

Cousin Stizz Bio

Experiencing rap fame doesn't happen where Cousin Stizz is from. Raised with his sisters by both of his parents in the Dorchester area of Boston, the 25-year-old MC didn't have dreams of becoming the next Jay Z or Nas -- he preferred being in the streets with his friends.

His pursuit of paper stemmed from his rough upbringing in Boston, where there would sometimes be less heat and more drama in the household. In his mid-teens, Stizz found a family outside of his home where his closest friends -- whom he calls his "brothers" -- encouraged him to pursue a music career. He met his manager Tim Larew, videographer Goodwin, as well as rapper Michael Christmas in 2012 at a local event called the "12 For 12" cypher series and began turning his freestyles into a future.

That's probably why his 2015 debut mixtape *Suffolk County* -- home to the standouts "No Bells," "Fresh Prince" and the Drake-approved "Shoutout" with millions of listens on SoundCloud -- takes a sound trip through Stizz's city. The unfiltered MC doesn't skimp on honesty for the 13-track offering. He revisits his drug-dealing past, a phase that started in his sophomore year of high school, on tracks like "Dirty Bands" and "Bonds." "My white homies taught me everything I know about the drugs and getting money and getting to it," he recalls. "They were doing it on such a different scale. I'm watching kids like 16 years old really moving and stacking thousands and thousands of dollars off this shit. That's what motivated me to be like there's a dollar out here for me too."

Before rapping full-time, he took on the name Cousin Stizz after his childhood friend gave him the name at 12 years old. Stizz was also known as the friendly kid around the neighborhood. "You acting like everybody's cousin," his friends would tell him. Once Stizz started picking up the pen, real-life experience fueled his rhymes, eventually sharpened by life's lows and highs. "Every single thing I do is real-life experiences. I wish I was one of those people who can just pick a pen up and start talking about anything but I'm not," he adds. "I'm one of those people who literally thrives on life. If things aren't going on around me, I probably wouldn't be able to make really inspiring music."

The rapper then switched the style up for his 2016 effort *MONDA*, named after Stizz's friend Damone Clark who passed away from cancer. He traded his trap-esque beats for soulful soundscapes that find him determined to take advantage of life. From the hard-hitting opener "Wanted To Live" to the money-hungry joint "Gain Green" and the resilient number "Million Things," Stizz still reps his round-the-way roots despite stepping further into the spotlight.

The sophomore 'tape also followed Stizz signing to a major deal with RCA Records after being courted by other labels. While the details about his upcoming project under the label are under wraps, he vows to show his listeners a good time with the "fun, happy-life" side of Stizz but also show the good that can come from the hood.

"I'm Cousin Stizz but at the end of the day, I'm little Stizzy to everybody else that really knows me. I'm just finding the balance in that and trying to make people understand that it doesn't happen where I'm from," he says. "I gotta let people know and understand that I'm doing this and it's happening but I'm always going to be the same kid I've always been."