



Top: VJ Martha Quinn interviews David Lee Roth of Van Halen on MTV's exclusive "Liner Notes." Bottom: Quinn with Andy Summers of The Police.



Photo by Mike Taylor

Martha Quinn showing off her Texas A&M sweatshirt on a segment of MTV.



Front, left to right, Martha Quinn and Nina Blackwood. Rear, J.J. Jackson and Alan Hunter.

V.J. talks about MTV

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Music Television hit the cable TV airwaves in August 1981, presenting rock 'n roll in a completely new way and taking the record buying public by surprise. America has responded to MTV in a big way; the channel last year received the highest Nielsen ratings of any basic cable network.

The birth of rock videos has led to a new era in music history. The first channel of its kind, MTV owes its success in part not only to its unique format, but also to its five fellow pioneers — the V.J.'s (video jockeys).

J.J. Jackson, Mark Goodman, Nina Blackwood, Alan Hunter and Martha Quinn — two disc jockeys, an actress and musician, a Shakespearean actor and a broadcast journalism major respectively — provide the news, interviews, energy and distinctly different personalities that keep MTV's audience watching the network in between videos.

Visiting with rock stars and introducing videos may sound like an easy job, but the V.J.'s are quick to insist that the surface glamour veils a grueling pace. Their salaries also are less than one might expect.

MTV runs 24-hours a day and each V.J. pilots a five-hour segment. Two five-hour slots for each V.J. are taped on weekdays, and according to one V.J., it usually takes about an hour and 15 minutes to tape the "live" spots in between videos for each segment. In between tapings, the V.J.'s are kept busy answering viewer mail, studying lines, doing research for upcoming interviews, screening videos and helping write scripts.

Their weekends often are spent traveling around the country to participate in MTV's various promotional contests and stunts, going to clubs and parties, and attending rock concerts to introduce the bands.

"I've never worked so hard at anything," V.J. Martha Quinn once exclaimed. "When we say music all day and all night, we mean it." Quinn graduated from New York University with a de-

gree in broadcast journalism shortly before becoming a V.J. The youngest V.J. at 24, Quinn had an internship as Assistant to the Music Director of WNYU and had produced different types of music shows prior to her job at MTV.

Quinn has said that "The challenge for me is to fight becoming a cliché person and really maintain a sense of self."

In an interview this week that was almost cut off twice while Quinn tried to figure out MTV's "crazy new phone system — it has all these buttons and I don't know which one to push," she spoke with AT EASE about the singular job of being a Video Jockey.

AT EASE: The five MTV V.J.'s were chosen out of thousands of applicants for the job and the 150 people who got to audition. How did you hear about it? Was it through a friend?

QUINN: Absolutely right. I had been doing commercials in college and a friend told me I should apply for this job at MTV.

AT EASE: How did you get into commercials?

QUINN: The same way — a friend dragged me along to an audition once and that was how it started.

AT EASE: What was the job like at first? Wasn't it a little scary to go from being a college student to suddenly being in front of a camera all the time? Was it a difficult adjustment for you, or did your experience in commercials prepare you for it?

QUINN: Oh, it was so different! I was the youngest, and there I was, this college intern and I thought I knew it all. I mean, that was college! When I went to the audition I had no idea what I was getting into with MTV. I was so paranoid.

AT EASE: I know that this is probably a sensitive issue, but it has been suggested in the media that having Jane Bryant Quinn as a stepmother has probably helped your career. Did she influence you at all?

QUINN: Absolutely no, absolutely no! That is not true. I've never even lived with Jane. I lived with my mom. Jane had absolutely nothing to do with my decision to try for a job at MTV. I'm

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