



Image: Violaine Willim

DJ KARIM'S UNIVERSAL RHYTHMS



Image: Esteban Rivera

INFLUENCING THE MESTIZO MUSIC SCENE

He supports the legalization of marijuana and refuses to play at a club that censors his songs about the substance. He risked his life when he trekked through guerilla territory in Colombia to play at a peace concert. And he doesn't shy away from spinning infectious tunes that ignite clubs all over the world.

"I feel embarrassed by what the European Union has done with immigrants," says DJ Karim, who speaks five languages and has traveled through most of Europe and Latin America. "Europe is old now. If you notice, there is no new leader. There is no new blood. No youth." DJ Karim's music aims to bridge that gap and represent immigrant youth, raising awareness of their existence. His sound falls into a style called "mestizo," coined from the cross of cultures that clashed in Spain in the last decade. It's a genre for which singer Manu Chao, a friend and influence to Karim, is most well known.

Karim blends unlikely combos of Afro-Latino hip-hop, Arabic drum & bass, Balkan gypsy music, a little cumbia, and even flamenco fusion. Like his own heritage, his sound is a mélange of constant movement prone to making people dance. Perhaps because of his own immigrant experience and that of his colleagues, the EU's recent immigration resolution made DJ Karim skip a beat.

"Europe is all mixed up now," Karim says. "Europe depends on immigrants." Born in Algeria, the son of an Algerian father and an Argentine mother in Doctors without Borders, Karim Beldjoudi Kohn, or DJ Karim, has lived in Spain since the age of fifteen. A bit of Europe has rubbed off on him. "Even though I am Algerian, when I go to Algeria I am not accepted by the people," he says while in Buenos Aires, one of the spots on his South American tour. "It's not that I am not like them, but I just don't practice the religion or dress like them."

Label-free, this artist has embraced the opportunities the Internet has made possible to promote himself. And though DJ Karim doesn't have a record, he's featured in several independently-released CD compilations like *"Mundo Mestizo 2"* and the *"El Aniversario del Che Guevara."* After spinning in Argentina, DJ Karim will perform in Venezuela, Colombia and Chile in the next few months. At 24, DJ Karim has been exposed through his travels to a deluge of influence, both through people and music. "I am not one of those people who says, 'I spent a week in Colombia or a week in Morocco and learned nothing,'" he said. "If you want to learn about a culture of a country, you have to live it." //

Claudia Cruz