Back 2 Tape: Berlin Vol. 2

09/04/2020 Music journalist Niko Hüls ends his cultural journey through hip-hop Europe where it began: in Berlin. There he visits German rap legend Kool Savas and DJ Josi Miller.

For 20 years I have been travelling as a hip-hop music journalist. For "Back to Tape" in 2018, I went on the lookout for traces of this youth culture in Germany. I visited Curse, Samy Deluxe, Namika and Moses Pelham, among others, in places that mean a lot to them - far away from promo tours or concert halls.

Now, together with Porsche, I have taken a road trip across Europe, which has taken me to artists and cities in France, Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, and Germany. Throughout the process, it became clear to me that hip-hop is an international, unifying element of life. Hip-hop is lived, respected and loved everywhere.

Now I am finishing my journey for "Back 2 Tape" where I started it: in Berlin. There, I visited DJ Josi Miller and German rap legend Kool Savas.

"I wanted to be the best MC"

Savaş Yurderi is better known under his stage name Kool Savas. At the age of eleven, the son of a Turkish father and a German mother moved to Kreuzberg from Aachen via Turkey. Rap has been in his blood since childhood, and as a teenager the street and hard Berlin everyday life became his daily companion. He counts the US greats Too Short, Compton's Most Wanted, Ice Cube and MC Eiht among his role models.

Kool Savas first raps in English before he switches to German together with Fumanschu and Justus as "Masters Of Rap". He does so with much success.

"All my teachers were or are rappers, hip-hop artists, people who reached me through hip-hop," says the German rap legend. "I'm not the kind of guy who sits down and reads a lot, I couldn't quote Luther now. I'll just quote Kanye West instead."

Hip-Hop stands for tolerance

Savas achieved his commercial breakthrough in 2002 with the album "Der beste Tag meines Lebens", which reached number six in the German album charts. The LPs "Tot oder lebendig", "Aura" and "Gespaltene Persönlichkeit" saw the Berlin battle-rapper finally reach the top of the German hip-hop scene and become a permanent feature of the Berlin cityscape. “My love of hip-hop is unchanged,” emphasizes the self-confessed Porsche lover. “I have learned a lot and worked hard on myself, but my relationship and contact with hip-hop is even more intense than before.” An essential component of his idea of hip-hop is tolerance. For Savas, rap, DJ and breakdancing transcend racial thinking, promoting respect for all people.

King of Rap

For "Back 2 Tape", I took a seat next to Kool Savas in a special place: on the steps of the stairs that can be seen in his iconic music video for "King of Rap", a German rap classic. For me, the track's beat, flow and lyrics represent a goose-pimple moment in music history not only then, but also today. In the years following the release, Savas' rhymes remain quoted and sung again and again. Whether it is Tua von den Orsons, Fatoni or even Dendemann or Jan Böhmermann: they all refer to the "King of Rap".

The art of scratching

Josi Miller wants to shape a new era of beats. In 2017 she toured as Trettmann's tour DJ and, together with the exceptional rapper, she created a unique live sound which all of Germany danced to. She also stands at the turntables for Frauenarzt and won a vice title at the Red Bull Threestyle finals - which has

brought her both recognition and great respect from the scene.

Josi Miller used to be known under her stage name YO-C - explaining what fascinates her, she said: “To create something completely new from things that already exist. But all that takes a lot of practice. One is the art of scratching, the other is creating something that doesn't exist yet."

Set a statement

Together with Helen Fares, she has been hosting the podcast "Deine Homegirls" since 2016, which first ran on Energy Sachsen and in 2017 she switched to the hip-hop channel "BoomFM" from Berlin online radio Flux FM. The duo gained fame through the ARTE web documentary "Homo Digitalis". One of their themes was women in the German rap industry.

They take a thoroughly critical look at the social significance of hip-hop. “The more women in high positions, whether in the music industry or in rap line-ups, the less you have to discuss the topic," says Miller. “It's a lot better today. But I don't want to be booked for a festival just because I'm a woman. In the end it's the skills that count. That's how I want to convince people."

Save the Date: Premiere of Back 2 Tape on April 16th

"Back 2 Tape" celebrates its world premiere on the Porsche Newsroom on April 16. The documentary was made in cooperation with hip-hop magazine "Backspin" and music journalist Niko Hüls. It sheds light on hip-hop youth culture using the example of 16 artists from all over Europe. A glimpse behind the scenes is already available on social media. In the run-up to the premiere individual artists will give personal insights into the production of the film project by speaking via Instagram live streams over the Easter holidays.

Back 2 Tape

In 2018, music journalist Niko Hüls embarked on a journey to the roots of hip-hop in Germany in "Back to Tape". Now, he's continuing his road trip across Europe in a Porsche Cayenne S Coupé. In cooperation with the hip-hop magazine Backspin.de, the Porsche Newsroom project "Back to Tape" sheds light on cultural influences through the four central elements of hip-hop: rap, DJing, breakdance and graffiti. In Part 7, Niko Hüls visits Berlin again.

Official playlist of Back 2 Tape

An important note

Niko's road trip through Europe was produced before the outbreak of COVID-19. Porsche, Backspin and the involved artists are aware of their social responsibility and advise against such a trip at this time out of consideration for the health and well-being of all people.

Info

Text: Niko Hüls
Photos: Markus Schwer

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Julian B. Hoffmann

Managing Editor Porsche Newsroom
+49 (0) 170 / 911 2771
julian.hoffmann@porsche.de

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