

Creating the Next Generation of DJs By Joe Bunn for DJN

If you're a DJ and you have kids, then this article is probably for you. I have two sons-Colin, 11 and Davis, 8. They are complete opposites. Davis is a little sportster. That dude loves the UNC Tar Heels and Carolina Panthers more than life. He likes to get up in the morning and check the scores of the games that he missed because he had to go to bed early. My oldest though, loves music and computers. I'll sometimes catch him up late at night with headphones on just vibing to music in his bedroom. He literally has a full blown DJ booth in his room with a "hand me down" Pioneer DDJ-S1 controller I gave him and studio monitors so that he can practice. He even bought one of those "burner" disposable cell phones like drug dealers use, and got on Vistaprint and ordered his own business cards! He designed his own, not Bunn DJ Company ones! LOL.

So how did he get this DJ "bug"? I didn't steer him towards the profession, he just showed interest, and at my age (44), I have to think about turning over the reigns of the company at some point! So maybe you have kids that are younger, or older, and you want them to get in on the family business one day. Maybe they haven't caught the aforementioned "bug". Here are some ideas for you to mold your successor.

Educate them. One of the things my kids love most is the Sirius XM Station "Backspin". They think that the lyrics and the delivery of the old school hip hop is hilarious. Being as old as I am, I literally know every lyric. Those were some of my first records back in the day when I got started. I'll show them the videos and also videos of early DJs playing in parks on the old belt drive turntables. Basically, just as in school they learn history, I teach them music and DJ history at home.

Show them. At least every other week I'll set my gear up in my house or outside if it's nice. In fact, they sometimes help me set it up or load my car on the weekends. They are still a little too young to accompany me to events, but just this amount of interaction with the gear gets them excited. And let's be honest, the gear is meant to be played with, meant to be touched. So I allow that. I let them touch the platters on the controller and hear what scratching sounds like in the Vinyl mode. I encourage it! How else are they going to get that feeling? I also show them what songs sound like when properly mixed and how they sound like shoes in a dryer when you miss. It's completely hands-on training.

Get them some gear. One of the good and bad things about technology is that it has become more affordable than ever for people to buy a decent system and music. If your kids really show interest as you are showing them your stuff, think about getting them a "DJ starter kit". You could check ebay or Craig's List for a used controller, or even let them use one of your old ones or backup units. To be honest, they truly could start on just a laptop or iPad these days, although eventually I would encourage them to "graduate" to something you can really put your hands on.

I also highly recommend studio monitors to practice on. They don't get as wall-shaking loud as say a set of 15" powered speakers, and the kids won't ruin their hearing before they're 21.

Practice, practice, practice. After they get the gear they need, it's time you take a step back and let them become (or not) their own DJ. Sure, you can offer instructions from time to time. You can encourage them to record their mixes and you could listen on your way to work and offer constructive criticism or positive reinforcement. But in reality, you have to explain that nobody got good until they practiced. I always give examples of great guitar players to my kids and say things like "Can you imagine how many hours so and so spent practicing guitar in his room when he was your age?" or "How many times do you think Michael Jackson practiced The Moonwalk in front of a mirror before he took it to the stage?" That's the kind of stuff that will get them thinking and realize that this isn't just something you learn because you're old like me. I practiced too!

With any luck, this can become a family business for me...and you. Start 'em young and hopefully they'll love this business as much as we do!