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Coast to Coast: Trey Coastal Lights Up the Bay

*Taylor Crumpton speaks to the Bay Area group about the racism that inspired their song "F**k BBQ Becky."*

BY TAYLOR CRUMPTON DECEMBER 5, 2019



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The Bay Area has established a counterculture framework centered on rappers' autonomy. The region's sociopolitical environment of Black entrepreneurship amplified by Too Short and Freddie B's hustler mentality provided structure for the development of Bay-Area based record labels who encapsulated the region's sound, such as Get Low Recordz, In-A-Minute Records, Young Black Brothas and Sick Wid It Records, that inspired the current roster of the region's rappers, raised on mobb era music.

In the early to mid 2000s, mainstream markets embraced hyphy, an energetic sub-genre birthed from the lived experiences of Black communities in the Bay, characterized by regional signatures of ghost riding and stunna shades infiltrated the Billboard Top 10 through E-40 and Keak Da Sneak's hit, "Tell Me When To Go" and Too \$hort's "Blow The Whistle." During this period, E-40 signed to Warner Bros Records,

MTV produced a documentary about the region's sound, and the distribution of street culture DVDs ensured the infiltration of hyphy into NYC, ATL, and music markets across the nation. Yet the lack of intentional leadership, strategic marketing, and controversy over which rapper could claim hyphy resulted in the movement's downfall.

Over the last decades, mainstream artists such as Drake, Big Sean, DJ Mustard, and Chris Brown have paid homage and been accused by the Bay of appropriated their music. Yet Bay-area artists such as Sage The Gemini, Iamsu!, SOB x RBE, and Kamaiyah rarely achieved Billboard success, in comparison to their industry peers, who flipped their region's music to be classified as innovative, and thus amplifying their chances of securing a Grammy.

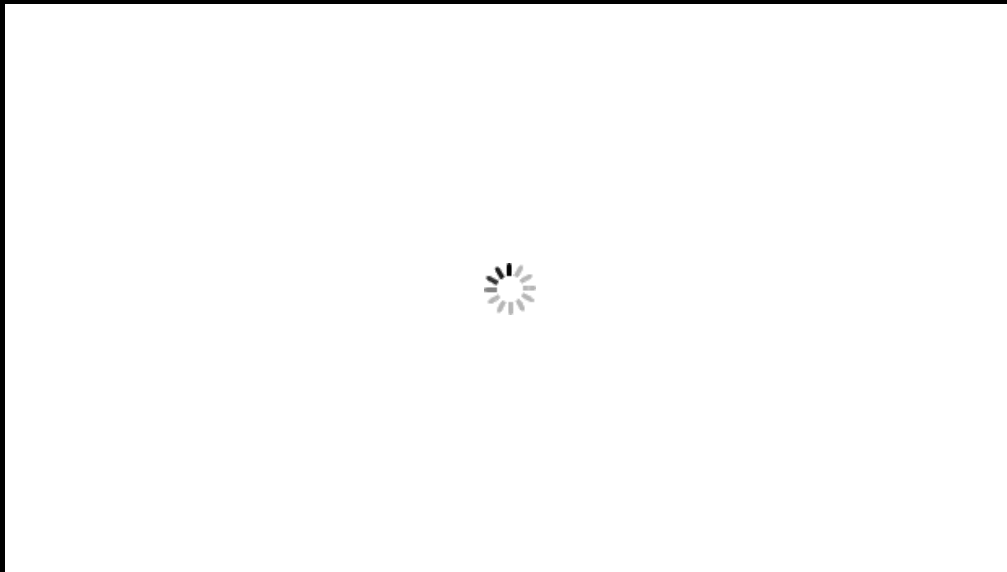
Despite these contradictions, waves of Bay Area-based artists are contributing to the diversity of the Bay's sound. ALLBLACK, Nef The Pharaoh, and REXX Life Raj, are on the verge of mainstream success, while Beejus, White Dave, Micheal Sneed, are some dedicated to the continuation of the region's independent success. In this latter camp is Oakland based rap collective, Trey Coastal.

Trey Coastal is composed of Philip Lang, Cameron Moss, and Ryan Klenk, childhood friends who developed their musical personas of Philip Bank\$, Rye Mann, and Cam Moss over a middle school to Washington, DC, where Cam known as DJ Booty Tap produced a mixtape of beats from pirated FruityLoops studio software.

In 2017, the trio went viral throughout the Bay because of their visual to "Polysenian Sand," a two minute track that paid tribute to the sociocultural factors that cultivated Oakland: Huey P. Newton, Ohlone Land, Tony! Toni! Tone – as Bank\$ and Moss donned in Golden State Warriors sail throughout Lake Merritt over a Mann-produced beat.

Within the two years, Trey Coastal has collaborated with over 40 of the region's independent producers, and rappers through their 20 for 20 Podcast, a multi-faceted auditory experience wherein the group educates listeners about the current trends and movements in the Bay's hip-hop scene. There's also the creation of an original song with the featured guest. The finished production is reflective of the organic collaboration among the region's indie scene, which is primarily composed of formerly childhood peers adamant about contributing to the region's lexicon, despite the ever rising costs of rent and enduring socioeconomic inequalities.

I spoke with Trey Coastal about navigating the Bay's hip hop independent scene, and their latest single, "F***K BBQ Becky," an homage to Jennifer Schulte, the white woman who called law enforcement in response to Black men BBQing at Lake Merritt. —
Taylor Crumpton



Structurally, Trey Coastal is an organic collaboration among childhood friends, that progressed into one of the Bay's known hip-hop independent rap groups. As the group progress, have you considered a partnership with record labels?

Trey Coastal: Throughout this time, we've learned things and applied them to our game plan. We're determined on coordinating, and collaborating on ideas. It would be nice to have assistance, so we could focus on artistic and musical projects for the group, but the record and management would have to align with our values.

Could you define Trey Coastal's values?

Trey Coastal: We're not going to betray ourselves. For example, we could make a folk song, but we're going to keep our genuine ways. We just don't want to be stereotyped, and we want to reach a bigger audience, but on our own terms. We're very eclectic, because we're real people who live actual lives.

Are your values influenced by Oakland?

Trey Coastal: Oakland's diversity influences us to have confidence where we could produce a song from any genre; salsa, folk, country, with no rules. There's honesty in our music, I can't have our parents thinking about how we lied on a song. People in Oakland are rational and realistic. We navigate with a mindset of it is what it is without

sugar coating or being spoon-fed. It's an interesting perspective, centered on realism. An undercurrent within Trey Coastal's videography is the intergration of Oakland as a main character. From Polynesian Sand, '90s video game inspired R1 R2 L1 L2, and recently released End of Line that paid tribute to "turfin", regional dance style developed from BART performers.

What inspired the visual incorporation of Oakland into your music videos?

Trey Coastal: The videos are social commentary about living in Oakland. End Of Line was inspired by "train robberies", and riders being afraid of the young Black turf dancers. We responded through the visual to say you should be donating to children dancing on BART, because they could be robbing you, but they're not. For the video, I contacted turf dancers from Instagram, and envisioned them for the video as I freestyled my second verse, "How many hit the ground and pop that? That's that West Oakland shit." "F**K BBQ Becky" referenced the incident from April 28th that went viral after being uploaded to Twitter of a white woman calling law enforcement on two Black man for "illegally grilling" at Lake Merritt, described as "her park." In response, Black communities increased their presence at the Lake, one of the few communal spaces where Black individuals, families, and communities can enjoy.

What led you to create a song based on this event in Oakland history?

Trey Coastal: We already had an idea to create a Lake Merritt song for the EP. The beat for those hot days filled with drinking and barbecue. When I wrote the verse, it was the first thing I thought of for the opener. On End Of Line, we open the track with, "Rest in peace, Oscar. Fuck a BART copper". It came from the heart. We were here in 2009 on New Year's when it happened. For "F**K BBQ Becky," I (Cam Moss) was high when I first spit the verse, so it sounded causal. Phil had me re-record the verse and said, "No bro! Say it like she was right in front of the mic". So I went back in there and said, "Fuck Barbecue Becky" from the heart.