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Los Angeles Times

Nate Dogg dies at 41; West Coast rapper created the blend of singing-rapping known as G-funk, Nate Dogg, born Nathaniel D. Hale in Long Beach, gained attention for two tracks on Dr. Dre's 1992 debut 'The Chronic.' He lent his baritone vocals to hits by Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg and Warren G and earned a Grammy nomination for the track 'Regulate' in 1995.

by Gerrick D. Kennedy and Valerie J. Nelson, Los Angeles Times, March 17, 2011



[Nate Dogg arrives at an awards ceremony in 2003. He honed his singing skills in his church's gospel choir and his rapping at Long Beach Polytechnic High School.](#) (Fred Prouser / Reuters)

Hip-hop singer Nate Dogg, who along with Snoop Dogg and Warren G is credited with crafting the blend of singing and rapping now known as G-funk, has died. He was 41.

Nate Dogg, who was born Nathaniel D. Hale, died Tuesday at a Laguna Niguel care facility of complications from multiple strokes, said his attorney, Mark Geragos.

By lending his gruff baritone vocals to ubiquitous hooks on hits by Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg and Warren G, Nate Dogg rose to prominence along with the West Coast rap scene that was brewing in the early 1990s.

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He first gained attention for two tracks on Dr. Dre's 1992 multi-platinum debut, "The Chronic," and quickly became the go-to crooner for hooks on rap albums from 50 Cent, Eminem, Ludacris and Fabolous. He also frequently collaborated with Tupac, as well as Snoop Dogg and Warren G.

[Warren G and Nate Dogg](#) earned a Grammy nomination for the 1995 gangsta-rap track "[Regulate](#)," one of three nominations he eventually received.

"There was a point where you couldn't even come out with a song with a hook on it, and be from the West Coast, without him on it," Jermaine Hall, editor in chief of Vibe magazine, told The Times.

The West Coast rap scene "was built on [Nate Dogg](#)," said [Power 106 disc jockey Big Boy](#), who hosts a syndicated morning radio program on KPWR-FM (105.9). "He was very crucial to the birth of that."

After signing with Death Row Records, the singer released his double-disc solo debut, "G-Funk Classics Volume 1 & 2" in 1998.

Yet his solo career never matched the success he experienced as a collaborator. Label and legal drama at Death Row Records marred his debut effort, and his album was shelved for two years.

The release was a top 20 R&B and hip-hop album. It also contained the singles "Never Leave Me Alone" and "Nobody Does It Better," a Warren G-assisted hit.

Nate Dogg remained optimistic about his solo career, telling The Times in 1998 that he did not plan to compromise his slow, deep-voiced R&B crooning.

"I don't know how to do nothing else," he said. "If it's not broke, I'm not going to try to fix it."

[News of his death](#) struck an immediate chord in the hip-hop community.

"We lost a true legend" of hip-hop and R&B, Snoop Dogg wrote on his Twitter account late Tuesday night, calling him "one of my best friends."

At last year's Rock the Bells hip-hop festival in San Bernardino, Snoop Dogg videotaped the crowd singing Nate Dogg songs and told them that he planned play the tape for the hospitalized singer, [who had strokes in 2007 and 2008](#).

[DJ Skee](#), a disc jockey for KIIS-FM (102.7) who has a weekly show on Sirius XM satellite radio, called Nate Dogg "a master."

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"He created his own subgenre," Skee said, referring to G-funk. "His legacy is as big as anyone's in hip-hop."

Born Aug. 19, 1969, in Long Beach, Nate Dogg honed his singing skills in his church's gospel choir and his rapping at Long Beach Polytechnic High School, where he met Snoop Dogg.

At 16, Nate Dogg dropped out of high school and joined the Marines but went AWOL after three years. After a dishonorable discharge, he returned to Long Beach in 1990 to focus on music.

Because he was unable to find work, he told The Times in 1996, he sold drugs to pay for housing until he, Snoop Dogg and Warren G could make demo tapes under the group name 213, Long Beach's area code at the time. They eventually released one album together, 2004's "The Hard Way."

One demo made its way to Warren G's half-brother, Dr. Dre, who signed Snoop Dogg and Nate Dogg to the then-fledgling Death Row Records.

Nate Dogg's 1996 single, "Never Leave Me Alone," seemed to address his troubles. It has the feeling of a conventional love song but tells the story of a father facing prison under California's three-strikes law and wondering if he'll still have the love of his companion and infant son.

After a three-week trial in 1996, a Long Beach jury acquitted [Nate Dogg](#) on one count of armed robbery and couldn't reach a verdict on a second. The rapper maintained the arrests were the result of mistaken identity.

Four years later, he was arrested for allegedly kidnapping his girlfriend from her mother's house, assaulting her and setting a car on fire. The charges were dismissed in 2001, and he pleaded no contest to a lesser charge of possessing an unmarked firearm.

"Boys need fathers and you can't do that in jail," Nate Dogg told The Times in 1996. "Becoming a father changed my outlook and gave me a whole other reason to be around."

In his lyrics in the 1990s, he frequently referred to his then-young sons, Nigel and Nate Jr.

The singer became known for sharp suits and snazzy derbies, and once said he had 230 hats.

"It's just me having fun," he told USA Today in 2001, six years before his first stroke. "You only get one life, and I'm living it."

Information on survivors was not immediately available.

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