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News

Music



A mixed bag at Sounds of Om

Reuters
 May 7 2001 12:22AM

HOLLYWOOD (Variety) - San Francisco-based Om Records sent out bands Soulstice and Afro-Mystik with deejays Marques Wyatt and Mark Farina to tour together, and the result is a club lineup dubbed Sounds of Om that is united in beats, with each performer throwing unique takes into the mix. Touring these acts together gives the audience a tiny sample of talents and, for the most part, leaves them wanting more.

Event caught last week began and ended with the deejays spinning their own brand of electronica, Wyatt starting the night and Farina finishing in the morning. Both combine assorted existing records to spawn their own creations in the vein of house music.

House music originated at a Chicago club, with disco as the foundation; it has evolved into blended bass lines, drums, vocals, hi-hats and artificial handclaps in a steady rhythm marked by four beats per measure, 125 beats per minute.

Los Angeles native Wyatt, who's been into the club scene since the 1980s, introduced his hometown to house music through his own deejaying and promotion of other talent. This night he was hidden in the disc jockey booth on the balcony level mixing up disco-infused grooves, but his presence was still felt on the dance floor. While heavy on the bass that thump, thump, thumped out of the speakers, Wyatt threw in African beats, maracas, a trumpet, keyboards and a xylophone.

After Wyatt, Soulstice crowded the stage with seven touring members. Chanteuse Gina Rene captivated the venue with her emotion-filled vocals, haunting, throaty and beautiful, while the band wove a rich texture with keyboards, a bass, a guitar and a turntable adding beats.

On the group's first number, "The Reason," Rene's vocals were melded into the music, making her words difficult to understand. Eventually, her vocals were brought to the forefront. Soulstice showcased "Not Alone," "Fall Into You" and the title track from its newly released album "Illusion" before finishing with the house-imbued "Tenderly."

While Afro-Mystik set up, deejay Rithma kept the clubgoers dancing with melodies, rhythm and bass. Lethargy took over, though, as Afro-Mystik began its set. Tribal rhythms with congas and bongos weren't able to break the torpor this band brought on. Omega Brooks' vocals didn't help much, either, and she even commented, "You're tired? You all sound sleepy!"

But a transformation took place with their last two songs, as Chris Smith (also known as DJ Fluid) injected beats and samples to help pick up the energy with more aid from percussionist Jason Kadlec.

Presented by Xtreadz, Om Records, URB magazine. Performers: Rithma,