

A SPIRIT THAT IS NOT AFRAID



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## DJ Ben Bruud turns the tables on Auburn's entertainment scene





Ben Neuffer, popularly known as Ben Bruud, has been DJing for 13 years.

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By [Ella Walton](#) | [Newsletter Editor](#)

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Ben Bruud, local DJ, is the founder of Skybar's theme nights, a tradition that began in 2022. These events are often sold out quickly, with attendees outfits and Bruud's setlists both tailored to a specific theme. Small goodies are passed out at the door to those who line up early.

From a One Direction night, to an emo night, Bruud's theme nights appeal to a wide variety of tastes. Some of his other theme nights include: a Disney night, a Morgan Wallen night and even a Pitbull night.

Theme nights that apparently never go out of style, and Skybar's most popular, are Taylor Swift nights. These draw in Swifties by the dozens—many of whom come dressed like they're heading to the Eras tour.

Taylor Swift night was actually the first in the now long line of theme nights. Two years ago, someone directly messaged Bruud many times to request a Taylor Swift night.

"If you could see the DM list from her ... it is immeasurably long. It's just her talking about Taylor Swift night and why we should do it," Bruud said.

After a certain point, Bruud gave in to the idea and decided to give the theme night a trial run. Tickets were sold out quickly, marking it as an undeniable success.

"I have her to thank for being persistent," said Bruud.

Bruud is originally from Seattle, Washington, but grew up in a small town in northern Alabama.

"DJing was never on my list of things that I had planned on doing. I didn't even know it was a job or something that could be done—it wasn't something I sought out, it just kind of happened."

Bruud has been a DJ for 13 years now—full-time for 11 of the 13 years. He started at Skybar in 2018 with the help of one of his mentors, Michael Rainer.

In addition to working at Skybar, Bruud works Auburn sports, sorority and fraternity events.

"In the past, I used to travel all over the southeast, and once I started working at Skybar, they had me on pretty much three nights a week," said Bruud. "I travel a lot less now, so I'll do Auburn sports—football this past season, although I didn't do basketball."

Hosting Skybar's theme nights requires extensive planning, as Bruud wants to ensure he's informed about the artist's music. The DJ likened the process to studying for an exam.

"For a theme night, if I wasn't necessarily a fan of what that music was, I would put myself in the shoes of a fan," Bruud said. "I would watch videos, read about it, look at charts, find people who are interested in that music and ask them to make me a playlist, or tell me what their favorite songs are or why they like them."

The theme nights take place on Wednesdays, making it a challenge to get people to want to go out.

"In the process of making it happen, I start figuring out how I can make it fun for people coming—with video content, and giveaways, door prizes—just making sure all the pieces are in place to make it a fun party that's not like your normal, every day bar night," Bruud said.

Bruud has established a good system for planning his events, and if the music is unfamiliar to him, it now only takes him about a month of preparation.

“The first Taylor Swift night was probably two months of preparation, because I’m not going to lie, I didn’t know her music that well at the time,” Bruud said. “One of my friends, she helped me a lot—we would literally sit down and go over songs and why it’s good and why I should play it.”

Bruud’s personal favorite theme night so far has been Pitbull night.

“It was so interesting and crazy to see—I would say about 70 percent of the crowd was wearing bald caps and dressed up like Pitbull,” said Bruud. “It was great to see that kind of dedication to the theme—and the music was fun.”

Katie Johnson and Jessie Xu, Skybar employees, thought the Galentine’s theme night and the One Direction theme night were really cool.

“Sometimes you don’t think that a particular group or person has a lot of music, but he’ll [Bruud] find them, and he’ll play them,” Xu said.

Johnson and Xu mentioned that Bruud is different from other DJs because he visits the Skybar workers between sets and talks with customers.

“He interacts with his fans a lot,” Johnson said. “I know a lot of DJs stay in the DJ booth, and for his set he may do that, but for the events he hangs out with the customers on the dance floor and on the stage.”

Bruud’s passion for engaging with people, paired with an unmistakable dedication to his work, makes his Skybar theme nights an interesting riff on downtown nights.

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*Ella Walton, majoring in English literature with a minor in creative writing, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor at The Auburn Plainsman. Formerly the Culture Editor, Walton has been with The Auburn Plainsman since the fall of 2023.*





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