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Martinez, Danny Interview 1

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Interviewee: Danny Martinez
Interviewee: Freddy Martinez
Interviewer: Mark Naison
Date: June 5, 2007

Transcriber: Danielle Jakubowski

Marc Naison: Today is June 5, 2007. We're at Fordham University and today we are interviewing Danny Martinez, known as "Beat Man," one of the original Bronx Deejays and his brother Freddie Martinez. And - - we always start off by asking about family. Where was your family from originally?

Danny Martinez: Well my parents, well they met here in New York, but my father's from Puerto Rico and my mother's from an Italian background and she resided in Brooklyn and then my mother and father met back in the fifties and you know, they were just friends at first from, from what I remember and it grew into a romantic interest and they had me.

MN: [laughs]

DM: You know what I'm saying? And then my brother and my sister afterwards.

MN: So there were three of you?

DM: Yes, three of us.

MN: And when you were born, were they living in the Bronx or in Brooklyn?

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DM: Yes, I was born in the Bronx.

Freddie Martinez: Born and raised in the Bronx.

DM: Born and raised in the Bronx, resided in the Bronx for all my life.

MN: Now what was the first building you lived in? Where was it located?

DM: It was located on Southern Boulevard and 149th Street.

MN: Oh wow. Okay.

DM: So we were in the deep south Bronx there and we stood there for about **three** years, I think, after I was born and then we moved to 170th Street and Grand Concourse. And then we stood there for a couple of years and then we moved to Fordham section of the Bronx, 184th Street and Jerome. We stood there for about twelve years. That's where I got into the music.

MN: Was when you were living at 184th and Jerome Avenue?

DM: Yes.

MN: Now did you go to elementary school in the south Bronx or - -

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DM: I, I went to kindergarten, then first grade and then I moved, second grade I was in the Bronx - - well actually no, kindergarten I was [inaudible] kindergarten 149th and then I moved to 170th in the Bronx, went to first and second grade, and second grade transferred over to Fordham.

MN: So from the time - - second grade on, you were living at 184th and Jerome.

DM: Yes, yes.

MN: And you?

FM: Yes, same. We used to go to PS-33 right there on Jerome. It's on Jerome right off of Fordham.

DM: Yes.

MN: Okay so that's right by the **L**.

DM: Yes.

FM: Yes.

MN: Now you went with the school yard out there?

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DM: Yes, exactly.

MN: What was that school like when you were going there?

DM: It was exciting. I mean it was fun and it was right down the block from where I lived so - -

FM: Yes, it was convenient. [laughs]

DM: It was convenient and I was always late even though it was like - -

FM: [laughs]

DM: - - a five minute walk. But that's where I learned about a lot of things in music, and in graffiti.

MN: What year were you born by the way?

DM: Sixty-five (1965).

MN: You were born in 1965?

FM: Sixty-seven (1967).

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MN: Sixty-seven. Okay, so you were coming of age in the seventies - -

DM: Right, yes.

FM: Right.

MN: What kind of work did your father do?

DM: My father was a machinist for - -

FM: **Andy** Button Company.

DM: Yes, Andy Button Company. He did mechanical work and fixed everything that broke down.

MN: So - - but you were saying the, the school was exciting - - was - - did you - - was your neighborhood safe when you were growing up?

DM: Yes. My mother, my mother always moved us to a safe, safe haven **as far as** - - but nowhere was safe around that time, only in the beginning stages. Like, I guess, when I was into third or fourth grade is when I started just hanging out with, just, other people. You know what I'm saying? And hanging out really early and learning about the streets more or less. We were

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very street orientated. We, we, we hung out a lot, especially during the summer time because we didn't work or nothing, we were kids so we were just running around. And I had a lot of friends who were in graffiti who were much older and then - -

MN: Now when - - how old were you the first time you started to notice graffiti?

DM: I was very young. I was crazy about trains when I was a little boy so - - I loved trains so I always used to watch them. And then we moved there on Jerome, we looked out our window and the train was right there so I used to watch trains all the time and then they used to park them right there on the middle track on weekends and late at night they would park them there overnight and then on the weekends they stayed throughout the whole weekend. And so all this graffiti was there and I was like wow, what's this? And I used to see the guys going up there and writing their names and - -

MN: Really? So this was - -

DM: It was crazy.

FM: From the window watching them do the graffiti.

MN: What floor were you on?

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DM: On, on the second floor and it was like a, a few feet up above you could just look - -

MN: And you could see them write - -

DM: Yes. They could see me, I could see them. I used to yell at them and go, "Yo, yo, yo! Write my name up there." [laughter] And they were like, "Why don't you come up here one day?" And then I met a couple of guys and - -

MN: How old were you when you first started tagging?

DM: Oh I was about eight years old.

MN: Eight years old. Now did you develop your own tag first or you started working with the older crews?

DM: Well I was just goofing around. I used to just like write my name, "Danny," just straight up and I used to tag it everywhere. I, I just - -

MN: Where - - what - - where did you get the, the paint to do the tagging?

DM: Oh, my father used to work at this place where he had - - I used to go to his job, by the way, and we used to take spray paint from, from his job and ink. I used to just find it lying

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around and I would just take it, put it in a bag, and bring it home with me, in my duffle bag, and I would make my own markers and stuff and we would just, you know - -

FM: Fill up the markers.

MN: Were, were you doing it also with, with him?

FM: Well after a couple of years, I mean, when he was eight I, I started writing with him when he hit about eleven or twelve, then I started.

MN: Did your parents know about this?

DM: Yes. After a while they - - my mother knew, my father didn't - - he, he knew about it when I got caught by the police and I got caught - - we used to rob our spray paint. We used to go to all the stores and just like - -

FM: [inaudible]

DM: We used to go to [inaudible].

MN: Where were the places you'd, you'd go to get the paint?

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DM: Everywhere. Out in Queens, New Rochelle, Jersey - -

MN: How old were you when you were doing that?

DM: That same age - - eight, nine years - -

MN: You were going to Jersey to get paint?

DM: Yes, going - - just going out there, taking the PATH train, taking it and just going to, to stores and just look around. There was no one around to attend you, and we'd just fill up shopping bags full of paint and walking out the store.

MN: How many people would go?

DM: I would go, I would go with one or two other guys and - -

MN: Were they older?

DM: Yes, they were older and they were - - and, and the key thing was I used to hang out with white writers so that was - - see hip-hop started with graffiti with all kinds of writers, different colors, different backgrounds, but we hung out with some of the white guys and then we had all friends - - we had an easier time getting in and out of stores because they wouldn't look at us.

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MN: So there was still white kids in that neighborhood - -

DM: Oh yes.

MN: - - when you were growing up?

DM: When we were growing up, yes, there was tons of them. I grew up with all kinds of people - - Korean, Turkish people, Germans, French and our, our neighborhood was so diverse; it wasn't just Puerto Ricans.

FM: It was Irish too.

DM: There was Irish, there was Yugoslavians, we had all kinds of friends. We, we used to go to each other's houses and eat different foods. It was great growing up.

MN: So you had - - it was a very multi-racial neighborhood?

DM: Yes, yes. It was very diverse.

MN: Were there black kids in your neighborhood?

DM: Oh yes definitely, definitely. My best friends were black.

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MN: And - - and so everything was mixed?

DM: Yes.

FM: Yes.

DM: Everything was mixed.

MN: Same thing with the school, PS-33?

DM: Yes, yes, yes. We had, we had a mixture of all kinds of kids and we were friends with all kinds of kids and we used to go to their houses to eat, they would come to our house and it was like an open - - more of an open society. Everybody trusted each other, we looked out for one another and, and the same thing with the hip-hop thing. It was just - - it wasn't just blacks who created it, there was whites involved and Puerto Ricans involved.

MN: Now when did you start being aware like - - people were doing music in the streets?

DM: Oh I was aware of that early on. My cousin used to deejay and he was teaching me how to deejay when I was around eight too. So I had the love for the music around that time, exactly at the same time as I was doing the art.

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MN: Now when your cousin was deejaying, was he doing it inside or outside or both?

DM: He was doing, he was doing mostly indoor stuff like clubs and, and like social clubs - -

MN: What was your cousin's name?

DM: **Porky**. So he was a Puerto Rican deejay - - he used to deejay Latin music and Disco. So he wasn't aware of the hip-hop thing going on because at that time it didn't really reach to his ears.

MN: Yes. We interviewed a guy named **Pete** Deejay Jones who was doing it in clubs - -

DM: Yes, yes, exactly.

MN: - - with two turn tables. Now was your cousin using two turn - -

DM: Yes, of course. He was using two turntables and a mixer.

MN: And what mixer was he using?

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DM: I'm not sure if it was a GLI or a Clubman, I'm not even sure. But I remember he also had a **knob** mixer which was just a **low** one, and raise one up. He had that kind of mixer. It wasn't even a cross-fade yet so - -

MN: Was he doing mainly in the Bronx or in other - -

DM: Bronx and, and Lower East Side, and, and Spanish Harlem.

MN: So you would travel with him?

DM: Yes, I would just hang out with him. He would come pick me up, I was really into it, and I used to collect Funk 45's and - -

MN: You used to collect Funk - -

DM: Forty-fives, yes.

MN: Who were some of your favorite Funk artists?

DM: Well James Brown was one, Rufus Thomas, Billy Preston, anyone who came out on radio that was cool I would definitely get. Then I would get obscure artists like Big Bad John Hamilton and stuff like that, anything with funky bits and pieces in it. And then - -

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MN: And this is - - you're still in elementary school?

DM: Yes, yes, yes. Yes, yes. This is - - because I learned early; I hung out with older people all, my life. I, I never hung out with kids my age unless I was in school. After school I would hang out with my cousin, he was like fifteen, sixteen years old.

MN: So you're eight or nine hanging out with - -

DM: Yes, hanging out with them. And then I'm, I'm acting like them too because they see me - - I'm all quiet just, just look, watch, always observing and watching and learning.

MN: Now the fact that your father was a machinist, did that mechanical skill do you think translate? Was that something which influenced you?

DM: I'm not sure, that's a good question. I, I can't really say because I never went to his job to watch him work.

MN: Did he fix stuff around - -

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DM: Yes, yes. He fixed stuff around the house and, and he did his own things with - - just making his own things like carpentry with cabinets and stuff like that. He would always do something like that.

MN: Now did you guys play much ball?

DM: Oh we, we had it all, we did everything.

FM: We loved to stick ball. Stickball - -

DM: Baseball - -

FM: Baseball - -

DM: Softball - -

FM: Softball. We played it all, basketball - -

DM: Yes, and especially handball and paddleball.

FM: Oh yes, paddleball.

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DM: We used to kill that.

FM: Yes, we used to have fun at handball.

MN: Where, where did you play paddleball?

DM: Right there in the school yard.

MN: You played there?

FM: Yes.

DM: We played everything there, basketball, baseball, we, we - -

FM: Everything, yes.

DM: Because right there was like the center of it all. It had everything there and it was just great growing up there. For us it was cool; we learned a lot. I learned how to play baseball there, ride my bike over there, everything was done right there. And I got into different things and, and I never stood in one place too long. I'll be like hanging out with a group of people for like a month or two and then I'll move on then - - because I want to learn so much. My mind

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was so open to learning so many different things that I would run around and just - - I, I would be hanging out in Brooklyn by the age of ten coming home at nine, ten o'clock at night.

FM: Yes.

DM: My mom was like, "Where were you at?" I'm like, "Brooklyn."

MN: How did you find people in Brooklyn?

DM: I knew people who knew people and we would just go out there and vibe out. It was like everything else. Most of the time I stood in the Bronx, but when you wrote graffiti you'll meet people from Brooklyn. We all used to meet at 149th Street, Grand Concourse.

MN: Now when was the - - did you get to a point where you were doing artistic graffiti?

DM: Yes, I was. I was, I was always on the weekends drawing and copying everything I saw on the trains.

MN: Now do you have any of your better work preserved?

DM: Pretty much. I still have most of my stuff preserved.

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MN: You kept the book?

DM: Yes, I kept, well I kept, I kept an envelope filled. A lot of my stuff got destroyed because I was punished a lot and I did a lot of stupid things when I was young and my father ripped up a lot of stuff but I kept a few things.

MN: What was the first time you got arrested for graffiti? How old were you?

DM: I was in my teens by then. I was about thirteen, fourteen and that was the first time - - I got set up by this other kid. He just was trying to bring guys just to do stuff and - - just for him to get out of his own jams, he was like "Yes, I'll get you more guys you can arrest and book," and that was only one time. Other than that, I never got caught. And it was just like - - I was walking by them and they just grabbed me. I was like, "What are you doing?" It was a - - it was, it was just stupid. I was like, "I didn't even write on nothing."

MN: Now what about school, were, were - - did you take school seriously?

DM: Oh yes, definitely.

FM: Yes, we always did good in school.

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DM: We always did real good in school. Like, like my teacher noticed my penmanship to be exquisite, like really good at a young age. It was like, "Wow you write your A and your B like real straight line." That was because I used to already draw and, and start doing my thing. They, they would send me to art school and stuff like that and teach me in the classes and everything to better my, my skills and stuff like that. But I tried as best as I can just to keep my artistic things flowing.

MN: Now when you were living at 184th and Jerome, was there much of a gang thing going on in that neighborhood?

DM: Yes, yes. Definitely, but not in that particular neighborhood - - away, like by Katonah Avenue and stuff like that there was the Savage Skulls. Actually, they - - weren't they up by the Concourse somewhere too?

FM: Yes, on 170th and the Concourse, they'd go up there.

DM: And, and near our house by 184th, they, they started to come through there too a lot, by one fifteen high school, I mean junior high school.

FM: Junior high school, yes.

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DM: They used to hang out back there on - - I forgot the name of that, that street. But they used to come through and hang out. There was a few gangs but they were just - - in the early seventies, like seventy-three, seventy-four they were around and then - - I stood away from all that. That's what - - that's why a lot of graffiti writers they broke away from that, we, we started our own little community of guys, just to stay away from that because they weren't into nothing but just - -

MN: What were your memories of the Blackout in seventy-seven?

DM: Seventy-seven - -

MN: Was that a big thing?

DM: It was a big thing, yes. Everybody went bananas. And they started - - I remember they were ripping gates off of Fordham Road - -

FM: And ripping from all the stores on Fordham - -

DM: Yes, they were breaking into stores and I was outside on the street and I was like holy crap, where the hell, where the hell am I? I couldn't see in front of my face until you start seeing the car lights going by real slow. I'm like wow, I'm over here, I was like - - I just ran home straight because I didn't want to be involved with that.

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FM: And at that time I was watching [inaudible] and then all of a sudden the **TV** got - - just cut off.

MN: Wow.

FM: [laughs] Yes, it stood for a weekend.

MN: When was the first time you became aware of people like **Herc** and Bambaataa and Flash?

DM: Seventy-five. I was going to this pool in the summertime called "Roberto Clemente" - -

MN: Yes, down by - -

DM: Yes, right over there. So we would walk through Cedar Park during the day to get to it and at night coming back, we'd hear this thumping sound "Boom, ba-boom." I was like what the hell is going on? I ran to the park, it was Kool Herc and his crew doing his thing. And I said, "That's what I want to do."

MN: Wow.

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DM: I said, "I want to do that." Well what are they doing? They're cutting two of the same records that's [inaudible]. I'm like wow, I got to get involved with this.

MN: Explain the difference between what Herc was doing and your cousin was doing.

DM: Okay, my cousin would let the whole record play and then mix it in.

MN: See, explain - - a lot of people listening to this don't know the difference so - -

DM: This, this difference was my cousin would play records, so would I, we'll play the record from beginning to end and we'll just jam in the next record, or my cousin will mix in two different records, but he had Disco so he would just let it play, let it rock and mix it in.

MN: Would he say anything when he was - -

DM: No.

MN: - - mixing it in?

DM: No talking, no nothing.

MN: No talking?

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DM: Nothing.

FM: Yes.

DM: No talking. Maybe once in a while, they'll grab a mic to say hey you're car is double parked, or you're going to get a ticket, or we're looking for someone; that was it. Other than that it was nothing - - there was no emcees even at Kool Herc's stuff, at the first time I would just hear him play records and he would play the funkier part of the record was the breakdown - - of the record was just strictly drums and hard drums and beats. Some records he would let play out, but when it gets to the beat, he'll rock it back and forth.

MN: How would you rock it back and forth?

DM: Well you take it where the part comes in and goes [makes sounds of beat] and it wasn't even scratching yet, so we would just cut it right back to back, vroom - - and just keep that part going and going for a long time, and I was like "Wow."

MN: Now would he have the same record on both turntables?

DM: Yes, the same records on both turntables and just keeping that part repeatedly going until he gets tired of it, then he'll let it play, it'll finish the break and it'll come into something else, then he'll throw on another break and he'll just extend that and keep it going and going.

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MN: Were his speakers bigger than what, let's say, your cousin was using?

DM: My cousin would use different systems if he was deejaying in clubs so - - and he had his own system, but Kool Herc had - - the Jamaicans had the monster systems; they were huge.

MN: [laughs]

DM: You could live inside some of them speakers, that's how big they were.

MN: And were there a lot of people in Cedar Park?

DM: Oh my god it was crowded, it was crazy.

FM: All the time.

DM: All the time there was a crowd there. And when I saw that, I was like wow, I got to get involved in that. And I was - - I would go back every time I'd get a chance and just stare at the deejay and stare at what he was playing. I have a photographic memory so then I would go out and buy the same records that he had. Even if they stuck the cover up a quarter of an inch, I would memorize that little part of the cover and I would go to the record store and I would go, "This has got to be it," and I'll just take one copy and, and ask the clerk if he had another one and, and I [inaudible].

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MN: Now where were the record stores which you would go to find these records?

DM: I used to go to Manhattan to buy records so - - we had, we had a record store that was already selling records like that, it was called "Downstairs Records," located in the train station at the end of, at the end of - - the last car at 42nd Street you'd just walk up these stairs and it was like a flight down from the, from the street and a flight up from the train station so it was like an in-between little shopping mall and there was two stores across from each other. There would sell albums here and 45's there. So the albums, they only have them on the wall, but I, I found those records kind of expensive at that time. It was like seven, eight bucks for - -

MN: Wow.

DM: - - one record. And I'm like, "Damn man, this shit is kind of expensive." So I would go there and I was like - - I spent the money at first and then I was like alright, maybe I can't find this elsewhere. Then one day I was walking down the street and I, I ran into like a, a Sam Goody or, or, another record store that I would go to and I found the same record for like four dollars. And I was like, "Oh shit, I can get these records cheaper." So I would go there, memorize the covers, like I said, whatever they sell that was hot, and I'd go there and buy all my records or write down the names and - -

MN: Now who other than Herc was doing what Herc was doing or would you just hang out at Herc's parties?

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DM: Well at first, yes, that's all I saw. And then - - a lot of people were catching on quick. Then you had Grandmaster Flash, Theodore came, came about. Then everybody came a little big later than what I saw but I, I went to a lot of Flash parties back in the day.

MN: Now where would Flash hold his parties?

DM: They were, they were all the stuff at high schools, street jams, stuff like that - - all up and down Fordham area. He would do house parties back in the days and a lot of high schools I remember, and school yards as well. So - - in the summertime - -

MN: When did you get your own system to start doing this yourself?

DM: Well I already had one turntable, I think, and I, I didn't get, I didn't get another one until later on, until when I could afford it. I asked my father to get me one and a mixer. The first mixer I bought was just a little box with two, two knobs where I could change it lower it and higher it and that was it, and I would deejay with that. It was real difficult too because the **fly fader** made things easier. Then later on I, I partnered up with one of my partners named Leon and we, we started our own crew. So I would just buy records and just bring them to his house and we used to practice there. Then I bought a mixer with a cross-fade but without headphones; they didn't have the headphones yet so I had to learn how to deejay without listening to what I was doing. [crosstalk] Drop, drop the needle to where the part was - - where the break is, you

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can see the grooves in the record where the break was, and I would deejay with twelve inches. I would just drop the needle and just catch it like that and then spin back a lot until I catch it. So even though I didn't catch on the exact spot, it would be a little bit before the break, and then I'd just cut it in and that was it.

MN: Now was this - - were you in junior high or in high school when you started?

DM: No this, this was still elementary school..

MN: Elementary school?

DM: Elementary school.

MN: What - -

DM: And I went to a Kool Herc jam out, begged them to let me get on, I brought a little thing of records and they couldn't believe their eyes. They said, "I'm, I'm going to put you on." And was like, "What do you got in the bag?" I was like, "Check this out man, I got [inaudible], this and that and a twelve inch of **Bongo Rock** and he was like, "Alright, I'll put you on." And I didn't even use the headphones, I just threw the records on and they called me "Little White Flash" - -

MN: Little White Flash? [laughter]

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DM: They, they were buggin'. This was like in seventy-six or something like that.

MN: So what, you were in fifth or sixth grade?

DM: Yes, something like that.

MN: They called you "little white flash?"

DM: Because I was quick too, I was quick. I would spin back and, and I would see what they did and I tried to advance myself to catch records real quick.

FM: And he was doing it without the headphones.

DM: And without headphones, they were buggin'.

FM: Yes.

DM: And that was the first time I did that in front of them and the last. And then in seventy-seven (1977), I took a break from music because I, I think we were doing street jam one time in seventy-six (1976) and these kids told me - - I broke out - - they, they set me up. They had a girl come on to me and she took me to her place and we were getting it on and all this crap and then I go back to the Jam and they said they - - the jam was finished and they took - - they said the cops

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came and took the equipment and all the records. I was like, "Get out of here!" And I had seven boxes of 45's that's all, that's all I carry. I was like, "Damn man. Look at all those records I lost." I said, "How can I get them back?" "I don't know," blah, blah, blah. Long story short, those records were stolen from me and I was real upset. I was like, "Yo man, you guys got to give me my records back, I spent a lot of money on this," you know, all my allowance money and all that, and I would take my lunch money and buy records. That's all I did, was buy records. And I, I had seven little boxes filled with records.

MN: So they set you up and took your stuff.

DM: They, they only took my 45's. I didn't have albums with me; I had albums in the house.

MN: Did they take your equipment too?

DM: No, no, no, they just, they just took - - if I would of brought equipment out then they probably would of but I just brought my records. They had their own equipment. And I was so upset.

MN: Were these older guys?

DM: Yes, they were older than me so I couldn't really do much; they were bullies. So - - but they didn't bully me but I brought my records so they could play them and they'll let me get on.

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They were a little better than me but I had the records so I mean - - a lot of people were better than me as - - at, at certain times but I had records though. And then **that made** the party.

MN: So there were a lot of people with these deejay skills around?

DM: Yes, yes. There was a lot of, a lot of Puerto Rican cats, I grew up with a lot of Puerto Rican cats. It was **Mike Mike, Johnny John, and DJ Buckle**. Those are the cats that I'm talking about. And I grew up watching them play too and some other cats like **DJ Whitehead**, they would throw jams and I would just watch people and I learned a lot from these cats but they, they only a certain amount of records and they would play their records over and over and over and I got, I got to them and I was like, "Listen man, you know there's other stuff out here." I was like - -

MN: So you were more of a student to the music than they were?

DM: Yes, yes. I understand music more than they did, but they had better deejay skills as far as cutting but I was good too but I, I never practiced I just - - they had the equipment and used to practice everyday and I would try to go to their house and practice and work with them, but they just said [inaudible].

MN: Did these guys ever go anywhere in the industry?

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DM: No. They never, they never went anywhere. Unfortunately a lot of them they, they dropped out of it and they just kept doing what they were doing and going to school or whatever or getting jobs at that time or they had girlfriends and they had babies early. And these guys just had to get work and take care of their families and whatever. But I found out later on that my friend had my records in his closet for all this time - - but he couldn't play them because I was always around. So he just had my records in his closet and I looked in his closet all the time. I went to his house just to visit him and I looked up that he was asking me, "Yo, get me this record, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And I said - - it was this little closet up high that he had all my 45's in there - - or some of them. And I was like "Damn man, this guy man?" I didn't mention nothing to him, I didn't say nothing. I was like [makes sound]. When I left I said, "Don't worry about it I'm going to get more beats, more beats than you can ever imagine." And they looked at me and laughed. And to this day, I'm the king of beats.

FM: Yes.

DM: That's my forte. I could go out and collect records - - I collected records from every corner of the earth. I, I've been to a lot of places and I, and I bought records from a lot of different people worldwide. And my records travel worldwide. And I'm known worldwide. I got friends all over Europe and my name rings bells from here to Japan.

MN: Now when did you start seeing a professional career in this music as opposed to just fooling around?

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DM: I, I never thought of it as a professional career. I always had fun doing - -

FM: It was a hobby.

DM: - - what I was doing. It was a hobby that if I made money, I was happy, but I didn't do it to make money.

MN: Now do you have another profession that you - - other than music?

DM: No. I kept it as, as a music thing. I mean I just kept it going as much as I could. I wanted to be an architect and I dropped that because of my love for music. I was like, "Fuck this school shit," I'm going, I'm going to take this music thing to where I can take it and - -

MN: And what high school did you go to?

DM: Art and Design in New York so - - and I just fell out of love with the art thing. Because there was kids that were so much better than me and I used to get frustrated. I mean I could have applied myself and really did what I did, but my love for music was too strong for me to even concentrate on doing any kind of art anymore. And I was running around - - I mean it was a lifestyle.

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MN: Okay talk about the lifestyle - - and this is, we're talking I guess, late seventies, early eighties.

DM: Yes, late seventies, early eighties. We're talking - - any woman I wanted that came to a jam was mine afterwards. They would just watch me deejay and see how good I was and I was just to myself, into my music, just making sure I'll make you dance. And then I did my job, made everyone dance, made everybody had a good time, you had girls like **seem** - - like everybody was giving me so much love and giving me so much respect and giving me my **props**.

MN: Where were the places you'd be performing? Give me some of the, the venues.

DM: Okay I would, I would deejay in high schools, high school school yards, abandoned buildings, we used to have a club house, we used to deejay [inaudible] - -

MN: Where was an abandoned building for example that you used as a clubhouse?

DM: On Crescent Avenue.

MN: Between? [phone rings] Hello? During lunch, you told us about this crew you had that you called TBB.

DM: Yes, The Bronx Boys.

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MN: Okay so talk a little bit about that. This was break dancers as well as deejays?

DM: Yes. This was, this was pre-Rock Steady.

RM: Yes, before.

DM: Way before Rock Steady.

RM: Rock Steady Crew.

DM: And it started out with a bunch of dancers from like [inaudible] and all those other groups that - - they, they were breaking up and we were forming a huge group called TBB. We were so huge that Bambaataa called a meeting to meet with us because he'd been hearing about us so much. And he thought we were just another street gang or something like that and we weren't; we were just break dancers and - -

MN: Now were they from your neighborhood, or from all over?

DM: They were from our neighborhood primarily and different parts of the Bronx, not too far from where we were living.

MN: Now were these mostly Puerto Rican kids?

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DM: Mostly Puerto Rican and black.

FM: Black, yes.

DM: And mostly Puerto Rican, the majority was Puerto Rican and we were really strong into hip-hop at that time and all the early records that we used to play like heavy drum bongo records, and up-tempo pace records that the break dancers could do their moves to. And that's what I fell in love with, that type of genre. And I, I still do it to this day. I make them shake their ass throughout - - throughout all over the world, and they still do it. They, they go off, when they hear my music it's, it's incredible, they just can't stop dancing. I make those kids go [inaudible] and they start yelling and screaming; it's crazy.

MN: So this is the choice of records is the key here?

DM: First the records, and being on top of your game with records. Like a lot of people in the game, they only have one level; I'm multi-level. I built up a, a dynasty of records where it's just beyond your imagination. People to this day still tell me I'm, I'm good I don't need anymore records. I was like, "What? I'm still learning about records." There's so many records out there that I'm trying to get them all. If they sound good - - I'm, I'm still recording records. I've been recording records for the last ten years. I'm still recording records to my computer. I've been doing it for ten years and I clean them up, remaster them to make them sound CD quality. I take

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all the scratches and pops out of them, that's what I do, and I've done it professionally now for the last five, six years.

MN: Now when you were having parties in abandoned buildings, what - - describe what was that was like?

DM: That was crazy. It was right across the street from our school.

RM: Yes, one-fifteen (115), we used to go to one-fifteen junior high school and - -

MN: Now where was one-fifteen located?

DM: One-eighty-fourth (184th) Street between - - what was it on Morris and Creston?

FM: Morris and Creston.

DM: On Morris Avenue one of the buildings was abandoned, it was burnt out or whatever and it was like - -

MN: Was this an apartment building or a small house?

DM, FM: Apartment building.

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DM: Five-story building.

MN: Five-story building?

DM: Yes. So we built club houses out of, out of some the apartments there.

FM: We used to go into one, one apartment and then go into a closet and bang holes in the wall and then go into the next apartment and just have - - that would be like the secret hide-out, club house up there.

MN: This is when you're in junior high?

DM, FM: Yes.

MN: So you, you kind of took over and abandoned building?

FM: Yes.

DM: Yes. And late at night we, we would go down to the basement, they had power still in the building, I don't know how. The lights would be on and the outlets would work so we'd bring out our turntables and used to throw jams and charge a dollar to get in.

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FM: We'd get light bulbs.

MN: Now who was collecting the money at the door?

DM: Different people. One, one was throwing their jam, they would collect their money, I would get a cut of it. And whoever wanted to throw the jam at that time, they would take care of all that.

MN: So they hire you, but they take care of the door.

DM: They'll take care of the door and everything. I didn't have to worry about - -

MN: So you don't have to worry about security or all that - -

DM: No, no.

MN: - - you just do the music.

FM: If you're deejaying over there you don't have to worry about that.

DM: I didn't have to worry about shit because - -

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FM: At then end of the night it will get paid, that was it.

DM: And they'll take my stuff home.

MN: Now when you're talking about breakers, how many people would be down there in the basement in your crew?

DM: Oh there was a whole- - we had thirty or forty guys.

FM: Yes, yes.

DM: More than thirty or forty guys. And we had girls too.

FM: Yes.

MN: You had girl breakers?

FM: Yes.

DM: Yes.

FM: They, they were the - - they were called - -

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DM: TBG.

FM: - - TBG, "The Bronx Girls".

DM: Yes.

FM: We were "The Bronx Boys" and they were the Bronx girls.

MN: Do you have any pictures from back then?

FM: [inaudible] at those days.

DM: I have a few but I never took pictures - -

FM: Yes.

DM: Never.

FM: We were too busy deejaying and - -

DM: I had, I had people that said they took pictures of me but I'm still trying to hunt them down.

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MN: Are you in - - one of the things we're trying to track down girls who were involved in the hip-hop scene. Are you still in touch with anyone who was, you know, one of your **B-girls** or - -

DM: A lot of them disappeared, got married - -

FM: [inaudible]

DM: - - and, and I lost contact with almost everybody I went to school with, almost.

FM. Yes. And a lot of people moved out to Florida too, just left New York.

MN: Now were - - when you were deejaying were there - - did you have any emcees working with you or straight deejay?

DM: I was a straight deejay. Sometimes we would have a mic and somebody would get on the mic and just do their thing, the early emceeing, but those days I was just playing music, concentrating on playing music. I didn't really know about the rap thing too much. I would see it done but I didn't care about that I just wanted to play my music.

MN: It was more to get - - about getting people to dance.

DM: Right. That, that was it.

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MN: And that was your forte?

DM: Yes.

FM: Yes.

DM: I didn't care about that too much until later on - - I still never had any rappers, that's why I never became famous, never came out in any of these books but as far me as a deejay holding my own, everybody knows who I am.

MN: So in other words, the guys who got in books were people who hooked up with emcees like Charlie Chase, with Kaz, or Flash with the Furious Five, or Bambaataa with his guy.

DM: Yes.

MN: Herc, not so much, I guess.

DM: No.

FM: He was a deejay.

MN: He was straight deejay.

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DM: He was the only one that kept it like that. He had his little, his little people come through but he had [inaudible], **Jay-Z**, and they were tearing shit up on the turntables like crazy. And **then we have this** little emcee thing happening, but it wasn't as much.

MN: Now it sound - - you guys were talking about how you grew up so I'm trying to visualize your, your elementary school as this school yard, you got graffiti people doing the train right across from your window, around a corner is an abandoned building you turn into a club house, so it's kind of a pretty interesting way to grow up.

DM: And we did, we did everything we wanted to do. We, we didn't take no for an answer, we didn't understand that we can't do something.

FM: We were, yes, we just - -

DM: We just went and created something and we kept building on the creation - -

FM: Yes.

DM: - - and kept being active with it.

MN: Now Freddie, you were the fearless one?

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FM: Oh yes, yes.

MN: Now what - - describe some of the things that Freddie did that blew people away back in the day?

DM: We would play this game called “[inaudible] roundup” and you’d chase him up a telephone poll, you’ll never catch him. He’ll be swinging from the, from the, from the wires across to someone’s - - top of someone’s house.

MN: He climbed the telephone - - how the hell did he climb the telephone? [laughter]

DM: He’ll climb up to a fence that led to a telephone poll where you climb up and then you can grab the wires and he’ll shimmy across the wires onto someone’s house, on the top of their house and like, “You can’t catch me.” How the hell are you going - - get, get up on top of that?

FM: [laughs]

DM: Then you’d see him down on the street running around somewhere else. He’ll climb down off the side of someone’s house. You do some crazy, crazy, crazy shit man. [laughter].

FM: And I was so skinny and light, I can, I can do it.

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MN: You can just go up and down?

FM: Yes, yes.

DM: I mean I could do some of that stuff, but some of that stuff, I wouldn't do it because I would get tired fast or whatever.

MN: Now did you ever get into breaking or any - -

FM: Not really, but I knew everybody that was into the, the breaking scene. I never really got into it, I mean, I should of because I was so light and flexible but I never really did.

DM: That's terrible man.

MN: Now, now when did you first start to see money in deejaying? How old were you when the money started coming in?

DM: This was like seventy-nine (1979).

MN: So you were fourteen?

DM: Something like that. Yes, thirteen, fourteen.

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MN: Now were the rewards more the girls or the money would you say?

FM: The girls.

DM: The girls because, man, I was young getting some nice older women.

FM: Yes.

DM: I'm taking about I was, I was getting girls - - women at that time. I was like thirteen, fourteen years hitting up nineteen-, twenty-year old women. Because I dressed older, I acted older and people didn't know how old I was, I would lie and say, "Yes, I'm twenty." And I would look it too because I already had hair on my face at that time growing in. And I would shave - - I would watch my father shave so I would just shave and then hair started coming out and I was like wow, I'm starting to look older.

FM: That was crazy.

DM: Women didn't know and I was, I was very young, very experimental and I learned at a, at a young age what to do, what not to do, and it was cool. And yes, at that, at that time I would have, no doubt, two or three women on the sidelines waiting for me after I finished. I was the "Don" back then. And they all knew about it; they didn't care. As long as they had that time

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with me, it was all good. Sometimes I would have ménage à trios - - have two or three women at the same time; they didn't care, as long as they were hanging out, having fun.

MN: When did you first travel out of the Bronx to do a party?

DM: When did I first travel out? I think it was like nineteen eighty, eighty one (1980-1981). I did something out in Jersey.

MN: Were you still living at home then?

DM: No, no. I had my own apartment.

MN: Now when, when did your, your mother end up kicking you out?

DM: Oh she used to go crazy with the music.

FM: "Stop playing those beats!" [laughs]

MN: So you played - - you practiced in the house?

DM: Yes, I practiced in the house.

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FM: Yes, she used to go nuts, she used to go nuts. "Stop doing that," and you know always repeating it after you cut it back and forth, back and forth and she used to just go nuts.

MN: Did the older people in the neighborhood appreciate what you were doing or it varied? Did they understand it? Did they care?

DM: Not really, not really, not really.

MN: What was your mother's favorite music?

DM: My mother liked a lot of stuff I played, but I wouldn't let it play. [laughs]

FM: **I would sing.**

MN: Oh you would put in the record and then - -

DM: And help mix it and keep mixing it back and forth and she didn't really like that. She would just want to hear the whole record play out. So like, "You don't let the records play." I was like, "Yes, but I'm practicing to get good at what I'm doing." And she started understanding what I was doing but she didn't really like me to play so loudly. I used to play my shit loud.

FM: Yes.

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DM: I would shake the room. In the old house - - I have some big shit. It was just like boom, boom, boom.

MN: Did neighbors complain?

DM: Their, their ceiling fell down underneath us.

FM: Yes. [laughs]

MN: Oh.

FM: [laughs] Yes.

DM: And they didn't - -

MN: From the noise?

DM: Yes from the, from the vibrations that the whole plastic came down - - almost killed the kid that lived downstairs. [laughter] Then I had to take it easy and my mom was like, "Yo, it's time for you to leave man." I think I was seventeen or eighteen.

MN: Now how did you meet Grand Wizard Theodore? Did you know him from parties?

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DM: From, from the street jams back in the days. And we lost contact with each other and we bumped into each other one day, back in the eighties, and he was like, “Yes man, I’m staying over here with, with Boogie.” I was like, “Cool I’ll, I’ll come and visit you,” and we started hanging out about eighty-eight, eighty-seven, eighty-eight (1987-1988); that’s when we brought **Biz** over and we got connected and we did, we did our record together.

MN: Now when - - you - - we were talking a little bit about drugs. When you were growing up was heroin a big issue in your neighborhood?

DM: Yes.

FM: Yes.

DM: Not in my neighborhood, but in neighborhoods that I used to go to.

FM: Yes.

DM: I would have girlfriends in fucked up neighborhoods but they would come up to see me, they would come to my jams because they heard about my music and I had people from all over come to my jams.

MN: Now where were - - when you say “fucked up neighborhoods” give me - -

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DM: South Bronx.

FM: South Bronx, Fox Street, [inaudible].

DM: [inaudible] yes. All that whole neighborhood down there.

MN: The Fort Apache thing.

FM: Oh yes - -

DM: The Fort Apache area.

FM: - - all around there.

DM: I had girls living in the projects, all kinds of - -

FM: You walk around you see people with swollen hands - -

DM: With holes in them.

FM: Shooting up the dope in, in, in **anything raw**. Fucked up.

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DM: One time when I was, when I was younger we used to play around in a lot of abandoned buildings, and stuff like that, exploring and just looking around and we - - I found some old dude was shooting up and I didn't know what he was doing, he was nodding out, we got scared - -we saw that - -

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

MN: So there were abandoned buildings pretty close to you?

DM: No.

MN: Or mostly down - -

DM: Mostly, mostly down, down in South Bronx or in Harlem. And we used to just go hang out and run around in different places and I saw this guy shooting up one time. That shit scared the shit out of me and I was very young I was around eight or nine years old when I saw that first hand and I saw that that was a problem for a lot of people - - on the down low used to do it. And I used to see them; they were all swollen and puffy in their hands and it was really fucked up with that shit man and it was, it was crazy. But what could we say? We didn't know any better. Crack came around, same situation. And then my neighborhood where I, where I moved to got really hot and dangerous with all these crack heads running around - -

MN: So this was in the mid-eighties?

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DM: Yes, mid-eighties.

MN: That was **Tiebout** and 184th?

DM: Yes, Tiebout, between 184 and 183rd and I used to have fights with these people man. They would come to my building yelling and screaming and arguing over that "rock." People fighting - - I used to have to come out there and yell at them and chase them out. Then I got mad at the drug dealers and they wanted to kill me, but thank god I'm still here. They threatened me and all this crap but I was a crazy dude at that time. I used to carry guns and all that shit; I didn't give a fuck.

MN: When did you start having to carry your gun? How early?

DM: Well in the early days, we all, we all - -

FM: We all had.

DM: - - we all had some kind of a weapon, in the early days, but we never really carried it much. We only carried it - -

MN: Now when - - would you say this is junior high or even earlier?

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FM: Yes, this was - -

DM: Junior high school.

FM: Junior high school, junior high.

DM: The beginning stage of junior- - sixth, seventh, eighth grade I remember a couple friends of ours used to carry guns in and out of school, but we'd never start no shit, we never were - -

MN: Now they, they'd buy the guns in the street?

DM: Yes, they would either buy the guns in the street, guns were given to them, guns that probably their family had in their house, I don't know. I, I remember I bought mine off, off of someone who bought guns down south and used to bring them up here.

MN: Now when you, you had a gun you got it for your protection or - -

DM: I got it just to have one, but I never had to use it. **I, I never pull, pulled out a gun.**

FM: Yes well, it was a lot, a lot of protection too because we were hanging out and we were making money too and stuff like that so just for protection. And then we had all that equipment so we just - -

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DM: Yes, one of us always had a **revolver choice thirty-eight**, three-fifty-seven magnum. We didn't even have automatics, we had revolvers back then.

MN: Did you ever have to pull it on somebody trying to take your stuff?

DM: Never. No one never tried.

FM: Nobody ever tried. We knew a lot of people that's why.

DM: We knew a lot of people and they wanted us to continue to do what we were doing because we were doing the stuff for free out in the streets so no one tried to pull any shit on us.

MN: Where did you, where did you perform in the streets? What - - give me some - -

DM: I'm going to give you some, some, some - -

MN: Locations.

DM: - - insight - - location. Around our neighborhood, definitely 184th Street, Davidson Avenue, Grand Avenue, Aqueduct, University Avenue. We would do Morris Avenue right, right by the junior high school.

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MN: These were free parties you'd throw?

DM: Right in the street, we'd plug them to a light post.

FM: Plug it up right to a light post - -

DM: Or, or, or grocery store across the street - - run, run an extension cord, boom, plug up our, our master equipment to everything. I put up a rack system where everything was plugged up - - pre-plugged up and everything. I didn't have to touch that. Everything was plugged up into a rack and it would just move on wheels.

MN: You'd move, move on wheels, plug it into the light - -

DM: I'd just plug it into one pole, boom, and then throw the speaker wires to the speaker - - into, into the amplifier and it's a go.

MN: Now why didn't the cops break it up?

DM: Because they, they have - - it was illegal but we were doing it, but there was no law that we couldn't do it.

FM: A lot of people would complain either because they liked it.

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DM: A lot of people didn't complain; they liked what we did.

MN: Do you think they - - I mean, older people didn't necessarily appreciate this music.

FM: Right.

DM: Yes but they - -

MN: Did they think that it kept the kids peaceful?

DM: I think, I think it did. I think it kept them out of trouble and we were doing something and we never had any fights at our parties that was one thing. If we finished, and there was a fight afterwards like down the block, that had nothing to do with us - -

MN: Okay.

DM: - - because we would shut it down and cut it down. If we had anybody talking any nonsense or fighting - -

MN: Did you tell people from the beginning "no fighting"?

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DM: No nothing or we're going to pack up and leave. The first fight we hear about we're going to talk to you about it, the second time it happens, we're shutting this shit off and we're leaving and that's it.

MN: Now you're doing something for free - - what's in it for you to do something free?

DM: To have a good time.

MN: That's amazing.

DM: That's all it was. Just to have a good time and, and, and to show people what we could do.

MN: And would this produce paid jobs or it didn't matter?

DM: Well it helped us out because in the winter-time people want us to do parties, you would have to pay. Summer-time we did maybe like two, three parties, maybe up to five or six outdoor parties. It was just something to do. Sometimes we would just do it every other day just to do a block party and it was to pull with girls, it was just to get attention of the women, the girls.

FM: See everybody having fun and dancing.

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DM: Seeing that all the young kids have a good time, party without no bullshit. And to give something to the community, to share my music with everybody.

MN: Now how old were you the first time you threw one of these outdoor parties?

DM: I think I was ten, eleven.

MN: Really? [laughs] And you were eight?

TM: Yes, I'm eight. [laughs] Yes we started off very young.

DM: I used to come home at two in the morning getting my ass kicked. [laughs]

TM: Eight years old.

DM: Mom used to be ruff on us but then she understand and she's like, "Let me know where you were." I was like, "Because you, you aren't stopping me from doing what I'm doing; I got to do it."

MN: Now was your father out of the house?

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DM: Yes my father used to be in and out of our lives. He would come home, hang out with us for a couple of weeks and then break out and we won't see him for like maybe a month or two and my mom was always the one taking care of us.

MN: Now was he ever with you steady?

DM: He was on and off most of our, our childhood, right?

TM: Yes.

DM: My mother and him used to have really hard fights and they couldn't get along, one reason for another but it was all good. At least he stood away and he didn't come home to aggravate her - - and when he did come home and aggravate her he'd have to leave again so, I mean, it worked out for her benefit and, and for his benefit so they wouldn't fight in front of us.

MN: And you guys always had enough of everything - - food and clothes?

DM: Yes.

FM: Oh god, yes.

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DM: If we didn't, my mother would say, "Go to your father's job and get some money." [laughs]

FM: And we would do that too. We'd go all the way to Queens.

DM: All the way to Queens, New York to what was it, Long Island City and go to his job, young as I was, by myself on the subway because I knew how to travel because of my graffiti expeditions. I was doing that when I was very young. I was taking the subway and I didn't pay for the train I would just walk in through the gate. You were young back then.

TM: Yes you were a kid.

DM: And then during school, during the school time we had bus passes and train passes so we'd get on the train for free and that was that.

MN: So you'd go and - - "I want money."

DM: Yes. I'd say - -

TM: No he'd know - - once, once he seen us that we were there to pick up some money.

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DM: But I would tell him, "My mom, my mom sent me here to get one hundred dollars. Where's -- give me the money." You got to, you got to pay. Anytime I would go there I was like, "Pop, I need sneakers, I need records. Hook me up." "You want something to eat to?" I was like, "Yes, I do." [laughter] I would go to Wendy's [inaudible]. Big Triple Cheese.

MN: [laughs]

FM: But we used to like going to his job because everybody used to give us a buck here, a buck there. We would come out of there with two hundred, three hundred dollars [laughs] just going over there.

DM: It was crazy. I started bringing them later on. I used to go by myself at first - -

FM: Yes, he used to go by his self at first.

DM: And then I started bringing them too because I was like you got to come see your father. My mom and him used to always fight a lot about dumb shit, I guess. I didn't understand what was going on until later on. But it was real important that we saw him; my mother allowed that. My mother never denied his kids to him. She always said you can come see them anytime you want or they'll come see you. And that was that. I used to always try to drag him home with me though. I was like, "When you coming home, when you coming home?" He was like, "I don't know, I don't know. I'll see you soon," and blah, blah, blah. But that was the only time we

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really had time to see him, really. And then when he was home he didn't - - he just wanted to relax and chill out and not be bothered with nothing so we respected that and let him do what he had to do and that was that. But we all got along. I used to always hang out with my brother, sister, look after them and try to teach them what I was doing. And whether they had interest in it or not or whatever - -

MN: Did your sister end up getting involved in music at all?

DM: Oh yes, she was a B-girl to the heart too. We were all B-boys, B-girls straight up. She used to come to jams with us and everything. We used to hang out.

FM: She used to hang out with us in those abandoned buildings, everything.

DM: Yes, we all used to hang out. All of us. We - - all three used to be together, especially in the early days. And then when I got a little older I started breaking away from them and letting them do their own thing and I'd do my own thing. My sister started doing her own thing with her crew of, of people and we all were just doing our own thing.

MN: Is she connected to music now?

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DM: Oh yes. She's very, very big into music. She's, she loves a lot of the eighties stuff, Latin music, and some of the old B-boy stuff that I used to do. She used to remember all those records that I used to play.

MN: When you say the Latin stuff from the eighties you mean like - -

DM: No, no.

MN: - - freestyle or?

DM: Latin, Latin music.

MN: Like Salsa?

FM: She loves Salsa.

DM: Her husband is big into the sixties and seventies (1960s-1970s). She knows all about that stuff and some of the eighties and even some of the stuff that comes out today. And I'm into that Latin stuff too, I've always been. I even put out compilations on that stuff and everything; it's pretty cool stuff.

MN: Yes. I mean it's great music.

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DM: Yes, Latin music is always cool. It brings me back to when my father was growing up we used to go to our cousin's house, we used to always listen to that Salsa.

FM: When we were kids, yes.

DM: Meringue.

FM: That's all we listened to.

MN: So your father was a Latin music guy?

FM: Oh yes.

DM: Yes, yes definitely. Deeply into that. My mother too, my mother was a **motherfucker** on records, right?

FM: Oh yes.

DM: She used to have a mean Latin collection.

FM: She did. She had a lot.

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DM: All Latin, Soul, Jazz. She had the Righteous Brothers. She was into all kinds of weird stuff.

FM: That's how he got started, from her collection.

DM: From her collection because when I, when I was a little baby I used to look at her records and just look at them and put them on the turntable and just listen to them when I was real young and I would say, "Wow, this is music. This is, this some other stuff." Especially her jazz record, like her Paul Desmond Records and stuff like that, man.

MN: Is your mother still alive?

DM: No, she's passed. A few, a few years now.

FM: It's eleven years.

DM: Yes, eleven years. And my father as well.

FM: She passed away in ninety-four (1994).

MN: Now when was the first time you had a chance to go abroad, go to another country with music?

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DM: It was in the eighties when I went to London and then we went over to Germany and Paris I think it was or - -

MN: Now who were you working with at the time when you went to England?

DM: I was working with this break dancing group called "The Majestic Force." They were a smaller group of, of break dancers and poppers and lockers. They were like - - they came out in "Beat Street."

MN: They were in the movie?

FM: Yes.

DM: They were in the movie "Beat Street" for, for a brief time but they weren't really big time like Rock Steady and them. But there were so many groups coming out and now that - - because they were a part like Fast Break and all those cats, they were a part of this group. They were originally down with TBB and Rock Steady but Rock Steady already had formed it's little family and click, like of eight, nine guys, and put these guys down so they had to break off and start their own stuff. So Fable, Wiggles, Fast Break, and, and a couple other cats **they were** - - Cory and I forget the other guys name, they started "The Majestic Force" and a friend of mine was deejaying for, for them as well - - Mixmaster Supreme, my old partner. But he got sick one time and he couldn't go out of the country with them so he had me deejay for them and we did a

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couple of dates and I came back and I loved it. I went out there and we did some things but it wasn't - - there wasn't enough time for me to spend out there to really suck up the atmosphere. I just there to go to work, deejay, deejay for a big arena and watch them, and watch them break dance and everything and that was it. I made some connections with some people who were into records and we, we had a relationship over the phone. A lot of my army buddies that I grew up with - -

MN: Now did you end up - - when did you go up in the service?

DM: I didn't go to the service. They were just - - those guys went to the service; they were just friends of mine.

MN: Friends of yours from - -

DM: They helped me get equipment from overseas. I got my first Yamaha amp that I bought and a pair of twelve hundreds before they came out in the states. They were telling me about it so they had the money to buy their own equipment and it was cheaper to buy it straight from them, Okinawa, Japan, and ship it here for free because they didn't have to pay that much on - - they, they had a certain amount of poundage they, they could bring over and I would get this equipment and I was like wow, now I got some real shit. Now I could deejay - - I had bullshit turntables before - - two tens or whatever; they were **belt drive**.

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MN: This is in the eighties when you, you got your really top-of-the-line stuff?

DM: Yes, yes. This was the top-of-the-line stuff. Nineteen-eighty (1980) I got it. **Even if it wasn't mine**, but I was using them. Then my mother a, a year or so later, gave me the money to buy my own turntables but I had to pay her back and they were like five-hundred for the pair.

FM: The Techniques.

DM: Yes, the Techniques twelve hundreds. Because we had - - we, we used all kinds of turntables that other people had but they weren't mine. So then once I got my own turntables then - - that's when I started getting busy. Then, then I started doing parties, making money, and doing all that stuff like eighty, eighty-one, eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four (1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984) and then I quit after that. I got, I got too involved with just having my apartment, I got rid of my equipment, but I never stopped collecting records.

MN: Now how did you support yourself when you quit this?

DM: I was working. I was either working for a law firm - -

MN: So you always had another gig - -

DM: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

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MN: - - to support?

DM: I always had, I always had a job that would pay the bills and, and would buy me anything I want. Then I would make extra money on the weekends - -

FM: With the music.

DM: - - with my music. So I would make extra money.

MN: Now did you end up taking any college courses or go that route?

DM: I tried, but I didn't succeed. I, I just dropped out. I was trying to go to NYU, I didn't, I didn't even make it a semester and I didn't even have the money to go to school even and it was just crazy. I didn't have the time I was just too busy deejaying and I was like, I can't do this and go to school and, and work and, and try to maintain a home life with my girlfriend when I - - who I was living with so it was real ruff, and we were doing records too.

MN: Now when did you start making records?

DM: I started making records - - I think it was like 1985 I was just starting around - - messing around with studio stuff. That's why I quit deejaying; I started going into the studio stuff. So I

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was just practicing - - so I had a big record collection so what I would do is just deejay two of the same records and make a beat, straight up nice little tape with just the music and then have a rapper rap over it on another tape. So I would play the music on one tape deck and then they'll rap to it and I catch it on another tape. That was before I had a four-track, I would do tape to tape and then I would take that tape over double with like scratches and a little bit of things and then that's how I used to practice. Then as time went on I bought a four-track, thanks to Special K from the Treacherous Three.

MN: Right.

DM: Right, he taught me how to do studio stuff. So he, he taught me about the four-track - -

MN: Now where did you go for - - to do the studio stuff?

DM: Well, he would take me to different studios and we, we were doing records. I was - - my first records were with him so we did some records. I was deejaying on his record and we had Quincy Jones's son do music.

MN: Do you have any of that stuff with you by any chance?

DM: I got all that stuff in storage but I have - -

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MN: Now it's all on record, not on CD?

DM: Yes, yes. No CDs at that time it was all vinyl.

MN: Are you - - do you, you plan to transfer it to CDs or - -

DM: I have it on vinyl so I mean I could do that, that's real easy. Some if it I do have on CD but I, I never thought about transferring that yet. I will do it though. I have old records in my storage
--

MN: Because this stuff is probably absolutely classic.

DM: Yes, yes. Definitely.

MN: I mean people will - -

DM: Definitely, definitely. I got records that people don't even know I did.

MN: I mean it sounds like you got amazing stuff here.

DM: I could go onto one thing into another. I was always successful with what I did. My biggest hit record was with Biz Markie "You got what I need," very simple record, two records I

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put together and it became a huge monster hit. My stuff is very simple it was always taken from other records, **the main little part with the break** and then I started getting more technical, started doing beats. **Beats** - - I stopped doing that and I went back to deejaying because I found that more fun. I gained a lot of weight sitting behind the studio pushing buttons. I'm like man, I'm not active no more, I don't get out, I don't go see nothing. And I saw, going back to Theodore, I saw Theodore on Public Access one day deejaying in the park. I'm like, "Get the fuck out of here." In this day and age? I'm like yo, I got to go to this thing when they're doing that. And I started deejaying again.

MN: Now do you still - -

DM: That was in 2001.

MN: - - so you go, you go to Crotona Park?

DM: Yes I go to the park. I'm, I'm on the bill for, for not Crotona, but for Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem on August seventh.

MN: Yes you got to let me know whenever you're doing something.

DM: Yes I'll definitely let you know. August seventh I'm doing it, I got **paid** for that. I'm going to be helping out some guys at Crotona. This weekend that just passed my nephew had a

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birthday party so - - but there was something going on at Crotona. Biz was there, I was supposed to be there - - Biz and Charlie and Tony Tone, they were throwing a jam out there. They invited me to go but I was busy with my nephew.

MN: Because they have these Thursday nights - -

DM: Yes, yes, yes.

MN: - - in Crotona Park that my friend **Chrissy** [inaudible].

DM: Yes, exactly. Oh you know Chrissy?

MN: Yes.

DM: Good. Cool, cool.

MN: Yes, yes. I know Chrissy.

DM: Yes she's hooking me up.

MN: Oh good. Say hello to her for me.

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DM: Yes no doubt, no doubt.

MN: I mean - - it sounds like you got to take your stuff and it's - - yes.

DM: It's definitely going to be hot. I'm also doing, if everything goes right, something in, in December for my birthday at the Kennedy Center so everybody's invited to that and it's going to be great.

MN: The Kennedy Center is in?

DM: In Harlem.

MN: In Harlem? Oh 135th Street.

DM: Yes.

MN: I used to play basketball there.

DM: Right, right.

MN: I was, I was, I was a ball player and not a music guy.

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DM: Cool, cool.

MN: So let me know about all of this.

DM: Yes definitely. And we got some more jams coming up soon. I got **Bronx River Day**; I'm going to do that.

FM: Yes that's coming at the end of July, the last weekend of July.

DM: I'll be in Bronx River doing that. Might be a couple other jams coming through, depending on where they are, and I can deejay it, but sometimes I choose not to, I choose to fall back because there's, there's too many heads involved and I don't want to - - I just don't want to be at every place like I used to be. Like at first I was, right?

FM: Yes.

DM: I was dying to get on anywhere. I was like let me chill for a while. If it's something that they really need me for and I have to go, I'll go.

MN: Now you're saying the **studio land**, the, the deejaying is a totally different experience.

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DM: Yes, totally different experience because deejaying it's, it's for people. It's in front of people and crowds.

MN: You can see them respond.

DM: Yes, you can see a response. When you're in the studio it's a lot of working with you and an artist by yourself and creating something. It's, it's a totally different thing and you're isolated in one room, you're working constantly, repeating the shit over, listening to it, where you can improve it, what, what you're going to do. We already had to select the format, which every record is, is basically sixteen and eight, sixteen eight, and, and another sixteen and then an eight or, or just four, four, four, four and that's it, that's the end of the record. There's a beginning and an end of a record. And between three and a half minutes to four and a half minutes that's, that's how long - - but you know how long it takes you to make that one record? It could take you hours. The music by itself - - when I used to create music sometimes it would take me like two, three days to create one track just experimenting around. Sometimes I would make a track in an hour - - that was later on though as I got good. I would, I would definitely - -

MN: Now did you have the equipment in your house? Are you - -

DM: In my house because it was too expensive to go out and pay for studio time, but when we do the actual record, we would have to do it in the professional studio.

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MN: Now do you live in the Bronx?

DM: Yes. And then we, we would go to studios out in Queens, a couple of studios that - - I used to go to **Powerplay** and a couple of spots in Manhattan like **Unique** and **Calliope** Studios and there was so many - - Unique Studios, so many different studios that I worked at I can't even remember all of them - - this place out of Queens that **Paul C.** used to work out of, I forgot the name of that, Twelve Twelve Studios? And I learned a lot from him. He put me on on how to make beats on, on the **SP1200** and the **S950** much better than I used to do.

MN: Now where do you see yourself going in the next few years in terms of what you want to do in music?

DM: Well, I never plan ahead; I just swing it. I don't have a set goal to where I want to be or how I want - - I just want to just go out there and do my thing and be heard and I want to be heard worldwide as a deejay. I haven't been out of the country, but my music has been so I want to go out there and perform for people. Whether I get paid or not, I don't care.

MN: Well here's the thing I got all these contacts now in Berlin. If you could write up something about what you've done like, almost like a prospectus, I can get it to my Berlin people and maybe they can bring you over to do - -

FM: And deejay.

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MN: - - parties there, get some - - a publicity thing out.

DM: That, that would be great.

MN: Because - - and I, I got friends in Barcelona because this project is going worldwide. I mean,

I, I never thought it but - -

DM: Yes. This thing is too big. It couldn't be contained to the Bronx only.

MN: Yes. No, it's, it's kind of amazing I, I say I'm from the Bronx in **Kreutzberg** and people go crazy.

DM: So where were you in Berlin - - I mean, in Germany? Berlin?

MN: It was in Berlin and then Kreutzberg is the hip-hop neighborhood.

DM: Okay so how did you, did you enjoy that?

MN: I loved it. I went to the community centers, the parks, kids rapped for me.

DM: Wow, that's great.

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MN: Yes, it was wild.

DM: That's great.

MN: And who the hell am I? I'm some professor [laughs].

DM: No but you're, you're important. What are you talking about? You're, you're, you're part of what we're doing. We don't exclude anyone. That's, that's the thing about hip-hop; we all embrace everybody and everything.

MN: Yes well it's pretty - -

DM: That's the thing about hip-hop you're never rejected, you can never say "Who the hell am I?" I mean, alright, you're no one in the business but you are a professor in, in this school, this particular school so you are someone, regardless, and you're there and, and you're learning about what you like which is the hip-hop movement - -

MN: But I - -

DM: - - and you see how everybody treats you right? You got mad love.

MN: Well "mad love" is exactly right.

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DM: That's it.

MN: That was unbelievable.

DM: That's how it is over, over there. And if I went out there I know I would get mad love.

MN: Oh for - -

DM: For days. It would be crazy.

MN: That's why I think one, get some publicity stuff, two, when - - in September I'm going to get you together with this kid Charlie to talk about some kind of exhibition.

DM: Right, that would be cool.

MN: And three, get your stuff onto CDs so people can hear it.

DM: Well actually I, I already made a CD that I'm going to put out to sell that has to do with - - it's like a follow up to my records, but it's me cutting up the records - - I'm not letting them play like on a regular record but it's me cutting up original records, records that people never heard in their life before because I already deejayed at this place in Manhattan and they said, "Man, I didn't know one record you played." Alright, that's the idea. And it was all funky shit and I'm

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going to give you that, I'm going to have a cover to it and it's going to be on sale by this September.

MN: Fantastic.

DM: Maybe sooner, but I'm working on it. All I need to do is get a cover done and it's a wrap.

MN: Because I'll, I'll spread the word about that.

DM: No doubt, I mean, I'm going to have my stuff, my contacts in Manhattan and I got my distribution company ready to go with some of that stuff so it's going to be exciting.

MN: [inaudible] But this international - - that's the way to go, that's the way to go.

DM: Oh no doubt. I'm going, I'm going to have my stuff in, in Japan; I got connections in Japan.

MN: But the - - Germany is crazy; Berlin is a whole hip-hop city.

DM: I'm going to try to get my stuff out there, regardless, because I have distributors - - they, they definitely sell stuff but if I could get someone that record, they want to purchase them from

me at my price and they could charge half, I'll charge them half of what I pay for it and they could charge the other half and make money from it, which is cool.

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[END OF INTERVIEW]