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Molly Whitehorn: The date is April 10th. This is my interview with Charlie White. I am Molly Whitehorn and we are also with Dr. John Bass.

Okay, to get things started, just for the record could you please state your name?

Charlie White: My name is Charlie White; I'm a DJ, producer, engineer, lots of other things. But in music those are the three things I am.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. Cool. If you don't mind telling us, could you tell us what year you were born?

Charlie White: 1988.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. Cool. So to start things off, can you tell me a little bit about your childhood in Charlottesville and like about your parents, like were they musicians?

Charlie White: Yeah. Yeah. I grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia. It's a college town similar to like Knoxville. It's University of Virginia. My parents were heavily involved in music. Not really musicians, but just force-feeding me Michael Jackson and soul music. So it's fitting that I ended up in Memphis because of my parents' love for soul music and just happened to be-

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-transcended into a city with so much history with soul music.

Molly Whitehorn: Mm-hmm. So how did you first start DJing? Like how did that-

Charlie White: I was the kid that wanted to be in control of music at parties. If it was a seventh grade dance, eighth grade dance, I wanted to play the music. So it wasn't really like a career back then; it was just a love for wanting to control the crowd and just have that feeling of I picked a song and made everybody go crazy. So when I started DJing it was around ninth grade, tenth grade; I saved up money for turntables. It wasn't really a process that came overnight. I mean – yeah, it wasn't a process that came overnight. It took time and really building the craft and practicing the art before I actually did my first performance, which was eleventh grade I think was my first – or tenth grade was my first performance. So it was practicing in my room, just scratching, the art of turntable-ism. It wasn't really party rocking yet, it was more of bedroom DJ, headphones on, trying to figure out the instrument of the-

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-turntables is kind of what I wanted to do, really study it as an instrument.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. Cool. So you came to Memphis to go to University of Memphis, correct?

Charlie White: Yeah. I at first wasn't sure if I wanted to go to college. It was – I graduated high school in 2006, and I kind of decided that if I wanted to go to school it was for music, and University of Memphis has a recording program that's not offered in the state of Virginia. So I got an in-state rate and made the move here in 2007.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. Cool.

Charlie White: Or _____ technology.

Molly Whitehorn: So you came for the school? Like you didn't know much about the city at the time?

Charlie White: Not much, besides just the history. I didn't really know much about – you know, I didn't know anybody here. My family all lives in Virginia, so my parents dropped me off at the dorm room and I've been here ever since. But I love it. It's been, you know, I started my career – I would say I started my career here, 'cause it was more of like a hobby, love, passion in Virginia. But it was – this is where I stared with, you know, doing what I love for a career.

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Molly Whitehorn: Okay. So how did you start to get involved like on this music scene, like with local music?

Charlie White: First it was parties for University of Memphis and Rose; I've done Rose parties, Christian Brothers. And then I got involved DJing with Memphis artist Al Capone. I was his DJ for a couple of years, and that led to meeting Free Sol, a band from Memphis. And it was just, you know, like I said, it took time; it wasn't something that just started overnight. I did a lot of free college step shows, parties, house parties, fraternity parties. It kind of just took off from there. Building a relationship with Red Bull in Memphis, their market here, that's kind of what I did.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. Cool. So do you think you could do what you're doing right now like in other cities? Like why is it special to do it in Memphis?

- Charlie White:* For me Memphis has the history of soul music, and that is what I love. As far as production, I DJ in an open format, so I spin all types of music; electronic, hip hop,-
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- R&B, top 50. But production it's sampling. And Memphis has a – such a rich history in soul music, so when I'm digging in records from here and I'm looking through the stacks catalog for records to sample, it kind of fits in with what I love to do as far as production and making the instrumentals with the samples from '70s and '80s and '60s and all that music that has, you know, sample qualities that I can take and chop up and produce my own beats too.
- Molly Whitehorn:* Mm-hmm. So obviously DJing is way more complicated than a lot of people think.
- Charlie White:* Yeah. I mean everybody's a DJ now, so.
- Molly Whitehorn:* Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So what do you think – or what do you wish more people knew kind of about what you do and what makes it-?
- Charlie White:* I don't mind the increase in DJs, it's just I wish people studied the history. You know, you wouldn't want a guitarist to pick up a guitar and not listen to anything pre, you know, 1980. You want someone to really study the music, and DJing-
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- is that. It's not as old as some of these traditional instruments, but you have 1980s and 1990s DJs that have techniques that you can incorporate in your style today, which is, with the technology has changed. So I wish people just did a little more research into the past, and that's it. It's not – I'm not wanting to be one of those bitter DJs that hates on the new technology, 'cause I love it. It's just doing a little research and homework and studying, practicing. Some people don't even practice before they get up on stage, and that's really important. Use it as an instrument, you know?
- Molly Whitehorn:* Yeah.
- John Bass:* Just I'll follow up on that, because you play with groups like Free Sol.
- Charlie White:* Yeah.
- John Bass:* And this is a lot of it, so, you know, with the DJ and with, you know, people playing what you'd call more traditional instruments, you know.

Charlie White: Mm-hmm.

John Bass: Can you talk about the interaction, the vibe and how – and I think this is a good point and it's interesting, in how what you're doing, you know, is not separate from what they're doing, but is part of the overall-

Charlie White: Yeah, I mean-

John Bass: -the ____, the-
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-creation of music.

Charlie White: With Free Sol it's really awesome to learn with such a talented group of musicians. I'm counting on beats; I'm paying attention to transitions and bridges, because they rely on me to bring in music at certain times. So, you know, I have stems of what we're playing – what the band is playing over the top of, but I'm bringing it in on time and making sure everything is, you know, syncopated in rhythm, because if I mess that up it's like the drummer will get off, Teddy will get off. We don't have an in-ear system, so it's all monitors, so if everything's not correct – it's kind of like the backbone of what's going on. You have to pay attention and you can't just push play and sit there.

And also, you know, backing up Free on vocals and certain things, when I'm looking at Elliot, who plays guitar, making sure that he's paying attention to what I'm about to bring in, is more than just pushing play, and that's another thing I wish people would learn, is just kind of the instrumentation that you-

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-can use turntables with.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. Cool. So we talked a lot about like the best music of the past and like obviously like there's a lot of famous musicians from here. So how do you see yourself kind of following in the footsteps of people like Elvis or like Otis Redding? Or is that just like-

Charlie White: Those are some awesome names. I mean for me to take from the past and use what I do is kind of what I hope to do. I hope to take records from the past and bring them back to life. And I've always wanted to do a whole instrumental project with nothing but stacks music and put that out and just kind of, like I said, show people the homework and the research of the city. 'Cause there's so much history here, you know? When I got here it took – still to this day

I'm still learning about bands and midtown scene and certain guys who pop up that I've never heard of, but, you know, you look into it and they've been playing for 20, 30 years here. So that's what I love about Memphis, is the amount of musicians here. And I hope to, you know, inspire somebody-

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-to, you know, dig up my stuff in 30 years – that would be awesome, man – and utilize what I put out in some way, if they wanted to flip it or take, you know, sample me, that would be awesome.

Molly Whitehorn: Yeah. So obviously the Memphis music scene like today isn't, you know, what it once was.

Charlie White: Yeah.

Molly Whitehorn: I would say that. So how do you think that like the city can improve that or like increase?

Charlie White: It's not from talent. There's way too much talent here. It's a business side. And I just find that I don't know what happened, but it seems the business side is lacking here. And the economy is bad here, so maybe that has something to do with it. Jobs, there's no jobs, so a lot of people can't pay their bills off of music. So I hope that that changes and we can have more musicians make careers here. And if I can help out in any way, that's kind of what I also inspire to do, is allow for people to start careers here and not just do it as a hobby. 'Cause the talent is unbelievable here. There's every type of a musician, church musicians and students-

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-that are musicians. You can't walk a block without meeting a musician in Memphis.

Molly Whitehorn: Yeah. So who are your, some of your favorite like Memphis musicians, like today?

Charlie White: Locally?

Molly Whitehorn: Yeah.

Charlie White: I love Memphis artists who actually work with – the last one I worked with is Scooby. I love the hip hop scene here. I think there's a lot of up-and-coming hip hop, and it's people who are inspired by the past, but also changing it. And that's what's important, you have the whole Three 6 Mafia sound, but you have artists that are coming up that are doing it their way or taking the

soul side of Memphis and putting it in hip hop. So Scooby is one. There's just too many names.

Molly Whitehorn: There's a lot of options.

Charlie White: Yeah.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. So how do you see your career going like in the next 10 to 20 years? Are you still going to be in Memphis or-?

Charlie White: I mean I'm not really sure. I just – I love the road. I think that the road gives me an opportunity to learn. And if I can go to a different demographic of the country and bring back something-

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-to Memphis, I think that helps. I think some DJs get planted in a certain city and they don't want to leave; they want to take that city over and run a little market. But as a DJ, I want to travel; I want to learn from a different crowd in a different city. What is popular here is not going to be popular in Portland, Oregon or, you know, France or anything like that. So I want to take what people like and bring it back to where I'm at, and if that's here, then so be it. I just, I'm really up in the air where the road is going to take me. I just am excited about that, you know. If I'm here in Memphis I couldn't pick a better place to live, but if I'm somewhere else it's because it was meant to be, as cliché as that sounds.

Molly Whitehorn: Yeah. So what would be your hopes for like the city of Memphis in 20 years as far as music goes?

Charlie White: I just hope it continues to evolve. I hope the sound continues to change, but doesn't follow trends. You know, there's a lot of trends in popular music. So I hope that people continue-

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-to evolve the sound of music. And it's changing; you hear different styles. I think Free Sol is pretty awesome in doing that; they took a style of music, rock and hip hop, and they fused it together. So I hope that musicians here in 20 years can kind of show that they've learned something from what's popular now and even popular from the past. So evolution is kind of the key to music, I think. For me at least.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay. Okay, cool. Do you have anything else to ask?

John Bass: You mentioned, and I'm just curious about this, you know, because this is something a lot of people think about. I think

you're absolutely right about the business side. It's not – you talk about, you look at Nashville and there's an infrastructure into the city itself. And it's not so much here. But then there's the flip side of that, is that Memphis is still, has this, you know, vibe to it, you know-

Charlie White: Has a vibe.

John Bass: - _____ so. I don't know, I mean, you know, as somebody who, you know, has-

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-some success from here, what could you see helping? You know, I mean what, like if Memphis music returns to its glory years in five years or ten years, what does that look like, you think?

Charlie White: I was really sad to see places like **the Heights** close, and I think if we can maintain those kinds of vibes amongst our venues and cult followings then we can, you know, succeed. And just getting people out to shows; it's really hard to get consistent fan base to come out to shows. We have fans here; it's just about making them come out on a Tuesday night, even if it's raining. And sometimes it's difficult; rain will stop a show altogether. So I think just having those small little clubs, packing them out on Sunday nights, Tuesday nights, is really important for the city to just maintain that small following, you know, amongst musicians.

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-up overnight, but that's not the way I've seen, you know, my career happen. And just anybody that's successful, it takes time, you know. You have to really practice and do those hole-in-the-wall gigs for zero money, you know. Those are the kind of things that will help the city out, is maintain a small fan base that can travel with the band to a certain venue. If they change venues, I want them to follow that band. And it's happening; you have those groups of people. But that's kind of what I see would help, just having a constant fan base, even if it's small.

John Bass: Yeah.

Molly Whitehorn: Okay, cool. Okay. Good.

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