

To beat or not to beat, another Islamic fallacy

"Such as took their religion to be mere amusement and play, and were deceived by the life of the world." That day shall We forget them as they forgot the meeting of this day of theirs, and as they were wont to reject Our signs. [7:51]

'Bro this has got a phat beat', says one brother. 'He got wicked flow', says another, bopping his head. These are typical comments made by the listeners of 'Islamic Hip-Hop', a multi million business and cultural phenomenon in which Muslims are the main consumer.

The alleged benefit of 'Islamic Hip-Hop'

Those responsible for pushing 'Islamic Hip-Hop' argue that it is better for Muslim youth to listen to this 'genre' of music, rather than the filth of contemporary Hip-Hop, which is concerned with *hayat-ad-dunya* (worldly life) and materialism. This opinion seems fair from the vantage point of using an existing 'hook' to try and draw the youth back towards the *Deen* of Islam. There are, however, a number of flaws with this approach and line of thinking.

The age-old debate of *Halal* and *Haram*

From the outset, the issue of using beats in 'Islamic Hip-Hop' has divided many people. This debate opens a whole can of worms on the music issue. Opinions tend to fall into three camps. One says all musical instruments are forbidden; another says you can only use the *duff* and percussion instruments, and the last that you can use any instruments. All views are backed up by those of scholars and members of each camp believe they have the strongest argument. So why is there a contradiction? It is not because of The Book of God, The Qur'an, since that is free from any contradictions (4:82). The problem lies in man's understanding and also in people trying to push certain agendas.

Entertainment or *Dawah*

What most have missed out is that 'Islamic Hip-Hop' and 'Islamic Music' fall under the broader umbrella of entertainment. The movers and shakers of 'Islamic Hip-Hop' have tried hard and pushed a *dawah* angle, but if we compare the traits of these two it soon becomes apparent that they follow the entertainment angle.

Dawah is simply about calling mankind to the message of Islam (self-surrender to The One True God Who is Free of all Faults). What is important is that 'Islamic Hip-Hop' has inherited the fascination of beats, flow and style from its secular predecessor with the result that its message becomes diluted and secondary. Nevertheless, it would be very unfair to categorise all tunes in this way since there have been some, specifically those that have taken a political angle dealing with the '*Dajjalic* New World DisOrder', that have sent out very strong messages. Unfortunately, these are few and far between, and the general listening audience is still far more interested in consuming beats and wishy-washy lyrics, as opposed to meaningful lyrics that will positively transform the self (*nafs*) and wake people up. Having a few lyrics on God and his messengers is actually disrespectful. The impact of *Dawah* should be development of the self and not nodding your head and spending needless amounts on distractive merchandise.

The Almighty Dollar

'Islamic Hip-Hop' was always going to be exploited by the corporations as soon as money was being exchanged for what is called '*dawah*'. The markets that opened were huge from the selling of CDs, cassettes, DVDs, videos and merchandise (particularly clothing and concert tickets). The cost of a CD is next to nothing with the sleeve being the most expensive component, and yet these are being sold for £10! This is a huge mark-up for something that is supposed to be *fee-sabil-lillah*. Furthermore, copyright laws are being issued, which is an alien concept in Islam since the message was given free from God to His Messengers. All this has fitted into the corporation's profile of exploiting the consumer for maximum gain. Money makes the mind work in mysterious ways by making people justify their actions. For instance, people will validate their pricing by saying a portion will be given to charity, or it covers various expenses such as bills etc.

Muslim Owned - A very expensive brand

A number of artists/producers have tried to take ownership away from the corporations even though the end results are the same or sometimes worse. Just because it appears to be Muslim owned or produced the price is bumped up. T-shirts are being sold for £15 by Muslims, CDs still at £10. So what is the difference? Nothing, except the brand name and greed for the almighty dollar, which people foolishly believe will be used for good purposes. This is a little like 'Ahmad Hood' (synonymous with Robin Hood): take from the Muslims and give to the Muslims -whilst receiving your cut.

Good intentions do not necessarily lead to the Garden

Whilst the philosophy of 'Islamic Hip-Hop' has good intentions, in actuality it is dragging the Muslim youth back towards *jahili* Hip-Hop rather than the *Deen* of Islam. In many forums on the web, Muslims are discussing *jahil* artists alongside fellow Muslim artists! They are engaging in pointless debates about who is the best/favourite artist and the message propagated by these individuals is increasingly viewed as being of secondary importance. Muslims are spending large sums on merchandise believing it goes to a good cause, e.g. 10% to Palestine (this is diabolical why not 100 %?) However, perhaps the worst outcome has been the Islamic Hip-Hop event, where brothers and sisters intermingle turning it into a 'Muslim rave/disco'. The selling of merchandise and raising funds for charity is a common excuse given for holding these events. Muslims need to learn the art of giving freely, without the need for entertainment or merchandise (given that the recipients have a God-given right to the wealth of the rich).

'Islamic Hip-Hop' is Hip-Hop packaged for Muslims. It targets them as the main consumer in this *jahili* entertainment system, distracting them from their real obligations. Muslims must wake up and not fall for these tricks. Time and money would be best served for other purposes that God Almighty has ordained. One should not get mixed up in this game.

Dawah is a very important aspect of Islam. It must be conducted properly, without wasting time or money, or by diluting the true message. We must not give in to our own whims and desires. Instead we must remain firm and steadfast on the straight path – Insh'allah.

Further information

For further information on what The Qur'an has to say about a number of issues, please visit the following website: www.bandung2.co.uk