

Remix

By Zachary Franklin

Who would have thought there would ever be a class where the only required learning instruments to have were two turntables and some 12-inch records? But that's how it is at the Scratch DJ Academy, a school for aspiring DJs that features the first-ever written curriculum and hands-on turntable training from celebrity DJs, will be opening its second school in Los Angeles.

The part lecture, part learning-lab courses teach everything from mixing and blending to scratching and beat juggling. Classes, which range from beginner courses such as DJ 101 to intermediate and advanced scratch instructional courses, will be taught by the likes of Mr. Choc, Power 106 DJ and mix DJ for Rawkus Records 2002 compilation series, Soundbombing III and DJ Nu-Mark, DJ and producer for Los Angeles hip-hop group Jurassic 5.



The school is non-music specific, meaning, it will not focus on one genre of music. It will start its six-week semester courses on Jan. 15 and continue until Feb. 23.

"Everyone is a DJ," said Candice Clarke, director of marketing and administration for the Los Angeles Scratch DJ Academy. "If you have music in your car or your iPod, this school helps you to improve on that."

The Scratch Academy will try to enhance hip-hop culture and "turntable-ism" in Los Angeles. It also aims to be a

base for those who share a love for music to come together. "It really is amazing to want to DJ and then go out and actually do it. These classes help so much," Clarke said.

The academy is not only for DJ aficionados; it's also for people from all walks of life who might just be curious about the turntable. "We have 40-year-old women doing it. Fathers and sons," Clarke said.

Jahi Sundance, one of the original DJ instructors at the New York City Academy, who will be one of the instructors for the first semester classes in Los Angeles, said he remembers a very eclectic group of people coming to take the classes in New York. "I've taught a neurologist, middle-aged couples, even a priest," he said.

Scratch DJ Academy has also created its own promotional network, teaching everything from making a mix tape to learning effective marketing techniques to hooking up with clubs and piggy-backing with experienced DJs, and even tagging along with professionals at their performances.

In early 2002, Rob Principe, the late Jam Master Jay of the groundbreaking hip-hop group Run-DMC, and Reg E. Gaines, author of "Bring in Da Noise, Bring in Da Funk," founded the Scratch DJ Academy in New York City. They wanted to establish an institution that would educate amateur DJs and enthusiasts by providing them with the necessary equipment and basic skills to learn more about the art.

"I taught the first semester with Jam Master Jay," said Sundance, who was a club DJ for 10 years prior to joining the Scratch Academy.

"Half of the semester in NYC was chaos. And half of it was beauty. Jay and I were basically writing the curriculum as we went along. I mean, no one had done anything like that before."

Rehab Records, a record store in Los Angeles that opened in early 2004, was kicking around ideas at the time about opening its own DJ academy to publicize the store's presence in the community and expose turntable culture to more people.

"Rehab was created to make a space for the community," Rehab Records co-owner Hapa said. "Rehab is an acronym for Real Experiences in Hip-Hop and Beats. Rehab is where things get reinvented. And that's kind of what hip-hop is all about."

Clarke said: "We thought, why start our own academy when they already have one in New York City? So we put together a proposal and flew to NYC to talk with the people at Scratch."

Clarke, who took a class herself, said the classroom instruction she received helped more than anything she'd tried before. "So many people have tried to teach me, but it never clicked until I went through this program."

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The academy is located at 2324 Cotner Ave. in West Los Angeles inside Rehab Records. Prices range from \$70 to \$90 per hour for private lessons to \$300 for semester courses. Call (310) 312-6599 for more information. For information regarding available courses, visit www.scratch.com/la/.
