

pause

Mashonda

Give Me Five Reasons to Hit Pause...

1. By now, we all know who this sexy R&B songstress is associated with: the one-and-only platinum-selling producer Swizz Beatz. However, they're not simply part of the same crew... *they're married*. So if there's one thing that's certain — hubby ain't gonna let his girl release anything on his Full Surface label that's not hot. Or at least we think he wouldn't, right?
2. While she may have been born in Cambridge, Massachusetts — the home of America's prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University — she was raised in Harlem. So squash any doubts you may have regarding this girl's credibility — she's definitely street, but sweet.
3. Her long-awaited debut, *January Joy*, is truly a labor of love that could not be rushed. "I didn't have a timeline or deadline," admits Mashonda. "So I was really able to get into it and be extra picky with every track and every lyric that I wrote."
4. Her debut covers all the bases required of her potential R&B fans. *January Joy* — named because Mashonda was born in January and feels that the first month of the year symbolizes something fresh and new — contains club bangers, songs both up-tempo, mid-tempo and ballads to make it the complete package.
5. If Swizz' name isn't enough, the list of big name features on her album should guarantee instant success. Kanye West, The Game, Jadakiss, Fat Joe, Raphael Saadiq are all on board lending their girl Mashonda a helping hand.

What Else Should I Know Before I Hit Play?

What you may not know about Mashonda Tigrere is that before becoming a household name, this church-trained siren was a key player behind the scenes. Trained in both piano, singing and songwriting, she was given the opportunity of a lifetime after meeting up with Beatz and wrote some of the catchiest hooks the game has ever heard. Remember Eva's "Gotta Man," Jay-Z's "Girl's Best Friend," Mya's "Best Of Me" and Cassidy's "Get No Better?" Yeah, well... those were all Mashonda.

**Give Me Five Reasons to Hit Pause...**

1. Fans of 106th & Park Freestyle Fridays already know that Daniel Smith AKA SunN.Y.'s skills are off the hook when it comes to his live freestyle battles. He had a seven-week winning streak before Virgin's new president of urban music, Jermaine Dupri came along and made Sun his first signee.
2. At only 23-years-old, Sun believes that his time has come simply because there needs to be some fresh faces in the hip-hop game.
3. Unlike Jin, another former Freestyle Friday champ, who was signed to Ruff Ryders, SunN.Y. has already benefited from Dupri's quick actions. "With Jin, they waited too long," says Dupri. "With SunN.Y., you gonna hear a record with him in three months. BET's [always] going to have another [freestyle champion]."
4. Sun is reppin' the best of both worlds. While he currently resides in and reps Atlanta, it's obvious from his name where he comes from. He's still got nothing but love for his hometown of Rochester, New York.
5. His debut album is appropriately titled *Overnight Celebrity* and features producers who've worked with hitmakers J-Kwon, Beanie Sigal, Memphis Bleek and Fat Joe. While he promises to keep his flow hot, he assures everyone that no matter how famous a celebrity he becomes, he'll always consider himself a hip-hop fan before an artist.

**What Else Should I Know Before I Hit Play?**

One thing that should be made clear is that SunN.Y. is trying to stand out from the growing population of wack emcees in the industry. While his music is definitely worthy of radio play with its club bangers, he stresses his influences are the likes of Run DMC, Beastie Boys, Nas, Jay-Z and even underground hero Del The Funky Homosapien. He's hoping to appeal to backpackers and a generation of hip-hop heads who may have missed all that legendary music. SunN.Y. asks, "If we ain't supposed to reach out and twist the world around, what is hip-hop?"



Chris Brown

Give Me Five Reasons to Hit Pause...

1. It's time for the grown-n-sexy to move on over and let the young-n-playful get a little shine. Chris Brown is a 16-year-old crooner who will make any teen girl's heart melt with his honest lyrics — without relying on the, ahem, lewdness of his labelmate R. Kelly.

2. Actually, he won't just toy with the emotions of teenagers — this young'un managed to get a roomful of 20 and 30-somethings quite flustered. In fact, a certain editor-in-chief of a certain *Black Beat* magazine started to crush on Mr. Brown before she was informed that he was jailbait!

3. One thing this up-and-comer has that many new and established artists don't is a genuine character and humble attitude. Seeing as how he's barely legal to drive in some states, he has a fun youthful vigor that his peers can definitely relate to. He doesn't take himself seriously and is well-aware of the fact that he's still young and just having some fun.

4. This kid's work ethic is off-the-chain. For his debut, Brown informed us that he recorded enough material for probably half a million albums. Between school, girls, and other things that an average American teenager does, it's surprising that he still had the time, energy and patience to record so much music.

5. Seeing how he's now labelmates with the likes of Nick Cannon and the Backstreet Boys, it's safe to say that his forthcoming self-titled debut is in the right hands. His Scott Storch-produced single, "Run It" is already causing waves, meaning that's only a sampling of what he has in store for his fans.

What Else Should I Know Before I Hit Play?

Like any good southern boy, Chris Brown loves his mamma. In fact, at any press event, signing or concert, his mom is right there by his side. When the *Black Beat* staff met Chris, he shared a funny story about some guy who was hollerin' at his mom. Though young and not terribly big, Chris was ready to throw down with anyone dumb enough to disrespect his mom. Remember, there's anybody who can make great, heartfelt R&B, it's got to be a mamma's boy!

pause

Rihanna



Give Me Five Reasons to Hit Pause

1. Here she is, the new young queen of dancehall music. You've heard her single "Pon De Replay" and you couldn't help but shake your moneymaker to the hot hip-hop/Caribbean beat and sexy R&B vocals provided by Rihanna. A few more singles like this and the likes of Elephant Man or Sean Paul might be forced to pick up their game a bit!

2. Continuing to prove his importance as a figurehead in the music industry (as opposed to just being a pawn as a recording artist) Jigga signed Rihanna, meaning that now she's a part of the Jay-Z run Def Jam, there's no way she can put out anything less than pure fire.

3. This Barbados-born 17-year-old may perform Caribbean-flavored music, but her work ethic is more in the lines of Beyoncé, Alicia Keys or Mariah Carey in that she pens most of her own songs. "Music is in my DNA," she proudly says.

4. Just because she's now signed to a hot deal with Def Jam doesn't mean she was always sure she was going to be a singer. In fact, other than singing for fun, the thing this green-eyed wonder was known for was winning her school's beauty and talent pageants.

5. Much like the Caribbean from which she came, Rihanna's style is a mix of cultures and tastes that she actually compares to food, the dish callaloo, to be exact. "It's like gumbo or stew," she explains. "My music is mostly Caribbean beats mixed with R&B. I don't want to be pigeon-holed into being just a dance artist, because I can sing too."



What Else Should I Know Before I Hit Play?

Sometimes things just happen for a reason, right? Upon taking a Christmas vacation with his Barbadian wife in her homeland, music Producer Evan Rogers — who's produced for the likes of Christina Aguilera, Ruben Studdard and Kelly Clarkson — came into Rihanna's presence through a mutual friend. This connection landed her an audition for Mr. Shawn Carter. The rest, as they say, is history. **BB**

REPORTING BY A.Q.C.