

TRACKS

“Party Here”

Octavian

2018



By Mehan Jayasuriya

GENRE: Rap

LABEL: Drilla

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The Southeast London MC’s song is rich, colorful, and jubilant

Since its emergence in the early 2000s, grime has been most closely associated with East London, the home of foundational artists like Wiley and Dizzee Rascal. But in recent years, grime’s center of power has begun to shift, and at the moment, many of the city’s most charismatic MCs, including Stormzy, Novelist and the Section Boyz, all hail from south of the River Thames. Octavian might be the next addition to that list. He was born

in France, raised in Southeast London, and first debuted in 2016 with a promising debut mixtape, 22. The video for his recent single, “Party Here,” was allegedly made with just £50—a minor miracle, considering how visually rich, colorful, and jubilant the clip is. But the song itself is even more remarkable.

Over a minimal, bass-heavy beat that nods subtly toward garage and dancehall, Octavian holds court with a delivery that bridges grime’s hardscrabble tone with the melodic, half-sung style of U.S. pop rap. His voice cracks as he reaches for notes, but this only adds to his everyman charm. He sounds weary beyond his years, almost as if he’s surprised to still be here, when he raps “Me and my team, we know what it means to survive.” “Party Here” is all about juxtaposition—of British and American sounds, somber verses and ecstatic choruses, posturing and introspection. In synthesizing these disparate elements, Octavian has arrived at something that feels vital and new, a sound that, perhaps, Southeast London can call its own.