



ELECTRIC EUGENE

ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC GOES MAINSTREAM IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

— BY ALEX NOTMAN AND KEVIN PIASKOWSKI

There was a time when the *thump thump thump* of electronic dance music was confined to abandoned warehouses and private basements or tucked away deep in the Willamette Valley's forests and mountains. Jordan Cogburn likens finding a rave in the '90s to a scavenger hunt. Step one: Find the party's flyer (through a friend or at a record store). Step two: Call the number.

"You'd call the number on the flyer and they'd tell you to go to this spot. You'd go over to this spot and there would be a dude waiting in a car," says Cogburn, drummer for local bands Dirty Spoon and Breakers Yard. "He'd hand you a map and he's like, 'OK, you gotta go to this other spot.' Then you'd go to this other spot. Then they'd tell you where the party was *actually* at. Then you'd go out to that party." He continues, "You get there and it's out in the sticks, out in the middle of nowhere. You're driving up this dirt road; you can't see anything except for what's in your headlights. Then you get out there, you're partying, partying, having a good time. All of a sudden the sun starts coming up and you realize you're on a 150-foot cliff!"

Times have changed.

"So now that you can just ride your bike down to the Cuthbert, it's like 'That's boring. You took all the fun out of it! It's no longer a hunt.'"

Boring or not, it's indisputable that the underground electronic dance music (EDM) scene in Eugene has bopped its head above ground. Warehouses and basements have been swapped for more mainstream venues like WOW Hall, McDonald Theatre and the Cuthbert Amphitheater. In the past year alone, Eugene has been flooded with EDM acts, from local bands Hamilton Beach and Medium Troy, to the national — Odesza, Beats Antique, Candyland, Pretty Lights — and the international — Dillon Francis, Disclosure and Daedelus. McDonald already has two big EDM acts on the docket for fall: Zedd and Zeds Dead. And those secret gatherings in the woods? They have morphed into throbbing, day-glo festivals with sponsors like the recent Human Nature Festival in Tidewater, Ore., the Paradiso Festival at Washington's Gorge Amphitheatre and the upcoming Kaleidoscope Music Festival at Mount Pisgah's Emerald Meadows featuring some of the biggest names in EDM like Bassnectar, DJ Shadow and Lotus. And where the music goes, the culture — dance, fashion, ecstasy (the preferred EDM party drug) — will follow. Whether the scene likes it or not, EDM is the new mainstream on the national stage. Eugene is no exception, but it has an EDM history, culture and, perhaps, a future all its own.



JORDAN COGBURN
SIFTS THROUGH
FLIERS FROM HIS
DJ DAYS AS DCNDR

WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE

"In general terms, EDM has burst onto the scene in such a quick way, changing what is considered pop music with layered electronic beats, in almost every genre today," says Mike Hergenreter, talent buyer for Kesey Enterprises. "The scene has infiltrated the youth, with the media picking up on it just as quickly, and selling the sound almost everywhere you go — radio, commercials, movies — EDM is pop music today."

EDM, with its dance-ready beats and heavy drops, is indeed the pop music of today, but its popularity is a relatively recent phenomenon. Known in the past as electronica, techno, club and rave music, EDM is a broad umbrella that covers ever-splintering electronic genres: trance, house, glitch-hop, moombahton and too many others to list here. Many believe its roots go back to the disco era. Longtime event producer Phillip Blaine for Insomniac Events (Electric Daisy Carnival) traces the movement's origins back to the '70s with bands like Kraftwerk. The '80s saw electronic outfits like New Order and Frankie Knuckles leading to a slew of '90s artists such as Paul Oakenfold, Moby, Prodigy and Daft Punk paving the way for today's popular EDM artists Skrillex, deadmau5, Bassnectar, Swedish House Mafia and many more. This spring's ubiquitous "Harlem Shake" is trap, another subgenre of EDM.

But, according to WOW Hall publicist Bob Fennessy, "This isn't the first time that the electronic trend has come around." In the '90s and early aughts, the venue hosted "Magical Thursday" events once a month. "It was very popular," Fennessy says.

Cogburn, who deejayed in the area for 10 years under the name DCNDR, originally joined the scene