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Words From The City Rated MA

Madman

Aussie hip-hop is easy to dismiss as obnoxious and unoriginal. At least until you listen to it, when much of it reveals itself as subtle, innovative and powerful. Acts such as Hilltop Hoods, Maya Jupiter and the Tongue are world-beaters. Or at least they would be if they didn't also have a peculiarly Aussie talent for self-deprecation.

This documentary from husband-and-wife filmmakers Rhys Graham and Natasha Gadd is an excellent exploration of Aussie hip-hop.

Nominated for five AFI awards, it tracks artists such as Wire MC, an Aboriginal wordsmith who creates inspirational rhymes out of his wayward past. And Joelistics, a highly articulate Asian Aussie who says that the best raps are "like a dialogue with your subconscious". And Koolism, whose Tongan roots help them connect with Canberra's wayward youth.

Supportive yet competitive, these rappers cram rhymes and double entendres into each line, forging a mish-mash that is highly literate. At its best, such wordplay is the cutting edge of poetry. The

music is impressive, too.

Ultimately, what could be more Australian than smart, bold kids who take a foreign genre and refashion it into something far more impressive, uplifting and long-lasting than the original? And with its beautiful cinematography and insightful interviews, this continent-spanning film is just as ambitious and impressive as the music it reveals.

Aussie MCs used to rap in American accents. This film shows that they've learned to rap in Strine. About time.
Sacha Molitorisz