Many music therapists wonder about the potential effects of rap music (both harmful and helpful), and may avoid using it altogether if they are not familiar with the genre. In my opinion, this edited collection is aimed at such therapists, challenging beliefs about the destructive influences of rap and Hip-Hop music. Contributors explore the value and role of the genre, break down the musical elements and look at various techniques across a range of settings.

The book is organised into three parts. Part 1 addresses the historical and theoretical contexts, presenting a rationale for the use of rap and Hip-Hop in therapy. Chapter 1 includes a brief history and breakdown of the musical elements. The author (Hadley) argues that the form of rap music is ideal for therapy. Chapter 2 looks at the uses and challenges of Rap Therapy, and describes the sub-genres within Hip-Hop culture. Yancy argues that rap music validates the lived experiences of clients that are drawn to the genre. Chapter 3 looks at how creating rap music with clients might be conceptualized as a middle ground between music-centred music therapy and music psychotherapy approaches. Chapter 4 relates the journeys of clients and Hip-Hop culture through the lens of archetypes and chapter 5 takes a feminist lens to the work. There are useful tables grouping Hip-Hop recordings into themed categories in both chapters 5 and 6.

Part 2 draws together clinical experiences from settings where rap music is often the most appropriate choice; working with ‘at risk’ youth. What stands out in this section is the passion of the authors and the honesty that they bring to their work and reflections. In chapter 7, Rap Therapy is presented as a strength-based and culturally sensitive tool of engagement. Chapter 8 describes a multifaceted breakdancing program in Canada’s Arctic Circle, and Chapter 9 looks at how members of a songwriting group can adopt the various roles in Hip-Hop music production. Chapter 10 looks at the relationship between adolescents and music, with a focus on the challenges and potential of using rap and Hip-Hop. Chapter 11 comes from South Africa and explores the process of refining words and performing rap creations, and the impact on those who have suffered violent oppression. Chapter 12 is based on research into the themes emerging from client’s lyrics when rap music is used within a music-centered therapy perspective. Chapter 13 looks at individual and group work within a short-term detention centre, while Chapter 14 details a protocol for listening and discussing rap music with adolescent offenders.

Part 3 highlights the potential benefits of introducing rap and Hip-Hop interventions to people with specific diagnoses, including those with drug and alcohol addictions, children in hospital, and adults receiving cancer treatment. These chapters include a variety of techniques including songwriting, discussion, improvising and recording; from brief interventions to a single case lasting four years (Chapter 19).

One of the strengths of this book is the variety of contributions; varied cultural and clinical settings, professional disciplines, approaches and methods. The language is uncomplicated while processes and protocols are described in detail. Some authors reflect on their initial reservations and nervousness when first embarking on the use of rap music, and others describe the considerations and complexities that can arise when introducing the genre into a facility. I found this aspect of the
book both helpful and refreshing. Unfortunately some of this wonderful detail is lost within the pages, as the index seems underdeveloped. A glossary or discussion of technology would also have been helpful.

This book is a rich and inspiring read and therapists hoping to expand their professional repertoire to include rap music will find much to guide them in this book.

Carolyn Hart, RMT
Women’s & Children’s Hospital, Adelaide