

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

WORKING WITH LIMITATIONS IN HIP HOP - PART 2 - DANCERS

As was stated many times in part one of this lesson, everyone has to work with limitations. Some limitations can be more unique than others, such as those faced by the deaf MCs and DJs featured earlier. However, regardless of how unique the limitation might be, we know that people are always finding ways to work within those limits or to transcend them. Hip Hop dancing naturally comes with its own set of challenges and then, of course, we add to that our own limitations and obstacles. In this lesson, we will meet some people who have unique limitations to Hip Hop dancing and find out what they have been able to accomplish with those limitations.

Bill "Crutchmaster" Shannon was born with Legg-Calve-Perthes disease which weakens the ball part of the hip joint through poor blood flow. This condition required him to use braces and crutches as a child. However, the nature of the condition also made it so that, in his teenage years, he was able to be without crutches and pursue an interest in breakdancing. While he avoided high-risk power moves to prevent unnecessary potential damage to his hips, he found himself attracted to Funk Style movements like waving, popping and gliding. As he grew into his early twenties, he found himself needing to use his crutches again. While he was concerned for a time that he would no longer be able to dance, he later found himself able to innovate a new design for his crutches which gave him a certain freedom of movement with less pain. Using these new crutches, he created a completely unique style of movement that reflected his immersion in the B-boy scene as well as other favorite dance styles, such as House. His dancing caught the eyes of many and his popularity grew to the point where he was finding himself able to perform regularly and share his art all around the world. Early in the 2000s, Bill was called on by Cirque du Soleil to be a choreographer for their next original show, "Varekai". He taught the circus' performers his original techniques and they integrated them into the act. While he has many outstanding merits and awards as an artist, most impressive is watching him in action. See a video of his incredible style @ <http://vimeo.com/4452273>

Jacob "Kujo" Lyons was born deaf in one ear and is almost completely deaf in the other due to various ailments. Of course, you would expect this to be a serious limitation for a dancer. However, Kujo says, "The music is in me. The timing and rhythm are so deeply engrained that I don't have to depend on hearing." Despite only really starting to dance in high school, Kujo has worked in over thirty countries as an artist and is one of the most well known and influential b-boys in the world today. Kujo has been in commercials, movies such as "Step Up" and music videos. He is also skilled in circus arts such as the Chinese Poles and has been hired as a consultant twice by Cirque du Soleil. One of his most personal and excellent accomplishments has been the creation of his own dance company, Lux Aeterna. This troupe combines many different performance disciplines such as Ballet dance, Modern dance, B-boying, Circus arts and stunting. Like Kujo, the company has also traveled all over the world and won critical acclaim and awards. Considering that he also had the limitation of being very shy as a child, it is quite impressive that Kujo would be so much in the spotlight today. However, he says, "Knowing that I can be so self-confident in dancing made me realize that I can put that same self-confidence into other areas of my life, and that has improved my life in so many ways." See Kujo dance @ <http://youtu.be/c0dltrpOeSA>

In addition to Lux Aeterna, Kujo is also in a group called Ill-Abilities. Ill-Abilities is a group of B-boys that have become known worldwide for their unique style which was created by finding new ways to dance with physical limitations. For example, the founder of the crew, Luca "Lazylegz" Patuelli, was born with arthrogryposis, which caused the development of his leg muscles to be extremely limited. Like Crutchmaster, Lazylegz got into breaking as a teen but, because he needed his crutches at that time, he built the crutches into his style from the beginning. He also uses a different style of crutch than Crutchmaster, which gives him different options and abilities. Also on the crew is Sergio "Checho" Miranda, whose legs developed in such a way as to have his feet at the end of his knees. Instead of a wheelchair, he uses a skateboard to get around. This unique lower body development, while somewhat limiting certain aspects of B-boying, allows him greater abilities in the way of power moves. Having less lower body mass, he is able to do things that people with longer legs would find difficult or impossible. There are three other Breakers in the crew, Tommy "Guns" Ly, Redouan "Redo" Ait Chitt and Marc "Dekoy" Briffaud who, although we can't go into each of them individually here, bring incredible talent to the squad and have made them one of the

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most impressive B-boy crews on the planet. See them in action @ <http://youtu.be/Es4t8PVptkl>

Bosila "B-boy Junior" Banya was born in Zaire and became limited in his legs due to the polio virus. Though he can stand and has some movement ability, he developed a style similar to Checho and Lazylegs where he relies largely on his upper body strength to create movement. While it may seem unnecessary to include another person in this lesson with a similar limitation, Junior has developed skills that make him stand apart from any dancers anywhere. His breaking is so incredible that people have tried to discount his demo reel as being fake or made through effects. See it for yourself @ http://youtu.be/_UeOdqjB_7k

And not to be left out, there are also females out there representing for Hip Hop dance who are creating new styles by working with limitations. "Team Hotwheelz" is a team of wheelchair dancers. All of these girls use wheelchairs in their daily lives for mobility. While some have been in chairs since toddlers, others came to use them due to incidents later in their lives. The co-founder of the crew, Chelsie Hill, started dancing at three years old. She became paralyzed in her lower body because of a drunk driving collision right before graduating High School. However, her love for dance was stronger than her focus on her new limitations and she decided to reach out and help others see the possibilities in their situations. She and her father formed the "Walk and Roll Foundation" to help people with, and raise awareness about, spinal cord injuries. She has been featured in the reality TV show, "Push Girls", in magazines and has spoken to tens of thousands of people about working with limitations as well as the dangers of drunk driving. Team Hotwheelz has gained a lot of press and media coverage which is inspiring to those using wheelchairs and those without. You can see a demo video of them @ <http://youtu.be/1cl4Q-mTcC4>

Limitations are a simple fact of life. How we work with our limitations is the beginning of innovation, originality and purpose. As we could not say it better ourselves, we will end this series with a powerful quote from the Ill-Abilities Crew. "Whether it's physical, emotional, intellectual, or financial, WE ALL have some sort of challenge that we face. But it's that minute we create excuses for why we can't do something, that's where the real limitation comes in."

*All links in this lesson were active as of Winter 2013

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Peeps: Short for "people". Usually said in reference to people close to you.

EX: "Me and my peeps are gonna hit up that battle later if you wanna ride."

Living Large: Living lavishly or very well.

EX: "Things have been seriously going my way lately. I am the definition of livin' large!"

My Mellow: A close friend.

EX: "Yo, this is my main man, my mellow, right here. Take care of him, a'it?"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) What limitation(s) is Redo of Ill-Abilities working with?
- 2) People often say that a limitation can be an obstacle or a asset. How is this so?
- 3) What does reading about some of the unique limitations that people are working with cause you to think about your own limitations?