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## Disc jockey

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**Alternate titles:** *deejay; disk jockey; DJ*

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**Disc jockey**, also spelled **disk jockey**, person who conducts a program of recorded music on radio, on television, or at discotheques or other dance halls. Disc jockey programs became the economic base of many radio stations in the **United States** after World War II. The format generally involves one person, the disc jockey, introducing and playing **phonograph** records and chatting informally and usually extemporaneously in the intervals.

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The idea of the program originated in the 1930s, but its development was hampered by a **Federal Communications Commission** rule that required stations to identify recorded music frequently—so frequently, as it turned out, that the message tended to irritate and alienate the listener. The disc jockey was also restricted by musicians and artists whose phonograph labels bore the warning "Not Licensed for Radio Broadcast." But the show's potential was revealed when Martin Block broadcast his *Make Believe Ballroom* on station WNEW in **New York City** as filler between news coverage of the closely followed trial of the kidnapper of the Charles A. Lindbergh baby. Upon the request of thousands of listeners, the makeshift show was retained by the station after the kidnap trial. In 1940 the Federal Communications Commission relaxed its rules, requiring that recorded material be identified only twice in an hour, and in the same year the courts ruled that the warning on record labels had no legal significance. From that time disc jockey shows became increasingly popular.

The radio disc jockey's future was clouded again during World War II by industry wage disputes with the **American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP)** and the **American Federation of Musicians**. At issue was the declining demand for live appearances of artists because of the popularity of disc jockeys and recorded music. In 1944 the disputes were settled, and wartime controls on vinylite and shellac, the materials from which phonograph records were made, were eased.

By the 1950s listener loyalty to disc jockeys was so firmly established that the success of any record depended on the preferences of the disc jockey. To solicit their favour, record companies began to shower the disc jockeys with money, stocks, or gifts (commonly known as **payola**). This widespread practice of commercial bribery was given national exposure by a federal investigation in 1959. As a result, payola faded for a while, but in the mid-1980s new exposés revealed that the practice continued to exist in many quarters.

The disc jockey format was never as popular on television as on radio, with the exception of a few dance shows.

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