

[Click here to print](#) or select File then Print from your browser.

[Close Window](#)

## June is Black Music Month, Countdown of Shamontiel's Top 30 African-American Artists

June 30 Black Music Month Artist Talib Kweli

By Shamontiel

President George W. Bush had a lot of screw-ups during his eight-year term, but he did do a couple things right. One of them was proclaiming June as Black Music Month on May 31, 2002. June is here, and to celebrate [Black Music Month](#), I'll be featuring one of my favorite artists each day, sharing my first or most personal memory of them, explain what their accomplishments are and why I felt they should make the Black Music Month Top 30 list. There will be some oldies, some newbies and some artists who are in between stages.

My June 30 selection is **Talib Kweli**.

It has been fun compiling this list of some of my favorite artists. A few of my favorite hip-hop and R&B lyricists weren't included, but there are only 30 days in June so I had to go with the ones I refused to leave out. All month long, I've been publishing sets of threes, new school R&B, then old school R&B, then hip-hop. Technically my June 30th selection should be a female lyricist, but since I chose both [Salt and Pepa](#) on June 18th, I wanted to keep the male hip-hop lyricists even. I struggled between [Andre 3000](#), [Ice Cube](#), [Jay-Z](#) and Talib Kweli as my last male hip-hop lyricist, but the more I played "[Eardrum](#)," I had to make my decision with my favorite album overall. So here it is.

**Black Music Month Heat Factor "Why's this artist hot?":** The average listener may not pick up on all of the messages in each Talib Kweli song. He may have to go back and listen to the same song over and over again to get all the references, subliminal messages and even some of the more obvious lyrics. These days you don't find too many rappers who are in the same lyrical category as Rakim, the rappers that won't let their beats override the lyrics in the songs. Even Talib Kweli's commercial hits still have a message in them, and he has yet to dumb down his music, which is rare and admirable. Those who may not have been familiar with him before grew curious after rapper [Jay-Z](#) said, "If skills sold, truth be told, I'd probably be, lyrically, Talib Kweli." Jay-Z doesn't walk around complimenting everybody. Quite frankly Talib Kweli is a better lyricist than quite a few millionaire rappers today so while the plug may have been unexpected, it was obvious.

And when he says things like "[Hip-hop isn't as complex as a woman is](#)," how can you not think he's hot? Every time I read an interview with him, he always explains something that I can't help but crack a smile about. What I personally like about him is that he's not so brainwashed by the music industry that he won't take chances. I loved his 2003 single "[Get By](#)," but his 2007 song "[Give 'Em Hell](#)" was better to me. The beat is crazy. He had the beautiful sound of [Lyfe Jennings](#) singing in the background. And while I'm bobbing my head to this, I'm listening to him have a fascinating, rhythmic conversation about religion. Not too many artists can do that successfully.

**First Memory, Most Personal Memory of the Artist:** On the opening to the 2007 album "[Eardrum](#)," poet Sonia Sanchez says, "I don't remember the first time I heard Kweli." That makes two of us because I racked my brain trying to remember the first time I heard about him. I saw him perform live while I was in grad school at [DePaul University](#), but I was reciting his lyrics along with him so I knew that wasn't it. I don't quite remember listening to him in high school from '95 to '99, but I knew too many songs from his 1998 album "[Black Star](#)" (with my favorite hip-hop lyricist [Mos Def](#) and DJ Hi-Tek) so that wasn't it. Talib Kweli is one of those artists that I think hip-hop fans hear, but it just takes a minute before we really listen. And once we listen to the words he's saying, then comes the appreciation. Is he underrated? Definitely. Overlooked? Occasionally. Talented? Unquestionably. However, sometimes the most talented artists are at the top of their game and fans are climbing trying to catch up to them.

**Accomplishments from the Artist:** While I wish he'd go ahead and verify his account and I'm still slightly skeptical whether it's him or not, for an [unverified Twitter](#) artist to gain 150,936 followers is impressive. If it's not him, whoever the person is always has interesting tweets about random topics and defends questionable topics like the idiotic blog about [Slim Thug](#). (I was disappointed by the latter, especially considering he's so quick to big up women on songs like "[Brown Skin Lady](#)" and encourage "more rap songs that stress purpose with less misogyny and less curses" on songs like "[More or Less](#)," two things [Slim Thug](#) does not do. Why a brotha who clearly makes more positive music about sistas would defend a man bunching black women in one misguided, stereotypical category is beyond me, yet another reason I hope his Twitter account is fake. I have the feeling it's not though.) Assuming it's really him and regardless of whether I agree with certain tweets, he is the most intriguing famous tweeter I've observed. (I've visited pretty much everybody considering I'm supposed to keep up with all things arts- and entertainment-related, but I only follow a handful of entertainment celebs.)

On the [Billboard charts](#), "[Eardrum](#)" hung around for 10 weeks and peaked at number two, selling 60,000 copies in the first week. His 2003 single "[Get By](#)" was on the Billboard charts for eight weeks in the Rap category. [LooktotheStars.com](#)

### Takeaways

Talib Kweli plays the lead voice in the anime cartoon "[Blokheadz](#)."

Talib Kweli is popularly known for working with Mos Def on the '90s CD "[Black Star](#)."

Talib Kweli's most commercially successful song is "[Get By](#)."

states the charities Talib Kweli has supported include the Chris Webber Foundation and the Make-a-Wish Foundation. He's also performed for the [Dare 2 Dream foundation](#), according to the *Chicago Tribune*. For the "[Call+Response](#)" documentary, the rapper performed "[Broken Glass](#)" in support of fighting against human slavery. According to the [documentary's website](#), "In 2007, slave traders made more money than Google, Nike and Starbucks combined." And if you're into cartoons, check him out as the lead character, Blak, on "[Blokheadz](#)."

**Other Black Music Month Selections:**

- June 1 Trey Songz
- June 2 Marvin Gaye
- June 3 Rakim Allah
- June 4 Brandy Norwood
- June 5 Tina Turner
- June 6 MC Lyte
- June 7 Lyfe Jennings
- June 8 Bill Withers
- June 9 Wyclef Jean
- June 10 Erykah Badu
- June 11 Chaka Khan
- June 12 Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott
- June 13 Ne-Yo
- June 14 Michael Jackson
- June 15 Mos Def
- June 16 Aaliyah
- June 17 Angie Stone
- June 18 Salt n' Pepa
- June 19 Nas
- June 20 Musiq Soulchild
- June 21 James Brown
- June 22 Heather Headley
- June 23 Whitney Houston
- June 24 Queen Latifah
- June 25 D'Angelo
- June 26 Al Green
- June 27 Mike-E of AfroFlow
- June 28 India Arie