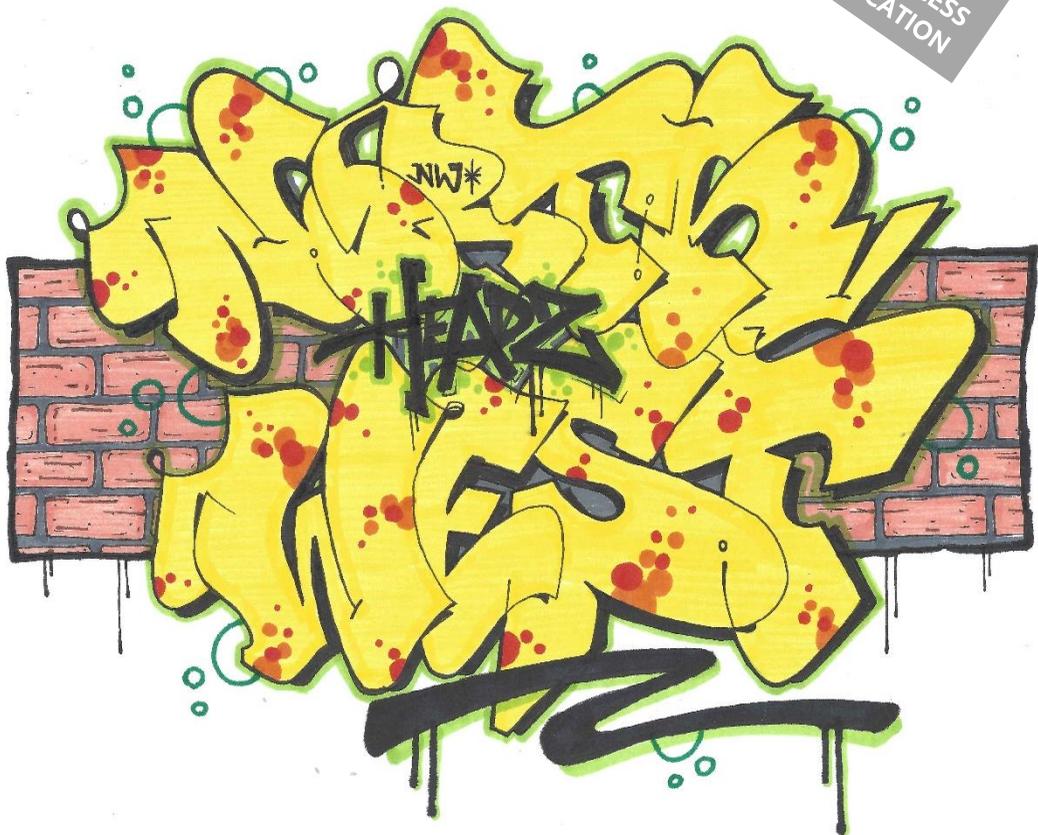


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HEADZ-zINE vol. 1: 'REGIONS-UK'

issue 1: NORTH-WEST HEADZ AUTUMN 2020

capturing hip hop histories:

MIKEY D.O.N / DAMON SAVAGE / WAYNE C McDONALD /
DJ WOODY / IMAM ABBAS MAUNDA / LADY TAME / SEEK

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RHYTHM•obscura: revealing hidden histories through ethnomusicology and cultural theory

is a long-term research venture that explores the relationships of the non-obvious and regional-rural phenomena within music cultures. A significant focus of RHYTHM•obscura is the consumption and production of music cultures in the often neglected provincial cities, towns, and rural areas of the UK.

The HEADZ Project is a major component of RHYTHM•obscura critically exploring hip hop histories with a particular focus on the provincial, regional, and rural. Examining the shared experiences of practitioners, artists, and the wider hip hop community in the UK and beyond, the project is particularly interested in the personal histories, memories, and archives of artefacts, recordings, photographs, and music ephemera. The project produces publications, exhibitions, recordings, performances, reading rooms, witness seminars, and public talks. Recent outputs include the monograph *Provincial Headz: British Hip Hop and Critical Regionalism* (Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2020), and the contextual novel *Scratching the Surface: Hip Hop, Remoteness, and Everyday Life* (Squagle House, 2020).

HEADZ-zIne is a periodical output of the HEADZ Project. Taking the form of the fanzine with a critical edge, it challenges the convention of academic knowledge production and dissemination. HEADZ-zIne seeks to capture the personal, local, and communal histories of hip hop. HEADZ-zIne is foremost interested in the stories of its participants, and through a series of in-depth interviews and complimentary analysis of the artefacts and archives of hip hop, reveals a set of previously untold stories.

More on these projects and others at the DIGitAL HEADZ ArchiVe which can be visited at: rhythmobscura.com

Acknowledgements and Shout Outs

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Adam de Paor-Evans is Reader in Ethnomusicology at University of Central Lancashire, UK.

Twitter: @rhythm_obscura Instagram: rhythm_obscura

David Kerr is a research associate at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Twitter: @DavidKerr_1

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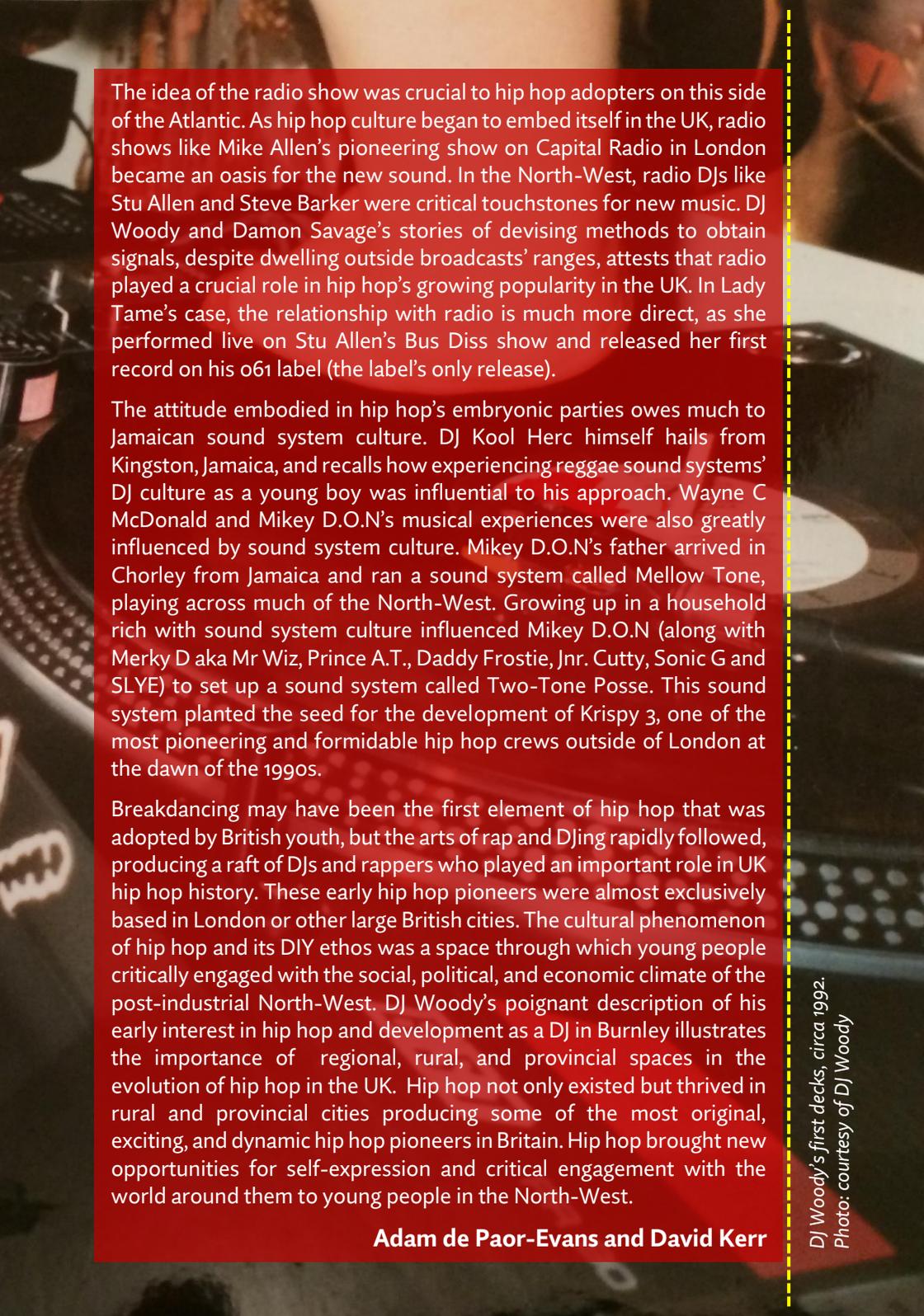
Editorial

The party DJ Kool Herc threw for his sister on 11th August 1973 in the Rec Room of 1520 Sedgewick Avenue, Bronx, NYC, is commonly cited by hip hop communities and scholars as the moment where hip hop was born. Since its inception, hip hop's four physical practices— graffiti, breakdancing (Bboying), DJing (scratching and mixing) and rapping – have continuously evolved creating a multitude of different styles. Hip hop's diverse forms reflect and respond to the contexts within which they have developed. As this zine illustrates, the social, cultural, and economic realities of the North-West had a profound effect on how local hip hop scenes emerged here.

The first hip hop records were produced at the end of the 1970s, with 'Rappers Delight' by Sugarhill Gang achieving double-platinum (2,000,000 certified sales) in the US and gold (400,000 certified sales) in the UK. As media interest in this new cultural phenomenon grew hip hop arrived on TV screens, in record shops and on radio stations in the UK. However, as many of our interviewees make clear, finding out what these new forms of artistic expression were was not easy. Information on rap music, breakdancing, graffiti and DJing were not easy to find and local networks of people interested in hip hop culture were essential. While hip hop became popular in the UK, the four elements of hip hop were not seen all together until Malcolm McLaren and Worlds' Famous Supreme Team took the UK by storm with 'Buffalo Gals' in December 1982. The 'Buffalo Gals' video was as important as the song itself because it displayed graffiti by Dondi White, Bboying by Rock Steady Crew, and scratching and rapping by World's Famous side by side. McLaren's production represented all four physical elements of hip hop in action. During the weeks following the 'Buffalo Gas' video's broadcast, thousands of young people across the country began experimenting with breakdancing. However, by the mid-1980s it had begun to disappear from the UK's streets and shopping centres, although a core of breakers across the UK kept true to the roots of Bboying and continued to progress its practices – amplified in the late 1990s by Bboys like Seek.

Although 'Buffalo Gals' did much to introduce the idea of hip hop to British audiences, it was not hip hop's only point of entry into the UK. Another route through which people in the UK were introduced to hip hop was through family links, particularly for those with relatives in the US. Tapes of rap radio shows often made the transatlantic journey from NYC to cousins in the UK.





The idea of the radio show was crucial to hip hop adopters on this side of the Atlantic. As hip hop culture began to embed itself in the UK, radio shows like Mike Allen's pioneering show on Capital Radio in London became an oasis for the new sound. In the North-West, radio DJs like Stu Allen and Steve Barker were critical touchstones for new music. DJ Woody and Damon Savage's stories of devising methods to obtain signals, despite dwelling outside broadcasts' ranges, attests that radio played a crucial role in hip hop's growing popularity in the UK. In Lady Tame's case, the relationship with radio is much more direct, as she performed live on Stu Allen's Bus Diss show and released her first record on his o61 label (the label's only release).

The attitude embodied in hip hop's embryonic parties owes much to Jamaican sound system culture. DJ Kool Herc himself hails from Kingston, Jamaica, and recalls how experiencing reggae sound systems' DJ culture as a young boy was influential to his approach. Wayne C McDonald and Mikey D.O.N's musical experiences were also greatly influenced by sound system culture. Mikey D.O.N's father arrived in Chorley from Jamaica and ran a sound system called Mellow Tone, playing across much of the North-West. Growing up in a household rich with sound system culture influenced Mikey D.O.N (along with Merky D aka Mr Wiz, Prince A.T., Daddy Frostie, Jnr. Cutty, Sonic G and SLYE) to set up a sound system called Two-Tone Posse. This sound system planted the seed for the development of Krispy 3, one of the most pioneering and formidable hip hop crews outside of London at the dawn of the 1990s.

Breakdancing may have been the first element of hip hop that was adopted by British youth, but the arts of rap and DJing rapidly followed, producing a raft of DJs and rappers who played an important role in UK hip hop history. These early hip hop pioneers were almost exclusively based in London or other large British cities. The cultural phenomenon of hip hop and its DIY ethos was a space through which young people critically engaged with the social, political, and economic climate of the post-industrial North-West. DJ Woody's poignant description of his early interest in hip hop and development as a DJ in Burnley illustrates the importance of regional, rural, and provincial spaces in the evolution of hip hop in the UK. Hip hop not only existed but thrived in rural and provincial cities producing some of the most original, exciting, and dynamic hip hop pioneers in Britain. Hip hop brought new opportunities for self-expression and critical engagement with the world around them to young people in the North-West.

Adam de Paor-Evans and David Kerr

*DJ Woody's first decks, circa 1992.
Photo: courtesy of DJ Woody*

MIKEY D.O.N

LOCATION: CHORLEY

Mikey D.O.N opens with an outline of his parents' arrival and settling in Lancashire:

"My mum and dad came here separately, and they met in **Chorley**. Even though they're both from **Jamaica**, they're not from the same places, you know. My mum's from **Coker District, St. Elizabeth** – people call that 'country', and my dad's from near **Half Way Tree, Spanish Town, Kingston**, right, and they call that 'town', you get me? So they met here, they obviously came here for the work. My mum was encouraged by her mum – to come over and do something over here – she's one of 8, and she also had brothers and sisters here, and my dad is one of 5. So, they came over separately to work in the mills. My Mum came over by plane and my Dad came over by ship, but I don't know if it was definitely the **Windrush** ship, but they are of that same generation so it's possible, and then they met here. They went through the trials and tribulations of trying to get accommodation and they also experienced the 'No Blacks, No dogs, No Irish' thing which was prevalent – so they both ended up getting their own bedsits, you know - although my Mum had more space where she lived. Then through the black community – obviously keeping together – they met – in **Chorley**. My dad worked mad shifts, mad hours, and mad jobs, to make things happen. They came up north of course – the whole milling thing -the work was here - my mum worked at **Talbot Mill**, and my dad ended up working for **Thomas Witter & Sons**. A lot of the Black families worked at **Talbot**, so a real Black community evolved there."

He continues to describe the sound system culture that brought him into music:

"**Mr. Wiz**, - my blood brother, and **George** – they were in the same year – four years older than me, in school years, you know what I'm sayin'? But **George** was a punk originally, believe it or not, and we was

like ‘who’s that guy?’ when we used to see him walking down Eaves Lane, but as time went on, he started hanging out with us (**Mr. Wiz** and **Mikey D.O.N**) more, and he was the first guy that started rapping out of all of us. That was 1985. Our family - the **Finlaysons** – and the **Thomases**, the **McFadyens**, then there was a few more of us, you know, ‘cause my dad had a sound system, and the **Thomases** dad had a sound system. So, we naturally grew together anyway coz we all lived within like 20 steps of each other. Being truthful, we were like the 3 closest Black families in **Chorley** – bearing in mind there was only about 8 Black families in **Chorley** – so the majority of Black people knew each other but didn’t necessarily hang out together. But through the sound system and families, we were always a close knit unit, there wasn’t really many Black families in **Chorley** in them times, you know?”

“There were two very active sound systems: there was my dad’s sound, that was called **Mellow Tone**, and **Mr. Thomas’s**, the **RootsMan Sound**. My dad used to play a lot in **Bolton**, he was playing in the late ‘60s and was active until about ‘85, I was born in ‘71 and I remember being a little kid and sitting in front of the speakers, I remember him doing the late parties, I often remember him coming home late after playing in Bolton, having minimal sleep and then going back out to work at 6am Sunday morning!”

“Then the next generation up, it was only us, the **Two-Tone Posse**, I called it that, and it stuck – ‘cause there was Blacks and whites together. It wasn’t really based on the Two-Tone movement, but we were down with stuff like **The Specials**, **Madness**, **The Selecter**, **The Bodysnatchers**, all that stuff. That started in about ‘83 until about ‘88. From that sound system is how the group came about.”

“As far as the sound system was concerned, it was all a mix of music, so there was hip hop getting played, although it was predominantly a reggae sound system, there was even house – the early acid house – all that kind of stuff, a real mixture of genres. As my brother, and **Andrew (Thomas)**, and **George**, and others that were older than us, they used to go to the all-dayers – they had a breaking crew as well (called **Andromeda**) – in about ‘83, again, they were going to places like

Hammersmith Palais, or Rock City in Nottingham, Clouds in Preston, so many places. I was young, but I was on the scene then.”

He recalls radio as a way to access the broader context of rap and electro:

“I remember listening to **Radio Luxemburg**. My older brother, **Gary**, he was a DJ as well, he was around and DJing when the disco movement was in full effect, so I’ve always been around music. Hip hop was a natural progression from one thing to another. And the electro scene, we were all over it, **Radio Luxemburg** used to play it hard, we’d listen to that late at night when we’re meant to be in bed, you know what I’m sayin’? We’d tune into it, all that stuff, like ‘**E.T. Boogie**’. I don’t remember ‘**King Tim III**’ coming out, but I do remember ‘**Rapper’s Delight**’. I remember you couldn’t get it anywhere for weeks and weeks ‘cause it kept selling out. “

Mikey discusses in detail how Krispy3 evolved through their local experiences in the dance, the first gigs and on radio:

“The group actually got together by accident, we used to play the blues dances. I was one of the main DJs on the sound system, but I used to beat box. We’d play the toasters from the reggae side, **Brigadier Jerry, Charlie Chaplin, Yellowman, etc.**, all these people, so then we eventually we started chattin’. One particular night at the end of a dance we were messing about, I did the beat box, **George** was rapping, and my brother was scratching, we’re doing this and **Andrew** came into the room when we’d finished, and said: ‘What’s that tune you just played?’, we said, ‘What tune?’, he said ‘that one just playing with the beat box.’ We said, ‘that’s not tune, that’s us’ – and he was like ‘You what? Nah, that was bad!’ Then a couple of days after, we were like: ‘Can’t believe **Andrew** thought we were playing a record’, so we thought, maybe we should do something. This was 1986. Somehow or another, we ended up being heard by **Steve Barker** of **Radio Lancashire** – but we had no name for the group at this point. The first thing we ever did as the group was on his **On The Wire** Sunday daytime show – this was 10th January 1987 – and we went to Blackburn and did this rap thing over the instrumental of **Biz Markie’s ‘Make The Music With Your Mouth, Biz**’, and they fucking loved it, they wanted us to go back on. We went back on weeks later – still with no name – then we were like, on the same day – ‘Right we’re called **Krispy 3.**’ I came up with this, all these names were flying

about, but that'd do for a minute. Then it just stuck after that. We did three things for **Steve Barker**, in the space of 3 months. Then our first gig was at **Audley Youth Centre** in **Blackburn**, bearing in mind we had no songs as such – we were just beat boxing and rapping, it was mad – then people just got onto us, then after that we thought: 'fuck me, we'd better make some songs'."

Mikey reveals the making and the mystery behind the 7" and the 12" of 'Coming Through Clear':

"The first ever thing we cut to record was 'Comin' Thru Clear' in '89. We went down to **Porky's** in Shaftesbury Avenue, London. Got there – on the coach, didn't know where we were going, found the place eventually – but we missed our cutting time. They said if you want to leave the tape here, we'll cut it and send it back. We were very reluctant, but we had a conversation between ourselves and thought we just need to do it. It came back a couple of weeks later – we went there to cut a 12", and it came back to us as a 7" – we were like, 'what the fuck is this, and what's this label – 'The Producers'" – never seen that label – we played it, and it sounded awful. So we had to cut it again, as we were stuck with copies of this 7", thinking: 'what the fuck are we gonna do with these?' but we started just giving them out to people, and then **John Peel** got hold of it, and **John Peel** loved it, he was playing it hard. **Porky's** was known for cutting punk records, so they cut the record with the high-mid super scrunchy sound, and we know as hip hop headz, that's not the sound. It was madness! So, **John Peel's** rinsing it, and people are going nuts, there were only 50 copies of this 7", we gave out loads for promo and all that, it gained some mad momentum. **John Peel** fully championed it, people listened to him like he was a music bible, he played it and played it and played it – he asked for another copy – we sent him 3 in the end. When I say the guy rinsed it, he fucking rinsed it out – both sides as well."

"Eventually we went to the **Square One Studio** in **Bury** to rerecord it, with 2 guys that we'd met on the car park of **Park Hall** nightclub, in **Chorley**. They had a record label, and they were wanting us to rerecord it for them. So **Mr. Wiz** and these 2 guys reworked it, I wasn't feeling that version, as I felt it was almost a sold out version, and I preferred the 7" version, as it was all about the raw dirty version, but that was maybe my inexperience not seeing the bigger picture. By this time, we had a

manager, he was my brother's friend, who ended up being our financial backer, so he became our manager naturally – **Doug Nelson**. He had a shop called **Soul Skates** in **Chorley**. So, it was all **Chorley** headz, all the people involved in **K3 Records**. **Doug** knew of this dude who as a graffiti artist, and he did the sleeve. I liked it, but then I found out who it was – and I was like: 'Nah we're not having that sleeve!' as there was a bit of rivalry from the graffiti days – and this guy was known as **Ron-D.M.C.** – not **Run-D.M.C.** but **Ron**. I was like 'Who the fuck's this **Ron-D.M.C.?**' around our town, so it was mad how the scene was popping around here - and for us. **Ron-D.M.C.** had changed his name to **RIME**, I was outvoted on the sleeve, but we went with it. That sleeve became instant recognition for us, people loved the sleeve. It just went off."



'Coming Through Clear/Natch It Up', Krispy 3, 1990. Photo: Adam de Paor-Evans

On 'Natch It Up', the other song on the 'Coming Through Clear' 12":

Mr. Wiz made this beat, and went out, and when he came home, I'd written the whole song. He loved it – honestly, he went out, the same night I'd written and recorded it on the 4-track, we had a Tascam 246, and I laid it down in a few hours. That then became the double-A side, the first solo of just me rapping and **Wiz's** beat. That's how the whole 12" came about.

Mikey explains the importance of identity though location:

"The next single on **K3 Records** was '**Destroy All The Stereotypes**', of which the original version was actually released first on a **Bop** compilation in '91 called '**Hit The North**', basically made up of **Manchester** groups like **New Fast Automatic Daffodils**, **Rowetta**, and that, basically that version is only on that LP. That made it we would do a different version for our release. The vocals are different, we remade it for the 12", we recorded the **Bop** version at **Assembly Line** in **Preston**. It was a bit foolish in a way, but at the same time brilliant – as it made it more collectable to a **Krispy 3** fan. That's how we did our thing!"

"We just wanted to put some music out there, we were taking it lightly, just having fun with it, then people got onto us, but nobody knew where we were from: 'You're them guys from **Birmingham**,' 'You're them guys from up **North**,' 'You're them guys from **Leeds**,' it went on – **Sheffield**, **Manchester** – nobody got it right where we were from, nobody said 'Right them guys are from **Chorley**.' All the time, we were not trying to claim anywhere else than **Chorley**. Yeah, **Manchester**, you got **Martay & DBM**, **Ruthless (Rap Assassins)**, **Prince Kool**, all these people, so we weren't claiming to be from **Manchester**. We're from **Chorley** – putting **Chorley** on the map. No-one else had done that from round here. Then **Fixed Penalty** came along and did it, they're from **Preston**, and put **Preston** on the map, you know what I mean? It's crazy, all this is pre-Internet, no-one's going online, all just word of mouth. False journalism and shit. These people didn't look at anywhere outside of London. That's the furthest people's knowledge of the UK was. They though that's so up north, they're naivety, their lack of education, I could probably say – lack of geography – they didn't know anything 2 miles out

of London. It was bizarre; never heard of **Chorley**, people asking if we were from **Scotland**, it was a daft as that. Honestly, it was bananas.

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Mikey D.O.N on stage at Boombap Festival.
Photo: courtesy of Mikey D.O.N



Mikey explains the signing to Kold Sweat:

“**Kold Sweat** wanted to sign us. We had another 12” EP, ‘**Don’t Be Misled!!**’, which came out on **Gumh Recordings**. There was a guy called **Nick** who wanted to sign us, he had the **Germany** market locked. He knew we were big in the German hip hop fraternity – we used to get ‘nuff fan mail – **Germany** was into us, our music was travelling, bro. **Nick** used to manage **KMFDM** – this massive rock/skate group, and we went for a meeting with **Southern** to do the ‘**Destroy All The Stereotypes**’ distribution, because before, we’d done it all ourselves, **Doug’s** dad had a printing firm, we printed the sleeves, all hand glued and all that shit. So, this next release, we got **Southern** to distribute it. We signed a distribution and publishing deal so to speak, it was just a 12-month deal. **Nick** had this label **Gumh**, that’s how that 9-track CD came about – and this was done specifically for the **Germany** market, just with 2 tunes that hadn’t been released anywhere else.

“Labels were approaching us - majors, like **WEA** and **East-West**, putting 6-figure deals in front of us and all that shit, but we had a music lawyer/solicitor, and we weren't looking at the money, we just wanted to make sure we had overall control on the music. But all these deals, wouldn't let us do it. That's the only reason we didn't sign to a major. Then **Kold Sweat** approached us, that green label shit. Now, I wasn't a fan of **Kold Sweat**, I wasn't into their music. I didn't own one **Kold Sweat** record, I might have bought a **Katch 22** record, but the one thing I did notice about **Kold Sweat** is that they were fucking everywhere. We had a meeting with them, and the meeting went bloody good. On the strength of that meeting, is why we signed. The whole business side, the whole idea of getting a 3 12"s and LP deal, the whole thing - it was our say in what was released, how it was mixed - everything - they acted like a proper independent giving us full control of our music. So, I was like, cool, I'm down with this. You've gotta understand that the biggest mistake or thing you could do in hip hop was selling out. That was the one thing you couldn't do, it was instant loss of cred, you get me? So, if we'd had signed to **WEA** or whatever, they were gonna be like, 'oh, you're the UK's answer to **Gang Starr**', or **Leaders of the**



On tour in Germany. Photo: courtesy of Mikey D.O.N

New School, we're like: 'What you on about, we're not the answer to shit, we're **Krispy 3.**' **Kold Sweat** stepped up, put a nice deal on the table – not financially – just what the whole shit was about, us controlling our music. They had distribution through **Pinnacle**; everywhere."

Finally, a word on the idea of respect:

"We had no reason to come to London, we were up north doing our shit, but the first time we played London properly was supporting **Naughty by Nature** – they specifically asked us to support them. The other acts, their labels were paying to get them on the tour. We did that as a **Northern** group. All the gigs we've ever done, we never ever got booed off stage. I've seen acts get booed off, we did **Nottingham, Manchester**, and London. The London show had seven support acts – that was far too many, all these people added to the London show got booed. Everyone; besides us. It wasn't a rapturous applause for us, but we never got booed. Everyone else was booed. I was leant on the balcony watching the others, thinking 'thank fuck we didn't get booed.' As I was onstage one guy though, as I looked right in his face, he just fucking yawned – so I called him out. I said: 'Yooo, stop the music, who's this dude, falling asleep?' You know, I was in my element. You know yourself; you had to prove yourself in this game back in the day. I thought if this guy can just yawn at me, he'd better come up here and take me out. If that happens, I'll hold my hand up and say, 'fair enough bruv', but if you ain't beating me, you ain't yawning at me."

"That's just earning respect. Back in the day, it wasn't about getting paid. Your payment was respect."

Mikey D.O.N is one of the original Krispy 3 members, a pioneer of UK hip hop, and continues to play regularly in clubs and venues all over.

Instagram: mikeydon100

Twitch: twitch.tv/mikeyd1

Mixcloud: <https://www.mixcloud.com/mikeydonkrispy/>

SEEK

LOCATION: BURNLEY

Seek dancing in Manchester, 1998. Photo: courtesy of Seek

Seek on his early years in understanding hip hop and the potential for societal change:

“One of the first things I can remember from those years ('87-'88) is him (his older brother) having a **Run-D.M.C.** vinyl and I always liked the image of it. It was 'Walk This Way' with Aerosmith and it had '**My Adidas**' on the other side. I always remember loving the sound of it; the way the people looked on the cover. I was seeing a lot of changes in the older kids around my area – the hairstyles were changing, the clothes were changing, the music was changing – they were starting to move in odd ways, which was popping and breaking starting to emerge. I can still remember the lads from different backgrounds in my area knocking about together without any issues and hip hop united them and I loved it. That was the start of me changing as a person and having a more worldly view and starting to get my first understanding of societal issues: I was aware that there were societal issues. The people who are into hip hop are united – there is no colour between them – they are just humans. My brother said: 'if you follow hip hop and you get really into it, you are going to learn a lot about why you shouldn't be racist.' I was seeing people mixing within the local crews and they were getting on, they weren't part of the racism. They were just with their mates of different colours. Eventually we started to get videos like **Beat Street** and **Breakdance (The Movie)** and your seeing people mixing and think: 'why are they getting on, but we are not?'”

He continues to illuminate his history through hip hop's music and artefacts:

“There was a lad around my area called **Grezz Tatersall**, and **Grezz** had the massive ghetto blaster. They used to sit on the steps of the youth

club and play electro, banging out like **Whodini, Aleem's 'Release Yourself'; 'Planet Rock', and 'Freaks Come Out At Night'**. That was literally booming out from the streets of my estate. I loved it and can still hear it now. It was almost rebellious. It was a subculture. There were 3 or 4 spots around my area where they used to practice breakdancing, it was always there, I knew once I was out and about in the evening, I was going to hear it.

I can remember Kangol hats, Farahs with Puma Suedes, bubble jackets and belt buckles. I noticed everyone was going to the youth club disco, I wasn't allowed, but it became completely irresistible. When I got into the disco there was a guy stood to my right who had dark blue jeans on, white shelltoes, white Aran jumper, shaved hair at the sides and almost like perm on top, sending waves through his body, he was popping. When I looked to the back of the disco, I saw the silhouette of someone windmilling. I was completely blown away by it and can still tell you every little detail about that. It was influential for me. That was it for me that was what I was going to be. My heartbeat is a Bboy break. I thought I can do that."

Seek describes his embryonic Bboying experience in depth:

"They used to practice in the back room of the youth club, all the older kids. Maybe a week later I knocked on the door one of the older guys called **Faz** opened the door and said: 'come on in, we will teach you.' It's like these kids – they saw a future, even though at the time it was a new fashion – they saw a future in what they were doing. To them it was more than a fashion and they were true to their beliefs that this needed preserving. I started to notice other elements of hip hop around me – the tagging on the wall – I started to read them and try and break them down; DJs coming into the youth club and DJs trying to scratch on old belt drive turntables. I didn't know the elements of hip hop, but I was seeing that they were part of the same culture."

"I needed some way to get the frustration out of me, and like I say when I first saw it the energy struck me, and so I wanted to be that energy I was seeing when I saw these guys windmilling and spinning. I wanted to explode into something good. When I started to realise that these moves were possible and I could do them I started tapping into who I wanted to be, this guy who had a method of releasing positive energy."

“There was an old cinema in the centre of **Burnley**. There was a space outside it, and all the breakers used to practice there and if I ever went into town with my mum I’d persuade her to walk past that spot, so I could watch these lads and maybe try and throw a move myself that I had learnt. The National & Provincial Building Society held a massive breakdancing competition (in **Burnley** ‘85-‘86). Breaking was massive. It shows us that these boys were right to believe in the thing that they believed in because it had gone past something that was just happening in the youth club, big people were starting to take notice. Maybe this is something you can do something big with. Seeing their success kind of drilled it into us that we could do something if we wanted. We went down to the National & Provincial competition and saw all these guys that had been teaching us beat people from other areas and win it. We had a home win.”

“When I was a kid there were the older kids in the youth club teaching us and then it disappeared but there were a couple of lads still doing it. They ended up on *The Hitman* and *Her* breakdancing. When I was at school I was talking about the dancing on the telly, and one kid said: ‘that is my uncle, **Mark Palmer**.’ When I walked into his uncle’s house, I knew it was the guy on the right in youth club when I first encountered hip hop all those years before. That was the start of my apprenticeship. He taught me how to do windmills in his back garden. I wasn’t straightening my legs when I was doing windmills, he duct-taped broom handles to my legs so they would stay straight. That was part of me learning how to be a Bboy.”

“He was preparing me to battle, he wanted to send me to **Manchester** to battle and find some breakers over there and I used to battle over there at a club called **Sub Tub**. I went there thinking I’m going to look for some breakers to battle and I met this small Filipino dude, eventually I pulled my head spins out and I smoked him with a head spin. Not long after that we formed my first crew which was **Tron 2**. The guys who taught me when I was a kid were called **Tron 1**. This dude walked in – it was **Evo** – and he was just leagues ahead of us, he threw this set down and it was one of my first times seeing a power set to that level.”

“From ‘89 Bboying died: in Bboy circles we call it the dark ages. Throughout the ‘90s I was always the kid that got laughed at by my mates for doing something that had died in the ‘80s. I used to practice in the youth club on my own. I felt like an outcast, but I had something that was

giving me my sanity, I was starting to write lyrics and I was drawing graff and Bboying, though I practiced on my own for many years.”

On the Bboying renaissance and the north/south divide:

“Then he (**Mark Palmer**) also sent me up to **Glasgow** to learn from the **Glasgow City Breakers**. ‘95-’98, I was going up there every month. ‘95, I started to see it re-emerging and then in ‘96 they had the UK Championships. I saw **Evo** and **Second to None** battling. I had my head blown by the **Fresh ‘97** event and that was it, I was like: ‘I am going to war, I’m going to smoke some Bboys now.’ I met **Bboy Mouse** in **Manchester** and I battled him and beat him, he ended up becoming the world solo champion. Me and **Mouse** started going to London – a couple of **Northern** little feckers battling in Brixton in pubs and clubs. It was almost like a redneck thing, we were treated like **Northern** barbarians, these lads from up the rough **North**. A lot of the moves were called different things. My attitude was different because I was a **Northerner**. I felt rough, like I was a scrubber. Lots of the stuff they were wearing down there was stuff I had seen in music videos. It felt big time in London, there was more opportunity, it was an incredible feeling going down to London and coming back with a bit of money in your pocket from battling and breaking. **Up North** we had a lot of power moves, a lot of spinning moves. One of the old crews from **Manchester – Street Machine** – which is **Jason Orange** from **Take That, Evo**, and people like that in it, they were unbelievably good at all the spinning moves.”

“Because we are more oppressed and there are less opportunities; you either going to explode in someone’s face or explode in a different way. Within dance there are very real moments of being explosive when you want to hit big power moves, it’s an outburst of energy. When you are an oppressed person and you haven’t had as much opportunity, and I felt like a bit of a scrubber who was mad at life, I’d seen a lot of shit in my area, I’d lost friends to drugs, I was angry. I had a lot of energy in me I needed to get out and luckily for me that went into big power moves, to head spins and windmills.”

LADY TAME

LOCATION: MANCHESTER

Lady Tame recalls her first steps to becoming an MC:

“I began listening to artists like **MC Lyte** and **Ultramagnetic MCs** at the age of 16. All my peers were listening to **The Jam** or **Adam Ant** and I was holed up in my room absolute mesmerized by **Lyte's** female flow. For me, she was and still is the true old skool queen of flow and reason. I was impressed by her sheer power and timing and I dreamt of emulating her. The same went for **Ultramagnetics** and **Kool Keith**, I was swept away with their beats and flow. **Kool Keith's** original, crazy lyrics fascinated me, and I made it my mission to meet him one day.”

“I was then asked to be on the bill of the world DMC mixing heats around the UK along with another aspiring female rapper, **Monie Love**. I loved that tour, and I grew in confidence performing around the UK. I owe my early career and getting noticed to **Stu Allen** who had complete faith in me all those years ago.”



“I sent a tape of me freestyling to the then god of **Manchester** hip hop radio – **Stu Allen** – it was me rhyming aged 17 in my bedroom. He contacted me personally and asked to see me which as a young naïve

aspiring rapper I was ecstatic about! He explained he was starting a brand new record label with the co-founder of Piccadilly Radio, **Tim Grundy**, who was financing the new label, o61 Records (after the **Manchester** telephone code). He then arranged studio time for me, and we put out my first record '**Loud Ladies**' which was received really well on the underground scene and I began to get known in London circles as well as **Manchester.**"

On '*Tame 1 Unleashed*':

"I was writing raps about how I felt about being a female MC, and that's when '**Tame 1 Unleashed**' was written. The name **Tame** is derived from my hometown, **Tameside, Greater Manchester**. I wanted to give homage to my birthplace and I still hold this name very dear to my identity. I was then getting noticed 'down south' – London – and the then don of London Rap – **MC Duke** – approached me to meet him whilst he was on tour and we hooked up in **Manchester** after his gig."

'Tame 1 Unleashed', Lady Tame, released on a double-A side 12" single with Doc Savage, 1990. Photo: Adam de Paor-Evans



“He asked me to rap there and then in his car driving round **Manchester** and I remember being very nervous, but he turned round and said: ‘You have it, no question, I’m approaching my label **Music of Life** to sign you.’ I then recorded ‘Tame 1 unleashed’ and **MC Duke** was the sole producer on the track and the label put it out we released ‘**The Royal Family EP**’ with several of **Duke’s** chosen new artists he had mentored. I was the only female to be under his wing and I moved to London to live the hip hop life, MCing at jams, shows and festivals. I stayed in London 5 years from age 18- 23, living in South London.”

Lady Tame expands on regional rap and class:

“Another wonderful very precious part of my era with **Stu Allen** and the **Manchester** movement was the **Bus Diss** shows on **Piccadilly Radio** hosted by **Stu** I played a huge part in. I would often visit the studio late at night and freestyle on live shows so the hometown could hear me, and I loved taking part in **Bus Diss** live shows at the International. That was a special time and I often wish I could return to that era in a time capsule. **The Hacienda** crowd welcomed hip hop back then and as **Northerners** we raved as one.”

“Back then I found a huge difference in that the London artists had more access to records labels and opportunities whereas we were limited. The **North/South** divide was prevalent even in the hip hop movement. We were always seen as secondary and irrelevant which is why I was so proud to represent my city as the only female from **Manchester** with a deal back then.”

“I think there is rawness and truth in any inner city urban working class hip hop be it north or south or the US. If your upbringing was a poor one with limited choices and material wealth, the message, ethos, and culture of the hip hop movement is inbuilt in you and it never leaves you.”

On gender, identity, and the industry:

“I remember being very into the NY rap scene and would save all my money to buy tickets to see these artists when they visited the UK. **Queen Latifah** visited **Manchester** early in my career and she played at the **International Plymouth Grove**, I asked to see her, and she heard me freestyle and invited me out that night to talk and give me pointers on success in the industry. I was very young then and I remember telling

her my mom would worry if I weren't home by midnight, so she called my mom from a phone box in **Manchester** and assured her she would get me home safe! My mom still talks about this to this day! I also cite my parents as one of my inspirations: my working class, socialist background instilled a lot of fight and passion in me and that replicated in my lyrics and mindset.”

“I was the **ONLY** female Northern MC around at the time, so I was met very differently from different areas, crowds, and places. The capital was always unsure of me and I often met with sceptical comments and crowds.”

Lady Tame, London, 1989

Photo: courtesy of Lady Tame



“Their female rapper was **Monie** and they rightly supported her, but I proved I could break down postcode barriers by proving I could spit and spit articulate and relevant and with ease. The respect came my way by be proving I could hold my own miles away from my hometown. The industry wanted to box me in a **Betty Boo** style appearance and sound and package which I firmly refused to do. I had several big auditions at major companies like Jive Records who would have signed me in a heartbeat if I would have switched to crossover pop, in a short skirt ‘n’ heels. That was NOT me. I only wanted to deliver hardcore underground rawness NOT pop, hence I refused many deals. I would rather be known for a short career repping truth, reason, and authenticity than someone who sold her soul to the industry for exposure.”

Lady Tame is a veteran MC from Manchester, and one of the first female artists in the UK outside of London to release a record. She remains active and has recently been making songs produced by MC Duke, and participates in musicology discussion panels.

Twitter: @mcladytame

IMAM ABBAS MAUNDA

LOCATION: LIVERPOOL / MANCHESTER / DAR ES SALAAM

Imam Abbas Maunda recalls his early introduction to hip hop in the North-West:

“In **Liverpool** I lived in **Huyton**, in **Manchester** in **Mersey Heaton**. In 1983 there were these guys that had a song called ‘**London Bridge Is Falling Down**’ by **Newtrament**. They were from the UK and had a couple of songs. We were really influenced by American rap. My Dad used to buy records; my first rap record was by **New Edition** called ‘**Candy Girl**’. In the **North-West** we didn’t really dwell in rapping it was all about breakdancing, I was into breakdancing a lot. That is where hip hop in the **North-West** went off. Actually, we were not really influenced with rap (to start with) we were more influenced with DJing and breakdancing. We used to go to this park in **Liverpool**, **Stanley Park** and there is **The Docks**. There used to be this warehouse. There is this guy called **Neil** who used to come to the docks with his radio, we used to get kids from **Huyton**, **Anfield**, **Stanley Park** we used to gather round there and put the radio on and breakdance. **Neil** was really good; I didn’t like him much because he was an Evertonian, but he was really good at breakdancing and I wanted to be influenced by him. **The Docks** was the main spot.”

He continues to relate the broad sphere of hip hop to other musics, and touches on notions of identity:

“People were into punk rock; we were like an alien type of people, an alien type of culture. We used to watch Soul Train and Top of the Pops and sometimes they would feed a bit of hip hop in it. Not much hip hop culture was broadcast on TV stations, I was breaking to **New Edition**

songs; we used to break dance to **Lisa Lisa (and Cult Jam)**. '87-'88 The way I got into hip hop culture is through breakdance first. **Jaffa** – the Everton fan – was telling me if you know how to breakdance there is this other way of expressing yourself, and then he showed me '**Paid in Full**' (**Eric B & Rakim**). I started to write six bars, actually I took a little bit from **Musical Youth** – they are reggae – but they had a few raps. I was practicing in front of my friends. I used to rap in front of my friends after winning (football) game" (**Imam** played for **Whiston**).

Hip hop's arrival and evolution coincided with, and confronted the rise in racism:

"There was this kid called **Leroy**, his Mum is from Brixton, his Dad is from New York, but Jamaican New York: Jamaican. When I visited his house, that is where I heard hip hop. That is where I started listening. The period of '83, '84, '85 up to '86 was a very bad period. The British wanted British, and British; not Black British. So, it was very hard to get people gathered together. Social gathering and community gatherings were prohibited. It was the dawn of hip hop. It was Black Liberation against segregation, it was something powerful. I was influenced because of the power; it was a very bad time for racism the early to mid-1980s...it was about Black people being discriminated against. In order to take out your anger you listened to a song that had the same mentality that you had. A place where I could be comfortable and express my pain was through listening to **Run-D.M.C., Public Enemy, Kool Moe Dee** and my favourite, **Rakim**."

On the transition of hip hop from the North-West, UK to Tanzania, and the power of spittin':

(First rapping in Dar Es Salaam at) "Don Bosco – that is where it started (in 1993 he released first track '**Hot Shot**' with **Mac Mooger**) – there were cultures from different countries a community centre. I was not the first one to bring it, the Godfather of hip hop in **Tanzania** – (**Fikirini Juma** aka **Cony Way Francis**) – we were living in the same street. When I first came here in the -90s, I was hearing him spitting '**Move the Crowd**', no-one else was doing that. I was like, I heard those songs when I was small in England."



Imam Abbas Maunda. Photo: courtesy of Imam Abbas Maunda

“Most people were spittin’ in Swahili, I started spittin’ in English. The UK hip hop paved my way, I was influenced by writing 6 bars in the UK. When I release what is in my heart, I feel so relieved. If I am down, if I am so discriminated against, the way to release and to make myself feel peace is to spit. It takes me to another dimension to a land where I am very peaceful. That is how the UK influenced me. “I have a secret for when I am down, and I got that secret in Merseyside. It’s the hip hop and cultural connection I had in the UK that made me feel home. Where I got this culture is called home. I’m Black British”

Instagram: [imamgabbas](#) YouTube: [imamgabbas](#)

Twitter: [@imamgabbas](#) Facebook: [Imam Abbas](#)

WAYNE C McDONALD

LOCATION: PRESTON / NEWCASTLE

Wayne opens with his early observations between reggae and hip hop culture:

“There used to be a programme called Soul Train that would have a lot of latest American music on, lots of it was soul, every once in a while, they would have a rapper on or a **Mantronix** track. Back then **Mantronix** could do no wrong. Growing up my parents were into reggae. As I was hearing more of the American sound, I started taping things of the radio from reggae shows like **The Ranking Miss P** on Radio 1. I used to listen to the American chart show on Radio 1 and every once in a while, you would get a **Kool Moe Dee – ‘Go See the Doctor’, Doug E. Fresh – ‘The Show’, ‘White Lines’**. That is what moulded us into what we became. Growing up in reggae music and soundsystem culture, you would have MCs on the mic chatting in Jamaican, freestyling Jamaican lyrics on the top of reggae instrumentals. I loved that but that was what my uncle’s generation was doing. I start hearing this new music coming through – the hip hop stuff doing the same kind of thing, toasting, chatting lyrics on top of instrumentals – and it was taking it that step further. It was like seeing the development of the MC from the reggae side to the new side that was growing up around me. Hip hop was the music of the youth at the time, it just connected so deeply with us.”

On his regional history, connections, and the beginnings of Fixed Penalty:

“There was a radio station and I could never get the signal, it was called **Signal Radio**, I used to try and wire extra cables into my Dad’s hi-fi to get a signal. There was a hip hop show **Cutting Edge**. That was before I found

Mike Shaft and **Stu Allen; Chad Jackson** the World DMC champion in '87"

"I was in **Preston** until 1988 and then came to **Newcastle**, born and raised in **Penwortham** and then **Longton**. This goes back to the days of when you used to have rapping competitions – we used to go to a youth club in **Preston** – some guys used to come from central **Preston**, and they used to want to have rap battles with us. So, we would do rap battles and little bits of freestyling. We kept winning and one of the guys suggested we make a crew together, there was me, my twin brother **Compton**, and **Dean** who was our turntablist/scratch guy. When it came down to recording stuff, it was me, my twin and **Dean**. We used to do a few local shows and get a bit of air play on **The Wire** Radio Lancashire with **Steve Barker**. When we used to send in cassettes of our tracks, he would play them on his radio (show) and then we started getting a few bookings here and there. **Dean** ended up getting his own equipment after that and we ended up recording things in **Dean's** bedroom. Then it was like let's see if we can do this a bit further let's start making records. After **Steve Barker** there was another guy called **Gary Hickson**, he would support us and play our demos. We used to go to Blackburn for it. That was how we got started. It was **Gary Hickson** or **Steve Barker** that got us on to **John Peel**, the first EP they sent it directly to him. That was a really, really good look."

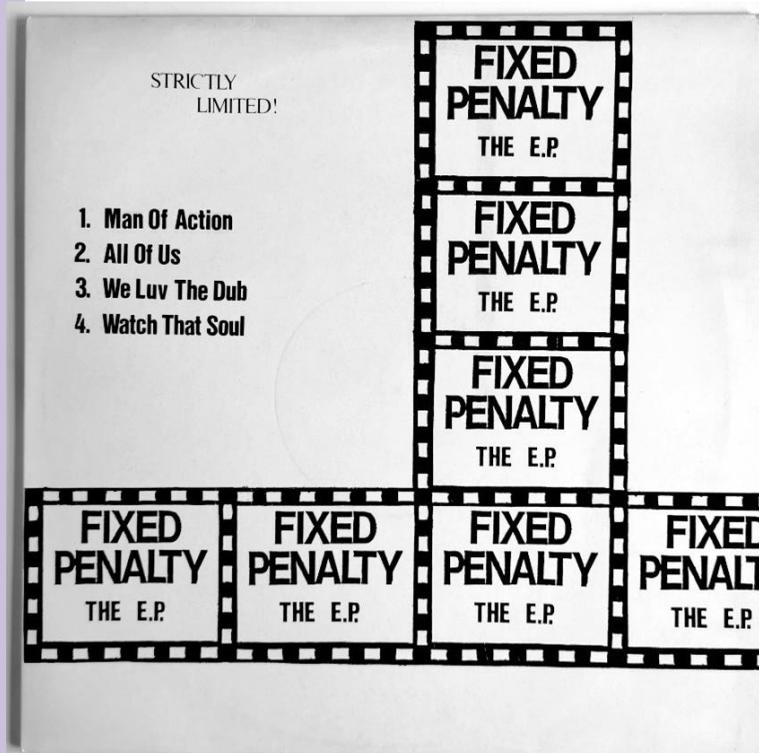
On the production of the first Fixed Penalty EP:

"Back then we were just recording on a Tascam 244, you used a cassette tape, you had 4 channels to record on. 2 channels on one side, turn the tape over, 2 channels on the other side. There were about 4 nobs on each channel and we just twisted them until it sounded right. It taught us the best way to use what you've got. That was the main reason I ended up coming to **Newcastle** college to do a music course."

"First EP we did a run of a thousand, at the time we had help with distribution from a local record shop in **Newcastle** called **Tracks** or **Flying Records** by then. I think I used my grant money, students used to get grants back then. That is how we financed it. It was owned by **Alex Lowes** – him and **Bill Swift** – they liked what they heard; they did a

lot of our exporting. We did a repress on another thousand. The last run, I don't know how many it was. Because it was self-financed it was hard. We were thinking if we sign up for a record label, they are going to want us to change.”

The E.P.: Fixed Penalty, 1991. Photo: Adam de Paor-Evans



On identity through sound and culture:

“After we released the first EP, we were getting phone calls from **Island** and **Chrysalis** records. We were very much ‘no we don’t need you guys.’ Certain people were getting signed and changing their sound to be much more pop and we were like we are going to keep it real; we are going to do what we want to do. We just wanted to keep our identity which was definitely **Northern** hip hop. The UK crews were based mainly in the South and there was only a handful of us in **The North**. We wanted to keep our British identity as well as brining out our Jamaican reggae roots, we wanted to keep our **Northern** accents. Much as we loved **London**

Posse, we didn't want to sound like them. At the time we were just doing what we could do to sound distinctly **Northern**. It was almost like badge of honour – we are from **Preston** – the **Preston Massive**. Second EP, we might have gone up to an 8-track by then for better sound quality. The third one was recorded in **Preston** and mixed in **Newcastle**. After we released the first EP 1991-92, we produced tracks for a group called **First Generation**. **Dean** was making the beats for them.

On a new critical regionalism from inclusive practice and cultural identity:

“Back then, crowds were open to a bit of everything. We listened to any and everything coz we liked it; we just didn't make it. Those times were magical. Even though we might excel in a certain genre we still loved all type of music. When we would go to house parties, you'd have the reggae session and then the soul session and then a little bit of hip hop and maybe a bit of a house session. You were getting the best of everything, the best music from the world of Black music. In **Preston** at the house parties and the venues, they catered to the crowd they had in front of them and they were open to everything because there was so much good music coming out across all the genres. There was a lot of good house, soul, hip hop, and reggae. We used to do gigs, the warmup before someone like **Sasha** would come on and do his whole techno thing. We had a sound by the nature of how we speak and rap.”

“There are certain things which only fellow Northerners have experienced. When you heard a tune from up **North**, you were like, even better then. We kept our identity **North**, there were other artists from the **North** that may have been chatting with cockney accents. There were other northern groups: **The Ruthless Rap Assassins, The Califs, Jeep Beat Collective, Braintax. Krispy 3** – we ended up doing a couple of gigs with them. We used to get mentioned in **Hip Hop Connection** every once in a while. **Cookie Crew, She Rockers**, much as we loved them, we wanted to make sure that we were keeping real. We were all about bringing the party, the vibes. Because back then when you went out you wanted to party and have good vibes. When we started it was all about an uplifting attitude. We did the Jamaican thing with a UK flavour. When we were at our happiest is when we could just flex and bring in the melting pot of all the things we were listening to, that

we had experienced, and we had gone through in our own relative worlds. That is what that whole era was about for us.”

“We were from Preston and Lancashire. We don’t talk about guns and gats and that type of thing because that wasn’t our life, that’s not how we live. We would talk about things that related to us. I don’t think we ever played a single gig in London as Fixed Penalty, but we did many across the North. We went to Germany, but I don’t think we have ever had a gig in the south. That is why we were so keen to keep the whole North thing going. We had a paranoia about being signed to a big label and them wanting us to change our sound.”



*Fixed Penalty.
Photo: courtesy of Wayne C McDonald*

“We weren’t following the money, we just wanted to be recognised for our talent and for our talent to be appreciated. Back then music was my world and I liked a lot of hip hop, I really, really liked hip hop. Hip hop had soul.”

Fixed Penalty - Preston based rap trio comprising twin brothers Wayne C McDonald (Maitre D) and Compton McDonald (True C) alongside Dean Sumner (DJ Skyjuice).

Twitter: @WayneCMcDonald @OneCompton

DAMON SAVAGE

LOCATION: BLACKPOOL

Damon explains how he first encountered hip hop and electro:

“I was watching the Kenny Everett show and he had some dancers on called **Tik and Tok**. They were two guys doing robotic dancing to ‘**Tour de France**’ by **Kraftwerk**. I was 8 or 10 and I couldn’t take my eyes of the screen. From there it snowballed. I found out what that record was, and my Dad took me to a record shop for the first time. There were a few in Blackpool, the main one I used to go to was **Melody House** on Bond Street, there was **Graffiti Records**, one called **Blowing Free** and **Sinfonia**. I got into ‘**Al-Naafiysh (The Soul)**’ by **Hashim**, ‘**Rockit**’ by **Herbie Hancock** and then I started getting the ‘**Electro**’ albums. I was into electro. I got ‘**Electro 2**’, ‘**Electro 3**’ and **Man Parrish – ‘Boogie Down (Bronx)’**. I was hearing all this music that was completely different to music on the radio. It fascinated me. I used to get a buzz off the energy and the sound of it, it was underground. That underground-ness, being different had an appeal to me.

“The first time I met someone who was actually into hip hop was in **Graffiti Records**. I had a **UK Fresh ‘86** badge on. I couldn’t go to UK Fresh because I was only about 15 and it was in London. I was absolutely devastated because **World Class Wreckin Cru** and **DJ Cheese** were on, I remember being sat there looking at the clock and I’m in Blackpool and they are all down there: **DJ Cheese** is about to go on with **Word of Mouth**. This lad saw (my badge) in the shop and he came over to me and said: ‘Did you go to that?’, and I said, ‘No

unfortunately', and that sparked a friendship with **Warren**. He was like me – an absolute hip hop head and he put me onto quite a bit of stuff, he was listening to **Stu Allen** on the radio, a show called **Bus Diss on Piccadilly Radio** that was fantastic. He'd have **EPMD** on there and all sorts of rappers that were coming over doing shows. He'd was playing all this amazing music."

Damon describe how he accessed new hip hop on record and on the radio:

"There was a guy called **Mad Hatter** from Manchester he used to drive a little white van and come to Blackpool on a Monday with a van full of all the American 12"s. On a Monday evening after school we would all bomb down to this record shop, get there as soon as we could to see what we could get. We'd come back with **Egyptian Lover** 12"s and **Ultramagnetic** 12"s. Anything that had been played on the **Stu Allen** show the night before we really wanted. I remember sitting in my bedroom when I was 13, 14, and 15 with my finger on the pause button waiting for **John Peel** to drop a hip hop tune. Every once in a while he would drop an absolute banger like **Cash Money & Marvelous**. I think that is the first place I heard '**The Magnificent Jazzy Jeff**'. **Signal Radio** used to have a **Mike Allen** show, I don't know if they got it recorded because it was a London show. I remember hanging metal coat hangers out of the stereo and the bedroom window to try and get a better signal to record **Mike Allen's** show. **Hip Hop Connection** was fantastic when it came out, that was like a bible for us. Mid '80s there was an amazing group called **Hardrock Soul Movement** from England.

Damon describes how he formed his first crew:

"We were listening to the **Stu Allen** show and he always used to do a shout out. We put out a message to meet if there was anyone in the Blackpool area Saturday afternoon. There were about 5 or 6 of us, people that were similar to me and **Warren** and we ended up as a bit of crew. We would hang out at a shopping centre called the **Houndshill** on a Saturday afternoon with our ghetto blaster and stand on the corner breakdancing, listening to the **2 Live Crew**. 16 years old, thinking we were the bomb. Once we met up, we used to go round putting our tags

up, I was called **Unique**, I had a mate **Take, Jonny** and there was another.”

Damon describes his early experiments with making music:

“I used to have an old 2 tape Karaoke machine, you could speed one side of the tape up and it had an echo thing on it. I sussed out I could overdub myself. I could play a tape, have my mic fob plugged in and be doing something like scratching. I would overdub myself quite a few times onto the recorded tape and speed the tape up and put effects on it. That was how I started messing around with music originally.”

Damon talks about getting his first drum machines and sampler:

“You know **Isaac Hayes’ ‘Ike’s Mood’**, the piano break? The first time I ever heard that was on an old **MC Shy D** record. It all sort of clicked, they were using records and looping them, making new sounds out of these old records. **Marley Marl** was a massive inspiration for producing. Breakdance came out and I think it was **‘Reckless’** on there by **Ice T** that blew my mind; I wanted to know how they made the music. That is when I found out about drum machines. There used to be a music shop in **Blackpool**, and I ended up with a Roland 707 and a Tascam 4 track and I started layering things. **Jonny Wild** had a Casio keyboard that had about 4 seconds of sampling time. He used to record on his 4-track, sample a bit of music, a drumbeat, a 2-second loop and he would record it in live on his Tascam. He didn’t have the facility to loop it so had to sit there with his finger on the keyboard and keep pressing his finger for 4 minutes. Trying to keep it in time as well as he possibly could with his finger. When I was 14, 15, 16 I started getting into drum machines and had a 4-track. I remember going on a trip to London and finding the **Music of Life** offices, it was just a room above a shop and there were piles of records everywhere. I was hungry for any hip hop I could get it never seemed to let me down.”

Damon started Djing in Blackpool:

“My introduction to Djing was at **The Palace** nightclub. There used to be a programme on a Saturday night, The Hitman and Her with **Pete Waterman** and **Michaela Strachan** that was at **The Palace** nightclub. From there we did all sorts, we had a night at the **Galleon Bar**

called **Yo Mo Fo** at one point that was quiet successful. It was a grimy club, we used to have it camouflaged up and play tunes in there. We had **All Natural** there, and **DJ Kool Herc** came to **Blackpool** once.”



'Slow For Focus E.P.', Funky Fresh Few, 1995. Photo: Adam de Paor-Evans

Damon describes getting more equipment for producing and developing the Funky Fresh Few sound:

“By the time I was 16 or 17 we had got a Commodore 64 and we were looping things up a little more. There was me, a guy called James and another guy, we were the original **Funky Fresh Few** crew. We ended up getting an Akai S 950 and we were away then; we were sampling **James Brown**, and everything was sample based. It was a lot of digging in charity shops and car boots on a Sunday just looking for drum breaks, loops, and sounds. I made some of my first tunes with on the 950. **Mark Rae** came back from America and he was raving about the MPC 60s and we ended up getting one of them.”

On the first collaborations with Grand Central Records:

Fat City Records opened up and I'd been messing around a bit doing music, we gave them a tape and we ended up getting a deal and releasing some records. We got to know the guys in the shop a little bit, **Mark (Rae)** mentioned something about setting up a label and we gave him a demo. Must have been about '92 or '93, we ended up in Ducie House and spent a day in the studio making a track. After that it got a bit more serious. The next thing we ended up doing was giving them a demo with a few things we had done, and we ended up back in **Ducie House** working on our first EP. Our first EP '**Slow For Focus**' came out on **Grand Central** in '95 and we went on to do more releases and had a few tracks on compilations.

“Hip hop was almost like my saviour. It was like my sanctuary; I found a comfort in it because I spent quite a bit of time in my room. It built the foundations of who I am today. The Bboy frame of mind. I've been into hip hop for 38 years. Hip hop is ingrained in me now: the culture of it I guess, I appreciate it; the breaking, the graffiti. I felt a little bit alone when I was younger and so that was the thing that gave me comfort.”

DJ WOODY

[derived from Lee Woodvine]: “in the no-bullshit Northern thing I’m like, I’m not thinking of a crazy name, that is my name.”

LOCATION: BURNLEY

DJ Woody opens by recounting his embryonic introduction to hip hop:

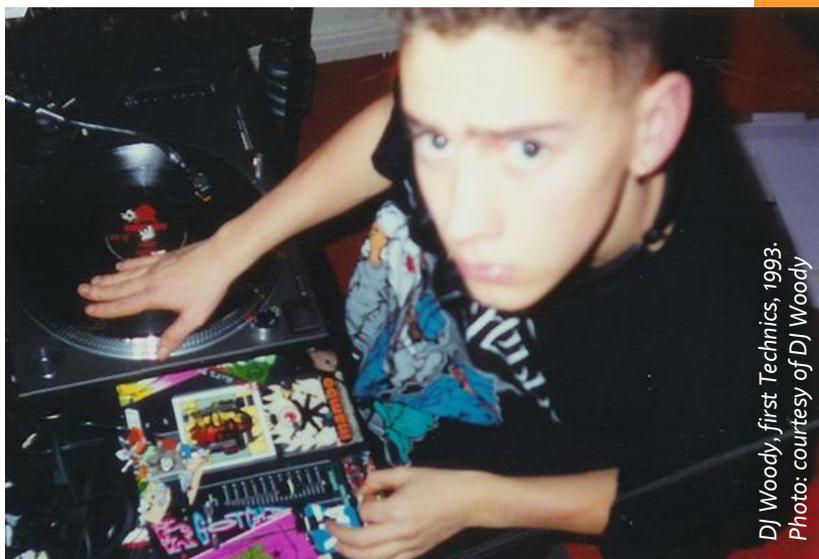
“I’m guessing it was ’83-’84 when everyone started breaking at the school disco; that big hip hop explosion and they were inviting graffiti artists, etc. on Saturday morning TV and Blue Peter. In the field across from my house people used to practice breaking, there were throw-ups and tags on the streets around where I grew up and I’d find out later that some of the most prominent writers in my town were from my area (**Burnley Wood**). A lot of the breaking happened at **Burnley Wood** youth club I’m told, though unfortunately I was never privy to that as I went to **St. Stephens** rather than **Burnley Wood** school, so for me showing up there would’ve been reason enough to get my head kicked in.

“The first hip hop tape that entered our house came via my older brother, it was a very nondescript home dubbed compilation simply labelled ‘hip hop’ or ‘rap’ I think. I remember it had ‘**Planet Rock**’ on, ‘**The Message**’, ‘**Rapper’s Delight**’, ‘**Sucker M.C.’s**’ and a bunch of other big tunes. It was definitely **Run-D.M.C.** though that cemented everything for me so far as rap music. The attitude, the sound, the look, the way that they rapped; and **Jam Master Jay**: possibly the entire reason I became a DJ.”

DJ Woody on his formative development of hip hop practice:

“My Mum had one of these 1960s reel-to-reel things in a suitcase, I remember discovering that and working out that you could achieve scratch-like sounds with it. Around ’85 or ’86 myself and a friend from school had a little rap group we called the **Psychic Boys**, I must have been about 8 or 9. I had a Casio keyboard (PT80) and used to write my raps over the ‘rock’ beat on there, I clearly remember the first time

putting pen to pad and thinking: ‘what does someone like me write a rap about?’”



DJ Woody, *first Technics*, 1993.
Photo: courtesy of DJ Woody

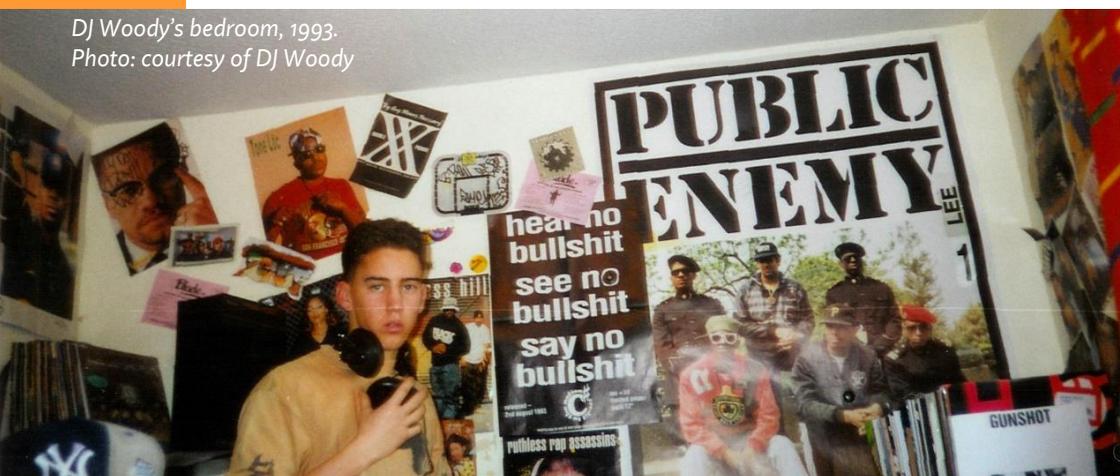
“Later I’d make tape loop beats using my ghetto blaster and a portable tape player, I’d overdub basslines using the bass pedals of this old 1960’s electric organ we randomly had in our house. My brother’s friend David had all the tapes, the **Street Sounds** compilations, **Kool Moe Dee**, **Big Daddy Kane**, **Public Enemy**, we just used to tape all his stuff. He had a shed at the side of his house that we decorated with tags, VW badges and **Run-D.M.C.**, **Beastie Boys** posters etc., and that became our little hip hop shed for a while.”

“By the time I was starting high school in ‘88 it seemed the enthusiasm had fizzled out for most people, we’d all started skateboarding so that was a new focus. During that period through to around ‘92 I was a closet MC but too shy to share them. My rhyme book was like a diary for me, I’d write about everything from family disagreements, homework and identity to politics and the everyday racism I saw that formed part of the culture in a town like **Burnley**.”

On regional and national context and identity, DJ Woody recalls:

“As an English kid listening to American MCs there were so many reference points in the lyrics that I didn’t understand nor could relate to, so when I heard people like **Derek B, Einstein** and **MC Duke** for the first time (’88-’89) dropping in English slang and references it really appealed to me. I started listening to everything I could find from the UK, artists like **Hijack, Gunshot, Hardnoise, Son Of Noise, Blade, London Posse, Demon Boyz, Caveman, Katch 22**. The energy, attitude, and subject matter; it was perfect for a British hip hop kid full of early teenage angst moulding his own identity: to hear a UK voice rapping and take pride in that.”

DJ Woody’s bedroom, 1993.
Photo: courtesy of DJ Woody



“I was lucky enough to stumble across the first issue of Hip Hop Connection in WHSmith in ’88 and managed to blag my mum for a subscription – that was a window onto this London scene and was instrumental in my discovery of the artists I would get into. There was no hip hop radio in **Burnley**, even though we’re only 20 miles from **Manchester** I lived at the bottom of a valley so any signal coming from there would get cut off by the surrounding hillside. I remember years later when I got a car driving to the top of the hill just to listen to radio shows.”

“In 1991 my older brother started college, on his first day he came home and told me he’d met someone who was exactly like me, **Chris Hargreaves**, a diehard hip hop head who was already a scratch DJ! Soon we would arrange to go to his house in nearby village **Barnoldswick**. **Chris’s** attic room was like the **Barnoldswick** community centre: it was as if acid house had never happened there, everyone still loved hip hop and in particular the kind of aggressive scratch laden UK rap that I loved. **Chris** was amazing at cutting and had an older mentor **Rick Alton**, who’d been cutting some years before him. I finally got my own turntables in 1992 and in the following years I’d spend any time I could driving over to **Chris’s** attic in **Barnoldswick** to practice and jam, studying DJ’s like **DJ Supreme**, **White Child Rix**, **Mada**, **Renegade**, **Qbert**, **Disk** and **Mix Master Mike**. We were also individually experimenting with making beats.”



Original crew The Handroids: DJ Woody, Filthy Rich, and Mr Tickle. Photo: courtesy of DJ Woody

“Two years after first meeting Chris I went to art college in **Blackburn** and within a week or so initiated a conversation with the only other ‘hip hop looking’ person there, **David Trevelyan**. It turned out that I was right to judge a book by its cover, he was into the exact same kind of hip hop as us and even handier was a great MC. This was ‘93, we had our DJ crew **The Handroids** and now we had an MC - **MC Tigger**. He would label us **The M.E.N.T.A.L Crew (Mind Expansion Near The Absolute Level)** – cerebral grimy **Northern** UK hip hop crew. Between ‘93-‘96 we made lots of jam tapes that were side to side turntable craziness mixed with bouts of freestyle MCing.”



DJ Woody's set-up, 1995-96. Photo: courtesy of DJ Woody

“Around ‘95 **Sean Canty** (DJ and digger) and Lee Abbott (Bboy) joined and along with various associates like **CURSE 273** (Writer), and **Mark Palmer** (Bboy and popper), we became this multi-element hip hop

crew. At this point we felt the need to showcase our collective and more importantly the culture (hip hop) so we put on a night in a church hall in nearby village **Todmorden**. The night was called '**Freak Style**' and was no holds barred unadulterated hip hop culture as we saw it: turntablism, Bboying, popping, graff, MCing, beatboxing. Unheard of in the area, the event brought a lot of the original heads out of the woodwork and put us firmly on the local map for those you hadn't know about us."

"A massive inspiration for us was **Krispy 3** from **Chorley**, a hugely talented and internationally respected crew signed to **Kold Sweat** (London-based hip hop label) who happened to live half an hour down the road. **Mr. Wiz's** production was amongst the best the UK ever produced and for me up there with anything from **Tribe** or **Gang Starr** at the time. His, **Mikey D.O.N's** and **Sonic G's Lancashire** accents stood proud alongside hints of their Jamaican roots. To know that a crew from our neck of the woods could reach this level allowed us to believe that maybe we could too. Similarly, you had crews like **Ruthless Rap Assassins** from **Manchester**, **Fixed Penalty** from **Preston**, **Braintax** from **Leeds**, **New Flesh For Old** from **York**, to hear people with a similar accent to you on wax was very motivating particularly in a scene focused much of the time on London.

"Although I'd been travelling regularly to Manchester since the late 80's with skateboarding, in '93 my brother went to live there for Uni with Chris from our crew. Myself and **Tigger** would go over for whatever hip hop nights were happening, be it a Gunshot concert or a pub or club night with DJ's like **DJ Digit**, **Evil Ed (Hidden Identity)** or **Chubby Grooves**. One of the main shops (in **Manchester**) I used to go to was Funky Banana in the Corn Exchange owned by **Dave the Ruf** of **Jeep Beat Collective**, he was a massive supporter of UK rap and had everything. In '95 I went on to live in nearby **Stockport** for Uni, **Andy Votel** was doing the same course a year above me, **Mr Scruff** a year above him. The **Manchester** scene began to start bubbling around this time with the likes of **Fat City Records** and their label **Grand Central**. On leaving **Stockport** **Andy** would set up **Twisted Nerve** records and we would set up live turntablist/musician improv night **Pork Scratching** along with fellow **Stockport** College friend **Gareth Mallinson** aka

Sirconical (Twisted Nerve). Not long after this I decided the next step was to enter some DJ battles, and after some success this unwittingly lead me to a life as a full time hip hop DJ and turntablist.”

On hip hop and life, he attests:

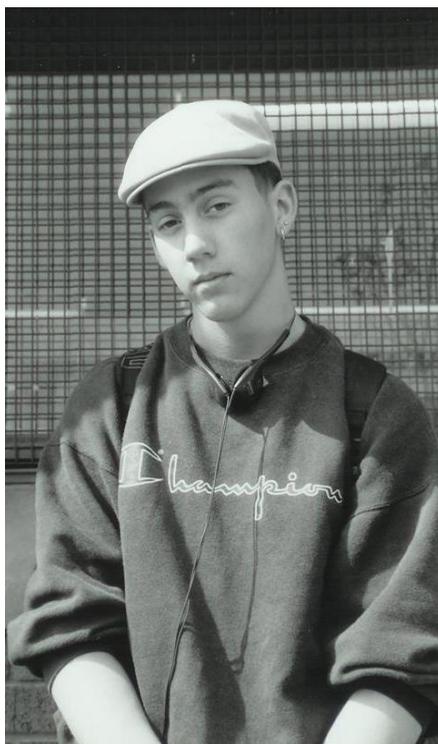
“Hip hop has completely shaped what my life has been, from an early awakening on the issues of my environment it switched me on politically. It’s been my education – hip hop nourished my thirst for knowledge. It’s opened my eyes to different cultures and given me invaluable life experiences. Life lessons, work ethic, the ability to study a craft and attempt to master it. To strive to create something new by flipping what had gone before.”

On the global connectivity of hip hop, he pinpoints:

“The sense of community and acceptance. Walking into a community centre in the middle of Soweto and have a kid buzz off you and you off him – because you both live this and know what it is to study and train in these arts and want to share that. It’s the international language cuts through everything.”

DJ Woody is 2001 World ITF Champion, 2002 World Vestax Champion, and has featured on numerous releases. He also releases his own music, DJ tools, and other merchandise at:

www.woodwurkrecords.com



Postscript

HEADZ-zINE is created with much the same immediacy as a zine. It is produced within a period of weeks, is self-published and designed using standard domestic hardware and software. Although the topic addressed is historical, participants' reflections illustrate the immediacy and closeness of this material to their current lives. True to the aims of the fanzine, HEADZ-zINE illuminates the histories of music culture which have previously been largely un-documented. These histories are told through the personal and collective stories of their participants. HEADZ-zINE is freely distributed, and the inaugural issue has been manufactured with a print-run of only 200 copies, in addition to being available in an expanded edition online.

The zine presents a continued engagement with questions of knowledge production and dissemination. HEADZ-zINE has been developed in collaboration with practitioners and seeks to foreground their histories, thoughts, and ideas. We are interested in how hip hop offers practitioners a way of engaging with and knowing the world through music, artistic and dance practices. In this, we take hip hop seriously as a cultural form through which practitioners and fans learn, share and archive knowledge. Hip hop practitioners are both the creators of and thinkers about hip hop, they are local intellectuals. The principal focus of this zine is on the voices of hip hop practitioners themselves as they not only tell but theorise hip hop history. As accumulators of vinyl records, flyers, posters, photographs, and magazines ourselves we are interested in what these artefacts and archives can reveal to us about the creative acts of curating and remembering cultural history. We are interested in exploring how involvement in hip hop culture shaped the lives of practitioners and provided a space for creatively, imaginatively, and intellectually engaging with the world around them.

The oral histories contained in this zine combine to present the beginnings of a complex, collective memory. Involvement with the early emerging hip hop scene in the UK – it is clear from the interviews – has been significant in their lives. For many practitioners, hip hop has been an enduring passion which continues to play an important role in how they understand themselves and the world around them. Hip hop from the North-West is both part of the wider global cultural practice of hip hop and profoundly regional.

Many of the people interviewed in this issue proclaim their proud Northern-ness and their belonging to and participation in a global culture in their interviews. In this Zine we have consciously sought to avoid collapsing these histories into a single narrative fashioned to represent collective memory. Instead we have been committed to allowing our interviewees to speak for themselves and for the reader to find common themes within these stories.

As author-editors, we are committed to presenting important but largely undocumented musical histories from outside the UK's major urban centres. The HEADZ-zINE takes our collaborators seriously as participants in and thinkers on cultural production. Methodologically, we achieved this by entering a process of individual discussions with the collaborators and subsequently transcribing our recordings. These transcriptions were then presented to collaborators for comment and feedback, and in many cases acted as a catalyst for clarification or further discussion. Some of our collaborators lightly edited the text themselves during a brief but intense period of further reflection. The resulting interviews combined with an editorial and postscript, form the complete publication.

We aim for HEADZ-zINE to develop into an archive of hip hop histories. By exploring the stories of rural, regional, and provincial hip hop practices, the zine can widen our understanding of hip hop history and the individuals and communities that created them.

Adam de Paor-Evans and David Kerr

NOTES



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