



Latin music runs in DJ “Little Louie” Vega’s family.

His father was an accomplished saxophonist, while his uncle was legendary salsero, Hector Lavoe. Vega was born in the Bronx in 1965, and it was not long after, when he would take his first step or two-step into the world of music. At the age of 15, because of his inclusionary club-hopping sisters, he attended Paradise Garage and witnessed DJ Larry Levan blend different genres and eras of music into one unified groove. Vega then proceeded to make a name for himself through his DJ residency at Devil’s Nest in the Bronx before moving to Studio 54, Roseland, and Palladium in Manhattan.

Vega’s solo material includes remixes of Todd Terry’s work, Information Society’s “Running,” and Noel’s “Silent Morning.” Though Vega produced much as a solo act, he is more widely known as half of the production team, Masters at Work (MAW). Kenny “Dope” Gonzalez, who originally used the name for his own DJ crew, met Vega through Todd Terry. Their first collaboration came when Vega was producing the debut album for underground club prodigy (at the time), Marc Anthony. The project marked a special moment in Latin music as Vega brought together Eddie Palmieri and Tito Puente, while turning to Gonzales for some beats. The album set the MAW conceptual framework of combining live instruments with sampled beats and veteran iconic musicians with new sound innovators.

As the MAW sound became more influential in the club scene, artists and labels came knocking. The duo would go on to remix for Bjork, Deee-Lite, Donna Summer, Janet Jackson, Daft Punk, and many more. They would also produce for artists such as Barbara Tucker, La India, and Luther Vandross. Although these artists had no traction in the dance community, the MAW stamp would garner respect for the artists on the dance floors of the hottest clubs in the world. In 1997, using a MAW alter-ego, Vega and Gonzalez debuted their new group and self-titled album, Nuyorican Soul. The new group name was a play on their heritage (Puerto Rico), city of residence (NYC), and the style of music (soul). The album was an electrifying mix of salsa, jazz, and soul (Look it up if you haven’t already heard it).

Vega has clearly contributed to his family’s musical legacy by creating art that stands the test of time. For all his accomplishments, ULM salutes “Little Louie” Vega as this issue’s Urban Legend. Now find your own dance floor and groove away to this mini-sampling of Vega’s best jams and be sure to check out his website for his latest, [vegarecords.net](http://vegarecords.net) .

- 1-“Ride on the Rhythm” - “Little Louie” Vega & Marc Anthony
- 2-“Beautiful People” - “Little Louie” Vega & Barbara Tucker
- 3-“Blood Vibes” - Masters at Work
- 4-“Nervous Track” - Nuyorican Soul
- 5-“You Can Do It (Baby)” - Nuyorican Soul ft. George Benson

Words by Erik Zambrano