

were also thinking about working on movies, writing movies?

DJ: Yeah, Stephen Spielberg wanted to make a movie, or so they said. And I said, "Well, I don't know." And apparently there's some kind of thing going on with some friends of mine. They say they've got a real connection. They're kind of vague about who it is but they're talking about a script and stuff like that... to tell the story of my life with someone else playing the part or something. I've told them again and again the different information and ideas about the movie and stuff, so maybe in the next few months it might become concrete.

MM: Who would you like to have play you? Do you have an actor in mind?

DJ: I don't really know exactly. I have a few people in mind. I'd rather play the part myself though.

MM: That would be great. Maybe they could have someone else play you younger and then you could play yourself now.

DJ: Yeah, that's one thing we've thought of.

## Stephen Spielberg wanted to make a movie (about me), or so they said...

MM: What would you like them to cover in the movie, if they did do a movie of your life?

DJ: It might be semi-biographical, but it would also be based on my cartoons and stuff.

MM: That would be neat... So it would kind of follow your life and then spin off into the cartoon world and then come back?

DJ: Yeah, dream sequences and things, you know. Different ideas all put together.

MM: Yesterday I was watching TV and caught the end of a Cheech and Chong movie where they go from being real people to being cartoons. It ends with them flying through space together as cartoons.

DJ: I've never seen that one. They're pretty cool.

MM: So, the way you see it, you would be going along and then you might box Vile Corrupt as a cartoon?

DJ: Yeah, this is all a fantasy for me, a story I was making up one time. I never thought it would last so long, you know? But I don't draw the boxers that much any more. It might be in there if the movie's real someday.

MM: Why do you think it is that you've stopped drawing the boxers?

DJ: I draw different characters now, you know?

MM: Do you want to talk about any of your new characters?

DJ: I draw these ghosts with teeth. They fly all around. All different kind of monsters and stuff like that, you know?

MM: Do they represent anything in particular?

DJ: They're just a bunch of ghosts with teeth. That's all. (laughs) That's about it.

MM: But it's not Casper?

DJ: No, but I still draw Casper every now and then... He's one of my favorite characters, you know. All those Harvey comics were pretty cool.

MM: Do you watch much TV these days?

DJ: Not too much. I'll tune in to MTV maybe once a week or something. And I watch movies with my dad at night, from about 8:00 to 9:00. Then I'm back to smoking my cigarettes.

MM: I think when I saw you play in New York you were having a problem with your throat and you mentioned that it had something to do with the cigarettes. Do you think they're damaging your voice?

DJ: No, I think I'm alright. (laughs) I'll make it alright.

MM: I was wondering if you watched the TV show, Survivor.

DJ: No, I don't think I do. What's Survivor?

MM: It's a show about a bunch of people that are stranded on an island together and every week they have to vote someone off.

DJ: Scary.

MM: Yeah. It's pretty popular though.

DJ: Till there's no one left or something?

MM: Yeah, and the last person wins a million dollars.

DJ: Pretty weird.

(We change direction again.)

MM: What's your favorite monster?

DJ: I like all the monsters. When I was a kid, I'd see monster movies a lot and I do collect monster movies, from everybody to everybody. So, there's no real favorite.

MM: From your songs, it sounds as though you sympathize with Frankenstein, that you feel he's just misunderstood and not really that bad...

DJ: Yeah, yeah, for instance the original Frankenstein was kind of out on his own and they didn't know what to think of him and stuff. And then he wound up killing everybody just because they were bugging him, you know?

When I first thought of ending on that note, I'm sure I had something clever in mind, some comparison I wanted to draw between the misunderstood artist and Frankenstein's monster. Maybe I wanted to warn people not to chase Daniel over the moors with pitchforks and torches because he'd most likely kill them. Or, perhaps, more appropriately, I wanted to draw a correlation between the curious masses who chased after Frankenstein's monster and myself.

I'd been trying, in one way or another, to interview Daniel for almost a decade. I'd go to see him play with my tape recorder in hand and then I wouldn't have the nerve to pull it out and approach him. I'd be talking to our mutual friend, Jad Fair, about Daniel and I wouldn't ask him for a phone number or an introduction. I was very close a number of times. Daniel and I even showed our artwork in the same show together once. I just never went the last step and made contact. Now that I had, I felt guilty, or bad, like I'd bugged him by pushing him to think about things he'd rather not think about.

As much as I respect him, his artistic vision, and his music, and as much as I feel protective of him as a fan, part of me wanted to find him more upset and more like the Daniel Johnston of legend. I didn't want to hear how well he was, but I wanted for him to talk about his problems and the things he obsesses about. While I didn't ask him explicitly about being institutionalized, or about the often troubling themes of his work, I got a sense that I was coming too close and that bothered me.

I think, even though I have his number now and he's suggested that I call back, that I won't, at least until I better understand my reasons for wanting to talk to him further. I'm thinking that I should just stay a fan of his music and let go of the personal curiosity.

Frankenstein's monster probably would have been a lot happier if people just let him do his own thing, and didn't try so hard to understand what made him tick. ★