

DJ makes her mark with House

DJ Heather spins in Waikiki

DJ Heather with Gary O., G-Spot, Scotty Soul, Tim B. and others

>> 9 p.m. today at W Honolulu Hotel

2885 Kalaheua Ave.

>> 9:30 p.m. tomorrow at West Regency Waikiki Resort & Spa at Ocean Mele and poolside.

2424 Kalaheua Ave.

Admission: \$15 to \$25, 21 and over

Info: www.double-u-spot.com

I've always been a big music fan since I was a little kid," states DJ Heather, aka Heather Robinson, echoing the sentiments of every knob-twiddling turntable talent to gain admission to that elite club of in-demand, globe-trekking DJs. Though well-versed in a variety of styles, the New York-born, Chicago-bred performer, who has played in venues of all sizes from Albuquerque to Antwerp, is best known for her work with the infinitely pliable house genre — the perfect form for a DJ with eclectic tastes.

"What draws me to house is what draws a lot of people to house," she remarked in a phone interview earlier this week. "There's a certain energy, influences of old and new, bringing together familiar and unfamiliar sounds and creating one continuous canvas of all these things."

You're just as likely, however, to find a jazz, rock or hip-hop CD in her player. "(House) is what I'm known for, but it's not all I listen to 24/7 and it's not all that I play. As a person who's really into music, it's one part of a bigger picture. It represents just a slice of what I like."

Making her mark in Chicago, the birthplace of house, is no small achievement. As one of the world's premier hubs of DJ culture, expectations in the Windy City are high and competition is fierce.

"You can have the same two records played by five different DJs from wherever and everyone's going to have their own signature style," says Heather. "But there's an approach that DJs from Chicago have, by using EQs, doubles of records or a cappellas. The Chicago kids seem to have their own style of 'attacking' an audience and making those records their own. That's probably because there's so much talent here that you have to do something extra special to make yourself stand out."

THE PROLIFERATION of DJ culture, however, has been followed by a worldwide glut of homogenous DJ albums. Many of these offerings have lacked the creativity and distinguish-

ing features that allow listeners to identify one spinner from the next, which is partly to blame for lukewarm sales in recent years.

"No one's really making money from mix CDs anymore," states Heather (whose latest outing, "Dancefloor Principles," was released earlier this year), "whether it be the artists who appear on them or the person who mixes their songs. These days, it's more of a promotional tool that everyone's using. Except for a handful of artists, the era of mix CDs making money is definitely gone."

One can also point the finger at the widespread availability of disc-copying and file-sharing technology, which many struggling, up-and-coming DJs and aspiring musicians feel hampers their careers in the long run.

"It's a double-edged sword," says Heather. "You want to have people get to know your music, but at the same time, it can hurt the artist. When it comes down to it, there's a lot of money going into making that product and CD burning is 'feeling their bottom line.'"

Thankfully, DJs still control their own destiny behind the decks. Through her experience, Heather has found the surest way to win over a crowd is to be well-prepared for each show, keep an ear to the music and an eye on the dance floor. In short, put the audience first.

"It's nice to know ahead of

time the size of the venue or the time you're going to play," she explains. "Some sounds are better for bigger spaces, others lend themselves to a more intimate situation, so you might plan ahead. Sometimes you're right on, other times you're not."

"You also have to keep in mind that it's not all about you," she adds. "There are people who might come to see you because they're familiar with your work, but you also have to be able to connect with those people who are just coming out to have a good time. They're all part of the same picture."