



# DJ Soul Sister

04/16/2006 by [Site Staff \(https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sitestaff/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sitestaff/)

In the club world, where most DJs are men, Melissa Weber, aka DJ Soul Sister, stands out: Besides being a woman, she is the only DJ in New Orleans regularly spinning genres such as rare groove, underground disco, old-school hip-hop, D.C. go-go, boogaloo, funk and soul. She is one of a few women internationally to specialize in these styles, and possibly the only black woman to do so in the United States.

Her shows are Wednesday nights at King Bolden's (11 p.m. to 2 a.m.), Friday nights at Shiloh (11 p.m. to 4 a.m.), Saturday (11 p.m. to 4 a.m.) and Sunday nights (10 p.m. to 1 a.m.) at Mimi's. She has also used her spinning skills at Tipitina's, Le Bon Temps Roule and the Ponderosa Stomp.

DJ Soul Sister also converts radio listeners to her musical passions on "Soul Power," her Saturday-night (8 to 10 p.m.) show on WWOZ-FM/90.7. She has been on 'OZ since 1994, when she was 19.

Find out more about rare groove and DJ Soul Sister at [www.djsoulsister.com](http://www.djsoulsister.com).

**Name:** Melissa Weber, aka DJ Soul Sister  
**Age:** 30  
**Born:** New Orleans  
**Resides:** Uptown  
**Favorite food:** Red beans and rice  
**Favorite book:** I like music biographies; right now I'm reading *Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye* by David Ritz. It's not fluffy, it's well-written.  
**Favorite movie:** Anything with Rudy Ray Moore, particularly in the "Dolemite" movies.  
**Favorite TV shows:** "Sanford and Son," "Good Times" and "What's Happening."

## **You play musical genres that many people have never heard of – what musicians do you think are representative of them?**

- For old-school hip-hop and breaks, try Kurtis Blow, Biz Markie, LL Cool J, Run DMC, Cold Crush Brothers, Funky 4 Plus 1 More, and T-Ski Valley – mid-to-late-80s artists.
- Disco, which gets a bad name because all people know is the commercial variety, there's Manu Dibango [his *Soul Makossa* is considered one of the first disco albums] and the Fatback Band. Many times when people hear this type of disco they think it's new house

music. Just shows how classic it is.

- Old-school funk is the Commodores and L.T.D.
- Deep funk is a harder beat; try early Fatback Band, the Soul Searchers, Skullsnaps and Black Heat.
- Boogaloo/soul jazz/groove jazz: boogaloo: Joe Bataan, Willie Bobo; soul and groove jazz: Blackbyrds, Pleasure, Bobbi Humphrey, Les McCann, Brother Jack McDuff, Jimmy Smith and Jimmy McGriff.
- Rare groove: I suggest Kool and the Gang's Music is the Message – it blends jazz and funk.
- D.C. go-go: Turn to the “Godfather,” Chuck Brown (and the Soul Searchers) or Trouble Funk and Rare Essence.

**How many records do you own?** Around 2,000, though that's not as many as some DJs.

**Is everything you play on vinyl?** Yes, 100 percent. I will never switch to CDs. I only have CDs to play in my car.

Don't your records wear out? I take care of them. I'm not a DJ who is a turntable-ist – I don't cut and scratch my records like they do. I would like to listen to my records for years to come. And some of my records are too expensive to cut.

**Where do you find records in New Orleans?** Louisiana Music Factory, Rock N Roll Collectibles [where this photo was taken], Jim Russell Rare Records, as well as thrift stores and garage sales.

**Tell me about your DJ shows.** Each one has a different vibe. I like to say that I'm not just a DJ (having a show), but that I'm throwing a party, one I would like to go to. I want to create a positive situation that folks can enjoy. My nights are more like events instead of just a club you go to.

People were saying there was no place to dance, and out of that came “Hustle.” It's Saturday night at Mimi, and it is the best underground party in the city. Sundays at Mimi's is “Unwind,” when I play soul jazz, fusion and boogaloo (a mix of African and Latin beats) – a lot of music that I play on Saturday night, but it's not a dance night; people are there to chill out.

Sometimes I drop some roots reggae. Friday nights at Shiloh is “Breakdown,” at which I play old-school hip-hop and “breaks,” the parts of songs from the '70s that breakdancers used, and occasionally D.C. go-go; “B-side” is Wednesdays at King Bolden's, and it's mostly rare groove.

**Can you support yourself being a DJ?** I am trying to right now. Before hurricane Katrina I worked full time at the Contemporary Arts Center. When I lost my job I thought I would give it a go, since I was getting a lot of phone calls to come back to DJ in New Orleans after I had evacuated.

**What do you like to do when you go out?** I like the live music and DJ culture equally. I listen to brass bands and Walter “Wolfman” Washington. DJ T-Roy has the only reggae show

at Shiloh on Thursday nights and DJ Quickie Mart is now at Handsome Willy's. He plays underground hip-hop.

**How did you get interested in these types of music?** Mainly through my love of hip-hop in the late 1980s. I always wanted to dig deeper and learn where the samples of the hip-hop tunes came from. For instance, the basis of the huge hit that Beyonce had, "Crazy in Love," is nothing more than a loop of an early 1970s tune by the Chi-Lites called "Are You My Woman?."

**Who do you think is an underappreciated musician or band?** New Orleans funk musicians other than the Meters, such as the Batiste Brothers, back in the day, and Chocolate Milk.

**True confession.** I like punk rock music. I got into it when I was in middle school. I really wanted to live during that time, be in that world.

–Sue Strachan

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