

INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY! RINKSIDER

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November–December 2008

Celebrating kids and community is primary focus at The Golden Skate

By Suzy Weinland

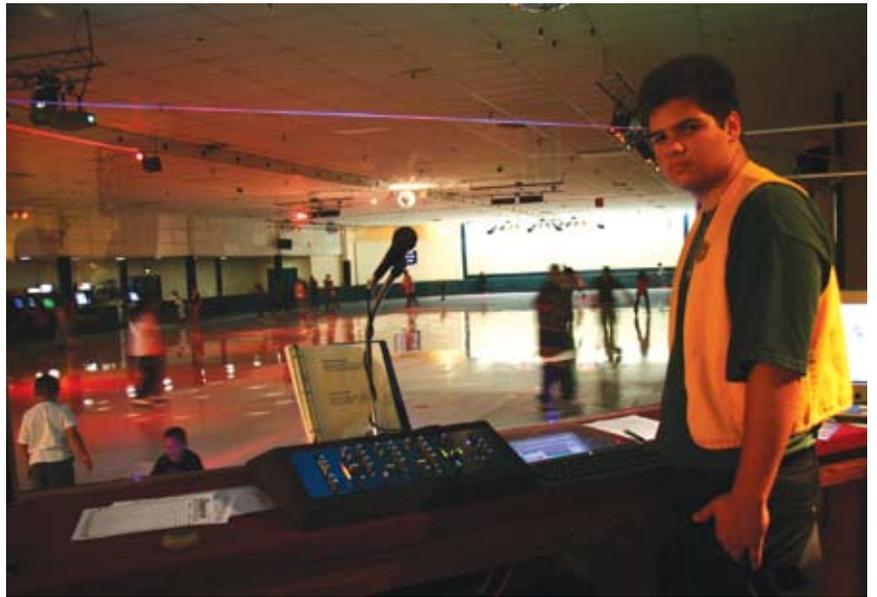
At The Golden Skate in San Ramon, Calif., owner Hassan Sharifi and his crew are all about the kids.

From unique academic programs to a twice-monthly Battle of the Bands, The Golden Skate staff “take pride in contributing what we can to our local schools and community,” said Natasha Biggs, the rink’s director of customer service.

The 24,000 square foot facility includes a standard 80 ft. by 178 ft. skating floor. The skating center, which opened 31 years ago, is located in a suburban area, but since it’s the “only rink around for miles,” according to Biggs, it pulls from areas such as Oakland, Berkley and even San Francisco.

Sharifi, who has owned The Golden Skate for 13 years, admits he’s not originally a skater, but he does have a shrewd business sense.

One unique program they offer at The Golden Skate is the Academic Excellence Program. Biggs said, “To support aca-



Kids of all ages love the skating and music at The Golden Skate.

demical excellence, we offer every teacher in our surrounding area half price admission coupons as a reward for students who show improvement in their academic skills. Many teachers request coupons for their

entire class and all requests are immediately granted. We receive a high volume of these coupons throughout the school year.

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‘Come, Mr. DJ won’t you turn the music up? Come, Mr. DJ..’

By Jim Morris

The way Steve Earley looks at it, roller skating rinks have one main thing they are selling to their customers – entertainment. And the most important person, he says, is the guy or gal behind the microphone – the DJ.

“The DJ is in charge of the entertainment,” said Earley, general manager of



Skateland in the Los Angeles suburb of Northridge. “And that’s what we are really selling.

“If our food is good and our entertain-

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From left to right, Northridge Skateland DJs Gail Zweben, Cameron McGee, Michelle Hardy and Joyce Hall rock the rink just outside of Los Angeles.

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The RINKSIDER’s new year-long holiday calendar includes secular, non-secular and promotional holidays to get you on the right track to planning a year’s worth of fun and profitable skating sessions.

Go beyond.....7, 13

Ever consider adding “kid-die attractions” to draw the youngest skaters – and their parents – in throughout the week? Two operators offer tips and tales of success with such additions as mult-level soft-play, indoor themed mini-golf and bumper cars!

Offer unique sessions.....16

While scheduling sessions with local schools and community groups, don’t forget to consider the fun and fitness benefits you can offer to those with special needs. Regular skating helps these individuals practice their gross motor skills and stay fit, while the chance to socialize with peers will bring smiles to everyone’s faces.

Come Mr. DJ (cont'd from page 1)

ment is bad, people will not come back. If the rink is clean and the entertainment is bad, the people will not come back. But if all those things are standard and our entertainment is high, people will remember what a good time they had and want to come back," he added.

So if the DJ is the leader of your entertainment package, how do you come up with a good one who will keep your guests wanting more?

"Some rink owners feel you have to bring in someone from the outside, like a radio DJ. That works sometimes, but most of the time those people come in and they don't really understand the philosophy of a roller skating rink," Earley said. "What they don't understand is a roller skating DJ is a completely different beast from a radio or club DJ."

That's why Earley prefers to identify someone who is already working at the rink and knows how a skating center operates. As a former – and still sometime – DJ himself, he prefers to train the person the right way.

"I will find the most outgoing person in the rink," he said. "It doesn't matter if they have never been behind a mike. It might be our best party attendant who is having fun with kids ... someone from the street doesn't know how to play games with kids, how to manage the floor and the flow of the

session and how to handle safety. And it really helps if the DJ is also a skater who knows how the music goes with skating."

Earley also points out the need to have management people involved in the training and supervision of a new DJ and to keep on top of the DJ operation at all times.

DJ Julio: New York/New Jersey

Julio Estian's roots as a DJ go all the way back to New York's famous discothèque, the Peppermint Lounge in the 1960s. In the days of the "Peppermint Twist," Julio, then 10 or 11 years old, got the first inkling of what he wanted to do when he grew up.

"I had an uncle who was spinning at discothèques, including the Peppermint Lounge," DJ Julio said. "I used to watch him and thought it was pretty cool."

Julio was also a skater and said he didn't like it when there was time between records.

"I'd be skating, and then the record would finish and there would be a long pause between records. I remember I didn't like that and wondered why they couldn't keep the music going all the time," he said.

He said his first "DJ" job was at

a rink where he would put on a record, then hustle down and do his job as a floor guard.

He said one of the most influential people in his career was a New York DJ



With DJ Julio, it's all about tempo!

named Tony Smith.

"He was amazing," DJ Julio said. "The way he went from song to song was just seamless. That's how I wanted to be, so I would go back and practice, practice, practice."

Julio, who works at rinks all over the New York City-New Jersey area and is also the DJ for Central Park skaters, said he feels the most important thing for young would-be DJs is to get out and find jobs in front of people.

"You can practice in your basement in front of your stuffed animals all you want, but there is no substitute for working in front of a live audience,"

he said. "That's how you get feedback. And you have to go out and hustle to find jobs; they don't just come to you."

He said a good DJ is able to control the crowd simply with the music he or she plays.

"You can tell a story with your music. You can set the moods. You can take people up or take people down.

"I'm always trying to create a mood, create a feeling. It's not only about playing the hottest music. I am trying to control the floor. If it gets a little wild, then I can shift the music to tone it down. You just have to keep on top of the mood of the crowd all the time," he said.

"It can get pretty wild," he added. "But when you have people falling and breaking stuff ... you don't want that. That's when you bring the intensity level down."

DJ Julio said that since he is a skater himself, he knows how the tempo of the music affects the people on the floor. In fact, part of his advice to young skating rink DJs is that they also skate.

He also said having a Web site is important to get the word out about the rinks where he works. His is web.mac.com/roxydjulio/Site/DJ_Julio.html.

DJ Rambo: Chicago, Ill.

Like many DJs at skating rinks,

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