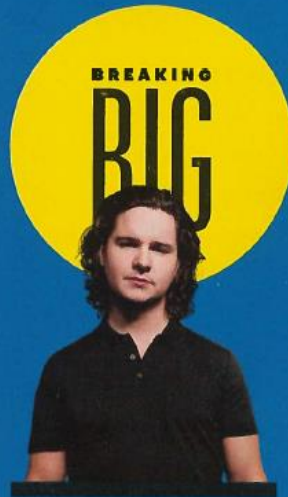


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Meet "7 Years" Singer Lukas Graham

How a Danish hippie crafted one of the year's surprising hit singles. BY MADISON VAIN

Lukas Graham Forchhammer has a backstory that's practically made for a music biopic. Raised in Copenhagen's self-governing hippie commune Christiania, where marijuana is openly sold, the singer-songwriter studied classical music as a kid, smoked his first blunt at 12, and was turned on to American hip-hop. "I knew we were different," says Graham, now 27. "[But] when I first heard rap, I understood that someone else was angry and afraid."

You can hear that hip-hop influence on "7 Years," the soul-pop single from his band, Lukas Graham. The track, which is No. 1 on *Billboard's* Hot 100 and has earned 271 million Spotify streams, was inspired by his unconventional and tough upbringing, marked by the 2012 death of his dad. "I just started singing, 'Once I was 7 years old...' when I heard the melody," says Forchhammer, who wrote it with a crew of his friends. "Like, eight people ended up drinking wine and writing together for hours."

That communal vibe is all over his group's self-titled debut (out now). And while the four-some are taking off—they've appeared on *Conan* and *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* and are touring the U.S. this summer—success isn't a buzzkill. "I grew up wearing secondhand clothes and eating leftovers, and I was so happy. Five-star hotels and private pickups haven't changed that."