

BEATS IN TIME

Local DJs sound off on ups and downs of using their musical passion to bump crowds

By Petra Canan
THE STATE NEWS

The walls are rattling, the floor is shaking and cares seem miles away. When examining what makes a great party, one truly meant to go down in history, the music always comes to mind. The right tracks can send the party-goers to another realm of reality, allowing them to escape the world through enticing melodies and let themselves go for a night. For this escape, partiers and hosts alike turn to disc jockeys to keep the floor packed and party going all night long.

During his college years at MSU, Jerry Jodloski built a following as one of the areas most popular DJs. After graduating in 1991, the advertising major said he decided to take it a step further by starting a mobile DJ service. He moved into his first office, across from Harrison Roadhouse, using his desktop computer, a Macintosh SE.

Now, 16 years later, his one-man show has become a national franchise — Jammin' DJs — with locations in Berkeley, Mich., Atlanta, Ga., Denver, Colo. and Minneapolis, Minn., along with the company headquarters in Lansing. While Jodloski used to be the sole DJ of the company, going by Jammin' Jerry J Mobile DJ Service, he is now in charge of about 40 employees, with 10 DJs at the Lansing location. He still has the Macintosh SE, only now the computer monitor sits on a shelf in his office, commemorating the early years.

While he last worked an event six or seven years ago, his expanding business has kept him busy handling schedules and the administrative aspect of Jammin' DJs.

"It's just an absolute thrill that something that I started has grown into something bigger than I could ever have imagined. I never even thought of expanding across the country," he said.

Jodloski, who grew up in Bloomfield Hills, enjoyed

his college years so much he decided there was no place else he would rather be. While his work has taken him to places like Ohio and Canada, home is always in Lansing.

Growing up, Jodloski was always musically inclined, playing saxophone and drums. But it was in college, when he joined a touring band playing keyboards and performing vocals that the music stuck.

While working as a waiter at Tripper's Sports Bar & Restaurant, 350 Frandor Ave., in Lansing, Jodloski watched the restaurant's DJ and saw his opportunity at age 23.

"To me, DJing was like being able to do your own thing," he said. "It was great, everything I hoped it would be; and it was better than waiting tables."

He played everything from dance to the growing sounds of hip-hop, using record players with vinyl, CDs and, once in a while tapes, to keep the dance floor packed and give his audience the hits they demanded.

What began as a part-time job, taking Jodloski to local fraternities and bars, word of his talent and business mentality turned his hobby into a career.

From splitting a \$600-a-month rent payment to owning the building which houses his current office at 619 E. Michigan Ave., Jodloski has made a name for himself by setting standards for his DJs, following what made him so successful.

Turn the beat around

Looking to get started as a DJ? Here is what Jerry Jodloski, owner of Jammin' DJs recommends:

A set of powered speakers to get the hits blasting

A professional board

Either a laptop, digital turntables or CD players, depending on your personal tastes and style

A mixer to create a unique sound

A professional lighting system to set a mood and tone for the event

Speaker speak

Check out these musical recommendations to get your party going:

1. "Put Your Hands Up For Detroit"
Fedde Le Grand
2. "Yeah"
Usher
3. "What's Golden"
Jurassic 5
4. "Gimme More"
Britney Spears
5. "Good Life"
Kanye West
6. "Crank That"
Soulja Boy
7. "Funk Phenomenon"
Armand Van Helden
8. "Can I Get A..."
Jay-Z
9. "Fly Me to the Moon"
Frank Sinatra
10. "You Can Do It"
Ice Cube

"Professionalism — the reliability and just an honest guy who would go the extra mile for you. Really work hard. That made it really easy to get that next show," he said.

While they originally bought all the music from stores like Tower Records or Flat, Black & Circular, iTunes now supplies the latest hits to add to their library of tens of thousands of songs.

The Jammin' DJs do everything from weddings to clubs, and Jodloski says the industry has gone through some major changes since he was starting out.

Now holding 15 regular shows each week, Jodloski is on track to expand the business one store per year. The Jammin' DJs in Pittsburgh, will open in 2009.

All the experience has taught him much about what it takes to be a DJ, both as a solid performer and a smart businessman.

"Everyone and their brother is now a DJ. The advances in technology make it really easy compared to before," he said. "Check your ego at the door, always be on time and stay out of trouble. Be smart with your money. I think what is important for today's DJs is to come up with a niche, and promote, promote, promote."

Adam Stender, known as DJ Storm, has been with Jammin' DJs since 1996. He was attracted to the morals and ethics the business upheld.

During his years with the company, he has seen his share of horror stories, including a confrontation between Sparty and the best man, a Buckeyes fan, at a wedding which resulted in Sparty being pushed to the floor, cracking his helmet.

"The father of the bride gets pissed, kicks the best man out of the wedding, kicks him out of the building and the bride is in the bathroom crying for three hours," he said. "When there is no wedding coordinator, I become the wedding coordinator."

It is days like this that turn a DJ into a referee.

Stender can be found keeping the dance floor jumping every Tuesday night at Rick's American Cafe, 224 Abbot Road and every Sunday at The Riviera Cafe Restaurant and Lounge, 231 M.A.C. Ave.

"I'm there to provide a really good show. If you're not happy with your show, I have not done my job," he said. "There's no better feeling than knowing you did a good job."

Musically inclined since childhood, Stender is enjoying the experiences his job provides.

"It's a natural high. It could be 10 people or 1,000 people," Stender said.

He is now planning to open a Jammin' DJs in Chicago, Ill.