

Past electronically becomes the future of music

By EMMA MCCLATCHY

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Have you heard: You don't even need to read or play music anymore to be a musician.

Woodstock-era adults often use this sentiment to disparage modern music. But just because many of today's composers have traded sheet music for computers and instruments for digitally recorded beats and samples doesn't mean electronic artists have forgotten the strings, horns, and synthesizers of yesteryear.

At least, Eliot Lipp hasn't.

With an ear for '60s, '70s, '80s, and '90s music and a passion for vintage sound-altering gear, Lipp will present his revivalist brand of electronic music at 10 p.m. today at the Yacht Club, 13 S. Linn St., alongside experimental rock duo El Ten Eleven.

"I just find an old riff and start playing with it until I create what I think is my song," said the Brooklyn-based Lipp, who borrows samples from old dis-

co, funk, folk, jazz, techno, and even classical music, and transforms them with backbeats and sound layering. "It doesn't always fit, but that's what I like about it. I like to connect the dots from what was originally the future of music to something that sounds futuristic to us in 2014."

Lipp began his electronic music career as an art-school student in San Francisco, where he was introduced to an experimental facet of the genre. Fascinated, he began to buy his own samplers, drum machines, mixers, and other 20th-century equipment, teaching himself along the way.

After seven solo albums and eight years of international touring, Lipp's focus on instrumentals, exploration of unobvious source material, and loyalty to analogue — or non-digital — gear has set him apart from the genre's beat-making masses.

"I think part of my appreciation for the older stuff is nostalgia," Lipp said. "When I first started, there wasn't any software

to make electronic music. Some of the analogue gear actually sounds better ... but it's just a different style, like the difference between acoustic and virtual instruments."

Lawrence Fritts, a University of Iowa associate professor of composition and theory and the director of the UI's Electronic Music Studios, said the history of electronic music spans over a century, with a wealth of technological achievements along the way — including the invention of the digital synthesizer in 1963 by James Cessna, a UI graduate student who worked under Professor James Van Allen.

"The older equipment has a very warm and full sound that's very hard to emulate with computers," said Fritts, who has recorded woodwind, brass, string, and other instrumental samples used worldwide. "[Electronic music] is a whole other lens through which to look at music from another era."

Just as musicians such as Lipp have gotten the

"bug" for music production, as Fritts put it, Iowa City audiences have started to flock to electronica through such dance-party programs as the Yacht Club's on Tuesday nights and Gabe's, 330 E. Washington St., on Thursdays.

"We've had some epic ones down here," said Scott Kading, the owner and talent buyer for the Yacht Club and Gabe's. "The best ones are always the DJs who know where the crowd is going and what they want next."

Lipp said he believes listeners are looking for an experience from electronic artists, and he hopes to bring that tonight with a combination of lights, sounds, and an onstage band — including guitarist Nick Bockrath and drummer Steve Bryant — to perform tracks from his upcoming album.

"I think people are tired of just watching a guy on his laptop," he said. "You have to kick it up a notch. I think more of these electronic producers will start

to have to look at what their show is and the vibe it gives off."

And despite a growing acceptance for electronic music as an art form, Lipp said he wants to continue to push the genre forward — even if it means looking to the past.

"I'm writing music and arranging, but I still feel like I'm making rap beats for my friends," he said. "I feel like I'm still doing it for fun, but I like that. I'm constantly on the search to discover new music."



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