

Hip-hop archive comes to Tulane

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Tulane doctoral student Holly Hobbs is collecting oral histories from some of hip-hop's most prominent artists for a new archive that becomes available in December. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Mannie Fresh may headline shows across the country, but he got his start in New Orleans.

"When other kids got bikes, I got turntables, I got a mixer, I got a keyboard or drums," he said. "And at first I wasn't really interested in it but my room started piling up so I started tinkering with all this stuff and just fell in love with it."

His story is one of dozens of interviews included in the NOLA Hip-hop Archive, a collection of interviews with local rap and bounce artists through the [Amistad Research Center](#) on the Tulane University uptown campus.

Holly Hobbs, a Tulane doctoral student in ethnomusicology, recorded the voices of artists with New Orleans roots, including Mannie Fresh, Fiend and Mystikal, for the digital archive that will be available online starting Dec. 15.

“Thematically, the NOLA Hip-hop Archive expands our music collections into a new genre, one that has a rich history in New Orleans, but is not being documented elsewhere,” said Chris Harter, director of library and reference services at the Amistad Research Center. “It also complements our current efforts to expand access to our moving image and sound recording holdings through digital initiatives.”

The NOLA Hip-hop Archive will be hosted online by the Tulane University Digital Library of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library. The collection will be completely open access for the global community.

The interviews included in the NOLA Hip-hop Archive are each about one hour long. By the end of this year, Hobbs will have compiled more than 60 to share with the public. The rap and bounce artists reveal information such as their upbringing in New Orleans, their second-line experiences, how they became musicians, the first show they performed and the first beat they ever made.

Hobbs began working on the project in January 2012, meeting with musicians and compiling their stories. Her staff includes a videographer and a production assistant. Jeff Rubin with the [Tulane University Digital Library](#) edited the interviews and oversees the online platform.

“This is a big effort, but with minimal money and minimal resources,” said Hobbs. “It shows you can really do something important and something can be beneficial to not only the musicians themselves but also high school students and students anywhere.”

Greg Thomson is a senior at Tulane University majoring in communication.

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