

DJ-ing: Turn a hobby into a real money spinner

Playing a few tunes may sound like fun – but it's hard work, as Caroline Roberts discovers

Thursday, 26 June 2008

¹ 'Last night a DJ saved my life,' goes the *perennial* dance-floor favourite. Letting your hair down to great music may not exactly be a life-saver, but it's definitely *life-enhancing*. And being the person behind the decks making it happen is a huge buzz, according to Tim Foster, aka DJ Phatboy Tim.

² 'Playing a set is like a drug, only without the side effects,' he says. 'To rock the dance floor, you need to be passionate about music, and experience of club culture helps. Before I started, I'd spent 10 years clubbing in this country and abroad.'

³ Foster, who now has a residency and performs in venues throughout the West Midlands, believes that it's no good being *sniffy* about musical tastes. 'I play anything from soulful, funky house to heavy tech, but I do all the *cheesy*, party stuff, too,' he says. 'You need to be prepared to cover a wide range of styles. When you get established, then you can specialise.'

'it's no good being sniffy about musical tastes'

⁴ It's a good idea to gain experience by playing at birthday parties and weddings before *venturing* into the club scene. A contract to perform at a series of functions for a hotel chain was invaluable for Foster when he was starting out. 'It taught me how to read the crowd,' he says. 'You can be playing to anyone, from 18 to 70 years old, and you get a feel for the type of music that gets different people dancing. Blokes seem to like dancing to Take That, even though they probably wouldn't want to admit it!'

⁵ Networking with other DJs and promoters will also help you get on. He advises beginners to learn the ropes by offering to act as a roadie for an experienced DJ. Developing contacts means you are more likely to be asked to fill in for someone or be given a warm-up slot.

⁶ It helps to be *outgoing*, he says. 'You need to interact with the crowd, make eye contact, and build up a *rapport*. At a function, I might go round the tables while people are still eating, introduce myself and take requests. At one large event where I did this, I was asked to play for an extra hour and they passed round a bucket for tips. It came to over £460.'

⁷ Many DJs diversify by going into club promotion or make extra money by hiring out equipment. You also need to be on the lookout for the next big trend. Foster is also a VJ, or visual DJ, which involves producing images to accompany the music. At one club night, he brings the Ibiza vibe back to rainy England with projected images from the island.

⁸ So what are the chances of joining the DJ jet set and landing a residency somewhere such as Ibiza? It's highly competitive, says Andy King, the founder of the training organisation DJ Academy. But there are plenty of other opportunities to travel. 'This country has ➡'

English in Mind Second edition

Level 4 Unit 4

Article

THE  INDEPENDENT

➡ always been at the *forefront* of musical development, so UK DJs are *renowned* as the best and can earn a living in top hotels all over the world. Dance music is massive in Eastern Europe at the moment so there's lots of work, as there is in places like Dubai.'

⁹ You have to get used to the *nocturnal* lifestyle. And it's not as though you can spend all the next day catching up on sleep – there are play lists to compile, promotional work such as talking to venues and designing flyers, as well as all the record-keeping associated with being self-employed. 'It's the hardest job I've done, but definitely the best,' says Foster.

'It's the hardest job I've done, but definitely the best'

For the record

¹⁰ DJ Academy (www.djacademy.org.uk) runs eight-week and one- to five-day courses at a number of cities in the UK. The courses cover everything from mixing music to operating a DJ business, and cost £150–£399.

¹¹ The website of the National Association of DJs (www.nadj.org.uk) has useful information and a

listing service for members. Also see www.djmag.com.

¹² A successful full-time DJ who also does club promotion can earn £30,000–£40,000 a year. Average-sized nightclubs pay £130–£200 a session. For weddings, you could earn £150–£600.

¹³ Basic equipment for a mobile DJ costs £1,200–£1,500, plus transport. A music package for functions costs around £400. Most DJs spend about £30 a week updating ■