

Scratch the Record Slowly: Prominent DJ Murdered in Cold Blood

By Will PATE



stage and lose my friends in the process.

When the band hit the stage the crowd came alive as one large congregation of the church of Run DMC, presided over by his holiness Jam Master Jay. They were a study of hip-hop at its best: rockin' beats, tasteful cuts and quality rhyming. There was no glorification of violence, sexual symbolization of women or overblown obsession with greed. These were three middle-class Hollis boys that knew how to lay down solid songs that fit the bill. There was no denying the talent that made them the most influential rap group of the 80's.

As I continued my walk home last Wednesday reminiscent of that concert, I started singing some of the lyrics of Run DMC's best tribute to Jay, "Peter Piper." *Jay's like King Midas as I was told/Everything that he touched turned to gold/He's the greatest of the great, get it straight he's great/Claim fame cause his name is known in every state/His name is Jay to see him play will make you say/Goddamn that DJ made my day!* Little did I know what news would be waiting for me when I arrived home: that 37 year old James Mizell, AKA Jam Master Jay, had been shot and killed while sitting on a couch in a studio. A friend at Dalhousie had even e-mailed me, knowing instinctively how much this turn of events would mean

to me, and with good reason.

The next day was spent ruminating on the injustice of Jay's murder. It seemed too cruel that a man who made the hallmark of his message positive energy through music would suffer the same fate as hard-core gangster rappers Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls. Jay helped countless local artists, signing them to JMJ Records, and even let some use Run DMC's studio for free. So great was my melancholy I almost lost the desire to join the wild Halloween Pub at The Wave, until a good friend wisely suggested I

attend and party to honour Jay's legacy of good clean fun. While I may not have been good or clean, fun was had nonetheless.

In the days after the murder some strange facts have come to light. Most troubling was that the murderer was buzzed into the studio, leading investigators to believe that he knew his assailant or was set up. Some anonymous sources have speculated that the killing was actually a hit gone wrong, intended on rapper 50 Cent. Other sources have indicated that Jay and his studio owed between \$280,000 and \$400,000 in taxes, interest and penalties. Also pertinent may be the revelation that a man from the South named "Scoon" was owed money by Jay and made a threatening call to one of his associates in previous weeks. This leads to the conclusion that either Jay was collateral damage in another musician's street war or that financial troubles led to his murder. Regardless of the reason, his death is a great blow to the music world and he will be sorely missed. All we have now is the musical gift he gave us, echoing through the boomboxes of hip-hop fans everywhere. Rest in Peace, Jam Master Jay- You made my day.

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