

Throwback Hip Hop Interview with the Late Johnny J

Written by Robert ID4530

Thursday, 16 October 2008 00:36 -

On October 3rd the hip hop community was shocked by the news of the passing of hip hop and R&B producer Johnny "J", aka Johnny Jackson. I would have to say that he is most notable for his work with the late great hip hop icon Tupac Shakur (2Pac).

The reason for posting this 'throwback' interview from October 2005 is that I got to know Johnny "J" and he agreed to do this interview with me and we touched on many subjects from Tupac to hip hop and many things in-between. In reading this interview you can see Johnny "J" had alot of love and respect for Tupac, and for Tupac's (2Pac) legacy.

It has been a minute since Johnny and I had spoken, but I knew and I know he knew that we were always there for each other. I was a fan who was lucky enough to get to know him. He always treated me with respect and would let me know that he liked what ThugLifeArmy.com was doing, and if we did something he did not agree with, he was a real dude; so he would also let me know that.

Getting to talk to Johnny was good for me and I only wish I could have spoke to him one last time, before he left us. I had alot of respect and love for Johnny and I still can not believe that he is not with us anymore.

Johnny "J" is now resting in Inglewood Cemetery, where I hope he has found peace. I will miss his calls and his voice. We talked about Tupac alot and we talked about many things outside hip hop and rap. Johnny "J" was a good man and I know he will be missed by his wife and family.

I hope you enjoy this 'throwback' interview with one of hip hop's most notable beat makers. I know I enjoyed doing it and now that Johnny "J" has left us, it takes on a new meaning to me. R.I.P. my friend, you are gone but never forgotten, and thanks for all the luv.

Johnny "J" Speaks On Rap, Tupac and More

10/26/2005 - by Robert

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Most fans of west coast rap icon Tupac Shakur know the name Johnny "J". Johnny "J" is responsible for much of the music laid down beneath the lyrics of rap artist Tupac (2Pac).

In the '90's the duo of 2Pac and Johnny "J" were untouchable. Although Tupac had worked with many producers, the tracks that the legendary duo of Tupac and Johnny "J" laid down are considered rap and hip-hop 'classic' tracks and will live forever as hits.

The love that Johnny "J" has for his friend and fellow musician Tupac, is evident in everything that Johnny "J" does. Even today as one speaks to Johnny "J" the name of Tupac Shakur still holds that special place in Johnny "J" 's heart. You can feel the love that is there and just imagine the vibe that these two icons shared when they were alone in the studio.

Making beats and producing for Tupac may be what a lot of people recognize Johnny "J" for but his mark in the music industry runs deeper than his friendship and work with Tupac.

Born in Juarez Mexico in 1969 and raised in South Central Los Angeles, Johnny "J" had a platinum album under his belt when he was just a year out of high school. 18 years in the music game and he has sold over 60 million records and has worked with so many artists that to list them all would take pages.

The 36 year old producer has many platinum records and is still a strong presence in the music industry working daily on the craft that he loves and appreciates so well.

His recent work with recently retired rap artist Napoleon, of Tupac's Outlawz, is covered in this interview along with some news on the upcoming Tupac album; which is to be out in 2006. He also fills us in on his role on the upcoming album from Lil Eazy E; the oldest son of another rap legend Eric 'Eazy-E' Wright the godfather of gangsta rap.

Also Johnny "J"'s Klock Work Entertainment is about to debut some new unbelievable talent and this legendary producer is staying busy treating the world with his unique gift of delivering

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music that the world appreciates.

With his busy schedule we appreciate the love that Johnny “J” extended to us in giving us his time to do this interview. Hope you enjoy it.

Expect to see more from Johnny “J” here on ThugLifeArmy.com as we have started a good relationship and we have a few other things planned with Johnny “J”.

***Also photo credit for the picture of Johnny “J” goes to Teal Moss, so if you use it give him his props. Big up's to him for furnishing it.**

ThugLifeArmy – Thank you for taking time for us, we appreciate it.

Johnny “J” – No problem, I’m in my recording studio right now man, so it’s like real quite time right now. So you caught me at the perfect time.

ThugLifeArmy – I appreciate that.

Johnny “J” – It’s all luv.

ThugLifeArmy – Some recent news we would like to ask about first is the recent announcement that rap artist Napoleon, from Tupac Shakur’s (2Pac) Outwaz has retired from rapping all together. He was working on his solo album ‘How Do U Want It’ with you. Can you shed any light on what’s going on with Napoleon?

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Johnny “J” – Well right now man that was a project that was in the mix. We were trying to make something happen but the thing is you have to remember his religion; he’s a Muslim man. He’s doing his thing and I respect that. He chose to focus on that right now. The thing that matters right now to him is his religion. It’s like no rap music, no entertainment, no recording studio what so ever. So it’s like he moved on – that aside – did what he had to do, and I respect that and give him his love man and said ‘Hey do your thing. Do what you got ta do.’

ThugLifeArmy – I heard it was a double album?

Johnny “J” – It was a double CD at the time. It wasn’t planned to be a double CD. It kinda bounced back and forth, to either make it 10 cuts or 20 cuts. And I said ya know we’ll see what’s going to happen. We kinda juggled the thing around. With him dealing with his religion man, I just let him do his thing; that was the main thing that mattered. It’s like you can’t force anybody to something they don’t want to do. I’m just glad that him and me have nothing but love for each other. Nothing but respect and it’s a beautiful thing. I love him to death and I wish everything for him.

ThugLifeArmy – How close was the album to being done.

Johnny “J” – The album was complete and ready to go; ready to rock and roll. We ended up putting out a tribute concept, a tribute song what ever, to Tupac called ‘Never Forget’. And that song will stick man, till the day we die. That is something that has to stay in the mix regardless because that came from him, that came from me on the musical side, him on the lyrical side and that just had a contribution to where it made a whole lot of sense for Pac.

ThugLifeArmy – Now was that going to be on this album?

Johnny “J” – That was going to be on the album.

ThugLifeArmy – That’s the video that’s out now right?

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Johnny "J" – Exactly, exactly the video and all that, that's the video. No album what so ever is coming out with Napoleon right now. We are going ta like put the brakes on that one and just move on to other things. Develop other artists, fresh new acts that are ready to go and ready to make it happen man and speak their minds.

ThugLifeArmy – So you're going to put that one in the vault for awhile?

Johnny "J" – Yeah pretty much dude. You gotta put it away man, put it in the vault, let it marinate a little bit. Ya never know what could happen. You never know, you can never predict what the future is going to be so let's just kinda let it flow and let it all just fall into place man.

ThugLifeArmy – Most of us know you from your relationship to rap icon Tupac Shakur. How did you meet 2Pac?

Johnny "J" – I met Tupac because the fact I was dealing with Big Syke at the time. This was way back in the 90's. Early 90's I was dealing with Big Syke, dealing with Evil Mind Gangstas; which was an independent album that he had at the time, and I ended up producing the majority of the record, pretty much the whole record; and we just worked together man. Just did our thing, it was like a 'Bonnie and Clyde' thing, we just went at it. Johnny "J" on the beats and Big Syke on the lyrics – just kinda smashed on it. And after that Tupac heard about it, heard the beats, heard the tracks and he was like 'you have to introduce me to the guy who did your tracks' – and the connection was just made. Just like connect the dots, it worked out.

ThugLifeArmy – Did Tupac bring you into Tha Row and where you signed at Death Row Records?

Johnny "J" – No, no never was signed to Death Row Records. Johnny "J" has never been signed to any label for that matter man, nothing like that.

ThugLifeArmy – So that was all independent work at Death Row Records?

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Johnny “J” – All independent work. I was with Pac way before Death Row. Me and Pac got down with the early ‘Thug Life’ material, everything. ‘Pour Out A Little Liquor’, you remember that right? (yeah). Thug Life Vol 1. ‘Death Around the Corner’ (from ‘Me Against The World’). ‘Picture Me Rolling’, that jumped off during the period of ‘All Eyez On Me’. But there was a lot of material we did way before that. We got a song called ‘Thug Life’, we got that.

ThugLifeArmy – So is that one reason you are not on the Makaveli 7 Day Theory album?

Johnny “J” – Yeah, you know what we did at the time man, I did so much material at Death Row for him and there was like a little gap in-between. We did so much material, but I had the early Makaveli material. So you got to remember all the beats I did for Pac was all Makaveli, if you think about it. If you listen to all the lyrical aspects of the things he is saying, that’s early Makaveli stuff. But it all kinda bounced around, ya know what I mean. He just did his thing, and after I did so many songs of his in a short period; I moved on and ended up producing some other acts and just jumped around man, everybody was coming at me. Everybody assumed that Dr.Dre was doing the albums; and it wasn’t Dr. Dre – it was Johnny “J” – not Dr. Dre., ya know what I’m saying. So it was like ya know people call me the ‘Mexican Master’. I hear all these big names ‘Ah yeah, that’s Johnny “J” ya know the ‘Mariachi Man’, the ‘Jumpin Bean’, what ever you want to call me man. People think I’m like this other dude or something like that. I’m like ‘naw man I’m Johnny “J”. The “J” stands for Jackson though. People are like ‘how did you get the last name Jackson?’ Like it’s a long story.

ThugLifeArmy – Is that your real last name Jackson?

Johnny “J” – That’s my real last name, Johnny Jackson. A Mexican with that type of name, it puzzles a lot of people man.

ThugLifeArmy – That’s something I didn’t know.

Johnny “J” – Yeah, I went to Washington High School, Yeah go way back ya know. It’s like me and quite a few people came out of Washington man, it’s like the ‘Wash Outs’ man. I was raised in South Central Los Angeles. Born in Juarez, Mexico and raised in South Central. And don’t forget, on the early Pac stuff, the middle of it, the end of it – the whole nine – everything is just circulating in one big circle.

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ThugLifeArmy – I remember in an interview I did with Ronnie King; we were talking about the pace that Tupac worked at, and he said that you and Big Syke had the same pace where you could drop like 7 tracks in a night. Is that still the case?

Johnny “J” – Pretty much, the same flow my friend; the same case. We still do that to this day man. It’s like a lot of the artists I am developing right now, and the new and up and coming talent I have right now, are dropping like 4 and 5 cuts a night. For rappers it’s pretty easy and simplistic, it’s very simple to do. Either you got your shit together or you don’t. If they got their raps right, ya know they write them on the spot or they just wrote them at the house, they deliver it. If I don’t like their shit they got to go. They have to go back to the drawing board and think about something else. I have so many people coming thru here it’s like fucking American Idol. So I am like either your shit is going to win or it’s not. I don’t care how you look. How pretty the girls are or how handsome the guy may look, if your shit ain’t good, your vocals aren’t coming out strong – you got to go. Peace. Much love.

ThugLifeArmy – At a pace like that, how much unreleased Tupac material do you think is in different vaults?

Johnny “J” – Quite a few man. Right now we are still talking about that, there’s quite a few things that are in the vault right now with Pac, so the number is varying right now. It is kinda hard to say. There is some more Johnny “J” material getting ready to come out – so get ready for that. Your just going to see it re-circulate and see some Johnny “J” production go right behind Pac. They call us like ‘Batman and Robin’, they were like you man you guys are like the dynamic duo, so that’s how we feel.

ThugLifeArmy – Do you still see Big Syke around?

Johnny “J” – Yeah of course, it’s all love man. We got love for each other.

ThugLifeArmy – In that interview with Ronnie King we talked about the ‘Thugs and Punks’ project they had going on. Do you know anything about where that stands now?

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Johnny “J” – Not right now I don’t know man cause some of us the way we do it we all kinda scatter out and separate and do what we do and then we all meet back up and we play each others music and evaluate. That’s pretty much what it is man. When Big Syke is done with his material he will play me some of his stuff. When I’m done with whatever I’ve done, I play my stuff. But we all got nothing but maximum love and respect for each other for doing what we gotta do. It’s all about this money man. It’s all about making good paper and good music and just doing what we got ta do; spread some classics out. And it’s all about putting ‘classics’ out. Not fucking diss records. I don’t need 30 ‘Hit Em Up’s’ out and all that shit. I’m not with that shit. I’m thru with that. For people to have ‘beef’ with each other, I mean they need to kill the bullshit.

ThugLifeArmy – You brought up ‘Hit Em Up’ :(Johnny “J” – and I produced that.): You know the reggae version that people are calling ‘Hit Em Up 2’ (Johnny “J” chuckles; I heard about it). Is that really the original or is it a mix?

Johnny “J” – No, the original ‘Hit Em Up’ is before the reggae, before any reggae touched the record.

ThugLifeArmy – That’s the one where Pac goes at BIG?

Johnny “J” – Yeah exactly. That’s the original, produced by Johnny “J”.

ThugLifeArmy – Good beats are what compliments the lyrics and that marriage is what makes a good track. All the albums and tracks of Tupac’s that you did, do you have a favorite?

Johnny “J” – Aw man, you know my album. The number one album right now in my book to this day has to be ‘All Eyez On Me’, because of the whole mixture of everything, because of the different directions that it went to man. It went to the club levels. It went to the fun levels. It went to the serious levels. It made the women happy. It made some of the folks think emotionally. It made even old people think about it man. Even the elders, they sit there in their rocking chairs and reminisce on some of those types of records. That’s what you call a ‘classic’ album. That’s a good combination of what music should be. It shouldn’t be just one form or format; where it’s going to be straight up club music and I want to go fuck bitches and I want to do this and do

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that. It's ok to have a little fun and talk about it. I'm into talking about sex. We all have sex so it's no big thing with me. Ya know I'm 14 years married, so ya know how I feel about that. But I mean everybody needs to mix their albums up. I am just sick of hearing the same old repetitious crap, and they know what they need to do to change the game; mix the albums up. Rip your styles of music, change your drums up, change your bass line, change your cords. Everything shouldn't be screaming and hollering. Ya know – I want to do this and I want to do that.

ThugLifeArmy – You were not on the last Tupac album 'Loyal to the Game'.

Johnny "J" – No, I have one cut on there which was re-mixed.

ThugLifeArmy - Can we look for you on the upcoming Tupac album to drop the second quarter of '06?

Johnny "J" – YES you can my friend. You will definitely hear Johnny "J".

ThugLifeArmy – Can you tell us how many tracks you have on there?

Johnny "J" – Not right now because right now it's hard to say because we don't have a set number of what it's going to be. We are still structuring out the game plan. And don't forget next year is his 10 year anniversary, so there is not really a set game plan like what the numbers are going to be; Johnny "J" has 2,3,4,5, or what ever – nobody knows yet. It's like the most 'Top Secretive album' in the world.

ThugLifeArmy – It's a double though, right?

Johnny "J" – I don't know yet, I'm not going to lie to you man. I really don't know. I couldn't say to ya man. I could not honestly say what it's going to be. Cause we don't know if it's going to be a double or a triple or a quadruple album; we don't know. Cause the way it all works man it knida comes out of no where. It kinda just attacks you like ready to go, we're all ready to rock

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and roll. And nobody is ringing the phone like 'hey Johnny you got this set number', and this guy has this number or what ever. No body knows anything. None of the producers have a set number on knowing what their going to do.

ThugLifeArmy – If it was unreleased material, are most of your tracks that are in the vaults are they complete or do they need to be mixed.

Johnny "J" – They are complete. They just need the finial touches ya know. Some over dubs, and things like that. So pretty much they are man. I just need to put my twist on it, which is called the Johnny "J" Finally: The Touch Up. Just put the Johnny "J" touch on it and call it and mix it and it's a done deal.

ThugLifeArmy – What did you think of the 'Loyal to the Game' album?

Johnny "J" – 'Loyal to the Game', I'm not happy with it. I didn't like it at all to be honest with you, not very excited about it. I mean it's all good, I don't know, it was unacceptable to me. I just don't play it; it's just something I don't mess with.

ThugLifeArmy – What about 'The Rose'?

Johnny "J" – Aw the poetry's straight man. That's something that needed to be spoke about. Your talking about the one from before not the one that's out now right?

ThugLifeArmy – Yeah the one that's out now; The Rose Vol. 2.

Johnny "J" – Well I still have to thoroughly listen to it, really dissect it and understand where their going with it. I heard a little snippet of Ludacris and everything like that but I haven't heard the whole album in its entirety. So I can't judge the album yet cause I have to hear it. So I couldn't call it.

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ThugLifeArmy – Do you know why certain people have been cut off some of the tracks that have come out; people like Big Syke and Storm?

Johnny “J” – You know what man, an answer to that is hard to say. You got to understand that the music business is full of politics man, you already know that. So if certain artists are taken off and somebody’s replaced or whatever the case may be; that’s just the way the game is man. Lyrically everybody remembers who the original artist was and as far as...there are so many bootlegs out; everybody knows who was on what record. So no matter, who like the new featured artist or the new featured rapper, they still know the original; and they go back to the original. They come up with a new concept or a new re-mix that sounds like a hell of a concept and – it’s called a re-mix, it’s not called an original. Sometimes they can’t fuck with the original man; the original is the original – that’s the way it goes. It’s like they look at me – I walk into a mall or walk into anywhere – I go into a public restaurant where ever just having dinner and it’s ‘man, hey Johnny “J” your shit can’t be fucked with’. I don’t care how many re-mixes I hear. I going into a Big 5 (like a sporting goods store) and there is a guy like ‘your shit can’t be touched no matter what. Your shit is the original, your shit it’s the hottest shit.’ And I love that man. That’s the utmost compliment that I’ve ever heard. But I hear that everywhere I go man. Thru out every nationality ya know. From Mexicans, Blacks, Armenians, you name it dude. Name a nationality and they have said the identical thing, doesn’t matter.

ThugLifeArmy – Well everybody connects you with Tupac.

Johnny “J” – Exactly, but I love the compliment man. It’s the utmost love and respect that I have ever heard, so I love that. I don’t sit up there and say ya know some of the re-mixes that have been done on Pac, they kinda ruined the shit, I mean the shit is kinda fucked up because honestly my opinion the shit is raggedy. Some re-mixes are cool, I mean if it’s cool I’m like aaaaa it’s cool, it’s passive – I mean it will pass but it’s not the greatest re-mix. Because some people don’t know the distinctive style or know the style of music they have to put up under his (2Pac) vocals. If he is talking about something sad you can’t put music up under him and make it a club mix, if he’s talking about something emotional. It makes no fucking sense.

ThugLifeArmy – Was he (2Pac) demanding that way?

Johnny “J” – Aw man, me and him were both the same way. You talking about Tupac? (TLA -

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Right) Aw man we were both the same. That's why you hear me talking to you. Man we both have the same attitude. We never had a dispute, never had a disagreement about how the music should go or how the lyrics should go. It was just a connection that made fucking sense. The connection is unbelievable, it's just unstoppable, you can't fuck with it. People think they can come in and say I'm a producer now. I bought a drum machine, I have a keyboard, or I have a little studio, I know how to do it. Ya know I can change this to this way. All ya have is a bunch of fucking copy cats reminiscing and going thru a lot of shit that is out today. They'll go off a Lil Jon record or any other producer that did something at that moment and say well I got to do that kind of version. That's called following the mother fucking, man your just a follower your not a leader; your not an innovator. See I'm an innovator, you can't fuck with me. And I know that. You can stipulate that shit right on the web site. **YOU CAN'T FUCK WITH THE WAY I PRODUCE.** You can try to duplicate it, but you never will; say that. Break that shit down.

ThugLifeArmy – Do you ever get to see Storm around?

Johnny "J" – Naw man, it's been years dude; been year's man. Beautiful fucking tight rapper though man I mean honestly one of the most tightest female rap artist I think I have seen in a long time. Haven't seen her in years, but I will give her all of her credits. Storm was definitely unbelievable.

ThugLifeArmy – She is my favorite. I always ask everybody if they see her.

Johnny "J" – Ya know how I was introduced to her man. At the 'California Love' video shoot, me and Tupac; Pac was like let me tell you man we're about to fuck with Storm. And I was like alright, let's get her in the booth and see what happens. And it was beautiful man, beautiful bond, lovely relationship.

ThugLifeArmy – Yeah I heard she is a mom now and has 2 children.

Johnny "J" – Yeah man she has a family and all that. I don't know what she is doing now man but I haven't seen her. I would love to see her. Everybody's grown and doing their thing and developing into a family man. Same with me man. Married man, 14 years and doing what we got to do.

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ThugLifeArmy – How many children you have now?

Johnny “J” – I got 2 beautiful kids. My son Niamyja, he’s 16. And my daughter Zhani, she’s 12. My wife’s name is Capucine. She is my right arm. And my right leg and all that, and we still stay in Cali.

ThugLifeArmy – Do you still have Non-Stop Productions?

Johnny “J” – You know what? That’s so funny you ask that man. Do I still have Non-Stop Productions? You know what man, the stamp was made with me and Pac, it stayed right there. Right now I have Klock Work Entertainment, but Non-Stop Productions was me and Pac and that’s the way it’s supposed to stay. So when he physically left, and I haven’t seen him man, it’s just like he took it with him and that was it. I keep that spiritual with him. It’s never going to stop. It’s always going to be a non-stop situation. But that was something I created and then Pac told me to create a name and come up with a production name. He was like ‘Johnny “J” think of something man’. I was like Non-Stop Productions bro, cause we always work – we never stop working. We’ll work till we pass out and wake back up and work again. And wake back up to El Pollo Loco or wake up to chicken and whatever man and just do our thing, get back in the mix.

ThugLifeArmy – With your background, one can only imagine that you and your talents are in big demand. Can you tell us what you have going on now in the way of projects?

Johnny “J” – Currently right now, just finished Lil Eazy E. The song is titled ‘Letter to My Homeboys’, which is a really beautiful record. Which is so crazy to me to think about it, that it’s so spiritual it just gives me the reminiscent vibe of ‘Pour Out a Little Liquor’. Same kind of twist, he just broke it down to where ‘Man we got to give a shout out to the homies that are locked up, got put away, ya know we got to give them love and let them know that we think of them man and let them know that they are safe and it’s going to be ok. And that really felt good to do that. And that’s the one song I got on the Lil Eazy E album. Lil E is a beautiful guy man, love him to death.

ThugLifeArmy – Yeah I spoke to him and he gained my respect.

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Johnny "J" – That's my boi man. So what was he talking about? Did he break it down on ya?

ThugLifeArmy – Man he was a real guy I tell ya. He's got real people behind him, and he has charisma like his father did.

Johnny "J" – Ya know what's scary? Man when me and him met it was like an unbelievable experience. I mean we just hit it off right away. It wasn't like the Hollywood set like yeah what's up man – yeah alright I know who you are. Ya know it wasn't the arrogance. It wasn't like yeah I'm Lil E, I'm Eazy E's son, and Johnny "J" I know your Tupac's boi and all that; it wasn't all that. It just felt so natural, so cool. Soon as I bumped tracks on his ass he was like 'Hell yeah', him my boi DL all of them.

ThugLifeArmy – See that's what surprised me. He didn't come with an attitude.

Johnny "J" – He came with some real cool vibes uh?

ThugLifeArmy – Yeah he came on a real cool level and you could just feel comfortable talking to him. We talked almost an hour, it was just mellow. It was just the coolest thing, for real he is going to make it.

Johnny "J" – That is the way it's suppose to be man. We had those conversations with each other where he knows how to stay grounded. I told him you got to stay grounded. You have to understand this game is a roller coaster ride, people come – people go. Don't try to take an entourage with you, don't try to save the world just take care of what you have to take care of.

ThugLifeArmy – Had you ever met his father?

Johnny "J" – Man of course. You know I produced the first song with Candyman called

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'Knocking Boots'. Candyman is on the cover with Eazy E, which is the NWA cover. Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, MC Ren, everybody on the cover. I produced and Candyman is right there on the cover. So me Dre, Ice Cube all of us know each other; Sir Jinx everybody we all go back to the same family. We're all doing music man like in '85 – '86 – '88. I graduated in 1987 from Washington High School so came straight out of high school to a platinum record, which was 'Knocking Boots'. And that took me on a hell of a fucking whirl wind man. It was an experience I will never forget. Even Tupac knew about that. Pac even brought it up when we where working on 'All Eyez On Me'. He's like 'Johnny "J" I saw you on the cover of a Candyman record. I couldn't believe it man it was you'. I was like yeah man I did all that.

ThugLifeArmy – Is there anyone featured on that Lil Eazy E song?

Johnny "J" – No it's straight up Lil E man. Lil E and DL, you already know DL man he's a beautiful guy, which is his side kick, producer everything. And we all got a really cool relationship, a beautiful bond. Nobody's tripping on who does this or who does that and ya know nobody's on that flip mode. There is no fucking hater'ism what so ever in the atmosphere.

ThugLifeArmy – You have future work with him coming up?

Johnny "J" – Oh definite man. Working with his group and everything. Kings of LA, all of that – it's going down, already started the process. So him, DL and MAV are putting it down. I mean it's a lot of beautiful things and honestly it was so cool to work with that kind of crew because they gave me that vibe like how Pac was trying to do it with the Outlawz. How he was trying to make it a whole big squad and say come on man let's make these records. Let's make this money, let's do this. So everybody can have a nice life style, everybody can enjoy each others life, and go to each others homes and have bar b q's and ya know have good times.

ThugLifeArmy – So from your professional background, do you think Lil Eazy E is going to make it?

Johnny "J" – I know he is, with out a doubt. And it has nothing to do with me being on the record man. You can just honestly listen to it and understand the fact that it is the bomb mixture; it is the way it is suppose to be. Now it's going in the right direction. You don't hear three and four of the same records. You don't hear, like my record; you don't hear four of those, you don't hear

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three of those. You just hear everything in the right order. Ya got your club bob. You got your reminiscing song. You got this and you got that. And when I heard Lil E's album I told him straight up right up in his face 'Like if your shit was garbage, I'd be like your shit is garbage.' And he was just like Johnny "J" man, he just had that look like you gave it the blessing man. I love it. And it ain't got nothing with me doing a record on your album. I'm just loving the fact that it is a good mixture, good combination.

ThugLifeArmy – Yeah hopefully me and him are going to get back together after I hear the whole album, I can't wait.

Johnny "J" – You got ta man. When you hear it, I'm telling you it's like that. You got your first cut out there man its just lovely.

ThugLifeArmy – Yeah, I had the feeling when I was talking to him that he not a stupid guy and he is not your average rapper that comes off all gangsta, he was very intelligent. He has a plan and he's sticking to it and that cool.

Johnny "J" – Exactly, a very humble dude man with a good attitude. We just hung out and had a beautiful time hanging out for DL's birthday, we had a really cool time, a real private moment; it was a lot of fun. Real cool laid back time.

ThugLifeArmy – I enjoyed the 'Never Forget' tribute.

Johnny "J" – Did you love it man?

ThugLifeArmy – Oh man it was tight.

Johnny "J" – That song will stick. It's gonna stay. That song is never be put away like it doesn't exist or anything like that. It's just the things that I did with Napoleon, it was almost like you look at it in this situation – like you try to make it happen but you can't force the issue. All you can do

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is say hey man ya know let him do his thing, let him do his religion thing and I'll go do what I do which is my music thing. Because music is always going to be a part of me until the day I die,. I don't have a retirement plan. I don't ever plan to retire producing records. This is what I love to do. This is what I dreamed of doing. This is what I'm going to die doing; plain and simple. It's going to be passed on to my wife and my kids, whatever. It doesn't matter; it is always going to live on.

ThugLifeArmy – How is it you hooked up with Napoleon and where do you stand with the other Outlawz?

Johnny “J” – The Outlawz, we're cool, all cool man. They all did their thing. It was like at the time ya know Napoleon left the group and did his thing with me and tried to experiment a little bit and the Outlawz were doing what they had to do, but we all had mutual respect. Nobody had beef or none of that so it was real neutral, it was cool. It was like I can't force the issue to make rappers just come thru and ya know Outlawz form this big reunion. Even in the 'Never Forget' video you had Big Syke, you had Macadocious, you see Jon B, you see some of the chemistry that was dealt with in the past that came together for the video but I couldn't grab them all. All I could do is grab what I could grab.

ThugLifeArmy – And Val Young.

Johnny “J” – She's unbelievable. She has that voice that has to be on that one to two songs that just stands out like that man. Ya know she is just that 'touch', I love it. I always loved her man, even before 'Live and Die in LA', I always loved that cut. Me and QD III we got nothing but maximum love for each other. We sit up and reminisce on each other, he's like Johnny “J” I love all your records. I love 'How Do You Want It', this, that, whatever. But one of my favorite Pac records, and I'm not going to lie to you, outside of my production was always 'Life And Die in LA'. That was one of my favorites personally. QD knows how its done and I get on him like man I love that cut. He just goes off like man I love your cut. But we just go at it like that, cool , cool relationship.

ThugLifeArmy – Can we expect more things like the Pac tribute to come from you?

Johnny “J” – With out a doubt my friend. I want to make sure that the new and up coming artists

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that I am dealing with at all times, no matter who I work with, they have to always give a little love out man. You gotta let it be known that this is something for Pac. This is something spiritual, you know that Johnny wants to reveal or say. I may not lyrically say it at times but I will do it musically. But sometimes I have to use my words thru them, and they will say it for me. Cause I am not going to talk thru every record. Your not going to hear me say this vocal or say that vocal at the beginning or the at the end. But at times I may say something but sometimes I don't want to say it, I just let it speak thru the music and speak thru the artists I am working with. And that's a good way to do it, cause I'm not the cheesy guy and Klock Work Entertainment and this is Johnny "J" and like Johnny please shut your mouth, stay off the records. Just do the music dude, ya know what I mean. I may say this and I may say that but I can not do that on every song.

ThugLifeArmy – All the things that you know are out there about Pac, what would you say the biggest misconception is that is being put out there?

Johnny "J" – The biggest misconception I can honestly say is that people are like – you'll run into these type of folks – 'But wasn't he a gangster?' 'Wasn't he really like a bad guy?' I'll get like those kinds of responses from people. If they see me wear a Tupac tee shirt, they will recognize my face from Resurrection or Thug Angle DVD or what ever, and I'm like 'No Pac wasn't like what you guys perceive him to be. He was a spokesperson for them. So don't perceive him to be a bad guy, he just spoke up with what people were going thru. You can't knock the man for like speaking up and doing what he had to do to get people thru the struggles. Cause we have all been thru them. We dealt with it. We have all dealt with the poor, the pawn shops whatever the case may be. We've all dealt with it. It's been a struggle to everybody, nobody's perfect man. One thing I am happy about I never went to drugs or anything like that. We have all drank our little Hennessy or little beers whatever but none of us turned to anything like that; I didn't. Whoever did so be it. I mean if they got thru it they got thru it. If they got to like deal with it then they have to deal with it. That's the only thing I look at that people have a misconception on Tupac like 'Oh he was a negative guy wasn't he?' He was like an ass hole wasn't he, like an arrogant prick. I'm like 'No that's the way you perceive it because your not understanding the man behind the music, behind the lyrics, behind the lifestyle.

ThugLifeArmy – Wouldn't you say though that he was a lot more than a rapper? A rapper is just a section of what Tupac was.

Johnny "J" – Oh my god man. He was more than anything that people can imagine. And I have to explain to different nationalities. It has nothing to do with talking to a white person, or a Chinese guy or a Mexican guy or whatever. When I explain it and say the things I just said to

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you they give me that look like 'you know what, I'm going to go TiVo that movie. I'm going to go rent that. I'm going to go read that book. I'm going to pick up his poetry. And then if I run back into them, they look at me like 'ya know what I didn't know all that, now I understand'.

ThugLifeArmy – Well if they can have the chance to see the video of Tupac giving the speech at the Malcolm X Grass Roots Movement luncheon that shows what kind of man Tupac was.

Johnny "J" – Right, exactly; you just said it right there.

ThugLifeArmy – Do you get to see Shock G around?

Johnny "J" – The last time I saw Shock I was doing an interview with Sway and Tech. That was the last time I saw Shock G.

ThugLifeArmy – Latino music is seeing a huge upswing now. Being of Mexican decent do you do any Reggatone beats or have you been working with any Latino artists.

Johnny "J" – I am a producer who pretty much does it all, and that's what a lot of people underestimate about Johnny "J". If you listen to the production of what I've done they're like 'man Johnny do you know what you have done?' Even if you listen to Jon B's 'Are You Still Down' they are like 'damn Johnny "J" even does R&B, and he does almost like pop music and then he does this real serious street material that's like underground'. I look at these guys like 'you fucking idiots, it's called music. All you have to do is spit a subject and that's all it takes. You can take your Reggatones, you can take your different styles and distinctive vocals or what ever and just flip it; it's no big deal. And then they look at me like 'you're right, man what was I thinking.' And I am just like ok, alright.

ThugLifeArmy – Have you been working with any Latino artists?

Johnny "J" – Ya know I ran into a few people who were pretty cool, the only thing I don't want is

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the typical Latino music that has that basic bubble gum rap style; that's the thing I can't get with. It's like when I did 'Knocking Boots' that was pretty cool, even though Candyman was a black guy, but it ran good with all my Latino people. But I don't like the basic bubble gum rap style like A Lighter Shade of Brown stuff, I can't get down with that. I don't want to hear the basic style. I'm not knocking the song, the song was cool at the time, but those are the kind of rap styles I don't want to hear from a Mexican rapper whether they are male or female. It has to have a distinctive sound. You want to kinda throw them off to where they look at my face, they look at me and say man he couldn't have done the beat. You know what they do to me when they look at my face? They're like 'but he's Mexican, how can he do that type music?' And they do that to me, and that has been going on since I have been doing music; and I'm 18 years in the music game. And you know I have sold over 60 Million records, and that's not even talking about worldwide music record sales. I mean, I'm selling records to this day. I can honestly retire but I just refuse to. But people look at me like 'naw you're a Mexican guy, you couldn't have done those beats. How can that be?' It's just my upbringing. It's my soulful gift. It's just the way it is. My upbringing was Mariachi music. My upbringing was different styles of music whether it be Dion Warrick or it doesn't matter; it could be Tito Fuentes whatever, it doesn't matter. I've been around all of it. I've stood around and ate tacos and did whatever and then I'll go to the other side and sit there with the homies, and listen to all the soulful songs you can think of. And I was always raised around 80's music, 70's, 60's, 50's music. I've sat there with older folk and listened to what they love to listen to. So all those things are incorporated into what I do right now. So that's why you hear different distinctive styles out of me, because it is my upbringing. There's no color, there's no nothing it's just straight up good music.

ThugLifeArmy – What new talent do you see out that you think highly of or would like to work with?

Johnny "J" – There are a few that I am thinking of, there's just a few. It's hard to say because I'm really marinating on it and just overlooking what's going on. And it's just not BET, MTV or whatever, some of the artists today are not really thinking about what they really need to do. Like I said there is too much following. Too much of 'I'm going to do what somebody else did a week ago.' I don't hear any distinctive like I am going to do something for the future, and make it a 'classic'. That's what's losing right now. I think that's why the game is hurting right now. They don't have the combination of a Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson and whether it be Earth Wind and Fire and all that stuff combined into one chart. That's what we don't have anymore. We got like one to two artists. One female artist, you could say Ciara, you could say Usher is the other artist, or one rapper and that's all we listen to all day over and over. Mariah Carey, beautiful thing the girl is dope, I love her to death but I mean that's all we hear on the radio, repetitiously over and over and over. And I'm not knocking it but I know there's more to it than just the Mariah's or that one artist that one rapper. There's a lot of distinctive artists out there man, that need to get a chance and the record business knows what they need to do. The record companies need to wake up and smell the coffee; and bring them thru, flush them thru. There is a lot of talent out there and just not in the hood, just over all. There's people that work

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secretarial jobs or whatever, there's females that can sing their ass off dude and they are just sitting there. They are right there in front of you. And I'm that guy that will grab them, but they need an outlet. I can only do so much. I can't take 60 or 70 artists and say I am going to put them on albums in one day, I can only do so much.

ThugLifeArmy – Have you heard Lil Eazy E's sister EB?

Johnny "J" – Ya know I haven't but I heard about her. I did hear about her.

ThugLifeArmy – Hopefully we are talking to her later this week.

Johnny "J" – That's beautiful man. You're putting it down and I love it.

ThugLifeArmy – Well just like your saying the mainstream music is stale and we are looking for something new. A lot of new talent just goes ignored and the mainstream music is getting old with the same beat and message. The same thing over and over so you start looking for new things to talk about, new things to investigate.

Johnny "J" – You just said it. I'm glad you just stipulated that. Subject matter means something and I honestly got to bring this up. That's what I loved about Pac. No matter what he went thru that day or the day before or what ever we dealt with. It does matter if me and him took a walk to a damn liquor store, we could see a homeless guy whatever. We could see somebody going thru something and he would like man I would pop a beat up. It could be a mid tempo kinda sad track but kind of a party track mixed together and he'd say Johnny ya know what man? What I just saw I got to spit that. He may not lyrically just say it to me right in my face but you could just hear it. Man as soon as he drops it on his pad, it's like writing and thinking like dude I got to say this, cause I just seen somebody go thru something that I don't want to see no more. And I'm the same way. And I've fed the homeless. I've done those kinds of things. I've told guys like look don't get the beer, don't worry about the liquor just have a burrito man, grab a taco, grab some chips. What ever I can do for ya I'll get you that. But if there like man can I get a beer behind that. I'm like eat this first and then have your beer if that's what ya need, but put something in your stomach man. And I've dealt with people like that. I've tried to feed them. Whether it be doughnuts at the doughnut shop, I can be anywhere with my wife, and they are right there. They will knock on your glass, tap on your window 'man can I get some food?' And

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I'm like well yeah, let me do this for ya. Let me take you into the store and I'll get you a microwavable burrito and they'll do this to me – 'Aw fuck that, naw fuck you man'. You know what they were telling me? They want to get that high, they want to get that weed, that crack, that other shit. But there are a lot of homeless people who say hey man thanks a lot. Thanks for buying me this Taco Bell or this cheeseburger, and that's me: that's Johnny. I have always been that type of guy. Since I was a kid I was the type of guy who would split a Snicker bar with my friend; whether it be ice cream, candy whatever, but I would always give them the bigger piece and I would take the small piece – cause I love to share and make sure they are ok. And that was me, and I am like that till this day. Wish I could save the world but I can't.

ThugLifeArmy – Yeah but you ease the ruff edges and make it a little enjoyable with the music.

Johnny "J" – Ya know what I mean. And selling these records and just being in the position that I'm in I can't ask for nothing else. This is what I asked to do. This is what I request to do in my life, this is my gift. And I just took it and ran with it, and I'm still running with it like I never had it before. I still act like I don't have any platinum records. You know I don't dress tacky or anything like that. I don't need to wear flamboyant jewelry. I may wear a few things. I have my diamond watch, diamond ear ring but I don't walk around like do you know who the fuck I am and I'm untouchable, you can't fuck with me. That is not my attitude. I am always going to be the guy who never forgets where I came from meaning that that shit can be taken away from me. I could be assed out, and go back to the bottom and start from scratch. So I never forget those things.

ThugLifeArmy – What can we look for in the near future from Johnny "J"?

Johnny J – Johnny "J" is getting ready to debut quite a few artists, which is going to consist of definitely rap music and R&B. You are definitely going to hear some alternative and a little bit of country and all those different elements coming out of me. So you'll hear different styles and all the different elements just coming out of me. So I am going to hit you from every direction possible, because I love it all.

ThugLifeArmy – All of this is coming out of your company?

Johnny "J" – Yep, all from Klock Work Entertainment.

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ThugLifeArmy – Last question is one that I always ask of everyone. If you were not blessed to be in the music business, what do you see yourself doing now instead?

Johnny “J” – If I wasn’t blessed to be in the business I’m in now I think I would be in some kind of management or something like that if it was outside the entertainment field. The last job I worked at was at McDonalds, I was a manager at McDonalds. That was my last 9 to 5. I think I would be managing some kind of company. It would either be involving food or something man. I probably would own a vacuum company, I don’t know. Managing something. My friends have always said that it seems I always need to be in charge so I don’t know. Maybe a pencil company, a pen company doesn’t matter. Maybe Bottled water, ya never know.

ThugLifeArmy – There’s a lot of money in bottled water.

Johnny “J” – (chuckles) Exactly. But that was always my thing. I was always complimented for staying in charge, staying ahead of the game, because I refuse to be a knuckle head and not do anything with myself. We all had fun drinking our 40 oz’s and doing our thing and that was cool as a trend man but there was a time ya had to say hey got to wake up and move on to the next phase. Sitting up drinking 40’s was not going to be my lifetime, that wasn’t going to be my plan.

ThugLifeArmy – Well I know you’re busy in the studio and I am happy that this is the beginning of a beautiful ‘friendship’.

Johnny “J” – It is man. You got nothing but love for me and anytime ya need me, you got my number. Anything you need just let me know. And watch for the new talent coming from Johnny “J” and Klock Work Entertainment – It’s unbelievable talent.

ThugLifeArmy – Thanks again for all the love.

Johnny “J” – It’s all love my friend. Much love, peace.

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ThugLifeArmy – Much respect, Peace