

Forty under forty



Derrick May, 38

Disc jockey and founder,
Transmat Records
Detroit

Biggest achievement: Innovator of electronic music that has influenced dance music worldwide.

Current goal: To expose the talent of Detroit's electronic artists to a larger audience.

The electronic-music industry in Detroit started in the 1980s with three pioneers: Derrick May, Juan Atkins and Kevin Saunderson.

Atkins was May's mentor, and the three artists used to spin records at local clubs and make dance music that became known as techno.

May founded Transmat Records in 1986. The label was designed as a vehicle for his own music and that of other musicians. He continues to balance Transmat with DJ jobs around the world and corporate work such as developing music for Sony PlayStation games. Between Transmat and his DJ work, May said, his annual revenue totals about \$2.2 million.

Most recently, May was a headliner for the **Detroit Electronic Music Festival**, held May 26-28, along with

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Saunderson and Atkins. The event drew more than 1 million people. The three musicians also participated in the Area: One Festival, co-produced this summer by popular electronic artist Moby.

There's a certain mystique about the three Detroit innovators. So even though all three artists are busy, they try to team up when they can.

Detroit has proved to be a good inspiration for music because of a bleakness that can spur a creative melancholy, May said.

"Sometimes, the fact that there is nothing creates all," he said. "The lack of creates the need for."

Under the Rhythim is Rhythim guise, May recorded well-known tracks such as "Nude Photo" and "Strings of Life." He also has mixed music under the name Mayday. The music press describes his sound as clever and complex.

May said he plans to keep his roots in Detroit and continue to be an ambassador for change. He said he wants his legacy to be that he lived to be different.

— Jennette Smith