

Delicious Vinyl Feeds Dilla Freaks In Need Of Beats With Yancey Boys – The Instrumentals



Siblings of the famous always have the burden of being comparably scrutinized to their prominent kinfolk. Janet Jackson earned her place as a solo star but no lengthy article written about her omits the relationship to brother Michael. The *Rhythm Nation* performer established her own catalog in a post-*Thriller* world but will always be Michael's little sister. And to her credit Ms. Jackson has been gracious to interviewers who ask her about Michael and is always proud to be a member of the first family of R&B royalty. Illa J is experiencing something similar being the younger brother of hip-hop's most intriguing beat scientist. The unexpected passing of the older brother in 2006 devastated his family and made hip-hop aficionados mourn the loss of hip-hop's most innovative producer.

Illa J readily accepts the attention his lineage gives him because of the pride he has for his brother's legacy. He also knows that the public will learn that his choice to be a musician is a rite for the Yancey family. His first album [Yancey Boys](#) and the videos for "We Here" and "R U Listenin'" are thrilling fans making them say that Dilla lives on through his brother. Of course it is helpful that Dilla posthumously produces Illa J's first album from a stash of beats given to the younger brother from Delicious Vinyl's co-founder Mike Ross. In the 1990s Dilla worked for Delicious Vinyl making remixes and he left behind thirty-eight beats the label never used. Identifying himself as a

songwriter first already differentiates him from his brother who preferred to stay in the studio and seemed to have no interest in the flashy side of the industry. But it is his carefree R&B singing and rapping that immediately separates yet connects him to Dilla. The older brother never sang yet Illa's rhyming voice reveals the DNA tie because he does sound like the late producer in tone but not style. Based in California for the past three years the youngest of the Yancey children is listening to his music and preparing for a tour at the first of the year.

How did your family get involved in music?

As far as I know my family pretty much been involved in music starting back from before my parents. Both my dad's parents played the piano my mom's dad was a musician so it even started back then. In my immediate family my dad plays piano and upright bass my mom she sings my brother most people don't know he also played a lot of instruments he also writes and my sister writes songs she sings so it's like I was brought up in nothing but music.

Was your brother the first one to do music professionally?

Well technically my did back in the day he just didn't get the necessary credit because of he like was like more of a ghostwriter he would write songs like for Motown back in the day. It pretty much started then my dad he was going to get a deal but he never took it to that extreme because he didn't want to that's one thing about my brother he could have been bigger than he was but he was so dedicated to his craft that it was all about the craft and that was the same with my dad. You know he didn't really care to really be out there like that. My whole family is into music not only that being in Detroit it's tons of musicians it's almost rare to know someone in Detroit who don't know somebody that do music.

Do you play any instruments?

Yeah I play bass guitar, piano and I started off on bass Iâ€™m kind of rusty on the bass after I started playing keys itâ€™s just something about the keys so much more universal and I can go a lot more places with the keys itâ€™s perfect because I am a singer- songwriter first I like writing songs on keyboards and piano.

How long have you been singing?

Pretty much since I was brought into this world my mom said when I was a baby she had a playpen in the living room her, my dad, and they had two ladies they would sing with to fill in the soprano and alto voices and they had an jazz acapella group and I wouldnâ€™t even disturb them and pretty much thatâ€™s how I learned my musical ear from hearing all the different jazz chords and singing in class since I was five. Like singing the whole music thing is natural itâ€™s my gift.

[youtube]0JVi1MoeWUI[/youtube]

How did your first album come about?

I always knew at a young age I would do music but I didnâ€™t know when. At a young age like when my brother had Pharcyde and all that I knew if later on in my life I did music I knew people eventually would compare. When I was younger I was a little discouraged from doing it because I just didnâ€™t want to get into all that stuff. As you get older you get a new perspective on life honestly you just kind of really donâ€™t care. Because at the end of the day you realize what itâ€™s all about like I feel blessed to be able to do what I want to do use the gifts I was given itâ€™s about trying to lift up people and make people feel good. When I got a bigger perspective on really the purpose of all this music is the first time I went over to Europe I was in Paris itâ€™s just crazy to me a lot of people at the show they didnâ€™t speak English but they knew all the words to my brotherâ€™s songs and stuff. That gave me a whole new perspective itâ€™s like my

brother is all the way in Detroit yet heâ€™s inspiring people on another whole part of the world. Itâ€™s like you never know who youâ€™re influencing and whoâ€™s listening to your music thatâ€™s in a sense kind of like I do this first because I love it itâ€™s my passion itâ€™s my gift and be the best I can be and continually get better but also to inspire. If I inspire one person I feel like Iâ€™m successful. And you know like any artist as soon as the product is finished itâ€™s successful to me because thatâ€™s me expressing myself.

Who are your influences?

I could go on for days with that but Iâ€™m going to tell you my main like Al Green I love Al Green, Marvin Gaye, Prince, MJ, I look up to my brother too. As far as artists now Amy Winehouse I think sheâ€™s a really good songwriter actually Sarah Novellis because Iâ€™m more of a songwriter so I listen to a lot of different songwriters and definitely a lot of Joni Mitchell lately John Lennon Imagine.

What part of your craft do you like most?

Iâ€™m a singer songwriter first like in a sense that came after but itâ€™s weird Iâ€™ve always been writing Iâ€™ve been writing since I was like seven or eight poetry and eventually I just stopped writing poetry and started writing songs at one point. Iâ€™m really comfortable in my songwriting and my singing. Through the album itâ€™s kind of like on my Myspace page I started off with more of my hip-hop stuff just because at the time I didnâ€™t have all the equipment to be able to really get into recording my stuff. Once I got the studio then I got to do it more on this album I kind of like it because itâ€™s a smooth transition from my hip-hop into where Iâ€™m going to obviously be going in the future which is how the album started Iâ€™m definitely really comfortable in my singing.

Are there any songwriters/producers you like?

One person I like is Pharrell Williams from the Neptunes as a songwriter. Stevie Wonder like I mentioned earlier Joni Mitchell, Regina Spector, Rod Temperton you know *Off The Wall*, 'Rock With You' and he wrote *Thriller* too. Actually I was reading this book and I was studying Ira Gershwin those are definitely great influences.

How would you describe your sound?

Definitely off this album all the tracks were already made all the way back in starting from '95 the production was done so on this album I pretty much was I had to narrow it down to the tracks that I wanted out of the batch because it was out of thirty-eight tracks that I picked all the tracks from. One thing I wanted to do on making this album is it's not a singles driven album I wanted to make an album I like albums where you can just kind of sit and lay back and listen to in your headphones and really you know kind of flow together as one whole piece of artwork that was my intention in a sense it turned out the way I wanted it to turn out I'm happy when I listen to the album. My style is just kind of laidback you can tell I'm obviously not trying to be I'm not the super duper emcee dude it's just my style kind of laidback and soulful, especially on this album I'm introducing myself it's not even the beginning of what I still have to express as an artist I feel like I have so much more to say.

You've said that LA has been better for your creativity because in Detroit it is stressful and there are many distractions. How do you think someone like your brother was able to be creative living there?

I do that say that because that was the time I was trying to get out especially after my brother passed I needed space to release so I could have time to grieve and stay on my craft and keep moving forward with that so I wouldn't be cause I felt one thing after my brother passing as the younger sibling I felt kind of a responsibility to kind of keep hope alive to

everybody else Iâ€™m like the baby in the family. Like in a lot of True Hollywood Stories I hear comedians say when times are going bad in their families they felt like they had to be the spark of laughter just to keep a smile on peopleâ€™s face as the younger sibling I felt the same way that I have to be the strongest as the youngest they see me as the baby no one wants to see the baby cry. My sisters and brothers are very protective of me and keeping me going in the right direction. When I talk to my moms and my fam theyâ€™re like â€˜James is up there heâ€™s tickled and heâ€™s smiling down on you. Thatâ€™s what my brother was about â€œJust do you man.â€

Tell me about â€œWe Here?â€

Actually I didnâ€™t pick that track originally from the original batch I didnâ€™t hear it because I skipped over it by mistake when I was listening to all the tracks. When I heard it omigod my girl she made a list of the tracks she liked out of the thirty-eight or whatever.

[youtube]wWPw_mQEXsM[/youtube]

Honestly it was kind of hard breaking down the tracks I was like â€˜yeah I like this one I like this oneâ€™ and we got to narrow it down but that one was the first one on her list when she made her list of the ones she liked. As soon as I heard ok Iâ€™m recording this one tomorrow pretty much I listened to it for like twenty-minutes and then I took a walk I was listening to my brotherâ€™s album *Ruff Draft* in a sense like almost talking to my brother like heâ€™s speaking to me through his music because with this album itâ€™s not like I wrote all the songs from scratch this was already done. I had the rights to the music itâ€™s almost in a weird way I have to connect with my brother making this album. I would hear certain things certain pockets and things like that where I know what he would want with a combination of both of our musical ears basically from my pops my dad itâ€™s kind of like a combination of that. I was listening to that and I was walking

around the block then I switched over to *Purple Rain* you hear the *Purple Rain* reference in the song to “Let’s Go Crazy” and when you listen to the song honestly as a songwriter I know that the structure isn’t necessarily the perfect structure for a song. When I recorded that song it was more about the energy because when I listen to *Ruff Draft* if you really listen to that album he doesn’t have a specific topic in any of the songs it’s more about kind of inspiring people it’s like the energy that he felt you almost feel that same energy when you listen to it and the rawness and the soul in it. That’s kind of what I was going for for “We Here” like when you wake-up like you I’m here it’s like I’m not promised tomorrow why not enjoy this day the best I can go all out.

When did you move to Cali and why?

I’ve been out here for a little over three years. Detroit’s always my hometown but I love it out here in Cali

What is the Detroit R&B and hip-hop scene like?

One thing about Detroit’s sound like even when I listen to *Welcome To Detroit*, *Black Milk*, anybody, *Guilty Simpson* it’s like when you listen to it I feel like I’m in Detroit. Because I live out in Cali now a lot of times of course when I talk to my fam I’m connected back to home but when I listen to certain music from Detroit I feel like I’m in Detroit. If I close my eyes I can feel myself rolling down the street with the bumpy concrete and everything it’s just something about the environment. I definitely think that Detroit is going in a good direction. I feel honored to be able to put out my album hopefully I can inspire other kids in Detroit who want to do their own thing other upcoming artists. All I say is it takes believing in you people around you may not believe but as long as you believe that’s the start.

Do you see yourself ever going back to Detroit?

Honestly not anytime soon Iâ€™m going back for Thanksgiving Iâ€™m going to visit from time to time but I definitely right now out here I feel at peace because my brother was out here last I feel like in a weird way I feel like Iâ€™m closer to his spirit. I feel freer out here as an artist because itâ€™s a lot on me when Iâ€™m in Detroit. It â€™s a whole new feeling but I love both Detroit and LA for what it is. Itâ€™s dope to experience all four seasons sometimes but out here in Cali itâ€™s pretty consistent but itâ€™s definitely about feeling closer to my brother because heâ€™s buried out here so I go visit him from time to time.

Have you thought about the performance of music are you touring?

Yeah Iâ€™m definitely going to be touring starting early next year sometime probably after January early February next year Iâ€™m going to definitely start touring. Iâ€™m trying to hit like Europe, Canada, over here, just basically get out there and start shining this light.

Illa J Featuring Guilty Simpson- R U Listenin'

Illa J-We Here