

# KIDDO

Elly Rifkin juggles many talents while considering a career change

words: Daniel Mnookin



**A** choral singer, a DJ, an editor and a woman with a foot phobia—no, this isn't the latest pitch for a reality television program, but the busy life of KidDO (aka Elly Rifkin). The Chicago-based technophile balances her time on the decks between steady local gigs and a blossoming travel itinerary. *UR* caught up with this quickly rising femme fatale for a little one-on-one time.

***UR Chicago:* How did you first get into electronic music, and at what point did you begin DJing?**

**KidDO:** My fascination began at a very early age. I began listening to some Aphex Twin, Chemical Brothers, the Orb—and later gradually discovered that I loved techno. My father is a piano tuner/teacher and a recording engineer and has an entire studio filled with walls of records, so I was brought up to appreciate the sound of vinyl. As a college freshman at UW-Madison, I was the only student in my dorm that had records and a turntable. Toward the end of my senior year, I decided to work for the student radio station. While learning to operate the board, I asked to be trained on mixing with turntables—my trainer blew off the request. Frustrated, I made it a goal to learn to mix.

**At what point did you realize DJing had become more than just a hobby?** When I started dropping an entire week's pay on records!

**If you were banished from Chicago, where would you move and why?**

After visiting Europe for the first time about a month ago, I would definitely say I'd move to Berlin. I felt very comfortable there. Berlin is full of character, extremely safe, ripe with historical importance and affordable to live in. Also, the community of artists and musicians there is extremely vibrant and supportive. Unlike the electronic-music scenes in many U.S. cities, there is a wonderful sense of camaraderie amongst electronic-music producers and performers in Berlin, not to mention the fact that the parties are absolutely wicked, lasting as long as two or three days. Plus, they serve cappuccino in almost every club—as a coffee addict, I really appreciate that.

**What is one thing about you that most people wouldn't know?** This is embarrassing, but I have a minor phobia about feet. I'm not sure

where it came from, but I can't stand people touching my feet. I tried to get a pedicure at a salon once, and it was horribly uncomfortable.

**What are your best/worst/most embarrassing DJ experiences?** I

think any DJ would agree that there are some nights when you play for people and everything comes together—the “magic” happens. I first felt that when I was playing in the VIP room at Zentra Nightclub. At the start of my set, some couples were dancing together, seemingly digging my set. After a little while, I got into this zone and was concentrating very carefully on my mixing and which records I was going to play. After about four tracks, I finally looked out at the dancefloor, and there were literally four or five rows of people dancing in place with all of their eyes on me. I was feeding off of this energy and crafted some pretty cool mixes, and the crowd response was fantastic. I remember being nervous that I was the only DJ not playing house in that room that night (Mark Farina was playing upstairs), and those DJs were coming up to the booth and closely watching me work, but then enthusiastically asking me for track IDs on some newer Minus records. Consequently, this was both my best and most embarrassing DJ experience because I was—and still am—not used to receiving that kind of attention.

**What are your plans for the near and distant future?** In the somewhat

distant future, I'm leaning toward starting a Master's program in secondary education to possibly make a career switch to teaching. (KidDO currently works as an editor for an educational publishing company.) I would also love to spend some more time writing, another passion of mine. In the near future, I definitely plan to go back to Europe and do some more traveling. As far as music goes, I plan to continue DJing whenever I can while also continuing my participation in choral music activities. Within the next few months I was asked to DJ in some cities I've never been to before, and I'm really looking forward to it.

***KidDO spins at the Lab (500 W. Cermak, Suite 501, 312/226-1717) November 18 and at SmartBar (3730 N. Clark, 773/549-0203) November 30***