



20th May 2013

Dear Drs Sule and Inkster

In my capacity as co-organiser of the Cambridge Brain arm of the very first Pint of Science Festival, I'd like to thank you for your fascinating presentation - Hip Hop Psych: the portrayal of mental health in hip hop lyrics. The Pint of Science festival was conceived as a vehicle to bring cutting edge science to scientists and the general public in pubs across the UK and from 14th – 16th May played host to a dizzying array of superb speakers in 15 pubs in London, Cambridge and Oxford. Our ambition at Cambridge Brain was to deliver evenings which explored current thinking, research and practice in the field of neuroscience, whilst striving to demystify and destigmatise issues of mental health by providing a human element to the talks and encouraging audience participation in panel discussions.

Your passionate and intellectually stimulating talk on our "Music and the Brain" evening at the Portland Arms blended perfectly with our other speakers, Dr.Ian Cross, Professor of Music and Science, University of Cambridge and Xidus Pain, Hip hop freestyler and executive director of Beat This.

Your interactive presentation style was perfect for this evening as you deconstructed lyrics from several popular hip hop songs, highlighting the complex and multi-faceted nature of mental health. You provided a fascinating insight into the clues and evidence contained within these lyrics which suggest some of the environmental and genetic risk factors which may give rise to psychiatric conditions such as depression, psychosis and even suicidal thoughts. You cited such environmental triggers as urbanicity, parental alcohol or drug dependency during pregnancy, a culture of substance use in the family home or with peers, media imagery and its promotion of negative role models, many of which struck a chord with our audience and gave food for thought.

Pint of Science festival bringing cutting edge science to pubs across the UK

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The evening was sold out to an audience of over 100 and feedback was extremely positive and encouraging. People were excited by the potential which your Hip Hop Psych vision has to do exactly what we, as organisers, set out to do – to destigmatise, demystify, provide knowledge and insight.

I look forward to hearing that your project continues to flourish and grow, not only amongst scientists and experts as a teaching tool, but also at grass roots level amongst those who most need to hear the message – the young people themselves, the practitioners, teachers and social workers who work amongst them and their communities and families who surround them.

It was a pleasure working alongside you.

Many thanks and best wishes for the future.

Jo Balfour

Pint of Science Festival co-organiser – Cambridge Brain

