

LOCAL NOISE

Koolism

December 2004.

Danielsan, Hau, Tony Mitchell, Nick Keys.

Summary:

“Well the more focused people seem to be on the idea of culture, hip-hop or whatever it may be, the more they draw their own book of rules and everything like that. That’s why we’re so loose and here and there, ‘cause even though we come from that background, we don’t take it seriously, you know, like it’s a religion or something. People who do have to draw lines and they get offended if people cross over them, if they sort of have one foot in and one foot out.” [Danielsan]

This interview with Canberra-based stalwarts Koolism took place in late 2004, when they were up in Sydney to play at the Homebake festival. Daniel and Hau told stories of 12 years experiences of being Koolism, including the making of the video clip *The Seasons*, Daniel’s comments upon winning the ARIA and Kool Herc DJing at a party at Hau’s family home in Canberra. In a patchworked fashion, the history and character of Koolism emerges through the stories.

About:

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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.

H: Hau

D: Danielsan

TM: Tony Mitchell

NK: Nick Keys

TM: I've got one of your tapes from way back; I think about 97... I think the first time I saw you live was at that Sons of Samoa gig at the Bondi Pavilion with King Kapesi and MC Trey and they had Samoa tattooing...

H: Yeah, Tanoi put that on.

TM: That was part of the Sydney Festival I think. I just thought it was a really great idea to get the three of you to have this kind of celebration of Pacific Island culture...

H: Yeah it was cool, especially with the live tattooing and that...

TM: I mean Trey has talked about this too, that there is sort of real connections between Pacific Island cultures and hip-hop, she's talked about how the four elements of hip-hop can be connected to four elements of her traditional Fijian culture.

H: Yeah, I guess so. I mean the four elements related to a lot of things in life, you know what I mean, it just depends on how you look at it.

TM: You've drawn on your Tongan background a lot in your previous work, less so now it seems. I was interested in that track you did on the *Sonic Allsorts* compilation where you rapped in Tongan.

H: Yeah that was hard, 'cause I can't naturally speak Tongan, I was brought up speaking English and that chorus took me ten years to put down. 'Cause with the language, when you rap the words it doesn't sound like you say the words so I had to try and make a balance between how to actually pronounce it and to put it in rhythm, in beat...

D: And they rushed us to get it to them, we didn't have an opportunity to make a song after they asked us, but we found like, one night, and it was one of those 'try and make something happen' [times]. It probably would have been much better if we had more time.

TM: I thought that was a really interesting compilation.

D: Yeah, my favourite track was the one by Curse ov Dialect...

NK: The Vulk Makedonski one...

TM: Yeah, and that's on their album too, *Lost in the Real Sky*.

H: Yeah, they're out of the beach man, at the Big Day Out, that guy wrapped himself in garbage bags [Atarungi], and it was like 40 000 degrees.

TM: But I really think what they are doing with hip-hop is great because they are actually taking it in completely other directions.

H: Yeah, that's the cool thing about that crew, they don't really care about what people think, they're just doing their thing, and I don't really get into their music that much, but you gotta respect that you know.

D: I'm not even sure they're intentionally trying to hip-hop so much as they have hip-hop elements in them, which is much like our group, to be honest.

TM: Do you find that in the hip-hop scene there are people who seem to make judgement and pronouncements, and insist on by-laws?

H: Yeah, that's the ignorance, and arrogance.

D: Well the more focused people seem to be on the idea of culture, hip-hop or whatever it may be, the more they draw their own book of rules and everything like that. That's why we're so loose and here and there, 'cause even though we come from that background, we don't take it seriously, you know, like it's a religion or something. People who do have to draw lines, and they get offended if people cross over them, if they sort of have one foot in and one foot out.

TM: Yeah, well, I've been playing your video 'The Season', I played it to some of my students in first year a few weeks back and they really liked it. And the thing that they said was that it's completely different from the kind of videos we see on *Video Hits* and all of that kind of stuff – the American stuff – because A: it's not taking itself very seriously, B: it's really kind of gentle and laidback and not at all macho or aggressive. And everywhere I've shown it to people I get a really good response. It seems like you're almost sending up the whole thing of breaking battles.

D: Well, we were, I think.

TM: And Nick was saying you filmed that ['The Season'] near the Chesspit [in Canberra], is that right?

NK: It wasn't at Commonwealth Park?

D: Nah, it was Pine Island. It's probably about half an hour from the city. It's probably the closest thing Canberra has to a river, where people can swim and get into nature, there's a barbeque.

TM: And those were all members of your extended family who were all there having a barbeque?

H: It was a mix. Some of the footage is from my actual birthday, and then...

D: There had actually been lots more people and it had been filmed the day before. But then the guy whose camera it was couldn't wait to see how the footage turned out, so he wound it back and watched a little of it and then forgot to replace the tape or wind it forward. And then when we continued to record some other stuff, like gardens at the end of the night, which is the stuff that you see on the original day in the clip. He just taped over everything that we'd spent the whole day doing. So the next day we tried to do it makeshift. A lot of Hau's family members who had come from interstate had all ready gone home and what you see is essentially the left overs.

H: Yeah the people who actually live in Canberra came the next day. We were like ringing them up, 'Oh yeah, we're having another barbeque'.

D: And it [the original party] was a much bigger party, it was a much better thing. And I saw a glimpse of the stuff that we'd done and I remember it, and it was great, it would have been a great clip if the footage hadn't been erased.

TM: Even so, it's a great clip I think

H: Yeah, a lot of people really do dig that 'cause of the overall vibe. It's just good times in summer, and a lot of people appreciate that.

TM: Absolutely. And the other thing I like is on the back of the *Blue Notes* vinyl, instead of shout-outs, you've got kind of... are they all deceased members of your family?

H: That was sort of a difficult time, I mean, Daniel had the music but I think it took me a long time to write that song. I knew I had to write a song like that but I just didn't know how to do it without

sounding too corny, and you know... And I think I wrote some of that in Tonga as well, and there was a lot of emotion with that.

TM: Yeah, because I read the interview that you did in *Stealth* and you said you seem to go to lots of funerals in Tonga in relation to family business.

H: Yeah, this year I think I've been to two, and a lot of people go to two in their whole life, you know what I mean. It's just because the community is so small, everyone knows everyone and somehow you're related to someone and you end up going to these funerals. Especially in Canberra, if any Tongan dies, everyone is there. But if someone dies in Sydney, you might be related to them so you come up.

TM: Is there a hip-hop scene in Tonga at all?

H: Yeah, well, I haven't been back since 97, but when I was there, there were a lot of DJs from America or New Zealand, and they take back a lot of music, a lot of the 50 Cent, Jay-Z sort of stuff, pop hip-hop stuff. I was talking to someone the other day and they were saying there a lot of kids breaking and things like that. I'm sure there would be 'cause hip-hop's quite popular. I mean, reggae's like the big music there, but there's a lot of young kids, especially the ones who get deported back to Tonga. You know, they're bringing back the culture back from New Zealand, Australia and America.

TM: Yeah, it seems to be happening a lot in Samoa and Fiji as well, and I think Trey was saying that she actually went back to Fiji and did some workshops there. Have you ever thought about doing something like that?

H: I'd really like too. And take Daniel too, 'cause he hasn't been. I think it would be a very worthwhile trip.

TM: Yeah, because you've worked with Trey quite a bit, haven't you Daniel?

D: Yeah, we used to quite a bit of stuff, 'cause we were friends for a long time, but that was when we had time and we'd just do things. Eventually when we were attempting to do things professionally, she came down to Canberra once or twice. We're always talking on the phone about doing things, but she's a very busy person and I'm a very busy person – and she's got a baby.

TM: But you did that track 'The Harvest' with her?

D: I've done a lot of production for her, but 'The Harvest' was one we did jointly. There was a song that was Trey and Hau.

H: We actually wrote it together.

D: It was really spontaneous and really great, but that's lost along with thousands of other tunes.

TM: Lost in terms of the tapes were lost, or?

D: In terms of the discs were lost.

TM: That's sad, because you guys have been going for what, 15 years now?

H: We met in 92.

TM: Well, 12 years, that's a hell of a long time. And I mean, do you think that the Australian hip-hop scene is finally getting the respect and recognition it deserves or does it still have a long way to go?

D: I don't think it's just that, and I don't know if it has a long way to go. I think it's just that now, rather than being a craze that is taking it's turn sweeping the globe first time 'round, it's sort of grown and

come of age over the years, and now it has a chance to be taken seriously, whereas it didn't used to be, because it's been around so long, it's hung around. And from this point onwards, it'll be another thing that is there, it'll be on the list. You know, when people slot things into genres, you had classical, and then eventually you had blues and then you had rock. And you had jazz and bebop and now you have hip-hop.

- TM:** Yeah, I mean, people can't ignore it anymore, and I think for a long time they *did* ignore it, especially the industry, they tried to pretend that it didn't exist.
- D:** And now that it is serious and people can consider it now their [thing], being tired of what has dominated the mainstream all these years, now people are getting into it, and they will for a while, and it will peak, and then eventually they will get tired of that, but it will still exist. Because now kids are growing up in it, whereas at first you only had a few small group of kids who lived in the area where this had this evolved, who actually had the culture in them, and everyone else was just watching the movies thinking 'That's great'. But now you have kids who grew up in it, who were young when they were seeing these movies in the early- to mid-80s and they were fanning for the tapes and the records. Like people in Sydney who were obsessed with it from its earliest days that it was exported from New York, and they grew up like that. So now, they're as hip-hop as anyone. So now you have all these people around the world. You have all these people who are old enough to make records and have all these life experiences and things like that, and they are essentially hip-hop.
- NK:** Tunz One has two kids and they're just as hip-hop as he is.
- D:** Yeah, see, they'll carry on the tradition, it's a cultural thing, it's funny that.
- TM:** It's the same with Charlene [Spice], she's got a couple of kids now doing graff and stuff like that... In Canberra, was there much of a scene that developed there, back in the 80s?
- H:** Eighties definitely, you know there was – we say there was the 'first wave' – when hip-hop comes to each city. I think hip-hop in Canberra was a mid-80s sort of thing. I think a lot of Europeans, as it would be in a lot of other cities, were the first to get into it, and Islanders as well. So there was a big peak there with the graffiti and the breaking and the DJing as well and some MCing. But then you know when it took that dive, you know 'Oh, breaking is dead,' and there was sort of a dip, and we were sort of at the end of the first wave, but we kept on going, instead of looking at other things to do.
- D:** I was still really into it when it was becoming unpopular, and I would go and play records at places like prohibition nights and things likes that and people would go 'You still playing this shit?'
- TM:** Were you into any of the other elements, like breaking of graff?
- H:** Yeah, I appreciate it all. We always thought the whole four elements thing was a bit corny...
- D:** But we didn't view it that way, you didn't see it is four elements...
- H:** It was just the culture, you never said 'OK, there a four elements', when we were growing up it was just what hip-hop was, we didn't break it down.
- D:** If you danced you just danced in that style 'cause you got it from the Factory or TV or wherever you know, you weren't even thinking about it. You did have some people, like Hau was saying, for example it was mostly Italian kids that I knew that wore tracksuits to school and had tapes that their brother or someone had sent them. They had a Fat Boys tape, or something like that. They had a concept, maybe they read about it, of breakdancing and things like that.
- H:** A lot of time they'd go back home, and that was the craze already in their home country already,

and then they come back with all that.

D: And if you talk to DJ Peril from Melbourne, he's always seen it like that, there was breaking and this and that. And he was very focused on being 'This is what it's about, it's about this and it's about that, and this is who did what and this is the history and this is the rules', and that kind of thing. But I suppose it depends on who you ask, and who was into it and what they got from it. I just liked the music 'cause I hated pop music and rock n' roll. I don't anymore, but at the time it was the first musical material that grabbed me...

H: 'It's talking to me...'

TM: You talked about prohibition nights, what was that about?

H: Under 18s discos basically. Yeah, they used to have blue light discos at this place called Firehouse and they played hip-hop and R'n'B for underages. And that's where we, not officially met, but began to know of each other.

D: 'Cause rap was the popular music in those days.

TM: And there was breakdancing as well on the streets?

H: Yeah, there were these guys called the Wall Walks, there was a lot of breaking going on then. I was never really in that scene, like we said, we just liked the music and never actually anyone who was in a crew, but I knew of people that were around.

D: Some of the members of that crowd went on to operate the nightclubs and that sort of thing.

TM: You were something of a rugby prodigy weren't you? Didn't you have a decision to make at some stage, whether you were going to stick with rugby or hip-hop?

H: Yeah, pretty much. I mean I did both for as long as I could. Because I took football very seriously as well, my whole family had a football background, both sides as well, my mum's side and my dad's side. 'Cause we were doing music as a hobby, you know, we loved doing it, but it was more of a side thing. But then as we built some sort of momentum and recognition, you know, some shows fell on the days we were playing football and things like that, then I had to decide whether to play football. And I really hate training so, it turned out good.

TM: What position did you play?

H: Prop.

TM: And you played for one of the Canberra main teams.

H: Yeah it was the Canberra Kookaburras. I think my dad was a bit, you know, 'cause he loved coming to the games and that, I think maybe he was a little bit hurt that I gave up football. But he's at the shows now, so he loves it. And I think he would have loved to see me in the Tongan colours.

TM: You've actually done a couple of tracks where you talk about your childhood and growing up, and it seems to be a very storytelling kind of style which is quite different from a lot of hip-hop, in that it is autobiographical, you're talking about your own life experiences. I just wondered why you did that, was it important to tell your story?

H: Yeah, I think so. 'Cause, you know, for us to make hip-hop we have to be unique. Back in the days of hip-hop, to be original was to set you apart, and when I tell my story that automatically sets us apart from, like you said, someone else's life story or how they tell it. It wasn't like on purpose the way I did it, you know, I didn't set out going 'OK, I'm going to do this in a way that no one else does', it

was just the way I did it. And I think with the story, it just set ourselves apart.

D: You know what, I think also, even though I don't rhyme, a lot of groups musically are spending most of their time out to prove their ability poetically or how cool they are, and it's that side of the culture that doesn't really motivate me personally.

TM: Have you guys been involved in battles over the years? I suppose you must have been.

D: Actually, the first time we saw each other, not even thinking about it later until we were introduced, was in a battle where his group was pitted against my group. And that was at a prohibition night.

NK: Who won?

D: They did.

TM: I suppose battles are just something you have to go through to hone your skills.

H: Yeah, you know, when you're young, you're full of vigour and you've got a chip on your shoulder and you're out to prove to the whole world, you know...

D: And you're competitive. You're not competing just to survive, you're competing for the fun of it.

H: Yeah, and that's why a lot of kids grow up with the battle thing. But I think that the worst thing that happened in terms of battling was *8 Mile*. Now kids think that what's battling is, and that's all crap. They think freestyling is battling, but it's nothing like that. I mean, *8 Mile* serves its purpose somehow for hip-hop culture, but it has taught a lot of kids...

D: Yeah, it becomes their book, their reference.

TM: There's much more of a sense of community in cyphers and there's not that competitive thing going as much, it's more about keeping the flow going and working together.

D: Yeah, if people are into it. I don't think it matters too much what you call it, it's just some people get along and have something in common, and I'm sure all those *8 Mile* fans probably enjoy doing the thing that they do, though they'll probably grow out of it. You know, you see a lot of these kids really excited to be part of cypher going on with these guys and those guys and then people like us only exist within this level of spontaneity. Sometimes things happen just for the fun of it. Just last night, this kid came out of the competition winners' crowd and joined in the show.

H: Yeah, we invited him up to just come and have some fun, and it was cool.

D: They [the other competition kids] kicked off as well, and it all started happening, it was all very fun but there was no intention to form a cypher.

TM: I just wanted to go back to the ARIA awards, because what I heard along the grapevine was apparently Sony were really pissed off with your comments about 'wannabe Americans'.

H: Well, it wasn't Sony. Well, that night she said she was a representative of Sony, but later we found out that she works for them but she's the manager of that new guy Figgkidd. She was just a bit upset with what Daniel said, but really...

D: Lots of people were, lots of people weren't.

TM: Well it was a great moment. I think the Black Eyed Peas were a bit upset for a minute there.

D: Even if it did really piss them off, it's because they didn't really understand. But I don't really care to clarify it with them and apologise, because I didn't actually say anything about them or anything to

do with then, so you know.

- H:** The night after, they did a show at the Horden, and apparently Will.I.Am said ‘You know, I love Australia, it’s like the new America’, and everyone in the crowd just booed and it was like ‘Oh no, what I mean is...’
- TM:** I heard also that Kool Herc was really complementary, he said nice things.
- D:** Yeah, well, his remarks were along the lines of ‘That’s good that you have your own localised thing and you believe and you actually stand up and say what you think, and that’s the best thing’. And that’s what he said, and that was really important, you know, stick to whatever we think, and be willing to say it loud and proud.
- H:** No one can say anything now, with Kool Herc...
- D:** Yeah well, I was thrilled with that, because that was my clearance, my validation, my passport.
- TM:** You guys got a good write-up in the *New York Times* a couple of years ago.
- D:** We got a good mention, and any mention in the *New York Times*, apart from ‘these crappy Australians’ would be good.
- TM:** But that was after you did a showcase of Australian music in LA?
- H:** No, we haven’t been to America. I think the guy was writing correspondence, so I think he was actually Australian.
- D:** Yeah, no, that was a Sydney writer who was commissioned by the *New York Times* to write an article regarding the Australian music scene.
- H:** But yeah, it was cool, it was a cool mention. Because it’s the *New York Times*, everyone’s like ‘Oh, must be true’. You see it in some local *Queanbeyan Age* paper and people will be like ‘Yeah, yeah’. It’s an irony you know, because for so many years you tell people you make music and they’re like ‘Oh really, oh that’s nice’, and then they see you on TV and they’re like ‘Oh! I didn’t know’, it’s funny like that.
- TM:** So, it’s kind of like a validation of everything you’re doing.
- H:** Exactly. And even the *Canberra Times* now since we won the ARIA have written like four articles on us.
- D:** More than four, I think they’re up to five now.
- H:** It’s cool you know, because Canberra has got a good community spirit and it’s good that we make them proud.
- TM:** Have you ever had any local government funding, or anything like that?
- D:** Only the very first tape, back in 92, and that was via somebody else. And the deal with those grants is that to get the money you had to prove that it was to put something back into the community, promoting something, doing something good. So the proceeds from that were directed straight to a ‘housing for youth’ scheme.
- TM:** And have you done much in the way of workshops?
- H:** Yeah, we’ve done a few. Not as much as Maya or Trey has, but we’ve done a few.

D: Not as much as I'd like to.

TM: From talking to Ozi Batla and Urthboy [from The Herd], they were saying it's actually quite hard to get those gigs these days.

D: Yeah, but you know why I think that is? Because you have to organise that stuff yourself. And same with government funding, you have to go out and ask for it. And you have to have the talent for writing those applications and things, and you have to have the time to be stuffed doing it. We're always focused on the immediate, keeping the business of it rolling, so we can keep doing it.

TM: Morganics was saying that he was lucky in that other people would tend to do it for him. Like, there would be community groups that would put in the application for him.

H: He's been active in a very positive way. He was the guy who actually brought me out to Penrith to a youth detention centre, 'cause there was a lot of Islander kids there, so yeah, he brought me up for that.

NK: How was that?

H: Oh yeah, it was alright, it pulled on the old heart strings you know, 'cause they were having so much rapping and then we leave and they just go back to their rooms. And you meet a Tongan kid who just came from Tonga a couple of years before, he's like 16, and he's in there for armed robbery. It's pretty bad.

TM: And Morganics gets those people telling their story; I think he's doing some great work. But you've got Axe working with you?

H: Yeah, yeah, he was actually with us, he just left today.

D: Yeah, he's coming back tomorrow for the Homebake gig. His name is Dave Atkins, and Hau will tell you, he has a football background.

H: Yeah, he's pretty much the same as me, except his football career went really high, he played for the Canberra Raiders. Pretty much the same as me, just grew up on sports and hip-hop and he's good friends with Tunz as well. He was doing MCing as a hobby, he did a few shows and then he left for England for a couple of years to play football over there and then came back and started training again with the Raiders. And then he injured himself, which put him out for the year, so with that time he sort of concentrated more on music, and was hanging out with us a lot. I guess he was learning just by hanging out with us a lot, just vibing with us.

D: He's very detached from the scene, and all the people and all the other groups. He hasn't yet, or doesn't intend to, associate that much, he's very individual, and similar-minded to us artistically, we like to be working with him.

TM: Didn't he contribute to a couple of tracks on *Random Thoughts Part 3*?

H: Yeah, he was a guest on one track on the new album.

TM: You guys also worked with The Dubious Brothers at one stage in New Zealand didn't you?

H: Yeah, that was just me I was over there for a holiday. I actually met Tyna on the 'net through the *hiphop.nz.com*. And the whole New Zealand-Australia thing is always bumping heads. I know it sounded weird to him, but he just appreciated that I was doing my thing and he said 'When you come over, come down to Hamilton and we'll knock something out'. I was like 'Cool', so the next time I went over, I went down there and hung out, recorded a track. It was interesting, definitely

very different from recording with lots of other Australian artists.

TM: In what way different?

H: Just in their approach to making music; it's OK to rap like an American. But when you go over there, you know, that's just how it is. I talked to some people over there about it, but they don't want to hear it. Plus, I'm in their country, I can't go over there telling them how to rap.

TM: So you've never performed over there?

D&H: No, not together.

TM: There seems to be very little crossover and interaction between Australia and New Zealand. But that seems to be a real problem – at least from this point of view – that so many of them just rap in American accents.

H: Yeah, for us it is. A lot of them have a lot of skills too, but I can't get past that Americanism in their music.

D: It's just the way it is over there, and it's just accepted.

TM: But it's a pity there isn't more interaction [between Australian and New Zealander hip-hop].

H: I think it will never be a brotherhood because of that American accent. And plus over there it's alright to sing over a track, it's alright to mould a lot of R'n'B and hip-hop together. Where as over there a lot of people frown on that sort of thing, all the purists are like 'nah'.

TM: Yeah, when I was talking to Maya she was saying she cops a lot of flak for having one foot in the R'n'B scene and one foot in the hip-hop scene.

H: No one can say anything about Maya, not only has she been there for a long time, but every time she does something she is representing the culture, on triple j radio and on Channel V. And she's always trying to push local artists.

TM: OK, the last album: working with Rodney P, what was that like?

H: Cool as. We listened to a lot of London Posse, and a lot of the hip-hop coming out of the UK blows the American hip-hop out of the water, just due to originality and freshness.

D: Especially Roots Manuva.

H: Yeah, we're big fans of Roots Manuva. We're big fans of the sort of bashment hip-hop, the sort of reggae-influenced stuff..

D: Because it is very unique to the United Kingdom.

H: Yeah, working with him [Rodney P] was cool. Him and Skitz were very down to earth people. When they first came on the tour, they were coming to Canberra, and we already did a show with them at Melbourne and we said, you know, 'If you got any time, then come to the studio'. They were like, 'Yeah, yeah cool', and they came down and came through with the goods.

D: It was a highlight. Prior to them coming over and recording, the highlight was seeing them both wearing our t-shirts. Since then, the greatest highlight has been having Kool Herc come over. Actually, we had a party at Hau's family home, and we invited, well, we paid Kool Herc to come down and DJ.

TM: What kind of stuff did he play?

- D:** I remember he played six incredible versions of the ‘Soul Mocossa’, which is Mano Debango, and he did the original one on the *Football Anthem* 7 inch, and then he played a lot of very obscure original versions of things like Booker T. & the MG’s Melting Pot. He played the actual original, which everyone thinks is Booker T. & the MG, but it’s not, and all of these kinds of things, all this mind blowing stuff.
- H:** It’s funny man, ‘cause all the oldies are going ‘So who is he again?’, and it’s like ‘It’s Kool Herc man! He’s the reason why were here’, you know, and they go ‘Oh yeah, that’s nice’.
- D:** It was quite surreal actually.
- TM:** The latest album seems a bit different from the previous stuff in that there’s more of a kind of drum and bass, clubby kind of beat to it.
- D:** I think that’s ‘cause we raised the grade of the production. For the first time we were making deliberate attempts to try and produce something for other people, rather than it being completely self-indulgent, like all our previous material. And that was because, basically, there was no way it was feasible for us to continue doing music – even though we want to do it for the fun of it – in the modern day, having to pay rent and whatnot, without being able to sell it and make a profit from it.
- H:** And that’s the music we were brought up on as well, so it’s not like...
- D:** Oh, but we like it, none of the compromises we made go against what we like or our principles, it just meant that it was less self-indulgent.
- H:** And plus there’s also the sampling thing too in the back of your mind; we just didn’t want to be like, the example.
- D:** In the past, the focus was just on having fun, more on the rhymes, and just making the songs and what not. So production was not, and in hip-hop, shouldn’t really be, a major portion of the art. Essentially it used to be just about the rhyme, the MC, and the music just came off records ‘cause it purely served as a beat. And the culture is like that, and the music is like that, and I like that about it because I like all kinds of music, you know, but I like that that is something different. And we always used to just take a two-bar phrase of music and loop that up and then a song, hip-hop style-y, would evolve from that. But you can’t do that now if you’re trying to sell records as well, because we don’t want to be the precedent here for groups ripping off a music, even though I personally believe it’s a perfectly valid art to incorporate – depending on what you do – but you should to a degree be able to incorporate something else, unless your severely damaging someone else’s reputation or their art, or impeding their current day success, then that’s not cool. Or if your totally plagiarising somebody’s else work, but you know, Andy Warhol could have very well been sued by Campbell’s for replicating their products. But he, in a sense, created pop art by stencilling things and doing what he did. But we’re not free to do that, we don’t have money behind us where we can licence things and get clearance for having used some snippet of sound.
- TM:** Unlike 1200 Techniques, who paid thousands for that Hot Chocolate sample...
- D:** Oh yeah, Hot Chocolate, Brother Luis. But that worked, I mean, it got them a giant mainstream audience and made them a big name in the scene, and then they can go and do what they want. But unfortunately, what they want to do doesn’t match what they did to make their name, so they have all these people that are fans of 1200 Techniques, but they’re fans of the Brother Luis/Karma, not what 1200 Techniques want to do. So now, when they come out with ‘Here’s some hip-hop, here’s 1200 Techniques, here’s where we’re at’, all these people will go ‘Ah, I liked you better when had that chorus line’.

- H:** Getting back to the production and the sampling, you know, Daniel has taught himself to play the keys...
- D:** I'm also just tired of being a DJ, like, after listening to so much music for so many years, you can't live with yourself when other people are considering you a valid artist, when in fact you're actually not doing anything much. I wasn't going to go out like that any more. You know, I used to put a lot of effort and a lot of thought, conceptually, into what I did, but I didn't really create a whole lot that was brand new. And now the only way that I can sort of be happy with my part of the group is by creating something. I don't get to rap or write rhymes and get to say what I want to say – because I can't – so I want to be artistic in some way.
- TM:** Have sales been effected significantly since the ARIA award?
- D:** We don't know, but we assume so. I would be surprised if it didn't have an effect, like it might not be anything great or fantastic, but it must have made a significant impact.
- H:** I've had a lot of people say they've been to HMV to buy it and it's sold out. They probably only had two copies anyway.
- TM:** What made you decide to go with Invader Records, which is Katalyst's label isn't it?
- H:** One of the main reasons was that they didn't have too many artists on their books.
- D:** There was a process of elimination. Invader is sort of new, and only has a good reputation so far... We got along, we've known him a long time. I've seen him around for ten years and it basically came down to that.
- NK:** Who is Invader Records?
- D:** Ashley Anderson, which is Katalyst, and Geoff [Barrow] from Portishead. Yeah, he [Geoff] takes care of Invader Records UK, which is what Invader records was, and basically, Katalyst opened up the name on this side.
- TM:** So does that mean that your album is being distributed in the UK?
- D:** *Blue Notes* was because it was actually pressed courtesy of Lowlife records, so there was limited copies of that around there. And I think from that, some of the people managed to obtain copies of *The Season*, 'cause that's been over there I've heard. Not this current release, but there are hopes that we will start to exchange.
- H:** Definitely. 'Cause I think we have a sound that's relative to the UK sound.
- D:** And the interest is growing. There have been expressions of interest from the UK.
- TM:** Have you made any other videos, apart from 'The Season'?
- H:** Yeah, there's one for 'Koolism Is', and one for 'Adrenalin'.
- D:** We made 'The Season'. Some guy offered to make 'Koolism Is' for free.
- H:** And some other guys offered to do 'Adrenalin', which was sort of high budget video for us.
- D:** By budget, we mean it wasn't done for zero dollars.
- TM:** You guys are playing Homebake tomorrow, it's not the first time you've done it, is it?
- H:** Yeah actually, first time at Homebake. It might rain tomorrow, too. Apparently the first one was

rained out too. They still did it, but apparently everyone was like Woodstock, wrestling in the mud.

TM: But that's a potentially huge audience.

H: Oh yeah, definitely, definitely.

