

HEADLINERS

Signed Sealed Delivered

International hip-hop star Sway talks to Headliners reporters.

We caught up with the international hip-hop star Sway backstage at the home of Arsenal Football Club, The Emirates Stadium. He took time out from checking his Blackberry to briefly tell us about himself, his experiences and what he will be doing in the near future. The North London raised rapper who is now signed to Akon's record label was in Islington to perform at an event for local young people.

How would you describe yourself and your style?

I'm Sway; I'm a rapper slash producer. My main style of music is hip-hop meets grime. I've done loads of different genres of music. I've collaborated with people like the Kaiser Chiefs, Ali Campbell from UB40, Craig David, Jamelia down to RnB stars like Akon. Pretty wide range of different people I've worked with.



So what are you doing right now?

I'm currently working on a new album called The Signature 2. I've just released a mixtape online on my website; sway.uk.com. It's called The Delivery. It features Akon, exclusive tracks from Akon. It features; Styles P., Giggs, Bigz, Mr. Hudson. I'm just giving this away for free to the fans, 27 tracks. All you have to do is type in your email address and you get it for free in a view that people love the music and they help push the album when it's released.

So what's the future for Sway?

The collaboration that has been in the pipeline forever because the guy is such a huge superstar who's so busy, is Pharrell. Every time I see him he says; "yeah were gonna do it, I'm gonna call you, I'm gonna call you" and then he gets so busy with his million dollar projects that you can't track him down. I think eventually as I rise and the more popular I get people who already know about me will reach out to me and push me further. Most people I wanted to work with, I worked with.

We saw you on the B.E.T. American TV show; 106 and Park, so how is your success in the U.S.A.?

Within in the industry circles in America people know briefly who I am. They've got a lot of tunnel vision in America in that they don't like to see outside of what's in front of them. They don't really look for acts so most of the British acts that have blown up in America have been people who have come to America and become part of their scene. So for example like Lily Allen has gone out there and done some stuff, Mr. Hudson has gone out there and done some stuff, Estelle has gone out there and done some stuff.

It hasn't really been them coming over and seeking the talent so with that in mind I'm still working on a lot of stuff in the U.K. Being signed to Akon's music label Konvict Music which happened for me just over a year ago has really opened the doors because I've been able to meet so many great people, really they've got a lot of belief in me. A lot of people are like; "oh Sway you signed to Konvict a year ago but were not seeing you on the Billboard charts in America." That's because these things take time, there's a roster of people in front of you that need to come out first. At the time I got signed Lady GaGa was just some girl that had been dropped from another label and Akon was like; "you know what I want to do a joint venture with her, I don't think you guys should drop her." Look at the time it's taken her to get where she is, she's had like 5 record deals!

Sometimes the music industry is about trial and error, you will make it eventually. You have someone like Tinchy Stryder who is 24 now, started when he was 15. Tinchy Stryder was with Roll Deep, then he was rolling with Dizzee Rascal for a bit, then he was with Wiley. He kept going, kept going. There was probably a point in his career where he thought this ain't gonna happen for me but he kept going to the point of where his talent was undeniable. It's all about a game of luck. The more you play lottery, the more there's a chance of actually winning.

What would be your advice to young, up and coming artists?

My advice to young and up and coming artists trying to breakthrough would be that some people really love the music and they assume that if they want to get in the music industry they have to be the rapper, they have to be the artist, they have to be the star. If you're in it for the money it's not always the best thing to be the star because the star doesn't always get the most money. The accountants, or the managers or the lawyers, the people behind the scenes that are getting most of the money. So if you've really got a talent for music and you feel as though you want the world to hear your talent, that's when you pursue yourself as an artist. But if you just want to be in the music scene making money and driving fast cars, there's a lot more other jobs that you don't have to be in limelight. If you're not talented you don't have to embarrass yourself, you can just be in an office working on a project that you believe in. It's not always about being a star in the industry.

Being signed to Akon's label, when you first picked up the mic did you ever think you would go this far?

When I first picked up the mic it was for fun. I wanted to be a record producer. I wanted to be a big time record producer that signed other people. I never really had the vision of being the rapper or being at the forefront of a movement, which just happened out of me not having anyone around who rapped the way I wanted to hear rap. That's why I decided to rap myself.

I decided to test myself by going out to open mics. If you have your friends around you, your friends don't want to hurt your feelings because there your friends. So when you're rapping to your friends they might be like; "this is crazy!" Even if you're half decent they want you to be good so they would tell you that you're good even when you might not be ready. So always the best thing to do is to enter open mic competitions to get a different reaction to what your friends give you. If it's the same reaction that your friends give you then you're on a winning streak, you know you've got something.

I had to go out there and test myself. I had to get knockbacks, I'm not gonna lie, I've been booed before. I've been booed, I've been cheered. This is the process that it takes so you can become someone who then enters the mainstream and be a respected artist that everyone listens to.

About this story

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