

history of pop smoke

History of Pop Smoke: Tracing the Rise of a Brooklyn Drill Icon

history of pop smoke is a story of raw talent, rapid ascent, and a lasting impact on the music industry despite a tragically short life. Pop Smoke, born Bashar Barakah Jackson, emerged from the streets of Brooklyn to become one of the most influential voices in the drill music scene. His unique blend of gritty lyrics, infectious energy, and an unmistakable voice helped shape modern rap culture. Let's dive deep into the history of Pop Smoke, exploring his origins, breakthrough moments, and the legacy he left behind.

Early Life and Beginnings

Pop Smoke was born on July 20, 1999, in Canarsie, Brooklyn, New York. Growing up in this vibrant but often challenging neighborhood played a significant role in shaping his artistic outlook. From a young age, he was exposed to the sounds of hip-hop and the realities of street life, which later became core themes in his music.

Before his rise as a rapper, Pop Smoke had aspirations beyond music. He initially pursued acting and even appeared in a few short films and skits, showcasing a flair for performance. However, the magnetic pull of music soon took over. Influenced by local Brooklyn artists and the burgeoning drill scene from Chicago and London, he found his voice and style.

Musical Influences and Style Development

Understanding the history of Pop Smoke means recognizing the influences that poured into his sound. Drill music, characterized by dark, violent, and gritty lyrics with heavy trap beats, was gaining momentum globally. Pop Smoke took inspiration from Chicago drill pioneers like Chief Keef and G Herbo, but also from UK drill, which added a unique rhythmic and melodic quality to his work.

His deep, raspy voice became his signature, a tool that conveyed both menace and vulnerability. This vocal style, combined with hypnotic beats produced by frequent collaborators like 808Melo, helped him carve out a distinctive niche in the crowded rap landscape.

Breakthrough and Rise to Fame

Pop Smoke's breakthrough came in 2019 with the release of his debut single "Welcome to the Party." The song quickly became an anthem in New York and beyond, capturing the energy of Brooklyn's streets while introducing the drill sound to a broader audience. Its success was a pivotal moment in the history of Pop Smoke, marking his transition from a local talent to an international sensation.

The track's popularity led to remixes featuring established artists such as Nicki Minaj and Skepta, further cementing his status in the music world. His

debut mixtape, "Meet the Woo," followed soon after, showcasing his lyrical prowess and ability to create infectious hooks.

Collaborations and Expanding Reach

Pop Smoke's rapid ascent attracted attention from major artists and producers. Collaborations with heavyweights like Travis Scott, Fivio Foreign, and Quavo expanded his reach and influence. Each project and feature revealed new facets of his artistry, from aggressive street anthems to more melodic, introspective tracks.

His second mixtape, "Meet the Woo 2," released in early 2020, debuted at number seven on the Billboard 200, demonstrating his growing commercial appeal. Songs like "Dior" became emblematic of his style and were widely celebrated by fans and critics alike.

The Tragic End and Posthumous Legacy

Tragically, the history of Pop Smoke also includes a heartbreaking chapter. In February 2020, at the age of 20, he was fatally shot during a home invasion in Hollywood Hills, California. His untimely death sent shockwaves through the music community and his fanbase worldwide.

Despite his brief career, Pop Smoke's influence continued to grow posthumously. His debut studio album, "Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon," was released in July 2020, with production overseen by longtime collaborator 50 Cent. The album debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 and featured a host of guest artists, cementing Pop Smoke's place as a major figure in hip-hop.

Impact on Drill Music and Hip-Hop Culture

Pop Smoke's contributions helped bring drill music from the underground into mainstream culture. His success opened doors for other Brooklyn drill artists, such as Fivio Foreign and Sheff G, contributing to a broader recognition of New York drill's unique sound.

Moreover, his stylistic choices—deep voice, catchy yet gritty lyrics, and fusion of UK and Chicago drill elements—set trends that many artists continue to emulate. His ability to blend street authenticity with commercial appeal remains a blueprint for emerging rappers.

Understanding the Broader Context: Brooklyn Drill's Evolution

To fully appreciate the history of Pop Smoke, one must also understand the evolution of Brooklyn drill music. This subgenre took cues from Chicago drill but infused it with New York's distinctive energy and slang. Producers like 808Melo and artists like Pop Smoke were instrumental in shaping this sound, which is marked by hard-hitting beats, syncopated hi-hats, and menacing

basslines.

Brooklyn drill's rise coincided with social media's growing role in music discovery, enabling artists to reach audiences quickly and organically. Pop Smoke capitalized on this shift, using platforms like Instagram and YouTube to build a loyal following before traditional media caught on.

Tips for Aspiring Artists Inspired by Pop Smoke's Journey

Pop Smoke's story offers valuable lessons for up-and-coming musicians:

- **Authenticity matters:** His music was deeply rooted in his personal experiences and environment, which resonated with listeners.
- **Collaborate wisely:** Partnering with producers and artists who complement your style can elevate your sound.
- **Leverage social media:** Building a fanbase online can create momentum before label attention arrives.
- **Stay adaptable:** Pop Smoke blended influences from various drill scenes, showing the power of innovation within a genre.

These insights highlight how Pop Smoke's rise was not just about talent but also strategy and cultural awareness.

Continuing Influence and Cultural Significance

Years after his passing, Pop Smoke remains a symbol of Brooklyn's vibrant music scene. His tracks continue to be streamed millions of times, inspiring a new generation of artists. His fashion sense, characterized by designer brands and diamond jewelry, also influenced hip-hop aesthetics.

Moreover, the ongoing interest in his life and music underscores the enduring appeal of drill music and the narratives it carries. Documentaries, tribute concerts, and posthumous releases keep his memory alive, bridging the gap between his brief career and the future of hip-hop.

Exploring the history of Pop Smoke reveals more than just the rise of a rapper; it's about the cultural shifts within music, the power of youth expression, and the lasting impact one artist can have in a short time. His legacy continues to shape the sound and soul of modern hip-hop, ensuring that Brooklyn's drill king is never forgotten.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Pop Smoke?

Pop Smoke was an American rapper and songwriter known for popularizing the Brooklyn drill music scene before his untimely death in 2020.

When and where was Pop Smoke born?

Pop Smoke was born on July 20, 1999, in Brooklyn, New York City.

How did Pop Smoke start his music career?

Pop Smoke began his music career in 2018 by uploading songs to SoundCloud and gained attention with his breakout single 'Welcome to the Party' in 2019.

What was Pop Smoke's breakthrough single?

Pop Smoke's breakthrough single was 'Welcome to the Party,' which became a viral hit in 2019 and helped establish Brooklyn drill as a prominent genre.

What are some notable albums released by Pop Smoke?

Pop Smoke released the mixtapes 'Meet the Woo' and 'Meet the Woo 2' during his lifetime, and his posthumous debut studio album 'Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon' was released in 2020.

How did Pop Smoke influence the music industry?

Pop Smoke played a major role in bringing Brooklyn drill music to mainstream audiences, influencing many artists and popularizing a new sound in hip-hop.

What happened to Pop Smoke in 2020?

Pop Smoke was tragically killed during a home invasion in Los Angeles on February 19, 2020, at the age of 20.

What is the legacy of Pop Smoke?

Pop Smoke's legacy includes his impact on drill music, his posthumous releases that received critical acclaim, and his influence on a new generation of rappers.

Who continued Pop Smoke's music career after his death?

After Pop Smoke's death, his mother and management team worked with producers and artists like 50 Cent to complete and release his posthumous album, preserving and promoting his musical legacy.

Additional Resources

History of Pop Smoke: Tracing the Rise of a Drill Music Icon

history of pop smoke reveals a compelling narrative of rapid ascent, cultural

impact, and tragic loss within the contemporary music landscape. Pop Smoke, born Bashar Barakah Jackson, emerged from the Brooklyn drill scene to become a significant figure in modern hip-hop, influencing the genre's evolution and expanding its reach. His career, though brief, left an indelible mark on the music industry, prompting analysis of his artistic trajectory, stylistic contributions, and the circumstances surrounding his untimely death.

Early Life and Musical Beginnings

Bashar Barakah Jackson was born on July 20, 1999, in Brooklyn, New York. Raised in the Canarsie neighborhood, a culturally rich but economically challenged area, Pop Smoke's early environment played a crucial role in shaping his worldview and lyrical content. Prior to entering the music industry, Jackson pursued basketball and modeling, but music ultimately became his primary outlet for self-expression.

The history of Pop Smoke's musical career formally began in 2018 when he started releasing songs on SoundCloud. His initial works showcased his deep, gravelly voice—a signature element that set him apart from many of his peers. Early tracks were influenced heavily by UK drill and grime, genres that had begun infiltrating New York's underground scene. This cross-Atlantic fusion helped Pop Smoke carve a niche that appealed to both American and international audiences.

Breakthrough and Commercial Success

Pop Smoke's breakthrough came with the release of his single "Welcome to the Party" in April 2019. The track quickly gained traction, becoming an anthem in New York clubs and earning attention from established artists and producers. The song's aggressive beats and catchy hooks epitomized the emerging Brooklyn drill sound, characterized by ominous production and confrontational lyrics.

Following this success, Pop Smoke signed with Republic Records and released his debut mixtape, "Meet the Woo," in July 2019. The project solidified his status as a rising star, featuring collaborations with artists such as Nicki Minaj and Skepta. His distinctive approach to drill music—combining raw street narratives with mainstream appeal—allowed him to bridge gaps between underground and commercial rap scenes.

The Evolution of Pop Smoke's Sound

One of the defining aspects of the history of Pop Smoke is the evolution of his musical style. While rooted in drill, his sound incorporated elements of trap, hip-hop, and R&B, demonstrating versatility beyond traditional genre boundaries. His deep vocal tone and rhythmic cadence became a hallmark, influencing a wave of artists who sought to emulate his delivery.

Influences and Artistic Style

Pop Smoke cited various influences including 50 Cent, a fellow Brooklyn rapper, as well as UK artists like Headie One and Skepta. This eclectic inspiration contributed to his hybrid sound. The production style on his tracks often featured sparse yet hard-hitting beats, heavy basslines, and atmospheric synths, creating an intense auditory experience that complemented his lyrical content.

Lyrically, Pop Smoke's music reflected street life, personal ambition, and resilience, themes common in drill music but delivered with a charismatic energy that resonated widely. His ability to blend menace with melody broadened his appeal, making his tracks suitable for both gritty club environments and mainstream radio.

Impact on Drill Music and Legacy

The history of Pop Smoke cannot be fully understood without acknowledging his pivotal role in popularizing Brooklyn drill on a global scale. Before his emergence, drill music was largely associated with Chicago and the UK scenes. Pop Smoke's success helped establish New York as a significant hub for this subgenre.

Global Recognition and Collaborations

Pop Smoke's influence extended beyond local circuits as he collaborated with internationally renowned artists such as Travis Scott, Lil Tjay, and Quavo. These partnerships not only expanded his audience but also highlighted the commercial viability of drill music within the broader hip-hop industry.

Moreover, his posthumous releases, including the albums "Shoot for the Stars, Aim for the Moon" (2020) and "Faith" (2021), achieved critical and commercial acclaim, debuting at number one on the Billboard 200 chart. These projects showcased unfinished work polished by prominent producers, preserving his artistic vision while introducing new sounds.

Challenges and Controversies

The history of Pop Smoke is also marked by the challenges inherent in the drill music scene, including associations with violence and legal scrutiny. Pop Smoke himself was a victim of a fatal home invasion in February 2020, an event that shocked the music community and raised questions about the safety and vulnerability of young artists in the industry.

His death sparked conversations about the intersection of fame, street credibility, and the dangers faced by artists emerging from troubled neighborhoods. While some critics debated the glorification of violence in drill music, others emphasized Pop Smoke's role in humanizing these narratives through his artistry.

Pop Smoke's Cultural Influence and Posthumous

Recognition

Beyond music, Pop Smoke's influence permeated fashion, social media, and youth culture. Known for his distinctive style, including his signature chains and tattoos, he embodied a new generation of artists redefining urban aesthetics. His active social media presence helped foster a dedicated fanbase that continues to celebrate his legacy.

Continuation of the Brooklyn Drill Movement

Following Pop Smoke's death, Brooklyn drill has continued to evolve, with artists like Fivio Foreign, Sheff G, and Dusty Locane carrying the torch. The history of Pop Smoke is often referenced as a foundational chapter for these artists, who cite him as a source of inspiration and proof of drill's commercial potential.

Recognition and Honors

In the wake of his passing, Pop Smoke received numerous accolades, including Grammy nominations and posthumous awards. His music videos and streams saw significant increases, and his story has been the subject of documentaries and tribute projects, underscoring the lasting impact of his brief but powerful career.

Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of Pop Smoke

The history of Pop Smoke encapsulates the story of a young artist who transformed the soundscape of modern hip-hop through innovation and authenticity. His integration of Brooklyn grit with UK drill influences created a unique voice that resonated across demographics and geographies. Despite his career being cut tragically short, Pop Smoke's influence persists, shaping new artists and expanding the reach of drill music worldwide. His narrative serves as both a testament to the potential for artistic breakthrough and a sobering reminder of the vulnerabilities faced by rising talents in challenging environments.

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