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Tools of the Trade: An Exploratory Study Analyzing the Frequency and Potency of Tools in Hip-Hop Music Creation, Performance, and Pedagogy

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Tools of the Trade: An Exploratory Study Analyzing the Frequency and Potency of Tools in Hip-Hop Music Creation, Performance, and Pedagogy

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Paper (25 minutes)

ABSTRACT

The presentation will conclude with pedagogical recommendations for integrating these tools into music curricula, fostering an authentic learning environment that resonates with students' lived musical experiences.

This presentation explores research findings on the tools most commonly used in hip-hop music creation and performance, gathered from interviews and surveys with professional practitioners, music educators, and amateur creators. By categorizing and analyzing these tools based on their frequency of use and perceived potency, the study offers a practical guide for educators seeking to design relevant and accessible hip-hop music curricula.

With a focus on hardware and software tools—from classic beat-making setups to emerging mobile technologies—the research emphasizes the importance of aligning classroom instruction with real-world practices. The session will also address how technology access disparities affect music education and propose strategies for fostering inclusivity through low-cost and open-source tools. By understanding how different tools contribute to beat-making, sampling, lyrical

composition, and live performance, educators can more effectively align their teaching practices with industry trends as well as the needs of their students.

Participants will leave with insights into current hip-hop music-making practices and actionable strategies for using these tools to support student engagement, creativity, and cultural relevance in music education.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

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Drew X Coles is a producer, serial entrepreneur, educator and scholar. Drew serves as a member of the faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University where he directs a hybrid graduate degree program in Music and Music Education and teaches courses in pedagogy, entrepreneurship, and production.

Dr. Coles' scholarship is widely recognized, with publications in leading venues such as the Music Educators Journal, the Journal of Educational Thought, School Music News (New York State School Music Association), INform (Indiana Music Educators Association), College Music Symposium, Motif (Maine Music Educators Association), TEMPO (New Jersey Music Educators Association), the American Journal of Arts Management, and the Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Education. His current Institutional Review Board approved research collaborations focus on topics including collaborative pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, music technology, flow states in educators, career practices, and creative activities in instrumental ensembles.

In addition to his research, Dr. Coles contributes to the field through extensive service in scholarly and professional organizations. He holds leadership roles in the College Music Society, the College Music Society Fund, and the Network for Music Career Development Officers. Dr. Coles' editorial contributions further demonstrate his dedication to the dissemination of knowledge in music education and beyond. He currently serves the following publications as either a member of a standing editorial or advisory board or as a peer reviewer; Issues in Teacher Education, Music Educators Journal, College Music Symposium, and the Journal of Educational Thought.

Cato Zane
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Cato Zane is a full-time audio engineer based in Southern California with over 20 years of experience, ranging from traveling Broadway shows to Super Bowl commercials and collaborations with numerous Grammy winners. She serves as part of the faculty at San Diego

State University, where she shares her expertise in music production.

Cato specializes in blending electronic elements with acoustic textures, often creating indie pop music with a cinematic vibe. She is passionate about working with female-identifying artists and excels at creating a comfortable, creative environment in the studio.

Her educational content is regularly featured by Avid's social media team, the creators of Pro Tools, among others. Cato holds a master's degree in Music and Music Education from Columbia University and has honed her skills by working alongside multi-Grammy-winning engineers and artists. She brings this world-class experience and passion to every project she undertakes.

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Fernando Gualda, associate professor, former orchestral musician, C/C++ developer, holds the following academic degrees: PhD in Sonic Arts (Sonic Arts Research Centre, Queen's University Belfast), Master in Music (The Pennsylvania State University), Artist Diploma (Diplom Künstlerische Ausbildung, Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe) and Bachelor of Music (University of Rio de Janeiro); researches music theory, music information retrieval, human-computer interaction, cognitive modeling, affective experience, affective communication, assessment and evaluation of musical performance, as well as performative affordances; teaches music theories, a research seminar in interpretative performance practices, and coaches chamber music at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). As either performer or researcher, he has presented on stages and at conferences in more than 20 countries in Europe, Asia and North, Central and South Americas.