

Join 1000s of Successful DJs - Learn

How to DJ

**Get More Gigs
Read a Crowd**

Karlton Rowley



**Stay ahead of the next DJ
Increase your chances of getting
more and better gigs by
following the ideas in this book**

Want to learn how to DJ?

Want to get more gigs?

Want to read a crowd?

This book is for you.

'How to DJ' gives you step by step guides on the right ways to get yourself prepared for DJing, maximize your gig opportunities and read a crowd when you're up there.

Following the ideas in this book will maximize your chances of having one of the best jobs in the world. 'How to DJ' will teach you the principles of the club, events and entertainments industry and how you can make the system work so that you become an in-demand DJ, commanding respect and higher fees, backed up by ability.

Karlton, with over 5000 gigs experience, has spent 3 years pulling together all the information included in this book. He covers key ideas that no other 'How To' books have touched on. It will give you a level of understanding that will allow you to out-perform other DJs, time after time. With these skills and insights, you will be able to give people 'the best night of their life', consistently.

You will learn how to choose the right track at the right moment and perform to the benefit of all concerned at whatever level of DJing you choose to operate in. 'How to DJ' gives you a clear plan for getting on the right path and into the industry quickly and effectively.

Enjoy this preview – The Amazon ordering link is included at the end.

How to DJ, Get Paid and Get Gigs

Karlton Rowley

© Karlton Rowley 2011-2014

'I've lost count of the amount of times I've been standing on a stage, hairs standing up on the back of my neck, thinking this has got to be one of the best jobs on the planet.'

All rights reserved. This eBook may not be reproduced, given away, sold on or loaned without the express written permission of the authors.

Every attempt has been made to verify the information contained in this eBook. Neither the authors nor the publisher assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions, interpretation or use. This eBook contains the opinions and ideas of its authors and is intended for informational purposes only. The authors and publisher shall not be held liable for any loss or other damages incurred from the usage of this publication.

About the Author

Karlton Rowley has successfully DJ'd at almost 5,000 gigs over the last two decades in clubs and venues around the world. He's also held residencies in some of the biggest venues in the UK.

He has worked with a number of contemporary and past icons including Diana Ross, Meat Loaf, Trevor Nelson, Tony Blackburn, Atomic Kitten, Jason Donovan, Pat Sharp, Jeremy Healy, Brandon Block, Radio 1 Dreem Teem, Sophie Ellis Bextor, Edwin Starr, Martha Reeves, Bill Wyman and Mick Hucknall amongst others.

During his career, Karlton has also played at many other events, balls, parties, launches and venues for corporate clients, Lords, sports stars, celebrities and millionaires at many prestigious venues such as Park Lane's Grosvenor House, Hilton and Dorchester along with The Savoy and Landmark hotel.

His ability to adapt to any situation, playing a range of mainstream club sets, Pop, House, Dance, RnB, Indie, 60s, 70s, 80s music, has made him a reliable pair of hands and the first choice amongst his many clients.

This book, written over several years, is an insight into the world of DJing and provides lots of advice for aspiring DJs plus many useful tips for those who already work in the industry.

Acknowledgements

For immeasurable help, guidance, editing and proof reading Paul Smith and Sandy Sounds from ampdj.co.uk

To Chris Clegg for giving me my first job as a glass collector 3 decades ago in a large club where I listened to local club filling DJs Reg Saunders, Jerry Dee and Bruce Harper.

A massive thank you to Tim Barnes who got me my first club residency.

Finally to Andrew Pountain CEO of Industry Music Group for some of the best times whilst DJing.

5000 gigs later and I still believe this is probably the best job in the world.

Intro – Getting out of the Bedroom

What This Book Is About

People get into DJing for various reasons including: love of music, getting off the dole, making themselves more available to the opposite or same sex, failed musicians and the new breed of B list celebrity that has made the crossover.

Most aspiring DJs might only get as far as buying some kit, downloading some free DJing software and annoying their family and friends for a couple of weeks with a random cacophony of sounds emanating from the bedroom.

What this book sets out to do is to provide you with the tools to enable you to get out of the bedroom and into venues to earn money from your passion.

The way this is achieved is by teaching the key skills to being a great DJ as opposed to being an OK DJ. You need to be the DJ that people want to hear and owners or managers want to employ. It will highlight the valuable assets that allow you to earn money and continue to add value to what you offer.

On this journey we will get to grips with basic marketing, promotion, etiquette and presentation skills. Following the ideas in this book could help you achieve your goal of becoming a professional DJ and enjoying one of the greatest jobs on earth.

Throughout this book, you will notice some ideas are repeated; it's not an over-sight but intended to stress their importance to generating higher paid gigs. They should be seen not so much as ideas but mantras for the successful DJ.

What This Book Isn't

This book isn't about how to use turntables or mix or how to be a turntablist; you only have to dial up 'How to DJ?' on YouTube and there are endless videos about scratching, effects, beat matching etc. Although these are touched upon within the book they are not looked at in any great detail. Essentially, as long as you understand the essence of beat matching (playing 2 records simultaneously in time) most of the other high end technical skills at this point are surplus to requirements for those wanting to earn money from DJing.

Table of Contents

How to Make Money from DJing
Where to Start
Essential Skills - Buying Music
Getting Work - Self Marketing Skills
Promotional Skills and Techniques
Marketing
Getting Mobile Gigs
Set Up A DJ Agency
DJ Skills - General
Technical Skills
Microphone
House DJ
Preparing for a Gig
Playing a Gig
Reading a Crowd – In the Mix
DJing in a Bar
Unwritten Rules
Residencies
Understanding the Shelf Life of a Record
Once You're Getting Gigs
Why is My Night Not Building Up if I'm Doing Everything Right?
Housekeeping
Running A Business
Room Layouts
Buying Guide
Technical Guide
Evolving and Re-Inventing

How to Make Money from DJing

There are probably 3 ways of making money at DJing

Become a record producer.

Get gigs.

Promote your own events.

A key thing to decide at this time is what you want from DJing; fame, fun or money? With a bit of luck and some hard work the reward will be at least fun and money.

When you have a clear picture of what you want to achieve in DJing, write it down; commit it to paper.

The Reality of DJing

Before diving in, it is probably a good idea to outline the reality of life as a working DJ. It is guaranteed to be unsociable hours, put a strain on any relationships, a challenge to see your friends or spend your weekends in the pub. In addition there is a lot of hard work to get a good foothold in the industry and ensure you are worthy enough to warrant your position. On the plus side you are at the heart of the action and are lining yourself up for one of the best jobs in the world.

The key thing with DJing at any level is that you must enjoy it (or pretend to) even when you're tired, ill or even bored playing to an empty room. You must look like you are having fun even if you are dying inside. In many ways you are an actor and the DJ booth will become your stage. If you have an alter ego this can be a way of achieving that happy character.

DJing isn't about having the latest gear but what you do with it and how you deal and adapt to whatever is put in front of you. If you feel you have to go out and buy all the latest tech you are probably missing the point. DJing is about music and people and no amount of kit or effects can replace having the right attitude, awareness and work ethic.

You may think that you specialise in one particular genre of music but the more you play out the more you will see music evolving before your eyes. House music started out as 1 genre around 25 years ago and without doubt you could name 30+ different genres within house now. Most of the big-name DJs have evolved over the years drifting through different styles to keep riding the crest of the wave. If Pete Tong, Erick Morillo or Carl Cox were still playing the styles they started with all those years ago they'd be struggling to get gigs in your local pub let alone in Ibiza. Just looking at 'House music' and the genres it has spawned is mind boggling. I've listed just some of the main house genres and there's over 30:

Nu-Disco
Deep Nu-Disco
Funky House
Tribal House
Deep Tech
Deep House
Liquid DnB
Dark DnB
Classic Eurodance
Classic Trance
Classic Vocal Trance
Dubstep
Liquid Dubstep
Disco House
Classic Euro disco
Latin House
Old school
Acid
Electro House
Big Room House
Hard Dance
Minimal
Vocal Trance
Lounge
Chill out
Vocal Chill out
Progressive
Tech House
Goa-Psy Trance
Progressive Psy
Hardcore

I know there will be many of you screaming out, 'You've forgotten XYZ'. I know there are many more but this list is just to illustrate the point.

When you start out it is easy to have the mindset that 'this is the music I play and that's what I will play whatever', but every kind of music has a life cycle like any other product you find in the shops or online.

It's a common mindset to pigeonhole oneself but this is a guaranteed way, over time, to reduce your value to venues. You shouldn't be wholly defined by a narrow genre. If other people see you as a crowd pleaser you will always be able to fill your diary with gigs. If you always keep in mind that venues/promoters book you to sell tickets and drinks, then the more it will put you in line for more work.

Stay open minded and if you are ready to adapt, you can achieve a good long career.

If you are no longer able to pull a crowd, you are history. In deciding to become a DJ there will be an infinite number of people ready to give you advice on what to do and

what not to do. It's easy to fall into the trap of listening to the 'experts' in the pub, but much better to watch and listen to successful DJs. Success may be an A list DJ or the guy who regularly rocks your local club with 2000 punters week in, week out or the guy that fills a dance floor at every wedding he plays at.

One thing is certain, your success will be a combination of hard work, complete focus on your goals, awareness of the musical environment, reading the crowd, networking and marketing skills.

If you follow and implement the ideas contained in this book they are guaranteed to improve your chances of making a successful career in DJing. The more you do, the more it will speed up the process and the rate at which your career will develop and accelerate. Spend too much time at home practicing the technical skills without undertaking all the other key marketing skills and all you will achieve is being a successful bedroom DJ.

Even if you are a producer you still need to be networking and marketing, as eventually you will want other people such as DJs to support you and play your music.

Please note any budding producers out there; one of the most irritating things as a DJ is for someone to come to you mid set and insist that you play a track they or a friend of theirs has produced. Invariably it is from a random genre and inappropriate to your set or target market.

Over the last 20 years the net fee for the working DJ has gone down and so there are a number of skills that are key to keeping up your value as a DJ to generate the higher fees. Many owners/operators don't really understand the value of a good DJ. They have tried to distil what makes a good DJ and the perfect set to the point some organisations have set up systems where they can measure exactly what their DJs are playing and when, setting the KPIs (key performance indicators, a way of measuring DJs against each other) and pre-assigned tracks that the DJs must play in their set regardless of how relevant it is to the night. Unfortunately these organisations might have analysed one of their preferred DJs in a successful venue in one part of the country without any consideration for the many other environmental factors and regional variations. Effectively they are trying to create the DJ robot.

It is possible to streamline your music policy to your preferred customers but with so many variable factors from venue to venue, town to town, region to region, the 'Holy Grail' can never be found. Even if you did find it for one night, things would have changed and the goalposts would have moved for the next night. Every gig, every crowd, every venue in every town is different.

An example of this would be a chain in the 90's tried to get rid of all their DJs and have one DJ playing via a link to all 20+ venues in their chain. The experiment lasted just a few weeks and effectively wiped out their business, which never really recovered. The DJ couldn't see what was happening in the individual venues, couldn't respond to the other environmental factors, what times people came and left, regional variations, requests. The whole experiment was a disaster.

With a conscious knowledge of the factors affecting DJs, you can raise your game and standards to a level where you are above some of the issues that affect those at the bottom end of the market. Only one DJ can be the cheapest, if that is your main selling point there's only one way things are heading. Many DJs are just playing records and have no real awareness of their audience or environment and are only worth nominal fees. With a conscious effort and clear goals you can put yourself in a position of strength as you seek to succeed in your chosen career.

(By 'environment' I refer to the whole micro scene within the town or city you are operating along with the micro environment within the actual venue, including internal politics and, importantly, the clients who come into the venue.)

Where to Start

First base has to be considering what kind of DJing you want to do; club or mobile? Within these sectors there is a broad spectrum of styles and it's important to assess your goals combined with your skill set. Basically, if you have the sparkling effervescent personality who wants to 'be the party' in the style of a holiday camp, there are certain venue types that are more suited to you. On the other hand a more measured and subtle approach might be your style and this will open doors at a different set of venues.

Over time you will be able to build the skills to adapt to any kind of venue or gig, club or mobile and none should be seen as better than another. The key is to get the opportunity to do something you love. You should always remember it is a privilege to play music for other people and a bonus if you get paid for it.

You will do gigs where you feel like a fish out of water; sometimes because you feel out of your depth and others because you are doing a gig where your style just isn't suitable. Either way you should aim to give your best, take the positives and be happy to stretch your skill set. Even if you learn that you don't want another repeat gig like that, it's something you've learnt.

Without fail, you will occasionally find that you may lose the passion for DJing but although it can be a slog, it has to be one of the best jobs in the world. Having spent 2 years working on the front line in a steel works, I vowed I would never work in a factory again. No disrespect to factory workers, but whenever I lose heart I just have to recall those dark days.

Having decided you want to be a DJ; you've got the kit, some music and you're practicing how to use it (we'll go over the details later), how do we get you out of the bedroom? How should your efforts be concentrated?

Practicing – It is important to be totally familiar with your kit and with the music, but no one ever got paid to play in their bedroom. Within a matter of weeks you should have got to a competent level with your kit; being able to mix tunes in and out smoothly. At first it will feel like trying to learn to drive a car and very complicated but if you focus on getting the basics you will soon find you are able to do them without thinking. It is a little bit like the drive to work where you've been in the car and can't remember how you got from A to B. Your initial actions will feel clunky trying to remember where the buttons are, how to get to the right part of the track, setting cue points and so on. Once this becomes second nature you can start to learn the real skills of a successful DJ, marketing and reading a crowd.

Learning – Once you've got the basics you can start to hone your skills by watching others. There is ample material on YouTube showing how to DJ and this is useful to a limited degree; but to really raise your game you need to be watching and listening to other DJs ideally in a live environment.

Marketing and Promotion – You can, and should, start this from day one, with the critical aspects of this outlined later.1.

Listen - You should always be listening to music especially within the genres you wish to be targeting, but you need to be on the ball as to the general ebb and flow of the whole music scene especially if you want to go where the money is.

From experience, at the beginning of your career you need to split your time along the following lines:

Practicing - 25% of your time.

Marketing and Promotion - 50 % of your time.

Learning from Others - 25% of your time.

Listening to music – Whenever you're awake!

Essential Skills - Buying Music

Before you start

Wherever you get your music from it should be at least 256bps as a bare minimum. iTunes is now 256bps but if you have the option, choose 320bps.

BPS is bits per second, a computer term for the amount of digital information each second that is given over to producing the sound waves. Lower 'bps' equals less information stored in the track. As a result the track lacks range at the top and bottom and almost has a hollow sound to it. Perhaps a way of understanding this is in how music sounds through a £2 set of headphones compared to a decent set.

Originally people would generally get tunes at only 128bps as this was the standard download bps on iTunes. This would sound ok on a laptop or mp3 player but as soon as they were played out in a club they would be seriously lacking, especially in the bass region. If you ever played a 128bbs track after a piece of vinyl or a high quality CD it would sound like you'd used the kill switch on the bass. The bass is probably the key spectrum of sound in a nightclub; it gives warmth and fills a room.

Kill switch- Some mixers allow you to cut out a complete set of frequencies from the sound; normally one of bass, middle, treble.

Always have at least one back up of your music. If you have a Mac you can use time machine but I would recommend backing your tunes up to an iPod, iPhone or iPad or whatever mp3 music devices you own. If your laptop failed, you could always borrow another laptop or plug into another DJs' as a last resort using your iPod. Memory is so cheap these days; there are no excuses for not backing up your music.

When you are starting out you are likely to be in a position where the only music you have in your collection is what you've collected throughout your life, including all the morose tunes you bought whilst in the midst of teenage angst.

Building your collection to the stage where you can get out and do a full night of DJing is going to cost money. Learning what to buy and what not to buy is a key skill.

In days gone by I would have been guilty of spending £3000 per month on tunes. Only 2% would see the light of day in a club. I now have two attics full of 'precious, worthless vinyl', which in reality, I'm unlikely to play again.

Sources of Music

Where you get your music from will depend on the style of DJing and genres you are targeting. If you're into your dance cuts Beatport is a great place to start. For everyone else iTunes is possibly the simplest way of getting hold of music and buying back-catalogue compilations is an awesome way of perhaps picking 60 tracks up for just £9.99 UK. Most tracks are 99p or less which is a steal compared to how much vinyl and CDs used to cost. If you're aiming to play mainstream music or party music you can quickly build a valid collection with the greatest hits of the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's etc

compilations. So if you play a six hour set you might play 150 tracks and with a 'best of each decade CD/download for a small investment you could have all bases covered enough to get you going and only have spent £200.

CD Pool- This is a professional organisation where you pay a monthly subscription fee for a dual delivery of downloads and CDs. You are able to choose from different genres to subscribe to. Very soon you will realise if they are worth the money and if they are working for you or not.

Some specialist DJ suppliers offer DJ only CDs where you can get tracks around a month in advance of release:

- Mastermix
- DMC
- CD Pool

Once you are established and a proven DJ out there doing gigs, there are a few sites where you can get promo tunes ahead of release for FREE. Everyone used to be keen to get onto the record company promo lists. Even if you get on them, it can be lot of work to listen through stacks of mediocre music, having to give your feedback on each track in the hope of getting that one gem for the week or month.

Without doubt everyone knows of torrent sites to find and download music but if you want to consider yourself a Professional DJ, buy your music. If you were going to be a builder or plumber you wouldn't steal a van and tools, I hope.

Bootlegs/Mash Ups are tracks that have been remixed officially or unofficially by other DJs etc. They can really spice up a set.

A couple of well-known mash up artists:

- Party Ben
- Lobsterdust

These guys occasionally produce some amazing tracks which can liven up any set.

One thing that is likely to happen is you will end up collecting masses and masses of tunes. Most of them will never be played in a set but it is easy to get sucked into downloading everything. Much of this can't be taught but over time you will develop a radar for tracks that will work in the venues you play in.

Some DJs become obsessive about owning more music than anyone else. You will come across DJs who market themselves with the line, 'Every top 40 song since the 60's'. This is great for him but in reality if this DJ plays more than 1 in a 1000 of them over the period of a year, I'll be amazed. 90% of the tracks in the chart at any particular date are only popular and relevant for a short period of time. They are throwaway pop and are in the chart because of a fad, or good timing, but will not stand the test of time. Another chunk of the charts will never get played in clubs as they are too slow or too much at the extremes of music to get played. Remember, much of the chart is purchased by age bracket 13-17years old who you will not be playing to in your over 18's venue.

That's the end of this preview.

You can purchase the full eBook from [Amazon Here](#)