

Local DJs entertain the masses

Story by Dino Ramos

Photos by E. Ray Gard

When people hear the words, "hip-hop," two other words enter their minds: "rap music." Many people are oblivious to the fact that "hip-hop" pertains to an entire culture. Since the early 1980s, there have been four elements that embody hip-hop: MCing (rapping), B-boying (break dancing), tagging (graffiti) and DJing (turntablism). Today, many people are trying to make themselves 100 percent hip-hop by utilizing all four elements. One element in particular, DJing, seems to be a popular up-and-coming hobby among young adults everywhere.

To many, the definition of a disc jockey (DJ) is one who plays music at a club. That may be taken as a stab to many popular DJ crews. Famous DJ crews such as The Invisibl Skratch Picklz, 5th Platoon and the Beat Junkies have made spinning the archaic vinyl record into an art form. They transform existing beats into new ones by using various forms of turntable techniques.

Jason Robinett, aka DJ Mainframe and graduate student, said, "It really bothers me when people think of DJs as people who just play music at clubs. To me, it's an art. DJing requires so much technique and skill that people are not aware of."

As simple as it may sound, playing at a club also can be considered an ordeal to many DJs. The way they program their music, the type of crowd they are playing for, and the appeal of their music, all play a vital role.

"A good club DJ has the ability to control his crowd in the way they feel by simply playing a certain set of records," said Steven Blancaver, aka DJ Stevie B of the Houston-based DJ crew, The Buddhafoolz. "It's fun to see how the crowd reacts to your music and to see what songs are going to make the crowd hype."

Although there are many techniques and criterion involved in DJing, many DJs are enrolled in school and must

learn to juggle their time on the turntables and their time hitting the books fairly well.

Ryan Santos, aka DJ Saint Projekt and freshman at the University of Saint Thomas in Houston, said, "Even though it's a lot of fun DJing at local clubs, I can't be too serious about the whole DJ scene right now. I just enrolled at UST, and school always comes first."

From California to New York, aspiring DJs who are and are not seriously involved in school can be found hidden in their bedroom trying to mix the latest songs playing on the radio. Even at Texas A&M, some students can be found not DJing at clubs but practicing their techniques in the privacy of their own homes.

"I think DJing at clubs takes a lot away from the aspect of turntablism," said Duong Le, aka DJ Bahn-Meeh and a junior biomedical sciences major.

"You can't be as creative as you want to be when spinning at a club. I just spin and mix songs to improve my technique as a DJ and hopefully get good enough to enter the famous DMC DJ competition."

Even though the majority of the complex DJing techniques are applied to hip-hop music, DJing is not just limited to that genre. Many DJs spin a variety of music such as house, jungle, trance, drum and bass and techno.

"Hip-hop is one of the hardest styles of music to experiment with," said Zaid Al-Baker, aka DJ Cheezecake of the Buddhafoolz. "That is why I stick where music is taking off in, such as trance."

Many DJs utilize their talents in many forms. Another Houston-based DJ crew, The Krackernutz, make use of

their turntable skills in radio, clubs and in the DJ battle scene. The Krackernutz consists of Baby J, Kleankutt, and Kasuri. They are regular DJs on the Houston radio station, 97.9 The Box. Even though they work well together as a group, they do just as well as individuals. Baby J recently competed in the DMC Southwest Regional DJ competition, a major event for DJs in and around Texas, while Christian Navarette, aka Kleankutt, has received a masters degree and still possesses major talent as a turntablist.

"DJing is getting really big around the nation, especially in Texas," Kleankutt said. "We like to utilize our talents in any way we can to express our music."

A predominantly male business, females are rare in the DJ scene. Popular female DJs in the limelight include Sonique and Spinderella, from the rap group Salt-N-Pepa. There are many other popular turntablists that are popular within the DJ community such as Symphony and DJ Kuttin' Kandi, two very respected names in the scene. Many aspiring female DJs tend to turn to these two DJs from California for inspiration.

"Symphony and Kuttin' Kandi are two awesome DJs," said Gie Navo, aka DJ G-Shock and a high school student from

Cerritos, Calif. "They give me a lot of inspiration to improve myself as a DJ."

The widespread infestation of professional and amateur DJs around the world is definitely a sign that there will never be a shortage of DJs. Whether they are presenting their skills at a club, the local radio station or at a DJ competition, one thing is for sure: DJs will always make one get down on the dance floor or make one want to become a master of the "wheels of steel."

Ryan Locker, a local DJ, spins in his home studio on Wednesday. He is part of the group Toxin, two DJs who spin all over, including places like Austin and Canada.



Volume Control



Willa Ford
Willa Was Here
Atlantic Records

Born Amanda Lee Williford, the 20-year-old singer first grabbed the limelight as Backstreet Boy Nick Carter's girlfriend. With a new image and a new album, Williford is trying hard to follow Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, all the while denying it.

In the liner notes of her first album, Willa Ford writes, "My life is as much of an emotional rollercoaster ... so I can keep writing real lyrics and not

... about butterflies, sunshine and candy." Ford co-wrote eight of the eleven tracks on her CD, but her topics range from sex, frivolous high school topics and dealing with being famous.

Her weak rhymes such as, "Hit the road Jack ... Did Ya' Understand That?" are accompanied by synthesizers and too many keyboards. Her background vocals are reminiscent of late 1980s Exposé or Paula Abdul hits.

It is hard to imagine anyone but 14-year-old girls shopping at Claire's Boutique actually bobbing their heads to her "music."

Each song on her album sounds alike with the exception of "Tender," a ballad where a poor girl sings about how sensitive she is to heartaches and love.

While many fans have posted Websites praising Ford, others have displayed their dislike of Ford with "Anti-Willa Ford" Websites, claiming she must be stopped from committing the crimes she is committing against music and dedicated to exposing the talentless

freeloader known as Willa."

From her video, "I Wanna Be Bad," which receives plenty of airplay on MTV, to the cover of her CD, Willa Ford tries to make up for her lack of talent with her lack of clothes.

Her singing voice is decent. Maybe if she were not such a sellout and jumped off the pop wagon, she would not be such a waste of talent. (Grade: D)



—Lizette Resendez
***NSYNC**
Celebrity
Jive Records

Three CDs into a fast and

furious musical career and the boys of 'NSYNC have set themselves apart from the cookie-cutter look-a-likes of so many competing boy bands. They are a boy band, but that is not a synonym for being musically illiterate.

Justin, J.C., Lance, Chris and Joey stepped out of the normal boundaries in creating *Celebrity* by co-writing 10 of the album's 13 tracks. Surprisingly, the songs that stand out the most are those that Justin Timberlake and J.C. Chazez had a hand in writing. While they still do not play their own instruments, these song-and-dance men deserve some respect.

"Pop," the first track released to radio and music television, incorporates rapid-fire electronic beats and a funky hip-hop rhyme to become the disc's prelude. Lead singer Justin Timberlake, who co-wrote the song, brings the

track's not-your-average-pop-group attitude with full force.

The title track follows suit in similar rebellious fashion. An angst-ridden melody, mixed with chanted background vocals, draws listeners in through its hypnotic utterances and more autobiographical lyrics.

Other tracks work their way through smooth R&B vocals and mellow rhythms, which un-complicate the sometimes busy digital music. The group's Stevie Wonder influence comes through clearly and pleasantly as the group strives to break away from critical stereotyping.

Listeners can expect to find a more personally introspective and expressive album than the group's previous discs, but they have not lost that fun, pop sound. (Grade: B)

—Thomas Phillips

See REVIEWS on Page 5.

TRANUM
AUTO GROUP
Mitsubishi and Suzuki

Visit us at
www.tranumauto.com
- student programs available -

"We Trade While Others Talk"

1309 S. Texas Ave., Bryan 979-822-5454

Hope Pregnancy Centers
OF BRAZOS VALLEY

FACING AN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO FACE IT ALONE.

Free Pregnancy Test • Complete Confidentiality
Pregnancy Peer Counseling Service
Information on Abortion Risks

695-9193 846-1097

205 Brentwood College Station M, W-F 9-5, Tues 9-8
3620 E. 29th St. Bryan M-W, F 9-5, Th 9-8, Sat 8-12

TEXAS ROADHOUSE
Now Accepting Aggie Bucks!

HEARTY STEAKS! KILLER RIBS!

TEXAS roadhouse

Opening early for Graduation!
Friday, August 10th at 2:00 pm
Open every Saturday and Sunday at 11:00 am

1601 University Drive East
979-268-0558