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On Stands Now

MY HOMETOWN

SAWEETIE BY THE BAY

THE "MY TYPE" RAPPER MAKES HELLA SURE TO ADD A LITTLE BIT OF CALIFORNIA INTO EVERYTHING SHE MAKES

By Marcus Jones

DIAMONTÉ HARPER, BETTER KNOWN as the rapper Saweetie, moved around a lot when she was young. "I'm primarily from Hayward, but I've lived in Union City, I've lived in San Jose, I've lived in Palo Alto, I've lived in Sunnyvale—I grew up all around the Bay Area," the 27-year-old California native tells EW. "But I went to high school in Sacramento."

She was also raised in a big family ("On my Black side, I have nine aunts and uncles, and on my Filipino side, I have seven") and would often tag along with the teenagers and listen to hyphy music, a regional genre pioneered by Bay Area icons like Mac Dre and E-40. "It's high-energy, it's infectious," she says, adding that people in her city "love to party and we love to dance, so when I'm making a club record, I try to make sure that all those components are in there to get the room moving."

Saweetie first gained national attention by putting a modern spin on indelible hip-hop beats—her hit "Tap In" samples "Blow the Whistle" by hometown hero Too Short—but, she now admits, "I hindered myself in the beginning because I was so trapped into only listening to older music. I wasn't really a fan of new music. But I'm a student of the game and I realized that in order to be successful, I have to adapt."

With her forthcoming album *Pretty Bitch Music*, Saweetie is working on an ambitious set of tracks that establish her own distinct sound. "I'm really inspired to not only represent the Bay Area, but the West Coast. We've never really had a girl in the hip-hop and urban community get worldwide recognition," she says. "My purpose is bigger than money and fame and recognition. It's about letting the girls who come after me know that they can do it too."



BEER: REEMA; JACK: OONLIN; SAWEETIE: DENNIS LEIPOLD