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Campbell's Tunes Are Music To Fans' Ears

By Dawn Lozniskar – Sports Editor

OKEMOS – Anyone who has ever attended a MSU Spartan hockey game, or a Detroit Red Wings game, and chuckled at some of the musical selections in between plays probably never thought about the mastermind behind the tunes. Okemos resident Tim Campbell is that man, the one who gives us something to listen to when the teams aren't playing.

Campbell heads up "Tunes by T" one fixture on the local party and wedding scene. The Okemos-based company will celebrate its 15th anniversary on Wednesday.

Wednesday will also mark Campbell's return to the music booth at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit, where he will cue up the music for the Red Wings match up with the Los Angeles Kings.

Campbell began providing the music for sporting events during the 1992-93 MSU Spartan hockey season, and picked up the Red Wings two years later.

But his professional development as a D.J. really began when he was a youngster with 45's in a shoebox.

"Growing up listening to the radio, everyone always said I knew the words, title and artist to every song," Campbell recalled earlier this week.

As he got older, the Lansing Catholic Central grad would first take music to parties, and then bring along stereo equipment.

Following a lengthy stint in his father's catering business, Campbell turned full-time D.J. at 23.

These days, his mobile service can handle a maximum of five weddings and four stadium events on any given night, but the sporting events are what capture his attention.

The gig at Munn Arena began with the annual Green-and-White game because the Spartan Brass was not there to provide between-play entertainment.

Veteran head coach Ron Mason then wanted to implement D.J. music for games, alternating it with live music.

The 1997 Stanley Cup champions, who had lost their D.J., discovered Campbell through MSU. They offered him a tryout during the 1994-95 exhibition season, and the rest is entertainment history.

Campbell now works all the Wings' home games and Detroit Tiger baseball games.

"I'm combining the things I love: hockey and music. It's a perfect job." he said.

On a typical Red Wings home game day, Campbell arrives in Detroit after the 65-minute drive from Okemos.

The arena doors open to the public at 6 p.m., and Campbell plays music from his self-described "cinderblock cubby hole" over Section 203B until 6:55 p.m.

That's when the players take the ice, and the volume goes up a little for the hard-driving music that motivates the players.

Campbell said he rarely gets requests from any of the Red Wings, except during the playoffs. One in particular is Darren McCarty, who prefers alternative rock. From his perch, Campbell can get away with quite a bit that, say, someone in the press box could not. There is definite cheering going on, as well as conversations with fans in nearby seats.

The fun factor got a little higher during the 1997 Stanley Cup playoffs, especially the closer the Red Wings got to winning the trophy.

When the team was on the road, Campbell supplied the soundtrack for broadcasts in "Joe Vision" or the arena's jumbo screen.

At the moment of victory, his emotions were naturally ecstatic. "They've won the cup; what am I going to play now?," Campbell remembers thinking.

The team included him in the celebratory parade, where he rode with a sound system in the back of a shiny red pickup truck.

"This really has turned into a great job," he said.

Campbell can be reached at (517) 347-7565.