

X-RATED



LET EM KNOW

Masego

» Singer and saxophonist Masego is about to blow. The 25-year-old musician from Newport News, Va. is quickly claiming top brass in the neo-jazz music space by blending aspects of house, hip-hop and R&B into his tunes. This live sound has garnered him viral success (“Tadow,” a 2017 in-studio jam session with producer FKJ, has surpassed 100 million views on YouTube) and prompted rappers like GoldLink, Boogie and J.I.D to collaborate with the multi-instrumentalist (he also plays piano and drums). Fresh off his impressive 2018 album, *Lady Lady*, the tall and talented Masego chopped it up with XXL about his hip-hop duets in the works and in the books.

XXL: Who is your favorite rapper out right now?

Masego: I like Smino a lot. He be crooning, but at the same time he’s real clever. That dude really knows some cadences. Saba is another one. He got a lot to say, too. Somebody pissed him off years ago and he’s letting it all out [through music].

You posted a hilarious rapping imitation of J.I.D on Instagram after his *DiCaprio 2* album dropped in November. How did you get so good at it?

Just being a fan. Somebody put me onto him when he had the black and yellow cartoon cover [*The Never Story*]. I was like, this dude, he’ll give you a quick 87 bars. Kid got so much to say. [The imitation] was more of a flattery thing ‘cause I love his music. I play it all the time. Between him and Vince Staples, I can do a good impression ‘cause I listen to them so much.

How did you link with J.I.D to contribute to “Skrawberries”?

J.I.D FaceTimed me randomly. I pull up to the studio and he’s wearing this 4x T-shirt, looking real hip-hop and playing his tape. I think Buddy, Arin Ray [and] Mereba [were] in the studio. I was like, “Let me get on it.” I did one take on the saxophone, did some chord action, hummed a few things and it kind of happened. I didn’t even know [about] Mac [Miller’s] involvement [until] the tweet went up. [Editor’s note: Mac helped arrange “Skrawberries.”] I was a big fan of Mac’s.

What was it about Mac Miller that made you a fan?

He’s a nerd. He’s a musician. I watched his interviews talking about his interest in flipping samples. I feel the world recently found out through NPR’s *Tiny Desk* how musical he was. Tyler, [The Creator] is the same thing; he got some really nice chords on piano.

Have you been in the studio with any other rappers recently?

Me, Denzel Curry and Smino all [got] on one record. Denzel’s another interesting one. He has Russell Westbrook energy, just aggressive and pissed off. But he’s musical, too. And he wants you to be honest. I was like, “Yo, I like this record.” He’s like, “No, you don’t. Tell me you hate it.” I feel like we fought.

What’s your dream rap collaboration?

Mystikal would be lit. That’s [like] James Brown: You don’t know all of what he’s saying but what you do hear will change your life.

—RS/II

JOHN MARQUEZ