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In Memoriam: Vincent "Mr. Animation" Foster

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, October 5th, 2016

A long-time dancer on the Venice Beach Boardwalk who became a legend in the world of West Coast street dancing and hip-hop culture in film and television, Vincent "Mr. Animation" Foster died at age 49 when he was struck by a taxi cab while in Las Vegas on September 23rd.

Mr. Animation's early Venice Beach performances coincided with street dance's emergence into the mainstream culture. At age 18, Foster was discovered by Hollywood where he was hired as a principal dancer for the 1984 film *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo*, starring Ice-T and other breakdance legends like Shabba-Doo and Boogaloo Shrimp.



Mr. Animation does his thing

From there, Foster joined the existing iconic street dance group, Air Force Crew, started by Lil Cesar and Wilpower which gained worldwide recognition for expanding the art of b-boying and street culture with tours to Japan, Germany, Italy, UK, and Australia.

After touring the world with Air Force Crew, Foster returned to Southern California where he quickly became a fixture on Venice Beach for over 30 years, as well as performing at Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade and Hollywood's Walk-of-Fame, Mr. Animation often drew hundreds of on-lookers as he mixed his dance moves with comical skits and audience participation. He once said, "I chose to make people laugh for a living."



Mr. Animation doing his thing.

Born Vincent Forster on October 16, 1966 and raised in South Central LA as one of ten brothers by a single mother, he was in a gang when by age 15. He came under the influence of Carmelo Alvarez, the director of Radiotron, a youth center that acted as a safe haven for kids who wanted to get out of gang life. Alvarez introduced Foster to Venice Beach Boardwalk and opened a whole new world of street performing.

When a kid in the audience remarked that he animated well, Vincent Foster's new moniker "Mr. Animation" stuck. Taking inspiration from by Michael Jackson, Richard Pryor, and James Brown, Mr. Animation developed signature moves such as the Moonrun and The Lean that have been become part of the street dance lexicon.

Passing on the lessons from Alvarez' Radiotron, Mr. Animation mentored dancers and choreographers including Wade Robson, Eric Nash, Lil Buck, John Boogs, and Jacob Jonas, who leads the LA-based Jacob Jonas The Company.

Paying tribute to Mr. Animation, Jonas described Mr. Animation as a true entertainer who will be greatly missed. "Mr. Animation's legacy of positive energy and his contributions to the culture of

hip-hop and street theater will live on forever in the memory of those who saw him perform, dancers like me who benefited from his mentoring, and the hip hop street culture at large.”



Mr. Animation with Jacob Jonas

Additional credits include performances on *America's Got Talent*, *The Tonight Show Starring Jay Leno*, *My Wife With Kids*, *Rhyme and Reason*, and concert tours with artists such as Missy Elliot, Wu-Tang Clan, Kurtis Blow, Xzibit, Fatboy Slim, and Run-D.M.C.

Note: While I posted this, the above memoriam was lovingly compiled by Jacob Jonas, Jill Wilson, Little Ceaser, Ann Haskins, Jeff Abraham, and Reva Jones, for whom Mr. Animation was at once mentor, friend, and crew mate. They used multiple sources to gather the information and create a timeline. I remember Mr. Animation well from the Venice Boardwalk... Both his moves and his warm smile. Vincent "Mr. Animation" Foster will be sorely missed by a great many people.

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