

Haleem “Stringz” Rasul

My name is Haleem Rasul, better known by my stage name, Stringz and I am a choreographer, artist educator filmmaker and cultural ambassador. I am well versed with many popular urban dance forms; however, I am proficient in breakin’, house dance and a Detroit cultural dance style known as jit.

I discovered my passion for the arts and hip-hop at an early age. Growing up in Detroit came with its own unique challenges that served as motivators that manifested into creative and business ventures following graduating from Western Michigan University in 2001. I established Hardcore Detroit as a brand dance company and fashion label. The motto “hardcore,” represents success after struggle and overcoming hardships to achieve victory. By 2010, Hardcore Detroit was voted best dance company in the Real Detroit Reader’s Poll.

I learned discipline through the trials of everyday life and the intense ridicule of b-boyin’s only teacher: the cypher. I have instructed dance workshops internationally, judged and participated in dance tournaments throughout the nation gaining international respect, organized dance-related events in my hometown and produced relevant merchandising materials. I am currently a recipient of two distinguished grant foundations (Kresge and Knight Arts foundations) earning the title of dance ambassador of Detroit.

After exploring dance in other communities, I gained more appreciation for Detroit’s own innovations: and by March 2009, I tracked down the Jitterbugs, the group recognized for developing the Detroit Jit in the 1970s. Compiling exclusive interviews with them and other pioneers, I released a DVD illustrating the history of the jit through oral narratives, images, and never-before-seen footage. This historical project is complimented with a groundbreaking how to jit instructional. My creative direction was highly driven by the look and feel of Crazy Leg’s (Rock Steady Crew) film production entitled *The Freshest Kids*. His documentary embodies the story of the rise of the b-boy in a paramount fashion.

Jit, is a combustion of standing high energy footwork precision and arm syncopations that could be taken to the floor to create a dynamic aesthetic. The history of jit runs directly parallel with the original hip-hop dance form of breakin’. Both are creative expressions spawning out from the funk era and landing on the inner city streets reflecting conditions of their time. Breakin’ emerged from outside park jams in the Bronx, while Detroiters formed their steps at night under the streetlights and at basement parties. Both disciplines began to fuse various movements throughout its evolution. This artistic fusion is vital, placing jit underneath the umbrella of hip-hop, synonymously with other regions across the nation, each having their own unique narratives. These social links push innovation and ultimately becoming the arch of my teaching philosophy.

In 2012, I became the gateway for jit’s inclusion within the entertainment lineup for the Detroit Pistons that is greatly dominated by hip-hop culture. Jit became an instant programming favorite. For multiple seasons, I have shared the stage with classic hip-hop acts such as: MC Hammer, Doug E. Fresh, Vanilla Ice, Salt N’ Pepa, Naughty By Nature, Fat Joe, Black Sheep, Busta Rhymes and many others.

This past August, the Zimbabwe Cultural Center in Detroit (ZCCD) working collaboratively with the Jibilika Dance Trust, sponsored a dance residency in Harare, Zimbabwe. During my month stay, I conducted research and interviews, led workshops in Mutare and other various towns. I was a guest judged for the annual Jibilika hip-hop dance competition held in Bulawayo. I collaborated with a selected group to perform for the opening dance act of the festival with jit set as the leading form of the entire piece. I was able to present my experiences and findings at the US embassy in Zimbabwe then later again this past December at the Skype and Mix Party held inside the N’namdi Gallery in Detroit. During my lectures, I used my own story of success and struggle to promote positive ideas that established the platform in which I was speaking from.

Haleem “Stringz” Rasul Ar-Rasheed

EDUCATION

B.F.A. in Graphic Design, Western Michigan University, 2001.

DANCE EDUCATION

Over twenty years of B-Boying (break-dancing) and fifteen years of Detroit Jit.

DANCE ACHIEVEMENTS

Hardcore Detroit Breaking Crew, 2001 - Present

Founder/Manager and Lead Choreographer.

Established troupe in 2001 to provide urban dance entertainment and instruction.

Developed international respect and interest through competition and performances.

2016 - Jit workshop series guest instructor at California State University. 3 week intensive.

2015 - Zimbabwe dance residency spearheaded by the Zimbabwe Cultural Centre in Detroit.

2014 - Released a one-of-a-kind jit documentary/instructional entitled “The Jitterbugs: Pioneers of the Jit.”

2013 - Knights Arts Challenge Grant - recipient of 12,000.

2012 - Collaboration with the Hinterlands Ensemble. Performed in China at the 9th Shanghai Biennale.

2012 - Instructed Jit dance workshop in Beijing, China.

2010 - Kresge Artist Fellow - recipient of 25,000.

“Music Saved My Life Tour”, 2012 & 2013

Performer for the American Cancer Society initiative that uses music, dance and spoken word to promote the importance of healthy behaviors and advocate against tobacco use to young people.

Outreach for Fela - Detroit high school tour, 2012 & 2013

Sponsored by Jay Z and Will and Jada Smith

Dancer for innovative series of educational outreach appearances in local High Schools which gives young people a connection between Fela’s music and his human rights activism through live music and dance which helps tell the story of this charismatic musician/activist.

Detroit Pistons Entertainment, “D-Town” Hip-Hop Dancer 2011 -2012

Main choreographer | performed during timeouts and halftimes with various musical guests acts:

MC Hammer, Gladys Knight, Taio Cruz, Salt n Peppa, Vanilla Ice, Morris Day, Flo Rida, T-Pain, Rob Base, Wyclef Jean, Rose Royce, Robin S, Morris Day, Chubby Checkers and The Temptations.

House Dance Conference, New York, NY, 2008 - 2009

Invited to perform and instruct workshops.

Judged international house dance competition.

“Buck ‘N’ Grind,” Stockholm, Sweden, 2007

Invited to perform at demonstrations and instruct at dance workshops.

Conducted interviews with local radio stations.

Event and biography featured in Swedish magazine.

Red Bull Beat Riders, New York, NY, 2006

Selected out of thirty international applicants.

Studied with leaders and innovators of contemporary urban dance.

Dialogued with fellow dancers on progressing the future of urban dance movements.

1ST PLACE COMPETITION

On the Rocks 2016, Flowhio 2015, UDEF Champions Series Top 100, Midtown Throwdown Cypher King - 2013, King Michigan - 2011 & 12, Wreck Room - 2006, Hip Hop Olympics - 2003, Battle Cry - 2002, RPM Import Slam - 2001 and EB 2000 - 2000.

SPECIAL TRAINING

Juste Debout School (Paris) House Dance
Broadway Dance Center House Dance
Red Bull Beatriders

Onomo Michel Meech
Footwork Brian Green
Crazy Legz, Zulu Gremlin, Mr. Wiggles,
Boogaloo Sam and Sugar Pop

MUSIC VIDEO

Charlie Puth, Ty Dolla Sign "One Call Away" Atlantic Records
Hawa "Heart Quaker" - TandB Films LLC
J Dilla & Esham "Big Thangs" - Dir. Nic Notion
Mike-E (Afroflow) "Stamina" - Dir. Tom Carleton
Danny Brown "When It Rain" - Dir. Mimi Cave
Bizarre (D12) "Hip-Hop"

SPECIAL EVENTS & VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Detroit Summer, Detroit, MI, 2005 - Present

Used as a creative alternative outlet where I managed free weekly practice sessions twice a week.
Assisted with developing proper dance techniques.

Detroit House Dance Conference, Detroit, MI, August, 2009

Organizer for the House Dance Conference in Detroit for the first time.
Collaborated with New York and Detroit house dancers to create a successful event.

Jit vs. Juke, Detroit, MI, 2007

Organized an unique competition promoting regional dance dialogue between two opposing dance forms.
Transformed a Detroit vs Chicago conflict into a non-violent high energy positive exchange.
Produced successful DVD attracting international attention.

PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

Detroit Institute of Arts, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011 and 2012
Concert of Colors 2011 and 2012 Collaborators: Afro Flow and Mike Ellison
Red Bull Art of Motion 2011
African World Festival 2011
The Legacy Continues (A Tribute to Michael Jackson), 2009
Comerica City Fest, 2007 - 2009
Cultural fusion, Splendor of the East, 2008
Detroit Westin Book Cadillac Opening, 2008
Stage play Fatherhood produced by Angela Dunlap, 2008
Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Urban Arts Explosion, 2008
Allied Media Conference, 2008
Campus Martius Park, Summer in the Park, 2007
Target Fireworks, VIP Rooftop Party, 2007
Greek Town Casino, 2006
North American Auto Show, Cadillac Escalade, 2006
Channel Fox 2 News commercial (Project Safe Neighborhoods), 2004

Links

Stringz Dance Reel

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzdDYfDozQc

Hardcore Detroit (Creative Impact Michigan)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QB3oewd3bqk

Stringz in China

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWExpHET4EY



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