

JAMES MURPHY & PAT MAHONEY BIOGRAPHY

BORN

Pat: 1973, Ithaca New York.

James: I was born in February of 1970, just missed the 60s, in Princeton New Jersey.

FAMILY/MUSICAL ROOTS

Pat: My father is an economist and my mom's an actuary at an insurance company. We did have music in the house all the time, like folk and for some reason reggae which was kind of weird for a white suburban family, and plenty of rock music. I always wanted to play the drums but my parents made me play the saxophone which I hated. They told me that there'd be 15 drummers in the band and only one saxophonist and there was like 25 saxophonists and 1 drummer. No one wants to have drums in their house. When I was 13 I heard the Violent Femmes and was sold. I remember riding a bus with this kid and he was like I like hardcore and I like punk what do you like, and I said I like Violent Femmes and he just rolled his eyes. But he was Scotty Cum Stain from a fine local punk ensemble.

James: My parents have passed away. My dad was a bean counter and my mom was a mom. My dad was really into big band jazz and small band jazz of the same era, but I have older brothers and sisters and they were into classic rock. Everybody played an instrument at some point. I played guitar but I was a singer in various new wave ensembles in the early 80s so I taught myself how to play guitar badly. I'm the youngest so I was the new wave kid. My oldest sister was into like Loggins and Seaman and shit like that. My brother listened to a lot of Yes and Utopia. My other sister listened to Jay Giles Band and Kansas. And I listened to the Violent Femmes and B-52s and The Clash, maybe a little Flock of Seagulls, you know? Dead Milkmen, Black Flag – anything that was weirdo music. You know, when you're a kid you don't know the rules of what's punk and what's new wave, it's all just weirdo music. My dad was born in 1931 so I think we had some musical differences.

FIRST PROJECTS

Pat: My first band was when I was 13 and a half. It was called Distorted View and I was the singer. I started playing drums when I turned 16 after I got kicked out of Distorted View because they wanted to be a goth band. I don't know, so that was that. Our first song was Moral Vacuum. It was '86, '87, around the same time as the first Fugazi record came out and it was you know, basements and garages and coffee houses. It was fucking fun. We had a manager who was like 17 and had a car. And he would take us to shows. He had a car that had no foot floor, it was just the street running by underneath it. Then at 16 I traded my PA for my friend's drum set, my friend John Nieymiski was a metalhead, it was a white Pearl Export. And then I started playing in this band, The Five Deadly Diseases. There were five of us. I think one of us was Chris Syphilis, that's about as good as it got. We used to do like Basement punk shows. I used to tape the sticks into my hands so they wouldn't fall away. It was good fun. And then I just kept playing drums. Then I went to art school as you do. I went to the Rhode Island School of Design which produces more bands than artists. My old band Les Savy Sav, that's how James and I met, he recorded our first album and the rest is history.

James: My first band was in 1982 and we were called The Mystery Meats, you know school lunch, when it's just meat, maybe it's turkey? Maybe it's lamb? Pimento Loaf? And our first song was Scarlet Letter, it was about the Scarlet Letter, it was a hardcore song. We'd read it in the 8th grade. Our second song was Bug In My Beer, written by the bass player when we were at a party and he had a bug in his beer, and he started singing that and it became our song. And we played in a place called The Happy Buddha Club which was my friend's basement. There was a Chinese restaurant in town called The happy Buddha Restaurant and they were renovating and they threw out their old booths and we drove with my friend's brother's pick up and picked up all the booths and took them one at a time back to his place, so we had five red booths and tables and we built a stage and we broke into the local grammar school and stole two Pas from two different grammar schools and put them in the place. It was pretty dope. We had liquor hidden in the ceiling and his mom was super nice, Tall Paul was his name. When I was 12, 13, 14 I played with those guys. We had various names over the years, Mystery Meats, The Extremes, and then we were just a question mark for a while, pre-Prince, just the symbol, I mean, not pre-Prince existence, but pre-Prince being the symbol. And pre-!!!.

Pat: Yeah, take that Prince and !!!

James: I always made music by myself. In '85, '86, somewhere in there, I stole a drum machine and a 4-track from a music store that a friend of mine worked at. Well, I went in and bought a drum machine and a 4-track in a big sale and what they were doing was, they had a security guard at the door and they didn't really check you unless you went out, that you had your receipt and they made sure that you had the right stuff but they wouldn't mark the receipt. So I just took those out and put them in my trunk and then went back in and did the same thing again an hour later when they got a new security guard and then returned one set the next day. And the guy back then who worked at that store still works with me in New York. So I started recording at home until I moved to New York in '89 but just hung around and produced various indie rock bands until I formed my own. I did live sound too, that was how I made a living. So I

started recording bands on my 4-track for sandwiches, and built a studio in 92/'93 and started a band called Pony. It was a proper 16-track studio in Brooklyn, the original Plantain. And live, I would open for Juan MacLean with a drum machine and a synthesizer and a distortion pedal. I had a 606 and a 202 and it was just the most punishing, insane Alec Empire stuff. You couldn't program the 202 in any logical way so I would just punch a bunch of ascending lines into it over and over. It was fun. At Providence we played at some Halloween costume party. It was this huge place. Six Finger Satellite played and Lightning Bolt played in the hallway. And that other super group, Landed; Landed and Lightning Bolt played opposite each other in the hallway. The funny thing was when we were playing Providence, there was this guy there playing pool because it was also like a bar, and he walked up to me and said what's this music you're playing, I really like it, it's really crazy. And I was like, well, it's just these machines and he's like no way man, so I was showing him and he was so excited. I mean, people were pretty nice about it. Maybe they hated it, but people were totally nice.

Pat: It was a very open minded period in that town at that time.

James: I was never in a band when I wasn't also doing some form of engineering so they were always hand in hand. Sometimes being in a band is more important, and sometimes being an engineer is more important but they've always been together as one.

DJING/DFA

Pat: The way that house music and stuff exploded over here [in the UK] was much more local and way smaller in the US.

James: Except for like C&C Music Factory or Dee-lite.

Pat: Like the rave thing didn't happen so much over there. So to a certain extent people were even like Six Finger Satellite, what are they doing because they had synths and people weren't largely really open to it, I mean, people weren't dancing, that's for damn sure. Indie rock is like this crazy ghetto where it's all about, there's some reason why when you're in the shit, music that manifestly sucks is actually really good and there's some way you understand it and it's all total nonsense, it's like a musical dead end. Like you get Tortoise at the end of that.

James: We were absolutely neck deep in indie-rock. We were in indie rock bands. Pony and Speedking were indie rock bands and that's what we were poster-boy indie rock bands. We wanted to be with our friends and travel around in a band. And then I continued my swath of breaking bands up by producing them. I broke like five or six bands up in a row. I was in Speedking then.

Pat: I saw Speedking go from an indie rock band to an experimental noisy electronic band before that imploded.

James: My DFA partner Tim Goldsworthy, he came over with David Holmes to work on a record and I was like this is new, this is weird, nobody plays this sort of thing. It was a very different way of making music and then I went out and did ecstasy when David was DJing and heard Liquid Liquid for the first time.

Pat: James helped me build a rehearsal studio for Les Savy Sav, who ostensibly speaking, he broke up, and this was the genesis of LCD and also me leaving Les Savy Sav.

James: So I played bass and he played drums and it was just like Liquid Liquid, and we were trying to wrap our heads around making people boogie.

Pat: That was like '96, with dubious results, totally foreign to us in a lot of ways because indie kids were not dancing.

James: No, they weren't looking to boogie. But it was fun.

Pat: If you'd go to a noise show, some of it can be amazing, but most of the time it's just fucking tedious. It's a bunch of guys like scratching their beards, while some other guys are making some ear-splitting nonsense that doesn't go anywhere. Noise, like someone playing a Budweiser can with a pickup. It's like a self-reflexive, self-indulgent scene. If you could dance to it, it would be an anathema because it would be too like crassly materialistic to actually enjoy something. It's like music made for people who have \$200,000 art school educations. That was what was around us at the time we came together, so we were trying to make a band where people could dance.

James: We were using the same sort of basslines over and over again and the people around us were like, 'ugh, this is not ironic enough'. Anyway, DFA was my nickname doing sound for Six Finger Satellite, doing live sound, as in Death From Above, because I was and am still to this day, notoriously loud, some might say shockingly loud, and in some countries illegally loud. It's just a phrase that the airborne use when they bomb places, Death From Above.

Pat: Like Death raining from the skies. I can personally attest to some of the Six Finger Satellite shows being inhumanly, biblically loud. Like so fucking loud that people are getting very upset. Physically ill. It was that loud. I mean, Six Finger Satellite would also open up with a shit-storm of just epic proportions just like all feedback, all cymbals for 20 minutes and you're thinking, when is this going to end, and then you realise, oh my god, it's not going to end. But it was so powerful, those 10 or 15 minutes and then to drop into a song and it was kind of like a revelation.

James: Yeah, that was a big deal to me. That was a big deal, learning that because then all of a sudden with the sound change, you'd be so glad just to hear a kick drum for a while.

Pat: But that's probably for me, I don't know about James, the colonel of where when I started listening to techno and house and stuff, where like all those very fundamental basic things about the way music makes you move your body, like body music, that was kind of the colonel of it was watching Six Finger Satellite do that, because it had the same sort of dynamics that dance music has, which indie rock did not have.

James: Have you ever seen My Bloody Valentines play? They used to do in the middle of one of their songs a break, in the middle of Feed Me With You Kiss, on the album it'd be like 30 seconds, but live, I saw it in New York, they did it for 40 minutes and people would just sit down and didn't know what to do. And then without a cue from anybody they'd just be back to the song. So there'd be the first two verses, then in what would normally be a 30 second breakdown, there was 40 minutes, and then the last verse and chorus. And that was a wake up call.

Pat: When I first heard that Aphex song Ventolin, I was like 'oh, okay, I can get my head around this.'

James: The things like Aphex and that translated to indie kids because it was experimental. My whole life I hated dance music, it was C&C Music Factory – in the states, you get a real image of dance music of like dudes in shiny shirts driving shitty expensive cars trying to get laid, with spiky hair and the blonde tips – basically, the worst people in the world. But, like - the bass player in our band now is from Detroit and he had no idea who Carl Craig was, he was listening to punk music. It's really micro-scenes in the states. The scenes that translate to the rest of the world as 'techno' and 'house' are really so miniscule. It's like, 'Oh, you're from Chicago? You must know Frankie Knuckles.' When really, Chicago punk kids have no idea about house music. They're micro-scenes, and that's why they're strong, that's why they're so inspiring. The Detroit techno scene was 150 people, but when it got to the UK it carried with it this idea that everybody in America listened to Detroit techno.

Pat: No one did.

James: Yeah, no one had any idea. It was really like New York punk, where outside the lower East side, in 1979 no one had any idea what it was. I think that was good, I liked the locality of it. With dance music, I was really optimistic, because I'm an optimistic guy...and I was full of ecstasy. My favourite dance song in the whole world is 'Loose' by the Stooges so I always thought if somebody dropped 'Loose' at a set wherever – in a techno set, at a rock show – everyone would freak out and be psyched. True, everyone did freak out, but they weren't all psyched. (laughs) So I started DJing, I wouldn't DJ in rock places, I would DJ at dance places and play rock records. And make people really angry. My idea was rock n roll is dance music.

Pat: That's what had sold me. We weren't playing together for a while, I was living in Miami with my son's mom, who was a club kid in the 80s. She was always like, "Disco's where it's at." In America, disco is like a dirty word.

James: It means the lowest common denominator of the stuff that became popular on the radio, which is really like a tiny little blip on the disco radar.

Pat: And disco also meant, on a greater cultural level, America's biggest fears...it was like racism and homophobia - together at last. We moved back to New York and one of the first things we did was go to one of the first DFA parties, when she was 7 months pregnant. James was playing all kinds of great dance music but then he dropped 'Mother Sky,' which is like a 15 minute rock song, but it's still 4 on the floor. Dancing to that with Bobby Garcia? That was it for me, I was sold.

James: We could do that at a DFA party, and that was okay. That's why DFA parties were so fun; we could do and play whatever we wanted – Diana Summer, Kraftwerk, The Fall, Carl Craig always figured into the mix, we were also into some early proto-hip hop, electro hip hop, Nucleus and stuff like that. They were held at my building, in my office, which held about 700 people – indie kids, dance kids, weird people, everyone was on ecstasy. It was beautiful, it was genuinely beautiful. We had our own soundsystem and we hired bartenders, it'd cost like \$4,000 to throw one. We were creating our own world so there wasn't a lot of pressure, we were just having fun. My first DJ gig was so good and it went so well, Marcus wanted to kill me.

Pat: Our friend Marcus Lambkin was a great inspiration, he would play dance music but he really just played what he liked. He's a hero.

James: He's the guy that taught us how to DJ. He was like a Dublin punk kid who turned into a rave kid who moved to New York and became a house DJ. He's Shit Robot on DFA.

Pat: New York is one of the hardest places to go dancing. I remember Tim Goldsworthy said when he came to New York, he expected people to be bodyrocking in the corner, it's just not true.

James: Dancing's illegal in New York. There's a cabaret law – if a venue doesn't have a licence, it's very expensive.

Pat: Cops can walk into a bar and if there are people dancing without a cabaret licence, they can issue a ticket. But yeah, after DFA was up and running, that whole time period made me think DJing was the best thing in the world. It was so inspiring; it really made me love music again. Indie rock is enough to make you hate music – I retired, quit playing drums, had a kid and moved to Florida! But at APT, there was all this joy. It was just such an exciting time.

James: At APT, we had one party a month, on a Tuesday. We were the first people to bring over the Optimo guys, Headman, Trevor Jackson, 2manydjs, Rub N Tug, Ben Fat Trucker, Blackstroke. Once a month I took all my money and flew over someone from Europe.

Pat: And some really old school hip hop people too.

James: That's the thing - the big DFA party Pat first came to there was a bunch of techno kids, some really smelly punk kids and Rosie Perez. On crutches. She rolled in on crutches! That was a good time. The only problem I have with the modern DJ world is everyone wants to DJ for an hour. I used to DJ for like 6 hours, I'd literally have like 500-600 records behind the decks for those APT parties. The party would start at 9pm, it'd be rammed by 10pm, and it'd be over at 7:00 in the morning. You would've been forced to play every single record you owned. I love that. Otherwise it feels like a celebrity appearance. I've had people give me 35-minute sets – I could play one track for 35 minutes.

Pat: I do a party in Brooklyn 3 or 4 times a year and play for like 5-6 hours, and then you can really stretch it out. You can take it up and then take it way down...

James: You could go anywhere with that. We started DJing together relatively recently, two or three years ago. I wouldn't let him DJ with me.

Pat: I was 'Junior DJ' for a while.

James: We started playing out as the 2manlydjs. There was once a gig with the 2mandydjs (our friends), the 2manlydjs and the 2manydjs.

Pat: We just did a DJ tour in Canada with Al Doyle from Hot Chip. Al plays straight-up minimal techno. We did a couple gigs where we were bouncing from disco to minimal, and back again, which was cool. There was a nice arc, going from pretty choppy old disco to more electronic disco to full-on minimal techno, some serious German shit. It was pretty fun.

James: With a band, you have to read each other because you can't talk. But with DJing, you put on a record and turn to each other like, 'Are you wasted?' 'Wanna put on this track next?' You don't have to read each other; you can actually talk to each other.

Pat: We both have a love for some pretty gay-ass disco. It is fun when either of us gets a new record and drops that into a set. We love vinyl.

James: It would be nice if MP3's sounded good. But they don't.

Pat: They sound horrible.

James: And they sound even more horrible on big systems. Even CDs don't sound particularly good, because they don't resonate.

Pat: Vinyl is twice as loud, the silences are more silent, the bass sounds incredible, there's much more space.

James: Any DJs that complain about how hard it is to DJ, need to get an actual job.

Pat: Even being in a band is like comedy. But at least you have to set stuff up.

James: I don't like when people stare at us when we DJ, I think that's a new-ish thing. I want them to dance, I want them to look at each other. They're not going home with me.

Pat: They might go home with me? (laughs)

James: I want people to interact, dance at each other instead of staring at someone in a little booth. I'm not going to be doing contemporary dance or do a drama for them.

Pat: That's the weird thing about playing LCD live – we often play at clubs with DJs, which is fun. But whenever we come on stage, everyone stops dancing and just stares.

James: It's like when there's a TV on in a bar and you can't help but watch it, even when people are talking to you.

Pat: We played a couple of amazing shows - in Montreal we somehow convinced the lighting designer to turn off all the lights and just turn the disco ball on. So for most of the show, we played in the dark – and people were dancing! There was nothing to look at except whatever sweaty person was in front of you. It was awesome.

THE FUTURE

James: The future? We're all going to live in space. This next year, we'll be playing, playing, playing, playing, touring, touring, touring, playing the same songs over and over again, looking at each other, smelling each other on the tour bus. I don't mind touring, but it's like I'm married, I've got a dog, I want to go home. You get to meet great people on tour but I have a house I like to be in. I'm not 22 years old anymore.

Pat: We hope to make some more music.

James: I miss throwing parties, I don't have time.

Pat: I'm doing a party on June 3rd I'm really excited about.

James: Screw you.

Pat: It's Broken Disco party at a bar in New York, with my friend Sarah. It's friendly, fun and free.