UGS Cypher shows promising talent

By Jay'Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

The UGS 2025 Top 10 Cypher, launched by Underground Sound, marked a defining moment for the underground rap scene.

It is the first in what is hoped to be an annual series of cyphers designed to put a spotlight on true underground talent, with a special focus on rising artists who have not yet cracked the 100K Instagram follower threshold.

The event mirrors the renowned XXL Freshmen Cypher but with a more underground, authentic twist.

The ten artists featured on the cypher were: Percaso, BREZZO, CAYO, SkinnyBoi CJ, K3, Xtsy*, RRoxket, YT, PRETTIFUN and Benji Blue Bills

The artists were given just two hours to record their verses, but that short window did not stop them from delivering high-quality performances.

Each artist came with a distinct style, blending unique flows and subject matter, all while maintaining the core spirit of underground rap.

The cypher kicked off with Percaso, a 15-year-old artist from Orlando, whose aggressive style immediately set the tone for the cypher.

Despite being young, Percaso has already amassed significant streams, with his track "KK" earning over 340K streams. His verse was high energy, and he was even holding a grenade launcher while rapping.

BREZZO, hailing from Atlanta, followed, delivering a melodic and introspective verse that matched his style perfectly.

Since signing with a record label a year ago, BREZZO's progression has been undeniable. His tracks like "2 Steps" and "Scarface" have already gained him significant traction and his cypher verse proved why he is a rising star in the underground.

Next was CAYO, whose collaboration with major artist, Trippie Redd on "Late 2" has garnered millions of streams.

CAYO's smooth, melodic flow on his verse, combined with his introspective lyrics, highlighted his talent and versatility. His rise, particularly on platforms like TikTok and YouTube, is a testament to his ability to blend cloud rap and aggressive elements seamlessly.

The cypher featured K3, who delivered the most memorable verse on the cypher despite having a smaller discography and fan base.

Her potential is clear, as she brought hard-hitting bars to her verse, proving she has the chops to compete with the best within the underground scene, but also with the larger mainstream female artists.

SkinnyBoi CJ followed with his witty, laid-back flow that struck a perfect balance of humor and sharp lyricism.

Known for his skits and playful approach to rap, SkinnyBoi CJ's verse felt like a natural extension of his unique style, with clever one-liners and smooth delivery.

Xtsy*, showcased his rhythmic mastery on an aggressive beat produced by ivvys1.

His storytelling ability, combined with a unique sound influenced by his musical upbringing, made his verse stand out.

Following Xtsy* was RRoxket, whose distinctive flow and animated delivery reflected his playful yet sharp lyricism. The Florida-born, Atlanta-based rapper is known for his infectious personality and creative music videos.

Although amongst viewers he had one of the lacking verses, his actual discography has some good songs like "Ganger" and "Cartoned Milk," which helped him gain significant momentum in the underground scene.

YT, a 21-year-old artist from northeast London, brought his smooth, dark flow to the cypher, incorporating references to UK culture and his signature adlib "oi."

His rise to fame through TikTok, especially with his song "Arc'teryx," has made him a force to be reckoned with in the underground scene. His verse in the cypher solidified his reputation.

Next up was PRETTIFUN a multifaceted artist known for both producing and rapping.

His verse, delivered on a beat by egobreak, was aggressive yet melodic, much like his overall style. PRETTIFUN's growth from a producer in the 4ersona collective to a full-fledged artist is evident, with songs like "Ice Cream" gaining traction in the underground.

Finally, Benji Blue Bills delivered the standout verse of the cypher, with his verse going viral on Instagram reels and amassing nearly 1 million views.

His smooth flow and distinct tone of voice is what will cement his place as one of the underground's brightest stars.

The underground has truly arrived, and if this cypher is any indication, its future is bright. Fans and viewers of this year's cypher are already anticipating the talent that will be showcased next year.

Kanye West lost it

By Solé Scott
Editor-in-Chief

Kanye West needs to immediately retire and go live on an abandoned island that has zero access to the internet.

Rapper Kanye West, who I loved growing up, now leaves a bad taste in my mouth every time he is mentioned due to his abhorrent ignorance.

The erratic behavior is disturbing and is quite frankly getting old. Every time West releases an album or promotes his Yeezy brand he goes off the deep end to cause controversy.

On Feb. 2, West arrived with his now soon to be ex-wife Bianca Censori to the Grammy's uninvited.

As we all know by now, their quick presence will be infamously remembered for the naked flash we all were forced to view of Censori.

To this day I am still wondering why this fiasco was necessary to be put on display at a public event?

This is one of the instances that shows he is falling right back into his unpredictable ways.

His erratic behavior first made an appearance at the 2009 MTV VMA Awards, where he famously interrupted Taylor Swift's speech as she was accepting Best Music Video.

"Yo, Taylor, I'm really happy for, I'ma let you finish, but Beyoncé had one of the best music videos of all time," West said.

At the time, I and so many others thought it was funny, until later on in life when I realized what a prick move it was. Unfortunately, that was just the beginning.

Suddenly in 2018 all hell broke loose when West made an appearance on TMZ and made a damning statement.

"When you hear about slavery for 400 years...For 400 years? That sounds like a choice," West said. "You were there for 400 years and it's all of y'all."

His coon tendency is an immediate turn off because all I can think about is that comment seven years later.

Even his self-proclaimed love for Trump is mind boggling to say in the nicest way.

Now, let's return to the year 2025 where West reactivated his X account for a short period before the account was banned. While on the platform, he spewed yet again hate propaganda, sexually explicit posts and other ignorant think pieces.

"WHY ARE WE LETTING TAYLOR SWIFT BE SEEN ON TV SINGING A SONG ABOUT TAKING A BLACK MAN DOWN" West said.

Since this latest debacle, West has been dropped by his talent agency and his Yeezy chief of staff quit.

Everything he preached about from 2019-2022 or so was nothing but a financial ploy and to bait the public.

I have recently come around to the idea of separating the artist from the art, yet this is not the type of artist that I can do that with.

As a society we can't continue to bring up the untimely death of his mother Donda West in 2007, for his mental and behavioral issues.

This man is a 47-year-old father of four kids, who needs psychiatric help and needs to stop these decisive gimmicks.

Kanye West is a nuisance who is bringing down the Black community with his insensitive comments and disgusting hate.

He is not the same man that once was a voice for Black America, but now a voice for hate and bigotry.

LiAngelo Ball now bounces into music



PHOTO | INSTAGRAM

LiAngelo Ball during his performance of "Tweaker" during NBA All-Star Weekend.

By Jay'Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

Did LaVar Ball go three for three? LiAngelo Ball's decision to pivot from basketball to pursuing a career in rap is one of the most unexpected moves we have seen this year.

Coming from a family that is synonymous with basketball, with his father, LaVar Ball, being a prominent figure in the basketball world and his brothers, Lonzo and LaMelo, both making waves in the NBA, LiAngelo's trajectory seemed almost predetermined.

His decision to step away from basketball and focus on music, specifically rap, raises questions and offers room for much discussion.

From a basketball perspective, LiAngelo's transition is a bit perplexing.

Although he never quite reached the heights of his brothers in terms of professional success, LiAngelo was still a fairly accomplished player. He was a part of the UCLA basketball program before his brief, controversial stint in Lithuania and a brief run with the G-League's Oklahoma City Blue.

His potential was evident, but it never fully materialized into a consistent professional career. Given his athletic background, it seemed like a foregone conclusion that basketball would remain his focus.

There is no doubt that LiAngelo has likely faced immense pressure, not only from the expectations placed on him due to his family name but also from the external noise surrounding his own skill set.

Some might argue that he never quite found his rhythm in basketball or that the opportunities that were available to him just weren't the right fit. In such a situation, pivoting to something like rap, an avenue where he could potentially express himself on his own terms, might be seen to carve out his own identity.

However, the issue is that the quality of music is just not there.

He has reportedly signed a several million-dollar contract with Def Jam and Universal Music Group, which is insane considering he has only one song released.

His only released song, "Tweaker," has gone immediately viral on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, with the official music video gaining over 8 million streams in just over two weeks.

"Tweaker" has also received a remix, featuring Lil Wayne which released on Feb. 7. This remix was horrible, as the sound of the mixing was not well, and Wayne's verse was questionable.

The term one hit wonder has been thrown around his way, and that is likely going to be the case.

Ball has teased two other songs on popular Twitch streamer, Plaqueboymax's stream and they did not show any true talent.

These songs sound very poor in quality, lacking and any real creativity are just purely a joke. That is the dilemma people are facing; is he serious, or is this all a joke?

The question remains as it does for every artist: can LiAngelo Ball have long-term success in the rap game? Basketball fans might view this move with skepticism, especially considering he never achieved any real long-term success within the NBA.

These are the opinions of the Southern News Editoral Staff

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