

Femme DJ Puts a Spin on the Racine Music Mix

DJ. Elixer K8: Dedicated to World Concoctions

By: Tanisha Morgan Coffey

It's not everyday you meet someone who's on the music scene who also has aspirations of being a college professor—and who's actively chasing after that dream. So as soon as I began chatting with Kate Schneck, aka DJ Elixer K8, I had to ask: How in the world does a studious linguistics student find her way into the vinyl scene? She laughed.

"I'm trying to take my love of language and culture," she said, "and bring them together to promote cultural diversity here on a musical level and [I want to] share World music with others who otherwise wouldn't be exposed to it."

She had stumped me again. I consider myself to be somewhat up-to-date on music trends but World music was a new genre for me. I decided it was time to go back to the beginning to discover just where the three passions—language, culture and music—had met...and exactly what this World music she was talking about was.

Twenty-something DJ Elixer K8 says it all began when she went off to Arizona back when she was a teenager. That, she says, was when she was introduced to the rave scene. "I was attracted to the [rave] culture because I always thought that it was the one genre of music in the U.S. that isn't tied to just one race. I just really enjoyed the environment."

DJ Elixer K8's attraction quickly turned into a healthy infatuation. She got a set of turntables after moving to Arizona from Wisconsin. She didn't have a job so she used the downtime to practice spinning at home. Before she knew it, she was spinning pretty well...well enough to get booked on a couple gigs, in fact. There was one problem: Though catchy in its own right, her given name just didn't exemplify the mood she felt and wanted others to feel while she was spinning.

"I always liked music that was fun; that moved you. I wanted a name that evoked that feeling. One of my friends suggested Elixer K8." With a new stage name and blossoming skills, K8 was on her way.

After putting in some time in Arizona, DJ Elixer K8 eventually found her way back home to good ol' Racine, Wisconsin where she began nuzzling her way into the local DJ scene. "It's been interesting. As far as I know, I'm the first female DJ in Racine." According to DJ Elixer K8, that was a factor that worked for and against her.

"At first there was sort of a novelty. They wanted to see, 'can a girl actually play', you know. [But after that,] it was hard breaking into the scene. I realized right away I'd have to get my own equipment and just do it myself. After a few years of trying to break into this male dominated scene though, I decided to throw my own parties, do things my own way." And that she did.

DJ Elixer K8 started her own production and promotion company, World on Wax, and focuses on bringing World music to the people of Racine. Through the company, she puts on World Fusion night twice a month. It's basically a dance party where multiple DJs are invited to come out and spin their style of World music. What is World music exactly? Well according to DJ Elixer K8, it's music from other cultures that have beats similar to what we're accustomed to hearing in the U.S. fused with American beats and lyrics. So a DJ who loves R & B may mix in a little African Ragga to create their style of World Music. Reggaetone would be another example of one of the more popular of the world music sounds.

At this point, I realized that DJ Elixer K8 must be one determined woman. She's finishing up her Master's, spinning, and running World on Wax; All that with her gender being a proverbial tether, attempting to hold her back from being a success on the DJ circuit. My curiosity got the best of me once again. I had to know why she put up with it all. After all, she was educated and could have



easily just focused her efforts on teaching.

“If I didn’t see a need for changes, I probably wouldn’t be as proactive in trying to be a promoter and put on events. I kind a feel a responsibility being one of two women doing this [in Racine], being in a field where women are highly underrepresented.”

It was at this point that it all became clear to me. DJ Elixer K8, aka Kate Schneck, is already a professor. A World professor, if you will. The people of Racine are learning about World music, and indirectly, other cultures. And by example, she is teaching other women that despite the fact that the world of disc jockeys is saturated with men there is still room, and lots of it, for talented women. “Music is expression. I would love to see what females have to say on some turntables...Put a women and her women’s intuition in front of a crowd she’s trying to move and you’ll see. I think that would be phenomenal.”

Kate makes regular appearances on the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee campus, usually carrying a hefty book bag. DJ Elixer K8 and other World music DJs can be seen every 1st and 3rd Thursday at George’s in Racine.