

An Inspiring DJ Pioneer

DJ Alibaba

At the end of November YVE had the pleasure of interviewing an entertainment pioneer.

He started in Winnipeg, Manitoba and moved to Vancouver in 1992. He has been active in the industry since 1985 as an on-air radio personality, television host and DJ Promoter. He has DJ'd in various night clubs, hosted concerts & after-parties for the likes of Boyz II Men, Backstreet Boys, Kanye West, just to name a few! You may also recognize him as an on-air personality, he worked for CFRO 102.7 FM, 96.1 FM, Z95.3 FM & The Beat 94.5 FM. I don't want to spoil the interview, so please sit comfortably and enjoy getting to know DJ Alibaba!



Paula: Who is DJ Alibaba?

DJ Alibaba: DJ Alibaba is a person who loves God first of all, loves people and music. Someone that wants to make a difference in the world to make it a better place.

Paula: Where does your artistic name comes from?

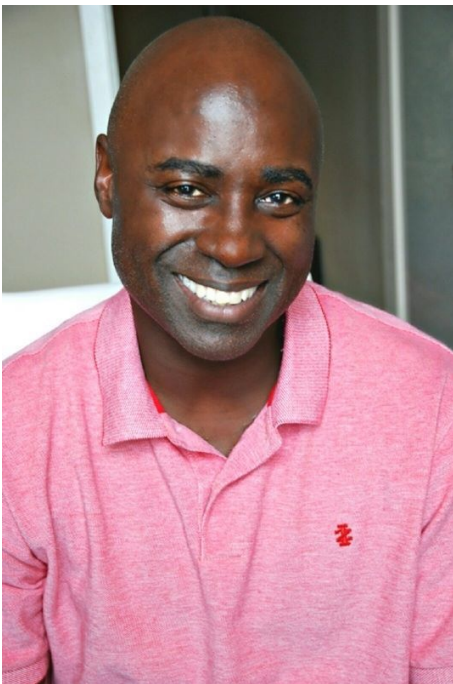
Dj Alibaba: This is a great story. A friend of mine, DJ Grand Master Funk, who I started DJing with when I moved to Winnipeg and was also a major promoter, went down to California. Around this time we were looking for a DJ name for myself. So, it was 4 o'clock in the morning and he called me collect and said "Hey Al, I got your name!", and I was thinking "Why am I getting a collect phone call from Grand Master Funk at 4 o'clock in the morning"? (he laughs). Turns out that he was in this club called Alibaba's Cave in Los Angeles, California. Now, I'm originally from California, so he just linked the two together and said "I'm gonna call ya DJ Alibaba" and it just stuck. I wasn't totally fond of the name at the time, but as you know we don't necessarily pick our own nicknames, other people get to pick them for us. (He laughs). And that's how I got my name!

Paula: And how did DJ Alibaba's story start?

DJ Alibaba: I realized a financial opportunity to make a career. I could work as a DJ three night a week and make as much money as working 40 hours a week at a warehouse for Western Foods, where I was working in Winnipeg. I also realized I could spend more time with my family so it was a no brainer. It all happened because on my third year of working in the warehouse, I was offered the opportunity to DJ for the company Christmas party. The following week, two of the senior union members approached me and said "Why are you working in the company? We suggest you go and pursue your DJ dreams, because this was the best Christmas Party we've ever had." That was kind of an eye opening conversation, and a wake up call. It took me two years after that to quit my job. I quit on the day of my fifth year anniversary to pursue my DJ career full time and haven't ever looked back.

Paula: From the Military to the entertainment industry, that is fascinating. What inspired you to make this life change?

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Paula: May I ask you what triggered the decision to quit your job after two years of knowing that your heart was with the turntable ?

DJ Alibaba: Well I wasn't happy at my job. I wasn't being challenged mentally but I did have a family to support, so I meticulously thought it out and said "Ok, I'm going to give myself another two years working in here", so on my fifth anniversary I decided to quit for my own personal growth and happiness.

Paula: Very inspiring. Not everyone has the will to fight for their true dreams, because sometimes their responsibilities hold them back. But you are a living example that one just has to trust in yourself, fight and not give up. You are a role model to this new generation, but who are your role models?

DJ Alibaba: My mom and dad are my number one role models, and then after that would be Martin Luther King Jr., Muhammad Ali, Nelson Mandela, Bob Marley, Mother Teresa and so

many others whose foundation is love.

Paula: I honestly can see that in you, because for example, in your shows, you read people and ensure they have a good time and finish their day with a smile on their face. Your career and your persona is all about giving truly to others. Even though you have such an extensive career in the entertainment world you are very down to earth. You have hosted after-parties for people like Backstreet Boys and Kanye West, and you are also an on air personality, what has been one of the greatest memory you have had so far?

DJ Alibaba: I had an opportunity to go to Greenville, BC and DJ with a friend of mine, Jon Malach aka JIAL 14. His father was a counsellor in Greenville, BC, at Nisgaa Village and they wanted to have a dance for the school. So they flew us there to DJ, we went in with an open mind. We brought presents, shirts, CDs, posters, a bunch of things. Not knowing what we were about to experience. The adults of the reservation prayed over us, and blessed me with a hat, hand-made, from them. That was the most spiritual, enlightening and fulfilling experience I have ever had as a DJ. It really just connected me with the people and their oppression of living on a reservation, and through that oppression I saw that regardless of their circumstances they were the most happy, loving, and welcoming people I have ever met. It was truly the most exceptional experience I've ever had in my DJ career, and that means more to me than DJing in front of 18,000 people.

Paula: I can only imagine how wonderful that experience was. One of the greats gifts in life is when someone allows you to enter in their life. They not only did that but showed you a little piece of history with the blessed hat they gave you, how wonderful. What has being the most challenging obstacle you have overcome yet?

DJ Alibaba: Self doubt, and the doubt of others. Self doubt, not having the confidence, and having other people, and some of the closest people in your life, telling you that you can't do it, you can't make DJing your career, you can't make a living out of that. As much as they love you, they can plant doubt and insecurity in your mind. I always say "The only people who say can't are the ones who haven't."

Paula: If you could go back in time and talk to yourself when you were younger, what would you say to the young DJ Alibaba pursuing his dreams?

DJ Alibaba: "Drop your ego!", and treat everyone with respect. Don't just do things for monetary reasons or for self fulfillment and just remember, "all money ain't good money". My dad used to always say to me, "Yeah, that's right Al, it's all about you", and I never understood until I matured. He was basically telling me to get over myself ... sometimes we can be a little too high on ourselves.

Paula: You mentioned to me that you coach basketball, that you started coaching your daughter's team. And once she graduated you stopped, but later on another person asked you to coach again and you have haven't stopped since then. It's has been over twenty years now, what do you cherish most as a basketball coach?

DJ Alibaba: The impact I have in young people's lives. I don't coach for the win, I don't coach to teach people how to play basketball. My number one job is to help them become better people. As adults we can learn a lot from the youth because they are the future, and as adults sometimes we spend more time telling them how to do things, how they should be, but we don't listen. If we listened, we would be better equipped to guide in the right direction. My personal scripture, because I am a believer, God is my foundation and Jesus is my friend, is 1 John 4:4 "Greater is He in me, than He in the world". My pastors, John and Helen Burns of Relate Church (Surrey) reminded us this past Sunday what you do will become history, what you set in motion will be your legacy. I want to leave a legacy, not just be history.

Paula: What an inspiring life goal! What would be your advice for the new generation of entertainers?

DJ Alibaba:

- The best investment you could make is in yourself.
- You pay for what you don't know.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.

The three Golden Rules that I hope stay with them throughout their lives. Follow your passion, whatever you do always do it with excellence, do everything with integrity, do it for others not yourself or money, do it for the love of it, and always be happy for other people's success.

Paula: As you mentioned before, you want to leave a legacy and part of your legacy so far is your company Friends United Beyond All Race, which you use to raise funds for charity. How did it start?

DJ Alibaba: Felix Banting, Burt Arciega and I ran a long weekend club party called F.U.B.A.R., and we wanted to do something to thank people for supporting us over the years. So Felix introduced me to Harold Frederiks who was managing Splashdown Park. We decided to do a picnic, have people come down and BBQ with their families. After a few years there was a lot of people coming so we decided to turn it into an opportunity for people to give towards a charity. So we officially started the annual Summer Splash event.

Then Felix somehow got me to quit baseball and play golf instead. That's when he sprung the idea of us hosting a charity golf tournament, I think he set me up! (he laughs).

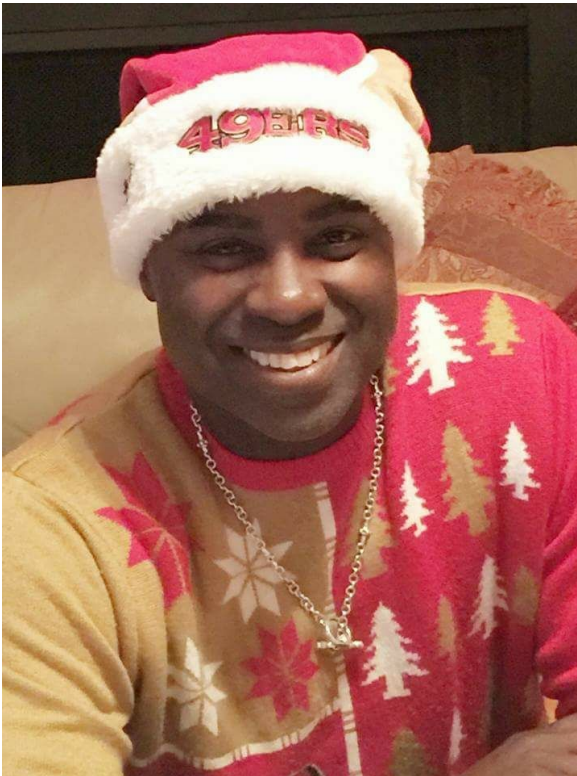
We looked for a charity and decided to raise funds for Make-A-Wish after we spoke with Kim Heron, who was the catalyst for everything we do today. She invited me to come down to the office, and from the time I walked through the door we just hit it off. Her joke was that she was wondering "who was this black guy with all that bling on, looking like he's from the hood?", (he laughs). She felt the heart we had for people and what we wanted to do, that we didn't have any other motives but to help kids and families who were going through difficulties. Everything got set in motion, and from that day on, I've been with Make-A-Wish ever since, it's been approximately fifteen years now.

Paula: If anyone is interested in making donations, how can they find out more information?

DJ Alibaba: Our page for information and donations is friendsunitedbeyondallrace.com and you can also find my DJ information and what nights I spin at djalibabavancouver.com.

Paula: I am sure our readers would love to check out your events, can you give us any spoilers for the next events you have coming up?

Dj Alibaba: Well I currently DJ every Thursday night at City Side Winery (Olympic Village, Vancouver), we call it Soul 'N The City. On Friday nights I'm at the Flying Beaver (Richmond), Saturdays are at The Park at English Bay, inside The Best Western Plus Sand Hotel (Vancouver), the weekly event is called Soul Train Social. New Years Eve will be at The Hilton in Metrotown Vancouver with Melo Productions, it will be a crazy good party with dinner and four rooms of entertainment. At the end of the NFL season, I'll be hosting this years NFL playoffs at The Clayton Public House (Cloverdale/Surrey) and The Super Bowl Party at Jack's Public House (Surrey)



Paula: YVE will remind all of the readers about this coming events. I would like to thank you for your time, and being so kind to take this interview. It has been a fantastic experience to get to know one of the legends in the industry and his kind heart. You are such an example. Thank you very much!

Dj Alibaba: Thank You for the opportunity, I appreciate it. One Love to everyone and... Merry Christmas!