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Gilad Cohen:

You're listening to the Hum.

Gilad Cohen:

Sitting down with up and coming Spotify, spotlight the lunch, (silence) listening who don't know who Dijah is, your story is pretty incredible. And so I was wondering if you could just tell us about the journey, your journey to the blue check mark and that record your deal and all of the dope shit you've been doing.

DijahSB:

So I've been pretty much active in the music community for about 10, 11 years now. And it all started, of course, just making music in terms of this, first fun or like as a hobby. And then when I realized I was actually pretty good at it, I kind of got attention from people in the community that had the resources to be able to put me in the studio and get me beats of my own. And then from there I kind of just kept consistent with it. And even though I wasn't seeing all of the benefits at once I still kind of kept to it. And that has led me to be where I am today.

DijahSB:

So a lot of it is just filler, filler filler, and then one day all of the little things that you put together finally makes sense and kind of is the reason why I'm allowed to do what I do today. But really the journey was just putting out music and keep putting out music and trying to find my sound and be original. And finally I kind of found that sound of mine that also people enjoy. So that's where I'm at now, but the details are really kind of boring and the typical just grind till it happens kind of thing.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

The humility. You got billboards, you got all this stuff and you're just like, it's just regular ass shit. I'm curious, is this your fulltime thing? Is this your full-time gig making music?

DijahSB:

Now it is. It wasn't last year, but I quit around September, my retail job and I've been doing it full-time since then.

Gilad Cohen:

I love it. So I, I actually want to dive deeper into that. So I work with a lot of young people who often will ask what is it like to take that leap into full-time artistry? And I asked that because I remember when I had to do a similar thing. Years ago I was working at a youth shelter and JAYU, this charity I had founded, was kind of like my volunteer thing. And I was always so terrified of jumping in full-time. And for me actually, it took a really scary motorcycle accident where I woke up and I was like, the fuck am I doing with my life, for me to go into the path of doing my creative thing full time. I'm curious, what was that

leap like for you? Tell us about any motorcycle accidents you may have had, but specifically, did you have any doubts or worries about what you were doing hopping into this thing full time?

DijahSB:

For me, thankfully, I have a really good foundation. So really all it took was 10 years of working retail and it being a pandemic and just running into people that just really just drove my mental health into the gutter that made me realize that this wasn't for me anymore. And I knew that was going to be my last retail job. But I didn't know how or when I would be able to kind of go full-time artist. So it is terrifying. It is scary, but for me, I was putting my mental health first, so I didn't really care. And I really didn't know where I was going to get my next check from or how I was going to pay for any of my insurances, my car insurance ran, all of those things. I didn't know how, but I believe in great alignment, I believe in just trusting your intuition and my gut and my body and my mind just said it was time to grow. So I kind of just left and figured that the universe would deal with it. And that's exactly what happened. Sometimes it's not that much of a glorious story. And you do have to kind of, maybe go back, but taking that leap initially is the best thing that you can do in the moment. And if it fails, it fails, but at least you tried.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

It's a learning experience, no matter what, right? You either you leap and you make it and you learn from that or you leap and you don't make it and you learn from that. And you try again later, but it's dope that you were able to take that leap and actually find purchase on the other side. So, full disclosure, I've known Dijah for some time. And so earlier in your career, you were going by Kzaraw. So now I've known you rapping as Kzaraw, I've known you wrapping as DijahSB, and I'm wondering what prompted that rebrand, 'cause I've come to your shows, I've been hyping up in the crowd and all that, but like, I don't think I ever talked to you about that. So, so what was that? What prompted that? What was that like?

DijahSB:

Well, with Kzaraw I was actually a part of a group called Class of '93. So to kind of distance myself from the group I'd say, and just kind of solidify that this was me as an individual I got rebranded as DijahSB. But also I figured that the name itself was just kind of manifesting what I'd want in the future since Nike SBs are my favorite shoes so I was kind of playing on that name. That's why the name is DijahSB and maybe in the future getting a collab with Nike and having my own SB kind of thing. So that was that, but also I took a year off of making music for a while. So that was also a part of just to rebrand and becoming a new a person and trying to find a different avenue in terms of sound and my fans and stuff like that. So it was all just kind of just a refresh and start again but with all of the new knowledge that I had from the previous run of being Kzaraw.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

Do you think, I'm going a little off script here, but do you think that DijahSB the artist, but also the mentality behind that was kind of a driving force for the leap that you took? Do you think you would've been able to take that leap as Kzaraw?

DijahSB:

Probably not because that version of me kind of was very scared of leaps and of different things. So I kind of definitely needed that rebrand, that refresh, to be able to kind of be more of an individual and be confident in what I was doing.

Gilad Cohen:

I mean that's dope. And so a few months ago you came out as nonbinary. I guess almost a year ago now. What was that gender realization for you? What was that like?

DijahSB:

It all kind of made sense. It all kind of came full circle. Just thinking about myself as a youth and not understanding why I didn't fit any sort of kind of gender, like any kind of social thing regarding gender. So why I didn't like things that girls were supposed to like, it really led to a lot of confusion growing up. And once I discovered the term nonbinary and the community, then I was just like, this is exactly what it is that I was missing my entire youth and teenage years. If I had this term, this community, this definition all of these years, I would not have had such confusing insight on who I was as a person and why I socially was outside of whatever it is that I was supposed to be.

DijahSB:

And I always figured that I was different and I didn't know exactly where to pinpoint and how. So as soon as that got pinpointed for me and I narrowed down exactly that it's nonbinary is a term, then it all came full circle for me and healed any of the trauma that I had from being misgendered as a kid or being bullied as a kid for not wanting to conform to society's version of what a girl was.

DijahSB:

So that was kind of a part of the reason of coming out and just the confidence it gave me to be able to wear and do what I want as well, that I always had, but being nonbinary reassures and realigns my views on gender and stuff like that. So that really was what helped me become more of the individual that I am today.

Gilad Cohen:

And there's sort of two things that are happening here too right? Like there's Dijah, the human being who's having this realization. And then of course there's also DijahSB, the artist who's also running parallel to you. Were you concerned at all about expressing yourself as gender nonbinary as an artist? Were you concerned at all about the reception of that?

DijahSB:

No, because I feel like that's... I don't think really that people care much in terms of just being bigoted towards me. I feel like a lot more people understood versus not understanding and I'm sure it's a lot more difficult to come out as other things that are not as widely accepted. So no, I didn't have a problem with it at all and it was liberating more than anything else.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

Yeah, your fans are all about your music regardless so it's nice to know that at least you have at folks in your corner from the get, but going into talking about your fans, your lyrics have always been relatable. They've always been queer, but do you think that they're hitting different now for folks now that you've come out as nonbinary? Do you think the lyrics mean a little bit more or just generally, do you think they hit different?

DijahSB:

Yeah, definitely have always been kind of wanted to do that for any sort of community. All of the communities that I represent are important in terms of them being able to relate and being able to listen to my music and feel like somebody understands them. So I definitely feel like it opened up a new portal of fans that want to support me and want to see somebody in their community make it big.

Gilad Cohen:

So we're obviously here on an audio show, so you can't see the fact that I'm wearing an NBA Jersey right now. In fact that's like most of my summer wear is just basketball gear. I'm wearing a Giannis Antetokounmpo jersey right now and I bring this up because throughout a lot of your music, you yourself use a lot of basketball references and I'm wondering, what's the significance of those references and why is basketball such an accessible metaphor for your life and your experiences?

DijahSB:

That was a good question. I love the basketball growing up. It was my escape and my way of, again, just feeling and being different. Not playing it per se, but just the culture revolving around basketball and wearing jerseys and braiding my hair like Allen Iverson who was my favorite player at the time. So I always loved playing and watching basketball and then even growing up, I love playing and watching and engaging with basketball. And there's so many different, similar, there's so many, sorry, similarities between life and basketball.

DijahSB:

So I just really like putting together metaphors that kind of explain that and I try to be as creative with it as possible because the NBA and the basketball is obviously like a very popular thing to engage with. So I know a lot of people will relate if I say something in my life is equivalent to something in the basketball arena. And I've always just been fascinated with the NBA and basketball and its culture more so than actual basketball, but there's so many things that in basketball relate to in real life, so I just put those things together a lot of times.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

All right, so you mentioned your mental health earlier when you're talking about your journey and anybody who's listened to your stuff knows that you've been super candid about your struggles with depression and mental health challenges and I'm wondering, how does your mental health affect the things that you say in your music and how does it affect the way that you speak to your audience?

DijahSB:

I like to speak to my audience, and in a way I take it as me speaking to myself and the grace that I give the people that I know are dealing with mental health and need that grace is the same grace that I try to give myself as well. And it's more so like my mental health impacts whether or not I can't even create or not. And I'll just have really large spouts of creativity one day or one week and the next week I can't write for anything.

DijahSB:

But also just talking and being vulnerable about what actually goes on in my brain, in my mind, I find it one of the best tools for not only myself to be able to release, but also for people who are listening and may not know how to express themselves and how they feel. And it's more common than you think that somebody can't find the words to say how they really feel or what they think is a solution. So I understand the importance of that, and from there, I understand why kind of people gravitate towards me and are really into listening to some of the things that I rap about because I've myself have artists that do that for me so I completely understand why it's so, so important to be myself and always be genuine about the things that I go through.

Gilad Cohen:

I'm curious like what your thoughts are also on someone like Naomi Osaka, who when they're experiencing a point in their mental health where they're not open to talking, society doesn't usually expect that. They expect people who are in positions of influence, like Naomi Osaka being one, you as well as a musician, and us as well, that sometimes our mental health isn't always there for us to give people what they need. What were your thoughts on Naomi Osaka going through that moment where she just refused to you to put media ahead of her own mental health?

DijahSB:

I thought it was probably one of the bravest things we've seen any kind of athlete do in terms of mental health because I was watching the Malice and the Palace documentary and Meta World Peace was talking about how he was just so misconceived and misunderstood because of the anxiety and just the depression that he was going through. And it translated as rage and it translated as him being weird or different or that he was not a team player or stuff like that. So I'm just thinking about that and I'm thinking about how fans in the media are just so privileged. And they really just do not treat athletes like human beings. They really just create this atmosphere where they feel as though they have all access and need all access to a player. And that if they're not winning or if they're not complying with what it is that the NBA, or with tennis, then they, they find ways to kind of drag them down and have all of this sort of opinions about them.

DijahSB:

So I feel like it was very brave of her to do that. And it shows to me that doesn't matter to her about like money or how much she's making. She genuinely loves playing tennis. And if that impacts her mental health, and if people are getting to the point where she feels like she's going to break down, she's not going to jeopardize that in order to keep smiling in these people's faces that clearly will take any opportunity to tear her down. And she made that boundary and I feel like every athlete should make that boundary because, again, they are human beings that are just really good at what they do and that's how we should start treating them instead of this god or goddess that can never be mean or never be upset about something. So, yeah, I'm very proud of Naomi for what she did.

Gilad Cohen:

It makes me think just about all these other things. Like sports is like super, super competitive and you win and sometimes you lose and when you lose you still have to fulfill all your media obligations. Just imagine how much it would suck if after something you wanted to be successful failed, and then all these people are asking you questions about it. Like, "Gilad, tell us about that. Tell us about that grant you just fucked up on? What could have gone better for you?" And then all these people are watching. It sounds terrible. It just sounds like an extra terrible sort of thing. All this is making me think also just

about representation. Like these conversations around mental health to me is a form of representation as well. Like now, Naomi Osaka and you also, Dijah, are also representatives of, mental health conversation. And those things are super important. Especially now that more marginalized people or equity seeking or equity deserving people are having their voices heard. For you personally, who do you hope to be for your audiences and what do you personally want to represent?

DijahSB:

I definitely just want to be that cool person to my peers or my fans that just makes music and is still a human being. I don't want to be praised or as if I'm better than anybody or I'm above anybody because my music is good or they like my music. I very much like to reiterate that I'm just a human being who just so happens to make music that you like. So just keep our relationship to just that. And I really just want to be help for people that may need it and don't know how to express themselves or any kind of youth that are nonbinary or struggling with gender and understanding gender and can use my story to be able to understand why they feel the way they feel or why they want to do certain things that might not, not be deemed normal for their gender.

DijahSB:

And representation goes a long way. I only wish that I had somebody when I was a youth that represented that community that I could have understood and modeled myself after. But yeah, I don't want to be like, anybody's hero or anything like that. I just want to be a... I always tell my fans, you're my homie and you like my music, that's it. It's nothing to praise me over or act like I'm, different over just because when I mess up I don't want you guys to think that I don't mess up and I'm better than everybody because I don't mess up. So I just want that distinction to always be there so that they know that it's all it is. I make music. That's it. I make music. It's good. You like it. That's all we got to go. That's the boundary that it is.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

So I would be remiss if we didn't circle back to your internet presence and talk about your active role on social media. I know we're talking about a lot of heavier stuff today, or we're talking about some serious topics and kind of getting to the meat of everything, but on the regular, you're fucking hilarious. And if you don't mind me saying it, you're a little bit of a troll on social media or a lot of a troll, but how has social media helped boost you in this industry? Cause I remember, I mean, I still follow you on Twitter and all the platforms and stuff, but I remember just you getting past your tweets or just seeing your tweets come up and just laughing my ass off because I was like, who's going to say some dumb shit that I need to hear today. Oh, it's going to be Dijah for sure. But like how has social media helped boost you in this industry?

DijahSB:

Definitely has because people will see my tweets and laugh and be engaging with it but then they stay because they see that I'm a musician and they like the music. So it has really helped me in terms of my platform and continuing to grow it and finding new fans. That has definitely been the number one thing, especially on platforms like Twitter and Instagram, just being able to be myself and have people gravitate towards me through that and then stay because of the music.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

Yeah. So you don't even need to change anything. It's like informal outreach.

DijahSB:

Yeah.

Gilad Cohen:

I'm just in your Twitter right now. You, have a bunch of things in here. Like, "I want my Hollywood start to be shaped like a butt.". You're talking about you having the best cheesecake of your life, even threatened to throw a brick at somebody. So there's variety here for sure which I appreciate. So we were talking about your Spotify today and last we checked, which was earlier today you were sitting at over 178,000 monthly listeners on Spotify alone, which, no big deal. You've had billboards advertising your album in the heart of downtown and you're getting all of this love in the press and beyond. How does that feel? Like how does all of that feel to have all of that set back to you to, to go through all these monthly listeners and to have your hard work recognized in these important ways?

DijahSB:

It feels just as good as fans recognizing my music, just my peers and people in the music industry wanting to celebrate me is also. It's a big accomplishment and not a lot of people get it this far. So I've definitely been able to calm it all down and realize how special and unique it is. But definitely is one of the better things about my music and making music, being recognized by your peers and people that have been doing and engaging with people's music for years now, wanting to champion you is really good for you.

Gilad Cohen:

I love to hear it and congratulations again on all of your recent success. It's really inspiring to watch. And I'm just curious, what's next for you actually or aspirationally?

DijahSB:

I definitely want to get out there more, find a lot more fans, engage with a lot more people. Definitely want to start being in community with some of my favorite artists and making music with them and build myself up financially so I could be able to help myself and my community. I definitely feel like I have the foundation now and it's just about exploring and trying to build from the foundation that I have right now. So I'm just kind of chilling and waiting for each opportunity to find its way to me and other than that creating when I can, but that's about it.

Gilad Cohen:

So you're looking for new fans, we've got an audience here. So is there anything you want to plug? How can people find you? How can these new fans reach out and engage with your stuff?

DijahSB:

I'm on every like streaming platform that exists. So if you just search DijahSB everything will pop up. But if you put DijahSB into Google and then you switch the tab over to news you'll see all of my articles or the things that people have said about my albums and stuff like that. So if you're curious about anything personal, you'll probably find it there. But also I'm heavily active on Twitter and Instagram, so if you ever needed to talk to me about something then you could just hit me up there too.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

So humble. So humble.

DijahSB:

Oh my God. This should just be called the humility episode. Thank you so much for joining us here today. I guess I'll see you on a future episode where we either build up or tear down Kevin Durant one way or the other,

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

You got to tune in to find out. So proud of you, man. Thanks again for coming and talking with us. This is, dope.

DijahSB:

I gotcha. Thank you. It was a good conversation.

Gilad Cohen:

Thank you everyone for tuning in my name is Gilad Cohen and I'm one of your co-hosts here on the Hum.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

And I'm Taylah Harris-Mungo, your other co-host.

Gilad Cohen:

Our producers are Alex Castellani and Rachael Lewis.

Taylah Harris-Mungo:

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Gilad Cohen:

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