

Rickerby Hinds: Welcome to The Creator State, where we share stories of social innovation and entrepreneurship for mover, shakers, creators, and changemakers. Each episode will celebrate success and failure, ingenuity, and the endless pursuit of knowledge from education to implementation. Join us as we explore everything in between, The Creator State.

Rickerby Hinds: Rafael Lopez knows when to press play. As a DJ, music producer, and artist based in Palm Desert, California, he's known as Alf Alpha. He creates and performs hip hop and electronic dance music for nightclubs, festivals, and parties, sometimes from the inside of one of his 70s era Volkswagen buses, customized and retrofitted as a mobile DJ booth. Alf Alpha began his career as a DJ while attending The University of California, Riverside, where he played soccer for the Highlanders and was a founding member of the UCR chapter of Hip Hop Congress. Following an album release in 2009 and a self released beat tape the following year, Alf Alpha was invited to perform at the annual Coachella Valley Music and Art Festival in 2011, and has been an artist at the festival every year since.

Rickerby Hinds: In addition to DJing for brands across the globe and launching a new label, Super Sonido Sistema, DJ Alf Alpha is also an educator, sharing his time and talents with high school students through a six week DJ workshop. Thanks for tuning in today. I'm your host, Rickerby Hinds. Welcome to The Creator State.

Rickerby Hinds: So welcome to The Creator State. My name is Rickerby Hinds; today, I am excited to welcome DJ Alf Alpha, and we'll talk about the name immediately after I talk a little bit about you coming back to UCR; having been a student here, having done some pretty dynamic things while you were on campus having to do with DJing, having to do with hip hop. But I want to start off by first welcoming you back to the campus.

DJ Alf Alpha: Thank you.

Rickerby Hinds: And secondly, I want to being with the name. Tell me about the name, because it has connotations as most hip hop names do, and also it has a unique spelling which most hip hop names do. So talk a little bit about that first.

DJ Alf Alpha: So... it's great being here, thanks for the invite. The name Alf Alpha came to me when I was in high school. It was given to me like most nicknames, you know; you don't just start calling yourself... Usually your friends start calling you... One of my friends was throwing a party, and he was like, "Hey, I want to make a flyer, and I want you to DJ my party."

DJ Alf Alpha: At that point, I didn't have a DJ name. I was just in my bedroom mixing, I'm like a junior in high school. My friend, he was a senior in high school, so he was always encouraging me. "You got to get your name out there. We got to throw a party and have you DJ." My name's Rafael, and so people call me Rafa, like Rafa, so I had told him... He was like, "What should we put on the flyer?" I was like,

"Well, why don't we put Alpha, like Ralfa, like Rafael... Alpha Ralfa," and when I said that to him, he looked at me and he was like, "That's horrible. That's not a good name."

DJ Alf Alpha: But he was like... I think when I told him Alpha... Alpha Ralfa, something triggered in his head, and so he went home, made a flyer. The next day when I walk into my chemistry class, someone shows me a flyer and it's like, "Alf Alpha." They're like, "You're Alf Alpha," and then from that flyer, basically... From that day, all my friends started calling me Alf Alpha. Like you said, Alf Alpha has a lot of different meanings, you know? Alfalfa, the Little Rascal, which is a very classic movie, and also alfalfa; horses eat alfalfa, it's like a plant, you know? Then Alpha, which is just number one, being an alpha male, and then Alf which is the artificial lifeform, the alien.

Rickerby Hinds: So you stumbled into... one of the best things you can have, I think, in hip hop culture, which is either a moniker or a persona with multiple incarnations. You know, with the Wu Tang Clan, they gave each other multiple names, they would select multiple names. But you had a name with multiple incarnations, so just a little bit... Can you talk a little bit about starting off from high school, when you were here at UCR, some of the things that you did while you were on campus that helped to catapult you or to guide you or to push you in the direction that you ultimately went in?

DJ Alf Alpha: Yeah, definitely. I mean, music's been in my blood since I was a youngster, and when I was... My parents aren't musical at all. My parents were the ones that would always throw the party in the backyard, and say, "Hey, we're going to hire a mariachi band for your birthday." So I always had this appreciation for music, you know, and so when I was in high school, I was really fascinated with hip hop culture, specifically the technique of scratching; being a DJ and being able to manipulate a record. You know, high school's when I... mowed enough lawns to buy two belt driven turntables, and started teaching myself how to DJ.

DJ Alf Alpha: I got familiar with hip hop and doing research, watching Grandmaster Flash in the kitchen, Wild Style, you know? Seeing that, those were the kind of people I was looking up to, the pioneers of hip hop, as kind of... But this was before there was tutorials on YouTube. It was very much a lot of trial and error, so as a youngster buying turntables, it was very frustrating. No one in my family's a DJ, no one knows anything of what I'm doing. I'm just in my room trying to figure out... My parents are like, "What's going on?"

Rickerby Hinds: So you're doing this in high school, you acquire your name as a junior, junior/senior in high school, and-

DJ Alf Alpha: I start doing more house parties. I started getting out of the bedroom and starting to do these house parties, you know, and it was when I really reached college; when I came to Riverside is when I started working with the campus. That's an interesting story, it all together too.

- Rickerby Hinds: So talk about that because when you come to Riverside, you're at a research one university. We don't do hip hop here. Well, I take that back... But tell me about what that was like, that transition.
- DJ Alf Alpha: So yeah, when I transferred to UCR, the Internet was still obviously a new kind of thing, and there was this thing called MySpace. I moved to Pentland, you know, and so I'm staying in my dorm and I don't know any... I'm like, "There has to be some kind of culture here." So I go on my MySpace and I look at the bulletins. It was like, "Hip Hop Congress, looking for DJ. Are you..." They were asking people that were either graffiti artists, break dancers... involved in hip hop, you know, the elements of hip hop. Poetry, MCing, and DJing, and they were looking specifically for a DJ.
- DJ Alf Alpha: So I responded immediately, and I said, "I'm new on campus, I'm a DJ," and then lo and behold on the other end of that was [Gopi 00:08:08]. Gopi was like, "I need a DJ tomorrow. Can you DJ for me tomorrow? I have the DJ gear, you just need to bring records." This was before laptops, you know? This is not like I pull out my laptop and starting DJing, and I was very anxious. I was like... All my records are in Palm Springs, you know, Palm Desert, at my house. But I got in my car, I literally drove home, got two crates of records, and drove back to do the first ever [Todal 00:08:37] Tuesday.
- Rickerby Hinds: That is cool, I want to get back to that. I just want to say something [inaudible 00:08:41] record crates; when I was here at UCR as a student, one of my friends was also a DJ and he would DJ clubs. The way you got into the club was you grabbed a crate of records and you followed in behind him, and then you just stayed in the club, took your jacket off, and had your cool gear underneath. So the next day, tell me about what happens now with Hip Hop Congress, tell me about at the bell tower... Just give us a little bit of what that meant, what the next day was after you had said, "Yo, I want to do this show tomorrow."
- DJ Alf Alpha: Yeah, I was anxious to meet people and stuff, so I literally went home, got my records... I had talked to Gopi; Gopi called me and he was just kind of giving me the rundown, and so he was like, "We're going to DJ. We have an hour at noon, you're going to DJ at the Commons in front of pretty much everyone walking by at UC Riverside, and we just want to create a good atmosphere." He was like, "There might be a couple breakdancers come out..." I was like, "Okay, cool." I went home, got a bunch of records, came back, and I was in the zone. That one, I was in the zone, I was definitely playing music and just kind of vibing off the crowd. We ended up getting a nice b-boy circle, and it was all organic, you know? This is all organic; it's not like we told b-boys to come. It was literally people going to their class that heard music, stop, and then just take their book bag off and start breakdancing.
- DJ Alf Alpha: We were engaging a lot of these students on campus, and so what Hip Hop Congress was... We were using the elements to... the elements of hip hop to create positivity and spread just kind of... positivity through creating, through

art. So that's what hip hop is; it's making something out of nothing, you know, and taking whatever you have, whether it's an old record and sampling it and making a beat, and making it your own and putting your own stamp on it... So what we were doing was we were bringing... that hip hop flavor to UCR.

Rickerby Hinds: That's very cool, and I think that some of that equipment was equipment that I had-

DJ Alf Alpha: It was your equipment. No no, it wasn't some of your equipment; it was all of your equipment. It was through the theater class.

Rickerby Hinds: Here's what was beautiful, is that I remember when Gopi approached me and said, "Kerb, is there any DJ equipment on the campus?" I had when I was hired... Part of what my hiring packet included was two turntables, speakers, mics, and at the time that was an anomaly. That was an odd thing for a professor to ask for, but it became something so useful and so vital for the classes that I teach, and especially for what happened with Hip Hop Congress.

DJ Alf Alpha: It was very vital for us, you know, the fact that... I want say thank you for bringing that equipment, because that equipment-

Rickerby Hinds: By the way, those two speakers are still in my... They still work too. But you're saying-

DJ Alf Alpha: Because we took good care of your...

Rickerby Hinds: Absolutely. So you're saying the equipment was-

DJ Alf Alpha: The equipment, it was Technic turntables, and so it was like, "Wow, I'm DJing on Technic turntables, I have to play good." It was inspiring for me as a youngster to come on campus and be able to have access to that equipment.

Rickerby Hinds: What is your creative process when it comes to you deciding what a set might look like, when you are pulling music... Talk a little bit about your creative process for DJing.

DJ Alf Alpha: Yeah, so every set is different. I've never been the DJ that is like, "I'm going to play these ten records in the same..." I've never really been that kind of DJ because I'm very freestyle. The way I kind of describe it is almost like jazz, you know? It's very improv, so when I go do a set, go do a club and I'm going to go DJ... You know, I have an idea. I'm saying, "Oh, I think the party's going to want to hear these records," but I always have an arsenal of music where I could fill in, whether it's the demographic, if it's a lot of older people and they want to hear more funk and soul, and they want to hear Al Green or James Brown and keep them over there.

DJ Alf Alpha: But then if it's a mixed crowd, then I'll do a little bit of both. I'll throw some hip hop, some R&B, and kind of... Even electronic, just kind of figuring out... It's all about reading the crowd, and so as a DJ, I would say, obviously you have to have the skills to mix records and keep the tempo on, but you also... A huge thing, which is probably almost 50% of it, is what are you going to play, you know? Playing the right type of music at the right moment.

Rickerby Hinds: So part of your creativity is happening live, it's happening as you're reading the dance floor-

DJ Alf Alpha: Absolutely.

Rickerby Hinds: -and whether you're losing or if it's getting hype, or what's happening in that moment?

DJ Alf Alpha: And I'll zone in on certain people too... It's almost like you're reading people's energy, you know, and so I'll zone in on a couple people. Specifically, obviously people that are dancing, you know? When I see people responding to certain records, then I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to take them here, here, here..." It's happening organic. So I'll get on the mic too, and I'm like... crowd participation, you know? "Let me see your hands up if you feeling good..." It all depends on the energy; that's why I say every set is different, you know? Sometimes-

Rickerby Hinds: That's interesting.

DJ Alf Alpha: And then I also zone in on people that aren't feeling it, that are like... that maybe aren't feeling it, and then I'm like, "I want to get this people to get out of their seat and start jumping." So then I start vibing off their energy because... It's weird. It's one of those things as a DJ; when I'm playing these events that are pretty open, I'm trying to make everyone happy, you know what I'm saying? Which is kind of crazy to say... People are like, "Oh, don't try to please everyone," but as a DJ I do try to make everyone have a good show and enjoy what I'm playing, you know, so they can say, "Oh man, that one record you pulled, I was feeling that." And I'll see it, I'll see people's reaction, and it always... I get a kick out of that for sure.

Rickerby Hinds: Yes, that's very cool. I was reading, or I think watching a video, where you were talking about your desire... your enjoyment for smaller spaces or smaller audiences, versus the larger spaces like a Coachella.

DJ Alf Alpha: So going back to what you had just said; you said you would imagine me just playing like, "Boom..." So for my Coachella sets, it is a huge crowd. When I play at Coachella inside the dome at like midnight, there's like 2,000, 3,000 people there, and the energy is... pumping. People want to hear the bangers. At that point, you know, it's like I'm not going easy on it. I need to play... obviously, music that's appropriate for that moment, and it's not... So that side is completely different than a smaller club set, you know, but I love the smaller

club vibe because I feel this connection... I describe it almost as dancing; I'm dancing with the audience, you know, and so you don't want to step on your partner's foot. I want to play music that is appropriate for us and we're doing this dance, and then it's reaching this pinnacle. I do play that... I will take the energy up, but it's not going to be right off the top. It's going to be gradual... like a ride, like a roller coaster ride.

Rickerby Hinds: What is it for you as a DJ that you find the most satisfying, the most compelling? We kind of talked a little bit about it, about getting that person up out of their seat, about rocking 2,000 folks at a time. Is there anything else that, for you, you might go, "Here's something that people may not even think about"?

DJ Alf Alpha: Yeah. I mean, it's also... Being a DJ too, you have this responsibility of kind of introducing people to new music, and it's not just playing... the stuff you hear on the radio, you know? I feel like that's kind of cheesy; I could go ahead and play the top 40 songs, but that's not the type of DJ I am. I like to... Or you'll hear a top 40 song, but you'll just hear a different version, like an a cappella over a different beat. You'll hear it, but it's kind of like opening people up to... maybe not just going for... It's taking them out of their... Giving them something that they know but they hear it differently, and that's what I like as a DJ, introducing people to... almost the underground. There's a whole world out there of music, and I feel like a lot of people... they appreciate that, they appreciate getting exposed to... That's why these apps like Shazam... People want to know what's happening, and I use that app a lot whenever I'm out. It's like this responsibility of introducing people to new music and keeping it fresh, you know? That helps all of us in the long run so we're not playing all the same music, and it's always this layer of searching for the perfect beat which is a classic hip hop-

Rickerby Hinds: Of course, of course. It's interesting; you talked about this idea of introducing an audience to new music or... in a way, a form of educating, and I know that you're doing more formalized types of education out in the desert. Can you talk a little bit about what you're doing in that respect?

DJ Alf Alpha: Yeah. About five years ago, the Palm Springs Unified School District reached out to me and they were basically like, "We want to start doing after school programs, where you teach students how to DJ." I was on board, that was a great idea. The school district invested into five MacBook laptops and five DJ controllers, Pioneer DJ controllers, and we're using Serato DJ, the top of the line software that the professionals use. Yeah, for the past five years I'll do a six week DJ program at all the high schools in the district, and because of the number of controllers we have we could only take around 10 students.

DJ Alf Alpha: But it's really great to be able to introduce... I'm a hip hop DJ from the beginning, two turntables and a mixer, but literally... I teach the students from the old school; I bring out the turntables from the first day and I show them, "Hey, you have a controller, but it's all based off of these two Technics and the mixer." So they really love it. A lot of the students have never seen a vinyl

record working, and so it's fun for me to introduce them and even show them 45s, the little records. So basically, give them a history of hip hop, you know, and... now then with the laptop, taking it to this other level where they... They're very open to the idea of music.

Rickerby Hinds: This is... In my hip hop theater class that I teach here at UCR, I will often bring in DJ or DJs to introduce students to that element, and what's interesting is we'll hear DJs mixing and scratching... For me, back in the day when I would go to the clubs or I would go to events, I would find myself fascinated by the DJ and the breakdancers. I would spend time just standing watching the DJ mix, and when you hear it work, when it works, it's like, "Man, that is so dope. I should do that." Then when you put your hand on the record, you realize the type of work that goes into that. Tell me about, for you as an instructor, what that's like, and how did education play a role in what you're doing now as an educator with DJing?

DJ Alf Alpha: So it's patience, too. I tell the students, "You have to be patient. You're not going to be an amazing DJ right off the bat," you know? I think nowadays with how fast the world moves with technology and stuff, if the kids don't get it after an hour they're like... For example, for someone like myself, it took years for me to even just start DJing in front of people, you know? I was in my bedroom DJing for two years just getting in the fundamentals, you know? Nowadays, it's awesome because you have more resources, and so there are YouTube tutorials, there are a lot more websites where people can go and get more information if they're into it.

DJ Alf Alpha: But you know, being an educator... it's also inspiring. You have to inspire the kids, so I'll come out and I'll just start scratching, I'll go in, and then it kind of... I always tell them, "This is how I do it. This is how I mix. You might have a totally different style than me, and that's what makes you unique." I don't say, "Hey, this is the right or wrong..." I definitely show them the fundamentals of mixing two records and trying to keep the same tempo, and definitely the effects that you could do and different ways you could blend music, but ultimately my feel is up to the individual. It's up to the individual to create, and to show who they are through the music and the records they play.

DJ Alf Alpha: I'll play some old school hip hop mixed with some trap... I'll mix it all up, and that's my style. I always tell them, "Don't feel like you have to play the records I'm playing. If you love country music, sample a country song and make it your own." I think that's what is really fun about my job. It's not like math where it's like, "This is the only way to get to the answer," or "This is it." Style is unique, you know, and so it's all about... having the best style.

Rickerby Hinds: You've DJed all over. What was one of your most memorable, unique, fun, dynamic moments in DJing?

DJ Alf Alpha: You know, Coachella was a big thing for me... and still being able to work with Coachella and being asked to be a part of Coachella... Rewind here. When I first bought my turntables, when I said I was frustrated and I didn't know what I was getting myself into, that first year was the first Coachella. 1999 was when I bought my turntables, and I had my turntables for about six months. Coachella happens; I'm from the Coachella valley, born and raised. I go to Coachella... And I'm at that point where I'm getting frustrated. I'm like, "I don't know. What did I do? I spent like \$400..." For a 15 year old kid that's a lot of money, so I was like, "I don't know. I think I might just get rid of these turntables," because I was getting frustrated.

DJ Alf Alpha: I went to Coachella, I saw the best DJs in the world. It was like all the motivation I needed at the right time, for me to go home and be like, "No, I am going to DJ on that stage one day." That was one of my goals, I was like, "You're not a good DJ unless you pay Coachella," in my mind, you know? So I was... It literally took 10 years from me to be a fan... 10 years, it took me, to make it onto one of the main stages at Coachella, the Sahara Tent. It was like... That set for me was... I opened Coachella up... My name was the smallest on the list. Kanye West that year, the year I played; his name was huge, and then my name was the very last name. But it actually helped me because people read... They're like, "Who's the last name?"

DJ Alf Alpha: So everyone kept looking at that name when it first came out, and people were calling me... I was an intern in Hollywood at that time. I was the intern, and then the people at my office were like, "Wait, the intern is playing Coachella. What is going on here?" I had kept it a secret. But I would say Coachella, being a fan and being inspired, being that 15 year old kid that is just like, "Oh my god, music. I love this feeling," and I'm being inspired by... I saw The Roots that year. I saw this group called Ugly Duckling... They have this amazing DJ named DJ Einstein, who's now one of my friends and we DJ together now, and it's insane. I saw Cut Chemist, DJ Shadow. I saw DJing on the highest level that year, and for me... I always thought in my mind, I was like, "I'm going to be like 40 or 50 years old, and Coachella's the last thing I do."

DJ Alf Alpha: I would say the exact opposite happened. I mean, I was working really hard and the festival was noticing what I was doing in Palm Springs. I was the resident DJ at the Ace Hotel and so I was building buzz, and my parties were diverse, you know? You would see... black people there, Mexican people there, gay, straight, older people there... I was literally bringing in all these walks of life through music, and the name of that party was called World Famous. The reason we called it World Famous is because I wanted to play this global... the world sound, so we used the globe as our logo. Goldenvoice, which throws Coachella; they saw what I was doing, and they said, "Would you like to play Coachella?" I was like, "Wow..." It was a full circle from being a fan, and in those 10 years working, and now... That was 2011, the first time I ever made the lineup at Coachella, the official lineup, and now I'm happy to say that I've played every Coachella since 2011.

Rickerby Hinds: Dude, that's very cool. I want to ask you, because I can hear when you talk, you put a lot of thought into multiple aspects of what you do, from the education to the naming of the event that you were doing. What role has education played in what you are doing now?

DJ Alf Alpha: I could honestly say I would have never played Coachella if I didn't come to UCR and get my education here. I could honestly say that. I could honestly say that because it started off honestly... When I was on the tour I was telling Austin this, that literally those Todal Tuesdays really did change my life. Being able to come and DJ every Tuesday, even if it was one hour a day... I mean, one hour a week, it was like the university started taking notice. They were like, "Man, you guys are getting a good crowd over here. Let's throw an urban arts festival. Let's throw heat now, let's throw these things around campus." I was DJing for the African student union, I was DJing the Chicano clubs, I was DJing all these different things and it was opening me up to this world of possibilities, of music is a tool to unify people... and what we did with Hip Hop Congress here. Our chapter of Hip Hop Congress here was very active, very active. We were definitely using Hip Hop Congress and hip hop as just a tool to open doors for us.

Rickerby Hinds: What have you learned from something that might have been perceived as a setback or a failure? Is there something that you went, "Man, this isn't a thing," but you learned something from it that helped you progress?

DJ Alf Alpha: I mean, I feel like there's a lot of those. Being a business person, entrepreneur... I've been a full time DJ now for about five years, six years? I was a teacher in Eagle Rock in Los Angeles. After college, I moved to Los Angeles and I was an intern. I was interning at a music studio, but I had to pay my bills so I was also a teacher. I was a computer teacher at an elementary school for almost five years, and so... I had to make this decision at a certain point, you know, where it was like... What it was is one of the teachers on the faculty, I think she was celebrating her 30th year teaching at the elementary school, and something triggered me. For some reason, I was like, "Wow, she's been here for 30 years." I had been there for four years and it felt like a blink of an eye, and I kind of was like, "You know what? I need to..."

DJ Alf Alpha: It was weird because... Literally I played Coachella the first year and I still worked there as a teacher. I remember playing Coachella in 2011, and then even after that I would go up to my boss, the principal, and basically be like, "Hey, I'm playing Coachella. I'm going to be gone for two weeks," and she'd be like, "Oh, cool. The kids love you, you're such an inspiration," and so I kind of had this thing where it was like a cushion, you know? She's like, "Oh, we'll get a sub. No worries."

DJ Alf Alpha: But I kind of always felt tied down. I was like, "Oh man, I still have to go to my 9:00 to 5:00," and it was heartbreaking for me to leave a lot of those students because as a male teacher... Some of them didn't have fathers, and I was kind of

like a father figure for them because I was also the soccer coach, the basketball coach. I was working at the school and I was a part of these kids' lives, so it was very hard for me to have to say, "You know what? I need to really go all in on my music career, now is the time. There's opportunities coming, and I'm not going to get them if I'm tied down to this job at the moment."

DJ Alf Alpha: So it was very hard for me to make that decision, and people could say... But it's a safe thing, "Oh, you have a safe 9:00 to 5:00 job," but for some reason I was kind of like... I don't want to be... celebrating my 20 year anniversary at the school when I could have inspired those same kids in a different way through my music, through my art, and through my creating.

Rickerby Hinds: I love the idea of... imagining students telling their parents that, "We have a sub because our teacher is playing Coachella..." That's a great visual.

Rickerby Hinds: Now, let's get into the creator state of mind. In each episode, we asked our guest to share what's been on their minds; something they can't stop thinking about, a new challenge they're facing, or what's inspired them into action recently. We call it the creator state of mind.

DJ Alf Alpha: I'm really inspired... I'm going to be putting out my catalog of music out. I'm going to start dropping... I haven't dropped my music on Spotify. People keep asking me, "Why isn't your music on Spotify?" When I got into music and releasing music, it was through SoundCloud. It was when SoundCloud was in its early days, and so I released some of my projects through SoundCloud. But I never thought Spotify was going to really take off the way... I'm excited. I'm excited to be creating new music and be putting it out.

Rickerby Hinds: So talk a little bit about the company, about the music you're creating, and...

DJ Alf Alpha: So I have... I created this label called Super Sonido Sistema, that's the actual term. Some people call it just Super Sonido, and it's... I'm Mexican American, I'm first generation, and so my parents are both from Mexico. My dad's from Jalisco, my mom's from Zacatecas, so I grew up speaking Spanish. Inspired by mariachi and the banda music, and so that was my parents influencing me. But my sisters and I were all born in America, so we were influenced by MTV... I was a little kid when Billy Idol came out, so I was into Billy Idol and Madonna, Run-DMC and stuff like that.

DJ Alf Alpha: So I was inspired by hip hop and rock and roll music, and obviously my parents, so with my company that I created, it's the Super Sonido. Sonido means sound, super sound, so I created this label and it has a lot of different... This label to me is a way for me to... throw parties, events, and have a stamp, you know? Also, a way for me to release music. But another thing too, another thing that gets me excited in the future, is... Super Sonido is also a van, a 1979 Volkswagen van that I've converted into a DJ booth. It literally is a mobile DJ booth, and I could drive anywhere and have a mobile party with my turntables set up.

DJ Alf Alpha: It's kind of like... There's a dream car that I always had in my head. Ever since I was 10 years old, I always was fascinated with the Volkswagen van... Bus, Volkswagen bus, and so it's like the hippie buses. About two years ago I acquired one; the Super Sonido bus which we called it, Super Sonido, and I go to events... Obviously, mostly outdoor events, and I'm able to just roll up and start doing parties. It's inspired by the Jamaican sound systems of Jamaica, really, which is kind of the roots of hip hop, you know? Kool Herc is Jamaican, and so I'm very hip hop to the bone. The fact that... In Jamaica, they were having these sound systems and they were playing 45s of American music, but they were doing it in their version, you know, and then that music was coming back to New York, coming back to America. Kool Herc started mixing that... and it's very inspiring. The backbone of all of this is hip hop and in the music, so...

Rickerby Hinds: It is always a valuable learning opportunity to take time to reflect. At the end of each interview, we like to ask our guest this; in hindsight, what is something you wish you would have known when you were starting out?

DJ Alf Alpha: I think... I literally have nothing to lose, you know? I think sometimes you value other people's opinions and you might be influenced by what other people are thinking... Sometimes that holds back people from trying new things or being different, or buying a van and making it a DJ booth where people think I'm crazy, you know? But once they see it, they enjoy it, so I think just the ideology that no one's real opinion really matters as long as you see the vision. I think sometimes being younger, you kind of hold back or... Now that I know, I have nothing to lose, you know? I think being able to... tap into that... If I was younger, you know, just being able to really showcase myself and not be scared, I think... that idea...

Rickerby Hinds: This has been so great. I am so proud to have had something to do with what you're doing, with where you are-

DJ Alf Alpha: Thank you, I appreciate it. I appreciate what you do here with the hip hop theater and just being able to accommodate us, and with Hip Hop Congress when we were here and being very generous with your DJ gear. It really did change my life.

Rickerby Hinds: I'm humbled because for me, it was just a matter of saying, "Yeah, go ahead. Here's the key."

Rickerby Hinds: Thanks for listening. Find more information about our guest at creatorstate.com. Do you know someone creating something great? Send us what you're creating for a chance to be featured in an upcoming episode. Write us at creatorstate@ucr.edu. There's a team creating this podcast; help us out by subscribing on Apple Podcasts, SoundCloud, Spotify, or wherever you listen. And while you're there, leave us a review.

Rickerby Hinds: Our producer for this show is Jennifer Merritt, with audio and editing by Kevin Williams. Digital strategy by Kelly McGrail, Madeline Adamo, and Rutna Garadia. Designed by Christy Danfort, Denise Wolf, Brad Roll, and creative director Louis Sans. Special thanks to Austin Quick, Christina Rodriguez, Christy Zwicky, Jessica Webber, Kate Beech, Christy Bieber, Taylor Rutherford, and Tess Irick. This show is brought to you by the University of California, Riverside. I'm your host, Rickerby Hinds. Thanks for joining us in The Creator State.

Rickerby Hinds: I've always wanted to do a rap song. I say, "Yo, turn up my headphones." But that's as close as I'm going to get. [silence]