

From the Bedroom to the Stage with DJ Tech

Part 3. By DJ Tech

Vinyl to digital

Most DJs who started over 30 years ago, I've always played vinyl.

But in the 2000s, digital really is the way forward for me.

It just opens up every single tune that's ever been made that's available for you to play.

I've spent a good 20 plus years going to record shops all over the UK, going through hundreds of tunes and maybe pulling out two or three.

With digital, the whole world is your oyster. Any tune you've ever heard, you can play.

To be totally honest with you, it's a no-brainer to me. I had to convert to digital DJing.

The main reason I converted to digital was after going to five or six different parties and being told I couldn't play because they didn't have any turntables.

On the last party out of that list, I ended up going to the car and getting my USB out of my car, which was just full of tunes of my own making, and just did a live set.

One of my best friends, who's also been DJing for over 30 years—it took me five years to talk him into doing digital because he was so stuck on the vinyl and didn't want to move away.

And now every time I see him play out, I get a really warm feeling that he converted to digital because he's now so happy that every single tune he's ever wanted to play, he can now play.

The best place to download your music as a DJ digitally is what they call a DJ music pool or community.

There are hundreds of them out there, all depending which sort of music genre you're into.

I personally belong to one called Underground Sounds, which is a private group on Facebook.

Underground Sounds is aimed at hard house, hard trance, and techno.What I've found is the absolute best out there.

What I recommend you do is just go onto Google and write the genre of your music with the word "music pool" afterwards.

The way I find music what I want to play is by using an app called Shazam.

When I've identified the tune I want, I then copy and paste it into YouTube to get the exact reference to the tune I want.

Those DJs that are stuck on vinyl and will not move off under any circumstances, they call purists.

My advice is: just let him get on with it and don't worry about it, and don't let them stop you from switching to Digtal.

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FROM THE RECORD BOX TO THE USB

Explore the music you love. Find your tunes. Be ready to play.



From the Bedroom to the Stage with DJ Tech

One step further

The next natural stage from DJing is making your own music.

The process I use is I make my music on Ableton Live, get it all ready to go, and when it's ready and you're happy and finished, then send it off to a mastering company to get it mastered.

Many, many ways of doing this. The one I recommend is a company called Ableton Live.

Not only can you make your own music with Ableton Live, you can also use Ableton Live out on a stage or in a club. To play the music you have made. From what I have found, it is the most stable piece of software you can use in a live environment on a stage.

All you need is the software, and everything else you will already have, like a sound card.The process I use is I make my music on Ableton Live, get it all ready to go, and when it's ready and you're happy and finished, then send it off to a mastering company to get it mastered.

By doing this, you will have the best output quality for your performance.

You get yourself ten or more tunes together, all mastered, and play them out live in a set. You go from being a DJ to being a live PA, which is the next natural level to go.

Once you're at that stage, you can start adding things like an APC40, or any midi controller so you can make changes live, including FX.The APC40, which is what I recommend, linked up directly to Ableton on your laptop.It also has a crossfader so you can chop and change in a DJ style throughout your set.

The biggest advantage of doing a live party is no one else can do it. No one else can sound like it, and you own it 100%.

Most DJs who make their own music get them pressed up onto a dubplate and play them live out in their DJ sets. But a live PA is the next level.

So the added advantage is you can add things like a live singer and live artists like instruments, like saxophone, trumpet, guitar, whatever you want.

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MAKE IT. MASTER IT. PLAY IT LIVE.

Your own music, a MIDI controller and a sound that is yours.



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Everyone's a DJ

I started mixing back in 1992 \ 93 DJs were royalty and all superstars in my book.

I'm assuming somewhere between 1992 and 93, if you were a DJ You had earned your position.

After you get into grips with the basics at home in your bedroom, the very next thing you had to do was get a residency anywhere.

I was lucky enough to be a regular partygoer at a club called Milwaukee's in Rushden.

The good thing about this club was every headliner in the whole country used to play there: Grooverider, SS, Vibes, Seduction, all of them. The big difference about this club was you could stand right next to the DJ and watch what he was doing as well as hearing what he was doing.

This is where I gained 90% of my techniques for DJing, because being able to see what's going on, as well as hearing what's going on, just makes your learning depth even deeper.

These DJs were the best of the best. It looks like it. A big-eyed raver, but I was there on a mission.

All my mates spent most of their time on the dance floor enjoying themselves, and I spent 80% of my time stood right behind the DJ. Believe you me, I was having as much fun as my friends were on the dance floor. As soon as I got home, I was straight on the decks, practicing, trying out the new techniques I'd witnessed that night. In most clubs, you don't have the ability to stand right next to the DJ, but my advice is to find somewhere you can stand next to the DJ and make that your home.

In the likes of Ray Keith, Nicky Blackmarket Grooverider, DJ SS, and DJ Fat Controller was a godsend. The thing was, they didn't even realize that they were teaching me how to DJ while they were playing their DJ sets. The thing about me is I'm either all in or I won't bother. If I'm doing something, I have to focus 100% on what I'm doing or it's just not worth wasting my time with.

And I never was aiming to be the best, just the best that I can become within myself.

And I think that's the right way forward for everyone.

Nowadays it's so much easier to learn how to DJ because there are so many bedroom DJs out there. Everyone knows three or four bedroom DJs, so what I recommend is link up with them and learn together. By doing that, if one of you learned something, you will learn it. And it just helps push your ability forwards. Four or five other friends always take turns going round to each other's houses. Have a mix, Noreen, and we'll have five tunes each and just go round and round in circles, and it used to be fantastic every single time.

We're doing this. It moves from being a solitary hobby to a community project because you're all on the same tip.

Finding out which bars, which clubs, I've got parties that you want to be involved with. Also, keep your eyes open for sound systems in your town. There will be plenty of sound systems; they're all over the place in every town. You just need to find out which are the ones worthy of following and then start following them, attending their parties, helping out if you can, carrying speakers, doing whatever you need to do to help out, hopefully looking for a set in the future.

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WATCH. PRACTISE. LEARN TOGETHER.

Share techniques, take turns on the decks and find your community.