

JUNIOR SANCHEZ

As one of the world's most respected and innovative DJs, Junior Sanchez has remained at the forefront of house music since the '90s. But throughout his three-decade-long career, Sanchez has continued to challenge himself—becoming a versatile producer, a hands-on label executive, and an inspiring entrepreneur along the way. Above all, Sanchez's enthusiasm for his craft, and his passion to share it with others, is present in all of his endeavors.

Although Sanchez's story begins in the most ordinary of places—suburban New Jersey—his rise to fame was anything but. The youngest of six, Sanchez was raised on his family's diverse record collection. While his Brazilian mother enjoyed a steady dose of Latin music, his siblings each had their own favorites: from ELO and Fleetwood Mac to Slick Rick and The Smiths. Sanchez embraced it all. But when he discovered house music—a relatively young genre that sprung from the ashes of disco—it resonated with him on a new level.

Sanchez developed his talents on a makeshift rig at home and immersed himself in New York City's vibrant club scene. By his early teens, he was DJing regularly at Peter Gatien's Club USA and Limelight. Balancing high school with residencies, Sanchez signed his first record deal at 15. A few years later, he established Cube Recordings, where he released records from the likes of Rhythm Masters, Stuart Price, and Sébastien Léger. There, he also co-produced Felix da Housecat's landmark electroclash album, *Kittenz and Thee Glitz*.

The prodigious DJ not only won the respect of house music's elders but also of a new generation of stars, including Armand van Helden, who took Sanchez under his wing. Together, they founded Da Mongaloids—a global collective of DJs that featured such high-profile names as Todd Terry; Daft Punk's Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christ; Roger Sanchez; Laidback Luke; DJ Sneak; and Basement Jaxx's Felix Buxton and Simon Ratcliffe. Aiming to create "The Wu-Tang Clan of House Music," Sanchez was the youngest of the group—and the most enthusiastic. "I recruited all of these people," he recalls. "We started re-mixing each other and appearing on each other's records. There was a lot of unity."

The collective also birthed a project between Sanchez, DJ Sneak, and Roger Sanchez called The S-Men. The multi-generational trio put together an enthralling live act featuring six turntables, a sampler, and a keyboard. While turntablism of this level had been seen in hip-hop, it was revolutionary in the world of house music. The S-Men made their debut at London's 1997 Tribal Gathering, opening for Kraftwerk. A little over two decades later, the group thrilled fans with a reunion. Today, they continue to work together.

Da Mongaloids, meanwhile, never officially parted ways, but members became increasingly busy with their exploding careers. Sanchez was no exception.

Over the years, the New York-based artist has enjoyed regular club appearances in Ibiza, Las Vegas, and Miami, and played for thousands of fans at Electric Daisy Carnival, Ultra Music Festival, Winter Music Conference, and Amsterdam Dance Event. He has also released dozens of singles and EPs across such esteemed labels as Strictly Rhythm, Nervous, and Defected, plus two full-length albums: 2011's *Seize the Fewcha* and 2017's *Under the Influence*. The latter title, which pays homage to house music's pioneers, was released under Sanchez's Brobot Records. Established in 2013, the label has long offered Sanchez the freedom to release his own records, as well as more experimental music from his peers. Additionally, Brobot has given him an opportunity to mentor and showcase a variety of rising, young talent.

Early on, Sanchez also pursued a career as a producer, remixer, and songwriter, which allowed him to work with a broad spectrum of artists. "Dance music is such a huge part of my musical DNA, but there's so much more to me too," he shares. "When I began making house music, I did it because I loved it—but I never turned my back on other types of music."

Those sessions helped him grow exponentially as an artist. "I wanted to put myself out there and learn how to work with a band or a singer-songwriter. I *had* to do that in order to be better at what I do," says Sanchez, whose roster of collaborators includes Madonna, Ariana Grande, Good Charlotte, Katy Perry, A Tribe Called Quest, Ima Robot, Morningwood, Teyana Taylor, and Azealia Banks, with whom he co-wrote and produced the highly-acclaimed viral hit, "Anna Wintour."

That endless love of learning sparked one of Sanchez's newest projects, KULTUR: a label, events, and lifestyle brand with an educational focus. Co-founded in 2020 with the Toronto-based DJ and producer Demiur, KULTUR was created to "keep the narrative of house music alive, so that kids know where their favorite dance music came from," explains Sanchez.

Those origins began in the underground—and particularly the marginalized communities—of American cities. "House music will always have its roots within the Black, Latinx, straight, and LGBTQ+ cultures of New York and Chicago," notes Sanchez. "It came from people who needed to escape their daily lives." Sanchez is further exploring these foundational themes in an upcoming solo project, which is currently in the works with producer Dallas Austin.

Today, Sanchez feels a responsibility to preserve that original spirit while also looking ahead; empowering a new generation of artists to shape the future of dance music. "Everyone should win within this culture—whether they're underground or mainstream; a singer, a songwriter, or a DJ who makes beats. There's room for everyone."

It's certainly a full-circle moment for the busy artist and father as he enters the next decade of his career. "I always say that we're all pixels in this amazing story of house music; we've all played a role," he reflects. "I'm so grateful that I was part of the picture as a kid—and am still a part of this 'painting' that we're all creating."