

http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local_news/the-life-of-the-party-is-gone/article_457f518e-89e5-52e8-bfd1-1a0275f9eed.html

<

PREVIOUS

ULEAD helps teens cope with stresses in their world

>

The life of the party is gone

May 3, 2007



Radio legend Rod 'Dr. Jockenstein' King dies at 55

By Bernie Hayes For the St. Louis American

The image of funk radio and the idol of thousands of local music fans died Monday, April 30, 2007 at St. Anthony's Medical Center. Roderick Gerald King, 55, known to the entertainment industry as "Dr. Jockenstein," died of an upper respiratory illness. He suffered with the ailment for nearly five years. He had experienced a critical stroke in 2002 that left him unable to work.

His wife, Idella King, said, "Life without him is already very, very difficult. I have lost my husband, my friend and my soul mate. He was a man that if you met him, you remembered him."

She said, "There's a little bit of Jock in everyone who met him."

King's daughter, Tamika Harvey, said, "He had a great smile that you couldn't resist. He cared a lot for so many people, and he was a mentor for many deejays that admired him. He had a personality that you could fall in love with. He loved his family, friends and co-workers. I think he should be called 'a legendary deejay pioneer,' and I know that his legacy will live on and on."

King, or "Jock" as he was affectionately known, was born February 11, 1955 in St. Louis but spent his early years in East St. Louis. He said he was always fascinated with spinning records. He began his career as a record spinner in 1968 while a student at East St. Louis Senior High School, when he often carried equipment to record hops for former KATZ deejay Donnie Brooks, who inspired him to seek a radio career.

He later started playing around clubs on the East Side, calling himself "Touche Turtle," then "Turtle" and "Touche the DJ." He accompanied and assisted Charles "Sweet Charlie" Smith in clubs and at record hops where he honed his skills.

His first on-air stint was in 1976 at WESL, after Sweet Charlie recommended him to program director Jim Gates, who took him under his wing. It was during this time that elements of hip-hop invaded every facet of popular culture, and the jock who made the biggest impression during this era was King.

Early in 1977 King traveled to New Jersey to meet with Joe and Sylvia Robinson, who produced The Sugar Hill Gang. Their monster hit "Rappers Delight" hypnotized him.

Upon his return to the St. Louis area and WESL, he developed a routine in the morning that he labeled "roll call." It was a gimmick where school children would call into the station and rhyme their favorite school and teacher, and it became an instant hit. Jock said he hoped the program would inspire children to stay in school.

He remained at the station as a deejay until 1979. That is the year he emceed a show for music giant George Clinton, also known as Dr. Funkenstein. After seeing Jock in his signature large white-rimmed glasses and doctor's gown, Clinton named King "Dr. Jockenstein."

In 1979 King was hired by Sid Small as the program director for KATZ-AM and WZEN or Z-100 FM. Enduring three ownership changes, he remained in this position until 1982. That year he became program director for Majic 108 (now Majic 104), and remained thus until 1986.

Jock received several awards during those years, including the Missouri Lottery's Real Winners, the DeeJay of the Year and induction into the St. Louis Radio Hall of Fame.

In 2002 Clear Channel Communications reduced Jock to part-time status with a Saturday "Slammin' Jammin' Oldies" show. As a part-timer, he lost his medical coverage. Later that year he suffered a series of mild strokes, followed by a massive attack in 2002. He was transferred to several medical facilities over the years, but his health never substantially improved. During his many years of impairment, several fundraisers were held to help defray the costly hospital bills.

Radio historian Frank Absher, a journalism instructor at Saint Louis University and founder of the St. Louis Media Hall of Fame, said, "When I listen to the tapes of Rod today and hear how he commanded mornings at WESL, I wish I could have been part of it. Today's young generation has no idea what they're missing."

Edie Bee of WESL worked with Jock for years at various stations. She said, "Dr. Jockenstein did not only live life, he was the star. Jock was a part of my fondest memories of radio, and I'll never forget him."

"He was such a sociable, outgoing guy. He loved music, he loved life. He lived his life to the fullest," said Doug Eason, former station manager and former deejay.

"I've lost a good friend. He will be missed."

Former KATZ co-worker Randy O'Jay said, "He was my mentor and taught me the ropes of the industry. I was honored to have known him and called him my friend."

Larry "The Godfather" Sheppard, who worked with King at WESL, Z-100 and KATZ, said, "Jock was the James Brown of hip-hop, and wherever Jock was, there was the party."

Former KATZ engineer Tom Lyons contends downgrading King to a part-timer and discontinuing his medical benefits shows the coldness of the business. He said, "Jock was one heck of a fighter in more ways than one, and I always had a lot of respect and admiration for him."

Funeral arrangements are pending.

Among the survivors are his wife, Idella King of Florissant; four daughters, Tamika Harvey of Belleville, Dewaynna Mosley of Chicago, Maleania Nabe of Atlanta and Tiffany King of St. Louis; two sons, Tremaine Fields of Cahokia and Jerrick King of Alton; a brother, Lamon King of Norfolk, Va.; a sister, Shirley King of East St. Louis and 16 grandchildren.

A special tribute will be broadcast from 3-7p.m. Saturday on the "Slammin Jammin Oldies" program on KMJM-FM, 104.9.