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**I**n his decade plus as one of the staple DJs of the Bay Area, Sake 1 has gathered knowledge, skills and valuable experience of the true meaning of what being a DJ is about.

### How did you get into DJing?

I was starting to get cassette tapes and CDs and I'd hear songs on the radio that weren't on the albums. My older brother who's a DJ as well was like, "you gotta buy the 12-inch single." I worked hella hard two summers, saved up enough money to buy a turntable. Didn't have enough money to buy two so what I did was I learned how to mix by listening to the mix shows on the radio because the tempo would stay steady for 4 or 5 songs. So I learned how to match beats with a boom box on my right ear and a turntable on my left.

### It seems like you have a particular sense of awareness in regards to DJing. Can you expand on your views on that?

Playing records isn't DJing. I was telling someone the other day, a good DJ is not defined by the party they're DJing at but a good DJ defines the party that they're spinning. A great DJ, and there's few of those, transforms a space. Not just defines their presence of the sonic landscape but actually transforms people's mind states either for a period of time or permanently. It's happened to me where I'm at a club and a DJ changes my thinking of the world through the music they were playing. Being aware of that possibility, you could never allow yourself, unless you wanna be a suck-ass, mediocre DJ, to look at it as just playing records.

You have to push yourself. I've always identified with the Larry Levans, the DJ Red Alerts, and the Qbert's – people that have pushed the boundaries.

### Where did your views on community and social awareness start for you?

I was raised by progressive parents and in San Francisco, which in the 70s and 80s was the center of the New Left. People know about the Black Panthers but they don't know about SDS, The Weather Underground, The Brown Berets, and The New Chicano Movements. As a young Jewish kid hearing artists like Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions, Lakim Shabazz and X Clan talk about revolutionary Black politics, it didn't immediately impact me. Those artists weren't directly talking to me so I had to stretch my mind to see where I fit and that process made me connect in a different way. By connecting in a different way I was reading books, studying and what I come to realize now, I was earning my right to be a part of the culture. The first time I got serious about school is when I saw KRS lecturing, "you don't have to love school but you have to love the process of learning, the process of understanding what's behind the ideas that are being fed to you." That's what allowed me to change my grades around, from cutting school and getting high everyday to getting good grades so I could go to college and end up studying under people like Angela Davis at UC Santa Cruz.

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### What are some of your favourite memories as a DJ?

My favorite memories are things like DJing for this group called OLIM, a high school organization that in the late 90s led walkouts against attacks on immigrants such as Prop 187. They organized huge walkouts in the Bay Area, there was one 10,000-student walk out and they asked me to DJ from the back of a flatbed truck. So I was DJing for a huge mass of black and brown students walking out for their own rights and I can't imagine anything more powerful than that as a DJ. You have to define success on your own terms, you can't get lazy and define it by how many people are showing up, how many people are retweeting your tweets, how many people are signing up for your email lists. If those were the goals you started with, that's fine, but if you had a goal to create something bigger than that, more than just a party then you have to stick to that.