

# Weekend magazine

## Talking music



Damian McGregor in his happy place, his backyard music room.

In the first in a series on New Zealand Music Month, **Carly Thomas** visited a Manawatu music stalwart.

**D**amian McGregor is known as D Fresh to many, a mentor to plenty and a vinyl-addicted good guy to those in his wide radius.

He has been on the Manawatu music scene since the late 80s, playing in bands from an early age before jumping aboard the forming wave of hip hop in the early 90s.

On those formative hip hop years, he's an expert and as far as vinyl goes, he's a guru.

The garage at his Ashhurst home, which probably hasn't housed a car ever, is a shrine to music.

Hundreds of vinyl records from far-reaching genres live in an order that McGregor knows intimately; gig posters and old school kit rub shoulders with treasured memorabilia.

It's a reflection of a love, a passion and a big-hearted obsession.

McGregor is quick to smile, he's good for a giggle and he offers advice, help and knowledge to anyone and everyone. He acknowledges his sound musical groundings during his formative Feilding neighbourhood days and

in turn he has been a mentor to many.

So, it's with McGregor that we start a conversation on Kiwi music, what that means, why it matters and what it all translates to in our neck of the woods. Because for those that know him, D Fresh is always keen for a musical natter.

**May has become the month that New Zealand music is celebrated. Is it just work as usual for you?**

I love NZ Music Month. It's such a great way to celebrate our achievements as a little nation in an internationally saturated industry. It can be a time to honour our unsung heroes who in some cases may be the unassuming guy or gal next door. NZ Music Month is also a timely reminder about empowering and nurturing our up-and-coming musicians with community and opportunities.

**Tell me some of the things you have on the go:**

I'm personally really excited about 2016 artistically as I'm focusing on DJing professionally fulltime. I will be doing a load more live performances and launching my long-awaited radio show *Universal*, which will feature



some of the most amazing music and musicians over the past 100-plus years of modern musical history, so watch this space.

**You have been in the music game for a while. How has Kiwi music changed over the years?**

Music's so seasonal and it's forever changing as a natural extension of everyday life. Every era of New Zealand's musical history has had defining milestones, wins and losses. The phenomenal Dunedin sound or 'Flying Nun' era in all its raw simplicity was perhaps the 'ugliest duckling' of them all. Reviled by the critics at the time, it has over the last three decades gained cult status internationally, particularly in Europe as music enthusiasts scour the Earth looking for rare and obscure oddities from far and distant lands, as you could imagine Aotearoa might look like to them.

**Who really stands out to you in New Zealand music as someone who just keeps keeping on?**

With the recent passing of musical giants like Bowie and Prince, I have been pondering over who are our

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very own New Zealand giants? Who continues to record and release decade after decade? Well, I just couldn't get past Dave Dobbyn.

He's the epitome of a good Kiwi bloke and one of our most iconic musicians, with a career in the music industry spanning around 40 years.

**If you did a Kiwi mix tape, who would be on it?**

I've been toying with the idea of a series of Kiwi-only mix tapes that cover issue by issue the full spectrum of Kiwi music; that is, genre, era and artists. I'm so in love with so many NZ artists' work both past and present. From 70s groups such as Butler, Quincey Conserve, Dragon (early) through the 80s and on to current artists such as Mark DeClive Lowe, Julien Dyne, Estere, Electric Wire Hustle, Disaster Radio etc.... Come on, I just love it all!

**You have always kept an eye out for emerging artists in the Palmerston North music scene, so how's it looking at the moment?**

The Great Job crew who run an independent performance venue on Grey St in Palmerston North are absolute shining heroes both locally and nationally in the music scene. They've created performance opportunities for emerging artists to perform and for locals to see some of

Aotearoa's most innovative acts perform in an intimate setting. Their passion for music and performance, building strong community and culture in Palmerston North is unmeasured... They are the leaders of the new school.

**What inspires your music through your life in Palmerston North and Aotearoa?**

We are incredibly blessed by our environment here in our country and our love and cohesion as community can be a beautiful thing if we nurture it. With all of that goodness, I hope our music is the audible sound or voice of our homeland, our people and our experience.

**What New Zealand music venue is your all-time place of nostalgia?**

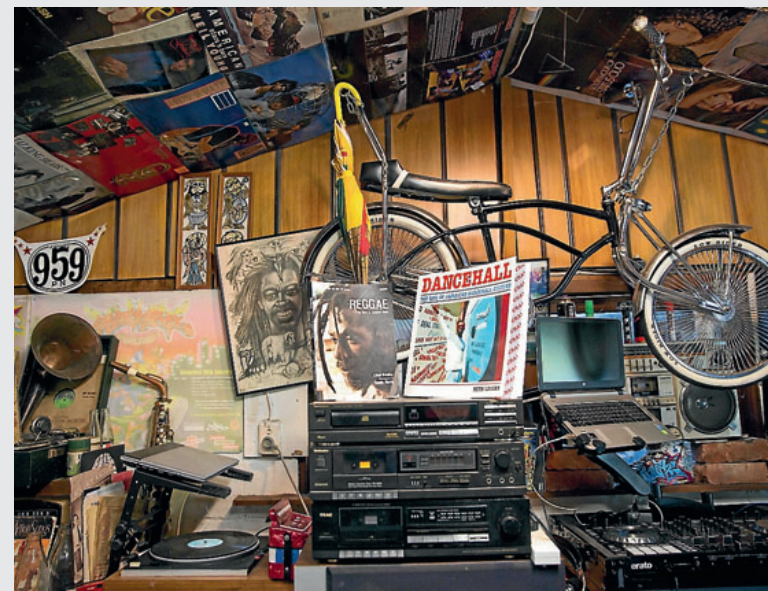
Clare's nightclub in Wellington was my first-ever taste of the underground/non-commercial club culture, which introduced me and many others to the world below the surface. I saw groups such as Ruaumoko, Gifted & Brown and loads of DJs there, which has undeniably defined my course to the present. Dance is the by-product of music and dance clubs like Clare's along with the early 90s rave scene cemented my commitment and obsession to music.

■ Next week's NZ Music Month feature will be a look into the music of Taipari Waaka who was fostered early on by Damian McGregor and others in the Palmerston North music scene.



## A king in his castle

Damian McGregor's vinyl collection is vast and varied. Here's a look inside his music room.



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