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“I’m Just Trying To Be Versatile!” NLE Choppa Is Going For Gold

Memphis rapper on his much-anticipated new album...

NLE Choppa talks to Clash about his upcoming album ‘Cottonwood 2’, his love for the UK and working with Lil Wayne.

For a long time, cities like New York, LA, Chicago and Atlanta have dominated the conversation and direction of US Rap. However, in recent years, Memphis has entered the conversation with big rappers like Moneybagg Yo, Young Dolph, Pooh Shiesty, GloRilla and Yo Gotti making waves across the World.

Another leading light is **20-year-old NLE Choppa** who is helping put Memphis on the map as one of the hotbeds of Rap in the US.

NLE Choppa emerged onto the rap scene at the age of 16 with his **huge breakout single ‘Shotta Flow’** which has an astounding 206 million views on YouTube to date. He has gone from strength to strength with hits like ‘Walk Em Down’, featuring Roddy Rich and ‘Camelot’ and has collaborated with some of the biggest in the game like Lil Baby, Chief Keef and Polo G.

Despite his young age, the rapper was incredibly determined to put his music first as a priority and that money and fame would follow as a result. This mindset was encapsulated when ‘Shotta Flow’ blew up and he sparked a bidding war from record labels such as Republic and Interscope that offered up to \$3 million to sign NLE Choppa. However, in the end he chose Warner Records to be NLE Entertainment’s label partner.

The sky’s really the limit for NLE Choppa as he remains humble and willing to learn from the greats of the industry that he surrounds himself with. The results of this learning experience are evident from an incredibly accomplished album that puts him in the conversation as one of the most exciting rap talents in the US.

Choppa is set to capitalise on his meteoric rise to fame with his upcoming album ‘Cottonwood 2’, released on April 14th. The follow-up from his 2019 debut album ‘Cottonwood’ is a huge step forward in the career of the young rapper as he shows his versatility, playfulness with wordplay and has huge features from the likes of Lil Wayne, Rick Ross and Fivio Foreign.



Clash: What was it like growing up in East Memphis?

NLE Choppa: It was a bit of a struggle because Memphis is not the most beautiful place with people's behaviour and the way that people act. It was tough but it made me who I was and I'm forever grateful for that.

Do you think that growing up in Memphis shaped you and prepared you for life in a way that not many places can?

Yeah man, for sure! It built a part of me on the inside. I was able to build a type of strength and to be able to overcome whatever God puts in front of me as a test. It made me a survivor because I feel that Memphis is one of those places where people are trying to live, but also trying to survive!

You will be releasing your upcoming album 'Cottonwood 2' on April 14. It's varied and different from anything we've heard from you before, what influenced this album?

I'm just trying to be versatile. I'm trying to make sure that I can tap into any sound, any mood and any genre. I want it to be whole, I want it to be the most versatile version of myself and I feel like I accomplished that.

One of my favourite tracks was 'Cold Game', featuring Rick Ross. It's mature and a switch in your sound.

Yeah! I actually shot a video for that yesterday. I don't think I'm going to release it before the album comes out but plan on dropping the video around May.

Another standout was 'AIN'T GONNA ANSWER' which featured Lil Wayne. He was one of your influences growing up so what was it like to have him feature on a track?

It was a dream come true because those types of things don't happen every day. To be able to be on a song with one of the greatest artists to ever do it was a huge thing. It meant a lot to me.



He is without a doubt one of the greatest of all time and has worked with many of the greats too. What was the biggest lesson you learnt from this experience?

Always be humble. I'm pretty much one of the most humble individuals you will stumble across and to meet someone of his stature that is so great and has done so many great things but is still a humble beast, it meant a lot to me because I just saw myself in that. I just thought that is exactly how I want to be when I reach that stature because that's exactly how I am now.

Is it hard to stay humble and grounded when you've achieved so much fame and success at such a young age?

Not really because I feel like as I have grown into who I am becoming I have learnt certain practices that keep me grounded. This includes simple prayer- making sure I say a prayer every day, meditation, to take in gratefulness- be grateful for everything that has happened to me because I remember times when things weren't moving for me. These are just certain practices I've been learning as I've been maturing and growing as a man and it's been working for me.

I was reading about your spiritual journey to help with this, is this important to you?

It's part of my journey, for sure!

When making an album do you feel pressure to live up to expectations and your high standards? Or as you're still so young does that relieve some pressure?

Musically I feel I always step up to the plate. But it's more so about the pressure of hoping everyone else likes the music. But y'know, musically I can always make the best music – the music is the easy part... It's just about getting it to the world.

More broadly, what do you think the biggest thing you learnt making this album was?

That anything is possible. Any feature you want is possible, any sound you wanna conquer is possible. Just anything is possible. Go out and have faith and get it done.

You've toured all over the World but where is your favourite place to perform?

My favorite place to perform is Europe. You know I had a whole lotta fun in Europe. My European tour was sold out and it was just a beautiful vibe.

I've heard lots of US rappers say that UK crowds have more energy than American crowds, is this true?

It's extremely true. I feel like because it's more so that we're foreign to them, just like they're foreign to us. It's just a different environment.

I saw you were in the UK recently and spent time with Russ Millions.

I had a blast! I love London, I love the music and the accent- it's one of my favourites. I love UK Drill music and we actually made a crazy banger.

