

## **Sound on the Edge: Dark Nation Radio, DJ cypher, and Why You Need to “Tune In, Turn it Up, and Burn it Down”**

**Available to listen to on various digital platforms.**

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Focusing on the darker side of sound—specifically “goth, industrial, post-punk, new wave and intelligent electronica music”—DJ cypher’s Dark Nation Radio is more than it first appears.

Which is saying a lot, because even at first listen the music catches your attention and won’t let you go. At least two hours, sometimes three, of hardcore music meticulously curated and broadcast live once a week, it’s difficult to remember what online music used to be once you find yourself here.



*DJ Cypher, aka Jeffrey Weinstock, professor of English at Central Michigan University*

Each Sunday’s show begins with the theme music, pulling you in and setting the tone, a lead-in for DJ cypher’s introduction. Generally around three minutes, this intro runs through not just what is coming up in the night’s show but what will be on the next week. Clear, concise,

with some tidbits thrown in including information about new bands on the scene, new music from established bands, or new solo work by band members, it builds a solid foundation from which to launch into the week's program. While I suspect he might cringe at the word dulcet, DJ cypher's voice certainly is, likely one of the many reasons for his more than 25-year DJ-ing success. He's been spinning goth/industrial music since it was actually spun, for many years at clubs in the northeastern United States—at Bound DC, Bound Hartford, and Contempt NYC—and as a guest DJ at venues like Dracula's Ball in Philadelphia, Endless Night in New Orleans, House of Voodoo in San Francisco and more. Dark Nation Radio has existed alongside those tenures since 1999, first as a terrestrial radio show and then online since 2004.

His skill at creating a mood from the start and following it through is on display as soon as he begins, and it doesn't take long for each week to settle into its own sound space. The music is hard-driving and hardcore, often dark, always compelling. There is no place here for the uncommitted; you love it or you leave. But you won't leave. There's some kind of alchemy at work with the mix of styles cypher weaves together into an interconnected blend that offers listeners a far more nuanced experience than anything else out there. While other DJs play music, cypher creates a sound and style all his own by intertwining artists the likes of Blackcarburning, Skinny Puppy, Hansel und Gretyl, I Ya Toyah, New Model Army, Velvet Acid Christ, Psy'Aviah, Front 242, Juno Reactor, Junksista, Ghosting, Information Society, KMFDM, Azar Swan, Seeming, daddybear, Stendeck, The Anix, Lords of Acid, Alien Sex Fiend, Depeche Mode, Suicide Queen, Siouxsie & the Banshees, IAMX, A Place to Bury Strangers, Stromkern, Kevorkian Death Cycle... and countless more.

cypher moves fearlessly across the years as well as the styles, playing great tracks from the 1990s alongside those released last week. One of his stated goals is to introduce his listeners to music they aren't familiar with, and he unabashedly believes that there's as much value in today's new releases as there is in earlier work. When he tosses in an early track by Skinny Puppy and follows it with a brand new song by SØLVE or Je T'aime, the threads connecting them are clear and you wonder why you never thought to put them together yourself.

Then there are the special editions. For International Woman's Day you'll likely hear a show celebrating only female-fronted bands. Other weeks you might run into a Gothic Beach Party, or a Retro Electro show featuring 80s and 90s electronic music. He has an annual World Goth Day event, Dark Solstice shows, a periodic Under Cover show with goth and industrial bands covering their favorite tracks, and every once in a while he offers up a rousing throwback to an earlier Dark 80s music show he once hosted called Blasphemous Rumors which might feature Soft Cell, The Cure, Wall of Voodoo, Romeo Void, Adam Ant, Love and Rockets and others. Sometimes a political or social event will spark a special show and before you can recover from the announcement of a new war, a lost election or a deadly disease, cypher's put out a soundtrack for it. His sonic Rebuttal to the 2019 State of the Union kept us all sane, and his recent Women Power show after the Roe v. Wade decision started with a wake-up call and "Battle Cry" from Canadian artist Ayria that we all needed to hear.

While other stations might pull together a themed evening that periodically hits its mark, cypher's weekly show never misses. Far from facilitating a kind of tuning out, what cypher's shows allow for is a more precise tuning *in* to whatever personal or cultural straits you might be

experiencing. Each week is unique and each one responds somehow to the world, offering not just a two-hour respite but a way to keep perspective. cypher's criteria is quality, his measure how fully the tracks participate in what music is meant to do: hit us full force, move us, make us feel something, and help us walk back out into the world.

I can't remember the first time I logged in to Dark Nation Radio. I know it was pre-pandemic, and that I haven't stopped listening since. Every week when I once again cue his shows up, I feel a certain kind of calm settling in. Make no mistake, though. It's not the kind of calm you feel sitting next to a stream or staring at the stars at night. It's not meant to be. Far from mediating between the world out there and the one inside, cypher's shows inhabit your head, cut to the core, and bring with them the kind of calm that allows your senses to resonate with rhythms that run deep and sound that expands to fit the space between where you are and where you want to be.

Tune in live to DJ cypher and Dark Nation Radio on Sunday nights, starting at 9 PM EDT, on **sorradio.org**. Submit requests during the show if you get inspired; he works hard to get those in. And if you miss him there, catch all of his excellent shows in perpetuity on the streaming platforms listed below, where you can turn them up loud enough to make the walls shake.

More than 200 shows, updated weekly <http://www.mixcloud.com/cypheractive>

A year of shows, updated weekly and downloadable <http://www.hearthis.com/cypheractive>

For Apple subscribers <https://podcastsconnect.apple.com/my-podcasts/show/dj-cyphers-dark-nation-radio/027d20b6-b203-4aec-bac1-f0d7e0957017/episodes?fbclid=IwAR06alOEJ1gEk4j83RqaJp4McHQkJy6uVj40gz-uvKHm83UQ939OSTPfbF0>