

How does an Emcee become the first Scribble Jam Production Battle Champ?

How does an Emcee become Scribble Jam's first Production Battle Champion? That's easy, he has to be a dope producer/beat maker. The battle at Scribble Jam was one of a tough regimen. After winning the prelims all 5 winners from different cities earn a slot and a two-day pass to compete at Scribble Jam itself. Chicago, Los Angeles, San Fransico, Minneapolis, and of course Orlando where the chosen cities. The criteria for the prelims were easy, bring your best beats, period.

Round for round the competition was fierce. The crowd obviously has their favorites... or in other words producers brought their crews out. lol... Nonetheless I won, the night of Sunday July 22nd, 2007 and that's what this is all about.

At this point I'm a Scribble Jam finalist... so the best of the best and some of the runners up are going to be there. Friday July 27th, two weeks before the battle all competitors are sent an acapella of Brother Ali's "Pedigree" for the remix round, and 10 miscellaneous songs to sample from for the sample round. In the remix round all sounds must derive from some sort of vinyl or cd sample source from a song including drums, no additional sounds permitted. As for the sample round, well, that's pretty obvious, BUT, all sounds must come from at least two out of the ten songs.

You'd like to think that I was working on something from the moment I received the material but I wasn't. Around the time of the prelims we discovered that my father was diagnosed with a level 3 case of Colon Cancer and a not so serious case of Lymphoma. With all the running around and telling people that I was prepping for the battle (as much as I wanted that 100% to be true), I wasn't, I was supporting my father, fighting the depression and pressure of how this cancer was affecting this rock of man I call "DAD".

During these two weeks before Scribble, my father is scheduled for his surgery to remove his tumor, thank the stars it was and is a success. By now, it's Thursday August 2nd, a week before Scribble and I begin working on my sample round first. I'm working on my beats in and out of the Hospital when I'm able to go. I come up with 3 beats that I'm not too happy with in this one composition. I tried to use six out of the ten songs... but that wasn't working out. All of the songs were so different in style and texture it became more about how I can use a lot of samples opposed to making a sure hit. But then comes Saturday August 4th, and we have to perform at Rock the Bells in Miami, this is an all day event, so no working on your scribble rounds today X, you have an all day event to sweat out with Hip-Hop legends.

Sunday August 5th, nothing happens, I'm worn out from Rock the Bells, and it's fiasco of an event for the artists on the second stage. Monday morning August 6th-7th, I begin to work on a new track and it's fire... pure heat, an undeniable winner. I am now confident in my round, enough to move on to the remix. It's now the day before Scribble Jam, and I have to make a remix and mix it before I drive 16 hours to get there. I think to myself "this is not happening", I can't make a new song with the restraint of only 60 seconds per round, mix it, and handle my business before I leave. BUT, what I can do is work on the remix in the hotel at Cincinnati. I'd have to sacrifice my leisure day at Scribble and just use the day to work... and so I did.

Friday 4:35am, we arrive at the hotel, I'm tired, focused, and ready to sleep. Around 11am I awake to work on my remix, and I do so for about 20 hours straight including food and bathroom breaks. Saturday 7:44am... My body's exhausted, my mind is amped, my heart is racing, and it's time to turn my brain off because I just finished making my remix. 12pm my label-mates decide to have a conversation as loud as they got in the emcee battle later that night, bastards. lol.

ROUND #1 The Elimination:

32 contestants, 14 showed. The elimination round is cancelled, they moved on to the remix round.

ROUND#2 The Remix:

None except for the last round is head to head... so the best of the best is selected out of the batch.

"X:144 to the stage", by the great Kevin Beachum. I'm in the first pair to go on, my beat plays second, the response is good but the Scribble crowd is still warming up to the concept of the beat battle... They want to hear more! The judges deliberate for what seemed like 30 minutes, but was probably 15. They call our names, and I advance to the next round.

ROUND#3 The Sample:

Same thing as last round by this time the crowd has warmed up. I'm first on deck, my beat plays, my beat ends, I get off stage. I can't really tell how many people liked it until I get off stage and members of the crowd and battle are walking up to me giving me compliments. Through these first two rounds I'm listening hard to each competitor, and being that this is the second beat they play for the night I'm already picking my faves.

ROUND#4 The Live Beat Making Round:

Four contenders were selected, needless to say that I was one of them. My competition was strong, real strong, but I didn't let that distract me from enjoying the moment. We were all supposed to receive only ONE copy each of the same record to work off of, but instead at the last minute they decided to give us SIX.

The rules are as follows; We have one hour to use any of the six records to sample and create a beat, the only thing that we can add to the mix is an 808 kick drum, anything else will result in a disqualification.

One hour goes by, we're all ready and anxious, we have only one minute to play our beats so I ask the host to give us MPC users a 30 and 15 second countdown to allow us to arrange our beats live accordingly. The first competitor plays his beat and it's dope, then I'm chosen to go 2nd. As soon as my beat drops the crowd throws there hands to the sky screaming like it's a scene out of House Party. I'm feeling good, my arrangement is strong and has great structure, enough changes and musical elements to last a full song. Intro, verse, chorus, bridge... I'm done. The last 2 competitors play their beats and they're diesel, I'm having a tough time deciding who's going to the next round. The crowd is now chatting amongst each other, pointing fingers at some of us on stage, but for every finger pointed at someone else, the same finger came back to me. I guess they're deciding as well as the judges as to who goes on next. During this process I'm nervous, hoping, meditating on the win... The host announces that there's one definite and a two-man tie. "X:144 you go on to the next round"...I'm overwhelmed with relief

and excitement, completely grateful that I've made it this far. The other two had to battle it out with random beats that they brought on CD.

ROUND#5 the ULTIMATE sample round:

Four crates of records, two producers, and sixty minutes to make history. We start digging; in a situation like this what you dig for counts so much that it can affect your time, and time is everything. The selection on stage was mixed with dope classics to what I like to call "Jimmy Buffet-fillers". I'm picking any and every record I know and feel to be fresh. I return back to my MPC 2500 before my opponent does, I set the record on the platter, get ready to spin and I hear...nothing. The mixer isn't signaling a thing. I call over the host to let him know the deal, we trouble shoot, we get it fixed and we move on. I'm credited an extra five minutes to compensate. I start sampling like a samurai cutting through his opponents on the battlefield, waiting to find that magic record, and at last I did. The third record into my stack is the one with all the magic, by then, my opponent is returning from his second pickings. Even though he had a stack as big as mine to begin with, I guess he was looking for something else, which really isn't good or bad.

Next, I'm sampling, I'm chopping, I'm looking over to my opponent and he's bobbing his head??? I'm sweating, I need to get a grip. I'm chill, I'm focused, I'm a wreck this fool. I remember he's about five minutes ahead of me because of my technical issues. Twenty minutes left for me and I finally begin working on a beat. I'm coming up with some sick progress, but I don't stop until I'm happy with an idea and the idea is fully evolved with the constraints of the time I'm dealt. I have five minutes left, my opponent is asked to stop working and start saving his progress. I keep doing my job and I notice that homeboy next to me is too??? My time is up, I'm asked to save. While I'm saving it looks like the other dude is still working, but I don't sweat it, I pack up and move on to the main stage.

MAIN Stage:

I'm on the main stage playing my beat repeatedly in my headphones, working on dropouts, and little things to freak while playing the sequence live. Kevin announces the details of the final round to the crowd, I'm still playing my beat like a knuckle head and looking at the URB Magazine banner to the side of me, then I hear my name. "X:144 you have one minute", I was like "Oh snap, you want me to go now?!?!?" - I ask for a second and then BOOOOOM! There it goes, drums stomp across the entire field of people. I'm running through my arrangement expecting to hear the 30 second count down to set everyone up for the kill, "You have 10 seconds" I'm like "WHAT?!?", damn it...I couldn't believe it, I knew that I wouldn't get to play my killer sequence so I'm asked to stop right when the meat and potatoes came in.

My heart is racing, my opponent plays his beat and sounds like it's going to be strong! It's an intro to be reckoned with, but 20 seconds into it I don't hear my finishing, I don't hear my loss, the beat was dope but didn't go much further past that intro. The judges are asked to decide instantly, Kevin runs across them getting everyone's vote, calls us to the front and says "This years first Scribble Jam Production battle champion is, X:144!!!" - I'm so excited I'm ready to give Kevin a

high-five, and I actually tried to, hahahahaha. I thanked Kevin, my opponent, the judges, and pass out beat cd's to everyone in sight.

Scribble Jam is one of, if not the, biggest Hip-Hop festivals in America. "I'm the first ever Scribble Jam Production Champion", I thought, "This is Hip-Hop history". All the winners of these battles move on to do great things, I can't wait to do mine.

Thank you Akai and Numark for all your support, without the MPC2500 I couldn't have pulled it off.

Thank you all for reading.

-Maged Khalil Ragab aka X:144