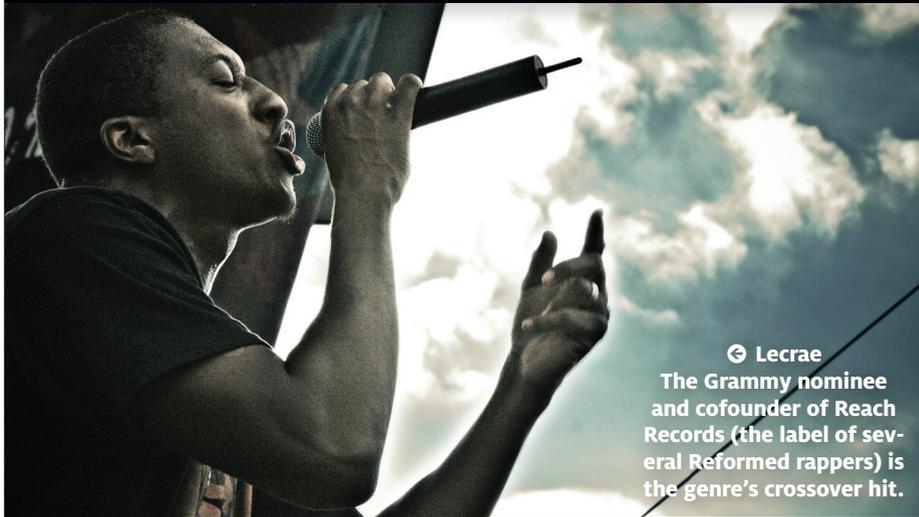


# SPOTLIGHT: Reformed Rap and Hip-Hop



📍 Lecrae

The Grammy nominee and cofounder of Reach Records (the label of several Reformed rappers) is the genre's crossover hit.

➔ Not since Maranatha! and contemporary praise emerged from Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel in the 1970s has a genre of Christian music become so associated with a specific stream of evangelicalism. And while not all Christian rappers are Reformed, nor do all see themselves as preachers and teachers working in a musical medium, the growing edge of the movement is explicitly taking its cues from Calvinist leaders. Several tracks have included direct references to (and even sermon clips from) John MacArthur, John Piper, C. J. Mahaney, and other pastors, and Curtis "Voice" Allen's recent rap on the Westminster Catechism (with theologian D. A. Carson) went viral in March—as did his Heidelberg Catechism rap last October.

## NOTABLE RAPPERS



### Trip Lee

The Lecrae protégé is taking a break from music to intern at Mark Dever's Capitol Hill Baptist Church and named an album after Justin Taylor's Reformed überblog, *Between Two Worlds*.



### Shai Linne

Know anyone else with a song defending limited atonement? ("If saving everybody was why Christ came in history / With so many in hell, we'd have to say he failed miserably.")



### Flame (Marcus Gray)

The Grammy nominee is getting a master's degree in biblical counseling from Southern Seminary and grew up in the Word of Faith movement.



### Voice (Curtis Allen)

Drew attention (and some criticism) to Reformed rap when he performed at Piper's Bethlehem Baptist Church in 2006. Now he's an assistant pastor in Maryland.

## Is it the sound of Reformed resurgence?

While hip-hop has become a staple of young Reformed conferences, it's not yet the dominant sound and it rarely appears in Reformed churches, said D. A. Carson. "I doubt that hip-hop with Reformed lyrics will ever become a primarily congregational corporate worship medium. It is a performance medium, and as such it is very useful for communicating with certain groups of people. . . . But that does not make it inappropriate for the more limited goals that it achieves quite strikingly at the moment."



## WHY IT HAS CAUGHT ON

The genre allows the rapper to cram loads of biblical and theological content in a single verse. I think we love hearing the Scripture 'preached' lyrically. Second, there is a 'cool factor,' which has helped bridge generational and cultural divides. But we can't explain this without acknowledging the sovereign workings of God.

— Thabiti Anyabwile, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman

Reformed hip-hop is a theologically driven masculinity movement. It says no to the prom songs to Jesus in ccm, no to whiny emo Christian music for hipsters, and no to empty, shallow, individualistic Christian music lacking theological content produced out of Nashville.

— Anthony Bradley, associate professor of theology and ethics at The King's College and author of *Liberating Black Theology*

### Martin Luther, the first reforming rapper:

In the 1500s he used rhyme, meter, and melody to teach the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and other truths, and "to give the young . . . something to wean them away from love ballads and carnal songs and teach them something of value in their place."