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## Bootie, San Fran + L.A.

A tale of two cities (and one genre-busting party).

By Justin Hampton

For all the press and controversy garnered by the mash-up or bootleg genre of popular music – where two or more wildly divergent and usually unlicensed songs or tracks are combined to create a new track – virtually no live American outlets existed to capitalize on the trend. Until San Francisco DJ/promoters Adrian Roberts and Deidre “Mysterious D” George started their club night Bootie. Now in its third year, Bootie has sprouted a successful Los Angeles satellite party, and routinely pulls in bootleg celebrities such as Toronto’s Smash Hitley, Australia’s Dsico and



Adrian Roberts (left) and Deidre “Mysterious D” George are the Bootie mastermind team A PLUS D.



Glasgow’s McSleazy for its monthly excursions into playfully illegal eclecticism. Roberts and George currently host Bootie at the DNA Lounge, in SF’s comfortably hip SoMa district. The club’s two-floor set-up, raised stage and sonic control (via BSS SoundWeb 9088 digital processors) allows the two to present both DJs and the occasional live band, such as Adrian’s Smash-Up Derby, to its clientele. The duo also makes full use of the club’s streaming audio capabilities, where each club night is streamed live over the Internet and archived on the club’s website for two weeks afterwards. Their LA home at Echo Park’s The Echo is smaller and more modest in terms of size and set-up, but still allows the duo both DJ and live band capabilities, as well as another ideal neighborhood to coax the genre’s hipster audience toward their DJ decks. When not prowling around online for that perfect Gwen Stefani/Nico/Edith Piaf MP3, Roberts works as an art director for the *Bay Area Reporter* and also edits the journal *Piss Clear* distributed yearly at Burning Man, where he and George married in 2004. Now that Bootie is fully incorporated, George handles DJ-ing and club promotion full time, and the two both produce mash-ups under the name A&D and tag-team under the name Rebel DJs. Both chimed in from their base in San Francisco to talk about the mash-up genre, where it’s heading, and running their club night in two different cities.



Onstage at Bootie's Smash-Up Derby in San Francisco's DNA Lounge.

According to your website, you were the first mash-up night in America. How have things changed for mash-up since you started in 2003, as far as the clubs are concerned? Are you seeing other scenes develop? **Mysterious D:** When we started Bootie, we figured it was only a matter of time before other mash-up club nights started springing up around the country. But surprisingly, other than in Boston and Seattle, that hasn't really happened. That's why we decided to launch a sister club in Los Angeles. It seemed like no one was really doing a full-on, 100% mash-up party the way we were doing it.

Who do you target for your parties, and how/where do you usually promote them? What sort of crowd do you attract?

**Mysterious D:** Because what we play at the club is so wildly diverse, we tend to target as many different types of people and crowds as we can. Because all the music is mashed-up, there's not really any one particular "scene" that owns it. Basically, we just want people at our club who love and appreciate all different kinds of music. So we try to get the word out to as many people as possible.

**Adrian:** We print 5,000 color flyers each month, which we distribute at every single club and show we end up at, as well as at various shops in the hipster neighborhoods, like the Haight in San Francisco, and Melrose Avenue in LA. We also place an ad in one of the alternative newsweeklies. And then of course, there's the Internet.

"The bootlegger DJ scene may be global, but it's still grassroots. Everyone knows everyone, at least via messageboards, email and instant messaging."

- Adrian

"Big commercial trance or house nights are about simply making money. We're more interested in the long term, and creating a vibrant new scene."

- Mysterious D.

We maintain our website with club info, photos, and MP3 downloads. You can also sign up for our mailing list there, and once or twice a month, we send out an email blast, letting our patrons know what's going on. In San Francisco, we have over 1,300 people on our email list, so the word tends to get around. And of course, we post to MySpace, Tribe.net, Friendster, Upcoming.org, and a few other sites.

How did you get the gig to do the night at the Echo in LA? Who does the promotion duties for you in LA?

**Mysterious D:** We had been doing Bootie in San Francisco for two years, and I really wanted to take the next step, which I felt was bringing the party down to LA. Since [LA promoter/DJ] Paul V was already a part of our bootleg community, not to mention a DJ and club promoter in his

own right, we asked if he would be interested in helping us start a sister club in LA. We went down there a couple times to discuss details and he helped get us a Saturday night at The Echo, where he throws another monthly club called Dragstrip 66.

**Adrian:** Unlike Bootie in San Francisco, which built up slowly over a couple years, Bootie LA was instantly successful ... perhaps it was timing. By that point - July 2005 - we no longer had to explain to everyone what a "mash-up" was. And due to Paul V's "Mash-up of the Day" on radio station Indie 103.1, LA was obviously primed and ready for an all-mash-up dance night.

As far as the clubs are concerned, what sorts of numbers are they looking for in order to consider the club night a success? Do you keep the door and they keep the bar? And is it the deal any different at the Echo as it is for the DNA Lounge?

**Adrian:** Yes, we have different deals with Echo and DNA Lounge. DNA is about three times the size of Echo, therefore they need to make more money to run the club: The venue has to pay higher rent, more staff, more security, and more equipment costs. We feel we have fair deals at both venues, based on the size of the space and what each can provide.

**Mysterious D:** If you have a successful party, you should be able to negotiate a deal with the venue that you feel is fair. If the venue wants to take too much, they're probably not the right venue. We've worked with our share of good venues and corrupt venues, and can identify which is which more quickly these days.

Basically, how many people do you get in at a good night at both locales? **Adrian:** At the DNA Lounge in San Francisco, we usually get around 700-900 people each month. As for the Echo, we get between 280-350 people.

**Mysterious D:** And capacity at the Echo is about 350. Capacity at the DNA, we're told, can be 1,000-plus, but we can tell you, at 900 it's pretty packed, unless you open an additional room, which we do when necessary.

Is the club successful enough that you're able to fly out talent? How much is it to run a mash-up night compared to say, a commercial trance night with the bigger-name DJs?

**Adrian:** We've flown out a few international DJs, when the opportunity arises and it's within our budget. The bootlegger DJ scene may be global, but it's still surprisingly small and grassroots. Practically everyone knows everyone, at least via messageboards, email and instant messaging. In that regard, it's probably quite different from a commercial

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# NightStalkers

You'll find them in the corners of clubs everywhere, observing the atmosphere, checking out the lighting, experiencing the sound. They're Club Systems' NightStalkers, ordinary club-goers seeking the truth about dance clubs across the world. Will your next customer be one of them?

## Cabaret Chicago, Illinois

And the role of the doorman will be played by...

With a 1,000-light marquee, Cabaret has announced its presence in Chicago's River North neighborhood. And after all the pre-opening publicity this winter we wanted to find out what all the hubbub was about. The 5,000-square-foot club/lounge is the brainchild of veteran nightlife trio Todd Rubin, Phil Lotsoff and Marc Bortz (Circus, Hogs & Honeys, Awesome '80s Prom). Three environments in the open space reflect a cabaret theme with chandeliers, Louis XVI furnishings, red wash lights and Brazilian Cherry wood floors. Three bars are kept busy by crew of attractive waitresses in racy flapper attire. Of course there's also a separate, private VIP room that's even more plush with red walls andandelabras. Burlesque shows are contained to Friday nights, and DJs spin hip-hop and rock tracks to fill out the entertainment lineup the rest of the week. Cabaret aims for a touch of old school Hollywood glamour with a side of new school Vegas glitz, but does it satisfy the appetites of the Midwest's hippest club crawlers and anxious partiers?

## Stalker #1

From the outside, with its marquee, Cabaret looked, at first, like we are all going to a movie or Broadway show; the setup of the



girl behind the cash register in the box office made us feel more like we were there to see a film than enjoy a party. But when we went through the doors, instead of a theater lobby we were flooded with lounge house beats, soothing red lighting and an upscale crowd with drinks in hand.

The place is not big but there is enough space to enjoy yourself without playing bumper people all night. There were two medium sized bars in the main room and a third bar in the back VIP room. Velvety sofas, which were all reserved for bottle service, lined the club. We attempted to get a table, but table service is for four to six people per bottle, per table, so our 20-plus crew had to hang by the back bar. If you ask me, there is no point in going to the VIP room, all the action is in the main room, including the dancers on blocks. For such a small place there was an abundance of security; security made up for about 40% of the crowd!

It was steady the entire evening, never dead, never overcrowded. All in all it was a great spot to have a cocktail and mingle with friends. The volume isn't so loud you can't hear anyone talking to you, but the music is more mainstream, commercial tracks. The Top 40 stuff going on was a turn off to our crew of house-heads.

## Stalker #2

I decided it was time to finally see if all the hype about Cabaret had any substance. On line there were bouncers with British and Australian accents, which might have made

the people they didn't let in think they were cunty, but me and my girlfriends had quite a laugh with them before going inside. Normally I'd whine about a \$20 cover, but this was a new club. I had already put on heels and my high-maintenance face and there was no going back.

Inside the room was gorgeous. Something about the glass columns, chandeliers and glowing light reminded me of Mansion in Miami – only a whole lot smaller. And with all the tables there weren't a lot of options for lounging and the floor space got crowded pretty quickly. We made our own space to dance, but the music wasn't so great anyway. We didn't spring for a bottle, even though the free deck of cards that comes with it was quite tempting. Instead we had fun watching Chicago's beautiful people and wannabes sipping \$300 champagne.

The waitresses were super hot in fishnets and corsets. They were straight out of Moulin Rouge, or at least the Lady Marmalade video with Christina Angilera and Lil' Kim. The bathroom attendant was rather fierce too, I think she even mopped right over some chick's foot.

Cabaret would probably be better for cocktail parties, but to party, to really party, I'd rather be somewhere else. The experience was fun for a bit, but by midnight we were ready to ditch the pretentious posers and head to a spot with some genuine – and proud of it – townie trash. We found a pack of like-minded (or otherwise motivated) guys and headed out for some cheap beer somewhere else, I got too drunk to remember where.

## Noiseboy

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responsible for that one.

What can you tell us about that infamous gig with Erick Morillo and Tommy Lee in Croatia? That was one of the top five weirdest gigs I've ever worked. The show had already started and I had to install three EQ filters, an effects unit, and a FireWire router/laptop configuration to the mixer whilst the opening DJ was mixing. Fifteen minutes later (thankyouverymuch), I returned to the backstage area to find Erick and Tommy feasting on roast duck with black truffles, sipping on champagne, and having an impromptu discussion with John McEnroe. I ushered the boys onto the stage, where they were astounded to find a banquet in progress. With 50 or 60 tables seating ten heads a piece, complete with appropriate floral arrangements and busboys waiting nearby wearing red vests and clip-on bowties, it was a bar mitzvah to the nth degree.

People were still finishing their fruit cocktails while Erick dropped his first track. But, like the consummate professionals

"I had to install three EQ filters, an effects unit, and a FireWire router to the mixer whilst the opening DJ was mixing. When I returned Erick [Morillo] and Tommy [Lee] were feasting on roast duck with black truffles, sipping champagne, and having a discussion with John McEnroe."

they are, Erick and Tommy went on to perform. Erick would DJ, remixing and creating new tracks using the filters and EFX, while Tommy would add percussion and use his Artillery program on his laptop to add some spice. Without a dancefloor or general area for people to crowd and, well, dance, we became dinner theatre.

Nonetheless, Tommy played along with Erick's beats for four or five songs. At times, Erick would cut out the music entirely, leaving Tommy to carry the beat into the next song as Erick mixed back in. The interchange between these two has always been great, and Erick knows how to mix rock 'n' roll in with house music to great effect.

Any advice for club operators who want to book your favorite superstar DJs? Pay on time (uncommon concept, no?), pay attention to tech riders and be willing to work with the agents and artists. It's amazing what can be accomplished when everyone works together towards a common goal. ○

## Bootie

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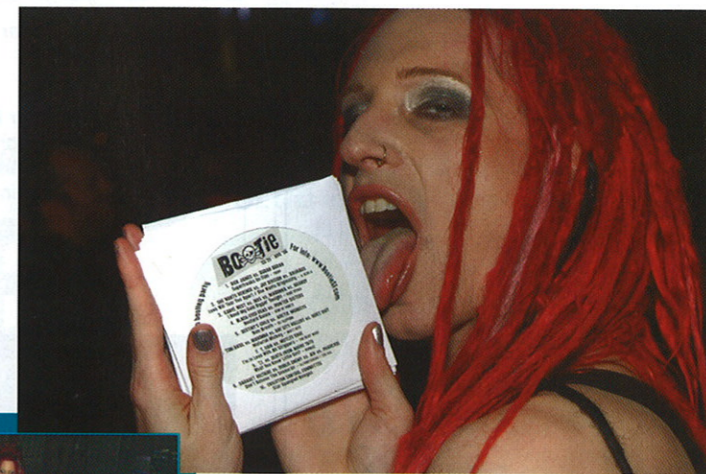
trance night with a big-name DJ ... who, chances are, you've never even spoken with before the night of the party, because you were forced to only deal with their management.

**Mysterious D:** Compared to big commercial trance or house nights, it seems to us those events are more about simply making money, whereas we're more interested in the long term, sharing this creative musical style, and creating a vibrant new scene.

Where was the club before it was at the DNA Lounge? Is it a better deal there? **Adrian:** It was at

Cherry Bar, which was sold and is now Annie's Social Club. We had a decent deal there – a reasonable bar guarantee and we kept the door – but we had simply outgrown the venue. It holds around 300 people comfortably, but our last few months there, we were bringing in 400-500. Mysterious D was convinced that its size was inhibiting our growth, and she was right! Since we've been at DNA Lounge, we've never had less than 650 people.

Where do you see the mash-up scene going? (Of course, the real question is how long do you expect to be giving your patrons Bootie?) **Mysterious D:** It's interesting, because in San Francisco's often jaded



Adrian has a taste for music.



and cynical club scene, mash-Ups have already gone through the complete trend cycle: Three or four years ago, they were very hip, underground, cutting edge, and exciting. Then a couple years later, the backlash started. Even though our club attendance was growing, the hipster naysayers were declaring that mashups were "tired" and "over." Now it seems like we're at the point where mash-ups are obviously not going away: They're simply another aspect of contemporary music culture.

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