

Hip Hop Pioneer Too Short Speaks Out on Hyphy's Demise

Written by Davey D ID4204

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Lessons We Can Learn From Fall of Hyphy Movement- Hip Hop Pioneer Too Short Speaks Out

By Davey D

People are abuzz about the recent article that appeared in the SF Weekly that focused on the [The Demise of Hyphy](#)

. For those who don't know Hyphy is the homegrown Hip Hop inspired music form that was well on its way to taking the country by storm. Artists like

E-40

,

Too Short

,

Keak Da Sneak

,

Dem Hood Starz

and

Mistah Fab

were leading the pack and well on their way to bringing that crucial national spotlight back on Bay Area talent.

The excitement surrounding the hyphy movement lead to outlets like; BET, MTV, The NY Times, Newsweek, Vibe Magazine and numerous other music publications touching down here in the Bay Area to cover the scene. Sadly as quick as Hyphy was brought to public attention quickly it went.

Several months ago former Mercury music writer Marian Liu documented Hyphy's fall from the national stage with an article title "

[What Happened to Hyphy](#)

"? Here Lui interviewed many of the aforementioned artists along with key industry insiders who pointed to bad business dealings, inflated egos and unrealistic contract demands as primary reasons. You can peep out that article and also peep out podcasts containing indepth interviews from some of the key people interviewed about the fall of hyphy including;

Mistah FAB

,

Sean Kennedy

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Davey D

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Adisa Banjoko

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,
DJ Krystal
of KZSU,
Balance
, The
Az
and
Will Bronson
of SMC records to name a few)
[What Happened to Hyphy](#)
"

While Liu's article brought home many sobering points the SF Weekly article took on the proverbial big white elephant in the living room which was the role good and bad played by the region's powerhouse radio station KMEL. The overriding sense was that KMEL used the hyphy movement for ratings and to buffer itself from criticism likely to arise when the station renewed its FCC license.

Localism

was a key buzzword at the time, and commercial stations from coast to coast were under fire for ignoring or squashing thriving local music scenes. Many believe KMEL went out of its way to squash the hyphy movement.

One of the more heartfelt responses to the SF Weekly article came from hip-hop pioneer Too Short

,
considered one of the godfathers of West Coast rap. He comes from a time when hip-hop wasn't even on the radio, and over the years he has seen how the music and culture have evolved.

Short was also witness to just how powerfully the streets can dictate change - how an inflammatory song coupled with a huge loyal fan base can turn things around.

Short was banned from KMEL after an incident between him and Luniz backstage at the 1995 Summer Jam. Because he wasn't invited back to the concert the next year, he received the blame for the altercation. Short issued a press release explaining his side of the story and questioning KMEL's decision-making, then later recorded a song initially released on a mix tape with J-Dub, formerly known as Kool Rock Jay. That song, "*That's Why*," took KMEL to task and got the streets riled up over the banning of their hometown hero.

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Public pressure eventually led to Short's ban being lifted. Too Short feels this connection to the streets and the larger community is what a lot of the younger rap artists in the Bay have bypassed. In response to the SF Weekly article, Too Short sent out an e-mail expressing his profound disappointment with how things had turned out. He also acknowledged that rap's elders need to do more mentoring and fence-mending (he's already working with youth in East Oakland's Youth Uprising).

Here's an excerpt of Too Short's e-mail. While not dismissing commercial radio's responsibility to the community, he clearly recognizes that artists need to take some crucial steps to have a firm foundation. Radio should not be the be-all and end-all of their careers, or an artists' movement:

"I ain't going to war with KMEL. I just wanna inspire the local artists & fans to be realistic & keep hip-hop in our area alive without help from the radio stations. The 1st step is to inform the people who might be concerned. That includes folks who just wanna hear some good gossip & especially friends & family members of artists who think their brother, nephew, cousin or homie could be doing it big on a national level if they had a fair chance.

"I believe in street-level movements creating the atmosphere for national movements & radio is only one outlet to create those movements. If U know that's not an option then U won't waste time, energy or money trying to please radio & in my opinion, the fans will love U more if U have popular street songs verses popular radio songs in the early stages of your career. Bay artists have to connect with the streets more than ever now. " - Todd/Shortdog