



Breyshon Johnson started rapping in 2004 at the age of 16 and began producing a few years later. COURTESY/PJ SAGUN

# Fresh produce

Duse Beatz

**At a young age, Breyshon Johnson fell in love with music, listening to his brother's CDs of Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre and the Luniz. Today, Johnson is one of the most prolific hip hop producers to come out of Reno, under the name Duse Beatz.**

Born and raised in Reno, Johnson started rapping in 2004 at the age of 16 under the name Young Duse. Over the years, he traveled across the country, performing in Miami, Indianapolis, Boise and Los Angeles—opening for artists like Wiz Khalifa, E-40 and YG. Producing began out of necessity in 2006.

"I started making beats because we didn't have enough money to pay for beats from big producers," Johnson said. "At that time, it was only big producers like Pharrell and Timbaland."

After years of touring, Johnson hung up the mic and took a seat behind the board, transforming from Young Duse to Duse Beatz.

"I stopped rapping because it cost too much," Johnson said. "You really gotta have marketing dollars to be able to get your name out there. The music industry is shady. A lot of people want to get you for your money, and they don't really do anything. I lost the passion for me actually being an artist, and I just wanted to be behind the scenes."

All of Johnson's beats feature a signature Bay Area bounce, a sound pioneered by artists like Too \$hort in the mid 2000s which has recently made a comeback into the mainstream. He gutted a shed in his parents' backyard and turned it into a studio. In the past, Johnson has produced for such artists as SOBxRBE, Blueface,

Drakeo the Ruler, Jay 305, Saviii 3rd and Earl Swavey. Johnson said the favorite beat he has made is for the song "Uchies."

With his work all over Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube and Instagram, Johnson believes the internet is both a blessing and a curse for music.

"It makes it easy with all the streaming services, so you can get your product directly to the consumer now," Johnson said. "So when you make a song, you don't need to go to a studio. You can build your own studio. Record a song that night. Drop it the next day. ... It's just oversaturated. That's what made the rap game change when it changed."

Although Johnson respects the new school—listening to rappers like Lil Baby and 21 Savage—his heart belongs to the classic West Coast sound.

"I still got that old school soul. ... I listen to lyrics," he said.

One rapper, Mozzy, a former collaborator of Duse Beatz, stands out to him as an example of a lyricist who remains in today's landscape of Soundcloud mumble trap.

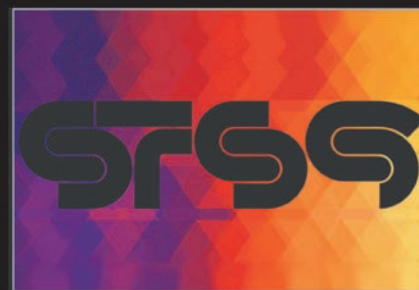
"He's different from everybody else," Johnson said. "Everybody else just puts out party rapping, talking about girls, money and drugs. But Mozzy is on a whole different level. He's talking about real life. If I had to compare someone to Tupac—I'm not saying he is Tupac—but it would be Mozzy."

In 2016, famous producer DJ Mustard flew Johnson out to LA to collaborate on a track.

"He basically just told me you only need one hit, and you'll be set for life," Johnson said. "And gave me a little bit of game. ... If you want to take it to the next level, you got to get a song that's on the radio. ... but a major push in the streets, too. It's easier said than done—but it's easy." □

Learn more about Duse Beatz' production work here: <https://bit.ly/2CUchka>.

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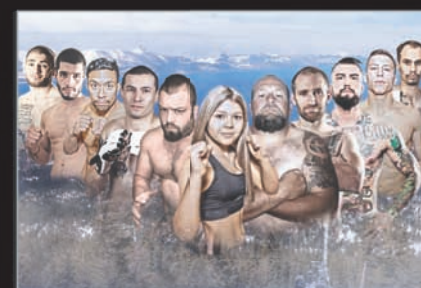
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