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VON VARGAS

Media Contact:
Miranda Bryant
Miranda@98forward.com
313-685-0344

Award-Winning Artist Von Vargas Launches Album & Film Campaign, Backed by Ignite Capital

Baltimore-based artist pioneers direct-to-consumer model through his social impact hip-hop label

BALTIMORE, Aug. 22, 2025 — Award-winning hip-hop artist, producer and cultural strategist Von Vargas released "Cocked Crowns" on Aug. 21, a bold new hip-hop album, paired with a new short film entitled "Influence of a Crown." The multimedia project delivers a message of identity, resilience and victory, while breaking ground as the first direct-to-consumer release from a hip-hop label launched with seed capital support from Ignite Capital, a subsidiary of Innovation Works.

At the center of the release is "Influence of a Crown," a powerful short film that weaves the album's themes into a cinematic narrative of healing, self-worth and transformation. Both the film and album have been crafted to complement one another, and to uplift audiences by amplifying stories from underserved communities, while pushing a broader movement of identity, healing and empowerment.

"This isn't just an album, it's a declaration," said Von Vargas. "'Cocked Crowns' is me speaking, not just to my audience, but to people everywhere. If we truly knew we were royalty, we would treat each other with love instead of harm."

"This project is about reminding us of our worth and encouraging people to rise above struggle, oppression and depression to claim victory," added Vargas. "What's for me is for me, and I do not have to feel lesser than anyone else. I am royalty, too. We all are kings and queens."

The album blends cinematic hip-hop with soulful instrumentation and live arrangements to create a sound that is both contemporary and rooted in the tradition of socially conscious rap.

With sharp lyricism, live instrumentation and a cinematic soundscape, "Cocked Crowns" challenges industry norms by presenting a new model that demonstrates the potential of hip-hop to drive cultural impact and community empowerment without compromise. According to Vargas, the work serves as both a soundtrack and a movement, boldly proclaiming his message that "Victory is Yours. Victory is Ours."

"Cocked Crowns" is being distributed through a direct-to-consumer model under the Von Vargas Music label, the first hip-hop label to receive seed capital through Ignite Capital, whose mission is to close Baltimore's racial wealth divide by investing in visionary entrepreneurs. This milestone represents a new model for music

entrepreneurship, where socially driven art is not only made accessible to a broader audience, but also funded and scaled.

Why it matters

- **Baltimore's resilience:** The campaign is rooted in Baltimore, designed to inspire and uplift local communities first.
- **Mission-based label funding:** Von Vargas Music is the first hip-hop label with seed funding from Ignite Capital, a fund dedicated to closing Baltimore's racial wealth divide.
- **Cultural impact:** The project positions hip-hop as a vehicle for healing and empowerment in communities too often shaped by trauma and inequality.
- **Proven creative leader:** Vargas's work has been featured on ESPN, Peacock TV, CNN, BET and CBS Sports. He has also produced music for campaigns with UnitedHealthcare and the American Cancer Society.
- **Award recognition:** Vargas has been honored with a Baltimore County Citation for Outstanding Community Impact. He is also the recipient of the 2024 Gold Hermes Creative Award and the 2024 MarCom Gold Award.

Leading up to the launch

Before the official release of "Cocked Crowns," Von Vargas engaged in a series of community-focused events that laid the foundation for the campaign:

- **YouthWorks Program:** Met with Baltimore teens at MAP Technologies to discuss music, industry trends and career opportunities.
- **Mandela Washington Fellows Dinner:** Hosted 25 young African leaders for dinner, dialogue and a preview of "Influence of a Crown."
- **Women in Music Reception:** Celebrated female DJs and influencers in the DMV creative scene, honoring unsung heroines with awards.
- **Crowns for Dads:** Recognized fathers and male community leaders during Father's Day week in 2025, spotlighting fatherhood and positive role models.
- **Parkway Theater Screening:** Drew a packed crowd on North Avenue for two back-to-back screenings of "Influence of a Crown."

Campaign highlights

- **Short film: "Influence of a Crown"** — Festival, school and theater screenings
- **Community events** — Interactive Listening Sessions, Holiday Drive, Artist Talks, Meet & Greets, Ambassador Dinners, Intimate Shows
- **Merchandise line** — Hoodies, tees, pins, vinyl, Song NFTs and a companion tabletop book
- **Grassroots and digital outreach** — Podcasts and street teams

- **Streaming via JPAY** — Making the project accessible to incarcerated audiences
- **National visibility** — Activations will be included at South by Southwest (SXSW) and the American Association of Independent Music's (A2IM) Indie Week

The "Cocked Crowns" album and trailer of the short film "Influence of a Crown" are now available at www.vonnewalbum.com. The site features streaming links, merchandise and exclusive campaign content.

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About Von Vargas

Von Vargas is an award-winning hip-hop artist, producer and cultural strategist using music as a tool for hope and social change. His creative work has been featured by ESPN, CNN, BET, Peacock TV and CBS Sports, along with national campaigns for UnitedHealthcare and the American Cancer Society. A former Recording Academy trustee, he helped shape the GRAMMYs by contributing to the creation of the Best African Music Performance category and the Harry Belafonte Best Song for Social Change Award. As founder of Von Vargas Music, he champions direct-to-consumer innovations and socially driven artistry. Learn more about Von Vargas and the "Cocked Crowns" campaign at www.vonnewalbum.com.