

Universal Music Group launches Def Jam Africa to support African hip-hop talent

Universal Music Group (UMG) recently launched Def Jam Africa, a new label division dedicated to representing the best hip-hop, Afrobeats and trap talent in Africa. The label division will follow the blueprint of Def Jam Recordings label and its launch roster includes some of Africa's most influential artists and MCs including Cassper Nyovest, Nasty C, Larry Gaaga, Boity, Nadia Nakai, Tellaman, Tshogo, Ricky Tyler and Vector.

The label will initially be based in Johannesburg, South Africa and Lagos, Nigeria, but will identify and sign artist talent from across the entire continent. It will be supported by dedicated A&R, marketing, creative and digital teams from the UMG teams in both Nigeria and South Africa and will report to Sipho Dlamini, MD, Universal Music sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa.

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In making the announcement, Sipho Dlamini said: "Many of us in Africa grew up on music from legendary labels under the UMG umbrella. From Blue Note for jazz fans to Mercury Records, which was Hugh Masekela's first US label and Uptown Records, the home of Jodeci and Mary J Blige and many more. For those into hip-hop, no label has such cultural and historic relevance as Def Jam.

"From Run DMC to LL Cool J, Disturbing tha Peace, Jay-Z, Big Sean and Kanye West, Def Jam has always been the ultimate destination for hip-hop and urban culture worldwide. It is a historic achievement that we're now able to bring this iconic label to Africa, to create an authentic and trusted home for those who aspire to be the best in hip-hop, Afrobeats and trap. Together, we will build a new community of artists, that will push the boundaries of hip-hop from Africa, to reach new audiences globally."



Jeff Harleston, interim chairperson and CEO of Def Jam Recordings, said: “Def Jam is a globally recognised brand, synonymous with excellence in hip-hop, and we enthusiastically welcome the launch of Def Jam Africa as an opportunity for audiences worldwide to discover the incredibly talented hip-hop artists emerging from across the continent.”

Adam Granite, EVP of market development, said: “Def Jam has always been a respected mark of hip-hop quality, and the calibre of artists already on the roster, shows that this is a label, truly dedicated to helping the very best rap talent from Africa, reach new audiences on a global level.”

Earlier this year it was announced that South African rapper Nasty C will release his forthcoming album Zulu Man with Some Power in partnership with Def Jam Recordings in the US during summer 2020. Other forthcoming releases on Def

Jam Africa include singles from Ricky Tyler, Boity, Nasty C, Tellaman feat. Alpha P, Vector, Cassper Nyovest and Tshego.

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