Analysis of Korean B-boys:

Trials and Errors of Korean B-boy Evolution

Kim, Dae Eun

Master of Arts
(International Commerce)

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
KOREA UNIVERSITY

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APPROVED BY

EVALUATION COMMITTEE:

Jeong Hun Oh, Supervisor

Jung Ha Lee

Eungi Kim



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This paper is written for Korean B-boys by a Korean B-boy. After a long journey, we are the proud people who still keep moving forward. Let's all continue this fine tradition. Long live this sacred culture; peace to you and yours!!

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ABSTRACT

B-boying is a modern dance style that has originated from the ashes of South Bronx in 1970s. After two decades, B-boying has landed in Korea, and starting from 2001, Korean B-boys have become officially and unofficially the best of the world. Of course, Korean B-boys had to survive the social hostility in the beginning. As a reward of blood, sweat, and tears, now Korea is the only country where B-boys receive government support. Korea is the only country where B-boying is taught as a major at art universities. Foreign B-boys come to Korea to learn. According to 2006 SERI report, B-boying ranked the top 6th commodity of the year. B-boying in Korea has come a long way.

While tracing these remarkable accomplishments, we have also discovered loopholes in Korean B-boy community. Some have been overwhelmed by the fundamental dogma of Hip-hop doctrine; neglecting the Korean foundation, these B-boys have engaged in erratic behaviors that are not suitable in Korean social structure. Others have failed in image marketing, some has failed to present themselves in professional manners. Over all, these errors have contributed to the frailty of Korean B-boy community in a collective manner.

In addition to these errors, Korean B-boy community is in need for the establishment of fundamental infrastructures(business and legal) to prosper even further. Korean B-boy community also needs more of a grass-root support. The good news is that slowly but gradually however, this vital grass-root support started becoming available.

The very existence of these problems, also speaks for the availability of remedies. Fortunately, current Korean B-boy community has its active senior members who have experienced and overcome the primitive hardships. Furthermore, Korean B-boys can refer to the past experience of American B-boy scene, and this reference provides insightful guidelines for Korean B-boys. Instead of fading out as a fad, Korean B-boys must seek sustainability by cultivating infrastructures, and expanding the sphere of activity.

There lies infinite potential within the Korean B-boy community. Better yet however, we have determined that having a coherent understanding and genuine appreciation of this art form must come before talking any business. This paper will address the very foundation of B-boying, the trials and errors of Korean B-boy evolutions in detail. This paper will also attempt to provide future guidelines for Korean B-boys to follow.

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I. Introduction

The subject of this research focuses on Korean B-boys who within two decades, have become the best at the global B-boy arena. Only in Korea, B-boys receive government support. And yet, not much research has been conducted on Korean B-boys. We have not been able to find any research since 2007, but B-boying in Korea has updates. Furthermore, when Korean B-boys are enjoying popularity in a global scale, no piece of B-boy literature has been written in English. These conditions inspired us to write an updated version in English. Due to the scarcity of references, we have conducted a field study. We have interviewed numerous B-boys, we have visited B-boy events both hosted by corporate sector and B-boy themselves, and in order to get more intuition we have even engaged ourselves in a B-boy business project. We confirmed that B-boying bears infinite business potential both domestically and globally.

As the research went on however, one thing has become clear; for any subject matter, there exists a fixed order. Without a through understanding, one can not and must not jump straight into the conclusion. Prior to discussing business, we like to emphasize the importance of having a coherent

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understanding and genuine appreciation of this art-form. 'Breaking[1] is an incredible dance that has value. It has foundation., it has vocabulary, and there are names for all the moves. It's not someone throwing themselves on the ground', says Ken Swift, the legendary B-boy from New York City(Cooper 2004, 102). In regards to most of the B-boy business that failed, we attribute those failures to unscrupulous greed, and lack of appreciation and understanding of B-boying. B-boying is not yet the goose that lays golden eggs, but it can be.

This paper will be discussed in following manner. The second chapter will provide the definition of B-boy, and elaborate its cultural origin. The trials and errors of the B-boy pioneers in the United States provide guidelines for the late comers including Korea; history lessons are important. The third chapter examines the ongoing evolution of Korean B-boy community. Started in late 1990s, Korean B-boys have come a long way against the hostile social environment. This chapter will address the splendid accomplishment of Korean B-boys both domestically and internationally. The fourth chapter will point out the errors to be fixed by Korean B-boying scene. These errors include: blind worshipping of American Hip-hop creeds, lack of professionalism, failed image marketing, wrong usage of marketing terminology, insufficient infrastructure and

[1] Breaking is the original terminology for B-boying.

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grass-root support. The fifth chapter will suggest the task to be done by the B-boy community to make further progress. At the end we will re-emphasize the significant points of previous chapters, and finish with concluding remarks.

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II. Origin of B-boy

1. Definition and Cultural Origin

B-boy stands for Break Boy. The origin of this term goes back to the mid 1970s. There was DJ Kool Herc who played music at the block parties in South Bronx, New York(Veran 1999). There would be a break segment of the vinyl records, and during the break session, the urban youth would get down on the floor with acrobatic moves. Tracks like ″Apache″(1973) by Incredible Bongo Bands, ″The Mexican″(1972) by Babe Ruth, and ″It′s Just Begun″(1972) by Jimmy Castor Bunch are all time B-boy favorites, rarely absent at B-boy events. Emphasizing the importance of these tunes, American social scholar Joe Schloss coined these songs as the B-boy Canon in which ′B-boys and B-girls transfer the historical association of the music to their dance and by extension into their bodies′ (Schloss 2009, 38).

At its early stage, B-boying was developed by the African American youth, but it was the Latino youth who took it to the next level in the 1970s (Veran 1999). B-boying is a core element of Hip-hop culture, which preached victory over the street. <Table 1> summarizes the four major element of Hip-hop

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culture. By embracing the code of Hip-hop conducts, street gangsters mutually agreed to cease fire, and promote peace, unity, and having fun. Hip-hop intended to generate dreams and hopes in the minds of the impoverished. Putting their guns down, the street thugs started competing for the artistic supremacy determined by the finesse, rhythm and difficulties of the moves. Since B-boy competitions have been referred as battles.

<Table 1> The Four Main Elements of Hip-hop Culture.

DJ(Disc Jockey) Not only DJ plays the music, but DJ create new music via different mixing techniques.	B-boy(Break Boy) B-boys stand at the front line of the Hip-hop show, and hype the crowd.
MC(Move the Crowd) The master of ceremony, MC delivers positive energy through conscious words of wisdom.	Graffiti Writing Originating from the caveman days, these muralists leave their legacy with spray cans and markers.

Source: Vibe History of Hip-Hop.

There was sporadic emergence of crews from different neighborhoods. During the early days, crews like Zulu Kings, Crazy Commanders, The Bronx Boys, and Salsoul Crew were bringing the ruckus. 'These early architects of the

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art form were doing it for the love of the dance and the thrill of competition′(Veran 1999, 54).

2. From B-boying to Breakdancing

Found by Joe Joe Tores in 1977, Rock Steady Crew came into the New York B-boy scene. Indeed, the birth of Rock Steady Crew would be the turning point of B-boying history. B-boying went mainstream in 1981 when Henry Chalfant, a renowned graffiti photographer offered Rock Steady Crew to do a showcase battle against their rival crew Dynamic Rockers. After the battle was aired by mainstream media like ABC NEWS and National Geographic Channel (Brenner et al. 2002), B-boying was coined as breakdancing.

′If you wanna keep it real, it′s called b-boying. Breakdancing was a name given by the media because they felt b-boying was an unacceptable term. They shouldn′t mind because it′s not their business; it′s ours. B-boying came from us. If we call it b-boying, that′s where it′s gonna stay′(Cooper 2004, 102).

says Joe-Joe, the founder of Rock Steady Crew.

With the growing popularity, a movie called Wild Style(1982) featured key Hip-hop figures at the time, but Flash Dance(1983), a motion film by

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Paramount pictures took B-boying to the public. Rock Steady Crew featured as a cameo in Flashdance, and this caught the attention of American pop culture. From there, B-boys entered the mainstream media.

Domestically, top B-boy Crews had decorated the 1984 Summer Olympics and President Ronald Reagan′s second inauguration in 1985. Internationally, B-boys have traveled all around the world doing performances before Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles.

′I would say 1983 was when b-boying was at its peak. We went to Europe for the first time and saw how our culture was starting to spread worldwide. It was a total shock to me when we arrived at the airport and people were already feeling us and knew exactly who we were and what we did. Everywhere you went back then, all you saw were b-boys, poppers, and lockers all over the place′(Cooper 2004, 106).

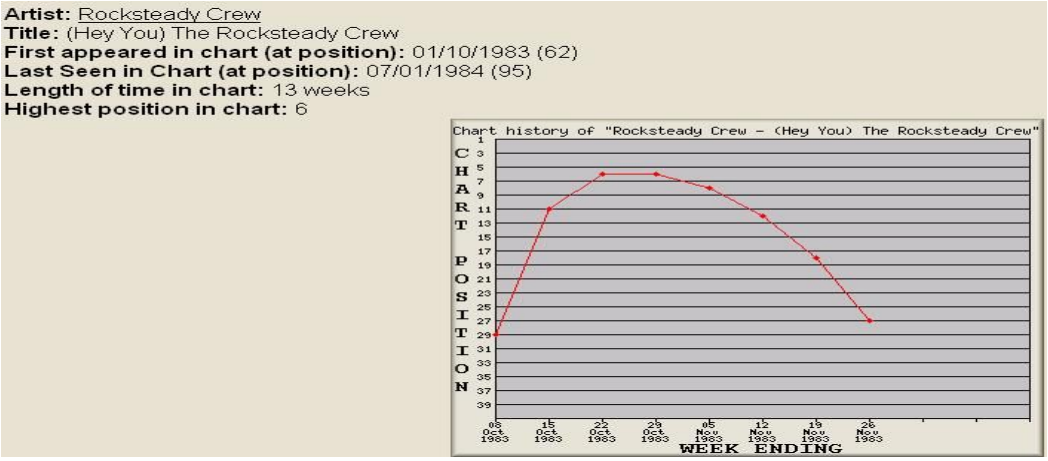
reminisces Spinner, a B-boy representing Dynamic Rockers.

In 1983, Rock Steady Crew even produced an album, which became the number one record in London. According to Fab5Freddy, Rock Steady Crew did engage in a music business to earn extra income even though this pop record was far from being Hip-hop. B-boys and B-girls were enjoying their celebrity status. It had been unprecedented. The original terminology B-boying had commercially mutated its name into breakdancing. Saturated by commercialism

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at the mainstream level, the original essence of Hip-hop in B-boying was neglected; but that was when the fever started fading out.

<Figure 1> Rock Steady Crew's Album Chart



Source: http://www.chartstats.com/songinfo.php?id=11030

3. Fall of Breakdance Industry

The breakdance fever started fading; the once friendly media suddenly turned against breakdancing. For example, several news papers exaggerated the warnings against the potential injuries from breakdancing. The city of New York started banning breakdancing (Brenner et al. 2002).

Unfortunately, B-boys were not ready against this contingency. Intoxicated by the unprecedented prosperity and popularity, they lost control. Perhaps, they

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never had any control to begin with; the first B-boys were from the ghetto. To exacerbate the situation, B-boys had hard times adjusting back to the state of no popularity. The lucrative lifestyle was gone overnight, but they wanted to hang on to what they once possessed. In order to do so, some had turned to less legal measures. But for whoever goes against the law, the consequences are always dire. Some B-boys had been jailed, others had been murdered, and the B-boy community was falling flat.

This painful experience can be interpreted as the primitive trials and errors, which are inevitable for an emerging culture like Hip-hop. B-boying had been just born, and there was not enough time to build the crucial infrastructures. However, what has become obvious once again was the difference between B-boying and breakdancing. When B-boying was integrated into mainstream media, they labeled it breakdancing. B-boys were exploited by the market, and when the entertainment value of breakdancing was depleted, breakdancing was ditched. In regards to the past commercial exploitation, that word breakdancing can never be appreciated by the B-boy community.

Indeed, being called a breakdancer is a grave insult against a B-boy or a B-girl. According to B-girl Seoulsonik, ′B-boying is loaded with...symbols and history,′ while breakdancing is ′just a movement′(Schloss 2009, 61). In his

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interview with Morethanastance.com, Gabriel "Kwik Step" Dionisio expresses frustration about the B-boy essence which was never the same after it turned into breakdancing.

'That word you wanna honor is gonna become wood. And it allows the media to put nails all in it and hang whatever they want on it to the point where the cats who made the culture can barely recognize it anymore. Use it in context, or it backfires'.[2]

4. Moving Forward

What does this fine line between B-boying and breakdancing indicate? It heralds that although breakdance industry might have perished, the B-boy community has remained strong. Real B-boys did not disappear. After going through a painful but sobering experience, B-boys in United States have learned how to control and be self-sufficient.

The self-sufficiency is evident in Freestyle Session, the largest B-boy event in the world. Organized by Chris "Cros1" Wright, a highly respected event organizer in the B-boy community, Freestyle Session boasts ten years of history. <Table 2> illustrates the decadeful of progress.

[2] www.morethanastance.com

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<Table 2> Freestyle Session Chronicles

Year	Freestyle Session Vol.	# of Audience	Entry Fee
1997	FSS Vol.1	700	$7
1998	FSS Vol.2	800	$10
	FSS Vol.3	1300	$10
1999	FSS Vol.4	1000	$15
	FSS Vol.5	1500	$20
2002	FSS Vol.6	2500	$25
2003	FSS Vol.7	2500	$25
2004	FSS Vol.8	4000	$30
2007	FSS 10 yrs	5000	$30
2008	FSS 11 yrs	3000	$30

Source: Interview with Cros1/ www.koreanroc.com

By looking at Table 2, one can recognize the positive linear relationship between the entrance fee and the number of audience at each Freestyle Session; the quality grows with time. In order to verify the positive relationship, we have conducted a linear regression test by using the SPSS.

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SPSS provided the correlation of 0.891 at 0.05 significance level.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,891[a]	,794	,768	697,31267	,794	30,748	1	8	,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), EntryFee

<Table 3> Model Summary for Linear Regression Test of Freestyle Session

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14951040	1	14951040,344	30,748	,001[a]
	Residual	3889959,7	8	486244,957		
	Total	18841000	9			

a. Predictors: (Constant), EntryFee

b. Dependent Variable: Audiences

<Table 4> ANOVA Test for Linear Regression Test of Freestyle Session

The R Square is .794 which verifies the strong relationship between two variables.

Coefficients[a]

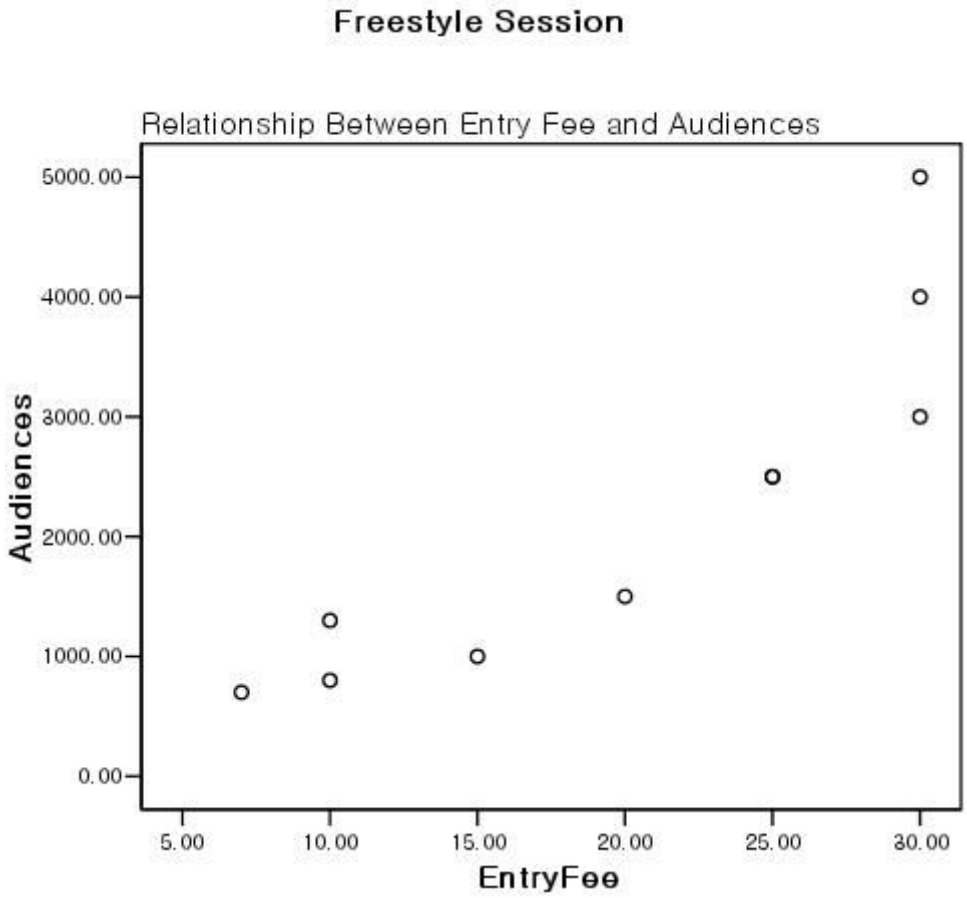
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-634,293	561,645		-1,129	,291	-1929,447	660,862					
	EntryFee	141,797	25,572	,891	5,545	,001	82,828	200,765	,891	,891	,891	1,000	1,000

a. Dependent Variable: Audiences

<Table 5> Coefficients for Linear Regression Test of Freestyle Session

Spelling Out the Sample Regression Line, we found out that Y= 141.797X-634.293

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<Figure 2> Relationship between Entry Fee and Audiences at Freestyle Session

Looking at the Scatter Diagram provided by SPSS, there is a linear regression curve with a positive slope; A positive relationship exists between the variable, and because R square is 0.794 which means 79.4 % of data is fit to this regression curve.

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After all, what does this mean? One can understand that because the quality of Freestyle Session has gotten better, people are willing to support it even though the admission fee increases each time. Surviving the painful breakploitation era[3], B-boying has proved its legitimacy as an enduring art form that is enriched with history and culture. Moreover, what has once started off as a redeeming avenue for the impoverished youth in Bronx, has spread around the world, and B-boying has eventually landed in Korea.

[3] Breakploitation was the satire expression that mocks how mainstream has exploited breakdance back then.

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III. B-boy Evolution in Korea

1. Primitive Stage: Korean Foundations

In 1990, the "Soul Train"[4] that was aired by AFKN Channel[5], sparked the beginning of Korean Hip-hop. Although, it was difficult to understand the essence of Hip-hop movement, minority of people began to appreciate what they have witnessed; they would imitate the dance moves, and they would recite the lyrics. Inspired by the rap music and American pop culture, Korean singers like Hyun Jin Young, Tae Ji Boys, DEUX have cultivated the Korean Hip-hop. Just like the original B-boys in the Bronx, people started seeing dancers doing B-boy moves during the break-session of the song; that short seconds of breaking have been just fascinating for Korea middle school, and high school students who were stressed out by the heavy educational demand. Soon, schools started spotting many students practicing the B-boy moves during lunch breaks. Slowly but gradually, Korean B-boy community started emerging. Hip-hop/B-boying has been welcomed by few, but overall, it was not embraced by the conservative social environment.

---

[4] Soul Train is a TV Program that played American Hip-hop music, and introduced B-boying to Korea for the first time.

[5] Standing for American Forces Korean Network, this TV channel operated for US stationary soldiers in Korea. In 1990s, AFKN was the only avenue for Koreans to meet Hip-hop.

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Under the Confucian doctrine that dictated the peninsula for many centuries, an invisible caste system was prevalent in Korea. Thus it has not been very surprising to see hostility projected on the Korean B-boys at their primitive stage. B-boys were stigmatized as trouble makers, and to live and die as a B-boy meant that he was ready to abandon the prestige and respect from the society. But as always, the forbidden fruit tastes sweeter, and furthermore B-boys had their reason to keep dancing.

When a B-boy is dancing, he is the king of the stage. There is no fixed definition of the stage; stages can vary from street, theater, battle, or even to subway stations. Regardless of the place, B-boying has embedded the sense of identity and pride within the B-boys who were socially deprived.

The B-boys would gather in the club called ″Moonlight″ that was located in Itaewon. According to the first generation B-boys, Club Moonlight was where they paid their dues.

′Moonlight has not been the exclusive B-boy club; it was a club for foreigners. Better yet, all the respected street dancers would gather at Moonlight. From 1 or 2 am to 3 or 4 am, there was a B-boying session where people formed a circle and danced....back then, I was a high school student. I would take the last train to arrive at Itaewon, play billiard, and go to Moonlight to see the B-boy session′(Cho et al. 2008, 203).

reminisces Dae Kyun ″Virus″ Hwang, the founder of T.I.P(Teamwork Is Perfect).

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2. Early Korean B-boy Crews and B-boy Unit

The early generations of Korean B-boys have danced against the repressive social structure, and survived. Around the same time, Korean B-boys have formed different crews. Established in 1996, the oldest Korean B-boy crew that is still active is T.I.P Crew. There also have been Rivers Crew, Able Crew, People Crew, Expression, and Extreme Crew[6].

In addition to the strong B-boy crews, Korea also had insightful visionaries who foresaw the potential of Korean B-boys: most notably Michael Park and Dean Kim. These two men have run a company named G-corp(formerly known as TP, standing for Think People), and hosted B-boy Unit, the Korean B-boy battle that accelerated the growth of Korean B-boys. Starting off as the advertising partners of Puma Korea, these organizers have gradually increased the size of the pie.

[6] Extreme Crew is from Busan City.

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<Table 6> Previous Winners of B-boy Unit

B-boy Unit	Year	Winning Crew
B-boy Unit Vol.1	2001	Extreme Crew(Korea)
B-boy Unit Vol.2		T.I.P(Korea)
B-boy Unit Vol.3	2002	Extreme Crew(Korea)
B-boy Unit Vol.4		Expression(Korea)
B-boy Unit Vol.5	2003	T.I.P(Korea)
B-boy Unit Vol.6	2004	Drifterz(Korea)
B-boy Unit Vol.7	2005	Rivers Crew(Korea)
B-boy Unit Vol.8	2006	France Dream Team(France)
B-boy Unit Vol.9	2007	Mind 180(U.S.A)

Source: 2007 B-boy Unit Brochure

This table bears significant implications for both domestic and global context. We will revisit the significance of global context later. Speaking in the domestic rhetoric, Extreme Crew has expanded Korean B-boy′s horizon by championing the first and third B-boy Unit. Prior to Extreme Crew′s triumph, Seoul B-boy Crews would monopolize the attention and spotlights. The fact that a non Seoul B-boy Crew topped the competition, inspired the youth in local provinces, and B-boy population grew accordingly. The inspiration grows even bigger when Korean B-boys started going out of the country from 2001.

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3. Turning Point: 2001~

The year 2001 reversed the tide. G-Corp held the Korean qualification battle to select the Korean national B-boy team to compete at Battle of the Year(BOTY in short) held in Germany. The first Korean B-boys to go abroad was a project team called Visual Shock, an all-star Korean B-boy team whose members were from T.I.P, Expression, Able, and Skills On The Groove.

Presenting a Korean style B-boy performance using the fans, Visual Shock won the Best Show Award, and placed Best 4 at the battles. In the following year, Expression Crew got the first place at the battle, and since then, Korean Crews would either win the first place or the second place at BOTY.



Visual Shock, photo by Puma Korea.

<Table 7> briefly summarizes the accolade of Korean B-boy Awards at major B-boy Battles.

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<Table 7> Accolades of Korean B-boys

Battle Of The Year	UK Bboy Championship	Redbull BC One	Freestyle Session
BOTY 2001 Best Show Award (Visual Shock) BOTY 2002 1st Place(Expression) BOTY 2003 2nd Place(Expression) BOTY 2004 1st Place(Gambler) BOTY 2005 1st Place(Last 4 One) BOTY 2006 2nd Place(Drifterz) BOTY 2007 1st Place(Extreme Crew) BOTY 2008 2nd Place(T.I.P Crew)	2002 1st Place(Project Corea) 2004 1st Place(Project Soul) 2005 1st place(Project Soul) 2006 2nd Place(Drifterz) 2007 1st Place(T.I.P Crew) 2008 2nd Place(T.I.P Crew)	2005 2nd place Hong10 2006 1st Place Hong10 2007 Best 4 2008 1st Place Wing	2002 FSS Japan 2nd Place(Project Corea) 2008 FSS 10 yrs 2nd Place(Gambler)



Coincidentally, the splendid accolades of Korean B-boys blended with nationalism flared by 2002 World Cup. It was the moment when the social interpretation of Korean B-boys has switched from devious trouble makers to patriotic figures. In less than a decade, Korean B-boys have succeeded to erase the negative connotation of a B-boy to a large extent. Accordingly, the golden era of Korean B-boys has started.

4. The Golden Days

(1) Korean B-boys On Air

B-boys were aired on TV. They were appearing on music videos, television commercials, and for prominent B-boy events, KBSn has come and broadcasted it live. Out of these exposures, the B-boy themed commercial films have been viewed most frequently. Quickly calculating the commercial potential of Korean B-boys, the media and the corporate sector have aired a lot of advertisement with B-boys. The most outstanding one was Kookmin Bank′s TV commercial where Yeon Su ″The End″ Kim from Gambler Crew hits an air-flare with the camera flashing on the back ground. The background voice says that the best in Korea can be the best in the world. Gambler Crew is famous for winning B-boy competitions worldwide, and Koookmin Bank was not slow to manipulate

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the top status of Gambler Crew.

Korean society was also deeply moved when they saw the E-pyunhan Saesang commercial. In that commercial, B-boys from Last 4 One collaborated with the Kayakum Team of Sook Myung Women′s University for a commercial. Along with DJ′s scratching and beatboxing, the instrumental team played the Canon(originally composed by Johann Pachelbel), and B-boys have danced accordingly.

T.I.P Crew did the advertisement for Samsung notebooks, LG CYON phones, public service advertising. Music wise, T.I.P have featured in music videos of Lee Hyo Ri, Big Bang, Bae Chi Gi. The status of Korean B-boys has elevated from minor to major; they have moved from back up dancers to main characters.

(2) Korean B-boy Association

Collision and conflict in expanding society are inevitable; this inevitability did not exempt the emerging B-boy community in Korea. As the Korean B-boys name value started escalating, some organizers were suspected for monopolizing the B-boy scene. B-boys raised their voice of concern against unfair monopoly. In order to resolve the escalating tension and promote peace

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and justice, Korean B-boys formed a temporary B-boy Federation. In a broader perspective, Korean B-boys sought to protect their rights against all odds.

By that time, Korean B-boys have grown enough to draw attention from the national government, and senior B-boys who looked into the welfare and future path of upcoming B-boys, organized Korea B-boy Association in 2007[7]. Korean B-boy Association has pushed several agendas to link member crews with 2007 Kyung Joo World Expo, and 2007~2009 Cyon Bboy Championship. At the end of 2007, KBA launched the Annual B-boy Award, and T.I.P Crew got the Best Crew Award, and B-boy Hong10 from Drifterz Crew won the Solo B-boy Award.

[7] The founding members of Korean B-boy Association are T.I.P Crew, Extreme Crew, Maximum Crew, and Gambler Crew.

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(3) B-boy Battles in Korea

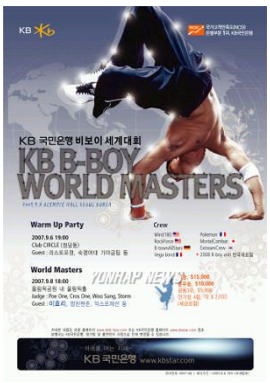
Before the B-boy fever overwhelmed Korean society, the battles used to be patented from abroad. Korean organizers and promoters would borrow the copyrights of B-boy battles from foreign promoters with ownership. Organizers like Cartel Creative Inc, still holds Korean qualification battles for Battle Of The Year and U.K. B-boy Championship, and sends out the Korean national team to the world finals. With the rising popularity of Korean B-boys however, people witnessed the emergence of domestic B-boy competitions.

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In addition to already existing B-boy Unit, Battle Of The Year Korea, and U.K B-boy Championship Korean Elimniations, new events like Levis Battle Master, 4 Da Next Level, KB B-boy World Masters, R-16 Sparkling Korea, and LG Cyon B-boy Championships emerged. Each has different motivation and significances.









Levi's Battle Master: was the first battle event that attempted to have regional qualifications, but due to the poor conducting, it fell apart.

4 Da Next Level: has been special because instead of confining the dance criteria only to B-boying, the organizer has integrated all the other genres of street dancing. In addition, 4 Da Next Level was highly praised when it approached the larger crowd, especially the senior citizens who were formerly neglected.

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KB B-boy World Masters: employed Lee Hyo Ri to attract people. It was participated by different countries including Germany, France, Japan, U.S.A, and Korea. As briefly mentioned above, Kookmin Bank had successfully generated a positive impression by stirring up the nationalism with a B-boy commercial. Unfortunately, the last KB B-boy World Masters 2008, has been criticized for prioritizing the guest singers over the B-boys; the singers were given more time while the length of B-boy battles had gone down. The winners of this KB B-boy World Masters have been Extreme Crew, Pockemon Crew[8], and Rivers Crew.

R-16 Sparkling Korea: This was the first time the Korean government(Korea Tourism Organization) was directly involved in organizing a B-boy battle, and highly decorated Hip-hop figures were invited as guests. The organizers left a good example by appreciating graffiti, the most neglected elements in Hip-hop culture. The first R-16 took place in Seoul, the second R-16 took place in Gyungi province, and the current R-16 is scheduled to take place at Incheon city.

LG Cyon Bboy Championship: has been significant because it is the first joint project between Korean Bboy Association and LG Cyon. Just like the Levi′s Battle Master, Cyon Bboy Championship pushed for regional qualifications, but

[8] Pockemon Crew is from France.



this time, it did not fail. The success can be attributed to the solid guidance provided by the vice president of KBA, B-boy Virus; a MBA graduate might be good at business theories, but nobody runs a better B-boy business than B-boys themselves. The most recent Cyon Bboy Championship encountered the same complaints that were previously raised against KB B-boy World Masters when B-boy supporters in Korea were pushed back by the Big Bang fan club members who clogged the Olympic Hall.

B-boy Unit: Now, let′s revisit B-boy Unit′s global significance. B-boy Unit, the oldest B-boy battle event in Korea, proudly holds the title of the first multinational B-boy competition. The multinational expansion of B-boy Unit is especially meaningful because B-boy Unit has started off as a domestic B-boy competition. First, B-boy Unit has differentiated itself from heavily commercialized events like Levi′s B-boy Battle Master. Such events had financially strong sponsors, but B-boy Unit proved that money can not buy everything. The large corporate sector did not have the dedication, appreciation, nor coherent understanding of the culture; but the most critical mistake of these corporate was that they lacked consistency. Levis B-boy Battle Master for example, lasted only two times. The big corporate chased only after the money,

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but B-boy market has not been large enough to offer what the big corporate sought. B-boy Unit on the other hand, steadily proceeded with launching annual B-boy Units, which were in times successful in establishing authenticity and prestigious name value.

As the period of successful event went on, B-boy Unit caught the attention of Bboyworld.com. Found by Erwin Mahroug of Netherland, Bboyworld.com is the largest online B-boy community with 80,000 registered users and still growing. It updates the B-boys and their supporters worldwide with the most recent video clips, advertises the event, and most important, it brings the attention of the global B-boy population. Bboyworld.com witnessed the dedication, progress and potential of Korean B-boys by finding the ever lasting B-boy Units. Deeply impressed by the quality of B-boy Unit along the progress of Korean B-boys, Mr. Mahroug gives credit B-boy Unit for playing a critical in the establishment of Korean B-boy scene. Bboyworld.com decided to bring up G-Corp, and B-boy Unit was exposed before the global B-boy population via Bboyworld.com.

The vital marriage between B-boy Unit and Bboyworld.com brought up G-Corp in a global scale. Bboyworld.com sent infamous dancers to Korea for G-Corp′s event called Honor of Dance 2003. They have sent B-boys from the U.S., France, and Japan. In 2004, B-boys from Japan, China, Taiwan, and Thailand

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came to Korea to participate B-boy Unit Vol.6, making it an All-Asia competition. In 2006, B-boy Unit had regional eliminations in U.S.A, France, Germany, Japan, China, and Taiwan. The following year was joined by Canada, Taiwan, Hong-Kong. As of right now, B-boy Unit plans to be participated by individual crews that qualified as national teams from sixteen different countries. Blessed by the B-boy fever, a little advertisement company for Puma Korea has come a long way.

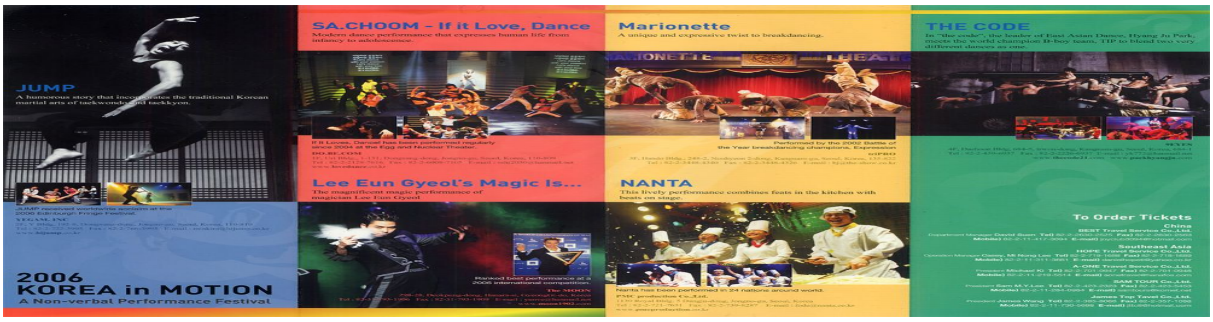
(4) B-boy Majors/B-boy Professors

Only in Korea, B-boying has settled as an academic discipline at Art Colleges. The consecutive annual victories covered by the media have inspired numerous youths to walk the path as B-boys/girls. Because B-boying was demanded as a subject, and later as a major, art universities had to look for appropriate professors. Usually professors are scholars with Ph.D degrees, but in B-boying, that is not yet required. Seoul Art College has employed B-boy Virus(T.I.P Crew) as a full time professor, and B-boy Tino Rock(Max Crew) as a part time professor.

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(5) B-boy Shows in Korea

Along with sporadic emergence of B-boy Battles, the non-verbal show industry too, has been very active to hire B-boys to the stage. In 2006, two non-verbal B-boy performances won the top six cultural content award; what took 6 years for Nanta, The Code took it in 2 weeks. By 2007, there were eight non-verbal stage shows featuring different B-boys. Moreover, the SJ B-boys, the promoters of "Ballerina who loves B-boy" have built an exclusive B-boy theater at Hong Ik University station.



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(6) And A Lot More

Just like the American B-boys back in the days, Korean B-boys have been aired all over the media. Just to name a few, in 2006, Samsung Economic Research Institute′s Annual Report has ranked B-boy as top six commodity. Last 4 One decorated President Lee Myung Bak′s Inauguration in 2007. In 2008, T.I.P Crew did the opening for O.E.C.D conference meeting. In the same year, when spacewoman was launching, B-boys were there to celebrate. B-boy seemed to represent the prominence of the events.

In sum, B-boys in Korea get exposure on news papers, commercials, music videos, non-verbal musicals, and most notably in the beginning of 2007, Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism launched the official Korean B-boy Association symbolizing the social influence which was non-existent at the primitive days. So far, the saga and accomplishments of Korean B-boys have painted a seemingly rosy picture. Now, it is time to analyze the errors that we have made.

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Ⅳ. Frailties

1. Dogmatic Worshipping of American B-boyism:

It would not be an exaggerated statement if someone says that the most serious problem amongst Korean B-boys comes from the U.S.A. There is nothing wrong with being inspired and embracing American B-boy dancing style and fashion. There is nothing wrong with studying the culture and history. It becomes problematic when young kids read the interviews of the famous old B-boys, and try to emulate their life style. It is problematic because Korean B-boys live in Korea instead of South Bronx, New York. When American B-boy preaches, "in order to keep it real, no one should go mainstream", there is nothing wrong with it because they live in the United States. By reading the interviews of famous U.S. B-boys, Korean B-boys embrace the rationale and mindset of American B-boys. Taking it as the truth, they act and behave like Americans, but this emulation can lead to extreme poverty.

Globalization of B-boying seems inevitable, but this integration must not eliminate the Korean essence within the Korean B-boys. One of the main concept of Hip-hop culture is respect. When Korean B-boys have started to imitate the life style of American B-boys, they subconsciously neglect the

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Korean roots and tradition. Trash talking toward the elders is a mutiny in the Korean hierarchical system. Presently, when the battle gets heated, trash talking is common place, but Korean B-boys must not forget that once upon a time, there was a period when younger B-boys used to get beat up for disrespecting elder B-boys. With the globalization of B-boying, the strict hierarchy amongst Korean B-boys has evolved into more of understanding and civilized organization. Instead of blindly pursing the American style, Korean B-boys must sit down, study, and appreciate the roots and history of Korean B-boy scene.

The appearance and disappearance of Korean B-boys have been repeated for two decades. B-boying has existed from 1970s, and it has landed in Korea in early 1990s. Burdened by the sustainability, majority of the first and second generation B-boys perished. Obviously for seniors like B-boy Virus who witnessed the short endurance of Korean B-boys, passing on the short life cycle to the next generation would be the last thing they want to see happening. In Korea, a B-boy who struggles financially will not be labeled as B-boy; he will be labeled as a beggar or homeless. After all, the reality in Korea is that a B-boy is less likely to get a part time job when he reaches his 40s.

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2. Keeping It Real

Hip-hop preaches the community members to keep it real. Keeping it real means to preserve the essence and spirit of Hip-hop, and thus to prevent any perversion from its original quality. Hip-hop antagonizes people who move from underground to mainstream as sellouts; speaking in the rhetoric of fundamentalist Hip-hop doctrine, these sellouts are not keeping it real. Accordingly, the dogmatic Hip-hop fundamentalists chose to stay underground, but when they chose to keep it real, they keep themselves real poor. When the fundamentalists chose to stay underground, what have the non-fundamentalists done? Have they destroyed the sacred culture of Hip-hop? Apparently, they have not.

For a close example, let′s take Maximum Crew who produced two music albums. These B-boys are singing on the mainstream level. Is this deed a grave violation of Hip-hop? For some people, yes it is. But these critics do not realize what Maximum Crew is doing for the B-boy community as a whole. Because Maximum Crew goes on mainstream, people become more familiar with B-boying; Maximum Crew is awakening the potential supporters who did not appreciate B-boying before.

Here is another vivid example; many B-boys rejected being on the

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mainstream TV shows. One of the most popular TV show is SBS′ Star King. Only few Korean crews featured in SBS′s Star King. T.I.P Crew, Maximum Crew, Gambler, and Expression. The B-boys who chose to go on air, publicized and advertised themselves. The reward has been sweet; they received more gigs, and the number of their online community members went up. The fact that they were on main stream TV boosted up their commercial value, and these B-boys′ prestige went up. When we asked T.I.P members if they were caught up in dilemma between keeping it real and going mainstream, they told us that they did so in order to bring up not only T.I.P′s commercial value, but Korean B-boy′s commercial worth as a whole. Indeed, they have been successful.

The effort of preserving the original Hip-hop doctrine certainly deserves respect. However, here, our vision looks into the future. If the cultural dignity barely brings food on the table, there should be alternative plans. Because the original Hip-hop essence(especially B-boying) is not yet sufficient enough to provide living, it is crucial for the B-boy community to seek for answers; if there is problem, there is always an answer, sometimes more than one.

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3. Lack of Professionalism

Although many Korean B-boys have championed the global supremacy, not many possess the professionalism. Such evidence could be generated and provided from few observations. Here, the lack of professionalism refers to the lack of business mentality. After winning the tough battles at global level, Korean B-boys need to realize and publicize that they are a lot more than the negative social prejudice; they are the world′s best dancers.

Usually, when being invited or booked by event organizers or corporate exhibition managers, both parties (the B-boys and the inviters) negotiate the prices. Here, the logic is simple. The event organizers want to book the B-boys as cheap as possible. This is especially true with the people who hold no respect toward B-boys; these organizers want to exploit B-boy as one-time decoration. Estimating the artistic sincerity of B-boys[9], their approach has been shallow; putting a friendly front, certain people have been exploiting the naïve B-boys. However in response, B-boys had to bargain to bring up their pay, or politely reject such cheap offer (Park 2003). In reality however, B-boys(except few major crews) took cheap offers, and brought down their social esteem and

[9] Media often portrays B-boys as passionate and naïve young men dancing without possessing any business mentality.

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commercial value. The consequences have been grave. Because B-boys took the cheap offer, a flawed public consensus started prevailing; B-boys are cheap to book, and if they charge high prices, there are always cheaper replacements (Kim 2009). The elder B-boys need to guide their fellow(younger) B-boys to reason and behave like professionals.

4. Failed Image Marketing

The investors are quick to go in and out of the investments. Whenever they sense a problem, they are quick to withdraw. On that note, it has been critically important for Korean B-boys to preserve a positive image, and image marketing. Unfortunately however, as nationalism grew thin with time, and while neglecting the second places of international B-boy battles, the media has been quick to expose the wrong deeds of Korean B-boys very blatantly. Two incidents took place. One is when the infamous Korean B-boy Crew was caught for pissing in the public while their stay in China. B-boys cannot afford to pervert their image yet. Before the golden age, B-boys were stigmatized as trouble makers, and there are still many people who are not comfortable with B-boys yet. Not enough positive or familiar images have been injected to the public, and especially the conservative and fickle Korean society would not embrace or forgive such mishaps. The team has officially apologized in the public, but it was

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long after the B-boy image has been tarnished.

Another unfortunate incident took place in November of 2007. Two Korean B-boy teams and organizers have sit down, and they were about to negotiate the terms of contracts for penetrating into American entertainment market. Apparently, there had been disagreements, and the escalated tension turned into a brawl. According to the news report, some organizers were severely injured by violence practiced by the B-boys. After all, five B-boys were arrested along with two promoters. However though, one thing must be noted. If there is a conflict, then the story must be told by both sides. In this incident though, the media has portrayed B-boys as the villains, and the promoters as victims. The irony is that there are a lot of promoters who goes un-scrutinized for their unscrupulous deeds. This ambitious project was immediately canceled, and this closed another door of expansion for the Korean B-boys.

These consecutive tarnishing on the Korean B-boys scared the investors and it did contribute to the negative image, and crippled the further investments. One thing Korean B-boys have been slow to realize is the collectiveness of the B-boy community. Because Korean B-boy scene is young, a mishap of one entity can deliver collective punishment to the rest of the B-boy community.

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5. Wrong Terminology

Some claim that the B-boys are the defining code of Han Ryu, the so called Korean Wave. Han Ryu, could be identified as Circulation of Korean Culture or Wind of Korean culture(Kim 2005). This term was first coined by the Chinese media. In 1996, Korea has started exporting its mellow dramas to China and Taiwan, and the growing popularity of Korean pop culture within the importing countries is the Han Ryu phenomenon. However, categorizing Korean B-boys as a part of Han Ryu is flawed.

The act of doing so could be only interpreted as act of ignorance not grounded on careful observation. It might sound fancy and intriguing, but branding Korean B-boys as Han Ryu contains grave error because it is quite contrary. Han Ryu figures have been already popular within Korea, and their popularity boosted up even more as they went outside. Whereas these Han Ryu figures like Bae Yong Joon and Kwon Sang Wooo have enjoyed overwhelming popularity in Korea prior to their expedition to the foreign regions, Korean B-boys have not.

As elaborated in details in Chapter III, Korean B-boys had to overcome the social hostility projected against them. The two decade full of blood, sweat, and tears have rewarded the Korean B-boys with the highest popularity at global level. Instead of being embraced by the society, Korean B-boys went out of the

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country, and they earned the respect, and brought it back home (Na 2005). Have they done so in order to become popular in Korea? No, they have not. They earned their supreme status because they followed their heart and practiced hard.

Another fact that deserves attention in the midst of this Han Ryu fever is the scope of the activities. If the conventional Han Ryu has been confined to the Asian framework, then the area of influence by the Korean B-boys has been a lot wider. For a close example, the media has been questioning about Korean Pop Star Boa and Seven′s debut at U.S.A; how popular would they be? For B-boys, this curiosity is not even a question. Like previously mentioned, Gamblers went to Freestyle Session, and placed the second, not to mention all the numerous online posts furiously protesting against the judges.

Categorizing Korean B-boy as the leading Han Ryu commodity has been manipulated as a marketing propaganda in numerous occasions, yet, the attitude of paying the respect to where it is due is required before any marketing or promotion; business ethics are not far.

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6. Insufficient Infrastructures

As Korean B-boys have cultivated their worldwide champion status, they have not been able to develop enough infrastructures in Korean society in order to support them. When young culture is emerging, people do not think like historian or public servants; they place the priority for what they could achieve in short-terms, and infrastructure building can come later according to their rationale.

Nonetheless, it might be(and most of the times it is) too late when they feel the need of basic infrastructure. For example, when the promoters of ″Ballerina who loves B-boys″ deprived Able Crew of the copy right; Able Crew is the original producer, Able Crew could not have done much against these thieves. These thieves have better awareness on societal structure, and they know how to manipulate the law in favorable directions. If B-boy community was grounded on basic infrastructures, this would not have taken place.

Unfortunately B-boys and B-girls have to be self-sufficient for everything. Merely training for a battle or performance do not guarantee success because the infrastructure can not provide such privileges or support. Burdened with the infrastructure building, B-boy community has a long way to go.

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7. Lack of Grass-Root Support

Another fact that has been destroying the scene shares the same origin with its prosperity. The generous sponsorships from the big corporate have spoiled the people; audiences come in for free. Sponsored by the large companies, the organizers can provide additional incentives to attract audiences who can come and enjoy watching B-boys, but there lies a big chance these very same population came to see their favorite singers instead of B-boys. As long as the organizer accumulates a large crowd, the sponsors tend to stay content.

But then, what would be the situation for a B-boy event organizer who does not have generous sponsorship? Does the absence of sponsorship cripple the function of B-boy community when this culture has a long way to go? Even when worst comes to worst, B-boys must not lose their sustainability, which is hard not to lose. B-boys organize their own jams, and they have to charge people at the door. This is when Korean people who are so used to the free show, start hesitating; eventually, most of the hesitant people do not come through.

Once compared with Freestyle Session by Cros1, Korean B-boy community should learn from the vivid differences. However recently, Korean B-boy community has gone through a remarkable experience that set new hopes. In April 12th, 2009, Korean B-boy Online community moderators have organized

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the Match One's Skill Vol.2 They have charged people approximately $25 at the door. It was a risky move to make especially in the severe global recession, but defying the past experiences, the venue was packed, and all the tickets have been sold out.

It indicates that the genuine love, which is the grassroots foundation of this art form is still alive and breathing. Another positive indication came in June 20th, 2009. T.I.P Crew organized a 1:1 B-boy battle called Monster Jam 2009. They have invited B-boys from six different countries, and B-boys battled for the title of being the best monster. The admission fee was $25, and it rained hard on the day of the jam, and yet, the venue was packed and the jam was successful. Underground jams must take place more frequently with the support from the B-boy fans.

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V. Potential Remedies and Direction to the Future

1. Coherent Understanding of B-boy Culture over Commercialism

Less than two decades ago, B-boying was not socially embraced in Korea. Yet, Korean B-boys have cultivated their foundation against the social hostility grounded on prejudice. Eventually, Korean B-boys have reached the top status in the B-boy world. Only then, the society started embracing and praising the B-boys in a belated manner. With the rising popularity of B-boying, many people who did not appreciate B-boying before, approach the B-boy community for various purposes (mainly business). Here, the question is, how many of these people understand the definition of B-boy, and how many of these people are willing to respect the teary decade? Whether or not they deny it, corporate people who approach B-boys for business purposes, share a tendency to regard it as a one time usage marketing tool. In order to sustain itself, B-boy community needs steady support, and such support comes from sincerity and gratitude; and such sincerity and gratitude comes from knowledge and awareness.

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2. Intellectual Enlightenment

Internally, Korean B-boys need to change their thoughts. It is so natural and inevitable that singer makes money by singing, and dancers making money by dancing. Yet, the seemingly prevailing concern among Korean B-boys is once a B-boy makes money on the mainstream level, that B-boy becomes the target of antagonism. Now has come the time to change this dogmatic rationale. This is not the South Bronx in the 1970s; it is Seoul, Korea in 21st century.

As long as the essence of B-boying stays in the heart, it will not be sold out. Once again, we provide the definition of selling out. Selling out is an act of compromising the value or belief for financial purposes. Selling out is submission to the external party's total control; if the external entity dictates what B-boying is all about, then that is selling out. The growing popularity of B-boying by intruding into mainstream must happen. The first step toward prosperity requires Korean B-boys to realize that going mainstream is not a distortion of true Hip-hop as long as they do not forget the essence.

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3. National B-boy League

With the enlightenment, Korean B-boys must seek for avenues for B-boys to be embraced by the public. Just like any other element of Hip-hop, B-boying has started underground, but within four decades, Hip-hop is not exclusively underground anymore. Because Hip-hop started off for people and by the people, everyone deserves a right to appreciate it.

Let′s take UFC(Ultimate Fighting Championship) for example. With the successful launching in the main stream level, fighting leagues like UFC or K-1 gifted the people (who have been only good at beating other people up) with money and fame. The reason behind the success of fighting leagues, is rooted upon the entertainment value. Speaking for the strong point of B-boying, B-boying fascinates the audiences with raw energy and overwhelming anticipation. If Korean B-boys can organize the B-boy league at national level, then Korean B-boys will be compensated whole lot more for their blood, sweat and tears.

We envision a national B-boy league with B-boy celebrities. Even in the past, there have been debates whether or not, and (if yes) how to bring B-boying into national leagues like basketball, handball, or baseball. Doing so would certainly bring up the popularity of B-boys, but so far, this remains as an ideal; there are so many riddles to be solved before B-boys organize their battle

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leagues. So far, the Korean B-boy Association is struggling to solve these problems, and only in times, trials and errors will provide the answers.

4. Korean B-boy Association and B-boys

So far, the Korean B-boy Association has been booking shows, and hosting B-boy battles. They need to realize that their mission is much bigger than what they have done so far. By writing this paper, we would like to make few demands to Korean B-boy Association. It is important to accumulate statistical data of Korean B-boy population. This essential task has not taken place yet because Korean B-boys still remain skeptical about the legitimacy of the Korean B-boy Association; they never had government involvement, and it will take some time and adjustment for Korean B-boys to realize the merit of having government affiliated organization. Moreover, Korean B-boy Association also has to come up with policy plans for injured B-boys. Korean B-boys are made-men. Korean B-boys are the artists who devoted everything into B-boying. Unfortunately nothing remains permanent, B-boys too, retire due to different reasons such as financial difficulties or sever injuries. Does Korea have any social welfare network for retired or injured B-boys? Not yet. Obviously, these reforms and necessities will not come overnight, and consistency of implementation is required.

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Last but not least, the most important task for Korean B-boys is to live up to the changing environment. Even in the absence of public support, B-boys have cultivated and earned their respect and status. B-boy community is given a lot more support than its primitive stage, but this must not weaken the survival capacity of the B-boys. B-boys need to come together, and they need to be self-sufficient; no one will look out for the B-boys unless B-boys look out for themselves; one person can not do everything, but everyone can do something.

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VI. Conclusion

It has been more than three decades of blood, sweat, and tears. B-boying phenomenon started in the ghettos of South Bronx, New York in mid 1970. As one of the core elements of Hip-hop culture, B-boying has been evolving ever since. There have been some splendid times along with hard times. Experiencing the primitive trials and errors, B-boying is still moving forward. B-boying has succeeded to prove itself as a proud and legitimate art form (in such a short time) that enjoys worldwide popularity, it has a longer way to go, and this journey takes more than just the time; the future requires more patience, trust, efficacy, and attention.

In this paper, we have compared the U.S. and Korean B-boy scenes. Although there exists a twenty years of gap, both societies share much in common; apparently Hip-hop knows no boundaries. B-boying in both countries started from the scratch, and it was started by the young people who overcame the social hostility. The essence of this dance is that these kids danced for the sake of dance itself. When B-boys kept it true to themselves, they were being recognized by the society that used to antagonize them.

The mechanisms of popularity in American and Korean B-boy community have been different. The U.S. B-boy culture went mainstream as a



prevailing popular trend whereas in Korea, B-boying was spread out by the fever of nationalism. U.S. B-boys have become popular for starring in the movie, whereas Korean B-boys have been lifted by the nationalism. In the process, there have been painful but sobering experiences. Yet, after three decades, B-boys started thinking for themselves, and they strive to earn more control. We will see which route B-boying takes from this point.

Due to the scarcity of references, this research has not been extremely difficult, but on the same note, it has been very meaningful. As Joseph Schloss points out, Hip-hop is grounded on a very decentralized history(Schloss 2009). But this decentralization accompanied by the anxiety of incorrectness must not demoralize the history from being recorded. We sincerely wish that our research paper will provide inspiration and enough substance for more future researchers who conduct a research on this subject matter. Findings of this research is a small fraction of B-boying culture itself. Accordingly, let our research attempt be proudly complemented by others in the near future. Long live the B-boys!!

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Interviews

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Christopher ″Cros1″ Wrights

Dae Kyun ″B-boy Virus″ Hwang

Kyung Shik ″B-boy Eyes″ Na

Ki Hon ″B-boy Differ″ Kim

Dong Kyu ″B-boy Greatman″ Kwok

Norman ″B-boy Bom5″ Abrahante

Websites

B-boy World: www.bboyworld.com/forum

More Than A Stance: www.morethanastance.com

Korean Roc: www.koreanroc.com

T.I.P Online Community: http://cafe.daum.net/TIP

Korea B-boy Online Community: http://cafe.daum.net/bboy

