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Martinez, Danny Interview 2

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Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

[START OF TAPE ONE; SIDE ONE]

Danny Martinez (DM): —jazz, easy listening music, at the time, and rock records. So that pretty much created a whole base of music that I kind of grew up enjoying. You know, stuff from the 60s. She had stuff from the 50s, in fact, and I didn't really care too much about that until the 60s ran around. She started playing a lot of newer music around the 60s. And then the 70s came around, that just like woke me up, and like, into a different realm. I'm like, "Damn, what—" the sound was so exploding at the time. Plus, since I grew up, and then surrounded by Latin music, that was just a natural, for me. And very early on, all I just kept hearing was different artists, you know, like Ray Gurrero, and Tito Pude Cao Cheda (SP?), Aphanía All Stars (SP)—that came later in the 70s. She would also listen to like Pinjuan (SP) and Daniel Santos (SP), it's like weird records from the early days of Puerto Rico. They were just coming out of, you know, so many different records. And a lot of shit, Latin Jazz, was also around my house.

Dr. Claude Magnum (CM): So were their musicians living in your building or in your neighborhood?

DM: Well there probably was in the area. I'm not aware of who they were, because I was too young. And it's interesting, I really never met a lot of the people that I played until later on in life. So like a lot of records that I did collect were just stuff that I heard from back in the days that my mother was playing, and a lot of her records I snatched for myself. But definitely, you know, as time rolled on, I got a little older, like, you know, six, seven years old, I was already walking to the store by myself, and going to record stores and picking out music that she definitely liked and she told me to pick up for her. So she would give me a list of one of these

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

names and numbers, and then I would definitely have a chance to pick out records also for myself. That's how I would get records.

Give me one second. "Yo, what's up? I'm in here now, okay? I'm in here right now, doing the interview. Yeah, yeah, yeah, alright then. So I'll be in here. You can come up in a little bit, alright? Alright, peace."

CM: Alright, so you started playing your mother's records, and—

DM: Yeah, I was very intrigued by them. But the thing that got me very interested, because—the covers. You would open up these covers and they have these pictures of the covers that had nothing to do with the record. So, like, my mother would buy these—how do you say these?—like, kinda like these jazz albums, and they had like these giraffes running across the beach. You know what I'm saying? And I was very interested in, you know, big animals or whatever at the time. So I would open it up and just see that she'd be playing this music by Paul Desmond. I think it was one of his albums. And it was a jazz artist. He was, you know, a horn player. And I was like intrigued at how he would play these—you know, this instrument—and then look at the cover, it like had nothing to do with him playing the horn or anything. But it was an interesting cover. So I would just sit and gaze at all these records. This is when I was kid. I didn't know shit. I was like, straight still in diapers. I didn't go to school yet or nothing. And my father, I remember my father, I was crazy about trains for some reason, I don't know what it was, between me and trains. So he had my little train set in a circle. I would sit in the middle and open up the record and just gaze at it, and try to read the text or whatever and just listen to the records,

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

while my mother—you know, that would keep me calm. Cause I would just always be around the house, running around, touching everything. So she would just have me there, and I'm watching my trains, I'm looking at the record, I'm listening to the music. This was done very early on, so my interest for music was just instantaneous. With my family always having parties down in the basement, I would hear the music, and—

CM: What type of equipment did you guys have at your house?

DM: Well, we had just a regular, you know, player. It was a big console, and, you know, she'll keep her records inside of it, and then she'll just take it—the records—out, and just play it, and then no one touched that. That was just like, that was like, very early stuff. And then later on, after that shortly, you know, like I said, I was going record shopping for her, and buying a bunch of records, and then she would like a certain amount of music that was very funky, so, of course, I just said "I gotta get these records for myself." So I started collecting records for myself, because I was like, you know, I like this stuff. She wouldn't really let my touch her records yet. It was later on when I started tap, tapping into her records and started listening for the stuff that, you know, I was very interested in.

Now, at that time, I didn't know nothing about DJ-ing yet. It was very, you know, just listening based type music. For the most part, take a record and listening to it one by one, and just letting it play, until I got a little older with my—

CM: What year would you say this was around?

DM: This was in the 60s.

CM: Okay.

DM: This is in like 67, 68, 69, you know. And then when 1970 turned around, my cousin started DJ-ing, and I was intrigued by, you know, checking what he was doing. But, you know, I still, I was too young to understand what was going on.

CM: What was his DJ name?

DM: He didn't have a DJ name, he just like, he—everybody just knew him as “Porky.” So he just had a basic, you know—this is very early, like I said. He just had like a basic system, and he'd just play a record, and then they would stack the 45s on top of each other and just play them. And 3 years later, he got a pair of turntables, and I was real intrigued by that. I didn't get turntables until about late 75, early 76.

CM: Now when did—were these Technics turntables, or what kind of turntables were they?

DM: Yeah, well, the ones that he bought were Technics. The ones that I bought were BSRs. So there was a difference. You know, he had the money, he was already, you know, a young man, already and had money. He worked, and he went a bought turntables.

CM: Were these 1200s?

DM: No, these were pre—these were 1100s. This is before 1200s.

CM: Was it a belt drive, or a—

DM: They were direct. Yeah, they were direct drives, 1100s. They were really huge and very technical looking at the time. And I learnt on those, but really never spent a lot of time on them.

CM: Did he have a mixer?

DM: Did they have—? He had a knob mixer. It was just a knob mixer made by a Jamaican, so—

CM: 2 channel mixer?

DM: It was like a 2 channel mixer with some other knobs on it, and it was just like: you turn your one turntable up, one turntable down. That's what I had in the very beginning. And I also had that too back in 1975, when I first bought my mixer. And then, that same year, later, cross faders, up and down, came out. I had a cross fader, so I was able to learn on those, and then I got a mixer like that.

Now, the turntables that I bought, they were basically some, like, wooden turntables. They were like really cheesy. They weren't made for DJ-ing, they were actually made for playing records.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

But I modified them so I could DJ on them. I cut out a piece of cardboard so I could make the surface very easy to spin the record. And they worked for me. Those were the first pair of turntables I ever bought, BSRs. My father bought—

CM: What'd you pay for it?

DM: I don't even remember. I think they were like, they were real cheap. I could say maybe, if I remember correctly, thirty dollars each.

CM: Were these pretty standard, or—did people have a lot better equipment?

DM: Oh, people had better equipment, but—

CM: everything was still pretty primitive?

DM: Yeah, they were real primitive. People had better equipment. But the thing was: I made that thing work for me. So, I mean, right before those days that I got my own equipment, I learned on my cousins. And I was very technical. He's very, you know, real careful with his stuff. But he let me touch his stuff, to get the feel for it. And all I did was play one records at a time. And then I come in with the next one. It was very, very simple, turned it up and turned it down.

Unknown Man: Your lunch is here.

DM: Okay, great.

[tape stops]

[tape starts]

CM: I don't know how this thing works, but—

DM: What happened?

CM: It started a new recording.

DM: Okay, fine. That's fine.

CM: So we took a little break and now we're getting started again. We were talking about the technology that you used, and your first pair of turntables, BSRs.

DM: Yeah, the BSRs were very, very primitive. They were just basically a household turntable you would hook up. You know, they was like, not built for a DJ at all. They weren't DJ friendly. Like I said, I modified them. At first I used to like really scratch the back of my other records—you know what I'm saying—and that was critical too, because at that time, at first, I didn't listen to all my records. And there might be another joint on the other side of the record, so there'd be like this white groove around the record. So I kinda like—and I couldn't really spin on them.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

You know, I would just play records. So Then I was like, I had to get faster, cause this is a time where I saw Kool Herc at Cedar Park playing doubles of each record. Like I said, at first, I was just playing records, one at a time, one to the other, turning it down and turning it up, and then I would just let the record play. I didn't *touch* the record. You know what I'm saying? But then when I saw Kool Herc on these 1200 turntables—not the ones that you know of. The first 1200s. The ones you—the ones we have today are the MKIIs, which are dubbed as the best turntables in the world that Technics made. They had other turntables prior to that. You know, they had 1100s, they had the first 1200. And I think Kool Herc, he had another turntable, I'm not sure what they were, but they were definitely made by Technics. And you could actually touch the record and just, you know, jam them in, spin back on them with no problem. But there was things that—I think that was what gave me these material that I made felts from it, but I had to cut them out myself. And then that white material that we had? I remember I made felts with those. That was very early on. And they weren't selling mats and stuff like that for the DJs, because these things were just like really getting things started. So everything was custom made.

CM: So most of it you made yourself?

DM: Right, right. Most of the stuff, like, you would spin back on. I just did a, like a blank record cover, and then I just cut a hole in the middle and cut the whole thing around it and had those at first. And then I started making felts afterwards, but they would just get too fuzzy when I would spin back and get inside the turntable, and they would mess up the turntable itself. After a while you had to take apart the turntable and just clean it out with all the fuzz that would drop in there.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

Because again, this stuff wasn't exactly made science for the DJ use. But we had to put up with a lot of that. That was the primitive stuff.

CM: What type of speakers were you using.

DM: Oh, we were using regular house speakers at the time. We had some bullshit, we was just like throwing shit together just to make sound happen. I didn't get into that technical part of making music speakers at that time until later on, towards the 80s. We bought our own speakers that were factory built speakers, but we would modify them, because a lot of—like, Gemini would come out with speakers. It was actually before Gemini. Gemini started replicating these type of speakers, these were made by USS. I bought a pair of those. And then when the woofer would blow out, I would go downtown to Canal St. and the Japanese would sell me the woofer and the tweeters as sets with the crossover kit, so I could make sure I won't overload my speakers. Now this is stuff I would learn very early on, through like friends of mine that—even Leon didn't know about this stuff, this was like later on I learned about this, like in 77, 78.

You know who was a real good technical guy? Bucko. He really opened up shit and just tried to figure out what the fuck was inside that made these things tick. So he —[cut out]—“Oh shit, we can buy these things separate downtown, and we can modify them and make them kick ass more than what they are.” The designer speaker could take a certain amount of wattage, we would pump them up maybe another 100 watts. But it doesn't mean that the cabinet could take that much power, but what we did was reroute enough power towards the speakers to make them sound as clear as possible without any rattles, without any distortion, let's say. And the same

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

things—like when I first started getting into like the turntable thing needles were very important.

We used to have these big thick needles called Peakings (sp?).

CM: They have a diamond tip?

DM: Yeah they had a diamond tip, but they were real thick gray ones. Remember the gray ones they used to have? And they were really good for needle dropping. Now, when I first started DJ-ing in that fashion, after seeing Kool Herc do his thing, I kinda took it to another level with the shit turntables that I had, but after a while I bought another pair of Technics. I don't know how did I get the money for that, I think either my father gave me the money, cause my father was a real big help. I used to run his job all the time as a kid and say, "Dad, I need some money." And I would save my money and just go out and buy one turntable, then I'd go out and buy another, then they had mixers with the up and down knobs, I didn't have to do this no more. Cause I was trying to get as close as to what I saw on the street and make it comfortable for me in my house. And then they had a mixer that had the up and down and a crossfade. But it had no headphones. Remember that shit?

Unknown man (UM): He used to spin without those headphones.

DM: I knew all the records cause the grooves were so thick that I would just drop the needle and get it as close to the part where I would just cut the record in, just like I do now.

CM: So basically you were DJ-ing blind?

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: DJ-ing blind—I mean, well, deaf. Blind, it was blind cause I was using sight. So I was using what I knew. And then one day, I went up to, after we went swimming, I went up to them one day and said “Can I get on the turntables?” And they all laughed at me.

CM: And this was at Cedar Park?

DM: Cedar Park. And then I said, “Come on, man. Lemme get on the turntables. I can do what you guys do.” You know what I’m saying. And they go, “Nah, Nah. Not this time, kid. Maybe next time.” So I ran over there next time. I didn’t go to the pool. I went there with a bag of records. And I said, “Come on. I got these records here. You ain’t gonna let me play these? What’s up?” You know what I’m saying? They let me get on. And they were amazed by me, but they were kinda like bugging out. It was like, “Well how did this kid get these records, and—”

CM: How old were you at this time?

DM: Oh, this was like maybe 11.

CM: Eleven years old?

DM: Eleven years old.

CM: So you were asking Kool Herc—

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: Or somebody else who was out there. I'm not sure if it was Kool Herc or Clark Kent and all those guys. But this was in 1976-77 when I did this. And they started making fun of me and calling me the "White Flash," cause I started dropping needles on them. And it was the first time I went, I did it. And I just was so natural, I was just doing my thing, and it was like "Check this kid out! He's needle dropping and he's catching a record fast" and I was spinning back, and I was cutting in right on time, and I was needle-dropping. They said, "Don't you use the headphones?" I was like "No, I don't have a mixer that has headphones." And they bugged out on me. So they like "Woah, this kid is bad" and started cheering me on. And I felt good about myself, so I went home with my little records, I was like "yeah, I did what I did." And then that gave me more confidence to kinda like do my own thing.

CM: Now was this your first time DJ-ing in public?

DM: That was my first time in a historical place that they let me do it. And I pushed myself to do it, because I didn't take no for an answer. I was like "I want to do this." You know what I'm saying. And I was practicing in the house constantly. I was with my friend Leon, my first DJ partner, and he just encouraged me to come upstairs any time I wanted, cause his mother allowed us to play music. My mother was kind of like more on a "Keep it quiet, keep it down."

UM: Turn that down [laughter].

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: “Turn that down,” you know, “I don’t want you to do this too late or too loud and I can’t really stand what you’re doing. You’re just taking records and scratching them and ruining them.”

CM: So your family was never as supportive as you hoped, or—

DM: Well, nah. I mean—

CM: --or maybe they just didn’t understand it.

DM: They didn’t mind like giving me money to buy equipment if they had the money. I mean we grew up very poor and it was just really, really more of a necessity. My mother would rather buy me things that I needed than things that I wanted. And if I did really good in school, then things would come my way. But, I didn’t take no for an answer, like I said, and sometimes I would just go and try to, like, get more money out of my friends or my mother. But my mother always taught me this: You work hard for something, you can get whatever you want. And— didn’t see tell me that?

UM: Yep.

DM: I mean, she always instilled that in me, and that’s what made me a monster, because I found ways to make money. I used to pack bags in supermarkets and take people’s groceries home. I did anything for a buck, just to make money—

UM: Shovel snow—

DM: Shovel snow, all kinds of stuff. Like, if someone had a—sometimes they'll pay me like, back breaking work, for like five dollars, or two dollars or three dollars. I'm like, "That's all I get?" But you know what? At the end of the day, I went and bought records, and things that I could buy. You know what I'm saying?

CM: So what year was this, the first time you DJ-ed at Cedar Park?

DM: Like I said, '76 or '77. It was around then. Cause I know it was after 75, cause right around that time, I was already into that music, I just needed to buy the first turntables. Then I bought records from a local record store on the block. And they had these records, 12 inches. And I already had 45s, cause I'd been collecting 45s from like '73. So I had a lot of 45s already, and I kept buying more 45s. I had—but then I only bought one copy of each. And it was a bunch of soul records and basically records of the time that were popular. Then I started buying two of each. You understand what I'm saying? After I seen Kool Herc manipulating two of the same record at one time. So I found that very fascinating, that you could take a little part, and extending it, and extending it—and I just copied everything I saw, and just took it into another level. I worked with what I had, and I made it work for me. Like, other people couldn't do what I did with the stuff that I had, because it wouldn't, you know.

CM: You practiced with it a lot.

DM: Yeah, cause I practiced with it, practiced with it. Like, anything I did, as long as I have a piece of equipment at home. Like today, I have a decent computer. I work with it, and I make it work for me. I'm able to do stuff and make money from it, and do jobs for people and make money with no problem. Because I take the technology and I kinda study it and I teach myself what else I could do with this. How much more can I push. And there's certain things I know I cannot do with that computer because it would just start crashing and start, you know, start acting up. But I try to push it to where I'm doing this and this and this at the same time and, you know, sometimes it works and sometimes it don't. It's just little tricks you have to learn, you know.

CM: After this first jam at Cedar Park, did you start DJ-ing regularly?

DM: Well, mostly house parties.

CM: What happened after that?

DM: After that I just had more confidence in myself that people liked what I was doing. I mean, I had a room full of people, and like I was just DJing in a house all the time. And it was like "Yeah, yeah man., this guy's doing his thing." But that wasn't enough for me. I to go somewhere where no one knew me and do it, and then I said, "Yeah, now it's on. This is what I want to do." You know what I'm saying. I got people who don't know me, never seen me before in myself,

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

maybe just seen me hanging out in the crowd or walking by. Now, I feel comfortable that I can do what they do. I wasn't as good, or maybe I was just as good or maybe better at certain points, because I even bugged a lot of people out, they were like kinda like—they were really bugging out on my talent.

CM: What was your talent mostly? Was is a mix of things? Or was it you had the best records, or you had the best skills, or what was it?

DM: I tried to have an all around base of it, because I couldn't sit by and even as time when on and DJs started getting better and better at what they do, I tried to always keep up with it. I'm still very behind in a lot of skills of what DJs can do, but I tried my best, right. I was a motherfucker out here. I tell you, like, I was one of the illest motherfuckers out here trying to do his thing within any time frame. You know, I don't want to get too ahead of—you know, into time of what I was doing until we get to that point. But I can just say for myself, I did a lot of amazing things and—with a lot of different things going on. And I always collected records. A lot of people didn't even know that about me until later on, that I had a lot of ill records. That happened more when I was trying to do production for people. The only one that really gave me a shot was Biz Markie, you know what I'm saying. Because he was looking for stuff at the time, and he had no room to play around, and it just happened at that one time. And it just worked out. And that became a real big hit record. I didn't even think that record was going to go nowhere, until—

CM: Let's, like, go back a little bit. So for these house parties that you started doing.

DM: We were just throwing them, just for free.

CM: For free, okay.

DM: We didn't get paid for them at first. We were just throwing them, throwing them and invite people to come. And we were just—

CM: Were these at your houses, or whose houses?

DM: They were at other people's houses. Sometimes we'd do stuff at my house, but it was a very small crew of us. But mostly we did them in other people's houses. A lot was done in Leon's house at first. And then I think in 76 there was other guys throwing block parties. And I was watching what kind of records they would play. Remember those block parties that happened on Grand Avenue and Davidson and up and down the block from us? I'm gonna show you later on, in another video, where we used to DJ and where I actually did all these things, and I'm gonna go forth on that. But for the most part, those block parties were made for us. You know, the community, the entire like four or five blocks would come out and we all party and we'd get to know each other and we have a good time. And I was more of a studier at that time. I didn't get to DJ until much later, you know what I'm saying. That I had more confidence to like say, "well I got enough records to come on and block a whole set," for like an hour or so. Cause back in those days, DJs would get on and be on the turntables for hours, and a lot them would be by themselves doing it. And they would always welcome someone else to help them out if they

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

knew what they were doing. So they would have to really see, you know, if you knew what you were doing, and then I would tell the guy, “listen, you know, I can help you out if you need it.” They would look at me like “Ah, you’re a kid. You don’t know what you’re doing.” I was like, “Dude, check this out.” I’d come with my little bag of records, and they would know from the records I pull out of the bag, like “Oh, okay. You got some stuff there. Alright, let me see you play, my friend.” You know. And I would get on and do my thing.

CM: So usually—you were pretty young, and a lot of these guys were a lot older than you?

DM: Yeah, they were in their teens. I was in my early—you know, pre-teens or early teens back in those days. And they would just be almost 19, 20 years old, or 20-22 years old. These guys were just—but they knew I was a good guy, and they knew that I really serious and passionate about what I wanted to do. And they saw that I meant business. Cause once you walk around and you got a little something in their bag that *they* don’t have, then they’ll be like “oh, okay,” or stuff like they knew about but didn’t have, I was the guy to go to.

CM: So, I’m curious, how did you get involved with the Black Spades and then the Zulu Nation?

DM: Well, I was never personally involved with the Black Spades. I’ve heard of them. We grew up around them. We grew up around these other gangs that were called “Savage Skulls,” you know what I’m saying, or the Savage Gnomens (sp?), and those were just people that we kind of like, did not really associate with. Even if we had family members down with that, their fashion or whatever, but those guys were just like a lot of troublemaker guys, and we tried to stay away

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

from those gangs and everything. So we represented ourselves as other—like crews. So we had the TVB Crew that we made. We were just kids that were into music, into B-Boying and into graffiti, and we were just part of that group, instead of a gang. We didn't have to wear colors, so we could travel anywhere we wanted where these groups couldn't go into certain—you know if you go into Black Spades territory, you might have a rumble. So I didn't want to become a part of that, that was like more of like you were limited to certain areas where we could roam anywhere. We could run on the train and go to Brooklyn and battle somebody and come home without a fight—scratch, you know what I'm saying. So we kind of like, we were in a gang, but we weren't a gang like that, you know what I'm saying. We were in our own, we was about doing things that were positive and just living and just having fun, basically. We didn't have no worries, no care—but we also had people that we could, you know, definitely, you know, be connected with and also have backup if we needed it. You know what I'm saying? And people that cared about each other. And we just did our thing. And then also we had like real good friends of ours who used to DJ as well within that group. Remember Lefty?

UM: Yes.

DM: He was a DJ—that's Weevil's brother. He had a lot of records too. But he never used to let me on the set, cause he was a hog. You know what I'm saying? He wanted to burn his light. But he was only short lived, for like one or two years. I kept going, you know what I'm saying. And he had some nice equipment. He had these Pioneer turntables that were real dope, and he used to just do his thing, come outside with it. And we used to do a lot of house parties together, me and him. When we were inside, but when he was outside, he wanted to be the showstopper. And, you

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

know, he did his thing, you know, he was cutting up his records or whatever, and he had fun.

And those days were really cool. But TVB, we were so big that Zulu nation approached us.

CM: Oh, okay.

DM: And wanted us to be down with them.

CM: Was it Bambaataa, or was this—

DM: Yeah, it was Bambaataa that came and approached the head of TVB, which was Batch. And Batch was like “Nah, we have our own thing going on. We’re basically a Latino Nation that we, you know, we are our own force in hip-hop whether you like it or not.” We was like, “But, if you want us to be down with y’all, you know what I’m saying, we can make it like where we’re all together as one big family.” So a lot of the TVB guys, they were running off and starting their own crews also, you know what I’m saying? That’s how Rock Steady was born, that’s how we united with Zulu Nation. Cause we were so big that we had little chapters all over the Bronx.

CM: Did you guys—so TVB was like collective DJs. Like a collective of DJs?

DM: Yeah, it was a collective of DJs, we had graffiti artists.

CM: B-Boys?

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: We had B-Boys, all in one. And later on in life it became, you know, more of younger chapters were getting formed. Like, we were beginning to be the elders. But a lot of the original TVB got into a life of crime as well. This was the silent part of being in TVB. The only ones that were down with that, they had their own factions, was the much more older members. And they started catching bids and going to jail. So guys like us were left behind to restart up new chapters or take over the other chapters that were existing and letting other people say—we were spreading the word about TVB that we're not dead. We're still around, and we're still doing things, but you cannot do certain things, because they're just going to wind you up into where the leaders were. So we didn't shun on what they did, but we didn't want to wind up like them either. We kinda learned from their mistakes. We learned from what they did wrong and we tried to rebuild on it. And things kinda fell apart at first because a lot of people were like down and out, like "damn, man, this guy's in jail." A lot of other guys went to jail really fast. But it was like, "man, why did this happen?" We were all confused. We were, like, kind of lost. It was like—remember Jimmy Lean and all those guys went to jail?

UM: yeah

DM: Then these other guys, they were robbing people and they were murdering people. And they went to jail for *murder*. This was no game no more. These guys were doing things that the gangs were doing.

CM: They were putting way more into the crime than into the—

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: Right, and we couldn't figure out why, but we see, at this time, they weren't being supported by our families. We were. So we couldn't understand that. We understand that, you know, maybe they could get help from their families. No, their families was kind like saying, "you gotta go out and get a job." But instead of them getting a job and working hard for their money, they went out and did a life of crime. And listen, I don't care what anybody does, but when people start getting hurt and the communities are starting to suffer, it was better off that they did go to jail. Even though they were personal homeboys and friends of ours, I think it was better off for them to do that to get their life straight, cause they were on the wrong path. And a lot of them—they're still in jail, by the way. Some of them are gonna be in jail for life, you know, til their natural days. I mean, I haven't seen Jimmy Lean since I seen pictures of him online. And these were taken in the 80s. You know what I'm trying to say. So, it's just crazy, but, you know, these guys are the backbone of what we grew up with. If it wasn't for them—I remember having real good times with them, but then they just went out and started doing their—they trying to get paid. And this is before the drug thing. This was like something, you know, just like jewelries and stick-ups and shit like that. And then the other guys that kinda like were, as we got older, we kinda got into different things to making money. I stood on the straight and narrow, because that's like, that was only way for me to go. My mother wasn't putting up with none of that shit. Neither was my father, so I would work a job, and then I would, you know, evidently buy more records, more equipment. But any allowance I got, or anything I made in supermarkets, as I worked as a kid, I remember buying all kinds of records.

CM: So when did you start getting paid for DJ-ing? And what was it like; how much were you getting paid in the beginning?

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: I know it was in the early 70s that I didn't get paid for a while, until the mid 70s rolled around. I could say 2 years after 1975 I think I started getting paid for gigs, like in '77. So and then that was at the end of '77. '78 and '79, we started doing parties. But we made our own money. We would rent—or not rent, we would throw rent parties. So we would like say, “hey, everybody's gotta pay fifty cents, a dollar, to get in.” So that's how we were starting to get paid. No one would actually pay me money: “here, and DJ for me.” We would just have an apartment that needed, you know, they needed some money for rent. So, we would charge a dollar or something. And we'd do it all weekend. We'll have a party Friday night and Saturday night. We'll clear the apartment out as much as we can, throw all the furniture in the back room, have one giant living room, perhaps. And I'm DJ-ing in the room with all the shit around me, you know what I'm saying? The couches and everything, and then people would bring their own beer and smoke weed. Their five-dollar bags of weed—real thick bags, you know, with the yellow and manila envelope type things.

UM: I remember trade bags being that big.

DM: There were trade bags too, you know what I'm saying. But, you know, that was a different time. And that was the essence of the party. You have a little bit of drink, you have a little bit of smoke, and a DJ playing all kinds of good music at the same time. So I'm playing all these records that were out. Disco started becoming very popular. My cousin taught me—he started with Latin music, and then a little bit of disco. That started doing disco really heavily. Like I just took that into, like that was my shit, you know what I'm saying? So, like, where house music

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

came from, it was all early 70s disco. And then we were playing all these albums, all these disco records. So that made us a lot of money, because a lot of women came to those parties. It's just like if you throw a party today, you gotta cater to the girls. If the girls are there, and they see that they love your music, that's when the guys are coming, and the guys gotta go because the girls are there, and that's what the thing was. You don't wanna have a bunch of dudes in the house and one girl, you know what I'm saying? It's kinda whack. And basically, I never threw parties like that, you know what I'm saying. I seen other people, I went to other parties it was like a bunch of dudes. I'm like "You, where the girls at?" And then we would bounce.

CM: So did you start to develop like a following? People who would come and see you?

DM: Yes, definitely. Definitely, everybody would come. Evidently, you know, then we'll have people's houses, and we'll also have a, you know, instead of a rent party, we'll just charge and then we'll split the money, you know what I'm saying, between the guys, the owner of the house and me, would just take the money for throwing a party and they'll grab, you know, half of the door, whatever, and I'd grab half of the door, and that's how I would get paid. And then after a while people started noticing what—you know, how good my sound was, and everything that I made went right into the equipment. So I started buying better and better equipment.

CM: Kinda updating it?

DM: Updating it, rearranging it, and getting equipment. And by the time 1981 came around, I had bought 1200s. I think I bought—my first pair was in 1980 with this guy. But they were his

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

turntables and then he sold them to someone else, and I had go out and buy my own. That was my boy Ray. And I got mine in 1981, my first pair that were *mine*.

CM: Where'd you get them, and how much did they cost?

DM: 500 dollars for the pair, with needles.

CM: Without needles, same amount of money for 1200s.

DM: You paid how much?

CM: 500 for the pair.

DM: 500 for the pair? Okay, well mine were brand new, out the box.

UM: Where'd you go to, Crazy Ed's?

DM: No, I bought those at—

CM: Was that a good deal for that time?

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: Yeah, that was an excellent deal for that time. They were 250 dollars for one. You know how much they are today? 480 dollars for one. I bought my black ones when I turned in my gray ones, cause they got messed up and I didn't feel like getting them refurbished.

CM: Did you buy these from a store, or—

DM: I bought them from a store on 9th avenue on 38th street.

CM: Do you remember the name of it?

DM: Mama's. Mama's electronics. She sold me the pair, and then also with a mixer, I think for 600. So I paid 100 for the mixer, she gave me cartridge and needles for the turntables, for 500. 600 dollars, I walked out of there with three pieces. I bought a Gemini Mixer, with the two 1200s. Now, mind you, I had other turntables before the 1200s.

CM: The BSRs and the—

DM: I had the BSRs and, the D1s, I had the B-101s, I had—and there was another name brand at Jazzy Jay, if you remember. He mentioned the turntable. I keep forgetting the name, because I never owned them, but we had them in our crew. So we used to use those outside a lot. And they were like belt drive, and they had directs. And the ones that I bought, B-101s, those are some cheap shit. I've spent, like, maybe 200 bucks for them, or 100 a pair—I mean 200 for the pair, or

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

100 apiece. With needles too. And I brought those, they were super light, but they were belt driven.

CM: Maybe—could you explain the difference between a belt drive and a direct drive? I don't know—I'm not sure everyone knows.

DM: Okay. Belt drive turntables are actually a little motor spinning and a rubber band belt. It gets turned by this little wheel that turns around, and the rubber band just goes around on these three points. So it's one point here, one point here, one point here, and then back onto the wheel. And it'll turn the turntable. You know what I'm saying?

CM: Like the platter?

DM: The platter. So it'll be around the platter onto this little pin that turns it. That would make it turn. And direct drive is a built in mechanism that turns the actual platter. And I don't know how that—I think that's done by magnetics, direct drive, but it works kind of like the monorails of today, that—they work on magnets, and it's like a thing that just turns, and its much better than the belt drives. Cause the belts can also wear out.

CM: So when did people start using direct drives as opposed to belts?

DM: Well they would cost too much money. That's what it was, at the time. But if you go out and you work a job and you save your money, within a month or two, you'd be able to buy one

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

turntable. Cause of the wages, you know, they weren't as—thank God I had a good job at the time, and I made, you know, a sacrifice with the tube, I got all three pieces for 600 dollars, and it was no problem, you know what I'm saying. And I just have to save the money. So that means I couldn't touch it, I'd just have to squirrel it away. And that's kind of hard to do when you're a DJ, cause there's always something you're gonna want and need. But I was like, "let me save this money up just to get this and get it out of the way." Then every week I'd go out and buy records after that. So I made a sacrifice, I missed a few weeks of not buying records, or a couple of months. And it kinda irked me, because I missed out on a few good records when I went back to the store. "Oh man, we had that three weeks ago." And I'm like, "Shit." And these were like import records that you couldn't find no more, I mean you have to special order them, and sometimes they would run out. So I missed out on a lot of good stuff, but you know what: later on in life I was like, "You know what? I can always get more records. I gotta get records now for this party, and don't worry about it." Because records were coming in every week, you know what I'm saying? By the gross.

CM: So how many record stores were there?

DM: Oh there were hundreds. Literally hundreds and hundreds of record stores.

CM: You were saying there was one on almost every block.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: Well there was almost one good store in every neighborhood. Like Fordham Road had like three or four good shops, where it's spindled down to only, only about two, and then after that it just went down to like one. And now there's none. Give me one second.

“Yes, hello. Who is this? You have the wrong number.”

CM: So how much were records at this time?

DM: What?

CM: Well, how much were the price?

DM: Oh, the 12 inches of—12 inches prices were like \$3, \$2.99. And before that they were \$1.99, I remember. And albums were like 5-something. And then—

CM: So it was pretty affordable for you?

DM: Oh yeah, they were definitely affordable. 45s were like 75 cents. And I remember paying 60 cents back in the early days. But yeah, they weren't even a dollar yet. And then the 12 inches were \$1.99. Albums were like \$3.99, you know what I'm saying. And they were going—rapidly going up within 2-3 years. So, that was it.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

CM: So, you mentioned before that, in the 80s you made a shift from primarily DJ-ing to going into music production.

DM: Right.

CM: Maybe you could explain that shift a little bit.

DM: Well, yeah, after I was DJ-ing for so many years and throwing so many great parties, I started meeting up with a lot of artists, like, from, that made the early rap records. And you know they wanted to do records again, but they needed a new sound. And, you know, they had live bands do all their music for them, but then we started getting to the sample age. So I was a cat that was making mad noise with all the records that I had. You know what I'm saying. So definitely, I met with Special K from the Treacherous Three, and this is our first record we ever did. He taught me how to, you know, use a 4-track and started recording on tape, you know what I'm saying, different tracks. And I understand how the technology works, so I went out and bought one. And we started working on records together in the house. And we worked kinda right before the samples were just coming out, a little bit before when we recorded, so we didn't have samples—samplers back then, you know what I'm saying. So it was kind of like—

CM: You were recording a live DJ set?

DM: Right, a live DJ set, I would just cut the record up back and forth, onto a tape, and then he'll rap afterwards.

[END OF CASSETTE ONE; SIDE ONE]

[START OF CASSETTE ONE; SIDE 2]

CM: And then you'd add the vocals?

DM: Right, and then you add the vocals separately. And then, I remember doing a session where I took a record, and my friend like kind of looped the tape, and he used a mic stand. And he put the tape from out of the machine—the loop—around the mic stand and back into the machine. And that's how we used to loop records.

CM: Wow.

DM: [laughter] And that was ill. So we'll splice the loop together, the tape and the tape will be like so long, so it will just coming around the pole, back into the machine. Yeah, and we'll record that onto another tape player.

CM: Wow, so this is a pretty complicated process.

DM: Yeah, yeah. Well, it was something that we *invented*, just to get—you know what I'm saying—just to get the job done. And then I would add things on—from turntables over it. More of like—

CM: Jut like multilayered.

DM: Right, so it was like, so then I'd add just a little like—not scratching, it was more like trying to add an instrument like [makes horn sounds], bring it back [makes horn sounds, mimics beats, makes horn sounds], you know like that, and then that would give it more drama. And the beat would be going off [mimics drums]. So this is very early stuff that we used to make up before samplers. So it was like bringing it in by hand with the turntable on a separate track, and then I would do scratches separately on another track, and he would do his vocals. And then I would just bring in other instruments with turntables, mixing. So like if I wanted to repeat a certain sound, then I'd have to go to another track and repeat it with the next turntable, cause I wanted to be on time. So like, we'll fill up a chorus with that, with that noise. Cause we didn't have the knowledge, you know, on how to use certain technology, and samplers were just being put out at the time, and they weren't that long either. You know, sample rates, and then they had terrible samples. Or quality—and we didn't know how to use it, so we just did, we just invented ways of doing stuff.

CM: Right. How may hours would it take to do a track?

DM: Oh, in those days it would take a lot—much longer. Because we have to, you know, take tape, splice it together, run it down. Sometimes it wouldn't take us no time at all, because I already had the idea built from the house, and I would take it in there, and sometimes just me DJ-ing with the two turntables with the drums already, you know, instead of just looping it on the

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

tape, we could just do that real quick. And it had more of a live feel. But when we wanted more of a professional sound, it was like, “well, let’s take the drums and loop them” and then blend in another sound with it, and then make that into a tape and loop that. Like a bassline: so let’s say I had the drums going, and I wanted the bass line to come in [mimics drums and bass]—so I would blend those two together, and then make another tape and then loop that, throughout the whole track.

CM: So, on one track, you could potentially use four or five different records, and different pieces from different records?

DM: Right, right. The only thing is, we couldn’t separate them, cause it wasn’t being looped yet on separate tracks and synced together.

CM: so you were recording them on top of each other.

DM: Right on top of each other with the turntables. So it’s kinda like—I’m like kinda like real crazy early versions of—

CM: You still have tapes from back then?

DM: I probably do. They’re in storage. I keep basically a lot of stuff. But those records that I did that, I did that with a friend of mine, and he probably has the tapes still. And if not, I don’t have

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

them, but I might have a cassette of it somewhere, like lying around in my house. You know what I'm saying?

CM: Wow. So, who are some of the other artists that you did production for?

DM: Well, I worked with my ex-girlfriend, which was The Female Dream. We did a record on Select Records. Then I worked with Biz Markie, You Got What I Need. And he had a production company where he had his brother down with him. So I worked with his brother, Diamond Show, Kid Capris, Van Daddy IU (?), and himself, and also with his DJ Vern. And we just put together a lot of interesting projects within all those production companies. And also, I worked with a lot of unknown artists that I can't even remember their names, but they were being interested in putting out their own records. And I just helped them with the beats and everything. And they kinda paid me for everything that I did.

CM: What was the rates like?

DM: Well, I would charge maybe anywhere between 12-1500 per song. And all I did was just the music, and then they had the engineer come and record their vocals and they'll get it mixed down any way they want it. And if they need me for anything more than that, then what I did, then they'll have to pay extra.

A lot of the projects, you know, I worked closely with these guys, cause they were real good guys that I worked with. So I kinda did everything else on my own with them, to make sure they

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

got everything they needed. But I concentrated on one thing, and one thing at a time. I did my music first, exactly the way that I did it in my house. That's why I was capable when I worked with Special K. You know, he was one of the first artists I worked with. He taught me the ins and outs on how to record on separate tracks, and everything like that. And you know, I took my home studio into the big studio. And then at that time, you know, samplers were coming out, so everything was coming out with MIDI and sync. So we would just sync all the tracks, everything was looped. And all we did was just punch in and out what parts that we wanted to play together. And actually, everything was tracked out, like over and over, just the loop. But then I started getting more intricate and things, and I was like "Well, if we're just gonna have like the chorus part, you know, come in with a certain loop," I would have it timed where it would be after 16 bars, then it would come in for 8 bars, so it won't get confusing on the mix—and also bleedthroughs, where you can slightly hear that sound throughout. Cause once I mute a track, and I just wanna hear the bassline, I don't wanna hear that other sound riding behind slightly. So then I started getting more intricate in how I would work, and started setting things up in a time. Everything's mathematics. So if I had, you know, an eight bar intro, 16 bars for the verse, and another 8 bars for the chorus, the sounds that I needed in that chorus would kick in on that last of the 16th bar, going into the 8 bar chorus. And the same thing would happen in the beginning for 8 bars. So they'll happen here, skip 16, and happen on the next 8, and then they'll stop as soon as the verse comes in again. And we'll have 3 16s and four 8s, you know what I'm saying. Or sometimes we'll make, you know, stretch out the record a little longer, have another 16 bars at the end where it's kinda like more of an instrumental feel, and then I can play around with it, with the sounds in and out as I fade the record out.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

So that was like a basic uniform and planned out, you know what I'm saying, kind of a normal structure of a record. Certain records we did, they were just kinda like freestyling, we did like 24 bars and a four bar chorus, and then 16 bars and then an 8 bar chorus, it wasn't really structured carefully, you know what I'm saying. And then people would say, "you got to have it more uniform." So I learned that going into the business, you know, and then it all worked out for me.

CM: So what record was your most successful record?

DM: I could say Biz Markie, *You Got What I Need*.

CM: And do you get royalties from that?

DM: No. I didn't understand the concept of, you know, publishing at the time. Which I did, in a sense, but I didn't understand, you know, I just made a contract between me and Biz that I get paid a certain amount of money. You know what I'm saying? And pay me—he had me on the payroll for production on any other projects that you did. So, in essence, I got, like, a good figure—I mean, it wasn't the best figure—but it was a good figure for just doing something that I did in my house, and then he recreated in the studio with someone else. And it was basically transferring information and giving him a big hit record. But I got enough money to buy new equipment. Then I started my own studio where I could record and also buy new records. That was more important to me than anything else. Cause having records at the time gave me more of an edge than anything else. Even if no one liked me, or liked my production, I was the man to go to. And one way or another, I would make money from it. You know what I'm saying?

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

CM: So I guess around this time, how would you say that you evolved as a DJ, since you first started, and where are some of the places that DJ-ing took you?

DM: Okay, I went all over the United States for DJ-ing, number one. And—

CM: Where? Like, name some cities.

DM: Okay, I could say I went to Chicago.

CM: DJ there?

DM: DJ there.

CM: Like a club?

DM: —LA—in the club, in the club. New York, I started getting into the clubs in the 80s, all over New York. And that spiraled me, you know, into being involved with a breakdance group that took me to—you know, like weird places, like in overseas, like in—

CM: Was it Rock Steady?

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: No, it was another crew. It was another crew called The Majestic Force. And, you know, we went to like DJ in like Saudi Arabia and stuff like that, and I met kings and princes, and—

CM: You told me once that you got to go to Baghdad.

DM: Baghdad, yeah.

CM: How did that come about?

DM: That was one of the companies that—in the business, if you got people behind you, or like agencies that can get you to work, and that they wanted these breakdancers to go there, we were the guys to go to. Cause everybody else was like, kinda like booked and busy elsewhere. Like Rock Steady and them were, like, so famous that they were always busy doing something overseas. So we were like the leftover crew from the Bronx that we were just as good, because we also practiced with them, we were also down with them at the time, and we were the only ones available to go to like these weird countries, like that. So we went to South America, you know.

CM: Which places in South America?

DM: Argentina—we did go to Colombia once, you know what I'm saying, but I'm not sure where. I know I was in Metaing (SP) and it was a short stopover. We did something there real quick. And, what was the other place? I know we went to Brazil, and that was the biggest city

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

that we played out there. That was really nice out there in Rio De Janiero. And then, there was another place in South America. I'm not sure where—I know it wasn't Mexico. I know we went to Mexico, but I don't know if we played in Mexico. I'm not sure if we just went there and from there we just traveled on to something else. I think it was Guatemala or some weird country like that. And we just kept taking these little charter planes to go from there to here to there, to travel over.

CM: How many people were you traveling with?

DM: We were traveling altogether like 12 people. So, most of them were dancers, and I was with another DJ. So it was 2 DJ, and the rest were dancers. So we had 12 of us altogether—actually 14. It was one of the road—I can't count the road manager, but the part of the group was like 10 guys that were dancing, and two of them—one of them would meet up with us in different countries, but we have to take—you know, we used to get these shots before we entered into the country, to make sure we were disease-free or whatever, and we won't catch anything and bring it back. So we would have to get shots. So they would go onto the different countries ahead of us sometimes, just to make sure that we get all our paperwork right and everything, and that was it. And then we had the road manager with us, to make sure we get paid and everything, and make sure our accommodations were right.

CM: What were you getting paid for gigs like that?

DM: We were getting paid anywhere between 1000 to 1500.

CM: And splitting it between—

DM: —no, we were getting that a piece.

CM: Oh, wow.

DM: We were getting some big money at that time. That was more money than, you know, and then we would get per diem too. We would get money to spend over there. So, that's like—

CM: were you carrying equipment with you, or did they have—

DM: We had certain equipment with us. We would carry—we would have the two turntables and a mixer, and that would be it. And our records.

CM: Okay, so they would have the speaker and the PA system.

DM: Right, they the—everything else—set up where we could, you know, we could do that. And definitely, we would just, you know, go there and do what we have to do, and that would be it. You know what I'm saying? And they bought the turntables for us, to travel. Cause I wasn't bringing my own shit. And they bought us the cases. I remember running to the store, and we had to be at the airport, and I was just getting the cases for the turntables, and I had to run back to my house. And we had the turntables in the—no, they were actually in an office, and we had to

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

pack them up. So we had to run back to the office and pack these turntables in there, and then get them on the plane, and all this crap. It was crazy. And in those days, they just tossed those boxes around, man. You know what I'm saying. But the turntables, thank god, survived. You know, it was just crazy.

Man, I remember those days. They were crazy.

CM: So this was essentially like a world tour, or international tour.

DM: Not really a world tour, because we did go—we only did a South American tour, kind of. So we did that, and then we came back to the states. And then—

CM: What year was that?

DM: This was like early 80s, like '81, '82. Okay, and then later on, you know, I started doing mixtapes here, and sending them to England, to a friend of mine. So, they had a bootleg radio station, KISS-FM. So, they would try to reproduce what we were doing over here, at the time. And this was all this early rap music, and stuff like that. So I would play all these early records, and then I would, you know, do my thing with the breakbeats. And they *loved* that. So they said, "Do another one, with just all breakbeats." So I did a whole 90 minute tape with just me cutting up records, and my friend on the mic doing it. They went bananas over there. So they got me a plane ticket to go over there, you know what I'm saying, and do some live performances. And me and my man went out there and shit. And we went to England, and we over there, we didn't

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

know nothing. We were just like, you know. And they had everything. All we had to do was just bring records. So my man had a big bag of records, I had a big bag of records. And I said, “we carrying these shits on the plane, cause they toss your shit around if you throw it—” you know what I’m saying? They didn’t have cases built for records yet, you have to get those special made, and—

CM: So what’d you carry them in?

DM: I carried them in big bags, like this. A record bag like this—

CM: Oh, wow.

DM: —but they were huge.

CM: So you had to put padding under it a little bit.

DM: Nah, I’d just carry, like, a bunch of records in this bag, and I’d just DJ. So, you know what I’m saying, so I had—they were Technics bags, so they were kinda bigger and a little bit longer—so we had two bags. So my mad would carry a bag, and he had his mic with him, cause he has to rap. And he did a couple of things, you know what I’m saying. He wasn’t a real good, good rapper, but he was just—picked me up and let me DJ and do my thing. And we did a couple of things out there, and then I came back home, you know what I’m saying. And it was pretty good. Then later on in life, I was like, “I gotta get out of here, I gotta go to Paris.” You know

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

what I'm saying. They were doing something. So we did things. I did stuff when I was doing production, they had me out there. You know what I'm saying? And also DJ-ing as well.

Because DJ-ing always made the way for me to get out of this country. So that's what hip-hop brought me. But there's a lot of other countries I never made it to, that I had really wanted to go, like Greece, Italy, Japan, and Korea, you know what I'm saying—not North Korea, though. I would like to visit Malaysia, stuff like that. I want to go to all these other countries, and hip-hop can get me out there, you know, hopefully, you know, before the next ten years, you know maybe we can get something going on where we can travel out there.

Now, technology has changed so much. We used to carry heavy-ass records. And the risk was that, you know, you could leave your records somewhere, and they'll get stolen. Or you lose them, or they break. Now we don't have to do that, cause of technology. But back then it was very, very, very much more intricate. Like when I first, you know started, like, building my own system up, we started building our own speakers, or taking old speakers that weren't being used no more and refurbishing them, they were really heavy as hell, and they were like something you have to rebuild the inside with, starting from the insulation, the speaker itself, building the crossover, to connecting to any other speaker so that you won't blow out, you know, if you overload them. And make sure when the overload would come, they would shut your speaker off, so, you know, it'll be a safety mechanism before it gets to too high, where they will blow out.

CM: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: And the electricity coming out through those speakers. Oh my god, I got shocked so many times hooking up equipment with the wires, you know what I'm saying. You know, just sticking your tongue on the wire, you go "zzt!" You get electrocuted. That shit was crazy, just to make sure they were running. "Yep, yep, yep they're running." The power's there, the speaker won't be blowing out. Or sometimes they have to reset, so we'll leave it off for a minute, and they'll come back on. That would rarely happen, in case someone just tries to overload the other system so much. But I always had those safety features built into my stuff so I don't have to worry about it, cause I have to fear of my stuff blowing out, you know what I'm saying. But I paid a lot of money for those speakers, like 3-400 dollars for one speaker is, like, a lot of money, you know what I'm saying. That's just for the speaker itself, the woofer.

CM: So, the next question I have is how did you get involved with the Ultimate Breaks and Beats Project.

DM: Oh, the Ultimate Breaks and Beats. I wasn't involved but so much just like saying, "yeah, I think you should use this record or use that record." That was basically a friend of mine, Lenny Robert's creation, and you know, he always asked opinions of what records should I throw on. I was like, "you was thinking about doing this record." I would always "yes, yeah, that's cool." I didn't know like, what record should be put out at that time. It was just like a good record to put out if they were popular, but they were still hard to get. You know, around that time, there were like a lot of records that were hard to get. Not for guys like me, but for just the simple average guy. So these records would definitely do well, because these were like the holy grail of records. Everything that's on that collection is kind of like the Holy Grail of records to get, you know

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

what I'm saying? If you didn't know about them, you know what I'm saying. So, yeah, definitely they put on a lot of records that were very hard to get, and he did well with them. The first three albums that he did, he did them on his own. I got involved after that, cause I was also—you know, I knew that he did them, but, you know, then I started hanging out with him and started buying records with him. Even in the early days, when he started doing them, I was already buying records with him. He always taught me, "well, if you see like 20 copies of a certain record, just buy them all." Especially at 50 cents a pop, ten cents, 20 cents, jut buy them all. You can resell them and make money from that, and buy more records. So I always had that in the back of my mind, so every time I went record shopping, I would see 2 for 99 cents, it was like the age of the cut out. Which, like a cut out record is a record that they don't sell on a normal stock basis. This is an old stock, and they would put a little tear in the record, or like some kind of saw. And it was just like a little line, that's what they call a cut-out. But I was buying records like that before they started doing that cutout. These were pre-cutout days, and they were just around the same price, or even more, you know what I'm saying. They were just trying to get rid of these records, because there so many of them pressed up that they weren't selling no more, so they was like "Let's sell them for 2 for 99 cents. They'll sell eventually." So those are the records that I was after at that time, and that was like in the early 80s. And that's how my record collection grew a lot. I used to just come, spend my whole check on all those type of records. My mother was like "Why you buying 20 records of the same record?" I was like, "You see those? I paid 99 cent for them. For two of them. I take those and I charge ten dollars, *each*, to the average DJ, and they'll have two of the same record. They'll give me 20 dollars, I'll give them two records. I take that 20 dollars, I save it, and then I would sell so many of them at that price, that I would come up with more money than what I spent on these records. Then I go out and buy more

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

expensive records, like 5.99 records and 7.99 records.” And the first record store that I started going to after I saw Kool Herc DJ was Downstairs Records. They were downstairs in the train station, upstairs from the train. So the train platform, you go up one flight, it was just like the little alleyway, and then downstairs from the street. So it was called Upstairs Downstairs Records.

CM: Cool.

DM: So it was a real cool little alleyway.

CM: Where was this at?

DM: 42nd street, right on where the Grace building is, they had a little entrance there that you go downstairs, it was like a little alleyway right before you get to the train. One record store was 45s, when you come down the stairs, I remember, it was 45s on this side, and then the album were on this side. And they’ll have a little board—it was no bigger than this room, in fact—and they’ll have a little board, cork board, and they’ll tack all the record covers up there. And you’ll go “what’s that on there?” “Oh, you don’t know this record?” and they’ll pull the record out from the back. They had little shelves where all the records were in green sleeves and writing on them. And they would just put the record on and they’d play it for you, like “Oh, shit this record’s hot.” And then they’ll try to give you the whammy. “How much?” “25 dollars.” “25 dollars? That’s too much for a record,” you know, so I would go over there, and I would see every record on that board, and I would write them down. You didn’t have to go inside the store, because it was a

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

glass storefront. You could just stand outside and just write shit down “Okay, this record.” I’d go right down the block and get them for like 4 bucks [laughter].

CM: Wow.

DM: You know what I’m saying? I save money, I save money. And we had guys who didn’t know how to do that, or didn’t think about doing it, they would just spend all their money there. But you going to get like two or three records out of there, when I’d just get the whole board, you know what I’m saying, with my whole check.

CM: So what was the most amount of records that you had at one time?

DM: Well—

CM: Give me a number.

DM: I never sat there and counted them until I got this other collection, was over 100,000 records. And I had, prior to that, just about that much. So, we’re talking about 200,000 records. I would count out how many shelves, you know what I’m saying, that 100,000 would carry. It’s a lot, let me tell you something. And we had custom shelves built. So we’re talking about— 100,000 records couldn’t even fit in this room, you know what I’m saying. It would be impossible. We’d probably have like 3-4 rooms the size of this to put in maybe 100,000, let alone 200-300,000. And we bought these records, and we kept them in my boy’s garage, and we

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

sat there and we kept counting every 100 that we had, until we got up to the point that we, you know, we had—we couldn't keep these records in the house.

CM: So these were all in your house?

DM: Well, they weren't ever in my house. That's how much—I had to rent storages. And I only kept about 20-30,000 in my crib at one time, at the most. Everything else had to go in storage, you know what I'm staying, because that's too many records.

CM: That's where, you still keep them today, in storage?

DM: Yep, in storage. It's just too many records, and then, the 20 or 30 that I had in my house, that even overflowed, you know, a two bedroom apartment. I had one room full of records. And it was like—I had it very organized though, everything was up against the walls from the ceiling to the floor. And everything were in drawers, like my 45s were in nice sleeves, plastic sleeves. Everything had plastic on it to protect the records from getting scratched by being filed in those wooden bins. So that's the way they are in boxes right now. Like, all my records are just like that, with the plastic. And I said, "These records were too damn heavy. I wish they would come up with something." Now, CDs were coming out around the same time. So I started collecting CDs too. So I have a ton of CDs as well. I was like, "I like the way they sound, they're clean,." You know, whatever. So a lot of CDs that I own are basically replicas of what I owned on vinyl, or different versions or whatever. But as many records as—I mean, there was just too many to count man. There was like, oh my god.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

CM: Hundreds of thousands.

DM: It was hundreds and thousands of records. I bought like 4-5 different collections in my life, and got rid of like a good three of them, and then kept the rest. You know what I'm saying?

CM: What was the most that you sold a single record for? And then, what was you bought a single record for?

DM: The most I spent on one record was five grand. The most I sold a record for: about the same price. Cause I was selling this record to someone else after I re—I digitized it, cause I got into the digitizing and stopped keeping records. And all my other records that I would basically buy for like 100, 300 dollars, 400 dollars, one record, I sold that to another collector for about the same price, or a little bit more per record. And I made my money back, and I just bought more records. And then I would keep flipping them. Keep flipping them, and then eventually I sold off all my whole entire rap collection, and a bunch of records that I didn't want anymore, like freestyle, house records and stuff like that. I sold all that, and a lot of 12 inches that I didn't care about, that were kinda like 80s. Cause we used to get—I was in a record pool as well. We used to get records through record pools, but I only got a certain amount of records. I was always looking for different type of records. Those were the records that were just—new records that were coming out. And I stopped being in a record pool within 1981. So I had stuff from 1977 to '81, record pool-wise. And it wasn't worth it for me, you know, I was getting a lot of, you know,

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

records like whatever. Certain records were real dope, and. You know, I caught some nice stuff, but you have to really have to go out there and buy records, and get good records that way.

CM: So how did the—how did Dusty Fingers come about? And when?

DM: Dusty Fingers came about later on. 1997. My first prototype for the record was called *Beats, Burks, Breaks and Grooves*. And it was just a white label with black letters on it. But in my mind, Dusty Fingers was rolling around as a concept. So *Beats Breaks and Grooves* was my first prototype, and it was just like, same kinda type of music, hard to get records from all over the world. But that was just like a little prototype. Then my man said, “Yo, we gotta make a cover for this.” So I designed the cover the way I want it. I wanted it to look like—like my first volume is what I really wanted—how that record to look. And that was my vision. So it’s just like a bunch of records, a picture of a bunch of records in a row. And then he came up with these hands. That was the only thing he came up with basically. The letter—I picked out the fonts, the lettering and the style of what I wanted. Two bars up on top saying “Dusty Fingers,” and then the bottom bar I came up with everything else. And then the bac of the record, when you turn it around, you see a picture that I had from one of my records, the way they were stacked up in crates in one of my houses, like a little aisle. And then I had records all plastered all over the place, on the ceiling, you know what I’m saying. I had the room hooked up real nice at one of my apartments.

CM: And so, that was volume one. How many volumes—what volume are you on now?

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: I completed volume 15 last year, and also a digipack, with volume 16 on it, that came out late last year, early—

CM: So the digipack has all of the Dusty—

DM: all of the albums on there. I couldn't get the 16th one on vinyl, because a lot of my pressing plants that I used went out of business. So like the vinyl game kinda like died out.

CM: But Fat Beats does the manufacturing for you, right?

DM: No, I do my own manufacturing, with my own company. They just pay for the manufacturing.

CM: And then I guess we'll just finish it up with what's going on now. And you're still collecting records—

DM: Still collecting records.

CM: —possibly looking into some music archiving. Please explain what your idea is with that.

DM: Well I been doing that since I started doing records. Just digitizing, you know. I bought a nice sound card, hooked it up to my computer, and I record records and a very high bitrate, you know what I'm saying? So every record that I get my hands on and I like and I personally enjoy,

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

I just record it to the computer. Then I clean them up, take out all the crackles and the pops. I have software, and skills to remove all the impurities that a record—you know, artifacts might be on the record itself. It just comes back. Like when you buy a CD all you hear are silence and then music and then silence again. That's how I make the music, you know, from vinyl. You usually hear you know, little crackly noises, cause the actual—you know, the needle was actually touching the record. So there's always some surface noise or whatever from the record. Wobble sounds, or whatever. But a lot of records that weren't on CD, you have to have the original vinyl to do so. But I make that into a nice, you know, CD master, and then I save it to my archives. And I been doing that since 1997.

CM: How many songs would you say you have saved?

DM: Over—over 100,000 I think.

CM: Wow. So is it about a Terabyte?

DM: More than that. Yeah, a few Terabytes. You know what I'm saying? I recorded, you know, full albums, a bunch of single records, and basically full albums I recorded. I have thousands and thousands.

CM: Wow.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: You now what I'm saying? Of records that I recorded from my library, you know, all way up until—from 1997 until now. That's a lot of years doing that. And I'm still doing it. And I do a little bit every week. You know what I'm saying?

CM: Well, maybe you can explain your relationship with some of these record stores these days.

DM: Well, I'm a veteran in the music industry, so a lot of guys cater to me and anything I need or want, they will definitely look out from me without a problem. And they'll always try to get records for me. But I also deal with a lot of dealers from all over the world, and out of state dealers. You know, guys that collect records from Canada. They're just record dealers, and they always give me a call first, cause they always know I'm looking for stuff. And I've got a connection in Europe—two or three connections. I had more when they were bringing records over here and would meet them up personally. But they stopped doing that, because kinda—the vinyl game is kinda dead now. And I was buying records then. Now I don't really do that. You know, I'll just ask for a record if I need it. I'll borrow it, record it, and give it back. You know what I'm saying? And in return for that, you know, if they need a favor from me, I'll always grant them a favor, if they need anything that I can do, you know, within my power to get it done. Like, you know, clean up a record for them or whatever for free. I'll do that, and they lend me a record. And you know—or records—and I do that, you know periodically.

CM: And then—so, what's your idea for the proposal to Fordham? Should we talk about that?

DM: No.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

CM: If you have anything else you want to add—maybe a story about DJ-ing somewhere, or something like that?

DM: Do you have enough tape still? Are we good?

CM: There's not any left.

DM: When did that stop?

CM: I'm not sure.

DM: Can you rewind that back?

CM: Let me rewind it.

Damn. We missed a lot of stuff.

DM: You're kidding me.

CM: Yeah.

DM: Fuck, bro.

[END OF TAPE ONE; SIDE TWO]

[START OF TAPE TWO; SIDE ONE]

CM: So we were talking about the Ultimate Breaks and Beats compilation. I just wanted to know what your involvement was with that project?

DM: Right, well that project was headed out by a good friend of mine who passed away a few years back, and his name is Lenny Roberts. And I was involved only so much in just saying like, “Yeah, I think you should put this out.” He was always asking my opinion on what records he should put out. And that was the only way I was really involved with them. We were just like basically kinda like record hunter buddies. We would go out and just hunt down records and find them at a real good price. And boxes of the same record. Not just one record and, “Oh shit we found it.” We would find boxes of shit. And, you know, resell them to stores, you know, all over the Bronx and Manhattan area and supply records to them. That was a good moneymaker for us. And especially for me, I would trade records off, I would buy excess amount of records and definitely trade with people and sell them to other DJs. And try to, you know, spread my knowledge to other DJs, and make other records popular, even though they weren’t popular in certain circles. A lot of people were stuck on certain records at that time, so I would try to spread the love out, to show them there’s other music out there—which I’ve tried to do that all my life. It’s kind of ironic, you know? It’s like only certain people are brainwashed to listen to a certain amount of records, and that’s it. So that’s why I became the massive collector that I am today, cause I’m into all kinds of music. So then for many years me and him, you know, dug for

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

records, and I gave him my opinion on all these records, and he stopped doing his records after volume 25. Which was cool. I told him, “Yo, you should continue it. You know, do some more,” but I guess he was like, kinda like—he really had room to do a lot more. He could’ve come out with 30-40 volumes if you ask me, and could’ve made a continued killing of that whole series. But that gave me the opportunity to do what I was doing. And many years later, in 1997, I came up with a concept with *Beats, Breaks and Grooves*, which is like a version of *Dusty Fingers*, pre-*Dusty Fingers*, but I also wanted to come out with, you know, that name. Because that’s what I used to get, dusty fingers, when I would go out looking for records. And then I had a little problem with Diamond D at first, cause his name, Dusty Fingers was his publishing company. But it had nothing to do with, you know. I didn’t even think about that. That name was there and, you know, but it didn’t like, you know, compute until he brought it to my attention. I was like, “Oh shit, dude, you’re right. I kinda, like, took your publishing company’s name. but this is a series. This is what I do when I go out digging for records.” I explained to him, I was like, “Me and you are from the same area, we know each other. It’s not like I’m trying to take your shit and use it, you know. And, you know, cause you had your name, you know, on your record. And, you know, you only had like one album out at the time, and basically that was the only thing that was published. And then you had a few other records that came out later on, but, you know—” A lot of people thought it was him doing those records instead of me. But I was like, “you know what. I’d rather come out with the record, explaining how I felt, what I used to get.” You know, I used to come out of places dirty, filthy black just digging for records, so it was just, like, a perfect name for the record and the concept. And then I designed the whole record cover myself. And then my friend added the hands to the cover, which was very clever with the gloves, with the white gloves. And he took that from a magazine, that was these white gloves playing a piano

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

keyboard that they were advertising for a keyboard. But he jacked those and we threw them on there, and that became the platform for our record. So when I first did my fist Dusty Fingers, that was the prototype to what I wanted it to look like. Then after that we just kept the same cover, and just redid different colors of the cover. You know what I'm saying?

CM: How many volumes did that end up being?

DM: I wound up doing 15 volumes on vinyl, was the last one I did was the—2007. And then last year, 2008, I came out with a digipack, that came out with volume 16, that was never released on vinyl. Cause all the vinyl houses went out of business. So definitely I said—

CM: The digipack was a collection?

DM: All the entire—the entire series plus the Schoolyard Breaks series, to which I added a third Schoolyard Breaks which was never released on vinyl either, only released it Volume 1 and 2. So that was basically it on that collection, and I'm real proud of it. You know, it's a real nice collection. And it's, you know, my life's work, you know what I'm saying, from digging around the world and collecting records here and there, and these are little pieces of records that I had lying around in my crates. That's why I kinda got out of production. I was sitting on a lot f funky records, where a lot of people couldn't believe that I was doing these records—like production records, to make rap records. And they would see that I wasn't a certain, you know, type of hip-hop guy. I mean, I'm not the type of guy that dressed up in name brand names and shit like that and trying to follow a certain trend and spend all my money on clothes and jewelry. I didn't look

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

the part, hip-hop enough, to a lot of these record companies. And I'm looking at them like, "You know, what does that got to do with anything, man? This is how I feel and this is how I do dope music." And anytime I turned around and say "dope track." people love what I do, but they just don't think I'm doing it or whatever. So they didn't want to deal with me. And then I'm not a dark shade of color enough for them to be—"I can't believe this white Spanish guy is doing this." I'm like—so I just came out with dusty fingers just to put the monkey wrench in everybody's game, you know what I'm saying. And on top of that let the world know about different types of music. Now every producer from here to the West Coast has used my records. So I done successful with that, and I changed hip-hop again by doing so, first with the *Ultimate Breaks and Beats*, we changed the way hip-hop was, because every record that we came out with was sampled and used. And that factors into all the records that came out in the early 80s until the mid 90s, is all *UBB* records that were sampled. And then all the 90s stuff into the early 2000s is *Dusty Fingers*. Think about it. I changed hip-hop twice. That's why I'm a very important factor in this game. Because I share knowledge with people all—and I don't get no credit. There's—the only one who kinda gave me credit was Dr. Dre when he had a personal interview with a magazine, and he had my records in the background, and he says he uses my shit.

CM: Wow.

DM: And that's only one who kinda has—who's kinda reached out and said, you know. Everybody else gives me the finger. But I give it out to you, because, you know, fuck you too, because, you know, I know a lot of shit. And people who talk about me nicely or not, player hate me or not. You know, I don't give a shit about that. It's not about that. It's not about competition

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

with me, because, you know, there are guys who probably have more knowledge on certain things than me. But you know, in a wide world spectrum I have a lot of knowledge, and they should be proud of that, and they should embrace me instead of try to push me away, like I'm some freak. But that's the way people are—whatever, I don't mind it. You know, I just go on living, and I live my life comfortably. You now, I'm not a rich millionaire from all this crap, but I don't intend to be. I'll probably die a poor man. But, you know, the thing is bro, I deserve, you know, a lot of credit for helping the whole cause of this hip-hop game. And I did it twice in a matter of decades. Not just once, but twice. And I'm behind the scenes on a lot of stuff, and a lot of people don't even realize that. It's like, I'm the reason why you took these paths. Cause I try to throw a monkey wrench in the 80s. I hate the 80s stuff. That shit is kinda whack, all that corny shit that Bad Boy and them were doing. I kinda like, "Yo man, there's other records out here you can sample from. You don't have to sample from that bullshit." You know what I'm saying? There are—that's what led up to all this garbage that we have today. And I can say that with comfort and ease. Cause that's all it is, it's all garbage. You got gay, robot sounding dudes making records, and I'm like "What the fuck, why do people like that? There's no hard beats, there's no—there's no driving force like the way it was." There's no funk, there's no nothing, it's all just watered down Caca. That's all it is. You know what I'm saying?

CM: Yeah. So, you're gonna be a lifelong record collector, DJ. What's in the horizon for you?

What else is—

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: I'm gonna keep doing this till the day I die. You know what I'm saying? When I die, I wanna party. I wanna buried with my records, you know what I'm saying, so I can rock the living dead (CM Laughs). I'm not bullshitting.

CM: That's a great way to end the interview.

DM: You know what I'm saying. I wanna rock the living dead from beyond the grave. I wanna be buried with my records, a pair of turntables, and I wanna—

CM: The 300,000 records?

DM: Yeah, I just wanna be buried with it. Find a plot and do it. Just get everything out of my storage and bury it with me. And that's it. You know what I'm saying. I'll think of some way to use it.

Or, I'm gonna leave it to my young'n. When I have my own kids, you know what I'm saying? Or my nephews and nieces, or whoever's really interested in that. I'll write a will for that. You know, just keep the show up. All my digitized stuff, I think the future kids will use that. The records and all that, I don't know if they'll use it. If they wanna keep it as a relic, and they can use it and—

CM: Or a museum.

Interviewee: Danny Martinez

Interviewer:

Date: 4/8/2009

DM: I could just store it somewhere else. But, you know, that's just something I want, you know, one of my family to just keep continue doing what I was doing. And they're gonna need the records. You know, once they give it away, someone else has it, they'll never have access to it no more. You know how these societies do. "No, no. No you can't." You know what I'm saying? "But this was my uncle's." "I don't give a shit. They're mine now." So I'm gonna keep them in the family one way or the other. But it would be a nice gesture just to bury with a few memoirs of my past, so I can rock, you know, beyond the grave. You know what I'm saying?

CM: Well, thank you very much for coming and sharing with us today, and that's it.

DM: Thank you very much. It was good doing this.

[END OF CASSETTE TWO; SIDE ONE]

[END OF INTERVIEW]