

Song Exploder
Fousheé - Deep End
Episode 213

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

Hrishikesh: This episode contains explicit language.

("Deep End" by FOUSHEÉ)

Hrishikesh: The story of how the song "Deep End" came into existence and became a hit is kind of wild. One person who really didn't see it coming is the person who created it, Fousheé. She's a singer and songwriter from New Jersey. You might have seen her competing on *The Voice* in 2018. Soon after that, she got asked to make a pack of vocal samples for the music platform Splice, where users can download samples and include them in their own songs, royalty-free. Coming up, Fousheé tells the story of what happened with one of those samples, and how that led to her making "Deep End." "Deep End" has now been streamed over 385 million times. Fousheé became the first Black female artist to hit the Top 10 Alternative Chart in over 30 years. Here's Fousheé breaking down the twists and turns that went into making "Deep End."

("Deep End" by FOUSHEÉ)

Fousheé: My name is Fousheé.

(Music fades)

Fousheé: When I got offered to do the sample pack, it was right after I got done shooting *The Voice*. I was just eliminated from *The Voice* and I was like, "Fuck [laughter]. What now?" And I was so heartbroken, but really, that ended up being for the better. I met someone from Splice, the sample pack company, and he asked me to do a pack of like 250 samples. He's like, "If you have extra vocals on your computer, you know, anything unused," and I was like, "Okay, this is cool like I can make money, and just release this thing, it's like a residual income." Usually, a sample pack is "Ooh's," "Ah's," you know, maybe a word or two. There's not hooks on there but I thought, you know like, "What do producers need? They need hooks so, you know, I'm going to make [laughter] a dope ass pack from scratch."

(Vocals: "I been trying not to go off the deep end / I don't think you wanna give me a reason / I been trying not to go off the deep end / I don't think you wanna give me, me")

Foushéé: It was like different variations of vocal samples. So the next one will be [sung], "I've been trying not to go off the deep end / I don't think you wanna give me a reason," and then I did some [sung] "ooh's," you know, probably a low and that would be like 6 or 7 samples. Writing is a very intimate thing but when I came up with those lines, I wasn't thinking about anything, I was trying not to overthink it, and I was just trying to have fun with it. And once the pack came out, I just walked away,

(Piano)

Foushéé: and did my own thing. My job here is done.

(Piano ends)

Foushéé: Once people use the pack, they don't have to credit the artist because typically people don't make hooks. It was just a different scenario, it backfired on me [laughter]. One of my friends sent me a YouTube link and she's like, "Is this you?"

("Deep End Freestyle" by SLEEPY HALLOW ft. FOUSHÉE)

Foushéé: And I clicked it and it was the "Deep End Freestyle" by Sleepy Hallow.

("Deep End Freestyle" by SLEEPY HALLOW ft. FOUSHÉE)

(Music ends)

Foushéé: I think a month had passed and it was like at a million something views. I didn't really understand what was going on until I saw [laughter] the YouTube video and like read the comments. The way that they use it kind of highlighted the vocals. People were like, "Where can they find the person singing the sample?" A lot of people were like, "I'm here for the girl singing." They were kind of answering the questions on their own, and like tracing back to different versions of people using the sample and thinking those were the original. [laughter] Someone was like, "Hi, I made the original. This is the original I have it right here." It was like just impossible to cut through all this chatter because so many

people were giving wrong information. So, after a lot of peer pressure from my family, I made that TikTok video just saying it was me.

(TikTok video audio)

Hrishikesh: In the TikTok video, Fousheé is playing guitar and singing, and there's text over it that reads: "The irony of this is I'm actually the original singer in this song but no one knows or believes me and it's legit making me go off the DEEP END."

(TikTok video audio fades)

Fousheé: I posted it. I went to sleep. I woke up and it went viral while I was sleeping.

Hrishikesh: Over 6 million views.

Fousheé: People were surprised, and I couldn't have gotten credit without them, they caused a lot of commotion [laughter]. And they were like, "Make your own version, we'll support it." So I just gave it a try. I saw it as a challenge to bring myself into the song while like still incorporating all these other elements.

(Guitar)

Fousheé: I didn't want to start it as somber and slow as the sample was. So I had my electric guitar. Okay, I'm just going to do like some driving strums.

(Vocals join: "I been trying not to go off the deep end / I don't think you wanna give me a reason / I been trying not to go off the deep end / I don't think you wanna give, give me")

Fousheé: I listened and like sat with those original hook lyrics to see how that applies in my life. And it was very fitting anyway so it wasn't that hard. I was very angry, I was stressed out, it was like right in the beginning of quarantine, George Floyd was just killed. I did feel like I was going off the deep end, so I just used it as my diary and vented really.

(Vocals with piano: "Had to come and flip the script / Had a big bone to pick / Got the short end of sticks, so we made a fire with it")

Fousheé: So that's like my thesis statement. I'm like, "Okay, why am I here?" I had a bone to pick. I got the short end of the stick for too long. And I decided to do things my way and make a fire with it instead of accepting this little bone." Not only is it

a familiar feeling, just like being a woman in the industry, being a black woman in the industry, there's so many experiences that we have, we're like constantly fighting for our worth, for opportunities, for acknowledgement. But this story was about following through and demanding your worth. So it was a different energy, like less of the victim, more of the victor. It's more of a success story.

(Vocals, guitar, and beat: "Shawty gon' get that paper / Shawty tongue rip like razor / Shawty got wit, got flavor / Pardon my tits and make-up, uh, uh")

(Guitar with beat)

Foushéé: I wanted it to be like danceable, motivating, like a happy anger.

(Beat)

Foushéé: I thought of a drum pattern and I did the little [mimics beat],

(Beat)

Foushéé: and I found the sound, the little water drop.

(Water drop sound, piano, and beat)

Foushéé: And I sent it to Itai Shapira, he's a producer. And I wanted different drums, but he was like, "This sounds great, let's keep it." I was like, "No!" And I was like, "Okay, fuck it. I'm already used to it [laughter]."

(Synth)

Foushéé: Itai added the synth elements too and like those cool sounds.

(Synth)

Foushéé: You know, I try to add a little weirdness in my songs so when he added that I was like, "That's perfect."

(Synth ends)

Foushéé: A lot of my inspiration comes from rap. Secretly like in my head, you know, I'm really like, "Okay, I'm a rapper, in my head [laughter]". But I thought like I didn't

have the content, the type of perspective that I would hear other rappers had. And then, there just came a time where I just didn't care.

(Synth)

Foushéé: And I was like, "I need people to know that this is a part of me."

(Vocals, piano, synth, and water drop sound: "give, give me / Please proceed to light this bitch up / Life ain't fair, you fight for your cut / Think I spy your eye on my bucks / Great, look, now the lion woke up / You eying my shit, inquiring shit / Live for the minor event, I finally slip / Built on the bodies of men, nobody winning / Contain what I'm bottling in just benefits them")

(Vocals: "Shawty gon' get that paper / Shawty tongue rip like razor / Shawty got wit, got flavor")

Foushéé: We finished the song. But I didn't know if people will like it because they already fell in love with the other version. But I knew that I was proud of it. So love it or hate it, this is me.

(Piano)

Foushéé: I came, and I got my victory, I got my things. It's just for me to get what I deserve. And in the process, I was an example for other people.

(Water drop sound and guitar join)

Foushéé: For black women and, you know, whoever I had went through

(Synth joins)

Foushéé: anything similar. Or just feeling cheated in any way or settling for less than their worth.

(Beat joins)

Foushéé: It's like the underdog moment, come on. I love those moments.

(Beat)

(Beat ends)

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "Deep End," by Fousheé, in its entirety.

("Deep End" by FOUSHEÉ)

Hrishikesh: To learn more, visit songexploder.net/fousheé. You'll find links to buy or stream "Deep End," and you can watch the music video.

This episode was made by me with editing help from Teeny Lieberman and Casey Deal. Artwork by Carlos Lerma, and music clearance by Kathleen Smith. Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia, from PRX, a network of independent, listener-supported, artist-owned podcasts. You can learn more about our shows at radiotopia.fm. You can follow me on Twitter and Instagram @HrishiHirway. And you can follow the show @SongExploder. You can also get a Song Exploder t-shirt at songexploder.net/shirt. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Thanks for listening.