

Notorious BIG

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Friday, 24 September 2004 15:52 -

The Brooklyn-born rapper, The Notorious B.I.G., first gained attention for his work on Mary J. Blige's "What's the 411?" When he delivered his debut album, *Ready to Die*, in 1994, it became one of the most popular hip-hop releases of the year. In June of 1995, his single "One More Chance" debuted at number five in the pop singles chart, tying Michael Jackson's "Scream/Childhood" as the highest-debuting single of all time. *Ready to Die* continued to gain popularity throughout 1995, eventually selling two million copies. With its success, the Notorious B.I.G. became the most visible figure in East Coast hip-hop, and he became a target in the heated feud between the two coasts; especially, he and Tupac Shakur, a former ally, became vicious rivals.

As the Notorious B.I.G. was preparing his second album, Shakur was shot and killed in Las Vegas. Many in the media speculated that Biggie's camp was responsible for the shooting, accusations that he and his producer, Sean "Puffy" Combs, vehemently denied. However, the wheels had been set in motion for another tragedy.

Early on the morning of March 9, the Notorious B.I.G. was returning to his hotel in Los Angeles after a Soul Train Award party when another car pulled up beside his car and opened fire, killing him instantly. Shakur had been killed just six months earlier. The Notorious B.I.G.'s second album, the double-disc *Life After Death*, was released three weeks later, debuting at number one on the charts