



Night out!
with Ten2nine

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eVent!

Sunday edition



Photos contributed
Manousos and JGirl are two of the DJs performing at *Chatter and Whirr* next weekend.

'Blow your mind'

A weekend of art and music promises plenty of fun for the younger crowd

By PORTIA PRIEGERT

The Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art kicks off *Chatter and Whirr*, a province-wide festival of artist-run culture that tosses up some freestyle fun while raising awareness about a network of small galleries with big ambitions.

"This is going to be something, hopefully, to blow people's minds," said Jennifer Pickering, the Alternator's director. "It's something that is really involved in the community — it focuses on local talent, on spontaneity, on creativity and on pure enjoyment."

Chatter and Whirr has three components — an opening reception Friday evening for three new-media exhibitions, a group conversation about artist-run culture on Saturday afternoon and a no-holds-barred disco-style party later that night.

"It's a chance to get out," said Pickering. "It's something unique for Kelowna. It's something fun — there's an opportunity to meet people, hang out and have a good time and to see stuff you wouldn't normally have the opportunity to see."

The party is aimed at a younger crowd that has few entertainment options in a community with a demographic skewed to aging baby boomers.

"I've talked to so many people and they just don't go out," says Pickering. "The club scene here is very limited. It has not really changed — it doesn't offer a lot of stimulation."

Artist-run centres like the Alternator and Western Front in Vancouver are poor cousins to public institutions such as the Kelowna Art Gallery and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

They support emerging artists who sometimes go on to national acclaim, but don't receive the same level of funding federal, provincial and municipal governments allocate to more mainstream public galleries.

Limited support makes it tough to get the message out, so the broader public generally has a poor understanding of the alternative system.

The Pacific Association of Artist-Run Centres, which represents some 15 venues, is hoping *Chatter and Whirr* will help change that.

It's the first province-wide festival — events are also planned for Vancouver and Victoria — organized by the group, part of a larger national network of some 100 alternative galleries.

The movement has been around since the 1970s, when artists banded together to create informal, grassroots galleries that helped propel the country's artistic agenda.

quick hit

What: Chatter and Whirr — B.C. Festival of Artist-Run Culture
Where: Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotary Centre for the Arts, 421 Cawston Ave.
When: Opening reception — Friday, Feb. 6 at 7 p.m.
 Conversation — Saturday, Feb. 7, noon to 4 p.m.
 Music and media-arts party Saturday Feb. 7, 9 p.m. to 3 a.m.
Tickets: \$5 donation recommended at the door
 Info: www.alternatorgallery.com or 250-868-2298



They have become more professional over the years, partly in response to pressure from funding agencies. But with public galleries now showing many of the same artists, some question whether the alternative system's time has passed.

Maintaining relevance in a changing era is sure to be a key issue discussed Saturday in the public session that will be transcribed and eventually posted at www.arc-post.ca.

Adequate financial support, one of the biggest challenges for artist-run centres, is another.

Maintaining the administrative accountability that funders demand while supporting artists with federally mandated exhibition fees, now about \$1,500 for a solo show, is a growing challenge in a tightening economic climate.

The Alternator, which is projecting annual operating expenses this year of about \$160,000, has cut spending on artists over the last few years to boost administrative wages.

"We've been cutting programming every year for the last two or three years to try to create some stability with human resources," said Pickering.

But she's less concerned than you might expect about the recent economic downturn.

"We can stretch money in ways that aren't even imaginable to a commercial business or to a government organization," she said.

The gallery's new exhibitions are by New York-based Cree artist Jude Norris, who presents *Diary of a Nomad*, as well as Brian Gotro and Christian Nicolay, recent graduates of UBC Okanagan now based in Vancouver.

Diary of a Nomad combines three projection screens that



JPod (The Beat Chef) is a guest DJ at *Chatter and Whirr* on Saturday.

examine Western landscape traditions from an indigenous perspective.

Gotro draws an audience into the White Room with a five-channel video installation and an electric guitar, while Nicolay's *Atlantis* considers current affairs south of the border using the sound of television static.

The exhibitions, which open Friday at 7 p.m. with talks by the artists, continue to March 20.

All are welcome to join the group conversation, which runs Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. in the atrium of the Rotary Centre for the Arts. The party, which features art installations, live video feeds and local DJs, begins at 9 p.m.

All events are by donation at the door.

