



MUSICALLY INCLINED

What do a future Billboard chart-topper, an Ultra-worthy DJ, a teenage rap heartthrob and an aspiring music industry mogul have in common? An insane amount of talent and a deep connection to the U. With impressive musical resumes under their belts, these 'Canes are bound for stardom.

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JAKE MILLER

The Justin Bieber of the rap game is University of Miami freshman Jake Miller. Many have said it, and he's embraced it.

"I couldn't be happier with that comparison," Miller said. "Obviously the kid is doing something right."

Miller himself is a textbook definition of a 21st century teenage idol. The up-and-coming rapper made a name for himself via social media, namely YouTube, where his channel has garnered over 10 million-plus views. The same goes for his Facebook and Twitter page, where he has more than 130,000 followers. That fan base, much like Bieber's, is made up of young teens.

"When I'm out with my friends at the mall, I'll have little girls come up to me 24/7, hysterically crying with their moms," Miller said. "It's nuts."

His plan wasn't always to appeal to that "tween" crowd. At first, Miller attempted to mimic Pennsylvania rapper Mac Miller who, coincidentally, shares his last name. Other underground rappers at the time inspired him as well, but he saw himself gradually move away from it.

"I didn't really have any messages behind my lyrics. I wasn't trying to inspire people and I didn't really care about sending out a positive message," Miller explained.

"I was just writing to fit in, to be another underground hip-hop rapper."

Miller's music style began to shift from hip-hop to pop in high school when he continuously uploaded videos to his Youtube page in hopes of publicizing his music. That's probably where his comparison to "The Beibs" started. What seemingly began as a side project transformed into something more.

"To be honest, my dream had never been to be a rap-pop star. It kind of just fell into place," he said.

Miller writes his own music when he feels inspired. The first step is listening through the hundreds of beats he receives from producers daily. "Some of them are great, others I'll listen to for one second and know it's not right. It depends on the vibe that the beat gives off, which puts an idea for a song in my head."

Miller admits that not that many people on campus know too much about him. While he says they aren't his target audience anyway, he still tries to create music that appeals to a wide demographic.

"I've had adults come up to me saying 'Are you Jake Miller? I listen to your music with my kids!' I try to make music that everybody can listen to because that's going to make you a more successful artist," he said.

Every musician does have his critics, however. Some even go as far as to criticize Miller's upbringing in Weston, one of South Florida's wealthier suburbs. He doesn't find that fair and sees himself as "well-off," not wealthy.

"There were definitely moments when it just got under my skin to the point that I had to write back," Miller said, referring to comments saying he "paid" his way into the industry. "There were times that I have to defend myself because people are just saying false things about me."

Another hurdle for Miller is trying to balance his busy performing schedule with his equally demanding academic schedule. With his "Miller High Life Tour" hitting various states this spring, maintaining that balance is going to get even more difficult. Still, the undeclared student who is "technically a freshman" doesn't seem to mind.

"If music works out and it starts to blow up in the next year or two, hopefully I won't even have to take any classes," Miller said. "If not, I'll be sticking to the books. I'm just doing this right now as a back-up plan."

In January, Miller announced that he signed a deal with eOne Music Group. Seems like his path to teenage stardom is on the rise.

- Hyan De Freitas