

Mount Vernon Mixes It Up

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If you think musical education ends with Hayden and Mozart, or even Miles Davis, scratch that. Literally. DJ professors from the Manhattan-based Scratch DJ Academy will show you otherwise, like they showed 30 young, aspiring DJs from Mount Vernon as part of the Triple Hill Music Festival in May.

"Sometimes you forget that DJing is a skill, and not everybody possesses it," said Lowes Moore, director of the Mount Vernon Boys and Girls Club, where the kids and teens (ages 6–18, split into two groups by age) learned the fundamentals of mixing tracks in five one-hour classes taught by pros on academy-provided equipment.

"DJing is just like any other musical instrument: It takes just as much practice as the guitar or piano, we just do scratches instead of scales," says Will Corbett, who has directed the academy since Jason Mizell (Jam Master Jay of hip-hop group Run DMC), one of the original founders, passed away in 2002. "The key is rhythm. You have to count the beats and know the beats to get the right sound."

The teachers, all of whom are accomplished professional DJs, showed the Mount Vernon students how to use turntables, queue up sound and check levels, and—finally!—to "baby scratch," which sounds a bit like your tires when you hit the gas too hard on wet pavement...but musical.

At last, their night of glory, the spin-doctors-in-training showed off their new skills to parents, friends, and DJ legend Grandwizzard Theodore, one of the genre's pioneers. Word up!☐