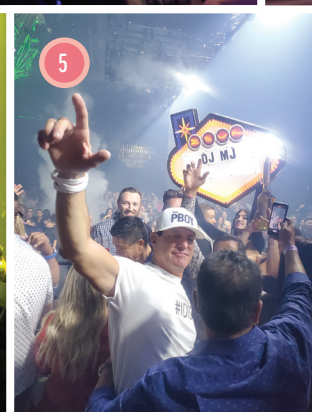


Figures. Dr. Jackson DJing at Tao Chicago (1 and 2). Dr. Jackson opening for Zedd in Las Vegas (3-5).



USING BOTH SIDES OF THE BRAIN



Balancing two careers through determination and adaptability.

BY MITCHELL A. JACKSON, MD

My career as an eye surgeon began with my father. About 80 years ago, at the age of 8, he lived through a devastating epidemic that left him blind in one eye and partially sighted in the other. Despite these challenges, he became a well-known attorney, raised three children, and overcame colon and prostate cancer before dying of Parkinson disease at the age of 83. His strength and resilience inspired me to pursue a career in ophthalmology. Helping others see the world more clearly has been my life's work for the past 30 years.

My life as a DJ outside the OR often surprises people.

DISCOVERING DJING

Fifteen years ago, I became drawn to DJing and dove into the world headfirst. I started out at the Foundation Room in Chicago, where I negotiated a 1-year contract for a monthly show after proving my ability to draw a crowd. From there, my career took off. I began performing at ophthalmology industry events and iconic venues such as the Warfield in San Francisco, and I even headlined at some of the top clubs in Chicago (Figures 1 and 2).

I never thought I'd achieve this level of success in the music industry. I was about to retire from DJing, save for a few eye care industry gigs, when a life-changing opportunity

presented itself. In October 2021, I was asked to headline at N°9 in Chicago.

ADAPTING AND GROWING IN BOTH CAREERS

Driven by a desire for instant satisfaction, I've focused my practice on the anterior segment and began offering laser vision correction in 1995. I've embraced cutting-edge technologies throughout my career. My work has allowed me to train six fellows, all of whom have gone on to successful careers of their own.

Surprisingly, my journey as DJ MJ has been met with incredible support from the Chicago DJ community. They've embraced me, cheered me on, and even gifted me a neon sign signed by all the DJs that reads, "The Legend."

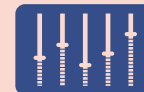
A LESSON FROM MY BROTHER

My younger brother died 4 years ago. In his final moments, he made me promise never to say, "I wish," but to say instead, "I did." This simple yet powerful message drives every aspect of my life—from my career in ophthalmology to my passion for DJing. I wear #idid bracelets as a constant reminder of the promise and my first passion, ophthalmology. I often throw the bracelets into the crowd at my gigs.

▶ OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

MY MUSICAL STYLE

As a DJ, my style is open format with a focus on house music. I love incorporating the music of artists I've played with, such as David Guetta, Dombreski, James Hype, and Galantis, as well as up-and-coming talents like Deux Saints and DJ Reve Official.



My journey into the world of DJing has been full of ups and downs, but the same determination and adaptability that serve me well in the OR have helped me grow and improve as an artist. I've gone from using the Serato Scratch Box at my first gig to mastering a DJ and music production software (Serato DJ, Serato) for CDJ-3000s (Pioneer) with USB sticks alone, all while learning to manage a crowd and keep the energy high.

In both surgery and DJing, working well under pressure is key. I can confidently perform cataract surgery in 6 minutes. As my DJ career has evolved, I've had exciting opportunities, such as opening for German DJ, record producer, and songwriter Zedd in Las Vegas on April 29 (Figures 3–5).

The challenge pushed me to improve and refine my DJ skills. My hard work was acknowledged and rewarded; 2 days after opening for Zedd, Resorts World Las Vegas asked me back to open for Kaskade at DayClub Ayu this summer. They plan to put my name and face on the side of the hotel that weekend—an honor I never thought I'd experience. It's been a privilege to have these opportunities, and I'm grateful for the support I've received along the way.

MY TO-DO LIST

My ultimate goals are to play at a major music festival and produce my own song. Producing music takes time, however, which is something I don't have much of as an eye surgeon. That's why I find it incredible that I've been able to juggle and progress in both careers.

Finding balance has been the key. My brother taught me to take vacations and breaks when needed. Sure, I'm not spinning six gigs a week, but for an eye surgeon, what I'm doing is insane.

After the show in Las Vegas, I hope to spin at Somewhere Nowhere, which is a big club in Manhattan, and many other similar venues across the United States.

Pursuing both careers has been a whirlwind. It's the support from people in both industries that has fueled my passion and pushed me to reach new heights. If you remember one thing, always say #idid #notiwish! ■

MITCHELL A. JACKSON, MD

- Founder and CEO, Jacksoneye, Lake Villa, Illinois
- Member, CRST Editorial Advisory Board
- mjlaserdoc@msn.com
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