

R.I.P. DJ Clark Kent



DJ Clark Kent has died at age 58 after battling colon cancer. The Brooklyn native was an important figure in New York hip-hop's Golden Era. He started his career in the late '80s as a DJ for Dana Dane. In 1989, he got off to an auspicious beginning as a producer after remixing Troop's hit "Spread My Wings." Born Rodolfo Antonio Franklin II, his professional name came from Superman's daytime persona because they both wore spectacles. He asserted his creativity by crafting more iconic remixes, including Mariah Carey's "Loverboy" and the J.U.N.I.O.R. Mafia's "Players Anthem." Jay-Z, Rakim, Slick Rick, 50 Cent, and Estelle were among the artists who also benefitted from his production skills. Kent was responsible for introducing Damon Dash and The Notorious B.I.G. to Jay-Z. Those introductions led to the formation of Roc-A-Fella Records and the B.I.G. and Jay-Z single "Brooklyn's Finest," which had production by Kent. Foxy Brown is Kent's cousin and that is how she met Jay-Z and collaborated with him on his breakthrough single, "Ain't No Nigga." Kent also discovered the rapper Shyne and introduced him to Sean Combs, who signed him to Bad Boy Records.

His ability to discover and nurture talent was not limited to

hip-hop and he surprised the industry when he got the boy band 98 Degrees a deal with Motown. The successful and career-changing introductions he fostered were balanced out with impressive failures when record companies didn't take his advice and give deals to Nas, Missy Elliott, Foxy Brown, Mobb Deep, Jay-Z, and Mase. His contributions to hip-hop did not stop at DJing, producing, and making important connections between people because he was also a big sneaker fan. Nike commissioned him in 2010 to design the Nike Five Boroughs AF1 Low. He was known for owning thousands of pairs of sneakers and never wore the same pair twice. New York hip-hop radio legend Angie Martinez directed a documentary about Kent that will be released next year.