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Hill, Lamar

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Interviewee: Lamarr Hill AKA LA Sunshine
Interviewer: Mark Naison
Date: May 2, 2007

Mark Naison (MN): This is May 2, 2007. We're at Fordham University and we're interviewing LA Sunshine one of the great MC's from the early years of hip-hop. Best known for his work with the Treacherous Three who appeared in the movie Beat Street and many other [unintelligible].

MN: Excuse me. One of the things we want to talk about is a little bit a about your childhood and your first exposure to music. So, tell us a little about your family and your early years.

Lamarr Hill (LH): I grew up with my Mom, three brothers, three biological siblings. And, you know, we listened to music, R & B primarily. For the most part that's my major influence- musically is R & B. My Mom used to sing around the house. She used to tell me that's where I got my talent from.

MN: So she used to sing and what were some of the artists that you remember best from like from when you were five or six or seven?

LH: The crooners like Lou Rawls and Al Green. I'd see my Moms losing her mind. Al - - go on Al [Crosstalk].

LH: Yes. She was probably one of those panty throwers.

MN: Ok. Did - - were your brothers older than you or younger?

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LH: Two older and one younger.

MN: Were your - - did your older brothers - - part of your exposure to music?

LH: Definitely. My oldest brother, who was heavily into music, heavily, I mean, he of course had his own room. And he, I think he was like six years older than I am. So coming up he would come home when I'm six, seven, eight. He's a teenager and so called doing his thing and I'm hearing music coming out of his room. And what I can remember most about him and part of the reason why he had so much of an influence on me because it seemed like he enjoyed it so much.

MN: Was he singing in his room?

LH: Singing and walking around - - he had the loudest finger snap I've ever heard in my life.

MN: Really? [Laughter]

LH: POW! Like POW! Like dynamite

MN: And he'd snap when he'd sing?

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LH: [finger snapping] He'd snap - - he'd be singing and going through the motions and then when he'd be coming out. You know he'd be coming out and going into the kitchen and whatever and he would sing a song to me and - - [Crosstalk]

MN: Did he see himself like an Al Green or an Otis Redding?

LH: Yes. That's right. He was just a music - -

MN: Ok, but - - so that was the time when you had the individual male star. Rather than the doo wop. He was more like - -

LH: Well, Mom was more into the Al and the Lou Rawls and the doo wop cats. But by the time when my brother was heavily into music. He was into the Temps, and the O'Jays, Stylistic, Blue Magic, all of those old R & B cats. That's why I guess I'm still heavily into that now.

MN: Now where there any particular - -where you more influenced by records or radio stations?

LH: Records. Right until this day, for the most part, I don't even listen to the radio. Because - - well, now it's for a different reason. But I don't listen - - I wasn't listening to it then because they wouldn't play the majority of the songs that I grew up on. They would play maybe, for example, one song from the Main Ingredients. Most people don't even know who the Main Ingredients

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are. You know - - Dynamic Superiors - - I can go on and on about groups that people don't even know exist.

MN: Sure, now you know it's interesting because Nelson George talks about sort of a, you know, middle class, African American shaping the taste of the radio stations. Was that something - - did, did you like not listen to WLIB at that point?

LH: No. To be honest, I listened when the radio was on. Remember, back then it was no radio station where you hear classic soul, R & B, and hip-hop. It was the radio. They played top forty. They played, you know, Simon and Garfunkel and then they would play Al Green behind it, you know. Then you'd hear Parliament. They just played songs so I got a little taste of all of that. And as I got - - as I grew up on I still yearned to hear those songs so when I would listen to the radio I played Lite FM - -

MN: Now what about - -

LH: and get teased for it.

MN: live music? Did you go to any live music performances?

LH: Yes. I did that when I was young. I stayed at Blue Magic concerts, the Whispers, Frankie Beverly.

MN: But where were they performing?

LH: At the Apollo.

MN: Mainly at the Apollo?

LH: I mean the Apollo was a stone's throw away from me. I grew up on 129th Street and St.

Nick. So - -

MN: So you were going to the Apollo.

LH: Yes, it was right around the corner from me.

MN: Did they - -were there ever outdoor concerts in your neighborhood or were not?

LH: Not really. Actually there was later on but by that time I was heavy into what I was doing and I wasn't able to go - -

MN: So the Apollo was your major live music - -

LH: Yes.

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MN: Now was there any Latin music in your neighborhood? Did you have much exposure to that?

LH: Not at an early age, no, no, I mean, because it was predominantly just, you know, African Americans. It was just brothers back then. Of course it's different now.

MN: What about like West Indian immigrants? Where they much of a force?

LH: No.

MN: So you were living in a mainly African American, you know, cultural space.

LH: Yes. Yes. Because the neighborhood that I grew up in was pretty much like a world of its own. Everybody that even asks me about the neighborhood - - it's like three different, three blocks: 127th Street, 8th Street, and 9th Street. Right below City College in Harlem on St. Nicholas Terrace and Convent Avenue. Now in those three blocks you'd have to accidentally - - find it accidentally unless you, you know, you knew - - if you know that it exists then you'll go. Any other time you'd just make a wrong turn thinking that you going because most people think they can go straight west from there and you run into the park where its' a dead end. So it's a dead end block. And It's just, you know - - it's like - -

MN: Did you grow up at a particular time when people looked out for each other?

LH: Oh, definitely.

MN: So, you know - - you know other adults were watching you?

LH: Shit. I got my dumb ass whipped by plenty of people.

MN: [Laugh]

LH: I mean back then it was you know - - that honestly a lot of people hear tales about how it was back then. Man I ain't proud of it but I ain't shame to admit I was a brat. I was you know a rock thrower, a cake stealer, and, you know, get caught by the man at school and get hemmed up, you know what I'm saying, popped upside the head and on my way down - - yes. You the boy that went and stole something out the store. Oh what. [smack] get your ass down the hell - - on the way home I got popped six, seven times.

MN: So this was a real community, this little cul-de-sac so to speak. Now was there percussion in your house in terms of you know you have people singing - - were there people trying to play drums? Were there people trying to like play - - make believe they were playing bongos?

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LH: Again later on by the time I got into what I was doing, we, me and my crew you know we would, you know, the invisible man you know we did that, you know. Everybody get an instrument you know. We'd be playing along with Earth, Wind, and Fire and stuff like that. But no, not - -

MN: [Crosstalk] So it was, it was, it was sing was the thing. It was R&B.

LH: [Crosstalk] It was singing and choreography.

MN: Choreography. Ok, so people were doing dance moves.

LH: Yes, see back then the, the, the talent shows were common - - I mean cats were doing, shit, talent shows and showcases in the community centers, in the schools. Actually, that's how I got involved in - -

MN: Ok, tell us about that. That's really important because you see you're talking about the early 70's.

LH: Yes.

MN: Before the fiscal crisis.

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LH: Early 70's.

MN: Ok ,so what was, what was your first talent show or your exposure to the talent show?

LH: Well - - what grade was I in at the time? I was in 6th grade when I did my first talent show and 5th grade when I was exposed to the first one being done that I seen. I seen guys doing the Temptations and so - - some guys were performing the Stylistics and doing choreography.

MN: Now those groups when they sang would have choreographed moves.

LH: Yes.

MN: So that was what people were doing.

LH: Right.

MN: They were singing and doing the spins and the splits and - -

LH: Yes and that's what, that's what influenced me - -

MN: What was the elementary school you were attending where this talent - -

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LH: John Finley Elementary School. Right on 129th Street - -130th and Convent Avenue. 130th Street. A block away from home.

MN: Was this during school hours or in an afterschool center?

LH: No. No. It was during school hours. I can remember vividly because-

MN: Was there a particular teacher who ran it?

LH: Yes. It was - - she happened to be my, my teacher because the classes were split up. My particular teacher, she was in charge of the talent show. And she didn't want me to be in it because again, I was, I was a bad ass. I didn't deserve to be, to, to get the attention that a talent show would warrant. And not only that I wouldn't be won the talent show. She really wasn't - -

MN: So, you had a group?

LH: Yes. I formed, that was my very first group that I formed.

MN: And this was a singing group?

LH: Yes. Singing and mainly choreography. We did more lip-singing. You know, I had the mic in front of me and - -

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MN: So you did lip-singing and, and - - but a lot of choreography.

LH: Mainly choreography.

MN: Now, what were some of the moves you were doing?

LH: We did-- the first song that I ever choreographed was "Girls" by The Moments. [Inaudible] were like "what?" didn't even flinch.

MN: No, this was my - -I know

LH: [Crosstalk] Girls. I like them fat. I like them tall, some skinny, some - - So the choreography back then I would do and, you know, I still do now, I have tried to link and synchronize with what the lyrics are. So that was pretty simple when I would - - you know, when I choreographed that. It was girls, I like them fat. I like them tall, some skinny, some small. I like to get to know them all, and, you know, I just choreographed it like that. That was simple for me and it was the first one but we happened to win. But - -

MN: Now did you, did you have outfits? Who designed your outfits?

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LH: Well, we just went shopping and bought dungaree suits. Matching dungaree suits. He'd wear a green one. He'd wear a brown one. He'd wear a red one. Because we - - that was the style back then. We all had - -actually they were called Billy the Kid suits.

MN: Billy the Kid suits.

LH: Yes. Yes, and they were made out of - -

MN: Are there any pictures of you in - -

LH: No

MN: from those - -

LH: No. No. If there was, they probably burned them. But no. No, they weren't. But, you know, it's interesting that we're mentioning the talent show because we won it and part of the choreography was kind of controversial at our early age. We, we grabbed our crotch and then we said give me five sticks of the bowels, give me one of the good looking [unintelligible] give me three that do them freaky things. That was in the song and we, we [Crosstalk and Laughter]

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LH: Woo, woo. Everybody turned their head and they tried to get us thrown out of the contest. There was a big debate and we didn't know whether or not we would win because they had a meeting in the back room. And the committee was deciding [Crosstalk]

MN: Now did your - - while your older brother was singing in his room, was he doing moves also or - -

LH: Not mainly. He was more just acting out what he was - - more performing as opposed to doing the choreography. He would just sing in my face and just be really animated about it.

MN: So there was nobody doing - - was you mother doing choreo - - so this was something [Crosstalk] - - this was you - -

LH: It was in my blood. Yes, it was just in my blood. I didn't know it then but it was definitely - - Michael, Michael Jackson, of course, he, he had a major influence on me because I just loved, you know [Crosstalk]

MN: Now was he doing - -now, was Michael Jackson when he was still with the Jacksons [Crosstalk] and he was still doing - -

LH: He was still doing the steps and - - we even had - - the Treacherous Three - - we had a routine off the Jackson Five song. We made - -

MN: Wow

LH: We, you know, switched the lyrics up. We did the Jackson dance.

MN: So what was the Jackson Five song you did that off?

LH: "I Want You Back" I believe.

MN: Oh, that's such a great song.

LH: I don't know how - - I'm so used to ours, I don't even know their lyrics are any more. It's like well - -when we try to rock the house every Friday and Saturday night, those things we said and did not turn out right. Someone took us for a joke and one laugh was all it took and but now it's time to stop the laughing and take a second look. Oh, Baby you need to - - no, it's one more chance I think it is.

MN: Give me one more chance.

LH: Yes that's what - -

MN: [singing] One, two, three [Crosstalk]

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LH: [Inaudible] rocking the house. We switched the lyrics

MN: Oh. Plug one, two, three MC's rocking the house.

LH: And we did the Jackson's, you know, choreography. So he definitely had a major influence.

MN: Now, did other, like, you know, groups of MC's have similar routines or this was something pretty unique to you?

LH: Everybody had melodic material. Back then cats were making songs off of coffee jingles, songs that were popular back then. Cold Crush was really known for doing a lot of our jingle stuff, songs. But yes, cats were doing it. There was different levels of it, you know. Some cats, they were trying to do it. And, you know, a few elite ones. I mean, without being egotistical, there were tiers like there are now. There were top tier and that consisted of four to five, six groups tops and the rest, you know, fell under it so obviously the level of expertise and skill and precision was somewhat under the top.

MN: Now were there afterschool programs at the elementary school you went to? Did you go to them?

LH: No. The streets - - I mean the bad ones wanted to be in the street.

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MN: Now, this is the early 70's and was heroin a big factor in that - -

LH: My crew - - it's interesting - - the group that I'm part of and the group that I became part of with the Treacherous Three and all the hip hop thing, to be quite honest it saved my life. Because the cats I was running with prior to me getting involved in hip hop unfortunately - - I mean - - the crew was pretty big. When I say crew, it wasn't a gang. It was all the cats that lived in the neighborhood. We all lived in the neighborhood and Kool Moe D and Cave was from the Bronx. So, he's not part of this particular loop. But Kool Moe D and the cats that he ran with, we considered them nerds at an early age because they were bookworms and they just being good.

MN: Where they from your area?

LH: Yes. We all grew up right in the same

MN: So Kool Moe D - - so that group was more of the kids that worked hard in school.

LH: Right. Yes, they stayed in school - -

Unidentified Man (UM): Did you perform with them in any of the talent shows? [Crosstalk]

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LH: No. No. There was my separate crew, the, the, the bad boys of rock. We were all about my height. We were all little, very small and just, just bad asses you know. Breaking windows and you know we weren't robbing or that kind of stuff. But that it was just that part of - - the bad guys of the block and nerds - - and we looked at them as nerds. But when hip hop came about it kind of sparked my interest and then I was the bridge between the two groups. We always got along. There was no battling or fighting amongst the groups. But I say that to say if it didn't - - if hip hop didn't come about I probably would have fell by the wayside like the rest of my crew. Because it was. There was five of us mainly: Porkchop, Chuck, Phil, myself, and Sire and Chuck, Chop and Sire, God bless them, they're all dead. Phil is-- Phil is in a wheelchair.

MN: So, one out of five - -

LH: Right.

MN: Made it through

LH: It was because, again, me, I went to a separate intermediate tool from everybody else. I, I wasn't a follower or, you know, nothing like that but that was just my crew. That's who I ran with. But I know that if I stayed with them, one way or another I would have bumped my head per se.

MN: Now, were there older guys on heroin around you, you'd see nodding out?

LH: We kind of had a different experience because - - I don't know if I'm proud of this either. That particular neighborhood was - - I don't know if you're familiar with the term 'Moneymaking Manhattan' - - I think they call it Boogie Down Bronx and Moneymaking Manhattan. Moneymaking Manhattan stand for cats that were actually selling drugs and you know and they were making money and that's what they did to make money. But that particular neighborhood was well known for distribution not usage. You know, the guys from out of that neighborhood were part of - -

MN: Now this wasn't Nicky Barnes?

LH: Not him particularly [Crosstalk] but his - -

MN: Scarfish is a Patterson Houses guy.

LH: I don't know him very well. Him, him and his underlings, one of them, one of them is related to me. So I mean, that, that whole crew right under Nicky, a lot of transactions took place. My, my, my building particularly so we grew up right in the middle [Crosstalk]

MN: Right in the middle of that stuff.

LH: With the fly cars and the [Crosstalk]

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MN: You saw it, you saw it all [Crosstalk]

LH: First hand. So, my crew was influenced heavily and they all swayed to that side. Cats wind up selling drugs and being a part of that element and I just never gravitated to that.

MN: Now what are the - - you know, I'm working with a memoir on a guy who grew up in Patterson Houses and basketball kind of saved him from the street the way, you know, hip hop saved you. But he described, you know, where people would go to get the fly outfits and stuff. Are there any stores that, you know, you - -

LH: A J Lester. I remember when I bought my first sweater from A J Lester you couldn't tell me nothing!

MN: Where was A J Lester located?

LH: A J Lester was on 125th Street and 8th Avenue. 125th Street and 8th Avenue right on the corner. That was the big-time store where all the, where all the fly guys - -

MN: Was the Bly's, Bly Shirt Shop still open then down on 5th Avenue?

LH: I [Crosstalk]

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MN: That was in the 60's. [Crosstalk]

LH: I wouldn't recall and we never even ventured down that far. That was, that was a little too far for us to venture. At that time, 5th Avenue was pretty much a whole new world to us because we didn't have that far to cop what we needed to cop as far as clothes and beer.

Production Person (PP): Real quickly. Could you move that mic up a little bit. It's my bad. It's rubbing with your jacket. Like up toward your chin a little bit, you know what I'm saying.

LH: You want me to take it off and move it up?

PP: Yes. Thank you. You know what I'm saying. Slide it up a little bit.

LH: I, I, I've used a mic before.

MN: [Laugh]

LH: I know what these things do.

PP: Yes.

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LH: That's good?

PP: Yes. Thank you. I'm sorry about that.

MN: Right. So, you had a lot of, you know, successful underground economy people around.

LH: Yes. Yes. Definitely.

MN: Now did they, did those guys overwhelm the working men in the area? Or

LH: Shit, that was, that was work. I mean - - definitely. Definitely. I mean, well I won't say yes. They were more visible than the working man. Now, not to say the ratio was, you know, overwhelming or nothing like that. But they definitely more visible. The cats flashed with, with, with - - [Crosstalk]

MN: Were they generous with the kids?

LH: Yes. Definitely. [Crosstalk]

MN: OK. Because that's another thing the people - - how did they deal with little guys like you?

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LH: We still mimic them. One of the ways I tease the guys, they used come up to us - - you know my brother, because he was part of that. Highly. He was even into one of the drug dealers, you know. They made, they was making money back then. Driving the big, fancy cars and what have you. So my - - they - - I was considered Little Chocolate because my brother's name was Chocolate, his street name because he was pitch black and they would call him Chocolate and the - - "Little Choc you good? You want a frank or something? Come on over here. We can go to the store." That's just their mannerism. "Yo go get you some sneakers. While you at it, go get you something." That's how they were with us, you know. If we're in the park playing basketball and the guys, they just sit around doing nothing. All of a sudden, they get the urge to play basketball. And remember, 125th Street was right down the block. "Yo, open the door. Put on a pair of shorts and some sneakers. Get you some sneakers." And they, you know, because money was free like that. That's how they treated us and we all, come on. We all going to, not McDonald's, it was a restaurant called Tomfords, equivalent to a McDonald's. A burger joint. They'd take us on down there and get burgers or get us all ice cream. They'd get us something.

MN: Did they sponsor basketball teams and stuff like that or it wasn't that formal?

LH: Only because - - right - - it wasn't that formal. But if something went on, they, they, they backed us. If there was a sponsorship. Yes, because we used to play - - there weren't leagues, you know, organized leagues, really, that we were in. But that community would play the Ikes.

MN: [Crosstalk] Now these were older guys. These were guys 25, 30.

LH: No. Not even that old.

MN: Really?

LH: When we - - I mean what - - in 73', 74', I was 10 or eleven years old.

MN: [Crosstalk] No. But the guys - -

LH: Those guys were teenagers. They was 17, 18.

MN: Really. So they weren't that old.

LH: No. No. No. Those were the street hustlers.

MN: Now did they - - you know, if they had a beef, did they do it in the street or was they was careful about - -

LH: For one, as far as their drug transactions, they weren't proud of it. Let me just acknowledge that first. Because back then, during that era, for the majority of the drug dealers, it wasn't something to hang your hat on. You know, back in them days. Not that it was good regardless to whether you're doing it or not but back then you wasn't, you weren't really flamboyant. Cats

wouldn't stand on the corner and just, you know, solicit cats to come and buy drugs from them. It'd be like [inaudible], you know, more down low, this kind of transaction. So - - it was locked into one particular neighborhood. Between like maybe like 114th Street and 118th, 19th Street and Manhattan Avenue. Generally around that area, that's where the heroin, you know, boom was taking place. You could virtually see cats nodding and stuff. Like, for example, in the 80's when the crack epidemic hit, you'd see crackheads all over the place.

MN: Yes. I'm partly contrasting that heroin was very different.

LH: Yes. It was different, very much so.

MN: And, you know, they didn't hold shootouts in front of the schoolyard.

LH: No. No. If they fought, I mean if there was beef, you would see somebody, beef, or somebody owes somebody some money or something. To make a stand or make a statement, you'd see them pull up in front of the park, get out the car and go get his bat out the car and, you know, threaten the cat fought him and hit him in the head, hit him in the leg but it wasn't no real - - [Crosstalk]

MN: But you never had to worry about flying bullets in the street?

LH: No.

MN: You felt safe.

LH: Yes. Definitely in that neighborhood. Shit. Nobody wasn't coming in there doing nothing. I mean, honestly, Kool Moe Dee wrote a song about it, "Wild, Wild, West."

UM: Oh. Yes.

LH: That song was about that particular neighborhood. I used to live downtown, 129th Street, Convent. Everything's upbeat. Partying, ball in the park. Nothing but girls after dark. That whole record is about that particular neighborhood. And if you can recall, he says, "We don't fight. It's better to use your hands." Or something to that effect. He's talking about we fight with our hands. People don't use guns and whatever. That was, that's how it was back then.

MN: So, this was a good way to grow up.

LH: Yes. Definitely. I wouldn't trade it for nothing in the world. Actually, everybody that grew up there feels the same way and people that happen to just come into the neighborhood and be part of the crew by chance, they, they stick like glue. I got cats that moved from Houston or visited somebody for a summer and, shit, they still on the goddamn block. Wow man. It's definitely a great place to - - it's a, it's a very unique experience. Actually if you ever take the, take the time to just visit it, you can feel it because it's still around.

MN: I actually think I know - - I, I visited somebody who used to teach here, actually lived in one of those buildings on 129th.

LH: Ok.

MN: You know, this was about 15 years ago. I remember she had to move, you know, because she was taking a job, like you know, across the country and I had to help her move all her stuff out of the apartment. It seemed like, you know, kind of a nice little corner in the world.

LH: Exactly. It's like, it's like its own planet honestly.

Unidentified Woman (UW): And you still have friendship and relationship.

LH: Well, I run a basketball tournament. Well, I co-run a basketball tournament and right in that particular park on 129th Street. It's called [inaudible] Athletic Association. We do it, we been doing it for like the last, I think what, the last 15 years something like that and because I work with kids anyway. But in part of the neighborhood, that's what I do, I give, I give a reunion every year. So it's still, I'm still - -

MN: So again, you have, you have a neighborhood reunion.

LH: Yes. Yes.

MN: And what, what month is this usually?

LH: In - -

MN: Or is it a set date?

LH: Yes. It's set this particular year's is going to be August 25th. Last year it was the first time we began doing it again because back in the day, speaking about the older cats, that's what they would do. They would have a reunion every year. If that had lived there previous to them and had moved on all over the country, they would come there and have a reunion for the whole weekend. Free sponsored, I mean not sponsored, but, you know, guys would put money in the kitty and go buy food and have it cooked and open up the park and get some music out and we hadn't that, I mean, in far too long and I felt that it was time to get it done. Get that back. So I can reconnect with the old friends and last year first time we did it.

MN: Now, you went to this junior high for performing arts.

LH: Yes. It was called I.S. 195 Roberto Clemente.

MN: Ok. And what street was that on?

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LH: 133rd Street and Broadway and I attended the first incoming class in 78' I believe.

MN: Now, now you were, at that point, very interested in both choreography and acting.

LH: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Definitely. I mean that was the reason why I went there because I always had a performing gene in me. I didn't know it at the time again. And it was a new school and a new building and it was away from the rest of the cats.

MN: Now were - - did, did you get a chance to do things in the school there?

LH: Yes. Yes. We performed a play that we, we wrote, directed, and that, being I didn't go to high school, that was my high school experience because we were the first class and they pretty much let us get away with a whole lot of things. Not everybody. I was the only one that wasn't doing their work, but. They - - you know, we pretty much had free range over the school because they let that student body like set the precedence of the, of the following - -

MN: Now did you have Spanish kids from further up?

LH: Yes.

MN: Along with black kids

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LH: Definitely. In that school, yes. That was more mixed. Definitely. Because it's on Broadway was a lot of Hispanic cats from that area.

MN: Now this was 78'.

LH: If I'm not mistaken, 77', 78'. The time reference [Crosstalk]

MN: Right. Now by this time we're entering this school, had you heard any, any outdoor jams with DJ's yet?

LH: No.

MN: So this is - -

LH: By the time I got - - I went in there in 7th grade and I did the 8th grade and I repeated the 8th grade. But the second time I was in the 8th grade, that's when I started doing that stuff.

UM: Do you remember your first exposure to hip hop? Was it a jam outside or was it like a mix tape? Or maybe not even a tape back then.

LH: No. It was at an R & B concert.

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MN: An R&B concert?

LH: Yes, because again being as that was my love and still is. I was at a Whispers concert at the Apollo and DJ Hollywood did the intermission at the Apollo at that concert.

MN: What did DJ Hollywood sound like? You know, like did he come - - did he - - what was his intro? Did he come in with a verbal intro?

LH: It was so profound and impacting that it changed my life. It was, for me, it hit me like a ton of bricks.

MN: Did he come in like - -

LH: He came in - - well - - ok, picture the, picture the concert taking place. They announce intermission. We're going to take a 15 minute break. We'll be right back. They close the curtain and without an intro they just put a spotlight in the corner of the stage. He wasn't even on the stage. He was, you know, down, on the floor, in the corner and they just zoomed the spotlight on him. And he just, you know, had his headphones on his head, on the mic, and he said, "I'm DJ Hollywood. I'd like to welcome everybody to the world famous grand Apollo Theater and it's time for me to make it bad." And he just threw on Apache [boom-ba-bop-bop boom] and I get chills just thinking about it. That shit just, just knocked me down. I never felt nothing like that.

MN: Really. It just like [sound].

LH: Yes.

MN: That moment.

LH: That's because prior to that I knew that I was going to be a performer to some extent. What avenue I really didn't know what I was going to take be it choreography, acting, dancing, or something. But when he did that, and doing that music and the sparks.

MN: So people - - you - - everybody was feeling what you were feeling.

LH: Yes.

MN: It grabbed people.

LH: Yes and he kept us there for 15, 20 minutes, however long the intermission was. From then it was, everybody was here. Everybody was up. He, he took over the concert. And when it hit me, I walked out of there, I mean I was high.

MN: And it was totally unexpected.

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LH: Right.

MN: You came there to see the Whispers.

LH: Yes. Yes. It was a life altering trip. Definitely.

UM: Two turntables he had.

LH: Two turntables and a mixer and he was just playing Apache. And, he was playing Apache and Lymon at the same time.

UM: Did he have other MC's come on?

LH: No. It was just DJ Hollywood. And doing crowd participation and - -

MN: Can I, can I say [inaudible] he asked them to shout back.

LH: To say hoo and all that to say he did own the crowd the responses. Say ow and, and, and was rhyming while he was doing it, I was just amazed.

MN: Now did you go at start practicing when you got home? I mean, how did it translate into, you know, your, your creating?

LH: When it happened, it happened that moment. I can remember that vividly sitting there after I, you know, dissipating and came down and we all, you know, had to take a breath and I got a chance to actually take it in. I realized that that was what I was going to do. While I was in the moment, I didn't know it. I was so awestruck. Like - -

MN: Now did you have a sense after you sort of, you know, a day or two later that the, that the thing, that this rhyming thing was something that was going to - -

LH: Yes. Yes. Again, after I had a chance to take it all in I, I, I said to myself, while I was sitting there still I was like "That's what I want to do. I'm doing that. Hell or high water, I'm doing what he's doing." I didn't know whether it was going to be DJing. I didn't know whether it was going to be rhyming. And it wasn't even hip hop. I didn't know what it was [Crosstalk]

MN: Now did you know anybody in your neighborhood who had the same set that he had at that point, you know, the equipment that he was using? The two turntables and mixer.

LH: Because I'm trying to think - - again, my time references are horrible. I think there were. I'm almost sure there were like crews starting to sprout up all over the place. But it didn't impact me, it didn't start resonating like, like he did because it wasn't to that level. It's was like cats

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trying to be DJ's. So, it's like that's corny. It's like yo, yo that's cute. Alright. That's enough of that. And I would, you know, go check out what they were doing and nobody was, nobody was blowing it out the water like Hollywood did. Once he did that I'm like no. It can be on a different level. It's like watching someone play basketball and they're trying to shoot [Crosstalk]

MN: Now did you try to get yourself a system?

LH: No. I never did that. That was unattainable totally. I knew I - - Shit, I barely had sneakers.

UM: Yeah. I would imagine there's a lot more room to start rhyiming than it would be to start as a DJ. [Crosstalk]

LH: Right. Exactly. You need equipment and all of that.

MN: Now when you started rhyiming, did you rhyme with other people like in a circle? - -

LH: No.

MN: You know, you did it in the house by yourself?

LH: We - - I started - - I guess if you want to call it a circle because that's when, again, the little DJ crew, what they were called, started sprouting up. And there were two main crews in the

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neighborhood. Eight guys had turntables and mixers. There were two main groups. It was DJ EZ Lee, who went on to be the freshest DJ, as well as, DJ Reggie Reg. And Kool Moe Dee was - - grew up with DJ EZ Lee and the cornball cats and they were over there doing there thing.

UM: Can you remind us again what period this was? About what year was this?

LH: 78'. 78'. And there were two different crews within the neighborhood. But, you know, we were all joined - -we all knew each other and what have you. But it wasn't like there was a group of us huddling up saying rhymes. Moe was over there doing rhymes and I was over here doing rhymes as well as other people in our crew.

MN: Now, did - - when you went to the Apollo did you go with a group of friends?

LH: No. Actually I went with one of the older cats, you know. One of the guys that, that, you know, used to - - Little Choc come over man. I have an extra ticket. Little Choc come, come on over.

MN: Now - - but - - here - - when you started doing rhymes, did you start doing them by yourself in the apartment and, and how quickly did you start sharing them with other people?

LH: Being that I never had a problem performing or, you know - - I was always totally comfortable in front of people. When we would jam in the park, there was always a mic and I'd

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be the guy who'd make the announcements about - - DJ EZ Lee come to the front or, you know, whatever it is you know. Whatever was to be said on the microphone I would do it. And that went from - - that graduated from that to just saying "Alright. DJ Reggie Reg is about to come on." And I would say "Yo. DJ Reggie Reg is about to come on and we're going to rock it to the break of dawn." And, you know, it just progressed.

UM: It was natural, right? So you were already kind of the master of ceremonies.

LH: Yes. Right. Exactly.

UM: And when did you start incorporating, you know, your crew in it, dance moves this, you know, more of the performance?

LH: When we - -no - - actually it was before - - the choreography and the dancing came after we made our first record. Because by that time we were solidified.

MN: When was the first time you like felt, a crowd respond to you - - when people went crazy when you were doing something? Was there one moment when you stepped in front of the mic at a party and then - -

LH: You mean my hip hop career or you talking about just in general?

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MN: Well, well ok. You had that experience in the talent shows.

LH: See, that's what I'm saying.

MN: You've, you've, you've had the experience of making the crowd go "ooh, ah." You know.

LH: It was totally comfortable.

MN: You were - - so - -but - - so was it very quick with the hip hop? Like, you know, almost the first time you took the mic that you had people going?

LH: Yes because it was local. It was central. It was, you know, in our little pocket.

MN: So everybody knew you.

LH: Yes. So everybody got a kick out of ooh, look. They are doing that stuff, whatever it was, that hip hop stuff. And whether we were doing it good or not, there was no gage or no nothing to compare it to. So it was just everybody getting a kick out of oh, they're on the mic and they're DJing so, we're happy because we're hearing music. So we got that response but when - - if you're talking about the first time we had a blow up pow, you know, that kind of response by the time we gotten good and heavy again, we may not even have been the Treacherous Three, just Kool Moe Dee and myself. We performed at a spot on 125th Street again called Randy's Place.

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It was a bingo hall that they would convert into a club. And we - - one of the simplest routines that we had in the earlier days. It would just go - - Moe Dee would say One, two and I'd go show them what to do. Three, four, give them more than what they bargained for. Five, six, show them all the tricks on the mix. Seven, eight, you know the music's great. Nine, ten, and you'll never hear sounds like this again. So Reggie Reg are you ready? [singing]. He'd cut the beat and then we'd start rhyming. We did that and everybody was like aah. So that's when we started building up. Oh we can do this shit. Alright. We could - - you know, that's what these other cats were doing.

MN: And this was still 78'?

LH: Yes.

MN: Down at this bingo hall?

LH: Bingo hall called Randy's Place on 125th Street and St. Nicks.

MN: Now was this, was this seen like - - ok, you and Kool Moe Dee, you know you're good. Do you, do you know about all the people in the Bronx by this time? - - that are doing their thing?

LH: We knew about, again, the first tier, the elites. We knew about the Grand Master Flash and the Furious. They weren't five by then. I think they were still three if I'm not mistaken. And the

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other - - the Cold Crush, we weren't the Cold Crush at that time. They were, you know, mixed to different crews and a lot of guys. But we knew, definitely, Herk, Flash and all the elite groups.

Yes. We knew about them.

MN: Now were you ever going up to see them?

LH: Moe Dee did. Again, because I was still waffling between becoming an MC and, you know, splitting because I was still with my, with my street crew.

UM: So you'd probably say you were directly influenced by the people in your neighborhood.

So, it was a Harlem sound. It wasn't a Bronx sound necessarily.

LH: Exactly because Hollywood had more of disco, hip hop [Crosstalk].

MN: So you thinking at this point you may, you know, go with the neighborhood business.

LH: Yes because I - - during that stage of the game, I wasn't really a hip hop diehard. I just happened to be with one and Moe was. And I just happened to be, I know it sounds supped up, I just happened to be good at it. It wasn't like oh, I go to do this shit. I mean, I felt I would have been able - - I would have been good at anything that I did from a performance perspective and it just happened to be that. But I still was, you know, caught between the two. So Moe Dee would go up there to the Bronx to see the Furious Five and see all them risers and he would come back

and give me all these fascinating stories about the same experience that I had with DJ Hollywood, Moe Dee had up in the Bronx when he watched Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five.

MN: Now when's, when's the point where you actually get on stage with some of these legendary figures and, you know, whether it's Hollywood or, you know, Flash, the Cold Crush?

LH: The first time? I don't remember but I know it was definitely pre-record. It wasn't - - it was before, before records. I wouldn't even remember, know what, what group. Because there was a time in hip hop before records when groups were just, you know, you'd come out to see us. By, by 70' when we started, by the end of 78', 79', we were, we were, we were pretty much a crew to be reckoned with in that lone setting. So we performed with pretty much all of those guys at one time or another. And looking back in retrospect I kind of think they were doing that for one we had a name. We had some, some, some clientele. But I think they were probably just as curious as to find out [Crosstalk]

MN: Now was anybody else - - you know when you and Kool Moe Dee started, you know, doing what you were doing, was there anybody else in Harlem comparable to - -

LH: Outside of like our crew?

MN: Yes.

LH: God, this sounds supped up but no.

MN: So you were what it was in Harlem.

LH: Yes. [Crosstalk] I don't want to dispute that to be quite - - yeah. Coming from a competitive - - hip hop [unintelligible] rappers - - MCs and none of them ever would really concede - -

MN: So competition was all in the Bronx at this point. So it was the two of you in Harlem - -

LH: Now there were other crews that were, that were in Harlem making noise definitely. And, you know, they had a following and they had a clientele as well but they didn't the, the, the technicianship, the intricacy, the lyri - - they weren't as tight. For example, there was Johnnie Won and Raybon. They were some eastside cats that were putting it down over there on the eastside. Again, it was centralized. It was pockets. And in our pocket, we held it down. And on the eastside, Johnnie Won and Raybon were doing it but they weren't breaking down lines per se. They were doing more, Doug will kill me for this, what Doug is known for - -Dougie Fresh like he's more of a party cat as apposed to a I'm going to put your ass on the mic. I'm going to say rhymes and make you say ooh. They were just saying little jingles and sing songs and stuff.

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UM: Here's a question for you then. So who was actually organizing the shows? I mean, were the shows at parties or were they at clubs or kind of both?

LH: Initially when we started we were just doing them in the park and we moved from the parks to the bingo halls or what have you. We'd go to a Randy's Place. The gentleman ran it. Randy, you know, say - - I'd come in and rent the spot or let's split the, let's split the door - -

MN: Was there any money in this when you were doing it? I mean - -

LH: [Laugh] If you call - - my first paid - - the first time I got paid for doing a gig, and it wasn't actually a gig. It was just us, the DJ crew because back then the DJ was more in charge and more dominant than the MC. We did, I think, Randy's Place and, you know, and back then it wasn't just no do a 45minutes set either. It was - - we'd go and we'd DJ from 9 to 4 in the morning.

UM: So you, you were not just the headliners. You were the act. And did you set up shows with other like let's say, newer MCs and newer DJs or that might have come later?

LH: It definitely came later but it was definitely groups on the card - -

MN: What did you get paid for doing 9 to 4 in the morning?

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LH: [Laugh] Literally we got pizza. [Laughter]

LH: We got pizza and - -

MN: Like those signs that say we work for food.

LH: Don't get it wrong. We were elated like because that was our first gig. We did the show and we didn't know no better. And we wasn't thinking about this, we weren't taking it on as monetary venture anyway. We were like what - - look at it contrast to what it is now we, we carried the records in the milk crates and we carried the speakers upstairs. And set it up and did the same thing when it's time to break it down. And at the end of the night, we would get pizza and be totally content. High five and shit. [slap] Hell yes. Just delightful.

MN: Now was, was, was Kool Moe Dee a reader? Was he, you know - -

LH: Yes. One of them, well this may not be a word but he's scarily educated. And he always has been.

MN: So you had - - the two of you were like in some ways a study in contrast, yet you - -it worked.

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LH: Yes. Definitely. Yes. Yes. Yes. I mean we still talk about that to this day how that, how that happened. Again, it must have been predestined. It sounds corny but it must have been because - - I was a size - - we were in one big neighborhood but we were on that side and I on that side but there was never no riff or no beef. But one from this one and one from this one. We came together and that's how the Treacherous Three was pretty much was created. After we sift through the different names of the group because prior to the Treacherous Three there was the Fantastic Four, the Fantastic Four Plus and DJ EZ Lee and his crew and there was so many different - - by the time we came into being the Treacherous Three it was - -

MN: Now how - - what kind of influence did, you know, putting it on record have with Rapper's Delight? How did that affect, you know - -

LH: It changed the game definitely. It took it to another level. But I think, to be quite honest, in a sense it was the beginning of the end. Because hip hop was a cultural thing. It was a livelihood. It was a style. It was a vibe. It was, you know, a life that you lived. But once it - - once they made that record it began the commercialization. And not a knock on them - -

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

LH: Started it. Now they were doing what they were doing - - they gave this impression they were first hip hop group and not only that, the fact that these cats were from Jersey. And here it is we doing blood, sweat, and tears, and we're in trenches and these cats coming in. And, you

know, be mindful that Sylvia Robinson did that, she constructed it. They were not even a group. They were three people that she went out and said I need some guys to do this rap stuff that they're doing. So the MC's - - when we took - - we weren't too happy about it. And she came into the clubs and was playing it. And when we heard it, we were like - - and you know what I mean, it wasn't the best record in the world from a lyrical standpoint. I mean come on. Be bop shoo be doo bop - - to be quite honest - -

MN: [Laugh]

LH: From an MC perspective and you're in the trenches and you're living, breathing, hip hop, MCing that ain't, that ain't, you know, giving your blood to a turnip. [Crosstalk]

UM: There is a whole section that was lifted from Grand Master Flash and the Furious
[Crosstalk]

LH: Yes. Of course. And the fact that they weren't a group. They were - - I'm sorry you all. You call a spade a spade. They were Milli Vanilli before Milli Vanilli.

MN: [Laugh]

LH: You know, and now once they became a group, you know, it was good and it was beneficial for hip hop as a whole because it gave it more exposure which began to become something to be

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reckoned with. Because prior to that it was a fad - - ah what's that - - and it wasn't even music. It was what's that noise you all are making. The fact that they used the song that they used, you know, it took, it definitely took - -

MN: Now I want to go back to something you said when we were having a discussion before about like this is a movement. That it was this explosion. You know, that of people who needed something. Young people needed something then - - you know, then today you said it saved your life. So, you know, it - -looking at those years, you know, 77', 78', like when you have this reaction to DJ Hollywood and it seems like a lot of people are having that reaction. How would you describe what was going on in Harlem, in the Bronx, in Washington Heights around this? This, this, this - -

LH: It was - - prior to hip hop, it was on the verge of being volatile but it wasn't because it wasn't - - we weren't like, we weren't at odds or nothing like that but, I mean, with heroin and the economy and the inner city, that whole life was, you know, it was really rough and you could sense that something was about to happen. It was just in the air if you were cognizant of it. Not that - - I mean you got to sit back kind of like assess it and go Oh something is in the air but if not, you wouldn't be privy to it. You'd just be playing basketball and not even feel it. But there was definitely something in the air but nobody would be able - - if you tried to think of it again you wouldn't be able to pinpoint it. But with that said, it was going to blow - - something was going to blow one way or another whether it was us becoming revolutionaries or, you know, going on riots, whatever. Something definitely was going to happen. Fortunately hip hop came to

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fruition, came into play and that's the way it blew up. It blew up in the form of hip hop fortunately. [Crosstalk]

MN: Do you think there were other people like you whose lives saved by this or is that a little dramatic? [Crosstalk] It's not dramatic.

LH: I'm sure it is - - there was and is now. For one because you've got rappers not hip hoppers. You've got rappers that are being fed and feeding a lot of other cats that would normally be in the street. The flip side of that is they try to glorify it but the other part - - I ain't even going to get into that. But it would - - it definitely helped them because they would be, you know, just entrenched in all kinds of negativity. So I know it saved cats from then all the way into now and I know I'm not the only person that was, you know, dabbing into this and dabbing into that and used that as a vehicle to get away from it. And, and as it became - - as it begun to become a moneymaking regiment, being how ever little it was, I mean, after the pizza, it went to the \$35 stage. \$35 in my pocket, I'm alright. I ain't got to go sell no newspapers or, you know, it became our hustle, a legal hustle.

MN: Now was the graffiti and the b-boying part of the scene in Harlem as much as it was in the Bronx?

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LH: No where near it quite honestly. It was part of it but not as much as it was in the Bronx to be honest. But it was received as well and respected as well. But you weren't - - didn't have a much b-boys and graph artists around tagging and breakdancing.

MN: So like in your - - in that little corner you grew up in, breakdancing wasn't a big thing.

LH: I mean, not as big as it was in the Bronx if I'm making a comparison. No it wasn't. And again, not only that, the cats that were doing it, that were trying to breakdance, they were, they were second tier. They weren't - - if they would have took it to that next level then probably, we probably would have recognized it and paid attention to it. And some other cats would have, like, Harlem began - - when Harlem started doing the hip hop thing, other cats started doing it because it was at a level - - a certain level. But the b-boys - - I mean, there were some cats that was very good at it, you know, a handful. But not in comparison to the Bronx where they just had them cats putting it down it didn't make us go ooh, another cat's going to try to do what he doing or so on. [Crosstalk]

UW: Sorry. When did you start going to the Bronx?

LH: To perform or - -

UW: No. To, to, to - - no. When you say I've got to go there to see what's going on.

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LH: To see what's going down? After Moe came and got me when he had the experience that I had from Flash and them - - we saw Flash and them 78' I think. Around the same time we seen him but it happened simultaneously, you know. I'm over here watching this and he's over there getting this, you know, we get this revolution at the same time, not the same day but in the same time period. Be mindful that that time period was going like this, I mean, two months may have seemed like two years. [finger snapping] It was moving at such a rapid pace. So the first time we did it, it was in the same, the same - -

UW: And to perform?

LH: The first time we went to perform in the Bronx probably it was 78' or if not, early 79'.

MN: Did you perform at a club or at an outdoor - -

LH: When we came to the Bronx? No. It wasn't definitely in a club. I believe it was the PAL.

MN: 183rd and Webster?

LH: Yes. [Crosstalk]

MN: See that. We've got to landmark that also.

LH: I believe that was the first one.

MN: Really?

UM: And were you already performing with Special K at that point?

LH: Yes. Yes. Actually no. that is it. That is it. [Crosstalk] That was the first time we hit the Bronx because - - I can picture Special K - - I could be mistaken but I'm almost sure - - I can see Special K performing with us for the first time because his name wasn't Special K at that time. His name was MC KK. I can, I can vividly see him coming on stage - - he had on a green shirt this color and had KK on it and that was his first interaction with us. And it was in the Bronx and it was at - - [Crosstalk]

MN: 183rd and Webster? Was, was Herk there at that one? Was that one - -

LH: I don't know because at that time I didn't know Herk. [Crosstalk]

MN: Was there anybody who really leaped out at you? Who was both running with you?

LH: I think, I think Cas was there. I don't know if they were a crew by then. I think, no, they were. Sorry because my time references are horrible. But I, I think the Cold Crush was there. Fantastic was there. Because - - and who ever Jazzy J was down with was there. Because I

remember Jazzy J. He was one of the few cats that acknowledged that we, that we, that we put it down.

UW: And your style was very different?

LH: Yes. Right.

UW: Speak rapping - -

LH: Right and all that stuff.

UW: how did they perceive you?

LH: It went over well. I mean, very well.

UW: Because this as not from the Bronx. [Crosstalk]

LH: No. It was pretty much a Harlem style.

UW: It was specific for you.

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LH: Yes. Yes. By that time - - during that time I don't even think we were doing fast - - yes, yes we did hit them with fast rhymes, what we called fast rhymes. And something that was definitely, definitely brand new. And it had it had a - - the Harlem MC back then had a different flavor. I couldn't really, I can't really break it down, the difference because it was just a different type of vibe. It was a whole different kind of charisma or attitude that a Bronx MC had compared to a Harlem MC. So it had to be somewhat refreshing - - not that they were tired of the Bronx stuff but something new, but it was still within the same thing, the same pocket - - [Crosstalk]

MN: Some of the things you have with you here - -

LH: Well you asked me to bring some of the stuff I had. I brought some of the songs.

MN: Ok. Let me get a - -

UW: A boombox?

LH: Boombox. It's in my office.

UW: Ok.

LH: So, let me just give you the key and we'll bring it over so you know, that people hearing this can hear you know.

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LH: I couldn't find one of the joints so I just put a couple of joints. [unintelligible]

MN: So how many people would be at like the 183rd Street PAL?

LH: Shit. As many as it could hold.

MN: [Laugh] So you had the sense that this was like - -

LH: They was sweatboxes. On a weekend basis like Friday, Saturday, and sometimes, Sunday and then it got to a point where there was more than one jam being held. Grand Master Flash and the Furious would be over here and, and Cool Herk would be over here and, and Bam would be over here.

UM: So there wouldn't be any seats right? [Crosstalk] So did they serve alcohol, that kind of thing?

MN: You couldn't at a PAL. [Crosstalk]

LH: I'm almost sure they didn't.

MN: At the Police Athletic League, there's no way you could.

LH: No, no. They had franks and sodas.

UM: Ok.

LH: They had franks and sodas.

UM: Ok.

LH: And when it graduated to a different level, places like, I think, the Audubon Ballroom and [unintelligible] I still don't think - - It was geared to kids for the most part. So I don't know because I don't drink and didn't. So, you know, if they were - - and more than likely, to be quite honest, cats were probably sneaking alcohol in.

MN: So this is - - [Crosstalk]

LH: Wait, wait, wait. Let me make sure we're going to play some [unintelligible]

UM: Now could you tell us about it?

LH: What? I'm going to find out what it is.

MN: Let's see what comes on.

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LH: Where's the skip button. [unintelligible] I definitely don't want to hear - - [music in the background]. This right here is our very first recording. This is the new rap language. This is what we called speed rhyming, speed rhyming. And the whole song is like this [singing along with the song]. The whole record is like this. [music stopped]

UM: This is what it [unintelligible]

LH: Yes. Spoonie G - - alright if we're going to get into it - - Spoonie G, Kool Moe Dee, and LA Sunshine are the original Treacherous Three. Spoonie G went off and made his solo record, Spoon and Rap. And we were already a group, a recognized group, so we needed a third member. Moe and K went to school together at Norman Thomas High School and that's how K became part of the group. Actually because when Moe - - they were performing in high school. They were performing in the lunchroom during the lunch period and they weren't a group then. Just Moe and K. They were the two top and seasoned in school. K, you know, walk around school [snapping fingers] playing a beat and having his little entourage following while he's rhyming and Moe was just cool rhyming and laying in a cut. [Laughter]

LH: K had to joint on lock down because he was always performing. Then one day, Moe performed, performed and, you know, blew up and had that competitive thing - - Moe Dee had the fast rhymes and blew - - it was something brand new. That's the first time we exposed the educated [unintelligible]. The next day, Special K came into Moe Dee and - - come here man

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check this out - - and went into the bathroom, just him and Moe, and he said a fast rhyme just like Moe and them do - - just walked right out. And we knew K was good anyway. I mean, that's how he pretty much, swayed them and got down with the Treacherous Three for the most part.

MN: Did any - - could anybody else do what you just did?

LH: What? The fast rhyming? Do you want the politically correct answer or - - [Crosstalk]

MN: Yes. Give me the real answer.

LH: Shit. You've heard them. You tell me.

MN: [Laugh] I haven't heard anything.

LH: That was - - Let's, let's, let's look at it this way. There are guys that are doing speed rhyming and fast talking, talking fast but if they even say they were not influenced, they might not know that they are. You know, somebody might deny it but if you do know of the Treacherous Three, you can't say that you were influenced. This was in 79' and this was our very first recording - -

MN: Now, who recorded this?

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LH: You mean what label?

MN: Yes. What label is this?

LH: Enjoy Records.

MN: So this is the same year as Rapper's Delight. So within like a couple of months?

LH: Months. After - - I tell you. The whole time period was like this [finger snapping].

[Crosstalk] it was going so quick. Yeah. Rapper's - - yeah. We did that in 79'.

MN: Now Enjoy Records. Where they a Manhattan based?

LH: Yes. Bobby Robinson again. Right on 125th Street. Bobby Robinson, Happy House, Enjoy Records. Because he wasn't just a hip hop label. Bobby had a record label prior to, you know, cats doing hip hop stuff, you know. I think he even had Gladys Knight and the Pipps maybe way back in the day. He had some prominent cats and deals and records from a lot of cats, so he was always in the record business. But as soon as the hip hop thing began to take up room, he began to capitalize just like anybody else did and he recorded us. But he didn't record us first. He recorded Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five and then the Funky Four and then, excuse me, and then us I believe. But going back to the song, in particular, this being our first song, cats do it now but I don't think that they do it the same way. It's different for one - - one of the things that

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we're known for is the lyrical precision as a group with - - I still haven't - - this might sound egotistical too but I'm - - it is what it is. There's not a group today that can compare from a lyrical standpoint, not with what they say, the way they say it. The way it's interwoven and locked in and, you know, the voices because some of the other stuff you would think that there's just one person talking we would break up [Crosstalk]

MN: Now is there something else we could - - [Crosstalk]

LH: We would break up lines as opposed to verses. MC's now they play - - you can get a group on a song and one person will say his verse. The next person would say a verse. The next person would say a verse. We did it the exact opposite. Every verse well all did but you just can't tell.

UM: And this was way before Run DMC were doing - - [Crosstalk]

LH: Oh - - I didn't say that. Somebody else - - no. [Laughter]

LH: Love you Run. [Crosstalk]

[Music playing in the background]

LH: That's Spoon. That's just the other side of - - [music ends] let's see what we got here.

[music begins]. You can stop. Stop right there. [music stops] Just that alone, for an example, that

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intro - - huh huh huh - - that's three different people. That's Moe, for example - - Moe says huh. K says ha. Huh, huh, huh, ha, ha, ha - - you know, so, you know, and that's just, just - - let's go back to that and just use that as an example of what I mean by we rocking and most people - - [music playing]. And the whole song goes like that. [music ends] If you hear just the lyrics - - oh man I think I jammed [Crosstalk].

MN: You're going to 10.

LH: No, I'm sorry. I as trying to speed it up so you could hear some of the lyrics.

MN: It was three. I think or is it

LH: Let's see what we got here. [music playing]. Now this is the most popular one. You can actually feel the heartbeat. If you listen to it, you'll hear us breakdown sentences and after a while it became so second nature [snapping fingers] we could just do it. In this song [unintelligible] the bumps are broken up. Just feel [unintelligible]. And that's just an example of what I mean by - - [music ends] cats, cats, you know, don't, they don't take advantage about being a group. If you going to be a group, do some shit, you know. That's like singing, singers that don't take advantage of harmony. Just singing in unison all the time. What's the sense of doing it if you've got five guys on stage, you know, work with it. And I don't think, to answer the question, nobody has done that to that level yet.

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MN: Now who is your DJ in this one?

LH: Lee. DJ EZ Lee.

UM: The production, is that just - - you just using two turntables [Crosstalk] the track?

LH: The music production was done by us. We, we, we, we had a band playing.

MN: Really?

LH: All of these back then they were songs that we took like Tanya Gardeners' Heartbeat and we would have it replayed.

MN: By a band?

LH: Well, actually it's not a band. It's a gentleman by the name of Pumpkin and he played all - -
[Crosstalk]

MN: [Laugh]

UM: He played bass? He played drums?

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LH: He played everything. God bless him. He played drums. He played spoon, I mean, the famous track, the hip hop tracks. Love rap [makes musical sound]. That's - - if you're a hip hop DJ, if you don't have that, you're not really a hip hop DJ, that track. And that's on the flip side of [unintelligible] and he played that. And he played all of our En joy stuff. He played it all. But of course we guided him as far as what we wanted him to do. I didn't know we were being producers then. See, we wanted to play [humming]. And that's how we did it. We said play this.

MN: And you did it all in the studio? How many tapes did you need to make that?

LH: What? From the lyrics or?

MN: No. From the whole thing. How long did it take to make that song?

LH: It was a process, an all day process. [Crosstalk]

MN: All day.

LH: All night actually. In the studio seven, eight o'clock in the evening we get out of there five, six o'clock in the morning because we would have to do - - we would have to wait for Pumpkin to lay down, lay the bass, lay the guitar, lay the drums, lay the percussions, lay the - -

MN: Is he still around?

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LH: No. God bless him. He died at a very early age. And another thing I can say about our material, the only time we've ever even the used a vulgar word, I mean, I don't know how important that is to cats, you know, today. The only time we ever even used a vulgar word was in the movie Beat Street. And the reason why is because we were trying to convey a ghetto message - - if you're familiar with the Beat Street little thing that we did - - talking to Santa Claus and unfortunately it's me is the only one to curse and say now I know why the presents keep getting messed up because you here keep fucking up. And that's the only time we've actually cursed in a song. That's just proof positive that you don't have to.

MN: Well one of the interesting things is people who used all those words in, in, in the street, right? But there was an idea that when you performed, you didn't bring the streets - -

LH: That's taboo. For one it's - - you - - I think as a performer, as an entertainer, as a celebrity, there should be some sort of separation. Because if you're being held in, in, in, in high esteem, you know, in, in, at an upper level, you kind of want to be reachable, attainable but you want to set yourself on a higher standard - - like the Whispers, they ain't going to come on stage and have on the same thing I got. They're going to have on some, some show clothes or whatever. And the same thing - -[Crosstalk]

MN: Now, but it's interesting because even when you talk about the hustlers in your neighborhood, there was a certain level of respect.

LH: Yes.

MN: And, and which is, I think, different from the crack era - -

LH: Right. Exactly.

MN: So that, that, that everybody understood there were certain standards, there's a certain hierarchy of values, just like there's a certain - - everybody's respectful to the elders [Crosstalk].

LH: That's a perfect example. That's what I was going to say. During that era, even a drug dealer, a street hustler, whatever, back then, for one, we would never have done it in the neighborhood. It was just taboo to even sell drugs in the neighborhood. You had to sell it where it was sold.

MN: They never sold on your block.

LH: No.

MN: So there was no selling on your block.

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LH: No. it was definitely against the law. If somebody was caught selling some drugs - - there was a back alley in the back of the park were they call - - like it was just a pathway on 127th Street and Eighth Avenue was another drug den as we called it. They would sell heroin like they did [Crosstalk] so sometimes the cats would work their way up into the park, you know, the back of the park to make a transaction. And I've seen plenty of cats get deep down [Crosstalk]

MN: So you had people who made sure - - who sold drugs for a living but made sure it was never sold in their neighborhood.

LH: Never. Never.

MN: Now - -

LH: It went to the extent that if somebody was even about to go get some drugs or somebody was going - - they call it re-up - - if somebody went in the building to get the drugs and run all the way back downtown, on the way back downtown, they see Ms. Johnson they'd go oh Ms Johnson. Hi Ms. Johnson. How you doing?

MN: So if 70 Ms. Johnson walks down the street, everybody is going to say hello Ms. Johnson. Can I carry your groceries Ms. Johnson?

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LH: You've got to. Ok. If, if not to that extent honestly, you're definitely like me we bad and we're cursing up a storm [unintelligible]. I hope she didn't hear me. There was a level of respect. Definitely. That's totally lost.

MN: And - -when - - when did you see that go - - was this a - -you know, some people see in the 80's was a crack thing.

LH: Yes. That's basically when it happened to be honest with you. And not early 80's really because the 80's there was still not a stranglehold on it but cats were trying to still hold on to it. As the mid 80's, late 80's the music started to change. There was that Gangster rapping and you know, you start - - they, they began to convey a different message and you sent a different vibe to the hip hop community and the rap community. They started making little kids think it's alright to walk around and say fuck that bitch. Just to have people - - that mindset took place and it started dominating.

MN: Now I just want to say its 2:30 and we promised to - - [Crosstalk] we have another 10 minutes? - - We're concluding our first interview with LA Sunshine and we're going to bring him back again to deal with where hip hop went after the 80's.

LH: Woo Bundy.

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[END OF SESSION]