

FORTUNE MAGAZINE: October 14th, 2002

The **50** Most Powerful Women in Business

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The **New**  
**Tropi**  
 Who's behind every powerful woman?  
 (Increasingly, it's a stay-at-home dad.)

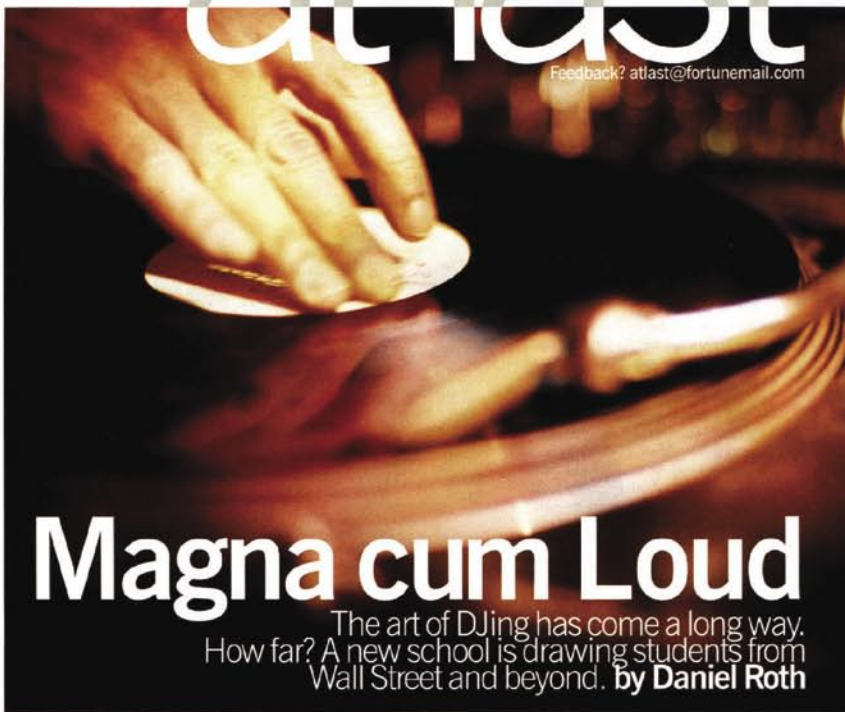


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**Magna cum Loud**

The art of DJing has come a long way. How far? A new school is drawing students from Wall Street and beyond. **by Daniel Roth**

Singer Angie Stone has a nice hit in "Wish I Didn't Miss You." The song is danceable, features appropriately vacuous lyrics, and has an infectious groove. But, for Eric Schimmel, "Wish" has a major flaw: Its tempo doesn't match King of House's "Billie Jean Club Remix."

It's a DJ's worst nightmare. And Schimmel, 31, is determined to be a DJ. By day, Schimmel's a vice president in emerging markets for Crédit Lyonnais, but at night he's been spinning at a restaurant in Manhattan. Now's he's preparing for the big leagues: a chance to DJ at a club in Ibiza, Spain. He knows these two records played back to back will be a hit with the dancers, but he has to get it right. So on a hu-

mid Friday night in August, Schimmel—suit jacket off and tie loosened—stands behind two turntables with his tutor, a 34-year-old giant by the name of DJ Kwest.

As Stone's song plays, Schimmel puts one finger in the air, flicking it up at each of the snares and down at the bass drum. Finding the beat, he reaches for the mixing board that rests between the spinning records and slowly inches over a lever that should seamlessly stitch the songs. The result is a mess of drums and Michael Jackson lyrics. Kwest, whose real name is Derek Scantlebury, shakes his head and shuts off both turntables.

**Into the groove**  
 At Scratch DJ Academy, students get hands-on experience.

"Listen first," he says, moving into Schimmel's spot. "Adjust it to make it match up. Drop it on the high hat." Kwest restarts the records, spins "Billie Jean" back a few revolutions, scratches the bass beat, and lets go. Stone morphs into King of House. "This is how fluid it could be."

Over the past few months, Schimmel and a couple hundred like him have walked up the six flights of stairs to the Scratch DJ Academy in Manhattan for such wisdom. The students come from the tech world, retailing, school, or Wall Street to learn from teachers by the names of Mista Sinista, Evil Dee, and

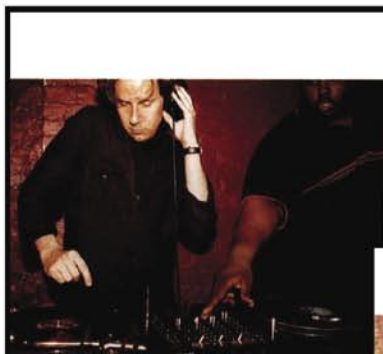
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Brooklyn Miph. Each student is trying to figure out the same thing: how to turn a party loose.

The Rolling Stones might make billions by milking baby-boomer nostalgia, but for Gen Xers on down, today's real music idols are DJs. Stars like Paul Oakenfold and the Chemical Brothers spin to arenas of screaming fans. In mid-September, Intel kicked off a multimillion-dollar ad campaign featuring music from Moby and Basement Jaxx. At music giant Sam Ash, DJ equipment sales—now a \$500 million business for U.S. retailers—are up 4% from last year while electric guitar sales are flat.

So it's no surprise that entrepreneurs have figured out there's money to be made in teaching how to use the equipment. Which is where Scratch comes in. The school is the brainchild of Rob Principe, a 29-year-old former dot-commer who sports a goatee and greets people with a clasp that's half soul shake, half hug. In 1999, Principe, a jazz lover, went to a party at a club in New York and watched the DJ spin song after song until the entire club seemed to be dancing. Principe was in awe.

"He flipped 1,500 people," he says. "He turned them upside down. I walked out and said, 'That moved me. Just like a book or a good movie or a piece of art.' It was like, Now what?"

The answer came in 2000 when Principe lost his job as the head of sales for an Israeli software company. Using connections from local venture capitalists, he got in touch with Jason "Jam Master Jay" Mizell, the DJ behind seminal rap group Run-DMC, and Reg E. Gaines, author of *Bring in Da Noise, Bring in Da Funk*, to discuss the idea of a school for



On the wheels of steel From left: Scratch DJ Academy student Eric Schimmel, teacher DJ Kwest, and founder Rob Principe

DJs. The three tossed around plans, and in February 2002, Scratch opened its doors in a space that houses Pseudo.com. When Principe advertised a free first semester on his website, 1,200 people signed up.

In the offices, covered in dark paint and graffiti, students are run through a six-week, \$270 course on the entire process of DJing. The beginner level, or DJ101, comprises everything from how a turntable works to how to market yourself. DJ202 features more complex classes, such as Advanced Beatmaking and Battle DJ: Routines and Analysis.

But at its base, being a DJ comes down to one thing: "You're responsible for everybody's good time," says Jahi Lake. A tall, dreadlocked teacher who DJs as the Sundance Kid, Lake is run-

ning Jared Cantor through the basic lesson. A 29-year-old sales executive for search-engine Looksmart, Cantor heard DJs in clubs and watched as his friends installed turntables and mixing boards in their living rooms. He wanted to give it a try.

Lake takes him through step by step: Before putting on a record, a DJ has to know how many beats per minute (BPM) the two songs contain. The closer the songs' BPM, the easier to mix. And the higher the BPM, the more people dance. Most DJs start slow, then boost the BPM as the night goes on. Lake explained how to plug a turntable into a mixer, how to control a record's pitch, and how to mark

a record for phrases and beats worth scratching. Lake demonstrates, singling out a lyric in rapper Ludacris's "Area Codes" and scratching it, creating a new bass line. Cantor tries the same, creating a sound similar to a car driving with a flat tire. "See, he makes it look easy, man," says Cantor.

Class continues another 15 minutes, and by the end, Cantor's still having trouble scratching. But he is able to blend one record into the next. That might not sound like much, but in a time when turntables have become the new electric guitar, it's a start. ■

Scratch DJ Academy 212-625-3881, www.scratch.com; private lessons available

At music giant Sam Ash, DJ equipment sales are up 4% from last year. Electric guitar sales, meanwhile, are flat.

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The Playlist by Chris Nashawaty



**Bad Wizard**  
*Sophisticated Mouth*  
Tee Pee Records  
If you took one shot of Lynyrd Skynyrd, one shot of Black Sabbath, and mixed them with a pint of Jack Daniels, you'd get a taste of the sort of nesty guitar boogie Bad Wizard cranks out. In short, this is the soundtrack to the greatest, sleaziest bender you'll ever go on. Hangover sold separately.



**Beck**  
*Sea Change*  
Geffen  
Beck wipes the ironic smirk of his peach-fuzzed puss, drops the whole hipster-homeboy pose, and channels the ghost of Gram Parsons. Relaxed, mellow, and with just the right amount of country twang, Beck has created a lonesome-highway masterpiece that rolls along as effortlessly as a tumbleweed.



**Music Inspired by Baadasssss Cinema: The Sounds of Blaxploitation**  
TVT Records  
Most of the flicks that made up the '70s Blaxploitation boom (*Shaft*, *Coffy*, *Dolemite*) haven't aged well. But their soundtracks have. Slinky, sexy, and always superfly, these inner-city anthems by the likes of Curtis Mayfield, Roy Ayers, and Gil Scott-Heron pack more punch than that private dick who's a sex machine with all the chicks.



**Sleater-Kinney**  
*One Beat*  
Kill Rock Stars  
Like a flamethrower scorching pop-farts Britney, Christina, and Shakira to charred bits, Portland's she-rock trio are back in fighting form after 2000's lackluster *All Hands on the Bad One*. Howling and thrashing like a cover of barshees armed with Marshall amps, S-K turn punk fury into something beautiful.



**The Apples in Stereo**  
*Velocity of Sound*  
SpinnArt  
A band that writes power-pop homages to the Poweruff Girls might seem annoyingly childish. But if the Apples are kids at heart, then they're kids who are all hopped up on cotton candy and Pez, promising their folks that they'll take their Ritalin if they can just go back on Space Mountain one more time. This is a dizzy, psychedelic sugar rush of an album.

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