



Clockwise, from far left: Marjorie Gubelmann at Lorenzo Martone's bicycle launch party; Marc Jacobs and Samantha Boardman; Vanessa Getty and Jamie Tisch; Peter Som; Gubelmann's Lorraine Schwartz jewels; Tory Burch and Gubelmann at the Tribeca Grand Hotel; Bevy Smith; Stephanie Pratt.

DECKED OUT

After dark, the Upper East Side society maven Marjorie Gubelmann turns into Mad Marj, the DJ with a diamond touch. Vanessa Lawrence plugs into her sound.

Around midnight on a Saturday in April, in the dimly lit basement of the Tribeca Grand Hotel, a thumping soirée was going full force. As a fog machine worked its magic, guys in pit-soaked button-downs and skinny pants shimmied alongside leggy girls in bandage-style dresses. But among this predictable mass of young downtown types was a smattering of guests not usually seen at sweaty basement dance parties: the Madison Avenue hairstylist Valery Joseph was grinding with a woman in a racer-back tank; Tory Burch, Jamie Tisch, Vanessa Getty, and Renée Rockefeller showed off their moves in front of the DJ station; and just as Calvin Harris's "Feel So Close" came on, the 45-year-old socialite-film producer Allison Sarofim performed an impressive full split in jeans. Twice. Overseeing the festivities, meanwhile, was perhaps the most unlikely face of all: society queen Marjorie Gubelmann, 44, in her incarnation as DJ Mad Marj.

Dressed in a cranberry Zac Posen gown, her hair in a chignon, Gubelmann helmed the turntables and hunched over a laptop, oodles of Lorraine Schwartz diamonds ("hundreds of carats, I don't know," she said, shrugging) catching the rainbow strobes. She kept the crowd going with her mix of Top 40 hits and retro fare. The Scissor Sisters' "Let's Have a Kiki" made room for Rihanna's "S&M." Justin Bieber's "Beauty and a Beat" gave way to the "toot, toot...beep, beep" of Donna Summer's "Bad Girls." And Katy Perry's "I Kissed a Girl" segued into "Blue Monday" by New Order.

"This is the new wave of DJ—in Vera, Oscar, and real jewelry," enthused the interior designer-turned-TV personality Nate Berkus, one of Gubelmann's close friends, who was letting loose with his fiancé, the fashion stylist Jeremiah Brent. The party, dubbed Spring Fling, was an undeniable success. At 1:30 a.m., as the Chelsea boys began to outnumber the uptown crew, Gubelmann made a discreet exit—trailed by a tidy young man carrying her L.L. Bean boat-and-tote.

A few weeks later, dressed in a navy blue Tory Burch dress and silver Melissa flats, her glossy bob just covering a pair of gold and diamond starfish earrings that once belonged to her paternal grandmother, Barton Gubelmann (a famous party girl in her own right), Mad Marj is keen to discuss this latest—and, to many, surprising—chapter in her life. "This was completely by accident!" she says with one of her characteristic booming laughs, as she sits on a tan suede sofa in the library of her Upper East Side apartment. "It was not something I was looking for at all."

Her lifelong love of peppy music, she explains, is genetic. Gubelmann was born in New York City. Her father, Billy, is a former race car driver whose grandfather William Gubelmann of Morristown, New Jersey, made his fortune in cash register parts. Her fun-loving mother, Susan, is affectionately known by Marjorie's friends as Gubelmom. When Marjorie was 2, her family moved to London and then Oxfordshire, England. "My parents loved music, and my father would come home with cassette tapes of Chic and the Village People and Barbra Streisand. We had all these sounds always going," she says. "We never had somber music, always upbeat."

When Gubelmann was in the seventh grade, her family returned to the States, where she attended the Palm Beach Day School and summered in Newport, Rhode Island, at Barton's palatial home. There, she bonded with a clique of similarly privileged teenagers, including Todd Traina, of the well-known Bay Area clan. "We both loved to drive fast, and we both loved music," recalls Traina, now a film producer in San Francisco. With their group of friends, Traina and Gubelmann would sneak into the local clubs and then continue the dance party with a boom box on the beach. "Marj always had control of the play button," Traina says. "And once we were of driving age, she always played her music at a very high volume in the car. You could hear her coming a mile away."

As a student at New England College, in Henniker, New Hampshire—a tiny town she recalls as having a gas station, a Chinese restaurant, a head shop, and a pub—Gubelmann felt culturally at odds with her peers. "I listened to the Cure, New Order—things like that," says Gubelmann, who frequented the New York club Area. "Most of the other students listened to the Grateful Dead and wore tie-dyed shirts drenched in patchouli."

She did, however, find an outlet in the college radio station, where she DJ'd a weekly show and earned the nickname Mad Marj. When she moved to the school's campus in West Sussex, England, her sophomore year, she quit her radio gig but continued spinning records for friends at a local pub.

In 1995, Gubelmann returned to New York, where, while working for amfAR, she took the social world by storm with her lavish dinners and outsize personality. And while she had no problem, say, having fresh orchids flown in from Hawaii to make 100 leis for a luau at the usually staid Club Colette in Southampton, she left the soundtrack for these parties in the hands of professionals. Certainly she had plenty of other things on her plate: In 2003 she married the oil executive Reza Raëin, with whom she has a 9-year-old son, Cyrus (the couple divorced in 2007). And in 2004, she founded Vie Luxe, a collection of home fragrances and candles inspired by jetsetter destinations like St. Barths and Buenos Aires.

Mad Marj reared her head again two years ago at her friend Mickey Boardman's birthday party. Over dinner, Gubelmann had casually mentioned her college radio days, and Boardman, an editor at *Paper* magazine, asked her to DJ his bash. "I respect that there's an art to DJing, but I also love a rich kid with a fun playlist," he says. Gubelmann was hesitant. "I said, 'I'm going to do 10 minutes. I have no idea what I'm doing,'" she recalls. "But after three hours, they could not get me away from the table. I loved it!"

Six months later, after reprising her act at a friend's Christmas party, and later at a Chris Benz Fashion Week fete, Gubelmann started to think she might turn her hobby into something more substantive. She sought the advice of the music tycoon Lyor Cohen, then the boyfriend of her pal Tory Burch, and he pointed her toward the Scratch DJ Academy in the East Village, which was cofounded by Run-DMC's Jam Master Jay. She enrolled in some introductory classes (how to "beat-match," or create transitions between songs, and how to spin from a lap-top). With her ladylike appearance and penchant for disco, she stood out among her much younger classmates and their electro dubstep tastes. "I don't think they quite knew what to do with me," says Gubelmann, between sips of water from a monogrammed glass. "But we had a blast. I met some really nice people."

Gubelmann continues to take private lessons twice a month with Scratch's DJ Dirty Digits. And through word of mouth, she's booked gigs like a Jane Fonda charity event at the Darby (she wore Givenchy Haute Couture from the Julien Macdonald era) and an Obama fundraiser at the gay club Eastern Bloc (she sported pink satin Vera Wang). "We've done a couple of things at Eastern Bloc," Boardman says. "It's on Avenue B and East Sixth Street. She'll be outside and text me, 'I'm on the corner in Carolina Herrera and emeralds—come get me!'"

Last year she hired her old friend Doug Davis, the son of Clive Davis and a music attorney whose clients include Lil Jon and Swizz Beatz, to act as the consigliere for the growing Mad Marj brand. "Obviously, people who are approaching her aren't doing it just for the music," Davis says. "She's not going to win the most-technical-DJ award. That's not what this is about. It's about smiles on people's faces. And who those people are; she draws an A-list crowd."

"I respect that there's an art to DJing," says Gubelmann's pal Mickey Boardman. "But I also love a rich kid with a fun playlist."

Her bookings manager, Karrie Goldberg, agrees. "Clients get the added value of celebrity wrangling and press when they have Marjorie involved," says Goldberg, who hopes to connect her with corporate high-fashion and beauty companies (in June, she spun for Clinique). "A DJ isn't just a DJ anymore. They have to look the part, play the part."

True, the New York party world of the past couple of years has been rife with genetically blessed, lithe female DJs, spearheaded by Leigh Lezark of the Misshapes, who came onto the scene in 2003 and is now more often a VIP guest than the evening's entertainment. These days, clubgoers can encounter the white-blond Mia Moretti or the New York University graduate Harley Viera-Newton or the gangly Alexa Chung or

the Seagram heiress Hannah Bronfman in the course of their nocturnal endeavors. Where does a 40-something Upper East Side society mother fit in?

"But Marjorie is a young hipster!" declares Burch—adding, of the Spring Fling event, "I can't remember the last time I saw that many people dancing."

Goldberg is a bit more measured. "She is older; she's more sophisticated. She has a cool business under her belt. And she's already an established brand," Goldberg says. "Either people will get it or they won't."

Judging by the crowds at Gubelmann's recent gigs, most people fall into the former category. But there are, of course, a few detractors. At a launch party for Lorenzo Martone's line of luxury bikes at the Paramount Hotel, a club owner eyed her in the DJ booth and inquired, "Should I know who she is?" When asked if he would hire her, he waited a beat and then offered a succinct "No."

But Gubelmann was enjoying herself too much to notice. Wearing a Chanel dress and Manolo Blahnik pumps, sparkling Diamond Tears for Monster headphones around her neck, she posed with Valentino exec Carlos Souza while the photographer Douglas Friedman and the shoe designer Brian Atwood hung close and her pal Samantha Boardman offered to fetch her a sparkling water.

"Is that Marjorie DJing?" exclaimed a young magazine editor. "Awesome!"

"People ask, 'Do you wish you'd done this sooner? You're having so much fun,'" Gubelmann says. "But I think I would have been too insecure. When you're young, you worry about what other people think. The older you get, the less that matters. Now, I don't really care. I'm just doing it!" ♦

Clockwise, from top: Stacey Jordan greets Gubelmann; Jeremiah Brent, Nate Berkus, and Douglas Friedman; Chrissy Teigen and Martone; Mickey Boardman; one of Gubelmann's partygoers; Gubelmann in action.



MAD MARJ'S PLAYLIST

1. "SITUATION"

Yaz

2. "PUSH IT"

Salt-n-Pepa

3. "PULL UP TO THE BUMPER"

Grace Jones

4. "VOGUE"

Madonna

5. "WHO'S THAT CHICK?"

David Guetta feat. Rihanna

6. "GIRLS ON FILM"

Duran Duran

7. "NO MORE TEARS (ENOUGH IS ENOUGH)"

Donna Summer

8. "DAY 'N' NITE"

Kid Cudi

9. "YOU SPIN ME ROUND"

Dead or Alive

10. "BACK TO LIFE"

Soul II Soul

11. "WORLD, HOLD ON"

Bob Sinclar

12. "THIS IS HOW WE DO IT"

Montell Jordan

13. "BUST A MOVE"

Young MC

14. "BABE, WE'RE GONNA LOVE TONIGHT"

Lime

15. "ONE LOVE"

David Guetta feat. Estelle

16. "OPPORTUNITIES (LET'S MAKE LOTS OF MONEY)"

Pet Shop Boys

17. "IT'S TRICKY"

Run-DMC

18. "MARCIA BAILA"

Les Rita Mitsouko