

Music

ON & ON ... & ON?

DJ JESSE SAUNDERS HOPES TO KEEP IT GOING WITH A NEW CAFÉ



The potential new home for the Electronic Music Café.

Photo: Deanna Rilling

Deanna Rilling

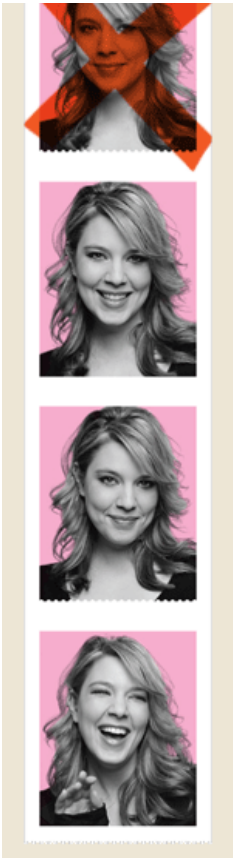
Thu, Aug 13, 2009 (midnight)

House-music pioneer Jesse Saunders is said to have written, produced, performed and released the world's first documented house-music recording, titled *On & On*, in January of 1984. Decades later, the Vegas-based DJ/producer might once again make history with his latest project, the Electronic Music Café.

Saunders has a vision for his adopted hometown, so he is going forward with an ambitious plan for a new Downtown venue centered around all things electronic music: Part gallery, part coffee shop, with a bar, lounge and more.

Following a recent world tour, which featured a traveling house-music art exhibit, Saunders began looking for a more permanent home to showcase works inspired by the sounds. "I never had anything to do with art before this idea," Saunders says. "One of the cool things I like is a lot of the European places that I play, generally the promoters have some bar or lounge thing that's really cool where everybody congregates before they go to the big clubs," he says. "That vibe of being somewhere with cool music—and you can dance if you want to—has a little lounge-y feel to it, but it's really an art gallery."

Currently in negotiations for 1,700-square-foot property near Charleston and Main by the arts district, Saunders speaks excitedly about his ideas for the project. Inviting in DJs, mixed-media artists and the dance-music community, Saunders isn't primarily interested in turning a massive profit; he hopes to foster the growth of Vegas' electronic-music population. "Admission, merchandising, everything we're trying to fit as a donation. I don't want to actually put prices on things, especially the art."



distracted by the glow of bottle-service dollars. “For me, I want the culture and educational aspect of it to come into play.”

And what space centered around EDM would be complete without a DJ booth? The Café would have just that, as well as a small studio for projects of both the aesthetic and aural varieties. “We’re also going to have memberships,” he says, to cover some expenses of the café. “Our members will be able to come in and use the studio facilities and get discounts if they want to rent the space.” Saunders also sees the potential for the space to host meet-ups with DJs, classes on technique and other collaborations.

“I don’t want to do anything that doesn’t have to do with music,” Saunders says. “That’s the whole basis of this. The central theme obviously is house music, but we didn’t want to stop there, so we actually opened it to electronic music in general. But that doesn’t limit us to electronic music. I want to do jazz installations, reggae, various things.”

More

Beyond the Weekly

[Electronic Music Cafe](#)

[Jesse Saunders](#)

Sounds like a grand plan, but can Saunders’ dream actually come to fruition? “Why wouldn’t we be able to pull it off?” he asks. “I think just the cultural aspect of it is enough to pull it off from the beginning. We could have originally just done this as purely an art gallery, but I wanted to take it around the whole musical experience as opposed to just being the art.”

Saunders says he has already raised \$100,000 worth of investments for the project, plus backing from major sponsor Red Stripe beer, so maybe the Café isn’t an impossible dream after all. “I have a couple of contingency plans,” he explains. “I have my very, very low-budget plan which will get it open, then I’ve got my medium-sized one, and then I’ve got my ultimate!”

Saunders hopes to begin renovations of the space by October, aiming for an opening around New Year’s. Visit electronicmusiccafe.com to keep track of the progress.

SHARE

0



DEANNA RILLING

[GET MORE DEANNA RILLING](#)

