



BABE RUTH SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- First Base* (Harvest SW) 1973
- Amar Caballero* (Harvest) 1973
- Babe Ruth* (LP Harvest) 1975
- Stealin' Home* (Capitol) 1975
- Kid's Stuff* (Capitol) 1976

"It was unfortunate, because somebody that was more aware could have kept us together," Hewitt says. "We had all these things going on with us, but we didn't have a clue."

Night Game

The "shadow history" of "The Mexican" goes something like this: New York jock Steve D'Acquisto was in Montreal, according to Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton's book, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, when *First Base* first hit there. Recognizing the inherent danceability of "The Mexican," he took a copy to David Mancuso, who began playing it at his legendary underground New York City venue, the Loft. Sometime within the next two years, it came to the attention of DJ Kool Herc, who made "The Mexican," with its extensive instrumental break, a staple of his eclectic Bronx DJ sets. With its thunderous *dun-a-dun-a-dun-dun-dun* bass line and Latin flavor, it became a favorite of early uprockers and, eventually, a b-boy staple.

"It was made famous first by motorcycle gangs that used to have uprockers in their groups as well," says Rock Steady Crew president Richard "Crazy Legs" Colon. In the b-boy era, "once you heard that Spanish guitar, you'd start lacing up your sneakers or get your little two-step on right before going into some crazy styles. You knew once that song came on, there was gonna be some straight-up battling. It could be good, bad, and ugly." By the 1990s, there was even an organized break-dancing competition named for a key lyric in the song, "Chico got to have his share." "It's one of the songs passed down by whoever came before us, and we accept it as tradition and pass it on to the next," Crazy Legs adds. "What we do, for us, is folk-dance. And this is one of the songs that go along with those dances."

"The only awareness I ever had that anything was going on was on tour in Montreal, in 1975, I think," Hewitt says. "A girl invited me to this nightclub, where they were playing 'The Mexican.' It was mind-boggling, because we saw ourselves as this progressive rock band, and they're playing the heck out of 'The Mexican' at this really plush nightclub like we're disco stars."

Shacklock got his first visit from the ghost of "The Mexican" in 1982. He was producing *Like Gangbusters*, the debut album by British new wavers JoBoxers, when their U.S.-born lead singer, Dig Wayne, returned from a trip home with a white-label copy of "Planet Rock" by Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force. "I'm listening, and I hear what sounds exactly like the drumbeat from 'The Mexican,' but instead of 'For a Few Dollars More' over it, it's the theme from *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*," Shacklock recalls.

Two years later, he was at Abbey Road with Welsh rockers the Alarm when a DJ and aspiring producer, calling himself Jellybean Benitez, phoned him. "He told the lady who answered that he was the best DJ in New York and [that] he was Madonna's boyfriend," Shacklock says. "Of course, it all turned out to be true. We finally spoke, and he told me 'The Mexican' was his favorite song; he'd like to remix it. I said, 'That's great, if they'll let you have the tapes.' He called me back and said either they can't find the tapes or wouldn't let him have them, and asked if he could rerecord it, and [if I had] contact information for the singer. He'd like to fly Jenny to New York."

That call led to Benitez's '84 version of "The Mexican," a progenitor of the emerging New York freestyle sound and a huge dance hit in its own right. But it wouldn't be until 2002, when the circa '73 lineup of the band reunited for an appearance at the U.K. B-Boy Championships in London, that the legacy of "The Mexican" would be fully illuminated for them.

"[Competition organizer] DJ Hooch was saying, 'You just don't realize, you're pretty much the anthem of b-boys internationally,'" Shacklock says. "[When we performed], the breakers were dying to come on with us—security was holding them back. Eventually, Crazy Legs just broke loose. It was amazing." Encouraged by the experience, the band returned to the studio to make an album, embracing the culture that embraced them all these years. Released in 2007, the digital-only LP *Que Pasa* features an updated version of "The Mexican," a cover of "Apache," scratches by Shacklock's son Jesse (aka DJ Kidsmeal), and a return to the Spanish flavor and Western themes that colored *First Base*. ●

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