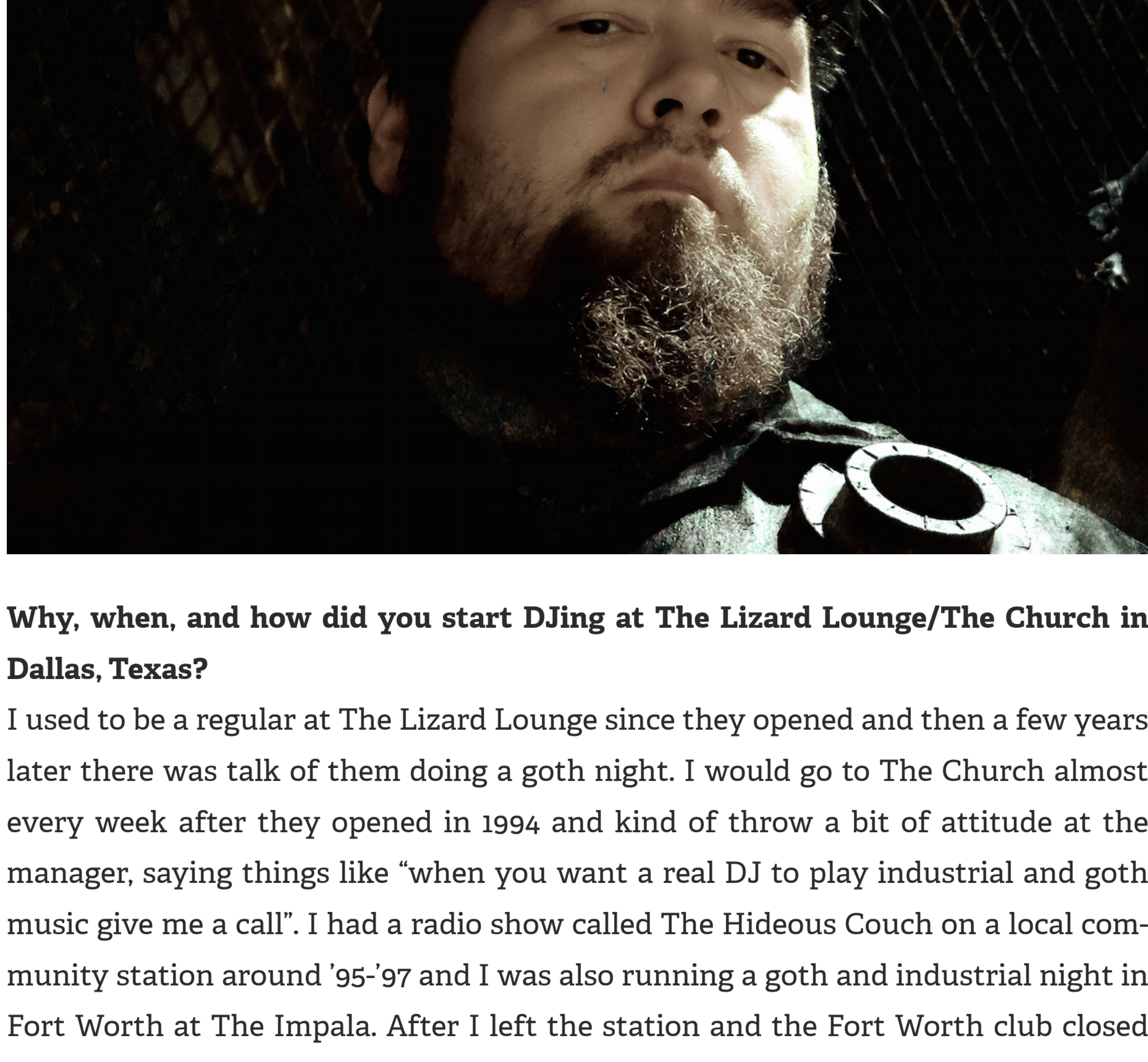


## DJ SPOTLIGHT

# DJ JOE VIRUS OF THE CHURCH IN DALLAS

FEBRUARY 18, 2019 | ELIZABETH RHODES | 2 COMMENTS

Dallas resident and fixture of the dark alternative scene, DJ Joe Virus has been DJing since the 90s and performing live music with various outfits. We spoke with Joe about the path that led him to DJing Dallas' largest goth/alternative club night at [The Church](#) and how he stays inspired musically.



### Why, when, and how did you start DJing at The Lizard Lounge/The Church in Dallas, Texas?

I used to be a regular at The Lizard Lounge since they opened and then a few years later there was talk of them doing a goth night. I would go to The Church almost every week after they opened in 1994 and kind of throw a bit of attitude at the manager, saying things like "when you want a real DJ to play industrial and goth music give me a call". I had a radio show called The Hideous Couch on a local community station around '95-'97 and I was also running a goth and industrial night in Fort Worth at The Impala. After I left the station and the Fort Worth club closed down I got the call from The DJ Joe Virus of The Church in Dallas an hour after I got a call from another club, both of them asking me to DJ their nights. So I took both, Wednesdays at Re:Mission and Thursdays at The DJ Joe Virus of The Church in Dallas. That was December of 1997. I started both weekly events the first week of January '98, and by July of 1999 I took over the Sunday slot at The DJ Joe Virus of The Church in Dallas as well. Been at The DJ Joe Virus of The Church in Dallas ever since.

### How does the culture and environment you are in impact the way you select songs for a set?

I try to create the soundtrack to everyone's movie that they are playing out in their heads. All the first kisses and even the fleeting eye contact stuff. It's all there and I'm the background for that. I remember the first time I walked into The DJ Joe Virus of The Church in Dallas and heard certain songs that felt like I was living out my movie. The Church is a full sensory immersive club, the lights, the decor, it all looks like a movie night club set. I use a formula for my song selection process that I can't really put in writing. Songs just have to feel right and sound danceable for me to play them these days. Driving after midnight through downtown Dallas listening to a song was my test to see if I wanted to play a track at the club. If it felt like a movie soundtrack to some dark underground film I knew I was on the right track.

When I was first starting out at The Church, I was a hopeless romantic, and for many years that really came through with the songs I would play. I played a lot of broken-hearted synthpop and new wave back then. Unrequited love songs for the post punks. Many other DJs just play their most favorite, newest unreleased, underground hard-to-find rarities, and do whole sets of that stuff. I was that way too in the beginning. Usually that would end up clearing the room, fast. But the crowds wanted to dance to things they knew and things they could sing along to. I had to learn to read my crowd and it's worked ever since.

### What got you into music?

My mother. Her whole family is musical. Mom played guitar, my grandfather as well. Mom would drive me around listening to new wave and disco when I was a kid and that was my first introduction to music really. I liked the really exotic looking new wave and punk bands and when I was 12 I discovered college radio. The alternative music shows got me into a wider variety of music and then when I heard Skinny Puppy and Nitzer Ebb for the first time in 1986 I was hooked.

### Do you play instruments or have other connections to performing music outside of DJing?

I've been playing keyboards since I was 8. I hated lessons because I wanted to sound like Eurythmics, not Bach. I write music under several different names and projects. My band Solemn Assembly has opened for everyone from Test Dept. and Bile to Combichrist and Covenant. I do all the music in the studio and my friend Brian Aitken plays keyboards live. For my project Robot Seppuku Crisis I do all the music and my friend Amber DeVille splits vocal duties with me. It's all fun for me.

### What bands made the most impact on your musical taste and style as a DJ?

I think each subgenre I play had their heroes that left marks. For deathrock/goth I would say Lords Of The New Church, Virgin Prunes, and Komunitiy FK. For Industrial it would be Skinny Puppy, Front Line Assembly, and Front 242. For EBM it was Combichrist, Imperative Reaction, and Aesthetic Perfection. For synthpop it was And One, Beborn Beton, and Covenant. For Experimental/Noise it was Test Dept., Einsturzende Neubauten and Merzbow. For New Wave it was The Psychedelic Furs, Peter Dinklage, and DEVO.

### What is your current favorite track?

Right now it's a tie between "Motion" from Boy Harsher and "My Name Is Ruin" by Gary Numan. "Motion" reminds me of an old Yello track called "Desire". Not necessarily the music or words, but the overall feeling. "Desire" was used in a Vampire club scene in Nick Knight starring Rick Springfield back in the 80's, and this song could totally be in that scene if it was made today. "My Name Is Ruin" has a real dystopian feel, lyrically and musically. I'm a wastelander and this song fits that whole aesthetic. Even the video is a desert wasteland. I love it!

### How do you maintain longevity as a DJ?

I think the key to my longevity is my ability to grasp onto bits of what is going on in the music world and twist it into something the crowds will dance to. Keeping them dancing keeps them drinking, keeping the club owners happy, keeping me spinning. Seriously, being a music chameleon helps. I will play whatever I feel will hit the mood on the head. I never have a pre-planned set when I DJ. I have three or four song sets that are geared toward a certain tempo or mood or theme. I pull those sets out when the mood is right, but for the most part I feel the vibe of the room and work from there. I won't do a whole set of new songs. Don, the owner of The Church, gave me a formula to use back in 1999, and it has worked ever since. 80/20. He said to give the crowd 80% of what they already know and love, and then 20% of what you think they need to hear, whether it's classic unheard tracks or brand new releases. It works.

### How did you create a successful event?

Luckily I am part of a very functional team that makes The Church happen every week: the owner Don, the general manager Leo and coordinator Courtney. The Church was Don's baby. I came into the picture and we started collaborating on things right away. Courtney came in a few years back and is really the hardest working promoter I know. I come up with ideas for events, book concerts and make several of our flyers. Don also comes up with event ideas, pays for and approves things. Leo makes sure the club runs smoothly and is often the voice of reason when our ideas go off the rails and get too crazy. Courtney not only comes up with events, but she'll stage manage them, produce them, and make sure our web presence is huge! We all work together to make this happen every week.

### The scene continues to change; how do you keep up with changing trends in the goth/dark alternative scene?

Luckily there is the internet. I check out podcasts to hear what the new trends are musically. A handful of record labels send me their latest releases to test them out on the dance floor as well as several bands from around the world who send me demos, downloads, and physical CDs! I'm in my mid 40s now so I really listen to what the younger crowd requests. Some of them will send links to their favorite new artists and I can follow down that rabbit hole all week before my next gig. I've always taken requests because that is another way for me to discover new things.

### How would you describe the scene in Dallas?

I think the best part of the Dallas scene is the way that all of the big players came together last year to put together an amazing event for Convergence 23. Lord Byron from Panoptikon, Oliver Sheppard from Wardance, DJ Red Vamp, and I came together to help unify the scene and we booked 23 bands and 23 DJs to play the three-day festival in Dallas. We tapped The Curtain Club, The Nines and Reno's Chop Shop to join in as venues for the weekend. It really help solidify our friendships and unify the scene as a whole.

The Dallas goth industrial scene is in it's own world. We are one of the luckiest scenes around. The scene here is big. Dallas has it all, lots of local bands doing everything from experimental noise to industrial metal, dark clothing designers, performance artists, burlesque troupes, Goth models and several club nights to choose from. There is something to do almost every night of the week. Sundays at The Church, Mondays at Outward Bound Mixtape, Tuesdays at Industrial Knight (in Denton, TX), Wednesdays at Mount Wave, Fridays at Panoptikon, a few monthly events like Wardance, Shock Waves, Deep Ellum Industrial Fest, and Dallas Ambient Music Night (DAMN).

### What other DJs have you come across that inspire you?

cEvin Key from Skinny Puppy really inspires me both as a musician and as a DJ. His music has the biggest influence on the music I write, and his DJ sets are insane! When he DJs, he uses a combination of synthesizers, drum machines, effect processors and DJ software integrating it all into a chaotic mix of glitchy beats and futuristic soundscapes! We have DJed several times together and each time I walk away learning something new!

### What do you see for The Church over the next year? Over the next five?

I see our crowd growing this year. We had an amazing summer and we have some killer events coming up in the fall! Five years from now I hope the club will still be going strong. It would be cool to see it turn 30 years old in 2024.

### How did you become involved in the Dallas Fetish Ball?

I have been DJing the Dallas Fetish Ball (DFB) since the first one we did! I was into the whole aesthetic of the BDSM scene when places like 1111 Studios and the Prospect House were a thing here, but I wasn't a real part of it. When Don and a local talent agent and promoter named Hanzel started working on the DFB, I got involved a bit and have been lucky enough to have now worked with some of the coolest performers and biggest names in that world. Performers from Japan, Norway, The UK, Finland, and all over have graced our stages for the Fetish Ball.

### From your vantage point of a nightclub dancefloor, what is your perspective on the connection between music and fashion?

I think it has a symbiotic relationship. I see the different cliques dancing together to their favorite subgenre and I can tell them apart really easily. I remember when I was really into punk fashion that someone said we all wore a punk rock uniform... I can see that more now as I get older. The different styles of music almost have their own uniform so the fans of that style can recognize someone else into the same style. I wish I could explain this better. The noige/neo crowd has an almost militant look. The witchhouse crowd has their space prints and alchemical symbols all over. The aggrotech/EBM crowd wears big stumpy boots, tactical vests and/or cyberpunk designs. The death rockers all have their big hair and torn clothes with fishnets stretched over. It goes on and on. I love every bit of it too. I love when the crowd dresses up to go out. We do get a lot of "tourists" who don't realize what they stumbled into, and I really love it when I see them a week or two later dressed up to fit in!!

### What's next for you? What events do you have coming up that you would like us to know about?

I am at The Church every Sunday night!

Check out upcoming events at [The Church](#) on their website as well as on [Joe's Facebook Page](#) and [Instagram @joevirus23](#).

*-Elizabeth Rhodes*

Elizabeth Rhodes is the Associate Editor of Auxiliary. Based in Los Angeles, she is a writer, DJ, modern mystic, and astrology junkie.

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CLUB NIGHT | DALLAS | DANCE NIGHT | DJ | DJ JOE VIRUS | DJ SPOTLIGHT | EBM | ELIZABETH RHODES | GOTH | GOTH/INDUSTRIAL | INDUSTRIAL | NIGHTLIFE | SYNTHPOP | THE CHURCH

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## 2 COMMENTS ON "DJ JOE VIRUS OF THE CHURCH IN DALLAS"

**DAVID "RODENT" POWELL** FEBRUARY 18, 2019 AT 2:12 PM DJ JOE VIRUS really knows his stuff and there is nobody better at reading us on the dancefloor! It's as if he knows what you want to dance to before you get out of the parking lot and into the club. MAD RESPECT SALUTE JOE!!

REPLY

**CAILLEACH** JUNE 22, 2020 AT 1:48 AM It's been over a decade since I left north Texas. I still miss dancing to your spins!

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