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Arts & Entertainment

## The Second Coming of Yung Nation

With over 10 years of experience in the music industry, the pioneering hip-hop group found a new home on TikTok.

By Taylor Crumpton | July 9, 2021 | 2:52 pm



Courtesy of Yung Nation



Over a decade ago, when social media platforms could only be described as burgeoning, YouTube was how Dallas hip-hop spread throughout the world. In the midst of this Internet dance boom, Brandon Reed (B. Reed) and

Kendall Johnson (Lil Faime) became stakeholders and torch-bearers for the Dallas sound.

The duo, known as Yung Nation, captivated millions of fans across the world with their high-energy, dance-centric videos. They're one of the musical acts that brought Dallas Boogie to the pop culture zeitgeist. [Zach Witness](#), the Dallas-raised music producer and unofficial Boogie historian, characterized the group as the [subgenre's](#) "new torch bearers. Boogie's DNA would in turn be passed on to a whole new generation, mutating into new styles."

At the time of their success, B. Reed and Lil Faime were teenagers. The duo went from performing at teen clubs in Dallas-Fort Worth to touring with Grammy-award winning performers like Lil Wayne and Drake. The duo represented the youthful energy of Dallas in the early 2010s. But as Dallas Boogie migrated out of the mainstream's spotlight, so did Yung Nation.

For the past 10 years, the duo, now based in Los Angeles, has collaborated with a roster of local superstars. Leon Bridges invited them to open for a sold out show at the Hollywood Bowl. They collaborated with the rapper 10k.Caash on his *Booie 2.0*. They have an unreleased song with Erica Banks.

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Despite being 28, the duo are the elder statesman of the current song-dance challenge culture on TikTok, the social media platform responsible for their latest revival in pop culture. (One could say the current viral dance craze popularized on the social app originated from Dallas hip-hop dance videos from a decade ago, but that's a conversation for another time.)

Earlier in the year, the Baylor women's basketball team uploaded a [#Shawtywassupchallenge](#) on the platform. The challenge (created by user [@mvpfr](#) in 2016) resurfaced on the platform after [Bryce Hall](#) and some of the platform's most prominent users brought it back last year.

Since then, the duo has signed a record deal with Ultra Music, and promised new music. Non-Dallasites would categorize their success as a second chance, but for us, we know it's just the rest of the world catching up with Dallas culture.

Yung Nation spoke with *D Magazine* about current trends in dance and hip-hop culture, their experiences as teenagers thrust into the limelight, and streaming's impact on the music industry. (It has been edited for length and clarity.)

**I read an old *XXL* interview from 2013. Back then, you said "Shawty Wassup" was going to be the duo's breakout single. Eight years later, here we are.**

Yung Nation: Yes ma'am. We have a lot of new singles. We have one coming up with Erica Banks. We did Tay Day [with Tay Money and Big Tuck, at Trees, in May.] We've been working with a lot of relevant artists, so they've been streaming a lot of our old singles lately.

**As someone who grew up with your music, it's good to see artists like Leon Bridges to pay their respect and introduce their fan base to Yung Nation.** Leon Bridges had a sold out show at the Hollywood Bowl. He said his whole show was created through Yung Nation. It inspired him to become an artist. At Tay Day, a guy came up to us and said, 'your music changed my life; when I was in a really dark place. I wanted to erase it all, but I would put y'all on and feel better.' Honestly, that's better than streaming, because we helped someone.

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**Your music has a joyful element to it. When you debuted on the music scene, there was a controversy around Boogie not being real "hip-hop."** Now, I always tell people Boogie created the dance culture on TikTok. YN: When we were in high school, kids would go out, we would make a song, give it to them, they would go outside and start working on dance teams. Most people would freestyle because it was a fun way to do it, but there would be people who would make routines too, like TikTok. The only difference was they actually practiced it because all eyes would be on dance videos.

**I definitely would classify Yung Nation as trendsetters. I'm mutuals with Sgt. J Turn It Up, the producer for the Erica Banks single "Buss It." In an interview about the record, he said he drew inspiration from Dallas Boogie for the song. So, it's a full circle moment that you have an upcoming collaboration with Erica.** YN: [Buss It] sounds like a pretty Dallas bop song. I love all the concepts she has put out. It's really southern and Houston. The song with Erica is from 2018. We made the song when we were on tour for Lil Wayne's 'Kloser 2 U' and she hopped on the track. We had the record on tuck, because we wanted to wait until tour. We were supporting her before she popped off.

**Similar to "Buss It," the #Shawtywassupchallenge on TikTok introduced your music to a fan base of new people years after the song was released. On the platform, the song is credited to Mason Ward, a popular TikTok user. I wanted to ask if he reached out because I remember the controversy around dance credits when the Renegade challenge went viral.** YN: Shout out Mason. There's no controversy at all. He's an extreme Yung Nation fan and I respect it.

**George Lopez of T-Town Music often says Dallas was ahead of its time. The city laid the groundwork for many new trends in hip-hop today. But was**

made fun of in the early 2010s. At that time, did you feel pressured to take the city worldwide? YN: There was a lot of pressure on shoulders because Dallas needed someone. It was hard for us [because we were teenagers.] Like, when you're under 18, you can't get into the clubs and meet the DJs to play your song. Back then, it was super hard. We were so different that people didn't know how to approach us and ask. We had one DJ at the radio station who played our songs. When you think about it, the first song that went crazy. We made in the 9th grade. Now, it's a whole different ballgame.

What are your thoughts on the current national attention toward Dallas as a hip-hop city? There's Trapboy Freddy, Yella Beezy, Erica Banks, Kaash Paige, Tay Money, Go Yayo. Def Jam is signing rappers. It feels like the Dirty South Rydaz and Boogie era again. YN: Dallas always been the city for hip hop. We have our own hip-hop culture. Now, I feel like people get our culture. People used to listen to it, but would never heard it. Everybody was ahead of their time. We're fortunate to get another chance to show the world. Now, I feel like Dallas is more of a big artist hub. It's a different vibe. More cities pay attention to Dallas artists more.

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