

ARTS ROUNDUP



▲ Raoul Juneja

Deejay Ra is bringing urban music to the masses

"Three years ago I thought that the music in the mainstream was bad enough," says Raoul Juneja, "but when I look at the music now...it's even worse." Best known as "Deejay Ra," the local resident is doing his best to give urban music a shot.

Juneja, a Thornlea SS graduate, recently returned to town after a stint at the University of Western Ontario, where he hosted a groundbreaking radio show on CHRW. "I wanted to take a large part of my life," he says, "and put it into this work."

He first became interested in the music while living for a few years in New York City. When he came to the

suburbs of Toronto he was pleasantly surprised to find local artists producing the same kind of music — it just wasn't on the radio.

In the relatively small market in London, Ontario, there was no hip-hop or urban music on the radio and Juneja "saw a chance to build something over there."

Having returned to the GTA, Juneja started up Lyrical Knockout Entertainment, a company whose goal is to promote the skilled local urban artists ignored by the mainstream. Already the company has scored major projects, including the re-launch of the hard-hitting soundtrack to the HBO TV series, *Oz*.

A key to their success, says Juneja, is that "we know what people who like us want to hear." In addition to promotions, they also run an e-mail-based Urban News Service.

Juneja also found a bond with comics and produced the *Comedy Meets Hip-Hop* promo CD, taped during a radio show, featuring comedians like TV's Mista Mo and Russell Peters.

While he's enjoying being in the promoting business right now, he admits, "TV and radio are what I want to be doing." Finding a balance between pleasing clients — like record labels — presents a challenge, he admits, but he's not worried about staying true to his mission.

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—David Fleischer