

Party Car Drives the Fun

DJ KEVIN BURFORD DELIVERS ENTERTAINMENT IN A VEHICLE ALL HIS OWN

By Mike "Dr. Frankenstand" Ryan

Since mobile DJs are "mobile" (they drive to the gig with gear in tow) and "DJs" (they play music for people on big sound systems), it's inevitable that some of them would combine vehicles and performance gear in some creatively alternative ways.

We've seen converted ambulances, exotic custom DJ cars like those of Charles Miles of Mix on Wheels (profiled in MB back in Nov. 2012), a VW Bus mobile DJ "station" with snow tracks for the ski slopes, even the cartoonish Ultimate Party Car at Disneyland's Cars Land. But you've probably never seen a DJ rig quite like the one that DJ Kevin Burford of Visalia, California rocks at many a week-day event.

"MOBILE" IN A NEW DIRECTION

Burford was originally looking for a VW van front end to stand behind while DJing but he says, "Then I saw this beautiful, fire-engine-red, complete front half of a 1942 Buick, with big, round, droopy-eyed headlights and its beautiful buck-tooth chrome grill. Someone was going to make a barbeque out of it but I rescued it and turned it into my DJ system.

So how did this discarded front end become a unique mobile DJ facade/performance "vehicle?" It took some machine shop know-how, which Burford had, along with imagination: "It already had a frame, so I continued from there by welding brackets to hold my DJ mixer

under the 'dash,' and vertical pipes for my fog machines, etc. Then I installed a 1940s fire truck siren (which is alarmingly loud)...it works very well. I also made foot pedal remote controls for the two fog machines and siren. That really helped free up my hands."

I wondered how Burford transports his setup; he estimates that the Buick alone weighs in excess of 500 pounds. "At first I used two open trailers but eventually my equipment outgrew them...I ended up biting the bullet and purchased an enclosed trailer large enough to haul everything at once." He added a small power winch to help pull the Buick up into its traveling home. Also because the two fog machines really sucked the life out of one generator, he bought a second Honda generator and runs them in tandem.

Before he started DJing, Burford was the general manager of a chain of tire stores in the San Joaquin California Valley. He became a local celebrity through his alter-ego, Mr. Tireman, and his hysterical TV and print ads. He was a bit of a showman to begin with, but I wondered if the transition from retail management to DJing was difficult. Apparently not. "It was an easy transition to DJing because being in retail sales for decades I found that I could talk to anyone at anytime, so it comes to me naturally. Plus being behind the Buick gives

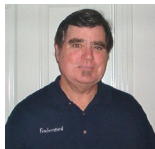
me a sense of security and makes me feel more comfortable."

Burford DJs almost exclusively for retail outlets—car dealerships, furniture stores etc. Why? Because that's what he knows best. He says, "Over the years I've seen the ways to attract customers change and needed to think outside the box...full-page newspaper ads weren't pulling the customers in like they used to, and radio and TV had too many choices, so parking lot sales ended up being the best way to get notice from potential customers. Plus, my clients appreciate the instant results of having me and the Buick at their place of business. It's the perfect promotional vehicle."

I've personally had some influence on Burford's development as a DJ, as he reports: "Also had lots of great suggestions from my brother DJ, Mike on the Mike, as far as games to keep the crowd entertained. He also helped me with my equipment purchases. I run a Numark iCDMIX mixer, a pair of 800-watt Alto speakers, Frankenstand speaker stands, and a Sennheiser wireless mike." Burford also offers his customers interesting extras. "When I started out, I bought a 60-count hot dog steamer, but it ended up being too much work for me to do, so I offer it to my clients to use, and they love it. I usually have them print up specials so I can announce them during the day."

PERSONALITY FUELS PERFORMANCE

With the soul of a carnival hawker, Burford works the microphone



Mike Ryan started out writing for news radio, and has been a SoCal DJ on KGB and KSDS. He mobiles as Mike on the Mike. He is also the inventor/owner of Frankenstand Powered Speaker Stands. He is currently the president of the San Diego Chapter of the ADJA.

like a television game show host. Last time I saw him, he was performing at a country fair and was announcing that the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders were going to be parachuting out of an airplane. "I've also announced that the Green Bay packers or President Obama would also be skydiving in at a certain time and, oh my gosh, it is so funny watching a bunch of people looking up into the sky. I swear if it rained they would drown because they all stare up with their mouths wide open. People don't know what to think until they realize that it's only make-believe and then they really get a kick out of being duped. Sometimes I'll announce that Elvis is here signing autographs when I play an Elvis song. My mother asked if anyone gets mad when they find out Elvis isn't there. If they do, I explain that they just missed him and if they hurried they might catch him on the on the highway".

I asked Burford if he wouldn't mind sharing the wealth about how he gets most of his gigs. "A friend of mine, Chuck Glen of CMG Media Concepts, is the advertising agent for the tire company I worked for, and he pitches me to his clients; that's been fantastic for getting my name out there. He does more as



a friend for me but I give him 15% for his help." Burford charges upwards of \$550 per event. Not bad for midday gigs.

This creative and very funny DJ says reaction from the businesses that hire him has been overwhelming: "They're amazed and entertained by the total production. Also playing the drums and fake guitar playing started out as something to do to keep myself busy but ended up being a hit and a lot of fun too. Customers really get a kick out of the Buick

and lots of people ask if I will DJ at their place of business. The fact that I am very selective of where I perform has created a frenzy and made my show very popular."

Does Burford have any advice for other DJs who have similar ideas for customized DJ systems? "My only advice is to think outside the box and make it fun and easy. Again don't get me wrong, the money is great, but after 35 years of retail, for me it's not about the money but more about having fun and interacting with people. So have fun with it. It's like the little monkey in his hat and vest, performing with the organ grinder. All the other little monkeys in the zoo make fun of him, but in his little world he is a performer—and all they do us sit around all day and throw crap at each other. My goal is for this to be fun and not be a chore".

Burford predicts a great future for his rock & roll traveling road show. "Because of just the fact that it is 'outside the box' advertising...the results are instant and my clients can really see the benefits. Being retired, the biggest thing was to make everything easy so I could enjoy my day. I do it for the fun I get out of performing and I'm having the time of my life". **MB**

music trends.com

the DJs toystore

Like us! www.facebook.com/DJsToystore Like

Music Trends New York Showroom
2947 Hempstead Turnpike • Levittown, NY 11756
516.796.7755 - 888.621.DJDJ (3535)

Supplying DJs and Nightclubs the best gear at the lowest prices for over 30 years.



Worth the trip from anywhere, can't make it? visit www.MUSICTRENDS.com

- Fully stocked showroom EVERYTHING on display!
- Friendly & Knowledgeable Staff
- Authorized Dealer for ALL MAJOR BRANDS

- Largest Selection of Uplighting on display
- Run by DJs for DJs
- Call us Now for Your Best Deal!

CHAUVET

Pioneer Dj

RANE

NI

serato DJ

QSC

Numark

DENON DJ

MACKIE

SPIN