



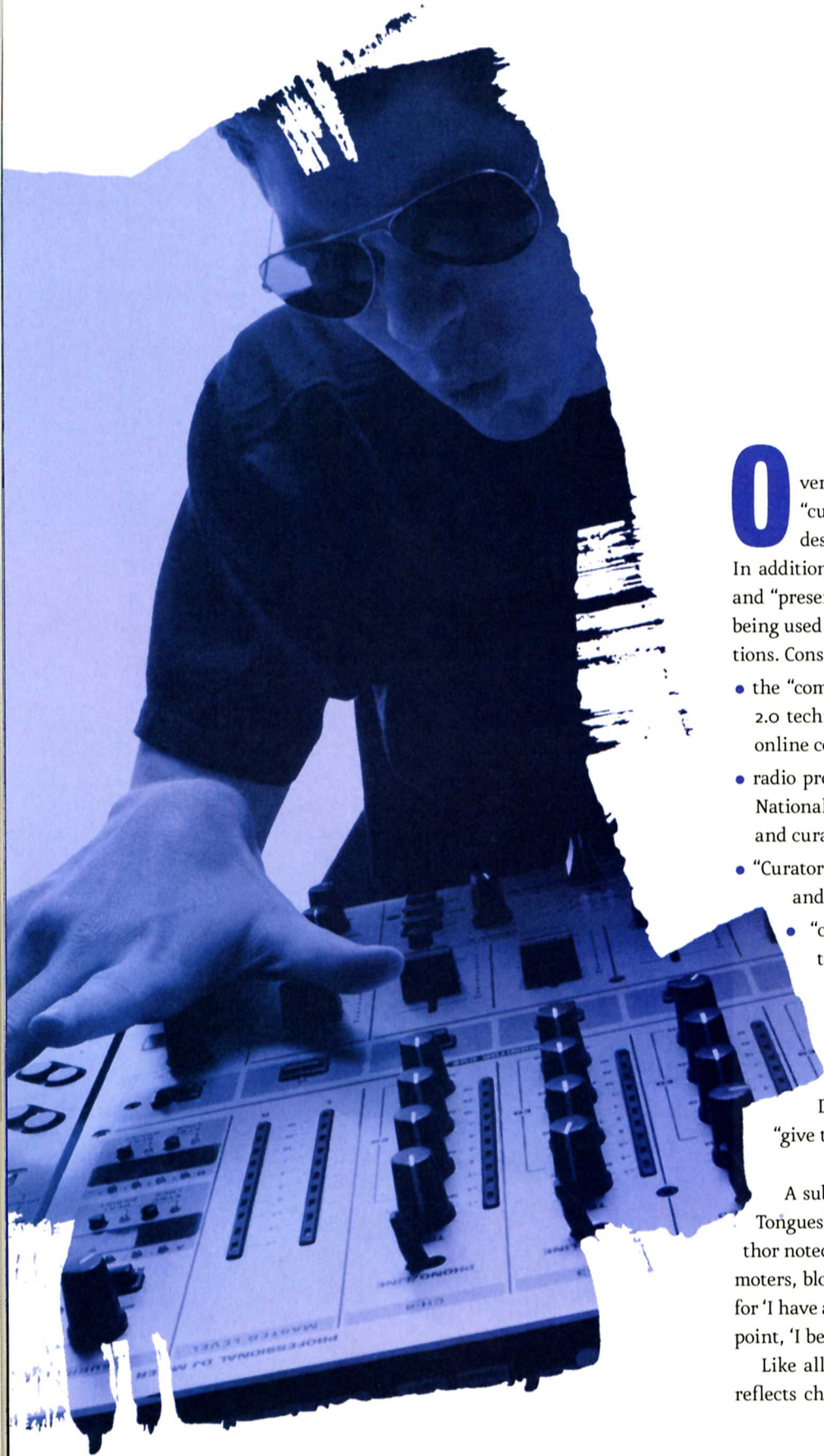
A NEW SPIN

Are DJs, rappers and bloggers 'curators'?

By N. Elizabeth Schlatter

A November 2008 headline in *The New York Times* read as follows: "Ludacris as Curator of His Own Hip-Hop Museum."

The concert review described how the musician Ludacris featured guest rappers and DJs famous in the '80s and '90s in his own new recordings and live performances. Praising the inclusion of songs and appearances by other artists in the concert, the reviewer wrote, "A cavalcade of guests emerged to take the stage for a few moments each, a showcase of New York hip-hop history with a devoted fan as curator. It turned this show on its ear."



Over the past few years, the words “curate” and “curator” have become increasingly prevalent in describing activities outside the museum arena. In addition to the word’s use as a synonym for “select” and “present,” as in the Ludacris review, “curate” is also being used in job titles and in related products and functions. Consider the following examples:

- the “community curator,” a new job spawned by Web 2.0 technology describing the function of organizing online communities
- radio producer Jay Allison listed in the credits of the National Public Radio series “This I Believe” as host and curator
- “Curator,” a software program that organizes artwork and album covers for iTunes collections
- “curated consumption,” trendwatching.com’s term for the informed selection of merchandise within a catalogue or store by such “experts” as lifestyle gurus or TV personalities
- TED Curator, job title of Chris Anderson, organizer of the Technology, Entertainment, Design conference that invites innovators to “give the talk of their lives” in 18 minutes

A subsequent *Times* article, “On the Tip of Creative Tongues” (Oct. 4, 2009), addressed this very topic. The author noted that “among designers, disc jockeys, club promoters, bloggers and thrift-store owners, ‘curate’ is code for ‘I have a discerning eye and great taste. Or more to the point, ‘I belong.’”

Like all words, “curate” possesses an etymology that reflects changes in history and civilization. Over time,

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