All in the Musical Family

By Nicholas Vela

Music has a way of inspiring a range of emotion within us, even if we are loath to admit it at times. Much in the same way that the great Gothic Cathedrals of Europe inspire awe, music, too, can inspire awe. For me, classical music, such as Handel’s *Zadok the Priest* and Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* For others, such as my family, it’s rap or hip-hop, or country, or one of the variety of genres that are out there, from folk music to bluegrass or Jazz. But…perhaps one answer that wouldn’t be heard if you asked someone what their favorite genre is, would be “local music.”

I’m Nicholas Vela, and this is South Texas Stories.

{CLIP: Jesse freestyle beatboxing.}

When we think of a local music scene, you may think of independent musicians who sing at bars or play at local gigs; or you may think of local musicians who made it, more or less, to the “big time”. Corpus Christi is perhaps best known as the city that Selena Quintanilla, a rising star in Tejano Music, called home for many years, before she was fatally shot back in 1995. We are also the home of *Domingo Live*, a Tejano music and information show that is broadcast across the country via radio and internet.

Today, I’m introducing you to Jesse Valdez, a Corpus Christi DJ who goes by the name DJ Diamond. He’s also my brother-in law. We’ll be discussing the intersection of family and music, and how these two fundamental elements of human life influence and affect one another.

When asked why he chose the name DJ Diamond, Jesse had a surprisingly simple answer.

**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.

For many, DJs aren’t the first to pop to mind when we think of Corpus Christi, but they play a local part, and an integral part in the local music scene. When asked if DJing is important, this was Jesse’s response.

**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?

Many DJs are unsung heroes, who play and disseminate music to the public, whether that be through weddings or bar and bat-mitzvahs to simply being on the radio; and they normally add their own little twist. At the end of the day, many of these DJs have lives of their own.

Growing up, music was an integral part of his life as well, and here, he explains why it was a part of his life.

**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.

How did Corpus Christi have an effect on his music? Jesse Explains.

**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.

Some of the influences that Corpus has had on his music can be seen not only in the music he produces.

**JV**: Aside from that, I'm a big, big fan of house and EDM 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.

As Mentioned, Jesse credits Flatline as being an influence, as well as his Uncle Justin, who was a year older than Jesse, and who, unfortunately, passed away suddenly in early 2018.

**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.

To many, Family and music seem to be separate spheres, but both are fundamental parts of the human experience. Music, aside from being a fundamental part of human expression, has a way to transcend boundaries, connecting old and young alike through a variety of experiences.

His wife, Brianna, is my younger sister, and their life has, while at times been rocky, become a bastion of support for not only them, but for many in the family, an example of how love wins.

**JV**: 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. I was I was DJing and, you know, I had my eye on her for a little while, and I decided to-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.

Jesse is the oldest in his family, followed by a sister, Jewelina, and, a decade and a year later, his brother Jeremy. For Jesse, Family is one of the most fundamental aspects of his life, as he explains.

**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.

When asked how music helped him and his family, Jesse explains how music played a large part in that.

**JV**: For me, my-my younger brother, he's 11 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.

**JV**: 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 sons 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.

The young voice here belongs to Jesse’s son, also named Jesse, or as he’s affectionately known: Baby Jess.

Music also has lessons that it can teach us. For Jesse, one lesson he hopes will pass on to his two children is this.

**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,

When it comes to how music can be used in the local scene to help and improve lives, two examples come to mind. The first is the Corpus Christi Jazz Festival, one of the last few free festivals of its kind, and one whose importance to the local music scene comes in two forms: First, as a festival that brings many together, and second, its connection to the Galvan family, who also opened the Galvan Ballroom, intended from the start to be a place where everyone could come for their shows and events. Another example that Corpus Christi has to offer is *Chicas Rock*, a local organization that helps young girls by “encouraging and promoting self-esteem through music creation and performance.”[[1]](#footnote-1) When asked whether or not the Corpus Christi Music Scene had something similar to offer, Jesse had a few good thoughts.

**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.

Amongst other things, Jesse thinks that this Ampitheatre, situated on the bayfront at Cole Park, would be good not only for concerts, but for get togethers.

**JV**: 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.

In regards to the Youth of the city, which is known for having a notoriously low literacy rate, Jesse thinks that music has something to offer this demographic as well.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**JV.** 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?

Finally, Jesse states that, above all else, Music has a unique position in human society.

**JV:** 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.

Family and music, at first glance, may not seem large. In fact, one may think of them as separate spheres. But regardless, music has an effect on even the most miniscule aspects of our lives. For local musicians and DJs, that effect is more profound, because music forms only one aspect of their lives. They find themselves pulled to it in part for the money, but mainly, for the release of creativity that flows through all of us. A snippet of a lyric from a musical. A soundtrack that tears at your heart and makes you relive some emotion. A beat that inspires you.

Once again, I’m Nicholas Vela, and this is South Texas Stories.

1. Julianna Jimenez, “Chicas Rock Summer Camp,” *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.caller.com/picture-gallery/news/2017/07/11/chicas-rock-summer-camp/103610022/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Time Editors, “The 5 Least Literate Cities in America,” *Time*, 2-25-2014, <https://time.com/9549/the-5-least-literate-cities-in-america/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)