

Harrow's hip-hop yoga star

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Hip-hop music and yoga might not sound like the most natural of partners, however one Harrow resident is aiming to change that view.

Neil Patel is now offering hip-hop yoga classes to the public, which he says can help people get fitter and lose weight.

The HA1's Mahira Sobral went to meet Neil to find out more about him and his hybrid art.



Neil Patel, aka N1, was born in Windsor then moved to Harrow at the age of two and is very happy he did.

"Harrow is a straight-forward, clean, positive borough, which allows for opportunity and nurtures the development of young people beautifully.

"I don't think I could have felt as comfortable being myself in any other borough in London!"

Harrow news: The Harrow man fusing hip-hop and yoga: The HA1

Patel began teaching yoga in Harrow 19 years ago but says he was exposed to the practice as a toddler, running around his mum's studio as she was teaching and "playing with the students and positions."

However, he did not stick to traditional yoga for long. Patel gave birth to a [contemporary technique combining hip-hop music and dance](#), bringing together his two passions.

"Certainly yoga is a lot to do with vibration and sound, so hip-hop music incorporates all of that," he said.

The 38-year-old then noticed a gap in the market as a big part of the local community was not interested in yoga.

"By bringing hip-hop music and yoga together, it allows the younger generation and those who aren't interested in traditional yoga to enter the market".

Generally speaking hip-hop and rap music are seen as violent and angry, which seem the complete opposites to the fundamentals of yoga.

Yet Patel makes a comparison between the lyrics and poetry in hip-hop and Indian scriptures.

"If you look at yoga scriptures a lot of it is in verse, just like rap and hip-hop. They are all based on poetry and beautiful writing. Essentially hip-hop is the scriptures of the new ages".

Patel says his passion for music comes from the cultural and ethnic mix he grew up with in Harrow, which introduced him to the hip-hop culture.

Yoga is a type of meditation to find one's centre and inner piece and with upbeat hip-hop playing you would think the music would be distracting.

However, Patel argues his lively classes are about having fun first and being positive: "so while we are doing the exercises the music is on and it is about having fun and doing the work. But, then when we meditate and relax, I share some poetry to the class".

The stamina and endurance needed for his workouts are two of the main differences between his Chi Kri Yoga and other practices like Vinyasa and Bikram Yoga.

Chi means energy and Kri means action, and he explains: "It means taking your highest energy and using it in all your actions," and he's not exaggerating.

His classes usually last about 105 minutes, complete with non-stop core work and traditional asana movements.

"If you are not on point, I'll chase you and make sure you get back on. Everything is on beat; just like dancing, everyone has to stay together."

It requires a lot of positive energy, or maybe just energy, to keep up with the Chi Kri master. In fact, Patel even credits yoga for helping him survive after being diagnosed with a rare form of cancer in 2000 and given 2-5 years to live.

"It was meant to spread to my lungs and my brain, but my body has contained it from growing and spreading.

"Science is starting to change now. They are going to start to discover the relationship with the mind and body. People don't realise how bad negative energy and thoughts are for our bodies."

Away from his teaching Patel is very much a community man and loves to get involved whenever he can.

Over the next few months he is hosting various fundraising events to raise money for local charities, at which he will also be performing his original raps.

"I want to give the power back to the people. I come from Harrow, I've been cured in Harrow, and I want to give that same power back to the people of Harrow."

To find out more about his battle with cancer, read his book '[What is Disease?](#)'

For more information about Hip hop yoga classes check out [Neil's website](#)

By Mahira Sobral

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