



SHOP.TALK.

By Xania V. Woodman

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DJ RASHIDA At Zia Record Exchange in Las Vegas

DJs today are finding fewer stores that deal in vinyl. With the advent of such digital technology as Serato Scratch Live, everyone from world-renowned DJs to the hobbyist or bedroom variety can spin with just laptops and mixers. Even CDs are being shunned as a too-heavy burden best left at home next to the dusty LPs and 45s. The art of spinning and manipulating vinyl seems to have devolved from a basic job requirement to a novelty or an old-school throwback. DJs who still spin records are becoming rare, and a female DJ who spins vinyl is even rarer.

Rashida Robinson just rolled out of bed gorgeous. She strolls into Zia Record Exchange in jeans and a cool yellow hoodie. Dior sunglasses nestled in her tamed but curly hair, she is dripping with gold jewelry: giant gold earrings sporting her name, two huge bangles and heavy unicorn and heart pendants. Her ring covers two fingers like bling-y brass knuckles. She goes straight for the new arrivals bin. "Hot, used vinyl," it outs. This former crate digger knows her stuff.

Even though much of Rashida's record haul will be transferred over to MP3 format for ease of travel, she still finds ways to work vinyl into her sets and

into her private collection. As a fine-arts major in her hometown of Atlanta (one of the many hometowns she can now claim), photography was Rashida's main creative outlet, but it was her reputation as a bedroom DJ—budding but not booked—that got her roped into spinning at a friend's birthday party at the age of 18. "My hands were shaking," says the now-confident 26-year-old of her very first gig.

A few years and a brief stay in Spain later, Rashida was torn: New York or L.A.? "I needed to come back to L.A.," she says, and with that she began a cross-country move with just one suitcase, her turntables and a crate of records. Whether it was beginner's luck or raw talent, Rashida booked a gig for her first night in town at The Conga Room, where she would end up playing every Friday night. "That was the first of many free gigs," she says with a laugh. Her day job of bartending at Temple Bar also turned out to be her first paid residency. There, she opened for countless live acts spinning rare grooves, funk, soul and classic hip-hop, tuning her sets to suit the artists.

One fateful day—during a stint as a Friday and Saturday resident at the House of Blues on the Sunset Strip—Rashida was spinning in a room next door to Prince's private afterparty when some of The Artist's band members sat in on Rashida's set. "They said, 'Oh, you funky!'" Rashida recalls. It wasn't long before she went from being requested for Prince's

afterparties and house parties to touring with him as his personal DJ. It's an honor that continues to serve Rashida well, as she is now opening for the Purple One from 10 p.m. to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays at 3121, Prince's new nightclub at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino, or "my halfway house," as she calls her temporary Vegas home.

Rashida makes her way through Zia's aisles looking for names like Björk, Stevie Wonder and, of course, Prince. "Now that I know him and have heard more of his stuff, it's really put me on to more of his music." But it's easy to get distracted by some of the random miscellanea one inevitably encounters amid the stacks, racks and crates. She picks up one particularly heavy five-album collection by Chingy and eyes it suspiciously: "How did *he* get a box set?! That's just insane."

With parents as musical as hers, Rashida could not have helped but become a collector like her father and her mother (who was herself a radio DJ, a flautist and a singer in Las Vegas, New Mexico). "We had a moment," Rashida says, "and [my mom] was like, 'Rashida, you're living my dream!'"

GEORGE BENSON *In Flight* (Warner Bros.)

My father listened to a lot of George Benson, but he also listened to a lot of Donny Hathaway, and this

has "Valdez in the Country" on it, which is a Donny Hathaway song that is just beautiful. Also, this has "The World Is a Ghetto," which is classic George Benson.

DAVID BOWIE *Aladdin Sane* (RCA)

The cover alone, the artwork—he's a maniac. I love David Bowie. This one is more for listening, but I could maybe play "Panic in Detroit." There's a few things here I could probably play, but it would have to be for the right party, know what I'm saying?—an *open crowd!*

CRIME MOB

"Stiletto (Pumps)" (*Crunk Incorporated/Reprise*)
There's a white-label Baltimore house track called "Stiletto (Pumps)" that I love. I don't know who did that bootleg remix, but this is the record they sampled it from. I love Baltimore house; it's just gritty, grimy and ghetto. I love it! It's perfect.

DUNGEON FAMILY *Even in Darkness* (Arista)

It features everybody from Goodie Mob, Outkast and Sleepy Brown to Society of Soul. This takes me back to the A-T-L. This is before they were worldwide. You could only hear that on the radio stations in the South. It was very regional, and now it's everywhere. There's like, a pride in that—that was our music. I came up lis-

tening to them and loving them for being from Atlanta. The home team!

GEORGE GERSHWIN *The Samuel Goldwyn Motion Picture Production of Porgy and Bess* (Columbia)

"I Loves You, Porgy"—that's my favorite. Billie Holiday's version of that is just heartbreaking. I love Billie Holiday. But that song, the way she does it...I grew up listening to Billie Holiday, and I heard [her] version before I got this. This is why I collect records. It's not just the music; it's a work of art. It's just beautiful!

MOS DEF

The New Danger (Geffen)
His album before this [*Black on Both Sides*] was more of a rock thing. On this one, he's got a little bit of that, but then he's got what we love him for—his hip-hop, his rhymes. He's got crazy flow. [Minnesota] did the production on this song, "Modern Marvel"; they took Marvin Gaye and chopped it up on this song. It's so fresh; it's so beautiful. Also, "The Panties." Dope. Sexy. If you like him singing, he sings on that song.

PLATINUM PIED PIPERS *Triple P* (Ubiquity)

I picked this because it's got so many of my favorite new artists on it. And that would include Jay Dee, who

just passed—rest in peace. I mean, he's not a new artist but my all-time favorite hip-hop producer. It's funny, I'll look back at all my favorite songs, and I'll always find out that my favorites have been produced by Jay Dee. He contributed a lot to hip-hop.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Sound of L.A. (Plug Research)
Plug Research is through Temple Bar; this was my first residency. And that's actually where I met all these people, [including the Platinum Pied Pipers]. It was such a mecca for live music. It was where people that were on their way up would come before they blew up, where things just grew, where sounds grew. That's where I met all these cats.

STEVIE WONDER

Innervisions (Tamla)
I like anything from Stevie. This is from my childhood. I have distinct memories of listening to this on my dad's record player, of sleeping on my dad's back while listening to this. This is one the best albums of all time. Every single song is a masterpiece. This is one I'll definitely play in the club. I'll play "Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing." 

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