

**2020 11-02
Partial transcript
of video interview**

Daudi Abe

If you change one little thing, you can't assume that everything that's afterward stays the same. All I'm saying is, if you guys weren't doing what you were doing at such a young age ... Sir Mix-A-Lot was inspired by the organization and professionalism that you guys had, every today, you see what I'm saying, in that early time. And so there is no guarantee that if you guys weren't doing what you were doing, that he was not inspired to do what he eventually did. ... The possibility is that everything changes. ... Thanks to you guys, there was history to write about. I'm the least important person here. Without you guys, there's no reason for me to be here. ... The name of the book was intentional. It's an homage to you-all.

Rcurtis Jamerson

It's cool to be noticed after all these years. I appreciate it. It's real cool.

Abe

The name of the book was intentional. "Emerald Street." It's an homage to you-all.

James Croone

I'm honored. I'm definitely honored. ...

Clay Eals

Did you guys have any idea of your pioneering role?

Croone

No. We were just kids having fun doing something we enjoyed doing. Yeah, that was the furthest thing from my mind.

Abe

It was just new and exciting.

Croone

It was fun. We had no idea. I don't think anybody did at that time.

Abe

No, of course not.

Croone

“Rapper’s Delight” came out in 1979, and we were (started) in 1981. At that point, it was just something that people were doing and having a good time doing it.

Abe

That’s what I was saying. Hip hop wasn’t supposed to be here, man, considering where it started from.

Jamerson

They said it was a fad. ...

Abe

At that point, everybody had seen had disco had been so popular in the 1970s and literally disappeared like overnight, so I think a lot of hip-hop kids were worried that the same thing would happen. But it went the opposite.

Jamerson

Because there were too many stories to be told. That’s just what hip hop was, telling stories, how they grew up.

Abe

It was the young, black, male perspective for the first time that the world was hearing that.

Jamerson

And it’s still here today.

Abe

Unbelievable.

Jamerson

I’m not such a bad boy anymore.

Abe

You guys, if somebody had given you just a little window on the future, you guys were perfect (it would be) “Get out of here. It’s not going to grow to be all that. That’s not going to happen. It’s not going to take over the world.”

Jamerson

Back then, we didn't even think about it. Honestly, we didn't think like we were going to be famous, and we had fun doing it. You know what I'm saying? We had people working with us to cultivate us and create what we were. Dance steps, make sure you ... keep your people excited. You know what I'm saying? ... They all played a part in helping us grow, man. So they get shout-out. ... I will tell you that the discipline in the group was Ed (Eddie "Sugar Bear" Wells). He called a rehearsal, we gotta go to rehearsal. ... He was the innovator, man. If it wasn't for Ed, there would be no Emerald Street Boys.

Croone

Ed was the one who got us going on all this stuff.

Jamerson

Once we got past it, he worked out the rap part, he was doing the DJ. ... Ed took songs and mixed them with Richard Pryor, things like that. They were doing that. That's when MTV was happening. We had TVs all over the house, and now we're doing video with the music. That's Ed. That's who Ed was. ...

Croone

Actual TV TVs, not the flat-screen. ...

Jamerson

That's what we had to help us along the way and teach us along the way. You know what I'm saying? He was writing all the raps because I didn't know how to write raps.

Croone

In the beginning. We would write our own solos, but he was good at writing the exchanges, like one person would say this and he says that. ...

Jamerson

His vocabulary was (huge). ...

Abe

I've been teaching the history of hip hop for 20 years, and sometimes I find it difficult to get across just how exciting it was. Nobody knew what was going to happen. There was no formula, there was no road map, everything was so new. ... Now it's so natural, it's so part of the mainstream. ...

Croone

Like I tell people when I have these interviews, people have to understand that even at that time, the thing that made us unique in what we did and the professionalism came from entertainment, because we never knew what rappers looked like when you're on stage. We modeled after stuff like the Temptations, know what I mean. You got to think about it. Even though we were using block steps, we knew that we had to be in unison, we had to be tight, we wore the same things, so it was like if it were the Temptations and rap together is what we actually used. It's kind of funny to think of it, but that's what we did. ...

Jamerson

It was fun. It was like a kid that walked into a store and said, 'I want that, I want that, I want that,' and you get it. ...

Eals

Performances in your future?

Croone

No, not for me.

Jamerson

I still sing. I sing now, and I've got my show. I took my recording equipment to a lady's house. They had like 10 ladies, and they wanted me to do a 75-year-old ladies' birthday, so I did some songs, but this lady was like dropping it and bringing it back up. ... They had fun, and I performed. ...

Croone

Before Ed passed away, talking about getting all rockers back together. ... I'd like to do something like that, with some of the younger ones, doing a video production and an actual song. ...