

Mike Posner - A biography

When Mike Posner was in tenth grade, an advanced placement course in American History changed his life. "We read about all these different people who had made an impact on U.S. history and I started to feel terrified that I'd never be remembered after I left this earth," Posner says. "That's the scariest thing in the world to me. Music is a way I can make my mark. That's what I think about every day: creating something timeless in a finite amount of time."

The 22-year-old singer, songwriter, and producer has taken a major step toward achieving his goal with the release of his debut album, *31 Minutes To Takeoff* - an eclectic, lovingly crafted collection of soulful tunes that showcase his innovative spirit and motivation to create something that sounds like nothing else out there. Posner co-wrote and/or co-produced every song on the album, conjuring up killer hooks and irresistible beats with a host of top-notch collaborators, including Benny Blanco (Ke\$ha, Katy Perry), Greg Kurstin (Kylie Minogue, Lily Allen), The Smeezingtons (Bruno Mars, B.o.B., Travie McCoy), and members of legendary R&B vocal group Boyz II Men (who provide soulful harmonies on "Deja Vu").

The album's relentless genre bending sound could only come from someone who's been steeped in music and driven to make it his entire life, as Posner has been. He was born and raised in the ethnically and economically diverse Detroit suburb of Southfield, MI, where he grew up listening to his parents' Motown records, and later, hip-hop, rock, and jazz artists. "If you looked through my CD collection, I had everything from Outkast and Nas, to Rage Against The Machine and Pearl Jam, to Miles Davis and Paul Simon," Posner says. He began playing drums in fourth grade and was making beats on his parents' computer by the time he was 13, an obsession he carried with him through high school, when he began writing melodies and lyrics. After graduating, Posner enrolled at Duke University in Durham, NC, to study sociology and business. During consecutive summer breaks, he interned at Detroit hip-hop station WHTD and hip-hop indie label Definitive Jux in New York City, where he attempted to peddle his tracks to the major record labels.

"I never sold one," Posner says. "So I was like, 'Forget it, I'm going to sing the words myself because no one else can pull off singing these lyrics the way I can.'" Among those tracks was "Cooler Than Me" - a breezy ode to a former crush that Posner recorded in his dorm room using a \$200 mic. Two years later, "Cooler Than Me" is a smash success having sold over 1 million copies. It is currently soaring in the Top 5 at Top 40 radio, Top 10 at Rhythm radio and thus far has hit #6 on the Billboard Hot 100 and Digital Songs Chart.

In March 2009, Posner released his first dorm-room recorded mixtape, *A Matter of Time*, by exploiting a loophole in the iTunesU software, which allows professors to post their lectures for free download. Featuring re-workings of Beyonce's "Halo," songs by The Fray and E.L.O., as well as guest vocals by Posner's hometown friend, Kanye West's G.O.O.D. Music rapper Big Sean, *A Matter of Time* climbed to No. 1 on

iTunesU. That spring, Posner juggled studying during the week with spending each weekend performing for college kids across the country, crashing on their couches and in their campus common rooms.

"People didn't really know who I was or what I looked like but they knew my music," he recalls. "That was one of the coolest times in my career, when I could sell out a 300-person show and be able to walk to the stage and nobody knew who I was till I started singing. It meant that people were there for my music and no other reason. There were no gimmicks involved - no video, no radio promotion, no photos. I'm really proud of those moments."

Posner's success sparked a major-label bidding war and he signed with J Records the summer after completing his junior year at Duke. In the fall of his senior year, Posner released his second mixtape, the aptly titled *One Foot Out the Door* (featuring a reworking of "Cooler Than Me") which racked up 25,000 downloads in its first week and once again claimed the top spot on iTunesU. Posner was off to the races, but he wanted to see through what he'd started and complete his degree. He graduated early in December 2009 with a 3.59 GPA, and walked in his cap and gown with his class in May 2010 - a day after sharing the bill with Drake in Los Angeles. (He's also shared bills with 50 Cent, Ben Folds, Gym Class Heroes, and Akon, performed at Bonnaroo, and is spending his summer throwing a party onstage at the 2010 Vans Warped Tour.)

31 Minutes To Takeoff (so named because according to Posner "something happens 31 minutes into the album that takes both the listener and I to a higher place") delivers on the promise he showed on his mixtapes. Making the most of his raspy, soulful tenor, Posner relates stories about his life, chronicling his imploded relationships ("Cheated") and his own dubious behavior ("Gone In September"), as well as his struggles with balancing family and career ("Delta 1406") and depression ("Save Your Goodbye"). Other highlights include the libido-driven smash "Bow Chicka Wow Wow", the Ray Lamontagne sampling "Do U Wanna," the flat-out club stomper "Please Don't Go," and the slinky, dream-like "Falling," which Posner describes as a cross between "a girl song and a song about my obsessive ambition to make my mark with music." Amid gorgeously layered harmonies, Posner sings: "You'll be there pointing and laughing to prove you were wiser than I / When I'm just pretending perfection, I'm flying uncomfortably high" - a brutally honest self-assessment that captures that dichotomy between confidence and insecurity that most creative people grapple with, making Posner that much more relatable.

"The second I stop using what happens to me in my real life and start making things up in my songs, is the second I lose everything," Posner says. "The most important word in my life is 'authenticity.' If I lose that I've lost everything. I wanted my album to be the platform I could stand on to say something meaningful and introduce myself to the world. I also wanted to make the best album of the year," he says with a laugh. "I guess time will tell if that's happened."