

## D12 Biography

In the post-Motown landscape of Detroit, brothers rocking the mic are still being considered the voice of young America. Yet, instead of dreaming of blue skies and white picket fences, the unruly boys known as D12 create surreal universes of wild times and unruly rhymes. On their bombastic sophomore effort, *D-12 World*, this motley crew of versatile style slayers mixes the rowdiness and absurdities of their lives into one potent cocktail.

Two years after selling four million copies worldwide of their debut *Devil's Night*, these motor city wild boys are on a mission to define themselves in the hectic canon of now-school hip-hop. "In *D-12 World*, anything can happen at any time," Kuniva laughs. "*Devil's Night* was just an introduction, now it's time for us to really go crazy."

With a lineup that includes sharp tongued Eminem, crazy cat Bizarre, beatmaster Kon Artis, laid-back Swift, chilled-out Kuniva and freestyle king Proof, the D12 posse is already popular. The group's debut disc received rave reviews in the press. *USA Today* wrote, "The garishly funky beats that underpin the diabolically clever wordplay make the album hard to dismiss...their diatribes seem born less of anger and more of disdain for all that's politically correct."

Indeed, *Devil's Night* established D12 as one of the super groups of the new millennium with its chart-topping single's "Purple Pills" and "Fight Music" and with their outlandish antics on record and in performance. So what if Eminem has nine Grammys and one Oscar ("Lose Yourself" from the *8 Mile* soundtrack); so what if Mr. Shady has proven himself as a film star (*8 Mile*) and America's most popular rapper, when D12 is in the house, he's just another group member.

"We all knew each other growing up in Detroit," Proof remembers. "I used to sneak Em into my school lunchroom just so he could battle. Later, when we started battling once a month at Maurice Malone's Hip-Hop Shop, everybody had a crew. So, we decided to form our own. That's how D12 was born. Before we even thought about making records, our only goal was to be like verbal ninjas and kick ass."

Although the Detroit hip-hop scene might not be on the scale of New York or Cali, those who are down take rap very seriously. Having known each other since the days when they were rapping just to be heard, head nodding on stage inside Detroit's infamous Hip-Hop Shop (where Proof was also the host), these brothers from different mothers have always had a special bond. "We were the All-Star Team of battle rappers," Kuniva recalls. "And when somebody like Bizarre got in front of the mic, we never knew what he might say. Bizarre is wicked 'cause he'll say shit that others won't."

While the group was a priority, each of the members has worked on solo and side projects. Still, it wasn't until Eminem's own legendary solo success with Dr. Dre that D12 finally got a chance to move beyond their neighborhoods. "Em was able to take D12 to the next level," Kon Artis says. Prior to teaming-up in front of a mic, the two worked together at a local pizza joint called Gilbert's Lounge. "He helps to bring stuff out of us. With him, no matter what happens, it's always been about real friendship."

One friend and group member who wouldn't live to see D12 successfully rock the world was a young rapper named Bugz. Although he too was down with the crew, Bugz was killed shortly before D12 was signed to Shady Records. "His last request was that we put Swift in the group," Proof says. "If you listen to our song 'Good Die Young' on *D-12 World*, you'd understand how much he meant to the group." In an odd coincidence, Proof's son was born the same day Bugz died.

After the release of *Devil's Night*, the D12 crew spent many days and nights touring the world. Although Bizarre was still bringing the laughs and Kuniva was still being his outspoken self, there was still time for reflection. "Anyone who listened to the *Devil's Night* will hear a lot of growth on our new joint," Kon Artis says. "For the past two years all we've done is tour and mature." Bizarre concurs, "Although Eminem is the most prominent member of the crew, on this album the rest of D12 steps up and displays their skills. On *D-12 World*, you can clearly hear we're all dope MCs. Most rap on the radio right now is either popcorn or

gangsta, but we're going for a new refreshing approach with our beats and lyrical content."

Although D12 has grown, they are still funny as hell. "When you listen to the title track, it's like walking into a dope house party," says Bizarre. With its strange soundscape and spooky strings, the Kanye West produced track serves the listener a taste of the group's bugged poetics.

While most cliques fronted by an internationally known rap superstar might try to distance themselves from second hand fame, the members of D12 rather make fun of it with their 1st single, "My Band," lampooning the fact that more than a few journalists wrote about D12 as though they were the latest boy band on the scene.

"The entire 'My Band' track originated from a joke," Swift explains. "On the whole song, Em is just this dick lead singer who anoints us the cute one or the shy one. It's just a goof directed at the media." Reminding one of a rap version of Spinal Tap, this minimally produced Em nugget has the charm of Mad magazine and sassiness of a snake.

The group balances out the release of "My Band" with the simultaneous release of "40 Oz.," (video and single). The rowdy Trackboyz produced track gives the club heads the rush they need to get the party started.

Em also contributed the frantic beat on "Git Up." Featuring Em's bouncy chants combined with creepy gothic strings, "Git Up," which is an exciting street burner taunts any suckers trying to step to the crew. As group member Kon Artis, himself a noted producer (find him listed as Mr. Porter in the production credits), says, "Em created a track that is just pure adrenaline. We just went in the studio and tried to destroy whatever people might think about D12. Any backlash that Em has to deal with from the press, we go through together. D12 is more than a group, we're brothers."

Although naysayers and corn balls might try to label the humorous "I'm Gonna Get My Gun" as just another gangsta anthem, Bizarre knows better. "That's another one of those times we were just messing around in the studio," he explains. "One of the engineers said, 'You ever been in a club, and see dudes get in a fight. One guy always gotta announce...I'm gonna get my gun!' It's funny, but it's also real."

Lacing a little R&B with his pimping, Kon Artis constructed "You Are the One." Reminiscent of a beat Big Daddy Kane would have been proud to use, Kon Artis has created a track that examines both the bitter and the sweet in love.

Although Kon Artis has gotten much fame from producing 50 Cent single "P.I.M.P." and G-Unit's "Stunt 101," he doesn't skimp when it's time to bring the noise to D12. "By definition, Detroit has always been a funk town," Kon Artis explains. "On 'I'll Be Damned,' I was just coming with a funky George Clinton/Larry Graham vibe. To me, rap is boring right now and a great way to liven it up is to bring the funk."

Kon Artis, who has studied the art of production under Detroit homeboy Jaydee (Slum Village) and Cali flyboy Dr. Dre (who also contributes to the project with "American Psycho II" featuring B-Real), has risen in the ranks as one of rap's most sought-after sound providers. Currently, he is working on tracks for Dre's upcoming CD, Snoop, Method Man and Bilal. "The best lesson Dre ever taught me was it doesn't hurt to try an idea. The only way to get to the next level is to not be afraid."

Additional producers on D-12 World include: Hi-Tek, Night & Day, Red Spyda, and Sick Notes.

With the release of D-12 World, the group has created the perfect blueprint for all future groups to follow. As Proof is quick to say, "Forget about the word real, D12 keeps it right."