

*Interviewer:* Thank you for doing this, for taking time **for this**. First off, can you just state what year you were born, if you don't mind?

*Interviewee:* I was born in 1978.

*Interviewer:* Okay, cool. Okay, first of all, can you talk a little bit about growing up in Memphis, like kind of the music you were exposed to when you were younger, about your parents?

*Interviewee:* I really didn't get into playing music until I was a teenager, until I was like 16 years old, and didn't even take lessons really until I was at Rhodes, so I was 18. So, younger, I really wasn't that exposed. I remember as a kid I wanted to be in the Fat Boys and in Europe. I wanted to rap to the Final Countdown. So, I knew I had that in me somewhere, but it took a while for it to get out. But, when I started getting exposed, I was exposed to a lot of different music by my peers who had been playing instruments their whole lives and really got into the nitty-gritty of the mechanics and blues music, basically.

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*Interviewer:* So, when was the first time you picked up an instrument?

*Interviewee:* Probably at a young age, probably like nine or ten, but I didn't really know what to do with it. I was more interested in sports and other stuff than trying to learn the instrument. I didn't take it seriously until about 17, maybe, 18.

*Interviewer:* Did you grow up listening to Memphis-based music, Elvis –

*Interviewee:* I did not grow up –

*Interviewer:* – anything like that?

*Interviewee:* – listening to much Memphis-based music. I mean my mother was an Elvis fan and she would put that on, but I was really into rap because it was new, it was like brand new, and Run-D.M.C. and the Beastie Boys, and then the harder edged rock-and-roll stuff. When you're interested in the guitar, it's like that's the first thing you kind of gravitate toward, and being born in 1978, there was a lot of '80s hard hair metal.

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*Interviewer:* Who were some of the bands? **I was born in '77**, so \_\_\_\_\_.

*Interviewee:* I would say early on Europe was a big one for me. Ratt was a big one for me, Motley Crue, of course, and then Guns N' Roses later followed, but those were probably the top four.

*Interviewer:* Okay, cool. Can you tell us about the first two bands you were in at MUS and how those got started?

*Interviewee:* Yes. The first band I was in at MUS, well, the first real band I was in at MUS was called **Sky Cow**, and the guys were a little older than I was. I was replacing a guy who was graduating, and I was in ninth grade, I think, and that was a big-time learning experience for me because I really didn't know much about the instrument, and I was just like, "Oh, you play a guitar? C'mon," and it was one of those things. So, I learned some chords really quickly, and, luckily, **Jay Sansing**, the lead guitar player, showed me pretty much everything to play.

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So, that was kind of my first experience in a band setting, and it was great because Sky Cow had a built-in following. They used to play the **Daisy** and **Smash**. I mean it would be packed in there. We had articles in the \_\_\_\_\_ written about us about how these 15-, 16-year-old kids are playing shows to packed audiences and everybody has to be home by 9:00.

*Interviewer:* So, how did you decide to come to Rhodes, and what made you want to study music once you were at Rhodes?

*Interviewee:* I was not gonna come to Rhodes. I was going to go to a state school, a bigger state school. The reason I came to Rhodes was because of the music in Memphis, and that's no lie. About nine months before I started at Rhodes, I had just started playing with **Jeff Birch** and **Blake Ray** who both went to **MUS**, and to Rhodes – Jeff did, I'm sorry.

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They were already really talented players and were kind of schooling me, and we started a band called **CYC** that kind of did their thing regionally, and it ended up I got my first record deal when I was like 20 years old, at Rhodes, with these guys. They were kind of the ones teaching me all about stuff, and that's kind of how I got into the roots of Memphis music and kind of paved the way to what I was gonna study.

*Interviewer:* Can you talk a little bit about your first record deal and how that came about?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, the first record deal was with the band CYC. We stayed in Memphis, and we kind of had an alternative cast of characters kind of rotating, and, at one point, we were a 13-piece band with horns and the whole nine, background singers, but we traveled. We got signed as a quartet, the four of us – bass, drums, guitar, and a keyboard sax player – and we got signed to this label called **CD Memphis**, and this was right when the Internet was kind of jamming.

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I think it was 1999 or 2000, and Norbert Putnam was the guy who signed us who was a record producer in Nashville, Memphis. I think he teaches at Delta State now. He still does? Yeah. So, he started this record label down at the **Cadre** Building downtown, and it was basically, "We'll sign artists, we'll do the production in-house, and then, instead of really coming out with these physical copies of the CD, we'll do it all Internet-based," and he was kind of forward-thinking. But we were so young and ready to hit the road, we were like, "What do you mean we're not gonna have CDs? It's called CD Memphis, you know?" So, we ended up printing some CDs and ended up touring regionally until that all fell apart.

*Interviewer:* Okay, cool.

[0:06:00]\*\*\*\*\*CUT 1 – Begin Segment 2\*\*\*\*\*

*Interviewer:* This was while you were a student at Rhodes?

*Interviewee:* This was at the end, like my senior year, into that next summer and next year.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Do you have any more Rhodes questions? I had a follow-up on a couple of those.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I was just gonna ask how you – because you didn't come to Rhodes originally to study music, is that correct?

*Interviewee:* No, I was an international business major and a French minor –

*Interviewer:* Okay, so –

*Interviewee:* – until the end of my sophomore year.

*Interviewer:* – okay, so what made you switch over?

*Interviewee:* It was the exposure I was getting to playing clubs. I mean I would play every Saturday night on Beale Street while I was at Rhodes.

We'd start at 1:00 AM and play until 4:00 AM, and, literally, 500 Rhodes kids would come. It was like the place to be back then; now it's not. But that's kind of what it was, and I just wanted to continue with that, and I really wasn't having fun in all my classes for international business, and then the French thing, I was gonna have to go abroad for a year, and we had just signed this deal, or about to sign this deal, and I wanted to stay in Memphis and work on music.

[0:07:00]

*Interviewer:* Can you talk a little bit about, because you're mentioning that you came to Rhodes because of the musical culture there, I mean was it more of sort of a **student**-driven thing? How did that mix with the classes that you took –

*Interviewee:* Oh, it –

*Interviewer:* – I mean how does it all –

*Interviewee:* – it had nothing –

*Interviewer:* – \_\_\_\_\_?

*Interviewee:* – to do with anybody at Rhodes or the Rhodes curriculum, or anything. It just happened to be that's a good school and it was in Memphis where I was playing with all these people. Most of the guys I was playing with, other than Blake Ray, who graduated in '98, they were all at U of M and studying jazz, and I was really wanting to do that, and that's why I was barking kind of at the music department about, "Where's the jazz music?" and I would get in trouble for these lessons that I did that were too jazzy. So, I kind of bounced back and forth. I took some lessons over there, and I took some jazz stuff, and I was really getting into **that** and blues, and then studying classical at Rhodes, but it worked out fine, I mean the mixing of the two, you know? I didn't really hang out with the Rhodes crowd, too, too much. We were gigging, and on weekends, my last two years at Rhodes, we were off playing shows regionally.

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*Interviewer:* Did you study with **Corbin Thomas**?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, yeah, that's cool.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so what was your plan after you graduated? Were you planning on staying in Memphis because of the record deal?

*Interviewee:* We got a small booking agent because of the little deal we got, and we just toured that summer and next year constantly. We bought a van, trailer, the whole nine, toured all around the southeast, took that record that we did with Norbert and just pushed it as much as we could.

*Interviewer:* Did you always plan on ending up in Memphis and living here?

*Interviewee:* I wasn't thinking about that, really. I just wanted to grow and grow the group, and as you start having a little bit of success, and at that age, really young, everybody starts kind of thinking about, "What if we did this?" or, "What if we took this path, or what if we changed the music?"

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Everybody starts to think at that point, like you're not radio, and, to make the money, you gotta get on the radio and you gotta make your songs **315**, the hook has to be in **before 107**, and so I was guilty of that. I was in the studio watching these guys make records and going, "Man, we need to make songs, we need to really hone in on this," and the whole reason we got signed is because we were really eclectic and crazy. You'd come see us one night and there'd be three rappers up there with us and a DJ, and the next night it's all salsa music, you know? That's kind of how we were as a band, we were very malleable. I guess a lot of the guys in the band didn't see it that way, and some of us \_\_\_\_\_ eventually, you know, we all went and did different things.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so can you talk a little bit about how you ended up at Young Avenue Sound and that internship, and what you learned there?

*Interviewee:* After CYC kind of dispersed, I remembered working with **Willie Paveer**, who was an engineer for Norbert at CD Memphis, and I was so interested in the recording/engineering side that on a couple sessions, when we weren't working on our album, I would go assist him on other people's albums, and I was like, "You know, if this music thing doesn't pan out, this would be something I'd really be into."

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So, I actually got a call right the summer that CYC dispersed, I guess I was 23, and he said, "One of the guys from CD Memphis, **Don Mann**, has bought this building, and we're about to make a

studio. Why don't you come watch the console go in, I'll teach you everything you need to know, but I think instead of an engineer, you'd be more of a producer, like I'll train you kind of on the producer side, we'll work with songwriting." I was like, "Great," you know, and I don't have to spend all this money trying to go to \_\_\_\_\_, which he ended up saying, "If you go to \_\_\_\_\_, you'll be good enough to bring me coffee," and I was already making him coffee at the time. So, four months into Young Avenue Sound, I got keys to the building, and the first session I did, I was way too green to do the session, but I was the only one answering my phone at 3:00 in the morning.

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Eightball and MJG, who are like Memphis' legends, rap legends, came in and we were there until sunrise working on a song. Then, after that session, I did a lot of rap sessions, recording vocals, and I kind of did all Eightball, MJG stuff for like the next nine months. Ying Yang Twins, Yo Gotti, Mac E, I mean you name it, they were all coming through there. I worked on a bunch of tracks with Drumma Boy. I did a bunch of guitar stuff for him, and I remember listening to the radio and being like, "Man, that's my guitar! What happened?" I'd call up \_\_\_\_\_ and he'd be like, "What are you talking about?" I really saw the getting-screwed aspect of the business, too, at an early age. It didn't stop there. But, yeah, that's how the whole Young Avenue thing just kind of took off after that, and that's when I met FreeSol.

[0:12:00] CUT 2 --- BEGIN SEGMENT 3 \*\*\*\*\*

He came and took a tour of the studio, and I gave him my business card, and two months later he was like, "I'm looking for a guitar player for this hip-hop group," and then that's how I started with that band.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so speaking of FreeSol, can you talk a little bit about your time in that band and what happened there?

*Interviewee:* That was a similar situation to the band before, just a little bit more mature. Don Mann ended up signing FreeSol. We actually rehearsed and rehearsed, and went and we were competing regionally in all these band competitions, and we were five for five; we won everything we did. We ended up going on the Rock Boat and competing nationally and won that, and it was really kind of like, "What's the next step? What's the next step?" So, Don Mann signed us to a small deal at Memphis Records, where we

went in as a band and tracked 11:11, which is FreeSol's first album.

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We put that out and got a booking agent, and did kind of the same thing but more on a national level – van and trailer, toured, toured, toured, toured – and about three years into that, or two years into that, I guess I was like 26 maybe, Universal, or a division of Universal, Devyne Stephens, an old Janet Jackson dancer who signed T-Pain and Akon. This was right when T-Pain had just barely come out, and Akon was jamming, he was blowing up. Well, he said, "Come down to Atlanta. I got a hold of you guys mix tape." We did a couple live shows for him. So, we started negotiating a deal with him and Universal, so we went down to Atlanta and we found this loft downtown, all five of us were gonna live in it. I think our drummer was even gonna live under the stairs. It was like a two-bedroom loft. We were all gonna just get in there and make a record. We were so excited. Went back to Memphis, went and did a show in Dallas, and we were physically moving to Atlanta after the show in Dallas.

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Well, while we were negotiating that contract, Justin Timberlake wanted to start the Stax label over again in Memphis, and he was searching for Memphis talent, and so we did a series of showcases for him, probably three showcases, and never heard anything from him, but he kept inviting us back for these showcases. Meanwhile, somebody in Memphis, I think it was **Rey Flemings**, who was running the Memphis Music Foundation, called Justin and he goes, "Man, you are snoozing on these guys. They are physically in a van right now going to Atlanta to sign with Universal. If you want these guys – " and Justin liked the fact that we were a black and white band, we did multiple styles, it was rapper, it had singing, it was R&B, rock, everything, and he was like, "This is like the next Stax house band, you know? I could take these guys and they could really do it again." So, he called, and we literally pulled over the van, and myself and the drummer, like, "No more negotiations. No more. Screw Justin Timberlake. We're going to Universal. It's there, we've got a place to live. We're there right now. Let's go! We can make the record next week."

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It just ended up happening where we took a vote and it was three to two, and Justin offered us a little bit more money, he was like, "I



gotta have you guys come back." So, we literally turned the van around and went back to Memphis, and took another six months negotiating a contract with Justin. Then, that album took four years to make, and it had a lot to do with his schedule. Justin was really doing a lot of movies. But we would go six months without seeing him, and then we'd go in the studio for like a week, ten days, and crank out songs, and then he'd send us to work with all these different producers. I mean we traveled all over the place working with producers. We had 118 songs by the time we had a meeting with Justin finally after four years, and he was like, "All right, y'all ready to make this down?"

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So, he sat down and he listened to roughly half the songs, and he gave them an A, B, or C, and, at the end of that listening session, we had 14 A's and he goes, "That's your record. We're gonna finish those." So, the next two weeks, we sat in the studio with him, Timbaland came through, we did two songs with him, and we knocked it out. Justin got us a deal with Interscope Records, and then we started doing some marketing. We released four singles on Interscope before we got dropped last January.

*Interviewer:* So, when you were dropped, did you think that that was kind of like the end of it for you for music, you were gonna do something else?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* You did?

*Interviewee:* Yes, total depression. I mean you go four years, and the album is actually really, really good, it's so different, and it can still go on the radio. They pushed that one song, "Fascinated," hard to radio for like two or three months, and it was doing well. We were about to go on this big Canadian tour, and then our manager called up the accountant at Interscope and was like, "We need to get that tour support." He said, "Well, you guys aren't on the roster anymore."

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Sure enough, it was over some political crap that had nothing to do with the actual band. I think Interscope actually dropped all of the **Tennman** \_\_\_\_\_, so he dropped all the Justin stuff. Yeah, we all kind of were mad at each other and mad at the situation. This was last year, I was 33 years old, and I was like, "What am I gonna do now? I don't know how to do anything else?" Actually, in



April of last year, I went to Atlanta to interview for a job. One of my dad's sons had an amazing opportunity for me, but it was in the credit card processing field. I remember going, you know, I had this long hair, and I go to this interview and there's all these cubicles out on the floor, and this really unattractive bald dude stands up, and my buddy is sitting there telling me, he's like, "Like him, you know? He's doing well. He's making us money. He's on Facebook. I mean look at him. He's gang-busting."

**[0:18:15] CUT 3 – BEGIN SEGMENT 4**

I mean, literally, a tear kind of started coming down my eye because I'm like, "This is not for me." No offense to anybody in a cubicle right now, because you've got to work and you've got to do what you've got to do, but it's just not for me. I think I'd rather go out in the woods and just chop wood all day, do something like that instead of anything like that. Anyway, so I get back in my car and I'm sitting there, totally depressed, like, "I can't believe this is what's gonna happen," and that's when I got a call, right then and there, from Justin's right-hand guy, and he was like, "Yeah, it's a secret, so I need you to come out here and work for three weeks with a couple of my producers." Didn't tell me right off the bat, like what I was working on, and I was like, "Okay, all right. I think I can do that."

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I started smiling, you know, and I hung up the phone, and then I stood there thinking, and I'm like, "Why would he fly me from Memphis all the way out there in L.A. where all these fabulous guitar players are? Why would you fly me out there for three weeks? Who's paying for this?" like, "What's going on?" you know? Then, I talked to somebody close to Justin, and he was like, "He's picked five people to work on his album, and you're one of them." I'm like, "What?" So, yeah, it was myself, Jerome Harmon, who is Timbaland's musical guy/keyboard player, Rob Knox, who is one of Justin's producers, James Fauntleroy, who is murdering it right now songwriting-wise, and myself. Three weeks turned into seven months. I was in L.A. and New York, back and forth, and worked on all of Timbaland's new album. I did work with Beyonce, Keri Hilson, Cher.

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Jay-Z's got a new album that came out today; I got a cut on that. Well, I did some guitar work and bass work on there, and then I did all this stuff on Justin's "The 20/20 Experience," which is great,

and then I think December of this past year, when we were finishing up the album and everything, he was like, "Well, are you ready to go on tour?" I was like, "What?" Yeah, so I've been in the band since January. We just got home from a month-long of rehearsals with him and Jay-Z, which we're about to go to Ireland in two days, starting a tour with those two.

*Interviewer:* So, can you talk a little bit more about your experience making "The 20/20 Experience" and how that process was and what that was like?

*Interviewee:* It was really intense. I was really nervous, because, honestly, when I got dropped, I didn't pick up the guitar, I put it down, and I was in another band called Lord T & Eloise that was doing a lot, and I don't play guitar in there. I wear a wig and I rap.

*[Laughter]*

So, I was actually trying to pursue that more, and I was kind of like, "Nah, screw FreeSol," you know, and I didn't play guitar, so I was really nervous because I was out of practice.

*[0:21:08]*

Also, Justin had a camera crew there. He filmed it. He documented the whole thing. So, the first thing I played when I was out there, it was basically like I had a guitar and we were working on the first song, and Justin goes, "All right, the chorus chords, I want you to invert them, \_\_\_\_\_ them backwards, and then give them like \_\_\_\_\_. Okay, go." You know, and I'm sitting there going, "Okay, inversion. Okay, got that." Then, meanwhile, like when he says, "Okay, go," suddenly lights are all over me, and there's a guy under me with a camera, there's a camera right to my left, and I'm shaking, you know, because I'm like, "I'm gonna be sent home any minute, I'm gonna be sent home any minute." Just one thing, one part after the next part, and then Justin went off to do a movie, and Timbaland was like, "Stay here," and we really did all the intro's and **outro's** of "The 20/20 Experience," really got into it, and laid all these crazy parts.

*[0:22:01]*

I had a new piece of gear that had just come out on the market, and I was really tweaking it and making guitar sounds that you would never know is a guitar, like real **synthed** out stuff, but it was really cool. The first three or four months I was there, I couldn't say anything about being involved in it. I mean it was like a freaking

60-page NDA I had to do, and all these people at home were like, "Where's Elliott? What's he doing?" people calling me for gigs, blues gigs here, "Why can't we book Lord T & Eloise?" blah-blah-blah. I couldn't say anything, you know? That was really hard on some friendships, and especially on the FreeSol guys, that was really tough because I couldn't tell them what I was doing. But, eventually, once I got to speak about it, it was all good. But I'll tell you, Justin works really fast, and **Timbaland** works really fast, and their chemistry in the studio, it was amazing to witness it every day, just how they make these hit records, you know?

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*Interviewer:* Yeah. So, when you were making the album, could you tell that it was gonna just be huge, because that album has just blown up.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I think so. I think there was times where I got so comfortable with everybody, everybody was so cool and so easy to be with, I didn't really think about the magnitude of the star power that Justin has until we'd go out, like, "You guys want to go out tonight?" and we'd go out and I'd be like, "Wait a minute. This dude is huge!" But, in the studio, it's like you don't have to worry about fans or anybody climbing the walls or anything, it's just everybody is being themselves and being ultra creative. So, it took a while. I think when December came and we added "Suit & Tie" and Jay-Z came in, and then Beyonce came in. I mean there was one time I was in a room, I was **in** my headphones and I'm like down in my chair on **Logic**, like programming something, because there's a lot of hours where you're not needed, but any minute they'll be like, "Okay, do this." I'm sitting there, you know, I don't even know how long, and I look up, and it's just me in the room, and it's Beyonce, Pharrell, Busta Rhymes, Timbaland, Justin, his wife – Jessica Biel – and who else? Missy Elliott.

[0:24:16] CUT 4 – BEGIN SEGMENT 5

*Interviewer:* Oh my god.

*Interviewee:* I'm sitting there going, "This is insane." Jay-Z, yeah. I'm like, "This is so insane." This is like Aretha Franklin, Michael McDonald, Quincy Jones. I'm like, "This is that generation of what's going on." I think at that point, I was like, "This is gonna be monstrous."

*Interviewer:* Yeah, so I'm sure you're asked a lot about the solo on "Spaceship Coupe." So, could you talk a little bit about that and how that happened?

*Interviewee:* "Spaceship Coupe" was one day I was supposed to go into Studio B and work with Rob Knox on some stuff. I saw Justin in the hallway, like walking past me, and he was like, "Hey, man, come here for a sec." We walked in there and he's like, "Here's eight bars. I need you just to \_\_\_\_\_ solo this thing out," and literally, I had never heard the song, I didn't even get to hear the whole song, so I had no idea in what context the solo was gonna be.

[0:25:12]

I grabbed a Stratocaster, which I barely ever play, put it on some crazy patch that I had, opened the **wah** full, and I did it in one take, which is Justin's favorite. When I worked with FreeSol, I did a solo in the first take. It's really about the first take. There's something really magical about that. I didn't really know how long it was, so I punched the very last note, which is the **high squeal**, and then there's one in the middle where he wanted to drop everything out that I just punched that. But the whole thing was so sloppily done and so like, "Aah!" that he was like, "That's it. That's exactly what I wanted." I'm like, "No, no, man, let me do it again," and he's like, "No." I'm like, "Seriously, man, give me a couple takes, and then you can pick which one, because I can smash it." He's like, "You're missing the point. I don't want you to technically fix this." He's like, "This is exactly what I wanted." I was like, "Ooh."

[0:26:01]

*Interviewer:* Okay, so I know a lot of crazy stuff has been happening this year, you know, going to the Grammy's and being on SNL. Do you have any standout moments that you just realized like, "Wow, this is it"?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. We did a club show in London after the BRIT Awards, and the band at this point had just gotten so tight, and these people were just – it was 1,000 people, that's all there was – absolutely crazy, and we had had a crazy day going from the BRITs, traveling an hour and a half to the club, sound checking there, going back to the BRITs, doing the show, going back to the club, it was just hectic, and then the next morning we had to go to Austria and Germany and do some TV stuff. I think at that club show, we waited and we didn't go on until almost midnight, and just the power of the lights and everything, for me, I was like, "This is insane," being in a 15-piece band, and everybody's just clicking, and it was so amazingly tight.

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That, and then I would say a really cool moment was after SNL at the after-party. I was at the bar, and it was Dan Aykroyd, Steve Martin, and Chevy – no, Steve Martin, Dan Aykroyd, and Martin Short, and just seeing those guys, like having a cocktail right next to them, and seeing how they cut up after all these years, they're still so close and still like best friends, I don't know, just being right there next to them, I was like, "Okay, this is for real."

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So, how has your life changed, like your personal life, since you've just been doing this? Have you noticed people treating you differently or anything like that?

*Interviewee:* Not really. I mean my Memphis people I'm real close with, so it's like as soon as I could talk about the situation, I was able to open up and talk about it with them, and I think most people were happy. There's gonna be some people, \_\_\_\_\_ Memphis haters, you know, \_\_\_\_\_, but for the most part, nothing has changed, other than I'm never here.

[0:28:07]

*Interviewer:* Yeah. So, how have your feelings about the industry changed, because I guess after FreeSol, you were kind of down on it, but how do you feel about it now?

*Interviewee:* I really like working for artists. I think, after that whole experience, I don't really want to be an artist anymore, you know, like for myself. I mean I'll always write music and I'll always do my own thing, and have my own side projects just for my personal fulfillment, but it's really hard to sign with a label and put yourself out there like that, exactly what you want to say to somebody through your music or through interviews, or however you want to relay your message. I think dealing with these labels that are ever-changing, too, it's hard to nail down how you're gonna be treated, and even the big boys, when they get a hit, if they don't keep them coming, they're axed, you know?

[0:29:03]

With the Internet and everything changing, I really like working for artists, and somebody like Justin, who is very established. It's easy. I don't have to worry about much. I just show up and make sure I'm on and do my job and have a blast. So, I could see from down the road working in a production house with some of these guys, maybe go work with Timbaland and Jerome, or any of these producers, just as a writer, and then tour when I can.

*Interviewer:* So, what have you learned from watching people up close, like Timberlake and Timbaland, like watching them work? What's some of the stuff you've learned about music?

*Interviewee:* Well, I've learned that those guys are aliens. They are extremely talented. Anybody who wants to say that they're not, they don't know. They've never seen them. I mean I see Timbaland work and Justin work, and they're completely opposite. They're rarely in the studio together.

**[0:30:00] CUT 5 – BEGIN SEGMENT 6**

I'm there with both of them all the time, so it's like 15-, sometimes 16-hour days, and I've never seen a guy work harder than Justin. He is the hardest working man in entertainment, quite possibly. Just when you think the night is over, he's like, "Oh, let me write the second verse and put that down." But he does it and gets it done, and **Tim's** work ethic is amazing. I mean I think he's just in an amazing place right now, creatively. To see both of them work, it's truly – I've never seen anything like it, honestly, and what I've learned is just to go for it. I mean one good thing about being in Timbaland's shoes is you can kind of put stuff out there that might not be – you know, if I put that out there, people \_\_\_\_\_, "Oh, that's whack," you know? But, if he does it his certain way, it gets accepted, and he can pave the way for all types of genres and music, and he can take it anywhere he wants to go, and that's pretty awesome.

[0:31:06]

*Interviewer:* So, why do you think the music industry in Memphis isn't what it used to be, like now that you've seen it working and you've seen music that works, like why do you think it's not happening for Memphis?

*Interviewee:* Well, there's no industry here. There's no industry here. There's no labels, there's no management companies, there are no booking agents. There are really not even hardly any publicity here, and that's what it takes. I mean back in the day, you had labels housed here. You had real producers coming in wanting to make real records, and label budgets, and all the tools that's needed to uproot yourself and get out of here. Now, it's just sick, raw talent; there's just crazy musicians here. But, as far as getting up out of here and getting noticed, it's very, very difficult. So, if we could get some of that here, get a house where it's just PR, people who can get your Internet stuff out there, however, anything to promote really

helps, and then of course doing the legwork and getting out there and touring.

[0:32:12]

*Interviewer:* Okay. Can you talk a little bit more about Lord T & Eloise, and how that kind of happened, and what's happening with that now?

*Interviewee:* That happened when I was at Young Avenue Sound. I had convinced the owner to buy an MPC, which is like the old-school way to make beats, you know, programming, because all the rappers I noticed were coming in and I was like, "I could make beats. I want to make beats." Got the machine, learned everything about it, and that was the time Don's son, **Cameron**, who now works at the Memphis Music Foundation, I think he's the director there, he had just come off this MCI WorldCom job in London that he hated and moved to Memphis to work in the studio. Then, **my** other friend, **Robert Anthony**, all of us childhood friends, came back from working in Chattanooga at some paper, editing this newspaper.

[0:33:08]

They came with this crazy idea about two trust fund kids, you know, one guy was born of pure gold, and one was born from the future and one was from the past, and they came together to help save rap music, which was a crazy premise, I thought. I thought, "This is the craziest thing I've ever heard." But some of the song ideas and just the actual content they were coming up with I thought was amazing, and if you were to put that in a rap the right way, it could be something completely different. So, I started producing it and making the music for it, and singing the hooks, and I came up with this other character. I think our first show in Memphis was sold out completely. Our first few shows were just crazy, because Cameron really did a good job of hyping it up. That was when MySpace was jamming, so we were really killing it on MySpace.

[0:34:06]

I mean it's amazing how stuff like that, you're killing on MySpace, and now it's just a completely new thing. So, we went to Nashville to open up for a band and got a really great booking agent, PGA, the guys who do Widespread Panic, **a big band**, the Wailers, REM, and a bunch of really hardcore touring acts now, and they started booking us right and left. It really caused a problem with FreeSol because we were kind of **in FreeSol land**, and I was like waiting on



Justin, waiting on Justin. Meanwhile, there's this hot, new thing that was just jamming, and doing shows and packing them out, and we made these crazy videos we made viral, and the music was really not even that good, and I had to teach these guys how to rap, they had no idea, and I was learning myself, but my experience was just from the Memphis guys that I was working with.

[0:35:00]

Then, Cameron got his job and moved on, I put on the wig, and then we really started hitting it and touring a ton. I mean we played all over the country. We did Seth Green's wedding up in Skywalker Ranch north of San Francisco on a tour. That was crazy. I've just done some really crazy things taking years off my life.

*Interviewer:* So, is that still going on?

*Interviewee:* It still is going on. We're almost finished with Blackout Crunk, the new mix tape. I don't know when it'll be out because I simply just don't have time to work on it right now, but we're close. It's great. As far as touring goes, there's not any of that going on right now. There's a couple shows that pop up. If I can do them, I do them; if I can't, Cameron's been filling in and doing – which is really cool. But we will finish Blackout Crunk and it will come out, because it has to. But, for now, we're about to tour.

[0:36:00] CUT 6 – BEGIN SEGMENT 7

*Interviewer:* Okay, cool. So, you've talked a little bit about writing music, so what's your process like for actually writing songs?

*Interviewee:* The process is all over the place. Lately, it's my iPhone, the voice memos, like at crazy times, I'll just hum something, or a drum pattern or bass line, or a vocal melody, and then, when I'm in my studio, I'll listen back to all the voice messages and start on something. So, I might just take a melody, find a patch on the keyboard, play that melody with a click, and then start building onto it. Usually, it starts with a melody or a drum beat, or sometimes, Eloise will call me, and like he said the other day, he said, "Man, we need to do a song called 'Syriausly.'" He was like, "Because all this conflict in Syria, but we call it Syriausly." I was like, "Syriausly"?

[0:37:01]

So, I was like, "Syriausly?" so I started with finding samples that were like conflicting kind of war samples, and then these crazy

instruments that sounded Syrian to me, and then built this whole thing, and then we did a hook, and that's how it happens.

*Interviewer:* So, you've been touring a lot lately, and you're about to go on tour again. Do you ever get sick of touring, or do you just want to come home for a little bit?

*Interviewee:* No, I don't get sick of it. I mean this level of touring is very new to me, so I'm loving it, and I have more fun playing onstage than I do anything else, so no, I'm not getting sick of it at all. Ask me this in a year, I might be, but right now it's – I mean we just did a promo tour, so it's not like we really toured-toured, you know? We're about to tour-tour.

*Interviewer:* Okay, cool. Do you have more questions?

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I guess just to sort of put things in perspective, in light of Molly's project, you've talked about Memphis just being this place with raw talent.

[0:38:09]

I mean what does being a Memphis musician now mean to you? I mean do you feel part of the tradition? You call yourself a Memphis musician. What does that mean?

*Interviewee:* Well, I can tell you this: when I'm not in Memphis and I'm around other guys, and let's just take the Tennessee Kids, for example, Justin's band, who are from all over the world, most of them rooted in Philly, when they introduce me to other people, they say, "Hey, it's Elliott. He's Memphis. He can do no wrong," and then when people say, "Where are you from? Memphis? Oh, respect, respect." You see it outside of Memphis a lot, and it makes you feel amazing, because just the fact that I play my instrument and I'm from Memphis, on the outside it means a ton to people and it gives you instant credibility. Now, what it means when I'm here, I go out and see guys slay me on their instrument, and it really bums me out because they're so good.

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But, at the same time, I take from that, and the influences I've had in Memphis are more so guys a little older than me that I just grew up to in high school and college listening to on the club level, and they're just freaks. I go out all over the world to clubs or whatever to try to search music on my days off, and rarely do I find something that's as good as going somewhere here for \$5.00 on a Tuesday night, as far as just the level of expertise.

*Interviewer:* Just as you're thinking about it, is there something that Memphis can do to – because it is, right? We have people from all over the world coming here just to be \_\_\_\_\_ artists come here to get a piece of Memphis, or whatever. Is it something that the city can do something, you know, **can it embrace**, or is that just part of what Memphis is?

[0:40:02]

*Interviewee:* That's a really good question. I think you'd have to look back and at the Stax days and the high days and see what it was that they were doing, because that was just a factory of music just coming out and coming out, and the only think I can equate it to, like I did before, it's not just the musicians, it's the people that help the musicians get up and going. So, I don't know if that's the city that can help with that. I mean I know the Memphis Music Foundation does a good job of trying to create situations for people. They have grants that they can give bands to go out and do stuff, but I think it would take hiring some sort of PR person for the City of Memphis, or some in-house person where you wouldn't have to pay so much. The problem is money, and the Memphis musicians around here don't have the money or the means to get up and go get a publicist on retainer. That costs a lot of money, but it's very effective if you can do it.

[0:41:02]

So, how can the city help with that? I don't know. I would hope one day that some rich people will come in and just say, "This is what we need." Maybe I'll be that guy one day. It would be really nice. But it's gonna take somebody outside of just being a Memphis musician to create that business infrastructure here that doesn't exist.

*Interviewer:* Are you hopeful that that can happen, or that it will happen?

*Interviewee:* Oh, I'm hopeful, yes. Oh yes. Maybe I'll get crazy mad publishing on one of these songs and come back and do it myself. That would be awesome. I would love to do something like that, but that's a big way down the road. Somebody needs to, though.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

[End of Audio]