

Catchin' the vibe: "America's Ibiza"

story and photos by Chris Gin

One of the great things about being a disc jockey is being able to play in different environments and surroundings. While this dj has been fortunate enough to play in many different spaces and places, it wasn't until this year that I got to experience the sensation of playing out of town. And this was really out of town.

The flyer (attractively die-cut and in full four color splendor) reads "Double-O-Spot presents Eclectic Experience '98," and I'm booked to play alongside San Diego trance man DJ Quiksilva, UFO!, a San Fran junglist from the Phunkateck Cru, and resident and promoter G-Spot, a Chicagoan who has relocated to Honolulu, with many local jocks supporting.

Yep, this party's gonna jump off amidst palm trees and volcanoes on the rock of O'ahu at Clumber's Paradise, an indoor facility for wall climbers that has been outfitted with sizable sound systems inside, and outside in the converted parking lot, lasers, lights, a bubble machine and an air bounce trampoline. In all, there are five separate areas to explore. But let me back up and explain a little about my trip and what is going on in a place that G-Spot is hoping will become "America's version of Ibiza."

Leaving Chicago way too early in the morning (and the night after the Bulls had lost game one of the NBA Finals), I boarded a plane out of Midway Airport headed for a full nine hours in the air. The trip was long; cabin fever had set in and proceeded to be miserable company. Meeting me at the baggage claim, Greg "G-Spot" Dehnert handed me a lei made of fresh-cut flowers and gave me a knowing smile. He'd been through the long trip before, but what he didn't know was that I had been stuck with a wing seat on the plane and had seen nothing of the view coming in. Hearing the oohs and ahhs of over two hundred other passengers felt like being a blind man at the Louvre.

After graduating from Evanston Township High School, just outside the Chicago city limits, Dehnert attended the University of Miami before transferring to the University of Hawaii, in Honolulu. He hasn't come home yet, becoming one of the most sought-after djs on the local scene. Regarding that lofty status, he says "...it's a double-edged sword. In one sense it's great, but it's impossible to get booked anywhere else. It's probably as expensive as bringing someone over from

Europe."

Since then, the thin guy known as G-Spot, (by everybody around, it seems) has become Promotions Director as well as organizer of a show on local radio station KTUH 90.3 FM and has become the area's top party/rave promoter in the process. On an island where the native population is comprised of roughly three quarters of million people and the economy is driven mostly by tourism, the party scene is understandably smaller than other urban areas. The distance (it's five hours by air, from the west coast), the cost of travel, and the problem of working around small operating budgets due to the size of the scene are all factors that make it prohibitive for promoters to bring in outside talent.

Some of the other promoters on the island have brought in outside talent but recently stopped the practice, booking locals exclusively. According to Dehnert, other promoters stopped bringing people in because "I don't think their main thing is to turn people on to music. I think they're just trying to lower their costs, make more money." That hasn't stopped the party-maker from his goal of nurturing the Honolulu scene into one the States can look at as its crown jewel.

In the past, Double-O-Spot events have included talent like San Fran's Mark Farina, DJ Lars ("I brought him to get people on the other side of the fence to jump it," says Dehnert), and Chicago's Hedner, Mystic Bill and Matt Warren. Jungle has also played a big part in the musical development of the islands. It is a music that is readily accepted; at the event, there was jungle rollin' constant, either inside or out. For six hours, G-Spot has also brought over loads of the West Coast's more prominent junglists, like Sage, Noel, DJ Heretic and DJ Curious. As a result, his parties are the best-attended on the island. One raver told me he hadn't gone out for three weeks gearing up for this event, saying "the extra work G-Spot puts in to provide us with a good party is worth it."

Which brings us to the party itself. The crowd was young but well balanced between twenty-somethings and something-teens. And the talent was extremely solid, top to bottom. Quiksilva's set of trance was gorgeous, G's hardhouse set rocked, and the man called UFO!, also known as "Ed, Captain Darkness," got absolutely fuckin' sick widdit on the ones and twos, with a thunderous darkstep jungle set Droopy would have died for. It's always daunting to follow a junglist on the tables, and Ed's supreme selection certainly put me on notice that I had to come correct for the house-heads. Fortunately, my set came off very well, and the crowd ate all of it up and gave the djs back the energy they created for the floor.

The thing that stood out about their scene was how

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fresh and virgin everything seemed. It felt as if time had rolled back to the beginnings of the party days I experienced in Chicago back in the early '90s. Everybody was having actual fun, and ravers I had met the night before were stopping me to talk about the music I had played and hugged me and each other in appreciation. I made so many new friends in less than 72 hours than I have at probably the last 72 Chicago parties I've gone to. And after the closing dj was rolling too hard to play, I was invited to do a second set (after they found me and pulled me out of the Moon Bounce thing). I closed with some soulful Chicago house to a rousing round of genuine applause. The energy level was off the charts and the party was about people dancing to all forms of good music - not about the latest fashions. Check this out: some partiers actually stuck around to help clean up the venue, before going to the afterhours spot. When was the last time you did that?

There doesn't seem to be a shortage of venues here and the ravers, if somewhat uneducated, are energetic and have their heads in the right places. The P.L.U.R. is in full effect, even if they don't know what it means yet. That makes this scene a great one, and a fertile breeding ground for good things to come. This up-and-coming vacation spot could eventually turn into the prime place in the country to really party, if promoters like G-Spot can keep giving lots while taking little, until the scene can really support itself.

One of the first things G-Spot explained to me about Hawaii was that people live on "island time." He was referring to their laid back attitude. It seems that all the natural beauty around them has been infused into their personalities, for everyone I met was friendly and beautiful in their own way. Due to some of the best chronic ever to pass through these lungs, I caught many ferocious buzzes while on my trip into the (see HAWAII, continued on p. 64)

