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Shine on, Dewanatron

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Colin Young-Wolff / Special to the Times

"Now stare into my eyes!" Magician Rob Zabrecky practices the art of illusion on the GhettoGloss crowd.

By Dean Kuipers, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
June 1, 2009

If you've got a melody gin, it only takes two little musical tones to make a song, a really good party, or even a strange and ever-changing career as a musician. Sunday night at GhettoGloss gallery in Silver Lake, the duo known as Dewanatron made a rare appearance with their handmade instruments, pulled together a bunch of L.A.-based musicians and a birthday cake, and left the local hip-osisie gaping in wonder.

"Much like a cotton gin weaves together strands to make cloth, the melody gin weaves together a melody," explained Leon Dewan in between sets. One half of Dewanatron, Leon makes the "guts" of their handmade analogue electronic instruments, while his cousin Brian Dewan makes the cabinets. Leon's father was an inventor and worked with high-voltage equipment. "It's better to work with low-voltage, solid-state parts," nodded Leon, "and not risk death every day."

The Dewans' melody gins come in various sizes and shapes – some, like the Dual Primate Console, are too big to transport easily. Others are gallery installations or meant to hang on walls, where they generate tones on their own. Leon explained that the particular gin he was playing that night, which was about the size of an old reel-to-reel tape machine, generated sets of two toggling tones – up to sixteen total – that could then be modified with banks of knobs and dampening keys.

At full roar, the Dewanatron experience howled and warbled with demented mid-1960s fervor, all simple rhythms laced up with complex and freakish electronic wails, a retrofuturistic journey to the reinvention of the synthesizer.

The Dewans were joined by screenwriter Mark Blackwell on guitar; filmmaker Paul Yates on his own Dewan-built melody gin; bassist Jim Robbins; Drivin' n Cryin' drummer Jeff Sullivan; Tim Maloney on incidental violin, trumpet and guitar; plus other folks on electric dulcimers and found percussion, and Tommy Jordan banging spoons all over the

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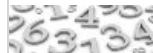
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Photos: GhettoGloss
Dewanatron Show

place.

Spoons, in fact, were the motif of the evening, with silver spoons arranged on the walls, as the night also celebrated the birthday of Spoonfed Art proprietor Karin Collins. Her jewelry, based on spoons (www.spoonfedart.com), has been featured in about a zillion publications including Nylon, Health, Jane and L.A. Weekly, and is available at the GhettoGloss boutique.

Magician Rob Zabrecky, formerly in Silver Lake band Possum Dixon, even kicked the night off with a card trick and some illusions. Which were really good and worked even in lights so dim you could hardly see. What more do you want from a Sunday night?



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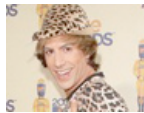
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