

# SCRATCH

DJ ACADEMY®



## ThursdayStyles

The New York Times

### Spinning the Family Name

By JOSHUA DAVID STEIN

ON the eve of New York Fashion Week, Target held a splashy party in a former carriage house on West 15th Street that had been transformed into four brightly colored pop-up shops. It was as if a suburban mall had momentarily alighted in the meatpacking district.

Hundreds of guests browsed the latest collaboration between Target and indie labels like Odin and PatchNYC, including the celebrities Jessica Chastain, Hallee Steinfeld and Lauren Bush Lauren, all of whom wafted through like angels in the food court.

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Children of the rich and famous  
find work at the turntable.

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There was another winsome scion there: Alexandra Richards, 26, a daughter of the Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards. Ms. Richards wore a gauzy bustier-like blouse and a starry skirt, by Target of course.

But after posing on the red carpet, Ms. Richards wasn't browsing the racks or sipping cocktails. Rather, she stood behind a small folding table, propped before two turntables and a laptop, playing classics from her father's generation (Led Zeppelin, the Spinners, the Clovers) and hits from her own (Azealia Banks, M83, the Black Keys).

"I love playing the classics that everybody recognizes but mixing it up a little with obscure tracks," said Ms. Richards, headphones wedged between her shoulder and ear, as models and shoppers walked by.

Ms. Richards is one of the many children of ce-

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BEN SKLAR FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**A SAMPLING** Alexandra Richards, a daughter of the Rolling Stones' Keith Richards, working at a party for Target.



## Celebrity Offspring Spin the Family Name

*From First Styles Page*

celebrities who have turned to turntables to eke out a living. And why not? As a party D.J., the hours are easy, there is not much in the way of formal training, the pay can be pretty good and, best of all, a boldface last name all but guarantees a gig.

A scan of party invitations in New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Las Vegas reveals a growing list of D.J.'s with celebrity parents: Connor Cruise, 17, the son of Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman; B.J. Demetrius Mosley, 20, a son of the record producer Timbaland; Hannah Bronfman, 24, an heiress to the Bronfman family fortune; and Pierre Sarkozy, 27, a son of Nicolas Sarkozy, the former president of France.



They are joined occasionally by tricked Hilfiger, 22, a son of Jimmy Hilfiger, and Chazzy Beavis, 22, a son of Tom Hanks, though they are more rapper than D.J., technically speaking.

"A lot of people think D.J.'ing is easy, and a lot of people think D.J.'s are cool," said Rob Princepe, a founder of Scratch DJ Academy, a decade-old D.J. school with campuses in Los Angeles, New York and Miami. "So I can see how it would be appealing to pursue it as a profession if you don't have to worry about income, like these kids."

Being a D.J. also lets them set their own path to fame. "These children might be trying to avoid Frank Sinatra Jr. syndrome, that is, becoming a second-rate imitation of their parents," said Dr. John Altman, a psychiatrist in Los Angeles who treats many children of celebrities. D.J.'ing, he added, "puts you in a protected

and protected position for that moment." That might explain the allure for the young Mr. Cruise, 15, who often sports a mohawk and is frequently photographed flashing a peace sign. He celebrated his birthday in January with a party in Los Angeles at the club Hyde Lounge at Staples Center, where

his birthday cake was shaped like two Pioneer CDJ-1000 turntables and a mixer. The party was sponsored by California Superstores, an auto dealer chain, and Just Dance 3, a Nintendo Wii video game. Since then Mr. Cruise, who performs under the name D.J. C-Squared, has hit the corporate

D.J. circuit. In July, he performed at American Eagle Outfitters' store in Times Square, playing an eclectic mix that included Whitney Houston, Goye and Coldplay, according to an article in People magazine devoted to his score appearances. He has also played at Comic-Con for the gaming channel IGN, and for the opening of a Katsuya, a Japanese restaurant, in San Diego. According to The New York Post, Mr. Cruise's fee for a two-hour set is \$10,000.

With fees that high, "it's easy to see why these D.J.'s perform at corporate events," said Emily Bungert, a partner at People's Revolution, a New York public relations firm that specializes in fashion events. "That's where the budgets are."

Mr. Cruise, however, seems to be at pains to prove his D.J. bona fides. He recently hired William Derella, the manager who turned the Black Eyed Peas into a marketing juggernaut, and embarked on a weeklong European tour that included stops at clubs in London, Zurich and Düsseldorf.

Of course, one of the fringe benefits of booking a teenage D.J. with a famous last name is that Daddy sometimes shows up. At an August appearance at the London members-only club Chiswick, the younger Mr. Cruise was joined by his father, an occasion that warranted breathless coverage in The Sun and The Daily Mail. "Daddy cool Tom Cruise checks out son Connor's DJ set at London club," wrote Hello! magazine.

"We never discussed his family, but Connor is a 17-year-old guy," said James Spillone, the club manager who booked Mr. Cruise after reading about him online. "You expect the parent to be there." (The younger Mr. Cruise did not respond to repeated interview requests.)

But his D.J. career may soon be eclipsed. In November, he makes his major film debut in "Red Dawn," the remake of the 1984 feature that starred Patrick Swayze and Charlie Sheen.

Mr. Cruise plays Daryl Jenkins, a teenager defending his hometown against an invasion of North Korean soldiers.

Not all children are as eager to milk the family name.

The young Mr. Sarkozy shunned the spotlight while his father was in office. He played in St-Tropez, Ibiza and St. Bar's, but did not make his French debut at the Parisian nightclub Queen until last June, after his father was voted out of the Elysée Palace.

"I wanted to prove my value outside of France first," he said in an interview for Mr Porter, the online retailer of luxury men's wear.

Since then Mr. Sarkozy, who has shoulder-length blond hair and who favors French house music, has played in Portugal, Poland, Austria and the French city of Nancy.

**SOUND DECISIONS**  
Clockwise from top left, Pierre Sarkozy, Alexandra Richards and Connor Cruise, for their work in the D.J. booth, are attracting the attention of the news media.

"I think it's so easy for people to judge me," she said. "But they really cut out a lot of the hard work, time and sweat that I put into D.J.'ing."

Disappointingly, there has been pushback from the traditional D.J. crowd. Online message boards dismiss their lack of technical acumen, with messages like "[Pod DJing for \$10,000 per gig?] And they are regarded more like celebrities than peers."

"That's why you don't see these guys playing booked at places that are serious about D.J.'ing, like Facha, the Sullivan Room or Ocho," said Jim Tremayne, the editor of DJ Times, a trade magazine. "The audience is there in gawk at the famous people, not to dance."

"People like Connor Cruise might have a pretty face," added Randy Reyes, who performs as D.J. KaiZe. "But they can't rock a crowd."

But such criticism misses why D.J.'s with celebrity parents are hired in the first place. It's not to rock a crowd, but to stir news media coverage, Facebook postings, Twitter messages and Instagram photos.

"Media coverage is one of the most important goals of our events," said Joshua Russell Thomas, a spokesman for Target. "It's about the great pictures, the headlines and the talk shows."

Ms. Bungert, the publicist, added, "Successful results depend on press coverage and what images are turning up after the event."

Back at the Target party, Ms. Richards was getting into her two-hour set. Ever the loyal daughter (and not without a sense of humor), Ms. Richards played "Gimme Shelter" by the Rolling Stones.

Guests requested Kanye West, but Ms. Richards's manager, Rachid Kallaoui, was told by an event staff member, "This is Target: let's tone-down the hip-hop." Ms. Richards obliged and switched to Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'."

No one danced, though Kenza Fourati, a Tunisian model, swayed gently and mouched the words to Michael Jackson's "Rock With You." The silk scarves, meanwhile, were flying off the faux-antique shelves and the red-and-white ice cream sandwiches were slowly melting.

At exactly 9 p.m., Ms. Richards's set was over. She closed her laptop and headed out the back for a smoke and a break.

She was flying out in the morning, to D.J. the opening of the

A boldface last name all but guarantees a gig and a measure of scorn from other D.J.'s.



BY WASHINGTON ANTHONY FOR REDUX

**CÉLINE**