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Issue 09 : Music

(Interview) It's Indie Night with DJ's 'Bill E' & 'Cling' ...So Go Or Die, your choice!

RUEBEN FOURT-WELLS

In a world of over-hyped soulless DJs who have built up their own fustian styles by mixing the latest thing from the "London Underground," it's refreshing to know that there are still DJs who are all about records. DJs who don't attempt to put their own mark on other people's music by scratching, mixing or any other adulteration you care to name. In keeping with the original tradition of D(isk) J(ockeys), and breaking the tradition of many contemporary DJs, Bill E and Cling are solely concerned with spinning records.

However, unlike 99% of Wellington's other DJs, Bill E and Cling are no longer concerned with House Music or most other forms of electronica, but rather with the music that they grew up with. And that's where they differ from most, because the music they play is an eclectic mix of Punk, New Wave, Pop, Electro-Clash, Garage Rock, Indie and everything in between.

The two met in Christchurch, "years ago," says Bill E. "There was a club called Romanov's, which is where Greg Churchill [who is now living in Auckland] was the main DJ on Tuesday nights. It was like a student night," says Cling. "Just new music, just all new music...House, Hip-Hop. Basically the night went through lots of genres, lots of dance genres, from sort of real slow stuff, to 120 beats which was the fastest thing you could get back then.... Then we went flatting for a bit, that's probably when we became quite good mates."

Bill E went to England in the late 1980s, and returned to Christchurch in 1989, with many records from the Manchester scene. Upon his return he started DJing. "Whereas I was just bedroom DJing" says Cling. Along with Greg Churchill and others, Bill E and Cling helped set up some of the first dance parties in Christchurch. However Bill E has always been a self-professed Indie and Punk kid, and the first night he played out, "was actually the first Madchester night that we did in '89 in Christchurch, playing pretty much what we did at 24 Hour Party People." The pair also did an Indie night on Wednesdays called Bliss, but at the time it never really took off.

In addition to what was the underground music of Hip-Hop, House, and Techno in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the pair also fostered their interests in 70s Funk, and started a Funk night called Bump, which they hope to return to soon. But when Bill E moved to Wellington in 1993, and Cling a year later, they began to want to put together a night which reflected the music they had grown up with. "The 80s thing, I suppose that came out of, well that's kind of Pop to us," explains Cling. "We wanted to put together like a New Wave kind of night," continues Bill E, "the sort of late 70s Punk, New Wave stuff."

Consequently in 1996 Atomic was born. "It was kind of rare for an 80s retro night to be around then," says Bill E, but "because we wanted to hear our pop favourites up really loud, and have a really good drinking night," says Cling, the pair decided that it was a necessity. From its start out back in the old Bar Bodega, the night was well received, and with the dubious exception of Barney's, unique. Plus, as Bill E rightly points out, "you'd never hear the

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Ramones at Barneys.”

And it seems that Wellington agrees with Bill E and Cling’s vision, as crowds of at least a couple of hundred people have faithfully attended Atomic over the years, with a few fans who have come to the night since its inception, right up to the present. The only difference over the years has been a change in venues, from the old Bar Bodega, to Indigo, and “less Goths” says Cling.

About a year ago the pair decided to start a new night, called 24 Hour Party People. The musical theme of the night is English Indie, particularly 1980s post-punk, through to Britpop. The night has proved to be very popular, especially with UK tourists, as well as with a broad range of ages. “I think we’ve been really lucky with crowds,” says Cling. “That makes us really happy, those mixed crowds”. And despite some trepidation on Cling’s part as a consequence of the Wellington crowds’ refusal to go out before 10.00pm (which leaves him and Bill E playing to virtually no one for at least an hour before it gets busy), the pair always have a lot of fun playing their records.

From Atomic to 24 Hour Party People, the pair have started new nights, with up and coming Punk night, 1977, and the contemporary Indie music night, called (funnily enough) Indie Night. The desire for such nights has come about mainly because they have extremely expansive record collections, which can’t be made to fit into their other nights. There is also the need to keep things fresh for themselves and their audiences, with Atomic entering its eighth year. “It will be interesting to see how it goes,” says Bill E. Although the two have some anxiety over whether people will appreciate what they’re doing, such fears seem unfounded based on past nights. And at the end of the night, Cling is realistic about their gigs; “We’ll enjoy it no matter what really.” And so too, no doubt, will Wellington.

You can catch the Nothingelseon DJs Bill E and Cling and their fine array of records at Indie Night on Saturday 15th May at Indigo. Go or die.