



Sean Forbes

1982-Present



Early Life

- Sean Forbes was born hearing in Detroit, Michigan, however, Sean lost the majority of his hearing after he contracted spinal meningitis when he was only a few months old.
- Both of his parents were supportive of Forbes, especially when it came to his interest in music.
 - His parents would take him to concerts, let him watch MTV and exposed him to classic rock at home.
- Sean's life was also full of musicians.
 - His mother played the piano while his father and uncle were part of a local rock band.
- Forbes' parents also had a focus on his lip-reading and speech skills, wanting him to be able to communicate with both the Deaf and the hearing, and he started learning American Sign Language (ASL) at age 12.

From Motown to Rochester, New York



- Sean's birth in Motown gave him a strong connection to music, and moving to Rochester, New York to go to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) didn't waver that connection at all.
- During his time at NTID, he continued to make connections with people who shared his interest in music. However, he realized that, while he had developed an understanding of music, many others with hearing loss had not.
 - Because of this realization, Sean founded DPAN.TV, *"an online, sign language media platform that hosts a multitude of sign language content in one place."*
- Sean graduated from NTID with a degree in management, accounting and communications, and before starting his music career he interned at a Chicago engineering company and was offered a graduate scholarship.



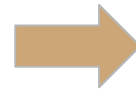
A Deaf Rapper?

- While visiting a recording studio that worked with Eminem and the Bass Brothers, Sean discovered a CD on the mixing board labeled “BEATS.”
 - Sean took it home and wrote lyrics to accompany the tracks, and then learned the creator of those beats was the son of one of Bass Brothers, Jake Bass.
 - Sean was then signed with Web Entertainment Records, and released his debut album **Perfect Imperfection**
- **Perfect Imperfection** bridges the Deaf and hearing cultures by including a DVD of 12 ASL music videos that pair with the signs.
 - In them, Sean vocalizes and signs his lyrics at the same times, while a large screen displays animated lyrics with cartoon graphics to provide meaning for everyone.

But Still... A Deaf Rapper?

- Even with his success, people still wonder **how** he does it. Sean uses hearing aids to assist with performance, and meticulously listens to the lyrics and mixing until he is confident that each track has met his standards.
 - Sean also uses his body to feel the beat of his music.
- Hip Hop had a strong impact on Sean growing up because he could follow the strong beats and drums.
- As Forbes says, hip-hop is *“like drumming with words.”*

Click here to watch Sean's music video for his song "I'm Deaf"



Sean's Other Work and Awards

- Along with his music career, Sean works as a motivational speaker and Deaf advocate while continuing his work with D-PAN.
- Sean was dubbed the outstanding hip-hop artist of the year and the Detroit Music Awards in 2013, and has performed for over 150,000 people in 60 cities, sharing the stage with people such as Stevie Wonder.
- Forbes has also been featured on NPR and CNN, and his YouTube channel has gone viral.

"The most important thing is to believe in yourself!"



Sources

All Music Web Site: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/sean-forbes>

Hearing Like Me Web Site article, *"Meet Sean Forbes, the Deaf Rapper Who Is Inspiring a Generation"* by Ellie Parfitt, <http://www.hearinglikeme.com>

Sean Forbes Web Site "Deaf and Loud": <http://www.deafandloud.com/bio>

Washington Post article, *"Deaf Rapper Sean Forbes Makes Himself Joyfully Heard on the Hip-Hop Scene"* by Alex Stone.