



by Chelsea Warwick

DJ Shadia's come a long way since her internship at a radio station when she was in school. She now heads up her own show, *The 5th Element* and has opened for artists like 50 Cent and Massari. We caught up with the gorgeous DJ to find out where she had her humble beginnings, her favourite events and all about her radio station that airs in Lebanon and Jordan.

How did you get started in DJing?

I started out as an intern in a local radio station when I was in school, doing very simple things such as following up the charts, discovering production and getting into some voice-over work for radio ads. Around graduation time, I was encouraged to take up an hour of airtime on Jordan's first private English radio station, Play 99.6, by the station's General Manager Zafer Younis. I was asked to prepare a demo; it was very basic but it was a lot of fun to put together. We decided to call the show *The 5th Element*, in relation to the four elements of hip-hop – DJing, MCing, breakdance and graffiti.

Who were your influences?

On a local level, I was definitely influenced by Zafer Younis, who was once a DJ himself. On an international level, I am influenced by the UK's DJ Semtex and DJ Swerve. DJ Green Lantern and most definitely Jay-Z from the US. I was supposed to do the warm-up set for Jay-Z in Beirut before the war broke out.

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Do you find it hard being a female DJ?

It was hard at first, not because I'm female but because I was so young. My family and friends have always been very supportive. The growing number of people who check out my radio show every week and come to my events makes me feel like it doesn't matter what gender you are, as long as you try to be the best at what you do and have fun doing it!

You're based in Lebanon where you have a Radio Show, tell us about it.

The 5th Element is the Middle East's official Hip-hop and R&B show. The show started out in November 2004 in Jordan. When I got to Beirut in 2004, the first thing I did was check out

the local radio scene and I was certain that the show had to be part of it. However, at the time, I felt like I wasn't ready. About nine months later, I sent a demo to Lebanon's leading radio station Radio One. We decided to launch the show and the syndication was official by June 2005. The show goes for airplay each week in Jordan and Lebanon and we've been getting really good feedback so far, it's been a blessing! We plan on taking the show to the rest of the Middle East. In 2007, *The 5th Element* will be coming to a station near you! (Smiles.)

You've DJed for a few big stars like Massari and 50 Cent, what was it like?

Doing the warm-up set for 50 Cent and the G-Unit's concert in Beirut in June 2006 was an amazing experience. I got some drops from 50 Cent for the show. The concert was big! I worked with Massari on Project Peace – an annual charity concert which takes place in Jordan. Project Peace was an incredible experience. I got to record some drops with Massari too. It was a lot of fun and I'm one of his biggest supporters and fans.

What's the biggest event you've done?

Biggest by size it was the 50 Cent Live in Beirut concert. But in general, it's a tough question because almost every event I'm part of becomes my favourite event until the next one. On a collaborative level, the last big event I did was with Play 99.6 on New Years Eve in Jordan. It was crazy hot, definitely a big success. On a personal level, my favourite events are the Strictly hip-hop series in "The Basement" in Lebanon, which is an event that takes place every month. That crowd is the craziest crowd and people are always excited about the next event – that's probably why it's my favourite local event. I don't take part in many events; I try to be as selective as possible. I think being selective helps you avoid over-exposure.

As well as DJing, you're also studying – how do you find the time to do both?

It gets really hectic because you find yourself unable to give either a 100 percent and I unconsciously favour my work in radio and music over academics and this sometimes gets reflected in my grades. I've been trying my best to maintain a balance especially with graduation coming up.

Which other DJ would you love to spend a day with?

That person would be DJ Semtex. He has a weekly radio show on BBC's 1Xtra every Friday and Saturday called *The Mixtape*. He also works with UK branch of Def Jam. I did some training at BBC in July 2005 and I got the chance to visit the station but Semtex wasn't around! We've been in touch for over a year and I was a phone guest on his show a couple of months back. He has been very supportive and has given me very useful advice for the business side of what I do and definitely a lot of music advice. Getting the chance to spend a day learning from him would be amazing but I doubt it would be enough; he is one of the most experienced people I've been in touch with. The BBC team are planning on coming to broadcast Semtex's show live from Beirut early 2007 and we're going to be working on that show and probably do an event together. I'm totally excited about that!

What are your plans for the future?

We are planning on releasing four mixtapes in 2007 that will feature a lot of *5th Element* exclusives from regional and international artists, special sets and the radio show. Promoters from parts of the region have been in touch asking for events, 2007 definitely sounds big so far! Right after graduation, I'm planning on doing a short stop in Dubai where I'll be working on the syndication of the show and then finally get the chance to do audio production at SAE London. www.myspace.com/shadia