



DJ ALL STAR

DJ Chris James flows into his own unique market niche

LIQUID FUN FRESHENS UP the MIX



By Dan Walsh

Around the year 2000, DJ Chris James had been entertaining for over a decade and had had his share of the nightclub scene. After countless karaoke, comedy, and dance parties, he was looking for something new. "My goal was to have more fun and make more money," the DJ recalls. "In order to achieve this, I needed to come up with something that no other DJ was doing." His solution proved more exciting than even he expected. More on that later. First, let's see what brought him to the point of needing a change of pace.

Breaking Out of the Studio

Chris started out as a radio DJ in 1988 at a local radio station in Saco, Maine. While there, he became friends with a guy who had a bunch of DJ gear but didn't know what to do with it. Chris remembers: "He was shy speaking live to audiences but offered to spin if I would do all the announcements and crowd interactions. So I started booking all kinds of gigs and putting his DJ gear to work. He eventually offered to let me buy him out at any time. Because I was booking all the gigs, he allowed me to pay him with the revenue I generated from the gigs. In essence, I was using his gear to buy him out. It worked out very well."

Thus, Chris James added "mobile" to his DJ resume and began regularly sliding out from behind the radio mic to share his entertainment skills with live audiences all over New England. The founder of Chris James Entertainment began focusing primarily on wedding receptions, anniversaries, private parties, and nightclub gigs. It seems that while his radio job made full use of his professional vocal skills, it didn't allow him to express the full range of his personality or to really interact with his audience.



"It all depends on the venue and what my clients are striving for," declares Chris. "I can do anything from calm, cool, and collected to off-the-hook, in-your-face energy. Sometimes I'll incorporate party props, interactive games, karaoke, extreme light/smoke show effects, and even foam."

DJ Starts Foaming

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, foam is what helped DJ Chris add some new energy to his normal DJ life, as well as a lucrative new income stream. Here's how it happened: "I juggled the thoughts of foam and game show trivia," he recalls. "I put together a PowerPoint presentation and began marketing to the local clubs. Foam got me very excited, as I thought about the possibilities more and more. It's four years later and I'm still going strong."

And the excitement continues. After the initial idea took hold, Chris continued to develop it, to the point where a completely new persona came out when he was performing as the "master of foam ceremonies." The DJ has no apparent qualms about living with dual performance personalities. "...Foam Masta G was born," he reports, "and away I went building a brand new show to take on the road. I still can't believe how much fun I've had with this. I thought I had seen it all but then came my foam parties."

"Every show is unique and aimed at the age group I perform for. My shows are extremely energetic...I wear crazy costumes and do exotic contests that I invent on the fly. People seem to do whatever I ask of them." See the separate section, "The Lowdown on Foam," for more details on how Chris made this idea work for his business.

Getting the Word Out

Chris strives to make it easy for potential clients to do business with him through the Web site he designed (www.djchrisjames.com). He explains: "All of my resources are available to my clients online including my music library, online planning forms, and pictures from past events. This is especially helpful to clients who are out of the area but are planning a wedding in my local area. It is not uncommon for me to meet the bride and groom at their wedding for the first time. I treat every event like a brand new show, plan it thoroughly, and adapt to my surroundings like a chameleon."

Chris relies on the usual methods for gaining exposure for his site. "I mainly promote online, via search engines and exchanging links with other wedding professionals." But along with the techno-savvy approach, this DJ also knows that direct connections with people are what ultimately get the job done: "Word of mouth is HUGE! I always leave my clients wanting more. And I've never had a listing in the phone book."

Expanding Beyond Foam

Where does Foam Masta G go from here? Well, as you might expect, this DJ is not content to just let the foam keep flowing without a new twist. "I'm working with my partner, DJ Dangerous Direnzo, to bring a unique form of entertainment to the world," announces DJ Chris. "'Fire meets Foam' is the name of the show. It's a show beyond your imagination. We are looking into doing bigger and bigger venues with a variety of entertainers. We have all the ingredients to be a national act touring the world. Only time will tell. My mission in life is to funnel my positive energy into as many people as I can entertain in my lifetime."

THE LOWDOWN ON FOAM

DJ Chris James, a.k.a. Foam Masta G, shares some foundational foam party tips: "To get up and running I bought a Foam Dome foam machine [from CITC], foam, 55-gallon drum, pumps, hoses, costumes, and accessories. Now I own two foam machines, trussing, and an inflatable foam pit."

Chris created a special logo to help brand the unique foam events. "I give away foam party towels and tank tops to contest winners. I incorporated glow products and I give away funky hats as well."

"I do club shows and private shows, indoors or outdoors. (Foam parties are big during the summer season although I have done an indoor one in December.) I can incorporate my show with the client's choice of DJs or provide DJ services as well."

Some final notes on personnel: "When I first started out I did it all by myself, including music, light show, foam, contests, MCing, setup and breakdown. Boy, it is very busy doing it alone—but it can be done. I prefer to be the interactive MC with a DJ spinning for me."

"My partner DJ Dangerous Direnzo and I offer an awesome show. I'm the wild and crazy MC with costumes, while he spins the music. I wear the foam costumes and he wears the fire costumes. He breakdances on fire, leaps off of a tower on fire, and lands on an air mattress, which I have covered with foam. Now, that's one hell of a grand finale."

FOAMING GEAR SOURCES

- RJN Industries - www.rjnworld.com/Entertainment.htm
- FoamMasters - www.foammasters.cc
- CHAUVET - www.chauvetlighting.com
- CITC - www.citcfx.com
- Antari - www.antari.com/snowfoamhaze.html

THE MASTA'S MUSICAL MATERIAL

- Denon DN-D5000 MP3/CD players
- Pioneer DJM 600 mixer
- JBL EON powered speakers
- JBL powered subwoofers
- Sennheiser wireless microphones
- American DJ lighting effects