SPECIALIZING IN AUDIO/VISUAL ENTERTAINMENT

LEGIONS OF BOOM

A History-In-Progress of the Filipino American Mobile DJ Scene in the S.F. Bay Area

San Francisco! Daly City! South City! San Jose! Union City! Fremont! Vallejo! Oakland! Stockton! Sacramento!

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SOUND EXPLOSION, NON-STOP BOOGIE, ELECTRIC SOUNDS, DISCO TECH LIMITED, UNIVERSAL SOUNDS, KICKS COMPANY, SOUNDS OF SUCCESS, THE GO-GO'S, UNLIMITED SOUNDS, ULTIMATE CREATIONS, NEXT PHASE, FUSION, G&R PRODUCTIONS, IMAGINE, UNIQUE MUSIQUE, MIDSTAR PRODUCTIONS, IMAGES, INC., AA PRODUCTIONS, INFINITE SOUNDS, SOUND SEQUENCE, MODERN MOTION, SPINTRONIX, SKYWAY SOUNDS, UNLIMITED PRODUCTIONS, CHILLTOWN CRUSH CREW, SECOND TO NONE, SPINNING IMAGES, STYLE BEYOND COMPARE, LIVE STYLE PRODUCTIONS, JUST 2 HYPE, HI TECH SOUNDS, MC FLY PRODUCTIONS, NIGHTLIME, MIND MOTION, ROK-A-LONG, THIRD DIMENSIONAL SOUNDS, HIGH ENERGY, MOBILE WEST, IMPERIAL SOUNDS, TURNTABLE WIZARDS, CREATIVE MADNESS, LADDA SOUNDS, NITE LIFE SENSATIONS, HIGH ENERGY, MUSIQUE, BUMPIN' SOUNDS, FUTURISTIC SOUNDS, COSMIX SOUNDS, UNLIMITED PLAY, KNIGHTS OF THE SOUND TABLE, AND HUNDREDS MORE . ALL PRAISES DUE: CAMERON PAUL, STUDIO WEST, MUSIC MASTERS, DR. FUNK, RANDY WONG, DR. K, PALLADIUM, MANOR MUSIC AND KK BABY.

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DESIGN BY OLIVER WANG W/ ASSISTANCE FROM SHARON MIZOTA. INSPIRATION FROM SOUND EXPLOSION.

For Derek Jordan Dela Cruz, Logan Vincent Kong, Cameron Paul Rivera, Ella Sakiyo Jian-Yi Mizota-Wang and all other future spin doctors.

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CHAPTER 1
AN INTRODUCTION

Dear reader:

What you hold in your hand is an attempt to document a history of the Filipino American mobile scene in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is a history that many of you probably know quite well because you lived through it or you actively contributed to it. Or maybe you learned about it like me – through the various stories passed down from the elders of the scene who are always generous with explaining how things were, "back in the day."

I want to explain to you how this document came to be, what it tries to do, what it doesn't do. Most of all, I want to involve those of you who know something about this history, who have other stories to tell. This is why I have entitled the work "a history in progress" – it is not meant to be a complete or definitive history but rather, a project that is continually widening and deepening. Let me first begin by describing how this project came into being:

What drew me – as a writer and a scholar – to the topic was fairly simple. I first moved to the Bay Area in 1990 and within a few short years, I began to notice all these news stories about Filipino DJs from the Bay stunning other DJs from around the country and world. As a budding DJ myself (though not in mobile work), the fact that there were these world-class DJs from my own backyard, who were also – like me – of Asian descent perked my curiosity. Around 1995, I began a career as a music journalist and several of my early stories focused on scratch DJs like Q-Bert, Mixmaster Mike, Apollo, Shortkut, etc. and time and time again, I would ask them: "so, um, what's up with this Filipino DJ thing?" Few of them had a real explanation for it but <u>all</u> of them were quick

to point out that they didn't get started in DJing purely as battle DJs. They all had roots in the mobile DJ crews of the 1980s and this is when I first learned about the scene.

By 1995 of course, the scene had long passed its peak. I had arrived in the Bay Area too late to have witnessed its reign but nonetheless, I was struck at how all these turntablists traced their roots back to the mobiles and I wanted to learn more. I did some research as a journalist but in 1996, I went back to graduate school at UC Berkeley and as time went by, it made more and more sense for me to turn my curiosity in the scene into the basis of my research. This is where I need to credit Melanie Kong, aka Melanie Cagonot, aka Lani Luv (for those who <u>really</u> know what time it is). Coincidentally, in 2001, I discovered that Melanie was planning to put together an exhibit on the Filipino mobile scene down at the San Mateo Historical Society. I let her know about my interest and she was incredibly gracious and generous in sharing her knowledge with me and involving me with the exhibit itself. I interviewed her and a few choice DJs who had roots in the scene and ran an article about the exhibit for the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, a local weekly newspaper.

In January of 2002, Melanie invited me to moderate a panel discussion on the history of the scene. Through that event, I met seven former DJs who would form my initial set of interviewees: Kormann Roque and Jay Dela Cruz (Spintronix, Daly City), Francisco Pardorla (Images, Inc./AA Productions, Union City/Fremont), "Jazzy" Jim Archer (Skyway Sounds, San Jose), Burt Kong (Sound Sequence, Daly City), Travis "Pone" Romando (89' Skratch Gangstaz, Fairfield/Oakland) and John Francisco (Expressions Entertainment, San Francisco).

I sat down with most of these men individually, and through them, my list of potential respondents grew. Though there was never a formal network or directory of Filipino American DJs, most of these individuals were in touch with one another and with every new contact, I gained access to more DJs and potential interviewees. However, tracking down some respondents became a major challenge, such as locating some of the scarce female DJs from the scene. In many cases, I stumbled on respondents through chance.

As you may note however, most of my respondents came from crews based in San Francisco or Daly City. There were practical reasons for this – I lived in Oakland at the time of research and spent much time in S.F. already. However, I also felt that these two cities best represented the entire scene as a whole. Also, though the crew era spans from 1978 until roughly the mid-1990s, I leaned toward interviewing crews from the earlier part of that history, especially crews that formed within the first five years. I felt that these "pioneering" crews were important in defining the scene as a whole, and could contribute more to my understanding of how crews formed and functioned. This does not presume that these pioneering crews defined some kind of "authentic" mobile culture. I take it for granted that the mobile scene was constantly changing and evolving throughout its history. That is why I also made it a point to interview newer crews to see how styles and values changed as the mobile scene grew.

Besides mobile DJs, I also interviewed others who were part of the larger social scene. This included dancers, promoters, DJs from clubs and radio, and others who were simply revelers who frequented the DJ parties and events. As part of my mission was to

understand how DJing changed the larger community beyond just the DJs, it was important to engage members of that community.

* * *

I wrote the history by looking at a few key examples – Sound Explosion, Ultimate Creations, the Go-Go's, Spintronix, Just 2 Hype, etc. and tried to discuss the larger history of the scene through their specific experiences. On one level, I wanted to simply know how this history unfolded: who started the scene? Who were the next ones to pick it up? Where did it go from there? Etc. However, it was equally important to understand *why* people began involved in the scene, either as DJs or as audience members. Obviously, the DJ scene was not just an idle hobby but a very organized and popular activity that drew the participation of thousands of teenagers during the 1980s and into the '90s. *Why?*

I collected what I had and wrote a dissertation based on it: *Spinning Identities: A Social History of Filipino American DJs in the San Francisco Bay Area* (not my favorite title but it works for an academic project). What you have here, *Legions of Boom*, is an adaptation of my dissertation research that just focuses on the history of the scene and strips off the more theoretical and academic aspects of the dissertation (though, if you're interested in reading that, look for my contact info at the end of this introduction and I can arrange for you to get a copy of the diss).

I want to stress the obvious: as a history built off the accumulated stories I gathered, *there are many, many stories that I missed out on*, stories that could have – and might still – change some of my conclusions or assumptions about the scene. Again, this is why this is a history-in-progress and moreover, one that I hope will be community-

based and collaborative. To put it simply, I need help – help from other members of the mobile scene who can provide even more stories and broaden the comprehensiveness of the overall history.

First of all, let me list a few key *gaps* in my research. These are areas that, as I continue to compile this history, I would like to be able to build on:

1) The mobile scene in other neighborhoods besides San Francisco and Daly City. I know there were major scenes in Vallejo, Fremont/Union City and San Jose (at the very least) and while I did enough interviews with Fremont/U.C. folks to get a sense of what that scene was like, I have very little descriptions and overviews of what the mobile environment was like in Vallejo and San Jose, not to mention Sacramento and Stockton which seem to be very unique and different scenes from the immediate Bay Area. (See Appendix 2, Figure 1).
2) Other crews. I spoke to representatives of no more than a dozen crews. Last I tried to count, there were over 200 mobile crews during the course of the 1980s (at least). Obviously, there are many other stories I could have collected that would enrich this history and help give many other important crews their rightful due. I don't think this history needs to chronicle <u>every</u> story to be complete but certainly, I think there is a wealth of more information to be discovered and incorporated.
3) The experience of the audience. I spoke mostly to DJs themselves but what I'd also like to know about is how the people who went to these parties felt and experienced. What did they get out of the parties? What drew them to the mobile crews? What did they take away from these experiences? In my dissertation, I argue that one legacy of the mobile scene was how it brought together all these

young Filipinos from around the Bay and in the process, created a community that didn't exist before since everyone was scattered and separated. The only way to really test that idea is by talking to more audience members and document what their experiences were on the other side of the turntables.

4) Fliers, business cards, posters, photos and similar material from the scene. As you will see in the appendix, I have a few of these materials collected but a very, very small amount compared to what I know must be out there. My long term goal is to create a WWW site where all these materials can be scanned and posted onto, creating a community resource, shared by all.

To this aim, let me finish by inviting all those interested out there to participate in the progress of the history project. All feedback and correspondence can be emailed to **legionsofboom@gmail.com**. Especially if you are a member of a crew who thinks that your history should be a part of this one, please get in touch with me. If you went to these parties and showcases in the 1980s and want to share your experiences, please get in touch with me. And equally important, if you want to help by conducting interviews yourself, *please get in touch with me*. (This might be a good side project for college students looking to learn about research and interviewing). Hopefully, in a year's time, I can build on this history with all the new stories and we can put it out there for public consumption again and start the feedback loop over again.

I have also set up a WWW site for this project which will eventually house an image library, downloadable portions of the history and other resources. **www.legionsofboom.com**. Please take a look when you have a chance and I welcome any and all suggestions.

With that, I want to thank everyone for picking this up and I hope that you enjoy reading it as much as I did writing it.

Oliver Wang
San Francisco, CA
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CHAPTER 2
Setting the Scene: Filipino Youth Culture in the 1970s

Scene One: Rashid's Big Night Out

In June of 1975, Yusuf Abdul Rashid had just graduated from 8th grade. Tonight was important – he was going to his first house party on his own, without parents or older relatives escorting him. Though only 13, the fact that he and his friends could go to this party unchaperoned marked a rite of passage of sorts. Rashid was gaining independence and a greater freedom of mobility. Tonight, he could go out into his Berryessa neighborhood in San Jose as a young man rather than a child.

Rashid dressed the part. His Levi 501 jeans were freshly starched, crisp and sharp. For the occasion he also purchased a new pair of clean, white, Chuck Taylor canvas sneakers. The finishing touch was the loud, orange floral rayon shirt he donned. "Dressed to impress," Rashid collected his cousin and some other friends and set out to the party. They were too young to drive and realized, on foot, they were unintentionally proclaiming their low position on the social status hierarchy. A slow parade of cars carrying older peers rolled past them and some of the occupants began to heckle Rashid's group for walking to a party rather than cruising as they were.

The steady stream of cars was not the only beacon that pointed the way to the party. From a few blocks out, Rashid and his friends could already hear the music. Funk, soul and rock wafted its way through the air and Rashid quickened his pace to near its source: the garage of a single family home. Outside the garage's open doors, dozens of teens loitered while as many were inside, dancing to the grooving funk of Earth, Wind and Fire's "Shining Star" or the thick rhythm of Parliament's "Up For the Down Stroke."

Some youth simply pattered to whatever rhythm they could inspire from their bodies, others had the latest dance steps memorized from *Soul Train*. Easing into the slow bump of Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On," couples quickly formed in the darkened garage, bodies grinding against each other. Even though Rashid was only 13, he was not ignorant of the sexual climate at the party and paid particular attention to the many young women who were there with him.

However, before he could make an effort to mingle, Rashid was distracted by an incredible drama unfolding in front of his eyes. Mickey was an older teen known by many at the party. He sat out in the street, inside his early 1960s Ford Thunderbird. A Cadillac cruised up and down the street and finally pulled up next to Mickey's T-Bird. A shot rang out, accompanied simultaneously by the sound of breaking glass. As the Cadillac sped off, the T-Bird's driver's door swung open and Mickey fell into the street. Across his back, red streaks of blood began to stain the white canvas of his t-shirt and he simply uttered, "I'm hit." There was no panic, just the stoic acknowledgement that he had just been shot and Mickey lifted himself to his feet, pacing and muttering, "I'm hit, I'm hit" until his friends pushed him into a car to take him to the emergency room.

Back at the party, everything had come to a standstill. Rashid recalled that many simply stood in shock at what had just transpired while some of the women began crying. One of the most amazing outcomes of the evening was that Mickey actually survived the shooting and the incident only inflated his notoriety among neighborhood youth.

* * *

The preceding "day in the life" taken from Rashid's recollections paints a vibrant portrait of Filipino youth culture in the 1970s. Certainly, gunfire was not always part of

their experiences, yet in their expressive styles of clothing, dance, music, etc. there was a ballistic energy that propelled their leisure lives. The leading cultural activities of this era: garage parties, youth gangs, discotheques, dancing, and so on, were platforms for important expressions of personal and communal identity. Moreover, in intersecting one another, they helped lay down the platform from which the mobile DJ scene would emerge by the end of the 1970s. DJing formed part of a larger cultural continuum and served as a nexus for these other activities.

From the Filipino families who immigrated following the 1965 Immigration Act, a generation of youth came of age in the 1970s. In the Bay Area, their social world was a cultural polyglot of sights, sounds and styles – a whirlwind of influences and activities that included soul/funk bands, aspiring poets, and jazz musicians. In relation to the eventual creation of the DJ crews however, four formations were most salient: discotheques, garage parties, dancing crews, and youth gangs.

Nightclubs and discotheques were hardly in short supply in San Francisco but the 1977 release of the movie *Saturday Night Fever* inspired a wave of new, upscale discos around the Bay Area. The San Francisco neighborhood of North Beach, a hub of nightlife activity, became a focal point for many. Within a 10 block radius, dancers could avail themselves of all-night parties being thrown at Dance Your Ass Off, Inc., Broadway Power and Light, The Palladium and Studio West, among other clubs.

These discotheques attracted a diverse set of patrons, including Filipino youth who turned out in the hundreds every weekend. Many were teenagers too young to enter legally but this rarely prevented the intrepid from finding alternative ways in. Once there, a select number of young Pinoys would find a vantage point near the DJ booth and watch

mixers like the Palladium's Dr. K or Studio West's Cameron Paul execute their craft. Among these spectators was Unlimited Sounds' founder Anthony Carrion: "I went upstairs and I seen what [Cameron Paul] was doing and stuff, and it just caught me. I would just watch for hours and stuff and just see what he does while my friends were out chasing the girls and stuff. I was up there watching the DJ." It was also here that these aspiring DJs would be exposed to a diverse range of dance music including the waning days of disco and funk, the rising importance of house music, the emergence of Latin freestyle and other hi-NRG styles, and, especially in the early '80s, the introduction of hip-hop and electro.

These discotheques were very influential in inspiring young Filipino DJs to pick up DJing. A site like Studio West was as much a classroom as it was a club. Discotheques were where many of the first generation of mobile DJs first witnessed the practice in action, and these spin scholars not only studied the use of sound, but the full sensory environment. Paul Tumakay, founder of San Francisco's Universal Sounds (later Kicks Company) explained, "I think the benchmark there was to take whatever you saw at Studio West and Palladium and bring it into a garage or high school gymnasium. That was our…goal, was to try to replicate that."

* * *

Often, the initial space in which DJs sought to replicate a discotheque environment was the most basic of venues: garage parties. As their name suggests, these soirees were thrown in people's garages, hosted by a member of the home owner's family. A garage party was frequently coupled with a larger house party, with the physical spaces were delineated along generational lines. Parents and their friends occupied the main

rooms in the house, while the garage was the domain of youth. These parties were especially popular among junior high and high school-aged teens too young to get into discotheques. Spintronix's Jay Dela Cruz observed that, growing up in the early 1980s, "there weren't the clubs and the organized [club night] parties; it was all about the garage parties. These people needed an outlet to dance," and thus, they created these outlets themselves rather than waiting for other institutions to fill their needs.

Garage parties were mostly popularized in residential, suburban neighborhoods rather than in the city centers for the simple reason that single-family homes were more likely to have garages compared to inner city apartment buildings. Kim Kantares, aka KK Baby of KPOO AM radio, grew up in downtown San Francisco in the 1970s and observed:

> Back in the days, we didn't really have a lot of [garage] parties downtown. Mostly, we'd go out in the Mission, Daly City, the Avenues 'cause a lot of people who lived out there had bigger basements and garages and their parents were more well off. The Avenues was like heaven to us because that's two car garages, that's going to fit a lot of people.

The physical dimensions of the space determined how big a party could get (most were under 100 people) but a party's social relevance had less to do with its walls and had everything to do with what filled the space between: music. In the days before professional DJs were available, the party host would normally use a home stereo system to play records but even then, music was rarely the sole responsibility of the host. Teens would bring a box of 7" singles with them and stack them next to the queue of records by the turntable. Sometimes, there would be one designated person who helped pick and play the records, while other times, different people at the party would take turns as the

informal DJs. The music they played reflected both the times and tastes of the youth, and in the 1970s, dance songs from popular soul and funk artists were in high rotation, including music from artists such as James Brown, Chaka Khan, Cameo, and others. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the roots of the mobile crews were planted in these spaces. Mobile DJs became the formal providers of music at these events and not surprisingly, garage parties became a fundamental way of how most crews found their initial business.

Given both the relative ease of throwing a garage party and their general inclusiveness, they became the main social space where Filipino youth congregated during the 1970s and later into the '80s. They were such an institution that Rashid's younger brother, John Castro, recalled, "I remember my brothers taking the bus to Union City or taking the bus to Fremont and then taking a BART to [San Francisco] and stuff," just to go to a party. This was no small investment in time since a one-way trip from San Jose to San Francisco would have taken at least an hour and a half, and party-goers risked being stranded if they did not leave before the subway system closed for the evening.

While garage parties and discotheques were obvious centers where youth could go dancing, they were not the only source of dancing culture in the Filipino youth community. As the next section details, dancing was an integral part of many of these youth's social lives as a way to claim space for their bodies and desires.

* * *

Inspired by a series of evolving dance moves emerging on the West Coast in the 1970s, Filipino youth turned to dancing as a way to express their individuality and in the process, assert their physical presence within society. When these funk dances began to

emerge in the late 1960s, they were different from previous dance crazes such as the Twist, the Jitterbug, Swing, and so on, because they focused on individual performance rather than tandem, couples-dancing. Funk styles accentuated how individuals could express themselves through dance.

The popularity of dances like "popping," "strutting," and "locking" on national television shows like *Saturday Night Live* and *Soul Train* or the local Oakland *Jay Payton Show* helped stir awareness among Bay Area youth, but it was the immediacy of seeing their local peers get involved that also sparked interest. Paul Tumakay, founder of the mobile crews Universal Sounds (later Kicks Company), was first a dancer, having formed Mystic SLs (i.e. Strutters and Lockers) in 1978. He recalled:

> When I first observed locking, I would have to say I might have been like 15 or 16, barely into high school. In fact, I know I was still in junior high. It was kind of neat because there were people at school in junior high trying to do it…it just drew an awesome crowd…I was just amazed. I was amazed at how they could do those moves to the music. I didn't think it was physically possible to do something like that.

By the late 1970s, a diverse community of dance crews arose throughout the Bay Area, including Filipino, Samoan, Latino, and African American crews with such fanciful names such as Close Encounters of the Funkiest Kind and Demons of the Mind. Crews formed for a variety of reasons, such as to help dancers learn and train with one another, but a major impetus was competition. Rivalries were a built-in part of the dancing scene as crews fought (i.e. battled) one another to establish superiority claims. Any party or even playground could become a potential battle site; in Kantares' experience, "it was just too new and rebellious on the dance floor. People would just show their moves and the best ones got the best response." Kantares' cousin and former dancer, Rudy Corpuz

added, “we used to battle once or twice a week. It’d be at a party, you’d see them at a party, and you heard [someone] was a good dancer. 'What’s up? You want to get down?' And you’d go at it.” Adding to this competitive spirit was how dancing also became a popular feature at local high school and community talent contests, which often offered cash prizes to the crews who could pull off the most impressive routines or moves.

Music was a natural part of the dance scene as lockers and poppers performed to the sounds of 1970s funk artists like the Bar-Kays, Ohio Players, Commodores, Parliament and Funkadelic, and others. Discovering a new song for a dance routine was as important as the dance moves themselves. Tumakay recalled one informal battle from 1981 between the Mystic SLs and the Keystone Lockers:

> People were watching, thinking we were gangs. So we took it outside, they had their boom box. The music they had was something I had never heard of. But we also brought our music that they never heard of. It was Kano [“I’m Ready”], Kraftwerk’s “Trans-Europe Express” played at 45 RPM instead of 33, “Freakin’s Fine” by Mandre. But they had something that was also fairly new. It was awesome, but I don't remember the name. And so we both had fairly new tunes coming into this.

Importantly, dance crews gave young Pinoys the opportunity to express themselves, to carve out an identity through performance and cultural participation. Dancing felt like a culture for youth, by youth, something that they belonged to without qualification. Paul Tumakay’s remarks are illuminating here:

> [we] could relate to it because it wasn’t like the opera. It’s not like you had to go to the Fillmore Ballroom. It was something that anyone could learn….A lot of the ordinary kids and teens could relate to [dancing] without thinking it was too expensive or too sophisticated. It was a way for you to be recognized and to be noticed. And back then, when you’re going through adolescence, it was important to be noticed.

As dancers battled on blacktops, in parking lots, in school cafeterias, or inside garages, these young men sought to control their space by literally occupying it with their moving, twisting, leaping bodies. However, dancing was a symbolic way of claiming turf – in comparison, another kind of male youth "crews" were more literal in their contestation of space: Filipino youth gangs.

* * *

> *In the 70's and 80's, Pilipino gangs were very violent and very dominant. They had so many gangs in the city. And that was just a thing being a Pilipino youth. As popular as DJing is now, so were gangs back then. You just fell into it one way or another - Dell Farinas.*

Bay Area youth gangs exerted a ubiquitous presence within the lives of young Filipinos in the 1970s. They could be found at almost every garage party, attended discotheques, and were involved with numerous dance crews. Gangs were, in the memories of my respondents, everywhere around them, regardless if they personally had any direct involvement. Farinas' observation above reveals how pervasive gangs were, suggesting that gang involvement was as much a part of the lives of Filipino youth as DJing became. In exploring the similarities and differences in what compelled youth to get involved in either the DJ crews or youth gangs, it becomes clear that both communities tapped into a complex web of shared desires for social status and camaraderie.

During the course of the 1970s, the Bay Area witnessed the rise of two major kinds of Filipino youth gangs. The first were off-shoots of provincial prison gangs established in the Philippines and then "imported" into the U.S. during the third and especially fourth waves of Filipino immigrants. In the Bay Area, three of the largest

gangs of this kind were BNG (Bahala Na Gang), LVM (Luzon Visayan Mindanao, later changed to Mobsters), and SS (Sigue Sigue). Filipino teens were introduced to these gangs either as youth in the Philippines, or through older relatives once in America. Yusuf Rashid explained, for example, that these gangs:

> …are hard core, very, very violent and organized gangs in the Philippines. They control all kinds of vice, you know, out of the prisons. So a lot of time…the guys who… appear to come from maybe middle class backgrounds, their fathers had authentic gangster backgrounds even if they became successful here… That kind of has a hold-over effect.

The other kind of gang was indigenous to the Bay Area – "homemade" vs. "imported." These gangs were often very local – down to the city block – and far more numerous. Their names often reflected pop culture influences, inspired by gang culture in popular media, and high-profile Chinatown gangs that gained considerable notoriety in the 1960s. On the long list of Bay Area Filipino gangs were names such as ABG (All Brothers toGether), Downtown Boys, Frisco Boys, Kearny Boys, Pittsburgh Pinoys, UCB (Union City Boys), UCP (Union City Pinoys), and others.

In either case, youth gangs were rarely involved in much organized crime, unlike the more popular association with the idea of "gangs." Gangs were often violent, especially in encounters with rival gangs in spaces such as garage parties or simply on the street. However, the gang also functioned as a social unit, a clique for neighborhood boys to belong to. Sometimes, gangs formed as a way for isolated youth to band together and to offer protection against racial tensions. However, gangs also gave Filipino youth – especially first generation immigrants – a sense of belonging and camaraderie at a time when many of them felt marginalized, not just by outright hostility but also by difficulties

in adjusting to life in America. Former mobile DJ Rafael Restauro (Sound Explosion) went on to become a sergeant in the San Francisco Police Department and has had considerable experience with Asian youth gangs. He links gang involvement with feelings of alienation and a desire to find community among first generation immigrant men who feel displaced and alone upon arriving in America.

> They weren't accepted, being Asians that didn't speak the American language… They tend to stay with themselves. You have to remember, back when you had the migration of families that come over, the land of opportunity, their parents are working 18 hours a day to support the family back home, plus support the family here so they don't have that parental supervision that you'd normally get. They're looking to be accepted, to get that comfort, so that's how they turn into their little cliques, and then they got away from the family because the family wasn't here for them, their buddies were their families.

There was no single reason why Filipino youth fell into gangs but the most powerful overall incentive stemmed from a general atmosphere of displacement. As immigrants or children of immigrants, Filipino youth found themselves cast into social environments where they were largely ignored, misunderstood, or marginalized. Though hardly ideal, the gangs were one form of social grouping that provided some male youth with a sense of communal identity. As the 1970s progressed, other ways to express that desire for community arose: the dancing crews were one prominent example and by the late 1970s, the emerging DJ crews offered another alternative as well.

Though gangs and crews overlapped chronologically and both existed in the same geographic spaces, the two were more parallel than intersecting. While there were certainly a few individuals who crossed from gang life into the mobile crews, for the vast majority of my respondents, they saw gang and crews as being relatively separate entities. DJ crews tended to attract middle class teens from stable families whereas many

of the youth who became involved in gangs were from broken, blue collar families. The two rarely tracked over into the other. However, both communities shared space. Gangs were a ubiquitous presence in the party scene and savvier DJ crews learned how to keep the peace when rival gangs ended up at their parties – otherwise, they might have to deal with a fight or gunshots breaking out, bringing the evening to a quick and chaotic end. Thus, gangs and crews were less rivals and more like alternate forms of youth activities available to the larger Filipino community. By the late 1970s though, the crews would start to stretch their influence and dominance over the Bay Area in ways the gangs could never even have dreamed to.

CHAPTER 3
UNLIMITED CREATIONS: THE ORIGINS OF THE FILIPINO AMERICAN MOBILE DISC JOCKEYS (1978-1983)

Scene Two: Saturday Night Live

(The following is extended narrative description that Spintronix's Dino Rivera supplied for me in response to my query: "what did a typical gig look like?" While every performance was unique in its own way, based on my other interviews and ethnographic knowledge, Rivera's depiction encapsulates many of the common experiences of other mobile crews.)

Friday, 3pm, Westmoor High School, Daly City, 1987.

I may be at school but school is not on my mind. I just go to school for the social aspect but in the back of my mind, I'm thinking about Saturday because there's a big hall party coming up. All during the week, friends or cousins have gone to other high schools, especially in San Francisco or in the East Bay to help get the word around, so people will know about the party. In school, I'm thinking about promoting, about equipment setup, about what everyone's role is going to be, what I'll be doing. The bell rings and I rush home or to Chris' house [i.e. Chris Miguel, Spintronix's other lead DJ].

At Chris's house, the crew is hanging out and we are quickly going over last minute details like who's going to pick up the rental truck, if any or who's going to pick up additional equipment if we need to rent extra. Remember, all of these guys are like 16, 15, 17, you know? Some don't have driver's licenses, don't have credit cards, so most of that stuff that requires credit cards or an adult, it will either be Chris' dad or myself.

Saturday, Early Afternoon

Everyone gets ready. They put on their studlier clothes, their gear, you know, the guys want to look good of course. The gig has an 8 o'clock start time, so around 3 or 4pm, everyone meets at Chris. I'll roll up with the rental truck or van and as soon as the guys see the truck, everyone knows to just grab the stuff in the garage and start loading. In the early days, after a gig, we were just so excited and still on a high and tired at the same time, we would just dump the equipment into Chris' garage and worry about it later but usually it was up to Chris and his dad to reorganize during the week. But then as years went by, we got loading and unloading down to a science and people now know exactly where to pack things. We can load within thirty minutes or less.

For a smaller gig, like a house party or small school event, all we need is a pair of speakers, a pair of sub woofers, some amps, your basic truss**,** some basic lights, like a couple of helicopters,[1] some oscillators,[2] and of course all the records. If this is a bigger dance then, of course, we want to impress. If we didn't already have that equipment, we'll go out and rent, and that's where Manor Music [in Pacifica] comes in. There, we can rent more lighting, maybe additional speakers to double what we have. Sometimes we also rent more truss though not necessarily more lights. We can just spread the lights out, it's like an illusion. As long as people see the truss they will be like, "ooh! Okay, so these guys got something!"

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[1] Helicopters were spot lights that sat on a spinning platform and revolved around and around.

[2] Oscillators were similar to spot lights that panned across the crowd.

As the DJs, Chris and I usually prepare our sets in advance – this is common. People know that it is the DJ's choice and you can't go there and bother him and make requests and that type of thing. The DJ has full control whether or not the crowd likes it or not, but they already have come knowing what type of party it's going to be. They just accept what we play and don't worry about it. A lot of DJs do not stray far from what they have planned. If you mix on the fly, maybe most guys are afraid that either their mixing skills or lack thereof might be present, or they are really afraid to try something and if it doesn't work, the crowd may just totally not respond right.

I practice my sets at Chris' house because we store all the records at his place. We both buy our own records but I always store them there for ease of practice. I spend so much time there, I am practically a family member. I am there at least two or three weeknights, practicing maybe two or three hours. Chris' family leaves me by myself downstairs, even when he isn't home. They just open up the room for me, I'll be there mixing by myself.

My thing is mixing, more specifically making sure the keys of a song match, not just taking a record with breaks here and mixing it with another record with a break there. That isn't me. I am very picky about my mixing. I think Chris's style is more speed, quick mixing, being able to go from one song to the next a lot quicker. That is his way to get the crowd, whereas mine is if the crowd hears the mix and they understand it then they'll be like, "Oooh!" You can hear this all over the crowd.

Out of a set of 40 records, I keep a staple of maybe 20 from the last gig and then either throw in some new stuff that I acquire during the week, or new stuff that would be a better mix than what I had before, based on the previous crowd response. At the gigs themselves, I rarely alter my sets and this isn't unusual among the other DJs we analyze. Guys basically have their stacks of records already out of their sleeves and stacked. They have little masking tapes on the record with the actual pitch setting so they can mix them together faster - Chris's method is to write a little note that actually has the song title with the pitch number.

Saturday, 6pm, St. Augustine's, Daly City

Getting back to the gig – once we arrive at the venue, it takes roughly an hour to set up with our basic equipment. There are main guys in charge of the set-up, and then there are other guys who basically just help loading or unloading and I guess, be there to look good and be ready to receive and greet their friends and that kind of thing. They are like the promoter-type guys. As far as sound, most of the time Kormann [Roque] is doing the sound or else me and Chris set it up. Plus there is one guy whose specialty is the lights and getting that set up.

When the gig begins at 8pm, there are actually people on time. Sometimes people line up even prior to doors opening. We'd get to critical mass about an hour and a half after doors opened. If this is a school dance, we will average maybe 300, 350 people and keep that critical mass on the floor for about two hours.

If it is only our gig, it is just me and Chris. If we are sharing with other groups, say for example, Live Style Productions, what we will do is alternate. We will start out with one of their guys for say 30-40 minutes and then maybe one of us for 30-40 minutes, back to them. Usually Chris finishes up the night. I'm usually the one that starts it off first and then he always closes up.

If I have two sets, I might have, say, an all freestyle set, and then, when I spin again, I might have an all hip-hop set or a combination of hip-hop and R&B. For the freestyle set, I might include, say, the Covers Girls, Sweet Sensation, maybe TKA. The labels at this time, around 1987, 1988 are Profile, Tommy Boy, Atlantic. Also, at this time, Miami hip-hop and freestyle has started to roll in: MC Shy D and 2 Live Crew. Hip-hop is getting big for this generation due to the big success of Run DMC and LL Cool J. The Beastie Boys are another staple every DJ has but you just have to watch the profanity, especially if you're at a school dance. Whodini is also good, maybe Biz Markie, Big Daddy Kane**,** Eric B and Rakim, basically anything East Coast. The West Coast still hasn't gotten big yet, not even Too Short. Maybe if we were playing somewhere in Alameda.

Saturday/Sunday Midnight

We will be done by midnight, certainly not 2am, like the club. If this is a school dance, we might be done by 10:30 or 11pm. The critical mass of people has faded by now but there are still little patches just hanging out in the hall, there to be somewhere on a Friday night, you know, they're teenagers.

It takes us about the same amount of time to take everything down, an hour. As soon as the gig ends, the doors close, the only thing Chris and I worry

about is putting the records away. Everyone else knows their roles, they know what to do. We are always concerned with records. Then we head back to Chris', that was always the central point, and we drop everything off. And then always, always, if we don't have a gig the next night, everyone goes to the Denny's in Westborough. It doesn't matter whether you're in the group or if you are a partygoer, Westborough Denny's is the hangout because all the other DJ crews hung out there. After paying off the van, the rentals plus putting aside money to help us buy more records for our next gig, we spend whatever's left from the gig for food for the crew.

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I do not want to posit Rivera's narrative as an iron-clad archetype – this was simply one possible scenario of how a gig could go. However, I felt it important to offer a window into the basic life of the mobile DJ as they went about their business. Rivera's story offers at least a glance into the many dimensions that go into hosting a simple gig. There are material considerations: the equipment, the records, transportation. There are more cerebral concerns: planning your set, what to play at a gig. There is the social environment: the internal crew dynamics, how you relate to the party-goers. For the mobile crews, all these activities simply flowed into one: the gig. Yet while the gig was, in essence, a distillation of all the labor in the mobile scene, it was also the source of that scene's power, importance and legacies. In other words, from the simple gig flows the history of the mobile scene itself.

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Sound Explosions: *Ground Zero at Balboa High*

Daly City looms large in DJ lore. Since the early 1980s and through the present, Daly City has been so honored as the hub of both mobile and scratch DJ activity throughout the Bay Area that some simply assume it must have birthed the community to begin with. While there is no question that Daly City is a pivotal site for the Bay Area's DJ community, it is not necessarily the point of origin. Instead, to trace the beginnings of the Filipino DJ scene, one needs to turn northward, towards San Francisco, and specifically to 1000 Cayuga Avenue, site of Balboa High School.

Beginning in 1978, Balboa was home to not just the Bay Area's first Filipino mobile crew, Sound Explosion, but *five* of the first, as well as the first female Filipino crew. In the mid-1980s, Balboa would produce another graduate who would later find fame in the DJ ranks: DJ Q-Bert. No single site in the DJ community has produced such a storied cast of characters.

Standing three stories tall, Balboa High School is one of the largest buildings in its neighborhood, a mix of residential homes and commercial development located within the triangle formed by Ocean Avenue, Geneva Avenue, and Mission Boulevard. Balboa services students from the Excelsior District, a heavily Asian neighborhood that sits barely a mile from the border between San Francisco and Daly City.[3] The school's enrollment tops out around 1,300 currently, making it one of the larger schools in the S.F. Unified district though far smaller than the biggest high schools like Lowell, Galileo, and

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[3] The proximity of the neighborhood to Daly City likely abets Daly City's reputation as the capitol of the DJ scene. Though residents of both cities are very clear on stating where they are from, my experience with those not familiar with the Bay's geography suggests that most outsiders just assume the Excelsior is part of Daly City, especially in relation to DJ history.

Washington, all of which are twice the size. However, Balboa has historically had one of the highest percentages of Filipino students in the district.

A tall fence encircles the school, ensuring that students stay in and outsiders stay out. This is a relatively new development in the school's 75+ year history – the campus used to be "open," meaning that students were free to leave campus for lunch but apparently, in more recent times, the need for separating campus from community and vice versa has taken precedence. At lunch time, students congregate inside "the Quad," a large, open space in the middle of the campus. According to Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, a San Francisco State University professor who teaches several times a week at Balboa, the Quad is divided by different ethnic cliques who claim small parcels of space during the lunch hour. The borders are invisible to the naked eye, but students still know where they lie.

25 years earlier, the claiming of space was not much different. According to Rafael (Ralph) Restauro, who graduated from Balboa in 1979, "there was an area around Balboa at the front steps, around the corner, pretty much where all the Filipinos hung out," Rafael was one of several Restauro family members who attended Balboa at that time, including his brother Richard (Rick) and nephew Eduardo (Edward) (who was the same age as Rafael). Rafael jokes, "The principal called us the Mafia because there were so many Restauros."

The Restauros, along with family friend Sam Beltran were part of a Balboa High School cadre that started Sound Explosion, the first major Filipino American mobile DJ crew in the Bay Area. They formed in 1978, at a time when there were few mobile DJs of any ethnicity in the Bay. By 1979, they were throwing 1,000+ person parties and gigging

parties practically every weekend. By 1980, they had inspired at least four other crews to get started, all at Balboa: Non-Stop Boogie, Electric Sounds, Disco Tech Limited and Sounds of Success. By 1982, they left the scene completely, with few later crews even remembering their existence.

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The Restauro family first moved to the United States from the Philippines in the late 1950s, beneficiaries of U.S. military connections that allowed them to get around the stringent immigration quotas of the time. Both Rafael and Eduardo were born in San Francisco – Rafael at Letterman Army Hospital in the Presidio. Sam Beltran's family emigrated from the Philippines in 1972, when Sam was already 12. Like many other Filipino families who immigrated during this same period, Restauro's and Beltran's parents worked in blue collar and lower-end white collar professions in the States. Rafael's father, after retiring from 30 years in the Army, worked for the federal government at Fort Mason, while his mother worked as a housecleaner in order to put herself through cosmetology school, her later career. Eduardo's father worked as a mechanic while Beltran's father was a health inspector for the city and his mother was on the clerical staff for Pacific Bell. Both families first started out closer to San Francisco's downtown – the Restauros in the Lower Haight while Beltran lived south of Market – and then relocated to the neighboring Excelsior/Visitacion Valley districts. "Housing was affordable there," said Rafael. "The house that my parents bought was only $48,000 at the time. There were already established businesses (i.e. Oriental stores) serving the Asian community."

The Restauros and Beltran met at Balboa in the mid-1970s, at a time when Rafael estimates the Filipino population was already "maybe 20%" of the total student body. The key activity that brought them together was participation in the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) and more specifically, the ROTC drill team. Balboa, like other San Francisco high schools with ROTC chapters, had drill team corps that competed with one another. According to Balboa students, their school was a perpetual winner in these city-wide competitions.

The Restauros and Beltran were drawn to the drill team because of its "bad boy" reputation. The competitive nature of the corps further fueled their interest – so much so that Rafael eventually became commander of the team, while Beltran was his Executive Officer. "When we were in there, there wasn't that many Filipinos or Asians in the ROTC but as we got in there, more started going," said Rafael. His statement would prove to be prophetic for other, younger Filipino peers who joined the drill team and later became DJs as well.[4]

On weekends, this small clique would visit a Restauro family friend, Renel Bautista, who lived across the Bay in Pleasanton, a moderately sized city about 40 minutes southeast from San Francisco. Together, they would frequent the clubs in the local area, in particular, the Firehouse, a discotheque in nearby Danville. It was discos like this one where they were first exposed to non-stop disco mixing. Up until that point, they had seen other mobile DJs, like Dr. Funk, host school dances but the non-stop mixing style attracted the attention of Bautista, Beltran and others. Bautista purchased his

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[4] This includes members of Electric Sounds and the Go Go's, both Balboa-based crews, and later on, in the mid-1980s, Richard Quitevis became another drill team member. While still at Balboa, Quitevis would later became the DJ known as Q-Bert.

own DJ equipment and began scheduling gigs throughout the city and later, Beltran would follow by acquiring turntables and a mixer as well.

The pivotal event that lead to the creation of Sound Explosion happened at the beginning of the school year in 1978. Richard Restauro, who acted as the crew's informal master of ceremonies and hype man, convinced Balboa's administration to allow him and his friends to DJ an upcoming dance. This dance was the crew's coming out party. "It was the first school dance of the year…down in the cafeteria," Rafael recalled. "That's when we said, 'ok, let's break out Sound Explosion.' We had a little paper sign that we plastered up on a little 4 x 8 plywood and had this little shiny paper on top of it."

This dance exposed Sound Explosion to a larger community of peers who would prove useful in helping them land more gigs. Word of mouth was the primary way Sound Explosion and subsequent crews promoted themselves – one successful gig would put them in contact with new potential clients and if those subsequent gigs went well, their reputation only spread. Unlike the so-called "phone book DJs" like the Music Masters, these crews relied on word of mouth through friends and family to help them find business. Said Beltran, "we'd get reverse invitations," meaning they would be working at a dance and then be invited to spin at other parties. "It wasn't intended for us to market ourselves but people would come up, 'do our party, do our party.'" What helped Sound Explosion is that they had almost no competition in terms of their presentation and style. DJs like the Music Masters and Dr. Funk were around but as Rafael pointed out, "We were mixing and they were tripping out on that. They just never heard that before.".

It was not just the music from the clubs and discotheques that Sound Explosion tried to replicate in their gigs – it was also the visual elements. At that first Balboa dance,

the crew spent most of their DJ fee on paying for an impromptu fog machine – essentially, a 50 gallon tub into which dry ice was dropped. At later gigs, they brought in and built their own lighting set-ups. Said Rafael, "We used to go to clubs back then and they would have all the lighting. So [we thought], 'let's bring our lighting here' rather than just the cafeteria lights being turned off and flashlights and all that. We had rope lighting, we had strobe lights," rented from theatrical supply stores. Since mobile DJs were a rarity at this time, there were few retail resources that the crew could turn to for DJ equipment. They often built their own. "Our stands for our lights and disco balls were rims of tires we put cement in (Figure 3). Screwed pipes in, all that stuff," said Rafael. Their most dramatic visual props were flash pots – simple but dangerous pyrotechnic devices jerry-rigged out of hubcaps, tissue paper, and magic store flash powder. Because flash powder ignites on contact, the tissue acted as a makeshift fuse but it was far from an exact science. Rafael recalled one time when he lit the fuse but it seemed to take an inordinate amount of time: "I went over there and POOF, I burned all the hair off my arm."

They applied the same ingenuity to their promotions as well. After they saved up enough money from their gigs, Sound Explosion purchased a van to move their heavy equipment. On weekends, when they were not gigging, they would take their concert speakers – expensive, professional-grade Klipsch La Scalas – load them in the back of the van and connect them to their stereo. "We used to have those Klipsch, in the van, bumping off a radio. No one had a system like we had back then in a car. We had a concert in the car, it was so damn loud," said Eduardo. With that system, Rafael said they

would, "run around with it and people would be drawn to [the music] and we'd give them flyers or whatever, let them know who we were."

Over their four-year reign, Sound Explosion did remarkable business by any standard. As one of the few mobile crews operating in the late 1970s, they were hired throughout the Bay Area to spin at everything from garage parties to school dances to weddings, and so forth. They gigged around San Francisco and neighboring cities, as far away as the Solano County Fair, 40 minutes from San Francisco. "Some months, we were working five weekends in a row, every Friday, every Saturday, getting $350, up to $600 every day," recalled Rafael, a goodly sum not just by late 1970's standards but also for a crew of mostly 16 and 17 year olds. Rafael added that money was not the only perk, "We used to make thousands of dollars and party at the same time. People would feed us, we'd go meet women, you know different girls from every different part [of the Bay]… It was a lifestyle at the time and getting paid on top of it."

Though what Sound Explosion was doing was unprecedented, the Restauro family was supportive of their activities.[5] As Rafael explained it, "they saw that we were having a lot of fun, clean fun, making money on top of it. Our parents taught us to be little entrepreneurs because, unfortunately, we didn't have silver spoons when we were born so we had to go out and get it." In fact, it was Rafael's mother who helped bankroll Sound Explosion's biggest gig, thrown on December 1, 1979 at California Hall in San Francisco (Figure 4).

The crew was inspired by the success of other DJs, namely Dr. Funk, in throwing large events. Rafael said, "Dr. Funk used to have a big following and we said, 'if he can

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[5] Beltran's parents passed away when he was 18 and the Restauros became his surrogate family.

do it, we can do it.'" With that attitude in mind, the crew started to pool their resources together for the California Hall party. Rafael's mother provided the capital to pay for the rental of the venue, refreshments, and other overhead. The crew themselves spent six weeks promoting the event, "We used to go every weekend…to all the different clubs, all the way down to San Jose…go to the different high school dances, give out our flyers. We drew out about 1,000 people at that dance," said Rafael. What also helped was that Sound Explosion included a dance competition as part of the event, buying their own trophies for the winners and inviting dance crews from across the Bay to participate. At the event itself, the crew also struck upon an ingeniously simple money-making scheme – once they were confident that attendance would be high, Rafael recalled, "We thought about… ok, we'll give them free popcorn and sell soda so we'll get them thirsty, then we get them soda." Eduardo added, "There was so much money being made there, we couldn't even handle it. It was just all our family handling it. We didn't really care about the money, it was all about having fun."

Despite success in their first few years, by the early '80s, Sound Explosion had ceased to become the only crew in town. As noted before, their own high school had turned out more crews and by this time, new crews out of San Francisco and Daly City were beginning to get started as well. Besides the added competition, Sound Explosion was getting older – all of their members were well out of high school now and moving on to other parts of their adult lives. The confluence of these different forces took its toll on the crew. Rafael recalled:

> We were getting older, we had all gotten out of high school, you know. Everybody was getting into the working field…then the younger guys were getting all the parties at a cheaper price and we couldn't really compete. Or, put it this way, we

> didn't want to. We didn't want to lower what we thought we were worth to what those guys were doing.

By 1982, Sound Explosion had disbanded, more or less (the end of a crew is almost never a formal affair). Though the showcases and battles had begun to start by this time, Sound Explosion never took part and as more time passed, the communal memory of the crew faded. Few younger DJs have any awareness or knowledge that Sound Explosion ever existed. It went the other way as well – when the members left, they left so completely that most of them had no idea how big the DJ scene would grow during the next ten years. They had helped birth the scene, yet never saw it come of age.

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This history of Sound Explosion illuminates several key issues that recur throughout the expansion of the mobile scene. Again, I want to note that there are no indelible rules nor universal trends that all the mobile crews followed, but the similarities between Sound Explosion's experiences and those of later crews warrant mention, especially as they help establish some of the key links between mobile DJing, youth culture, and the Filipino community.

The fact that the Restauros were born in the U.S., while Beltran immigrated from the Philippines, resembled patterns throughout the mobile community. Especially among first and second generation crews, many, if not most of the participants were "Island-born" (i.e. born in the Philippines). This phenomenon follows from larger changes in U.S. immigration policy following the Immigration Act of 1965, but I also noticed that many of my older respondents, born in the Philippines, came to the U.S. in 1972. That year kept recurring in my oral histories and at first, I did not make much of it until I remembered:

Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972, initiating a flood of families fleeing the Philippines to avoid political persecution or to seek a more stable social environment.

Once in the States, the Restauro and Beltran families first settled closer to downtown only to later move to southern San Francisco, the Excelsior district, which boasted a higher number of single-family homes as well as more commercial services for Filipino families**.** Likewise, as with many other Filipino immigrant families, both the Restauro and Beltran elders had professional backgrounds in the Philippines but were largely underemployed in the U.S.

Beyond their family background, as the community's seminal DJ crew, many of Sound Explosion's experiences would become standard. On a basic level, this included the kind of gigs that Sound Explosion played– from garage parties, to school dances, up to large hall parties such as their California Hall event in 1979. The only gigs Sound Explosion did not take part in were the larger showcases and then, only because they disbanded before the showcase era took off.

Moreover, the crew's innovation was impressive. In the late 1970s, there were practically no DJ specialty stores in the Bay Area to help supply aspiring disc jockeys with even basic materials such as lighting truss. Instead, Sound Explosion built their own, whether that meant filling hubcaps with cement or rigging their own pyrotechnics. This do-it-yourself attitude was conditioned by necessity, but it was also reflective of how imaginative these youth learned to be in trying to recreate a discotheque environment with far smaller means. Throughout the history of the mobile crews, similar stories would crop up, from stealing ambulance beacons with nothing more than a hand wrench, to learning how to improve amplifier output without formal engineering training. Then there

were the gigs themselves, the kind of social experiences that Sound Explosion enjoyed at their parties and among their peers. Sound Explosion were respected by their fellow students and friends for many reasons, not the least of which was likely envy over their popularity and income.

From a business standpoint, Sound Explosion also broke new ground. When I interviewed the Restauros, Rafael showed me a copy of his business license from 1979 – he had registered the crew as a business, a step that almost no other crews I knew of had taken. Moreover, in negotiating with school administrators, equipment rental stores, and venue managers, Rafael undoubtedly helped to condition people to the then-unusual sight of a Filipino teenager trying to handle contracts and other business agreements with adult figures.

The grand irony is that Sound Explosion helped create the very popularity for DJing that eventually lead to their discontentwith this nascent scene. It was no coincidence that in the years following Sound Explosion's inception, Balboa High was home to many of the mobile scene's earliest crews. Sound Explosion formed in 1978, followed by Electric Sounds[6] and Non-Stop Boogie in 1979, then Disco Tech Limited (DTL) and Sounds of Success (SOS) in 1980. This phenomenal growth – at a time where few other mobile crews were forming elsewhere in the Bay Area – can be largely attributed to the success and visibility of Sound Explosion. In the succinct words of

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[6] Electric Sounds was made up of DJs from both Balboa and Lowell High Schools in San Francisco. Given that peer groups often existed between schools, it was not unusual for crews to be made up of students from multiple schools. However, most crews had a core membership based out of one school with individual members coming from elsewhere.

Candito Anicete, one of the founders of Non-Stop Boogie "they pretty much paved the way for us."

Discotheques may have exposed many Filipino youth in the late 1970s to the aesthetic of non-stop mixing but Sound Explosion were role models within the youth community itself, demonstrating through example how their peers could turn their DJ ambitions into reality. For example, in 1979, Rene Anies attended Lowell High in San Francisco when his friends at Balboa brought him to a school dance to see Sound Explosion. Anies recalled his impressions of seeing the crew for the first time:

> they brought the club to the high school dance, in essence. And they just took it to another level…I mean, dancing in those days, you grabbed a girl, go out and dance. But they told you what to do…they told you to say "Yeah!" They told you to say "Party over here!" And with that, everybody was just interactive, not just dancing, not just to their group, everybody became one. And it just made the party that much better.

It was at that dance that Anies turned to his friends and said, "hey, that's pretty cool, we should do that," and so they went out and formed Electric Sounds. Anies was not the only one affected by seeing Sound Explosion in action. Willie Sparks, light-man for Non-Stop Boogie, noted how influential Sound Explosion was on his visual imagination:

> I think Sound Explosion was the biggest inspiration for anybody. I mean they had their lights set up, they were set up real well… You got ideas off them and then you just kind of made it to where you could make it work, you know? I mean the one thing they had that was real neat were the police bars [i.e. siren lights from atop police cruisers]. Those were the biggest things, the big police bars, and everybody was out trying to get those.

What I want to stress here is that moment that Anies described, the "we should do that" moment when these youth realized that if young, Filipino peers like Sound Explosion

could form a DJ crew, so could they. This direct, person-to-person, crew-to-crew influence is key to understanding how and why DJing spread so fast throughout the Filipino community. Interest spread virally as each prominent crew influenced several others to start, and as those crews gained visibility, they planted the seeds for more crews to follow after them. Not just in San Francisco, but in many of the key DJ cities: Daly City, San Jose, Union City/Fremont, and other cities, all that was needed was one or two key crews to initiate an exponential growth in new crews forming throughout these regions.

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The years 1980-1983 constituted a period of rapid growth in the Filipino mobile DJ scene, especially in Daly City and San Francisco.[7] As already discussed, Balboa was home to several crews that formed in the wake of Sound Explosion's influence. Jefferson High's Unlimited Sounds had a similar influence among crews in Daly City. Beginning in 1980, they were followed by Westmoor High School's Next Phase (later, Fusion) in 1981 and then El Camino High's Unique Musique in 1983. Back in San Francisco, at Lincoln High, Ultimate Creations formed in 1981, around the same time that Washington High produced G&R Productions (named after founders Glen and Raoul).[8] These crews were among the scene's best known but they dozens more began to emerge throughout the Bay Area, as far east as Sacramento and as far south as Monterey. Mobile DJing was

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[7] Presumably, similar increases in mobile DJ crew formation happened in San Jose and Fremont/Union City but I do not have the data to confirm that currently.

[8] G&R were an enigma to me – they were mentioned by many different crews as an important, pioneering crew but no one had information on the current whereabouts of the group. No one even knew what Glen and Raoul's surnames were. As a consequence, I was unable to collect more information on them, but I hope to in the future.

becoming a popular activity for many youth of all color and my respondents spoke about the growth of mobile crews among Chinese American, Latino, White, and African American aficionados.

It is difficult to accurately gauge how many crews formed during this time but some of the scene's best known crews, especially Unlimited Sounds in Daly City and Ultimate Creations in San Francisco, emerged in this era. These were the groups that constituted the "first" and "second generation" of mobile crews and within their ranks were many of the key pioneers who helped to popularize mobile DJing throughout the Bay Area.

Determining who were the "first" crews has been important to the members of the scene, not just for the sake of history, but also to establish a chain of influence. DJs take great pride in stating who they helped influence, and likewise, most DJs credit the mentors who inspired them. Therefore, the issue of whether a crew could be considered first or second generation is of considerable importance in composing a subtle but significant hierarchy. For example, at the 2002 San Mateo Roundtable, the first question from the audience came from Q-Bert, asking who the first crews were. Curator Melanie Cagonot responded that Non-Stop Boogie, Electric Sounds and Kicks Company were widely acknowledged as the first crews. When I spoke to Paul Tumakay, he also considered Kicks Company to be part of the first generation but when I spoke to Rene Anies, he politely implied that Kicks Company was more of a second generation crew since his own crew, Electric Sounds had been so instrumental in helping Kicks Company begin. I was not under any impression that Anies was being defensive about separating

his generation from Tumakay's, only that Anies took pride in his role as being one of the earliest pioneers.

Likewise, when I spoke to members of the Go-Go's (the female DJ crew from Balboa), they considered Sound Explosion to be the sole first generation crew and all subsequent crews from Balboa, even those that formed a year after Sound Explosion, to be second generation. In their logic, Ultimate Creations was therefore a third generation crew though most others would have considered them a second generation crew. Curiously enough, the Go-Go's considered themselves second generation though many would have considered them third generation since their members came from the pre-established crew D.T.L. I have no investment in creating rigid boundaries over who was first or second generation – these terms are useful in helping to sub-divide the history of the mobile scene into smaller eras but I recognize the loose, fluid lines between them.

Like the story of Sound Explosion, a focused history of any one of these groups can and does yield a wealth of information about the inner workings of the mobile crew, the individual DJs, and the community they came from. However, I want to highlight one second generation crew in particular – Ultimate Creations – as a way of looking at how the growing mobile scene affected these DJs and in turn, was impacted by them. Ultimate Creations, a San Francisco-based crew, is popularly recognized as the group that other mobile outfits held in the highest regard. They were praised for their quality of performance and elaborate set-up, but most of all, for their mystique, an ineffable quality that continues to influence how people perceive the crew, even 15 years after they disbanded.

* * *

"Like the Oakland Raider:" The Mystique of Ultimate Creations

Gary Millare and Gil Olympiada grew up as neighborhood friends out in San Francisco's Sunset district, aka "the Avenues." Millare was born and raised in San Francisco while Olympiada moved with his family from the Philippines in 1971. Though Olympiada was two years senior to Millare, both attended Abraham Lincoln High School (also in the Sunset) in the early 1980s. As young teens in San Francisco in the early 1980s, their social activities were similar to those of many other peers: sneaking into Studio West to see Cameron Paul spin, crashing garage parties around town, etc. However, they were also young enough to see the first generation of mobile crews come up before them, especially the ones out of Balboa: Sound Explosion, Electric Sounds, and Non-Stop Boogie. In 1981, as budding DJs themselves, they started to spin at small garage party gigs around town and decided to team up. To pick their name, Olympiada explained, "We were browsing through the yellow pages one time looking at names. [Gary] actually found 'ultimate' and I found 'creations' and that's how we started."

Like many early crews, the two threw together equipment from whatever sources they could, often raiding home stereo systems that were not meant for club play but were tasked with that purpose nonetheless. "The first set of equipment was almost like hand me downs," Millare recalled, " I don't even want to mention where it came from, maybe hot [stolen], I don't know. We had a sound system, woofers, like homemade speakers." Then Millare's mother stepped in.

> GM: My mom said, "you guys are doing a lot of parties. I'll loan you a thousand bucks, just buy some decent equipment." [She wanted to] just to keep me off the

> streets, to keep me from hanging out. I was getting in a lot of trouble when I was 13.
> *Q: So your mom helped bankroll the crew at the beginning?*
>
> GM: Yeah, it was kind of a controversy because everybody would think, "oh, they buy him everything." We paid her back in two months.

Family financial support was key to Ultimate Creations' beginnings, providing the group with much-needed capital to purchase equipment. These parental loans (most crews paid back their families through gig money) were common throughout the DJ scene.

Ultimate Creations' early gigs were mostly garage parties, but as their reputation grew, they began handling more school gigs, abetted by the fact that, at the time, Lincoln had few other DJs among the student ranks. Soon, according to Olympiada, "people would have birthday parties, graduation parties, and even Christmas parties. We would get a lot of those parties."

The crucial intervention in the crew's development was the introduction of Gil's older brother Jose into the crew. Millare and Gil were Ultimate Creations' two main DJs and Jose had little interest in becoming a third. Instead, he became the crew's primary creative designer/engineer. In the early '90s, most of DJ set-ups were simple, limited to a few beacons or strobe lights mounted on a jerry-rigged system similar to Sound Explosion's set-ups. However, the members of Ultimate Creations had a grander vision, one inspired by music that was practically anathema to the dance-centric mobile scene. "During that time a lot of us were into heavy metal," said Gil.

> We used to go to AC/DC concerts, the Scorpions, Def Leppard, Judas Priest, even Ozzy Osbourne. Going to those concerts, you would see the concert set ups with the track lighting, the anvil cases and huge speakers. That's how my brother got his idea, off the heavy metal concerts.

If the first generation of mobiles like Sound Explosion had borrowed their ideas from the discotheques, Jose saw hard rock concerts as another potential inspiration. Gil elaborated:

> Once my brother started building all the set ups, he was spending a lot of his own money to actually put the group together. He purchased truss, he made the stands and built triangles for them, getting into par lighting, little pin spots. He started reading up a lot of articles on what type of equipment we should be using. Every time we had a gig, instead of splitting the money, we would just purchase more equipment.

Millare added:

> Jose, he went to school for welding so he would weld our own things together. He pulled it off…He was a pretty genius kind of a guy when he had his mind straight on something. If you brought something on paper, asking "can you do this?" He'll make it. One of those MacGyver kind of guys.

As one example, Gil spoke about a battle in which Ultimate Creations participated in 1982, the Balboa "Octagon" gig:

> In that gig there was 3 Balboa DJs and we were the only Lincoln DJs in the house. We ended up winning because of our light show and our music, it was weird because it was a Balboa crowd. Jose actually built something for the ceiling. You couldn't hang anything on the ceiling so what he did was tie some ropes and hung…the disco ball on the ropes. Put some pin spots and some scanners on the ropes. We even had a couple of explosions on top, flash powder. He went to the hall ahead of time - he was doing that all the time. If there was a big gig coming up, he would go there ahead of time and just look around and see what type of set up he could do.

While Jose was impressing audiences with his elaborate visual spectacles, Gil and Millare were doing their share on the turntables. Millare, who DJed under the name Genie G, was an early innovator of quick mixing, a mixing style that blended speed with precision. He explained:

> one time I was DJing a party and it was getting so crazy that I just started grabbing records and flipping through them. But everything was on beat, everything was punctual…it was like the early stage of quick mixing. It would be like half, quick mixing, a combination of quick blends, cutting. Just going with

> the records…I was playing a party, it was in Stockton and all I hear is the crowd just saying "Harder!" So I'm just grabbing and throwing records everywhere.

However, these elements, while helping Ultimate Creations gain a foothold in a competitive scene, were not the only elements that contributed to their mystique. For one thing, more so than many other crews prior, Ultimate Creations were very particular about their presentation, not necessarily in terms of how elaborate they were but in how "clean" their look was. To wit, Jim Archer, aka Jazzy Jim from San Jose's Skyway Sounds recalled, "Everything was so clean, they didn't always bring a ton of things but it was always very clean and professional." By "clean" Archer meant that Ultimate Creations were able to construct a set-up that was simple but sophisticated. They added small nuances, like making sure all their equipment was black with silver trim, including their speakers, their turntable cases, even their business cards. Later crews, like Spintronix, sought to emulate Ultimate Creations' immaculate, orderly presentation by color-matching their equipment, making sure unsightly wires and cables were tucked away from sight, leaving only an image of professionalism and austerity with every set-up.

Most importantly though, and most unusual, was that unlike Unlimited Sounds or Non-Stop Boogie which were large, social crews, Ultimate Creations were far more private and selectively small. Gil explained that Ultimate Creations thought of themselves as a business first, rather than as a social group and that is why they were very selective in who they let into the crew. Like their set-up, the crew aimed for strict professionalism and that attitude extended to the membership itself. Just as each nuance of their presentation had a purpose, people in the crew had to serve some role as well. This was

evident to the others in the scene who observed Ultimate Creations. Said Pardorla, “the way that they showed up at the gig, they didn't have a whole army of people, it was a few guys who'd show up and everything would be up really quick, like they had a system. It’s almost like they had like little drills on how to put it together.” Gil Olympiada himself confirmed that he did not want a crew with a large entourage that had little to do. He stressed efficiency and professionalism and explained:

> We didn’t just let anybody in it. We were telling people, if you want to be in our group you have to be dedicated. If we give you a job title, you need to concentrate on doing that. There used to be a lot of people who would knock on our door all the time, like “hey, if we help you out, can you get us into a party?” I mean, we used to have a lot of followers. We would tell them, “look, we are doing this as a business. We would like to get you in but…if you want to show up, you need to pay at the door.

Ultimate Creations were the mobile group that everyone saw but few knew much about. While such an attitude could have been a liability in a community as social as the mobile scene, the very unusualness of it only enhanced their mystique. Burt Kong of Sound Sequence noted:

> They didn’t fraternize with the other people, they didn’t form alliances with anyone else. They didn’t hang out with anyone else. Very few people were really in Ultimate Creations, whereas, like some other groups…[people would claim] ”oh yeah, I’m part of Legion of Boom” just because some guy helps carry in a record crate. They didn’t allow that, they didn’t have none of that, that was part of their mystique. They were like the Oakland Raiders - didn’t care what other people think about them. They just did their business.

Ultimate Creations remained in the scene for eight years, a relatively long reign considering how fast turnover could be within the mobile ranks. Ironically though, as tight-knit as they seemed to outsiders, internally, Ultimate Creations slowly fractured due to personal differences within the core trio of Millare and the Olympiada brothers. At

some point in 1989, Jose Olympiada and Millare had a falling out, partially because Millare was getting more gigs on his own, outside of the crew. With that altercation, Ultimate Creations, one of the most ceremonious members of the mobile scene, themselves came to a quiet end.

* * *

The presence of Ultimate Creations within the Bay Area's mobile scene was significant because they set a standard by which many of the other crews were measured. Other mobile groups may have been larger, others commanded a bigger following, but in terms of reputation, the testimonials of my other interviewees suggested that all eyes were on Ultimate Creations and whatever they had planned. Even younger participants, like Just 2 Hype's Derrick Damian, aka Derrick D, remember the kind of impact they had, "When they did Westmoor, they would set up truss stands as big the roof of the gym and they would cover that shit up with black curtains. You'd swear it was a big rock concert because when these guys put on a show, they put on a show."

This continual emphasis on presentation is not trivial but speaks to the heart of the mobile scene's values. This was not a community simply built on individual DJs or personalities but made up of *crews*. That communal focus, on promoting groups of youth, translated directly into their emphasis on appearance. Though the mobile scene's ostensible purpose was to provide music, the public, visual image of these groups was no less important. In a sense, they were selling more than just their musical resources. They were selling an image, an identity. For many crews, it was common to have a crew t-shirt or jacket as a way of promoting that image in public.

This dedication to image was directly related to how mobile crews could promote themselves, especially against the background of all their competition. Contemporary DJs rarely share in this concern since they are hired only to play – set-up design is up to the venue or the promoter. In the mobile scene however, the old adage of "image is everything" served a real purpose in helping these crews gain an advantage over one another in the public eye. The power of image would take on additional meaning as the mobile scene moved towards the zenith of its prominence and dominance, encapsulated in the invention of the DJ showcase and the changes instigated by the rise of that institution (see Chapter 4).

* * *

They Got the Beat: Women DJs and the Case of the Go-Go's

If Ultimate Creations represented one of the most visible and respected crews of this early '80s era, the Go-Go's were perhaps one of the more obscure yet their historical import is no less significant. What jumps out at you in looking at this history is how male-dominated everything is. Very few of my respondents – men and women alike – were able to remember the names of any female DJs (or "lady DJs," as they have been described). When asked why there were so few, most of my respondents, regardless of gender, admitted that they had never thought much of the issue. Apparently, their absence was so complete that the scene did not even realize they were absent to begin with. One lone exception arrived in 1982, the year the Go-Go's came, conquered and left.

When I interviewed Orlando Madrid of Non-Stop Boogie (formerly Sounds of Success), he showed me around his South San Francisco house where he kept much of the crew's original audio equipment – speakers, mixers, lighting, etc. – all of which he

still loans out on occasion.[9] In a small room by his garage, Orlando stores some of his records, a DJ turntable/mixer set-up and most notably, memorabilia of his DJing days in the 1980s. Photographs of different gigs dot the wall while a row of trophies from DJ battles line up behind the turntables. Orlando pointed to one trophy in particular and explained, "That's from the first female DJ battle," where his friends, the Go-Go's from Balboa High, beat another female crew, YNT (Young N' Tough) from Wilson High. It was one of the first times female DJs would be in the spotlight within the Bay's scene. It would also be one of the last.

As coincidence would have it, my respondent Rene Anies was married to one of the former Go-Go's, Daphnie Anies (birth name Gambol). I met her by accident during one of my interviews with Rene, and Daphnie subsequently helped organize an interview between myself and four of the other Go-Go's members: Rebeca Ruaro (formerly Dumlao), Leila Recania (formerly Apostol) and Amy Gramlich (formerly Celis).[10]

* * *

Like most other DJ crews, the Go-Go's traced their roots back to childhood friendships. These women all knew each other as adolescents, having all grown up in the neighborhood that some call Templeton, at the border between San Francisco and Daly City, off of Mission Blvd.[11] It was at high school that Amy, Rebecca and Daphnie became involved in the DJ scene. As noted already, in the late 1970s and early 1908s, Balboa High was home to many DJ crews, including Orlando Madrid's S.O.S and Noel

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[9] Orlando was an active DJ throughout the 1980s and 1990s but back injuries have prevented him from working more and instead, he loans and rents out Non-Stop Boogie's equipment out to other DJs.

[10] Not present but mentioned throughout the interview was the Go-Go's other DJ, Liza Dizon.

[11] Recania lived in South San Francisco but she met the other women through her older cousin.

Villenueva's D.T.L. (Disco Tech Limited). Anies and Gramlich, in particular, were members of Balboa's ROTC, which, as noted before, was essentially a Filipino American social clique on campus. This network is what exposed them to the DJ scene – Anies' older brother Mikey was a member of D.T.L. and Gramlich also began dating Villenueva. Both women were good friends with Madrid who eventually folded S.O.S. into D.T.L.

Though Gramlich was involved with Villenueva and Anies had her family connection, both were quick to state that they were not like "other girls" that they had seen in the mobile DJ community. Anies recalled:

> a lot of the groups that used to bring women with them, [these] girls just sat in the corner. We were active. These girls would just sit in the corner and not dance all night because their boyfriends were DJing the party. They would just sit there. And they were just there, just to be there, watch their boyfriend, whatever. [When] we were there, we got into it. I would say that was the majority of the groups, all of them just had trophy girlfriends tagging along. We were just kind of different from that. Even though Amy was a trophy girlfriend, it just wasn't like that. Amy got into [DJing], on her own.

As Anies remembered, she, Gramlich and their other female friends refused to relegate themselves to the background. They saw themselves as active members in D.T.L., carrying equipment and records, energizing the party atmosphere by being front and center on the dance floor, and in the cases of Gramlich and Dizon, stepping off the parquet and behind the DJ boards.

Gramlich learned how to DJ by practicing at Orlando Madrid's house: "That's where Amy got her training from, not from Noel," said Anies. Recania added, "when we'd go to [Madrid's] house, that's all it was – just music playing all the time. He used to tell her to learn, and she would just be on [the equipment]." Meanwhile, Madrid was

training his girlfriend Dizon on how to mix, and the lot of them – Dizon, Gramlich, Anies, etc. began accompany S.O.S. and D.T.L. to their gigs.

In the summer of 1982, the Go-Go's formed out of the interlacing friendships of these women and like many crews, their membership was informal and dynamic. During my interview with them, they argued over who was in the group and who wasn't – depending on who you asked, the Go-Go's either had seven, eight, or nine members. The decision to form also emerged informally and spontaneously. Recania described how their circle of friends would joke, "Yeah, we'll be the first lady DJs. We'll come, wearing the same clothes, we're going to have this little dance. Amy and Liza will be the main lady DJs… And then it just started happening, everywhere we went. 'Oh, we're the Go-Go's, we're the Go-Go's." Gramlich added, "We thought if we formed a DJ group, just the girls, we'd get more exposure that way and more gigs. We picked the 'Go-Go's'" because they were a popular girl band – we looked at the group as our role models. We weren't into the rock thing but when the Go Go's were hot we figured we'd named ourselves the Go-Go's too."

As a DJ crew, the Go-Go's mostly performed at hall parties and battles. One of the first gigs was a battle against other established crews, including Non-Stop Boogie, Unlimited Productions[12] and Ultimate Creations – all male crews. Anies recounted,

> The first battle, we battled guys and they wanted to battle us. We were like, "ok!" We were kind of being picked on just because we were the girls. [Rumors would be] "oh, they think they're all that but they got help from all their little guys, let's see what they can really do"… Amy was better than a lot of the guys out there and I think that was really pissing them off. When you see a girl up there who was doing so much better than you, I think that was a reason they challenged us the very first time."

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[12] Unlimited Productions is not to be confused with Unlimited Sounds, a separate crew entirely.

As Anies related, male DJs and audience members initially treated the Go-Go's with suspicion, presuming that they were fronted by men, rather than standing on their own abilities and merits. Moreover, the fact that the Go-Go's were almost immediately challenged to a battle upon formation is highly unusual. Battles are accorded a certain level of prominence and importance based on the prestige of the crews involved. Inviting nascent crews into a competition was unusual at best, let alone against established crews such as Non-Stop Boogie and Ultimate Creations. As Anies suggested, Gramlich's skills as a DJ threatened the masculine pride of male DJs who previously only dealt with women on the dancefloor and not as competitors behind the boards. This battle can be read as an attempt by these male crews to humiliate and discredit the Go-Go's as gimmicks or frauds, thereby reasserting a masculine order undisturbed by a female presence. However, when the Go-Go's placed second in the battle, their competence could not be so easily dismissed. Ironically, the Go-Go's discovered more detractors in their midst, this time other women.

According to the Go-Go's, following their initial visibility, a nemesis arose in the form of another female DJ crew, YNT (Young 'N' Tough), out of Wilson High School in the Avenues. The Go-Go's insisted that YNT only came into existence to challenge them, "I think [they formed out of] jealousy because they came out of nowhere. They really came out of nowhere," said Anies. Furthermore, Ruaro recounted that after the first Go-Go's battle against the male crews, "YNT, they spread a rumor that we were using a tape."

In order to settle this emerging conflict, the two crews held a DJ battle in the fall of 1982 in San Francisco. The Go-Go's walked away victorious but this did little to quell the encroaching divisiveness from others. This negativity began to affect the crew's morale and according to Anies, "After the YNT gig, everybody was just picking on us," and as a result, the Go-Go's eventually disbanded. "We still all hung out, we just didn't…pursue [more gigs]. We just didn't want to deal with everybody talking about us" said Anies. Gramlich continued to spin with D.T.L. and other Balboa crews and Anies and the other women were still actively involved in the party scene but the Go-Go's, as a crew, ceased to exist, barely half a dozen gigs into their career.

CHAPTER 4
IMAGINE THIS: THE SHOWCASE ERA (1983-1989)

One of the single largest DJ events held during the mobile era was Imagine 7, in 1987, held at the San Mateo Fairgrounds (Figure 5). Sponsored by Mark Bradford's Imagine Productions, it was estimated to have drawn over 3,000 people, with *two dozen* crews performing. Almost every sector of the Bay's DJ community was represented: Oakland's Ladda Sounds, Daly City's Unlimited Sounds, San Francisco's Ultimate Creations, San Jose's Unlimited Play, and Fremont's Images, Inc., among 19 others. More so than other events in the 1980s, this congregation personified the meaning of a *showcase*.

In the parlance of the mobile scene, a showcase was any event where several crews came together to perform. Promoters – not the crews themselves – were the primary sponsors of showcases; they fronted the overhead expenses, prepared the promotional flyers, but also reaped the profit. Though promoters like Imagine , AA Productions, Just 4 Fun, Destiny, Expressions and others sometimes paid DJs to participate, in many cases entire crews would donate their time and equipment simply for the exposure. Given the competition between crews in limited markets, any opportunity to distinguish oneself or gain a larger audience was as important to basic business needs as it was to social reputations since the two were largely inseparable. Unlimited Sounds' Anthony Carrion explained the relevance of showcases to new groups:

> I think it was real important to get the newer DJs out there. That was, if you wanted to get known quick, you would do these showcases and people would know you right away. Rather than just doing gigs here and there, it would take a long time before you established how good you were and what you had. If you did the showcases, you got known very fast.

Battles were a specialized form of showcases (Figure 6), where two or more crews would compete with each other for a cash prize or other kind of recognition, but the main goal for crews was to avoid losing. Carrion elaborated on the nature of battles and the pressures they applied on participating crews: “The battles were more stressful because you did not want to lose, you did not want to be the worst out of 4 or 5 DJs. You had to be the best. Especially for us, we wanted to be there at the top. We didn't want to be last” (Carrion, 2002). However, in regard to maintaining and/or elevating one’s reputation, all showcases were forms of competition. While they were ostensibly there to play music for the audience, the crews were also putting themselves on display.

The Imagine showcases and battles (Figure 2) played the role of kingmakers within the mobile scene, especially among second and third generation crews. In both her experience and research, Melanie Cagonot observed, “Imagine was important in the sense that everybody knew [about it] - if you did an Imagine gig, you would have tremendous exposure. And if you won an Imagine [battle], forget it, you'd have gigs left and right.” Chilltown Crush Crew’s Dell Farinas explained that a showcase like Imagine was more than just a big gig.

> You had 4-5 groups there. And it was pretty much who could provide the best "wow!" The opening part, the intro, who could make you [say] “wow!” with the best light show, music. It was a combination of stuff. As opposed to just a big party…when [a showcase] had 4-5 groups in one big room, you had the crowd moving from DJ to DJ to DJ. So it was interesting. You could watch which people rocked out to which DJ the best.

The most important legacy of the showcases was that they drew massive, diverse audiences together from across the Bay Area. If mobile crews took their craft through the Bay’s different cities and counties, the showcase worked in reverse, bringing audiences

from all over to congregate in a single venue. In a very real sense, these showcases were one of the foremost ways in which community was built among Filipino youth. The showcase era, which lasted well into the 1990s, became a central hub through which the DJ scene helped shape the identity of the Filipino youth community.

* * *

Of all the major personalities who helped shape the mobile scene in the 1980s, none was more surprising than Mark Bradford. For 10 years, from when Bradford first established his Imagine showcase series in 1983 until his death in 1993, he was instrumental in promoting mobile DJ crews to the Bay Area's public. Yet for someone who spent so much time working among teenage, Filipino American DJs, Bradford was not a DJ, not young, and not Filipino. Instead, he was a 30-something, Tagalog-speaking, white, gay real estate broker from San Francisco, as controversial as he was ubiquitous. Undeniably, his Imagine series were one of the mobile scene's most important institutions.

Little is known about Bradford previous to his creation of Imagine except that he was a disco/dance aficionado with substantial financial resources and a gift for socializing He threw his first Imagine in 1983 and the series soon became a twice-a-year event, held in venues like the Irish Center and Fort Mason (both in San Francisco) that could accommodate crowds of upwards of 1,000+ people. Bradford heavily promoted his events through flyers – sometimes printing over 20,000 for a single event – that he divided among the invited crews, depending on them to distribute them to their local fan base. It was a shrewd strategy since the more crews he invited, the more informal promoters he gained. As Imagine's reputation swelled, word-of-mouth became another

way in which the larger public became aware of his events. Moreover, as Imagine grew to become the scene's most prestigious series, DJs considered simply getting their crew name on an Imagine flyer (Figure 2) as a mark of achievement and distinction. Midstar's Ray Viray explained, "[Bradford's] flyers alone are good enough. If your name is there, to some people you are untouchable. You want to make his list." This attitude was shared among many of my respondents who acknowledged that being headlined on an Imagine flyer was an accomplishment and a sign that they had "made it" within the scene.

Despite their size and popularity, the Imagine events rarely netted Bradford any profit because his overhead costs were enormous. According to Arleen Alviar, who worked with Bradford through the course of the 1980s, "He never made any money. He would never make any money at all…He'd have to pay his DJs…his expenses were high and half the people coming in were not paying." However, if money was not the primary attraction for Bradford, attention was. Said Alviar, "He wasn't in it for the money…He was in it for the light…very diva. When he would throw his gigs…he'd have all these sparkly clothes…and he'd want to be on the mic all the time. He wanted the spotlight."

Not insignificantly too, Alviar (among others) stated that Bradford, "was in it for the excitement of being around boys." Bradford's sexuality was openly known, as was his predilection for young Filipino men. That fetish was not simply a lurid aspect of his mystique, but was considered by the DJ community as a major *raison d'etre* for Imagine's existence. Hosting the Imagines, even at a substantial financial loss, brought Bradford in contact with hundreds of Filipino teens. As a powerbroker, he had tremendous influence over the youth he worked with. He regularly blacklisted crews that fell out of favor with him, excluding them from participating in Imagine events, no matter

how important their reputation within the scene. This happened to San Francisco's Electric Sounds, because, as founder Rene Anies suggested, "I knew what he was about… At that point, I didn't want to have anything to do with him…and he knew that. I didn't know about the blacklist until a year later."

What Bradford "was about" was allegedly exchanging money, equipment or other gifts in return for sexual favors from Filipino youth. This allegation recurred throughout my interviews, yet no one admitted that they were part of such an arrangement. However, almost all intimated that they "knew people who had," but refused to cite names. Interestingly enough, these rumors acquired a life of their own over time and became a way in which crews or DJs could attack and discredit one another. To suggest that a DJ/ crew was too favored by Bradford carried with it the implicit accusation that they had sexually compromised themselves with him.

Daly City's Ken Anolin was one such victim of these rumors after his crew, Fusion, lost the Imagine 2 battle but came back to win Imagine 3. Anolin recalled that their victory at Imagine 3 was called into question because their set-up was not as elaborate as their competitors and soon, disgruntled people began to suggest that Fusion won on more than just talent. "The rumor had it that there was some relationship between me and Bradford and that he's going [to allow us to win Imagine] 3."

Such an implied allegation was a serious insult on both personal and professional levels but Bradford's queerness was far less an issue among DJs than the fact that he peddled his power as a wealthy promoter to encourage young teens into sexualized arrangements. Alviar, who had close working and personal relationship with Bradford argued that many of the alleged relationships that crews had with Bradford were idle

rumor but she also acknowledged that the basic premise – that Bradford exchanged gifts for sex – was true.

> Mark offered boys, "if you do a little 'something something,' whatever, then I can get you those speakers. And they would comply. A few times some of the boys have admitted to me - I won't mention who they are but they wouldn't deny it - they kind of admitted to me that they would give Mark a little 'something something' and they got like a car or like they got like a suit. It was sad because he was basically molesting, preying on these youngsters."

Not surprisingly, Bradford's reception from the DJ community was mixed. San Francisco's Farinas echoed Alviar's comments when he said, "Mark Bradford wasn't somebody who I really liked because of what he did...he was basically a child molester. And I knew it was wrong back then. [He] was somebody that used to throw these big parties just to make himself a queen over all these little kids." However, others had more positive memories of Bradford, including Olympiada who altered his impressions of Bradford, despite initial wariness:

> After I ran into him, he seemed to be an okay guy. [I told him,] "Just don't mess with me and you'll be all good." Then what Mark Bradford did, since he dealt with the Filipino community a lot, he put an organization [Imagine] together to actually have the Filipino community come together, combine as one. It was really weird, a guy like that having so much power. But he turned out to be a nice guy, he had his rules down.

Besides complimenting Bradford as "an okay guy," Olympiada credited him for helping to bring the Filipino community together, i.e. "combine as one." The Imagine series, by attracting primarily Filipino youth, was a primary force in encouraging young men and women from across the entire Bay Area to socialize with one another. This would have a profound impact on shaping the nature and identity of the community by helping to bridge the geographic spaces separating Filipino youth from one another. Imagine was

not the only kind of event of its kind to accomplish that, but during its 10 years, it held the highest profile and thus played a prime role in how Filipino youth congregated within the mobile scene.

* * *

Styles Upon Styles: The Third & Fourth Generation (1985-1989)

In the midst of the showcase era, the growth of new mobile crews was nearly exponential. The success enjoyed by first and second generation crews like Unlimited Sounds and Ultimate Creations only increased the interest of other youth to form crews. By the mid-1980s, a new cadre signaled a subtle changing of the guard. The rise of the third generation crews such as Spintronix, Style Beyond Compare (SBC) and Second To None (STN) marked a zenith within the mobile scene in terms of visibility, influence and innovation. Concurrent with their rise was the sprouting of many smaller crews like Live Style and Just 2 Hype. Coming together at the end of the 1980s, these 4th generation crews comprised the last major wave of mobile outfits before the entire scene went into decline. Though these smaller crews may have been in the shadow of more prominent peers from previous generations, their endeavor to stay relevant and competitive in such a dense community still offers some important insights into the mobile scene and its impact on the Filipino youth community.

In this section, I begin by focusing on the history of Daly City's Spintronix. Not only did they quickly become one of the largest of the 3rd generation crews, but they also claim to be one of the oldest remaining crews. Celebrating their 20th anniversary in 2005, this crew has lasted longer than almost any other from the mobile era and they have not simply survived, but thrived. They continue to actively garner mobile work, especially

weddings and corporate events, and their members have taken on prominent positions at local radio stations as mixers. More than their longevity though, the main impression I was left with by Spintronix's core founders – Jay Dela Cruz, Chris Miguel, Dino Rivera and Kormann Roque – was how close their relationships remain after all these years. While other crews fractured under internal tensions or simply atrophied out of existence, Spintronix has embodied a "family" model oft-touted by others but rarely achieved. In reviewing their history, one gains an understanding of the popularity of the mobile crews from the perspective of belonging to a crew itself. Though DJing may have been the activity that brought these youth together into Spintronix, it was the crew that offered the incentive to remain, even after two decades.

* * *

If Balboa High School was ground zero for the mobile scene in San Francisco, its counterpart in Daly City was Westmoor High. The campus rests near the junction where Eastmoor Boulevard turns into Westmoor, sitting high upon a massive glade of well-maintained grass. The streets that wind around this sprawling campus are lined with rows of identical homes and a few apartment complexes. In contrast to the cramped, dense neighborhood that surrounds Balboa, Westmoor reflects the suburban environment in Daly City that attracted so many Filipino families in the 1980s.

Technically, Jefferson High, where Unlimited Sounds was born, was the first school in Daly City to claim a mobile crew but Westmoor collected several generations of talent, beginning in the early 1980s with Fusion's Ken Anolin, and Unlimited Sounds' Apollo Novicio, and then Spintronix by 1985. Spintronix was initially the amalgamation of two other, smaller Westmoor crews. Chris Miguel and Jay Lorenzana founded the

original Spintronix while Kormann Roque and Dino Rivera were in a slightly older crew named Modern Motion (Dela Cruz, 2002). After Lorenzana moved away to Chicago, Miguel was in need of other DJs to work with and after speaking with Roque, they struck upon the idea to merge the two crews with Miguel and Rivera as the two main DJs and Roque handling master of ceremony duties. Once Jay Dela Cruz was introduced to the group through a mutual friend, the final Spintronix founding team came together.

All four of these founders came to DJing through familiar sources: garage and hall parties being thrown by more veteran crews like Daly City's Midstar Productions and San Francisco's Ultimate Creations. The crew benefited from timing – most of the core members of Anolin's Fusion had graduated Westmoor by 1985, leaving a vacuum that emerging crews like Spintronix and Style Beyond Compare were able to fill. Unlike other crews that built their reputation slowly, especially through garage party gigs, Spintronix quickly aimed at landing bigger events like school dances, cotillions, and showcases (Rivera, 2002).

One of the things that aided Spintronix's rapid rise was the collaborative talent of Rivera and Miguel and their two DJ/four turntable mixes, which first debuted on May 9th, 1985 at the "Battle of the DJs" at Philip Burton High in San Francisco. To explain: a standard DJ set-up includes two turntables that the DJ uses to mix from one song to another. "Quick mixing," a popular style mentioned earlier, was a way to test a DJ's skill at creating as smooth mix while simultaneously switching between songs on each turntable as quickly as possible. With a four-turntable mix, a pair of DJs could create mixes impossible with just two turntables. For example, if they executed properly, they could have four overlapping songs playing at once. Also, a quick mix by a single DJ is

limited by how fast he or she can pull one record off and place a new one on. With two DJs on a quartet of turntables, transitions could be done in half the time, especially when a routine was properly choreographed and practiced.

Rivera and Miguel were not the first DJs to invent a four-turntable style – part of Ultimate Creations' mystique arose from how Gary Millare and Gil Olympiada mixed in tandem. However, like other crews, Spintornix frequently recorded their mixes and passed them out to friends and fans. Copies of these tapes filtered through the community and helped Spintronix make a lasting impression in the community, according to Dela Cruz:

> Remember, back then, those days were the purist form of the DJing era. Everything was done live. No editing, computers, sampling, etc. Although other crews did 4-turntable mixes, very good ones I must say, there was always something special about a Spintronix 4-turntable mix. It had an aura, a swagger. There was always a feverish anticipation from other crews, promoters and party people for our next 4-turntable release. Over the years, we've heard that the mixes made its way from Northern California to Southern California...all the way to New York and New Jersey.

Especially in the competitive field of the mobile crews, anything that could help an outfit distinguish itself was a way to increase their exposure. Rivera recalled, ,"What made [the tapes] unique - each one had its own unique marketing, not just the fact that it was four turntables . We and Chris wanted to have quality. We introduced a different style to it which really made it stand out and that's what people liked about it."

Spintronix learned much from their predecessors, especially Ultimate Creations. Throughout our various interviews, Spintronix members frequently cited the San Francisco crew as part of their inspiration, and much of Spintronix's own sound and visual design was founded on the principles that Ultimate Creations had laid out:

innovative and pristine presentation. During one group interview, three of the members recounted:

> Roque: We were also experimenting with lighting. We were the first ones to look for people that had lasers. We were the first one to use the laser? That's what everyone said. We were the first ones to look into that stuff.
>
> Miguel: We had this guy papier-maché an actual skull and put oscillators inside the eyes. We would do crazy stuff like that.
>
> Rivera: It was a big Halloween party and the flyer was drawn in a cemetery scene, coffins with speakers in them, skulls. So at that event, we made the flyers come to life by recreating the scene live in person. We made all these props, tombstones and skulls.

From their inception in 1985 through the waning days of the mobile scene in the early 1990s, Spintronix was a constant presence in the showcase scene, having headlined their share of Imagines and other similar events. Unlike most other crews though, Spintronix survived the end of the mobile era. They owe their continued presence to a series of business-oriented decisions – uncommon foresight within a scene where most DJs treated their craft as a hobby rather than a profession. Most notable was their decision to form a registered Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) in 1998**.** In Dela Cruz's words, "We've gone corporate to target corporate," a nod to how Spintronix now develops much of their business from handling corporate gigs, business opportunities that very few mobile crews would have ever thought to have pursued in the 1980s.

Spintronix's development as a business has been one of its defining features and in the summer of 2004, the crew demonstrated that acumen again by splitting into two separate entities: Spintronix and the new STX. Dela Cruz explained,

> STX consist of the younger guys, their sole focus are the schools, clubs, car shows, the party scene,' etc. Basically, a younger demographic. Which, by the

> way,, will eventually grow up to work in corporate America, get married, have kids...which leads them to...Spintronix Corp. [who can] do their weddings, office holiday parties and baptisms. Spintronix Corp.'s sole focus is the weddings, corporate events, private affairs, etc. Both sides are recruiting the appropriate personnel; we're booking more gigs, we're aggressively marketing Spintronix Corp/STX and building for the future.

For all their business talent however, what is most remarkable about Spintronix is their continued enthusiasm and dedication to a "family" model of the DJ crew. Especially from Dela Cruz, the crew's most vocal booster, descriptions of Spintronix are always couched in the ideals of brotherhood and family. This passage is particularly representative of his attitudes towards the idea of a crew being more than just a collection of individuals:

> Once the DJing, the music scene, is in your soul, is in your blood, you're hooked for life. This whole Spintronix thing has been a part of my life for nearly 20 years and it's something we've cared so much for. We've cultivated, seen its highs, seen its lows, and it's really molded us as individuals into what we are today. Getting to know these guys, it becomes an extended family. These guys are all brothers. We're in each others' weddings, some of these guys are each others' kids' godfather. The wives are friends. It's become a real family.

Dela Cruz's sentiments are hardly unique within the scene: many other DJs felt about their crew in similar ways: as families, as brotherhoods, etc. – but Spintronix's continued success at a time when almost all their peers from the 1980s have disappeared is a testament to the continued strength of their original model, both as a business entity and as a social organization. The camaraderie that Dela Cruz speaks of was not just with crews but at times, between them. Spintronix's emergence in the mid-90s also coincided with the rise of the "alliance," a phenomenon that exemplified the interplay between competition and cooperation within the scene.

* * *

Gathering the Legion: Battles and Alliances

As Anthony Carrion mentioned earlier, battles and showcases pushed crews to represent themselves in the best light possible especially because DJs were putting their reputations *and* livelihoods on the line. Competition between crews within local neighborhoods or schools was already fierce, with DJs regularly underbidding one another for business, but the formal setting of a battle made the stakes and tensions higher. The particular responses that crews exhibited towards this competition, both destructive and productive, reveals the ways in which these DJs negotiated a community within their own ranks – how they separated themselves, how they came together.

Tension between crews was largely indirect and could express itself in various levels, i.e. giving a DJ a scornful stare during their set, spreading aspersions about them behind their backs, or other less confrontational ways. However, in the heat of competition, some friction manifested physically – instead of undercutting a rival crews' bids, some turned to actually cutting their opponents wiring or destroying equipment before a battle. Acts of sabotage were rare, but more common were attacks on credibility, such as accusing another crew of using a tape instead of performing live. Jay Dela Cruz recalled

> My very first Spintronix gig I attended was a battle and I think it was our very first party collectively. It was us against Fresh Beats Incorporated, who were African American, and Fascination, who were Chinese. This was in May of 1985, after school. We lost because Chris [Miguel] and Dino [Rivera] were on four turntables and they accused us of playing a tape. We had trussing, we had lights - nobody else had that - but we lost.

Crews whose performances were judged to be impossibly intricate were sometimes accused of using a tape – the equivalent to accusing a singer of lip-synching during a supposedly “live” performance. Such a charge was serious among a community that prized the ability to perform under pressure. To level the accusation was to call into question their very integrity.

In some cases, such as Dela Cruz’s anecdote above, the charge was unfounded but still damaging. In other cases, DJs would resort to unethical tactics in order to gain an advantage over their competitors. For example, according to promoter John Francisco (Expressions):

> I remember judging a battle in Union City and this one kid swore up and down that his set was his very own. I think he took the first part of every Spintronix tape that I had ever heard and made it into his set. And so he was sitting there having an argument with the promoter saying "why did I lose?" [The response was,] "Well one of the judges [Francisco] feels that you're a biter." And he's all "no I'm not, that's not the case. This is all me, my original set." I said " we can go back to my house and I can pull out all my Spintronix tapes and show you where you got it from". I guess he figured that since they were in the South Bay [whereas Spintronix was from Daly City], we wouldn't know.

Lest I paint too dark a picture of the mobile scene’s competitive side, it must be said that the DJ community also encouraged a great deal of cooperation and camaraderie between crews. Though mobile groups often had to compete with one another for gigs, they were still drawn from the same neighborhoods and high schools. Even if DJs were in battles against one another, that did not always damage or change existing friendships or stifle the desire for groups to look after one another.

For example, in some cases, older crews would mentor younger ones. The crew Live Style Productions was a fourth generation crew that included students from Balboa High in San Francisco and Westmoor High in Daly City. When Live Style formed in the

mid-1980s, Spintronix was a dominant crew out of Westmoor as well and they took Live Style under their wing. Spintronix brought the younger crew to gigs and gave Live Style's DJs time to mix at their events. Q-Bert was a member of Live Style and he remembered, "We did a lot of shows with Spintronix and whatever shows they couldn't do, they would hand it down to us." Through this mentorship, Live Style gained an advantageous foothold within the competitive mobile DJ field.

However, the best example of cooperation between the crews was the creation of informal and formal *alliances*. An alliance was a partnership between two or more DJ groups to loan equipment or provide assistance to one another. They came into being mostly out of the rise in showcases and battles – times when a participating or headlining crew needed to have as grand and impressive set-up as possible. If their own equipment was insufficient – lacking enough speakers or amplifiers or lighting, for example – crews would turn to friends to borrow their hardware. Melanie Cagonot explained that with battles, "People would go all out because it was a competition. They'd bring 100 feet of truss and all their lights and borrow stuff from other groups. At this point, people would ally – borrowing speakers, or lights because they wanted to beat this other group (Cagonot, 2001). Skyway Sounds' Jim Archer (aka Jazzy Jim) concurred, "If I had a big battle, I'm going to Burt [Wong from Sound Sequence, asking], 'Hey dog, let me get 20 feet of truss, two helicopters, and smoke.' At the end of the day, it was alliances...there was a network that they would pull off of."

Most of these alliances were informal but a few would actually create a name and identity for themselves, however tenuous or ephemeral. Francisco Pardorla, from Fremont's Images, Inc. recalled that in the South Bay, there was an alliance called Empire

(Pardorla, 2002), while Carrion recounted how three Daly City crews, Unlimited Sounds, Midstar, and Unique Musique, briefly formed and performed together in an alliance named the Juice Crew . Even as late as 1991, in the twilight of the mobile era, new alliances were being formed. On the back of the "Stompin' Into Tha 90s" flyer from 1991 (Figure 7), an announcement declares a performance by "Daly City's newest alliance, The Power (Featuring Spintronix and The Beat)."

The biggest and best-known alliance drew together crews from across the Bay Area: the Legion of Boom, formed in 1986. Named by Burt Kong of South City's Sound Sequence, the Legion eventually included Fremont's Images, Inc., Union City's Creative Madness, Daly City's Midstar, and Style Beyond Compare. In the summer of 1987, the Legion made highly visible appearances by headlining both AA Productions' Summer Showcase III (Figure 8) and the Imagine 8 All-Star Summer DJ Battle (Figure 9).

From Legion members Kong and Pardorla's perspective, the Legion was not just a way for groups to share equipment but also to find new ways to perform. As the Legion, they boasted a sound system that was bigger than practically any rival. Added Kong:

> It was another way also to market ourselves…If you were an independent promoter, you could just book us all…at a good price, you know what I mean? It's cheaper for all of us too. Every member and every crew would just divvy [up the] equipment… we'd have a couple of meetings before each gig to figure out what we're going to bring and stuff like that. And it's fun…we used to have around 16 quakes [i.e. large club speakers] and that's a lot a lot of 18 inch woofers.

That potential – to build the ideal sound system – was as much an incentive behind the alliances as any business concern. When I asked Pardorla which alliance was superior, he beamed and excitedly insisted, "Legion of Boom of course! We were the loudest, and we always used to say, down South, they had the sound, but no lights. SF crews are very

flashy. They had all lights, but no sound. We were right in the middle. We were the best of both worlds."

Certainly, not all alliances were as formal as the Legion of Boom but even casual alliances still reflected a spirit of cooperation. For example, during the late-1980s/ early-1990s, the Westlake scene in Daly City was built by two local crews – Second To None and Style Beyond Compare – who co-sponsored showcases together. STN provided the lighting and SBC brought their audio equipment.

* * *

I emphasize these examples of both cooperation and competition within the DJ scene to flesh out the interpersonal dynamics of this community. As a cultural activity based at least partially on economic motivation (i.e. earning money at gigs), showcases and battles were two of the ways that a crew, especially a newer one, could distinguish themselves against the massive backdrop of their peers. That kind of pressure within an already competitive environment did not always foster amiable relations, especially when personal issues such as romantic rivalries or bruised egos came into play. Yet, it is equally important to note that this was a scene made up of fellow classmates, neighbors, and friends, and that despite the forces of capital that may have driven some crews apart, these groups also found ways to build partnerships with one another and lend assistance when needed.

These alliances, both informal and formal, represented some of the best communal values and qualities that the mobile scene engendered: the desire to work together across geography and individual concerns to not only lend support, but also offer the audience larger and more spectacular performances. As Kong noted, there were

financial incentives, but for him and Pardorla, being able to create the most elaborate sound system seemed even more pleasurable than whatever extra business they might have earned with the Legion of Boom. These motivating factors reflect the importance of play and pleasure within the scene – having "fun" was not a superficial or secondary concern, but was very much at the forefront of what motivated these DJ crews. While intense competition could detract from their enjoyment by creating unnecessary tensions, alliances were an attempt to forge positive relationships that rewarded crews for cooperating, rather than always working against one another

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The Other Side: Just 2 Hype

Much of the mobile scene in the mid-to-late '80s can be described through magnanimous adjectives that try to capture its size and spectacle, but for every Spintronix or Legion of Boom, there were dozens (if not hundreds) of smaller crews whose exploits were not as legendary nor whose presence as larger-than-life. Yet their existence was as essential to the life blood of the scene as their larger peers, handling gigs that the mega-crews may not have wanted and creating opportunities for aspiring DJs to form their own outfits rather than trying to crash existing ones. In this brief section, I discuss the Daly City crew Just 2 Hype (J2H) and their experiences out of the limelight.

Derrick Damian, aka DJ Derrick D, provided me with the bulk of the crew's history. Born in San Francisco and raised partially in the Fillmore district before moving to Daly City, Derrick entered Westmoor High in 1986, just when the original members of Spintronix were already beginning to graduate from that school. Before becoming a DJ,

Derrick was a dancer, and his early competitive experiences came out of dancing battles. He noted that everything about his childhood seemed to revolve around competition:

> It wasn't always breaking, it was riding bikes, we was thrashing. And the wars - we had water balloons, rock wars. Wars would consist of, we'd be up on a hill and the other team would try to overtake that hill and if you're the defender of the hill, which was always our post, you'd throw rocks to keep those guys down. Of course, *Return of the Jedi* had just come out so guys had that fever of wielding lightsabers so we'd have to use broomsticks for that. It was the best childhood. No gangs either, no color wars, no drugs. It was straight fun, competition.

As a youngster, Derrick witnessed the early mobile scene, specifically citing Unique Musique as one of the early mobile crews he knew of, followed by Spintronix, Spinning Images, Music Masters, and the ubiquitous Ultimate Creations. In 1988, he auditioned to become part of Don Oh and Larry Cordova's crew, Ultimate Frequency, which changed its name to Just 2 Hype after accepting Damian. In 1989, they had their first gig, a school dance for Presentation High School, and after a few personnel changes, J2H ended up with Cordova, Derrick and a peer from Jefferson High, Jonathan Cruz aka DJ Shortkut, who would later find fame as part of the Invisibl Skratch Piklz.

From its inception, J2H's ambitions were modest. They kept busy but their gigs were generally simple. Derrick recalled:

> We were gigging every week, but it started off with family parties - Larry's family parties. And then referrals would land us more parties, more different family parties. Then we would advance to weddings and of course, there'd be some kids there and we'd advance to high school, then colleges. That's pretty much as far as J2H went.

Shortkut concurred:

> House parties, weddings...that's where I got the bulk of my knowledge of how to play to a crowd. Honestly, we were never part of a showcase or anything. We

> were a small group, we'd have like two quakes and two Cerwin Vegas and we'd borrow most of the other equipment from other groups to do the big gigs.

As Shortkut noted, part of J2H's limitations was that they were never as well-equipped as bigger crews like Style Beyond Compare and Second To None (two mega-crews out of Westmoor and El Camino high schools respectively). Said Derrick, "We didn't have equipment. SBC, Second To None had big, humungous lights, we had rope lights. We always called ourselves discount DJ's 'cause we had no equipment, but we had heart" (Damian, 2002).[13] The other major difference was music: Derrick and Shortkut enjoyed playing hip-hop even though their crowds were not always interested in hearing rap music. Derrick explained:

> That was my M.O. when I came into gigs. Everyone wanted to cha-cha, everyone wanted hi-NRG. Short and I would drop [rap songs like KMD's "Peachfuzz", [or Public Enemy's]"Welcome to the Terrordome." Me and Short would cut shit up, play up P.E. [Public Enemy], play [A] Tribe [Called Quest] and people would be so mad at us but we didn't care.

These kinds of stylistic differences reflected changing musical tastes within the scene: the older generation of DJs had grown up on fast-tempo dance music like freestyle and hi-NRG but for Derrick and younger peers, hip-hop became the soundtrack of their youth. The preference for hip-hop within crews like J2H reflected a growing schism within the mobile scene, one that would take on its full form with the rise of the hip-hop-influenced scratch DJs. What these small incidents revealed was the proverbial beginning of the end. The mobile scene was in the midst of small, but significant shifts in interest and practice

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[13] Rope lights were similar to Christmas lights, except the bulbs were located inside the larger wires rather than hanging outside.

that, in hindsight, can be seen as signals for the scene's eventual decline. One of the more obvious signals was the end of the showcase era.

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Last Call: Transitions Within the Showcase Era (1987-1993)

As Mark Bradford's Imagines were quickly becoming the premier mobile DJ event in San Francisco, across the Bay in Union City, Arleen Alviar waited. Like many other Filipino families, Alviar's came to Union City as a secondary point of migration. She herself was born near Portsmouth, Virginia – daughter to a Navy father (later turned mail office clerk) and a mother who was a nurse. The Alviars moved from Virginia to California in 1971, first settling on the island of Alameda and within six months, had relocated to the Alvarado neighborhood in Union City as part of a wave of Filipino families who moved to Union City/Fremont in the early 1970s just as new housing subdivisions were being completed.

Even as early as age 12, Alviar fell in with local Filipino youth gangs like the Union City Pinoys (UCP) as part of her social clique, attending garage parties with them and sneaking into San Francisco nightclubs like the Palladium and Studio West. When Alviar was finishing at Logan High School in 1985, she decided to throw a graduation party. She set her sights on renting Union City's Holly Center until she discovered that a classmate of hers, Anthony Tiyag, was also interested in the space for his own party. Rather than fall into a bidding war, the two agreed to sponsor the party together and thus named AA Productions after themselves: Anthony and Arleen. Their partnership ended after the second gig but Arleen decided to keep the name since it was already established and besides, most people assumed "AA" stood for Arleen Alviar.

Early on, Alviar's ambition was to draw together larger, diverse audiences from across the Bay Area. Alviar noted that Bradford worked almost exclusively within Filipino, and to a lesser extent, Chinese circles, concentrating on their large populations in San Francisco and Daly City. In contrast, Alviar wanted to market AA Productions events to a larger ethnic mix, one that reflected Union City's geographic location as a point between the heavily African American Oakland to the north, Latino-dominated San Jose to the south, and the many Filipino youth who lived around the tri-city space of Union City/Fremont/ Hayward. Francisco Pardorla began to work with Alviar in the mid-1980s, and he described how AA Productions purposely recruited crews from across the Bay as a way to increase the popularity of their events:

> It was the unprecedented at the time to bring these guys from the South and these guys from the North and put them together. So we started putting the battles like that, we were pitting North vs. South. Just like a fight promoter, it's all promotions. In real life, these guys had no grudges against each other, but it brings the people in.

Alviar herself explained that her desire to integrate her crowds reflected particular ethnic assumptions she held toward different groups:

> [I had] Samoan, Mexican, Blacks and but majority Filipinos still…I was purposely targeting other groups, another mix. You know, because Filipinos and Asians to me are pretty dead…they're boring. They just kind of hang out, they hold up the walls. You want to get like some Blacks and Mexicans and stuff because they'll dance.

Alviar's conscious attempts at integrating the Filipino party scene represented a gesture of inclusion that not all promoters shared, especially Bradford. According to Alviar, Bradford frowned upon her attempts to integrate AA Production parties, denigrating African Americans as "black creatures."

However, even if Bradford did not want African American patrons attending his events in large numbers, he did have the foresight to start inviting African American artists to perform. Beginning around 1987, Bradford began to turn his DJ showcases into concerts as well, hiring Black, Latino, and White dance and freestyle artists like L'Trimm, Sa-fire, and Debbie Deb to perform alongside the DJ crews (Figure 10). AA Productions soon followed suit within a year, recruiting hip-hop/dance artists like Afro-Rican, Trenier and Sweet Sensation to their events. This culminated in 1989 with AA Productions' "Summer Girls Showcase," held at the San Jose Civic Auditorium. According to Pardorla, this was their largest event ever – attracting over 3,600 to a sold-out event yet despite its outward success, the showcase proved to be a devastating financial disaster for Alviar. In a pattern that ironically followed Bradford's habits for over-spending, Alviar had run her expenses too high and was only able to recoup half her costs.

> I spent like…$64,000 and only $32,000 came back…I spent more than I was charging, you know, I…wanted everyone to be having fun so…I gave everybody limos and stuff. I was trying to do like how Imagine rolled – [Bradford] had to put everybody in the Hilton, you know? So I lost $30,000. It was hard.

Alviar's mother, who had helped manage her finances throughout, helped cover part of the loss and told her, "that's it."

* * *

Imagine did not survive much longer either. 1987 was a banner year for Bradford who hosted no less than four Imagine events including one battle and a New Year's Eve party. In 1988, Bradford sponsored a "Ladies of Love" tour (Figure 10) as well as Imagine 10 but after that, for reasons yet unexplained, disappeared from the DJ scene

from roughly 1988 to 1991. Though only three years long, within the fast-moving mobile scene, Bradford's absence was extended enough for many younger DJs to have forgotten him by the time Imagine 20[14] was held in 1991. Said Paul Canson, aka DJ Pauly Tek of Second To None, Bradford's reputation proceeded him: "The new generation, meeting Mark Bradford, was like, 'I heard a lot about you, you're fucking weird but I have a lot of respect for you still because you were making moves back then.'"

Respected or not, Imagine in the early 1990s was not on the same footing with where the series had been just a few years prior. Not only had the name "Imagine" been forgotten among younger party-goers but Bradford also had to contend with a far more competitive field of promoters than he was used to. Out of Union City, John Francisco and his friends helped form Expressions Productions just as AA Productions was fading out, sponsoring showcases/battles in Hayward, Newark and other East/South Bay cities. Billed as "Daly City's Unity 2 Crew" (Figure 11), Style Beyond Compare and Second To None also promoted their own showcases in locations such as Daly City's Westlake district, Foster City, and San Francisco. As late as 1992, there were still large showcases – the DJs Extravaganza series – being sponsored out of Santa Clara University in the South Bay (Figure 13).

In his heyday, Bradford had the power to muscle out competing promoters but after his 3 year hiatus, his influence had waned and his Imagine events no longer held the same kind of cache within the mobile scene as they once did. Bradford held his last major Imagine on November 27, 1991, at the Cathedral Hill Hotel in San Francisco (Figure 12).

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[14] Titling this Imagine, "20" was more imagination on Bradford's part than reality. There were no Imagines 11 – 19. On the flyer, it also says that this Imagine was celebrating the "20th anniversary" of the party series that that too seems unlikely since Bradford had not been promoting his parties as early as 1971.

Canson's dance crew, the Raggawinos, performed at the event and recalled its less-than-graceful end: "[My friend] Alvin was in a circle and he was doing those gyros,[15] flung his shoe off, straight up in the air. It hit one of the huge chandeliers and pieces started to crash down. They shut the party down right there. That was that."

In 1993, San Francisco police discovered Bradford's body in the burnt-out shell of his car, shot to death. Rumors abound regarding the reason for his death, including allegations that he had become involved in drug sales but no definitive motive or explanation is yet known. At the time of this writing, 12 years after his death, Mark Bradford's murder remains unsolved.

His death and the end of the Imagines did not formally end the showcase era, but it was an indication that something had changed. Showcases were no longer just about putting crews on display. For example, on the flyer for a DJs Extravaganza showcase from 1992, two different categories appeared: battling DJs (i.e. individuals) and showcasing DJs (i.e. crews) (Figure 13). This kind of delineation was unusual and had rarely existed before, even just five years prior. Within the mobile scene, a new kind of DJ was emerging – the scratcher – and as the next section explores in depth, this change represented an important and fundamental shift, not only in DJ culture but in community culture too. As crews faded underneath the rising shadow of star DJs, the scene's previous valorization of the communal unit (i.e. the crew) was steadily being displaced by a cult of personality surrounding individual, iconic figures. This shift both reflected and hastened changing values within the mobile scene.

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[15] A "gyro" is a breakdance move where the dancer executes a standing cartwheel.

CHAPTER 5

TAKE ME OUT WITH THE FADER: THE DECLINE OF THE MOBILE SCENE (1989-1995)

Scene Three: A Watershed Battle

1989: It could have been like any other DJ battle. On one side was Jim Archer (aka Jazzy Jim) of San Jose's Skyway Sounds. Opposing him was Richard Quitevis (aka Q-Bert) of San Francisco's Live Style. Sponsored by Expressions Promotions and held at Centennial Hall in Hayward, the battle was billed as a showdown for Bay Area supremacy between the best of the South Bay and the best of San Francisco. Archer opened, putting on an exemplary show of quick-mixing skills as he whittled his way through two stacks of records on either side of him, seamlessly switching between both until he had exhausted his supply. Q-Bert's routine also featured some quick mixing but what really caught people's attention was a scratch routine he performed, using the hit song, "It Takes Two" by Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock. Expressions' founder John Francisco described his impressions of listening to Q-Bert:

> I was walking from one side of the hall to the other. I stopped dead in my tracks. I was like "Jesus Christ, who the hell is this guy?" I mean, he was doing things to that record that I never heard in my life. I mean I heard people scratching before, but not like that. He was like a damn madman up there.

At the end of the battle, the judges were left in a quandary. As Francisco explained, "It actually threw off a lot of judges, they couldn't figure out exactly how to judge them. You had two different styles on two different parts of the spectrum, how do you deal with that?" Debate ensued but the judges eventually awarded the contest to Archer, a decision that Q-Bert protested, and the decision is still hotly debated today. No one questions the

skill of either DJ but the difficulty in establishing a consensus on which DJ style was "better" has been a debate that remains unsettled.

While the 1989 Jazzy Jim vs. Q-Bert battle may not have been the first instance of a mixer and scratcher facing off, many veteran DJs cite it is a symbolic moment in the history of the scene. That contest marked a crossroads in the evolution of DJing among the Bay Area's DJs that would eventually reflect changes in DJing practice around the world. Q-Bert might have lost that battle, but his generation of turntablists would overwhelmingly dominate DJing by the early-1990s.

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The invention of "the scratch" is credited to DJ Grandwizard Theodore, back in 1977.[16] As lore has it, Theodore was idly cueing a record back and forth and the sound it made under the stylus intrigued him (Pray, 2002). As he introduced scratching into his public DJ gigs, the technique quickly caught on with other DJs, especially among hip-hop groups, and it was not unusual for DJs to produce songs exclusively dedicated to showing off their scratching skills.[17] Scratching was given a tremendous boost in visability in 1983 with the release and success of Herbie Hancock's "Rockit," a jazz –rock fusion single that prominently featured the scratching of Grandmaster D.S.T. Hancock's subsequent appearances on both *Saturday Night Live* and the Grammys with D.S.T. only helped scratching gain a wider audience, and in a story common throughout the DJ community (Bay Area and otherwise), Kormann Roque credited "Rockit" with his initial exposure to scratching:

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[16] For more on the history of scratching, see Doug Pray's excellent documentary *Scratch* (2002).

[17] The best known example is Grandmaster Flash's "Adventures on the Wheels of Steel" (Sugarhill Records, 1982).

> *Q: When did you notice that scratching was becoming a big part of the DJ scene?*
> *KR:* For me, it was watching Grandmaster DST doing the "Rockit" thing. Man, when I heard that I was like "Damn."

However, while "Rockit" and the emerging popularity of scratching left a powerful impression on budding DJs nationally, within the mobile scene, the practice was met with a more lukewarm reception.

Scratching and mixing, while both skills that DJs must expend considerable time to master, are not necessarily complementary styles. As stressed throughout, a good mixer mediates music for the audience through his selection of records and more importantly, through his ability to transition between different songs. Scratching is far more radical, turning records and the turntable into a musical instrument itself, capable of producing rhythms and melodies that have nothing in common with the original music on the records themselves. These are very distinct abilities – not all mixers can scratch and not all scratchers can mix – the skill-set do not have to overlap with one another.

Likewise, the appeal of both scratching and mixing is similar but not identical. A mediator tries to connect the crowd to the music. Their success, as DJs, is largely determined by their ability to sustain and impact the energy of the dancefloor –the better the music and mixing skills, the more likely the dancers "surrender" themselves. A scratcher, in contrast, is more of a conventional performer in terms of seeking to present his or her talents to a receptive, observant audience. Scratchers do not want their audience to "surrender" to their performance if that means losing their rapt attention. A more accurate metaphor would be to say that scratchers seek to "hypnotize" the audience –

their performance is designed to awe and impress but to do so requires focus rather than wild abandon from the dancefloor.

As such, the introduction of scratching into the mobile scene was not met with much enthusiasm by most mixers. If most mobile DJs aspired to create as seamless a mix as possible, scratching was exactly opposite. The craft called attention to itself, often times interrupting the rhythm of the dancefloor. In the words of Francisco Pardorla of Images, Inc., "When scratching first came out, it was annoying. It would kill a vibe."

This brought scratching into conflict with the dancefloor focus of the mobile crews. Unlimited Sounds' Anthony Carrion remembered when DJ Apollo, one of the younger members of his crew, once started scratching in the middle of a wedding and Carrion had to reprimand him:

> Apollo was actually the first one to show me some tricks and stuff. He ended up at a gig, it was a wedding and he was trying to show me, and I was like,"No, not now, this is a wedding." He was transforming and scratching. "Don't do it now, you know, we're right in the middle of a wedding."

Orlando Madrid recounted similar incidents: "We'll be at a wedding and a teenager will come up and ask, 'Can you scratch?' We're at a wedding...hello?" Like Carrion, Madrid imparted that scratching during a dance (especially at a wedding) was particularly inappropriate because scratching would have directed the audience's attention away from the dancefloor and towards the DJ. As a result, scratching never made a major impression in the mobile scene itself but was relegated to side-show status. The way Pardorla explained:

> Everyone gets their 15 minutes of fame. That's what scratching was. Everybody could get their 15 minutes of fame. There were these promoters that would have a dance, and for the majority of the night, there were DJs playing records, then it would stop so that these guys could show off.

However, if scratch DJing was a marginal part of the mobile scene, that did not stop DJs from developing an interest in the artform. Some crews, like Unlimited Sounds, had what amounted to a "designated scratcher" – a scratch DJ given some stage time during a battle and showcase specifically for his scratching skills. These individual scratchers eventually began to seek each other out, even between crews that might have otherwise competed with each other. This is how the nucleus of the Invisibl Skratch Piklz[18] - DJs Apollo, Mixmaster Mike, and Q-Bert – came together in the late 1980s.[19]

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In the early 1980s, DJ Apollo attended Westmoor High in Daly City and initially created a reputation for himself as a breakdancer in Daly City's War Memorial scene[20]. He then turned to DJing when he joined the prestigious Unlimited Sounds. Q-Bert grew up in the nearby Excelsior district in San Francisco, and was a student at Balboa High (birthplace of Sound Explosion, the Go-Go's and other pioneering Filipino mobile crews) where he joined Live Style Productions. Mixmaster Mike spent much his teen years living between Daly City and Vallejo, and eventually joined the mobile crew High Tech

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[18] The scratch crew headed by the core of Apollo, Mike, and Q-Bert went under a variety of names beginning in the late 1980s. These included FM 2.0, the Shadow DJs, Rocksteady Crew. Eventually, they settled on the Invisibl Skratch Piklz in 1995, a name that lasted until their dissolution in 2000.

[19] What follows is a limited background of the Piklz. In their own right, based on their accomplishments and intriguing personal histories, the Piklz' full history demands to be written at some point. However, my focus was on their relationship to the mobile scene, and thus my comments on the crew address this field primarily rather than looking at the crew's larger history and import. For more information on the Piklz, see Tai, 1998 and Pray, 2002.

[20] The War Memorial was a park located near the border between Daly City and San Francisco. In the early 1980s, it became a popular site for youth into breakdancing.

Soundz in Sacramento.[21] While the core membership of the Piklz changed throughout the years, it was almost always the case that their DJs came out of the mobile scene.

The pivotal event that brought Apollo, Mike, and Q-Bert together was in 1991 when Q-Bert won the DMC (Disco Mix Competition) U.S. Finals, becoming the first Bay Area DJ to do so.[22] It was then that the three DJs, along with two rappers (FMD and H20) decided to form FM 2.0 (Furious Minds 2 Observe). The group took its name from the rappers but it was the three DJs who captured the media's attention. Up until that point in history, scratch DJs performed solo routines. However, beginning as early as the mid 1980s, Apollo and Mike had already begun to develop group scratch routines, later bringing in Q-Bert by the late 1980s. With FM 2.0, the three DJs created an *orchestrated* scratch routine - tandem *mixing* had already been a part of the mobile scene, but FM 2.0's innovation was giving each DJ a specific role within the larger group, like musicians in a jam session. For example, one DJ would act as the rhythm section, scratching a percussive beat. Another DJ would add in melodic elements, scratching up a horn line for example. The last DJ could find some vocals to play with, adding in another sonic layer, and the three would coordinate their routines in sync with one another.

At the time, this kind of coordinated group effort was virtually unknown in the larger DJ world but as the three DJs performed their routines at FM 2.0 shows, local

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[21] By the early 1990s, other former mobile DJs would join them, including Just 2 Hype's Shortkut, Sound City's D-Styles and Second To None's Yoga Frog (who would eventually manage the group).

[22] Ironically, in a parallel to Q-Bert's loss to Jazzy Jim in 1989, he lost the world finals that year to Germany's DJ Dave in a contest where each DJ displayed different sets of skills. DJ Dave performed a routine heavy on "body tricks," a catch-all phrase that describes different acrobatic and sleight-of-hand tricks that helped boost a routine's visual appeal. Q-Bert, on the other hand, relied on technical virtuosity in his scratching. Ultimately, the judges decided that DJ Dave's flashier routine trumped Q-Bert's superior scratch skills.

media (notably the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*'s Neva Chonin and *Bay Area Music Magazine*'s David Cook, aka Davey D) began to report on their innovations. Their biggest moment came in 1992 when the three, now performing as the Rocksteady Crew, successfully won the world title at that year's DMC competition. After Q-Bert and Mike (sans Apollo) defended their world title in 1993, they were asked by DMC officials to voluntarily retire from the competition, so as to not intimidate their colleagues (Inoue, 1996). In 1995, they formed the Invisibl Skratch Piklz and remained under that name until the group disbanded in 2000.

These victories, according to Travis Rimando (aka DJ Pone), initiated a "paradigmatic change in scratch/battle DJ values"[23] and helped cement the DJs' reputations as the world's best-known and arguably, most respected, scratch crew. Pone explained that while the Piklz' technical innovations, i.e. creating new kinds of scratches and DJ routines, are part of their legacy, one of their less obvious contributions was revolutionizing how scratch DJs marketed themselves and the community at large. Pone recalled meeting Q-Bert for the first time in1993:

> one of my striking memories of [Q-Bert] was of his constant promotion of himself and his endeavors. We went to a local DJ battle, and when he got on the mic, he was promoting his new battle record, the recently released "Battle Breaks." We later went to Kevvy Kev's show at KZSU…and again, after scratching live, he got on the mic and gave his same spiel on "Battle Breaks." His proactive and aggressive approach to marketing, unlike that of many other scratch/battle DJs, is yet another distinguishing point about him - the stereotypical image of a scratch/battle DJ is that of an antisocial recluse who prefers to be locked up in a bedroom, practicing.

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[23] One of the major paradigm shifts that Rocksteady's victory engendered was the devaluing of body tricks. From that point onward, the Rocksteady DJs set a new standard in technical, scratch proficiency that future DJs were expected to meet. Though body tricks did not become entirely passé, any routine that relied solely or mostly on body tricks stood almost no chance of winning.

In other words, Q-Bert and this emergent community of scratch DJs helped transform the image of turntablists from introverted, "bedroom DJs" into public figures who began to appear in television commercials, music videos, and motion pictures. In addition, DJ Shadow (Josh Davis) also credited the Skratch Piklz with dissolving the shroud of secrecy around scratch techniques. In Doug Pray's *Scratch* documentary, Shadow explained:

> The Piklz were the first to take the secrecy out of DJing because a lot of hip-hop DJing was about….not revealing your tricks. I think the Piklz were the first people to just be like, "Hey, here's exactly how to do what we do. We want you to go out and do it better so we can learn from you." I think that was such a giant step forward.

In essence, Shadow described how the Piklz made it easier for DJs to learn scratch techniques, and contributed to the expansion of the turntablist community. Like the mobile scene, the early scratch DJs mostly learned from one another –both communities originated within specific local spaces where person-to-person training and observation was possible. However, by the mid-to-late 1990s, through videos, Internet web sites and other resources, the Piklz and others created a body of knowledge that other DJs, regardless of their location, could access. Within a few years, competitive scratch DJs began to emerge in new cities, states and countries where DJing had rarely found a major foothold. For example, China has had no real DJ tradition to speak of – in a city like Shanghai, with over 17,000,000 residents, there are no stores that even sell vinyl records. Yet, in 2002, China held their first national DMC contest, attracting over a dozen competitors. The contest was won by Shanghai's Gary Wang, aka DJ V-Nutz, a DJ who learned the craft while working in Tokyo in the 1990s. Wong credited the importation of

scratch DJ videos into China as a major way by which aspiring Chinese DJs are now learning how to mix and scratch.

In contrast to the mobile scene, which intimately intersected with local communities and social networks, the rapid proliferation of turntablist knowledge through transnational media conduits – videos/DVDs, web sites, magazines – has created an international community of scratch DJs who boast a shared knowledge base and events (such as battles) which constantly unite participants in specific sites. However, one of the things lost in the transition from the mobile to the scratch scene was a sense of local community where DJs are part of larger networks of social relationships. For example, even as the Piklz were helping to build a larger turntablist community, within the crew a philosophical divide reportedly manifested at its very inception. According to DJ Apollo, he and Q-Bert disagreed over the crew's purpose – Apollo wanted the Piklz to retain parts of their mobile crew heritage by continuing to mix at clubs and parties but Q-Bert saw the future of the Piklz as a virtuoso, artistic musical group, rather than a band of party mixers.

> [Q-Bert] was really against us [saying] "well, all you guys are, are club DJs." And we were like "nah, it's incorporating everything." And he was like "no, we want to be hard core elitist." And we were like, "yeah, we're that too, but we don't wanna just be the hard core elite, we want to do [mix at parties] too…He never saw it that way.

This conflict in opinion represented more than just a difference in personal views – it also exposed a fundamental debate and shift that was on-going within the DJ community during the early to mid 1990s. The fact that most turntablists were/are organized into crews retains some of the basic familiarity of the mobiles, but many of the similarities

end there. For one thing, scratching has become far more of a distinct subculture within popular music and hip-hop in particular. While mobile crews plugged into a larger cultural world that included dance crews, family parties, school events, live music, record labels and radio stations, just to mention a few overlapping sites, the scratching scene is largely self-contained and removed from these larger networks. As a result, turntablism has developed into an arguably insular activity.

There is a certain complexity to this issue because turntablism has undoubtedly become a visible part of the pop culture mainstream – found in McDonalds' commercials, episodes of *South Park*, movie soundtracks, etc. Yet, while the turntablist aesthetic has gone global in geographic, economic and cultural ways, much of the turntablism community separates itself from the rest of the musical community, including peers such as radio/club DJs or newer mixtape DJs. In Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton's DJ history, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, they compare turntablists with a "cryptic cult" and argue that the impact of scratch DJing has been to distill,

> the essential elements of hip hop DJing…until it became an art form almost completely detached from its original dance floor function… At times, though, these scratch DJs seemed in danger of becoming obsessed hobbyists, competing against each other in increasingly esoteric competitions.

On one level, Brewster and Broughton overstate their concerns – the turntablist scene may be insular but it is undeniably a sprawling, global industry, complete with its own recordings, record labels, even schools.[24] However, they are accurate in noting that much

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[24] There are several "scratch" academies, including ones based in New York and London. In the Bay Area, the International DJ Academy opened in 2003, lead by Alex Aquino, a Filipino American entrepreneur who began with Unlimited Sounds and in the early 1990s, managed several members of the Invisibl Skratch Piklz prior to the crew's formal incorporation. For more information, visit www.icandj.com.

of the turntablism scene is removed from its roots in dance floor culture which most certainly includes the mobile scene's *ouvre*. In comparison to the mobile crews, who shared a symbiotic relationship with their audiences, turntablists often fall closer to the conventional idea of art performance where there are clear separations between performer and audience.. While scratching performances may not have such formalized, rigid divides between artist and audience as say, Western opera or orchestra, the crucial difference is that turntablists are performing *to* audiences rather than seeking to create a synergistic chemistry with them. Mobile crews like Ultimate Creations and Unlimited Sounds sought to impress their audience through their visual presentation and mixing skills, but that relationship was far more symbiotic: dance floor DJs feed off their audience and vice versa.

In contrast, most younger turntablists learn their craft as so-called "bedroom DJs," i.e. DJs who spend hour upon hour practicing at home but rarely venturing out with public performances the same way that party DJs do. Turntablism, as a whole, is very disconnected from the dancefloor and this constitutes one of the most important differences between the mobile DJs and the turntablists. Thus, when the Invisibl Skratch Piklz formed in 1995, it marked a symbolic changing of the guard within the DJ scene. The scratching crew had become ascendant while the dominance of the mobile crews quietly faded away.

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Plotted on a chronology, it is easy to assume that the decline of the mobile DJ scene was directly related to the rise of the scratch DJing – the logic being that interest in the latter drew DJs away from the ranks of the former. The rise of turntablism certainly

does coincide with the decline of the mobile scene but the popularity of scratching was only one of myriad factors – and one of the lesser ones at that - which explain the downturn in mobile DJ interest by the mid-1990s. It was a mix of both structural and cultural changes, afoot as early as the late 1980s, that predicted the mobile era's decline. For example, one of the biggest demographic changes was that the community became older. Though participants were often young when they began, most of those who had accompanied the scene's rise during the course of the 1980s were well on their way into adulthood by the end of the decade. For some, that meant DJing was no longer a viable personal activity in the face of commitments such as college, military, work or family. This is precisely what happened to Sound Explosion. Says Rafael Restauro, **"**We weren't doing as many gigs by then. We were getting older, we had all gotten out of high school, you know. Everybody was getting into the working field." Many other crews would follow a similar path, atrophying away from general neglect. Midstar's Ray Viray shares what is a typical anecdote about how crews ended. **"**it was slowly. The group didn't talk and split up. There was no verbal, 'it's over.' It just faded away and stopped." That lack of ceremony reflects the same casualness under which most crews formed – they came together under informal circumstances and they ended them the same way.

What also influenced the end of the era was a lack of recruitment on the part of many older crews. Though crews added additional members over the years, in most cases, the core decision makers and leaders within the crew remained the same since inception. As these individuals became older and involved with other commitments and interests, few of them had the long-term vision or desire to recruit new leaders to guarantee the perpetuation of the crew. This did happen in some cases – for example,

Orlando Madrid took over leadership of Non-Stop Boogie after all the original founders had left, but these situations were often the exception rather than the rule. In most cases, crew founders became disenchanted or bored with the mobile scene, and lacked compelling reasons to identify and recruit new leadership to keep the crew going. Even more significant, not to mention ironic, is that the very success and visibility won by the mobile crews also helped create some of the forces that led to their decline. What changed most was not the popularity of the mobile crews, but their necessity.

Remember that during the 1980s, the mobile crews provided a venue for music and dancing at a time when few other opportunities existed for their teenage peers. The club and bar scene did not cater to their tastes – let alone their age – and radio stations employed big-name club DJs like Cameron Paul but had not yet caught wind of the mobile scene. However, by the end of the decade, the prominence of the showcases and popularity of the mobile scene throughout the Bay Area prompted a reevaluation on the part of powerbrokers within the club and radio scene. Savvy promoters and programmers began hiring and booking DJs from out of the mobile crews as a way to attract the large audiences that traditionally followed them.

For example, radio stations like San Francisco's KMEL and KSOL began to hire DJs from the mobile crews to host shows or mix on air. This boon was bittersweet for some. Throughout the 1980s, Filipino DJs felt as if they had been passed over and ignored in favor of non-Asian DJs when it came to radio gigs. "You had to be white to move into the big radio stations," suggested Kim Kantares. While he was a long-time DJ for the smaller AM station, KPOO, Kantares tried to get DJ work through KDIA and KSOL – both larger commercial stations, who, like KPOO, programmed soul music.

Despite his extensive background in radio however, Kantares found himself shut out of both stations: “Even KDIA, KSOL, they laughed at us. Especially me, man, trying to get on KSOL. They were like, “it won’t work,” and then two months later, DJ white guy, Cameron Paul, is in the mix, and he’s playing hip-hop.” By decade’s end, most of the major urban contemporary stations in San Francisco were employing Filipino DJs, including Kantares who went to work at KSOL rival, KMEL.

By the beginning of the 1990s, there were also increased economic incentives for clubs and bars to work together with DJs and promoters to throw events in their venues. Spintronix’s Jay Dela Cruz writes,

> The DJs/DJ Crews that played for little or no money wanted to finally get paid! That's why there was a surge to start up party promotion groups (most of them former DJs). With several promotion groups going after the same target market, your competitive edge was hosting a party at a club – it added so much credibility to your party. And, the club/bar owners were hip to this money... they opened their doors to these folks.

Many changes were happening at once within the mobile community during this period from the late ‘80s to the early ‘90s. It was not just the DJs who were getting older, seeking new opportunities but the audience was aging as well. “Hall parties were thought to be "played out" or for teeny boppers (at least in my circles),” Dela Cruz writes. “As my generation got older, the next step was naturally the club/bar scene. During this time, we were in our 20s... ready for the club legally.” After years of sneaking into clubs, DJs and their fans were now old enough to get into these venues without subterfuge, a rite of passage of sorts. Hall parties became seen as more of a teenage activity, creating a generational split of sorts within the DJ audience.

However, the traditional hall parties were in trouble too. According to some, the end of the 80s brought with it an upsurge in violence at hall parties. Says Jim Archer, "as this mobile DJ [era] was dying down, it was the era when the young kids, and the gangs started getting back into it and that caused the trouble at the gigs." Promoter John Francisco of Expressions concurs based on his own experience: "you were catering to these younger crowds, problems came with them as well, so that's when the police came in. It became harder and harder to actually get venues." As Francisco suggests, this escalation in violence and police involvement made previously DJ friendly venues more wary of allowing parties to be thrown in their spaces. This was another compelling force that pushed the parties from the halls into clubs. Sound Sequence's Burt Kong observed, "I think the police, they crack down a lot harder on private parties and it's a lot harder to do it in that matter whereas it's so easy to rent a club." Clubs and bars usually provided their own security, thus assuming both the cost and liability from the DJs.

The expansion of the mobile scene into the clubs was long overdue, and in some ways, should have represented a second life for them. However, one unintended consequence of this shift towards hosting parties in clubs and bars had a devastating, adverse effect on them instead. Kong stated this problem clearly:

> Before, people rented halls like the Irish Center. The Irish Center has nothing but some big rooms, so then you have to get guys like Jay [Dela Cruz] to bring [Spintronix] to supply the sound system, the lighting, and of course, the DJs. Now promoters, they just rent a club that already has the sound, the lighting and things like that.

What Kong asserts is that clubs and bars that already came equipped with audio and lighting effectively eliminated the mobile crew's logistical *raison d'etre* – to help move

heavy equipment from venue to venue. Dela Cruz cites this fact as integral to the decline in mobile activity, giving one example with a promoter named Chuckles and his Bootyhop parties: "Chuckles, he'd have five DJs from five crews spin in a club and the equipment would already be there. There was no need for a mobile DJ to come and set up their stuff." *Tales of the Turntable* curator Melanie Cagonot adds that,

> I think it became a matter of convenience because now you could get paid two or three hundred dollars for playing a couple of hours by just bringing your records. You didn't have to lift these huge plates or rent a van or break your back, bring all this truss. The club already had it.

Cagonot draws attention to the economic component. Before, any money made at a gig was usually split between the members of the crew. As promoters booked individual DJs, whatever the DJ took home, the DJ kept and this financial appeal also helped lure DJs away from the bigger, more expensive and troublesome hall parties and into the relative efficiency of clubs.

The focus in the DJ scene shifted from the crews to individuals and this became the major cultural change that occurred within the DJ scene in the early 1990s. As noted earlier, this shift could be seen among the emerging turntablists but it was not limited to just them. Whereas the norm used to be for crews to get top billing. by the early 1990s, the individual DJ commanded more attention, more prestige, more money, etc. As DJs found themselves in the situation where they could now get gigs on the strength of their personal reputation, the power of the crew's name waned. Crews might still have offered DJs a sense of local community but the allure and promise offered by gigging solo held stronger. Says former DJ and promoter Pardorla,

> I think it's a lot about individualism. With a DJ group, the most famous guy is always going to be the guy behind the turntable and then it takes six other guys to support him – carry the equipment, hook everything up, do the lighting. You're part of a group as opposed to being an individual.

This is one of the reasons why, for example, Ultimate Creations ultimately disbanded. Despite the success and reputation of the crew, Gil Olympiada says that as Gary Millare (Genie G) gained more solo work in the late '80s, it created tensions with the crew.

> [It] started fading 87, 88, 89. Just people going different ways and stuff. People getting different jobs. Gary, when he was hot at the time, people offered him to start DJing clubs and different events. My brother Jose didn't like it, because the way our group was formed, we were like a small family. [His philosophy was,] "We play as one, you don't branch out and try something else." I was really supportive of Gary. [I would tell him], "Go for it, it's all you. But if you can get us some gigs, go for it." [laughs]

Similarly, Derrick Damian (aka Derrick D) recalled when he broke away from his mobile crew, Just 2 Hype (J2H) in 1994:

> I told [J2H partner] Larry [Cordova] "I'm going to go solo. If you see my name on a flyer and it doesn't say Just 2 Hype, it's not because I'm disrespecting you guys, it's more [that] I'm doing my own thing. You guys are my first and only crew and I'll keep you guys close to heart but I got to do my own because I can't do weddings. All the guys are old now and it's like, I can't be lugging equipment, doing all these gigs by myself." He understood and he gave my blessing.

What these accounts by Pardorla, Olympiada and Damian suggest is that, at some point in the late 1980s and early 90s, the value system of the crews had shifted from a communal identity to an individual one. The success of the crew mattered less than the advancement of the individual. Whether the new opportunities for individual DJs created this change in attitude or whether the change in attitude influenced the economic structure of the DJ business is difficult to say. As noted earlier, the fact that many of these DJs were growing

older, with more outside commitments weighing on them (school, work, family, etc.) would also likely shift their personal priorities to focusing on themselves rather than their crew. At the very least, there was a convergence of forces at this time in the scene's history that lead to the shrinking significance of the crew as an organizing unit.

Other forces compounded the draw for individual DJs to gain fame away from their crews. Within the DJ ranks, scratching significantly intensified the focus on the individual rather than a crew. Part of this was based on logistics: the traditional battle pitted crew vs. crew but scratch battles took place between individuals. Archer observed, "if you look at the kids that were [DJing], we wanted attention. The kids who started the mobile DJs, we really wanted to be good but also basically wanted attention, we wanted to be a star. With the scratching, I think people saw the opportunity to be a bigger star."

While early turntablists tended to be solitary figures, i.e. the lone person in their crew who specialized in scratching, the international success and visibility of Apollo, Mixmaster Mike and Q-Bert attracted younger DJs who began to form their own community, away from the mobiles. While many of the emergent scratch DJs in the early '90s were still members of mobile crews, as battles involving scratching took off, their attentions shifted towards their individual careers rather than the crew. Damian's partner in Just 2 Hype, Jonathan Cruz (aka Shortkut), a founding member of the Skratch Piklz, recalled how his interest in scratching took him away from his mobile career: "I wasn't there anymore to do gigs with them. I didn't expect to focus on [scratching] but I got so deep into it, especially going to New York for the first time, by myself. I saw the bigger picture outside of just the mobile scene." By the early 1990s, more and more DJs were

following in Shortkut's footsteps and the Bay Area saw the rise of scratch crews – the Piklz, the Bulletproof Scratch Hamsters, etc. – rather than mobile party crews.

Last, but certainly not least was also that, by the early 90s, there were other cultural activities coming into play that drew attention away from DJing. Foremost among these was the import car racing scene. Almost all my respondents cited the racing scene as one major force in explaining the decline of interest in mobile crews during the 1990s. Says Dela Cruz, "Instead of buying records, turntables and equipment, they're buying mufflers, stickers and cars.". DJ Pone joked, "About 95% of the mobile crews that I was aware of in my generation – as soon as they got their Honda, it was over," alluding to how potential DJs all fled that scene to get involved in the import car community instead.

The rising popularity of the import car scene can at least partially be explained based on how it also elevated individual status *alongside* promoting a collective identity. Racers were still organized into crews but whereas a mobile DJ crew was very specialized, with only one or two star DJs being supported by the rest of the group, within a racing crew, any member with a car had the opportunity to express themselves creatively. Pardorla observed, "At least with the import car scene, if you have six of your friends and each and every one of them could have a single car that looks totally different from the next one, you could have your own 15 minutes of fame" (Pardorla, 2002a). The spectacular rise of the import car scene is a more complex topic that is beyond simple explanation here but as the dominant cultural activity for the generation of Filipino youth in the 1990s and beyond, the racing scene drew the interest of many teens who might otherwise have gone into DJing like their older peers had done.

This confluence of factors did not mean that mobile DJs disappeared entirely. Some of the biggest crews, including Spintronix and Style Beyond Compare (SBC), continue to find mobile work around the Bay Area. Other former mobile DJs who kept their equipment, such as Orlando Madrid from Non-Stop Boogie and Unlimited Sounds' Anthony Carrion, still hire themselves or their equipment out for gigs even if they no longer have an organized crew supporting them. With Carrion in particular, he has started a lucrative business operating photography studios that cater to events, such as weddings, by offering packages that include photo, video *and* DJ services.

Despite the continued existence of DJs who provide mobile services to parties, dances, weddings, i.e. all the main venues of the mobile era, the cultural presence and dominance of the mobile crews no longer exist. There are no longer battles or showcases that highlight and promote the scene and even the concept of a crew name has become an anachronism within the Bay Area's music community – most DJs perform under their names and their names only.[25]

Yet, despite the passing of the mobile scene, its traces continue to linger. Apart from the fact that mobile DJ services still proliferate throughout the Bay Area, there is an increasing number of DJs who are returning to the dance floor culture that the mobile crews once cultivated. While this does not represent anywhere near a wholesale return to the dominance of the mobile crews, it does suggest that some of that era's influences

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[25] One notable exception is DJ Rick Lee, a popular KMEL and club DJ who was a member of the Third Generation crew, Style Beyond Compare (SBC). In his promotional radio spots and paper materials, the Chinese American DJ still identifies himself as "DJ Rick Lee of SBC". It should be said that this has a practical element attached since SBC still actively provides mobile DJ services and thus, Lee references to his crew acts as a form of advertising as well.

continue to thrive, especially among former mobile DJs themselves. In the Bay Area, the most prominent example is the Triple Threat DJs.

* * *

Postscript: Triple Threat and the Evolution of an Aesthetic (1999 – Present)

In April of 2003, the Triple Threat DJs, made up of DJs Apollo, Shortkut and Vinroc, restaged a hall party at San Francisco's DNA Lounge. Just like the cooperative alliances of mobile days of yore, Triple Threat were helped by Non-Stop Boogie's Madrid who supplied the lighting equipment for the event as they promoters tried to capture the old atmosphere of the hall parties, complete with "fog machine, helicopter lights, all that" (Raines, 2003). Apollo and other DJs played quick mixing sets in the tradition of the mobile days. Their motivation to hosting the event, according to Jonathan Cruz (Shortkut) was out of boredom with the current DJ scene in the Bay Area:

> We're just tired of the scene... It's the same DJs, same music. [We wanted to bring back] that feeling to go a hall party back then, and once you walk in, you see this crazy ass set up, it's on some rock shit. We just felt, damn, that's missing and it was something that brought the kids together back then too. I'm sure the new kids probably won't understand what the hell is going on but it's definitely a twist.

Triple Threat formed in 1999 between Vincent Punsalan (Vinroc), Apollo Novicio and Cruz. The latter two were storied veterans of the Bay Area mobile scene as members of Unlimited Sounds and Just 2 Hype respectively, not to mention co-founders of the Skratch Piklz. Joining them was Punsalan, a two-time world champion turntablist with a distinguished mobile DJ background before moving from New Jersey to the Bay Area in order to form Triple Threat. All three men have distinguished themselves in the public

eye through their turntablist talents, yet their roots as mobile DJs has largely influenced their contemporary, professional careers.

Triple Threat are not a mobile crew insofar as the group does not travel with their own equipment but their performances are intimately influenced by their background in the mobiles. They are first and foremost, dance floor DJs, spinning a mix of hip-hop, reggae, house, R&B and other dance music in clubs around the world. In contrast to turntablism's performance art approach that separates audience from artist, Triple Threat aspire to connect with their audience through their mixes. With their combined experience, Triple Threat are experts in how to read a crowd and supply them with music that both fulfills their expectations for the familiar as well as testing new surprises on them. Novicio noted the importance of retaining that connection with the audience as mixers:

> Before we were turntablists, we used to be mobile DJs… People forget about that style. New kids that are just picking up on [DJing] nowadays, they just go straight into the battle stuff and the trick stuff. Which is cool, you know - to each his own. But we feel like you shouldn't forget the basic fundamentals of DJing either. Because you miss out on an important part of it if you don't go through that step (Reines, 2003).

Novicio's identification of mixing as a "fundamental" of DJing skill reinforces the aesthetic values of the mobile era. It was non-stop mixing that inspired most of the mobile era's DJs to even pick up the craft to begin with, drawn to the aesthetics ability to affect audience mood and energy. Novicio implicitly critiques one of the outcomes of the turntablist era when he says that new DJs "just go straight into the battle stuff and the trick stuff" because, in his opinion, these DJs treat mixing as unimportant and therefore,

do not even bother to learn it to begin with.[26] In contrast to the attitude that scratching requires a higher level of artistic skill, Apollo said, "making the crowd move and making the people move on the dance floor is as much as an art form as turntablism. I mean scratching and stuff is a little bit more technical and stuff, but everything else is an art form as well, whether you're playing breaks or playing a club."

Triple Threat are a hybrid crew that brings together the aesthetics and skill sets of both the mobile and turntablist era. As DJs who have been important players in both eras, Apollo, Shortkut and Vinroc have the experience and perspective to advance their own vision of what DJing practice should embody. Though all three DJs boast exceptional technical skills when it comes to scratching and other turntable manipulations they are equally, if not more, concerned with their ability to connect to their audience on a visceral level, feeding off their energy and channeling that verve back out to the dance floor through their mixes. Importantly, Triple Threat are not necessarily staunch revivalists, nostalgic for "the good ol' days." None of them, nor their peers[27], advocate for a return to the economic and social structures of the mobile era. However, what they emphasize is that today's DJs not forget the important skills and values of the past generation. For them, the mobile era taught them how to connect with other people through music performance, a chemistry that Novicio feels is in danger when younger DJs forget about

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[26] I interviewed Triple Threat in 2001 and we engaged in a lively conversation about how many of today's DJs learn scratching but do not possess a fundamental knowledge of non-stop mixing, even from the technical basics of beat-matching.

[27] Triple Threat are not the only hybrid scratch/party DJ crew out there. In Los Angeles, their counterparts are the 12 year old Beat Junkies, which has been home to prominent Filipino American DJs such as Babu, Rhettmatic, Icey Ice, Symphony as well as former Piklz' D-Styles and Shortkut. Like Triple Threat, the Beat Junkies came out of L.A.'s mobile crews and then excelled during the scratching era. Also like Triple Threat, since retiring from active turntable competition in 1998, the Beat Junkies have focused mostly on returning to spinning at clubs and parties, integrating their skills as both mixers and scratchers.

the “fundamentals” of DJing. For Triple Threat, their recreated hall parties offer both a taste of the nostalgic to today’s crowds but they also demonstrate what was once possible in the bonding DJs with audiences and what may be possible yet again.

CHAPTER 6
WHY FILIPINO DJS? (SOME ARMCHAIR THEORIES)[28]

One topic that I have not directly addressed so far might seem to be the most obvious: we may know about the history of the Filipino mobile scene, but what was it about this scene that attracted the attention and involvement of so many young Filipino men and women. Given the myriad activities that young people had at their disposal in the 1980s, what explains the intersection between DJing and the Filipino community?

In probing this question, I've always been careful to avoid overly simplified cultural explanations that try to find some essential kernel of "Filipino-ness" that can explain it unless there are rational social, economic, historical, etc. reasons behind that. Just to use a really obvious example from Filipino culinary habits – adobo isn't popular "just because" Filipinos like the taste of it. The use of vinegar in adobo – which gives the dish its most pungent flavor – also acts as a preservative, allowing adobo to be packed and carried over time and distance without spoiling. Of course, not every cultural practice has such a practical explanation but with DJing, I assumed that there had to be some root explanations for Filipino involvement. My favorite joke came from DJ Q-Bert who said something to the effect of, "it's because we're all short and that makes it easier to reach the turntables."

On a more serious note, this was a question I asked all my respondents and very few of them had direct theories. Quite simply, few of them had ever considered the question to begin with – they took it for granted that the mobile scene was big in Filipino

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[28] The following chapter is a highly simplified adaptation of several chapters of my dissertation. It is, I admit, not as tight a chapter as I would have liked but under time pressure to get this first draft out, I made do with what I had. In future editions, I plan to expand on this considerably.

circles, but not why. It was through combing through all my interview notes that some themes and trends began to crop up and by the end of it, I feel that I was able to draw out at least some of the most salient forces at play. There is no single explanation – rather, it's a combination of several forces (economic, social, cultural, geographic) that I believe helps explain the Filipino interest in mobile DJing in the 1980s.

On a basic, individual level, the recurring comments I got were that DJing gave young teenagers access to three things they desired: members of the opposite sex, money and social status/power. These are still enticements for practically any social activity that young people get involved in but DJing was well matched for it. As a DJ, you were the center of the party scene – everything revolved around you – which meant that you were tied into your school or neighborhood's social scene. Once at the party, there were plenty of opportunities to meet and talk with new people – especially potential romantic/sexual interests. And the icing on the cake? People *paid* you to do this. It was like earning a small living to be popular.

However, on the latter note – income – what this raises is the central importance (and sometimes ignored factor) of family and community networks. Burt Kong of Sound Sequence once quipped that the reason why DJing was so popular in Filipino circles was because, "Filipinos just party more," and while people get a good laugh from that, there's something important in his observation. Time and time again, my respondents noted that almost all their early gigs tended to be parties thrown by families celebrating birthdays or weddings or debuts or a garage party thrown just for the hell of it. All these parties wanted music and this gave the budding DJ scene in the late '70s and early '80s an ideal financial and social platform to launch their careers. Especially given the cost of

equipment – well into the thousands – mobile DJing likely would never have taken off strictly as a hobby if not for the financial element that could help pay for tech and records. It's not that DJs pursued the craft to make a living – very few of them ever turned much of a profit that didn't go straight back into equipment or music or dinner at Denny's – but the fact that they could get paid off DJing had both practical and symbolic worth. With their families, for example, DJs could show that their weekend activities were actually a form of entrepreneurship and this could be a source of pride.

What is unique about the Filipino community is precisely how extensive these family and community networks run. As an immigrant community that gravitated largely to the same communities – Daly City, Fremont, Vallejo, for example – budding DJs didn't have to go too far to find someone throwing a house party who needed a DJ. Once they had that footing down, they could build their reputation and start doing school dances, then hall parties, then work their way up to the gig showcases. It all began with the family party circuit for most though – both for reputation and financial capital.

There are other forces at play here too – for example, secondary migration patterns took many Filipino families from the inner city to the suburbs in the 1970s and '80s and suburban settings were far more ideal for a mobile scene that depended on things like cars (which many in the inner city don't own out of impracticality and cost) and garages (since you can't throw a garage party without one). That may seem self-obvious but these small forces matter a great deal in understanding how the mobile scene proliferated so quickly in specifically *suburban* neighborhoods whereas there were far fewer mobile crews from S.F.'s South of Market or Fillmore districts, despite a large Filipino population in both areas (class privilege also plays a key role here too).

Last but not least, anecdotally speaking, I received many comments about how people grew up in households where Western music was just a way of life, going back to the Philippines where people or their parents would listen to American rock n' roll or R&B on the radio. I think that familiarity and integration of American pop music into everyday Filipino family life plays an important role here too. By itself, it's not enough to explain the phenomenon, but in concert with other forces, it helps build a larger explanation.

However, I think there is also a simpler explanation beneath much of this – not removed from the other factors, but perhaps the easiest to understand. What we saw happen with the spread of the mobile scene is that once young teens saw what their peers were capable of – the attention, the money, the status – they wanted these things too and so they followed suit. And then they, in turn, could help influence another set of peers who influenced another set and the scene grew virally from there. Without overstating this, there is something very powerful in seeing your peers succeed and realizing that because they've done it, that means you can too. I think this – as much as any other force – helps explain how the DJ scene took hold so quickly and why it grew from there. It's the power of having role models to follow and this brings to bear a quote from DJ Babu, for Doug Pray's documentary on DJ culture, *Scratch*:

> For American Filipinos, we don't really have role models as far as mass media goes. You know, there's no athletes, there's no actors…we have our parents and Q-Bert .

These factors may help explain the interest in DJing from the DJ's point of view but what explains why so many of their friends and peers came out to parties and supported the scene with their attendance and dollars.

The last thing I want to offer is an explanation for why the mobile scene was important to the Filipino youth community as a whole. When I asked Arleen Alviar why she thought so many Filipino American teens were attracted to the DJ scene, not just as DJs, but as party-goers. She replied:

> They're integrating now. You gotta be like the American style, you gotta be trying to get the job, and you know, we don't have time to stay together. Filipinos, they're big families, right? This is the way to bring it all back, you know, just within the Filipino thing. Because when you think about the parties, it's all Filipino, they catered to what the Filipinos want…I think it's the way of us… staying as a culture.

There is much to unpack in Alviar's comments but what I took her to mean is this: from her perspective, the desire to integrate/assimilate into American, middle class status has meant that Filipino Americans have become more distant from one another (figuratively and literally). The DJ scene provided a means through which Filipinos could come back together, by providing them with an environment and cultural scene that appealed to their sensibilities. In that way, the scene provided a cultural link that helped keep the Filipino community intact.

Looking at the information my other respondents offered, there is a compelling, though perhaps tenuous, confirmation of what Alviar suggests. What you saw in the 1970s and 1980s was the dispersal of Filipino families from downtown San Francisco to satellite cities around the Bay Area, done largely in search of middle class comforts like home ownership, more spacious areas, safer environments, etc. In the process, the Filipino community went from being packed into the dense space of San Francisco's inner city to relocating to cities, 30, 50, even 80 miles away. What is striking about this cartography is how relatively isolated these cities are from one another. Though San

Francisco and Daly City border one another, the next nearest Filipino center is at least 45 minutes away – Vallejo to the north-east or Fremont/Union City to the south-west, to say nothing of Sacramento or Stockton, both 90 minutes distant. Alviar argues that the DJ scene provided an incentive, a reason, for these youth from these disparate centers to move across space in order to meet and interact with one another. And in that process, the community retained some semblance of unity. The next section takes on this idea by examining how the DJ scene encouraged its participants – DJs and audiences alike – to be mobile, to cross borders in order to congregate in shared spaces as a way to build camaraderie. In that process, as I argue, a Filipino youth community was being forged.

It may seem overly dramatic to describe a trip across the Bay Bridge from Fremont to San Francisco as a "pilgrimage," but Filipino youth were drawn to these events through a powerful, shared desire to "be there." Paul Tumakay (Kicks Company) recalled:

> …when mobile DJing started catching on…that's when you had people who preferred to go to garage parties than clubs. And it was kind of unique because people would not only go to garage parties by means of cars and private transportation, but they took the bus, and you don't see that happening nowadays, people taking the bus. There would [also] be stories [about] a small, compact car, and 15 people in there trying to get to the garage parties.

While the story about 15 people crammed into a compact car is likely an exaggeration, the gist of what Tumakay related was repeated by many – in the words of Yusuf Rashid, "We'd get to the party one way or another." On one level, the attraction of these DJ events was very simple: they provided entertainment in the form of music and dancing. As social gatherings, they facilitated the mixing and mingling of different people, offering the potential of finding new friends and potential lovers.

The mobile DJ scene may have been created through the shared desires of Filipino youth to forge contact with one another, and learn more about the diversity within their community – be it geographic, cultural, social, etc. In that regard, the mobile crews helped create a place where this bonding could occur. However, the mobile DJ scene was not simply a product of this desire, but actively produced new forms of community as well. The following recollection by Rene Anies spoke volumes about the kind of community being forged through the DJ scene:

> These DJ groups formed we were doing parties for each other and got to see how other people [lived]… Taste their food, down to the food, everybody cooked one dish differently, 10 different ways to cook one dish. As something as little, as trivial as that, really, in essence, that's what it was. We were tasting each other's [lifestyles], how we celebrated our lifestyles. [My crewmates] used to make fun of me because we all did things differently and they said my language sounded backwards. But that was the thing, we learned about that and part of that was going to their family's parties and talking to their elders. In that sense, it did teach us a lot. People would never have thought of that, but it did.

Though Anies described learning the differences in food between families as "trivial" he still recognized that symbolically, the exchange was more than just culinary. Though Filipino Americans are often treated as a monolithic community, they trace their roots to one of the most ethnically diverse nations in Asia, reflecting disparate linguistic, cultural, and class backgrounds. For Anies, food might be an obvious point of difference, but it is representative of Filipino internal diversity – a diversity that participation in the DJ scene helped to bridge. Tumakay extended this idea, observing:

> In my opinion, one of the major positive things that the Filipino DJ really helped to bring about is getting familiar with the different community groups out there in a more social scene. Hanging out at Serra Bowl, you'd have to know someone or be part of a clique or gang. But…when you're at the dance party…you have to

> behave in a certain way,[29] so I think that's what helped…to sort of start binding all these different, disparate Filipino groups in different areas of the Bay…We weren't mature enough to [be aware of this], we were just like "this is cool." But when it comes to people enjoying themselves and trying to bond, the DJ groups really started that.

Tumakay recognized that part of what was happening at these events was the crossing of borders – not just literal, geographic borders, but cultural and social divisions as well. This idea took on additional significance when I received an email from Jeremy Monsayac, aka DJ Uprise, a 33-year old DJ from San Francisco. Reflecting on his many years in the mobile scene, Monsayac shared, "I mostly remember the energy at these parties. Everything was so new and exciting… You knew you were part of something special back then. Everybody knew everybody. It was definitely a shared experience." However, he went on to say that the ultimate legacy of that "shared experience" was that, "the party scene in the 80's helped give Filipinos an identity. As an ethnic group that had no real 'identity' in the same manner as the Chinese or Koreans, for example, the party scene helped give us something to claim as our own."

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[29] When Tumakay suggests that, at DJ parties, "you have to behave in a certain way," it recalls Will Straw's observations in Chapter 2 where he warns, "Bringing together the activities of dance and musical consumption, the dance club articulates the sense of social identity as embodied to the conspicuous and differential display of taste" (Straw, 2004: 92). This counters the ideal that dancefloors allow for total freedom from self-consciousness or conventional rules of behavior yet, in Tumakay's example, he is suggesting that the conventions at these dance parties actually helped facilitate contact between different cliques, thus assisting in the formation of community.

APPENDIX 1: PRIMARY RESPONDENTS[30]

Alviar, Arleen. Age:[31] 37. City:[32] Union City. Company: AA Productions.

Background: It was difficult to track Alviar down because she maintained only loose ties with current DJs but luckily, she was still listed in the phont book. In the mid to late 1980s, Alviar ran one of the bigger promotions companies of the time: AA Productions. Second only to Mark Bradford's Imagine series, AA Productions sponsored showcases and battles throughout the East and South Bay. She was a very candid and animated interview and held strong opinions about the people she knew within the scene, especially because she was in a prime position to work with many of the personalities at the time. Though Alviar retired from active DJ promotions in 1989, she continues to regularly sponsor community and youth events at her home in Union City.

Anies, Daphnie. Formerly Daphnie Gambol. Age: 37. City: San Francisco (Templeton). Crews: Disco Tech Ltd., The Go-Go's.

Background: See *Rene Anies* and Go-*Go's*.

Anies, Rene. AKA DJ Ren. Age: 39. City: San Francisco (Excelsior). Crew: Electric Sounds.

Background: I first met Rene Anies in 2001 when I was researching a story regarding the "Tales of the Turntable" exhibit at the San Mateo Historical Museum (curated by *Melanie Cagonot,* see below). Born in the Philippines, Anies immigrated to the U.S. as a young boy and after his family settled in the Excelsior district of San Francisco, he eventually attended Lowell High Thanks to friends and relatives, he knew about Sound Explosion and was influenced by both them and his visits to Studio West. He and his friends started Electric Sounds in 1979, one of the earliest crews following Sound Explosion. Given his experience as well as general demeanor, Rene was a tremendous resource of information and testimonies. Not only was Electric Sounds one of the earliest mobile crews, but they suffered through the tragedy of losing one of their own, "Tiger" Tapia, to gang-related violence at a garage party in 1981. This incident was noted by many in the mobile scene and effectively destroyed Electric Sounds along with it. Rene, along with his wife *Daphnie Anies* (see *Go-Go's)* were also helpful in supplying me with other contacts and opened their home to me to conduct interviews. Rene and Daphnie were also the only couple I came upon in the course of my research where both members came out of the DJ scene. Rene is also related to DJ Q-Bert

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[30] This does not include numerous other people who I conducted interviews with but whose testimonies and oral histories did not factor significantly into my final text.

[31] All ages are approximate and based on the year 2004.

[32] City refers to where they lived during their involvement in the mobile scene. When possible, I also included the neighborhood they were from, i.e. "San Francisco (SOMA)."

(see *Richard Quitevis* below) though neither man was sure which relatives they shared in common. Rene no longer DJs actively but still does on occasion.

Anolin, Ken. Age: 38. City: Daly City (Palisades). Crew: Next Phase, Fusion.
Background: I met Anolin at the "Tales of the Turntable" roundtable in January of 2002. Born in San Francisco and raised mostly in Daly City, Anolin, along with *Anthony Carrion* (see below), was one of the first people to help start a mobile crew out of Daly City in the early 1980s. While at Westmoor High (future school to Spintronix), he started Next Phase which later merged with another crew to form the aptly named Fusion. Anolin was one of the most enthusiastic among my interviewees, especially because he had rarely had any opportunities to share his history prior. Even after our interviews, he would send me additional thoughts and testimonies via email. Anolin actually returned to DJing after a long hiatus, partially out of inspiration from having reminisced about his days in the mobile scene.

Beltran, Sam. Age: 43. City: San Francisco (Excelsior). Crew: Sound Explosion.
Background: See *Sound Explosion*.

Cagonot, Melanie. Age: 32. City: Vallejo. Crew: 3D Sounds.
Background: Cagonot was one of the first sources of information I made contact with. I met her in 2001, as she was working on hosting an exhibit on Filipino American mobile DJ crews in the Bay Area, "Tales of the Turntable" (see Wang, 2001b). Cagonot was an active member in the 1980s party scene, having performed for years as a rapper (Lani Luv) and associating herself with various DJ crews including Sound Sequence (run by her husband *Burt Kong*, see below). Cagonot was instrumental in helping me with early leads for my research, not to mention the considerable body of knowledge she had developed as both a part of this scene and in the course of her research for the exhibit. Through her invitation to host the exhibit's roundtable discussion in early 2002, I was able to locate my initial round of interviewees. Cagonot currently works for a technology company in the Bay Area and has thought about resurrecting her Lani Luv alter-ego from time to time.

Canson, Paul. AKA DJ Pauly Tek. Age: 30. City: Daly City (Westlake). Crew: Second To None.
Background: Reflecting how small a world that DJ scene is in the Bay Area, I met Canson when I myself was DJing a gig in San Francisco in 2003. We spoke briefly at the event, realized that we knew some of the same people but when Canson learned of my research, he was immediately enthusiastic and offered to provide me with not only an interview but was also instrumental in providing me with flyers from the late 1980s/early 1990s mobile scene. Canson was born in San Jose, grew up in various parts of San Francisco, Daly City and South San Francisco. He was close to the War Memorial breakdancing scene in Daly City in the early 1980s before turning to DJing through Second To None, one of the

larger third generation crews. Canson was also involved of the youth group at St. Augustine and helped sponsor some of the many battles and showcases held at the church's hall. Later, by the late '80s and early '90s, as part of STN, he was involved in the emergent Westlake scene in Daly City. Canson continues to actively DJ though he mostly does club work rather than mobile work.

Carrion, Anthony. AKA The Carrion Kid. Age: 39. City: Daly City (Westlake). Crew: Unlimited Sounds.

Background: Carrion was referred to me through *Jay Dela Cruz* (see below). Born in Manila in the 1960s, Carrion came over to the U.S. in 1969 with his family at age 4. As far as my research shows, Carrion and his brother helped found Daly City's oldest Filipino mobile crew, Unlimited Sounds, back in 1980. Based out of Jefferson High, Unlimited Sounds quickly grew in stature to become the most well-known and prestigious crew out of Daly City for the better part of the 1980s (until Spintronix at least). Carrion was another excellent resource, with a considerable depth of knowledge about the scene's history and evolution. Carrion continues to DJ occasionally but his main work has been in opening a series of photography stores that sell package photo/DJ services for wedding parties. He current runs such a store in Vallejo but has been establishing others around the Bay Area.

Castro, John. Age: 34. City: San Jose (Berryesa).

Background: I met Castro through a friend and colleague, historian Dawn Mabalon. Castro was born in the United States and grew up first in north Chicago and then San Jose. Through his older brothers (see *Yusef Abdul Rashid*), he experienced the party scene of the 1980s and even helped form a short-lived mobile crew while in high school. Castro translated many of his childhood experiences in the scene through his creative work which includes his own 1994 short, Diary of a Gangsta Sucka (included on *The Debut* DVD, see Cajayon, 2003) and his later work in helping to write the script for *The Debut*.

Corpuz, Rudy. Age: 38. City: San Francisco (SOMA).

Background: I was referred to both Corpuz and his cousin *Kim Kantares* (see below) through writer Jeff Chang. Corpuz grew up in the downtown, SOMA neighborhood but also spent considerable time out by the Portrero Hill projects. Involved in both young gangs and dancing crews during the 1970s, Corpuz was able to provide valuable descriptions of the downtown scene during that era. Corpuz currently works in gang prevention, both at the Bernal Heights Community Center as well as Balboa High

Cruz, Jonathan. AKA DJ Shortkut. Age: 32. City: Daly City (Templeton). Crews: Just 2 Hype, Invisibl Skratch Piklz, Triple Threat

Background: Along with *Apollo Novicio* and *Richard Quitevis* (see below), I first met Cruz in the mid-1990s when he was a member of the *Invisibl Skratch Piklz* (see below). Born in San Francisco, Cruz grew up in Daly City and eventually

attended Jefferson High Along with *Derrick Damian* (see below), Cruz was a member of the Just 2 Hype mobile crew. In the early 1990s, he became more involved in the scratching scene and eventually left J2H in order to focus on his battling career. Cruz left the Piklz before its formal dissolution in 2000 and helped found Triple Threat (which also included Novicio). He continues to be an active DJ in the Bay Area.

Damian, Derrick. AKA Derrick D. Age: 32. City: Daly City (Serramonte). Crew: Just 2 Hype.

Background: I knew Damian through the local club DJ scene in the Bay Area and only discovered later that he had gotten his start in the mobile crews. Born in San Francisco, Damian lived in the Mission until his father moved his family to Daly City when he was an adolescent. While a student at Westmoor in the mid-1980s, he helped form Just 2 Hype which later included *Jonathan Cruz* (see above). Damian continues to actively DJ around Bay Area clubs.

Dela Cruz, Jay. Age: 32. City: Daly City (Serramonte). Crew: Spintronix

Background: I first met Dela Cruz through the 2002 Roundtable and his enthusiasm for my project, combined with his considerable contacts, made him one of my most valuable resources in finding other respondents. Dela Cruz was born in New Jersey and lived there until 1982 before his family moved to San Francisco and eventually Daly City. He attended Westmoor High where he met other future members of *Spintronix* (see below) such as *Dino Rivera* and *Kormann Roque*(see below). Dela Cruz helped handle the business side of the crew rather than working as a full-time DJ. He is still an integral part of the crew and currently works for a television sports network. He has also described interest in developing a documentary on the mobile DJ scene.

Farinas, Dell. Age: 39. City: San Francisco (The Avenues). Crews: Unlimited Productions, Chilltown Crush Crew.

Background: One of the *Go-Go's* (see below) referred me to Farinas since he was married into her family. Born and raised in San Francisco, Farinas was out in the Avenues where he attended Lincoln High but later transferred down to Daly City's Jefferson High because violent tensions at Lincoln made that school unsafe for him. While at Lincoln however, he and several friends helped form the mobile crew Unlimited Productions. Because of personal differences with the other members of the crew, Farinas took off to found Chilltown Crush Crew in 1984 which lasted another two years. Farinas moved down to Los Angeles briefly, where he helped support himself as a club DJ. Moving back after a year or so, Farinas joined the staff at KSOL, a local urban contemporary station and started working for Brentwood Entertainment, a large, more corporate mobile DJ service. Meanwhile, Farinas was also working as a correctional officer at San Quentin prison and eventually left DJing. He still owns all his records however and plans to share them with his nephew, an aspiring DJ.

Francisco, John. Age: 37. City: Union City. Crew: Foreplay, Expressions

Background: Francisco was another respondent who I initially met through the 2002 Roundtable. Born in San Francisco, Francisco spent a few years in Daly City before eventually settling in Union City. As a student at Logan High, Francisco first came to the DJing scene through a breakdancing crew, Freestyle, and in 1984, helped form the mobile crew Foreplay which later changed its name to Expressions. After graduating high school and attending college, Francisco majored in marketing and used his expertise to help transform Expressions into a promotions company modeled after *Arleen Alviar* and her AA Productions (see above). Expressions promoted most heavily in the late 1980s and early 1990s, helping to fill the vacuum left by the end of AA Productions and disappearance of Mark Bradford's Imagine series. Francisco has since gone onto a career in technology and business but he continues to promote events and work with younger generations of DJs.

Go-Go's (The). City: San Francisco (Excelsior). Year of activity: 1982.

Background: Formed at Balboa High in San Francisco in 1982, the Go-Go's were one of the first and only female DJ crews that emerged during the history of the DJ scene. Amy Celis (now Gramlich) was one of two primary DJs and Daphnie Gambol (now Anies) worked as MC for the crew. Both came into the DJ scene through family and friends involved in other Balboa crews, namely Disco Tech Ltd. and Non-Stop Boogie. Gramlich does not DJ full-time but she has done several smaller gigs with Daphnie's husband *Rene Anies* (see above).

Gramlich, Amy. Formerly Amy Celis. Age: 36. City: San Francisco (Templeton). Crews: Disco Tech Ltd., The Go-Go's

Background: See *Go-Go's*.

Invisibl Skratch Piklz. Cities: San Francisco, Daly City. Years of activity: 1995-2000.

Background: Up until their dissolution in 2000, the Piklz were regarded as the most influential and best respect scratch crew of their generation. They were actually the latest incarnation of an evolving set of DJs crew that began with the core membership of *Apollo Novicio*, *Richard Quitevis* and Michael Schwartz (aka Mixmaster Mike).

Kantares, Kim. AKA KK Baby. Age: 41. City: San Francisco (SOMA).

Background: Like *Rudy Corpuz* (see above), Kantares was referred to me by a friend, journalist Jeff Chang. Born in the Philippines, Kantares came to the U.S. in the early 1970s, at the age of ten and settled in the South of Market Area in San Francisco. He began as a mobile DJ (though not part of a crew) as early as 1975, having first been in a local Filipino American soul band called Stroke of Luck (S.O.L.). In the 1980s, Kantares joined the staff at KPOO, a local, independent, community radio station and as such, became not only one of the first Filipino American radio personalities of his generation, but has also been an influential

hip-hop DJ for the entire Bay Area. He is still on the air at KPOO and now lives in south San Francisco (the area, not the city of South San Francisco).

Kong, Burt. AKA King Kong. Age: 36. City: South San Francisco. Crew: Sound Sequence

Background: I met Kong through his wife Melanie Cagonot. Kong is Chinese American but spent much of his teenage years as an active part of the Filipino American DJ scene, especially since he grew up in the predominantly Filipino neighborhoods. As DJ King Kong, he was a founding member of Sound Sequence (South San Francisco) and helped form the alliance, Legion of Boom. Currently, Kong continues to work in the music industry as part of the staff for 75 Ark, a local San Francisco record label with many ties to the Bay Area party scene of the '80s and '90s.

Madrid, Orlando. Age: 39. City: San Francisco (Visitacion Valley). Crew(s): Sounds of Success, Non-Stop Boogie.

Background: I cannot remember for certain but I think Madrid was referred to me through *Rene Anies* (see above) since both men shared many of the same friends. Born and raised in San Francisco, Madrid was part of the large cohort of students at Balboa High that formed mobile crews by the early 1980s. Madrid himself started up a smaller crew called Sounds of Success but after a battle in 1982 with Non-Stop Boogie, he was invited to join the crew and eventually, took over leadership once the original founders retired. He also helped the *Go-Go's* (see below) get their start since he was the then-boyfriend of one of that female crew's two main DJs (Liza Dizon). Though Madrid has retired himself from active DJing, he still regularly loans out his sound and lighting equipment to other crews to use.

Novicio, Apollo. AKA DJ Apollo. Age: 34. City: Daly City (Serramonte). Crews: Ultrasonics Sounds, Unlimited Sounds, Invisibl Skratch Piklz, Triple Threat

Background: I first met Novicio nearly 10 years ago given our mutual sets of acquaintances in the Bay Area's DJ scene. Born in the Philippines, Novcio moved to San Francisco as a young child before settling in Daly City. He attended Westmoor High and was first a breakdancer before moving into DJing, first joining the crew Ultrasonics Sounds and then becoming a member of the larger Unlimited Sounds crew. In the mid-1980s, he befriended Michael Schwartz (aka Mixmaster Mike) and through Schwartz, met *Richard Quitevis* (see below). All three men eventually formed the *Invisibl Skratch Piklz* (see below) though Novicio left the group (according to him, he was asked to leave) soon after its founding in 1995. For several years, Novicio recorded with jazz saxophonist Branford Marsallis in a group named Buckshot Le Fonque. He is still a very active DJ, having joined with *Jonathan Cruz* (see above) as a member of Triple Threat.

Olympiada, Gil. Age: 37. City: San Francisco (Avenues). Crew: Ultimate Creations

Background: Born in the Philippines, Olympiada came to the U.S. in the early 1970s as an infant and his family settled in the Avenues of San Francisco's Sunset district. Along with his brother Jose and Gary Millare, Olympiada formed the

crew Ultimate Creations while in high school at Lincoln. He and Millare were the crew's two main DJs and from 1981 through 1989, the helped Ultimate Creations become one of the most respected crews in the entire Bay scene. After the dissolution of the crew, Olympiada left DJing for more than ten years before starting to get back into it because of his brother-in-law. He is currently the owner-operator of an 18-wheeler.

Pardorla, Francisco. Age: 37. City: Fremont. Crews: Images, Inc., AA Productions.
Background: I first met Pardorla at the 2002 Roundtable. He was born in the Philippines and arrived in America when he was three. His family settled in Fremont where Pardorla later attended American High He began DJing his sophomore year and joined Images, Inc. Later, towards the end of high school, Pardorla began to help *Arleen Alviar* (see above) with AA Productions. In 1995, Pardorla started Velocity Records, a music label, which was primarily know for freestyle pop artist, Buffy and he is currently with Wraith Records. While Pardorla does not actively DJ still, he still helps promote related events within the Filipino community in the Bay Area and works formerly as a graphic designer, a skill he picked up during his mobile career and later augmented with a BA in Graphic Design from San Jose State University.

Paul, Cameron. Age: 47. City: Daly City (Westlake). Club: Studio West.
Background: Tracking down Paul was difficult since he had left the Bay Area in the mid-1990s and few had kept tabs on him since then. I used the internet to locate him out in Tulsa, Oklahoma. From the late 1970s through the 1980s, Paul was considered San Francisco's premier club and later, radio DJ. He got his start in the burgeoning disco scene of the late 1970s and then minted his reputation at Studio West by the early 1980s. Not only an influential DJ, Paul was also an entrepreneur and founded Mixx-It Records in the early 1980s, a label that specialized in DJ-only singles. As a DJ at KMEL FM, Paul gained even more stature but a falling out with the station in the early 1990s effectively ended his career. He moved Oklahoma five years ago and became a veterinarian technician but plans on moving back to the Bay Area in hopes of reviving his DJ career.

Quitevis, Richard. AKA DJ Q-Bert. Age: 33. City: San Francisco (Excelsior). Crews: Live Style Productions, Invisibl Skratch Piklz.
Background: I have interviewed Quitevis on numerous occasions beginning in the mid-1990s. Born and raised in San Francisco, Quitevis attended Balboa High in the mid-1980s where he first joined the mobile crew, Live Style Productions. One of the first DJs in the scene to really pick up on scratching, he befriend Michael Schwartz (aka Mixmaster Mike) and along with *Apollo Novicio* (see above), the three were instrumental in helping popularize scratch DJing throughout the Bay Area and later, nation. Quitevis won the U.S. DMC DJ competition in 1991, lost at the world championship but came back in 1992 (with Schwartz and Novicio) and won then, and then successful defended the title in 1993 (this time with just Schwartz). In 1995, he and others formed the *Invisibl Skratch Piklz*. Quitevis,

arguably one of the best known DJs in the world, currently lives in Honolulu where he continues to practice scratching.

Rashid, Yusef Abdul. Formerly Joseph Castro. Age: 41. City: San Jose (Berryesa). Background: I located Rashid through his younger brother, John Castro (see above). Rashid was born in the Philippines and moved to the U.S. when he was six. Though his family first moved to north Chicago, Rashid spent most of his teenage years in San Jose where he actively observed both the party and gang scene in Berryesa. His recollection of his childhood was notable given his ability to remember specific details with candid clarity. He later converted to Islam as an adult (hence the name change) and currently lives in Sacramento.

Restauro, Eduardo. Age: 42. City: San Francicso (Excelsior). Crew: Sound Explosion. Background: See *Sound Explosion*.

Restauro, Rafael. Age: 42. City: San Francicso (Excelsior). Crew: Sound Explosion. Background: See *Sound Explosion*.

Rimando, Travis. AKA DJ Pone. Age: 28. City: Fairfield. Crew: Canned Beats, '89 Skratch Gangstaz, Hip Hop Slam, TFS DJs
Background: The youngest of my respondents, I met Rimando at the 2002 Roundtable as he was the lone representative at the panel for the scratch DJ generation. Rimando grew up in Fairfield, a moderate city north-east of Vallejo. Rimando was old enough to have taken part in the mobile scene as a member of the crew Canned Beats but he has primarily gotten involved in DJing through scratching, self-describing himself as a "scratch nerd incarnate." Currently an instructor at the Northern California DJ and Music Production Academy, Rimando helped provide me with insightful observations into the growth and changes within the scratching scene.

Rivera, Dino. Age: 37. City: Daly City (Serramonte). Crew: Spintronix.
Background: I was introduced to Rivera through the other members of his *Spintronix* crew, including *Jay Dela Cruz* (see above). Born in the Philippines, Rivera came to the U.S. in 1972 (at age 5) and lived in the Avenues for a few years before then moving to Daly City where he attended Serramonte, then Westmoor High Rivera is the oldest founding member of Spintronix, having already graduated Westmoor before the other members of the crew had. Along with Chris Miguel, the two were Spintronix's main DJs for many years. Rivera has since left full-time DJing and works for a large internet company but he still occasionally does with Spintronix.

Roque, Kormann. Age: 34. City: Daly City (Serramonte). Crew: Spintronix.
Background: Along with *Dino Rivera* and *Jay Dela Cruz* (see above), Roque was a founding member of the Daly City/Westmoor High crew Spintronix. Born in the Philippines, Roque immigrated to the U.S. at age 4, first settling in the Avenues

before moving to Daly City where he attended Westmoor High In Spintronix, Roque was the crew's main electrical/light expert rather than a DJ. In the early 1990s, Roque started Classified Records, a music label, which was primarily known for discovering freestyle pop hit Jocelyn Enriquez in the mid 1990s. Since then, Roque continues to work in the entertainment industry.

Samson, Brian. AKA MC Fly. Age: 39. City: Stockton. Crew: MC Fly Productions
Background: I was introduced to Samson through friend/colleague Dawn Mabalon. As someone who grew up in Stockton, Mabalon knew Samson as the city's main Filipino promoter. Born and raised in Stockton, Samson discovered an affinity for throwing parties while in high school and soon rose through the ranks to become one of the city's main promoters. He also DJed at a local college radio station and this assisted his visibility. During the 1980s, he would often travel to the rest of the Bay Area and recruit the major Filipino mobile crews to perform in Stockton, exposing these crews to new audiences and a more multicultural music scene. In more recent years, Samson moved down to Los Angeles to work in the music industry and he continues to promote events for Filipino professionals and community members.

Sound Explosion. City: San Francisco (Excelsior). Years of activity: 1978-1980.
Background: Sound Explosion is considered to be the first Filipino mobile crew to form, made up of students at Balboa High in San Francisco in 1978. Included in the crew were three of my respondents: Sam Beltran, Eduardo Restauro and his uncle Rafael Restauro. Beltran was one of the main DJs, Eduardo DJed and did lights while Rafael was the business administrator. Though the crew only lasted about two, three years, they were of great inspiration to other crews such as Non-Stop Boogie and Electric Sounds. Of the various members I spoke with, all left DJing in the early 1980s though Beltran has begun to play with mixing again.

Sparks, Willie. Age: 40. City: San Francisco (Sunnyside). Crew: Non-Stop Boogie.
Background: I was likely either given Sparks' contact through one of his former crew-mates such as *Orlando Madrid*. Born in the Philippines to a Filipino mother and white American father, Sparks grew up in San Francisco and attended Balboa High That is where he befriended Candido Anicete and other members of the first generation mobile crew Non-Stop Boogie. Sparks, in an odd coincidence given his name, was the crew's main electrical/lighting expert. He is no longer active in the DJ scene and works for the city of San Francisco, in heavy equipment.

Spintronix. City: Daly City. Years of activity: 1985 – present.
Background: Formed at Westmoor High in Daly City, Spintronix grew to become one of the most significant third generation crews. Besides boasting a large membership and professional business model, Spintronix was also one of the few mobile crews that made a concerted effort to develop new talent to help replenish their ranks as older DJs retired. That is one major reason why Spintronix is one of the very few crews that survived the mobile crew downturn in the mid-1990s. In

the late 1990s, they formed in a LLC and became formally incorporated. They continue to do active gigs weekly, including many corporate parties and weddings while other members have gone on to become radio DJs. Among their founding members included Chris Miguel, *Dino Rivera, Jay Dela Cruz* and *Kormann Roque*.

Tintiangco-Cubales, Allyson. Age: 33. City: Fremont. Crew: Nitelime

Background: As a professor at San Francisco State University, I first met Tintiangco-Cubales through academic channels but when I realized that she grew up in the Fremont, I interviewed her about her childhood memories. Born in Alameda and raised in Fremont, Tintiangco-Cubales attended American High where she befriended members of the mobile crew Nitelime. Though not a DJ, she was part of the crew's more informal membership. Her observations, especially as one of the few women interviewed for this research, have proved important.

Tumakay, Paul. Age: 40. City: San Francisco (Portrero Hill). Crews: Universal Sounds, Kicks Company.

Background: Tumakay was referred to me by *Jay Dela Cruz* (see above) of Spintronix who held Tumakay in great regard as a pioneer and experienced figure in the mobile world. Upon meeting him, I found this assessment to be entirely accurate as Tumakay had experience not just in the mobile world, but also in the dancing crews. He was born in the Philippines before moving with his family to Chicago in 1971. Around 1977, his family then moved to San Francisco where they settled by Portrero Hill. It was during high school, at Wilson High, that Tumakay first started dancing and like some of his friends at Balboa High (where Tumakay's brother Caesar attended) Tumakay was a member of Wilson's drill team. At Wilson, Tumakay and his friends/family founded a dancing crew called Mystic S.L.'s (standing for strutters and lockers) in 1978 and then added on a DJ crew called Universal Sounds in 1979 that later changed its name to Kicks Company in 1981. He longer DJs and works in telecommunications.

Viray, Ray. Age: 37. City: Daly City (Westlake). Crews: Unique Musique, Midstar Productions.

Background: Viray was likely a referral through either *Jay Dela Cruz* or *Anthony Carrion*. Born in the Philippines, he came to the U.S. as a young child in the early 1970s, first settling in SOMA before moving to Daly City. As a student at El Camino High, in 1984 he helped found one of the first mobile crews at that school and one of the early Daly City crews: Unique Musique. Later, he split off from the group and helped found Midstar Productions. Viray no longer DJs.

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

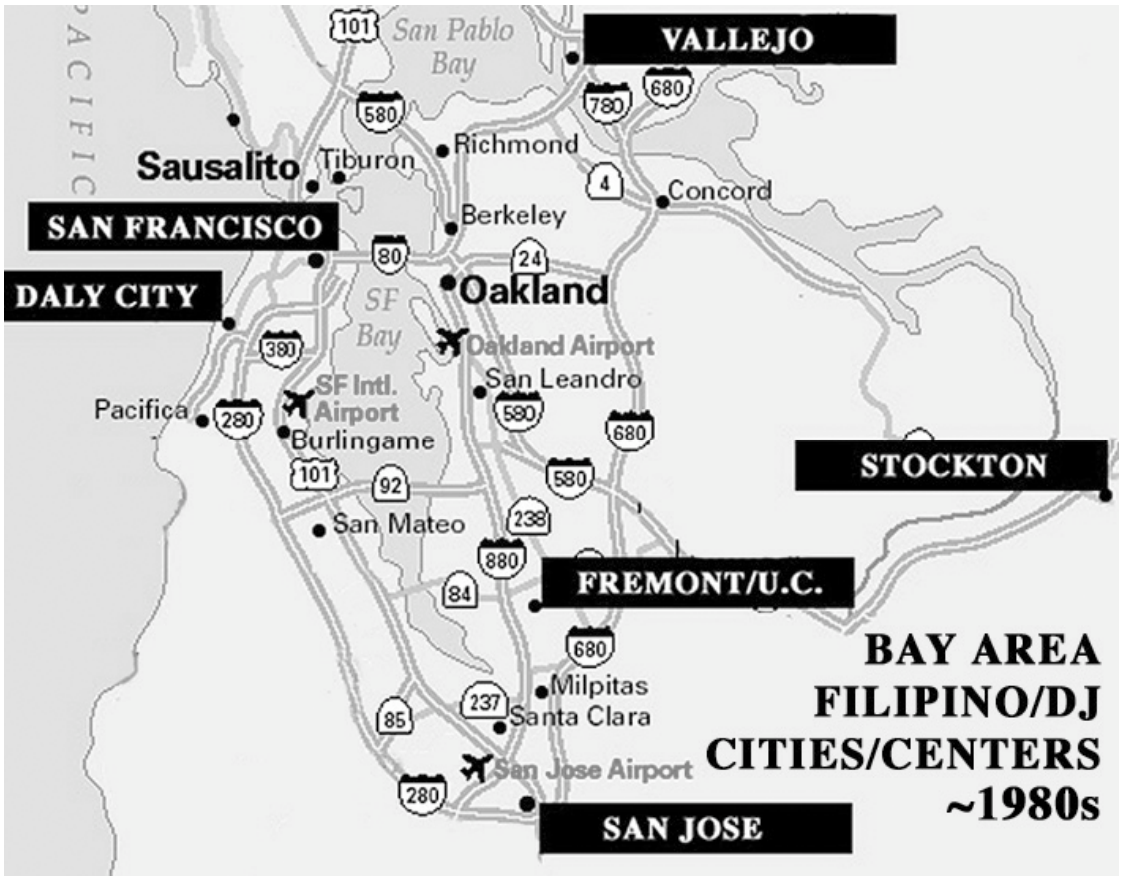


FIGURE 1
Map of Bay Area with key DJ cities highlighted.

FIGURE 2

Flyer for Imagine 4, December 1985. The Imagine series were sponsored by Mark Bradford and from ~1983 until 1990, were the largest showcases in the mobile DJ scene. Note that DJs are listed by crews rather than individual names.

Oliver Wang
UC Berkeley

FIGURE 3

Sound Explosion, ~1979. From left to right: Rafael Restauro, Sam Beltran, Eduardo Restauro. The arrow draws attention to their use of a cement-filled car rim as a light stand.

FIGURE 4

Flyer from Sound Explosion party, Dec. 1979.

FIGURE 5

Flyer from Imagine 7, April 1987. This was the largest of the Imagines, held at the San Mateo Fairgrounds, attracting an audience into the thousands.

FIGURE 6

Flyer from Imagine 5, June 1986.

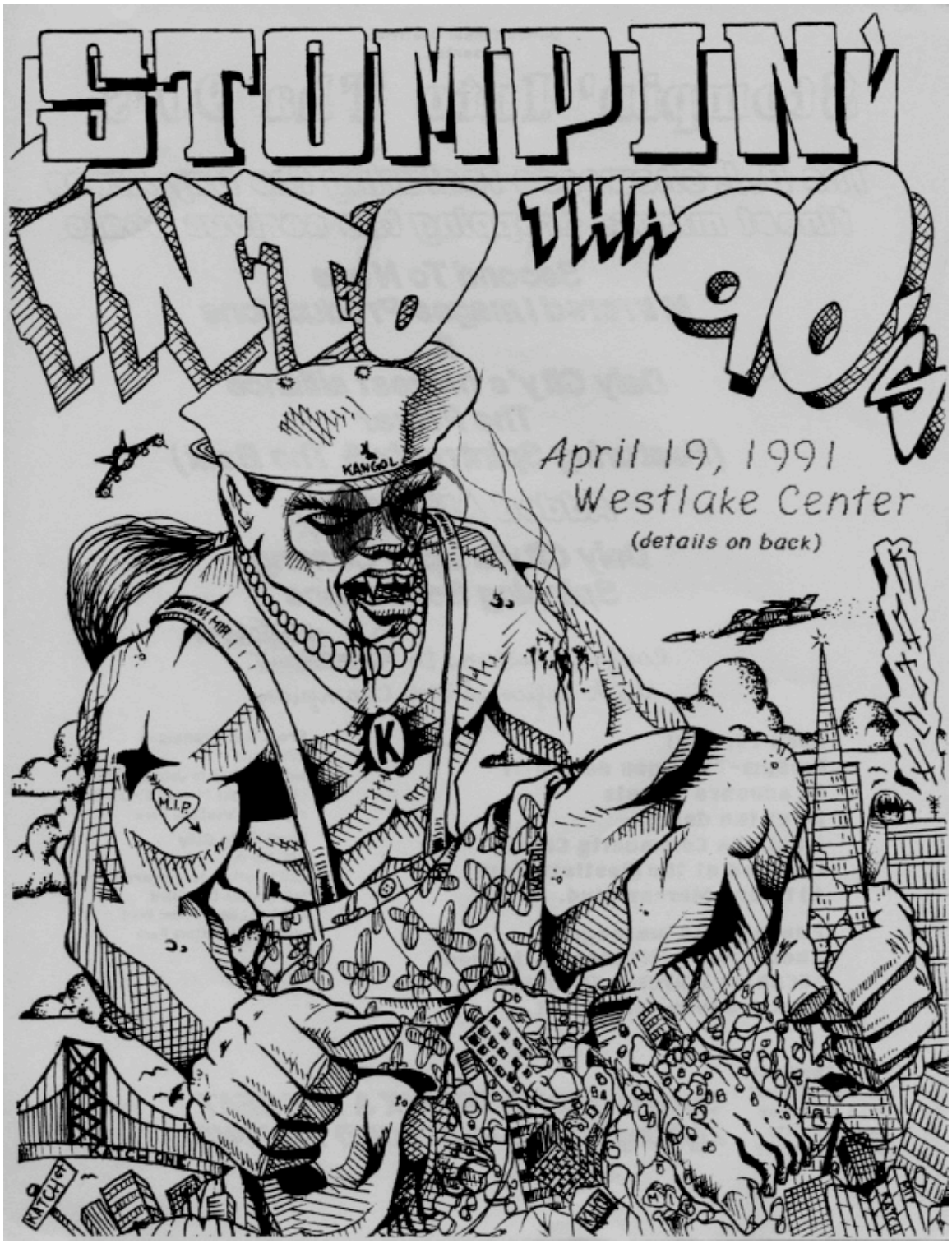


FIGURE 7

Flyer from a Westlake party, April 1991. Westlake, located in Daly City, near to the San Francisco border, had a vibrant mobile party scene in the early 1990s.

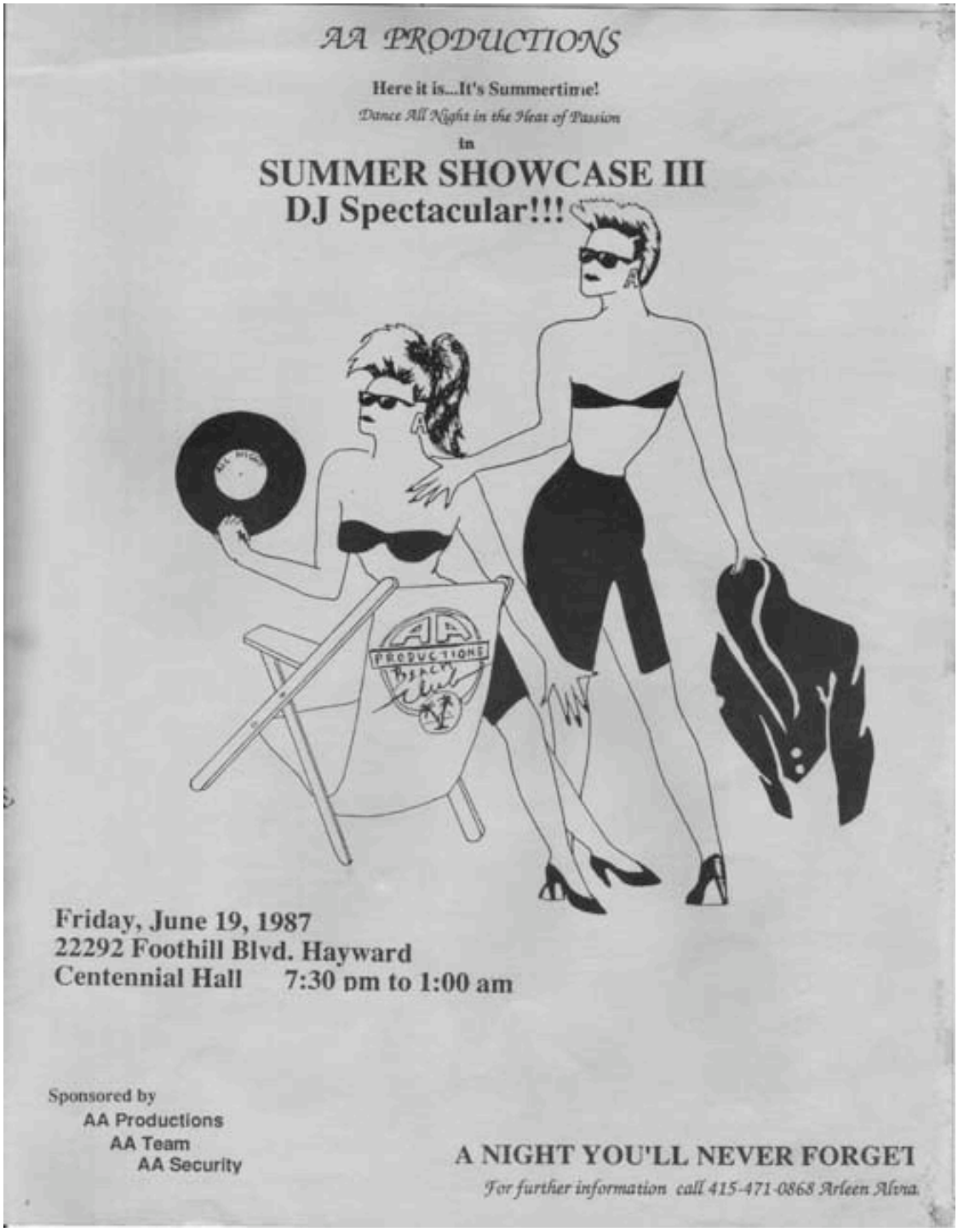


FIGURE 8

Flyer from AA Productions Party, Jun 1987. AA Productions, run by Arleen Alviar, was the second largest showcase series in the Bay Area, behind Mark Bradford's Imagine.

FIGURE 9

Flyer from Imagine 8, June 1987. Notice that the alliance, Legion of Boom, is one of the headlining acts. Three of the alliance's crews are mentioned: Midstar, Sound Sequence and Creative Madness.

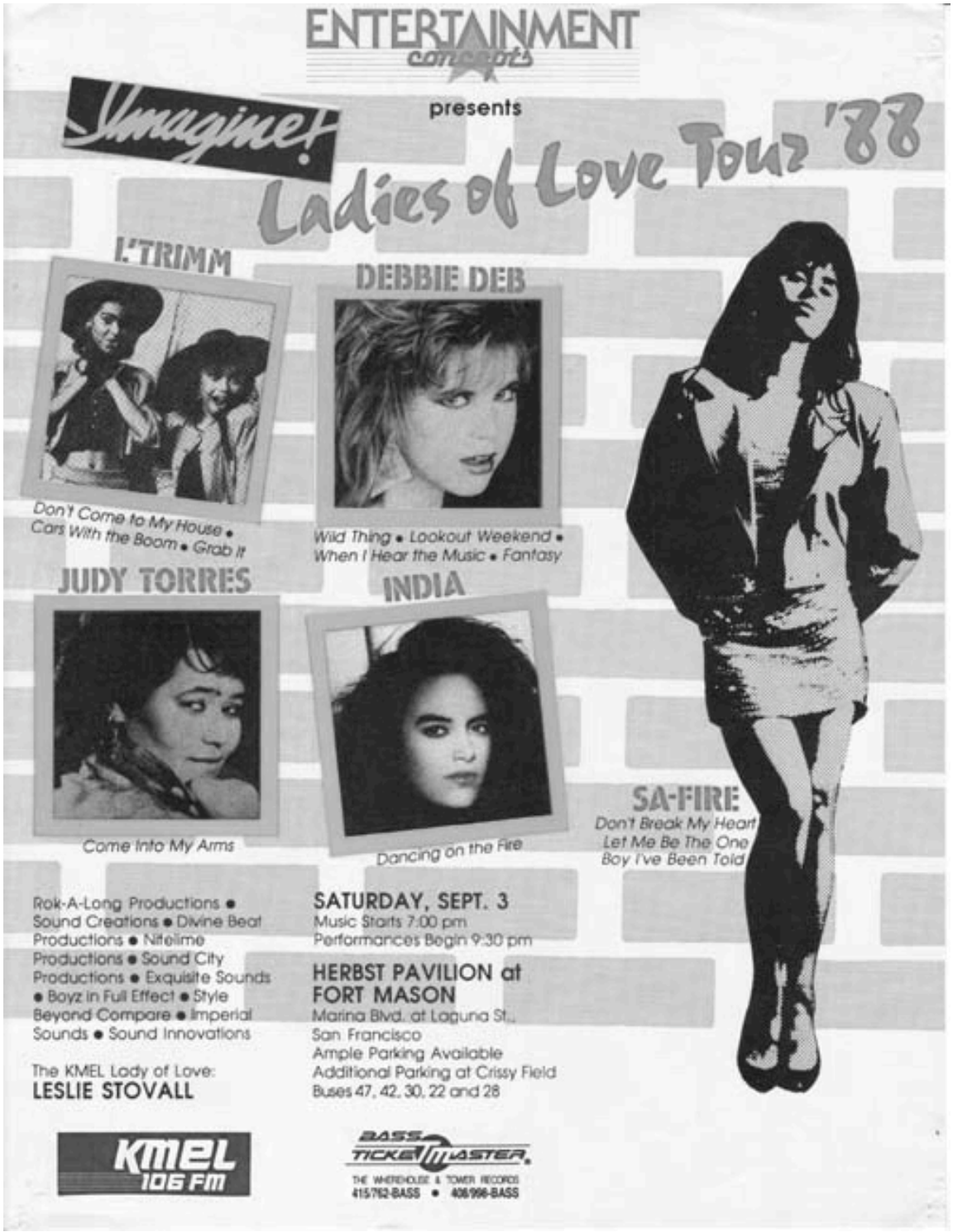


FIGURE 10

Flyer for Imagine's Ladies of Love Tour, Sept. 1988. This gig was an example of the crossover between mobile DJ showcases and concert formats.

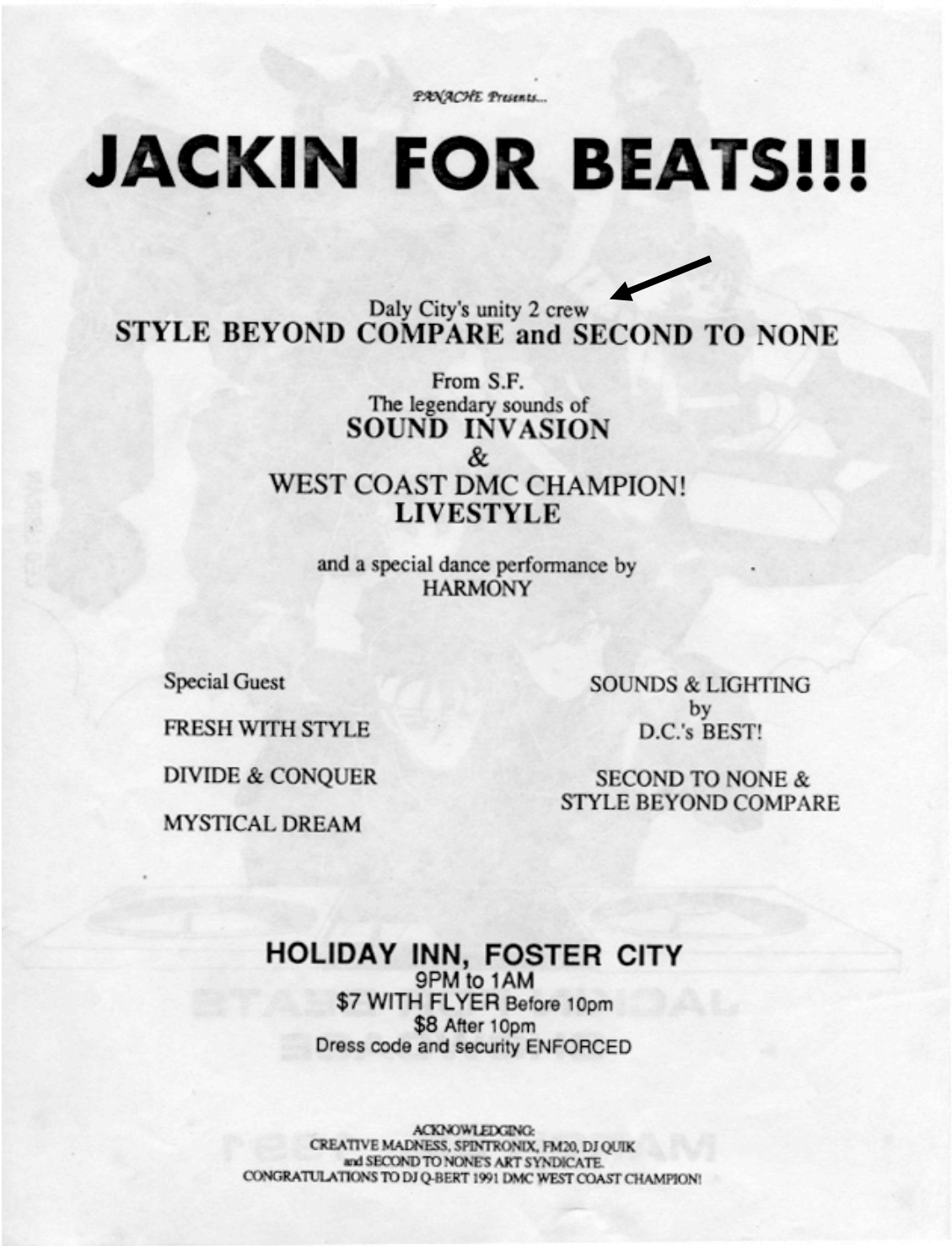


FIGURE 11

Flyer for Jackin For Beats party, ~1990. The arrow draws attention to the Unity 2 Crew alliance between Style Beyond Compare and Second To None, both Daly City crews.

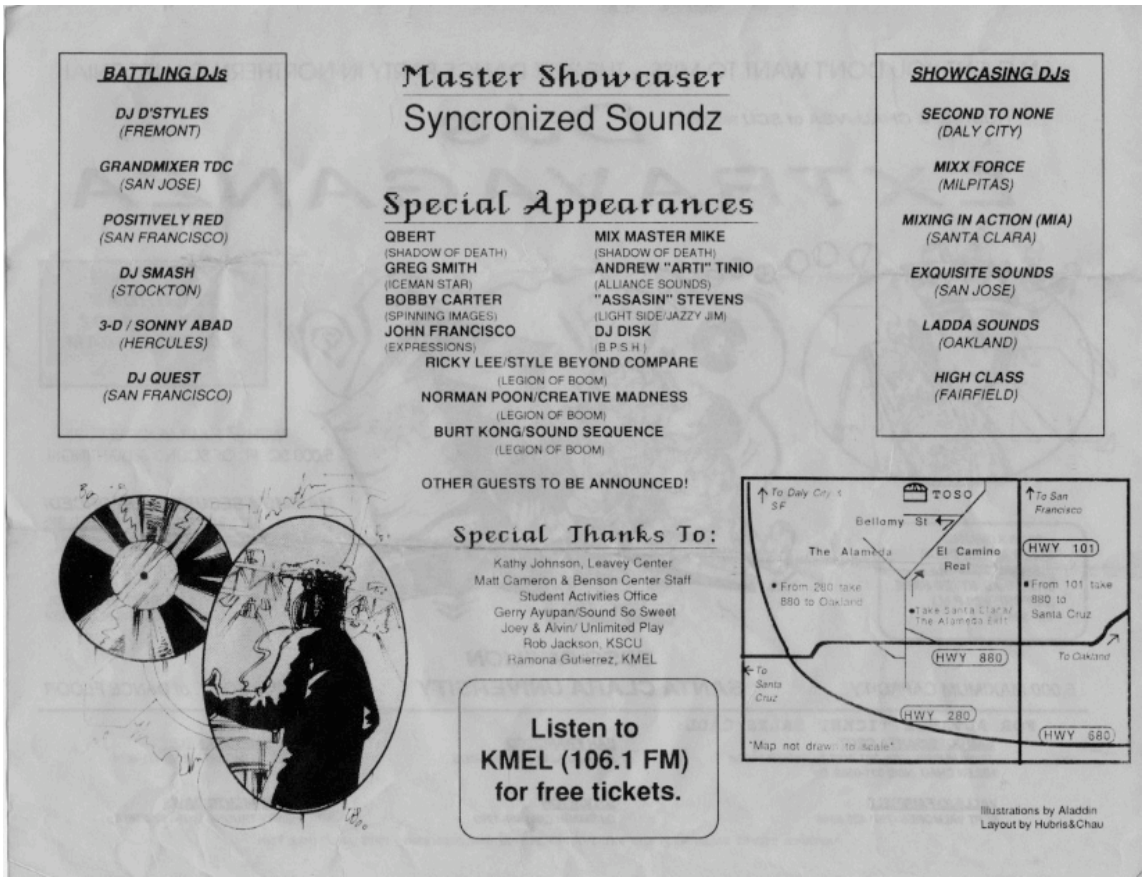


FIGURE 13

Flyer for a DJ Extravaganza party, 1992. This is an example of the endurance of showcases into the early 1990s despite the end of both Imagine and AA Productions.

FIGURE 12

Flyer from an Imagine 20, Nov. 1991. This would be the last Imagine party thrown before Mark Bradford's murder in 1993.

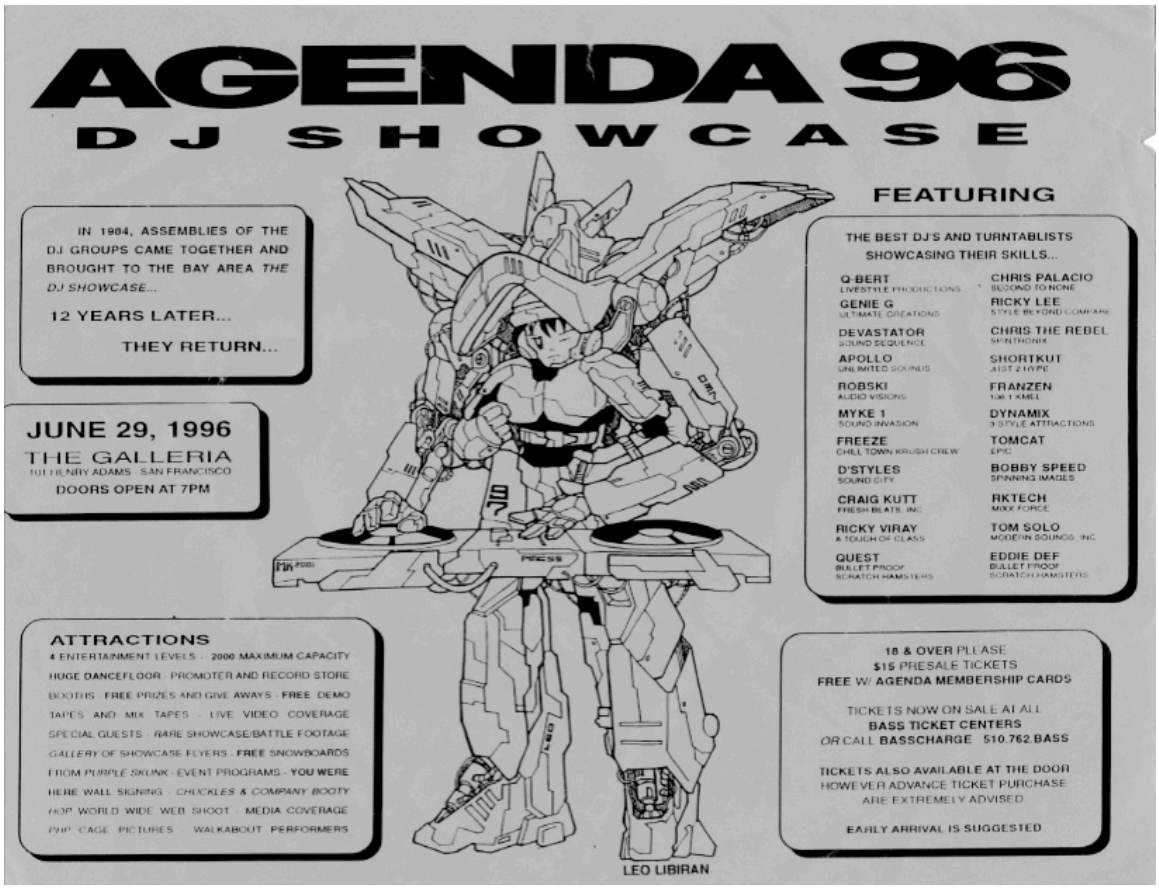
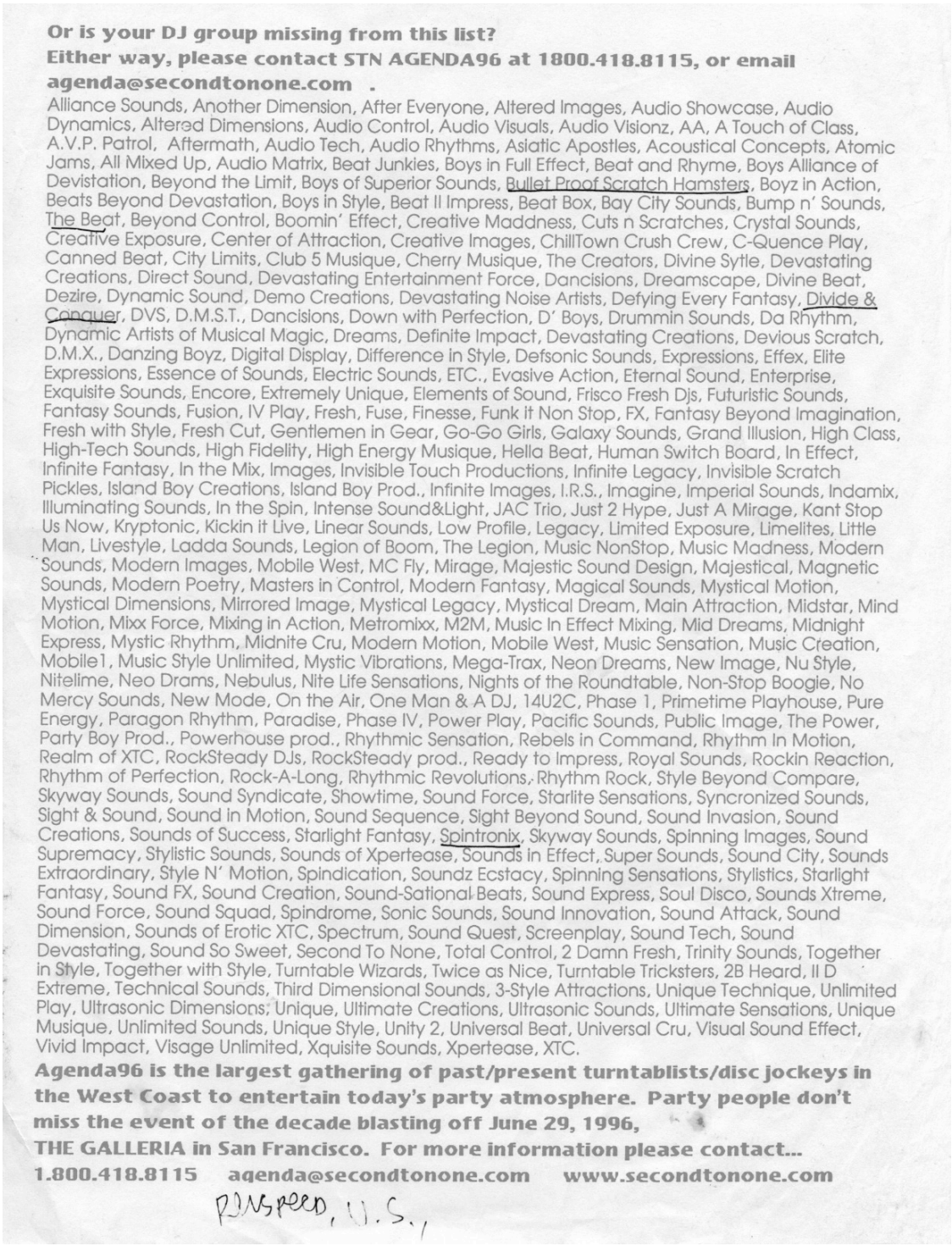


FIGURE 13

Flyer from Agenda 96, June 1996. This showcase was thrown as a tribute to the Bay Area's mobile crews of the 1980s and 1990s. The use of anime-influenced artwork was popular in party fliers from the 1990s.



Or is your DJ group missing from this list?
Either way, please contact STN AGENDA96 at 1800.418.8115, or email agenda@secondtonone.com .

Alliance Sounds, Another Dimension, After Everyone, Altered Images, Audio Showcase, Audio Dynamics, Altered Dimensions, Audio Control, Audio Visuals, Audio Visionz, AA, A Touch of Class, A.V.P. Patrol, Aftermath, Audio Tech, Audio Rhythms, Asiatic Apostles, Acoustical Concepts, Atomic Jams, All Mixed Up, Audio Matrix, Beat Junkies, Boys in Full Effect, Beat and Rhyme, Boys Alliance of Devistation, Beyond the Limit, Boys of Superior Sounds, Bullet Proof Scratch Hamsters, Boyz in Action, Beats Beyond Devastation, Boys in Style, Beat II Impress, Beat Box, Bay City Sounds, Bump n' Sounds, The Beat, Beyond Control, Boomin' Effect, Creative Maddness, Cuts n Scratches, Crystal Sounds, Creative Exposure, Center of Attraction, Creative Images, ChillTown Crush Crew, C-Quence Play, Canned Beat, City Limits, Club 5 Musique, Cherry Musique, The Creators, Divine Sytle, Devastating Creations, Direct Sound, Devastating Entertainment Force, Dancisions, Dreamscape, Divine Beat, Dezire, Dynamic Sound, Demo Creations, Devastating Noise Artists, Defying Every Fantasy, Divide & Conquer, DVS, D.M.S.T., Dancisions, Down with Perfection, D' Boys, Drummin Sounds, Da Rhythm, Dynamic Artists of Musical Magic, Dreams, Definite Impact, Devastating Creations, Devious Scratch, D.M.X., Danzing Boyz, Digital Display, Difference in Style, Defsonic Sounds, Expressions, Effex, Elite Expressions, Essence of Sounds, Electric Sounds, ETC., Evasive Action, Eternal Sound, Enterprise, Exquisite Sounds, Encore, Extremely Unique, Elements of Sound, Frisco Fresh Djs, Futuristic Sounds, Fantasy Sounds, Fusion, IV Play, Fresh, Fuse, Finesse, Funk it Non Stop, FX, Fantasy Beyond Imagination, Fresh with Style, Fresh Cut, Gentlemen in Gear, Go-Go Girls, Galaxy Sounds, Grand Illusion, High Class, High-Tech Sounds, High Fidelity, High Energy Musique, Hella Beat, Human Switch Board, In Effect, Infinite Fantasy, In the Mix, Images, Invisible Touch Productions, Infinite Legacy, Invisible Scratch Pickles, Island Boy Creations, Island Boy Prod., Infinite Images, I.R.S., Imagine, Imperial Sounds, Indamix, Illuminating Sounds, In the Spin, Intense Sound&Light, JAC Trio, Just 2 Hype, Just A Mirage, Kant Stop Us Now, Kryptonic, Kickin it Live, Linear Sounds, Low Profile, Legacy, Limited Exposure, Limelites, Little Man, Livestyle, Ladda Sounds, Legion of Boom, The Legion, Music NonStop, Music Madness, Modern Sounds, Modern Images, Mobile West, MC Fly, Mirage, Majestic Sound Design, Majestical, Magnetic Sounds, Modern Poetry, Masters in Control, Modern Fantasy, Magical Sounds, Mystical Motion, Mystical Dimensions, Mirrored Image, Mystical Legacy, Mystical Dream, Main Attraction, Midstar, Mind Motion, Mixx Force, Mixing in Action, Metromixx, M2M, Music In Effect Mixing, Mid Dreams, Midnight Express, Mystic Rhythm, Midnite Cru, Modern Motion, Mobile West, Music Sensation, Music Creation, Mobile1, Music Style Unlimited, Mystic Vibrations, Mega-Trax, Neon Dreams, New Image, Nu Style, Nitelime, Neo Drams, Nebulus, Nite Life Sensations, Nights of the Roundtable, Non-Stop Boogie, No Mercy Sounds, New Mode, On the Air, One Man & A DJ, 14U2C, Phase 1, Primetime Playhouse, Pure Energy, Paragon Rhythm, Paradise, Phase IV, Power Play, Pacific Sounds, Public Image, The Power, Party Boy Prod., Powerhouse prod., Rhythmic Sensation, Rebels in Command, Rhythm In Motion, Realm of XTC, RockSteady DJs, RockSteady prod., Ready to Impress, Royal Sounds, Rockin Reaction, Rhythm of Perfection, Rock-A-Long, Rhythmic Revolutions, Rhythm Rock, Style Beyond Compare, Skyway Sounds, Sound Syndicate, Showtime, Sound Force, Starlite Sensations, Syncronized Sounds, Sight & Sound, Sound in Motion, Sound Sequence, Sight Beyond Sound, Sound Invasion, Sound Creations, Sounds of Success, Starlight Fantasy, Spintronix, Skyway Sounds, Spinning Images, Sound Supremacy, Stylistic Sounds, Sounds of Xpertease, Sounds in Effect, Super Sounds, Sound City, Sounds Extraordinary, Style N' Motion, Spindication, Soundz Ecstacy, Spinning Sensations, Stylistics, Starlight Fantasy, Sound FX, Sound Creation, Sound-Sational Beats, Sound Express, Soul Disco, Sounds Xtreme, Sound Force, Sound Squad, Spindrome, Sonic Sounds, Sound Innovation, Sound Attack, Sound Dimension, Sounds of Erotic XTC, Spectrum, Sound Quest, Screenplay, Sound Tech, Sound Devastating, Sound So Sweet, Second To None, Total Control, 2 Damn Fresh, Trinity Sounds, Together in Style, Together with Style, Turntable Wizards, Twice as Nice, Turntable Tricksters, 2B Heard, II D Extreme, Technical Sounds, Third Dimensional Sounds, 3-Style Attractions, Unique Technique, Unlimited Play, Ultrasonic Dimensions, Unique, Ultimate Creations, Ultrasonic Sounds, Ultimate Sensations, Unique Musique, Unlimited Sounds, Unique Style, Unity 2, Universal Beat, Universal Cru, Visual Sound Effect, Vivid Impact, Visage Unlimited, Xquisite Sounds, Xpertease, XTC.

Agenda96 is the largest gathering of past/present turntablists/disc jockeys in the West Coast to entertain today's party atmosphere. Party people don't miss the event of the decade blasting off June 29, 1996, THE GALLERIA in San Francisco. For more information please contact...

1.800.418.8115 agenda@secondtonone.com www.secondtonone.com

RINSPEED, U.S.,

Figure 14

"Roll Call" flyer for Agenda 96, spring 1996. This massive listing of DJ crews was circulated throughout the Bay Area in order to collect a complete listing of mobile crews, past and present.

Figure 15

Bay Area mobile DJ business cards, part 1. Of note: Imagine (top left), Spintronix (2nd from top, left), Live Style (middle left), Cameron Paul's Mixx-It (2nd from bottom, right).

Figure 16

Bay Area mobile DJ business cards, part 2. Of note: Ultimate Creations (top left), Sound Sequence (bottom right), Skyway Sounds (top right), Fusion (2nd from top, right), Midstar (2nd from bottom, right)