

# Throwback: Crooklyn Dodgers - Crooklyn



[youtube]rHAuMy50quc[/youtube]

Buckshot, Masta Ace and Special Ed were the first group to be the Crooklyn Dodgers. “Crooklyn” was a song produced by Q-Tip and recorded for the soundtrack to Spike Lee’s ’94 *Crooklyn* feature. The bassline to “Crooklyn” has confounded hip-hop connoisseurs for years and the song itself is a permanent anthem to the Brooklyn borough. The second lineup of the Crooklyn Dodgers included Chubb Rock, O.C. and Jeru The Damaja for the DJ Premier produced [“Return Of The Crooklyn Dodgers”](#) in ’95. The concept was utilized again in 2007 with Jean Grae, Mos Def and Memphis Bleek for 9th Wonder’s [“Brooklyn In My Mind”](#) from his *Dream Merchant Vol.2* album.

---

## 5 Questions For Special Ed



*“What drew me to rap was the rhythm and the rhyme, the flow, the messages, the feeling that it gave me.”*

Twenty-one years ago *Youngest In Charge* became an iconographic piece of hip-hop’s Golden Era to be learned from and followed by all lyrical worshippers. Edward Archer’s debut as Special Ed did make him the youngest in charge at age 16 since LL Cool J’s *Radio* in 1985 and “Roxanne’s Revenge” from

a 14-year old Roxanne Shante in 1984. The pure synergy between Ed and producer Howie Tee harvested one of hip-hop's most celebrated works, which keeps renewing itself with each next generation of hip-hoppers. "I Got It Made" and "I'm The Magnificent" have both been referenced by every other capitalist-loving rapper for their prominent boasts and being the theme song for future rappers who would get richer faster. Last year Rick Ross covered "I'm The Magnificent" and used it as one of his many mantras and odes to his dubious street king image. Despite Ed's appearance on the remix and a segment in D-Nice's *True Hip-Hop Stories* most fans have wondered, Where did Special Ed go? The former Crooklyn Dodgers member has released his last CD, *Still Got It Made* in 2004 but has spent the bulk of his time making sure that other people have it made. A self-appointed obligation to helping youth and others become personally and economically empowered may have turned him into the most charitable rapper alive. A new album called *The Specialist* is slated for release next week and he is also touring with an old school party called The OSSE. Ed was kind to speak with me about his past, present and future projects in a voice that had its most passion when he spoke of his need to serve others.

[youtube]SsFeJ8AVGTU[/youtube]

**So what's been going on with Special Ed? We saw your episode of True Hip-Hop Stories last year, we heard you on Rick Ross's remix of "Magnificent" and you were on Mo'Nique's show with Big Daddy Kane, Chubb Rock and Dana Dane a couple of weeks ago?**

Special Ed has been up to a lot. Many many divisions of what I'm trying to accomplish. One major thing that everyone is looking for is the album.

I have a new album it's called *The Specialist*. *The Specialist* is slated for release this summer end of July and it's a great album. I'm a loyal dude I'm still working with Howie Tee I'm working with Mark Sparks who've I've

worked with on two previous albums and I also found a lot of new talent so I have new and upcoming producers that I affiliated myself with. They're featured on my new album one is Jay P one is named Nineteen and DR. So pretty much like from the original to the brand new I got it all like that. I have some vocalists, some features, you know I'm not really a name dropper I don't think that that's necessary I think if you're going to do what you're doing do it let them see what you're doing show me don't tell me you know that's my philosophy. It's more of a pleasant surprise when I hear a collaboration I didn't even really know about.

I'm coming with the element of surprise. I got some OG's on there I got

some multi-platinum artists on there. So it's gonna be a great look. I'm very excited about The Specialist. This album is on my label, which is S.E.M.I. Records, that stands for the acronym The Special Ed Music Group and that is the parent company and the original company that I bragged back in 1989.



And that's the album in addition I'm doing an event called The Old School Special Edition we call it OSSE. The OSSE is a branded specialized event that goes around to different markets but primarily it's a once a month event and it's hosted by me. What I do is take back what belongs to us, which is the whole old school moniker.

*"You have a lot of people in different markets they just use the name old school when they may not even be old school for one, for two they don't employ or hire old school artists any old school DJs or personalities. They just use the name to draw people and that's it."*

It's authenticity at it's finest. First of all you have me on there representing it. I've been professionally in the

game for 23 years. So that is the old school. What my intent is to research this and bring back the classics and the legends and the icons of hip-hop period. I will be getting work to DJs, the real authentic DJs as well as some real authentic old school artists. So every month I will feature whether it be a classic DJ or classic artist to come and either DJ or host. When the vibe is right we always love to rock a crowd so I look forward to some great classic times. And we will definitely be capturing it on film. The first one is slated for July 10th here in Charlotte. The second one is Memphis, Tennessee July 23rd and weâ€™re opening other markets as we speak. So pretty much itâ€™s a mold Iâ€™ve branded and will be taking wherever thereâ€™s a need for authenticity and old school and classic music. And this is not just hip-hop Iâ€™m talking about old school R&B, house pretty much reggae you know those hits throughout the ages that sometimes seem to fade away because radio is so bent on the now. Well my intent is to bring back the music we love to reminisce. So itâ€™s kind of nostalgic and thatâ€™s what Iâ€™m bringing with the OSSE event. Weâ€™re coming to a city near you. Iâ€™m doing a lot of positive reinforcement with this event. For one when I come to a market what we do is incorporate a likeminded local promoter or individuals to join us. They get an opportunity to get on board either as a sponsor or an authorized promoter of the event. An opportunity to earn some income with us along with bringing their following so I invite promoters that specialize in mature events. I like to just give them the opportunity to join us weâ€™re not excluding them.

*“And in addition itâ€™s all a party with a purpose so what Iâ€™m doing is Iâ€™m donating a portion of the proceeds in every market at every event to a number of non-profit and charitable organizations within the specified community.”*

If itâ€™s in Detroit Iâ€™ll be giving back to Detroit and so on. Itâ€™s just a way for me to enable people to enable themselves learn how to give back learn how to help others. So

everyone wins, the local promoter wins, the old school classic DJs win, the legends and classic artists win the people win. The information is also available on my website which is SpecialEdmusic.com. And pretty much the same thing with my twitter is SpecialEdmusic, YouTube, MySpace, Face book is all slash SpecialEdMusic so anyway you need to find me online. So with that all said that leads me to my other ventures, which are more philanthropic, definitely involve me aligning myself with several non-profit and charitable organizations for the betterment and empowerment of people and the community. I feel like I can always do for myself and my family with what I already do. My intent now is to enable and empower people to be able to help themselves and teach them how to help others without compromising their own well-being and futures. There are ways to implement and allocate you know help towards certain causes and needs it just takes people to step up to the plate and represent that and do it. The same way you can open up your own thing and do this and do that and make money for yourself you can also do the same thing on a wider scale and help more people. So thatâ€™s one of the things thatâ€™s important to me at this point in my career.

*“After over twenty years Iâ€™ve done pretty well for myself and I do help others and I do pretty well for others now itâ€™s time to show people how itâ€™s done and how to do it so they can reach back out and make a difference.”*

A lot of people donâ€™t know that they can do that they can get funding open and start programs they can educate children they can mentor and talk to people and make a big difference and thatâ€™s what Iâ€™m really trying to do right now. I do a lot of work with organizations such as The Urban League a lot in the Carolinas because thatâ€™s where I am. You know thereâ€™s kids who enforce positive images through hip-hop culture so the kids learn early the positive side of hip-hop and how it can help to develop your abilities, skills and just positive imagery instead of the normal negative images that

are portrayed through the mass media. There's Absopure they bring about awareness of all cancers which is a big issue in a lot of minorities just don't really get it healthcare and caring for yourself and your body is important and one of the ways we can prevent cancers of all kind and it also goes into mental health as well. You know most of our sicknesses develop mentally first and then it affects the body so we need to be able to know how and help prevent, cure and maintain ourselves and our families and our children. We have the Scott Care foundation the Scott Care foundation what they do is they provide scholarships to high school seniors and people maybe just out of school who wanna go to college to pursue an education in the arts. I just came from a scholarship awards ceremony two or three weeks ago in Winston- Salem, North Carolina and they sent eight kids to college. And I'm happy to be a part of that and I contribute as well I can say that I'm helping others further their education. So things like that in general are the types of things that I do on my own without really trying to exploit it in a way selfish at all. I'm very giving these days. There's some places and things that I go to that you might never know but know that the people there know I was there to influence and help and motivate.

[youtube]sHCWMkKAKUs[/youtube]

**It sounds like the "I Got It Made" philosophy taken to the next level.**

Exactly. I think you have to lead by example and people can see me doing that maybe it will influence them to do it. And that's the type of changes that does make a difference. Sometimes you don't think it makes a difference but just from "I Got It Made" say for instance that alone I've created multimillionaires whether directly or indirectly whether they choose to admit it or not I know what I'm responsible for. And if I can do that by a song then I can continue to do that through song as well as real life.

A couple of years ago Gza used you and LL as examples of young MCs with skills in a critique of Soulja Boy. What do you think happened between your debut and now where we don't see as many young rappers with lyrical skills? Not to say that Soulja Boy doesn't have his place.

What Soulja Boy is doing is very lucrative it's providing a lot of career opportunities so to speak incomes for families. You know he's feeding people so at the end of the day he's doing his part. As far as creatively now times change, things change, people change there was you know blues, jazz, soul, R&B, disco, hip-hop and it's still hip-hop but we evolving as a people and culture.

*"You know kids want to hear something different at times we're in times of economic stress and depression sometimes it's good to just give people simplicity and pleasure in their life just to be happy to think good thoughts and that is what I think Soulja Boy is more or less doing."*

However there are other artists that have lyrical capability and skills that do not get the opportunity to shine because pretty much what it boils down to is what labels and executives think is marketable and will sell. It's pretty much all based on what they think will do well. If they think Soulja Boy will do well as opposed to maybe like a young Talib Kweli like a child version of Talib then they're gonna go with the Soulja Boy cause they wanna sell units. But at the same time that young Talib needs to be heard because he's got a message in his song that can enrich and empower some lives. These things are repetitive these things influence the youth because that's how youth learn through repetition and experience a lot of repetition because they don't get to experience as much as adults. So saying that to say you know the majors and the companies and the corporations they push that because it sells for them. So we as a people and a culture need to acknowledge the real side of hip-hop and the

message in hip-hop. So that's pretty much what happened and as far as child stars go they stopped looking for talent and started looking for marketability. They'll grab a kid off the street and write his album as opposed to when I was in the game I wrote my whole album every word that I've ever spoken. I've never believed in you can not be an artist and have someone else paint the picture for you and you sign your name. If you're an artist you're an artist so what that leads me to believe is that we need to find these young artists that are actually creating their own art as opposed to performers who are given songs and perform them. If they are writing songs that's not making any sense or enriching any lives or minds that's the stuff that needs to be on the backburner that's the play around stuff. It's the other way around they're feeding us the play play stuff and suppressing the culture. And like I said they are feeding families and such but they are other families that deserve and need to be feed as well.

**When you started rapping did you ever think it would turn into the kind of corporate thing so much of it has become?**

Well yes because well not at the beginning but once I started to see the artists on TV then I knew that it can go somewhere bigger. Because it was just in the street it wasn't widely publicized and it was club culture in the disco era and when it became mainstream and it started putting rap artists on *Soul Train* and (New York) *Hot Tracks* that's when I knew that rap was going somewhere much bigger than us.

*“With that being said then came Run DMC, which blew it over the top and just let me know that what I was doing was viable and there was a place for it in the market. Because at that time I was already listening to ‘Super Rhymes’ and Melle Mel I had a Fischer Price Phonograph and four older brothers.”*



So when they were bringing the music home Iâ€™d play it all day. I knew â€œSuper Rhymesâ€ back and forth â€œThe Birthday Party Rapâ€ Sugar Hill, everything. And what made me see something different was seeing it on TV instead of just the records, which were underground, and you know mixed tapes when they were really mixed tapes cause Howie Tee had a crew he used to make mixed tapes.