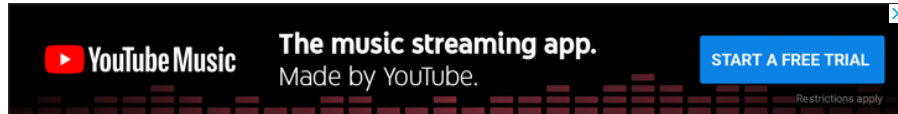


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Courtesy of Netflix

## Meet D Smoke, Inglewood And Hip-Hop's Next Hometown Hero

November 14, 2019 - 5:40 pm by  
Taylor Crumpton 

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### The musician talks 'Rhythm + Flow,' his new EP, and next steps as an independent artist.

**D Smoke is humble.** The Inglewood native exudes an aura of maturation, needed for his quick ascension into popular culture as the first winner of *Rhythm + Flow*, Netflix's hip-hop reality competition centered on the discovery of hip-hop's next star. His signature authenticity shone throughout the 10-episode series and international audiences were drawn to his charisma as he proudly rapped about his lived experiences as a young black man in Inglewood.

"There's such a rich history," he says about his hometown, the inspiration for his forthcoming EP, over the phone. "I feel like it's a beautiful but brief journey through my mind, my lived experiences, and the place that I'm extremely fond of."

His musical confidence was displayed on the three-week series as he incorporated Spanish and live instrumentation to uplift the community-centered messaging embedded within his raps. Inspired by his childhood friends in Inglewood's Latinx community, Smoke found **music** as unifier and way to remove barriers between Latinx and Black communities in his hometown. Demographics reflected in his students as a bilingual and music teacher at Inglewood High where he invests in the next generation of leaders.

He's won an American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) award with his older brother, Sir Darryl Farris aka **SiR**, for "Never," a Billboard-charting song from **Jaheim** in 2007, and received songwriting credits for Ginuwine and The Pussy Cat Dolls projects.

As the show's first winner, there's an added level of pressure for the rapper who has completed three music videos and started work on a 15-track mixtape since the show's release. In the midst of press runs, D Smoke opened up about his experience on *Rhythm + Flow*, his *Inglewood High* EP, and his next steps as an independent artist.

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**VIBE: Tell me about *Inglewood High*, your latest EP.**

**D Smoke:** *Inglewood High* is an EP about my experience coming up on Inglewood, going to Inglewood High, and teaching at the high school after I graduated from UCLA. It's an important project for me because Inglewood High School holds stories for me as a student and teacher. There are so many youngsters that I had the privilege of teaching that still walk those hallways and are walking the same path I did. I thought it was only right to start with this project first; some of the songs are about my experience, while others are about trends or stories that I often heard growing up in Inglewood. I took a third person approach to tell these stories; some bright, some dark, but they really capture what's going on in the city.

**In a *Time* interview, you stated *Rhythm + Flow*'s authenticity around cyphers and battles undid your skepticism. Could you speak about your transition process from being a bilingual teacher into a contestant on the show?**

As a teacher, you're performing every single day, right? Your students are your harshest critics, so performing wasn't nerve-racking for me. It was more that I didn't want to subject myself to the critique of another artist. In the later rounds, I was unsure that their biases would either serve in my favor or to my detriment. So it wasn't the nerves of performing, but how would they receive and understand my art? Because I believe the audience...before I went on the show, I knew that there's a large audience for what I do. Submitting to three judges is very different, but by the time we had gotten into the later rounds, I felt like they appreciated what I was doing artistically and creatively. By the end of it, they thought of me as a peer.

**Towards the later episodes, you incorporated live instrumentation into your performances which won over Cardi, T.I., and Chance. Is the next direction for your artistry going to implement live band performances?**

Going into the show, my goal was to do that before I left. [With] the last round's challenge of making a live performance, I was like, "Okay, this is the time where we're going to pull that rabbit out of the hat, so to speak, and show them my musicianship side." To be honest, I'm a musician first. My first love was playing piano. My mom is a music instructor and minister of music. Since the

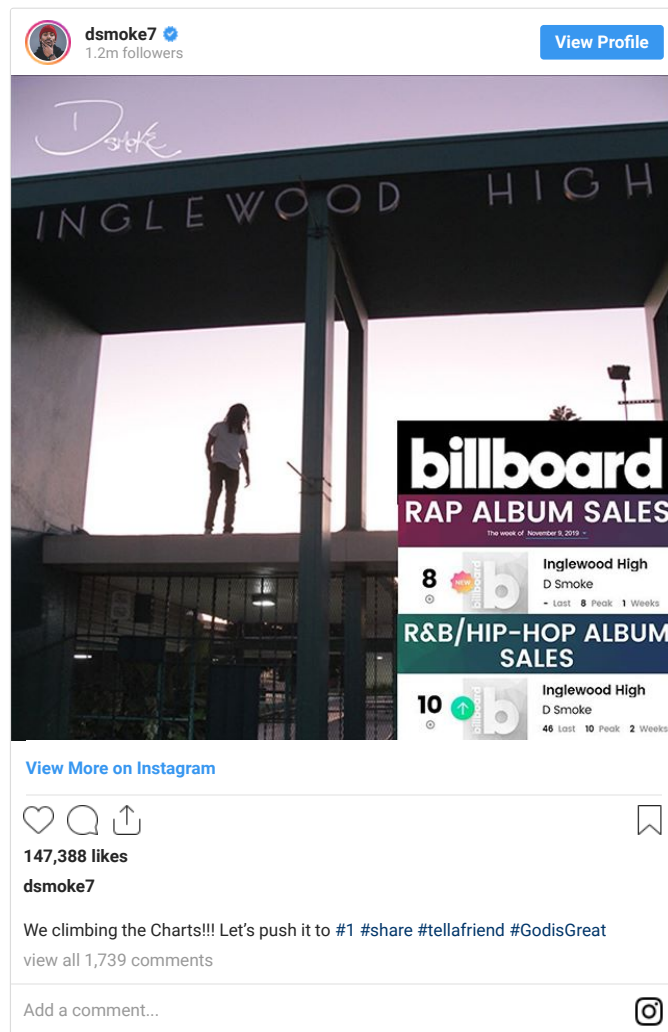
age of six, I've been playing the piano. That's going to be a huge part of my artistry; to the same extent that playing the drums, singing, and rapping. It speaks to me authenticity as an artist, creative, and musician.



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**Being on the show has developed your relationship with the audience, in addition to your original support system of Inglewood. How do you feel about having fans around the world who have fallen in love with your music during your time on *Rhythm + Flow*?**



To keep it completely honest, the reception has been amazing. I'm getting messages from all over the world. People love what I did and represented on the show while being entertained by it at the same time. I think when you combine somebody believing in your message, but being thoroughly entertained by your presence, I feel like that's a true impact on the audience. I'm really overwhelmed by how much love people are pouring out and the messages. I'm trying to read as many as possible, but I'm only one guy. My following grew from 7,000 followers prior to the show to 700,000 and counting, and that's in less than a month.




**Some viewers waited until all episodes of *Rhythm + Flow* were on Netflix to binge-watch. Why do you think people should've watched and witnessed your evolution as an artist to step into confidence?**





I think people should watch the entire journey; go back and do their detailed research because we aren't necessarily doing different things than we were already doing. I speak in "we" because I have a strong team of people that were working with me to prepare for being on the show. When the audience watches my performance, it's not like this is something that I haven't already been doing. I look forward to seeing the growth in numbers of my previous works, whether it be *Subtitles* - the series that I did demonstrating my rapping ability in both languages and having fun over beats that I loved and influenced me. It's super vital to go back and see the whole story because although I'm new to a lot of people, I'm not new to music by any means.

**On *Rhythm + Flow*, Cardi referenced Kendrick Lamar in relation to your music. You have close affiliations with Top Dawg Entertainment, your brother SiR is Kendrick's labelmate, and you've opened for the Pulitzer Prize winner in 2011 at the Whiskey A Go Go. Do you see yourself continuing your relationship with TDE?**

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Today is my younger brother's birthday. Same mom, same dad, same blood, same schools, same hair, same goals, but [@InglewoodSiR](#) is and will always be his OWN MAN. My younger bro opened doors for me that he may not even be aware of. He's fearless and original. His music is DOPE as Fuck and he's as real as they come. Go wish my lil bro [@inglewoodsir](#) of TDE a happy Birthday! LOVE YOU BRO! 7

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I like the way you put it...continuing that relationship. We're neighbors; they're less than 10 miles from me. I was my brother's keyboard player and musical director while he went on tour with **Miguel**. For a couple of years, Top Dawg Entertainment has been somewhat of a home base in the sense that I'm supporting their works indirectly. What TDE is to my brother or was to my brothers in terms of the platform to allow his following to grow exponentially. It'll be more of a partnership where there's an open dialogue about best practices to collaborate with artists, how we can plan community events, and coordinating impactful things. It's opening the door for me to collaborate with my brother, similar to how we started off, and have the full support of TDE. That's something I'm excited about and look forward to sharing.

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**Are you hoping to bring the spotlight to Inglewood similar to TDE's upliftment of Compton? On *Rhythm + Flow*, you rapped about the familiarity of victims of fatal police shootings, because everyone in Inglewood knows each other.**

I'm certainly looking to put Inglewood on the map. A lot of things are happening on the business development side with the stadium being built and the **rise in property values**. I'm looking to make investments in property and building connections within the city to continue education and community development work. My background is in mentorship, so being a visible face in the public, championing youth-driven programs is something I look forward to doing.

**Do you plan on using your cash prize to start educational programs at Inglewood High and give back to your students who inspired your performances in the competition?**

I'm looking forward to doing the scholarship. I've initiated the conversations with the city of Inglewood and Inglewood High School. We're going to have an event to celebrate. I want to see the marching band come out and play the same cadences they played when I was there. I want to drive the energy back towards competitive academics because that's what Inglewood was for me. It may not have that reputation but I can go back and name all of the teachers who had that impact and pushed me into being an academically competitive student.

**Since winning *Rhythm + Flow*, you've gained a greater following and secured a series of upcoming collaborations. Are you aiming to remain independent, reflective of your underground spirit?**

I haven't altered how I move through the world since winning *Rhythm + Flow*. I'm always seeing my family, eating healthy, getting my workouts in, and connecting with people that I love, admire or respect. Engaging in different texts and conversations that really keep me sharp. Those things aren't going to change. We also got business endeavors that keep me sharp and very grounded in conversation. I'm not concerned with the about of new publicity, altering how I operate. It's cool and flattering, but prior to this, I knew exactly what I'm here to do and those things are still in motion.

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**Tyler Perry, Popeye's Chicken, And Who We Call 'Coon'**

Black shame has been something of an online talking point in recent weeks. From a chicken sandwich's bemusing popularity, to a movie mogul opening a major studio on the back of a controversial cinematic legacy, big headlines have led to heated conversations about who or what embarrasses us as Black folks. This is an ongoing discussion – about “coonery” and how it affects Black America and Black Americans' perception of themselves. Filmmaker Tyler Perry's successes, a stabbing at a Popeye's chicken, and the resurrection of a blaxploitation cult classic have all offered interesting peeks into how we see the more polarizing aspects of Black popular culture.

But there's still no clear answer to the question: who, or what, exactly, is a “coon?”

The opening of Tyler Perry's studio in Atlanta has been hailed as a major event for Black Hollywood; a moment where Black

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## Solange Uses Her Divine Spirit To Calm The Mind And Body For "Bridge-s" Performance Piece

There's a serene feeling over the bodies standing in the iconic architecture at the Getty Center Museum. Jazzy horns, peaceful keys, and crisp guitar riffs gently interrupt the soothing silence as dancers dripped in marigold threads swayed to "Counting," a composition created by Solange. A series of odd numbers like "5", "7" and "9" are recited on a loop by half of her dancers while the others chant "6", "4" and "2." It's just a preview of her latest creation Bridge-s but felt like a dynamic meditation.

Bridge-s brings yet another magnetic piece into her series of interdisciplinary works that spawned after the release of her magnum opus, *A Seat At The Table*. The world was introduced to Solange's artistic side thanks to performance art pieces at the Guggenheim in New York and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles.

Composed by Solange and choreographed by Gerard & Kelly, Bridge-s was created with the pillars, beams, and columns around

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## A Night Of Timeless Moments: AKG Honors Quincy Jones At 'History of Making History' Event

Quincy Jones can hang.

As AKG Audio's special event honoring the legendary composer in Hollywood came to an end just before midnight on Tuesday (Nov. 12), the 86-year-old was in the third hour of meeting guests. Sitting on a piano bench with a wide smile, Jones showed genuine love, laughs and hugs with every fan who had their own special story of how his work changed their lives.

Jones and innovative sound leaders AKG Audio have a lot in common. For the last seven decades, both have commanded the world to open their ears to new styles of technology, music, and production. It's a bond that brought the two to the Capitol Records Tower for "A History of Making History: Celebrating 70 Years of AKG," an event honoring the massive brand while tipping its hat off to one of the most important music composers of all time.

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