

# The Official Do It Yourself Kit For Rappers

## Recording An Album Series



By  
*Jamaal "J-Mill" West*

My life was in shambles. I didn't feel like living anymore. The stress of the music industry on top of losing my homie and the woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with had me contemplating not going on. I reached the point of no return. Numerous attempts of trying to break into the music industry on top of life's daily obstacles was taking its course. My life could've easily went another route. But I'm a rapper, a hustler, a artist, a ceo. I'm self made and I was told a long time ago you can't break a self made man.

So with my pride and self worth at a all time low I went back into the studio and just wrote about everything I was feeling. I didn't care if it was bad or good. At that point it didn't matter to me one way or the other. As long as what I was recording was real. I also didn't care if it was going to be accepted by anyone else besides me. I knew as long as it was honest to me it didn't matter what anybody else thought. From that point on the music became therapy for all I was going through. Away from a broken home, and unloyal friends and women.

I started working on my album and I was determined to put it out. Recording a album is very different then recording a mixtape. My first album was a EP. With that album I did everything myself. From the recording to the finished product plus promoting and marketing it. Everything funnelled back to me and was set up to help me financially for a life time. In '05 I started a label with My brother and a child hood friend "Al Paso" called Streetz Certified Records. Needless to say the label was gong good but 3 minds seemed to be tugging the label in three different directions leaving us stagnant.



*This is my first album. "Certified Hustle"*

When working with two other people it was hard to complete songs because everything falls back on the artist. My brother was throwing ideas out left and right. We need to do this, or we need to finish this and then do this. My advice to that is complete what ever project your working on first before taking on another. Things will go a lot smoother that way.

After starting the label, tragedy hit close to home with the lost of a close friend to drug violence. I went into a slumber for around 3-4 months. I watched my other CEO's lose interest over time. Then I was hit with my "aha" moment. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to record an album. I didn't want to make a mixtape. I wanted an official retail ready album. And I wanted to do it just like a major would.

So with that in my mind I knew I had to do it myself. I knew it was going to be hard but I believed in myself that much to make it happen. Or atleast I was going to die trying. My brother would always tell me "No one is going to push you like you" and it began making since. I took that and ran with it. From that point on I knew if anything was going to get done itt was going to have to get done by me. No one was going to call radio or book studio time. No one was going to get me shows or get my name out there. No one but me. And believe me when I say it is a lonely road when your doing everything, and I mean everything yourself.

There would be times when I would be going to a show (Actually A Open Mic) not knowing where it was. I just knew It was in the hood. And I would be in a new place, a new face around a club full of hood n\*\*\*\*z. I hesitated at times but it was a little voice that would push me....this is something you want to do. Their either going to love me or kill me. Needless to say after every performance I received a lot of love. In a matter of months I went from no one knowing who I am to getting shot outs everytime I walked in the club. And this was 7-10 clubs in my area. DC, Maryland and Virginia. We call this The DMV.

I pre ordered my beats that I wanted to use. I found a studio and a great engineer. I got with a manufacturer and I started making plans to make my first EP. In a little less than a year I was able to recoup everything and some of what I had put into myself. I did as many shows as I could to get my name buzzing. It was a lot of work but I did it. I landed a deal with a huge gaming company and got my music on a few playstation and Xbox games. To this day I say it was me registering my music with ASCAP that solidified my gaming opportunities.

Then it hit me. If I can do it myself, I know its somebody out there trying to do it themselves that could use my help. So I came up with The Official Do It Yourself Kit. I incorporated all the resources I used to record my album and build me a buzz all by myself from a two bed room apartment without any help from celebrity sponsors. Not only that but I began to make money off my music independently.

I have to tell you, it is a wonderful feeling seeing my email come through with "You Have Royalties" alerts. It starts off a small amount, maybe \$4 but as the time progresses that \$4 turns to \$10 and then \$50. Its an amazing feeling to see your efforts actually making you money. Even if its little to nothing. You have made a return from your music and you should pat yourself on the back my friend.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Okay the first thing your going to want to do before you start promoting yourself is to come up with a plan. Come up with a game plan to get your music out there. Are you going to be promoting it in just your town or your neighborhood? Once you have a that figured out your going to need a product to promote. What's the product you say? Your music of course.

The resources that follow have helped and do wonders for my music career. But in no way shape or form do I guarantee these tactics to work for you. That will depend on you and your quality of music. Although the sources helped play a great part in getting my music out there, I believe the quality of my music had a heavy part in helping my career to take off in ways I never imagined.

With that said, I believe whole heartedly that these resources will help get your music heard and to the right people. The rest will fall on you, and that is to be determined if your putting out good quality music or not.