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SWAY'S

BIOGRAPHY

Back in 2004, 22 year old Derek Safo (aka Sway) devised a master plan for success in setting up his own totally self-run label, Dcypha Productions, as the outlet for his initial trilogy of releases; *This Is My Promo, Volume 1*, *This Is My Promo, Volume 2*, and *This Is My Demo*. The aim of this initial hat-trick of records was to express and establish himself as an artist independently without the help of a label. The two *This Is My Promo* volumes exhibit Sway's all round natural abilities in a traditional hip-hop mixtape setting: collections of rough tracks, radio appearances, skits and bootlegs all combine to form two electrifying demonstrations of his raw talent and ability. Originally intended as small scale precursors to his fully-formed *This Is My Demo* debut album, the mixtapes grew bigger and more successful than Sway ever imagined, propelling him into pole position as the country's biggest mixtape artist. As well as shuttling between clubs, shows and independent record shops to personally sell his mixtapes, Sway found time to tour with Dizzee Rascal and bring his inimitable style to a raft of releases as a guest artist – his cheeky chappie chat-up lines shone through on Terri Walker's *Whoopsie Daisy*; he rode roughshod through Taz's *Cowboy Film* remix, and cash-backed in style with the Mitchell Brothers and Mike Skinner on *Harvey Nicks*.

A rash of awards quickly followed: Sway walked away with *Best Newcomer* at the Urban Music Awards; *Best of British* from the Channel U Award and – most memorably – *Best Hip-Hop Artist* at the MOBOs despite still being unsigned, having not yet released an album, and going up against global rap heavyweights 50 Cent and The Game. By the close of 2005 all eyes were on Sway.

Sway's *This Is My Demo* had become one of the most eagerly anticipated releases of 2006. A triumphant and truly British cross-pollination of influences, the record lived up to expectations drawing upon a broad range of musical styles including hip-hop, grime, soul and pop creating a sound to match it's lyrical originality and the freshness. Sway produced half of the 14 tracks himself, proving his enthusiasm for production, as well as his natural abilities in the vocal booth. The witty flows and distinctive rhymes cover subjects as diverse as credit card debt, *Flo Fashion*; downloading music, *Download*; a child's imagination *Sick World*; and city living, *Products*. The autobiographical *Little Derek* details how the North Londoner "ended up in HMV, instead of HMP" breaking Sway into the top 40 of the charts when released as a single – an amazing achievement, especially considering Sway's unsigned status. Sway's *This Is My Demo* debut album has increasingly become considered as a landmark moment for British "urban" and hip-hop music, and caused widespread acclaim, with one quality newspaper describing it as; "*not just the best British rap albums in years, but simply the best rap album in years, full stop.*" The record received further mainstream endorsement when it was selected as one of the Mercury Music Prize's 'Albums Of The Year' – one of the most respected accolades in UK music which honours only 12 albums a year.

Since *This Is My Demo*'s release, Sway's world has been an accelerating blur of activity, with highlights including multi-platinum selling US rapper David Banner supporting Sway on his

debut UK tour; televised performances broadcast to audiences across the country live from the MOBO and Mercury Prize ceremonies; and collaborations with chart topper Craig David, rising US hip-hop star Lupe Fiasco, RnB princess Jamelia, rising US star Chamillionaire, and sharing stages with The Streets and Hard Fi on their headline tours. The ripples of attention generated by Sway's impact have now also crossed the Atlantic reaching the shores of America. Sway was confirmed as the winner of a coveted BET [Black Entertainment Television] Award with the public voting for Sway ahead of fellow nominees Kano, Plan B and Dizzee Rascal, in the first ever "Best UK Artist" category. As well as travelling out to Atlanta to receive the award, Sway's performance with Remy Ma, Rhymefest and Saigon was broadcast internationally to an audience of millions as part of the ceremony in November 2007. In other US related endeavours, Sway has forged strong links with Akon and his Konvikt Muzik family - a relationship which promises to produce collaborations and further projects between the two.

Fast forward to the present day and we find Sway stood on the cusp of his much-anticipated, now overdue second album release, *The Signature LP*. The record's title refers to both Sway's ongoing independence and commitment to his own Dcypha Productions label, and reflects his conviction that this is his most personal and definitive work to date. *The Signature LP* sees Sway surpassing the sky high standards set by his electrifying mixtapes and Mercury-nominated *This Is My Demo* debut with his most exciting and accomplished offering yet. This scorching second album – encompassing a 22 piece orchestra, several live musicians and guest appearances from Lemar, Sting's daughter Coco, and more – shows Sway's progression and growth as an artist, fuelled by his tireless ongoing mission to creatively reach higher than ever before. Sway's signature style of witty-wordplay delivered via a razor-sharp flow is present throughout, as are the lyrical role-playing performances and rib-tickling showmanship fans and followers have come to expect. However, much of the record is born out of the tougher times leading up to it's release – consequently Sway explores deeper darker waters, and *The Signature LP* is dedicated to the memory of the loved ones who passed away during it's creation.

The *Saturday Night Hustle* single featuring Lemar is released on 15th September, Sway then signs in with sizzling second album, *The Signature LP*, on 29th September. Further release, live dates are planned for 2008 and 2009...