

## Calboy Bio

Virality is one of many paths to success these days, and Calboy's no different: the Chicago rapper's blown up over the last six months off the strength of his latest single "Envy Me," which has generated its own viral dance challenge online along with co-signs from some of hip-hop's brightest talents. But there's more to Calboy than instant fame: "I talk about a lot of pain in my songs to let other people know that you're not the only person going through these issues," he explains, outlining his specific mindset as he preps for what is sure to be an impressive 2019.

Calboy grew up in South Side of Chicago, moving to the suburbs when he was 6 years old: "I was going through a lot of traumatic stuff, so I remember," he recalls about this time in his life. He was raised in a family of five kids, where the music never stopped playing: "Everyone had their favorites: R&B, gospel, and the Notorious B.I.G." In particular, he acquired a taste for alternative rock from his older brother. "Rock Band had an influence too—I'm not gonna lie," he says with a laugh about the popular video game. "My older brother was playing it and then I started listening to the music."

One of his brothers played the trumpet and trombone, while his mother played piano and violin, the former of which Calboy picked up a little from her: "I learned a little bit about how to read the keys from her." Although Calboy never formally studied music, his piano skills gleaned from his mother later came in handy when he ventured into producing. Music wasn't his only passion at a young age: Calboy's always possessed a strong interest in visual art, from graffiti and realism to anime. "I don't even sketch no more—I paint acrylics. I was always creative," he claims, explaining that he's also working on a book of fiction on the side. "It's not about me, but there's a lot of me in it."

Calboy started making music in seventh grade, learning how to work ProTools and FL Studio through watching YouTube videos. "Freshman year, I got serious," he explains, recalling his "raggedy setup" inside his house. "I was just trying to learn how to record and put stuff together—

how to make it sound good. It was fun, because I love doing hands-on stuff and learning. I was being creative and having fun."

His passion for sound led him to pursue music even more seriously "Every time I rapped, I loved what I was hearing," Calboy explains, claiming that his family members and neighborhood cohorts' own musical explorations provided further inspiration. "I was thinking, 'I could do better than that,'" he recalls. "I never thought about who I wanted to be like—I just knew I wanted to be a rapper. I was listening to music thinking, 'Okay, I can be skilled like this.' I was getting ideas from the music," including regional heroes like G Herbo and Lil Durk alongside poppier fare like Ed Sheeran. "I was trying to blend drill with other genres to make a new sound."

A few years of hard work and connecting with people in his neighborhood who "believed in the dream" made it possible for Calboy to build relationships throughout the city, nabbing free studio time as he continued to refine his sound. Eventually, he went out to California for 12-hour studio sessions that provided ample time for him to strengthen his approach. "That whole process was hard work—a grind," he explains. "I saw I was getting better and progressing at a steady rate."

His debut single, "Envy Me," was recorded over this past summer; with rippling production from Chi boardsman JTK. "He was hearing me when I was buzzing with the other tracks I was doing, and he sent me out a pack of beats," he explains on discovering the song's eerie-yet-soothing beat. "We just caught a vibe." The song began to make its way around the internet and eventually inspired a viral dance challenge. "It was crazy—I never had a video go so high with the numbers as that one," he marvels. "I was like, 'Man, this could be it.' I always had a small doubt in the back of my mind—there's a thousand rappers out there. But when I seen that video grow like that, it was like a pat on the shoulder."

"Envy Me" became a legit sensation in the rap world, with shout-outs from Meek Mill and Lil Baby—the latter of which flew Calboy out to perform with him in Atlanta. In a full-circle moment, Lil Durk and G Herbo took notice, too: "That was crazy. I'd met Herbo before he co-signed me—my manager connected the dots—so when I ran into him, he was

like, 'You keep doing your thing. I been hearing you.' Then, voila, he gave me a shout-out on the internet and boosted my views up."

After "Envy Me" took off, Calboy linked up with Polo Grounds Music, the label that signed Harlem rappers A\$AP Rocky and A\$AP Ferg as well as Miami pop star Pitbull. "I already knew what I wanted to do—what type of deal I wanted. I knew I wanted a partnership in my favor, so when I spotted what I wanted in an offer, I took it because I knew it was what I wanted." And as Calboy continues to work on new music for 2019, he's making sure his music stays true to his own artistic approach. "My music is unique, because it has realistic facts in it. It's trap, but it's a lot of genres in one too. I try to make it as crazy as possible—turn my pitch up on my real vocals, try to bend my voice. I do a lot of different stuff like that."

What's next? A winter tour across the U.S., and a forthcoming single and EP that will undoubtedly further Calboy's reputation. "It's the vibe," he states when asked what he wants listeners to take away from the music he's prepping for release. "I want people to feel relaxed when they listen to the music—to feel the vibes, and feel OK. Everybody's got some pain, it's okay. I want everybody to understand that. Life comes with its ups and downs." Truer words have never been spoken, and when it comes to Calboy's future, he's clearly heading upwards and beyond.