

COMPLIMENT



BATTLES

IN FRANCE

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In *Silly Linguistics* issues #20 and #25, I talked about French rap battles and how other languages were used inside French-speaking battles. Stage names, strategies to mock the opponent, and other elements were related to self-affirmation throughout rap battling. I'm actually fond of rap battles, and I often stay up to date on this subject. Recently, rap battlers in France have invented a new concept: compliment battles. The idea is not mocking the other rapper anymore, but to worship him or her. We will try to understand how it works and why it has been created. We'll be using two main sources: the YouTube channel *Ta mère la mieux* with its description, and an article published in August 2020 on *Hollfrance.com* entitled "Ta mère la mieux: inverser les codes du battle rap", that you can find [here](#).

Rap battles aren't supposed to be compliment battles

Before we talk about compliment battles, let's recall some basic elements about rap battling. In Issue #20, we saw rap music emerged in the 70's, followed by rap battles in the 80's. It started mainly on USA East Coast, and is now a corner stone of rap culture. The basic goal in those discursive fights: mock your opponents. It goes with jokes, metaphors, etc. The technical side is also very important: quickness of speech, alliterations, assonances and so on. Usually, some judges decide who wins at the end of the battle. It goes without saying that these

battles don't use compliments. You have to mock your opponent, fight him/her with words, definitely not compliment him/her!

In this verbal war, a character is often used as a special target for battlers: moms. Based on this idea, some battlers from the main French competition *Rap Contenders* decided to create a new concept. Let's talk about it now.

"Your mom the better/best"

As long as we want a better society, we better start by complimenting each other in a friendly mood. Maras, a rap battler known for example in *Rap Contenders* started from this idea. He wanted to tweak the tone of rap battling, from discursive violence to verbal compliments. He created a competition with this motto, and he called it *Ta mère la Mieux*, or "Your mom the better/best" in English. Why this title? As said earlier, in the rap battles violence, one individual is often used as a special target: the mom! Maras says this. I have [tried to get this] translated:

"TMLM starts from the following assessment: the most insulted person in rap is your mom. We will often find punchlines targeting one's mother in competitions, whereas the father is very rarely targeted. The mom is a fascinating image, and people get angry when we mention her. This observation leads us to create something noble and positive to win back mom's spurs, as she's the Man's origin!"

Very nice idea, right? On the YouTube channel's description, we find other elements. Traditional battle rappers would have to redeem for their spitefulness! A second motto for compliment battles. Battle rappers would have pronounced "more insults than a driver on a congested freeway during rush hour. Time to redeem has come". Started in 2019, this concept is not meant to stop. What is the result of all these elements?

The result?

Comedians, rappers, attorneys and other professional profiles are represented. A lot of women pledge into the competition, which is pretty rare in battle rap.

As said in the article cited in introduction, two people with different profiles will fight against each other, with compliments! As the competition is followed by a rather young audience, the goal is to give them compliment techniques instead of clash techniques. According to compliment battlers, mocking an opponent is way easier than complimenting him. It's also a way to renew the art of rap battling. On the YouTube channel, the description claims compliment battles are trailblazing as basic Hip-Hop codes are tweaked. And finally, maybe the most important idea: "mothers will be proud of their offsprings again".

Conclusion

Very interesting idea, right? Compliment battles are really a way to renew a traditional concept of rap battling only

based on discursive violence to mock the other rapper. In this article, I have tried to introduce this new competition, but we haven't seen yet the linguistic features used to compliment the opponent, that I'll try to analyze in another article.

Thanks for reading!