

From DJ to J.D. Coe Ramsey masters the art of mixing

As a student at T.W. Andrews High

School in High Point, Coe Ramsey left Friday night football games right after half-time. It wasn't a lack of school spirit that forced his exit—he was a proud member of the marching band. Instead, it was his responsibility as a Friday night DJ for a Greensboro radio station.

"I had hit the pinnacle of life at that point," says Ramsey, an entertainment and communications lawyer for Brooks Pierce in Raleigh. "I'm in high school doing this mix show on this top-ranked radio station, loving every minute of it."

Ramsey discovered DJing while going to church dances in his early teens. "To me the coolest person at those dances was the DJ," says Ramsey, who then started listening to radio station G105 in Raleigh. "You could barely pick it up in High Point, but over the weekends they would do these mix shows. They'd go from one song to the next without a pause in between, making the beats and pitches match so that it was a seamless connection. I was fascinated by how in the world was this guy on the radio doing that."

Ramsey decided to figure it out for himself. "I called my grandfather, got a loan, and decided to start a little DJ business," he says.

By age 15, he was the DJ at the church dances.

Eventually Ramsey discovered Ultimix Records, a DJ-only remix service based in Greensboro that led to his gig at 102 JAMZ, which included 30-minute prerecorded shows Monday through Thursday and a four-hour live show on Friday nights. From there he got into nightclub work and created multiple remixes for Ultimix that were played in nightclubs and on radio stations around the world.

"I went to college thinking I was nothing other than a DJ," he says. With a major in communications studies at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he realized that he already knew most of the production skills involved. "Reality sort of set in that I had already achieved a lot as a DJ, but for me to make it to the next level, it was going to be difficult," he says. "I needed to find something a little bit more practical."

With that in mind, he double-majored in philosophy and enrolled in law school at Wake Forest University. "My goal was to come out and to have some connection to broadcasting, some connection to music because I liked the people," says Ramsey, who was known to study while DJing at nightclubs in law school. Upon graduation he considered moving to New York or Los Angeles but opted to go with Brooks Pierce for its communications practice.

Now a partner in the firm, Ramsey, 36, handles a national media portfolio, including Curtis Media Group, Hearst-Argyle Television, Young Broadcasting, and other publicly and privately held broadcasters and digital media companies. Recently, he's been helping a number of clients prepare for the digital television transition scheduled for this month.

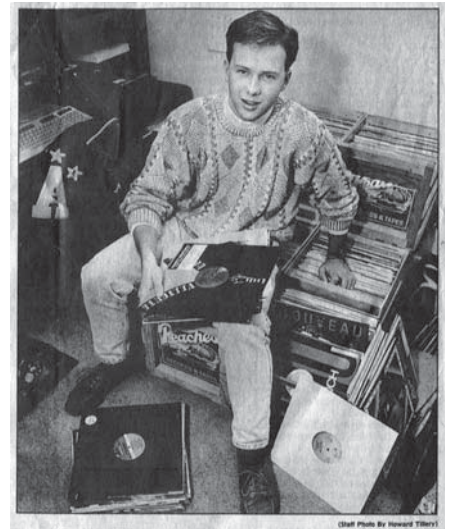
"I'm helping stations build new TV facilities and leading them through the logistics of how they are going to transition not only their operations but their viewers from an analog world to a digital world," he says. "I was fortunate in the regard that I began practicing law around the time the digital transition became hot."

Ramsey remains close to his DJ roots by operating the online radio station DanceStreams.com from his home. Although he's able to devote only about an hour a week to it because of work and family—he's married with a 3-year-old daughter—he likes to keep his skills sharp by staying connected to the music.

"It helps me understand a lot of the legal issues that my clients have because there are significant royalty issues that come into play



(Above) Ramsey with clients Benton James (left) and Jeremy Denman (right) of The Urban Sophisticates in the Kenosis Studios in Greensboro. (Below) A 1989 clipping from the *High Point Enterprise* of 17-year-old Ramsey reviewing records for his radio show.



when you're doing webcasting," says Ramsey, who also represents unsigned bands, DJs, indie record companies and music producers.

"He's still in touch with the music, which is good, especially when we talk to him about songs," says client Mark Roberts, owner of Ultimix Records. "He helps us police all the illegal file sharing that's going on right now."

Benton James, the managing member and lead singer of The Urban Sophisticates, says Ramsey has helped his live hip-hop group maintain its integrity as it talks to various labels. "A lot of people, if they don't know the music, they just settle for what can make them the money, you know, but Coe doesn't really put any pressure on us to do that," says James. "There's this overall sense that Coe is with us."

—Lori K. Tate