

Weapon winning local hip hop arms race

Cadence Weapon

with DJ Weezel, Kirby Dominant, and Touch and DJ Nato
Friday, 8 June @ 8pm
Starlite Room

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Arts & Entertainment Staff

Now that "Edmonton rap" is no longer considered an oxymoron, it's time for Rollie Pemberton to shine.

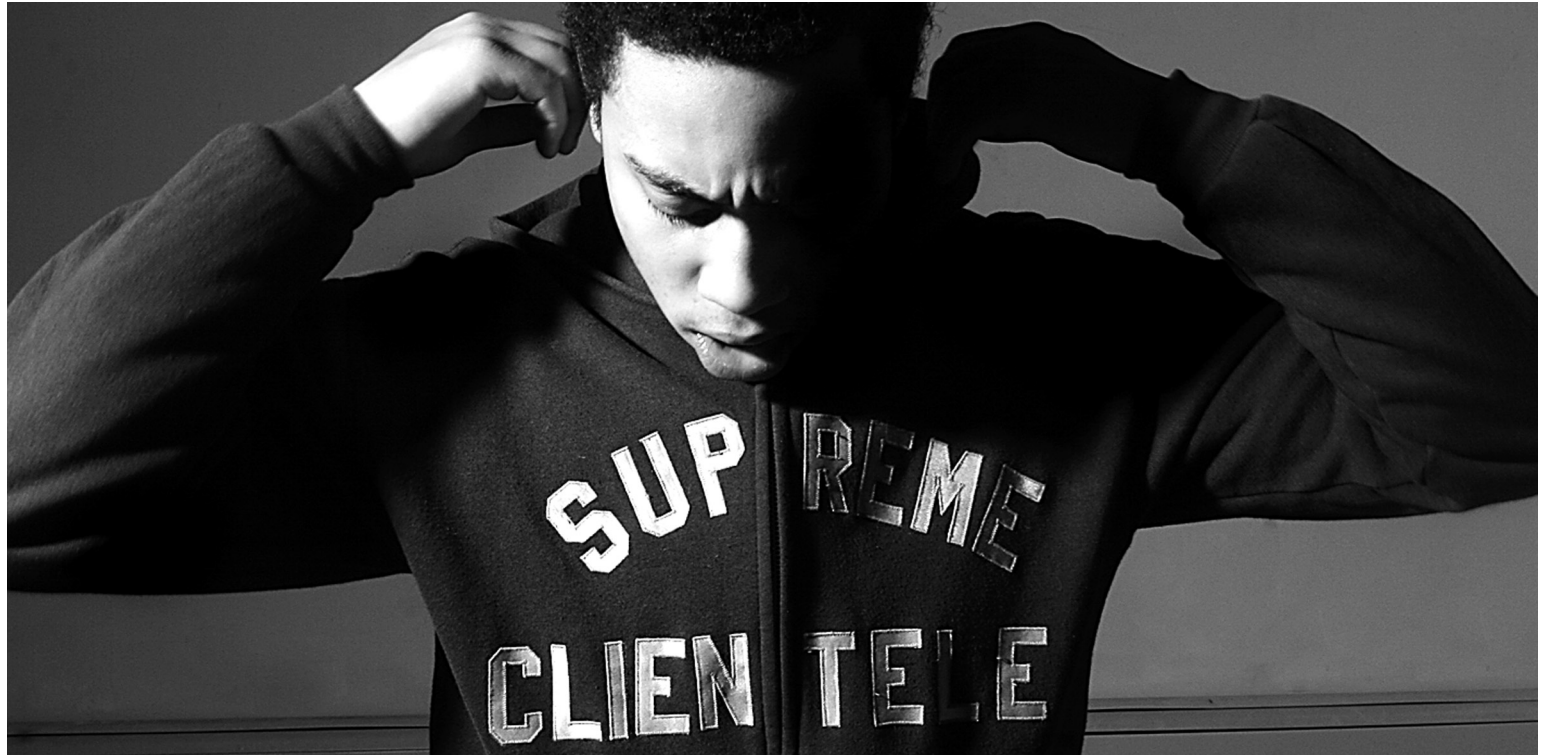
In the last two years, the Edmonton-based rapper—better known as Cadence Weapon—has made the transition from aspiring local talent to international recording artist. He's opened for hip-hop legends like Masta Ace and ?uestlove, toured with indie darlings the Islands, and is now preparing to release his sophomore disc, tentatively titled *Afterparty Babies*, this coming fall.

The album is slated to be released both in the United States and Canada at the same time, unlike 2005's *Breaking Kayfabe*, which was only released this past March in the American market.

Pemberton's success doesn't seem to have gone to his head—although, as he jokingly puts it, "I never will get sick of talking about myself."

"Having people interested in what you're doing and your music is exactly what you want as an artist, he says. "Plus, if you ask anyone, I think they'd tell you the exact opposite about doing interviews."

The 21-year-old recently inked a deal with Epitaph, an independent record label that began primarily as a home for punk bands and which has only recently begun branching out into other genres. In fact, with this



signing, Cadence Weapon becomes only the fifth rap act to become an Epitaph artist, joining a group that includes Atmosphere, Sage Francis, and Danger Doom, the collaboration between MF Doom and super producer DJ Danger Mouse.

A double threat in the music industry, Pemberton, who briefly attended journalism school in the US before dropping out to focus on his career, both raps and produces his own music. While his first mixtape, *Cadence Weapon is the Black Hand*, featured both his own beats and some borrowed from other rappers, he produced his debut LP, *Breaking Kayfabe*, entirely on his own.

Bringing a more electronic sound to Canadian hip hop, the beats on *Black Hand* owed a lot more to the likes of Afrika Bambaataa and Basement Jaxx than modern producers like Kanye West. Clanging, full of synths, even verging on techno in spots, the production was just as fresh as Pemberton's raps about local landmarks and sharks who bite his style.

Having moved away from this sound somewhat in his later work, he now feels torn between the two.

"I couldn't pick one over the other," he says. "I started as a rapper, and I started making beats because there were no local producers who were making beats that complemented my style, so I

just started to make my own."

Returning to Edmonton for his first show in two years has Pemberton excited, but he sounds just as pumped when talking about the imminent release of *Afterparty Babies*. His voice perks up and his passion for the craft is evident as he discusses what to expect on his second full-length release.

"The new record is way more about Edmonton and youth culture in Edmonton," he explains. "I have a song on the new album about a good friend of mine who used to write for *See [Magazine]* back in the day—Julianne Wilding—who I think is quite a character."

"*Afterparty Babies* is kind of a party

record," he continues. "It's way more dance-y than *Breaking Kayfabe* was. It's about partying and life in Edmonton—the interactions between people. I think the notion of people going to a place and jumping around to coordinated lights is very strange, and the record touches on these kind of things."

"I look back on that record [*Breaking Kayfabe*], and I still like the songs, but I know how far I've come since I recorded it—especially as a producer—and I feel the new stuff is very exciting."

Once Pemberton debuts his new material here at home on Friday night, we'll find out just how much more powerful this weapon has become.

Improvaganza making it up as it goes

The Eighth Annual International Improvaganza Festival

13-23 June
Varscona Theatre
Nightly shows @ 8pm; late shows
Friday and Saturday @ 11pm; kids'
matinees Saturdays @ 2pm

BRYAN SAUNDERS
Arts & Entertainment Staff

In a week's time, Edmonton will be under invasion by the likes of the Kinkonauts, the Pajama Men, and Theatre Im Banhoff. But these aren't the names of strange and savage foreign armies hungry for our oil: these are some of the best improvisational theatre teams the world has to offer.

From 13-23 June, teams from Austria to Vancouver and everywhere in between will converge on the stage of Varscona Theatre for the eighth annual Improvaganza festival.

But Chris Craddock, artistic director of Rapid Fire Theatre, which is playing host to this year's Improvaganza, said that on top of giving Edmonton audiences a chance to see different kinds of improv from all over the world, the festival is also a training ground for local performers.

"Our form is an oral tradition," he explained. "It's advanced not so much by books that are written, or by papers, or by research—the

way that other forms are advanced. They're advanced in this way: by [us] coming together and doing a bunch of [improv] together."

According to Craddock, Rapid Fire's own regular Saturday night show, *Chimprov*, is an example of how the craft is passed along.

"In terms of Edmonton, festivals have been really important. Twelve years ago now, Jacob Bannigan went to [a festival in] Seattle. When he came back, he taught us everything we do now in terms of long-form improv, and invented the show *Chimprov* for us to start exploring this new form. And it was brand-new to us, although it had been practiced elsewhere quite a bit. So it was really revelatory for us," he explained.

Stuart Hoye, a performer with Rapid Fire, agreed that the international festival would be a good example for the local talent.

"The more experience you get with the myriad of ... different forms of improv, the more comfortable you get exploring them; the better improviser you are," he said.

Still, despite the festival's international appeal, Craddock admitted that improv in general is "still struggling to be taken seriously as an artistic form."

"Our exclusion from the Canada Council for the Arts, for example, is sort of proof that improv is not taken as seriously as it might be as a form of

performance," he said.

This exclusion means that Rapid Fire Theatre, unlike other theatre companies or art galleries or museums, is ineligible for funding from the federal government.

For Craddock, however, the emphasis is not on the bottom line but on keeping young people interested in the arts.

"The habitual theatre-going audience, in terms of scripted work, sometimes seems to be of the later generations," he said. "And there's a lot of concern in professional theatre circles that as we start to lose that generation, that maybe theatre will wane in terms of how interested people are. So it's very important to try to sell theatre to a new generation."

Still, Craddock is optimistic that gaining the interest of the youth market is an achievable goal, and hosting an event like Improvaganza is important to help promote that the comedic styling and the theatres that engage in it.

"There's a lot of talk about the younger generation and how dumb they are now because they can't listen to a person talk in a living room for three hours, [but] we are more imagistic. We can look at an image, we can hear a few words, and we can glean so much more information than previous generations have. I don't think that makes us dumber, I think it makes us smarter."



WHERE THE IDEAS COME FROM Improv performer Stuart Hoye hopes the funny will explode from his head during the eighth Improvaganza festival next week.