



DJ Montana

By: Thomas Joseph 12.14.20

When I think of an influencer in the music industry that actually uses his influence and talents to help others, this man is the perfect example. He's not only a touring DJ but you can also find him on the radio airwaves and online via 96.3 The Block. He's met and helped popular artist in the industry and has had a hand in breaking some of the biggest records in HipHop/Rap. He's professional and at the same time one of the realest when it comes to passion for the culture. So without further ado I'd like to introduce you all to the one and only DJ Montana Ali!

Q&A

Tell us a little about yourself. Where you're from and where you were raised.

Well first off, I definitely appreciate you for having me my boy and for the opportunity. I go by "The People's Champ", DJ Montana Ali. I got the name "The People's Champ" in like 2013 when I was DJing in college, and I actually just recently added "Ali" to the end of my name. I needed something to make my name stand out more, because "DJ Montana" is already used so much, but "Ali" means "champion" so I felt like that was perfect. Greenville, South Carolina, that's home though! Born and raised...

Did you go to college and study any major like communication or any subject related to music, or were you naturally born with the skills of controlling a room and the atmosphere created within that space? If so, where and what was the most valuable thing you learned?

Nah, I actually went to college and graduated with a B.A. in Information Management & Systems. What's crazy though, you mentioned being naturally born with the skills of controlling a room, man that's something I had to work at lol. I used to be so antisocial, you know, just kept to myself most of the time. So I really had to become that type of person, somebody that could control a room and create a dope atmosphere. But that's actually my favorite part now, I love walking in to a space and creating the vibe that I want in the room.

How did you get your start in music as a DJ; starting with who were the artists and disc jockeys that you listened to and was there one specifically that inspired you? Also, what was your first gig that you got paid for and how did it feel to finally get paid for something you loved doing?

To be honest man, I honestly don't know how all this happened. Just blessed! Of course I loved music, but I was never a music junkie, DJing was never in my plans. You know how some people say, "God has a plan for each and every one of us"? I feel like I'm a true example of that, because becoming a DJ just kind of happened and took off for me.

I got my start while I was in college, and it was just something I wanted to try. I practiced a lot, but honestly it was like I was just naturally born with the skills of mixing. It was like being a DJ was already in me, I just had to put in the work to bring it all together. I got the opportunity to start DJing weekly at a little spot in Greenville, I used to be nerves as hell lol. I remember the owner started giving me drinks every week because I was so nerves and he could tell. He use to say "you need to loosen up Montana" lol. That gig paid \$50 a week. I was in there DJing twice a week, 5/6 hours a night for only \$50. The pay was low as hell, but I appreciated the gig because it gave me a club I could learn and grown in as a DJ. Plus I was trash as hell lol, cause I was new, so it was just the perfect spot for me to practice live.

Since you first started to now, how has the journey thus far been? Is it everything you imagine at this point as far as goals and your passion for it all?

It's been hard as hell... and not afraid to say it. When you want something though, you really have to be all in. That comes with giving everything you got, and fighting through every obstacle in your way. It's been plenty of times where I said I was done, but at the end of the day, I had to keep going. Everybody has ups and downs, that's apart of life. It's all about how you handle those situations.

In this era of being a DJ many people are simply sticking to playlist without scratching or other DJ techniques via a laptop. As a fairly newer DJ do you believe it's important to be able to spin on vinyl and why or why not?

I'ma say no. I think if you have the chance, definitely touch a pair of turntables and learn how to use them but I don't think it's as important anymore. Times have changed a lot, turntables aren't DJs only option anymore. They have their benefits, and I personally love turntables, but they're not convenient for most DJs now. My personally preference, I use a controller.

We all have those times of doubt in what we're doing. Have you ever had this moment and if so how did you get past it? Was there a mentor that helped you through it or some inspiration you received?

Of course, but It's just a matter of remembering my "why". That's how I get through those times, knowing this is what I what in life and knowing who I'm doing this for. So for the most part, it's me that's in my corner motivating myself to just keep going and not to give up.

After playing at historical places like the House of Blues around the states to working with MMG, what has been your biggest accomplishment thus far?

That's it right there lol. Having the opportunity to travel across the U.S. and play at almost every major House of Blues in the country, and sharing the stage every night with Rick Ross and his artist Yowda, it's nothing topping that right now lol. I know it's only up from here, but for right now, working with MMG & going on tour with them was definitely my biggest accomplishment so far.

So we have some background established, now we're going to switch it up with some lighter questions.

North vs South, in a Verses Battle, who do you got to win?

I'm going with the South off top lol. I'm from the South, born and raised. So I couldn't see myself saying the North if I wanted to lol.

Describe South Carolina in one word.

Hungry. And I say that because lately I been making it a priority to make sure I'm tapping in with SC artist heavy. So I been talking to a lot of them, and I'm telling you, they're hungry. So I'ma just say, if you're a Carolina artist, keep going. Keep your foot on their neck and keep applying pressure.

Would you rather hustle or talent?

Personally, I'm a fan of the hustle... because being honest, we all know that handwork beats talent any day. Like I told you earlier, I feel like I was blessed with my talents, but I also said I had to put in the work to bring it all together. If you got talent, you're blessed. Just make sure you also work hard and hustle because it's always somebody coming for your spot.

Now this part of the interview is called explain these pictures. You've probably seen it before, so in as many details as you can let's dive in.

Explain These Pictures:



Lol this picture was taken at Boosie Bash in 2018. I used to work with Bad Azz, which is Boosie's label, and every year Boosie throw a crazy concert in his hometown Baton Rouge, LA. I'm talking about he bring out the biggest names with hit songs at that time, and all his industry partners, so you can image how big and crazy the show is. But that picture right there, that's during Lil Duval's performance (Livin' My Best Life), and you see Boosie right there on the right. But man for real though, that's the biggest stage I ever been on. I mean it was like 10,000 people in that crowd, and I'm right there in front of each and every one of them. It's crazy, but a blessing at the same time...

Now lets dive into some more in depth questions.

How have you had to adjust since the Corona Virus and do you think things will ever go back to how they were?

To be real, I've had to adjust by tapping in with my creative side. Because think about it, everything has been shut down, so of course, DJs haven't been able to eat because the clubs and venues been closed. So I've had to come up with a lot of different ideas... I been in my bag this year for real lol. It's a lot of things that I've taught myself and projects that I've put together since all of this started. At some point, of course everything will open back up and thing will somewhat seem "normal" again, but I feel like we should be expecting a new "normal" at this point. Like wearing face mask for example, I don't see that going anywhere. I feel like that's going to be a new normal for us.

Tell us about some of the other ventures, hobbies, or organizations you are invested in, whether it's time or money and how you got involved.

I'm really invested into a lot right now, like you said, whether it's time or money. I'm just trying to work, I'm trying to tap in with a variety of people and make history.

After touring around the US, playing some of the biggest events, and even collaborating with companies, what's been your favorite experience you've had since you first decided to enter the music industry in 2012?

I have so many lol, because you got to think, I never saw myself doing any of this. So it's all a blessing to me, I take it in and try to cherish every experience. If I have to choose though, it's being on tour. Being on tour is different lol. It's honestly an experience that's kind of hard to explain but I can tell you it dope as hell lol, it's a lot of late nights and early flights too. My biggest tour to date was the Port of Miami 2 Tour with Rick Ross, GunPlay, and Yowda. But I've been on the road with a few different

artist, including my artist NewMoney Quez, from Atlanta, GA. We're actually just starting to move again, you know, since all of the Covid stuff started. But you're able to experience so much on the road, you honestly learn a lot about yourself and the people you on the road with too.

I try to keep the conversation light, but with everything going today I have to ask a couple questions touching on the subject.

What do you think is one of the solutions to finding and upholding justice for our people who are African American?

Bro I honestly don't know. Look at everything that's going on around us, I honestly don't know what it'll take. I mean, it's going to take us as blacks to come together... Is that something that we can do? I hope so. It's power in numbers, we all know that. You see how big the Black Lives Matter movement got, then all of these companies started making changes. They felt the pressure from the black community. So we just have to continue sticking together, that's where it starts. Sticking together and impacting our communities in a positive way. Let's start focusing on the next generation of kids, those are our future doctors, police officers, and lawyers.

Are there any people that you know that are doing great work in the community including yourself that people in SC and the world should know more about and if so who are these people and the organizations they are associated with?

That's where a lot of my focus is going this year, in order to gear up for a big movement in 2021. I started my #ForThePeople campaign last year, which I have plans to form that into a non-profit organization soon. I'm just looking to use my voice and help the community anyway I can. I actually just held a voters drive in my hometown, and that was dope. We had a good turn out, so I'm looking to do more events like that soon.

I just want to say thank you for answering a couple of questions on such a hot topic.

You have the respect from some of the most famous DJs in the game and from what I see you definitely represent SC and the culture in the best way. So what's next for DJ Montana Ali?

Continuing to make history and spreading my brand worldwide... I have a brand that I've been pushing for a few years now, OnDemand Worldwide, and 2020 has been the year it's been taking off. I just released my official march, so definitely make sure yall check that out the website www.OnDemandMerch.shop. But I got a lot coming up man... my mixtapes been going crazy, independent artist make sure you tap in with me on those, I got another one that's about to drop in a few weeks. My interview series is picking up heavy, and like I said, we also starting to get back to these shows on the road. So I'm busy, i'm working. I got so much in store man, it's only up from here.

Before we go do you have anything else you would like to share with the people? Anything we didn't touch on, new projects, news or upcoming endeavors?

I wanna say I appreciate you and your team most definitely! Thank yall for having me, the interview was dope. But also, I always have to plug in my team and show them some love... Shoutout to the team, OnDemand, and shoutout to the label Street Capital Entertainment. Go cop some merch too, it's out now! www.OnDemandMerch.shop

I just want to say thank you for taking the time to respond to my messages first and then for the interview. And also for giving the questions the attention you did. I know you there's quite a number of questions, but I hope you enjoyed the interview. I also want to say thank you on behalf of all the artist, independent and established for supporting the culture as much as you do and keeping music in the people's ears, especially in the city. Thank you for sharing your story with us and the world through this interview. Here at AI iKon Entertainment we support those who support the culture and it's been a honor to interview you. I wish you nothing but more success and anytime you have something new going on let us know and we'll be more than happy to show our support in any way we can.