



A HIP HOP MENTORSHIP PROGRAM 2006/2007

EVALUATION





UNDERGROUND LOOP MUSIC MENTORSHIP PROJECT EVALUATION

Beginning in August 2006 and ceasing in August 2007 through funding from Arts Victoria (Arts Development for Communities) and The Australia Council (CCD – Skills and Arts Development) Living Music delivered the Underground Loop Hip Hop Mentorship Project.

Living Music administers two community based music programs – The In-House Music Program which seeks to assist young people in the Youth Justice System of Victoria with a musical interest, and the Gateway Music Program (Jesuit Social Services) which seeks to engage at risk young people in a managed and supported developmental pathway and in a range of intensive and coordinated programs that focus on personal development, education, vocational training and employment. A total of 22 young people were involved directly as mentees, with 6 others involved as guest performers or collaborators, working with a total of 16 mentors.

REFERRALS TO UNDERGROUND LOOP PROJECT

IN-HOUSE MUSIC	62%
GATEWAY	38%

The idea of the Underground Loop Hip Hop Mentorship Project was conceived due to the high number of participants in both programs with an interest and talent in creating hip hop music. Young people were invited to participate in the program which involved being mentored by working, professional hip hop artists within the City of Melbourne. The mentors were selected from Living Music's database of professional artists who had shown ability and a passion for working with at risk young people.

The hip hop culture in Melbourne is evident through music, dance, and graffiti and speaks of rising against adversity and the struggle associated with street life. Young people are drawn to this message, especially those from troubled and difficult backgrounds – it speaks a language they can readily relate to.

The Underground Loop project gave these young people an opportunity to work one on one alongside a professional artist already established in the local Hip Hop scene. Each participant was expected to collaborate on two original compositions with their mentor and perform at a live concert. From these two original compositions, one was selected for inclusion on a compilation CD. One live concert was held at the Old Melbourne Watch House as part of Gateway’s Dialogue Project and the Melbourne Fringe Festival and a subsequent performance at the CD Launch at the City of Yarra Freeza Group, Cultural Infusion in Collingwood, Victoria, in August 2007.

MENTEE PRE-MENTORSHIP

AGE

17	6.25%
18	18.75%
19	37.5%
20	25%
21	6.25%
21+	6.25%

EDUCATION

YEAR	
8	12.5%
9	6.25%
10	50%
11	25%
12	6.25%

COMPLETING EDUCATION

NIL	75%
FIRST AID	12.5%
COMPUTER	6.25%
YEAR 12	6.25%

MOTIVATION FOR INVOLVEMENT

WRITE GOOD MUSIC	12.5%
LEARN FROM PROFESSIONAL	37.5%
NETWORKING	12.5%
ENJOYMENT	18.5%
GAIN EMPLOYMENT	6.5%
AMBITION TO SUCCEED	12.5%

PREVIOUS MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

YES	37.5
NO	62.5

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY RADIO	12.5%
CHURCH GROUP	6.25%
LOCAL ARTS GROUP	6.25%
NIL	75%

The statistics show the dominant age group of mentees being between 18 to 20 years, with an education level of mainly year 10, most of whom were not currently involved in any education, and mainly unemployed.

Most mentees came from the Youth Justice System of Victoria. Most had no previous musical experience but all had definite motivations for becoming involved, mainly to learn from professionals. Involvement in community activities was very low.

MENTEE POST MENTORSHIP

QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP WITH MENTOR

GOOD	36.36%
VERY GOOD	45.45%
EXCELLENT	18.19%

ACTIVITIES

PURELY MUSICAL	72.72%
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AS WELL	27.28%

SKILLS ACQUISITION

PERFORMANCE	36.36%
TECHNICAL	36.36%
PEOPLE SKILLS	9%
INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE	18.28%

COMPARISONS Pre and Post Mentorship

EMPLOYMENT STATUS PRE MENTORSHIP

UNEMPLOYED	72.3%
PART TIME	11.2%
FULL TIME	5.5%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS POST MENTORSHIP

UNEMPLOYED	27.27%
PART TIME	18.18%
FULL TIME	27.27%
RESUMED STUDY OR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	27.28%

The statistics show the majority of mentees did secure employment during the mentorship period, with the largest increase in full time employment. Some of the reasons for this change in employment status may reflect involvement in the Underground Loop project. Involvement in an ongoing project with a supportive adult role model/mentor seemed to increase most participants self confidence and self belief. Although this support would have occurred on a musical level, positive affirmation of their abilities may have spread to other areas of their lives and permeated into their overall thinking, instilling the belief that they can accomplish new tasks and fulfill long held ambitions.

- *Increased participation/performance in education, training and employment: In one project participants who were assigned a mentor felt more competent about their school work, attended school more, and got better grades than individuals in a matched control group (Grossman and Tierney 1998). In another mentoring program that focused on education and employment it was found that 73% of those who completed the first phase of the project were in college or employment (Benioff 1997; cited in Shaw 2001). The Brayton mentoring project evaluation found that participation in employment, education and training increased from 36% on entry to 85% on exit (ARTD 2001b; cited in National Crime Prevention 2003).*

SUPPORT –PRE MENTORSHIP

	NO SUPPORT	POOR	REASONABLE	HIGH
FAMILY	6.25%	12.5%	43.75%	37.5
FRIENDS	12.5%	0	56.25	31.25
AGENCIES	18.75%	12.5%	50%	18.75%

SUPPORT –POST MENTORSHIP

	NO SUPPORT	POOR	REASONABLE	HIGH
FAMILY	0%	0%	36.36%	63.64%
FRIENDS	0%	0%	63.64%	36.36%
AGENCIES	45.46%	0%	27.27%	27.27%

The mentees reported feeling more supported after the mentorship as compared to before, with the greatest increase from family. This information is supported by an evaluation of a mentorship pilot program by Marie Delaney and Chris Milne for the Crime Prevention Branch, Commonwealth Attorney General’s Department in September 2002 which states –

- *“All young people involved in matches of six months or more reported reduced offending, increased community involvement, improved self esteem and communication skills and more motivation. These outcomes were consistent in reports of the projects, by young people themselves, by their families and police. Families in particular noted a change in the young person’s attitudes and behaviour and how much their family relationships had improved as a result.”*

Agency support also reflected a large change. During the mentorship period a few young people on Youth Justice Orders completed their orders, thus altering agency support figures. Involvement in a project which connected them to a new network of peers and mentors also may have contributed to a change. The reliance on agencies was not as necessary as a new support group fulfilled needs of social connectedness.

Family support also showed a marked change, possibly due to mentee’s families changing attitudes due to involvement in a positive project, but may also reflect a change in mentee perception of themselves, and a feeling that generally family and the community seemed more supportive due to their own self perception and attitude.

PERSONAL FEELINGS OF HEALTH AND WELL BEING

PRE MENTORSHIP

POOR	6.25%
AVERAGE	12.5%
GOOD	56.25%
EXCELLENT	25%

POST MENTORSHIP

POOR	0%
AVERAGE	18.18%
GOOD	54.54%
EXCELLENT	27.27%

These figures show that overall; involvement in the Underground Loop mentorship project helped them feel better physically. Some mentors reported their mentees had reduced their drug and alcohol intake during the mentorship which may have lead to the feelings of greater well being.

MENTORS

Mentors and mentees were matched by the Project Coordinator. Matching decisions were based mainly on musical tastes and interests and assistance in areas in which the mentees lacked development. All mentees had at some stage in the 12 months prior to the mentorship worked with the Program Coordinator on a musical activity and judgments about ability were made at these times. Mentors were selected through a word of mouth process. The mentor group started with 4 people. Through discussion with the group and to other professional artists, interested parties contacted the Project Coordinator and vice versa, and after an interview, mentors were selected based upon previous experience of working with the target group, understanding of issues relating to target group, time constraints, and musical style and tastes. Living Music then followed this up with a Victoria Police name check to ensure no previous criminal activity. 39% of mentors came to the project with Tertiary Qualifications in music.

Prior to meeting mentees, all mentors attended a mentor coaching session held by Conrad Aiken, a mentor coach and psychologist. Many issues including relationship skills, expectations, support, exiting the relationship, listening skills were discussed and work shopped. During the whole mentorship period mentors were able to access support and guidance from the Project Coordinator, Living Music Manager, and the mentor coach. A monthly meeting followed where all mentors and mentees could meet to discuss the project and its progress. These meetings also included guest speakers all from different areas of the music community including songwriting, APRA (Australian Performing Rights Association), publicity, and record companies. All mentors and mentees were contacted by the Project Coordinator on an occasional basis to discuss the mentorship in confidence and resolve any outstanding issues if necessary.

All other contact was left in the hands of the mentors and mentees, which included songwriting and recording, and in some cases socializing. The recording sessions were held at the Living Music Recording Studio in West Melbourne, The Gateway Recording Studio in Collingwood and in the mentors' own private recording studios. The decision to record at mentors own private studios was left to the mentor. Some agreed readily, others were hesitant and completed their recording at either Living Music or Gateway.

Most mentors understood their role as being mainly to inspire their mentee and offer advice, knowledge and guidance on a musical level. Some saw their role as similar to a big brother, commenting their role also had some importance further than purely musical, to influence their mentees on a personal level and increase their confidence.

- *TO GUIDE TO DEEPER SENSE OF MUSIC AS PERSONAL AND CULTURAL PROGRESSION*
- *TO HELP ADVANCE MUSICALLY, AND PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE TO POTENTIALLY DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR*
- *INSPIRE, POSITIVE INFLUENCE MUSICALLY AND PERSONALLY*

Mentor motivation for being involved as a mentor in the Underground Loop Project centered around wanting to share the positive influence and enjoyment music had had on their own lives, as well as giving back to the community.

- *SHARE IMPACT MUSIC HAS MADE ON ME, SHOW JOY AND POSSIBILITIES*
- *TO LEARN, GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY*
- *TO SEE INDIVIDUAL GO ON THE RIGHT PATH*

MENTOR AGE

21 -25	41%
26 -30	35%
31-35	0%
35-40	24%

TERTIARY QUALIFICATIONS

YES	39%
NO	61%

EXPERIENCE WITH TARGET GROUP

YES	55%
NO	45%

EXPERIENCE WITH MENTORSHIP

YES	27%
NO	73%

FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH MENTEE

WEEKLY	63%
FORTNIGHTLY	27%
MONTHLY	10%

Many mentors were between 21 -25, a similar age to mentees or only a few years older, with the older 35 -40 year age group represented as well. Most mentors did not come to the project with tertiary qualifications, but most with experience of working with the client group, but not in a mentor role. A high amount of contact was reported by most mentors.

Almost all mentors reported being challenged by the project, but generally ending positively.

- *CHALLENGING TO INSPIRE LYRICALLY, CAME FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES, BUT FOUND COMMON GROUND*
- *DIFFICULT AT FIRST, BUT IMPROVED MARKEDLY*
- *ADVISING ON TECHNIQUES WAS A CHALLENGE, AT TIMES MENTEE WAS UNABLE TO LISTEN, BUT DID BREAKTHROUGH*
- *REWARDING, LEARNED COMPASSION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THIS SITUATION*
- *DISTRUST AT START, FORMED FRIENDSHIP, SOME ANXIETY*
- *RELATIONSHIP GREW SLOWLY, GOOD NATURED BANTER, HAD TO REPORT MENTEE FOR QUESTIONABLE BEHAVIOUR, BUT DID NOT UPSET HIM*
- *SOLID RELATIONSHIP WHICH GREW, MET FAMILY, UNDERSTANDING OF A DIFFERENT WORLD*

CONCLUSION

The Underground Loop Hip Hop Mentorship Project succeeded in its original charter; to give young at risk people the opportunity to work with professional artists towards producing original music for inclusion on a compilation CD and a live performance. The most immediate and pronounced results are evident in the CD and live performances and refinement of skills in songwriting, producing music, and new skills such as event management, publicity and promotion, and live performance preparation.

However, the collateral benefits of health and well being, social connectedness, employment, self empowerment, self worth are also evident in the overall outcomes. The statistics reflect not only musical change, but personal change which long term has much more far reaching and profound impact. Positive changes in employment status, health and well being, support from friends and family, skill acquisition is evident in all the statistics. Working alongside an adult

and peers in positive relationships is what many of the young people lack in their lives. Hip hop music is merely the vehicle for a relationship which offers respect, structure, collaboration, direction and clear goals.

The Underground Loop has facilitated the beginning of what is hoped will be life long professional and personal relationships, where young people have not only been given an opportunity to fast track their musical interest and open up professional networks which would have otherwise taken many years to develop, but also break down barriers of social isolation and disadvantage, and give them a chance to develop as young adults with something positive to offer their community, family, friends, and themselves.