

WEBSTER P.A.L.

TEEN Council Present
A disco smoker

Old Rock HERE and Coke

60
Rock

Dec. 17, 1976

TIME:
9-300

At

Webster
P.A.L.

2255 Webster
Ave. + Ford St
Bronx N.Y.



Admitted only
\$2.00 for tickets
and \$2.50 for members

ticket sold
at lobby of
P.A.L. and by
teen Council
members

beginnings: kool dj herc

KOOL DJ HERC: I came to the States in 1967 from Jamaica; I was twelve years old. My mother was studying for nursing in New York, and she used to bring back records from Motown, Smokey Robinson. And James Brown came to the island one time. "I Feel Good" at the time was a hit record, and I fell in love with that record. Also Jamaican music was a big influence on me, because there was a lot of big sound systems they used to hook up and play on the weekends. I was a child, ya know, lookin', seein' all these things going on, and sneakin' out my house and seein' the big systems rattling the zincs on the housetops and stuff.

When I first came here in '67, I was listening to a lot of white stations...DJs like Cousin Brucie. So I was singing a lot of white music—until I got turned onto WWRL (New York's top Black music station), surfing the stations, picking up the Temptations and different groups.

As it went along I started to go to parties and stuff, and checkin' out the vibes of the scene. And I started to dance. I'd go over to a place called The Puzzle. The DJ there, John Brown, used to go to the same high school I used to go to. I would go there basically for break-dancin'. I used to run with a graffiti crew called the Ex-Vandals. It was Phase 2, Super Kool, Lionel 163, Stay High 149, El Marko, and Sweet Duke, a lot of graffiti artists. We used to meet up there—it was like a meeting ground. We'd all talk about where we tagged, where we bombed, and all that, and we used to dance. A lot of those graffiti artists also was break-dancers, you know, just free stylin'. The word, "break-dancing" didn't come up 'til I started to play.

[In the early '70s] the gangs came up and started to terrorize the clubs in the Bronx. Started smacking up girls, starting feeling them up, disrespecting them, robbing people's coats and stuff, so it shut the discos down. At the time, graffiti vandalism was getting out of hand, and I had a strict father so I couldn't run with that too long, before MTA start bangin' on my door, arresting me. And after I've been arrested, my father gonna put an ass-whippin' on top of that. So I took a chance and put Kool Herc on an index card (announcing a party), chargin' 25 cents to get in for the ladies, 50 cents for the fellas. I had heard a lot of gripe on the dance floor. "Why is this guy not playin' this music?

Why's he...you know, F-in' up?" And I was agreeing with them. So I took that attitude behind the turntable, giving the people on the floor what they were supposed to be hearing. You know? So it was like "Whoah! There's somebody who knows what they doin'!" So I was the guy who kind of resurrected the music again, on the West Side, a place called 1520 Sedgwick Avenue. 1973.

It was like a speakeasy: "Hey, 'cross town on the West Side there's a guy named Herc, Kool Herc, giving parties, man. And it's nice, ya know? Girls is there, ya know. You could do your thing. All he asks is—don't start no problem in here, ya know. He's a big guy, man." 'Cause I have friends, ya know? I'd tell 'em, "Look, you got a problem, take it down the block." Ya know? I don't care, "You want to smoke your weed? Take it down the block. Don't hang in front of the building."

DJ DISCO WIZ: You had a sense that something was going to happen, because everybody was going with this disco trend, but we wasn't feeling it. It wasn't for us. We weren't socially accepted at disco joints; we were pretty much segregated. I was looking for an outlet to express myself. I was young, thuggish, and just looking for something to do besides getting in trouble, so we used to throw house parties: one turntable, three-room apartment full of people...just tore down, and that was basically it.

When Kool Herc finally hit the scene, we started getting the buzz that something was different. The funk that he threw on turntables, and the soul that came across with the African beats, was something that I related to. I could feel it. When I heard the beats and the bass thumpin', it was something that really blew me away, more so than any other music I'd ever heard in my life.

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KOOL HERC: At the time, my friends wasn't running with no gang. The gang members asked us to join the gang—some of the division gang members wanted us to be division leaders—but we wasn't going for that because we respected each other, and we just said, "Look, we don't need that." They respected us; we respected them. We didn't need no colors to be on our back to be recognized or put fear in people's heart, stuff like that. When they come to the party, they know if they mess with us, we was gonna have our business. If you step to me, you're gonna have problems.

So even the gang members loved us because they didn't want to mess with what was happening. You know? They come in, keep to themselves. Not only that, a lot of Five-Percenters (a splinter group of the Nation of Islam) used to come to my party...you might call them "peace guards," and they used to hold me down: "Yo Herc, don't worry about it." So we was just havin' a good time.

Everything was fine. The girls was there. I had just bought a Reverb echo box, so we was experimentin' with that, throwin' it out, ya know? "Herc...Herc...Herc...Herc...Herc...Herc..." you know, "what...what...what...what...what...what", "the joint...joint...joint...joint...joint..." We just playin' around having fun with it, calling out our friends' names. At the same time people was jealous of that: "Well, why he callin' your



Happy birthday Here 1980. Lr' Rodney Coe, Tony Tons, KK Rockwell, Breakout, and Kool Here (Courtesy Angelo King)

name out?" "Well, he don't know you. Ya know? When the party's over, you're going to go back to your neighborhood and we still see him. So he call our name out. Until you get to know him, then he call your name out."

DJ BARON: I was going to Herc parties in '74, '75 when he was still doin' the Community Center in his building (1520 Sedgwick Avenue). I used to live on Undercliff Avenue, and Herc lived on Sedgwick Avenue. I had an older brother named Dimitri who used to hang out with Kool Herc. I was too young so I was like a tag-a-long. To get into the parties free I used to help move Herc's equipment.

Herc started with PA columns and guitar amps. All DJs in the Bronx started like that. There was no mixer, no power amps—it was a guitar amp and speakers. He used to switch from turntable to turntable on a guitar amp, from channel one to channel two. That's how mixing started out. As he did parties and accumulated his money, his set got better.

KOOL HERC: I was giving parties to make money, to better my sound system. I was never a DJ for hire. I was the guy who rent the place. I was the guy who got flyers made. I was the guy who went out there in the streets and promoted it. You know? I'm just a person who bring people together, like an instrument, an agent who bring people together and let 'em have fun. But I was never for hire. I was seeing money that the average DJ never see. They was for hire; I had my own sound system. I was just the guy who played straight-up music that the radio don't play, that they should be playin', and people was havin' fun. Those records, people walk from miles around to get 'em 'cause they couldn't get 'em, they wasn't out there no more. "Just Begun," Rare Earth, James Brown, the Isley Brothers—they just love it. Ya know?

Sometime people would make a mistake and give a party on my date. And they would stop their party at two o'clock and tell the whole party, "I'm goin' to see Kool Herc. We're goin' to finish the party at Kool Herc's party." I look out the window and see like twenty or thirty people headin' towards the little recreation room. So I gave a block party, and that showed me that this thing got bigger than what we thought it was going to turn out to be.

GRANDMASTER FLASH: There was this guy Clive Campbell, who went by the name of Kool Herc, that used to play music. And the word went around—just word of mouth—that this guy was coming out in the park, that you had to go see this guy. This guy would bring this setup outside to what was called a block party. And he'd have these huge speakers, this huge, huge setup. And he'd be playing this particular type of music that they weren't playing on the radio.

At the time, the radio was playing songs like Donna Summer, the Trammps, the Bee Gees—disco stuff, you know? I call it kind of sterile music. Herc was playing this particular type of music that I found to be pretty warm; it had soul to it. You wouldn't hear

these songs on the radio. You wouldn't hear, like "Give It Up or Turn It Loose," by James Brown, on the radio. You wouldn't hear "Rock Steady" by Aretha Franklin. You wouldn't hear these songs, and these are the songs that he would play. And I said to myself, "Wow, this is pretty interesting, what he's doing here."

KOOL HERC: We couldn't come back to the recreation room so I went out looking for a place, and I found this place called the Twilight Zone on Jerome Avenue in between Tremont and Burnside. And at the same time, there was a club called the Hevalo. The Hevalo used to be called "Soulsville." I used to give out flyers up there. I used to promote my parties, and they used to chase me away from the door. "Get outta here. Don't give no flyers out!" I say, "Yo, man, one day I'm gonna be up in there. I'm going to be up in there one day."

So my first (indoor) party I gave away from the recreation room, away from 1520, was at the Twilight Zone. And it rained. But it so happened from the start that anytime it rained on my party night, it's the best night. And this night—the first time playing—it rained. It rained. We looked out the window, and it was nothing but umbrellas on the sidewalk. And the place was packed. And everybody left from the Hevalo and came down to the club.

[The guys that ran the Hevalo] was like, "What's going on? What's happening?" They heard, "Kool Herc. He's playing down the block." "You mean that guy that always come up to give the flyers out? That we chase away?" So like a week later, I got a phone call: "Herc, we wanna talk to you." It was the Hevalo. "Okay. I'll hear what you have to say." This was, I think, in '74-'75. And so I start to play weekly. No more three weeks or a month for me to give a party—now you gonna hear me every weekend.

But some nights it'd be packed...less money; some nights it'd be less people...more money. So I said, "Hold up, Coke." That's my man, my partner. He used to come out and play. He used to grab the mic and start to throw out his poetry and stuff like that. I said, "Coke, man, I'm going to hold the door down tonight. I'm going to see where this money's going." And I stood there and I see what was happenin': everybody was sliding through one side [not paying]. I stood [at the door]. "So look man, right here man [points to the right], right here." And we saw our money that night. And after that they would say, "Kool Herc and Coke La Rock is makin' money with that music, up in the Bronx." We was recognized for hustlin' with music.

Easter Vacation

Dancing
til Sunrise

Featuring
D.J. Kool Herc

Time 10. p.m

Thur. 23 1.⁰⁰

Fri. 24, 2.⁰⁰

Sat. 2.⁰⁰

Wed 29, first 50 Ladies

Free, Fellows 2.⁰⁰

Thur 30, 1.⁰⁰

Sun 1.⁰⁰ to 12
2.⁰⁰

At the Best
in the
Bronx

The Sparkle
Mt. Eden and
Jerome Ave

Trans 4 train
to mt. eden ave



NO
Drugs
Weapons
Achohic Bev
Sneakers

16 to 18

J.D. Cards

Kaini

Home Of HERCULES

TONY TONE: 1974–1975, I was working at a record shop called 3 Stop Record Shop on University, which is maybe four or five blocks from Jerome Avenue where the Hevalo was. At the time, I was going to Stevenson High School, which is all the way on the other side of town. After school I used to go to the record shop and work, and I started hearing about this guy Kool Herc and this place called the Hevalo. My older brother and my God-brother used to go there, so they was telling me about it. I was taller than both of them even though they was older than me, so they said, “Well, you probably can get in.” So we all would go. They would walk in first, and when I came in last the guy wouldn’t question it, ‘cause I was taller than them. So I walk in the Hevalo, and it’s dark, and the music is pounding—I think he was playing “Melting Pot”—and it’s like...running through me. I’m only sixteen. I’m feeling the music, I’m feeling the heat of the club, and I’m walking around watching people just enjoy the music, and I’m saying, “OK, OK.” The next day I was like, “I’m going again!”

I worked in the record shop, so I used to know all the records...but I didn’t know the records that Herc was playing. So now it’s grabbing me, now I’m trying to order them for my record shop, but I can’t find them ‘cause they’re not records that are selling right now—they’re older records, jazz records, whatever. Now every weekend I’m in the Hevalo. Sometimes I go and they would ask me for I.D. and I would just walk out. I’d wait about twenty minutes and then go back in there and try and look older and then they would let me in.

DJ BARON: Herc used to have music people never heard before. Beats. Herc’s speakers were the ultimate at the time. The main person on the microphone was Coke La Rock. He was the MC and he was a DJ. Herc had his thing, and they went back and forth. Then there was Timmy Tim and Clark Kent (DJs). Sau Sau, the Nigger Twins, Tricksy were his break-dancers. Sau Sau was double jointed; he could do impossible moves that nobody else could do.

PEE WEE DANCE: When I was sixteen, I moved to the Bronx, to Mt. Eden and Jerome. I tried to get into the Hevalo on Burnside and Jerome. I was too young, but I snuck in there, and I started dancing so they wouldn’t put me out. Everyone said, “Let him stay,” and I kept dancing. I felt in my heart that I couldn’t be beat. My main competition was Sau Sau and Tricksy. To this day, I haven’t seen moves that could fuck with them. They was goin’ off.

RICHARD SISCO: The hippest music out was what Kool Herc was playing—“Apache,” “Mardi Gras,” “Just Begun”—these certain records that everybody was b-boying off of. What propelled it was all the b-boy action. That was what drove the music forward.

Sparkle

Time: 10. P.m. 6.A.m

Admission. 200

Place. 1590 JEROME AVE
BRONX.N.Y

HAVE SCHOOL I.D. CARDS

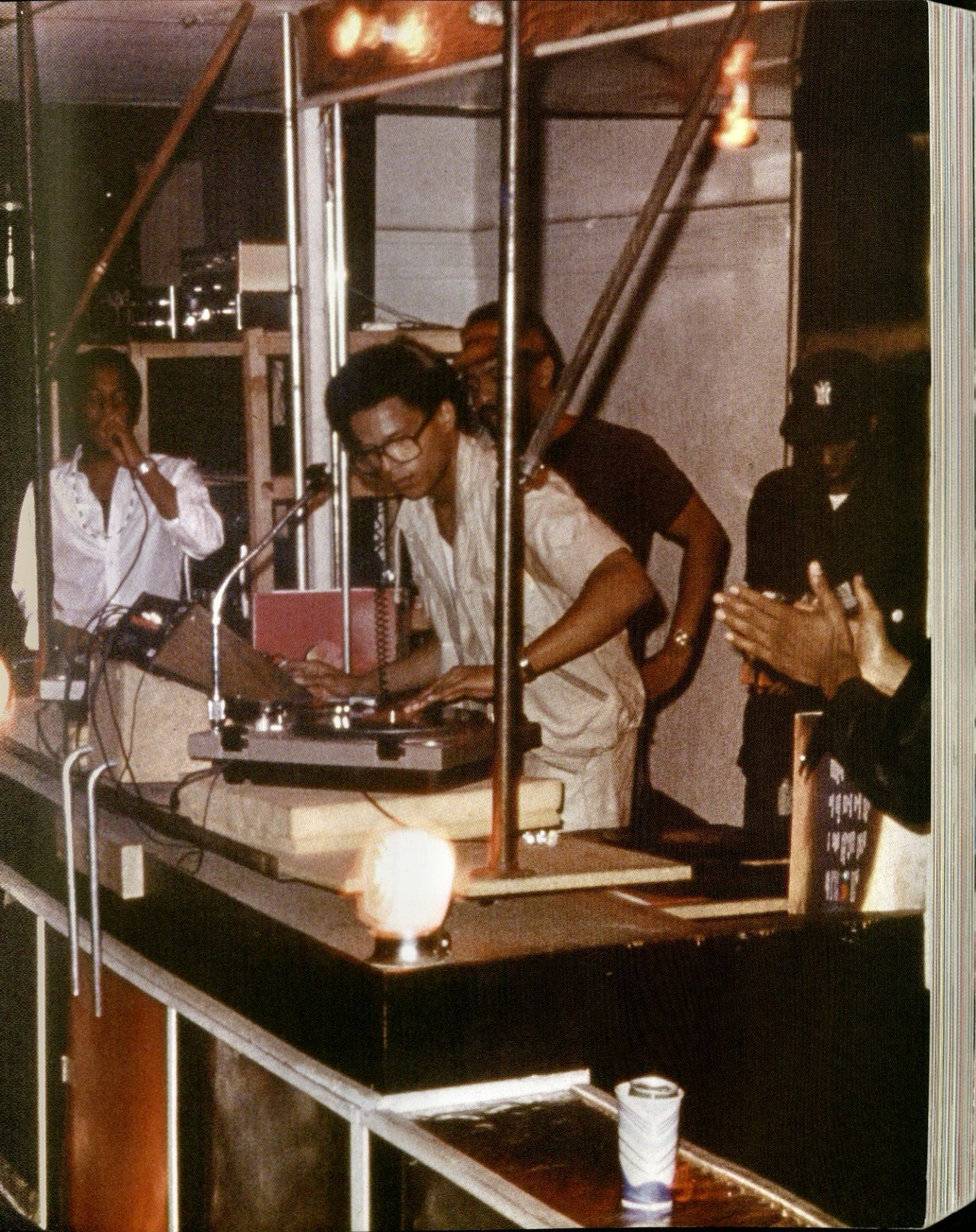
NO ONE OVER 18
NO ONE UNDER 16

(bet. West 174th Street & Mt. Eden Avenue)
Transportation: #4 TRAIN TO MT. EDEN AVE.

DATE EVERY Fri, Sat



ANOTHER
FREE FRI APRIL, 7



THE V.A.I.

RETURNS WITH

THE BAD MACHINE -BUNG GHOEKER D.D.

* BIRTHDAY & CELEBRATION *

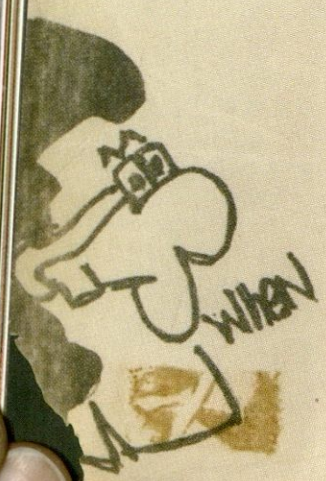
GOOL-HERC

Chute
Web

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y

DOKE-1A-TRAC

2255 WEBSTER AVE
FEE IS \$3.00
TIME-9:00 UNTIL
DATE-JAN 24, 1978



GRANDMASTER CAZ: The turning point—which made me go from pedestrian to driver, I like to call it—was in 1974. I went to a party, a indoor party, at a club called the Hevalo, and I saw this DJ named Kool Herc. He was the DJ. I mean he was it. Everything that I heard and saw all came together that night when I saw him DJ-ing. I saw how it's really done and what it's really about, how he had all the b-boys dancin'. I said, "Now that's what I wanna do. I mean, I did the dancin', now I wanna be the one who makes people dance." That night in 1974 when I went in that club and I saw Herc, I knew from that day on that's what I want to do for real, you know? Not as a hobby. I wanna be a DJ.

TONY TONE: I was introduced to it all in the Hevalo—the break-dancers, the hard bass, the jazz breaks—all that, it was all there. Today it's a parking lot, but I can picture how it used to look. I could draw out the floor plan...maybe 400 people could get in there. When you came in, you would walk through a set of doors—security, where you paid was there. They would search you, and then you go through another door. On the left-hand side was a seating area...one step up to a seating area, and on the right-hand side, a bar, and then all dance floor. The DJ booth was over in the corner. Other DJs used to use the DJ booth—Herc would never use the DJ booth. Herc would bring in his own sound system, 'cause he was credited as having the strongest, loudest hip-hop sound system at the time.

It was a party atmosphere. If it was drugs, I didn't realize it. I mean—there was some drinking, but as far as drugs, it wasn't out in the open.

KOOL DJ AJ: When I first saw Kool Herc, I was about eighteen years old. I used to attend a lot of parties, and at that time Kool DJ Herc was number one in the whole Bronx. I was like a follower—I used to take my girlfriend, and we used to go to his parties. I used to just watch him, and he used to do a lot of amazing things. It was much different from the disco of the day...he played a lot of breakin' beats. He used to play a lot of records that you couldn't buy in the store. He played a lot of James Brown, Melvin Sparks, the Incredible Bongo Band, Baby Huey, a lot of real interesting break-beats. But I didn't go to a party really to concentrate on Herc that much—I went to a party to party.

See, in the South Bronx we really had nothing to do. There wasn't no movie theaters—everything we did was like something just to make a little bit of excitement in the area. Shooting cans with a water pump was exciting in the area, you know what I'm saying? And then when people seen Kool DJ Herc, it was like some excitement, and it drew a crowd. I just took notice, and it was interesting.

DJ DISCO WIZ: P.A.L. was the Police Athletic League, which is a sponsorship from the Policeman's Benevolent Association that sponsors athletic programs. The one that we used was on Webster Avenue in the Bronx on 183rd Street. It was called the Webster P.A.L. I used to box at the P.A.L., and that's how I got to hear Kool Herc. Kool Herc used to practice and DJ on the weekends in the P.A.L. on Webster Avenue. I first heard Kool Herc's sound check and heard of his parties through friends and acquaintances. I went to his party and was blown away by what I saw. I went with Caz; it was in the athletic room in the P.A.L., which was the center. We're talking maybe 400-500 people and Herc on top of the stage with these huge speakers on each side. And he's a massive presence to begin with, in the middle there....

It was just something for a young guy like me; I can still remember how awesome that was. The music that he played was definitely funk, but the way he cut it and the cuts that he used—sound bites and things that I've never heard before in my whole life—it was something that definitely opened the door for me. I never heard a DJ before; maybe disc jockeys on the radio, but they just slapped a popular tune on. This was my first initiation into what a DJ was, and I saw the best. It was overpowering. For a young guy like me, it was an awakening.

MELLE MEL: The first Herc party I went to was at the P.A.L. on Webster. There were three or four of us in the gym drinking beer, high on weed. I was fourteen or fifteen years old. There was this slow-motion thing...people were dusted, smoking angel dust (PCP). The acrid smell was in the air, the smoke was visible, floating on this one level, flashing in the red strobe light. It was illin', a hostile atmosphere, people getting high in the bathroom.

When we came in, they wanted to see what circle we would dance in. I got punched in the eye; I had to battle one of the Nigger Twins. He used this spin move. Clark Kent was a DJ, but when he wanted to burn somebody he would dance. They all rapped but not on the beat. Coke La Rock was Jamaican. Timmy Tim was the smoothest: "The sounds that you hear hear hear... (heavy echo vibes) deaf to your ear ear... 'cause you have no fear fear fear... 'cause Herc is here here here" "We're going to give you a little taste of the bass... (turns off the treble). We're going to hit you with the highs..."

DJ BARON: Some of the main parties was so jam-packed you couldn't move to get in. One time we was in the Executive Playhouse, in a Herc party. Somebody had an argument with somebody in the party and pulled a gun out. Everybody's doing the Bus Stop, and when the shot went off, everybody's moving toward Herc's speakers. His speakers fell and everything. Herc had to pull his stuff out [Baron mimics drawing a gun]. "Yo! Y'all got to go that a way!" That's when all hell broke loose. Everybody ran out, and it was crazy!



Rod DJ Herc with DJ Tony Tone, at the Ecstasy Garage, late 1970s (Courtesy Angelo King)

A packed jam at the Celebrity Club, 1980 (© Charlie Ahearn)





★ THE T-CONNECTION DISCOS' DOWN WITH... ★

★ THE **HERCULORDS** ★

CLARK
KENT



SWEET
N'
SOUR



KOOL
HERC



JAY
CEE



TONY
D

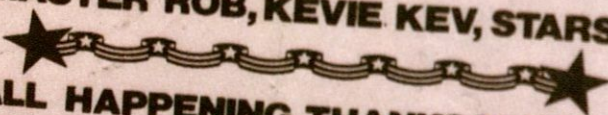


AND
IT'S

KOOL KYLE "THE STARCHILD"

★ "GRAND WIZARD THEODORE" ★

★ MASTER ROB, KEVIE KEV, STARSKY ★



IT'S ALL HAPPENING THANKSGIVING DAY
THURSDAY, NOV. 22, 1979 • THE T-CONNECTION
2 TRAIN or 55 BUS to GUN HILL ROAD

LADIES FREE BEFORE 10pm • DAMAGE 2\$
3\$ ALL AFTER 12pm • NO WEAPONS



TONY TONE: Herc had his Herculoids: him, Clark Kent/Superman—Clark Kent and Superman the same person—and I think he had a guy named Kryptonite, and the Nigger Twins. The Nigger Twins was Kool Herc's break-dancers. They all was known as Herculoids.

There was a cartoon called the Herculoids. Since his name is Kool Herc, he took on the name of Herculoids from that. And his system was named the Herculord—it's huge and can't be touched. Powerful. I guess Herc got his name from Hercules, 'cause Herc was big. I have pictures where I look like an infant standing next to Herc.

KEVIE KEV: I went to mad Herculords parties in the P.A.L. on 183rd. You standing in line to pay with your fresh green Pumas, fresh green mock-neck sweatshirt with your name on it. You got on sheepskin. You go in and you get searched. It's so dark inside, but its so cool 'cause it's so many fly people there, and you are a part of this. Herc's dropping James Brown, like (he sings), "Clap your hand, hunh, stomp your feet," playing "sure shots"—that's what we was calling the dope records. It was all over when he played "Bongo Rock"... "Apache," that took us out.

You feeling yourself 'cause you and your friends all looking dope—Mom sent you out looking real fly. The beats is coming out so loud. It only costed two, three dollars to get in, but it was packed. Clark Kent was on the microphone, Timmy Tim ...but when they turned over, they never cut on the beat; they never scratched. But they was the first playing two turntables, just playing them. B-boying was going on. It was a Black thing—I saw no Puerto Ricans around this time. We was in the Bronx, those b-boys, they was Black and they was goin' off! It's a whole 'nother rhythm.

RAHIEM: I used to break-dance. I'd hear the music on tapes from people in the neighborhood, but I had never actually gone to a hip-hop party or anything. The very first party that I went to was DJ Kool Herc, and he was playing at the Webster Avenue P.A.L. on 183rd Street and Webster Avenue in the Bronx. I remember when I walked in how electric the vibe was...I wasn't even old enough to get into the party; I had a curfew, and my mom was like, "You can go to this party but you better be home by 11:30." We were there in the middle of the floor, and I was just watching people dancing, and the kind of music that Herc was playing was really conducive to this style of dancing. No one was getting on the floor—b-boys at the time were not doing floor moves—it was up-rocking. I remember this guy El Dorado Mike, the Nigger Twins.... The people who were on the floor were the best b-boys at that time, and I remember going home and practicing the moves that I saw them doing. My next door neighbor M&M was doing the same dance steps that these guys at the P.A.L. was doing, and I was like, "OK, I'm gonna get serious about this dancing thing."



**A
BIRTH-
DAY
PARTY**

**FOR THE
BIG BOYS KOOL
HERC &
AFRICA
BAMBAATAA**

At the TConnection
T-Connection 3510 White Plains Road
• Guys 5⁰⁰ 7⁰⁰
Dolls 4⁰⁰ Couples 8⁰⁰ • Don't miss this one!!


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Red alert
Cosmic
&
Soul sonic
force mc's**



**Nubian
Kool Herc
Sandwich
Prod.**

A birthday party for the big boys, 1981

SHA-ROCK: The atmosphere was awesome, 'cause Herc had a system, and if you were really into music and into the hip-hop scene, that was everything. You had to have the system to cover the music, because that's why a lot of people go—they go for the bass. Just to hear the bass was like everything, and that's what made me rebel: to hear the bass. You know? Whether or not it was right or wrong, I just went to hear the bass. The music. James Brown...all these different types of music that you could break-dance to. Herc, he'll get on there and say like one or two words, and then he'll have like the mirror ball going around, and Clark Kent would get on there and rhyme for a minute.... Herc wasn't like a rapper or anything like that; it was just a sound, his music, his system. The music that he played was just like no other.

KOOL HERC: Little did anybody know that this thing was going to turn into a world-wide phenomenon, billion-dollar business and all that. 'Cause I wasn't looking at it like that back then. I love my music, I love my sound system, and I just love to see people havin' fun. Period.

DJ BARON: We used to do the block parties, so people could know about you everywhere you go. We used to do block parties uptown in Cedar Park—that's in my neighborhood, right off of Sedgwick. That's a famous park. Herc was the one who played in there first, and then everybody else played in there. If you didn't play Cedar Park, you weren't happening.

BUSY BEE: Early on, we did the streets, the backyards, the schools, and stuff like that. The janitors—that's how we got into the schools, because the janitor cleans up when school is out. So if you can find a janitor that was cool, you can say, "Hey listen, I've got twenty extra dollars for you to let us use the gym at night, and we'll clean it up after, no problem." But the janitor didn't know that 200 people were coming to the gym that night [laughing]! We would help him out at the end of the night with the soda cans and stuff, and we'd clean up. That's how we got to play the 123, Evander High School, the high schools and the junior high schools that we mostly played in during those eras. The janitors let us in.

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TONY TONE: When we used to do the high school parties, we would go and talk to the dean or the councilor, and they would say, "Well, if you get one of the janitors to stay, then it's okay." So then we would talk to the janitor and say, "Listen, how much?" We would offer him money to stay, so we could have a party there. It wasn't all that much money—you know, buy them a little beer and stuff. But then again we was only charging \$3 for a party. Sometimes we would have dollar parties. We was kids, and that was a lot of money we was making.

In the high schools, you would set up right under the basketball hoops, facing each other. If it's in the lunchroom, you just face each other—any battle, you face each other. The battle consists of who got the clean sound in their set, who got the strongest set, whose DJ is better, and whose MCs is better. So you got to show and prove in different areas. It would be like, "OK, you play for an hour, I play for a hour, you play for a hour, I play for a hour." Then sometimes it would get to, "Why you playing? I'm tired of waiting. I'm gonna turn on. If you can't be heard, that's just your luck. You gotta go out and buy more equipment."

birth of the funky 4

TONY TONE: In '78 it really started picking up momentum. We start trying to organize as a business, giving people separate jobs: "You on security, you help Tony with the sound system, you're flyer people" We tried to organize and really make it a company-type situation.

DJ BARON: As we grew, as we built the system up, then we started out with another MC; that was Keith Keith. Then Jazzy Dee discovered Sha-Rock. She was a part of the Sisters Disco. Sha used to hang around. Sha was shy, but one of the girls encouraged her to be an MC, "Oh, your voice sounds good, you ought to get on the mic." So eventually she learned to rap.

SHA-ROCK: I grew up in the Bronx. My family were music fanatics—I grew up on James Brown, Marvin Gaye, and Tammy Terrell, Diana Ross. I started getting into the hip-hop music around '76. I attended a school called the Evander Childs High School. That's when I ran into DJ Breakout. He used to come up to the school all the time, I guess just to look at the girls or whatever.

I would sneak out and go to the clubs or go to the P.A.L. where Kool Herc used to perform a lot. I even was a break-dancer back then! I wouldn't say I was a tomboy, but I had more guy friends than women friends, so I would learn from them. I would watch Breakout, I would watch other guys that would get out and break-dance. Breakout was the ultimate break-dancer. He would do things that you couldn't even believe. He would spin on his head. He would do this thing where he jumped up and down and played like he was dead, and it was awesome. Breakout was an excellent break-dancer. That's where he got his name from.

I was in the ninth grade going on the tenth grade when I began to get into the MC-ing and all of that. DJ Breakout and DJ Baron were like, "OK, come and audition to be an MC." And I did, and from there it went on.

DJ BREAKOUT: Sha-Rock said, "I can talk, too." I was, "Well, no, you can't. There never was a girl MC." And then she started practicing.... So we had the first girl MC, Sha-Rock.

SHA-ROCK: When I started, there was no female MCs. Back then, there was no one to pace yourself behind; we were all testing it. My mom was worried about me being a female out there, but once she saw that this wasn't something that would lead me into the wrong direction, she was alright with it.

BUSY BEE: When Keith Keith and Sha-Rock came along, I felt it was cool. I can go on. There was no hard feelings, because Breakout is my friend today, still.

SHA-ROCK: The whole Brothers Disco/Sisters Disco thing came about when Jazzy Dee wanted us to have security. With me being a female out there, I just had to be safe. The guys—Brothers Disco—were for the men in the group, and the Sisters Disco were for me. It was like an organization. They would make sure that everything was protected, make sure that everything went well, that nobody that was a part of the group was harmed. If it meant lifting speakers, that's something that they did—carry speakers. And they was like our crowd pleasers—they would get the crowd hyped. They knew all our rhymes, so they would be out in the crowd getting the people started.

TONY TONE: Sisters Disco, they was like Sha-Rock's security. They watched Sha-Rock's back. You carry your own girls, they cheer for you, and if it's a problem with the women, let the women take care of it, 'cause the guys don't want to get involved in women's stuff.

Brothers Disco took care of the guys. Big Tommy, Iron Mike, B. Herin, Artie Choke, everybody had their names, their killer instinct names. Artie Choke was a little guy with a big temper. Big Tommy was Big, and Lancer was in control of the security.

JAZZY DEE: The Brothers and Sisters Disco was just family. We slept together—I mean, not sexually-wise, but just hangin' out. And people followed us. There was people that started with us in the beginning and went to just about every party we gave. They followed us wherever we went. They was a part of us.

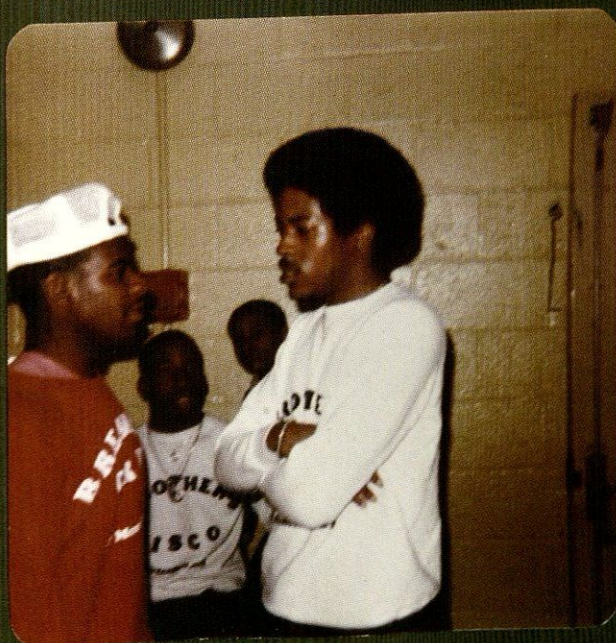
filling out the funky 4

K.K. ROCKWELL: Baron brought this guy over to Breakout's house to try out for the group. Rahiem had his own style. He could rhyme and make you laugh at the same time! I'd never heard anyone as good as Rahiem before.

RAHIEM: I met a guy named Theron Johnson. He was down with another hip-hop pioneer D.St., who had a group called the Infinity 4. Theron introduced me to James Latimore and his cousin Eugene, and together we formed Master Plan 2 and the Phase 1 Crew. Our thing was giving house parties. And when I say house parties, I mean we gave a party in the same house over and over again; we didn't travel around to different houses. That's where I honed my MC skills.



Brothers Disco—Big L, DJ Breakout, Little Rod, and Jazzy Dee—at Edenwald Center, 1977 (Courtesy Darnell Williams)



Brothers Disco—Artie Choke and DJ Breakout at Edenwald Center, 1977 (Courtesy Darnell Williams)

The Brothers Disco Security—Artie Choke, Black Black, Alccapone,
and Iron Mike—Boston Secor Projects party, Fall 1977 (Courtesy
Darnell Williams)



Members of the Sisters Disco: Cheba Girl, Lisa Lee, Busy Bee,
Yvonne, J-Little, Bronx, NY, 1978 (Courtesy Darnell Williams)



Theron Johnson lived on Undercliff Avenue in the Bronx, where DJ Baron lived. He told me about a battle between the Brothers Disco and a group called the Little Brothers. This battle was on a Friday night at a place called Boston-Secor, a community center. That was the very first place that I met the Brothers Disco.

I don't remember exactly what any of Breakout's MCs sounded like at the time, because I was too taken by the atmosphere. The Little Brothers had their sound system up full blast. They had like a bunch of Peavey columns, and the party was kinda live—it was packed. They had some girls walking around with picket-style signs saying "Little Brothers," and I remember saying to myself that this was kind of like a spectacle, you know?

Breakout was listening to music in the headphones, and his sound system wasn't on yet—they were getting a sound check while the Little Brothers were doing their set. Breakout had a row of tweeters [high-frequency speakers] on strings going the width of the stage, and when he turned up the tweeters, it was deafening—high and loud, like a million bees in your eardrum at one time. Breakout is testing the highs in their sound system, and just by him turning up the tweeters, you couldn't really hear the Little Brothers' sound system. That wasn't good for them. So Breakout said on the mic, "Little Brothers, feel the highs," and the highs was kicking! Then he said, "Now here's the mid-range." He had some Electro-Voice horns on stands; they really projected the mid-range. Any record that he played, it was like the people who made that record were right there performing in your face. And when he turned up the bass, it was...you couldn't hear Little Brothers at all.

This guy Richie T, he was one of Breakout's MCs at the time, but it was unofficial—he was Sha-Rock's boyfriend. He was on the mic, and then I remember K.K. being on the mic. Then Baron got on the turntables, and I got on the mic, and wow! I didn't really have a lot of rhymes, but the rhymes that I had, I guess they were really effective at that time.

After that night, it was pretty much sealed: I was a member of the Funky 4. They officially gave me my white Brothers Disco sweatshirt with the black letters on it, and I was walking through the party with my Brothers Disco shirt on that very same night. I remember it was wild; there was angel dust in the air, marijuana...people were really gone that night. I saw this guy holding on to the walls, feeling his way through the party like he was blind, and I said to myself, "Wow, this hip-hop stuff, it's really exciting" [laughs].

Initially, when I got in the group, I was added because DJ Baron needed an MC, because the MCs that was in the group didn't say Baron's name; they said Breakout's name.