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When 18-year Melbourne DJ Cooper Smith takes the main stage at this year's Ability Fest, he'll be communicating the best way he knows how – through music.

"I absolutely love how it (DJ'ing) makes me and my audiences feel," says Cooper.

"I love bringing high energy and artistry to my gigs.

"It just feels awesome that so many people are touched by my music."

Cooper will be beatmatching alongside more than 50 of Australia's leading bands and DJs for the 4th Ability Fest on 25 March at Birrarung Marr, organized by the Dylan Alcott Foundation.

He says he's pumped to perform for the first time at the all-accessible music festival, bringing his passion for Afro house and melodic techno to the dance stage.

"I'm a bit nervous about performing in front of so many thousands of people," Cooper says.

"But I'm excited and looking forward to getting people up and dancing and having fun."

Cooper, who lives with cerebral palsy, regularly DJs at clubs and corporate and private gigs around Melbourne.

He describes himself as a DJ who 'happens to have a disability.'

Supported through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to pursue his life goals, Cooper says he's 'a proud disabled guy' but his disability does not define him.

"Having cerebral palsy means my muscles move differently as all the messages get mixed up.

"It's just a small part of me but it's not who I am," Cooper says.

"I can walk, and I sometimes use a wheelchair.

"My voice sounds different, so you need to take the time and be patient to hear and understand all the awesome topics I discuss!

"When I perform, I use DJ-ing and music as a communication tool.

"I think people can see past the disability, it's not a big deal.

They just have fun and enjoy my music."

Cooper began working the DJ circuit in Melbourne after starting to DJ at home during COVID.

When school resumed, Cooper's teachers invited the aspiring DJ to entertain schoolmates during PE class and lunchbreaks.

And then something special happened.

Disability advocates and ListenABLE podcast co-hosts Dylan Alcott and Angus O'Loughlin turned up at Cooper's high school assembly to surprise Cooper with a gift – his own top-of-the-line professional scratch DJ mixer.

Cooper was grinning from ear to ear as his high school rose for a moving standing ovation.

"It was pretty amazing," Cooper says.

"They (Dylan and Angus) had heard from my awesome teacher Mr Jack that I dreamed of becoming a world-famous DJ.

"What they did helped make that dream come true!

"So, a year on I am in the studio each and every day practising and making my own music."

Cooper's music career will take a leap forward when he debuts his own music at Ability Fest.

"I've been working for about 6 months with a music producer Tom Evans, who is the most awesome and inclusive person I know," Cooper says.

"I'll be releasing my first single 'Stay' at Ability Fest, which is very exciting.

"It's a techno track, but a bit more mainstream and emotional, which will hopefully appeal to the crowd."

The NDIS is helping Cooper to pursue his goals with a variety of supports, including support workers who help him to stay fit, access his community and socialise with people his own age.

"I have 3 support workers who do different things with me like going to the gym and doing boxing, which I really love because that helps me to keep fit for my DJ work," Cooper says.

"Sometimes we go out for coffee or meet up with friends or go out with my siblings.

"My support workers are great and they're more like friends to me now.

"I like that they're young like me, it feels more like we are just sort of hanging out together."

Cooper says he hopes to be a good role model to other young people with disability.

He's looking forward to showing the crowds at Ability Fest what he can do.

"I'm living a great life and busier and having more fun than most people," Cooper says.

“I have an amazing team supporting me and I am showing everyone, disabled and able-bodied, that when you work, are persistent and committed you can achieve your goals.

"Never give up is my motto!”

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