

So you want to be a DJ?

Shout talks to DJs

Imran Al Aradi and
Damian D'Costa to find
out what it takes.

BC: DJ Imran – first of all, how did you get into DJing?

I: Actually I'm a musician. I had a lot of opportunities where people wanted me to play. I understood how to use the equipment. So by the time I really got into it, I was playing everywhere.

BC: When was your first gig as a DJ?

I: I'd just turned 18 a very good friend of mine is the son of a sound and light technician. So I used to go and help out. In the process they said – 'Since you're here, can you play for us? And that's how I got into it.

BC: Did people respond well to your first gigs?

I: It took a few trials to get it right. I've had some good times, some really good times, and some really bad times. That's how it is.

BC: How can it go wrong?

I: When you don't have the right music. So now I make sure I have all styles with me.

Bahrain in 2006, and they were accepting demos. I sent one in, and received the 'phone call saying– "You can join our team". I had a very long interview, and I had to be very patient. I was hired in July and went on air in December.

BC: When you play at gigs do you mix or play by timing?

I: It depends what style of music I'm playing. If it's R&B/Hip Hop, I play by timing, if it's House, I'll mix, because it's just matching the beat. R&B/Hip Hop is a very hard style to mix.

BC: Who is your favourite international DJ?

I: I'm a huge fan of Paul Van Dyk.

BC: What do you look for in other DJ's?

I: Not only their skills but what they play. I've seen some DJs who aren't very skilled but their choice of music has everyone out on the dance floor. It has a lot to do with the selection of music. For me a really good DJ is someone

metal as well. I have a rock show every Monday night, called Alternative Therapy. And on Wednesday night I play all styles of commercial music. The biggest challenge for a DJ – whether he's playing on the radio or playing live is to please everybody. At least on the radio I can target specific groups.

BC: Has anyone ever disapproved of your choice of being a DJ?

I: My mother was very supportive, she was very happy for me when I made it on radio. I've always grabbed every opportunity that presented itself to me. Being in the right place at the right time plays a big part as well. I took a huge risk, but I'm so happy I did it.

BC: What's the worst thing someone could do when they're DJing live?

I: Many things. Playing the wrong style of music will ensure a lot of angry people. Mixing - if I believe I can't mix the next track, I'll play it safe and play it by time. Technical errors – pressing 'pause' instead of 'play' can be embarrassing.



with a knowledge of music rather than excellent technical skills.

BC: Is there an artist or musician you get a lot of requests for that you don't like?

I: I'm not a great fan of Boy Bands. And there have been occasions when I'll be playing R&B/Hip Hop, maybe a bit of reggae, and someone will call up and ask "Can you play 'Hello' by Lionel Richie?"

BC: Tell us about your love of stand-up comedy.

I: My plan is to take the word DJ out of my name and just be known as Imran.

“A really good DJ is someone with a knowledge of music rather than excellent technical skills”

BC: And how did you start working on the radio?

I: There was a competition on Radio

BC: What type of music is your absolute favourite?

I: I'm a huge fan of rock. A bit of



Damian in studio

Don't be too disappointed. I'll still be on the radio. But I'm a member of the Bahrain Comedy Club and I have a lot of plans for the future. This was something I always wanted to do. As well as working as a DJ I also host a lot of events. So I've had the experience of kicking into humour, but had never had the chance to do stand-up comedy. I recently hosted the Axis of Evil show and from there I started to do stand-up. I've realised that this is where I really want my career to go. Our first show – Axis of Evil – was a huge success. There is a huge market for comedy here in Bahrain.

BC: How long do you want to carry on DJ-ing for?

I: Well, I would love to carry on performing on radio, but performing live? I'll just keep it as a hobby. I really want to pursue a career in comedy. For me what I do is not just a job, it's a passion – I love it.

DJ Damian explains what it takes to be a DJ

"If you want to start DJing, grab every opportunity you can: Family occasions, school parties, private parties. Contact professional DJs and attach yourself to them like a limpet - offer to carry and clean their records for them, become indispensable to them. Get your name known. You charge BD5

for your first gig, and increase it ever so slowly. Develop your reputation.

"You want to turn professional?

Learn everything you can from the Big Name DJs – watch and pick up their tricks. Earn their trust and become their warm-up DJ. They will let you start doing parties of your own, and give you a percentage of the takings. If you're at university get your name known there. Get as much experience as possible.

"If a DJ wanted to play a set at my venue they should approach me in a

the freshest talent, the ones to watch. Pick up on their new and innovative styles. Watch them work.

"Not every set you play will be perfect. For me, it tends to go wrong when I'm trying to prove myself to other talented DJs in the room. Just relax and do what you do whether you're being watched by professionals or not.

"If a DJs are aiming to promote themselves they should be original and persistent – but not annoying. Consider that you are a business and be

“A love of music is not a quality it's a necessity.”

professional way and definitely know what they are about musically. DJs who rant on about production and music and actually know nothing about them are a dime a dozen. I always believe it's better to keep quiet if you don't know what you're talking about. And bring a live mix for me to listen to.

"Common mistakes DJs make: If they do a few big gigs, they let it go to their head and reach a plateau technically. DJing is an art form and an expression of oneself. Don't ignore upcoming DJs. These are the guys with

professional. Talk to people who work in sales and marketing, and get tips from them about how to promote yourself. Put a twist on your whole image. Production is also of vital importance to make it in the world of DJing. Get into software programmes. It's much more exciting than just spinning. And practise. Then make sure you get paid on time!

"Qualities which will help you make it are inner passion, dedication, focus and the right attitude. All these things will develop your talent. A love of music is not a quality it's a necessity." ☺