

## Brother, do you remember hip-hop?



It all began around August of 1994, when they celebrated in an almost miraculous manner, the first Hip-Hop festival in Cuba. It was then that this old citadel in El Vedado became a point of convergence for all the rapper energies. The spontaneity, the talent and the creativity had a magnetic force that became vigorously visible. Graffiti and rap: it seemed to be the beginning of a new cultural era in the years of the worst general crisis in the history of the country.

The rappers had much to say and they had voices that were capable of doing so with the appropriate toughness and varying styles, they had will, and they had hopes as they followed the brilliant path that some

Afro-Americans and Hispanics from the US had begun the previous decade. Names like Public Enemy, Ice-T, 2 Live Crew or Arrested Development, and even M.C. Hammer or Massive Attack with their trip-hop, sparkled in the minds of those who for the first time tried out their fiery rhymes at the verge of the ancient walls that were being impregnated with those obsessive sounds and that were getting covered with sudden inscriptions and drawings sketched by admirers of Basquiat or of Keith Haring – who drew the same on a subway wall or on a T-shirt or on a dirigible and, was an admirer, at the same time, of Afro-Cuban figurative painting.

Innumerable names and faces passed through there, such as SBS or Amenaza, which, a few years later, became a group known the world over by the name of Orishas. Many, like them, left the country towards destinies more diverse, some continued in the hip-hop culture, others abandoned it for reasons of all sorts. Those that still survive are sometimes found by the side of the big old house, they sit on a broken wall, under the trees on the sidewalk and talk perhaps about Ice-T or a Spike Lee movie.



Some of those who come are so young that they have only heard of what happened there years ago, before the authorities stopped the show permanently and the sign URBAN COMMUNITY stopped having a stimulating meaning.

Just a few days ago another of the survivors left for Spain, they say, married to a beautiful European who took him even further away from those days of DJing and the shrapnel of explosive rhymes and a pressure cooker of people looking for more and more rap and more and more tough verses and more and more names of challengers.

