

# Bad Boy Bill: The 5 Magazine Interview

By **Czarina Mirani** - August 3, 2009



In Chicago, Bad Boy Bill ([website](#), [discogs](#), [twitter](#), [myspace](#), [facebook](#), [youtube](#)) is best known for his mix shows on WMBX, WGCI and B96 and he is credited to being the founding father of the mixtape. With a career pning from the mid-1980s, Bad Boy Bill is legendary with his accomplishments, starting his first imprint – the illustrious IHR ([International House Records](#)) label – as a senior in high school, where he released material from artists like [Mr. Lee](#), [DJ Pierre](#) and [Mike “Hitman” Wilson](#). Bill has received top marks for being America’s and the world’s best and favorite DJ in multiple music publications, including *URB* and *BPM* and has been ranked repeatedly in the top 100 in *DJ Magazine* over the years.

Although Bill has moved on from his early roots to pursue different styles of dance music, he still is on top of his game and loyal to his roots. He is a founding partner in download site Beatport, tours the world playing over 100 gigs annually and has combined sales of over one million units to date. Here he talks about how he negotiates his past, present and future successes.

## What are you listening to right now?

“Don’t Stop Til You Get Enough” by Michael Jackson. Been listening to all his songs since he passed. *Off The Wall* was the first Michael Jackson album I bought, and it’s still my favorite.

## **Why did you decide to put an end to your multimedia company Mix Connection and its labels, including IHR which was pretty much a cult House label?**

Our distributor went out of business owing us over a half million dollars, and that pretty much put us out. It was a sad time in the music industry and basically it became a game of collections – trying to collect money, and people calling us to collect money, and that's no fun for anyone.

## **Your newer label Ménage seems to be a bit dormant lately. What's the plan and future of this label and its direction?**

**Ménage** is actually doing quite a bit as a boutique house label. We did a deal with Ultra for the JJ Flores and Steve Smooth album, and with Nettwerk for my album. Both of these projects were through Ménage. We have some other projects and deals in the pipeline, and once they are finalized, expect to see a lot more music on Ménage.

## **Tell us about your upcoming album on Nettwerk. Who is featured? What styles does it include? Why the release on Nettwerk and not another label or your own label?**

This is my first all original music album. It's a big deal because most people know me from my mix CDs, but what a lot of people don't know is how long I have been making original music. I released [my first track on DJ International](#) when I was 17, and started my label IHR when I was a senior in high school. On *The Album* I linked up with a lot of people from my crew – JJ Flores, Steve Smooth, DJ Bam Bam, and Alex Peace – but I also have songs with very talented producers and singers including John Taylor (Duran Duran), Alyssa Palmer, Dan Chase, Evan Marc, Eric Jag, Johanna Phraze, and Kid Infinity.

## **Why did it take you so long to come out with your own album? Do you feel more pressure given your status?**

It's very challenging to work in the studio when you travel as much as I do. I wanted [The Album](#)

to be something that you can listen to in your car or while you are at home and enjoy it all the way through, and actually want to hear it again and again. That made me really focus on getting some great *songs* together, and that takes a lot of time as well.

I probably worked on 50 to 100 songs, then narrowed it down to the 11 songs I felt were the best, and those are the ones that actually made it on *The Album*.

## **Tell us about your transition from House to all the different genres you covered after that: techno, electro, hard house, etc. Any chance or desire to come full circle and play more traditional House again?**

I like so many styles of music, and I really enjoy playing all the many styles of House. I do change with the times because my tastes change, I mature, sounds and styles change. Also, I change a bit based on the venue, and the crowd. I am usually booked to play a prime time, peak hour slot, and with that comes a responsibility to bring the vibe of the party up. Although I may love a more deeper sound, sometimes the set time and vibe doesn't really allow for it.

## **Do you ever play old school House sets? Do you follow any traditional House music producers right now and if so who?**

I turn down 99% of requests to play old school sets, and mainly for two reasons. First, it's a pain to dig out all my old vinyl. Second, I have to practice for 3-4 days to come up with a set, and figure out where all the breaks are and how to play the songs again because these are records that I haven't DJ'd with in soooo long.

With that being said, I played an old school set twice in Chicago (once at Crobar and once at The Congress Theatre) and just a couple months ago I did an old school set in Germany.

I'm not sure what you mean by traditional House Music producers, but I follow most of the House Music that comes out. Right now that means from around the globe because unlike when I first started and most of the House was only coming out of Chicago, now there are amazing House Music producers from around the globe, and it's very exciting to see and hear everyone's take on our Chicago House sound.

## **Coming from the point of view of a House Music magazine, we obviously have fond memories of you and the huge impact you had on our scene. Over the years your style has changed to what seems to be whatever was the hot new thing. Why is that and what do you think the pros and cons of that are?**

Thank you for that. I have always looked at my time of being a radio mixshow DJ on WBMX, WGCI, and B96 as an honor. I have had the privilege of DJing with what I feel are some of the most amazing DJs in the world here in my hometown, and I still feel that Chicago breeds the best DJs in the world.

I think when you grow up like I did, listening to the radio and hearing the smooth blends of Ralphie Rosario, the scratching of Farley JMF, the edits of Mickey Mixin' Oliver, the turntable tricks of Julian Jumpin' Perez, the production of Steve Silk Hurley, and the overall great programming of Scott Smokin' Silz and Kenny Jammin' Jason, it makes you become a better DJ. My style really is a culmination of everything I have learned from those DJs before me, and everything that I have learned since.

My sound is constantly evolving and that keeps me excited. So many people who stuck with one sound, or who didn't evolve, are simply not relevant anymore, and I think for me, growing and evolving is what makes me happy, and hopefully people enjoy listening.

### **Aside from the weather, what made you decide to move to LA? On your downtime, how do you divvy up where you stay between Chicago and LA?**

I thought I wanted to live in LA, and it was mainly for the weather. I lived there for three winters, and about two years ago, I decided that even during the winter I would rather be in Chicago. That's how much I love Chicago. So, no more LA for this Chi-town kid.

### **Do you see yourself keeping up with your current traveling schedule? Any plans on slowing down and settling down in one place?**

Felix Da Housecat once told me, don't ever take a break. He basically said that it is so hard to get back going if you stop for too long, and I agree with him. So I'm going to keep doing what I do because I love DJing for people, and as long as people are into my sound, I will be there to give it to them.

### **We are very excited to have you play for both your birthday and our anniversary party! What can we expect to hear from you at the Boom Boom Room party on August 24th?**

I am really excited too! Thank you for sharing your anniversary party with my birthday – that really means a lot to me. As far as what I'm going to play, I hear the people at Boom Boom Room really love it funky and know what's up with the real true House sounds, so I am going to bring out some extra special goodies for the night, and I think its going to be a lot of fun!

### **Anything else you'd like to add?**