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50 Cent Biography

July 6, 1976 • Queens, New York

Rap musician



50 Cent.

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The rapper known as 50 Cent is living proof that hip-hop is as much a lifestyle as it is a type of music. He was a star in the underground mix-tape circuit for several years, but the rest of the world did not hear about him until 2002, when his first single, "Wanksta," appeared on the soundtrack of the film *8 Mile*. In 2003, 50 Cent's debut album *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, topped the charts and broke sales records. As a result, the young rapper was constantly in the press, and his life became an open book. This was not a "studio gangsta," meaning a musician who makes up stories about drugs, violence, and murder in order to sell records; 50 Cent was the real deal. He grew up on the streets of New York, survived being shot at nine times, and used those experiences to fuel his songs. As a result, critics noted that his music had a gritty edge, and they predicted that 50 Cent would be the next hip-hop heavyweight.

(Life of a drug dealer

Born Curtis Jackson, 50 Cent grew up in South Jamaica, a neighborhood of Queens, which is a borough of New York City. It is a tough neighborhood, plagued by gang violence; it is also the birthplace of many rappers, including LL Cool J (1968–) and the female trio Salt N' Pepa. Fifty Cent was surrounded by violence from the day he was born. His mother, Sabrina Jackson, was only fifteen years old when he was born on July 6, 1976. She turned to dealing drugs in order to support her son, and eventually became one of the most feared drug dealers in Queens. Sabrina was killed mysteriously when her son was eight, perhaps the result of a drug war.

Fifty Cent was raised by his grandmother, whom he adored. However, because she had nine other children in her charge, the boy spent a good deal of time on the streets. By the time he was twelve, he was dealing crack, a strong form of cocaine that is smoked. As 50 Cent explained to Allison Samuels of

Newsweek, he had to fend for himself because he did not want to burden his grandmother: "I didn't want to ask her for a pair of Air Jordans when I knew she couldn't afford them, so I began working to get my stuff and not stress her out."

"The bottom line is, the obstacles that you overcome are going to determine how great you are."

At age fifteen, 50 Cent bought his first gun, and by nineteen years old he was the neighborhood drug kingpin, bringing in about \$150,000 a month. He had dropped out of high school and was spending most of his time in jail; 50 Cent was also listening to his favorite musicians, including KRS-1, Rakim, and Run-DMC, and trying his hand at writing his own rhymes. He dreamed about breaking into the music business but was not sure he should give it a try. When his son, Marquise, was born, 50 Cent knew it was time to make a change: he decided to stop dealing drugs and start making music.

(Eminem: Unlikely Hip-Hop Hero

Eminem is one of the biggest superstars in the music business, but he is also one of the most controversial. His lyrics are full of profanity; his CDs are boycotted by women's organizations and gay and lesbian groups; and he makes news headlines because of his public rampages against his mother, his ex-wife, other musicians, and fans. On the other hand, Eminem, a white rapper from Detroit, Michigan, has an enormous number of steadfast followers. He also has been credited with infusing new life into a genre that some considered to be growing old and stale.

Eminem was born Marshall Mathers III in Kansas City, Missouri, on October 17, 1972. When he was young, he and his mother, Debbie Mathers-Briggs, divided their time between Missouri and Detroit, Michigan. When he was twelve, the family finally put down roots in the east side of Detroit. Because they were constantly moving, Mathers found it difficult to make friends, so he turned to television and comic books. He also started tuning in to rap music, and soon he was writing rhymes like his favorite musicians, LL Cool J and 2 Live Crew. By high school, Mathers was skipping most of his classes, and focusing his energies on his music. He failed the ninth grade, and ended up dropping out of Osbourne High School.

Mathers paid his dues over the next few years, releasing independent CDs until he was noticed by veteran rapper Dr. Dre. With Dr. Dre's help, the world was introduced to Marshall Mathers, also known as Eminem, also known as *Slim Shady*, the title of his 1998 debut CD. His songs were harsh, filled with references to rape, violence, and drug use. In particular, Mathers lashed out at his ex-wife, Kim, and his mother, whom he blamed for his hard childhood. Critics loved him or hated him, parents protested, but millions of people bought his music and attended his concerts.

The *Slim Shady* CD was followed by *The Marshall Mathers LP* (2000) and *The Eminem Show* (2002). Both sold millions of copies and earned several Grammy Awards. In 2003 *The Eminem Show* won the Grammy for Best Rap Album. That same year Mathers took home an Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Lose Yourself," which appeared on the soundtrack of the movie *8 Mile* (2002). Mathers also starred in the film, playing Jimmy Smith, a would-be rapper who battles the streets of Detroit. Smith was a character that Eminem knew well since he moved from those same streets to become one of the most unlikely hip-hop heroes in music history.

(Learns from the master

In 1996 a friend of 50 Cent's introduced him to one of his boyhood idols, Jam Master Jay (1965–2002), a member of the pioneer rap group Run-DMC. Jay was from the same neighborhood, and he saw a spark in the fledgling rapper. Soon, 50 Cent was studying with the seasoned musician. "He was really patient with me," 50 Cent told Josh Tyrangiel of *Time*. "I would come in with rhymes, almost free verse, and he explained that they had to fit 16 bars of music. Once he said it, I got it." In 1997 Jam Master Jay signed a production deal with 50 Cent and agreed to promote him. The songs 50 Cent produced were raw, and his lyrics were taken from his own life on the streets. As Evan Serpick of *Entertainment Weekly* wrote, "they reverberated with authenticity."

Fifty Cent quickly became a hit in the underground world of hip-hop. This means he was recording and releasing discs independent of any major record company. As a result, the big record labels started to take notice of the "street thug"-turned rapper. In 1999 Columbia Records signed a deal with 50 Cent and gave him a reported \$65,000 advance. Jam Master Jay received \$50,000, and lawyers took the rest, so, even though he was a bona fide musician with a record deal, 50 Cent had no money. He kept his "day job," which meant that he continued to sell drugs to make ends meet.

Once they had 50 Cent under contract, Columbia was not sure what to do with him. Tired of waiting to release his first legitimate CD, 50 Cent cut his own single called "How to Rob." The song was an attempt to get noticed by his label. As 50 Cent told Serpick, "I needed them to stop and look at me." "How to Rob" did get Columbia's attention, and everyone else's attention in the music world since it was filled with 50 Cent's plan to "rip off" every hip-hop star around. In his lyrics, 50 Cent warned, "I'll rob Boyz II Men like I'm Michael Bivens/Catch Tyson for half that cash, like Robin Givens." Columbia put 50 Cent's song on the soundtrack to the movie *In Too Deep* (1999), but did little else with their artist.

In May of 2000, 50 Cent's street life caught up with him. While sitting in a friend's car in front of his grandmother's house, another car pulled up, and the driver fired round after round into 50 Cent's body. All told, he was hit nine times, including a bullet to his hip, which shattered the bone, and a bullet to his head. Although 50 Cent survived, the close call was too much for Columbia Records, and the company dropped him from its label. Ever optimistic, the rapper returned to the mixed-tape circuit.

(A fan in Slim Shady

In 2002, 50 Cent wrote "Wanksta," the song that would be his ticket to the big time. "Wanksta" was a bouncy party tune, but it was also a direct jab at 50 Cent's archenemy, rapper Ja Rule (1976–). The feud between the two musicians began in 1999, when Ja Rule was robbed and then accused 50 Cent of being involved in the incident. In the song, 50 Cent claims that his rival is merely a gangster wanna-be: "You say you a gangsta, but you never copped nothing'/You say you a wanksta and you need to stop frontin'."

Fifty Cent delivered "Wanksta," along with a few of his other songs, to Paul Rosenberg, manager of the hottest rapper of the moment, Eminem (1972–). Eminem immediately called 50 Cent and asked him to come to Los Angeles. In June of 2002, 50 Cent signed on the dotted line for a reported \$1 million, and was the first rapper to be promoted by Shady/Aftermath Records, Eminem's personal record label. According to Serpick, it was a "match made in hip-hop heaven."

Unlike Columbia Records, Shady/Aftermath immediately put 50 Cent to work. Later in 2002, three of 50 Cent's songs, including "Wanksta," appeared on the soundtrack to *8 Mile*, a movie loosely based on the life of Eminem. "Wanksta" received a lot of radio air-play, and listeners lined up to buy a CD by the new

rapper. As a result, 50 Cent and Eminem went into the studio to work on 50 Cent's debut disc. Eminem produced several of the songs; other tracks were produced by hip-hop legend Dr. Dre (1965–). The CD, titled *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, was released in February of 2003, and it immediately broke records. Just days after it debuted, it sold almost one million copies and made it to number-one on the Billboard charts.

(Get Rich or Die Tryin')

Get Rich or Die Tryin' sounded like an anthem for 50 Cent's life. He took shots at other rappers in such songs as "U Not Like Me," where his target is Sean "P. Diddy" Combs (1971–), and he included dance cuts, like "In Da Club," which became an immediate hit single. However, as David Browne of *Entertainment Weekly* explained, 50 Cent spent most of *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* "riffing on his crime-ridden past."

Almost all the songs talked about drugs, guns, and death, and all of them were definitely R-rated. Fifty Cent, however, was not apologetic about his lyrics. As he told *Ebony* magazine, "I curse to express how I feel... The things I've been through made me the way I am



50 Cent performs at the 2003 BET Awards.

AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

today." Fifty Cent also addressed his future in *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* and the fact that he is all too eager to reap the rewards of a hip-hop star. In one song, he shares that he has "been patiently waiting for a track to explode." And, according to 50 Cent's "In Da Club," he is "feelin' focus, man, my money on my mind/Got a mil out the deal and I'm still on the grind."

By the end of 2003, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* had sold more than 6.4 million copies, which made it the best-selling CD of the year. It was also recognized as the biggest number-one debut by a new artist on a major record label. Fifty Cent was nominated for five Grammy Awards (one of the highest achievements in the music industry) and won five World Music Awards. The secret to the CD's success, according to

reviewer Ted Kessler, was that behind the clubby dance tunes there was a "cold-blooded seriousness to [50 Cent's] stories ... that set him apart." Critics also praised 50 Cent's gritty vocals and commented that his choir-boy smile and his tattooed, well-toned physique probably helped to boost sales, as well.

(Member of Da Club

Following the triumph of *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, 50 Cent became a full-fledged member of the hip-hop club, and started to live the Hollywood lifestyle that goes with it. In October of 2003 the boy from South Jamaica purchased the house of ex-boxing champion Mike Tyson (1966–) for \$4.1 million. In addition, since his "bad boy" days were not yet behind him, 50 Cent also purchased a fleet of SUVs, all of which were bulletproof. As he explained to *Ebony*, "No matter how successful you are, you've ... gotta take precautions." As added protection, 50 Cent wears a bullet proof vest every day, and insists that his son also wear one. Fifty Cent's fears are not unfounded. In 2002 his longtime friend and mentor Jam Master Jay was shot and killed in his recording studio in Queens, New York.

Fifty Cent does not seem to want to shake his gangster image, but he does intend to channel it into his music and into other projects: "50 Cent is a metaphor for change," 50 Cent explained to Zondra Hughes. In late 2003, 50 Cent and his group G-Unit, short for Guerilla Unit, released their first CD, called *Beg for Mercy*. At the same time, the rapper announced plans to write his autobiography. He was also considering some movie offers. As for the future, 50 Cent was realistic, but hopeful. As he told Serpick, "Trouble seems to find me, so I'm kinda anticipating not everything being beautiful, or going my way. But it feels like it is right now. So far, so good."

(For More Information

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Also read article about 50 Cent (/knowledge/50_Cent.html) from Wikipedia

User Contributions:

- 1 **jahcelyne** Jul 22, 2007 @ 5:17 pm

(/news/A-

Im a big fan of 50 I always belived he could do it and all dem hatars out there need to stop because 50 here he aint leavin
- 2 **roshelle** Feb 10, 2009 @ 5:17 pm

(/news/A-

I REALLY LOVE 50 CENT AND I UNDERSTAND HID LIFE AND I WOULD LOVE TO MEET HIM
..... I LOVE YOU 50 CENT !!
- 3 **Sharper** Aug 26, 2009 @ 4:04 am

(/news/A-

50 is a real deal in HipHop and everything that he does works. No matter how pple might hate him, but still he is the best rapper. He deserves everything that has. Dude works hard and he is smart and genius. All the best fiddy!
- 4 **gent** Jan 15, 2010 @ 1:01 am

(/news/A-

50 cent?
50 cent...i like him the most it dosen't metter the fack that he was drug siller but he's the best in da worl none can be like him or none can't copy him he's my idol and i love it
i like all his songs and he's the king
- 5 **sarah** Jan 25, 2010 @ 9:09 am

(/news/A-

your the best rapper ever made i think your ausome! xx
- 6 **alex (mailto:alexike [at] yahoo [dot] com)** Dec 27, 2010 @ 5:05 am

(/news/A-

50 cent is a very determined person who never gave up his dream after his first son,i really love the determination. he lived a very rugged life as a boy but now he's living big as a don,he's da best of 'em all,i love it man,keep it up.
- 7 **Fouzia** Apr 9, 2012 @ 7:19 pm

(/news/A-

No comments when it comes to 50 Cent it just you and how life has broth you to the mother land and destiney I can see it in your eyes, your face and so it comes out to you voice that how you express it. That's 50 Cent and Hip Hop.
- 8 **Sally** Nov 4, 2019 @ 6:18 pm

(/news/A-

I love you 50 cent and your music and the way you make people happy

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And for the record, I'm against unjustified zoning restrictions that increase housing costs in cities. Then you get people asking for rent control, which makes matters worse.

♡ ↗ 10s

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Doesn't Coronavirus put into question the widely held assumption that dense, walkable cities are better than the suburbs? I think it's fine to acknowledge that

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