

R.I.P. DJ Kay Slay

Hip-hop pioneer DJ Kay Slay passed on April 17th at age 55 after battling COVID-19 for months. Slay, who was born Keith Grayson, grew up in New York City during hip-hop's earliest days when the Bronx was still Mecca for the art. The young Slay was inspired by DJs making breakbeats and the Zulu Nation which thrust him into becoming a graffiti artist tagging the city with his Dez moniker. He was featured in the films *Wild Style* and *Style Wars* in the '80s because of his days as a spray can auteur.

The name Kay Slay was born after Dez faded away simultaneously with the city's condemnation of graffiti. The legendary mixtapes he became known for started in the '90s after he served time in prison for dealing drugs. DJs would make blend tapes and let the music speak for itself but Slay injected his big personality into his productions and became as important as the artists he featured. His popular Drama Hour radio show on Hot 97 ran for two decades and became its own institution in the city. Slay's unapologetic banter and promotion of beefs between rappers made his Drama King title well-earned. At the heart of the entertainment aspect of his work was a fierce dedication to respecting rap's roots and educating others about the culture. Last year he completed an almost impossible posse dream with his "Rolling 110 Deep" single that featured 110 rappers. In December of 2021, around the same time he became ill with COVID-19, *The Soul Controller* album was released.