



Eugene's Hardest Working DJ

DJ Tekneek spins the nights away.

Hip hop is a Monday through Saturday affair for Kenneth C. Morris III, aka DJ Tekneek. Once 9 pm rolls around, it's time to pack up his record box, his turntable, his mixer, whatever miscellaneous cords he may need throughout the night, and head for the club. Those are his tools, and DJing is his job. This is what "puts food on the table."

This tall, stocky, soft-spoken, 32-year-old performs five nights a week

at four different dance floors: Taylor's, Joe's Bar and Grill, John Henry's and Club Tsunami. Over the years, he's held weekly residencies at more than 10 different local nightclubs. But in a college town where students, the staple customers of bars and clubs, leave

every three months, succeeding as a club DJ depends as much on the music you can pull out of your crate of records as it does the time of the year.

In his five years as a DJ, Tekneek has watched clubs and weekly dance nights come and go. "I've been at nights that died out completely," he says. But through it all, he's managed to make a living from it and is recognized as Eugene's most prolific DJ.

That has meant not being too picky about where he plays. He used to spin exclusively at one club. But if attendance was down, so was income. "I had to make the decision that I wasn't going to give up any gig," he says.

The role of the club DJ is to entertain. To

get people dancing, the DJ must select and mix other musicians' music. Tekneek spins a popular style of rap known as urban hip hop. Songs that you may hear on MTV or KDUK, from rappers such as 50 Cent to Jay-Z, help define this style and frequently permeate his four- to five-hour sets. It's what his crowd wants. Although his mix of music is well known, the type of hip hop that Tekneek promotes remains underrepresented in Eugene.

"KDUK only plays about 25 different hip hop songs," Tekneek explains. "I get the same requests for those 25 hip hop songs over and over again." Like all genres of music, thousands of great hip hop songs are out there; they're just not getting major airplay. Urban hip hop encompasses a diverse group of artists, from De La Soul to Slum Village. The genre's name alludes to its popularity in pri-

marily urban markets. In Eugene, many of these rappers are undiscovered. It takes about 120 songs to fill four or five hours with music, and it's the music outside the local mainstream Tekneek seeks out for his sets.

Urban hip hop culture is an underground scene in Eugene. Ironically the indie hip hop genre, made famous by visiting national acts such as the Living Legends and Anticon, gets more hype in town than the popular, national sound of urban hip hop. Phat Trax hosted by DJ L2G (Friday night on KWVA, 88.1 FM), is Eugene's only live urban hip hop DJ mix show. Tekneek says shows like Phat Trax are common in his native New Jersey. "Campus radio has the only live hip hop mix show around," he says.

Tekneek's DJ company, Hardwood Entertainment, uses a stable of five professional DJs who share gigs around town. Through constantly promoting himself and his company, Tekneek has carved his own niche in Eugene. He uses his East Coast roots to learn about new music and new artists, then introduces them to his local following.

With five gigs a week, saturating the market is something he strives to avoid by keeping each of his nights unique and appealing. "You can't let the nights overlap," Tekneek says. "Format is what maintains the individual nights." Finding a unique formula that works is a big reason "Reggae vs. Hip Hop," a showcase of reggae, dancehall and hip hop at John Henry's every Wednesday night, is such a huge success. DJ Kal El and Tekneek started the night years ago at the old John Henry's location. It was so popular fans followed it to the new club.

Despite the fact that Jamaican music is a popular style in major cities, John Henry's is the only place in Eugene you'll find a reggae groove. Crowds of reggae lovers pack the club at the beginning of the night, and don't leave until the final cut is played. Tekneek calls Reggae vs. Hip Hop night the closest thing to a Brooklyn, Queens, or Manhattan style club night.

"It's important to get underrepresented music to people's ears," he explains. "There's always a song out there that's everything you wanted to hear but you didn't know you wanted to hear it." **EW**

DJ Tekneek
 Fri, Jan. 7: Taylor's
 Sat, Jan. 8: Club Tsunami
 Monday, Jan. 10: Taylor's
 Tues, Jan 11: Joe's Bar and Grill
 Wed, Jan 12: John Henry's

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