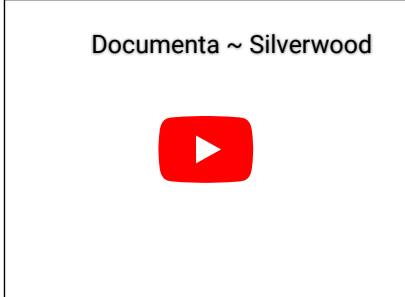




# Inbound: Temper-Mental MissElayneous

Back to Top ↑  
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In this installment of Inbound, Loreana Rushe chats to the mesmerising **Temper-Mental MissElayneous** about her many influences, hiphop culture in Ireland and the power of the spoken word.

Hi Elayne. Can you tell us a bit about yourself? (Your background, things you enjoy etc)

All I wanted to be since as long as I can remember was different. Spumco's *Ren & Stimpy* are my heroes since age 7. I wanted to correlate my artistic motives with their creator, Kricfalusi's artistic vision to never repeat his characters facial expressions twice. I read multiple books simultaneously. Currently one of those many books is Hans Falladas' *A Small Circus*. Nietzsche and Alan Watts are to my philosophical tastes. I'm skateboarding at the moment – a new hobby. I'm also studying the practice and philosophy of Clown. I'm an autodidact, like my father. My sister enrolled me in a boxing club for my 18th artist. Neither was discarded, but I'm more novice in one than the other and am content with that today. Boxing shaped a part of me that I will never shed. I consider it a positive spiritual overhaul. I am straight edge since aged seveteen and I'm an activist. My mother took me to union and feminist meetings as a child. I've participated in the adult world since I could walk under tables without crouching. I prefer motorbikes over cars. I cycle a yellow and blue BMX through Dublin city centre every day with an imaginary bell on it. My Grandfather is my best friend. Jasmine green tea is my brand. Boycotting is an automatic reflex to me since I went vegetarian, aged 8, then vegan aged 11. I grow cactus plants and collect vinyl. Drums were my first instrument. The sun was in Leo when I was born. I have a portrait of my favourite movie character tatoood on my thigh. One of my aspirations is to play the Fool in Shakespeares' *King Lear*. After a long will-shot battle with the soother, I quit sucking pacifiers when I was seven. I'm just out of a fourteen month period of homelessness. By the oceans side is my most favoured place to be.

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### How did the name ‘Temper-Mental MissElayneous’ come about?

I titled myself ‘Temper-Mental’ when I was fourteen. Temper refers to emotion and Mental references the mind. The hyphen defines the separation between the two. This marks the emphasis I placed on the presentation of words and how they look and are perceived as written or when read or heard. I was developing a literary penchant and evolving a style. I was embarking on a journey of self discovery through my cultural and artistic education – hip-hop. MissElayneous is a play on the word ‘miscellaneous’ but incorporates my birth name ‘Elayne’ indicative of that very traditionally hip-hop essence in self titling with regard to use of cleverness of word play.

### How did you get into Hip-Hop and who were your main influences in the genre?

I was raised up by a musician and songwriter father who exposed me to inspiration and prompted my taste in quality of lyric, arrangement and performance. I got Daft Punk’s *Homework* out of my Communion money. My elder sisters influenced me in hugely different ways musically. Both remain consistent conduits to Temper-Mental and MissElayneous. When Temper-Mental was born I bought an album called *Anon and On* by a hip-hop artist called **Emanon** – “beware the television, it’s a tool for conditioning ... protect yourself, preserve your mental health and look inside for the value of your personal wealth”. A sure thematic incitement to my first single ‘Dominoes’, which challenges the status quo within this TV nation and prompts abstinence from watching TV. Far away from the fish-lensed, materially adorned mainstream, which repelled me then was when I knew I belonged to a larger shared experience of ideals made tangible by the power of real hip-hop, endeavouring toward a just and meaningful existence. I do believe hip-hop reared me up, guided me, gave me lessons in dignity, in crew-mentality (community/friendship) and opened up other avenues of life for me. However, my compelling and latent attraction to African American culture and music all began with Motown for me when I was eleven years old. A triple CD, my personal pains and the Proletariat struggle were the ingredients to commencement in creating my own artistic persona.

### You’re hugely inspired by poetry. When did your fascination begin? Who are your favourite poets?

When I was nine years old I wrote a poem because I was a natural at drawing and was exploring other expressive methods. My sister was the writer, truly, whereas I just followed her role. Yeats could not have taught me as she did. The poem is titled ‘Little Leaf’ and is used currently in my syllabus for teaching students from primary to third level education. I read record sleeves of **Slipknot** (Corey Taylor) when I was thirteen and became a confessional rap lyricist from that musing. I know all forms of my lyrical work were and still remain intrinsically linked but there are distinctions that define them birthday present. A that point, it was either – become a professional boxer or be an as specific in their own natures, be it spoken word, classic poetic style, nonsense syntax or rap. Most of the poets of the Beat Generation, ‘Shakespeare’, Anne Sexton, Rumi, Yeats and Dylan Thomas would be some of my favourite.

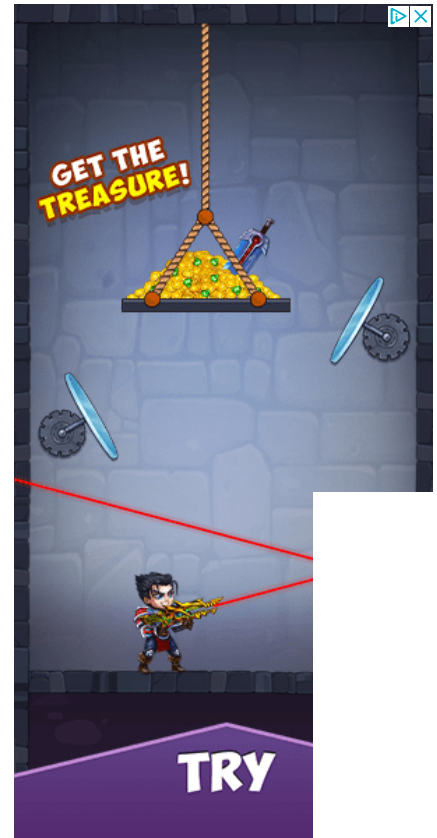
### You’re involved with the Irish Writers Centre. Can you tell us what you do there?

I’ve been hosted by the Writers Centre to present my work in an unplugged format and within a live collaborative setting accompanied by choice fellow poets to a select audience for discussion and analysis of my works or in more casual set-ups also where I entertain and try to motivate the people. They also hosted me for leading school workshops.

### Tell us about your involvement with schools and youth groups.

As I’ve mentioned I am exercising my very own MissElayneous syllabus oriented around hip-hop as a curriculum and study practice via my body of original works. I fluctuate it according to the needs of each group. I work one to one with young people and try to be as available as I can to provide artistic suggestions and support creative development. I mentor a young man in Brooklyn and I am under the guidance of my own mentor there, as I elaborate on later. I would like to bring the ‘Art Start’/‘Urban Artbeat’ crew over to Ireland. Axis Ballymun has housed many of the projects, youth festivals and programmes I’ve been involved in and coordinated. Facilitation is something I’m good at and I’m looking forward to working with Dundalk Creative Spark YPs again and St. John Bosco LEAP course is a new journey I’m excited about. I love growing and learning through teaching and experiencing alongside my people. I have faith in our culture and our young people, so I try to be as involved as I can in youth and community. Analysing Lyrics and WRAPP Around are some of the recent projects I was immersed in alongside teaching Inchicore College of Further Education creative writing students. I visit schools and universities and provide presentations and master classes/discussions.

### Can you give us some insight into the Dublin/Irish hip-hop and Rap scene at the moment?



Fundamentally I am aware that it is a deep consciousness which is stirring the people and motivating change in attitudes. As is evident from the description of my life as MissElayneous, I'm involved not only in one scene or culture, so I have to spread my energies over a wider expanse and satisfy broader avenues. I'm an actor and am developing a show with director Jason Byrne and under the supervision of writer and director (and former performance school mentor) Gerard Lee. The spoken word scene shows many crossovers of rap lyricists exploring and sharing within that world. From what I have experienced, unfortunately weed is something that I feel is almost promoted within the Dublin hip-hop domain and it is a lifestyle I feel that does not compliment our culture at large, from what I see and experience every day and all my life, so far. I've had nothing but negative experiences with people who are using the herb excessively in the areas of creativity and music. It has created psychosis and demotivated artists who were once seemingly more ambitious and healthy in mind. I'm not judging individuals – I am judging a system. The messages that are being conveyed in hip-hop through rap in Ireland move me and rouse pride and wonder in me. I have brought the Irish essence of hip-hop to the States because of its' spirited nature, its' vigour and passion and its' air of advocacy which is unique to our culture.



**Hip-hop in Ireland seems to be predominantly male. Can you discuss your feelings on this?**

Wimmin are not outwardly and boldly welcomed into scenes. This is factual. They are in fact demeaned, their message invalidated, they are harassed, objectified – just like in every other culture in any society. They are seen as separate, as the singular sexy addition to a crew, as token 'female rappers', as different. Yes, there are overall differences based on gender identification in life but attitudes need to evolve drastically to acknowledge that this isn't a basis for segregation. It's paradoxical in the sense that wimmin must be exalted in our hip-hop culture in order to ensure a balance while they are recognised and valued as the oppressed minority alongside being treated carefully as equal. Hip-hop is about unity, all inclusiveness, open mindedness and respect. There is no room for misogyny and the false portrayal of what hip-hop is by the so-called mainstream media which promotes mediocrity and lies to perpetuate ignorance and docility.

**For those who are not too familiar with rap or hip-hop, the lyrics can often come across as angry or aggressive. What are you trying to convey through your work?**

I thought of this the other day as I listened to **GZA's *Liquid Swords*** and **KRS One's *Return of the Boombox*** – "People aren't angry because they listen to rap music, people listen to rap music because they are angry." Stylistically I feel it offers me a release, the lyrical tempos that envelop moral and socio-political punctuations emphasise how profound it really is and how unfortunate it is that we are miseducated to see it as two-dimensional and stereotype. Rap just is one of the four elements of the cultural movement of hip-hop. Like any art and



culture it has categories and variations. It creates a sense of belonging through the aspect of affiliation associated with crew-mentality, community, culture, society. It offers the experience of catharsis to its witnesses and followers. It is revolutionary and requires attentive ears that attune with the heart. Within my syllabus I parallel the four elements of hip-hop with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Anger is not a negative emotion, it is a valid personal human experience and very justified when it comes to African American culture whose oppressive history is despicable and an ever-tarnishing stain on everyone's brain which hip-hop brings to light through beauty. Hip-hop is a language of depth and reverence. I speak of the experience of fear, ego, love, oppression, from a personal perspective and in a more indirect way in particular areas of my works too. I challenge morality and use all the aul literary tricks and my own linguistic stylistics with the **Billie Holiday** trait of 'crossing the bar'. I use interesting vocabulary to create not only an intellectual experience, but a sonic experience too. The live show bears the theatrics that get the bodies involved. The message is: what's your interpretation, how does it make you feel – all is valid. I may have the definition but I'm always amazed by my students and co-workers interpretations. It allows the work to be utilised on many plateaus.

### **Hip-hop is hugely popular and commercial in the charts here, yet Irish performers are often seen as a part of sub-culture. Why do you think this is?**

Because banality sells and people are being trained to be materially needy and insecure in themselves so that they need these distractions from the issues we have faced and will have to face. 'Commercial hip-hop' is not hip-hop. It is a socially imposed cosmetic mutation of new boy band style pop. We, our nation, are creatively oppressed because the Irish spirit is vigorous and this is exactly what threatens our oppressors and perpetuates soulless so-called music being churned out to our young wimmin to keep heterosexism afloat so that the proles keep producing offspring to work for the middle classes and produce art and entertainment. Diet, circumstances, miseducation, etc, contribute to the immunity of our youth to truth which makes control a choice weapon of mass manipulation and is utilised in the music and performance industry. Real artists are forced to stay on the underground because they're not given a chance to get over that 'sub-culture' because it's all prescribed and depends on 'who you know' which is wrong and totally corrupt and the fake industry wags it's finger and determines what 'sells'. You can't market morals...

### **You wrote and recorded a manifesto for International Women's Day this year. How important is feminism to you and does it inform your writing?**

Feminism has very different connotations in NY than what it has in Ireland. I've been studying in Brooklyn with a society called Scientific Soul Sessions under the mentorship of SpiritChild, whose teachings are around matriarchy as, not only a revolutionary concept, but as an integral and practical part of life. I use the cultural movement of hip-hop as an expressive and lifestyle medium by which I present my experience of femininity, my knowledge and experience to society and exalt Womyn highly as I guide my people in the way of matriarchal community.

### **What other artists should we check out?**

Check out **I Am A Car Crash**. They're not within the specified 'hip-hop scene' but lyricist JDs' message is one that has me rocking their band t-shirt ... and it takes a lot to have me wave a flag. A unique sound. The cream of the crust of the underground. I recommend immersing yourself in the spoken word world where you'll find some lofty lyrical rarities there.

### **Any plans for releases this year?**

A double A side vinyl titled 'Heart Lose Tempo' is pressed and ready for official release. Renowned Irish graffiti artist Cisto created the sleeve artwork and the song is produced by Stano. It'll be a limited edition very special launch party in July. Meanwhile check out the music video featuring child actor Deya as 'Little MissElayneous', directed by Liam Mac an Bháird. The single is available to listen to alongside it's flipside feature 'Tír Na n-Óg' on my Soundcloud.

Oops, we couldn't find that track.

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Live band accompaniment is where it's at for the next few records for TMM.

### **Where can we find out more about you?**

Wait until late Autumn/Winter to see me feature in a twenty-part documentary series I've been filming for on the regular, so far, for the past four months. It's called *Connected*, produced by Animo and will be broadcast by RTÉ2. Have a scroll on my [Facebook page](#) which is where I archive most MissElayneous movement or just punch my name into Google and you aught find some very varied content on TMM.



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### About the Author



Loreana is the deputy editor / photo editor. She also contributes photos & illustrations to The Thin Air magazine.

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