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UNION CITY LEISURE SERVICES TEEN CENTER

Presents . . .

BATTLE OF THE DJ'S

FRIDAY JUNE 10th

8:00 PM

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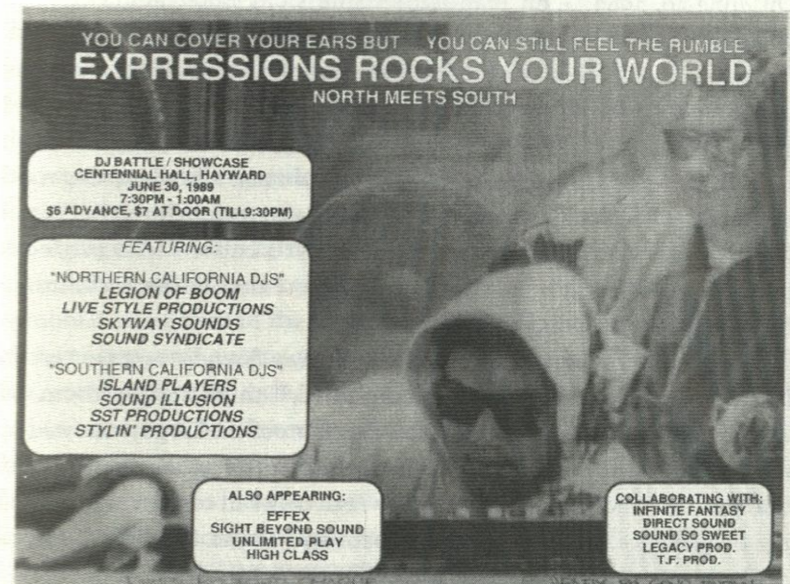
Legions of Boom / Filipino American Mobile DJ Crews in the San Francisco Bay Area / Oliver Wang

Duke University Press / Durham and London / 2015

a circle and he was doing those gyros, flung his shoe off, straight up in the air.[21] It hit one of the huge chandeliers and pieces started to crash down. They shut the party down right there. That was that."

Less than a year later, on September 5, 1992, San Francisco police would discover Bradford shot to death, his body and car set afire. His murder remains unsolved (Bartolome 1992: 1).[22]

Chapter 5 / Take Me Out with the Fader / The Decline of the Mobile Scene



5.1 / Flyer for a 1989 showcase, "Expressions Rocks Your World," in Hayward. Though billed as a battle between DJs from Northern and Southern California, it is best remembered as being a key battle between "Jazzy" Jim Archer (representing older mix DJs) and Richard "Q-Bert" Quitevis (representing emergent scratch DJs). Courtesy of John Francisco.

On June 30, 1989, John Francisco's Expressions Entertainment sponsored its most ambitious showcase to date (figure 5.1). Held at Hayward's Centennial Hall, the showcase included several local and national stars, including DJ Johnny Juice of the rap group Public Enemy, then-up-and-coming rapper and radio personality MC Sway, and the mobile community's own MC Lani Luv (aka *Tales of the Turntable*'s Melanie Caganot). However, the real stars of the show—and the conceit behind the "North Meets South" concept—was the eight-team DJ battle that intended to put four crews from the Bay Area against four from Southern California. It did not quite turn out that way, though.

"Jazzy" Jim Archer, from San Jose's Skyway Sounds, was part of the Northern California contingent and explained, "I think that Northern California DJs started getting such a buzz that none of the LA guys showed up, or they showed up but didn't perform, it was something like that." Instead, the showcase ended up pitting the Bay Area crews in competition, including two alliance teams—Legion of Boom and Sound Syndicate—as well as Skyway Sounds and San Francisco–Daly City's Live Style Productions.

In the finals, the event still got its geographic showdown: San Francisco's Richard "Q-Bert" Quitevis (Live Style) versus the South Bay's Jazzy Jim. From Jim's perspective, this was more than crew versus crew; it was

also a generational battle of sorts: "At that point, I was getting a decent name for myself and Q-Bert was just coming on. People were wondering about me, 'Is Jazzy done, has he had his time, is Q-Bert the next guy who is going to take over?' This is something people wanted to see." Jim mentally dissected what the potential matchups would look like in the battle, especially in relation to each of their styles: "I know that Q-Bert is going to get a ten on scratching, but I know I can probably . . . get a seven or an eight. I do not think Q-Bert is going to do much mixing so he's probably going to get a three, but I am going to get a ten."

Jim's predictions turned out to be quite precise. He went first, putting on a show of quick-mixing skills as he seamlessly whittled his way through two stacks of records on either side of him. Q-Bert's routine also featured some quick-mixing, but as Jim assumed, it was his scratch routines that really caught people's attention. Promoter John Francisco described his impressions of listening to Q-Bert: "I was walking from one side of the hall to the other. I stopped dead in my tracks. I was like 'Jesus Christ, who the hell is this guy?' I mean, he was doing things to that record that I never heard in my life. I mean I heard people scratching before, but not like that. He was like a damn madman up there."[1] At the end of the battle, the judges were left in a quandary. As Francisco explained, "it actually threw off a lot of judges, they couldn't figure out exactly how to judge them. You had two different styles on two different parts of the spectrum, how do you deal with that?" Debate ensued, but the judges eventually awarded the contest to Jim, a decision that attendees still debate today. No one questioned the skill of either DJ, but the difficulty in establishing a consensus on which DJ style was "better" reflected an emerging split within the larger mobile DJ community.

In hindsight, it is tempting to frame that 1989 battle as marking a symbolic crossroads in the history of the scene, one that also predicted changes happening among DJs globally. Scratching and mixing were not necessarily opposing styles—scratching can be a useful skill in enhancing a mix transition, for example—but the adherents of each skill set were beginning to form into different communities. On that summer day in 1989, Q-Bert might have lost the battle, but within only a few years, many could claim that scratch DJing would eventually win the war.

The death of Mark Bradford and decline of Imagine and AA Productions did not spell the end of the showcase era, but the scene was changing rapidly by the early 1990s. One of the most stark examples came with

the way showcases began to focus heavily on single DJs rather than just crews. For example, on the flyer for a "DJs Extravaganza" showcase from 1992, two different categories appeared: battling DJs (i.e., individuals) and showcasing DJs (i.e., crews). This was a new kind of delineation, a nod to the emergence of the scratch DJ, and a harbinger of a fundamental transformation happening within the mobile scene. The scene's valorization of the communal unit (i.e., the crew) was steadily being displaced by a cult of personality surrounding individual, iconic DJ figures. This shift both reflected—and hastened—changing values within the scene.

As I have stressed throughout, mobile DJ crews offered many kinds of benefits and attractions for members: friendship and camaraderie, a modest source of income, social status. However, what may get lost is the most basic function of a mobile *crew*: labor. Crews provided the physical labor needed to tote crates of records and move and assemble heavy audio and lighting equipment. Remove the need for that assistance, and the logic of a crew organization begins to fall apart. When that happens among many crews, the scene itself withers.

Within this context, scratch DJing may have contributed to declining interest in mobile crews, but it was far from the only—or even main—reason the scene began to fade by the early to mid-1990s. As this chapter details, it was a confluence of factors, both internal and external to the scene, that gradually chipped away at its import within the cultural lives of the Bay Area's Filipino American youth. Some of those forces worked to elevate the successes of individual DJs but inadvertently weakened the need of a support crew. Other forces siphoned off youth into other cultural activities. And specific to the crews themselves, insufficient recruitment of younger members meant that those who "aged out" were not replaced in the ranks. The scene might have survived any single one of these forces, but in concert they helped catalyze the scene's decline. Yet even as the heyday of the mobiles began to pass, the generation of DJs they helped to develop began to make their own power felt. That emergent cadre of turntablists would go on to reach heights of global recognition that their forebears could scarcely have imagined.

An Itch to Scratch / The Rise of Scratch DJing in the Mobile Crews

The invention of "the scratch" dates back to 1977, when a teenage DJ named Theodore Livingston idly cued a record back and forth and became intrigued by the sound it made under the stylus.[2] Livingston, better known as Grandwizard Theodore, began to introduce his scratching technique into public gigs, and it caught on quickly with nascent hip-hop DJs in the New York area. By the early 1980s, scratching had become a central style among hip-hop DJs; one of the most lauded of "old school" hip-hop records, from 1981, is essentially a scratch and mix routine put on vinyl, Grandmaster Flash's "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" (1981).

Scratching enjoyed a massive boost in visibility in 1983 with the success of Herbie Hancock's "Rockit" (1983). Not only did Grandmaster D.S.T. provide scratching on the song, but the jazz-rock single came with an eye-catching video that put D.S.T. on display alongside a chorus line of disembodied, robotic legs kicking in rhythm. "Rockit" was so successful that it supposedly helped break through the infamous "no black music" policy at the then-fledgling MTV (Brewster and Broughton 1999: 260). Grandmaster D.S.T. accompanied Hancock on a series of prominent live performances of "Rockit," including on *Saturday Night Live* and the Grammys, and these appearances, along with the video, likely did far more to spread scratching than any audio recording. Spintronix's Kormann Roque could have spoken for an entire generation when he explained how he first learned about scratching: "For me, it was watching Grandmaster D.S.T. doing the 'Rockit' thing. Man, when I heard that I was like 'Damn.'"[3]

The appeal of scratching has partially to do with how it sounds. A scratch is, on one level, a conscious act of dissonance, creating a rupture from the expected, linear flow of a record. However, when scratching is done in tempo with a record, it adds a layer of sound and syncopation that enhances rather than distracts. In accomplishing this, scratching profoundly transforms the very function of the turntable and the person behind it. As musicologist Mark Katz notes in his book on DJ culture, *Groove Music*, "traditionally, it's not the person playing the turntable who is making the music—the music has already been made, and is simply *reproduced* by the turntable. . . . [Grandwizard] Theodore went even further; when he pushed [a record] back and forth underneath the stylus, he was transforming it into something entirely different. It is because of this real-time manipulation that the turntable can be a musical instrument" (2012: 61–62). If the turntable could be turned into a musical instrument, it followed that the DJ could become a musician. In the 1990s, Chris "Babu" Oroc, a Filipino American DJ from Southern California, came up with the neologism "turntablist" (turntable + instrumentalist) as another way to describe scratch DJs (Katz 2012: 127). The term stuck;

by the late 1990s, an International Turntablist Federation even arose to compete with the more venerable Disco Mix Competition (better known as "the DMC"). Turntablist became a useful way to describe the scratch DJ as both musician and performer. As I have suggested throughout, the act of mix DJing is always a performance, based around both song selection and mixing skills. However, scratch DJing pushed the performative element even further.

In the beginning, scratching added a layer of creative expression "on top" of the mix; for example, instead of tempo-matching two songs, one could instead "scratch in" the next song as a transition. However, as scratching evolved—especially through the participation of Bay Area Filipino American DJs—mixing receded into the background, leaving scratching as the primary musical expression. A scratch performance was no longer the sideshow; it became the main event.

For this reason, mobile crews often met the growing popularity of scratching with some ambivalence. This was a generational tension to some extent, with younger members enthusiastically learning the style while more veteran members remained wary. After all, nonstop mixing is meant to sustain and contain the energy of the dance floor, guiding the dancer-listeners into a state of "surrender" where they "lose themselves" in the moment. Scratch DJs operate on a divergent—some might say oppositional—set of ideals and needs. Scratching, as an act of rupture, calls attention to itself; an ideal scratch performance seeks a receptive, observant audience rather than one that is "lost in the music." To put it another way, if DJs are like drummers, the best mixers sustain a danceable backbeat, but the scratch DJ is all about the drum solo.

One of my most vivid, early memories of watching a scratch DJ was in 1994, when Daly City's DJ Shortkut (Jonathan Cruz) competed in the West Coast regional DMC contest. A Filipino American from Daly City's Templeton High School and originally a member of the Just 2 Hype mobile crew, Shortkut was a rising star in the turntablism scene in 1994, the heir apparent of older mentors like Q-Bert and Mixmaster Mike. At the competition, Shortkut unveiled a routine that he would later become famous for: the "Impeach the President" juggle.

A juggle (aka beat-juggle) is a scratch technique, dating back to at least 1987, where the DJ uses copies of the same song, one on each turntable.[4] By moving back and forth between each record, constantly rewinding or pushing them forward, the DJ can deconstruct and reconstruct the song to emphasize specific musical or vocal moments or completely reshuffle

them. Juggling requires a deft hand, quick eye, and hyperattentive mind, since the DJ has to move between both turntables while also manipulating the DJ mixer, all within fractions of a second. It is a difficult skill set to master and as such became a staple in scratch competitions.

Shortkut's routine used two copies of the Honeydrippers' 1972 single "Impeach the President," a song that opens with a distinctive drum break, well sampled by hip-hop groups.[5] His song choice here was quite deliberate; scratch routines often rely on using songs that are part of the hip-hop or pop music canon but then transforming them, thus blending familiarity with surprise. In Shortkut's case, he took that famous drum break and then beat-juggled it to create an entirely new drum pattern, something that left the crowd (myself included) in awe.

My point is that Shortkut's routine was created specifically to draw and hone in our attention as a crowd. He needed us to (1) recognize the song being played as "Impeach the President," and (2) recognize how he was transforming it. In theory, a DJ could try to pull off a juggle in the middle of a mixing set, but if the crowd is "lost in the music," then a well-executed juggle might go unnoticed, therefore negating the reason a DJ would attempt to pull off such a difficult trick to begin with. As I am stressing, scratching is meant to call attention to itself, and as such, its integration into a mix-centric mobile scene was always going to face resistance.

Images Inc.'s Francisco Pardorla recalled: "When scratching first came out, it was annoying. It would kill a vibe." Unlimited Sounds' Anthony Carrion remembered when "DJ Apollo" Novicio, one of the crew's younger members, started scratching in the middle of a wedding and Carrion had to reprimand him: "Apollo was actually the first one to show me some tricks and stuff. He ended up at a gig, it was a wedding and he was trying to show me, and I was like, 'No, not now, this is a wedding.' He was transforming and scratching. [I told him,] 'Don't do it now, you know, we're right in the middle of a wedding.'" Non-Stop Boogie's Orlando Madrid recounted similar incidents: "We'll be at a wedding and a teenager will come up and ask, 'Can you scratch?' We're at a wedding . . . hello?" Like Carrion, Madrid imparted that scratching during a dance (especially at a wedding) was particularly inappropriate; as Pardorla said, scratching could threaten to "kill a vibe," the antithesis of what most DJs seek to build and protect throughout an evening.

As a result, many crews relegated scratching to the side. As Pardorla explained it, "everyone gets their fifteen minutes of fame. That's what

scratching was. . . . There were these promoters that would have a dance, and for the majority of the night, there were DJs playing records, then it would stop so that these guys [scratch DJs] could show off." Pardorla's suggestion that scratching was partially about fame-seeking reveals an interesting tension within the mobile crews. To be fair, as I have suggested throughout, part of the appeal of DJing to these young men was the potential of accruing social capital; fame-seeking existed long before "Rockit" came out. However, what scratching introduced was a different route to fame, a point I will return to later in the chapter.

Once scratching began to catch on with a younger generation of mobile DJs, a generation gap was almost inevitable, as crews had to contend with two different kinds of DJs in their midst. While giving scratch DJs their "fifteen minutes to show off" could serve as a stopgap compromise, as scratching grew in popularity, that schism would eventually widen, especially once turntablists discovered they could headline their own stages instead.

The transition toward that break was slow and hardly linear. For the most part, mobile crews accepted scratch DJs in their ranks; some, such as Unlimited Sounds, had what amounted to a "designated scratcher"—a scratch specialist specifically given stage time during battles and showcases. Inadvertently, the use of designated scratchers, especially in high-visibility events, allowed those DJs to identify and seek out one another, regardless of which crews they belonged to. Marginal within their own organizations, these nascent turntablists had a vested interest in finding like-minded souls elsewhere.

This is how the nucleus of Apollo, Mixmaster Mike, and Q-Bert came together in the late 1980s.[6] They would later go on to form one of the most lauded and famed turntablist crews in the world—the Invisibl Skratch Piklz—but back then, they were all high school students, scattered about the Bay. Apollo Novicio was a student at Westmoor High in Daly City and was already a renowned participant in the b-boy dance scene centered at Daly City's War Memorial.[7] He then turned to DJing when he joined the prestigious Unlimited Sounds crew and became DJ Apollo. Richard Quitevis grew up in the nearby Excelsior district in San Francisco and was a student at Balboa High—birthplace of Sound Explosion, Non-Stop Boogie, Electric Sounds, the Go-Go's, and other pioneering Filipino mobile crews.[8] There, he joined Live Style Productions, becoming DJ Q-Bert. Michael Schwartz spent much of his teen years living between Daly City and Vallejo; he eventually joined the mobile crew High Tech Soundz in Sacramento, where his handle was Mixmaster Mike.

As I stress here, like almost all the prominent Bay Area scratch DJs from the 1990s, these three men first started with mobile crews in the 1980s.[9]

The three were childhood friends, with Apollo being the common link; he and Q-Bert's high schools were less than five miles apart, and they used to battle one another in school cafeterias during lunchtime. Apollo and Mike were close friends as well; Mike lived with Apollo's family for a spell. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the three—calling themselves FM2O (Furious Minds 2 Observe)—began to lay down the foundation of what would become their groundbreaking innovation in scratch DJing, one dependent on a *collective* dynamic rather than just individual skill.[10]

Tandem mixing, with two DJs and four turntables, had already been a part of the mobile scene, especially for major showcase battles, but FM2O's innovation was in giving each DJ a specialized, sonic role within the larger ensemble. For example, one DJ would act as the rhythm section, scratching a percussive beat. Another DJ would add in melodic elements, scratching up a horn line for example. The last DJ could find some vocals to play with, adding in another sonic layer, and the three would coordinate their routines with one another. In essence, FM2O discovered how to organize DJs into a band.

This kind of coordinated group effort was virtually unknown in the rest of the scratch DJ world, but that would change dramatically by 1992, when the three, now called the Rocksteady DJs, took the U.S. and then world DMC titles.[11] Two things stand out here. First of all, prior to this, the DMC championships had been overwhelmingly dominated by African American DJs from the East Coast as well as British and German DJs. Bay Area—let alone Filipino American—DJs had almost no presence in these competitions until Q-Bert won the U.S. national championship in 1991.

Remember: much of this was happening in a relative mass media vacuum. As I have stressed throughout, the Bay Area mobile—and early scratch—DJ scenes came together through direct peer-to-peer interactions. DJs like Apollo and Q-Bert may have been turned on to scratching via "Rockit" or other televised hip-hop performances, but their *collaboration* was primarily made possible because of the mobile crew networks. And because their innovations had no easy path to mass self-distribution (i.e., nothing remotely similar to YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter), this media isolation also gave them the opportunity to develop their techniques without "outsiders" either influencing their styles or appropriating them. While this isolation angle is tangential to my work here, it may be useful for other researchers to delve into further.[12]

However, while the mobile DJs never made a successful jump into mass media (a point I will discuss shortly), the scratch DJs were far more adept at wielding these media-based tools of marketing and distribution. The Invisibl Skratch Piklz, in particular, were at the forefront of what marketers today would call "managing their brand." According to Travis Rimando (aka DJ Pone), the Invisibl Skratch Piklz's international success initiated a "paradigmatic change in scratch/battle DJ values" and helped cement their reputation as the world's best-known and most respected scratch crew.[13] Pone explained that while the Piklz's technical innovations, that is, creating new kinds of scratches and DJ routines, are part of their legacy, one of their less obvious contributions was revolutionizing the way scratch DJs marketed themselves and the community at large. Pone recalled meeting Q-Bert for the first time in 1993:

> One of my striking memories of [Q-Bert] was of his constant promotion of himself and his endeavors. We went to a local DJ battle, and when he got on the mic, he was promoting his new battle record, the recently released "Battle Breaks."[14] We later went to Kevvy Kev's show at KZSU . . . and again, after scratching live, he got on the mic and gave his same spiel on "Battle Breaks." His proactive and aggressive approach to marketing, unlike that of many other scratch/battle DJs, is yet another distinguishing point about him [countering] the stereotypical image of a scratch/battle DJ [as] an antisocial recluse who prefers to be locked up in a bedroom, practicing.

In other words, Q-Bert and this emergent community of scratch DJs helped transform the image of turntablists from introverted "bedroom DJs" into public figures who began to appear in television commercials, music videos, and motion pictures.[15] DJ Shadow (Josh Davis) also credited the Invisibl Skratch Piklz with dissolving the shroud of secrecy around scratch techniques. In Doug Pray's documentary *Scratch*, Shadow explains: "The Piklz were the first to take the secrecy out of DJing because a lot of hip-hop DJing was about . . . not revealing your tricks. I think the Piklz were the first people to just be like, 'Hey, here's exactly how to do what we do. We want you to go out and do it better so we can learn from you.' I think that was such a giant step forward" (Pray 2002).

Shadow lauded the group for making it easier for DJs to learn scratch techniques and contribute to the expansion of the turntablist community. As in the mobile scene, the early scratch DJs mostly learned from

5.2 / FM2O (Furious Minds 2 Observe) performing at the Eco-Rap show in San Francisco, c.1990–1991. Left to right: Richard "Q-Bert" Quitevis, "Mixmaster Mike" Schwartz, "DJ Apollo" Novicio. These three DJs met when all three were in mobile crews (Live Style, Hi Tech, and Unlimited Sounds, respectively) before forming their own, seminal scratch DJ crew, which went by several names—FM2O, Shadow DJs, and Rocksteady DJs—before they settled on the Invisibl Skratch Piklz. Photo courtesy of Apollo Novicio.

one another—both communities originated within specific local spaces where peer-to-peer training and observation were key. However, by the mid- to late 1990s, through videos, websites, and other resources, the Invisibl Skratch Piklz and others created a body of knowledge that other DJs, regardless of their locations, could access. Within a few years, competitive scratch DJs began to emerge in new cities, states, and countries where DJing had rarely found a major foothold previously.[16] As a result, the various streams of turntablist-oriented media content created a shared knowledge base that was bolstered by events and competitions that helped gather like-minded participants from around the world. Just as mobile showcases created opportunities for pilgrimages for most of the 1980s, the scratch scene had its own events that encouraged travel, contact, and collaboration in ways that began to build a global community of scratch DJs. The mobile DJ scene, successful as it was in its own right, never came close to having that same kind of reach.

Turntablism created an incredibly tight yet vast community of like-minded adherents internationally, especially by the end of the 1990s. Moreover, turntablists also tended to organize themselves into crews, thus continuing and borrowing the crew structure—and its homosocial and communal identity attractions—from the mobiles. At the same time, while turntablism encouraged a communal bond between fellow participants, their relationship to the audience was significantly different from that of their mobile counterparts.

Case in point: how DJs were meant to interact with audiences became a central point of tension within the Invisibl Skratch Piklz. According to DJ Apollo, he and Q-Bert disagreed over the crew's purpose—Apollo wanted the group to retain parts of their mobile crew heritage by continuing to mix at clubs and parties, but Q-Bert saw the future of the group as that of a virtuosic, artistic musical group. Apollo recollected: "[Q-Bert] was really against us [saying] 'Well, all you guys are, are club DJs.' And we were like 'Nah, it's incorporating everything. . . . We don't wanna just be the hard core elite, we want to do [mix at parties] too.' . . . He never saw it that way."[17] This conflict in opinion represented more than just a difference in personal views; it also reflected a fundamental shift within the DJ community during the first half of the 1990s.

Scratching was quickly evolving into a practice distinct from other hip-hop scenes, to say nothing of a wider pop music landscape. Mobile crews had often plugged into larger cultural worlds, overlapping with dance crews, family parties, school events, live music, record labels, and radio stations. In contrast, though scratching was undoubtedly becoming a more visible part of the larger pop mainstream—found in advertising, television, cinema, and so on—the scratching community was becoming more insular as its participant base grew.[18] In Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton's *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, they compare turntablists with a "cryptic cult" and argue that the impact of scratch DJing was to distill "the essential elements of hip hop DJing . . . until it became an art form almost completely detached from its original dance floor function. . . . At times, though, these scratch DJs seemed in danger of becoming obsessed hobbyists, competing against each other in increasingly esoteric competitions" (1999: 257). Brewster and Broughton overstate their concerns to some extent—the scene may have been insular, but turntablists were far from monastically self-isolating; scratch DJing advanced a sprawling, global industry, complete with its own recordings, record labels, and schools.[19] However, they are accurate in noting that much of turntablism moved away from DJ traditions inherently connected to dance floor culture. If mobile crews shared a symbiotic relationship with their audiences, turntablists often fell closer to the conventional idea of art or musical performance, where there were clearer separations between performer and audience. As I noted earlier, that disconnection from the dance floor was perhaps the fundamental difference between scratch and mobile DJs—it was not just a stylistic difference but rather spoke to the raison d'être of each expressive form. It is little wonder that older mobile crews dismissed scratching, while emergent scratch DJ crews had less interest in spinning for parties.

This difference in purpose created a fundamental—if less obvious—organizational change: compared to mobile DJs, scratch DJs can travel light. Clients do not book turntablists for their sound system, let alone lighting rigs (the latter serve little purpose in a scratch performance). Moreover, promoters usually booked scratch DJs into bars or nightclubs where sound systems came preinstalled. The most a turntablist might need to bring would be a pair of turntables, a mixer, and a handful of records to scratch with (if even that). Such a rig can be easily handled by a single person; support crews need not apply.

Moreover, a single scratch DJ's performance is usually measured in minutes, not hours. Therefore, there is no need to bring crates of heavy records; a single bag of records is sufficient. Freed from these kinds of logistical burdens, the scratch crews that formed were made up largely of members who were all DJs rather than the conventional mobile structure, which had one or two DJs supported by everyone else.

This last point is crucial. Scratch crews allowed each member to pursue his or her own expressive potential, and by doing so, intensified the focus on the individual. Part of this was based on logistics: the traditional mobile battle pitted crew against crew, but scratch battles tended to be more between individuals. Jazzy Jim observed, "If you look at the kids that were [DJing], we wanted attention. The kids who started the mobile DJs, we really wanted to be good but also basically wanted attention, we wanted to be a star. With the scratching, I think people saw the opportunity to be a bigger star."

This rise in the popularity of scratch DJing lured many younger DJs out of the mobile crews. Shortkut, who began his DJing career as part of the Just 2 Hype mobile crew, recalled that transition: "I wasn't there any-

more to do gigs with [Just 2 Hype]. I didn't expect to focus on [scratching] but I got so deep into it, especially going to New York for the first time, by myself. I saw the bigger picture outside of just the mobile scene." By the early 1990s, more and more DJs were following in Shortkut's footsteps, especially with the rising national prominence of scratch crews such as the Invisibl Skratch Piklz, Bullet Proof Scratch Hamsters, Beat Junkies, and others.

Plotted on a timeline, the decline of the mobile DJ scene certainly coincides with the rise of turntablism, but rather than seeing the relationship between the two through some kind of zero-sum equation, it is more useful to consider how scratch DJing was one of several forces chipping away at both the membership and logical necessity of mobile crews. Moreover, those forces were not always external to the mobiles; some of the most detrimental factors arose because of the successes of the mobile scene itself.

Recall that part of the popularity of the mobile crews rested on the way they catered to their peers, creating venues for music and dancing at a time when Filipino youth audiences were not being actively courted by more mainstream clubs. Likewise, radio stations employed major club DJs like Cameron Paul but were not initially tuned into the mobile scene. However, by the end of the 1980s, the prominence of the showcases and general popularity of the mobiles prompted a reevaluation on the part of club and radio industry gatekeepers. The savvier ones began hiring and booking DJs from out of the mobile crews as a way to tap into their fan bases.

For example, radio stations like San Francisco's KMEL and KSOL/KYLD began to hire DJs from the mobile crews to host shows or mix on air.[20] That included Jazzy Jim from Skyway Sounds (KYLD), Ultimate Creations' Genie G (KYLD), and Glen Aure from Boys of Superior Style (KMEL). Perhaps the best known of this cadre is Rick Lee of Styles Beyond Compare, who has been a DJ at KMEL since the 1990s and whose radio IDs always mention his crew affiliation.

This change in opportunity was bittersweet for some. Throughout the 1980s, some of my respondents felt as if they had been passed over because of race. "You had to be white to move into the big radio stations," suggested Kim Kantares. While he was a longtime DJ for the smaller AM station KPOO throughout the 1980s, Kantares tried to get DJ work through KDIA and KSOL—both larger commercial stations that, like KPOO, programmed soul music. Despite his extensive background in radio, how-

ever, Kantares found himself shut out of both stations: "Even KDIA, KSOL, they laughed at us. Especially me, man, trying to get on KSOL. They were like, 'It won't work,' and then two months later, 'DJ White Guy,' Cameron Paul, is in the mix, and he's playing hip-hop." Kantares would eventually break through that glass ceiling; by the beginning of the 1990s, Kantares had gone to work at KSOL's rival, KMEL. However, Kantares and other DJs felt that as Filipino Americans, their racial difference contributed to their marginalization from mainstream media companies in the 1980s. Yet, while that marginalization partially fueled the drive toward creating the mobile scene as something that Filipino Americans could lay claim to, as the scene's growth garnered mainstream attention, it also meant that the institutions that had previously shunned those DJs would now play a role in undermining the scene, however unintentionally.

Nowhere was this better illuminated than in the nightclubs. If mobile crews originally came into prominence because they could replicate the discotheque experience "at home," the nightclubs eventually realized the inverse was true too: by hiring DJs from the mobile crews, they could tap into the larger crowds that followed those personalities. By the early 1990s, club promoters began to cherry-pick talent from the different mobile crews. Spintronix's Jay dela Cruz recalled, "The DJs and DJ Crews that played for little or no money wanted to finally get paid! That's why there was a surge to start up party promotion groups, most of them [by former DJs]. With several promotion groups going after the same target market, your competitive edge was hosting a party at a club—it added so much credibility to your party. And, the club and bar owners were hip to this money . . . they opened their doors to these folks." The expansion of the mobile scene into the clubs was long overdue and, on first glance, should have represented a second life for the mobile DJs. However, one unintended consequence of this shift toward hosting parties in clubs and bars was an adverse effect on the crews instead. Kong stated this problem clearly: "Before, people rented halls like the Irish Center. The Irish Center has nothing but some big rooms, so then you have to get guys like Jay [dela Cruz] to bring [Spintronix] to supply the sound system, the lighting, and of course, the DJs. Now promoters, they just rent a club that already has the sound, the lighting, and things like that." As with the scratch DJs, the increase in mix DJs working in nightclubs effectively eliminated the mobile crew's logistical function in moving and installing equipment. Dela Cruz cited this trend in explaining the decline in mobile activity, giving one example with a popular promoter named Chuckles: "He'd have

five DJs from five crews spin in a club and the equipment would already be there. There was no need for a mobile DJ to come and set up their stuff." *Tales of the Turntable* curator Melanie Caganot added: "I think it became a matter of convenience because now you could get paid two or three hundred dollars for playing a couple of hours by just bringing your records. You didn't have to lift these huge plates or rent a van or break your back, bring all this truss. The club already had it." Caganot drew attention to another advantage to doing club work: economic incentives. Before, money earned at a gig was usually split between the members of the crew. Nightclub and radio money did not have to be shared, however, thus improving a DJ's earning potential. As a result, throughout the early 1990s, the appeal of big, expensive, troublesome hall parties waned in favor of the relative simplicity—but lucrativeness—of club and radio work.[21]

In summation, by the early 1990s, DJs could command more attention, prestige, and money by themselves than with a crew. Moreover, as DJs found themselves in the situation where they could now get gigs on the strength of their personal reputations, the power of the crew's name waned. Crews might still have offered DJs a sense of local community, but the money and status offered by gigging solo were also strong. Says Pardorla, "I think it's a lot about individualism. With a DJ group, the most famous guy is always going to be the guy behind the turntable and then it takes six other guys to support him—carry the equipment, hook everything up, do the lighting. You're part of a group as opposed to being an individual." This is one of the reasons why, for example, Ultimate Creations ultimately disbanded. Despite the success and reputation of the crew, Gil Olimpiada says that as Gary "Genie G" Millare gained more solo work in the late 1980s, it created tensions with the crew: "[It] started fading '87, '88, '89. Just people going different ways and stuff. People getting different jobs. Gary, when he was hot at the time, people offered him to start DJing clubs and different events. My brother Jose didn't like it, because the way our group was formed, we were like a small family. [His philosophy was] 'We play as one, you don't branch out and try something else.' I was really supportive of Gary. [I would tell him] 'Go for it, it's all you. But if you can get us some gigs, go for it.'" Similarly, Derrick "D" Damian recalled that when he broke away from his Daly City mobile crew, Just 2 Hype, in 1994, "I told [crew partner] Larry [Cordova], 'I'm going to go solo. If you see my name on a flyer and it doesn't say Just 2 Hype, it's not because I'm disrespecting you guys, it's more [that] I'm doing my own

thing. You guys are my first and only crew and I'll keep you guys close to heart, but I got to do my own because I can't do weddings. All the guys are old now and it's like, I can't be lugging equipment, doing all these gigs by myself.' He understood and he gave [his] blessing." It is telling that Damian assumed that his crew colleagues would have expected him to include Just 2 Hype on his individual flyers—even working solo, DJs were still expected to include their crews as part of their identity. Therefore, when Damian spoke of gaining Cordova's "blessing," what he meant was that Cordova was effectively permitting Damian to forge a new identity for himself, disconnected from his roots with the crew. These breaks with convention were not just relevant to the crew's business model—since they were not being included in Damian's marketing: symbolically, they also represented a "letting go" of the once omnipresent communal crew identity so central in the mobile scene. DJs were, in a sense, outgrowing the crews, and as they left, the crews found their membership steadily whittling away.

This was part of a larger pattern of internal challenges facing many crews. By the early 1990s, the mobile scene was ten years old, and though crew members might have been as young as thirteen when they started, their aging into adulthood often meant that other commitments would force their attention away from DJing: college, military, work, or family. This is precisely what happened to Sound Explosion. Says cofounder Rafael Restauro, "We weren't doing as many gigs by then. We were getting older, we had all gotten out of high school, you know. Everybody was getting into the working field."

It was not just the DJs who were getting older, seeking new opportunities; the audience was aging as well. "Hall parties were thought to be 'played out' or for teeny boppers (at least in my circles)," dela Cruz suggested. "As my generation got older, the next step was naturally the club, bar scene. During this time, we were in our twenties . . . ready for the club legally." After years of sneaking into clubs, DJs and their fans were now old enough to get into these venues without subterfuge, a rite of passage of sorts. Hall parties became seen as more of a teenage activity, creating another generational split within the DJ audience.

Moreover, the traditional hall parties were in trouble on their own. The end of the eighties brought with it an upsurge in violence at hall parties. Said Jazzy Jim, "As this mobile DJ [era] was dying down, it was the era when the young kids and the gangs started getting back into it, and that caused the trouble at the gigs." Expression's John Francisco con-

curred: "You were catering to these younger crowds, problems came with them as well, so that's when the police came in. It became harder and harder to actually get venues." As Francisco suggested, this escalation in violence and police involvement made owners of previously DJ-friendly venues more wary of allowing parties to be thrown in their spaces. This was another compelling force that pushed the parties from the halls into clubs. Sound Sequence's Burt Kong observed, "I think the police, they crack down a lot harder on private parties . . . whereas it's so easy to rent a club." Clubs and bars usually provided their own security, thus assuming both the cost and liability from the DJs, yet another way in which club work became a more attractive option for individual DJs.

Meanwhile, back within the crews themselves, recruitment for younger members seemed like a lesser priority, even as older members were "aging out." In most crews, no matter how big they grew, the founding staff still constituted the key leadership. While this may have provided stable guidance and a core identity over the years, as those individuals became older and more involved with other commitments and interests, it meant that there was little or no future leadership to hand the crew's management off to. Only in rare instances did you see some kind of "passing of the guard"—for example, Orlando Madrid took over leadership of Non-Stop Boogie after all the original founders had left. In most cases, though, crews slowly atrophied, member by member. Midstar's Ray Viray shares what is a typical anecdote about how crews ended: "It was slowly. The group didn't talk and split up. There was no verbal, 'It's over.' It just faded away and stopped."

Outside of the DJing world, the early 1990s also saw other cultural activities competing for attention from Filipino American youth, none perhaps more powerful than the emergent import car racing and customization scene. Based initially in Southern California and fueled by the (relative) affordability of compact Japanese auto models such as the Honda Civic, Acura Integra, and Toyota Supra, the import car scene had made its way up to the Bay Area by the early 1990s (Namkung 2004: 162). This scene also organized itself around crews, investing time and expense into tweaking both the mechanical and aesthetic attributes of import cars and competing with one another in both illegal street races and organized racetrack events.

There are no hard numbers to quantify how many Filipino American youth became involved in the import car scene, but among my respondents, the competition for attention between the scenes weighed quite

heavily on their minds. Both older and younger DJs saw the import car scene as siphoning off youth who might otherwise have gotten into DJing instead. Said dela Cruz, "Instead of buying records, turntables, and equipment, they're buying mufflers, stickers, and cars." DJ Pone joked, "About 95 percent of the mobile crews that I was aware of in my generation—as soon as they got their Honda, it was over," suggesting that potential DJs fled the scene to get involved in the import car community instead.

As with scratch DJing, the rising popularity of the import car scene may have been related to how it elevated individual status *alongside* promoting a collective identity. Racers were still organized into crews, but within them each member could express himself or herself creatively (so long as you had a car). Pardorla observed, "At least with the import car scene, if you have six of your friends and each and every one of them could have a single car that looks totally different from the next one, you could have your own fifteen minutes of fame." In this way, the car crews retained the supportive camaraderie that comes with being in a collective yet still gave individuals the opportunity to attain social status on their own.

Adding to this, whereas DJing is more about the transformation of *permitted* private spaces (family homes, school gyms, social and church halls) car culture leans more toward the claiming of public space in the most visual of ways—driving down the street or parked in a lot—regardless of having permission to do so or not. If anything, the contested nature of cruising and street racing, both of which have led to any number of municipal laws designed to curtail or outright ban the practices, introduces a level of volatility and danger—and thus excitement—into car cultures (import or otherwise) that has no real parallel in DJing (mobile or otherwise).[22] Along these lines, similar to the way the DJing community allowed young men to experience and express particular forms of masculinity, car customization and racing also have a long history with myriad forms of gender performance in the United States, especially in symbolizing a kind of mechanized form of masculinity that connotes power, danger, sexuality, and of course literal and figurative mobility (see Best 2006, chapter 3). Both scenes offered a similar allure, but car racing and customization could offer a different, and perhaps more dramatic, experience of public realm performance.

Import car customization and racing carried a high price for entry—purchasing and modifying a car required a massive capital outlay—but that also meant the car crews were more likely to compete for members

from the same middle-class communities from which the mobile crews emerged.[23] Both activities necessitated disposable family incomes, not to mention those aforementioned requisite two-car garages that came with suburban houses. (Just to reiterate this: over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, perhaps no single cultural space was more important to Filipino American youth culture than the garage.)

The history and legacy of the import car scene within Filipino (or Asian) America is far too broad a topic to adequately address here; suffice it to say, that scene deserves its own studies.[24] For now my point is that as a dominant cultural activity for the generation of Filipino American youth in the 1990s and beyond, the racing scene was another important force that drew the interest of teens who might otherwise have gone into mobile DJing.

So far, I have discussed forces both internal and external to the mobile crews that point to a weakening of communal ties that helped to slowly unravel the mobile scene. However, behind the question of "what happened to the mobile crews?" lies another: "What *did not* happen to the mobile crews?" More specifically, "What did not happen that *could have* extended or expanded the scene's lifespan or popularity?" The history of popular music in the United States is rich with examples of regional DJ and party scenes that eventually transcended their local roots and attained national, if not global, stature: hip-hop out of the South Bronx, the Chicago house scene, techno music out of Detroit, et alia. How did these other DJ-led scenes "make the leap" in ways that the Filipino American mobile DJ scene did not?

In Jennifer Lena's *Banding Together*, she argues that most U.S. pop musics fall into one or more "genre forms" during the course of their growth: avant-garde, scene-based, industry-based, traditionalist (2012: 28–52).[25] For example, for a major musical style such as hip-hop, the trajectory begins with a small, local, and largely unknown style (avant-garde), then it grows more vibrant and popular yet still remaining "underground" (scene-based), then it draws the attention of corporate record labels looking to profit from and exploit the growing popularity of the genre (industry-based). In some cases, such as hip-hop, the industry phase ignites a backlash that leads to a revival of a form considered traditionalist, in an attempt to "restore" the genre to an earlier, preindustry state.[26]

The mobile DJ crews had the most in common with the "scene-based" form: an "intensely active, but moderately sized group of artists, audience members, and supporting organizations" that help codify conventions of

performance and appearance while also pursuing "stylistic innovations" via "charismatic leaders" (Lena 2012: 33–34). However, the mobile scene departed from the trajectory of other music scenes in one key way, and perhaps this made all the difference.

Part of what helps define a scene is the creation and proliferation of different kinds of genre-based *media*: from fanzines to independent record labels to—in modern times—genre-inspired websites and social media collectives. This is precisely what was missing in the mobile DJ scene. They generated personal media: business cards, flyers and posters, performance recordings passed hand to hand, photographs shared with crew members. But the mobile scene lacked a *mass* media component: no newsletters or fanzines, no coverage by local or ethnic press, and most ironically for a DJ-based scene, very few self-produced records.

Consider for a moment: how do we know about most music genres to begin with? While it is certainly possible to experience new genres via live performance, we normally hear a new music style via some kind of mass mediated form: a song on the radio, a video on television or the Internet, a recording played at a friend's house. The history of American pop music in the twentieth century is inseparable from the history of the recording industry: the ability to record, manufacture, and distribute music is what helps constitute the "popular" part of "pop music." That is not to discount genres that have a strong live performance component, be it Dallas polka festivals, Los Angeles warehouse raves, New Orleans second line brass bands, or Washington DC go-go. Yet all these genres, however niche, still have some kind of recording component that allows these musics to travel, to reach potential fans outside the immediate geographic range of the genres' home bases, and that at the very least announces the existence of these musical communities to a wider public (not to mention record labels).

Recordings are also key sources of both economic capital and social status, helping to bring in new participants and extend the life span of a scene. New York's hip-hop scene of the late 1970s shared some key similarities with the Bay Area mobile scene of the early 1990s. For one, hip-hop also began as a predominantly DJ-led party scene, first arising in the Bronx borough of New York City in the early to mid-1970s. What started with park and basement parties, centered on Jamaican-inspired mobile sound systems, eventually transitioned into uptown nightclubs and discotheques by the late 1970s. What is often overlooked in the standard narrative of hip-hop's rise is that the genre came close to dissolving by the

end of the 1970s. The similarities here to the mobile scene are striking: as early hip-hop DJs began to move away from mobile sound systems and toward more lucrative nightclub gigs, the scene suffered (Fricke and Ahearn 2002: 181).[27] As cultural historian Jeff Chang chronicles it, there was a moment around 1979 when "hip-hop was a fad that was passing. 'I called it the Great Hip-Hop Drought,' says [DJ] Jazzy Jay. 'Everybody started fleeing away from hip-hop'" (2005: 128).

What altered hip-hop's decline was a recording: "Rapper's Delight," by the Sugarhill Gang, the first major rap music hit and a catalyst in moving hip-hop from a local, street culture to a global phenomenon. Obviously, the transition from a party scene to a recorded medium is a profound transformation; as the idiom goes, some things get lost in translation.[28] The act of recording is an act of commodification, literally and figuratively packaging what used to be a musical experience that could only be enjoyed "live" and now making it replicable and consumable in a mass market (and thus, more exploitable). However, the introduction of a recording element also infuses DJ-led scenes with the necessary economic and social capital to extend their life spans and expand their communities.

Veterans of the mobile crews *did* eventually produce recordings by the waning days of the scene.[29] Most prominently, by 1993–1994, Images Inc.'s Francisco Pardorla helped found Velocity Records, which produced recordings for the Filipino American singer Buffy, while Spintronix's Kormann Roque helped establish Classified Records, best known for its own Pinay diva, Jocelyn Enriquez.[30] Both Enriquez and Buffy released songs in the freestyle dance tradition, one of the key styles associated with the mobile scene. Both experienced modest success, especially Enriquez, who eventually was signed by Tommy Boy, one of the leading dance and hip-hop labels of the 1980s.[31] However, these developments came "too little, too late" for the mobile scene. There was no significant attempt to create more or other labels, nor was there interest on the part of other, bigger labels to tap into the talent and energy of the mobile scene. While the scene's overall lack of a recording component was simply one of many factors contributing to its decline, it is easy to imagine that a more robust shift into record production—whether independently run or via industry investment—would have had a major impact on the scene's overall life span.

Jennifer Lena describes "mechanisms of inertia" that "inhibit, derail, or otherwise modify a musical style's transitions." Those include "1) the absorption of artists into other styles . . . 2) various forms of resistance

to expansion, including both planned obsolescence of some styles and the incompatibility of a style's genre ideal with the promotional machinery of the U.S. record industry and 3) racist exclusion" (2012: 86). One could argue, for example, that in the mobile scene, younger DJs ended up being "absorbed" into other styles, whether that meant scratch DJ crews or club and radio gigs, both of which were detrimental to the crew structure.

However, the mobile scene's failure to move into a recording phase was not just an issue of losing members to competing scenes; it also came about because so many participants began and ended their mobile careers while still in their teens, lacking sufficient training in either the technical side of record recording and production or the business side of pressing and distribution. Perhaps more important, though, they also lacked older community members who possessed such experience. It is telling that Roque had no role models or mentors to lead him through the challenges of running Classified. He wrote in an email: "We read books like *This Business of Music* and *How to Start an Independent Record Label*. None of us had any prior experience in working at a record label or *having access to being able to shadow other record labels*. We just went with the flow and learned along the way" (emphasis mine).[32]

Importantly, Roque noted that beyond simply lacking experience in working at a label, he and his friends were not aware of local labels where they could "shadow" personnel to help learn those skills; they had to rely on mass market books and guides instead. This highlights the fact that the Bay Area, unlike Los Angeles and New York, has never been a major center of the American recording industry, let alone for recordings catering to Filipino Americans. As Roque also noted, "we didn't even know any Filipino-run labels at the time. . . . Personally, I was inspired by Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin and the whole Def Jam story," referring to the origins of the famed hip-hop label in a New York University dorm room (see Adler and Charnas 2011).

Filipino American rock and jazz artist Eleanor Academia discusses these kinds of limitations in describing the challenges facing her own career. She told interviewer Theo Gonzalvez:

> The Filipino American community is still at an emerging level from knowing how to pull all this together to help launch a solo artist's career successfully in a major way. You are left on your own to find your way. You live both in the wilderness and the jungle. You are in the wilderness because there are no peers from whom you can get professional

support at the same level; and you are in the jungle faced with a lot of people who recognize your talent, but don't have a structure to systematically get the word out about you properly. (Gonzalvez 2007: 62)

Though Academia was talking about her own difficulties launching a solo career in the mid- to late 1980s, her observations just as easily apply to the challenges facing the mobile crews in trying to build on their local popularity so as to attain a larger stage.[33]

Compounding this issue was that even among the few local dance labels that might have embraced mobile DJs as remixers or producers—as happened in other DJ-centric scenes—there seemed to be little to no awareness of the thriving mobile scene taking place beneath their proverbial noses. As noted earlier in this chapter, it took radio stations and club owners the better part of a decade to catch wind of the scene, but it seems that the local labels never did. For example, I was able to speak with John Hedges, one of the key people behind the popular San Francisco dance music label Megatone. Their records were a major part of the Bay Area club scene in the 1980s, and as Hedges told me via an email conversation, "we mostly promoted to major club jocks around the country," meaning that Megatone had a close relationship to DJs working in nightclubs. However, when I asked if he—someone living in the Bay Area and professionally connected to its DJ community—was aware of the Filipino mobile scene, he replied: "Sorry to say, no." Admittedly, this is just one instance, but I think it is telling that even though mobile DJs were almost certainly playing records by Megatone artists such as Sylvester, those DJs did not enter into the awareness of the label itself.[34]

However, it was not only record labels who had little awareness of the scene. If scene-based genres generally help create or inspire a cadre of supportive media producers (writers, critics, documentarians, etc.), this never significantly materialized with the mobiles, either inside or outside that community. The overall invisibility of the scene to Bay Area news media was especially striking. For example, I approached several journalists who were actively writing on music and entertainment during the 1980s, and like Megatone's Hedges, they had little to no awareness of the mobile scene. Joel Selvin was the longtime music critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle* (the main paper of record in the Bay) throughout the entire 1980s and 1990s, and he told me in an email: "That whole Filipino thing took place outside anyone's notice. . . . I was only the vaguest bit aware of it."

I also spoke to Emil Guillermo, another longtime Bay Area journalist, who was the entertainment reporter for the local NBC affiliate, KRON, from 1984 to 1988. Guillermo never reported on the scene either, though he did at least know about it via his distant cousin, Peter Sugitan, one of the founders of Oakland–Alameda's Ladda Sounds. As Guillermo put it, "you had to be part of the [Filipino] community [to know about the scene]. I'm able to tell you about this because it was part of a grassroots scene and the grassroots included my relatives." However, Guillermo never reported on it himself, nor did he recall any other member of the press doing so. A similar vacuum existed within the budding community of Filipino American–centric filmmakers and documentarians. While many focused on the older, *manong* generation of Filipino immigrants, little was done to document the cultural lives of Filipino American youth of that same 1980s era.[35]

While I do not think these factors rise to the level of what Lena describes as "racist exclusion," this kind of media invisibility seems like a subset of the larger social marginalization faced by Filipinos across major U.S. institutions: economic, political, cultural, and otherwise. In the end, as talented and capable as they were, mobile crews existed within a largely self-contained bubble, hidden from the "outside" world. Though the scene was able to enjoy tremendous success, over the long haul it meant that as crews slowly withered away, there were few opportunities for external forces to pump in new lifeblood via added capital or new personnel.

Contrast this with DJ Pone's observations of how well scratch DJs managed their media profiles and marketed their own records. Bay Area turntablists like the Invisibl Skratch Piklz and Bullet Proof Scratch Hamsters (later renamed Space Travelers) began to release their own "battle records" as early 1992–1993.[36] Within a few years after that, a spate of scratch-based albums, as well as instructional and performance videos, began to become readily available.[37] And, technologically speaking, the scratch DJs had the good fortune to see their scene begin to peak just as the Internet was transforming the dissemination of audio and video across the world.[38]

In summation, over the early 1990s, the mobile crews became challenged by both internal and external mechanisms of inertia that (1) gradually weakened their purpose and appeal, (2) drew off younger members to competing cultural activities, and (3) left many crews incapable of (or uninterested in) replacing those members who were aging out. Finally, whether a consequence of insufficient media skills within the scene or

an invisibility to those outside it, the scene never evolved the kind of recording component that often gave other DJ-led scenes new life. The mobile DJ crews had a remarkable, ten-plus year run in the Bay Area, but despite how well it thrived in that time, its momentum waned, and by the mid-1990s the scene was a faint shadow of its former self, with many of the major crews gone and few new ones coming in to replace them.

Of course, mobile DJing never vanished entirely. Some of the biggest crews, including Ladda Sounds, Spintronix, and Styles Beyond Compare, continue to pursue lucrative mobile work around the Bay Area. Other former mobile DJs who kept their equipment, such as Orlando Madrid from Non-Stop Boogie, still hire themselves or their equipment out for gigs even if they no longer have an organized crew supporting them. Unlimited Sounds' Anthony Carrion, as another example, started a savvy business operating photography studios that cater to events, such as weddings, by offering packages that include photo, video, *and* DJ services.

However, while mobile DJing survived, the cultural scene organized around mobile DJ crews did not. There are no longer large-scale battles or showcases that highlight and promote the scene. Independent party promoters or venues, not DJ crews, run the major parties in the Bay. Most important, the very "crew" concept has become an anachronism. DJs still organize themselves into affiliations at times, especially in conjunction with a promotions company, but the phenomenon of mobile crew as surrogate family and fraternity no longer exists in any widespread fashion among the Bay Area's DJs.

Yet traces linger. Apart from the fact that mobile DJ services still proliferate throughout the Bay Area, an increasing number of DJs are returning to the dance floor culture that the mobile crews once cultivated. While this does not represent anywhere near a wholesale return to the dominance of the mobile crews, it does suggest that some of that era's influences continue to thrive, especially among former mobile DJs themselves.

Conclusion / Echo Effects