**RICO CARTEL BIO**

Rico Cartel is part of a long list of young artists to rise out of the Sunshine State in the past few years that possess an impressive ability to act as a shapeshifter on beats. The 21-year-old West Orlando native’s name first began circulating throughout Central Florida, the rest of the state, and pockets of the internet in 2017 when he released “Thuggin Witcha,” a catchy, lullaby that details his undying love for a special girl in his life. The song was featured on Cartel’s debut tape *Rise of Rico* which was the world’s first chance to become acquainted with his multifaceted rap toolbox. Through ten tracks, Cartel found time to touch on unconditional love and cautionary tales of how to maneuver in his city. “I just like to get on tracks and bounce,” he says of his musical approach, driven by a passion for challenging himself through his artistry. “I feel like I could do any beat. I can switch the flow at any given time. I know how to rap fast, I know how to rap slow. It’s ways and flows you put together.”

*Rico’s Rise* may have been the first time the wider world got a chance to finally witness Cartel’s talent, but rapping is a skill that he’s been sharpening since his early childhood. In second grade, he won a talent show that prompted kids to do covers of their favorite song at the time. For Cartel, the music he adored the most then came from Atlanta duo Rich Kidz. The particular song he covered is fuzzy in his mind now, but the sweet feeling of victory sent him on a life-altering artistic path.

Right after that moment, he began to familiarize himself with programs like GarageBand to build his knowledge in music production, inspired by the likes of Future, Gucci Mane and Florida’s own Kodak Black. As the 6th child of 10, Rico sought out to make his own lane. Nicknamed Gucci and known in his city as Wop, he later developed the stage name Rico Cartel, connecting with 100K Management through rapper Hotboii and writing his own story ever since. “I gave up a few times throughout my career and somehow I always seem to gain the energy and push I need to get back at it!”

Since 2017, the Florida rapper’s catalogue has grown consistently. In 2019, he released two mixtapes: *Jungle Szn* and *Clever Lil Steppa*. With each project, Cartel exhibited the signature uptempo sound that has become indicative of his region’s street music for the past couple decades, with songs like “Same Gang” and “No Time To Play” featuring Hotboii as cultural standouts. Though those projects were strong, especially for those who had already been fans, Cartel says, looking back, he was in a mental and creative funk. “Last year at this time around, I really wasn’t hot,” he says. “I really wasn’t doing nothing. This time around this year, I’m getting a buzz, I’m getting feedback, I’m building my catalog.”

2020 has undoubtedly been his strongest year in terms of reception he’s got for his music. And that’s likely because of his relentless output and the type of sounds he’s tried his hand at. “I Like” finds the perfect balance between a vintage New Orleans rap tempo and bouncy Florida rhythms as he waxes poetic about the pleasures of life that he enjoys the most. On “Erykah Remix,” he unexpectedly goes over a beat that’s inspired by the melodies of soul pioneer Erykah Badu. The uptick in productivity has proven to work wonders for Rico Cartel, who says he found his true purpose coming into 2020. “I got more to live for. I got people to take care of. People that depend on me,” he expands. “Living in the studio, I kinda found myself again. I kinda gave up with the music for a whole year. I wasn’t dropping nothing, I wasn’t putting nothing out, I wasn’t doing no shows. I locked myself back into that studio and made it happen. I had to figure out what I really wanna do. I don’t wanna keep wasting money on studio time. Wasting money on videos. I had to build up my mindset.”

With a new outlook on life, a steady increase in listeners and supporters, and a hunger to excel, the near future is looking promising for one of Orlando’s most visible artists on the world stage. “I wanna be ten steps ahead of anybody else,” he shares. “Everyone has their time to shine” and now, it is Rico Cartel’s.