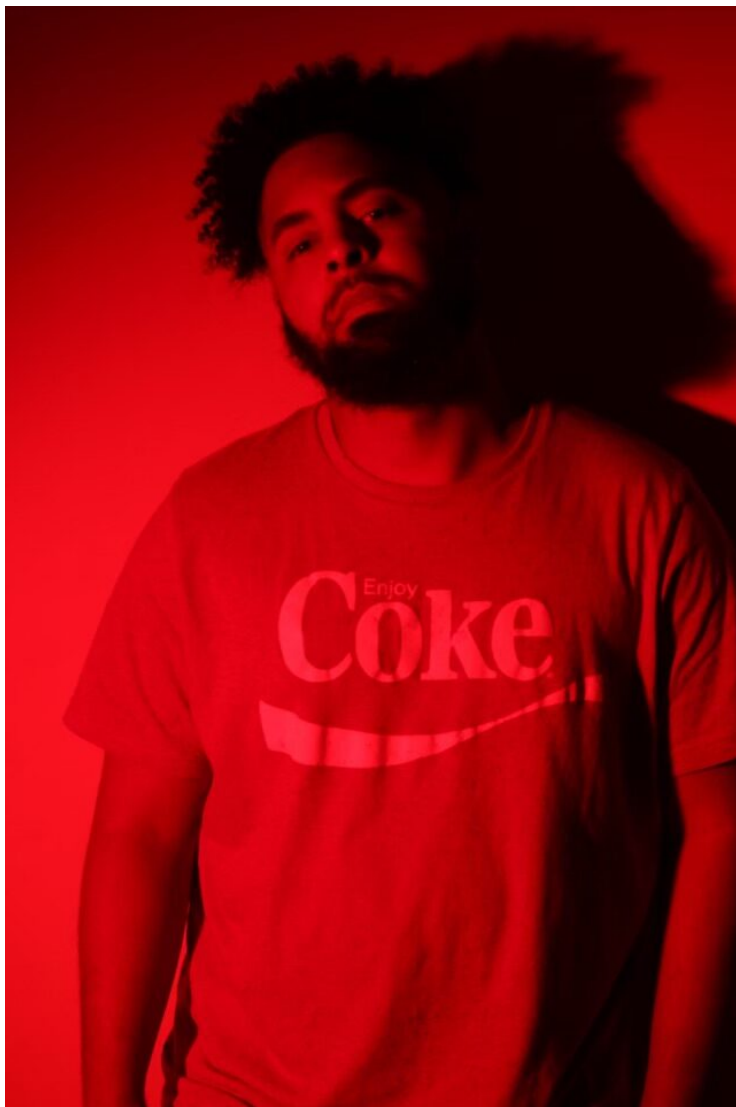


# Sonically Driven: Dvalor on hip-hop, the industry and the lifestyle



**David Manny Valerio** (aka Dvalor, Valor) is a Providence native with more than a decade of experience in music tech, production and studio relations. Seeing the world through hip-hop culture has shaped the life this single father has created for himself and his son, Ethan. From playing beat sets at local venues to finding his way through the corporate world of music, Valor's story is equal parts humble and humbling. With a fiery passion for success and expression through artistry, Valor's goals, aspirations and means by which he works to achieve them are relatable and empowering. Valor's music and infectious laughter are easily recognizable and worth getting to know.

"I began a career in recording arts as an adolescent at The Met. I learned the fundamentals of the music business from The Jeffrey Osbourne family. I learned about event curation, music production and studio relations. It was there I first discovered entrepreneurship and received my first business license at age 16. While attending Rhode Island College, I chaired the Student Entertainment Committee and booked Gym Class Heroes while also interning at a local recording studio. The foundation I got through

a progressive education brought me to working with some of the biggest music tech brands.”

Even before he started the groundwork for his career, music was a big part of his life. “Like most Caribbean-based cultures, Latinos are sonically driven. I was always around music. My parents would have loud Salsa music playing at all hours of the night like while I was trying to watch Toonami and play video games with my cousins.”

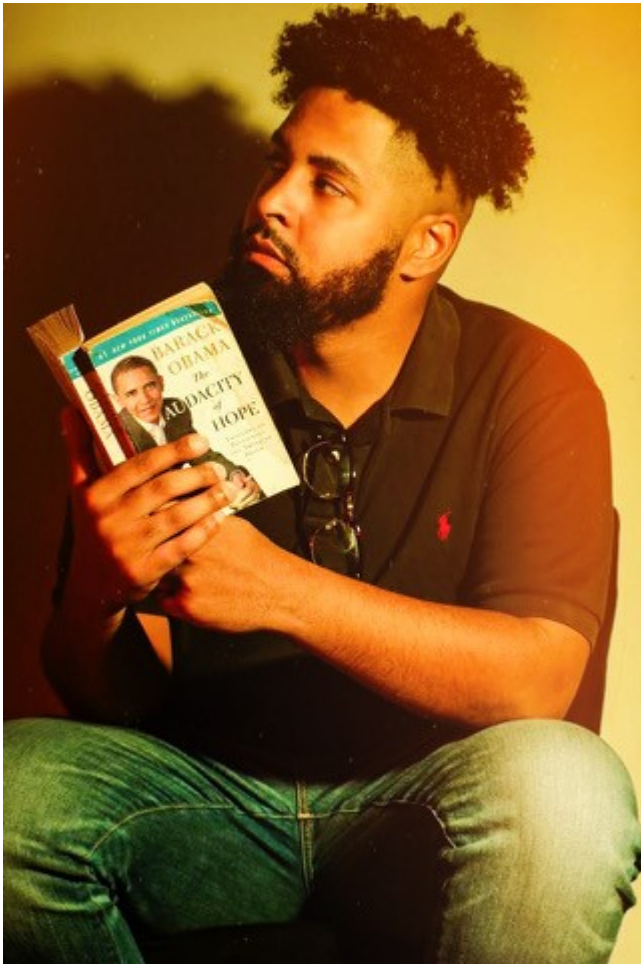
Valor was 14 when he started producing music. “Before I even started making beats I went to the library a lot and saw in audio magazines that people could go to college for music. I eventually started producing on my computer with Cool Edit Pro and Sony Acid Pro. I would find the simplest chords and create Reggaeton drum progressions under them. To me it would sound halfway decent! I got into it as a hobby and that got me into sample digging and bettering my skills over time.”

His newest full album, *As Long As I'm Alive*, is coming out soon with the flagship single “Let It Go feat. Ink The Urban Myth” being released September 3 on streaming services. His new work features local collaborations and Valor’s unique take on his influences of New York hip-hop, backpack rap and alternative music.

“This album is spiritual hip-hop with depth. I made a decision that since the pandemic affected everyone and with me personally experiencing loss and heartache, I would not let my dreams slip away. As long as I’m alive I’m not going to let fear be the thing that stops me. I’m crazy happy to be dropping music again. I’m inspired by my friends and knowing we can’t let music fall through the cracks since this means so much. I’m excited for people to experience this entire piece of work and to see who I’ve been working with. I’m so tedious on music I come out with because my art through creation is so personal to me. It’s intimate. I’ve had times being happy and making music while smiling the whole time. I’ve had times where I felt so down it came out in what I was making. But through the therapy I get from creating I was able to turn the same piece around and make it uplifting and hopeful.”

Valor’s world view and motivation are shaped largely by his experiences in hip-hop. A pioneer for the importance of this culture his biggest influences are the group Little Brother, KanYe West and Lupe Fiasco. His favorite book at 16 was Russell Simmons’ biography, which taught him about one of the first rises of Black ownership in music.

“Hip-hop has given me more chances than I think I’ve deserved. It’s taken me away from so many different things in a positive way. I’ve lived in inner city areas and was around a lot of crazy stuff. I would be in situations hanging outside my house and know if things were going to go in a dangerous direction. We’d be having fun and all of a sudden someone would kick a fence post and the cops would be called. Instead of being sucked into the moment I would go inside to make beats. By the time I had come back outside the cops would have already come and beat up my friends for doing something reckless. How would it have changed me if I stayed outside and been a part of that? For me these situations are inescapable unless you’re able to change reality. Hip-hop allowed me to change my reality. It saved my life. It’s the core values of hip-hop that I’m able to bring into every environment and what’s allowed me to apply these values to professional infrastructure through the latest decades rise in tech companies, entrepreneurship, and promotional networking.”



These experiences have brought an important sense of community to Valor's life as well. He gives a lot of his time to local causes and continues to impart knowledge he has gained over the years to young people in a variety of settings. This includes being a community curator at AS220 teaching beat-making during the pandemic. He was even able to leverage his music tech connections and had the company Izotope donate thousands of dollars worth of their software for the non profit's music production facility. He also taught an innovative social media class at The Met in 2018 teaching kids about social media analytics, brand building and marketing strategies.

"These are things I want to continue doing. Imparting knowledge is very important. My challenge to bigger companies is to do more to equip kids in communities like ours with tools and resources. I would also love to see RI government pay local studios for time to send kids to learn how recording, music business and the creative process work. Instead of pushing kids away from being creative, empower them to learn more about these potential avenues in life. Choosing to expose them to these types of experiences will help them with life experience meanwhile helping local professionals and / or aspiring professionals in the local music community. We can set kids up with mentors and some basic equipment and start stimulating a whole new type of local economy."

This type of insight comes from having been in the professional music technology field over six years. His backbone of hip-hop ideals and motives has led him up the corporate ladder of the music world, having worked in various positions for such prominent music tech companies as InMusic Brands (the parent company of Akai Pro and M-Audio), E-Mastered, Izotope, and currently Timbaland's company BeatClub. This work has never made him deviate from his passion of solo artistry and expression,

though.

“I’m a person who created my own opportunities by being part of companies who gave opportunities to learn in many capacities. I’m on my personal journey in combination with my professional journey. Through living life this way, I’ve been able to build a more solid foundation for my own unique self rather than constantly getting caught up in fads or trends. People who get to a legendary status understand themselves first. They’re always ready because it’s literally part of their everyday life.”

When asked about his personal experiences as a local creative growing up in Providence and seeing where it is now compared to where it was when he first started Valor explained:

“Through time we’ve began to create our own infrastructure within our creative communities. We’ve had to build everything little by little from the ground up. Because we’re so small and tight-knit, it forces an individual to have to stand out. Meanwhile the music industry is always changing. Especially now, it’s a whole new hybrid industry. They figured out that things can be accomplished even if the world is shut off since we’re all connected through our phones. These people have learned the true value of the internet, readapted it, and put the pieces they learned into the best strategies to make it work and generate income and notoriety. Now the biggest power is being first. If you’re first and you’re ready, then you’re going to get where you want to go. This gives people from anywhere new opportunities, and our home is no different.”

Given the everyday work Valor does, he has a constant finger on the pulse of new musical trends and current hip-hop and producer culture. When asked about Rhode Island in relation to the music industry and what may be needed in order to grow our notoriety within the bigger industry he explained:

“With music and entertainment a lot times people have to leave RI to gain some national notoriety and then come back to be more successful here. The good thing, though, is that when we venture out we bring pieces of Rhode Island to other places. I love my city and I want the world to see my city. From a music industry perspective I’d love to see us have a prominent music festival. We have PVD Fest, but that’s a call to our specific culture. For me I’d love to see a ‘Rolling Loud’ type of event. When tourists get here they see Rhode Island as having a unique vibe. We have beaches less than an hour away, we have a great night life scene and we’re the creative capital. I think we need to promote Providence as a major city in America in new ways and that will draw newer types of attention here. More positive as opposed to negative competition within will help us as well. We have an entire music hall of fame a lot of people have no idea about. We’ve had producers from here on major records, even bands who tour the world. A lot of special things and people come from here, we just need to continue putting ourselves on the map collectively.”

When asked where he sees Rhode Island hip-hop heading into the future he said, “I think Rhode Island hip-hop will come together like the different nations within the Avatar universe. We will learn the ability to use each other in positive aspects to network like other states and crowd boost our own social content, which will inevitably popularize the diversity and talent we have in the smallest state in America. Once we get to the point where we listen to ourselves enough other people will want to listen to us too. I think there should be more inclusion in local major and minor businesses in Rhode Island musical arts as well. Even simple things like using more local beats and songs for commercials will be a big help.”

In true Valor fashion he had a few words to leave anyone reading this who may be starting out, looking for inspiration, or feeling lost on their journey:

“My advice to a lot of people is to not be scared to release music yourself, especially if you’re hitting walls releasing music with other people. Stay positive, work hard, if you have a setback, realize why it happened, hold yourself accountable and continue. This is exactly what I thought I’d be doing when I first got into music. My goals have never really changed because I knew exactly what I wanted to do for so long. Being able to make sounds that make people feel good, that help them when they’re sad, or even just make them shake their butts is a privilege. I’m a single father balancing a very demanding career, making music, and still creating my legacy for something my son can leverage for himself one day. That motivates me more than anything. Like many people I started out just making dope stuff with my friends. Now I’m making dope stuff happen with my friends.”

*Dvalor’s single “Let It Go feat. Ink The Urban Myth” drops September 3: [smarturl.it/jiwstx](http://smarturl.it/jiwstx). The full album, *As Long As I’m Alive*, will be available soon. Keep up to date with this and more on Valor’s social media: Instagram: [@cantstopdvalor](https://www.instagram.com/cantstopdvalor/); Twitter: [@youaintdvalor](https://twitter.com/youaintdvalor/); Facebook: [@dvalor](https://www.facebook.com/dvalor/)*