

15 MINUTES

Paid to play

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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Doug Reeves has played tunes as a disc jockey in clubs from his hometown of Miami to Denver. His first gig, mixing music for his U.S. Air Force peers at NCO clubs in the Azores off the coast of Portugal, was more than 30 years ago.

He's still in the groove. "Where did all the years go?" he asked. Sitting in his office at home in Fort Myers Shores, Reeves grins. "I remember the days when I had to do mobiles (gigs for which he brought all his own gear) with records," he said, looking through some of his old vinyl collection. "I was right there with the first of all the DJs."

After the Air Force, in the 1980s, Reeves attended Brown Institute of Broadcasting in Fort Lauderdale and became a DJ at a club in Miami called Level 3. When it was turned in to a salsa lounge (a result of more than 100,000 Cuban immigrants who arrived in the city), Reeves found work at a hotel in Denver. "The general manager made me an offer I couldn't refuse," he said. "What I liked the best was working nights and having the day off." He played music from around 8 p.m. to 2 a.m., and during the day finished a bachelor's degree in business administration.

When the gig in Denver ended, Reeves found work at another hotel,

this time in Seattle. While there he also became a member of the Screen Actors Guild and appeared in a commercial for beef jerky. He remembers being paid \$333 per day to film the spot and another \$333 every week the spot ran on television.

Ultimately, Reeves returned home to Miami after a death in the family. He worked for a karaoke company in Fort Lauderdale and sold music equipment during the day.

Upon coming to Southwest Florida in the mid-1990s, his first job was at Sluggers Sports Bar & Grill in Fort Myers. Rap music by the likes of Snoop Dogg and K5 was becoming popular, but Reeves saw disco resurge as well. He learned to read the crowds and play what they wanted to hear, taking cues from requests and by paying attention to tapping hands or feet.

"You kind of read body language," he said. "I always broke it up. I didn't play the same stuff all night." By switching music styles and paces, he said, you "bring it up and slow it down," he said. That keeps one group at the tables and one group on the dance floor for most of the night, so someone's always buying drinks, he explained.

Reeves doesn't play clubs anymore, preferring instead to book weddings, private and company parties and other special events. "Halloween parties, luaus, you name it," he said. His last club job was at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, where he worked from 1998 until shortly after the hotel's Millennial Bash. "I figured I might as well go out in style," he said about the party



EVAN WILLIAMS/FLORIDA WEEKLY

Doug Reeves

that ushered in the year 2000.

He put his business degree to use and became project accountant for multi-million dollar developments at the Ritz and at Edison State College. Now during the day, he's a production manager at Fireservice Disaster Kleanup in Fort Myers. And by night, he plays dance tunes. Reach him at (239) 267-1576 or www.atmosphereentertainmentdj.com.

When he's not spinning music, Reeves likes to take his boats out on

the Caloosahatchee River. He guided a small, speedy one called "Excalibur" out of the canals in Fort Myers Shores one evening last week. It was a test run for the hydrogen generator he had built and installed in the engine, to save gas. He got the boat up to about 30 RPMs and raced toward a looming stack of clouds and the setting sun.

One or two errant drops of rain fell; a rainbow appeared.

"Miami Vice!" Reeves said. ■

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