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Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Image: Jay Prime

End of Summer Jam: Honoring Tradition Through Breakin' in Philadelphia

by Emily "Lady Em" Culbreath

Local breakers, commonly known as breakdancers, gathered for the End of Summer Jam event on Sunday, August 17th, for a 1v1 Breakin' competition in North Philadelphia. This traditional gathering has been held by the Philadelphia breakin' community since 2008. Michael Ortiz, operating under the moniker "Philly Breaks," hosted the event for the first time this summer at the Philly Movements Dance Company in Nicetown-Tioga.

The event attracted a diverse and enthusiastic group of dancers, primarily hailing from Philadelphia and New Jersey, all competing for a \$200 prize fund. According to Ortiz, the End of Summer Jam is a "long-time tradition that used to be held at Love Park. It's for the breakers to have something to look forward to before going back to school." Ortiz emphasized the youthful origins of Hip Hop, a cultural movement that began with marginalized adolescents in the South Bronx during the early 1970s. "Originally, many of us were still in school when these (jams) first started. I just try to keep the tradition going," he said.

In this iteration of the event, the initial energy was guided by the core principles of Hip Hop culture: peace, love, unity, and having fun. Although the event followed a typical breakin' battle format—where an emcee directs the flow of the jam using a microphone, a DJ orchestrates the call-and-response aspect on the turntables, and dancers react to the interplay of music, environment, and opponents—this battle had a distinct vibe. It carried a raw authenticity that was uniquely Philadelphian, while maintaining a simple and unpretentious atmosphere. Close proximity between contestants and spectators created a sense of community that encouraged everyone to engage fully, while the small studio's bright fluorescent overheads left no room to shy away from the spotlight.

As people entered the room, a circle began to form in the center. One by one, battle contestants took their turns warming up in the growing cypher, which gradually became defined by scuff marks from dancers' sneakers and a circular formation of onlookers that

gathered around a few chairs. From this gradual distinction between dancers and onlookers, a battle stage emerged. The emcee, Wrath of Khan, called out to potential contestants to sign up, while DJ Jey Prime spun a set of familiar yet uniquely arranged funk, breakbeat, and Hip Hop records. Three judges, Bboy Low Key, Bgirl Gloh, and Bboy Mikey (Michael Ortiz/Philly Breaks), took their seats side by side on one side of the circle to indicate the beginning of the battles. The striking contrast of grown breakers against a backdrop of children's art adorning the walls of the Philly Movements Dance Company's studio created an environment where play and creativity were central to the room's function.

The first round of battles—commonly referred to in the scene as “prelims”—gave participants a chance to showcase their skills and earn a place in the next stage. While Philadelphia often hosts large-scale battle events that draw dancers from across the country—such as Red Bull BC One, where competitors dance for a coveted spot among hundreds of entrants over numerous rounds—this jam was a much smaller affair. At the End of Summer Jam, a strong prelim performance meant securing one of only eight available spots in the next round. Despite the event's intimate scale, the artistic caliber of the selected dancers generated an energy on par with that of much larger competitions.

The success of the battlers was evident from the engagement of both their opponents and the audience. The excitement in the crowd was directly linked to the dancers' abilities to create an embodied conversation during the battles. The most celebrated rounds were characterized by a breaker's mastery in interweaving musicality, intricate breaking moves, personal style, and battle tactics. The eclectic styles showcased at the End of Summer Jam varied significantly from one breaker to another. Notable performances included Lian, who executed complex threading; King Mou\$e, known for his gravity-defying power moves; and Smithing, who demonstrated a skilled interpretation of musicality. One particularly electrifying battle took place in the semi-finals between Bboys Supa Josh and Wiz, creating an atmosphere reminiscent of a gladiatorial arena. Wiz showcased highly dynamic and explosive movements that seemed to emerge from nowhere, while Supa Josh demonstrated his charismatic, musically-inclined craftsmanship.

While the battle judges selected a winner for the End of Summer Jam, the atmosphere of the humble dance studio and the local crowd created a sense that this event was not solely about competition. It was also about fostering relationships through a shared passion, elevating each other through artistic expression, and preserving cultural traditions. The success of this event was ultimately reflected in its ability to remain true to Hip Hop's values, which left a lasting impression far beyond any trophy or title.

[End of Summer Jam: 1 v 1 Breaking Battles](#), Philly Breaks, 4700 Wissahickon Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19144, August 17, 2025.

Homepage and Article Page Image Description: *An unseen person holds a colorful event flyer over a wooden surface alongside a DJ turntable and a pair of black sneakers. Vibrant and dynamic, the flyer depicts a sunset city skyline in the background and a breaker, wearing a teal patterned shirt and cargo pants, frozen in mid-air performing an impressive freeze. The title “End of Summer Jam” is boldly displayed in graffiti-style red lettering with the subtitle “1 vs 1 Breaking Battles” below it in black on yellow. The left side of the flyer is red and contains event details, including the date (08•17•25), time (Doors 3PM), and entry fee (\$10). It also lists the venue — Philly Movements Dance Company in Philadelphia, PA — and mentions a \$200 grand prize. Additional info includes the DJ (Jey Prime), the judges (Fierce One, B-Girl Gloh, and Mikey), and the host (Wrath of Khan). The overall design is energetic and urban, capturing the spirit of a Philadelphia breakin' competition.*

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