

Interview with: Wes

Background: Wes is a junior at a college in New Jersey majoring in theatre. We chose to interview Wes because he has experience and expertise in the DJ industry. He has DJ-ed before and is still currently pursuing the dream of becoming a professional DJ, as well as a stage actor. He has worked with different DJ software, so we felt like he would be able to provide excellent insight on the subject.

Questions/**Answers**:

1. If you have seen a professional DJ perform, what did you like about the DJ's performance?

I have. I loved the DJ's stage presence and how he was able to react/answer back to a crowd. I liked how he got the crowd pumped similar to that of a pep rally. Through his music, effects, and lights, he was able to basically control the audience.

2. What are some pros and cons about DJ systems you have seen (at parties, concerts, etc.)?

Depending on the equipment a DJ uses, there are a lot of pros and cons. For example, a DJ can use CD Turntables or turntables that use vinyl records. Depending on what the DJ has, it can be easier or harder to multi-task, especially if they have a lot of equipment. Nowadays, 90% of the time, DJ's will hook up their laptops to turntables so they can transfer the music from the computer right to each turntable. This makes it a ton easier.

3. Have you ever been disappointed by the size of a DJ's music library?

Yes, what most DJ's (except for reputable ones) have in their library is music that only they like.

4. If you were a DJ, what features would you like to see on your DJ interface?

- Easy way to find songs
- BPM (the speed of the song)
- Some effects (such as sirens, beat gating, scratching, etc.)
- Easy ways of being able to transition from one song to the next.

5. What are the pros and cons of your current DJ software?

There are not enough effects. I can't get to a certain point in the song (jumping to a specific location in a song), and not enough shortcuts to help mix [the songs].

6. Do you prepare a lot for DJ performances, or do you improvise?

It's a little bit of both. You basically know what the crowd wants. They like what's new and current on the radio, but if you don't see a good reaction from the crowd, you might have to change up your whole routine. One of the biggest things about DJ-ing is reading the crowd; they are your customers.

Interview with: Alex

Background: Alex is a senior at Virginia Tech majoring in Computer Science. Alex enjoys making mash-ups using a variety of software. He follows the professional DJ scene closely, and aspires to be like them. We thought he would do a good job of interpreting his knowledge in such a way to be helpful to us, given his CS background.

Questions/Answers:

1. If you have seen a professional DJ perform, what did you like about the DJ's performance?

It's a little hard to explain. His interactions with the crowd are very important. His ability to fade between songs, and choose the appropriate song has a direct effect on the crowd. This is much more important than the light show.

2. What are some pros and cons about DJ systems you have seen (at parties, concerts, etc.)?

I like it when DJs use turntables, as its more "pure" and requires a lot of skill. Typically if they have a laptop, it seems too easy, in my opinion. However, with a laptop, they can be more innovative, and create crazier sounds. However, if the DJ isn't into it, the crowd isn't into it.

3. Have you ever been disappointed by the size of a DJ's music library?

Yes, when they play generic, overplayed songs, it detracts from the excitement.

4. If you were a DJ, what features would you like to see on your DJ interface?

- Automatic tempo corrections to properly mesh songs.
- A large track library.
- The ability to play more than 2 songs at once. Traktor has 4. I have different uses for each.
- A beat pad, for sampling that is in sync with the screen.

5. What are the pros and cons of your current DJ software?

I currently use Traktor DJ. Pro's are that it had an expansive feature set, with 4 tracks. Con's are that it was sometimes tough to manage all of the features. I didn't like the keyboard layout and the key-mappings. It had super cool effects in addition. They were unique and exclusive that added strongly to my sound.

6. Do you prepare a lot for DJ performances, or do you improvise?

When I'm making a mix, I plan loosely. Once I get things rolling, I tend to improvise a lot, and the creative process goes quickly.

Interview with: Mike

Background: Mike is a junior at Virginia Tech. He has been producing his own music for 6 years now, and although he is not a professional, he has an extensive knowledge in Ableton Live, one of the top current DJ software solutions. We chose to interview him because of his software expertise.

Questions/Answers:

1. If you have seen a professional DJ perform, what did you like about the DJ's performance?

Yes, I have. Good DJs aren't afraid to innovate and deviate from their plan. They have almost full control over their software, and let the audience know it by blowing them away with effects and transitions. A good DJ is into his performance so much that he spreads the good mood to the crowd. He must also read the audience effectively, and have different musical solutions on hand.

2. What are some pros and cons about DJ systems you have seen (at parties, concerts, etc.)?

At Tech, I've seen plenty of bad DJ systems. Usually it involves a single laptop, running very basic software and PA speakers that don't sound very good. The DJ is restricted by his equipment. It doesn't sound good and he is afraid to deviate from whatever plan he's been going with, no matter how the crowd is reacting. The good DJs I've seen have good sound systems and impress the crowd with new sounds.

3. Have you ever been disappointed by the size of a DJ's music library?

Not so much with the size, but with the variety. DJs that play only radio hits are lame.

4. If you were a DJ, what features would you like to see on your DJ interface?

- Multiple tracks
- Automatic Tempo corrections as well as pitch
- EQ fades
- Effects
- Easy library control

5. What are the pros and cons of your current DJ software?

Live's huge strength is that it has a time-warping feature that alters anything's tempo while preserving the pitch. This is huge. Almost a must if you want to improvise. Its downside is that it doesn't ship with very unique sounds. The built in instruments are pretty dull. Also, things like side-chaining are made difficult by the interface.

6. Do you prepare a lot for DJ performances, or do you improvise?

Yes, I prepare a lot. I have most of my cool stuff lined up for an hour or two of play time. I'll switch the order, but most of my difficult effects are prepared. Personally, I struggle with improvisation.