



Long gone are the nights when mmm-cha, mmm-cha, mmm-cha was the lone techno beat heard in crowded, cavernous clubs across the city. When weekend nights meant Lansdowne Street and Top 40 dance music. And when sometimes you wondered whether you should've just stayed home to play Trivial Pursuit. × Today, Boston boasts a collection of both new and established über-DJs, inhabiting areas like Central and Union squares and feeding their art to a music crowd that's hungry for something different. Performers themselves, they take familiar standbys and mix them with the obscure or inane, and they're steadily building a fan base in the process. Here's a look at some of Boston's most creative spinners.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Head to Mass. Ave.'s Enormous Room on a Monday night and experience the same warm, lounge-y atmosphere it offers on the weekends, but without hordes of barflies. A hole in the brick wall leads to the DJ booth and the heart of Beat Research, offering experimental party music from jungle to dubstep to hip-hop.

Since creating Beat Research in 2004, duo DJ Flack (aka Antony Flackett) and DJ C (aka Jake Trussell) have been traveling and reaching out to music lovers with eclectic taste from New York to Prague. This month marks their third anniversary at the spot above Central Kitchen.

On any given Beat Research night, Flack, of Jamaica Plain, plays familiar pop music and combines it with something more esoteric. For example, he might take the instrumental portion of Kanye West's "Gold Digger" and play it at a fast 45 revolutions per minute. On top of that, he might add a slowed-down "dubby"—a bass-heavy, Jamaican-influenced beat—by Montreal producer Ghislain Poirier.

"Ask a DJ what style they play and they'll say jungle, trance or house," explains C, of Somerville. "We wanted to open it up and introduce people to new styles through the familiar." Blends at Beat Research can range from "Where's Your Head At?" by Basement Jaxx to an instrumental version of Mary J. Blige's "A Family Affair" to Bounti Killa's "Mad Love" before the night is through. One of C's most popular remixes is of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" called "Billy Jungle."

"We've been into the idea of multigenre [blends] since the '90s, but it's just now that the whole genre is becoming popular," says Flack. "We'll play super-poppy stuff everyone knows over a track no one has heard." He says Beat Research isn't a lecture about the coolest music in the world; instead it's a way to



From left to right: Rugged One takes the helm at River Gods; DJ Rndm (right), who studied mixing at Mass. College of Art, shows what he's got alongside Robot Kid; DJ BC is master of the mashup at the Independent.



NIGHTLIFE > MUSIC

RENEGADE MASTERS

The city's most innovative DJs mix a new musical brew.

By VICTORIA GROVES • Photographs by MATT TEUTEN

expose people to different sounds. He recently released a track on his Web site, "Beyond the Valley of the Smurfs," that includes Buffalo Springfield and Yaggfu Front. The title came from music he used to listen to as a kid. "When I revisited that record, I was surprised to find a track that was pretty danceable and even had an electronic reggae bounce to it," Flack explains.

Like all of Boston's DJs, Flack and C use word-of-mouth and scour the Internet for new music to populate their libraries. Beat Research's Web presence has even earned it international attention, resulting in some highly experimental Mondays. "We have DJs as guests who come from places like London and Brazil," says Flack. "It's sort of gotten a reputation for being experimental, yet still fun... and that's what people appreciate."

MIX AND MASH

Creative spinning can take on many different forms—just compare the crew at Beat Research with those at Mash Ave. Mashups, known in Europe as bootlegs, are combinations (usually created digitally) of two or more songs. The blended samples often include one song's vocal track over another's

instrumental or rhythm track. After gaining popularity in Europe, the first mashup clubs started popping up around the U.S. in 2003.

A little more than two years ago, DJ BC (aka Bob Cronin) and then-local resident Lenlow (aka Luke Enlow), now of New Hampshire, met in an online forum dedicated to mashups and decided to try a night of their own. They eventually found a home at the Independent, and they now spin there every other Friday. Mash Ave has a core of die-hard fans, but the pair is still trying to get the word out. "We get them in and we give them CDs, but it takes a while for people to understand that Mash Ave is a regular thing," says BC. "Now people are starting to dance, which is killer."

Mash Ave can also get quirky, with tracks like Lenlow's "To the Taxmobile!" combining the *Batman* theme song, the Beatles' "Taxman," Interpol's "PDA" and the Surfaris' "Wipe Out." BC's first mashup layered the vocals of Jay-Z's "Izzo" over Rush's "Tom Sawyer." "It's a little rough, but I still like it," he says.

Two years ago, John Binns of Boston randomly downloaded *DJ BC Presents: The Beatles*, BC's collections of Beatles and

Beastie Boys mashups. "I'm a big fan of the Beastie Boys, and it made me a big fan of DJ BC," recalls Binns. "I'm picky about my music, but I liked everything on that CD." In fact, "Tripper Trouble" (BC's mashup of the Beasties' "Triple Trouble" and the Beatles' "Day Tripper") even scored a mention—and three stars—in *Rolling Stone*. For Binns, Mash Ave is all he wants it to be. "It doesn't take a lot to get my music fix, and I don't think I need to go any further," he says. "I go there every two weeks and I'm good."

COVER YOUR TRACKS

River Gods on River Street in Cambridge also does its share of recruiting and showcasing cutting-edge DJs. Monday night's Weekly Wax brings in people who've never DJ'ed or who want to try out something new. The events are usually themed—two DJs recently went head-to-head using only tracks that included cow bells and hand claps. Booker Jeff MacIsaac says he tries to avoid using the same DJ twice, but he'll invite those who shine to play again. "I see DJs who blow my mind with their music and skills... [Weekly Wax] really makes for an in-

tense revolving door of DJs," he says. "And you can sense the excitement of a DJ trying out something new."

A member of the River Gods DJ family is So Limpa-Amara of Cambridge. She's been spinning there for the past two years and currently hosts schiSOphonic on a Friday of every month. Dedicated to free-form and random play, Limpa-Amara calls herself a human jukebox, and while she doesn't mix music, her four-hour slot is filled with everything from Indian hip-hop and R&B to indie-pop and soul. "If you have a really good beat and a good melody, you can get away with anything," she says. "I play all sorts of weird stuff that keeps people on their toes." She's hesitant to admit that Nelly Furtado's "Promiscuous Girl" can find its way into her set, but she's just as likely to include Sebastian Tellier's "La Ritournelle" or a track from Mib Roadshow's *Desi Inferno*, too. "A hip-hop head might tell me that he really liked a song I played, and I love to tell him it was orchestral music," she laughs.

SCHOOL OF SCRATCH

For music lovers interested in hitting the books, Flack teaches a class at Mass. College of Art, also called Beat Research. "People are so psyched to have a forum for getting into DJ'ing," says Flack. "There's always a waiting list."

DJ Rndm (pronounced "Random"), aka Todd Robertson, took Flack's class and later spun off in his own direction. "I was blown away that I could take a class with turntables and learn about the art of sampling and DJ culture," says Rndm. And at the end of each semester, students in the class have an opportunity to guest-DJ at Beat Research and test out their spinning skills. "From scratching to mixing to juggling records, it's a great proving ground."

Rndm is a sucker for a live blend or mashup. Both live and recorded mashups involve laying one track over another and matching beats, but live mashups require a different DJ style. "It's more of a performance, and there are more consequences," says Rndm. "It could all go to hell." But he's quick to acknowledge that DJs like BC and C, who often use recorded mashups, are simply different kinds of artists. "Everyone has their own way of doing it," offers Rndm. "BC is more about the research, and I'm more performance-oriented."

TRY IT OUT

Like the music itself, those who come out to listen are an eclectic group, and the DJs work hard to cultivate e-mail lists and encourage repeat attendance. These Boston DJs don't guarantee you'll love everything they play or encourage you to abandon the club scene altogether. But at least now when you hear Fergie's "Glamorous" for the third time in one night, you have somewhere to turn. **B**

WHERE THE BEATS ARE

Beat Research

Every Monday night at the Enormous Room,
567 Mass. Ave., Cambridge
www.beatresearch.com
Upcoming dates: March 12, 19 and 26, 9 pm

Mash Ave

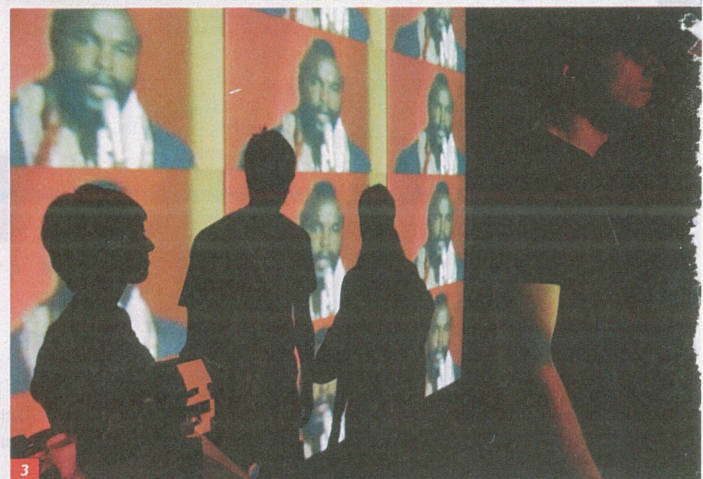
Every other Friday night at the Independent,
75 Union Square, Somerville
www.mashave.com
Upcoming dates: March 9 and 23, 10 pm

Weekly Wax

Every Monday night at River Gods,
125 River St., Cambridge
Upcoming dates: March 12, 19 and 26, 8 pm

SchiSOphonic

One Friday every month at River Gods,
125 River St., Cambridge
Upcoming date: March 16, 9 pm



"I SEE DJs WHO
BLOW MY MIND
WITH THEIR SKILLS..."

1, 2: At a CD release party for UV Protection, the band/performance group did its own thing before turning DJ Rndm loose on the crowd. 3, 4: Partygoers at the UV Protection throw-down. 5: DJ Rndm takes a breather. 6: DJ C (right) and DJ Flack have presided over the experimental Beat Research at the Enormous Room since 2004.

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LETTERS

FROM THE EDITOR



THE LATE SHOW

Some of our readers remember the Boston of 30 years ago, when the area around lower Washington Street was known as the Combat

Zone and the nightlife there consisted mainly of strip clubs, like the infamous Naked I. A lot has changed since then, and for this our annual Nightlife issue, we thought it'd be fun to investigate what some of today's popular nightspots used to be. It's a trip down memory lane for lifelong Bostonians, and an eye-opener for the newbies

who've lived here for less than a couple of decades.

Nostalgia aside, this issue is packed with info on what to do during the nighttime hours in the here and now. We tell you where to find cutting-edge DJs and decent after-midnight eats, no matter what you're hungry for. And we introduce you to the worlds of burlesque and cabaret—far from the typical night out.

Veronica Chao

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YOU CRUISE, YOU LOSE

In regard to Ezra's column "Loser Cruiser" (Feb. 21), fake a medical emergency and get your money back. I just came from my first and last cruise. It was one of the worst vacations ever. The ship was a combination floating mini-mall/trailer park/ash tray. If you like cafeteria-quality food, cattle herding, bingo, bad wine, tacky everything and diarrhea, go for it. If the weather sucks, you're screwed (and not the good kind). Escape now; I'm dead serious.

—PATRICK MAGUIRE
Boston

MISSED CONGENIALITY

In "Last Scene Here" (Feb. 21), you ran a photo of Despina Delios and identified her as Miss Massachusetts. Actually she's Miss Massachusetts USA, not to be confused with Miss Massachusetts, which is part of the Miss America system. Miss Massachusetts USA is part of the Miss USA system, owned by Donald Trump, who also owns Miss Universe and Miss Teen USA.

—RAFA DELFIN
Milton

GAGA FOR GUCCI

I absolutely loved the cover of the last issue (Feb. 21). Where can I find that Gucci dress?

—SARAH SPROULL
Stoughton

The dress is available at the Copley Place Gucci store (617-536-3660).

CONTRIBUTORS

KELLY DAVIDSON



Photographer Kelly Davidson's work has appeared in *Bust*, the *Utne Reader*, *Go NYC*, *Amplifier*, *Performer*, *Instinct* and several Boston publications. She's currently hard at work on the third installment of her *Rock 'n' Roll Parents* exhibition series. Her most recent work for the *IMPROPER* can be seen in "Seems Like Old Times," starting on page 22.

VICTORIA GROVES



Boston-based freelance writer Victoria Groves has written for the *Boston Globe Magazine*, *Yoga*, *Baltimore Magazine*, *Commonwealth* and *Scouting*. Her first story for the *IMPROPER*, "Renegade Masters," begins on page 34.

ELIZABETH BOMZE



Elizabeth Bomze began her career writing for *Martha's Vineyard* magazine and the *Vineyard Gazette* while attending Colby College in Maine. After studying culinary arts at Boston University, she joined Brookline-based *America's Test Kitchen* as an editor for *Cook's Illustrated* magazine. She's written for the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Phoenix* and, most recently, the *IMPROPER*. Her latest story, "Post-Midnight Munchies," begins on page 28.

Tell Us What You Think

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO: The Improper Bostonian, 142 Berkeley St., Third Floor, Boston, MA 02116. E-mail: letters@improper.com. Fax: 617-859-1446. Letters must be signed; please include your town and phone number. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.