

Let the Games Begin!



By Mark Norris

Music Mayhem Strikes a Note with the Ears of its Listeners

Do you ever find yourself answering music trivia questions on the radio, saying the answer aloud to yourself and to no one else in particular? Did you spend most of your time in college glued to the stereo instead of burying your nose in a textbook? Do you ever watch VH-1's *Rock N' Roll Jeopardy* and know every answer before a single word leaves the contestants' lips?

If the answer to any or all of these questions is yes, it's time to consider a match of *Music Mayhem*. Created by former Buffalo native Bill Solboe, *Music Mayhem* is the equivalent of *Trivial Pursuit* for people whose CD collections numerically outsize the amount of dollars in their bank account. Of course you don't have to have spent your entire fortune on music to play the game, but it doesn't hurt.

The premise is simple, a judge (or DJ, for matters of continuity) plays a sample of a song until one contestant recognizes either the ditty's performer or actual song title. Each correct answer earns the contestant's game-piece (in this case, a motif-fitting symbol of a guitar pick) an advancing position on the gameboard's decibel meter. After ten correct answers, the game-piece rises to the full volume position (top of the board, in layman's terms). It's kind of like getting to the top of the ladder in a certain childhood game that shall remain nameless.

The game may be played with individual participants or in teams, whichever the number of players deems. Each player or team spins a vinyl shaped wheel until it steadily rotates to a rest on a specific category. The categories range from Mayhem, which allows all the contestants to fervently shout their answers at once, to Mute Mayhem, wherein the person who has spun may choose a contestant that cannot answer the auditory riddle and Solo Mayhem, whereby the spinner is given 10 unadulterated seconds to answer for him/herself before anyone else may jump in.

Sound simple? Well it is, in premise. The trouble comes in forcing your ears and your tongue to recognize a song in a few bars before someone across the table jumps up and shouts the victory away from you. A song as simple as "Born in the USA" might come out as "Oh God! I know this one.... It's that song I used to sing at baseball games!" But answers such as these are hardly permissible to the all

knowing master DJ.

While the musical selections are pre-determined by the judge/DJ, who supplies the music, and must deftly place the discs in the player without anyone seeing their label, the fun lies in answering the obscure songs that no one else knows and earning a dumfounded-awestruck look. Of course, after you reach a certain age, the only real fun in playing a boardgame lies in getting ripping drunk and letting the inhibitions fly. Few are the games wherein the remark might be overheard (in slurred and angered tone, of course), "I said Kajagoogoo first, you rat-bastard!"

Several members of the *Buffalo Beat* staff recently participated in a test playing of *Music Mayhem* and the results were brutal. Our esteemed host, editor and general musical know-it-all, Jeff Miers, along with wife/partner in crime Kim, stole the show, winning most of the matches hands down. (I mean, some people just have to prove they know more about Thin Lizzy than you, and really want you to know it). However, team-Miers must receive kudos for their split second recognition of a relatively little known Bjork track, a full several minutes before the vocals had even begun.

The selection of musical segments is virtually unlimited. The real rock n' roll jerks out there might want to select track 3 from Lou Reed's noise opus *Metal Machine Music* (newly remastered by the way) and watch with a laugh as the angered incoherence ensues. Yet fairly, the game should be played with songs that at least have a semblance of being recognized. An easy example would be to use a Motown collection. Virtually everyone in the world has heard such classics as "My Girl," "Stop In the Name of Love" and "Sugar Pie Honey Bunch" ad nauseam. However, the trick lies in being able to remember who it was that recorded it and the name of that song you've been trying to erase from your memory for the past few years.

As music forms an ever-increasing part of our cultural makeup, a game like *Music Mayhem* may become the standard for non-computerized, inter-person board games. Who knows? In years to come, we may see our children spinning the wheel and shouting, "I know that one, it's that song by that geezer-rapper Eminem! Oh, I mean former President Eminem." As long as a united love of music stands, and there remain people who want to show their friends all the useless musical knowledge they've amassed in their brains instead of learning how to fix a car (this writer included), *Music Mayhem* is a new game with a timeless future.

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