

Rise: The Academy of Music and Dance

Lodhville Production
Written by Jonathan F McGinnis

Logline:

Rise is a high-stakes drama centered around music mogul King Illy. When his final album flops after the death of his ghost writer, desperate to build a different legacy outside of music, King opens a performing arts academy in Oakland only to discover his true purpose may lie in inspiring the next generation. Talent meets preparation determination and hustle and the number one question gets asked. How bad do you want it?

***Rise: The Academy of Music and Dance** is a high-stakes urban drama set in modern-day Oakland, California. I wanted to Blend grit and realism and the kinetic energy of music, dance, and ambition. Rise will explore themes of grief, reinvention, mentorship, and the cost of greatness set against the vibrant backdrop of the bay area the city that raised me and sparked my creative passion and interest. As a kid i would listen to Carlos Santana and Jimi Hendrix the followed with hip hop and with this show i want to not only highlight the greatness of the Bay Area but also tell a captivating story with characters I developed from personal people in my life.*

1. King Illy

- **Age:** 42
- **Role:** Lead / Music Mogul / Founder of Rise Academy
- **Background:** A former chart-topping hip-hop legend from Oakland, King Illy now in the aftermath of his career's collapse. His last album tanked after the death of his ghostwriter Zeek, and the music world started to forget him. In a desperate move to protect his legacy—and maybe find himself again—he opens a performing arts academy to cultivate the next wave of raw talent.
- **Personality:** Commanding, sharp, brooding, brilliant.
- **Motivation:** To resurrect his name and empire, and uncover whether he has anything left to give the culture.
- **Conflict:** He's never had to teach, only dominate and now he's surrounded by young talent that mirrors who he used to be and he's struggling to be the leader he wants to be.
- **Visual Aesthetic:** A blend of old-school legend and new-school boss: tailored jackets, gold-framed glasses, Cuban links, think of Jay-Z mixed with T.I with a splash of Usher.

Zay'Lee

- ***Age:** 17 (Senior in high school)*
- ***Role:** Lead student / Young lyricist*
- ***Background:** Raised in East Oakland by a single mom. Gifted with natural rhythm and unmatched freestyling talent.*
- ***Personality:** Confident, emotional, hungry, rebellious but loyal*
- ***Motivation:** To be heard. To break the cycle. To prove that pain has purpose.*
- ***Conflict:** Struggles between his loyalty to street roots and the new structure of Rise Academy*
- ***Visual Aesthetic:** Bucket hat, headphones, hoodie with worn-out sneakers; bars written in notebooks napkins anything ge can use to write. Think 8 mile Em. meets Jamal Lyon From empire.*

Zhane

- ***Age:*** 35 (*Had Zay'Lee at 18*)
- ***Role:*** Zay'Lee's mother / *Quiet pillar of the story*
- ***Background:*** *Dreams deferred. Was once a promising singer before life shifted course. Works multiple jobs to support her son, rarely thinking of herself.*
- ***Personality:*** *Fierce, no-nonsense, emotionally intelligent, loving but firm*
- ***Motivation:*** *To give Zay'Lee a chance she never had*
- ***Conflict:*** *Distrusts King Illy's motives—fears her son will be used and discarded*
- ***Visual Aesthetic:*** *Braids pulled back, grocery bags in hand, yet always walking with purpose*

Oakland School for the Arts (OSA) – aka Rise Academy

Type: Real performing arts high school

Description: Located in downtown Oakland, OSA is a dynamic, urban campus housed inside the historic Fox Theater. The space features dance studios, recording booths, art rooms, and a performance stage. It is reimagined as Rise Academy, a private performing arts school founded by King Illy.

Purpose in story: The central stage for transformation. This is where raw youth energy collides with King Illy's high standards—and where both sides begin to change.

Tone: Bold, electric, creative chaos with glimpses of structure

Filming Feasibility:  Very producible — real location, local access possible

Visual Style: Vibrant street meets conservatory—murals, mirrors, hallways echoing with beats and vocal warmups

Vibe: FAME meets Euphoria meets Step Up: High Water meets empire.

EPISODE 1 – “Legacy Ain’t Free” (Pilot)

Music mogul cultural Icon King Illy shocks the press by announcing his retirement and opening a performing arts academy in downtown Oakland. After a viral freestyle battle catches his attention, a gifted teen named Zay’Lee is invited to audition — but Zay’s mother, Zhane, pushes Zay to apply even though Zay feels at 18 he should have a job to start working and paying bills so that his mom isnt working 3 jobs

Main Themes: Legacy, skepticism, new beginnings

EPISODE 2 – “The Test”

Zay’Lee gets into RISE after his powerful poetic audition. As he prepares to attend the academy he gets a concerning letter from a medical facility noted for his mother. Confused he approaches her with the letter only to find out his mother has a tumor on her breast and she may have to get radiation treatment causing her to have to cut down on work. Frustrated, angry and confused Zay decides the only logical thing for him to do is to not attend RISE and find a job ASAP to help with bills. With the deadline for enrollment to RISE only 2 weeks away Zay makes a choice that will change his future forever.

EPISODE 3 – “Battle Lines”

After a video gets out about a situation that happened on campus because of battle rapping King decides to ban street-style battling on campus. Eager to prove his skills as a MC Zay'Lee and other students take the battle underground, testing loyalty and exposing skills of others in the academy. When footage leaks online, King has a idea that he's sure will help cut some tensions but when the idea takes a turn king is forced to reckon with the battle culture in his city he once helped build.

Main Themes: Rebellion, control, authenticity

EPISODE 4 – “Ghosts in the Booth”

King finds himself Haunted by the loss of his ghostwriter Zeek, Illy visits their old studio for the first time since the funeral where he finds something that makes king question Zeeks death. Meanwhile Zay'Lee stumbles on an unreleased verse from Zeek that inspires a breakthrough style that helps create a break through in he rhyming ability. In the midst of Zay at school his mothers tumor situation has worsened and she's afraid to tell her son that the tumor on her breast is now cancerous per her last visit. While out Zhane runs into King and they have a very real conversation about Zeek.

Main Themes: Grief, legacy, inspiration

EPISODE 5 –“What We Carry”

Zay’Lee notices the physical shift in his mother but can’t put his finger on it, especially as he rides the high of his recent creative growth. While Zhane, quietly battles her diagnosis, she begins to start pulling away emotionally. Afraid to burden her son, Meanwhile, King starts digging into Zeek’s death after the clues he found in the studio—and what he uncovers begins to disturb him. At school, Zay’s new performance style earns him praise and envy, leading to rising tension with another student whose pain hasn’t found a voice yet. King visits Zhane at her job to follow up on their last conversation, he finds himself drawn into a much deeper connection and finally starts to see her strength beyond the surface.

Main Themes: Secrets, sickness, emotional distance, uncovering truth

EPISODE 6 – “The Price of Truth”

As Rise Academy prepares for its first major public showcase, tensions ripple beneath the surface. Zay’Lee is selected to headline—but the piece he’s written exposes painful truths about the streets, the academy, and even King Illy himself. King is pressured by donors to tone down the content for media appeal, sparking an identity crisis: protect the brand or protect the truth. Meanwhile, Zhane finally breaks down and tells Zay about her cancer, just hours before he takes the stage. With his heart fractured and his future uncertain, Zay delivers the most honest performance of his life—unfiltered, raw, and revolutionary. Illy watches from the wings, realizing the next generation doesn’t need to be protected—they need to be heard.

Main Themes: Truth vs. image, vulnerability, transformation, artistic freedom

EXT. CITYSCAPE - OAKLAND, CA - DAY - 2 YEARS AGO. 2006

Flashback:

A sweeping shot of the city. The skyline of Oakland buzzes with life. A sleek Rolls Royce glides through the streets, curtains drawn in the back. Inside, KING ILLY gazes out the window, his expression pensive as Tupac keep you head up plays softly in the background.

The car makes a right, a left, then another right before the driver smoothly brings it to a halt. The DRIVER, a African American man in his mid-60s, steps out and opens the door for King.

DRIVER

Welcome to your empire, King.

KING ILLY steps out slowly, commanding attention. Fist pumps the driver as The sunlight hits his diamonds adorning his neck, ear, and wrist, scattering dazzling reflections

KING ILLY

Thank you, brother. Every day is a good day at the office.

He strides confidently toward a towering building in downtown Oakland, the centerpiece of today's meeting. Reporters and fans swarm, their energy palpable. as King makes his way through his building he reaches the auditorium and approaches his podium, taking in the crowd with a practiced ease. both hands go in the air to calm the crowd as if they were a symphony and he was the conductor. Nobody said a word.

KING ILLY

Good afternoon, everybody.

For a moment, he scans the crowd, his gaze softening into a brief, familiar smile, as if struck by a fleeting memory. He pulls a folded speech from his pocket, studies it for a beat, then tucks it away.

KING ILLY

I had this big speech prepared for y'all, but you know what? Everything is everything.

His tone is casual yet impactful. He steps back from the mic, placing a thoughtful hand on his chin, as the crowd begins to murmur, confused by the pause. Then, King steps forward again, a wry smile forming on his lips.

KING ILLY

So, look, ok, y'all love the Empire, right? Well,
I've decided it time to expand my empire.

MARK:

King, King can. You elaborate?

King Looks at reporter with a sharp grin indicating excitement for the reporters question.

KING ILLY

You finally asked me a good question Mark good job.

The room breaks out in laughter including mark

KING ILLY:

Mark baby I'm just kidding with you, you know its all love everybody give it up for mark.

The room claps and laughs at the moment showcasing Kings gift of controlling the room and cutting the tension. Suddenly kings stops laughing and looks in the crowd preparing to tell the news.

KING ILLY:

Alright, Alright all Jokes aside. Thank you Mark for being a champ. As of today effective immediately I King Sir Illy the first. Will be resigning as CEO.

The reporters erupt, cameras flashing in a storm of light. Voices overlap as questions pour in, excitement rippling through the crowd like electricity. The funny playful energy has been sucked out the room and replaced with questions mounted on confusion.

Mark steps forward, his voice rising above the others.

MARK:

King why are you doing this? What does that mean for your legacy. Are you drinking again?
Late 20s Jr reporter named Joe from a local Oakland reporting agency.

JOE:

Wait wait King so what does this mean for You?

you've retired from music and now leaving the Empire? does this mean your coming out of retirement?

The room buzzed with excitement, the kind that crackles in the air like a live wire, charged enough to overwhelm anyone unaccustomed to its energy. But King, true to his name, sat poised and commanding—these were the moments he thrived on, riding a high that only he could own. He wore his smirk like a secretive crown, knowing his announcement would shake the kingdom.

He let the anticipation simmer, taking deliberate steps back as if savoring the tension in the room. Adjusting his custom Gucci suit with a practiced ease, he exhaled, his voice cutting through the chaos like a smooth riff in an otherwise frenetic song. His eyes locked on the cameras, and the crowd leaned in, hanging on his every word.

KING IILLY:

Yeah....about that...I am still retired. My last album made sure of that. This go round...I'm Starting a art school.

Without waiting for the room to process his words, King turned on his heel, exuding the confidence of someone who knew he'd just stolen the show. The reporters erupted, their shouts overlapping in a chaotic storm of questions, but King didn't look back. Security moved in like a well-rehearsed dance, creating a barrier as he strode toward the exit.

INT. BEDROOM – MORNING – 2008 Oakland California

The morning sun filters through the curtains as the sharp buzz of an alarm clock breaks the stillness—it's 6:30 AM. In a modest room in Oakland, ZAY'LEE (18), a high school senior, stirs awake. His room is a shrine to hip hop history, with walls covered in iconic posters: Tupac, Biggie, Migos, and King Illy—his ultimate idol. The echoes of rap legends fill the space, a constant source of inspiration for the young dreamer. Each poster serves as a reminder of where he comes from and where he hopes to go.

The smooth, soulful rhythm of Roy Ayers' "Everybody Loves the Sunshine" plays softly on a nearby radio.

RADIO

(Singing)

"My life, my life, my life in the sunshine

Contact Information

**Thanks for reviewing *Rise: The Academy of Music
and Dance***

Created by: Jonathan McGinnis

Email: jonathanmcginnis910@gmail.com

Phone: (916) 696-9087

Lodhville Production LLC