

Making His Own Way

BREAJNA DAWKINS

Diggy Simmons is not resting on his famous name. He's creating his own R&B-inspired hip-hop beats.

His family certainly is legendary. Some may think his uncle, hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, and Diggy's dad, Rev Run of the iconic rap group Run DMC, have made the path easy for the 16-year-old. But the young rapper takes it in stride.

"People will always run to assumptions of how you got there or that you don't work hard. But I know that I do. So I don't get caught up in it," he says during a visit to the JET headquarters in Chicago.

Diggy, who starred with his family on the reality series *Run's House*, knows expectations are high for him because of his roots. "The fact that my uncle, my dad, my show and my last name play a part of my life, people want to see and hear what I'm doing. They're going to want to hear (my music) and that's going to make people gravitate toward listening to my music. So that's the good part of it."

He's working on his debut CD, set for release late this year on Atlantic Records, but dropped his first mixtape, *The First Flight*, in 2009.

"People enjoyed the music and I wasn't shopping myself around for a deal. But record labels started coming to me and I kind of got signed from there."

Now, with three mixtapes under his belt, a performance on the BET pre-award show and a headlining spot on this summer's Closer To My Dreams Tour, Diggy is working his way to the top of the industry.



DIGGY PHOTO BY PATRICK HOELCK

"I'm a perfectionist, so with my mixtapes I haven't been that content with them," he explains. "But with my album, I'm just so happy with it. The standard is just set so much higher and so much better."

The rising teen idol is hoping to score many music hits, and he's already a hit with female fans. "I just love a girl that's beautiful not only on the outside but on the inside."