



Drew Thomas, who performs under the name RDLN, will return to Jub Jub's Thirst Parlor for a show this Friday.

PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

Rapped up

RDLN

In a way, the story of Reno rapper RDLN

sounds like a comic book plot—fitting since he often writes in an analogous way about the fantasy world. Picture the scene: friendly and even-mannered Drew Thomas sells cars for a living. Then, he puts on his RDLN persona, and it's a boisterous and wild show that's a true transformation.

"What I'm doing now is very different from how I started, but I like to call it nerdcore," Thomas said. "I rap about superheroes and anime, but I put it to a real-life aspect and do it in a very loud, in-your-face way. There are people where it goes over their heads, and then guys in the crowd that are like, 'This is the shit.' A couple of times I've had moshpits going to a *Dragon Ball Z* influenced song that I did."

Thomas' high-energy shows have been seen over several different eras of the Reno rap scene. He started rapping when he was in middle school in the early '00s and was doing shows as a teen until he moved from Reno in 2008. He and his young family moved back in 2011, but it took him three more years to get back on stage.

"I had to put it on hold because of work," Thomas said. "Music is my passion, but it's second to family and jobs."

A familiar story for many musicians, for sure, but it hasn't stopped Thomas from pursuing his style. He's opened for acts like Brotha Lynch, Rittz and the Moonshine Bandits in recent years, and he's going to open for one of his all-time favorites, the rap/rock hybrid Hed PE, this weekend.

"Coming back here, I got back in touch with a lot of the friends I had, and that really relit the fire under me," he said.

Thomas' stage name is indeed a play on the word Ritalin, a reference to his youth when he was diagnosed with ADHD. "My mom had me on a bunch of stuff from the age of 3 up until I was 16," Thomas said.

He also promotes shows, and the company he runs with his wife, Tamara Thomas, is called ADHD Entertainment. He said that Tamara is often a source of inspiration for his music.

"She's constantly trying to motivate me," Thomas said. "She's probably the person pushing me the most right now, but doing it in a way that respects what I'm going through. When I'm feeling down or stressed out, she tells me, 'Why don't you try writing something?'"

One aspect of the rap world that Thomas wants to do more of is collaborate. He mentioned a standing offer from the local metal band Preacher to do some work, and he wants to work again in the trio ZXRXS. That's a group featuring Thomas with a performer named Z from the local collective Firing Squad and another rapper named Stun 'Em. He admits that there's some procrastination involved in putting out new work online, but he also loves performing.

"It's kind of a double-sided coin," Thomas said. "When I get onstage, I feel like I get to be 100-percent me, and I get to be loud and people can see this side of me that I don't get to show 80 hours a week. It absolutely fuels the fire. But, the other side of the coin is that there's so much that goes into promoting a show and balancing that with work and family that it can hinder me with sitting down and starting new stuff. I know that is on me, though." □

RDLN opens for Hed PE and Blacklist Regulars at 8 p.m. Nov. 22 at Jub Jub's Thirst Parlor, 71 S. Wells Ave. Hear more from RDLN at soundcloud.com/kiddrdln.



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