

TY DOLLA \$IGN



UNAPOLOGETIC

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The call keeps cutting in and out. From Los Angeles, Ty Dolla \$ign's gravelly, low slung tone echoes on the other end. I make a comment about how he sounds far away. "No, I'm close. I'm close," he reassures, followed by a long trail of laughter. After a few attempts from his team to reconnect us, Ty finally re-emerges singing an unrecognisable song.

Tyrone Griffin Jr. isn't your typical R&B sweetheart: he doesn't have the babyface, the graceful moves, or the chiseled look that often accompany the genre. With his skater-tinged aesthetic, laid-back vibe and 808-fuelled hits, he often has more in common than the rappers he loves to collaborate with, than his R&B peers. Then there's his alias, which, to use the words of Hot 97 radio personality Peter Rosenberg, "Sounds like a fuckin' rap name!" Ty has made sex, partying and debauchery cornerstones of his musical output.

You'd think those trademarks would reverberate in real time, but on the phone, he's earnest and passionate in a way that offsets any preconceived notions. With the release of his recently released sophomore album 'Beach House 3', he has a dual purpose: to exhibit his emotional maturity and showcase the potency of his voice. While he allows himself to indulge for the feature-heavy first half of the album, by the time listeners reach later cuts like 'Lil Favorite', 'In Your Phone', 'All The Time', and 'Message in a Bottle', they're witnessing a more subdued side to the singer.

The 32-year-old crooner was born in South Central, Los Angeles, but moved throughout L.A. after his parents' divorce. He comes from a musical pedigree: his father, Tyrone Griffin, Sr. owned a music store and played in the funk collective Lakeside. Ty would watch his dad and the band practice, and once he figured out how to play the same instruments — guitar, bass, keys, drums, the MPC — that's when it all started.

Ty didn't get a taste of success until the late 2000s, after meeting L.A. rapper YG. Together, in 2009, the two released the gooey, addictive hit 'Toot It And Boot It,' which became a milestone for Ty — his first hit as a singer and producer. But even



then, he knew people weren't really checking for R&B artists. "When I was first starting to try and get record deals and get on," he says, "my style wasn't something that was poppin' in the mainstream, so people didn't wanna fuck with it."

Eventually, in 2012, Ty found the recognition he was looking for, through a record deal with Atlantic Records, and the release of his 2012 solo mixtape 'Beach House'. The tape caused a ripple effect: in 2013, he signed with Wiz Khalifa's Atlantic imprint, Taylor Gang Records and dropped the sleek DJ Mustard-produced record 'Paranoid'. 'Beach House' solidified Ty as the next big thing, and soon enough, he was sought out for his earworm hooks, co-writing on Chris Brown's 2013 top ten hit 'Loyal' and Omarion's highest peaking single 'Post To Be' the following year.

At that point, hip-hop was on the cusp of another shift. Thanks to artists like Drake and The Weeknd, rap and R&B were growing closer together in terms of melody and subject matter: with a huge bounty on sexually-charged songs, Ty's overt lust and desire played right into it. And while his alignment with hip-hop was flawless, his hook-writing abilities and raspy tenor helped him stand out. "For me, it's been like a brick-by-brick type ride," Ty says. "Baby steps. But it feels good to just keep on going and meeting all my goals."

'Beach House 3' is a celebration of success. "It stems from when I was a kid. Me, my brother, sister, and my parents going by this beach community called Palos Verdes and hopping out on this lot and talking about this imaginary house we were going to build," Ty reflects. "And then my parents broke up and once they broke up, I got kicked out the house, my brother got kicked out the house. Life happened — shit got serious. But I never like lost the dream of that house we were talking about building. So when my music shit happened, I felt like everything else I wanted in life could happen more 'cause I could manifest it and go after it. Do what it takes to go get that shit, and stop talking about it."

What 'Beach House 3' also demonstrates is the natural duality of being human: while Ty has his hedonistic moments, he also reveals that he's willing to retire his infinite libido. On R&B-pop song 'Lil Favorite', we see what monogamy looks like to Ty: "I've been stressin', I've been up all night/ Had to leave them hoes alone, had to focus on my life, yeah / I've been flexin', wishin' on my mind / You ain't even gotta test it, girl, you know you're my lil' favorite." Ty studies the emotion on a deeper level on the poppy record 'In Your Phone' and ballad 'All The Time'. On the final song 'Message in a Bottle', over a meditative beat, Ty is both genuine and satirical, leaving the listener to wonder whether he's chosen pleasure or prudence.

Above all, one thing that's certain is Ty Dolla \$ign uses 'Beach House 3' to show his truest self. "Hopefully I just inspire real singers to stick their guns, be themselves, and live their best fuckin' lives. Just be you. That's who I am."

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