

Hey, Mr. DJ

Local DJs bring new light to the fast-growing art form



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The Battalion

When most people think of a DJ, they think of the guy at their favorite club who stands behind two turntables and plays music, but few people realize the time, effort and expense involved in becoming a professional DJ.

DJs as entertainers have gone largely unnoticed, though several have made their mark on the musical world. Hip-Hop DJs have been visible since the early '80s when Jammaster J first made his name as Run DMC's DJ.

More recently, DJs have surfaced in genres other than hip hop. Fatboy Slim and Moby have made their way onto the pop charts, and underground DJs such as Carl Cox and Sasha can draw 10,000 people to a show.

Ryan Locker, a DJ and senior political science major, said there is far more to being a successful DJ than just playing records. Locker, also known as DJ Ryland Hunter, said the first step in becoming a serious DJ is to decide what type of music to play.

"You have to start off listening to everything," Locker said. "Whether it's techno or trance or hip hop, you just have to listen to a wide variety and decide what it is you want to play. The tracks you play are your identity behind the decks; they're what people will remember you for first."

Locker said this time-consuming process involves numerous trips to record stores and Websites with soundclips of various music types. He said this may be time-consuming, but that the biggest factor in many peoples' decisions on becoming a DJ is money.

"A good pair of (turn) tables will cost you anywhere from \$600 used to \$1000 new," Locker said. "Most DJs will only play on Technics 1200s, so you have to plan on getting those and using them religiously."

However, Locker said the resale value of turntables is relatively high, with a lightly used pair of 1200s selling for nearly their original price.

Turntables are not the only expense — record collections can cost thousands of dollars. Trey Cruz, a resident DJ at Club 2010 in

Bryan and a Texas A&M graduate, said he has between 350 and 400 records, which each cost approximately \$10 — making collections like his a hefty investment for any prospective DJ. The next big purchase is the mixer, which Cruz said can cost between \$150 and \$500 depending on what the DJ wants. Lower-end mixers may do the job, he said, but higher-quality mixers provide better sound quality and longevity.

Locker said the next step in becoming a DJ is practice. Combined with perseverance, practice is the first major step in a beginner's trek to becoming a top-notch DJ, he said. "I can't count the number of hours I have spent behind the tables," he said. "Just learning to match beats takes months. It's easy to get frustrated at the beginning and feel like quitting, but you have to hang in there — as your skills improve, the more fun it gets."

Locker said beat-matching is the most important aspect of becoming a good DJ.

"You have to be able to mix songs together perfectly, or any tricks you do will be lost in the mess," he said. "Most electronic music is written in common or six-eighths time, and so you have to be able to match the speeds of the records so they'll overlap like one song. After that, you're only limited by your imagination."

So with that the once God-forsaken amateur is now ready to play his first show, but unfortunately, he does not know how to get one. Locker said the quickest route to a booking is to meet people.

"Go up to DJs and promoters and club owners," Locker said. "Ask them for a chance to play; give them a tape of your mixes; go to parties and meet the people who are in the scene. More often than not, they will be happy to give you a shot if you act like a professional and have a good tape."

Cruz added he got his DJ job at Club 2010 when he met another resident DJ, DJ Sirius, at a house party. "I started spinning at house parties ... and Joey (Sirius)

asked me to play at 2010," Cruz said. "I started spinning up there early once in a while, and that's when I started to promote the club and everything, and now I am a member of FM2 — the crew of resident DJs at Club 2010."

Jimi Pineda, a Disc Go Round employee electronic music enthusiast said that while College Station may seem like a town with only two kinds of music — country and western — it boasts a surprisingly vibrant, if small, electronic music community.

"During the school year, there's like 50 or 100 locals who come out to every party," he said. "Then there are the big events like North By Northgate that can bring out 400 people or more."

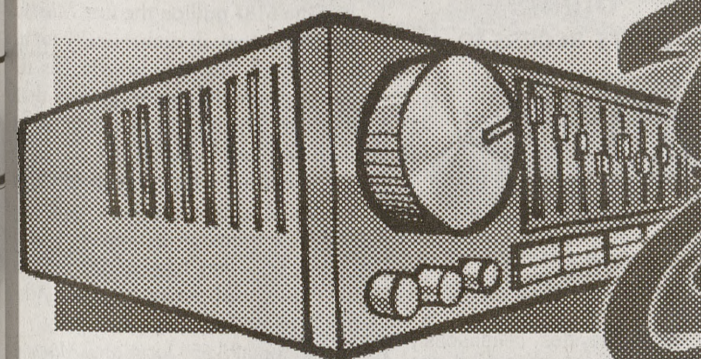
So to the "wannabe DJ," the cardinal rule to remember is being a DJ is difficult, expensive and often misunderstood, but for those who do it, there's nothing like selling a pint of blood for some new vinyl.

"The tracks you play are your identity behind the decks; they're what people will remember you for first."

— Ryan Locker
DJ and senior political science major

Ryan Locker, a.k.a. DJ Ryland Hunter, spins for the crowd at North By Northgate 2000. Locker, a senior political science major, played a four-turntable battle set as part of his battle team, Toxin.

Volume Control



Bad Religion
The New America
CD Courtesy of Atlantic Records

Bad Religion fans may not have bought the band's album *The New America* yet, but they have heard it before.

While this album is called *The New America*, there is nothing new about it except the insert. The album is filled with punk songs that sound so cliché they could have been picked from a slew of other bands.

The highlights of the album are Bad Religion's trademark activist lyrics and vocalist Greg Gaffin's never-before-heard vocal range. Gaffin hits new highs both lyrically and vocally with this album as he urges listeners to improve their lives with lyrics like, "It's a long way to the promised land, if we work we might



find it here. There's no substitute for enlightenment, there's no reason for bridled fear." Despite these highlights, there are no surprises, and few good songs on this album. While Bad Religion's members should be applauded for their motivational and activist views, those views would have been better voiced in a spoken-word album. (Grade: D+)

— Jason Bennyhoff

Various Artists
'Til We Outnumber 'Em
Courtesy of Righteous Babe releases

Until his death in 1967, singer/songwriter Woody Guthrie, epitomized the plight of the blue-collar romantic with folk ballads meant to stir the heart and the mind of the common man.

Thirty-three years later, 'til we outnumber 'em, boasting a cast of performers ranging from the always entertaining Tim Robbins to "The Boss" himself, conducts a proper eulogy of the idolized folk artist by re-creating a cache of his most famous songs and poetry.

However, just as a funeral is tailored for those who knew the deceased, this album will most likely only appeal to those who already have a special place in their hearts for the staple melodies of true folk music. Even with performances from the harmonious Indigo Girls and the impassioned Ani DiFranco, the reincar-



nated ballads remain true to the gritty, mellow style that characterized Guthrie's work.

For those who were wearied on the soda-pop tunes of Michael Jackson, Garth Brooks or Heavy D, this album would probably be no more attractive than a recording of cats in heat. But for those who love to relive fantasies of strummin' a guitar on the open road or making love and not war, this album is a dream come true. (Grade: C+)

— Stuart Hutson

MxPx
The Ever Passing Moment
CD Courtesy of AM Records

MxPx hits close to home with its latest album of fast-paced soon-to-be-punk-rock-anthems produced by legendary punk guru Jerry Finn of Rancid and Green Day fame. In this album, MxPx stays true to its punk sound with a decidedly unpunk theme.

Vocalist Mike Herrera tries to find himself in this album and takes the listener along for the ride through songs like "My Life Story," "Two Whole Years" and "One Step Closer to Life." This album strays from the familiar punk clichés of girls and beer and into the band's struggle for survival in the cutthroat musical world and the personal tragedies that occurred on its road to stardom.

However, while the theme is different from the prototypical punk band, the sound is not, aside from the fact that Herrera is one of the few punk vocalists who can carry a tune. The songs still average two-



and-a-half minutes at 160 beats per minute, and some have no discernible quality, with AM Records' apparent single-to-be "Responsibility" among them.

While MxPx does not think like the stereotypical punk band, it does not break any new ground with this album, either. The band manages to go through 15 songs and sound the same throughout; while it is good for continuity, it is not innovation.

However, *The Ever Passing Moment* is still an album full of catchy songs and is more worthy of \$15 than most of the tripe out there. (Grade: B-)

— Jason Bennyhoff



A = instant classic **B = a cut above** **C = average**
D = don't buy it **F = burn in effigy**