

Where are they now?! - Mel B

Written by DarkTetsuya

Friday, 22 June 2012 20:38 - Last Updated Friday, 22 June 2012 22:18



So today marks **TEN YEARS** since our very first episode way back in 2002. I can't think of a better way to celebrate than to revive this special series from last year, starting with an interview with one of our earliest fans -- Mel B! I have to say ever since I started this series last year during our 9th, *this was the one interview I always wished I could get.*

If you were into DDR back in the day, chances are you've probably heard of this guy. His freestyle routines were quite legendary indeed. So, I thought I'd invite him on to reminisce about DDR's past as well as find out about some of his favorite memories from our early days. (He did appear quite a few times on the show during our first season.)

So hit the jump to read the interview! (*Also I did throw in a bonus question about his time working at Konami to help make DDR, so he'll share his thoughts on that, too.*)

1. So tell us about yourself. What are you up to these days?

5'11", last I checked. =P

Actually my main thing is being a DJ. (Yeah, who'd have thunk someone into music games would get into a music-related field?) I've been rockin' clubs, parties and other events throughout the Bay Area since 2006. When I'm not busy doing that, I'm still gaming just like when I was a kid.

2. Favorite BEMANI game?

DDR is easily the most influential game of the series and what I'm known for (and ultimately my favorite)... but I'd remiss if I didn't give mad love to ParaParaParadise. *ducks* Mambo a GoGo

Where are they now?! - Mel B

Written by DarkTetsuya

Friday, 22 June 2012 20:38 - Last Updated Friday, 22 June 2012 22:18

gets honorable mention.

3. Favorite mix from said series?

Solo 2000! (Runner up being DDR 4th Mix+)

4. Favorite song/artist? (doesn't have to be from your favorite game/series)

Favorite song: It's like choosing my favorite kid, geez... I'll say "If You Were Here" by Jennifer.

Favorite artist (overall): good-cool. I'm a sucker for soulful house music.

5. Any tournament memories you want to share? (also, PA or Freestyle?)

I could seriously go on for an hour on fond memories of tourneys. Santa Monica Pier jumps to mind because it was the first time NorCal showed up en masse to a SoCal tourney. It was also the first time I competed (both freestyle and PA).

The freestyle judges were three of the most respected guys in the DDR scene who also happened to be pretty big deals in Japan at the time: Masa, the owner of DDRmaniac; Yoshi: well respected freestyler from d-ash, and; Osmin: well known freestyler and perfect attacker.

For Osmin to choose my routine as one of the best... it was an honor and I was truly humbled. The swag was pretty sweet too. =) From there, the NorCal/SoCal rivalry was on, but for all intents and purposes it was a respectable rivalry. And thus the phenomenon kicked off.

6. Proudest accomplishment?

Winning the Arcade Infinity 2 freestyle tournament in 2001. There was at least 75+ entrants. To beat some of the biggest names en route to scoring a DDR Solo 2000 machine, that was nothing short of epic. =)

It's also pretty cool knowing I've won 11 freestyle tourneys total. Has anyone even won 6?

7. Any memories from OLR you'd like to share? / Or, memories from playing DDR/BEMANI?

Oh gosh, that crazy promo/bumper I cut for OLR a long while back... uh, don't play that. (I'm sure this inevitably means it's getting played.) XD (*ED NOTE: Oh you can probably count on it, LOL :P*)

But I've always enjoyed being in studio, doing the F.U.'s of the Week... oh, and the original "Let's Ask Orange Lounge" theme song sung by Rob. These sort of things cannot be ignored. But nothing, and I mean -nothing-, will ever beat Loki's rendition of "I'm Staying In". That transcended everything. (*ED NOTE: agreed on both counts!*)

8. Do you still play DDR/IIDX/etc. nowadays? / If not, what ARE you playing?

I still play here and there. I don't go to arcades as much as I used to. I've got Solo 2000 and a recently acquired ParaParaParadise 2nd Mix machine at home, so that cures my fix as needed. I'll play IIDX occasionally, but my skills eroded considerably. =(

I still like rhythm-based games like ROCK BAND, Amplitude, Dance Central, so there's that.

Other than that, I'm still a sports game guy (Madden NFL, WWE, NBA 2K) and a Rockstar Games honk (GTA, Red Dead Redemption, Bully) and I'll ride with anything from Quantic Dream from here on out.

9. If you've seen what DDR is like now, do you feel it's 'jumped the shark'? Share your thoughts on that.

It's not that relevant anymore. And it's terribly sad because the grassroots movement across America, specifically in NorCal and SoCal, was so awesome to be part of back in the early 2000s. We took it from a quirky game into something the mainstream became curious about.

Konami could've done a -lot- more to promote the game via competition and foster the already established hardcore fanbase. Look at Pump It Up. It's not a great game. (Not to me at least.) But it's an international smash and if you've seen their worldwide championships in Korea, as a DDR fan I'm jealous as hell because I'm certain Konami could pull off something like that. They have the resources and the fans willing to play.

Now it's 10 years past the boom, most players have grown up to do their own things besides hang out in arcades... and we're all thinking "coulda' woulda' shoulda'". =(

At least DDRX2 was fun when I played it.

10. Obligatory 'your first time playing DDR' story

October 30, 1999. My birthday. Las Vegas. Already these are key elements into having an epic moment.

Found DDR at Gameworks on the Strip. I was totally sucked in because it reminded me of Bust-a-Move, the Japanese dancing game for PlayStation (later released as "Bust-a-Groove" in USA), only with feet.

I gave it a whirl. Beat "Have You Never Been Mellow" on Basic (wearing my flyest clubbing gear and shoes that had ZERO traction, so that was a little scary, sliding everywhere and whatnot). Beat "Boom Boom Dollar". Beat "Butterfly" (barely). Totally screwed the pooch on "Paranoia".

And a fan was born.

10a. Anything you wanna share about your brief gig working at Konami helping to make

Where are they now?! - Mel B

Written by DarkTetsuya

Friday, 22 June 2012 20:38 - Last Updated Friday, 22 June 2012 22:18

DDR?!

Ultramix 2 is my favorite home version of DDR. I'm proud to say I was part of that release from a QA and development standpoint. I'd say it was the one mix where RMC (our nickname for Konami's Japanese office) was willing to take a leap of faith and let the QA testers (most of whom were big players in the NorCal DDR scene) put their ideas and thumbprints into the game.

The step charts to new songs? That was all us. Ideas for BEMANI crossover songs making it into the mix? All us.

It was lightning in a bottle that could've gone even further, but... well, let's just say politics and red tape got in the way of future releases. Luckily I'd moved on before things got much worse. That said, I cherish those two years I spent there.

11. Final thoughts?

Congrats to OLR for going 10 strong and being able to evolve with the times. May you all continue to flourish and get showered with praise and accolades! =D

--

Huge props to Mel B for granting me this interview! Tune in tomorrow as we catch up with another of our oldschool regulars, RicePrincess!