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NEWS

How to be a VJ

Would you like to freak out a **dancefloor full of mashed-up clubbers** with a huge TV screen of mind-bending visual trickery? Mixmag tells you how

VJing - is that the talking bit between videos on MTV?

Forget nice teeth and Dutch accents. This is the assembling of visuals on big screens to accompany your DJ. "The whole concept is to go into a space and make it more sexy and more up," explains superstar VJ Charles Kriel, who's provided visuals for Paul Oakenfold, Tong and the Fatboy. "You're creating the environment into which the DJ can inject their music, so you need a big exchange going with you, the DJ and the audience." Lynne Sanderson, aka VJ SustEnancE from the Boiler Room at the Adelaide Big Day Out, agrees; "Hopefully you'll blow someone's mind!"

Sounds good - but how's it done? Prepare to spend. "The most basic things you need are a computer and an internet connection," says VJ

Anyone, whose Vectors night beat Bugged Out! and Fabric in the top nights out list in September's Mixmag. After this initial outlay of about a grand, you may want a video camera, video decks, animation software like Flash, specialist VJ software, projectors and screens. But with laptops getting ever more powerful, expect to fit your main gear into two DJ record boxes.

Do you need to know what music will be played in advance?

Opinion varies between needing to know the DJ you're working with better than their own mother, and just letting it happen. "We VJed for Tom Middleton at the Big Chill," says VJ old-stagers Hexstatic, "we knew he'd want full-on Star Wars overload." Make sure you know what style will be played, but flexibility is the key. "It's just eye

candy," opines VJ Shynola. "We don't try and sync it up - we just tape stuff off the telly when we're drunk."

Where do I get my visuals from?

"Anyone who's good expresses their own style," explains Matt Black of VJ innovators Coldcut; "There's a mixture of sources you can use - 3-D graphics, appropriated images off the TV, stuff you film yourself." Shooting in a club is a good source. Each clip needs to be edited to roughly a second so it fits with any beat. "Understand the inner rhythm of each clip," says VJ Kriel, guru-like. A VJ will clear around 1,000 clips a night, so get chopping. Beware using the same software as everyone else as it means samey visuals.

Okay, I've got the gear. Is there a standard way to get bookings?

"I'd say DIY it," says Matt Black. "Convince your local free-party

promoter that you are the master of this new art." Get experience and you'll be ideally placed to take advantage of a growing field - some companies have started to sell visual solutions to clubs, so that VJs only need turnup with their video on VCDs or DVDs. "If sending out demos make sure your logo is on it - otherwise they may just tax it," adds Black.

Why not just become a DJ instead?

Because every man and his dog is a DJ. And the money's better in VJing. "We usually pay VJs more than the DJs," confirms one club promoter. "You'd have to be a superstar DJ to beat the best VJs on pay." Big dogs like the Light Surgeons also get to travel the world putting on shows and regularly create images for Fabric. Try downloading free software like Vjamm or Motiondive and see what happens.