**A Minute with Mannie**

By Mike Andrews

As one of the most easily recognizable voices and most recognizable beats from the past decade, rapper/producer/DJ Mannie Fresh, producer for some of the most recognizable songs of the late 1990s and early 2000s including Juvenile’s “Back That Thang Up”, Lil Wayne’s “Go DJ”, and his own “Real Big”, is in an essence starting his career all over again after some time off of the music scene.

Mannie Fresh’s rise to fame into the music scene came in the late 1990s as the in-house producer for Cash Money Records (the label that bred the superstar known as Lil Wayne), half of the duo Big Tymers (the other half being Birdman), and producer for the Hot Boys (the hip-hop super group composed of Lil’ Wayne, Juvenile, B.G., and Turk).

After a very public split from Cash Money Records due to financial misappropriations, Mannie Fresh has spent the better part of the past five years reenergizing and ultimately restarting his career from the ground-up.

I had some time to catch up with the legendary producer, and his voice on the phone is just as recognizable as he fills me in on what he’s been doing for the past couple of years. Fresh is still producing for big names such as Rick Ross and Mary J. Blige, but the way his tracks are being sold has greatly changed over time. “The way it works now is I just send out tracks to labels and they submit them to artists…It’s not like you get to sit with somebody and go produce a track out….you never know who you’re working with these days,” said Fresh.

As for who he knows he’s working with, he has been collaborating with Mystikal, the former “Shake That Ass” No Limit rapper who just got out of a lengthy prison bid and is trying to restart his career. “Mystikal is a talented dude…it took him a second to adjust but now you know he’s in a good place and it’s clicking and everything is happening right now…I would say right now, we’re at 110 percent.”

Fresh recently collaborated with former Hot Boys member B.G. on B.G.’s last album, “Too Hood to be Hollywood”. “We always did work. We never stopped working. It’s always been politics or whatever whether it be his label or whoever I was affiliated with that stopped songs that we wanted to come out.”

Lots of rumors circulated last summer about a possible Hot Boys reunion, a fire that was fed in some interviews by Lil’ Wayne. Mannie Fresh, however, is still (rightfully) sour over the money situation and does not see this happening for some time. “There isn’t gonna be one (a reunion) until the money is right. It’s nothing personal but it’s just about the money. They still continue to sell my music from their catalog…but they don’t think they owe me royalties on that.”

Fresh said many times that it was strictly business and it was nothing personal. He still feels like Lil’ Wayne is one of the best. “I mean Wayne is the man but that’s what he’s supposed to do. I have nothing but the utmost respect for Wayne…” said Fresh. Later on, Mannie seemed a bit salty slightly hinting that he didn’t think that he got enough respect for the way that Lil Wayne has blown up. “I’m not gonna say that he will say this and don’t take it the wrong way, but whether he likes it or doesn’t like it, he’s still part of Mannie Fresh’s DNA.”

As for the future for Mannie Fresh, he’s been working with Guns N Roses cutting some remixes that the band gave him, and he’s running his own label, Chubby Boy Records, which his last album, “Return of the Ballin” was released on in 2009. “The whole reason I did “Return of the Ballin” is because it was my own thing. And I got to distribute it myself. When you look at the picture (album cover), it wasn’t no high quality shit. It was just some shit I just took and put out there…I don’t need special effects, I don’t need none of that. I just need to get music out.”

As for now, he still works on his label, keeps sending his tracks out, and goes all around the US as a DJ for many different clubs. “That’s (Djing) is what I started from…the whole rocking crowds is teaching me little elements all over again on how to make tracks.” As for the future, Mannie fresh is humbled, reenergized, and has gained a new sense of respect for the rap game. “Mannie Fresh right now is at a humble beginning again. It’s a rebirth…it just took me a while to figure out like, “Damn, I still love this,”…Now that I’m there at that place, I’m good, I’m ready to go forward. I’m ready to kill the game again and give the people the Mannie Fresh that they love.”