Jesse “DJ Diamond” Valdez III

Interviewed by Nicholas J. Vela

June 20, 2019

Corpus Christi, TX

Transcribed by Nicholas J. Vela

**Nicholas Vela**: Okay, so today is the 20th of June 2019. We are here at Jesse Valdez, the third's house. This is Nicholas Vela, and do I have your permission to record?

**Jesse Valdez**: Yes, you do.

**NV**: Okay, great so with that said, um, what affect did music have on you growing up in—on you when you were growing up?

**JV**: Growing up, you know, it was a big part of my family, because not only was my father a DJ, but also my Uncle Roland and, you know, coming from a big family, we always had big get together, And one way that we were always able to connect was through music, you know, dancing at the house, stuff like that.

**NV**: And what did growing up in in Corpus Christi have on you? Were there any effects in terms of a style of music that you do?

**JV**: So, coming from Corpus Deep South Texas, I really like Texas rap and trap. You know, Houston style, right? To name an artist from Corpus is Flatline. He's a real big inspiration of mine, you know, just really heavy bass and weights his impact that Texas had on me.

**NV**: All right, and so what kind of music is it or what kind of music is it that that you do and produce? Aside from, uh, the Texas rap, I really do believe you called it.

**JV**: Aside from that, I'm a big, big fan of house and EDM [electronic dance music] sometimes even incorporating some Latino music into EDM. That's always fun to do with the trumpets and the accordion with the high-pitched noises. It's pretty fun.

**NV**: Was there anything in particular that drew you to the genre that that you now work in?

**JV**: My Uncle Justin always wanted to be a rapper and, you know, growing up with him, we were only your apart. We have a lot of fun together. He showed me a lot of Texas rap and, you know, I looked up to him so naturally, that's what we listen to.

**NV**: And are there any figures who, at least to you, that have made an impact on the local Corpus Christi music scene? I know that you mentioned Flatline earlier, but do you can you name any others?

**JV**: Here in Corpus? Unfortunately, no Flatline is the top of the line.

**NV**: Does music now have an impact on how you interact with your family?

**JV**: You know, music is a way to connect anybody with anybody. So, us being family only I made that bond a little stronger. Sometimes me and my father would go do a gig together. And that's a good way for me and my dad to bond, aside from working, hanging out at the house or something.

**NV**: So, with that, do you think that DJs are an important part of any local music scene?

**JV**: Most definitely. How else will the artist be heard, if not played through a DJ? Or, you know, played at that venue, nightclub, so have it. How else will we get the music out?

**NV**: So, do you have a particular name that you use when you're going out to DJ? And if so, what inspired that name?

**JV**: So, when I was younger, I did. I did a lot of DJing at places I probably shouldn't. And I used to wear a lot of Diamond Supply clothing. So naturally I wanted to be called DJ Diamond. Sounded like a stripper name.

**NV**: And now that you are, uh, father, is there any particular way that-that you incorporate music into how you. I feel like—like deal with your kids is too strong of a word. But in how you interact with them is there a certain—certain ritual that that you have.

**JV**: So, my son really likes my style of music. So when we get in the car sometimes so, you know, asked me to put my music on or he’ll asked my wife to put the type-that type of music on it should be calling me, asking me, “You know, what song does my son like?” So that's—my son's four and you know—

**Jesse Valdez IV**: I’m three.

**JV**: You’ll be four. It's a good way for me and him, the bond since he's so young.

**NV**: Okay.

**Jesse Valdez IV**: Are you talking about me?

**JV**: Yes, I am.

**NV**: So, since we're uh- since this particular podcast episode is working really with the juxtaposition of music and family, how they interact with each other—

**Jesse Valdez IV**: Daddy.

**NV:** What does family mean to you as a South Texan?

**JV**: Family's everything being raised in Texas in South Texas at that? Everybody knows everybody. And if I've known you for longer than five years, you bet your ass you're my family,

**NV**: All right, and so what is your opinion on music as an art form?

**JV**: That's just another way for us to express ourselves. You know, any artist in general is wanting to express himself on pad, paper, whatever the canvas may be, my canvas just has to do with, uh, a speaker. You know, that's how I get my expressions out when I want. When I'm feeling down or low, my music and melodies are usually pretty slow and somber.

**NV**: And so, for those of you, for those who may be listening who aren't as familiar can you talk about what your particular brand of music entails? What, what EDM is what Texas rap is?

**JV**: So EDM is more of, uh, electric dance music. That's what the EDM stands for. It's more computer at—computerized, you know, eight-bit, uh, real heavy, fast beat. Anything over 140 bpm is solid for EDN, uh, Texas rap? It's more in your face. Uh, okay, time out. We got to cut that out.

**JV**: So, rap music to me is, you know, it's what I was raised on. It's—It's what's around me. It's a it's a way for me to connect with some neighborhood kids. You know, I was growing up with. We all experienced the same things, shootings across the street or, you know, robberies. You have people begging for money. You know, everybody wants to be that superstar. And that was a good way for me there to connect with my peers.

**NV**: So, what—It's something like your, your culture, like.

**JV**: Definitely, definitely. In layman’s terms, yeah.

**NV**: And what kind of effect did—did rock music have on you? Because I know that when I was growing up me acting like I'm ten years older than you, it was something that was unbecoming but something that I personally was never able to get into. So, what drew you to-to rap music? Aside from peers who were listening to it. Was it something in the lyrics or in the beat, or in how the rappers presented themselves?

**JV**: You know, not too much about appearance, but more of the lyrics and the way that they were putting it together with the beat. Yeah, that's what led me more into DJing is, well, I really love the beat of music. If I could listen to an instrumental, probably listening to that, you know.

**NV**: So now that you've been producing your own music and you've been in this DJing game for a few years now, which is probably an understatement. Um, what kind of effect has that had on you personally?

**JV**: You know, it really gives me some sense of drive, you know, to want to become better at my craft? No, it makes me. It makes me want to be the best in my town so that not only I can bring my town up with me, but so that I can put food on my table. You know, it is not only a way for me to turn money, but it's a way for me to have fun doing it, you know, it's a lot of fun.

**NV**: And what are your hopes for the local music scene? I mean, of course, we have the likes of Selena, who was the first name that people think of when they think about Corpus Christi. But what do you want this music scene to become?

**JV**: I really just want everybody to come together here in Corpus. There isn't a lot of, you know. I'll help you out with this track. You help me out with that track. You know, I really like to see our community make something you know, great. Out of the talent that we have here, you know, I’d want to see the newer Generation come up with something great that across the board everybody's going to want to listen to.

**NV**: A few of my other, uh, podcast producers for this particular season of South Texas Stories. They're actually interviewing a few people. Casey Lane, who owns House of Rock downtown and David King, who is part of the Independent Thieves, which is like an independent music kind, kind of band. Um, do you think that there's anything that can be done with music and the youth here in Corpus Christi?

**JV**: Definitely. I mean, like I said previously, it's a way to connect with all ages, of all groups, ethnicity, anybody, you, can; music will bring you together. And you don't even have to speak the same language, you know, for youth. I'd like to see the youth come together, and I'm repeating myself.

**NV**: Uh, so is there anything that you think that the local music scene in particular the DJs who arm or local and more familiar with specific neighborhoods can do to help youth?

**JV**: Definitely. You know, we could we kids create classes for the youth. You know, especially during summer when this is the most vulnerable time this where their minds have most free time. And what better way to express themselves than through turning tables?

**NV**: And, is there anything that you would really like to see the local community do to support DJs and to support the local music scene? Especially because Corpus Christi has a reputation as not being particularly cultural.

**JV**: You know, we have an amphitheater downtown that is not being utilized to its full potential. You know, we could most definitely throw on a free show just to bring everybody together. And it could even be small donations, you know, whatever. But we have a theater that we can use that we're not utilizing.

**NV**: I mean, I personally agree. I think that would be a good a good way to not only used the theater, which is kind of derelict, but it's a way to get people out because people always love things that involve low-key being free (oth laugh).

**JV**: Of course, who wouldn’t?

**NV**: But going out and having a good time.

**JV**: Yeah, definitely. And you know, like I said, what better way to bring people together than with music, you know. Have a good time. Have some vendors, some food trucks, mean anything. We have this amazing spot downtown that we're not using to its full potential

**NV**: And, I suppose this question has to be asked, do you hope to make it big?

**JV**: Of course. But you know, that's not what had me start this to begin with. You know, my dad was a DJ. I looked up to him. I wanted to be a DJ, but at the same token, it—it brought me and my Uncle Justin closer together, which made me want to produce music so that I could produce for my Uncle Justin. And, you know, that was always a big dream of ours. Was to blow up, do something big, but it really just started as us having fun doing what we love.

**NV**: Well thank you.

**NV**: So, can you mention any specific instances that DJing has had a major impact on your life.

**JV:** Definitely. I mean, there are a lot of memorable events in my life that I've from DJing One of the biggest ones was meeting my wife, the mother of my children. You know, without music, without me wanting to DJ would never have met her DJing at the venue.

**NV**: Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

**JV**: Yeah, I was DJing and, you know, I had my eye on her for a little while, and I decided to take a little break, put on some Pandora, and I went and talked to her for a few minutes. And I convinced her to come talk with me over so I could DJ. And she loved the music. I was playing at the end of the night. I got her number.

**NV**: All right, so you mentioned your father and your Uncle Roland. But you also mentioned your Uncle Justin. What effect did he have on your style of music?

**JV**: You know, growing up, that that was his big thing. He showed me a lot of the Texas rap because before that, I was real into rock. You know, as a kid, my parents put me in guitar lessons. So, growing up, I always want to play electric guitar, you know? Look it up to the big ones. You know, heavy metal, Iron Maiden, you know, stuff like that. Um, but as far as my uncle, he showed me a different kind of music, and that really pushed me more into the hip-hop genre.

**NV**: And, are there any other people aside from your uncles and your father who have had some kind of influence on either your love of music? Someone who may have pushed you, to follow your dreams?

**JV**: Yeah, my uncle Justin. You know, he-he bought me a couple of items. Uh, you know, don't we get started on producing music? And he was always there with me at my shows. He would, you know me and him would run the-the set up, and I would I would DJ, you know, I love them for that. He was always there to help-help me out. And, you know, he was always My big support was through. Justin.

**NV**: Are there any lessons that practicing music has-has taught you? And would any of those lessons would you like any of those lessons to pass on to your children?

**JV**: Be patient. You know, when creating music, you learn to just let the inspiration flow versus forcing something, you know, be patient and wait for the right moment. When you have that right. Inspiration to take that and just become successful. Be patient.

**NV**: Okay. In regards to music and family, is there anything that you think music can continue to contribute?

**JV**: So, for me, my-my younger brother, he's eleven years younger than me, and it's very hard for us to connect. we connected through music, you know? I love to beat box, and I always beatbox around the house, you know, growing up. And I'm sure he picked up on that because now he just might be better than me. You know, we every time I go over to the house, we exchange, you know, we exchange our own language, if so, to speak, you know, beatboxing. So, I feel that I have impacted my brother. And it's also brought our family closer because now there isn't that big barrier between ages. It's just the love of music.

**NV**: And before we close this interview can actually get a sample of your beatboxing?

**JV**: Sure. (Jesse gives us a small sample of beatboxing.) Something like that. That's more EDM, you know, Dubstep.

**NV**: All right, Well, thank you for your time.

**JV**: Appreciate it.