

Cool Without Permission: The Cool Kids

E-Man Bates

January 5, 2026

Imagine, it's the mid-2000's again. Instead of Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, we're highlighting our top 8 friends on Myspace. Spotify and Apple Music aren't a thing yet, so we're forced to purchase music from iTunes, a physical record store, or risk giving our computer the digital equivalent of stage-four cancer by downloading music from file-sharing sites such as LimeWire. At this time, what if I told you that two artists and soon-to-be friends from the Midwest who connected through Myspace were about to help usher in a new era of hip hop we refer to as "The Blog Era." I would be referring to *Sir Michael Rocks* and *Chuck Inglish* of *The Cool Kids*.



Photo of The Cool Kids performing as the crowd of the Magic Bag feeds off the energy.



Chuck English(Left) and Sir Michael Rocks(Right) of The Cool Kids interacting with the crowd at the Magic Bag in Ferndale, MI

The Cool Kids were, and still are, a throwback and a breath of fresh air in hip hop. A healthy blend of a nod to the Golden Era of Hip Hop, sharp punchlines, creative visuals, and a fresh style that puts The Cool Kids in a league of their own. Sir Michael Rocks hails from Matterson, Illinois(just south of Chicago), and Chuck English from Detroit, Michigan. The group's lore began on Myspace when Mikey and Chuck interacted over a beat Chuck produced, which led to an in-person meeting and, in turn, a multi-hour recording session in Chicago. Soon after, they grew from collaborators to real-life friends. Detroit and Chicago have always had a friendly rivalry in music, ranging from blues, gospel, and jazz. Still, none are more widely debated than the origins of Detroit Techno and Chicago House music, and the influence each has on the other, which paves the way for two great cities with rich musical history to come together. The timing couldn't have been better since the landscape of how consumers found music was about to change.

The Blog Era refers to a time when fans began to take power away from music-industry execs and became the gatekeepers themselves through blogs. Websites such as *2DopeBoyz*, *HotNewHipHop*, and the now-defunct *NahRight* were the tastemakers. They helped pave the way for new artists such as *Kendrick Lamar*, *Drake*, *J. Cole*, *Big Sean*, *Danny Brown*, *Odd Future*, *Tyler, the Creator*, *Earl Sweatshirt*, *Kid Cudi*, *Mac Miller*, *Wale*, *Wiz Khalifa*, *Curren\$y*, and so many more coming fresh off the heels of the white-hot rise of the dirty south wave and ringtone era.

The Cool Kids released their first full album, *The Bake Sale*, in 2008, an album that still stands the test of time and remains a staple of the Blog Era of Hip Hop. This album was also responsible for the Cool Kids' entry into the pop culture realm, their 07' single, *Black Mags*, which had been featured in a TV commercial for Rhapsody, and *88*, which Fool's Gold Records



Sir Michael Rocks of The Cool Kids interacting with the crowd at The Magic Bag.

picked up in a single deal featured in the video game *NBA Live 2008* and *MLB 2K8*. Another song from *The Bake Sale*, “*Mikey Rocks*,” was also featured in an episode of the HBO series *Entourage*. The Cool Kids are closely associated with Sports, Skate, and Streetwear culture as tastemakers in their own right.

At the core, The Cool Kids operate on the ethos of cool without permission. It’s one thing to have music and aesthetics that are trending for the time, but it’s a whole other thing to create your own and not waver due to pressures of what it is to be considered an “industry standard.” With The Cool Kids, the flex is in the creativity and building a core following rather than playing the numbers game and riding the waves. What makes The Cool Kids cool is the realism, the fact that they put their own spin on classic boom bap production with realistic bars, and package it in a way where it’s still fresh every time you press play.

After six mixtapes and two albums, there was an extended hiatus, and fans thought we wouldn’t hear anything from them as a collective. Both continued and championed each other’s solo endeavors and were featured on each other’s solo projects. In 2016, Chuck English announced via X(Formerly Twitter) in a series of tweets, leading with “I called Mikey, and nothing would feel better than us being the originators again. The Cool Kids are back forreal.” It’s no secret that each group has its own set of challenges behind the scenes: many break up for various reasons, some may not even be that close to each other when the cameras are off, and the fans have cleared the venue. Still, what I’ve gathered is that their friendship has remained tight through the turbulent times.



Chuck English(Left), Sir Michael Rocks(Right), of The Cool Kids, on stage with DJ Killa Squid(behind booth)

A full circle moment is that in 2025, they landed a deal with A-Trak's Fool's Gold Records, with whom they previously had a single deal for the *The Bake Sale* single, 88. In the late 2000's, during the rise of the blog era, A-Trak served as the tour DJ for Ye(Formerly Kanye West), so the timing wasn't necessarily right for the focus to be there, however, their most recently released 15 track album, *Hi Top Fade*, and the recent conclusion of a 6-city tour with multiple sold out dates shows that though the times have changed, some things don't. The way we consume music has gone through several stages. The way we may interpret success in the digital world is viewed with inflated numbers; even the way we interact with each other has changed, but The Cool Kids are still effortlessly cool without permission.

All images photographed by Emmanuel E-Man Bates.