
Moosh and Twist: 'City Kids' in a Hip Hop World

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DeQuincy “Moosh” Coleman McRae and Oliver “Twist” Feighan are better known as the hip-hop duo OCD: Moosh and Twist. The Pennsylvania natives graduated from high school in the spring of 2011 – Moosh from Haverford High School in Haverford, and Twist from Friends Select in Center City Philadelphia — and are now pursuing their music career full time. As an independent music group, unsigned to any label, their success is largely tied to the power of social media. Their biggest rap hits, like “Live It Up” and “City Kids,” have been YouTube sensations, with the latter getting more than 800,000 views on YouTube. Moosh and Twist talked with Knowledge@Wharton High School about being teens in the rap industry, their lyrical inspirations (“To be or not to be...”) and the importance of believing in yourself.

An edited version of the transcript appears below.

Knowledge@Wharton High School: Moosh, how did you guys come together as a hip-hop duo? Tell me a little bit about your history.

Moosh: Well, me and this guy right here, we met in first grade at the age of six and from first to eighth grade developed a great friendship — we were best friends. In eighth grade we started rapping and from there, it catapulted and we’re here now.

KWHS: So it sounds like you just did it for fun. Was that the case? You were just kind of rapping together in eighth grade and enjoying it?

Moosh: We were doing it for fun and because we love music so much. Because of good feedback, we pursued it as a career and it worked out.

KWHS: I want to know more about Moosh and Twist. How successful have you been so far? What are some of your biggest hits and your most favorite songs?

Twist: Yeah, so we started around eighth grade, but I guess around tenth or eleventh grade we put out a video of us rapping in [Moosh’s] car. We had this song called “Possibilities” and we filmed ourselves. We put it on YouTube. That was the first time people took notice of us from a more legitimate standpoint. Then the summer going into senior year of high school, we put out a video called “Live it Up” that was directed by this guy out of Pittsburgh called Rex Arrow. We put that out, it got a couple of thousand views and before you knew it, it [had] 200,000 [views] in a couple of months. Then another big video we put out was called “City Kids.” We’re from Philly, so we wanted to do a song telling people where we’re from, Philadelphia. Right now that’s at about 800,000 views on YouTube, close to a million.

Moosh: We’re trying to get that million. Hopefully, this right here gets us there.

Twist: We’ll see what happens. But yeah, I would say “Live it Up” And “City Kids” were the first two big hits.

KWHS: What is a typical week like for you guys as far as practicing your craft?

Moosh: A typical week [starts] on Sunday [when we gather] ourselves from the last week. Monday through Thursday might be rehearsal, studio sessions, meetings with our manager, Evan [Reynolds], and Friday and Saturday [we're] out of town doing shows. We do shows maybe twice a week.

KWHS: What types of shows? Where do you guys play?

Twist: This Friday we're going to be in South Carolina. We're going to Clemson University. So the audience ranges. Sometimes it'll be 200 kids, sometimes it'll be 1,500 kids. We've opened for a lot of different acts; we've headlined a lot of different shows. But it's not a typical 9 to 5. We might get in [the studio] at 8 at night and leave at 3 a.m.

Moosh: We work the other 9 to 5 — 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Twist: The opposite 9 to 5. That was pretty hard when we were still in high school, senior year — we would get home at 2 a.m. and our parents would be kind of pissed at us.... But it was all worth it. Now that we're not in school — we graduated high school a couple of months ago and chose to do music full-time — [we] definitely [have] a lot more freedom. It's a toll on your body, though, traveling and airplanes. It's what we love, so it's cool. Sometimes we have no hotel [and] have to sleep at the airport, but it is what it is.

KWHS: I guess that helped you balance your schedule a lot when you were in high school, the fact that you were passionate about what you were doing.

Moosh: Definitely.

Twist: Oh, yeah, of course. It gave us a goal to work [toward]. Kids didn't know what they wanted to do for college, but we love music, so we just focused on graduating and having a good time and putting out music that people enjoyed — we enjoyed it, so it was cool.

KWHS: Do you guys write your own lyrics; where do you get your inspiration?

Moosh: We write all of our own lyrics — [Twist] writes his lyrics, I write my lyrics and [for] a lot of choruses we collaborate and put our ideas together. Our inspiration is life and experiences, what we've been through. High school was a huge theme that we ran with for most of our lyrics. [We rap about] what we go through, the lives we live, our relationship as best friends, our manager.

Twist: When you're 18, 17, 19, girls drive you crazy, parents stress you out, [you have] relationships with different people, [you grow] apart from old friends, just everyday life and living in Philadelphia in the city, experiencing different things. We've been traveling a lot more than we're used to — we've been to St. Louis, Connecticut, [places] that I would never have been to without this. It's cool traveling with the people you enjoy spending time with.

KWHS: Back to those high school themes for a minute. Can you guys give me a quick sample?

Moosh: All right, well, this is a little excerpt from "City Kids." "Now you can get with this or you can get with that, 'cause we're doing it big and we're bridging a gap. Yeah, we be on the road, but you know where it's at and you know where it's at and you know where it's at."

Twist: "We only making hits, you hit our base clap. We do it for our city, putting Philly on the map. No matter where we go, you know we're bringing it back 'cause we'll be bringing it back and we'll be bringing it back."

Moosh: That was from our record, "City Kids" so check that out on YouTube.

KWHS: Very cool.

Twist: Thank you.

KWHS: How do you feel about rap music's bad rep — especially for the content of the lyrics? What is your opinion about that, and how do you approach your own lyrics?

Twist: We talk about experiences that we live. We don't ever lie — every line that we write, that we rap on a track, is what we do. We don't curse that much in our songs. We try not to at all because we like to play it for our 70-year-old grandmas and our five-year-old little brothers. That's something we take pride in because when we write lyrics, we really try hard to use interesting vocabulary. Sometimes when people curse in their lyrics, it's a sign of laziness. We try to stay away from that. But as far as what we do in music, we try to be positive. Hip hop is actually becoming a lot more positive in recent years in my opinion and I think it's definitely on a good path — positivity, having fun, living life.

KWHS: And did I hear somewhere that you mentioned being inspired by Shakespeare and poetry?

Moosh: Oh, yeah, definitely. That's a huge part of what we do because we had this [English] teacher in seventh grade who was heavy on grammar and Shakespeare. We did a play in school, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and it inspired us. From there, we enjoyed his work and applied it to our own work. We still have that poetic sense to our work.

Twist: [We use] imagery and metaphors [and] that's something we take pride in, as well. If Shakespeare were alive, he would probably be one of the best rappers. He's so smart with his lyrics and he [draws] that picture in your head. That's cool.

KWHS: Talk about your decision to pursue a music career rather than go to college right after high school. How did your families feel about that? How did you come to [that] decision? I know you said you were really passionate about your craft, but was it a hard decision and will you end up going to college?

Moosh: I think we're going to go to school, eventually.

Twist: At some point.

Moosh: It was a very hard decision, and it took a lot of convincing and a lot of groundwork because we had to show our parents [that] this is what we do and this is what we get joy out of — it's positive, it's bringing us income and it's what we want to do. It took a lot of groundwork, but now they're appreciative. They're 100% supportive.

Twist: It was a hard decision to follow through with. But I think it's what we always wanted to do. Our friends were applying to colleges and we were starting to, but we were thinking, "I don't really know if I want to do that. Music is what we love." Our parents are behind us, and that's the coolest part about it.

KWHS: You've got the support.

Twist: Yeah, it's what you need.

KWHS: What are some of the challenges that you face as young entrepreneurs in the music business?

Twist: Where do we start?

Moosh: Where do we start? Everything – from financing our own trips — two 18-year-olds buying plane tickets — to our

band, our DJs [and] dealing with promoters, different people, different prices for shows and things like that. Buying our own videos, promotion and marketing.

Twist: When we went into it, we strictly wrote music, recorded it and put it out. But now, we also have to be involved in business.

KWHS: It's the machine, right?

Twist: Yep, it's everything. We have lawyers, we have a manager, we [work with] different DJs [and] band members. Another issue [is that] it seems like everybody is trying to rap and make music, especially in Philly. You have to really fight to have people appreciate your music and to realize that [you're] not just like everybody else. It seems like way too many people are trying to do something they're really not supposed to do.

KWHS: You guys have been pretty successful so far, though. What's your key to success, or how do you feel like you're succeeding where others haven't? And how are you dealing with all of that competition and charging head on into becoming successful?

Moosh: Working hard and being open to what's out there. And taking a little bit of what everybody else has to offer and putting it in our music. There's some rock in our music, alternative, hip-hop, hardcore rap — everything that people would like. It's in our music, so they wouldn't have to go elsewhere.

Twist: We just like to have fun. We interact with our fans after shows; we'll stay around and take pictures with kids and talk to kids. It's a small world. We'll be in [Washington] D.C., and after a show, a girl [will know] someone we went to high school with. You talk to people, you network and you just be yourselves. That's the biggest thing [about] where we're at right now because we're not trying to do something that is fake. Sitting right here, we're just Moosh and Twist, two 18-year-olds right out of high school loving to make music, putting it out, having fun [and seeing] where it takes us.

KWHS: So what about Facebook and Twitter? Has [social media] been important for you guys as far as getting the word out to fans and really starting to market and generate interest in the group?

Twist: Definitely. Facebook is one of the top things. In eleventh grade, we made a Facebook [page] for our rap group OCD, a couple hundred people joined it and we had friends in different high schools. I went to Friends Select and [Moosh] went to Haverford High in Haverford, Pennsylvania. He had the suburbs; I had the city. Kids [our age] would support us. I think we're up to 25,000 members on our Facebook page right now, so that's really good. And then Twitter we [started] a couple months ago and are both at around 4,000 followers. Twitter's cool [because] you can talk directly back to people who talk to you. [It's] the same with Facebook.

KWHS: What has been the best part about this for both of you so far? I know you both love the music. But if you could go beyond that – meeting someone [famous] or whatever. What has been the best part?

Moosh: A highlight was performing at the Philadelphia concert called Power House — it's a big concert [that] the local hip-hop station threw. Each year they have great artists and this year we were incorporated into the line up. That meant a lot to us being from Philadelphia. Being a part of an event like that was huge for us.

Twist: It was at the Wells Fargo Center, and I think it was sold out. There were 15,000 people there. We used to go and watch AI [Allen Iverson] play for the Sixers [Philadelphia 76ers basketball team] at the Wells Fargo Center, and now we're performing there. That was definitely a highlight. And [I like] seeing enjoyment from other people for our music — when kids write to us that [they related to] one of our songs. You [can] really see the sincerity in what they say — that's

the coolest part. When you're onstage and kids are in the audience [and] really into it just like we are, there's nothing else like that.

KWHS: What advice would you give to a young entrepreneur who's watching this and thinking, "I want to do the same thing" — maybe not hip hop, per se, because you said there's a lot of people crowding that field. But what advice would you give to them?

Moosh: That you can do it on your own. You don't need the music industry, you don't need a record label, you just need your own tools. And you need good people around you, a good team around you – [a team that is] dedicated to your cause and who's going to have your back, willing to fight for you, whatever you need.

KWHS: Who is your team?

Twist: Well, it's my brother right here. We were adopted when we were younger. We fight for each other no matter what. Then we have our manager, Evan Reynolds.

Moosh: [The three of us are] the prime players. I feel like if [we] are together on the same page, nobody can tell us anything.

Twist: And another word of advice: whatever you do, if you play the guitar or you sing or you rap, just be confident when you express your skills. When people want to hear us, if we don't believe in ourselves, no one else will. You have to make sure that no matter what you're doing, playing soccer, cooking, whatever — work hard and be the best at what you do. Focus on the things that you're good at, try to get better at the things you're bad at and don't be afraid to express your skills. If you're a great cook, cook me that soufflé [and] make it taste amazing.

KWHS: Where do you guys see yourself in the next couple of years? I know the sky's the limit. But where do you want to be?

Moosh: Just capitalizing on everything we do now — everything we do now to the third power. [We want to] enjoy our music and make the fans happy.

Twist: It would be crazy to one day go on a tour and every show [is] sold out and everybody knows every word — that's the goal. Who knows where we'll be in a couple of years? It might be a crazy dream, but we definitely want to make it to the Grammys at some point — four years, five years, six years, seven years — that's the goal. It's the music lover's dream.

KWHS: Where did the name Moosh and Twist come from? Got to ask.

Moosh: Moosh is a family nickname that I was —

Twist: — given as a little baby.

Moosh: Right.

Twist: And then Twist — my name is Oliver, so Oliver Twist. But they express who we are. Moosh is a smooth guy; Twist is the other guy. It just works together. And then OCD [Obsessive Compulsive Disorder] — we are obsessed with music, we're obsessed with trying to be perfect, even though it's not perfect, never happens.

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