

Groovologist spins rare pleasures in cafe

Tyrone Gooden spins his "rare groove" vinyl discs at downtown's Stumptown coffeehouse twice a week. The DJ, who doesn't mind sharing the turntable, is working to spread his love of hard-to-find jazz and soul recordings. "It involves a lot of listening, a lot of looking and a lot of money. It might take five years to find a certain record," he says.

OLIVIA BUCKS
THE OREGONIAN



Get groovin'

When & where: Tyrone Gooden spins records at Stumptown Coffee Roasters, 128 S.W. Third Ave. 6 to 9 p.m. Thursdays and noon to 3 p.m. Saturdays.

Rare groove 101: Gooden recommends six albums, in order of accessibility:

- José Feliciano, "Feliciano!" (1968, RCA)
- Julie Driscoll with Brian Auger & the Trinity, "Streetnoise" (1968, Disconforme)
- Marlena Shaw, "The Spice of Life" (1969, Cadet)
- Leon Thomas, "Spirits Known and Unknown" (1969, Flying Dutchman)
- Open Sky Unit, "Open Sky Unit" (1974, Duchesne Records)
- "Jazz Dance Classics, Vol. 1" (1994, Luv N' Haight)

Step into downtown's Stumptown Coffee Roasters on a Thursday evening or Saturday afternoon and get an earful of sounds you've probably never heard before. You'll find a disc jockey with a batch of rare records who hopes Portland catches his vinyl vibe.

Tyrone Gooden, 37, traffics in an off-beat record-collecting realm known as "rare groove." For a year now, his treasures have been wafting through the locally owned java joint.

"Tyrone is amazing," says Sarah Shields, an affable barista with five years at Stumptown.

"I'm a music enthusiast, and he likes to share what he knows. He definitely has his following, and a lot of the clientele comment on what he does. He works his magic."

Rare groove takes its name from a 1980s British radio program and mainly involves tracking down vintage jazz and soul recordings, especially from the 1960s and '70s. Gooden's collection spans the 1940s through today.

When Gooden arrived in Portland two years ago, he expected to tap a thriving rare-groove scene in a city with an artis-

tic reputation that reached all the way to his hometown of Cleveland. He scoped out San Francisco and Los Angeles before friends persuaded him to come here.

Gooden shipped his record crates to PDX. "It cost me a fortune," he says, "but then I had to move."

Only trouble was, there was no scene. "When I first got to Portland, I hoped my records would be good enough," he says. "But I couldn't find anybody else who was interested."

Gooden's crates carry the relatively familiar likes of José Feliciano, Nina Simone and Julie Driscoll, along with a seemingly endless roster of artifacts from the far-flung fringes. Carmen McRae singing "Take Five" with the Dave Brubeck Quartet is a defining example. Some of his albums trade hands for \$500 or more. Many are coveted for one song.

"I'm probably walking around with the most expensive records in Portland," Gooden says. "It involves a lot of listening, a lot of looking and a lot of money. It might take five years to find a certain record. But the emphasis is on the rarity of an album or an unknown version of a well-known song. That's what rare groove is really about."

Gooden devours niche magazines and digs for hidden troves at yard sales, used shops, basements, Web sites. His own site, raregroovesociety.com, is new. He speaks with reverence about the idiom's celebrated DJs.

And he lights up when describing a new record label, Jazzman, that buys rights to vintage recordings and reissues them on 7-inch vinyl 45s with a rarity on both sides.

Then there's the performance, when rare-groove DJs seek a signature sound.

"It's easy for a DJ to get dragged around by what the crowd wants," Gooden says. "And some guys are uneven while others have a true style. The guys who can take you on an emotional trip, those are the guys who know what's going on."

That's a tall order for a coffee shop on a Thursday night as daylight starts to fade, but Gooden gives it a go. After spinning four sultry songs about the sun, he slips in a slinky "Fly Me to the Moon."

A steady stream of listeners meanders toward the booth, and Gooden encourages guest DJs.

"Somebody will hear something that grabs them," he says. "Then they'll come up and want to talk about it."

That's kind of always how it starts. Some of us really fall in love with the music."

The downtown shop guarantees a revolving door of travelers, first-timers and regulars. Fingers drum tabletops. Heads bob ever so slightly. Knees bounce at the bar.

Mandy Olson, 28, came to town from Iowa three months ago to complete her OB-GYN residency at Oregon Health & Science University. She tapped a toe and knitted on a taupe cardigan sweater.

"The music does have an older feel to it, and that's the kind of music I like," Olson says.

"I was sitting here thinking, 'Have I heard this before?' It sounds familiar, but not quite."

On another Thursday, 41-year-old Charles Falk, a longtime New Yorker with a decade in Portland, shows up with his stack of gems. Gooden turns the booth over to another budding devotee.

"Usually there's a lot of ego involved with DJs," Falk says. "But Tyrone seems beyond that. He's friendly and inviting and trying to create some kind of synergy and good will."

"He's also got a sound that's not happening in Portland — but it should be."