

Group seeks to dispel hip hop's bad rap

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Opening more ears and more doors to positive hip-hop music are two goals of a new Madison Arts Commission subcommittee that is meeting today for the first time.

“The question that we’re going to be working (on) is how can we provide a positive light for hip-hop in Madison,” said Anthony L. Brown II, who first proposed the city’s Hip-Hop Ad Hoc Committee and will serve as its chairman.

“We’re going to be focusing on who we need to connect with in the community to help answer that question, whether it be venue owners, music producers, artists, patrons or fans — and even people who might not have a role within the hip-hop community or even the music community, but who might have solutions that have worked in other areas. The more people and the more ideas, the better.”

A diverse art form that now bridges generations, hip-hop has led a complicated life in Madison. In recent years, several live-music venues have added security for hip-hop events or dropped them altogether after shows were marred by gunshots or fights.

“I was born and raised in Madison,” said Brown, 30, a pop musician who performs in an acoustic rock band and as an R&B/soul artist under the name Anthony Lamarr.

“Over the past 10 years I feel it’s been very troubling because hip-hop has been pushed into a corner,” he said. “And it’s always because of a few individuals.”

The idea of the Madison Arts Commission taking a look at the hip-hop scene came up more than a year ago, said city arts program administrator Karin Wolf.

“It’s been evolving for awhile,” she said. “A lot of people have been calling for it.”

Robert Wynn, who is not a member of the hip-hop committee but supports its mission, said there needs to be more communication “between the young people in town who are very much tied to the hip hop culture, and some of the more mainstream parts of the arts culture.”

“I think many of the young people have very positive intentions, and some of them have serious career ambitions in music and the arts,” said Wynn, who runs Madison-based Asset Builders of America, a nonprofit that promotes financial literacy.

“There’s a very vibrant and healthy arts community in Madison, and I think there is more that can be done to help some of these individuals who don’t know much about the business side of the arts.”

If you go

What: Meeting of the Hip Hop Ad Hoc Committee

When: 2:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Room LL-130, Madison Municipal Building, 215 Martin Luther King Blvd.