.1. Audience Responses to “Ulibambe Lingashoni”**

Ethan interpreted the lyrics of this piece as being “a view of township life. It is an explanation of its difficulties, as well as seeing the need to project the positives and to look forward and to embrace life. I particularly like the sentiment of ‘now life carries on’” (Author’s Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009). Siza, a fourth-year Bachelor of Practical Music student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal majoring in jazz piano, interpreted the lyrics of this piece as being about anger and pain, and that it makes one wonder “why people hurt each other” (Author’s Interview: Siza, Durban, 2 June 2009).

He also commented that he related to this piece on a personal level. Claire was provided with a translation of the lyrics of this piece. She said that the piece's lyrics were about "an ordinary person suffering a heartbreak. The rapper speaks to the ordinary man, and so the listener can relate to it" (Author's Interview: Claire, 31 May 2009). Claire's interpretation directly relates to Zuluboy's intended meaning for "Ulibambe Lingashoni".

When asked about the music in particular, Ethan commented that this was "a truly beautiful song" (Author's Interview: Ethan, Durban, 20 May 2009). He said that "the groove of this piece supports the relentlessness of it all" (ibid.). He particularly liked the female voice. Siza said that the music made him want to listen to the story more to find out how it ends. Jennifer said that this piece had a relaxed and laidback feeling, especially in the chorus. Sarah said that, because she did not understand Zulu and therefore did not understand the lyrics of this piece, she did not find it particularly emotive. However, she did enjoy many elements of the musical track, such as "the beautifully layered interwoven vocals, the strings, the gentle beat, and the female vocals. These elements create a soundscape with depth" (Author's Interview: Sarah, Durban, 3 June 2009).

Claire said that this piece had an 'ordinary' sound, which helps to relay that it is about "an ordinary person, and it speaks to the ordinary man" (Author's Interview: Claire, Durban, 31 May 2009). She said that the piece began by introducing the artist, and it sounded like a conversation as "he's asking the listener if he knows the girl he's singing about" (ibid.). She felt that this was effective in including the listener in the piece, and that this conversational tone added to the 'ordinary' sound of the piece. Claire felt that the clapping sound that is heard throughout the piece drove the piece forward, and she enjoyed the mix of the rapping and the female voice. She felt that:

the female voice seems to sound pleading and full of regret, particularly in the chorus when she sings '*Oh yini*' [Oh why]. The female vocals near the end are very melodic and contrast strongly with the rap. I'm not sure if it's the rapper's intention, but it's almost as though he is offering both sides of the story. The piece also ends on a conversational tone, with several voices singing and talking. The piece ends simply on a final note with a strike on a cymbal. (ibid.)

Claire said that “the guitar melody throughout the piece makes me feel comfortable and ready to listen to a story” (ibid.). This relates to Siza’s comment that the music makes him want to listen to the story to find out how it ends. Claire felt that the music and lyrics worked well together and made the piece easy to listen to, as there was nothing “jolting or abrasive about it” (ibid.). She commented that Zuluboy has a very different style of rapping to the other performance groups used in this research.

### **2.2.2. Analysis of “Ulibambe Lingashoni”**

The introduction to this piece establishes a Spanish-style guitar line, which remains constant throughout the piece. The use of the Spanish-style guitar line would be considered a genre synecdoche (Tagg 1999:17) as the style indicators (ibid.:28) of the Spanish guitar genre are included in a foreign style, that is, hip hop, so as to represent Spanish guitar music as a whole. This guitar-line has a relaxing, soothing quality, and it is very likely this that led to the comment by Siza that the music wants to make him listen to the story to see what happens in the end, the comment by Claire that it makes her comfortable and ready to listen to a story, and the comment by Jennifer that it has a relaxed and laidback feeling. The continuous use of this guitar line may also be the reason for Ethan’s comment that the groove supports the relentlessness of the text. The rapping in the introduction is more conversational, as was noted by Claire, and, as she said, adds to the ‘ordinary’ sound quality of the piece. Other instrumentation in the introduction includes a shaker playing on every beat and off-beat, a kick drum that also plays a constant rhythm throughout the piece, and a clapping sound on beats 2 and 4 of each bar. It is this clapping sound that Claire had said helped to drive the piece forward.

Verse one begins with a cymbal hit (00:21), and this cymbal hit is occasionally heard during the piece. The instrumentation in this verse is the same as that of the introduction. On the words “*Sisuka emhlabathini sahlala emafini* (Lift you up from the earth to the clouds)” (00:42 – 00:44) the bass line, which is constant throughout the verses, begins. Through most of the verse the rapping makes use of a double-voice. The rapping has an almost singing quality.

The first verse is followed by an interlude (00:52 – 01:02) which uses singing by a female voice (Siphokazi) and Zuluboy, but his voice has been distorted. Once again the instrumentation is the same, but at the end of this section there is a slight suspension (01:01) in the instrumentation as the drums and shaker fall away.

The drums and shaker return for the chorus (01:02 - 01:24). The only change in instrumentation in the chorus occurs in the bass line, which now plays a different part to what it played in the verse. The bass line is also more prominent than in the rest of the piece. Siphokazi interjects and sings over Zuluboy's rapping, which, in the chorus, also uses a double-voice. The way in which Siphokazi sings her chorus lines was described by Claire as sounding pleading and full of regret. The words she sings, "*Oh yini? Oh yini? Ndiyamemeza.... Oh yini ndiyamemeza ndixolele*" mean "Oh why, oh why, I am calling you.... Why, I am pleading for mercy?". It makes sense that she would sing these lines in a pleading manner.

There is no bass line through the first half of the second verse. When the bass line enters halfway through, it returns to the same part as it played in the first verse. At the end of the second verse, instruments are again suspended, though the bass line continues. Once again, a double-voice is used through most of the second verse.

After the second chorus there is a second interlude (02:28 – 03:09), which is sung by Siphokazi. Towards the end of the interlude Zuluboy interjects with rapping. The Spanish-style guitar melody seems to be more prominent in this section. Because this interlude is sung by the female voice, and the guitar melody is more prominent, perhaps the guitar line could be understood as symbolizing the female figure. As a result, the presence of the female figure is suggested throughout the piece because the Spanish-style guitar melody is played throughout. The instrumentation is the same as in the verses, but at the end there is another suspension of instruments, with only the guitar line continuing. This interlude does, as Claire suggested, give the woman's side of the story. The female

voice in this interlude stands out from the rest of the piece. It is a cameo within the piece and draws the listener's attention to what it is that Zuluboy has lost and wants back.

In the chorus succeeding the interlude, more voices are used, both male and female. The use of the interwoven male and female voices – used throughout the piece, and particularly in this final chorus – was one of the musical elements that Sarah enjoyed about this piece. This last chorus is followed by a coda (03:31 – 04:14), during which the drums and bass line fall away (03:52) so that only the Spanish-style guitar line is present, with lots of voices. The piece ends with male laughter and a hit on a cymbal.

Although the music that backs the rapping in “Ulibambe Lingashoni” is repetitive and uses little variation, it is as important as the text: it creates an ‘ordinary’, ‘everyday’ quality, as noted by Claire, which would seem to make the piece more accessible to a wider audience and encourage the listener to listen to the story.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

My aim in this research was to prove that the assumption that meaning in rap is derived only from the lyrics and not the music, is not always valid, that there will often be an important relationship between music and text, and that the music itself will play an important role in meaning construction.

From looking at the audience responses to the pieces analysed in chapters 3 to 6, we can see that the music played an important part in each of the selected pieces. For many of the listeners, the music helped to create the meaning that they constructed for each of the pieces. This therefore proves my hypothesis that the music itself can play a vital role in meaning construction.

We also see from the analyses in the previous chapters that there are many places where there are significant connections between music and text. It is interesting that both Spin the Flava (chapter 4) and Zuluboy (chapter 6) said that they did not form any intentional connections between music and text, yet many connections were to be found within the pieces. This seems to suggest that in the compositional stages, a composer may connect music and text almost subconsciously. “This is War”, by Spin the Flava, is the best example of this unintentional bringing together of music and text. Clint Grove of Spin the Flava had said that no intentional connections were formed between music and text in this piece, and that if by any chance any connections were found, they were purely coincidental. When looking at the analysis of this piece, we find that the listeners commented on many connections between text and music, far too many for them to be purely coincidental. In such a case, there may be something subliminal in the compositional process that governs the choice of music.



We also find that even when the composers of the pieces have specified their intended connections between music and text, the listeners found many more connections between the two. Because of this, we can say that the relationship between music and text is a vital one as it assists in the process of meaning construction.

In the active-audience theory associated with Lisa Lewis, meaning construction depends on the listener's personal context and previous experiences, and, as a result, audience members may interpret the same piece of music in many different ways. We find this to be true when looking at the audience responses to the questions about their interpretations of the particular pieces in this research. In some cases, listeners' interpretations were the same or very similar, and in these cases it seems that the listeners drew their interpretation from the meaning of the text. Where interpretations differed from each other and from the composers' intended meanings, the listeners drew meaning from the music as well as the text, and their personal contexts also bore impact on their interpretations. Sarah often commented that she felt that her family background, education and social standing had an impact on the way she interpreted the various pieces. One such example was how she interpreted the Spin the Flava pieces (chapter 4): they carry a strong Christian message, and she comes from a background of Anglican, Greek Orthodox and some atheist heritage.

The theory of semiotics as applied to music by Philip Tagg was most useful in my research. This theory was used in order to make sense of the meanings that were constructed by the audience members, and to help understand why the music made them feel certain emotions, and why they commented specifically on certain parts of the pieces. The most useful areas of Tagg's theory in this regard were those on anaphones and bioacoustic universals.

It was my hope in conducting this research that it would be a starting point for filling the lacuna that exists in the field of rap music regarding music and meaning, and the relationship between music and text. My research has investigated the relationship between music and text, and music and meaning, in the selected compositions, although

only regarding South African, and specifically Durban, rap compositions. It is hoped that more research will be conducted in this field.

This topic was also chosen because my hypothesis runs contrary to the thought that rap is of no musical value. This research has certainly shown that this is not true. Meaning in the selected rap compositions was not created simply from the lyrics, but also from the music, and from the relationship *between* music and text. This study shows that the music in these compositions is both relevant and important, as it assists in the process of meaning construction, and often allows for meanings other than those that are constructed from the text, to be formed. Because of these implications, this study has touched on aesthetic issues, as it has argued that there are reasons for the music that backs the lyrics.

When I set out on this research there were several key questions I intended to ask. The most important of these were: how is the music received, what meanings are constructed by listeners, why are these meanings constructed, and how do these listeners' perceptions of the relationship between music and text affect the meanings that they construct? These questions were all asked during the interview and analysis processes. The first, second, and last of these four questions were put to the audience members in various ways, and answers were received. For each of the pieces focused on, the listeners' interpretations, and the connections that they perceived between music and text, were discussed. The third of these principal questions (why are these meanings constructed?) was one I asked myself during my analysis of each of the selected pieces. As I analysed each piece, I focused on discovering the musical reasons for the audience members' answers to the other three principal questions.

By asking the composers what their intended meanings were for each of their pieces, I was able to discover how successful they had been in relaying their message. I found that in most cases the composers focused on in this research were successful in conveying their intended meanings, as most of the audience members interpreted the selected pieces in the way in which the composers intended them to be. There were very few cases where a listener interpreted the piece in a way contrary to what the composer had intended. The

best example of a contrary interpretation is Claire's interpretation of Spin the Flava's "This is War" in chapter 4.

The composers were also asked whether they had formed any intentional connections between music and text during the compositional stages of the selected pieces. By asking this, I was able to determine whether the audience members heard these specific connections, and whether they heard any other connections that had not been specified by the composers. I found that in most of the pieces the listeners did not pick up on the composers' intentional connections. However, the listeners did comment on many other connections in the pieces that had not been specified by the composers themselves.

It was stated in chapter 1 that this study has relevance for the general study of music and meaning, and the interplay of music and text. This research has focused on the study of these areas with specific regard to rap, and more specifically Durban rap. It therefore fits into the literature for the general study of these topics, with regard to both international and local musics.

Another area of study that could be researched as an offshoot of this one, is that of performativity. My study has focused only on meaning and music, and the interplay of music and text, by receiving audience responses to the music specifically, and then by analyzing the way in which music and text work together, in order to explain the audience's responses. There are other factors that also affect the meanings that audience members construct, and research could be conducted focusing on these. These factors include how the specific social context in which the music is experienced (for example, whether one listens to the music alone or with friends), and how the venue in which the music is heard (for example, whether at a live performance or through a recording at one's home) influences meaning construction.

Even though this research has been conducted on a small scale with only a small sample of rap compositions, in this sample both music and text are relevant. The music and the text work together to help listeners construct their own personal meanings of the pieces.

As a result, music should not be neglected in studies of rap and hip hop: it can play just as significant a role as the text and other elements that form part of hip-hop culture; these being break-dancing, deejaying, and graffiti art. There needs to be far more research into the music of rap compositions as it has been sadly neglected in the past.

## Appendix A: Lyrics Transcriptions

### 1. "My Mecca"

I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
Let my Mecca make me believe  
I need to believe  
I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
Let my Mecca make me believe  
I need to believe

I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
Let my Mecca make me believe  
Once again  
In the Mecca in me  
I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
Let my Mecca make me believe  
Once again  
In the Mecca in me  
I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
Let my Mecca make me believe  
Once again  
In the Mecca in me  
I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
Let my Mecca make me believe

In my inner journey  
In my sanity

My faith in humanity is damaged by these monkeys  
 These free world leaders won't let the world be free  
 Won't let me be me free me to be me freely  
 Freedom for my eyes to find the sunrise  
 To dry tears  
 My ears fill my mind with lies  
 I despise my race  
 Don't trust my face  
 Light skin means sin in a naturally dark place  
 Not allowed to be proud of my ancestry  
 I'm embarrassed by impressions of an oppressor's legacy  
 Too white for some blacks  
 Too black for most whites  
 Think I'm coloured but I can't get the accent right  
 Despite the real light where the sun in the sky meets  
 I close my eyes to recognise my own east

I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
 Let my Mecca make me believe  
 Once again  
 In the Mecca in me  
 (See I need to believe in the Mecca in me)  
 I'm gonna make it to my Mecca  
 Let my Mecca make me believe  
 Once again  
 In the Mecca in me  
 (See I need to believe in the Mecca in me)  
 (See I need to believe)

I make it to my Mecca when I live to forgive  
 But I can't be forgiven for shit I never did

I always pushed for peace  
While Bush was bombing the east  
And while Osama runs his funds keep the rubble in the streets  
Mugabe's got his people by the throat I mean the vote  
I mean Blair couldn't care  
He won't rock the boat  
I prepare none-the-less  
Bullshit I stay above it  
Paying what I owe even forgiving these puppets  
I have sinned I do sin I will sin again  
But I sin against myself  
Not against other men  
In my Mecca there is God  
And he sits with Allah  
There's Jah Rastafari  
And you know I'm feeling Buddah  
My mother my father my whole family  
There's some strangers some friends  
Most importantly my enemies  
I will be pure when I reach the sun  
Just a pilgrim on the road till the road is done  
To my other mother brothers  
My other mister sisters  
Those I've hurt  
To those who've hurt me  
I submit to your mercy  
I love you  
Journey with me  
I love you  
Journey with me  
I love you

Journey with me

We're gonna make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

We're gonna make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

We're gonna make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

We're gonna make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust

We'll make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust

We'll make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust

We'll make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust

I'll make it to My Mecca

Let my Mecca make me believe

Once again

In the Mecca in me

I'm gonna make it to My Mecca

Let my Mecca make me believe

Once again

In the Mecca in me



We'll make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust

We'll make it to Mecca

To let the Mecca in us

Be the reason for the rebirth of faith hope and trust

## 2. "Hollywood Burning"

Never gonna have that thick stack of cheese on my Big Mac  
Plastic cats for the bling not the backpack  
So maybe if I had all the latest devices  
If I was peppering my life with all those extra spices  
I might just find myself poked full of holes by some dude who needs food more  
than I need gold  
Trying to lift my life into a higher tax bracket  
You know Gucci shades and Armani jacket  
That blue chip status money ain't a thing (yeah)  
Scrooge McDuck see me swimming in the bling  
Just dream on (why) Reality check  
Coz I'm a broke mother fucker empty pocket  
It got that natural attraction for money and fame  
For the bright light, the big time, the big name  
But my game is my tongue not a golden tooth  
My eyes show me lies but my soul sees the truth  
On my shirt you read clearly life's a bitch  
And I wear it everyday until I make the switch  
From the puddle to the palace pull my arse out the ditch  
Bite that hand off the wrist for the rings in your fist

When you gonna learn man Hollywood's burning and I wanna do my part to fuel  
the fire

When you gonna see that the people believe in nothing but a sound and I'll be the  
supplier

When you gonna learn man Hollywood's burning and I wanna do my part to fuel  
the fire

When you gonna see that the people believe in nothing but a sound and I'll be the supplier

I'm just a regular slob (yeah) within the regular job (yeah)

But I work man never see me play with my knob

I never jack off I don't slack off

You feeling me they need to back off

They show a lack of reality

These Hollywood gangsta wannabe jerks well I'm a gang star boy (why)

I put in work (yeah)

I know where I'm gonna be in twenty years time (where)

Still on the mic kicking old man rhymes

So still by the wall with a can in hand

My space dot com forward slash the man

My feet on the ground never over or under

The Hollywood blind style like Steven Wonder

While my style fresh like twenty tic tacs (yes)

You hear it on another one of Rough Rex tracks (yes)

Sit back relax and just let loose the blues

And listen to the news

When you gonna learn man Hollywood's burning and I wanna do my part to fuel the fire

When you gonna see that the people believe in nothing but a sound and I'll be the supplier

When you gonna learn man Hollywood's burning and I wanna do my part to fuel the fire

When you gonna see that the people believe in nothing but a sound and I'll be the supplier

When you gonna learn man Hollywood's burning and I wanna do my part to fuel the fire

When you gonna see that the people believe in nothing but a sound and I'll be the  
supplier

When you gonna learn man Hollywood's burning and I wanna do my part to fuel  
the fire

When you gonna see that the people believe in nothing but a sound and I'll be the  
supplier

### **3. "One Nation"**

We got the multi-cultured flow at the Gospel show  
 And brought all the race groups just to let you know  
 That we buried the racial barrier  
 That wouldn't allow another nation to get close or near to ya  
 Ya hearin us we sound superior  
 That's been recorded in the all nation Ill Flava studio  
 Slanging raps from the slums of America  
 Different races but we're one big familia  
 'Cause we're not governed by the media criteria  
 Dope tracks from the East Coast Area  
 'Cause we're thrilling ya and we're feeling ya  
 Chorus born in the streets of India

*Palavidhamane nirengal* [Different colours one nation]

*Wore kadavil wore wolagun* [One body in Christ]

*Naan perumay then Aprikarvil* [Proud to be South African]

*Kadavil Yesu ratham, yelloray karpal tri naar* [Blood of Jesus as redeemed us]

*Yellorum nanbir gal lirind her wore Jadhie dhaan* [People from every tribe and nation will praise him]

The beginning of human beings began in the Garden of Eden,  
 My life changed ever since I started believing  
 That I could do all things through Christ who strengthens me,  
 I'm a born again Christian that's my true identity  
 Don't envy me when it comes to my beliefs I dare you to question me see  
 Because I believe that we are one nation, one people one goal one body one soul  
 One God one Spiritual Father one kingdom  
 One big family made up of blacks, whites including coloureds and Indians  
 We were created just like God in His image and likeness

Filled with His spirit and covered in His righteous  
 No more hurts, no more damages  
 Let us pray and speak to God the Father in our different languages

*Palavidhamane nirengal* [Different colours one nation]  
*Wore kadavil wore wolagun* [One body in Christ]  
*Naan perumay then Aprikarvil* [Proud to be South African]  
*Kadavil Yesu ratham, yelloray karpal tri naar* [Blood of Jesus as redeemed us]  
*Yellorum nanbir gal lirind her wore Jadhie dhaan* [People from every tribe and  
 nation will praise him]

Check out the flow beat, I hit a snag when writing this next piece major  
 Said he never went on a field trip to north east Asia  
 Major pains in my gut when I see you manners sat  
 All these dreams I had of us not being so bad  
 Came together at the time we stopped passing the blame  
 You see he took all the shame do I have to mention His name  
 On this earth he came made us all equal as one.  
 Can you holler g pitch up at our next meeting  
 Never stop preaching speaking on the next coming  
 Yeah, You really need to stop and take a look at your life right up to now old pop  
 Come on, Keep strutting with the bible propped all the way from Phoenix to  
 Chatsworth  
 So happy now the Virgin Mary gave birth, we so happy now!

*Palavidhamane nirengal* [Different colours one nation]  
*Wore kadavil wore wolagun* [One body in Christ]  
*Naan perumay then Aprikarvil* [Proud to be South African]  
*Kadavil Yesu ratham, yelloray karpal tri naar* [Blood of Jesus as redeemed us]  
*Yellorum nanbir gal lirind her wore Jadhie dhaan* [People from every tribe and  
 nation will praise him]

## 4. "This is War"

Yeah, Remixed, Spin the Flava records, let's take them to war

Everybody clap your hands stamp your feet come on

Everybody clap your hands stamp your feet come on

Everybody clap your hands stamp your feet come on

Clap, clap, stamp your feet come on

This is war

Now gird your loins with truth

This is war

I got a breastplate for you

This is war

And with your shield of faith to protect you from them fiery flames

This is War

So shod your feet with peace

This is war

You better fight in on your knees

With your helmet of salvation word as your sword

And don't ever say that you never ever heard

Trample over grapes and I come through fighting the war

Packing 100 soldiers on the left right ready to die for the law (law)

That is not written but given by spiritual wisdom

No discussions cause all I see in front of me is sinning and treason

That's the opponent and I don't give no introduction

'Cause ever since birth he is being trying to steal my salvation

As if that was not evident enough that I had a purpose

A destiny I had to fulfil so help me Lord because I am nervous

So all of my units move cautious  
 I don't want to lose any soldiers cause this war is going to get serious  
 From the first blow right through to the ending  
 My allegiance lies with the Lord cause here in lies my blessing  
 Cause

This is war  
 Now gird your loins with truth  
 This is war  
 I got a breastplate for you  
 This is war  
 And with your shield of faith to protect you from them fiery flames  
 This is War  
 So shod your feet with peace  
 This is war  
 You better fight in on your knees  
 With your helmet of salvation word as your sword  
 And don't ever say that you never ever heard

Left for dead stone broke living it hard  
 Face in the dust no way of picking me up  
 Call the paramedics gonna need some mouth to mouth  
 Now sit back and let me tell you what the tech's about  
 My man Zane be feeling every bar I spit on the track  
 Cause he be down with me from day one yeah way back  
 The S.C.A be filling my thoughts boys and girls gather empty basketball courts  
 This is a Holy Ghost revival  
 So are you with me  
 The violent take it by force  
 So stand up with me  
 The violent take it by force Matthew 11:12



The violent take it by force  
Join us, yo, so you best prepare for war  
Into the arsenal I look pull out the weaponry  
Position myself and listen to the visionary  
Waiting for the order ready to make the slaughter  
Focus on the battlefield no time to take a breather

This is war  
Ah These be the last days  
This is war  
There be no time to be playing games  
This is war  
Messing around with sin  
This is war  
Come on, Come on, Come on,

This is war  
Now gird your loins with truth  
This is war  
I got a breastplate for you  
This is war  
And with your shield of faith to protect you from them fiery flames  
This is War  
So shod your feet with peace  
This is war  
You better fight in on your knees  
With your helmet of salvation word as your sword  
And don't ever say that you never ever heard

I stay clean with my sword strapped tight to my jean  
Maintain my steam as I reach for a dream preach to my team

One for the prize still try to remain focus  
 This here is for my soldiers thank God that he chose us  
 Since he has chose us so many oppose us  
 Cause we have got the cure of how a man can keep his soul pure  
 So how can a young man keep his way pure?  
 By listening to the Lord keep the word as your sword  
 Cause no matter who you are or how young you still at war  
 A war fought from the core because they question who you are  
 But Christ says stand and be strong  
 Lean on the armour of God he will protect you from all harm  
 Protect you from the devil's schemes devil's teams devil's dreams  
 Cause the battle that we fight is fought up in the heavenlies  
 With men like these and friends like these protect you from the enemy  
 Cause we fighting for eternity

This is war  
 Now gird your loins with truth  
 This is war  
 I got a breastplate for you  
 This is war  
 And with your shield of faith to protect you from them fiery flames  
 This is War  
 So shod your feet with peace  
 This is war  
 You better fight in on your knees  
 With your helmet of salvation word as your sword  
 And don't ever say that you never ever heard

## 5. "D to W"

Man I'm parking in Umhlanga Rocks  
 With these *lahnee laaities slaaning* [upper class young people hitting] socks and  
 chucks, you know  
 They got credit cards, but what am I doing here,  
 Sjoe, I'm looking for lucks?  
 'Cause I'm money driven like a drug-lord or your landlord where you're living,  
 Leasing from Sicilians with Brazilian connections man,  
 You can even check Yugoslavia got their own section,  
 You see around here everyone more or less sticks to themselves  
 But we wide open like fuel injectors in felt  
 We could rock cloud nine hit the beach inter dive  
 Then colour at the bat then take a roll in our stride,  
 We're the Big Idea over-taking from the rear  
 See dist music is free your mind blocks  
 And take a deep *dop* [drink] when the bass line drops  
 When you feel it from your toes to your *kroes kops* [curly heads] ...

Cool with the *dop* [drink],  
 G hit us with a shot,  
*Eksê* [slang: *ek sê* (I say)] make it a double  
 Those North beach *ous* [people] want trouble  
 They agro and cook while we laughing on the bumbles  
 I don't really want to rumble but on the humble,  
 Lets snatch their cell phones from them sell 'em at the jumble  
 Man, what's the big idea why you shoving over here  
 We make it disappear out the atmosphere

Because we know Durban like the back of our hands my boy

We know Durban like the beach knows the sand my boy,  
 We know Durban like the *zol* [marijuana] in our hand, like al Qaeda knows  
 Afghanistan

Like a builder knows his plans  
 I know Durban and I love it like a *dief* [thief] loves the rand  
 Like my white grandfather liked his queens African  
 From Durban North to Wentworth then back again

Man you should read the news check your mail on the daily  
 Why do people lose their groove when they move to Umhlanga?  
 They lose their hunger,  
 Chopping up chaps with a panga,  
 Don't make us take you up the road from Mwarango,  
 Man over there *ous* [people] are very quick with the jungles  
 Man they flippin' vulgar like the average Londoner  
 You know what I'm saying Dave?  
 Far below from an ordinary Joe  
 Does he take it from someone who knows?  
 You shouldn't walk slow through Umbilo  
 'cause you just never know who's a *bruin ou* [coloured person] acting mental  
 You walk through Durban bring a Durbanite with you,  
 You talk *kak* [rubbish] about it a Durbanite will hit you, flip you, *druk* [pull] you,  
*skud* [kick] you  
 It's okay to be *skrikked* [scared] *bru* [brother]  
 Things we say we do,  
 You get bruised in your ego 'cause your *stukkie* [girlfriend] wants to go where we  
 go... she knows  
 Who god flows, which band lays it down the most,  
 Fresh like butter on breakfast toast

Because we know Durban like the back of our hands my boy

We know Durban like the beach knows the sand my boy,  
We know Durban like the *zol* [marijuana] in our hand, like alqaeda knows  
Afghanistan  
Like a builder knows his plans  
I know Durban and I love it like a *dief* [thief] loves the rand  
Like my white grandfather liked his queens African  
From Durban North to Wentworth and back again  
We'll take you all around Durban and back again  
We take you all around Durban and back again  
Once we got you in Wentworth you stuck there  
'Cause when we got you over there, man, we got you where we want you,  
We got you over here, man, we got you where we want you,  
We got you, we got you, we got you exactly where we want you  
Exactly where we want you  
Exactly where we want you  
Want you

## 6. "Amnesty"

Handcuffs on  
 Face against the wall  
 Hands in my pockets they looking for *zol* [marijuana]  
 Damn I'm appalled  
 Cops *raaks vol* [have had enough]  
 What the fuck are y'all harassing me for  
 Their eye was on me since I came through the door  
 But I ignored this had to be a tip off for sure I came to the four  
 Guns got drawn]I heard them call  
*Laaitie* [young person] get on the floor  
 Them I ignored these *kêrels* [policemen] must be bored for sure  
 They working on the weekend their feelings are sore  
 Yah I'm raw but they got nothing on me, 'cause I handed in my guns for amnesty  
 But they don't give a shit  
 Still I get frisked  
 But me in the *kêrel* [police] cab now I'm pissed  
 Times that by two now I am cist  
 Sitting in the back seat smoked too many *spliffs* [joints – marijuana cigarettes]  
 Aar shit I'm back on the wrong side of the law  
 Trying to figure out the cause  
 What's the reason for my incarceration  
 These *kêrels* [policemen] are blatant  
 They *futting* [holding onto] me while they writing down my statement  
 Now my mind is racing I thought I'd get blatant  
 Offered them a bribe look for shock on their faces  
 No such luck these *kêrels* [policemen] were out for bucks  
 No *skaam* [shame] cells they weren't feeling *swak* [guilty]!

I handed in my guns for amnesty  
And look at where my honesty's landed me  
I handed in my guns for amnesty  
And look at where my honesty's landed me  
I handed in my guns for amnesty  
And look at where my honesty's landed me  
I handed in my guns for amnesty  
And look at where my honesty's landed me

Where to place this violence I can smell it  
Sense fear and shame in every second  
Madness is a must  
Method, power, lust,  
Break the crust  
Suck out the marrow of trust  
Wealth, lust or survival plagues the same  
Lock your door hide your head pray for better days  
You seem to look back in anger forward in rage  
The presents all dazed  
Powerless and holding out for change  
Who to blame still the same  
Pass the buck and cold eyes pass your way  
All's forgiven it's hard to gain love pull it out the grave  
And feel warmth again

I handed in my guns for amnesty  
And look at where my honesty's landed me  
I handed in my guns for amnesty  
And look at where my honesty's landed me  
I handed in my guns for amnesty  
And look at where my honesty's landed me

I handed in my guns for amnesty  
 And look at where my honesty's landed me

(laugh)

(Guitar solo – Dave Birch)

Sitting in a two man cell with 25 other *ous* [people]  
 Thats 26 *ous* [people]  
 One sink and toilet bowl  
 Wentworth sap holdings the one new facility built in the *Wenties* [Wentworth]  
 since 93 see  
 Told you should of voted for the \_\_\_\_\_  
 But no you went for the DP IFP old white lady wanted to legalise weed  
 Tell me why you living in a danger zone  
 Really don't know which way to go  
 Freedom is hard work we slaved for this  
 Keeping your mind dark just lazyness  
 Bullshit I search for the light  
 Blinded sue me *laaitie* [young person] you light  
 Who? What? You? Me? Right!  
 You can't see reality tries to fool me I say cool it g  
 This is my dream  
 This is my scene  
 These are the *playas* [players] and this is my team  
 And they are mean  
 Not mean in the sense that they pack guns  
 Mean in the sense they don't rap for fun  
 Don't rap for funds  
 Don't rap for crumbs  
 Rap to attack when we battling punks



But my life in the hands of my blessed tongue

I handed in my guns for amnesty

And look at where my honesty's landed me

I handed in my guns for amnesty

And look at where my honesty's landed me

I handed in my guns for amnesty

And look at where my honesty's landed me

I handed in my guns for amnesty

And look at where my honesty's landed me

I handed in my guns...

## 7. "3 Zulus on Da Mic" <sup>3</sup>

*Khuluma nazo mfoka uMsholoji*  
*Abametha uZuluboy*  
*Wagibela entabeni*  
*Wabamba umbhobho*  
*Kwanyakaza izihlahla,*  
*Ngiphuma esigodini saseNtuzuma*  
*Ngiphuza ukopokopo*  
*Angihambi ngedwa-ke kule*  
*Ngihamba no Zesukuma umfoka Kunene*  
*Engamlanda la ezintabeni zika bhushu*  
*Nomunye-ke engimlanda khona la eSoweto*  
*Okuthiwa umfoka Mkhize*  
*Khuluma nazo*

*Ngiyabonga give me the tha ukuthola umbhobho kulegagasi lompetha*  
*Enter gate siyakhahlela gate crasher*  
*Elizogeda ukumaketha kulabomrepha*  
*Abarepha engathi barephiswa i peer pressure*

*Umqamb' umntwana noNxamalala Msholoji*  
*Hook-up sindis'ibhulukwe i ofa*  
*Ngiyifasa amafosi*  
*Just in case ku jampa igost,*  
*Shekha ikhosti*  
*Gwinyeka mathe*  
*Sibindi ubalulekile njenge voti*  
*After cut yo ngathi trip Emawoti ngathi Joli*  
*Ngase ngithola nomakoti*  
*Oh siyangena bengizirephela*  
*Abantu bephumela njengo Pavaroti kwi akhaphela*  
*Njengabazali bethu ama petrol bomb bebewajikijela*  
*Konke sekwaphela*  
*Kodwa kukhona*  
*Abasasichela kumjondolo ne hostela*  
*Akekho ongangivembela*

*Ngikubiza ngomgwaqo osekhoneni ma ngiphethe incwadi nepeni*  
*Nokubong'emphakathini ngokuqeda imelo yelo iveni*

1 2 3 three Zulu's on da M.I.C

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<sup>3</sup> Transcription and translation by Lungile Gumbi and Marius Botha. The translation is not a literal one the original uses a highly idiomatic style and the translation is approximate only.

Imagine that the Zulu's from California  
 Hear this compilation who else did your nations  
 I came back home  
 Now I got the image of my son on my cell phone  
 To remind me I ain't one and alone  
 I'm so Zulu when I'm in the zone  
 It's like I'm sitting on the throne  
 Big beats like the feast do we know is born  
 Hold on why it's like this in California  
 You mind your business, when I was young  
 Then I came back home  
 Observed by protocols  
 Pay my respect to the King  
 Okay cool let me do my thing  
 I came back like a boomerang  
 Just to find nothing changed  
 It's all pretty much the same  
 Still dealing with the same pain  
 Seek shelter from the same rain  
 Blood from the same vein  
 It is what it is  
 Zulu and Pro Kid the hottest compilation on the planet ever lived  
 Beat makers on the beat so I had to give a hit tell the nation all about it  
 You catch in the streets like  
 1 2 3 young nations on da M.I.C  
 How about I say  
 1 2 3 three Zulus on da M.I.C

*Grand, grand, grand*  
*Ake sikiphe ujakalase oashe phansi kwe ship skin*  
*Uhlobo lokuthi manje*  
*Angishayisani nesistimu*  
*Uma sesikhuzwa sidonselana ama pistil*  
*Cartridge ikangako sidedela nama system*  
*Baphuzelakude bafuna ivari ne extra*  
*Hamb'utshela abantu ukuthi lentwana i rapper uzohlangana nenhlanekela*  
*Mawuthanda ukuba unggesta*  
*Umthofu uzokuphasa mawuzama ukuthesta*

*Awubamb'umoya*  
*Uthathe ukubheka i situation*  
*Ithand'ukudlala ngomqondo*  
*Idide i concentration*  
*Zuluboy, Young Nations*  
*And no Pro Kid espey'sini*  
*Usizela namasimba*

*Uzabulawa yi constipation*  
*Destination inzima njenge*  
*4-4 masihlalisane*  
*Pheth'intenzima Zulu*  
*Woza nawe sibambisane*  
*Bangasingeni phakathi,*  
*Basenze sibambisane*  
*Isende lendlela inameva mfwethu*  
*Woza asibambisane*  
 1 2 3 three Zulus on the M.I.C.

*Ibutho nebutho alidonse umkhonto walo*  
*Ihawu nesagila mfana*  
 Three Zulus on the M.I.C  
 Zuluboy, and Pro Kid, Young Nations  
*Sizophinde sishe second half.*

### **"3 Zulus on Da Mic"**

Introduce yourself son of *Msholoz*,  
 The one they call Zuluboy,  
 He who climbed a mountain holding a microphone,  
 His voice shakes the trees.  
 I come from *Ntuzuma*,  
 I drink *uKopokopo*.  
 I don't work alone  
 I move with *Zusukuma* son of *Kunene*  
 He's from the hostels  
 And the other one is from Soweto  
 He claims to be a *Mkhize*,  
 Introduce yourself

Thank you for an opportunity to hold a microphone on the airways  
 Entering this industry is difficult,  
 Opportunistic rappers fail.  
 They rap as though it's just because of peer pressure

I am a composer and a son of *Nxamalala*, *Msholoz*,  
 Hook-up and be careful when you receive a recording offer.  
 I always check the fine print, on all contracts  
 Sometimes I take a risk  
 As courage is very important just like a vote  
 After receiving my share,  
 I took a trip back home to *Emawoti* [Inanda] and proposed a wedding

That was to be a joyful township wedding,  
 I was rapping,  
 The whole community accompanied me with a-cappella just like Pavaroti  
 This was a community that had been affected by a State of Emergency  
 Which made them criminals,  
 In defence they were throwing petrol bombs.  
 But now we are reconciled  
 There are still people who cause trouble in squatter camps and hostels

I am calling from the street corner with a pen and paper in my hand,  
 I give thanks to my whole community for stopping black on black violence.

1 2 3 three Zulu's on da M.I.C  
 Imagine that the Zulu's from California  
 Hear this compilation who else did your nations  
 I came back home now  
 I got the image of my son on my cell phone to remind me I ain't one and alone  
 I'm so Zulu when I'm in the zone  
 It's like I'm sitting on the throne  
 Big beats like the feast do we know is born  
 Hold on why it's like this in California  
 You mind your business, when I was young  
 Then I came back home  
 Observed by protocols  
 Pay my respect to the King  
 Okay cool let me do my thing  
 I came back like a boomerang  
 Just to find nothing changed  
 It's all pretty much the same  
 Still dealing with the same pain  
 Seek shelter from the same rain  
 Blood from the same vein  
 It is what it is  
 Zulu and Pro Kid the hottest compilation on the planet ever lived  
 Beat makers on the beat so I had to give a hit tell the nation all about it  
 You catch in the streets like  
 1 2 3 young nations on da M.I.C  
 How about I say  
 1 2 3 three Zulus on da M.I.C

Grand, grand, grand  
 Let's expose these jackals in sheep skins,  
 Now it is time to take out opportunistic rappers.  
 As the youth we are so indecent,  
 Whenever we are in conflict we act out with guns with live ammunitions,  
 They drink too much and boast lying

Go and tell the people that this rapper will hit you with a back slap  
As you claim to be a wise guy.  
The bullets will pass through you if you lie.

Hold your breath,  
And assess the situation,  
It's becoming difficult,  
It needs your concentration.  
Zuluboy, Young Nation  
And Pro Kid in a space  
You come with your belly full of dung;  
You will be a victim of constipation  
The destination is hard  
It is like four people sharing a minibus taxi seat, let us share  
I am the talented Zulu, come let's share  
Let them not divide us, but let's work together  
1 2 3 three Zulus on da M.I.C

Zulu warriors rise and arm with your shields, spears and clubs  
Three Zulus on the M.I.C.  
Zuluboy and Pro Kid, Young Nation  
We'll return to burn the second half

## **8. "Ulibambe Ligashoni" <sup>4</sup>**

Ammunition lo another production  
 Ngiphethe impintshi yami u Zuluboy  
 Aw yazi ngixabene nomuntu wami, mjita  
 Uyazi ukuthini mjita  
 Eyi sbari ukhala ngani  
 Ilo engangikutshela ngaye ukuthi ngahlangana naye estobhini  
 Ngaserobhothini, ematsheni, uSiphokazi  
 Awusamkhumbuli?

Lalela-ke  
 Sahlangu ematsheni, estobhini ngaserobhotini  
 Ngathi nganeyomuntu ngitheni  
 Umuhle njengehlamvu lenkantini  
 Ukuqhakaza kwenkanyenzi  
 I top down i-mini  
 Ngingenasikhathi sokuthatha amasi ngiwafake ku-avini  
 Uyazi ukuthini asithi ukulula izinyawo elokishini  
 Sangena katsi saphumela kuphawini  
 Saphelala espotini  
 Ngapaka ikwata logavini, ikwata logavini  
 Kwaku-upharafini iyo sifudumez'injini  
 Sisuka emhlabathini sahlala emafini  
 Noma imishini kwakungukumbeka  
 Embhedeni endlini ngimthinte emanonini  
 Ngazichamela ngingaboni, isihlahla sami se fish and chips ne polony

Empilweni yakho mina ngaphenduka isoni,  
 Ekujuleni kwenhliziyo mina ngikufuna ngingakutholi,  
 Asibe sobabili silungise indaba yethu  
 Singakashoni khona uzoyeka ukungenza inyoni  
 Kuyingozi ukungazi, kufana nokungaboni  
 Noma sidla amakhekhe asheleni  
 Siwehlise nge stoney

(Oh yini? Oh yini? Ndiyamemeza)  
 Manakazi ngasichamela is'hlahla  
 Ngingaboni kodwa mntanomuntu  
 Uzulibambe lingashoni  
 (Oh yini ndiyamemeza ndixolele)  
 Ukube sisandawonye ngabe lencwadi angiyibhali  
 Ngicabanga izinsuku sisahlala silalele u Bob Marley

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<sup>4</sup> Transcription and translation by Lungile Gumbi and Marius Botha. The translation is not a literal one the original uses a highly idiomatic style and the translation is approximate only.

*Kodwa dali wangivalela ngaphandle ngoba ngingenamali  
Wangiqhatha nosbali*

*Lencwadi asiyivali noma sekunzima  
Ngishima indoda ayikhali iyazila  
Amaqiniso yo manje sengiringa ivari  
Wangsitshela inkohliso wathi umngani  
Kanti enhlizweni wayeseyisibani ngoba esami asisakhanyi  
Sengiyakufuna angikutholi*

*Ngazichamela ngingaboni  
Ngathi ngiyazichamela nganyelwa inyoni  
Ngadlala amahloni  
Akusafani nakuqala awusafoni  
Lixhoshwa lingaboni empeleni ehlweni  
Wangigaxa igoni  
Sihlala sami engasichamela ngingaboni se fish and chips ne polony uze  
engixolele*

*Kuyingozi ukungazi, kufana nokungaboni  
Noma sidla amakhekhe asheleni siwehlise nge stoney  
(Oh yini? Oh yini? Ndiyamemeza)  
Manakazi ngasichamela is'hlahla  
Ngingaboni kodwa mntanomuntu  
Uzulibambe lingashoni  
(Oh yini ndiyamemeza ndixolele)*

*Uqalile uzenza inqondi  
Wandibonisa inhlakanipho  
Ubungazi unyawo alujoji  
Kodwa ndixolele ndibhatjazile  
Nditjabazile naw'uyavuna ufumene umvuzo wakho  
Eyi bekungemnandi ukuba nawe  
Ew-ke ndiyavuma  
Bekumnandi ukuba nawe  
Manje pho kwenzekani?  
Ndaziqhatha jonga okuphathekayo  
Ayi izinto zinyenzeka*

*Kuyingozi ukungazi, kufana nokungaboni  
Noma sidla amakhekhe asheleni siwehlise nge stoney  
(Oh yini? Oh yini? Ndiyamemeza)  
Manakazi ngasichamela is'hlahla  
Ngingaboni kodwa mntanomuntu  
Uzulibambe lingashoni  
(Oh yini ndiyamemeza ndixolele)*



*Ndixolele nawe qhubeka  
 Impilo phambili impilo yakho phambili  
 Ngikufisela impumeleo s'thandwa sami  
 Ndixolele ndiyazisola  
 Awu mayebabo!  
 Khululeka buyala ekhaya ukuzofudumeza  
 Lendla ebandayo uyenze ikhaya  
 Nami ngicela uxolo  
 Ngikuxolele mntanasekhaya  
 Ngikuxolele  
 Khohlwa ikona asambe siye ekhaya*

## **"You Hold the Sun"**

This is Ammunition bringing another production;  
 I am introducing my friend Zuluboy.  
 You know, I had a quarrel with my woman, my friend  
 Do you know what, my friend  
 She is the one I was telling you about  
 I mean the one I met at the bus stop,  
 Next to the traffic lights, at the beer hall, Siphokazi.  
 Do you remember her?

Listen carefully...  
 We met at the beer hall, next to the bus stop,  
 Next to the traffic lights.  
 I fell for her right there,  
 Your beauty resembles a ganja seed  
 You shine like a star  
 A top down Mini Cooper  
 I had no time to loiter around  
 And do nothing  
 I proposed that we visit my township  
 We strolled around till we ended up at a tavern  
 I bought a lot of Vodka, which fuelled my lust  
 That lifted my anticipations from the earth to the clouds.  
 Though my mission was to invite her to my bed and arouse her.  
 I had a premature ejaculation right under a tree,  
 Trounced by excitement  
 I messed up my love,  
 My envy of pleasure

In your life my love, I became a sinner,

In the depth of my heart I was longing for you,  
 Let's both talk and sort out our problems  
 Before more troubles occur.  
 Ignorance is dangerous it is like being blindfolded  
 I remember a day when we shared cakes and stoney ginger beer for a shilling.

(Oh why, oh why, I am calling you.)  
 My lady love, I mess my tree (relationship),  
 I was not aware my love.  
 You will hold the sun  
 (Why, I am pleading for mercy.)  
 If we were still together I would not be writing this letter  
 I remember those days listening to Bob Marley,  
 Why did you close our chapter,  
 Was it because I was broke,  
 You sold me out to your brother.

I will not stop this letter though it's hard to continue,  
 As a bachelor I hold no grudge  
 Now I tell only the truth nothing but the truth,  
 You lied, you introduced him as your friend,  
 In your heart he was a light, while mine was fading.  
 You were not available

I was not aware that I was messing up,  
 My premature ejaculations affected our relations  
 I was ashamed  
 Now you are no longer calling, things are different,  
 I truth I was not aware, you stepped on my ego.  
 My envy of pleasure, I messed up.

Ignorance is dangerous it is like being blindfolded  
 I remember a day when we shared cakes and stoney ginger beer for a shilling.  
 (Oh why, I am calling you.)  
 My lady love, I messed my tree,  
 I was not aware my love.  
 You will hold the sun  
 (Why, I am pleading for mercy)

You think you are smart,  
 You show off your intelligence,  
 You have shown your ignorance,  
 Please forgive me I also messed up.  
 You also did  
 It was really a pleasure to be with you  
 Yes I do agree

It was pleasurable to be with you  
So what went wrong?  
I messed up, it was life...

Ignorance is dangerous it is like being blindfolded  
I remember a day when we shared cakes and stoney ginger beer for a shilling.  
(Oh why, I am calling you.)  
My lady love, I messed my tree,  
I was not aware my love.  
You will hold the sun  
(Why, I am pleading for mercy)

Forgive me and proceed with your life,  
I wish you a good life my sweetheart,  
I forgive you, my love  
I forgive you for your criticism of me  
Aww, it's hard  
You are forgiven come back and warm that cold house  
And make it a home again,  
I am also pleading for your mercy,  
I forgive you, child of this home  
I do forgive you,  
Forget all this now and let's go home

**Appendix B**  
**Track List and CD**

1. Ewok: “My Mecca”
2. Ewok: “Hollywood Burning”
3. Spin the Flava: “One Nation”
4. Spin the Flava: “This is War”
5. Big Idea: “D to W”
6. Big Idea: “Amnesty”
7. Zuluboy: “3 Zulus on da Mic”
8. Zuluboy: “Ulibambe Lingashoni” [You Hold the Sun]

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