

# LOCAL NOISE

## Josie Styles

February 2005, UTS, Sydney

Josie Styles, Tony Mitchell, Nick Keys.

---

### Summary:

“I joined the arts-law centre of NSW, which is the best move I ever did. I took my first contract down to them, and the guy went ‘Josie, Warner is trying to bend you over and fuck you up the arse’. And I’m like, ‘Yeah, really?’ and he was like ‘Yep, check this out, check that out’, and by the end of it I had exponentially learned about music entertainment law and how to write my own contracts and re-negotiate them. OK, you’re hungry to get your name out there, but you don’t need to sign to a major to get that, you can go with an independent distribution company, like Obese, or Shogun. They will put out your tunes, you get all your publishing, all your fees, it’s all savvy.”

Local Noise spoke to DJ and hip-hop promoter Josie Styles in 2005 at UTS, just after her hip-hop show at 2ser and at a time when she had been offered a job with Shogun Distribution (based in Brisbane). The energetic Josie talked about her two-sided life, spread between her love of hip-hop and her work as a territorial ecologist looking after an endangered Bell Frog population. She spoke about the early days of getting into hip-hop, early Australian hip-hop and its influence, tape culture and growing up loving hip-hop in the rock-centric mainstream. She talked of her beginnings as a DJ, crate digging and her current practice. She spoke about the relationship with Warner Music that yielded the two Australian hip-hop compilations *Straight from the Art*. This led to a long discussion about the history of major labels and hip-hop in Australia and working in the industry in general. Josie focuses on representing women in hip-hop, and understands the difficulties of being a woman artist, citing the examples of Canadian FemCee Eternia and Perth-based FemCee Layla as positive examples.

### About:

This text is licensed under a Creative Commons Attributed-Sharealike-Noncommercial license. For details on the terms of this license, please see <http://www.creativecommons.org/nc-sa-a2.0/>

Local Noise is an ARC-funded research project from the University of Technology, Sydney. Its focus is on Australian hip-hop, and the localisation of hip-hop in different cultural, societal and educational contexts.

**JS:** Josie Styles

**TM:** Tony Mitchell

**NK:** Nick Keys

**TM:** I've just found this on the internet about you, about Indent, can you tell me a bit about that?

**JS:** Sure, I've actually resigned from that position. I joined there last year, it's just a non-profit, government-funded organisation that gives funding to anyone in the community who wants to put on drug- and alcohol-free music entertainment events. So, if you wanted to put on a gig and say, bring Lyrical Commission up from Melbourne, then you'd get a little team together of young people from 18-24 and you'd apply to me for funding and I'd be like 'Yep, here's two grand, and that will cover your public liability', or something like that. So, it's a pretty good initiative, but I'm moving on to better pastures; Shogun distribution, which is an independent distribution label in Queensland, has just hired me to be their national sales manager and head publicist, and that's just strictly hip-hop. So, I'm looking forward to starting that in eight working days.

**TM:** Great, fantastic. Will that involve moving to Queensland?

**JS:** No, I get to do it all from here, from a laptop in Sydney. I'm going up there just to see how they run things, and then after I've set it up here, I'll go down to Melbourne and set it up there as well. We distribute lots of Australian hip-hop on there, basically everything that Obese records doesn't have, we distribute.

**TM:** OK, right. And before you were with Indent you were a terrestrial ecologist for the Australian Museum, do you still do that?

**JS:** Sure do. I guess I'm quite dichotomous in my nature being a Gemini – music kind of gets me through the science, and I used hip-hop to always get me through my working nights out there. I'm in charge of an endangered Bell Frog population at Homebush Bay. So I spend nights in the swamps, dressed in rubber.

**TM:** So that involves hanging out there at night?

**JS:** Yep, from seven pm till five am, crawling around and looking through the reeds going like this, 'Raaap-raaap-raaap-rap-rap-rap' to attract males across.

**TM:** Have you ever sampled any of it?

**JS:** I have done. Some Bell Frogs have been used in bass lines, you can time stretch their call and it gets a really nice bass line.

**TM:** That's great, where can I find that?

**JS:** *Frog Calls of Australia*, Dave Stewart did the sound I think for that.

**TM:** Well, from frogs to hip-hop, what got you into hip-hop?

**JS:** Well, I'm 31 this year and I've been into hip-hop since I was about 14 or 15, obsessively I guess. Before that, it was just in the mid to late 80s it was just a big fad, it was popular music. If it was a rainy day then everyone would bust out the lino mats and we'd go into the hallways of the demountable classrooms and everyone would be busting moves, I guess breakdancing. And then I guess it kind of went back underground, I guess more so, and it didn't have such a popular focus, and then in 1987 it must have been, I went to high school and there was this cute boy in my class who was a graffiti writer and into hip-hop. And I was already into hip-hop, but more commercial stuff like Run

DMC, Eric B and Rakim and that. And he was like, 'Yo, check this out,' and I was like 'Oh, that's pretty sweet,' and then I guess I kind of got into it to chase him down and then just fell in love with hip-hop and then discarded him, completely. It was like, don't need to know about you, I found my marriage!

**TM:** So did you get into graff as well?

**JS:** I did. But I was really shit at it, and I never really progressed past one colour big blockbusters. So, I left that alone and began concentrating on the music and began collecting tapes and just doing little mixtapes, from pause button edits. I just kind of kept collecting music, and I've always been a big fan of music, and not just hip-hop but all styles and genres of music, except pop, I never really got into pop in the late 80s. And then in the 90s it was all over, it was just hip-hop all the way.

**TM:** So, you started going to local jams?

**JS:** Yeah, I grew up on the northern beaches so there weren't really any local jams, we had to come into the city, or the Hyde Park stuff, or the Martin Place amphitheatre things. Yeah, but there was nothing my way, we were doing graff in the drains. And basically I was, well not getting bashed – though I nearly did once – but threatened physically by people in my area because I was into hip-hop and they were so heavily into rock.

**TM:** Right, mostly surfers?

**JS:** That's right. And I surfed as well, but they were like, 'No, only rock music'. But now I see these people at a hip-hop gig and I'm like 'Grrrrrr', it's not right, you know. So, I think, if you're really into it, it's a lifelong obsession, and I guess most of the people you've been speaking to say the same thing, married to the beats, rhymes and life.

**TM:** Absolutely, and live it every day. So, you started DJing?

**JS:** Yeah, I started DJing, probably about 93. I was going out with this guy and he was a house DJ, and I was just looking at what he was doing on the decks and I was like, 'I reckon I could do that'. And while he had the turntables there, I gave it a go, and it seemed pretty easy, and I could do it. So, I just kept doing it and doing it, just as purely a bedroom DJ, and about 99 I put out a mix CD and started handing it out to everybody, saying 'Yep, I'm ready to start playing out now'. And I started getting really active in the scene – before I was always bubbly from the side, just sussing it out; like, I'd go to gigs and just stand back and listen to the music, I just wanted to avoid all the politics. I got pretty active in 99, I started working at Next Level Records, which was – well still is – Sydney's only hip-hop music store.

**TM:** Was that when it was in Liverpool Street?

**JS:** Yep, that was after the Lounge Room and before George Street. That was really cool, I started writing for *Stealth* magazine and *Drum Media* and *Out 4 Fame* – what else was I doing – well, DJing out of course. And then in 2001, or 2002 maybe, Warner approached me – well actually this guy came into the store who I know, and he's a rep for Warner – and he said 'Oh, Warner are thinking of putting together an Australian hip-hop collection', trying to ride the wave of success. He said, 'They are trying to get this R'n'B DJ to compile it'. And I'm like 'What!? What do you mean an R'n'B guy's going to compile it? I'm not having our integrity sacrificed, no way'. And so I rang Warner straight away in the afternoon and said 'I've heard what you've got in the pipeline, I'd really like to call a meeting and come into a talk to you about that, and show you how I could bring better things to you'. So I put together this marketing plan and strategy and took it into them and they were like, 'Oh, shit'. So yeah, basically, did that first one, which was really successful because we had the Australian artists division at Warner then. And between that one and the next one, they got rid of the

Australian artist department, so we had no support for anything. Even for the first one, I did all my own promo, and set up all the media stuff, and it sold OK, they sold like 5 000 copies of it and they are just repressing some now.

**TM:** I think for me the most noticeable thing about it is that it has got more women artists than any other compilation.

**JS:** Apart from the *Mother Tongue* compilation which is exclusively women.

**TM:** Well of course.

**JS:** That's definitely something that I wanted. The level of female MCs may not be as up to scratch as I would like it, but I definitely wanted to represent women on this release. But, the idea for the third one was going to be all women, and not just from Australia but from all over the world, but I don't think they are going to have a third one, due to the sales on number two.

**TM:** Did that drop down?

**JS:** Yeah it did, because I went overseas to the UK probably a month after it dropped, and I wasn't here to do any of the media follow-up like I did on the first one. I hounded people on the first one, I was ringing people up going, 'where's my CD? Did you get? Where's the review, I can't see it? Get someone on to it'. And so I wasn't here this time, and now it's been like five months and it just too late to hit them with a new release. So, we've let it slide. The vinyl masters got lost in the mail. Then, the track listing was all wrong because the Australian artists department had gone and no one called me to proof it over before it went to press. So the track listing from Brothers Stoney onwards is all screwed. They told me that 'We can't fix the artwork until they sell the 5 000 units or 3 000 units they have pressed'. I'm like, 'Dude, if that was Madonna, there is no way that you would let that go through'. So, first release they were fine, second release they were not as good as I'd like them to be.

**TM:** I did a review of the first one, it was in *Music Forum*. I gave it good props, and focused very much on the women artists being the most distinctive feature.

**JS:** Well the Layla and A-Love tracks, to this day, are still my favourite tracks in Australian hip-hop. 'Maverick' [the track by Layla] just kills it; she [Layla] murders male and female MCs, both local and overseas.

**TM:** I've been dying to hear her LP [Heretik].

**JS:** It is soooo good.

**TM:** Is it out already?

**JS:** No, it will be out February 21, I think, and there is a tune called 'The Fuss About Sluts', which is just amazing. And it's quite ironic, 'The Fuss About Sluts' track, because she's talking about sex in the music industry and how sex sells, with your Foxy Browns and everything like that. [And Layla says] 'What happened to your skills?' Because your voice can be digitally enhanced now, so it's not about skills anymore, it's about looking good and branding product. So she's talking about that, but at the same time it's over this sleazy beat that you can't help but shake your arse to it. So there will be all these sluts in clubs dancing to it but not understanding the irony of the lyrics. So, it's going to be hot.

**NK:** That's totally an issue though with music production, the way they compress the vocals and say, somebody like Britney Spears or whatever, they don't write the tune, they do their one version or couple of versions of the vocals which get compressed and chucked in with everything else, and all they do it the video where they shake their booty. So really their artistic input is so unbelievably

minimal.

**JS:** Zero.

**NK:** Yeah, their voices are compressed out of all their personality, it's just so they sound tight...

**JS:** And it's got to be for radio as well, so the voice is always compressed and digitally enhanced, so you can rap on beat, so they drop you in on mark.

**NK:** That's something I've noticed. It's almost weird, like, a lot of people that listen to a lot of mainstream music, they have this almost paradoxical thing going where they listen to substandard music but it's produced really quite well. Like Justin Timberlake, as much as I don't like his music, it is produced really well...

**JS:** No, you can't front on that, no.

**NK:** So you've got people who have taste in what I would say is bad music, but these really high production value expectations that they don't even know that they have. And so when they hear live Aussie hip-hop that is hard to reproduce in a good sonic environment...

**JS:** Especially considering you know, New York and America have million-dollar recording studios and million-dollar drum machines and million-dollar effects units, or whatever, that we don't have here. Everyone is still making stuff out of their bedroom. That's why we're on par, production wise, I think, with the UK. I don't want the Americans to pick up on our sound particularly. I'm not so fussed about getting Australian hip-hop over to America, because our sounds are completely different, it's polarised. Where as in Britain, people are still making stuff in their bedrooms. I guess with the advent of MPC, and computers coming down in price, it gave everyone a chance to make tunes at home. But, there's a downside to that as well, because everyone's doing it, like, I get sent like five demos a week, and you really have to sift through the shit to find the good stuff. So, just because it's Aussie, doesn't mean it's good. There's a lot of people running around going 'It's Aussie, it's good!' But they really need to go, 'Well, what is good about it? Is the production good? Are the beats good? How's it sound?' People are eager to get their sound out.

**NK:** Totally, and that's a good thing. It's just unfortunate – you know, I know a lot of people who have gone to Aussie hip-hop gigs and gone 'Yeah, it was cool, but it just didn't really sound that good, I couldn't hear what the MCs were saying'. And fair enough, you can be as critical as you want, but, some people don't take into consideration how hard it is to make it sound good. Dudes just rock up before a gig, do a 20-minute sound check and then go sit in their dressing room again and come out again. You know, like they don't get to spend hours and hours procuring the sound as good as it on CDs and so forth.

**JS:** And even in this country especially, which is primarily dominated by the rock industry, by rock music, a lot of our sound engineers who are doing the gigs are rock engineers, so they are really high on the top end, and low on the bass and the mids. And for hip-hop, you really need a massive bottom end sound, a fair bit of mids and then drop your top end down a wee bit. That's something that we're fighting against, but, you just have to get good soundies with you. But, I guess the only people I think that do international level shows would be the Hoods, Bliss n Eso and Hyjak, Torcha and Bonez and Koolism. Or Resin Dogs are pretty good too, and Two Dogs. Like the live band stuff is fine, that's not an issue, but as far as recorded crews go it's those boys who are killing it.

**TM:** And often when they get into a recording studio, it's geared for rock isn't it?

**JS:** Depends on where you go, yeah. And mastering as well, if you take it to a masterer that's a rock engineer then they will completely roll over your bass, and it's like 'No, no, no, no – give me that 40

hertz’.

**TM:** Someone who I was curious about who is on this [*Straight From The Art* compilation] is Jade Nemesis, who’s been around for a long time...

**JS:** Yeah, she has.

**TM:** And just doesn’t seem to have got a huge amount of exposure.

**JS:** No, she did her first EP called *Scenic Route* which dropped in about – oh it must have been 98, now you’re testing the memory – which was produced by Blaze, and remixed by DJ Ransom. She now has a full-time job, she works for ABC. She has a lot of potential, she still has a really old school flow, which is great, but she’s getting on in years, like myself, so it’s people like A-Love and Layla, the younger ones, that are coming up that are really going to bring it through for the girls for the next generation.

**TM:** I’ve got a track of hers called ‘Chinese Whispers’.

**JS:** That’s the same EP, yep.

**TM:** Is she part Chinese?

**JS:** She is, she is half-Chinese, half... is it British? She raps about it in one of her tunes.

**TM:** Yeah, and it was interesting that you had Eternia on this too.

**JS:** Did you meet her while she was over here?

**TM:** I didn’t meet her but she was actually studying over here for a while, and I saw her at one of the Ladies First gigs and she had a completely different style from all the Aussie women – dressed in battle fatigue, really full on and aggressive.

**JS:** She’s incredible, I’ve never seen a woman like her. I first saw her at a movie they were playing, it must have been *Freestyle: the freedom of speech*, about the art of freestyling – and there was this massive cypher outside, like there must have been a hundred people in this circle and she just stepped in her big denim dress and her big boots and just rocked it. And I was like ‘Oh my lord, who is this girl?’ And then she came up to Next Level the next day, and I was like, ‘You’re the girl that was at Glebe last night, how you doing?’ And then Mr Lif was in the country at the same time, and her and him are mates, I took them to triple j when I was doing the hip-hop show with Nicole Foot and we just have been mates ever since. She was in the country when that came out, and she was down in Melbourne recording with A-Love and Plutonic Lab for that tune, and I was so blessed to have her on. I mean honestly, she is amazing, you’ve seen her perform live so you know.

**TM:** Yeah, she was great. And she said really nice things about Australian women MCs too didn’t she? I read an interview with her in *3D* and she was saying how women here seeing to be getting a lot more exposure and dropping more product than women in Canada which is kind of interesting.

**JS:** Oh, definitely, we’re more proactive. I think I put that down to MC Que, she was the first female MC who really inspired me, around 1995 I think it was, she released her *Telling it like it is* cassette, just on tape, before people we even releasing CDs...

**TM:** Yeah, the tape culture, so many of those cassettes.

**JS:** I still have my tape culture going, man. I’d say between 93 and 97 was really strong tape culture, when everyone was dropping the shit.

**TM:** Well, yeah MC Que, we've seen her film *All the Ladies*, which is good.

**JS:** Yeah, it's pretty cool. But she was really inspiring to me, first and foremost as a female in hip-hop, because it's a very patriarchal subculture, as you know.

**TM:** Absolutely, yes.

**JS:** And you kind of rock onto the scene and people are a bit sus on you, especially the guys, when you first come in they're like 'Right, is she a slut?' or whatever, and when they see that they aren't going to get any play, and that you're there because you love it, and you love it is as much as they do, and you're as obsessive as them about it, they are like, 'Whoa!' And you can gain their respect that way. She [MC Que] was one of the girls, she's Prowla's girlfriend, and he still is one of my favourite producers in this country, so she was very inspiring to me, and to A-Love, you can hear a lot of her style in A-Love's rhythm.

**TM:** Oh right, OK. Anyone else who was kind of like a big influence on you? What about people like Spice?

**JS:** Charlene [Spice] was more graffiti-based. She was more inspiring to me as a female in the graffiti scene, but because by then I was so shit at it, I was like, 'Nah, I'm not doing it'. I kind of had given that away. But people like DJ Chrissie from Melbourne, she was a retro DJ, she really inspired me as well, MC Que definitely. But there weren't many girls around when I came through, and the only girl I knew was Jade Nemesis in Sydney, pretty much.

**TM:** So you haven't had much involvement with Mother Tongues?

**JS:** I do now. What Heidi [from *Creative Vibes*, who runs *Mother Tongues*] has done is great, you can't front on that; it's a great thing to be pushing.

**TM:** Oh yeah, she's been a major force in the Sydney hip-hop scene I think, and not just for women, but I think for the whole scene.

**JS:** Definitely, it's made it a lot easier for people to get stuff out, or to get it distributed, get it into the stores and to get media coverage from it. We've definitely come a long way in five years, in terms of attention ... and it's not just hip-hop, she's very, very schooled on funk and electronica – she's got a very wide skill base with that. 'Cause there's not a lot of girls that dig [for records] either. I don't know any girls in this country apart from Heidi and myself that go out and dig for breaks and records. Maybe Chrissie, but she never really talks about, whereas it's only guys doing it. I love going to Martin's, or you know, one of those really old dodgy record stores and just digging through and finding that break that no one has used, and taking it home and going, 'yeah, I'll hold on to that one'. So yeah, that's another element, the fifth element.

...

**TM:** There seems to have been a history between Australian hip-hop and major labels, going back to Down Under By Law and Virgin, which is what, 88/89, or something. They put that out and then walked away from it.

**JS:** Yep, for sure, they washed their hands of it. What was worse was the Sound Unlimited Posse drama, with Sony. They gave them a \$50 000 dollar advance, and all this recording time. And back then, everyone was so eager to get out there and be signed, no one wanted to check contracts, and so they didn't know they were going to be left to recoup it all, so when the album didn't sell, they were left with this mad debt. Of course, they never have to really pay it back, as such, but you never see royalty payments.

**TM:** I mean, they were a pretty good group, before they signed with Sony.

**JS:** I was more into the Easybass, the Urban Poets, who were Easybass before they were Easybass. I actually went to school with Illpickl. I actually have him to thank, probably, for guiding me on the path to hip-hop, because otherwise I may well be listening to rap, because I was listening to a lot of hardcore stuff then, and it was rap, 'cause hip-hop wasn't invented. So he came back from Singapore with De La Soul, Jungle Brothers, Money Love – this was in 89 on vinyl, and I was like 'My god, this shit is incredible. It's got crackly samples from James Brown, this is freaky'. And for that, that was the stepping-stone from rap to hip-hop, I can define the exact moment, I remember sitting in his lounge room, playing it – he's passed away now. I don't know, the whole Warner thing was really strange for me from a personal perspective, I could kind of feel him propelling me towards it, over my shoulder, like pushing me to do it. 'Cause I know he'd been trying for years to get the underground Australian sound out, and never really succeeded.

**TM:** He was a Perth boy wasn't he?

**JS:** Originally, yes, and then they moved over here in 1986. And I was best mates with his sisters, who were twins, and met him through that, and he was a little Gemini boy as well. And I remember his first raps, and it was in this pseudo-American accent, 'cause back then everyone was rapping with American accents, and it was all on tape, and it was all really ghetto. And then, I just remember saying to him, you know 'Shit man, there's nothing we can do over this side'. Like we went over to the northern beaches, and it was just awful. He'd be going over to the eastern suburbs to meet Leroy Brown and other boys and they all lived over here, and then eventually he moved over here, and then when I moved over here in 94 he was like 'Jose, how good is it?' and I'm like 'Dude, you can wear hip-hop on your sleeve and not get bashed'. So that was a good move, I think that was really when I could be open about being a big fan of hip-hop, moving to the eastern suburbs, 'cause I wasn't going to get bashed by big surfer dudes. But I definitely have to put it down to Illpickl for bringing it home, and he's got his own solo album on Warner.

**TM:** It's a kind of double bind isn't it? If you don't get into major labels, then you don't get the exposure. You have to stay this underground phenomenon.

**JS:** Yeah, but, look at the Hilltop Hoods, they did it all independently. They only pressed up 3 000 units of the CD and vinyl because that's all they really expected to move, tops. That's all Aussie had been moving up till that point. But then, next thing I know, Nova's picked it up, and then they've gone gold, and now they are up to 40 000 odd, and that's amazing. But you know what, they still haven't changed, they're still humble boys, Suf [Suffa MC] still drives his bloody yellow Laser, piece of shit with doors falling off. They haven't changed, they might have bought some studio equipment, but they still really are underground hip-hop artists.

**TM:** They're heading off to Europe aren't they?

**JS:** Yeah, they're doing Canada, London, and Tokyo – actually they are only shopping in Tokyo, Shibuya is mad for records.

...

**JS:** I joined the arts-law centre of NSW, which is the best move I ever did. I took my first contract down to them, and the guy went 'Josie, Warner is trying to bend you over and fuck you up the arse'. And I'm like, 'Yeah, really?' and he was like 'Yep, check this out, check that out', and by the end of it I had exponentially learned about music entertainment law and how to write my own contracts and re-negotiate them. OK, you're hungry to get your name out there, but you don't need to sign to a major to get that, you can go with an independent distribution company, like Obese, or Shogun.

They will put out your tunes, you get all your publishing, all your fees, it's all savvy.

**TM:** Well, that's good to know. It's getting to the point where you don't need the major labels.

**JS:** Yeah, I don't think so. My advice to people is just don't sign, they take 85% of your publishing [rights]. You can join Amcor, and they'll collect your publishing for a fee, but you get the majority of it. None of this 15% bullshit, and that's standard industry practice, not just Warner.

**NK:** Eighty-five per cent?

**JS:** Yeah, that's just for publishing. I used the Warner project was to send all this stuff overseas. So I've sent it to all my contacts in America, Canada, UK, Italy, people banging it in Prague, Mexico, you know, everywhere, it's all over. It's really far-reaching, and that's what I wanted, to expose Australian hip-hop and just let people know what we're about. And, you know, it's something I'm very passionate about, and it's something that I wanted to make sure that no R'n'B DJ was compiling it, and ruining our integrity.

...

**TM:** We were talking to A-Love a few weeks ago. She seems, to me, like a good example of, well some of the women at least, who are getting involved with the business side really strongly. Which is – is that just a kind of a need for self-preservation and survival?

**JS:** Oh, self-preservation and self-motivation and self-promotion, 'cause the guys aren't going to promote you, they still think we're second rate, whether it's DJing or MCing, breaking or beatboxing, graffiti or whatever. You still get that, 'Oh, but you're a girl,' or the 'token girl' kind of thing. But when you can bring your skills to the table, that's when it's a little bit different.

**NK:** That's when the respect comes.

**JS:** Exactly, and A-Love was lucky, well not lucky, but she's a very, very smart girl, highly intelligent, and she's still young, so the whole Nescafe/*Big Break* thing was great. And she's now enrolled in law, her first year in law.

**TM:** That's right, and she's already got a degree in anthropology.

**JS:** Absolutely, so she now wants to specialise in music-entertainment law.

**TM:** Which is a very smart move.

**JS:** Yeah, as if we don't need it. I know plenty of people – Warner basically approached the Hilltop Hoods trying to get them to sign – and, you know, at this stage no proper hip-hop artist has been signed as themselves.

**TM:** That's fantastic that those labels are really stepping up, like Obese. I don't know much about the one you've just signed to, Shogun.

**JS:** Just a distribution label, yeah, they started as the first online hip-hop store in this country and basically they had all Australian hip-hop on there for sale. And that is just a side thing now; Shogun has been set up now to distribute Australian/UK/US funk, soul and reggae. And of course, they've got me on board, which is really good 'cause they can pay me. Woohoo, I finally get a paid job in hip-hop! I don't mind doing it for free, but it's nice to get paid sometimes. People respect you when you've paid your dues, but then again, you just keep paying your dues, and I'll still keep paying my dues no matter what. I'm just very, very lucky that they needed a girl; I think girls are better at publicity, PR work. Bianca from Obese is a good example. Because I came from a retail background

– to get though uni I was working for HMV, always pushing Aussie hip-hop, always setting up Oz hip-hop sections in every store I worked in.

**TM:** You're still doing a regular [DJing] gig?

**JS:** Yeah, weekly. Tonight I'm at Candy's Apartment. I'm just doing either Oz hip-hop gigs, like the team battle at the Australian Hotel a couple of weeks ago. It's really weird, playing at an Oz hip-hop jam and then playing at a club. It's such a different culture, you know, when I'm at the Oz hip-hop jams I've got to play my hard shit, really hard Aussie stuff. But that wouldn't go down so well at the club, so I play A-Love, and Layla – well I play Layla at both. But yeah, my club stuff is more funk, reggae and soul.

**NK:** Especially for Candy's.

**JS:** Yeah, especially for Candy's. They are a young crowd and they'll dance to anything, but still I like to educate them a little bit at the same time, because that's what DJs should do.

**TM:** Blaze is involved with Candy's isn't he?

**JS:** Yep, Blaze and Regal. Good old Blaze, Granddaddy Blaze I call him, he's the grandfather of Oz hip-hop, him and DJ Ransom.

**NK:** Yeah, we're going to try and talk to both of them in the future.

**JS:** Oh god, you might need three CDs to record him on. He's got so many stories to tell, and he's so verbose and just prolific at everything. Tony, can I ask you a question, what's your opinion on the use of the US accent in New Zealand?

**TM:** I was just going to bring that up. I really can't stand it; I really can't bear it at all.

**JS:** 'Cause you've got proper groups like Dark Tower who come through with sick, dope stuff. And then you listen to the Deceptikonz, it's got great production, but, you know. I spoke to them and said 'What's the story?' and they said 'Well, you know, we've grown up listening to American rap'. And I'm like 'OK, but I don't know if that's a good excuse anymore'. And they've got a bigger scene you know, they've got a big R'n'B scene, like My FM and stuff over there that play it, and we don't have that over here.

**TM:** Yeah and they also have the Maori radio stations and the uni stations, and there are quite a few people coming through now who are rapping in Maori, my main contact there is Te Kupu, aka D-Word from Upper Hut Posse, and most of the stuff he does now is in Maori.

**JS:** Wicked, that's brilliant.

**TM:** And he taught himself Maori, 'cause when he went to school they didn't have Maori classes, so he went and took lessons and stuff. So he's inspired a lot of people, there are younger kids coming up who are rapping in Maori, and Samoan and Tongan, stuff like that. There's quite an interesting album out by a guy called Feelstyle, called *Breakin' it Down*, I think. And it's got some tracks in Samoan. It's interesting, because some tracks are in Samoan, but the English tracks are in an American accent. But there's also this Samoan-American connection as well.

**JS:** Yeah, definitely, and there has been for some time. You know, I was running around with The Sons of Samoa when I was a little girl doing graff, and you know, they actually spoke in an American accent, and I don't care if that's how you speak. Rap how you speak. The Aussie/NZ accent debate has been going on for at least 15 years, and....

**NK:** And will go on for at least that again.

**JS:** Britain is going through the same thing as well, like in the late 80s, people were rapping in that quasi-UK/US accent, just like they were here with the quasi-Oz/US accent. And even Sleeping Monk was doing it up until 97/98 when he started to break out of it, and now he's found his flow and he's doing shit in Spanish.

