



POST-CANCER, DJ GETS NEW LEASE ON LIFE By Stu Kearns

DJ Mickey G: "This is my calling and nothing can keep me from doing it."

Robbinsville, N.J. – At the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017, DJ Mickey Gordon was experiencing debilitating nausea – and all that follows. Knowing something was not right, he visited six different doctors, but none of them could diagnose what was wrong.

Gordon thought it was vertigo, as his equilibrium was also compromised, and one therapist told him to go to an ENT (ear, nose, and throat) specialist, who ordered an MRI.

Unfortunately, the MRI revealed an un-described tumor in his brain, which measured about 3 centimeters. It was suggested he go to the hospital right away.

A family friend recommended a doctor an hour away, and Gordon went immediately. "[The doctor] told me what to expect with the surgery and the possible risks," he recalls. "He told me I really need this surgery or I would be a vegetable."

Having 4-year-old twins and a wife, he agreed. The doctor operated on his brain for more than eight hours. "So much for a quick and painless outcome," he says, "and he sent out my tumor to the lab and it was unanimous that I had a cancer."

It was called medulloblastoma — a type of cancer found in 2-percent of adults. "I was part of the 'lucky' percent," he says. "This disease is usually found in kids and teens."

To combat this, he'd need radiation with proton therapy, chemotherapy and a spinal tap to see if it had spread to the spine. Thankfully, nothing was found there, but the process was extremely painful.

"Two doctors had to stick me eight times before they got what they needed," says Gordon. "I felt everything..."

With this, came numerous side effects. "I became a third child to my wife," he says. "She had to do everything for me. She was my voice, because I developed immense speech problems, which is definitely not good for a DJ/MC. I was confined to a wheelchair, had to use a shower chair to sit, and a hand and safety rail had to be installed in my home shower, in case I stood up. I couldn't do much for myself at all."

He had to re-train himself to do everything — from seeing, to speaking properly, driving, walking,



Comeback: Mickey G returned to DJing in '18.

dancing, and going back to the gym to work out his usual three to four days a week to get strong. He also underwent acupuncture therapy, which he credits mightily for his ultimate recovery. The whole process took more than a year, during which he couldn't work at all.

"This was extremely difficult because, being a DJ, if I do not work, I do not have an income stream at all," he says. "I'm not entitled sick days or personal days. I agreed to let my wife and her friend create a GoFundMe account and arrange two fundraisers. This helped offset some of my lack of income. While this was not nearly what my wife and I made previously, this certainly helped take away a little bit of the burden and the feeling of worry and that I was drowning in a pile of bills."

Of course, DJing still beckoned, so a comeback was in order. Accordingly, Gordon got back behind the console as soon as he was able — in February, 2018. After all, it's been his comfort zone since he was an early teen. In fact, he DJed his first event when he took over the decks at his own birthday party, when

he turned 13. He began booking gigs soon after and DJ Mickey G Entertainment was born.

Says Gordon of his beginnings: "When numerous couples took a chance and hired a young kid to trust to DJ their wedding, that was so huge, I was floored!"

Since he originally saw that he could be successful in the DJ business, he says, "Every year I've added more services and features to become that full-service company that my clients can go to and ask for various things."

Those "various" things are extensive: DJ Mickey G Entertainment has the capability of doing events worldwide, has customized show cards for notes, announcements, and trivia questions; they do voice overs for commercials, radio sweepers, power points presentations, on hold/phone system messages and commercials. He does personal appearances for companies and schools, hosts concerts for big names and produces large-scale events. He's entertained for 20,000-plus people at a time, and if the client's budget allows, he books celebrities to perform. The company operates two offices — one near Princeton, N.J., the other in New Town, Pa.

As for himself, there's nothing else he'd ever dreamed of doing. "Having the natural gift of performing/entertaining audiences is something that can't be taught," he says. "You can absolutely learn equipment and how to mix music properly, but really entertaining on the microphone is something that really can't be taught. In this business, you can't be shy by any means."

On the audio tip, DJ Mickey G Entertainment mixes and matches plenty of suppliers. He uses Pioneer DJ units (DJM-900NXS2 mixers, CDJ-2000NXS2 media players, DDJ-SX3 and DDJ-SB2 controllers running Serato DJ Pro) with PA systems from JBL Pro, Mackie, Bose and Sennheiser. He uses wireless systems from Sennheiser and Shure, in addition to cases from Odyssey and Pro X, custom DJ booths from Dragon Frontboards, and Ultimate Support Stands.

Gordon says he admires other companies in the market, and feels that nobody is each other's competitor. "There's enough room for everyone," he

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Zeds Dead

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of anticipation for their next album or release. I often forget names of people, in fact, because I only knew them for one thing. Maybe it has to do with what I was saying about how it's easier to make something now, but harder to have your own sound.

DJ Times: How would you say your sound has evolved since your early remix days?

Hooks: I feel like we're just continuously adding to a big painting that is Zeds Dead. Like a tapestry, everything we've done is a part of a larger picture and we're still working on it. I think the picture is much more clear now than it was in the first couple years. We never wanted to just make one sound or one type of music, rather to explore anything that inspires us. I think, at this point, our fans know not to expect any one thing in particular. Hopefully, that's a good thing.

DJ Times: Some of the biggest names in bass music are Canadian – how did that happen?

Hooks: Maybe it's because when the weather is shit during winter you're more inclined to stay in and work on music.

DJ Times: What is it that made you fall in love with the genre?

Hooks: So many different reasons. I remember I was a big hip-hop head, but when I discovered drum-n-bass I liked how it had a lot of hip-hop influence and vibe, but had such interesting sounds. It sort of was my gateway drug into electronic music. A little while later, my friends and I used to sit around and sketch while listening to Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, Calyx and Teebee. I liked it for listening to.

DJ Times: Did you hear DJs in clubs or festivals?

Hooks: I never went to clubs – I

was too young, had no money. I never went to festivals – I didn't even know about them. When I first heard drum-n-bass in a club, I loved how heavy the sub-bass was and you could feel it in your chest. I loved how dubstep was so underground and dark and hypnotic. I loved the energy of dirty electro house. I just gradually really got into all that stuff and wanted to put my own spin on it.

DJ Times: You guys seem to collaborate with artists quite a bit these days. Why do you choose to go that route as producers?

Hooks: There's still way more solo stuff, but we're just trying to finish those and put them out at the right time in the right way. I think we were very insular and didn't really entertain the idea of collaborating that much before – I don't know why, really. Maybe because Zeds Dead is a collaboration between the two of us, we didn't think to bring other people into the mix. At some point, we became more open to it and sometimes it really works out incredibly.

DJ Times: What's the process?

Hooks: Usually, it's ideas that we got to a certain point and then never finished or hit a wall with creatively. We have a lot of these laying around, so sometimes somebody else can bring something new to the table and then something that was dormant gets awoken. It goes the other way, too – artists send us starting points and that can inspire us. These days, we're into trying anything. At the end of the day, it's just about making good music however it gets there.

DJ Times: You two recently joined forces with Delta Heavy for "Lift You Up." What was it like working with them and how did the track come together?

Hooks: That collaboration felt very natural and we loved how that track came together. We'd love to do more with them in the future – they're really great producers. We sent them an idea for "Lift You Up" with the vocal and a melody and drop idea. It was very rough, but they saw the potential in it. We went back and forth on it throughout, but they really injected their flare into it and made it the beast that it became.

DJ Times: Now speaking of collaboration, there was "Lights Go Down" with Jauz and the "Deadbeats Goes Off the Deep End" concept where you all play back-to-back. How did this come about?

Hooks: Jauz is a friend of ours and we have a lot of the same tastes in production, so collaborating with him always feels really natural. We were just in the studio a couple days ago and made something we're really excited about.

DJ Times: Is there anyone else out there you'd like to go back-to-back with?

Hooks: We've gone back-to-back with a lot of our favorite DJs – Diplo, Skrillex, Skream, Dillon Francis, Kill the Noise, to name a few. I think it would be fun to do one with Rusko.

Mobile

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says, "but while the goals among DJs are the same, we are very different by what makes us unique or stand out. I like to think what makes us stand out is our professionalism, charisma, delivery, our dance choreography prior to events, and our educational/entertaining school assembly programs."

Despite the unique challenges that have come up over the years – including his health issues – Gor-

DJ Times: Most artists dream to play Denver's iconic Red Rocks Amphitheatre at least once in their career and this year will mark as the sixth installment of your annual Deadrocks event. How does it feel to host such an event?

Hooks: It kinda blows my mind when I think about it. We did this so organically, just kept at it, putting out songs and doing shows, never signing to a label, never having a mainstream hit, and now we do two nights at Red Rocks. We're still pretty under the radar – like we're so far from celebrities – but when we do a show there, 20,000 people come. It's insane.

DJ Times: Deadbeats is already off to a hot start, DeadRocks dates have been revealed. What else can fans expect from Zeds Dead in 2019?

Hooks: Lots more music. We have so much Zeds Dead original music in the works and we're just figuring out what we're going to do to finish and release it. We also have several more collabs to be coming out shortly and some remixes. Some amazing releases coming out on Deadbeats, too, and we'll be playing some great festivals, as well as more Deadbeats parties. Can't wait to show you what we got cookin'!

don, 39, can honestly say that DJing remains fun for him. "Things could impact anyone," he says. "All jobs have certain pitfalls or things that can come up. But I really would not trade at all what I do! This is my calling and nothing can keep me from doing it.

"In surviving cancer, the idea of DJing is what kept me going. Returning to DJing means I got my life back – performing is my life."

Detroit's Movement Fest: May 25-27

It's now DJ-festival season...



And that's a good enough reason...



To kick off the summer in The D.



Photos: Bryan Mitchell/Paxahau

Movement Festival, in the next DJ Times