

PRO MOBILE

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PROFILE

Carl Hirst

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I never imagined I would become a DJ – ever. My ambition was to train as an electrician and to have my own electrical company, and this is still a big part of my life. However, the DJ lifestyle is more fun; more entertaining! Since a very young age I have always been fascinated with anything that has a plug attached to it: power tools, gadgets, you name it. When I was younger, you could always find me tinkering around in my dad's garage, taking items apart to see how they worked or trying to adapt them in some way to do different things. Much to the delight of my father, of course, when he discovered I had taken his tools apart...

During my last years at school (Crookhorn College of Technology), I was fortunate enough to be in charge of the lighting, sound and projection for all the school performances and shows. This was a great opportunity for me as I was able to 'skive' lessons – which was fantastic! Anyway, the school appointed a new head of department, who took over when I started this role, and he introduced his thriving Theatre Consultant sideline company to me. They had a great team of guys and lots of stock with everything from pyrotechnics to Mac 250's – which delighted me for obvious reasons.

Even now at 23, it is still exciting when I get my hands on some new audio or lighting equipment. My involvement in the school productions enabled me to develop my knowledge of creating light shows to a professional standard on the desks, as well as teaching me the best rigging techniques and practices and how to correctly cue and edit music for the intended parts of the performance. The school actually insured me to climb up the scaffold tower to rig, something which was un-heard of then due

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to the limitations of the charming health and safety people. After three years of doing this, and being part of 27 shows, I left school for the real world. Everything I learnt during that time has become invaluable to me now; I have a great understanding in this field and have built up some useful contacts. I'm even still called upon by this company, occasionally, to be involved with productions – clearly I must have made a good impression!

I left school in 2006 and at this point I was still intending to become a fully qualified 'sparky', so I started my Electrical Installations course at Chichester College. I later qualified as an electrician to City & Guilds standard and at this point I thought I had fulfilled my ambition – I was a tad wrong with that one.

Because whilst I was doing all this training, I started to move into the life we all love; I was becoming a DJ. A new neighbor had moved into the area, so naturally, being nosy, I went up and introduced myself. This

neighbour was in fact a fellow contributor to Pro Mobile Magazine: Ashley Riggs. Little did I know, this was the start of my new venture. I openly asked him what he did for a living and why he had all this fancy equipment dotted about the house. The reply from Ashley was simple: "I'm a DJ". I thought this was amazing and wanted to know more, so I told him about the theatre experience I'd had. Ashley didn't believe I was serious at first, thinking I was going through a teenage phase of trying out different career paths (or just simply being an annoying neighbour).

After many attempts to get him to take me along to a gig, he finally gave in. "Here are the rules," he said. "Stand in the corner and don't move until I tell you to." From this moment on he could see I was serious. I later became more of a roadie and Ashley started showing me the ropes of being a real DJ. I was introduced to a couple of other high profile DJs in the area who were a great asset in helping to get me onto my first mobile stage.

I became a member of Equity – from which I still get my public liability insurance now – and the NADJ, as I knew they were highly recognised in the entertainment industry.

At this point I was still learning to drive, so it was Dad on standby with his trusty estate car; very helpful for all of the gear I was purchasing. I began to put the plan into action and started building my first set-up. Making several shameless withdrawals from the bank of Mum & Dad, I made my first purchase: some Numark CD Mixer decks, some superb light boxes, a couple of moonflower lights attached to a t-bar, and some powerful 300W Ohm speakers. After which, my first booking came in: a 25th Wedding Anniversary for friends of my parents (no pressure Carl!). I charged a top fee of £100, thinking I was quid's in – little did I know then about charging what you're worth!

So, the night came around and, nervous as anything, I took center stage with the dreaded microphone and



introduced the evening. It probably would have helped if I had remembered to put the batteries in before attempting to talk – my first BIG lesson learnt. The evening progressed and luckily I was working alongside my friend's band, meaning (much to my relief) I didn't play for that long – although, despite my set being just two hours, it felt like a life time! This was my first encounter with life as a DJ and lots of lessons were learnt. The equipment became my first mobile rig, so I was all set and ready to go.

I made my first call and approached a highly successful agency in Portsmouth called KM Entertainments. I have a lot to thank the agency for, as they took a leap of faith by hiring me in the early stages of my DJ career. The Christmas Party Season approached and I had my first real contract for the Hilton Hotel in Portsmouth. So, wearing my dinner jacket, I turned up, set up and was ready for my event. Sadly, my nerves took over until I crashed and burned at the function. But thankfully

the resident DJ – who is now a good friend of mine – was in the other room of the hotel and he kindly came to my rescue; helping me to regain my confidence and get me back on track.

Alongside agency work and taking my own bookings, I also went out – sometimes on an un-paid or burger-paid basis – and 'roadied' for several of my new DJ friends in order to gain more experience, learn more about the various musical eras, boost my confidence and get a feel for what I could expect at my own events. There is a saying to note here: 'Patience is a virtue'. And it sure seemed to pay off eventually.

During this time, I passed my driving test and bought my first shiny Ford Transit. I was free and able to accept many more bookings, as I didn't need to rely on my father anymore. I was also fortunate enough to be able to afford some new gear, so I continued to build my set-up and bought my first real 'big boy' decks: some Denon DNS 5000 CD decks – which I loved, although they

were heavy in their flight case! I invested in an upgrade to my sound system too, buying myself some Mackie 450s (later with some 1501 subs) – I thought I was in heaven when I heard the throbbing bass kick from these.

By now I was beginning to build up my reputation amongst venues, companies and my fellow peers. I kept doing almost every event that was thrown at me. Some were for peanuts, but it meant I was out there improving all the time, using the experience to my advantage; gaining more confidence in myself as a DJ.

The time came to say goodbye to my Denon CD decks. Since I'd fallen in love with the Denon, I had purchased the HD2500 hard drive console and a Citronic 8.4 mixer. Able to carry the gear without the fear of the heavy old CD decks sending me to A&E, I was loving the ease of the digital mp3 format – as opposed to ripping or burning CDs – and the storage space difference.

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Moving forward to the last few years, I took a full time job (alongside my DJing) at Barclays. Yes, a million miles from the electrical trade I had planned and, of course, the superb DJ business I have now. At the time of taking this job it was still early days for my business, but I'm hoping to take the full-time DJing plunge soon - hopefully in the next few months.

A milestone was reached when I finally had my own business, Wicked Events, up and running. I'm extremely proud of myself and happy with the progress so far. Currently, alongside weddings and events, I'm moving into the hire market; supplying PA systems and TV screens for the corporate market to use in their conferences. For the last two years I have also had a monthly residency at a college in Hampshire, where I have been involved with the majority of their student nights - including their big end-of-term college balls.

The development of myself as both a DJ and Master of Ceremonies, as well as the

presentation of my set-up, is the center focus to my business, and I'm fortunate to have many variable sets with lots of fantastic gear. I was introduced to the HDA (Hampshire DJ Alliance) and the NADJ South Central, and was invited to become a member of these groups of like-minded DJ's working in and around Hampshire. It's great fun to be part of these groups; I have made some truly amazing friends through networking and, from these people, I have also learnt some fantastic things. I'm also privileged to be involved with a charity local to me called Hannah's Holiday Home Appeal. This charity was set up in aid of disadvantaged and seriously ill children with terminal illnesses, and aims to give them respite and excitement away from their treatments.

2013 was an iconic year for me; I attended the first Pro Mobile Conference in March and it was a fantastic opportunity to listen to the outstanding keynote speeches - I took away a lot of great pointers from them. I had a superb weekend with everyone and I am very

much looking forward to this year's conference on the 9-10th March.

My other main highlight of 2013 was attending the Marbecca Method Workshops run by Mark and Rebecca Ferrell and I was fortunate enough to be able to do the Bronze and Silver workshops for the Master of Ceremonies. This has proven invaluable to my development and has given me the skills to adapt to a whole new approach to how I work. In May of this year, I will once again be taking to the podium for the Gold Workshop, which I'm very much looking forward to, and I'm hoping to develop further the skills I have already put into practice from the last courses.

I can't wait to see what the future holds for me and my DJ career; the exciting changes I will see in technology, the prospect of a successful full-time business, and who knows? - maybe I could be training a roadie of my own one day, helping them on the journey to becoming a future inspiring DJ.



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