

DJ uses hip-hop and sustainable living to unite young people

Q&A



Interview by Camilla Muldermans

Specialising in UK R&B and urban music, KMT, otherwise known as Ian Solomon Kwail, has been DJing on radio and stages internationally for over 12 years, from Ghana to Glastonbury. Based in London, Ian is also a workshop leader, believing passionately in the power of music to educate and create positivity. Through his work he is using hip-hop culture as a tool to increase social cohesion and raise awareness of social issues, while also promoting sustainable living.

sustainable living. The overall aim is to inspire the creation of sustainable communities, which grow their own food, use alternative energy sources and an alternative water supply.

Early Mayes, a local young person is the heart and soul of the project. We've worked hard together on introducing issues like food production and waste reduction to young people, using a permaculture-designed garden in Moolen, London. Children and young people come from all over the city to lend a hand in the space.

Positive News: How do you use hip-hop to help young people?

KMT: My work is about opening channels of communication and music is great for that. Music is a messenger and is good for raising awareness of social issues such as racism.

I usually do workshops around DJing, lyric-writing and performance skills. Once I engage young people in these elements I can explore other issues with them.

What's great is that they can use the form of something like hip-hop to forget about their differences and explore what they have in common. It's a great way to problem solve.

What do you notice about how the project affects young people?

It introduces young people to the value of nature through allowing them to adjust to outdoorspace by getting to know the garden. It's a gradual process of building up trust – the kids need to get over their fear of nature, some of them don't even know that grapes

Could you tell us about New Microphone Cyphas?

Among many other things, I run a company called New Microphone Cyphas, where we get MCs together in a circle to rhyme together and create music. We do this instead of the more common hip-hop battles, which involve a usual singing verbal insults at opponents.

I don't want to have battles. For me, gaining strength on the basis of insulting someone else isn't a positive way of being in a community. There has to be an alternative model for us to work together.

Who are your inspirations?

KRS-One – an American rapper who won a lifetime achievement award in 2006 for all his work and efforts towards the Stop the Violence Movement, as well as Gandhi and my mum, May.

My mum died in 2006 after a battle with mental illness and alcoholism and I spent a lot of time caring for her. In 2009 I launched the May Project in memory of her – a community gardening, alternative living project for young people in south London.

How is the May Project going?

At the moment we have a garden full of food and we have young people come in and learn about growing vegies and

have seed in them.

We have examples of what you can do if you don't have much of a garden. There's a salad space, potatoes, garlic and broccoli; a wild flower meadow, a pond; a forest area with plum trees, a polytunnel with chillis and aubergines, apple trees... the list goes on.

Why is something like this so important for the next generation?

I want to emphasise the importance of creating safe environments for

vulnerable young people. The real challenge is to secure a space that is a part of the young people's lifestyles.

Young people are living in an exciting time right now, and they're on the cusp of having infinite opportunities. Unfortunately, there are a lot of distractions, but I think we can help them find themselves and their place in society.



KMT workshops

Photo: © NewMicroKMT

KMT's STORY

“You will be working in Tesco's”

Hip-Hop for social cohesion, social change and social awareness.

20 Years + Career

MORE INFORMATION:
www.tu-ncl.com
www.mayproject.org

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Ian Solomon Kawall is 😊 feeling determined. 23 hrs

Amen..This is why I #Grind #KeepitMoving. 13yrs with May Project Gardens and 9yrs of self funding and you still ask me what do I do ? and why I charge this much !!! #EverydayImBrussling



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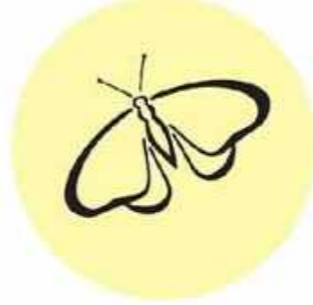
A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a cupful of dark, rich soil. The person is wearing a black t-shirt with the words 'Project Gardens' printed in white, along with a circular logo featuring a bird. A beaded necklace with black, red, and green beads is visible around their neck. The background is a blurred outdoor garden setting with a green tarp and a wooden planter box. The text 'RECONNECTING URBAN COMMUNITIES WITH NATURE...' is overlaid in a bright green, stylized font on the left side of the image.

**RECONNECTING
URBAN
COMMUNITIES
WITH NATURE...**



**...FOR PERSONAL,
SOCIAL +
ECONOMIC
TRANSFORMATION**

Use edges & value the marginal



Observe & interact

Use & value diversity



earth care



Catch & store energy

Use small & slow solutions



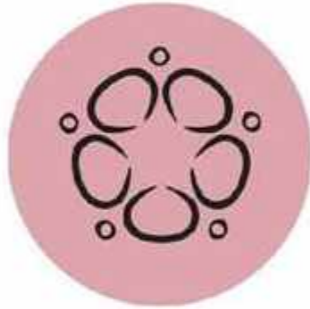
Obtain a yield

fair share



people care

Integrate rather than segregate



Apply self-regulation & accept feedback

Design from patterns to details



Produce no waste



Use & value renewable resources & services

A large pile of red and yellow apples is spread out on a grassy surface. The apples are in various stages of ripeness, with some showing yellowing and bruising. The background shows some green foliage and a dark structure. Overlaid on the image are several text elements in different colors and fonts.

Biodiversity

Alternative

Collaborative

***People-
Centric***

Resource-led

***Value the
Marginal***

PEOPLE-CENTRIC



DIVERSITY

BIODIVERSITY





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principles

ethics

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PRINCIPLE 11: USE EDGES & VALUE THE MARGINAL

"DON'T THINK YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK JUST BECAUSE IT'S A WELL-BEATEN PATH"

The interface between things is where the most interesting events take place. These are often the most valuable, diverse and productive elements in the system.

The icon of the sun coming over the horizon with a river in the foreground shows us a world composed of edges. The proverb "don't think you are on the right track just because its a well-beaten path" reminds us that the most popular is not necessarily the best approach.

Listen to the song about the principle from this album:



formidablevegetable
The Edge

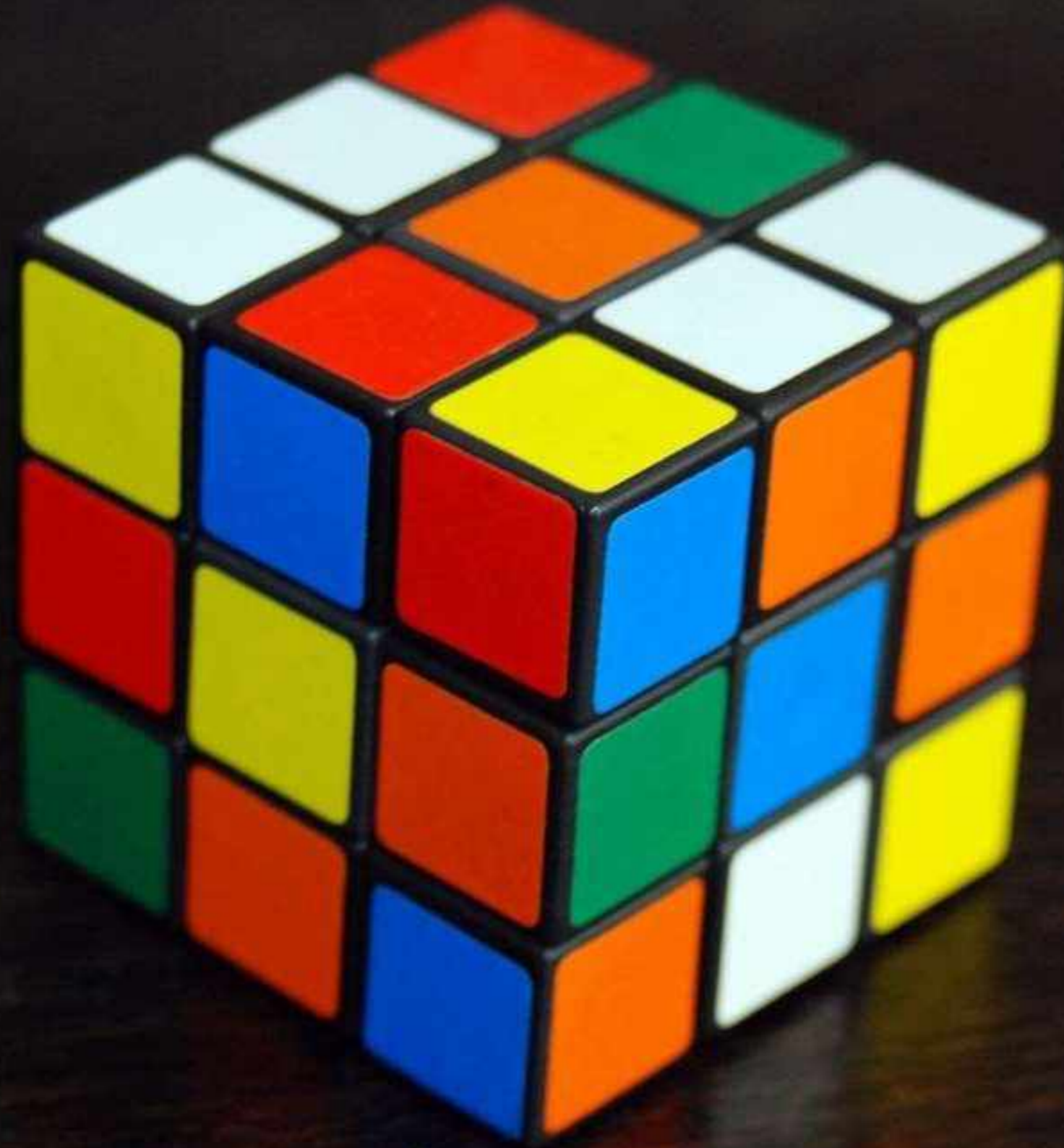
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problem
is
the
solution



Hip Hop
Garden







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A Fatal Stabbing Took Place At This Man's Youth Club - Now He Speaks Out

"Young black people feel marginalised - with no sense of belonging."

By Nadine White



Woman Pays For Stranger's Groceries, Doesn't Realize Who He Is

Drivepedia

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Insights

- **What are microaggressions?**

A microaggression is ‘a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalised group.’ Microaggressions have increasingly been talked about and studied in the past decade but understanding of their negative impact on individuals and society is minimal.

What is cultural appropriation?

Cultural appropriation is 'the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices and ideas of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society.'

It is a term gaining traction in a society obsessed with sharing selfies and updates on social media. And yet, with celebrities, designers and writers increasingly being called out on their hairstyle, clothing or language, why is the line between appreciation and appropriation still being crossed again and again? And why is it so important that we stop?