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# Post No Bills

By Eva Neuberg

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## Spinning Class

**BEN FASMAN, JESSICA HOPPER**  
**Turntable Time for Girls**

It took about 40 years for the turntable to join the guitar, bass, and drums in rock music's arsenal. The process went a lot faster at the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls in Portland, Oregon: this summer the camp, which since 2001 has offered instruction in

playing instruments and singing for girls ages 8 to 18, added a DJ/electonica program to its curriculum. According to Misty McElroy, the camp's founder and executive director, the impetus for the new course came from the campers themselves. "Each year we've given them feedback forms [asking] what else are they interested in that we're not offering," she says, "and each year this tops the list."

Tuition at the camp, which is funded by donations and staffed by volunteers, is \$300 for a one-week, days-only session, but nearly 60 percent of the girls are on some kind of scholarship. There's not much money to buy equipment, and the camp has to rely largely on donated gear. Musicians have contributed enough old guitars and amps to outfit the classes, but turntables and mixers are proving harder to come by. So far the camp doesn't have any DJ gear -- this summer the instructors brought their own -- and it's looking for help. It should get some from a benefit show Saturday night at Highschool (1542 N. Milwaukee, third floor); admission is \$6, but attendees are also asked to bring used DJ equipment in good working order. Local independent music publicists Jessica Hopper and Ben Fasman, the event's organizers and DJs themselves, will spin, as will Josh Davison, aka Touchmaster Infiniti.

In early November Fasman taught a class called DJ 101 at Highschool, which sponsors free events and classes on artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical topics. He was happy to see that his 15 or so students included about 4 women. Fasman, who's spun professionally since 1998 in New York, LA, and Chicago, thinks things are changing in a field that's long been overwhelmingly dominated by men. "Within the past three or four years it's become much more open to women," he says. "When I started, I literally didn't know any women DJs personally, not one. Now I know at least eight to ten, and there's more all the time."

Fasman thinks some aspects of electronic music and turntablism may make it especially appealing to girls and women wary of sexism from male peers: "You can do it by yourself -- no bandmates. You can record-shop by yourself." But it helps to have friends. Hopper first started spinning in the fall of 2001 using equipment belonging to Davison, who was rooming with an editor at the zine she publishes, *Hit It or Quit It*. She couldn't afford to buy turntables of her own, she says, but she gained experience on rental gear at any event that would have her. "I'd get people to throw parties so I could DJ," she says. Drawn from her eclectic record collection, Hopper's sets would segue from "old Chicago house to hip-hop to punk to Afrofunk to Dinosaur Jr." Soon people who'd heard her at private events were inviting her to mix at parties and club nights they booked, where she'd learn by watching the more experienced DJs on the bill. She still finds instruction like the kind in Fasman's class to be valuable even as she spins professionally, and she wishes programs like the Rock 'n' Roll Camp had been around when she was younger. "Fortunately," she says, "I had people to show me a little trick here and there and let me practice on their decks."

While the Rock 'n' Roll Camp's more traditional courses draw students of varying skill levels, none of the girls in the DJ program this summer had any previous experience. Before Lauren Krueger, 13, of Portland, went to

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the camp, the only DJ setups she'd ever seen were at school dances. Krueger, who's been playing bass for three years and counts the Beatles, Nirvana, the White Stripes, and Aretha Franklin among her favorite musicians, says she took the DJ course in search of "something new. It was fun -- we learned how to mix one beat into another, how to scratch a little bit." Her favorite part of the class was mixing and beat matching -- adjusting the tempo of a song to match the one it's following. "It was really hard," she says. "You have to keep trying and trying. But when you get it, it sounds really great."

Krueger says her main focus is still the bass. That's fine, says Rebecca Fasman, 23 (she's Ben's sister), who DJs locally under her own name and as Miss Money Penny. "Even if these girls don't ultimately become DJs, they're still learning skills." Rebecca, who'll also perform at the benefit, began spinning just this spring, though she's been collecting records and attending hip-hop shows since her early teens. Making a crowd move is "a big adrenaline rush," she says. "I don't have that type of musical talent, like for playing the piano. But this is sort of more interactive." Rebecca's local DJ hero is Le Beast (bassist Rob Lowe of 90 Day Men), who she says "always manages to play the right thing." Veteran New York rapper turned DJ Biz Markie is another favorite. "He DJs with his belly, hikes up his shirt and moves the cross fader with this huge belly." She takes a more straightforward approach: "I'm not good at tricks. But now I have the basics down. I can hook up a PA system. It's a question of practice -- you learn by doing."

Hannah Kort, a 17-year-old from Evergreen Park who attended the camp's vocal program this summer, says she learned practical skills, facts about the music industry, and more besides. "There were girls from all around the country, different people," she says, "and they taught us to respect each other and focus on what we had in common, that we all love music. For the younger girls, they taught us how to not be afraid to be individuals, and for us older girls, how to be role models, how to work together and help each other out. We all had the same opportunities there."

Saturday's benefit at Highschool starts at 10 PM; for more about the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls go to [girlsrockcamp.org](http://girlsrockcamp.org).