

diversions

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DON'T MISS THESE SETS

Kaze, Donwill of Tanya Morgan and Glenn Boothe of Local 506 pick their most anticipated sets of Signal Fest 2008.

Kaze

"DJ Babu and The Beat Junkies. Babu is Dilated People's DJ, so he produced a lot and is part of that movement with Dilated People."

When: 10 p.m. Friday
Where: Cat's Cradle; 300 E. Main St., Carrboro
How much: \$12 in advance. \$15 at the door.

Donwill

"We just did a song with Supastition, so of course I'm looking forward to checking out his live show."

When: 10 p.m. Friday
Where: Cat's Cradle; 300 E. Main St., Carrboro
How much: \$12 in advance. \$15 at the door.

Glenn Boothe

"Personally, I think Dirty5Thirty is one of the best live bands in the area — they always put on a great show."

When: 9:30 p.m. Friday
Where: Local 506; 506 W. Franklin St.
How much: \$8

BY BENN WINEKA

STAFF WRITER

This weekend, in a town known for indie rock, thousands of lovers of a different genre will descend upon Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

In its third year, Signal: The Southeast Electronic Music Festival — Signal Fest for short — will bring prominent DJs and electronic-based acts from around the electronic music world to the area.

The festival, which begins tonight at Tallulahs and runs through Saturday, has, in the past, brought in techno pioneers Derrick May and Stacey Pullen and held workshops for aspiring DJs and those hoping to learn more about the music community.

Similar events will characterize the Fest this year, but a new presence is sure to be felt as concerts of the electronic variety won't be the only shows of interest. Headlining the billings for three of the 14 shows are some of underground hip hop's best.

Signal Fest 2008 is not the first time hip hop will be making an appearance at the festival — Souls of Mischief and Masta Ace performed at Cat's Cradle last year.

But it will mark the first time the premier electronic music festival of the Southeast will have such a heavy influence outside of progressive and house music.

Besides what seems like a push from organizers Ctrl+Alt+Del and director Uzoma "Uzi" Nwosu to include hip hop in the mix, concert promoter Shaw Hargett, who has collaborated with Local 506 and Cat's Cradle on hip-hop shows and who brought the free Scion series through Carrboro, also was a driving force behind the bookings.

Kaze, a local talent and Rawkus 50 artist who will perform Saturday at Mansion 462, credits Hargett for bringing him and others to Signal Fest.

"They have definitely made a big effort to bring a lot more hip hop into it," Kaze said.

"Shaw being a part of it this year, and him having a heavy connection to hip-hop artists, he's personally made efforts to insure there's a lot more involved this year."

Along with Kaze, Hargett brought other big names from the hip-hop community, including DJ Babu, DJ Rethmatic and J-Rocc of The (World Famous) Beat Junkies and the ?uestlove-approved rap group Tanya Morgan.

MC Donwill, one-third of Tanya Morgan, also complimented Hargett's job on bookings for the weekend.

"Signal Fest is one of the shows on our tour that we've been anticipating and looking forward to because we get to perform with our colleagues like Kaze, who we came up through the trenches with, and Kev Brown," Donwill said. "It's just love."

The magnitude of a member of Tanya Morgan making this statement is even greater knowing the trio opened for The Roots during the A3C Festival in March in Atlanta.

Although the ties between hip hop and electronic music

seem loose, both Kaze and Donwill see the two genres sharing a lot of similarities.

"The way hip hop is being created, it has switched over to more of the same nature as the electronic format," Donwill said.

"Hip hop was known for all the samples and drum machines, but the techniques that we're now using is just from (music) converging on the same path," he said, citing the work of Gnarls Barkley and the late J Dilla.

"Everything is not becoming one, but everything is borrowing and blending with each other, and it gives it a shade where you can tell the influence."

Kaze even went as far as throwing out the idea of working alongside featured electronic performers.

"I'm definitely a big person as far as trying to be diverse and being a part of mashing things up," he said.

"Maybe I'll field an electronic DJ or producer from another side of music to find a way that we can maybe cross-pollinate what we do."

As Signal Fest has continued to grow each year, the organizers have made a conscious effort to keep the venues as close in proximity as possible to promote moving between shows.

This year, as they have in the past, Cat's Cradle, Local 506, Tallulahs and Nightlight all will be hosting events. Mansion 462 is new to the equation but also is within easy walking distance to the other hosts. The Library, Vespa and Caffe Driade also are venues this year.

One location that will not be hosting any events — a change from last year — is the Carolina Union, which presented May and Pullen last year.

Carolina Union President Robert Gurdian said the Union was not contacted by Signal Fest organizers to hold any events for 2008.

But the close proximity of many of the festival's venues makes a more cohesive event for attendees and artists eager to see their own favorite acts.

"I'm a fan first, so I'm looking forward to checking out their shows, period," Donwill said.

Kaze echoes the sentiment.

"I'm planning on definitely making the rounds. I want to be a part of the atmosphere and environment," he said, noting Signal Fest's ability to highlight artists outside of the mainstream.

"In that regard that's what I think Signal is trying to do, just trying to put out cats that are on that cutting edge about to break through."

And both the performers and the festival itself thrive on that organic growth.

"It (Signal Fest) appears to grow each year, and I think they are doing it very logically and strategically, said Glenn Boothe, owner of Local 506.

"They are not trying to make it huge overnight — there appears to be a long-term plan in place, and they seem to have a collective vision on how to accomplish that objective."

Boothe also says that adding hip hop to the festival might also bring in a larger audience.

"As long as they are realistic in their budgeting and enthusiastic about the results, I'd like to think it's here to stay."

Contact the Diversions Editor

at dive@unc.edu.

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SAD TIMES AGAIN We still have no blog. I swear we're working on it.

SURPRISES Be extra sure to check out Diversions next week as we have some very special surprises in store. Suffice it to say that we're super excited.



concerts

TURN UP THE HEAT

Local rock 'n' rollers Dirty Little Heaters brought their dynamic garage rock to the stage at Local 506.

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music

DIRTY IT UP

The Black Keys' latest combines the blues/rock fury it's known for with swampy, Southern sounds to splendid results.

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TEENAGE WASTE

"Paranoid Park" falls well short of the mark as a result of less-than-stellar visuals and a complete lack of narrative.

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ROLLIN' DOWN THE RIVER

Get inside the head of Greensboro's Giant to see exactly what inspires the band's heavy, dynamic sound.

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