

NIGHT LIFE

Never too much of a good thing for Soulwax

■The irreverent DJ team remixed its own rock-inspired album into a synthed-out rave up.

By Chris Lee, Times Staff Writer

Manning the decks under the moniker 2 Many DJs, Belgian brothers David and Stephen Dewaele helped usher in the mash-up era in the early '00s by exploding existing notions of what gets bodies moving on the dance floor. They were among the first turntablists to sonically commingle, say, Salt 'n Pepa with the Stooges, or Michael Jackson with AC/DC.

Despite a lucrative sideline as remixers (Kylie Minogue and Gorillaz, among others, have enlisted 2 Many DJs' services) and high-flying DJ gigs around the world, the brothers' passion is their glam rock quartet, Soulwax. Already a big deal in Europe, the group has performed at such prestigious musical Bacchanalias as Rock Werchter and the Glastonbury Festival (respectively Belgium's and Britain's answers to Coachella).

With the release this week of Soulwax's "Nite Versions" CD, however, the Dewaeles turn their mash-up abilities inward. They re-recorded most of the tracks from the group's well-received 2004 album "Any Minute Now," replacing guitars and drums with sequencers and synthesizers and reconstituting its predecessor's rock sound into a seamless electronica mix.

"Remix albums have been done, but we couldn't think of a rock band that had remixed itself — and then played the remixes live," vocalist Stephen Dewaele says. "It's like 2 Many DJs," he continues, "dance music with a punk attitude."

A U.S. mini-tour dubbed Radio Soulwax kicks off tonight at the Vanguard in Hollywood. And adding to the self-reflexive spirit of the group's current project, the Dewaeles will open for themselves as 2 Many DJs.

Though certain surprising cross fades are inevitable in most of the duo's sets — who says you can't mix Zongamin into the Residents? — don't hold your breath waiting for run-of-the-mill mash-ups. In fact, don't even bring up the M-word.

"I never felt mash-ups were mash-ups. I resent the word," Stephen Dewaele says. "It should be more than an a capella of Missy Elliott with some Strokes music underneath. Instead of mashing up two songs, why not four or five?"

Such opinion begs a question about the state of the turntablist union: Are there too many DJs?

"A DJ performance is fundamentally boring," Dewaele says. "It's just a guy playing other people's music. And when we started doing this in Europe, the DJ's status was so overrated. But we discovered we could do something different: We never rehearse. We have fun with our friends. We make a party with some surprises. And the people go crazy!"

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