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Byas, John and Danny Martinez

Bronx African American History Project
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Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison
Interviewees: John Byas and Danny Martinez
Date: March 19, 2009

[BEGIN TAPE 1; SIDE A]

Dr. Mark Naison (MN): Hello, today is March 19th, 2009, we're here at Fordham University with deejay Jazzy Jay who is one of the famous pioneering Bronx deejays. Who has traveled all over the world with his music but I've also just found out he is a professional union carpenter who's worked in some of the biggest projects in New York and has had a very interesting life. So we're going to start with the beginning. Could you please say your name and spell it for us, your non-deejay name?

John Byas (JB): My government status is—I hope ya'll can hear—is Juan John Byas, B-Y-A-S. Basically I grew up, you know what I'm saying, lived life to the fullest and I'm here right now trying to just--.

MN: Okay, well let's start off with your family. You, you told us before you grew up in South Carolina. What was your childhood like in South Carolina?

JB: Oh, man South Carolina was like, you know, it was, you know, country boy, you know, bare feet running around. Weather usually always hot, you know, chickens, chickens in the coop, pigs in the hog pen. We grew everything from sugar cane to peanuts, watermelon, corn; you know all of that stuff. My grandmother used to just grow that stuff right out there in the fields. We had acres and acres of land.

MN: So you owned your own land?

JB: Yes, we had, we had land that was kind of like passed down to us, like from the slavery era. It was that, that swamp land, you know we were the Geechee people we had that swamp land that actually nobody wanted back then. Now it's a big, you know it's a big tourist attraction but, you know it was like basically everybody—I lived in a, more or less like a shack. You know what I'm saying? And as the years went on, you know, additions went on to the shack to kind of

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make it more homely but I remember like you know, just like looking—you could look through the floorboard and see the chickens underneath the house walking around. The whole full nine, you know, the dusty thing. Basically the stove was, you put wood in the stove and that's how you cooked your food. The whole full nine. Wasn't no plumbing, you wasn't flushing the toilet. You had an outhouse that you had to go to outside and you know what I'm saying? And that was basically it. The water, there was no water, you had to go outside, pump the water, bring it back to the house in buckets and all of that. It wasn't until like later on, you know down the line, that you know, we got, you know, the modern conveniences of plumbing and all of that stuff.

MN: And you didn't have electricity?

JB: No, basically everything was like you know, you know, the lamps with the kerosene lamps with the--.

MN: Right, you used to have a radio in the house?

JB: Oh, yes, we had battery-operated radio.

MN: Battery operated radio.

JB: Yes, a radio that everybody used to gather round, but more or less I think even, you know because I was, you know, I was, I was real young at that time, I kind of vaguely remember those eras, you know what I'm saying because, I think when I moved, when I actually moved from South Carolina, I think I was like about, maybe about 5 years old.

MN: What year were you born? What was your date of birth?

JB: In 1961, November 18th.

MN: Okay, now so what do you remember about the food you ate in South Carolina?

JB: A lot of pork. A lot of park, a lot of chicken, you know, it was like a, what we call field chicken. Field chicken is a lot different than chicken you buy in supermarket, because you know,

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when you grab a chicken and you wring his neck and pluck all the feathers off, you ain't going to chop that up and throw it in a fryer because you'll pull out half your teeth trying to eat it. So like, a field chicken, you know, it was a different process. You know like I said I was real young, I didn't know the process until like later on. But, you know, it was like a lot of chicken that had to be kind of like boiled before you can even fry, the whole full nine. You know what I'm saying? And it was a lot of trading going on because like, it wasn't like, we went to the supermarket very often. So it was like, you know, somebody would come around, then get a list. So, you know, the one guy come around with his truck and then you know, he'd go visit all of the people in the community. Ms. Eula what do you want? Ms. So and So--? They'd go around and get all the deliveries for everybody, kind of bring it back and then more or less there was a lot of trading going on, like my grandmother she used to go stock up on sodas and beers and stuff like that, so she was like, kind of like the little mom and pop store, so people used to stop by, oh Ms. Eula, that's what they used to call her, Aunty Eula, Ms. Eula, I need some sodas. Sodas were like a nickel.

MN: Is your grandmother still down there?

JB: Yes, my grandmother she's still down there.

MN: Is she still alive?

JB: Yes, she's still alive.

MN: How old is she now?

JB: 98? Between 96-98, I don't know exactly but somewhere in that range. She still, she still is the sweetest person but still, will whip your ass if you get out of line. You know what I'm saying? She'll go in the field and get me one of them switches; you know what I'm saying? Pull it off a tree and you better not come back with something small because then she'll go out there

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and she'll get the whole tree and come back to whip your ass with it, you know what I'm saying?

So she's still feisty, she's still, she's still hanging in there doing her thing, you know.

MN: Now you said before when you were 5 or 6, you moved to join your parents in Harlem?

JB: Yes. They had moved up. They had moved up from, you know from—because you know like I said, you know the South at that time in the 60s it was still, you know, really, really segregated and the area we was in, you know, I didn't know too much about the, about the racial stuff and everything like that because I was too young to know about it. But you know, as when I, when I, when I moved up here to New York, then I, you know that's when I found out that all of this was going on. We were being hung from trees and all of that you know what I'm saying, which, at a young age was, you know, kind of disturbing to find all of that was out. And you were right there, but the area like I said, that we lived, they didn't even have a bridge, you had to take a boat to go from--.

MN: So you were on an island?

JB: Yes, we were on what's called Gullah Island, or what we called it, the natives of there, we call it Tomfrip.

MN: How do you spell it? T-O-M--?

JB: T-O-M-F-R-I-P.

MN: Tomfrip.

JB: Yes, Tomfrip. Frip Island, there was Gullah Island.

MN: Now are there bridges now?

JB: Yes, yes, now they got the modern bridges, you know, they probably two months away from putting a toll on there and start charging people, because it's more of a tourist.

MN: It's a resort area? Golf?

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JB: Golfing all of that. I remember when, you know, it was like, it was nothing from, but miles and miles of just black folks with you know with [inaudible] on their head, people walking around barefoot the whole full nine. You know, that was country living. You know, back then.

MN: Now, you, did you go to church down there?

JB: That's all there was man. Down South there, people are very religious, so it's like, I was practically born and raised in the church. From an infant I was back and forth to church. I remember going to church with my grandmother, and you know back then there wasn't no certain roads. Most of the roads were dirt roads; the main road was like, like, like you know you had to walk a ways to get to a main road where it was paved. And we used to walk through the woods, over the little, over the little, ravines and everything, didn't have no little overpass. You had a tree that they cut down and put over, so you had to walk over this like tree, to get over the waters or whatever the deal is. The church was like, you know, the wooden benches, or wooden floors. Kind of, kind of tin shack type situation.

MN: That was their music in the church?

JB: That's right, that's where I got all my music from. From the church. All of the, all of the influences that I, that I use in my music today--.

MN: Was there, was there rhythm in the church?

JB: You talking about black folks man--.

[Laughter]

JB: There's always rhythm where you got black folks.

MN: A church service in South Carolina, you have people singing but what else?

JB: You had people singing, you might have, might have a tambourine or two.

MN: A tambourine?

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JB: You might have somebody with a washboard. Washboard and a spoon. You might have somebody else with the string and the basin tub.

MN: So they made their own instruments?

JB: Oh, yes, yes, we had to because we was poor. I told you, there wasn't no or, we just po', P-O. O-R we couldn't even afford the rest of that.

MN: Now, did people get up and testify in church?

JB: All the time, testify, catch the Holy Ghost the whole thing.

MN: Speak in tongues?

JB: Yes, I remember I was one. I was just looked I remember seeing that was like, what's wrong these people, what's going on here man, you know? What' happening with these people, they jumping all over the place, sprawling out, you know what I'm saying? But you know, that was, that was the way, you know religious people celebrated their faith in the early South, you know what I'm saying? I wouldn't call it the early South, because I mean I wasn't around for the, you know, my grandmother was like maybe second generation free. You know, what I'm saying. That's how, you know, the land that we got, that we're on, it was like big time, free slaves, you know what I'm saying? So a lot of it was like you know horses, you know what I'm saying, plowing the fields, farms, the whole full nine, fisherman. So you know, to me it was a simpler time, you know, I wouldn't say it was a better time, but I think, taking into consideration the way the world has turned these days, I wish we could go back to some of those times.

MN: But you had enough to eat, and you had family, and you had people who cared about you.

JB: Yes, yes, yes you know. Always.

MN: Now, okay, so you go from the country in South Carolina to 149th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. What was that like for you?

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JB: Ah, big city was strange because I remember, I remember my grandmother brought me to New York. We landed in, what is it 42nd Street the Port Authority. And we took the bus up--.

MN: You took what is this, the Greyhound?

JB: Yes, we took the Greyhound?

MN: What did they pack for you for food on the Greyhound, do you remember that?

JB: Yes, you know I can't, I can't remember, the only thing I remember is because the only person I know, because I didn't really know my mother and father like that. I only knew my grandmother, so, you know her bringing me up here, for me to be with these strangers. She couldn't tell me that because she know I would, you know, even I wasn't going for--. I done ran out the house--. You know I'll never forget when I finally came up here and had to be with my mother and father, how I was just miserable because when she left out, you know what I'm saying, I wanted to leave with her. You know like, you leaving me with these strangers for, I don't know these people?

MN: So how many other kids were there in the house with you?

JB: Actually, there's 5 of us all together. I got 2 sisters and 2 brothers. I got 1 sister older than me, the rest of them are younger than me. And yes, I was the bully of the bunch, but you know what I'm saying, you know now, you know we all get a long. We got nice tight family unit. We don't, we don't always like see eye to eye on everything, but push comes to shove, crunch time situation, you don't want to mess with one of us because then you have to mess with all of us, type situation.

MN: So, how, how big was the apartment that you moved into in Harlem?

JB: In Harlem, we had a, what was it like a, like a 2 bedroom, you know, me, me, me and, and at that time my youngest brother Michael wasn't even born yet. And me, and my, my other brother

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Eddie was, he was a little infant, me and my 2 sisters, used to have to share a bed. You know what I'm saying? Share a bed, not a bedroom. A bed, you know what I'm saying, and then my mother and father had their room, along with you, with my other brother Eddie. You know, we were tight, we were tight. But you know what it is, you know, we, we came up from, you know from living like that, you know what I'm saying. Basically we were in an era where there were big families. My mother, my mother had all together there was 13 of them. You know what I'm saying, so it was like those families were just naturally bigger back then. You know so, you know, we were used to like, okay, going over to a cousin's house and 6 to a bed, you know what I'm saying? Grind up this way that way, whatever the situation is so, that wasn't nothing new. But you know, just like getting, getting used to the city life, it was a different thing. Seeing the big buildings and, you know what I'm saying.

MN: What sort of work did your father do?

JB: Auto mechanic. He was an auto mechanic. Auto mechanic, slash a he was, he was, he was racing cars for a while until he got into a big accident. And you know, I don't forget, I know one thing I'll never forget that always stuck with me, because I didn't know how it happened, I found out later on that he was in the accident, but it's like he had a, he's got like scars from—all the way down here and he had this patch, where he'd have to relieve all of the inflammation and everything. So you imagine seeing that as a young kid and it just confused me like, what the hell's going on?

MN: Now what was the—what was school like for you in Harlem, when you first went there?

JB: It was, it was tough but for me, I was kind of like always, one that always kind of like got in with the crowd. You know what I'm saying, like when I moved to Harlem it was just like, you know it was a clique, like you know this is the guy that's quick in school, okay. I was down with

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that clique. Every school I went to I was always in with the in crowd, more or less not the in crowd that just wanted to go to school and learn everything, not an in crowd that kind of like, these are, these are the kids that's running this school.

MN: The hang out crowd.

JB: The hang out crowd, the whole full nine, yes. So you know, I remember when I, when I first went to, when I went to elementary school and took a while before, you know I'm a country boy and coming in and I remember a lot of people, just, just like--. Not even like, just make fun of the way I talked, like, say that again, come here listen to how he talk. You know what I'm saying so it took me a while before I got rid of that country accent and I could actually just fit in.

MN: Now what was the ethnic mix in your school? Were there Latinos there?

JB: Yes, I went to 186 in Harlem it was like 145th Street between Amsterdam and Broadway and it was a mix of, you know, little bit of white, mostly Latino and majority black.

MN: And were the blacks mainly from the South? Or some West Indians too?

JB: A lot of them, a lot of them were like, not too many West Indians, I would say a lot of them were like, probably migrated from the South or whatever the deal is. But you know, what I'm saying more or less it was, it was like the large majority New York City urban, you know what I'm saying.

MN: Now what about the academic part, did that come easy to you? Or--?

JB: Well, I was always good with numbers. Math always came easy. I wasn't too great with, with the reading and social events like--. I go all around the world sometimes and I've got to still look on a map to find out where I am, or what region I'm in or whatever the deal is. But you know, you know more or less, the academics—I learned a lot because the teachers then, you know back then, it was a from what I see today, it was more of a different curriculum. They had

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a set plan on what you learned. Different textbooks I remember, after getting up as far as high school when I found a lot of that stuff was irrelevant that I had to learn all of them years. Like what the hell I was in the classroom for all of this time for--? But it was regular, for that time, it was the regular academic education that you get in a public school.

MN: Now, what were the streets like around your house and [inaudible] did you become like aware that there was a lot going on in the street?

JB: Oh, in Harlem it was always, Harlem was like, the city that never, you know the city within the city, you know what I'm saying, that was like the, you know you would so and so with his little put-put, putting down the block. And then next thing you know, you see the pimp coming down the block with the big El Dorado with the you know with the chrome on it all purpled-out with the shag fur. You know, a lot of people see these in the

Blaxploitation movies. They like wow, people used to dress like that in Manhattan? In the big fedoras like, I was like man I lived through all of that, you know, and those guys are like wow look at that car, look at his vines, you know what I'm saying? It was, it was a, you know it was a whole different, it was, it was, you know knew something was going on, you know. Harlem was like, you know the 60s like, you know, 50s and 60s you know Harlem was jumping it was the place. People with all the Cotton Club, you know the whole full nine. And it was like my introduction to like a—city life, you know what I'm saying. And New York City life, you know what I'm saying--.

MN: What about the music?

JB: Oh, music come on man. I grew up on that, you know, Gladys Knight and the Pips, the James Brown, course it was—I would say the biggest influence in my whole musical career because I mean I remember James Brown since I was in, in, in the cradle. You know what I'm

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saying? You know that type of stuff you know, the soul, the original rhythm and blues, that stuff you know.

MN: Was it played in your house also?

JB: All the time, all the time. My father would drive my mother crazy because when we, we would be going—we would get up on Sunday to go to church my father would come in from the, from the night before a little twisted and toasted and blast James Brown and, and, and all that stuff and my mother, that used to really tick her off, because he'd come in, alright, get us all up out of bed. Alright, come on in here and dance all you, you'd go on and be tired and okay Dad. And that was another thing, see like, it more family orientated like, like I grew up with a whole host of brothers and sisters of course, but a bunch of cousins and uncles and aunts.

MN: So you had a lot of people, your family in South Carolina up in--.

JB: Yes, yes, moved to New York, you know what I'm saying, uncles and aunts and you know when we get together on the weekend it was like every weekend was a party. The kids, it'd be like 20 kids and we all running all over the place--.

MN: Okay, now one of the things I always ask is describe the food at one of your family parties.

JB: Oh, it was never ending. And I mean, it was, it was chicken, ribs, collard greens, macaroni, potato salad, yams--. My mother, my grandmother, both of them on both sides, both excellent cooks, so all of that, that trickled down throughout all of the family. I mean even most of my uncles, even excellent cooks. So, all of these cooking minds in the one place at one time, it's going to be an explosion.

MN: So this was like, was it called the Byas Family or--?

JB: No, it was, we, you know, it was a couple of different--.

MN: What were some of the names?

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JB: Smalls, Washington, Byas, what was the other one--. Well you know the sisters went off and got married and you know this and that and blah, blah, blah. The sisters that were here in New York was my mother, Ernestine, her 2 sisters, Arabelle and Noreen and then later on the younger sister that came up to New York, Jenny. You know what I'm saying, but when they all got together, it was like them—all, my mother and all of her sisters were like, quote unquote kind looking, it was like all, all of my father, and all his friends come through. It's like oh yeah, you know, hook up with, hook up with one of the aunts. It was always that type party, you know. And they were, you know, I guess they were in there, and you know, met older 20s and 30s, you know what I'm saying because a lot of like you know, a lot of, a lot of like, people that came from the South, was having, was having children at earlier ages, you know what I'm saying. 16, 14, whatever you know.

MN: Now, now what church did you go to in Harlem?

JB: In Harlem we went to Greater Zion Hill Baptist Church.

MN: And where was that located?

JB: Originally 116th and Manhattan Avenue.

MN: Okay, so that's pretty far from—you know, it was a bus ride or--?

JB: Yes, yes a bus trip, train ride actually. That's like, I kind of like started traveling on my own because I used to go to church, I used to take my sister to church every Sunday on the train. So I started traveling on the train at the, at the age of like maybe, maybe, by myself probably like the age of 10 years old. You know, knowing the trains how to get around how to motivate around the city how to read the train map, how to read any kind of map, whatever. So basically, that's what I—and I started out in the, in the church choir and then also became the drummer later on. I started playing the drums.

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MN: Now did they use snare drums in the church or did they--?

JB: No, full drum set.

MN: Full drum set.

JB: Yes, full drum set in the church you know what I'm saying. When they found out—I first, first used to play the bongos, then when they found out that you know I had
Interest--.

MN: Now where did you learn the bongos?

JB: Just my, I guess it was, it was in my blood.

MN: Because, did they use hand, things like bongos in South Carolina?

JB: Yes, but of course.

MN: So they did.

JB: But even, I knew, that was what I was destined for because I remember even from, at a, at a early age when I used to live with my grandmother down there you know, 2,3—I can remember, I can recollect going in the, in the bottom of the cabinet, pulling out the pots and taking a couple-
-.

MN: Banging?

JB: Yes, lining up the pots on the floor, taking spoons and banging on them.

MN: Now, were you aware of like, the Puerto Rican men playing drums when you came to New York? Was that--?

JB: No.

MN: --something that made an impression on you?

JB: No, not really. I didn't even know what Puerto Rican was when I came, until I came to the Bronx.

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MN: Oh, so that's when you really--?

JB: Oh, yes when I was in Harlem, you know what I'm saying, matter of fact when I was in Harlem, I think I was in 1st grade, and, and, and I was just amazed, because I had this, this girl I had a crush on and her name was Rosalia and you know, that's, that's when you're young, you have no, no prejudice, you don't see people as white, black, Hispanic or whatever, you just see people as, oh well, this person is that person and you see people for what they really are. You don't start categorizing until you get older and you get taught. Okay, this person they're different than you, I didn't think Rosalia, okay she has, I was just like bizarre—because she had hair that came down, to almost to her ankle and to me she was just like the prettiest thing in the world. You know what I'm saying? I was like, never saw nothing like that.

MN: Wow.

JB: You know so--.

MN: It sounds like you had, you know this thing, where on the one hand you have this ability to connect with the hang out crowd, the street and you have this church side.

JB: Yes, yes, because you know what it is, is you know, you know, there was always the inner bad boy in me but also because of the way I was raised, that didn't take over my whole persona because more or less, I had the, I had the basic foundation, that, that, that was instilled within me, with, with my parents and how they brought me up, so I knew I couldn't stray from that and, and without disappointing everybody.

MN: But see that's a very powerful thing what you described. There's somebody who had an inner bad boy, but never let it totally take over.

JB: Oh, of course not.

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MN: And that was very common thing that I came across, you know, mainly with people a little older than you. You know, but really something that was very prevalent.

JB: Yes, yes, I mean you know, I got, come on, I was your typical, typical, you know boy, got in trouble all the time. I would do things wrong, the teacher had to bring me home from school a few times. And you know, and the thing about it was that, you know, all of that then I didn't know what's for my own good, but as I got older I was like, you know what, I'm glad that happened. I'm glad I, I went to church every Sunday even though I didn't want to go to church or whatever the deal is. Sometimes I didn't want to go blah, blah, blah, then after a while. I mean, we used to be in church, from like, like Sunday school 10 o'clock in the morning until sometimes 12, 1 o'clock the next, you know, in the morning. You know what I'm saying, just like--.

MN: You'd be there all day?

JB: All day. Sunday School, morning service, afternoon service, then evening, evening service [inaudible] of time. Then on those special occasions where you know we had the choir there, we, we would go to different places, we'd have choir competitions, where we had the baddest--.

MN: Did you have a good gospel choir in that church?

JB: Oh, yes, yes we had, we had, our gospel choir was always in, in, in the top of the competition, or you know, a couple of years we won the competitions. You know, we, we were up there with the best, we traveled, we traveled, went down to North Carolina for a competition and all of this stuff. And then it was the aspect--.

MN: Is that church still there?

JB: Greater Zion? It's moved now it's on 125th Street because the, the it was there for quite some years, I think they just moved maybe about a couple years. I haven't been there in so long,

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I know my mother's probably going to look at this, yes, you know you ain't been there--.

Because my mother, where she was just like a usher then, and you know, just going there getting us to go every week to Sunday School and everything like that, now my mother's like, she's like the mother of the church. Because she's been there for so long.

MN: Now does she still live in the Bronx?

JB: Yes, she still lives in the Bronx River Projects.

MN: We should interview her.

JB: Oh, please don't. Please don't, please don't.

[Laughter]

JB: You don't want to do that, she don't like talking to people.

MN: So okay, now at what point describe yourself a Harlemit? When you said I'm from Harlem and you realized that carried weight?

JB: Yes, well you know, Harlem was just like upbeat you know. To me, like you know, that's all I knew. Coming from down South that was my, that was my initiation to like, yo, you, you, you know—because I remember I used to go back, go back down South even when I was younger, then I'd get with a couple of my cousins that was, that never left the South area, and they used to be like [inaudible] this boy got country blood and he got city blood in him.

[Laughter]

JB: I got nothing but red blood in me; you know what I'm saying? You got that snappy you know, snappy New York attitude now. Ya'll country bumpkins you know. So you know, it was like you know, Harlem, you get a quick schooling in Harlem because if you don't maintain that like, certain amount of—hey listen I got—I'm able to hold my own, you will get walked over in Harlem, especially in the school. In the schools you know what I'm saying, if you wasn't tough

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enough, you would get bothered, you'd get jumped, you'd get your money taken every day. So you had to maintain a certain amount, of even roughness and then you know what I'm saying whatever the deal is. See I had that both sides because I was always, I was always ready to go and, and be the roughneck, but I would hate to see somebody else get picked on.

MN: Now one of the things I wanted to talk a little bit about is, if there were hustlers in your neighborhood, how would they deal with kids, and how would they deal with let's say grandmothers, mothers? Were these hustlers polite when they weren't being tough?

JB: Yes, you know it was a different type of you know, it was a different type of cat back then. You know, they had respect for the neighborhood, they had respect for—they even had respect for the cops. The beat cop walking in—you know the cops knew what was going on, but they had respect for elders. Some of them would, would you know take out from what he's hustling what he's doing to help Ms. So and So upstairs with her bags, you know what I'm saying. Some kids down the block if they get into a scrap, you know the number runner might come run out to break them up or whatever the deal, alright, yo ya'll will say sorry and shake hands, you know what I'm saying. It was more of a community-based thing. Even though he did his thing in the community, he, you know, you know, he kind of know that the school grounds is off limits, or this is—or whatever because he knew he would get retribution from, from, from the families, especially like you said, like the fathers in the neighborhood. Like my father, I'll never forget when the gang came up when I moved to the Bronx and they like you have to join the Baby Spades and this and that or else you know we going to jump you every day, this and that. And I was like well bring it on. Because you know what I'm saying, I said ya'll might be bad, but the baddest person that I know live upstairs in the house with me. I said, I would rather, I would rather fight ya'll every day then to go upstairs and deal with him with some gang colors. So you

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know, nevertheless it was a different, it was a different mentality even with the street thugs and the street element, they, they, they had a code of respect that you know, I think that no longer kind of exists, but only in certain individuals today. You know what I'm saying?

MN: Yes. Okay so, I guess you've become acclimated, you, you worked everything out pretty well for yourself, you know, you know and then you move to the Bronx.

JB: Yes, Boogie Down.

MN: What was it like to--? And first of all, why did your parents move to the Bronx?

JB: We had a big fire. Man, it was awful. I'll never forget that, waking up in the middle of the night and everybody screaming the building's on fire and then we moved to the Concourse Plaza Hotel. It was, it was like a, you know one of those; one of those places when a family gets burned out it's like a shelter. We moved into the Concourse Plaza Hotel, I think we lived there for a few months and until they finally placed us and the place they placed us in was Bronx River Houses.

MN: Now, did your parents see that as a good thing or--?

JB: Yes, yes, because, you know getting into the projects, was, was, was a big deal at that point in time. You know, so we got into the projects and--.

MN: And what year was that?

JB: 1970.

MN: Okay, so 1970 it was still seen as a good thing to get into the projects.

JB: Yes, because the projects—because you know, everybody was moving into the projects and it seemed like the place to be. Where you got one area with these big, gigantic buildings that house so many people that, you know, for, for pretty much like you and your family are. You know what I'm saying kind of the same bracket.

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MN: When you moved to Bronx River, was it mostly black or pretty mixed?

JB: It was pretty mixed, it was pretty mixed. Pretty mixed, blacks, whites, Hispanics. And you know, after a while like [inaudible] they still had a lot of white families in there. But now they started slowly, kind of like moving out. But you know, it was, it was, it was pretty, it was pretty mixed.

MN: Now, okay, you're the new kid on the block, so what did you expect and what did you, did you find?

JB: Oh, I expected to go up there and just be respected straight up off the bat because I'm from Harlem you know what I'm saying. I'm showing around my Harlem credentials like hey, you know what I'm saying? Man I'm from Harlem 149 baby. You know what I'm saying? I remember, you know, remember feeling home sick and every chance I get I used to hop on the train, go back and visit, some of my friends left in Harlem and everything like that, you know. As, as time went on those, those visits gradually, you know decreased. But you know, and, you know, it was pretty much, you know they knew like from, from this kid he might be small but he got, he got a lot of attitude with him, you know what I'm saying. I kind of blended in, made a bunch of—I was—it was easy for me to make friends.

MN: So you had social skills and you knew how to, you know, make friends.

JB: You made friends with different people so it was, it wasn't too hard.

MN: And so what grade did you move into, you were into junior high or last year of elementary school?

JB: Yes, yes, last year of elementary. Actually, actually, yes, I remember I think in Harlem, the schools went up to the 5th grade, then you graduated from the 5th grade in the 6th grade you started junior high. Yes, then I remember graduating in 186th and then coming to the Bronx

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doing 1 year and then graduating again. So you know, it was like, you know it was like double graduation or whatever the deal is. But, I just kind of fit in and you know, just started, you know, you know this and that but you know I still had that Harlem attitude until one day I--a kid by the name of Steven Cooper, you know we became good friends, but my brother's like man the Bronx ain't nothing man, it's all about Harlem, all about Harlem. So everybody's standing around they didn't want to say nothing to me, they ain't going to say that--. Steven Cooper's like I had enough of this. [inaudible] Alright, I guess the Bronx is a little something, something. So I had to learn that the hard way. You know what I'm saying, you don't come in nobody else's—okay—alright you know what I'll keep it to myself about Harlem, you know.

MN: Now, how quickly were you exposed to the whole gang scene in the Bronx, when you moved to Bronx River?

JB: Oh, quick. Exposed, it was, it was there immediately, it was there before I got there, so you know, it wasn't, it wasn't something like it was hard to spot. You know what I'm saying the gang that was, that was in my area was the, was the Black Spades, and you know what I'm saying, you know, then it was always like rumbles between the Black Spades, the Savage Scars, the, the, the Reapers, and there was another crew that--.

MN: Were these gangs ethnic or racially based or they were somewhat mixed?

JB: Yes, somewhat mixed because you had the Black Spades, you know Black Spades, are white, blacks and Hispanics, West Indian members. More or less like, I think the Savage Scars, were more or less, more or less Hispanic based, Hispanic based gang but they still had black members.

MN: So it where you lived.

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JB: It was where you lived more or less. Because you couldn't live over there in Southern Boulevard and be a Black Spade because you know what I'm saying, it was--.

MN: It was territory.

JB: Yes, it was a territorial thing, now you could; you could just not join the, the Schindlings or the Scars or whatever and then be a Black Spade on the down low. You'd get up in the morning and you don't put your colors on until you get in another area but you didn't want to do that because then it was too much territorial flack.

MN: Now, did you see, see yourself doing music when you moved to the Bronx or it was mainly the church thing. Did you have a musical career outside the church?

JB: Yes, basically because what I used to do was, I mean you know, I used to bring my drums home from the church. In the first, before I started doing like music on the deejay on producing or any of that type, I remember I used to come home and throw on the Earth, Wind, and Fire long extended play album. You know Earth, Wind, and Fire had those, those songs that you put on the needle on the record and then a half and hour later it's ended.

MN: So you had your drum set at home.

JB: Yes, I used to carry the drum set on the train, like, that's what you do when you're dedicated to your craft, you do crazy stuff like that. So I used to bring the drums all the way home, set them up in my one room with the bunk beds. That me, my 2 brothers would sleep on the bottom, I'd sleep on the top, it was hardly enough room, it was smaller than this room right here. You know what I'm saying, I set them drums up and you know, just wail away, and that was like because people used to gather round in front of the building and, no, no play that other beat, play that project beat. So basically, you know, everybody--.

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MN: Did you play any instruments in school or were you in a school band or orchestra or anything like that?

JB: No, no not really, I kind of like, I kind of like just, just picked up the drums like, in from being in church and then, we had the little, you know, when we weren't doing the playing for the choir or, or, or playing for the ensemble, or different groups in church, we used to go to the church like on the off days and just like, me, my cousin, Gary, that's dead, my cousin Theodore and we used to just go in there and start scrapping 'til the preacher come in like, I know ya'll ain't playing that music in the church, you know what I'm saying. So we used to, we used to go there and scrap, get our music going. But you know, it always, it was always a sport thing, you know that, you know that, we wanted to be involved with music, so that was like my introduction, just start--.

MN: When, when did you start getting into, to Graff stuff? Was that in Harlem or--?

JB: No, that was, that was in the Bronx. You know what I'm saying because, every, everything was, there was, it was just like a, everybody was into it. I mean junior high school, you know we used to--.

MN: This was like '71, '72 or--?

JB: No, no actually, actually a little bit later, that would be like maybe '73, '74. And basically when you're in junior high school, you know everybody had that, you know we used to—we didn't used to go the store but those expensive markers, we used to have like, somebody throw out a old cigarette lighter, we'd steal the blackboard eraser from, from the teacher and you take that apart, you stuff the inside the cigarette lighter, then you got the little flip top so, anybody see it, oh I just got a lighter, meanwhile you flip it open you got the uni-writer, you know what I'm saying, you get the Flowmaster ink, fill it up and you know, bam we used to take the Ban roll on,

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you know the empty roll on thing, pop the ball off of the top and, and fill that with, you know with the chalkboard eraser, fill it up with Flowmaster ink and, you know, at the time, I think we came a part of, just a part of our culture, as a necessity to mark your territory. Especially from the gang days, you know what I'm saying? You going to another, another gang area, you know in order to piss them off, so to speak, you let them know you was there. You marked your territory, hey the Black Spades was here, oh these dudes came in and invaded our territory.

MN: Oh, okay so a lot of it was that. Yes, did you ever get into the subway stuff or that--?

JB: Yes, yes, I mean everybody, we wrote, we weren't, we weren't big time, we were probably amateurs just playing around with it, you what I'm saying? We took it pretty serious. I mean I had a book full of tags that I did and, you know, it was just, it just occupied a lot of my time as part of my art things, because you know, at one time I was deeply into drawing and doing artwork. So it took a phase from my artwork, it phased into me doing graffiti, just writing.

MN: Do you have any of those books that you kept?

JB: I still have some of the, some of the old books that I used to write all over and everything, but not the, not the actual books, you know over the years they just—.

MN: Right, now what about b-boying, did you get into that?

JB: Oh yes, big time. Right, like right after graffiti stage, my graffiti era, I got into b-boying because like, a lot, a lot of cats like I said, just like, you know, just following the crowd. And I did very good at. Actually like, it was like, maybe about 2 or 3 cats in the area in the whole area of you had all the projects, you had Bronx River, Bronxdale, Monroe, Sack-Wern, Castle Hill, and actually out of the whole territory, it was like only a few cats that would be like okay, I would say okay like they're better than me or whatever the deal is, because like every time we'd

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go in area, okay the Zulu Kings were coming through, they knew when I came in the area, it's like okay you better be up on your best game because I'm coming over there to take you out.

MN: Now you use the term Zulu Kings, when did you, when did that become an identity for you?

JB: It was like I said, I started playing with Bambaataa in a, I think in about 1975. Things happened a lot quicker in those days. People were like oh well how long did you stay Disco King Mario before you went to Bambaataa?

MN: Okay so, okay so let's back track a little in turns of, you know, okay, you're, you're, you're doing graffiti, you're playing drums, that's your instrument, you're doing artwork, you're starting the b-boy thing, so when does the deejaying begin to enter it?

JB: The deejay thing came in, into play with a, a neighbor that lived down the hall from me on the 6th floor, in the projects, in Bronx River. And we started just like, you know, just, just seeing these other deejays, like, it was a cat named Commy that used to come out and he was a guitarist. But then he used to come out with his guitar head and you remember, remember the old earth speakers with the, with the it looks like a couch with the plush drums in it. So he used to come out with the 2 earth columns and his guitar head and 2 turntables and play music.

MN: Was this outside?

JB: Yes, this was outside in the early 70s, you know 70s '71, '72. You know he'd come outside and start playing music in front of his building, and you know everybody used to flock in front of the building and then we used to do the bus stop and all of that you know. And basically that, that kind of inspired everybody. Just like oh, wow, you know, collecting music and getting--.

MN: So what was this guy's name?

JB: What the deejay or the guy with the guitar? His name was DJ Tommy.

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MN: DJ Tommy.

JB: Yes.

MN: So this is before Bambaataa, Disco King Mario?

JB: Yes, this is, this is, like--.

MN: DJ Tommy, and nobody ever heard of him?

JB: What was his name? Tommy--. He was like one of the [inaudible], same thing like, you know he was into music, he was in a band, he played, you know, band as well. Up to then it was like, all the time we really got outdoor music would be like, you know, same thing, Tommy come up or like when they bring the jazz mobile out around the way. The guys come up to play. So ah, you know, me, Bambaataa, all of us, I know Bam used to travel over in front of the building, and Bam was the one who started the you know, little dancers--.

MN: So when did you meet him for the first time, how was--.

JB: Well Bambaataa was always there, you know, kind of living in the, in the same kind of area--.

MN: Is he older than you?

JB: Yes, Bam's older, older than me. I wouldn't say about how many years but he's a little older. And you know, just, just being in the same area, you kind of know a little bit of everybody, it's like a small community. So basically from that, me and like I said my next door neighbor, Sylvan, we just started, you know, collecting records and after school, you know after Spiderman was off, you know, he'd come running over, you know, we could actually see each other from, you know look through one side of the window--.

MN: Yes, right.

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JB: Okay, Spiderman's off he'll come over with his records and we'll sit there and listen to the records, and you know, bust down some moves whatever, move the living room table out. So that was our introduction just doing that, then I remember I moved into making like these little pause button eight-track tapes. Yes, eight-track, my kids saw an eight-track tape the other day and they're like what the hell is that? But, you know, making little capes and stuff like that, so that was like, that was like my introduction--.

MN: Now at this time were you aware of Herc? And what was going on in the West Bronx?

JB: Actually, actually, no. Actually, actually, no. It was like the type of vibe of what was happening, Herc. Because then you know we had our deejays on this side and that's how I remember it was like. It was, we were still relatively young so, it wasn't a lot of like, traveling all the way to the other side of town.

MN: So you guys were mainly 13, 14, 15?

JB: Yes, yes, some you know, even younger than that some of us. But, you know, more or less we had deejays on our side like, Cool D, DJ Hollywood, you know so some of these cats who were like older. All the cats that just throw parties, some of them I don't remember their name or probably even knew them. You know, but, you know we had those 2, those cats were on our side of town, used to throw parties in the community centers and stuff like that. And then, you know, Bam used to, you know, at that time a lot of people used to throw house parties, you know, those type of parties, but those were big after—you know, in the early 70s, or whatever the deal is you know? Stemming from the parties that, you know, your parents had. And, so basically that, that was it. Once we started collecting records, me and Sylvan, we decided okay, we're going to get our own little crew together. I don't even remember what the crew was, crew was called but we just started, you know, collecting some records. We, you know, we didn't have no equipment so

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we just took like a old headphone, plug it into the, into the, into your mama's stereo, you know just fool around in the living room, just for your own entertainment, and that's how, that's how it all started. For you know, for our own entertainment. And then after that we started, like you know, branching off, meet people in the—like my cousin lived in, in Soundview Projects so I met a couple of cats over there who were into music and, you know, that's how we formed the group--.

[END OF SIDE 1; BEGIN SIDE 2]

JB: called the Jazzy Five, you know, they were into music, I was into music so I wanted to be the deejay, they wanted to emcee, so it's like you know we started getting—pooling our efforts to get equipment so like, you know, one person will have a turntable, another person will have a handful of records, another person might, might have a receiver, one guy got a speaker up the block, or maybe his pops got 2 speakers he can snatch them out. And you know, that's how it all started. We just like, trial and error, I mean, you know it's like, if, it wasn't no fancy equipment, but it was just something like you know, as long as people heard the music, no matter how distorted it sounded or whatever the deal is, they just rush--.

MN: So, this was, it's all about the deejay at that point?

JB: Oh, yes, yes it was always—it was all about the deejay in the beginning, that's the whole—the first line of defense, you know what I'm saying, with the deejay. You know?

MN: And was it that way in Harlem, or is this something that really happened that was different over there in the Bronx?

JB: It was, it was, no it was different in the Bronx all together. That's what, that's what made me, made me like okay I'm from the Bronx. Well you know because it was, it was a era, it was a vibe, just, just, just going in the Bronx that I've never seen anywhere else.

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MN: Yes, it sounds it. I mean Harlem had it's own thing.

JB: Yes, Harlem, Harlem was more, more like I said, it was, it was, because I lived in Harlem in the earlier era, and it was more like, you know, the block parties and they would have a live band come out, or, or if somebody was playing music it would be, like somebody brought their little house stereo out and play—and you know, and just, just set it up outside with an extension cord from the window, played a, played a couple of songs on the, on the thing I remember—when the next record dropped out the needle get up and go back over. You know it was that type of thing. I didn't get exposed to this like wow, you know I remember, you know, us taking apart like, like, my mother's stereo I took that apart, my mother—she wanted to kill me. Because I took the stereo apart and, and took the turntable outside and set in a crate and we would use it as like, I got to hurry up and get it back to the house before my mother came home but course that didn't happen, she came home and see, a hole where the record player was, you know what I'm saying?

MN: So there was this whole thing with technology and, and electronics that people were experimenting with?

JB: Yes, yes. Because I mean basically just--. We knew nothing about, about what we were getting into, and of course we didn't have no money to buy none of this stuff. So it was like you know, somebody threw out a old turntable or whatever, you know what, you got that, you took that off, if it was broke you went upstairs and you fiddled around with it, until you fixed it, so you could have something, that you can spin some music on.

MN: Now where did you get the records from?

JB: A lot of the records came from, ill gotten means. You didn't let me in your house and expect me not to leave out with some records. Some of them, you know, we'd go downtown all day, that's where you know records were like, 99 cents, you know what I'm saying. You'd probably

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go find a store where some records were old that you'd pay 50 cents a quarter for--. So you know we'd go downtown and just, just dig for records, all day man. I remember, me, me and a couple of partners, we'd go down to The Village, and, and you had 20 dollars in your pockets. With 20 dollars we used to come back with a stack of records. You know what I'm saying. Now 20 dollars, you go, you go, you might not even come back with one. You going to have to put that on layaway.

MN: So you had a sense that this was a way to really distinguish yourself? At this point, is by developing this skill?

JB: Yes, I had, I had a passion for it but the real, the real deal—most of us got involved with it was because of the girls. All the girls loved deejays, you know what I'm saying, so it's like, yo--.

MN: When I came up it was a big ball player.

JB: Yes, no--.

MN: It was the deejay more than the ball player?

JB: Well, you know ball players had they, had they own clientele but--.

[Laughter]

JB: If you was spinning, if you was spinning the music, you was the man. You had like--.

MN: You had more than the ball player.

JB: Oh, more than the ball player.

MN: That's a big change.

JB: Oh, yes.

MN: So, so you had a lot of talented people going into this.

JB: Yes.

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MN: Because it sounds like, you have a, you have a musical background and you also have an artistic side, you have a technical side, so they all kind of came together.

JB: Yes, they kind of, they kind of like all work hand in hand. To you know, help me out with my--.

MN: Now, I'm going to let Charlie ask you questions about the techniques of this, because I'm not, you know, that's not my, my, my generation. So--.

Charlie (C): So in the movie Scratch you told a story about getting your first shot with Bambaataa, that he was missing some turntables or something--?

JB: Yes, yes what happened was like, let me, let me start off with Disco King Mario's situation. Basically, I had worked, I remember and then I finally said you know what, I got to get me a job, I got to get me a real set up. I worked Youth Corps one summer, the whole summer and saved up all my money at the end of the summer I bought me 2, a pair of Techniques. 210s and a Gemini mixer.

C: What year was that?

JB: That had to probably be like a '72, '73, '74, '73-'74 around that era. Because I remember I worked that whole summer, got my, got my turntables, boy I was on point now. Because you know, now I'm starting to get a little bit of rep from just like, just being a, a you know, a junkyard deejay and just playing, you know, more or less we were like, we were like, you ever seen the Cosby show? The Cosby kids they playing all the stuff in the junkyard and the radiator? That was us. You know what I'm saying? So basically now you start beginning to get a little rep. Now it's time to step up your game plan. So after I got that, me, Sundance, Ice, Freeze, these are guys that I teamed up with from Soundview. We, we started doing like, we started doing like,

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just playing outside in the park you know what I'm saying, every chance we could, we'd just go outside and just start playing. Because you know people come around, oh yes, that boy's good.

MN: Now where did you get your electricity when you did this?

JB: We plugged in a lamp pole. Either in lamp pole or we might get electricity from somebody's house or the first floor.

MN: Now one question, what about the police, did they bother you?

JB: No, it was more or less a little more freer then. You know what I'm saying? As long as, you know, we used to play music sometimes 'til 2, 3 o'clock in the morning, no police. Police come by, they come by and hang out and you know what I'm saying--.

MN: And the older people didn't mind?

JB: No the older people, they was, they was down with it. Because and like—even when the police used to come by and they'd bother some of the deejays and you hear Ms. Johnson, yell out, leave them boys alone, they could be out robbing somebody, somebody out there, you know what I'm saying, they ain't doing nothing to hurt nobody. Leave them alone. You know police be, they go on about they business along as you know—some people in the community always, you know, I got to get up and go to work in the morning, ya'll--. You know you got, you got hit from both sides, you know what I'm saying whatever the deal is. Some people will call the cops on you, but you know for the most part, you know, kind of the community embraced it because it was that energy that was something new, it was like yo, you know, something fresh. And you know the community embraced it. So back to the story of the turntables, so as we started getting a little bit of rep, Disco King Mario was like, you know, who was never much of a deejay, he didn't really have much of a collection, but he had the system of doom, you know it's like--. To play on Mario's system was just like, you were in the big leagues now. He was like the God, in

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our era, you know Macintosh, Macintosh 2300 amplifier, what was that, Electro-Voice, what he have. What're those Electro-Voice they used to have? I forgot the name of that, Electro-Voice base bands, he had 4 of them with the street lights and the big horns and when he turned on it was like, woof, woof, it just barked, you know--?

MN: It wasn't so much that he was a skilled deejay?

JB: No, he just had the sound and you know, he'd blow you out, you know. You could, you could have all the records, you'd come outside and Mario would just set up and he turned them knobs up, you couldn't even be heard so you might as well just pack up and go home. But you know, so that was, that was the deal so--.

MN: Was he a lot older than you guys?

JB: Yes, you know he was like, he was like, the, the—couple of—maybe 4 or 5,6—generation gap, a little older than us. So you know I started getting down with vinyl by then I started you know, really upping my collection, I got down with like Afrika Islam, we became real tight, so we started, we started really digging--.

MN: Now, what was Afrika Islam's connection to Bambaataa?

JB: Islam, Islam was quote un quote the—deemed the son of Bambaataa, Bam kind of christened him to be like the younger generation. The generation of me, Islam, Grand Mixer DXT, Grand Wizard Theodore, who else was in that--? Breakout and—Breakout, DJ Baron, Charlie Chase, Tony Ton—we were like underneath the cats—like the 3 top—we consider like the first string. That would be like Afrika Bambaataa, Grand Master Flash, and the father of course, Cool Herc.

MN: Okay, they were like 4,5 years older than you guys?

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JB: Yes, yes, yes they were, they were, they were what would we would call the foundation.

MN: Now what about, where did Mario stand in relation to them?

JB: Mario, Mario was in—it was in that generation, but he wasn't, Mario was just more like a guy who came outside and he was a foundation of hip-hop, but he wasn't—he didn't lay down the groundwork.

MN: He didn't, he didn't mix things together, he had the system but not the skills?

JB: Right, see Mario, Mario was, was you know, was a pioneer, don't get it wrong, but Bambaataa, Master of Records. So you knew, when you go to Bambaataa party, you going to a hip-hop party you going to hear a selection of music that you may not hear anywhere else. Ever. Grandmaster Flash, turntable God, so it's like when you go see Flash on the turntable be prepared to be shocked and amazed. Cool Herc, the founder, he like, when you go, it was just like yes, you might as well bow down. He was the creator, if it wasn't for Cool Herc, you know we wouldn't be doing none of this hip-hop stuff. So you know, that's how we defined that, now Mario, you had Mario and you had a lot of other cats, that were in that era, that would almost—just the same, they—I'm not saying that they were less than any of the other ones, or they weren't good or whatever the deal is, but they you know, it was just a little different flavor.

[BREAK]

MN: Okay, so were people outside the Bronx starting to hear about what was going on in the Bronx? Did you have people from Harlem come over to Bronx River?

JB: You couldn't, you couldn't, you couldn't, you couldn't contain it. I mean it's like, like, it didn't, it didn't like okay, creep like, okay, then 6 months down the line, somebody holler, ayo you heard what they doing in the Bronx. No it was like automatic. As soon as Cool Herc started

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to come out, I think some people from Harlem and others around the boroughs started coming to the—coming before some of the people in the Bronx made it to Cool Herc.

MN: Now, you had people from Harlem come to Bronx River?

JB: Oh, yes, oh yes. It was like ‘cause it was automatic, people from Harlem, people from all of the boroughs. Because you know, you got to understand like people that lived in, in the Bronx, also had relatives that lived in Queens, lived in Harlem, lived up--. So it was like yo, you know they get on the phone, yo you got to come over here, they jamming out in the park today. You know, a train ride away, boom they’re there, you know so--.

MN: Now, now how did Bambaataa end up using the Zulu Nation to keep the gang thing a little more under control?

JB: We’ll get to that in a second. So what happened was, Mario, I got down with Mario through another friend of mine, Sundance, God rest the dead, emcee Sundance, who just like said yo man, he should just go and just emcee for Mario every now and then, then he told Mario about me so, we went over there Mario—auditioned for Mario, got down with him for a while and then, you know got confronted by Bambaataa saying that, that I was giving away the Zulu beats to the enemy you know what I’m saying. Because everything was competition back in those days. Was like, one deejay against another deejay, one crew against another crew, whatever the deal is. But, you know more or less, they had more in common, than, than just--.

MN: Now, now when you said emceeing, what would the emceeing consist of in that time?

JB: More or less, at that point in time, the emceeing would consist of anything from yes yes ya’ll to the beat ya’ll, to clap your hands to the beat, to so and so your mother’s at the front gate and she looks pissed I think you better go right now. That was the worst thing ever, you being at a party and--. So and so your mother’s at the front door and everybody, [laughing noise], your

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moms came to get you! That happened to me a few times, we'd be downstairs in the Bronx River, we'd be partying and my mother would come downstairs and her slippers and the rollers in her hair, the bathrobe and I used to always send my sister out first because you know, you didn't want to get, so—oh so and so your mother's at the door, I'd go grab my sister, go out, you go meet her man. I always wait 'til they go on, walk out like, yeah. But yeah the whole thing is when I got down—that's basically what the emcees do, they've evolved into what you see today, but, that's basically the, the, the prime evil stages of it. But then I remember one day Mario was playing the park, I was playing with Mario and Bambaataa came up and played on Mario's set and started passing me records. Like he'd pass me the record and point, I was like wow Bambaataa passing me records. So me and him kind of clicked from that day we just started you know talking here and there. Being that we lived in the same projects, and then one day I remember Bambaataa going to play a place in Yonkers on School Street and the turntables broke, so Isis which was one of the Zulu members from, from—that was down with Bam, Bam it was originally like only about 7, 7 to 11 original members and he came upstairs and knocked on my door. Yo, Bam needs some turntables, I told him—before he could get the words out I had the turntables packed in the box and knocking on Bam's door. Like, use them please! So not only did he use the turntables, but he took me with him and, and, and let me spin with him that night. And we, we've been together ever since that night.

MN: Now, the, the spinning itself, what did that consist of? To, to somebody who's not a deejay. How would you explain, what was—what you were doing?

JB: Okay, well, the hip-hop deejay, true hip-hop deejay is one that, plays obscure and, and, and, and, and uncommon beats. Rhythms and, and, and flows and a lot of times they're not the full song, they're just snippets of maybe the energy part of the song that we kind of dissect and

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extend through our talents of quick mixing right. So in order, so in order to extend it and keep the party people dancing and keep the emcees flowing. That's why you see a lot music that is derived from, from the scratching, and, and, and not really scratching but the cutting, and the, and the, and the quick cutting and stuff like that of records because we used to take like maybe 30 seconds of a record and extend it to like 4, 5 minute sound.

MN: How would you extend it? The section.

JB: You extend it by just, that, that little part of the record, picking up the needle, mixing it in, put that same—you'd have to have 2 of course--.

MN: Of the same record?

JB: Yes.

MN: And then you move back and forth?

JB: Just keep that beat going. And, and those who had skills, like you know the Grandmaster Flashes, Theodores, myself, those guys would be able to even catch that quick beat, that even if it went by real quick you may be able to keep that going for a long period of time and keep it rhythm--.

MN: And you have to see it on the record?

JB: Oh, no, no, no you know at that point in time, they did come out with the technology so that you could actually cue, so while this one is playing, you're cueing the next one, to send that one into [crosstalk]—then you cue back and forth. On the headphones. So you can actually pre-cue. Now when I first started out, we had, we, we started out on the sub par quicker where there was no cueing. With—that's what came in handy when you would actually put your ear to the record and hear when these parts would come up.

MN: So what were—the skill set was knowing how to use the equipment?

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JB: Yes.

MN: And also having sense of the, of knowing what rhythms to find?

JB: Knowing what rhythms to find and, yes, yes because the deejay's only as good as his selection and the talent that he uses to, to, to put it together. So basically knowing the music to play, knowing how to program it, knowing how to keep it flowing, knowing how to switch up into different music, without throwing everybody off balance, you know what I'm saying, you don't want to go from—you don't want to go from some, some, some crazy upbeat tribal, tribal sign is up into like a Neil Sedaka song, because it's definitely going to kind of screw everybody up, you know? So you know, just knowing how to put all of that stuff together, which is, is, is, is the definition of the true--.

MN: Now did you have a—something that distinguished you in, in—from other deejays in terms of, the kind of music you found or your technique? If you were to say, well what's your like--?

JB: Trademark?

MN: Yes.

JB: My trademark was basically, I was one of the, one of the, one of the like what they call fastest deejays at that time. And the trademark would be like I would always, I would always develop like different type of a—different types of ways to actually—and like you know we played a lot of the records so many different times, I knew, I knew every inch of it. So I would be able to develop new, and, and, and different ways of playing it. You know what I'm saying? That's how like, like, people like Theodore got his trademark was he, he is credited to inventing the scratch. So basically what happens is, we would always try to like invent new techniques, back spinning, needle dropping, quick cutting, actually taking the song, and, and, and making

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different beat up out of—you can actually manipulate the record and change it into something that you know, you could be your very own. So that, that's more or less like what my forte was.

MN: And with Bambaataa it was finding records that no one ever would've dreamed of?

JB: Finding the records and being able to program in such a manner that sometimes it would get people frenzied. I mean he still does that today. He's not the, he's not the, you know, the, the fanciest deejay, or, or, or the most incredible you know to watch but I mean the way he puts together a program of music, it just, it just--.

MN: So it's a knowledge of the music.

JB: Knowledge of the music and how you, how you, how you package it and deliver it to the audience.

C: So b-man was telling you that Bam used to soak his records, in the, in the tub and get all the labels taken off, maybe you could explain how, deejays back then would try very hard--.

JB: I don't know if he soaked them in the tub, more like, we used to, we used to steam them off, where you put them over the stove and then you steam it until, until they get bubbly--. Because a lot of people are into like, into like the secrecy of, of the music. So a lot of music had leaked out here and there but, if you, you, you wanted to be known as the one, I brought this out. You know what I'm saying, so that was the big thing, not only being able to be a skilled [loud background noise], but to be able to play that song that no other deejay would play and everybody else would hunt for—yo you heard that record so and so played? So that--.

MN: Were there any particular records that you like, just kind of discovered that like, before anyone else?

JB: There, there, there was a few, a few. There were a few--. Yes, there was a few that I brought out that you know that I started playing before a lot of people but, you know it's like, it's like I

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was one that would never really hide because I always wanted to keep my records. Sometimes I used to kind of tape over the name or whatever the deal is, but eventually you know it's like, everybody would find out, you know what I'm saying through some, some other means but there's a, there's a bunch of records that you know brought out that, that, we, we called them the sacred crates.

MN: The sacred crates? I never heard that term before.

JB: Yes, the sacred crates are those, those crates which the whole, the whole a, a, a, course of hip-hop was built on. You know what I'm saying? It's those, it's those catalog records like Bob James Two, Shaft in Africa, Flip, all of these songs, Catch a Groove that, that, that you know—yes you know. All of these songs that, that, just, just, just like defined what we were doing.

MN: Did you ever put together a collection of these and then you know as, as—as a CD and then market it?

JB: Yes, you know what but, it's been done to death so many times.

Danny Martinez (DM): It's been done in a sense, it's with ultimate breaks and beats all that. Compilations. More like patterned after what these guys used to originally play, you know what I'm saying? So those were like the sacred—it goes even deeper than that because there's records that they might've played just once or twice in their parties and you'll never hear it again on any other tape it was like what the fuck is that?

[Laughter]

DM: I'll ask him I'm like, Jay what is this record? Yo man, I can't remember that, it was like 25 years ago. The label was off of it. Bambaataa just point, and told me what to play and that was that.

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JB: Yes, we was responsible for bringing a lot of, a lot of, a lot of joints to the sacred crates, but you know.

DM: And it's still around there's a lot of records that, to this day I'm still looking for. And that's, that's real rare for me you know? Because I, I've been around.

JB: Dan, he, he, he takes much pride in what we used to--. I mean we used to go into a record store and when we leave out, we be all, hair filled with white dust arms all ashy, I mean, and, and you'd be there all day digging. We used to just buy records just for the sake of, looked at the album cover, they had Afros and some bell-bottoms, oh let's buy that. It was, it was you know, 9 times out of 10, you know, you might've got a dud, but it's that, that, that 10th one which was the joint that bang, you know what? We got a winner right here, so—you know that was it.

DM: Those were the good old days.

C: How often would you go in these archaic stores? Was it a weekly thing, or monthly, once a month?

JB: No, we were doing it every chance we get. Sometimes we come out with, then the next day just come right back out again. You know because, it was, it was something we had a passion to do. You know what I'm saying? Plus, like I said, the day I brung the system out the girls flock around. It's a good thing. It's a win-win situation.

MN: Now you also mentioned before, that you developed another profession while all this was going on. Or was that later? With carpentry?

JB: That's how—basically, when me and Bambaataa teamed up, now at this point in time, now I'm interested in, in, in the sound, the big sounds, but also I knew that we couldn't really go and pay the big money. So most of the sound systems that we played on back in days all got built by my hands and my partner, we had brought in another partner, my partner--.

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MN: Okay, so you built--?

JB: We built the whole sound system because, of my, my skills with carpentry--. That's how a lot of, a lot of the stuff that, like, like you know the amps and stuff, we built the racks, we built all, we, we—soldered all the wires so we kind of you know, built the whole thing and that was just from the skills that I developed because, you know like I said, in, in school, I, I was always interested, in the, in the carpentry and stuff like that. So basically when, when, when I, when I got out, I got a job we were still doing parties even after I graduated--. Then we was in the thick of things, you talking about now I graduated high school in '79 and, and, and it was just like it's '79 now let's make sure we got, we got the right equipment, we have—you know we doing it--. I started working and in the construction field, cabinet making first, in a, in a little shop in, in Long Island City and then later on started—moved up to doing, rough construction and houses and outdoor the heavy construction building—doing the Verrazano Bridge, we built the pier at Hunt's Point, I was involved with that project. We did work on several locations and, piers out in Staten Island so--. I had a knowledge of all tools and stuff like that and I knew that, listen I can go in a store and look at these speakers and say huh, take my tape measure with me, take a couple of measurements and then go home, write down the, write down the, the blueprints, go to the lumber yard, pick up some wood, go to the, to the store on Canal Street, buy the bare woofers and the beaters and then come home put them in the box and then you know what, it was compatible with, with a lot of the big sound systems that people spent thousands of dollars on.

MN: Okay, now I'm going to leave the rest to you guys because I got some work to do, so I'll come in when you finish but this amazing man. Okay, so I'll be right down the hall so just keep going.

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C: I guess there was a time where, in the early days the deejay was the center of hip-hop, when would you say that kind of shifted more to the emcee?

JB: Yes, the early days was all about the deejays, well you know after the Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force, Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five, DJ Breakout and Baron and the Funky Four so on and so forth. Yes because the deejay was the man because you know what I'm saying basically, like I said in the beginning, the only thing the emcee was here you got to move your car so and so, or you know whoever your mom's at the door, blah, blah, blah, it didn't evolve into emcees doing routines. And it was always the deejay and his emcee, now when everything started switching, was basically when, when they started going to making records and stuff like that. Because now you got the element, you got the consensus, hey we can go in a studio and we don't need the deejay to spin records for us now, we can go—so that's when the whole paradox switched. And the emcee became the focus of the thing, more or less, the focus left off the deejay. Kind of went towards the emcee.

DM: Towards around 1978 the start of it.

JB: Yes.

DM: Up into 1980, that's when it took over.

JB: Yes, and in about—I would say, because it was, it was still a lot of crews which were still deejay, emcee oriented, but then, then it started teeter tottering by like '85 it started really, where you know, because then you had crews, you had emcees coming out that never even really had a deejay, they just came out just for the sake of making records, you know what I'm saying?

C: And then it says on Wikipedia that you were involved with the early days of Def Jam, that actually maybe you introduced Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin--?

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JB: Def Jam, Def Jam records was started out of the trunk of my 1979 Chevy Caprice Classic, alright. Me, Rick Rubin used to follow me around from club to club, and I was playing in this club called Danceteria one night when he introduced himself, blah, blah, blah, we became friends, I did a couple of parties with him. He digged the whole college--.

C: Oh, he was a deejay too?

JB: No, he, he called himself a deejay but any kind of deejaying skills, he you know he picked up from hanging out with me. I taught him how to make beats, the whole full nine. He just wanted to break into, into the hip-hop business and he didn't really know how to go about it. So you know, figured let me bang around with Jay for a little while, blah, blah, blah, then he came and was like yo listen, I want to start a record label. I'm like okay well, he said, yo you know I want you to be my partner? I was like no problem, any excuse to go in the studio was no excuse for me. I hang, I lived in the studio, plus I was playing in, in just about every major club in New York City. So it was like okay, I'm like yo start a record label and it wasn't that I star—I started Def Jam just like make a whole bunch of money, yo come on at that time it was like all a lot of independent labels and everybody was pretty much doing they thing. So the independents, was like doing their thing, so we went in, you know, all 3 of their first records are all basically all me. I was actually, besides being the owner, besides being part owner of the record—I was the only artists on the label besides T La Rock. First record was It's Yours, Def Jam 001. It's Yours by T La Rock and Jazzy Jay. Alright, 002, was a song Cold Chillin, Cold Chillin in the Spot, Jazzy Jay, Flipside 003 was a song called the Def Jam which we made to introduce the label, Def Jam. Now then, basically you know, we kind of struggled with that for about a year. Some people--.

C: In the early '80s?

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JB: Yes, this was like 84 to 85 and basically the only person that was playing was my cousin

Red Alert, couple of other people played. Playing underground. Yes, so a couple of people playing the underground, you know, but not too much of a buzz. You know this and that.

Meanwhile, it was, it was making a big buzz in Florida, so we was, we was running back and forth and being that Russell was like more or less like booking, booking a lot of acts--. He was booking, a little bit of everybody.

C: So he was more like a promoter at the time?

JB: Yes, Russell, it was more of a booking agent. Russell Artist Management, he was managing artists. Now we never signed with Rush, but you know he would book shows for us, here and there now and again. So he was booking me and T La Rock at the time. So I had introduced Rick to Russell at Danceteria one night. You know they hit it off, they became friends and, so on and so forth. So what happened was at that time, the record industry didn't even take hip-hop seriously. You know what I'm saying? The radio wasn't really playing it, you know whatever the deal is—they wasn't giving up no, no budget money for nobody. The biggest deals that were cut in hip-hop were all cut by like, mainstream or, or young Jewish professionals, you know what I'm saying. Lee R. Cohen--. So at that point in time, they wasn't going to give me a million dollars, they wasn't going to give Russell a million dollars. You know, two, two, two black kids from, from, from, from the projects in Queens or the projects in the Bronx, but on the other hand, Rick Rubin, who has ties into like his father was like, head of like K Shoe Corporation or something like that. So you know, and plus like you know they had like, you know, little legitimate ties within the business. Plus, you know it was like, okay, we'll give you the money, you keep the jungle bunnies in order. So, it was that type of thing. So, when the money came involved, Rick forgot he had pride, you know? Plus it was like a situation where, in the

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beginning, he was actually teamed up with a, Special K, from the Treacherous Three. Who's T La-Rock's brother. Special K was supposed to do What Yours, but being that he was signed to Sugar Hill, he couldn't do it, so that's when T—he wrote the song Special K wrote, I did the music and the scratching, Rick did some of the beats and we went ahead and put it. It was just like a, put it like this, a handshake between two friends, hey this is our label, oh okay, let's go ahead, let's go do it. And then when the money came involved one party just like kind of like, ousted the other party and that's the whole situation that happened with the Def Jam situation.

C: You never really saw any royalties or--?

JB: I think I saw, about 600 dollars from, It's Yours, in the beginning and that's about it.

C: So him and Russell just kind of cut you out.

JB: Yes, but see that was the whole thing, that was Rick's plan from the beginning, you know what I'm saying? Sometimes you can't see, you can't see the devils plan—a little too deceptive.

But you know, like I said he was with Special K when, when he found out that, you know it's like oh, I can get with Jazzy Jay and I can take him to a higher level, that's when he cut out Special K. Now I didn't even know about that, that's when he, when, when I introduced him to Russell and he saw that Russell could take him to another level, that's when I got ousted out, you know what I'm saying? So you know that's the whole deal with that.

C: So you've also done production as well as deejaying?

JB: Man I produced just about a little bit of everybody, from, everybody come straight throughout from like, the, the, the, the, the, the mid, mid to early 80s on up to like the mid to late 90s, you know a little bit of everybody. You know when I had my recording studio a little bit of everybody flowed through there. KRS-One, Latifah, Tribe Called Quest, you name it, Public Enemy, KRS-One, Bambaataa, the list goes on and on. And because it was more like an

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environment where it was, it was more like home, instead of an industrial, let's go in and record a record type of vibe, this was like hey let's go in and have a, have a jam and record it. You know what I'm saying? That was, that was more or less the feeling that was floating around in the building of Jazzy Jay Recording Studio.

C: Okay, so it mostly started out in front of your building or in your room, maybe you could tell us some of the places that deejays, deejaying has allowed you to go, like some of the countries or just some of the venues--.

JB: Well, deejaying has took me around the world, I mean, I been, you name it. Australia, Japan, London, all of these places—I been like several times, you know Amsterdam, Africa, been to Israel, China, you know places that people like—Canada of course you know what I'm saying? Places people dream of going. You know what I'm saying, the whole South America, Ecuador, you know, just so many places man, and you know it's just like you know, got love from so, so many different cultures of people that appreciate the work that we put it so—you know this, it's, it's been a hell of a rollercoaster ride. And it ain't even over yet, you know what I'm saying? That's the crazy thing about it. You know it's like right now, I mean, I had took a, I had took a whole full 10 years off from deejaying when I was doing the producing and messing around with Strong City Records, you know from, from '85 to like '95 all I did was just mainly studio--. I was deejaying here and there, at little events here and there, but I, I was mainly focused on studio and doing that stuff so—took off 10 years from deejaying and then came back in '95, it was like, just never stick the beat, it was, it was a little rough in the beginning, getting back in, but once I started pedaling uphill it became downhill and you know—you know what I'm saying that was it.

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DM: My question is, what was your most favorite city that you had, out of this, you know out of the New York, or out of the country? Which was the best jam you threw outside? And how were the people?

JB: Well, there was, there was a few of them. One that sticks out because it's just me on the solo tip was a, when I played in Edinburgh, Scotland.

DM: That's great.

JB: I played in Edinburgh, Scotland and it was a jam packed—and I was like wow you know, just for little old me? And was able to play an eclectic collection of music from everything from funk to soul, to disco, to slow music. I was playing slow music, I was playing slow jams, you know what I'm saying, and I was able to play around the board, and at the end of the night the roar that came out of these people was like, you would've thought I was Michael Jackson or something, I was like, I was like yo come on man, ya'll got to stop this, ya'll going to me blush.
[Laughter]

JB: Yes, but, and there was another one, I remember when we was with, I was with Soul Sonic Force, we played in this park called Carowinds, it's an amusement park that's in the middle of the Carolinas, right on the border line of North and South Carolina. And it's a big, it's a big park and we played there man until like, tons of people, and it was, it was one of those harmonious things and you know what I'm saying--? The whole full nine, girly girlies after the party. Now, that was a good time right there too.

C: You played in like arenas with like--?

JB: Oh, yes, we played a little bit of every—just because you know—so Planet Rock was that type of song. It catapulted us into the league of like—we, we, we were kind of on the same level, record for record as Michael Jackson at that time when Planet Rock came out. We performed

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with a little bit of every—I remember we performed with Prince, Parliament Funkadelic, [inaudible] for the Simpson, Cameo, Zap, I mean the list goes--. I mean we performed with some you know, some--.

DM: Heavyweights.

JB: Heavyweights. So we performed in 50,000 seat arenas and we performed in little places like Collard Greens, Mississippi where, where, where the guy's holding wire into the speaker, you ever seen like those—you know the chitlin circuit where all 5 guys are like, like The Temptations all 5 of them all the same, microphones are the same, and you know we played means to extremes, and you know, I don't regret any of it, you know what I'm saying. Some of it, I'd like to do over again, you know what I'm saying, like maybe we could do it a little bit better.

C: What was, what were you getting paid for these early things, or were you getting paid for like the jams and then maybe so of the bigger--? Was there a break where at one point you were getting nothing and then it just all hit or is there--?

JB: Here's, from the, from the beginning, all the way up to now. In the beginning when we were plugging into lamp poles and we were, you know, building the speakers and going out there, we were basically playing for free, to set up a clientele for the winter so that when we go into the community center, into the indoor spots, we'd get people start paying that 5 dollars, 3 dollars or whatever it is at the door. So that was the build up--.

C: And the promoter would then pay--.

JB: No, there was no pro—we never hired promoters, so we'd just put out, put out the flyers and then, you know, blah, blah, blah and then we going to be at Bronx River Center or we going to be over here. So it was lucrative because everybody wanted to be at the parties at that point.

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Then it got to a point where, you know, it's dry spell, where it wasn't as popular, people started going after, the Treacherous Threes and the groups that were on vinyl, then you know the big shows, okay one time Treacherous Three, blah, blah, blah, Furious Five and so and so, so you had to do shows like that. And then you know eventually we got into that with the Jazzy Five and then eventually Soul Sonic Force got into those. Then when we did Planet Rock, it skyrocketed to a different level where we were getting a salary every week, plus we'd get money, after all expenses. So let's say we were getting 10,000 a show, you know we'd get a salary every week and then at the end, at the end of the, at the end of the tour whatever wasn't, whatever wasn't taken out of salary we all split the part of what was left over after the tour bus and all the hotels and everything. So let's say at the end of the month we might be you know like, 10 grand left over we'd split that amongst the group. Then it went from there, you know what I'm saying, we came back settled back down home, Bam started doing his deejaying, I started going into the, into the studio a little bit more and doing other projects for other label and I did stuff for Next Plateau, for Elektra, all of this stuff, so I started broadening my horizons and doing other things and you know, that course comes with a different pay tag sometimes you can produce a song and get 30 grand right up front or you could produce the song and get a handshake you know what I'm saying? So, you know, it's, it's been a, you know, sliding scale, then you move into the era where, where we started taking deejaying downtown. Now we ain't got to lug the big speakers and, and all the turntables and all the equipment every—no more. We just got to show up with our records and go to the club. They got all the equipment there. And at first it was like, moderate, you know what I'm saying, which was good for us because, no weight, we go over there with just, with records and sometimes turntables, and get paid just as much as if we went—all hand out fliers all week and promoted it then get to the party bring all this equipment, set up,

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played all night, take it down, take it back home, so it was like oh, wow, you going to pay me just—all I got to do is just bring records? Then it got into eras, like we were playing in the major clubs like, you know, I think we own the record in the Roxy for packing in 4,000 people on a New Years, on a New Years Eve night, you know what I'm saying? And you know, that was, that came with a whole different price tag with it, you know, playing in the big clubs and then playing the smaller clubs, you know, but it's to the point where now I'm doing my own deejay tour. So you know, you can get anywhere from, a promoter that might want to show up, you might get a grand anywhere up to like 10, 15 grand just for you know, going to do your thing, so you know it's a lot of different scales and a lot of different ways you can price this thing but, you know what, just you know, just don't ever price yourself out of the game. I never do that.

C: So back to the Planet Rock record, now you produced that right?

JB: Yes.

C: How did that work out with Kraftwerk because I know that's originally their record right?

JB: Kraftwerk had love for us. I think, see basically--.

C: You guys talked to them before--?

JB: No, we didn't, we didn't because remember that was back in the days when we were, we were young, dumb and ignorant. We just wanted to make a song. And being that it wasn't a, an outright take, we replayed it, but the melody still, you know, you could still tell it was--. But, because that was basically a routine between--.

[END OF SIDE B; END OF TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE A; BEGIN TAPE 2]

JB: routine between, between myself, Bambaataa, and, and, and the 3 emcees which was, you know, 3 records Super Sperm, Trans Hip Express, and, and, and which one was that, and

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Numbers. So basically those were the 3 songs we used to mix together during the routine. So Tom Simmons used to come up, they had a lot of parties up in the Bronx, whatever the deal is, T-Connection and all of that. So, one time we spinning, he was like okay I like that routine ya'll do, blah, blah, blah, so they got a tape of the routine and John Robie, who was like more or less the, the program at that time said okay, it's the time a live dance feel. Because it wasn't, you know it wasn't that much sampling going on in, in that era. Said okay do an electronic feel. When Planet Rock was done, actually to tell you the truth, I'll tell you, when I first heard it, I didn't really like—I kind of liked it but it was so different than anything else that was out there at that point in time. I didn't know how it would be perceived, you know what I'm saying? But you know, I'm glad I, I'm glad I didn't have the final vote on that one because that one record took us around the world you know what I'm saying, Germany, Paris, Italy, you know all over the place.

C: What was the response of people in other countries?

JB: Planet Rock, it was huge, it was huge. Because even if they didn't speak the language they knew every word. They knew every word to the song. So even if they didn't speak like, you know—you know you go to a lot of places, they might not speak the language but they know every word. They can sing, they can sing—you go to Puerto Rico, you got Spanish, you got Puerto Ricans that can't even speak a lick of English but they know every word to a Jay-Z song. Some people learn how to speak different languages by listening to the songs, you know?

C: So I guess being that they don't really produce vinyl at the same level that they used to, how do you think that deejaying has changed? Or maybe you can talk about the new technologies or your involvement with the Rain with [crosstalk].

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JB: Well you know what, I would say like this, it took a little bit of the, of the heart out of the game when they, when, when, when, when it stopped-when vinyl, when the vinyl train stopped. You know what I'm saying? But like anything, with technology, it's always going to advance, so you know, you got to keep up with it. But never neglect, never neglect what got you here. So you know, even though you used the technology, every now and then whip out a 45 on they ass, and, and fuck their heads up you know what I'm saying? You know, and, I mean even though I keep on top of technology, I always kept on top of technology from, from, from when I was building amplifiers back in the day, up until now, when I'm using computers to do, to do, to do my deejaying along with me. Not for me now as along side, yes, you know what I'm saying? So now, with programs like Serato which allows me to keep all my, all my, my, my thousands of songs in a, in a laptop. I can, I can now take even songs, that I remember going, going to England and pulling out like the equivalent of maybe about 5 crates of records that I wanted to take with me. But I only got 2 road cases that hold maybe like 100 records a piece, can't fit them all in there. See but now with the Serato I can not only fit all of them in there, but I can take some of them other records that I wasn't even thinking about though. The novelty records, some of the comedy joints, everything like that. So what happens is it helps you out, you know what I'm saying? The technology does that for you and, and, and you know being that I got involved with Rain, I never stamped my name on anything unless I think it's a good product. And then I really will search around until I find that product, that's solid state because I was scared to take, I used to use, before I started using Serato I was using Final Scratch and it's, it's basically kind of the same format, only thing one, one is built on a better platform than the other. Final Scratch had this little floors that's why I had to get rid of that and go with, and go with Serato. But more or less it's just like you know, just what it does, it just does allows me to take care of all that stuff

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and it allows me to just take my, my whole game plan to another level. Because you know what I'm saying, you know, before you had Organ and you could only, you could only make, make one, one sound from it you got a Organ sound you can adjust the parameters or whatever the deal is. Now then when they came out with, with electronic keyboards, and now you got 40,000 songs plus that Organ sound in one keyboard. It allows you to step up your game plan and play all the different musics or whatever to do to get—and get more out of your performance. And that's basically what I use, all of the stuff for, is a performance enhancer.

C: So, I saw—I went to Santos Bar a couple weeks ago, they were using the video mixing now? Maybe you can explain what that is for a second?

JB: Yes, well the video, you know like a lot people are—get jumping up on the DVD—playing DVDs and--.

C: It's still pretty new?

JB: Yes, it's still pretty new, the DVD is, is, is kind of like, not the, not the way to go because, you know, especially if you've got like—me I love spinning on vinyl, spinning on turntables, that's one thing with Serato I still got the feel of vinyl because I'm actually playing, playing records as opposed to a platter that doesn't spin on, on, on, on, on a CD player or whatever the deal or a DVD player. What it is, this allows you to just take any video that you can put in your computer, you might have to convert it to a, a, a, a MP4 format or a QuickTime Player format, but it allows you take that video and, and, and like you know, videos you see on, on MTV and set them right in your computer and play them at your leisure and manipulate them, with a, with a record. Slow it down, speed it up, scratch it up, chop it up, back and forth, transform, do whatever you want to with it. And, and, and you know, that's the, that's the next thing because, yes that's the next, that's going to be the next thing because I'll tell you like this, I already

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predicted, I predicted a few times when a lot of cats told me it wasn't going to go digital, it wasn't going--. Nah, got to stay with vinyl, I said alright well you know, I don't fault you, hey I love your thought, but after you get tired of carrying all them records, just come back and see me and I'll hook you up. And sure enough, a lot, a lot of cats like Kid Capri, Jazzy Jeff, and a lot of these other cats that said they would never, never ever touch a computer for deejay, now they're all on it, you know what I'm saying? Mark my words, the next 6 months to a year, everybody's going to be—if you a deejay and you going out and you don't have some visuals to your thing, you're going to be kind of, you going to be kind of like falling behind. So, you know, my advice to a lot of them cats, learn about it now, figure out some way, figure out the best form, I'm not telling them to use what I use but figure out something to incorporate that in your shows. Yes, and incorporate some of the visuals in your shows, so you don't get left out of the matrix once, once you know, once the elevator start going up, if you ain't on it man you might get left off. You know what I'm saying?

C: I guess, what's, what's in the works? What's, what's in the future for you?

JB: Well, what's in the future for me right now is, finish, finish my house. That's my carpentry end of this thing. Finish getting everything together, my house, you saw me doing auto mechanics things yesterday.

[Laughter]

JB: That's the—but finish off my house, get my studio back together, get in the studio put out some stuff that's going to make hip-hop proud. Not, not a lot of stuff that's just going to go out there and make me some money, see my, my first thing is, I got so much passion for the music that I make and the culture that I belong to, you know what I'm saying? It ain't always about the dollars, I make songs that, stand the test of time. We got songs that we made that people still play

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and still get a kick out of 'til today. I got songs that sold a million copies 2 months ago or a year ago and 6 months ago. And I put it on right now people clear out of the dance floor, you know what I'm saying?

C: [Inaudible] like Planet Rock people.

JB: Yes, you know what I'm saying? So you know, you know the deal. That's, that's the kind of, that's the kind of thing I'm going after, I want to make songs that I want to start a trend and have people follow that trend. Hopefully we can take the cycle and reverse it and get some hip-hop back into, into what it's supposed to be and maybe start generating some positive message. And you know, if I, if I'm the one to deliver that cool, if I'm one to contribute to it cool, you know what I'm saying? If somebody else contribute to it, cool. As long as somebody does it because I'm, I'm appalled in the you know—it's not the same thing that we started out to achieve, when we, when we, when we started this thing called this thing called hip-hop you know what I'm saying? It's like, it's some of it's good. But we need a balance, we need something that okay, this is, okay this is bullshit, we going to have another bullshit here, can we get a little bit good shit to balance off the balance off the bullshit? Cool.

C: So Strong City is your record label? [inaudible]

JB: Well, Strong City was a collaboration after I got burnt on the Def Jam situation, I didn't really want to start no more label. I was basically concentrating on my studio and one of the groups that came to me, with, with they manager was Rocky Buchano came to me with a group called Masters of Ceremony, which is Grand Poobah, his cousin and Don Baringe, DJ Chepat, so he came to me with this group Master of Ceremony and they were kind of like a, a, a like a underground thing in, in, in New Rochelle from back in the days, you know they were, they were, they were doing little, you know, parties, jam parties or whatever the deal is. So they, they

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had a little style to them, plus we clicked as people, you know what I'm saying? So Rocky brought them in for me to help them work on some songs and then he started pitching to me about how he wanted to start a label and this and that. And I was like, hmmm, so I kind of turned him down cold, he just kept going--. After we finished the Master of Ceremonies album, I liked the album so much I wanted to be a part of it, so I told him—I came in one day I said hey listen, you know what, from now on you don't have to pay for anymore studio time. I said this is going to part of my, this is going to be part of my company, blah, blah, blah. He said oh, so you, you want to get down with the record label. At that point we didn't even have a name for it. I was like yes, well, why not? I said if we, if we got talent like this, because I believed in the, in the Master of Ceremony, them boys, said we got talent like this I think we can make a go of it, you know what I'm saying? But this time, best to believe I'm signing some paperwork because that record label shit ain't going down like that no more alright?

C: So I guess, movies, how, how did you get involved Beat Street or Scratch, probably starting with Beat Street? What was that like?

JB: Well, Beat Street—how I got involved with Beat Street was, it was interesting because they, they actually didn't want—they didn't want me per se they didn't even know who the hell I was. They wanted Bambaataa as a consultant to kind of like give a detailed description of like the Bronx days back in the era whatever the deal is. And then in order to have some, some, some, some weight in the whole thing. Tom Silverman kind of like leaned towards getting us into the movie and, and, and, having us do songs in the movie, so that you know, you know the whole business--. You know business tied in, you know we thinking, we're in the movie, they're thinking a whole 'nother level. Dollars and cents, just how much they can merchandise it for. So Tom said—then once we got into, once we got into that—Arthur Baker, you know had a part to

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do with it, you know it was like, somebody producer, planner but basically the wheels are spinning. Got put into motion and I went from actually not even supposed to even be a part of it to having the biggest part out of everybody in my group, because actually I had a couple of other parts, I got the outtakes—I got a couple of other parts that I actually had speaking parts with me Cool Here, me and the, the guy, the where it's, you know they cut it out because the original movie that, with the, with the outtakes in it and everything like that was about 3 and a half hours long. I could barely watch, what is it 90 minutes now? I could barely watch that.

[Laughter]

JB: It wasn't that great of a movie, it's just, it was just, just, just like the first of its kind or something like that or whatever the deal is. That's the only--. But that's how we got involved with that and I ended up doing a lot on the soundtrack, which was a, which was an experience for me because, you know, I, I didn't know you made that much money just being involved in movies man. And like when I got them checks I was like woohoo, that's what paved the way for me to open Jazzy Jay Recording Studio and with the Scratch thing it's like guys are working on a documentary, actually Scratch was like, I don't know how many years that they take to make that. I think, by the time they put, by the time they put it out I had forgot all about it. They came and interviewed me that stuff and, and they put out, but I think it was, it was a good thing with Scratch because it kind of focused, not kind of, focused ultimately on the first element of the hip-hop culture, which is the deejay. You know what I'm saying? The deejay, so it, it just do the whole focus on the deejay and I think it did a lot, I remember it did a lot for me. Because it, it brought me back out there to a level where a lot of kids if they had not saw Scratch they probably would even not known--.

C: That's the way I first found out about you.

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JB: Like see. Yes, they probably would've not known who I was, or not ever heard of me or what I did. You know what I'm saying? So it made a lot of people go back and say, oh man, wait a minute, this dude did—he did all of this? Why I never heard of him, you know what I'm saying? Blah, blah, blah. So you know, I give a lot of credit to that movie for making people do a little research on my behalf or whatever the deal is.

C: I don't want to keep you too much longer maybe if you just want to hit us with anything that comes to your mind, a story?

JB: Oh, basically, basically, you know I gave up enough. You took me from the, from the, from the woods, from the woods [inaudible] South Carolina all the way up to the technology of Serato. I think we covered a whole lot. Only thing I—basically it's like, I just, my thing is, live and let live man. Everything, you know, like we got to stop being so lazy, let's get up off our asses and do something, I mean. My peoples get your shit together, get out there, do something, you know what I'm saying. Even, even, every little bit counts, you know what I'm saying? I mean, not even on the music--. If music is your passion pursue it aggressively. You know what I'm saying? Whatever it is, you know what I'm saying? And I mean that's the bottom—like I try to give that advice to a little bit of everybody and on that note—it's the Funkmaster DJ Jazzy Jay hanging up with my man D. Man, and we are out.

C: Alright thank you very much.

[END OF SIDE A; END OF INTERVIEW]