

Seminars to celebrate pop music, technology

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Turntables, hip-hop, disco music and disc jockeys — not what most people would consider standard university fare. But that's just what's on deck at the University of Regina over the next three months as it presents a series of seminars designed to celebrate DJ culture.

"There's a lot going on (in Regina)," said Charity Marsh, a professor of music at the University of Regina and one of the event organizers, in an interview. "To bring that into a university setting and also to talk about popular music in a way that's going to pique interest and tie into the local community — that's what we're really interested in."

In a joint effort, the faculties of science and fine arts are teaming up to present a scholarly discussion of electronic music and the various technologies used in its production.

The project is funded by a trans-disciplinary fund established by the university to encourage interaction between departments.

Marsh was the presenter at Thursday's inaugural seminar and workshop, which featured a discussion of the social history of DJ culture, as well as a guest appearance from a local DJ. "There's a great deal of really interesting electronic music and music-making practices that are happening, and they're happening here in Regina," said Marsh.

One of Marsh's partners on the project is David Gerhard, an assistant professor at the university's computer science department whose studies in "computational acoustics" allow him to combine his interests in music and science.

"I'm a computer scientist that's very interested in sound and music and the

"Some of the equipment that modern DJ's use is very technological and computer designed."

This keen interest in technology and music will be showcased during "New Technologies and New Soundtracks," the second seminar in the three-part series being presented on March 24. Gerhard will be joined by Charlie Fox from the university's department of media production and studies, and Dr. Andra McCartney, a composer and visual artist from Concordia University in Montreal.

The third and final seminar will be hosted by Marsh on April 7, at which she will discuss the rave scene in Regina — both past and present — and also present her research on rave and hip-hop culture, which was conducted in both Regina and Toronto.

Through her research Marsh discovered that the culture is just as much about the community as it is the music. "It's such a great way of building community and building networks and talking among various different groups of people," Marsh says of initiatives like the Prairie Roots Project — a youth hip-hop collaboration project taking place in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

"(It's) also about creating spaces for youth to be creative and to deal with a lot of other issues that are going on in their lives."

All events take place in the Riddell Centre on the university campus