

Get in trouble, as Thebe Kgositsile did from time to time, and you end up spending your time in a separate house — the bus barn — more or less alone, waiting to be allowed to rejoin the group. Mostly he would get into trouble for sneaking onto the Internet, trying to check in on his other life, 5,000 miles away. Before leaving his native Los Angeles he'd made a name for himself as Earl Sweatshirt, the most intense and talented rapper in Odd Future, the crew that in the last two years has helped upend hip-hop business models, remade ideas about the meaning of the rap underground and stoked the hip-hop culture wars as no act in recent memory has, thanks to its

rowdy, outlandish and sometimes offensive content and its motormouth frontman Tyler, the Creator. Much of the early Odd Future buzz centered around Earl Sweatshirt, whose video for "Earl" was a teen-rebel fantasia of drug use and other misbehavior. A provocateur with a dry wit and an outrageously dexterous gift for wordplay, he was a clear inheritor of Eminem's macabre humor and Lil Wayne's dyspeptic logorrhea. He was a savvy, schooled rapper: gross, entrancing and thrilling. And also one of the only pop mysteries left. By the time Odd Future began performing and doing press, he was nowhere to be seen. In a time of netflow speed information flood, Earl Sweatshirt's absence he was sent to Samoa by his mother — a striking rarity. Returned to Los Angeles in February maybe more popular than he would have been if he'd never left. In his absence Odd Future had used the Internet to trump old ways of doing things. Earl Sweatshirt, by largely staying off the Internet, found himself benefiting from all that had happened and with a bully **pulpit in front of him.**

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**What Would
He Say
Next?**