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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/music/2021/03/26/saweetie-talks-new-music-album-sampling-famous-beats-quavo/6874554002/>

## MUSIC

# Soak up samples of Saweetie's skills

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USA TODAY

Meet Saweetie.

If you don't recognize the rapper from her performances or her massive social media presence (she boasts almost 17 million followers across Instagram, TikTok and Twitter), you've likely heard one of her catchy singles, probably one that samples a '90s or early aughts hip-hop classic.

For those already familiar with the West Coast rapper, real name Diamonté Harper, there's more to her story than what you've seen online.

"This is the first year where I've been recognized as an artist," Saweetie says of her landmark 2020 success.

As she crafts her debut album, currently titled "Pretty B---- Music," Saweetie shares her journey with USA TODAY.

## 'I do it really well': Saweetie excels with samples, collaborations

After graduating from the University of Southern California with a degree in communications, Saweetie gained notoriety for posting videos rapping over beats in her car.

Her viral car rap of Khia's "My Neck, My Back (Lick It)" became Saweetie's first hit single, "Icy Girl," with its infectious opening lines: "Can't stop, won't stop, get guap/Ten white toes in them Tory flip-flops/Manicures and pedicures, I'm always tip-top/When they say I'm not hot, all these lies need to stop"

She has since rapped over samples from Petey Pablo ("Freek-a-Leek") on her 2020 smash hit "My Type," Bay Area legend Too Short ("Shake That Monkey" and "Blow the Whistle") on "High Maintenance" and "Tap In," respectively, the Ying Yang Twins ("Salt Shaker") on her "Money Mouf" feature and Black Rob ("Whoa!") on "Pretty B---- Freestyle." Though some have criticized her for basing her hit songs off samples, she's unbothered.

"They can expect that for the rest of my life," she says, laughing. "I know I get a lot of criticism, but I feel like it's only because I do it really well when I release my most popular songs. When 'Pretty B---- Music' comes along, I do have some original beats that I'm so excited to share because I feel like it'll not only be 'Oh, Saweetie makes great sample songs,' (it'll be) 'She just makes great



Saweetie, performing at Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve 2021, gained notoriety for posting videos rapping in her car. ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES

songs, period.'"

Beyond her solo success, she has collaborated with Dua Lipa, Doja Cat, DaBaby, Post Malone, Jack Harlow, Jhené Aiko and City Girls. She has joined forces with Demi Lovato on her upcoming album, "Dancing With the Devil ... the Art of Starting Over."

## Saweetie says women in hip-hop are 'always compared to someone else'

She's blond during our interview, sitting back in a fluffy white chair rocking her platinum locks half up with a T-shirt, hoop earrings and a sparkling Cuban Link choker, though she's switched up her look many times since we talked. Saweetie is a chameleon, much like her cohort of women in rap, but she's done with the comparisons.

"You're always compared to someone else when you're a female (in hip-hop)," she says. "When men come into the game, they're not always asked who they're inspired by. They're not always compared with one of their male counterparts or peers about what outfit they're wearing or (their) hairstyle."

The Bay Area rapper is one of the few

major female players in rap to come from the West Coast. She says Lil' Kim, Foxy Brown and Nicki Minaj are some of the biggest women in hip-hop, but notes they're all from the East Coast.

"I always felt like I was struggling to find my sound because I can't think of any West Coast woman who made it at that level as those three women," she says. "When you were looking at different women as a West Coast girl, there were none from my region. There are names who deserve their flowers, but when it comes to reaching worldwide success and worldwide influence, we never had that."

The 27-year-old wants to be hands-on with her music.

"I'm able to bring my vision to life when I'm in the studio," she says. "I love to co-produce my beats because I know what my voice sounds good over."

Her work ethic comes in part from having to bounce back after fumbling a freestyle during an appearance on Hot 97, after which one of the radio hosts called her "basic." Social media users piled on, shaming her rap skills and insulting her.

"It was a really dark point in my life. I went from being so loved so quickly be-

cause of 'Icy Girl' ... The script flipped really quick, like night and day" she told Cosmopolitan in an April cover story interview. "I had PTSD from that."

## Her relationship with Quavo made waves – but now it's 'Back to the Streets'

She made headlines for her three-year relationship with Migos member Quavo for their Icy Girl/Glacier Boy romance – and she sparked more headlines following their split and ensuing back-and-forth on social media.

One of her own songs, 2020's "Back to the Streets", is a prime breakup anthem.

"Back to the Streets" is so special and unique because it's a celebratory breakup song," she says about the song produced by Timbaland.

"Normally when you hear breakup songs they're aggressive, they're mad, they're sad, but sometimes it's good to get back to your independence. So that's why (the song) is so special, not only because Tim produced it, but it just gives a different discourse of what a breakup is."

## Icy Girl University, 'Grown-ish' role, other projects in the works

The budding philanthropist has plans to give back with the launch of her nonprofit Icy Baby Foundation, which aims to provide support to low-income communities and aid in education efforts.

"I was just really tired of donating a lot of money to organizations and not knowing what they did with my money," she says.

"My grandmother is actually going to help me run it."

Saweetie's latest venture is a guest role on Freeform sitcom "Grown-ish" alongside Yara Shahidi as celebrity client Indigo.

And fans might also be calling her Professor Icy soon: The star has hopes of becoming a college professor, expanding her Icy University lessons on YouTube for how to start your own business or "bag an 8 figure man."

Despite the difficulties of the pandemic, she's not slowing down any time soon.

"This year, we've had a lot of hardships, but I think pressure makes diamonds – and my name (Diamonté) does mean diamond."