

Chicago's drill scene has infiltrated the mainstream, pushing out promising new talent like Lil Durk. Born and raised in the street life, Durk's goal was simple: Grind hard to make it one day. He established his own label with Only The Family (OTF), using the namesake to brand his mix of Auto-Tuned singing and straight-up raps. His regional hits were "Sneak Dissin'" and "I'm a Hitta"—both with over 500,000 views on YouTube—that were evidence of his street sound taking form. Filled with hard-hitting canvases that complement Durk's style, his popularity grew solely on the fact that he was a sharp, technical rapper with a lot to say. "I just want to spit the real rap and what's going on in Chicago," Durk says of his music.

Durk has a bigger platform to share his story with *Remember My Name*. The 22-year-old Englewood native has experienced the trials and tribulations that come with living on the South Side of Chicago, and he's ready to educate listeners on his Def Jam debut. On the album opener, "500 Homicides," Durk starts off with a news clip about how over 200 children have died in Chicago before relaying his own account of the situation. "It just opens up your eyes like, 'Damn, that's how many people died?'" he says. "That's a strong statement. This is what we are going through so I wanna talk about it."

Elsewhere, Durk rounds out the personal tracks with party-starting bangers. On the Billboard-charting single, "Like Me" with fellow Chicagoan Jeremih, he sing-raps about his admirers that love men who keep it real. Logic joins Durk on the energetic "Tryna Tryna" and OTF rapper Hypno Carlito is a contributor to illustrate the album's diverse cast. Sticking to his family, he grabs frequent heatmakers Young Chop and his Chop Squad production team, as well as Vinylz, Boi-1da, Metro Boomin', London on da Track and more.

Before gaining national attention, Durk was able to separate himself from his peers with melodic songs that dominated his city. He began laying a lot of mixtape groundwork to build his fanbase after his first tape *I'm A Hitta*, dropping *I'm Still a Hitta* and his breakout project *Life Ain't No Joke*. With the Windy City's drill scene getting a lot of media attention—some for its glorification of gang culture and violence, some for the music's authenticity—Def Jam signed Durk in 2012. For him, it was way out of the dangerous lifestyle he grew up in. "We didn't know the effect of it. That's how we thought," Durk said. "Now, we are seeing that we signed and it was basically like, 'We all gotta build our buzz.'"

In 2013, Lil Durk had a banner year. Influenced by the game's most known hustlers—Meek Mill and French Montana—Durk aligned himself with French's Coke Boys. Listeners started to see the co-sign come into fruition when his biggest tape *Signed to the Streets*—which included standouts "Dis Ain't What U Want" (a remix by Rick Ross, French Montana, and Meek Mill would soon follow) and "Bang Bros"—was a joint release between OTF and Coke Boys. The momentum continued when Durk was chosen as an *XXL* Freshman in 2014 with other Chi-Town spitters Chance The Rapper, Vic Mensa, and Lil Bibby. It wasn't long before Durk hit the mixtape circuit again with *Signed to the Streets 2*, which set the summer on smash.

But this year will herald Durk's transformation to hip-hop star, with *Remember My Name* bringing the same unrelenting energy, while shining a light on the ongoing violence in his hometown. It's been years of hard work. Especially for someone who has live through wild hardships, he uses it as fuel for his triumph. "He's one of the main reasons I'm here," Durk says

of his fallen manager Chino, who was shot and killed in Chicago in March. “A lot of recent things happened that put me in a deep mode of rap. It’s the perfect time in 2015.”

With *Remember My Name*, Durk is ready for the spotlight.