

## They've Got The Spinners Hub Masters Join the Mix to Share Knowledge at School for Aspiring DJs

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It's a new spin on an old fantasy.

Admit it, you've pictured yourself standing in front of a roaring throng of music fans. They scream out your name as you annihilate them with your guitar wizardry and vocal acrobatics. They dance up a storm to the pounding of your band's ferocious rhythm section.

Now subtract the blazing electric guitar, and the rest of the band, for that matter. Add a pair of headphones and turntables and the blazing lights of a warehouse rave, and you've got the new millennium rock star dream of millions of people: rocking the party. DJ Mix Academy aims to make that dream a reality by putting the power to move the people in your hands.

The Winchester-based spinning school was founded by DJs Manolo Ferreiros and Peter Souhleris earlier this year. The pair know a lot about the dream, since they've been living it for the past 15 years. DJ Manolo was named Boston's Best DJ 2002 by a local night-life magazine; he has spun all over New England, most notably during a seven-year residency at Avalon. Souhleris also manned the wheels of steel at Avalon for several years, and just about every other club in town from Felt to the Modern, plus Club Amadeus in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



Gerald Prifti at the DJ Mix Academy



Instructors Josh Carl and Paul Dailey

The dynamic and affable duo, who created a unique tag-team style at Avalon in the '90s, began cooking up the idea for DJ Mix Academy about a year and a half ago. "Throughout our careers we've both had people ask us to teach them how to DJ," says Souhleris, 32, an Aussie native who immigrated with his family to Lynn at age 12. "And we've seen that DJ'ing has become a lot more serious now, remixes are getting GRAMMY awards and it's a different scene."

They've also witnessed the sales of turntables outstrip electric-guitar sales, and the way electronic dance music has permeated the culture, from clothing and car ads to fashion runways and even "Saturday Night Live" sketches. DJs like Fatboy Slim, Carl Cox and Paul Oakenfold have truly become rock stars.

"So I think a combination of those things and the fact that both of us are always trying to do something different" led them to open the school, Souhleris says. He points out that he has worked in real

estate development, and that Ferreiros, 35, has run a music store, in addition to their nocturnal activities. "We're both entrepreneurs at heart, so we decided there's a big demand for this, it's something that we love, and we're both firm believers that you should do something that you love and success will follow it."

The DJs' business plan was strong enough to attract sponsorship from turntable giant Numark — who donated some of the school's state-of-the-art equipment — plus online record store PlanetX and Red Bull. The academy has just graduated its first "DJ'ing 101" class of 20 students. The pair was a little surprised at the diversity of the group.

"Not every kid that goes to high school is going to be an athlete, some kids are into arts and crafts and stuff," says Ferreiros, who emigrated to the U.S. from Spain at the age of 12. "So we thought it would be a nice alternative for kids in that age group to do something like this."

What they got, however, was a class that ranged from a 15-year-old high school student to a 50-year-old choreographer/aerobics instructor. Which was exactly what they wanted — a mix of ages and skill levels.

"The attitude that we took is that you can take this class like you take a pottery class or a cooking class," says Souhleris. "It's not that you want to start a pottery store or open a bakery. It's that you see a course outline in a newspaper and say, 'You know what? This looks like fun,' learn how to mix music, and it makes you a little more culturally aware of something that's definitely become part of our lives."

The academy offers four courses. For \$25 you can take the one-hour "DJ Intro" class that gives you a preview of the curriculum. For \$325 you can plunge into "DJ'ing 101," a four-week, eight-hour program that covers the history of DJs and electronic music; mixing and scratching fundamentals; and finally creating your own CD. For the same price, "DJ'ing 201" delves into advanced tricks of the trade for the more professional-minded student and offers an introduction to studio production. And finally, the academy offers "Mobile DJ'ing 101" for those interested in performing at private parties, functions and weddings.

"I also teach at the Mass College of Pharmacy, so I know what it's like to get up there and teach," said MGH pharmacist John Doole, 26. "And I was really happy when I came in and they were focusing on the fundamentals, and not just getting on there and cutting it up and ripping the records and all that BS."

Doole has been spinning on his own for about a year and a half and fantasizes giving up the pharmacist's life for the DJ booth. But he was impressed with how the teachers — Ferreiros, Souhleris and DJs Josh Carl and Paul Dailey — took their time with the beginning students. "They did it in a way that's not really intimidating to people who don't have any experience, and they won't move on until you've got it."

"I'd definitely recommend it," says 24-year-old Susanna Adams of Needham. She came in with little experience but a love for the sounds created by such DJs as Grant Plant and Boy George, whom she heard spin while living in Los Angeles. "I was really excited, I wasn't intimidated at all."

There were only two women in the initial class, and it does seem that DJ'ing largely has been a male province. Adams isn't really sure why. "It's such an emotional medium, I would think that more women would be into it, because she can make a whole room cry," she says.

Ferreiros and Souhleris say they wish there had been a place like this when they were growing up. "I used to go to clubs and just look at the DJs for five hours from like 9 until 2 in the morning," says Ferreiros, who recalls months of frustrated practice and mismatched rhythms as a teen. "If I had had an opportunity like this, it would've saved me a year and a half of aggravation."