

Director's Statement

Ali's Story is a film about sound — how it lingers, how it heals, how it resonates long past its origin and refuses to be silenced. It's about dance — as celebration, expression and survival. It's about the spaces we share and the freedom and togetherness we find in movement. It's about how a Nina Simone remix can change someone's life.

The project began with a simple question: Can we tell an emotional, visual story using one perspective and a handful of vinyl records?

The structure mirrors a DJ mix: Ali's voice and record selections drive the arc, while archival fragments, choreographed solo dance, and NYC b-roll form a visual counterpoint.

But as I spoke with DJ Ali Coleman in Brooklyn during the summer of 2023 — filming, researching, and listening more deeply — that question opened into something larger. Ali's life, and his perspective on the NYC Cabaret Law and the movement to repeal it, revealed how sound, memory, and motion help shape personal identity and collective history.

The story ended up exploring what dance means to an individual, and what it means to a community when that fundamental freedom is threatened, or disrupted.

The experience of hearing what it felt like from someone directly affected by Cabaret Law abuse showed me how coalitions form among different kinds of people, such that it becomes a movement. DJ Ali Coleman is the special kind of everyday person who ends up at the center of that phenomenon, and that spirit was reflected in the making of the film itself: a team of people with differing perspectives all choreographing dialogue, music, sound design, and multi-sourced footage while threading archival fragments into the rhythm of Ali's life and records.

As a filmmaker, *Ali's Story* taught me to focus on the importance of what unites us in a time when it can feel so seductive to disconnect.

Contact:

Benito Sinclair

Director / Producer, *Ali's Story*

bensinclair1@gmail.com

(510) 409-7849

benitosinclair.com

sightlinesvisual.com