

# Stormzy

Stormzy is a British grime and hip-hop artist who shot to fame with a series of freestyle raps on YouTube. He was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1993, in Thornton Heath and started rapping at the age of eleven.

Stormzy (real name Michael Ebenazer Kwadjo Omari Owuo, Jr) is proud of his Ghanaian roots but was brought up in south London, often battling MCs much older than himself for fun. He admits to being a "bit of a boffin" at school and left with six A's, three As and five Bs in his GCSEs! His teachers wanted him to go to a top university and he had his heart set on a career in engineering but, despite spending two years working on an oil refinery in Southampton, things didn't quite work out that way!

From 2011 onwards, Stormzy started freestyling online and soon had a large following. He performed more hip-hop to begin with but soon he started experimenting in grime. In July 2014, the six-foot-five-inch rapper released his debut EP and soon, record companies wanted to sign him up. The song was so successful that by October that year, Stormzy had won 'Best Grime Act' at the MOBO awards (an achievement he repeated the following year in 2015)! Later that month, he became the first unsigned rapper to appear on the BBC's 'Later... with Jools Holland' - and he even found time to work alongside fellow rappers Chip and Shalo, which gave him an invaluable insight into the professional world of rapping.

2015 saw Stormzy go from strength to strength. He came third in the BBC's 'Introducing Top 5' on Radio 1, released two new singles and



## Did You Know...?

Stormzy is an actor! He starred in a film in 2016.

He is the cousin of BBC 'Sound of 2017' nominee and fellow rapper, Nadia Rose.

Stormzy isn't all about the music! In 2017, he held an intense Q&A session with 300 students at Oxford University, where he talked about life, grime... and his mum!

Stormzy has lots of nicknames, such as 'Big Mike'!

He once donated £9000 to British-born Ghanaian, Fiona Asiedu, as she couldn't afford to study for a Master's Degree at Harvard University in America.

uploaded more freestyles. One of his tracks was the first ever freestyle tune to reach the top 40 in the UK. After Stormzy performed the song live at Anthony Joshua's British heavyweight title fight against Dillian Whyte on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2015 (he freestyled the lyrics as Joshua came on into the ring), he decided to release it as an official track. It hit 17 million views online. Stormzy then took on 'The X Factor' in a monumental battle for a Christmas Number 1. After a huge social media campaign, it eventually reached number 8, making it the rapper's most successful track to date.

Stormzy is a self-confessed lover of social networking and often posts photos and messages on various sites but in 2016, he took a complete social media hiatus. After a year of silence, he returned in early 2017 when he released his highly anticipated new album on 24<sup>th</sup> February. It reached number one on the UK Albums Chart.

In his relatively short career, Stormzy has racked up an impressive number of awards and personal achievements. Along with the two MOBO awards, he has also won 'Breakthrough Artist of the Year', 'Best Artist of the Year', 'Best Solo Artist of the Year', and 'Best International Act' from a number of different award events. He has also been nominated for 'British Male Solo Artist' and 'British Album of the Year' at the 2018 BRIT Awards. Stormzy is known as the 'frontman of grime' in music circles.

Following Stormzy's huge rise to stardom and the success of his freestyling tunes, the grime MC finally joined a major record company in January 2018 when he signed for Atlantic Records. Expect lots more 'grimes' to come!

**Glossary**

Grime – A type of music that started out in England in the early 2000s. A mix of UK garage, drum 'n' bass, and dancehall.

Freestyle rap – A type of rapping in which rap lyrics are made-up on the spot.

MOBO – Music of Black Origin.