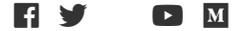


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FEATURE

# The future of hip-hop is female

*And yes, there can be more than one; and no, they don't need men to cosign their existence.*

On a warm evening in the fall of 2018, the who's who in fashion gathered for one of New York City's biggest nights: the Harper's Bazaar ICONS Party. The star-studded event is designed to celebrate idols in fashion, but on that night, the party became part of hip-hop lore. Where were you when things between Nicki Minaj and Cardi B got heated? A young Cardi was left with a ripped gown, no shoes and a lump on her temple the size of a golf ball. But despite their kerfuffle, this moment was bigger than their differences. It was the inevitable explosion of two women competing for the top spot in hip-hop. For so long, society told us and them only one female could dominate the industry at a time. Unbeknownst to both talents, it was

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generation of women in hip-hop where they could thrive and persevere, all at once.

**By Keydra Manns**

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**Hip Hop**

**Cardi B**

**Rappers**

**Nicki Minaj**

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It seems like just yesterday there was only one female rapper dominating the airways, Billboard charts and running up YouTube views. But if the past few years taught us one thing it's that women are reclaiming their time. From politics to the boardroom – especially in hip-hop – women are demanding a seat at the table and are arriving in a myriad of flavors, sizes and flows. This is a quintessential time in music because, for years, there was a lingering idea that only one woman could dominate hip-hop at a time. Nicki Minaj held the throne as the queen of rap for years before Cardi B bust down a door. In came flowing the likes of Megan Thee Stallion, Kash Doll, Rico Nasty, Princess Nokia, Doja Cat, Lizzo and a running list of rapping femmes who are gaining commercial success and doing it their way.

It was 2009 when Nicki Minaj dropped one of her first mixtapes. She came in like a wrecking ball. "Beam Me Up Scotty" was the tape heard around the world. It was a compilation of star-studded features, remixes and thought-provoking tracks that could be heard blaring through the car speakers of men and women. On the tape, Minaj covers DJ Khalid's track "Go Hard" and boisterously raps "I'm still looking around for my competition." The line was an eerie reflection of the time because her competition was scarce if any at all.

Of course, there were veteran women in hip-hop who had come before her, but they had done just that, come before her. The '90s and early aughts in hip-hop wouldn't have been the same without the sounds of women like Foxy Brown and Eve, but the majority of the 2010s belong to Minaj. And it

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Cash Money Records. Minaj set a high bar for women in hip-hop. The Trinidadian born rapper has 108 songs on the [Billboard](#) charts and 17 top-ten hits. She has been nominated for 10 Grammys and has broken record after record. In 2014, she topped Michael Jackson's record of having the most [Hot 100](#) hits at 50 with her single "Anaconda;" and in 2017, she did it again by topping Aretha Franklin's record of [73 Hot 100](#) entries.



Then came Cardi B. The Bronx native maneuvered the hip-hop industry in a way we had never seen before. Cardi, as she is affectionately called, commanded our attention with her candor and hilarious Instagram videos. She was one of the first women in hip-hop to use social media as a catalyst. Whether she was goofing off in the locker room at the strip club before a shift in nothing more than a thong and pasties or giving her followers tips on how to give perfect fellatio, she was raw – exactly what her followers wanted.

"One of the biggest differences between female rappers of today is that their lives are all out in the open," says publicist Lynn Hobson. Hobson has been in the Public Relations industry for over 20 years, and her client list includes rap veteran Foxy Brown. "Social media has made artists more accessible and gives fans the opportunity to get to really know their personalities."

And that is what attracted people to Cardi. Fans saw themselves in the Dominican rapper with the thick accent and couldn't wait to root for someone many viewed as the underdog. What makes the rapper different is her relatability. A former stripper turned Instagram celebrity seemed tangible, and that attracted her supporters. She didn't need a cosign from the most successful male rapper like so many of the women in hip-hop who came before her. Social media solidified her. And before you knew it, the rapper had mainstream

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infamous tag lines, “washpoppin” and rolling their tongues to say “okurrrr.”

In 2017, Cardi’s first single “Bodak Yellow” vaulted her into the spotlight. Cardi continuously released hit after hit; and in 2019, she became the first female rapper to snag a [Grammy](#) for Best Rap Album. Once Cardi B became mainstream, it was as if the floodgates opened and folks suddenly realized there could be more than one successful female rapper. Cardi is well aware of her impact. In a 2019 interview with Tidal, she spoke about her [influence](#) on the wave of new female rappers.

“I’ll say it’s a lot easier for a lot of these female artists,” says Cardi. “Before me, there were no female rappers that was signed to a label, except the ones who had already been established.” Cardi wasn’t wrong. Newcomer Rubi Rose recently signed to L.A. Reid after he saw a snippet of her single on Instagram. The City Girls signed to Quality Control months after joining as a duo and performing at local clubs around Miami. And Saweetie was swept up by Warner Records after her Instagram freestyle went viral. “Now everyone is just signing them if you could rap and have a couple of followers because no one wants to miss the opportunity that a lot of labels missed with me,” Cardi says.



The Tylt caught up with one of the hosts of Power 105.1’s “The Breakfast Club,” Charlamagne Tha God, and he says women in hip-hop today have the ability to stand on their own. “Back then a lot of them needed a crew,” says Charlamagne. Kim needed Biggie and Bad Boy and Foxy needed Jay-Z, a lot more people are standing on their own now.” He goes on to mention artists like Megan Thee Stallion and Rapsody who have become stars on their own and are respected for

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summer." And many credit Rapsody as the [best rapper alive](#), male or female. These ladies simply don't need men to solidify their spot in hip-hop – an idea that is cutting-edge. "I think it's different that you have a lot more female rappers who can stand on their own as opposed to just being known because they are the woman in their crew," explains Charlamagne.

The Tylt recently conducted a bracket series – [Rising women in hip-hop: Who will rule 2020?](#) – and 66 percent of voters sided with Megan Thee Stallion as their favorite newcomer. Megan, in particular, has proven she's able to stand on her own without the backing of a male rapper. The Houston, Texas native basically blew up overnight with her 2019 hit, "Big Ol Freak." In less than two years, she has appeared on the [Billboard 100](#) Chart at least five times, and one of those tracks was the unofficial summer anthem of 2019, a collaboration with Nicki Minaj, "Hot Girl Summer." But that isn't enough for Thee Stallion. She recently dropped "Suga," and as of early March, the project sits at number five on the [iTunes Top 10 Album Chart](#).

It is no secret that Megan Thee Stallion, a.k.a. the Houston Hottie, is heavily influenced by her hometown. Her other moniker, Tina Snow, is a stage name she adopted to pay homage to the late legendary rapper Pimp C, who also represented Houston. In a recent interview with "The Breakfast Club," Megan was asked if she felt Texas is showing her support. "I haven't felt like people don't support me in my city," says Megan, "I was friends with a lot of people before I got super big and I supported them, so I feel like they are returning the love to me."

Megan isn't the only female rapper being backed by the South. Southern states give overwhelming support to women in hip-hop, despite where the artist may call home. In fact, most rappers rely on this support before they make it big. One of The Tylt's most long-standing debates, Best female rapper: Cardi B or Nicki Minaj?, saw overwhelming turnout from the South. The debate overperformed in areas surrounding Atlanta and Houston when we tracked the geographic regions of votes.

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***rising women in hip-hop.***

***Keydra also shares a special clip of her interview with Charlamagne Tha God, co-host of "The Breakfast Club," giving his two cents on the hottest women rappers.***



Unlike Megan, Nicki and Cardi are from the East Coast, but according to Charlemagne Tha God, the support makes sense because the South runs everything. "Nobody has had a longer run in hip-hop than down South, not New York, nobody," says Charlamagne. "Atlanta culture influences the whole globe, and I think it's because we grew up in an era when we couldn't walk outside in our backyard, and Def Jam was right there, Interscope was right there. We had to do it ourselves, and we never had to answer to anybody, so we kept that genuineness about us, and I think that carried us over the past 20-something years.

The South is obviously known for producing some of hip-hop's most talented acts. Since the inception of the genre, it has been a Mecca for artists ready to break out in the music industry, and it continues as a beacon. Rapper Rubi Rose hails from Atlanta, Georgia and only has a handful of songs available for streaming. But that didn't stop music executive L.A. Reid from signing the young star anyway.

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Rubi released her hit “Big Mouth” in September 2019, and the single already has more than 6 million views on YouTube. The Tylt spoke with Rose over the phone on Valentine’s Day, and the budding, confident artist of Eritrean descent says she caught the attention of L.A. Reid through Instagram. “My dad is the one who suggested I get on Instagram the day after it came out,” says Rose. Her Instagram account is verified and has over one million followers.

She is another woman in hip-hop on the verge of success without the cosign of a man, and looks forward to joining forces with her female rapping peers. In the past, it was rare to see a group of women rapping together, but today there are a plethora of examples. “Thot Box” was a mega collaboration between Dreezy, Young M.A, Dream Doll, Mulatto and Chinese Kitty. Doja Cat and Rico Nasty teamed up for “Tia Tamera,” then Dreezy and Kash Doll joined forces for “Chanel Slides.” Not only are women collaborating on records, they are touring. Rubi Rose and Kash Doll were set to tour together, but like other social gatherings, the event was paused due to COVID-19.

Rose says she would like to collaborate with the likes of Doja Cat, Cardi B and Tierra Whack, and is heavily inspired by Nicki Minaj, Missy Elliot and Lil Kim. “I’m just getting started, but getting signed changed my life and gave me more confidence.” On Rose’s track, “Big Mouth” the young rapper boasts, “Probably make more money than my dad now.” It’s safe to say for Rose and this new generation of women in hip-hop, the bar holds true.

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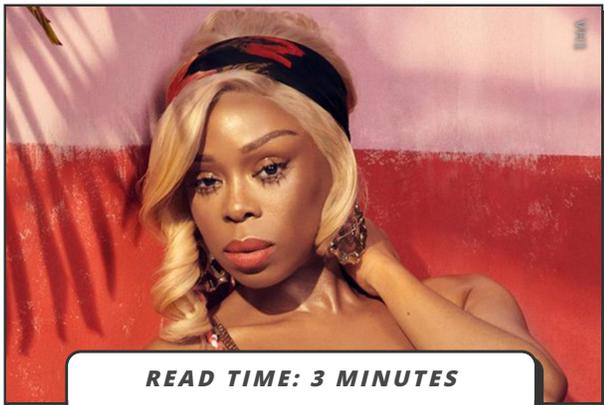
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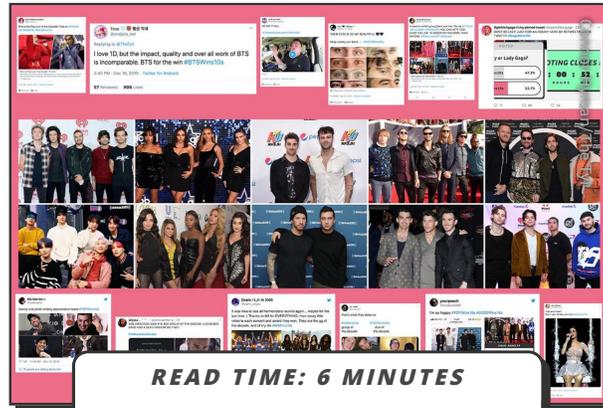
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