

## Beni G & Blakey - Beatdown pt3

Written by Laurent  
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Beatdown pt3, an interview with Beni G of the Mixologists and Blakey of the Truesicians...

So after talking to Pogo and Bizniss, i managed to catch Beni G, one half of the Mixologists and Blakey, part of the Truesicians. Beni and Go have been wrecking dancefloors for a few years now with their very own blend of musical styles and a heavy emphasis of drum n bass. They are also past holders of DMC Team titles, and have more recently been working with Kila Kella as part of the Spit Kingdom Sound System. Blakey is a DJ that has come to light in the last year following his coming second at the UK DMC and winning the UK teams as part of the Truesicians... Let's roll...

Conducted on the afternoon of the Beatdown 2003 World Finals. Be sure to check our other Beatdown interviews in the archive.

What's your definition of turntablism?

Beni G: My definition, damn it... There are so many definitions you know, but my one would be like a live remixer. Somebody who can play with shit, and take sounds and records, and manipulate that live on stage in a way that's never been done before.

Blakey: I look at it like another aspect of being a DJ, and it's a more musical part I suppose, it requires more skills and musical affinities then just playing records one after the other. You can still be turntablistic in a club set but a lot of times it might go over people's head...

Beni G: I don't really like the word turntablism though...

Yeah I know what you mean but you have to use a word to help definitions...

Pogo (walks by): Back hand slap is another word you can use!

Beni G: It's a part of what goes on DJ wise, but it doesn't have to be everything. Some people I think sometimes just get too much into a certain aspect of it and lose the bigger picture.

Blakey: Exactly

Beni G: I mean it's not like I'm trying to say we are not,

because we are a part of it and it's part of where we come from and what has helped us break through... But sometimes it can be a bit too narrow I think...

And what have you been up to recently?

Beni G: Just been on DJing dates with Mixologists really, we just toured Australia, New Zealand, Canada... Just been doing our thing and enjoying ourselves, but its nice to be back home in the UK. And yeah apart from that, we just been working in the studio on some bits, making sure we are on top of our shit as well for when we play out and working with Kella and MC Trip as well.

You still working on the Spit Kingdom stuff?

Beni G: Yeah, we are heavily involved in that. So yeah in the next year I am gonna try and dedicate my time more to working on that stuff with Kella, cos at the moment we are all quite busy, but once we lock it down it should be dope.

And what about you Blakey?

Blakey: Yeah I just been DJing a lot and trying to get myself to as many places as possible, getting my face and name known. I am trying to get my style across and show people a good time, while trying to break people's pre-conceptions of what music can be like. I am also gonna be doing some dates abroad in the next few months, in the States and Europe. And apart from that just working on some bits and enjoying myself really.

And have you guys heard of scratch notation?

Beni G: Yeah I heard of it, saw it as well on the scratch DVD... I mean personally I haven't really gone and looked at it in depth but I like the concept and I think it has a lot of potential. I don't know if it is something I would use or we would use as the Mixologists, but I can see that it has potential for people who are more into that aspect of things, or who would want to share their work or exchange it with other people. But it's definitely got potential and I'm interested to see how it evolves and becomes used.

Blakey: Yeah I think maybe for the hardcore scratch DJs... But as Beni said, I think some people might use it a little and some might go all out with it. It can definitely be good and help in a sense, like giving us a way to talk to each other more clearly and stuff. And it's got potential beyond just scratching as well, it can help with all aspects of the artform as well.

Beni G: Yeah I think the main thing is there needs to be a proper consensus as to what exactly is going on with it, so maybe once that happens it will become more tangible for all of us.

Blakey: I think someone should take it and properly and really write it up, like maybe someone like Qbert who can also endorse it in a sense.

And have you heard of Radar's work on the Concerto for turntable?

Beni G: Yeah shit like that I'm really interested in because it's someone taking it further. Its how people interpret it in their own ways you know? Shit like that I think is one of the best ways to push this whole thing further.

And if you had the opportunity would you go into competitions and battle again?

Beni: Uhhhhh... Probably not, we had our time, you know. Its kinda like we lost our hunger for it, there is something inside you and even the last time we entered it wasn't really there anymore. You got to be real hungry, you got to be on it, you got to be practicing, and in the last few years our agenda has changed. I still love watching them and checking out the DJs, still like it when someone comes out with a sick routine you know. So yeah we still like it and follow but I don't think we would go back to it because there is so much more that we want to do and try. But we loved it you know, we got some dope memories, and some nice videos for when we grow old (laughs).

And you Blakey you still battling aren't you?

Beni: Yeah that boy is still hungry!

Blakey: Yeah I am. Last year was really good, I mean for me coming second in the UK that was the perfect way to leave it. Because it has open so many doors for me and given me something big to build on and still leave me with something to do. And also on top of that there is the team thing, which we are still going to do for a few years I think.

Beni: That's it, that's what it's all about.

And what do you guys think about the different competitions? How in the last few years there seems to be a shift away from the more "prestigious" or established comps like DMC towards comps like the Beatdown which have less of a marketing feel to them and are more about the DJs putting something on for other DJs?

Blakey: I think if you give it a couple of years, the Beatdown will be on par with the DMC.

When I say that I mean that if a DJ wins the DMC that will open more doors to them than any other competitions really.

Yeah and the money prize in the Beatdown is also a bonus and a nice change from the free gifts from sponsors.

Blakey: Yeah that is definitely an incentive and its good as well.

Beni: I think either way though if you win a competition you will gain you know? You are a winner, and not just in the sense that you got a title but also you can use that to get you to a level or wherever it is you want to go. I think whatever competition it is if you use your win properly you can get stuff like sponsorship, gigs, whatever. Its all about how you decide to use it and make the best of it, and most times it's definitely profitable.

Blakey: If you look at all the DMC winners over the past like 4 years, they have all done very different things with it. Skully is now doing this thing with Kiss FM, and production as well. And he is doing a hell of a lot of shows, so he is doing quite well with himself and taken it further. Whereas if you look at someone like Quest, who has won it more recently, he is doing his own thing with it. So if you look at it it opens up whatever doors you want it to really, you just got to know what you want to do with it.

And Blakey i seen there is a 2Tall EP out now and you are on there aren't you?

Blakey: Yeah its coming out this month on Needlework Records, called the Rise. It's not really like a club track, it's more like 2Tall's music, and I'm on the A-Side. But we got an EP coming out, with the Truesicians, which is going to have some UK MCs on it and that's going to be more like a club joint. It should be out sometime early next year.

So you guys are already working in other areas and doing different things then just battling or DJing?

Blakey: Yeah we want to put something out, and then whether people like it or not that's another thing altogether. For us it's more

about having something to build on, and then we can take it where we want.

And you guys (turning to Beni), you are still banging out lots of drum n bass?

Beni: Yeah man. I always been into drum n bass from day one and I always followed it, And so it's nice that in the last couple of years I got to play it out, and Go is really into it now as well. We were talking about it a little while back and we probably still play more hip-hop sets than we do dnb, but it's all good you know what I mean?

Yeah I remember when I first came here and saw you guys the first few times, you and the Perverts, where the first groups of DJs I can remember who really came out and did parties where you knew you weren't gonna just hear hip-hop for two hours, but that you were going to take people on a little journey.

Beni: It's kinda like part of your instinct, of what makes us as DJs. That is us, that's me, when I play drum n bass, that's me you looking at, not what I'm trying to be or pretending to be. That's where I'm from and what I grew up with and really our sets now is just a reflection of that. That's why its nice that we are now able to do that and enjoy it even more.

Blakey: I came from a totally different background in terms of influence from a lot of the DJs on the scene right now. One of my main influences as a DJ was EZ, because that's who I listened to a lot when I was younger. That's why it's the same for me as Beni was saying, that when I play a club set, there is always something in there that is me, that I like and play because of that. But I don't mean it like I drop garage in my sets! (laughs)

Beni: Yeah it's music that we like and when we play in a club we don't want to feel like you are selling out, or if that means that people think you are selling out, you can't let yourself care. You have to remind yourself and prove to them that this is us. There are so many different styles of music around you that can't not be influenced, you know? And talking about garage, when we did a routine in like 2000, we used a couple of garage tunes, and some people where fucking having a go at us and hating us, like "oh they are playing garage now". And for us it was like "so what? We listen to it, and if we want to do a routine with it, we will!" I mean, even if you haven't grown up with something your whole life, but you fall in love with it and you play it all or even a good selection of it, then why not? Who is to say what music you are allowed to play or not to play?

Yeah exactly, as you were saying before there is more to the whole thing then just turntablism and scratching or even one style of music. You got to be able to go from rock to pop

to whatever you feel like as long as its well done and gets people moving.

Blakey: I have actually dropped some pop before in my sets, stuff like a bit of Michael Jackson, and it always works.

Beni: Yeah exactly!

Its like what Spinbad has done with the 80's megamix, it's 80's music but approached and done in the way a hip-hop DJ would and it works. It always brings a smile to your face when you listen to it.

Beni: That has to be one of the best mix, every DJ has that tape cos' its so dope. And it's great as well because you can play it to like older generations and they are like damn! They know all the tunes and at the same time it shows them another aspect of DJing and hip-hop that they might not know about.

Blakey: Yeah and switching up a club set in front of a crowd generally always goes down well and opens their eyes.

Beni: As a DJ you might get booked for certain clubs but at the same time you gotta balance that with what the promoters want you to play and what you want to play yourself. You can't do just what you wanna do, you gotta give and take some you know? You might get booked and the guy will be like "do what you want" but most times you have to stick to a certain genre or a mixture of genres. For us we've been at it for so long now and really gone out and now people know that when they see us they can't just expect to hear hip-hop or just the one thing, we'll throw in some dancehall, some ragga, something new, something old. Sometimes we might play a straight set depending on where we are and the next time we might flip it up.

Blakey: sometimes you will find a record and when you bought it you are like "I wanna play this, fuck it!" ... Actually

Beni I wanted to ask you this: Do you find that sometimes when you play in a club, unless you are doing a showcase, some people come up to you and are like "man why didn't you scratch more or do this or that?" And then if you do a showcase but there isn't that much scratching or technicality then some people are like "man what are you doing?"

Beni: Yeah it happens all the time, it's really funny too when it does, because you are kind of like "well I'm not here to just scratch for two hours", but then if you don't scratch some people do feel cheated in a way. It's hard to balance it sometimes, some people just want to get their drink on and party and some people want you to be really technical. I find that if you give them a little bit then they always want a little bit more, you give them a little bit and they ask for more. What we try to do in our sets is fuck it up a little bit so that the people who don't really quite care or know what we are doing dance anyway and then cats that want to see us fuck it up all time still kinda dance to it but get their groove on and still see us fuck it up. So that's how we try to balance it but there is always people who want to see you scratch for

two hours, and you cant do anything about it. But that's not really us.

Blakey: Its just not gonna happen

Beni: If you come from a background where you are a party rocking DJ, but you have battled before and you come out to play clubs and mix records, and you are like us and you cut it up a bit, it's difficult for people who have seen you on videos and in DMC or at battles, to then see you play in a club and understand that you are not gonna do the same thing. You were booked to play some tunes. Sometimes people really don't get that and that's when they come up with all this stuff to you. But the longer you keep on doing your thing as a DJ the more these people will slowly realise that they are wrong to assume these things... And also you have to put things together in an interesting way as well, to help you catch their attention even more.

Blakey: With my battle sets, I try to take a very club sort of orientation when I do it. My set this year at DMC for example didn't have any battle records in it. And I tried to make a point of that, because I don't see the point in using only battle records.

And what would be your top 3 DJs? The people that have influenced you the most?

Beni: People who have influenced me I would say would have to be DJ Randall, the long standing jungle/dnb DJ. My boys the Perverts, they our partners in crime! And Craze as well cos whenever he comes out he kills it.

Blakey: I would probably say the same but replace Randall with EZ cos he is the one I looked up to and also probably Skully cos he is a big influence.

And where would you see turntablism in 10 years?

Beni: Just Djing as a whole I think that the right DJs are gonna get to the right places, and it's still gonna be stronger and the whole vinyl and CDs thing as well is gonna help blow it up.

Blakey had to go by that point so we didn't get his answer on that one.

For more

info on the mixologists check [www.mixologists.com](http://www.mixologists.com), and be sure to check them out if they are coming near you, as they are some of the dopest guys around! For more on Blakey check [www.djblakey.com](http://www.djblakey.com). Since this interview the Truesicians have disbanded unfortunately. However you can still check our interview with 2tall (check the solo artists section of the archive) to find out more about that.