
EXPLORING NIGHTLIFE: SPACE, SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

JORDI NOFRE AND ADAM ELDRIDGE (EDITORS)

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Exploring Nightlife is a fascinating and insightful volume exploring often overlooked issues related to the “night” and those who inhabit it. The concepts of nightlife, night time, and urban nightscapes are closely scrutinised by the diverse authors in this collection. Nightlife for the purposes of this review is conceived as both the actual physical sites for the consumption of intoxicating substances and experiences, and as the location of such sites within city nightscapes. Therefore, nightlife, as the authors in this book highlight, refers to *more than* physical venues. It is a more fluid concept that can also refer literally to life at night: how the urban landscape is transformed after dark, and how the city at night is consumed by its often-diverse populations. As the editors note in their introduction to the book, nightlife is not new, but the regeneration and gentrification of urban areas is a phenomenon that has taken on increased significance in the post-industrial era of neo-liberalism. Such regeneration often has a relationship with nightlife, either by altering, sometimes radically, existing ebbs and flows of urban nightscapes or through the introduction and development of new nightlife areas and venues. The idea that this type of intervention and regeneration in inner city locations and other areas perceived as run down, risky and dangerous will “save” the area and its inhabitants while providing economic stimulation and profits is one that is critically interrogated in this volume. A variety of topics such as: harm reduction; power and resistance in city nightscapes throughout processes of gentrification and regeneration; resistance to regeneration as a form of social control; and the displacement of existing nightlife traditions, are explored by the authors in this volume providing a critical and nuanced discussion of some of the key themes related to nightlife and the city after dark.

A key theme running through many of the chapters in this volume is the success of regeneration and gentrification, and the typically dramatic effects these kinds of urban policies have on nightlife and those who inhabit(ed) urban nightscapes. Several authors question these kinds of developments noting the displacement of important nightlife traditions to make way for allegedly new and improved ways of experiencing the spaces and places of the night. It is also notable that the capitalist model of economic revitalisation and profit is a key presence in schemes of regeneration and gentrification, in contexts that have previously had very different ways of approaching social life: for example, the socialist perspective of pre-war Yugoslavia that viewed nightlife and leisure as important for human development, not as an escape from capitalist oppression of labour as noted by Nihad Cengic and Jordi Martin-Diaz (54). The gentrification of nightlife after the Bosnian war to accommodate new migrant groups as well as the emerging youthful middle classes, coupled with new kinds of state policies, radically altered the nightscapes of Sarajevo, producing tensions between old and new residents of the city. As Peta Wolfson in chapter 2 notes class inequalities are often embedded in gentrification and regeneration developments, producing tensions between urban populations and antagonism towards city planners who have “ruined” previously thriving night time economies. Similarly, in Johannesburg Crystal Oloukoi’s description, in chapter 1, of urban redevelopments and the symbolic violence wrought by gentrification paints a vivid picture of sanitised and surveilled spaces with previous inhabitants displaced to other parts of the city.

A Westernised view of nightlife is challenged by Atepheh Amid in chapter 5, through her discussion of the city of Mashhad in Iran. Using religion as a lens to explore the redevelopment and gentrification of a particular part of Mashhad that contains an important shrine, a different view of the night unfolds. A vibrant, thriving nightlife culture, built over centuries exists or existed in Mashhad and the night was not associated with sin and immorality as it is in many Western cultures. A 24-hour city was built around the arrival of pilgrims to visit the shrine at any time of the day or night, and places serving food or providing accommodation were bustling and numerous. The plan to redevelop this area to accommodate more pilgrims and visitors to the shrine is critiqued in this chapter with Amid pointing to the negative impact on the local cultural and economic success of the area. The redevelopment has overwhelmed existing night time communities and failed to attract pilgrims to the new modernised area. Similar to other chapters in this volume she points to the detrimental effects of gentrification on public night time spaces and the cultural diversity they engender.

This volume therefore raises key questions around gentrification and regeneration such as who are they actually for and who do they benefit? Although, more pertinent questions to ask may be who *should* they actually be for and who *should* they actually benefit? as noted in the example of Amsterdam by Irina van Aalst and Ilse van Liempt in chapter 11. Here “touristification” is viewed as problematic and as upsetting the balance between sex workers and residents in the red-light district of Amsterdam. The redevelopment

of this area of the city to reduce the visibility of sex work, to attract a more respectable class of tourist to the area, has had detrimental effects on the urban spaces/s and on the sex work industry. Locals can no longer shop for essentials like bread in their newly developed upmarket environment, and sex work clients are scared away by the high level of tourism that makes clients of sex workers highly visible. Here the impression is that urban development was outward facing in a global tourist context rather than inward facing for local residents and businesses, and raises the question of *who* should these kinds of regeneration and gentrification plans be aimed at? These are also issues raised by Daniel Malet Calvo, Joao Carlos Martins and Inigo Sanchez-Fuarros in chapter 9 throughout their consideration of the “studentification” of Lisbon through the presence of Erasmus students. The commodification of the student experience has contributed to the segregation of urban nightlife between Erasmus and local students, while the gentrification of areas of the city offering commercialised student nightlife experiences continues the eviction and displacement of previous populations. It could be argued that areas with countercultural and resistance traditions are replaced with “controlled diversity” the phrase used by Penny-Panagiota Koutrolidou in chapter 4 (79). However, perhaps encouragingly, Calvo et al. also note that not all Erasmus students flock to the commercialised experience with some preferring more diverse nightlife experiences.

In chapter 4 Penny-Panagiota Koutrolidou also notes issues of displacement of some populations through the gentrification process in her exploration of the nightlife developments in Athens. The concept of “ghettos of the mind” is raised here in relation to fears about particular, often inner-city, neighbourhoods, exaggerated through media discourse and sensationalism. This chapter also raises questions about surveillance and control – are increased surveillance and control the price paid for gentrification and revitalisation of inner city and other run-down areas? New gentrified populations demand safety and reassurance through increased policing and control of undesirable pre-existing residents, as they experience newly developed residential and nightlife areas. As pertinently noted in this chapter, solutions to problems such as addiction and poverty are seen through repression and displacement, rather than through helping the populations that need it (77). Resistance to regeneration and gentrification is also noted the Brazilian context, in Rio de Janeiro by Marcos Paulo Ferreria de Gois, in chapter 13, with more intensive policing accompanying the revitalisation and redevelopment of urban areas, aiming to control unruly groups. The effect was to reduce the numbers of patrons visiting these newly developed areas at night, similar to the experiences in Amsterdam, and “the heavy-handed actions, as a result, only worked as a stimulus for the creation of other night places, protected from the eyes of authority” (218). These kinds of observations bring to the fore the fluidity and flexibility of nightlife, and the perseverance of resistance in urban nightscapes.

This perseverance of resistance is noted by some of the authors in this volume, notably Samantha Wilkinson in chapter 7 and Jose Sanchez-Garcia in chapter 6. Mahragan music is seen as resistance music, linked to working class male populations, and exists on the

margins of city nightscapes in Cairo. Mahragan enthusiasts are seen as misfits and the music as vulgar and uncivilised by those who want to present a Westernised, cultured face to the global world. The endurance of Mahragan music, its politics of resistance and challenge to dominant groups, signals that these hidden and underground spaces of the night time economy continue alongside the gentrification that often dramatically alters urban landscapes, echoed in the Erasmus students who seek out “authentic” local experiences and resist more commercialised entertainment developments.

The pleasures and harms related to alcohol and other drug intoxication are also explored in this edited collection. The choices of young people in two suburban areas in Manchester, UK about where and how to consume alcohol may also be read as resistance to commercialised nightlife spaces from which they are excluded due to age, gender or class. Young people in these under researched cultural contexts moved between spaces for alcohol consumption and a number of things played a part in their choices: others inhabiting the bars/pubs; the atmosphere; what kind of night out they wanted and so on. For those choosing to drink in outside spaces, such as parks, the freedom and excitement experienced were preferable to being in enclosed spaces. Samantha Wilkinson—in Chapter 5—makes the important point that outdoor spaces were not necessarily used for drinking because young people had nowhere else to go – some groups of young people actively sought out and chose these kinds of places for alcohol consumption. Her work also demonstrates that the nightscape is multi-faceted and complex with a number of different ways of engaging with suburban drinking environments, allowing a rejection of commercialised venues.

Marion Roberts in her discussion in chapter 8 notes the gendered aspect of the night time economy with women struggling to find a (safe) space or place in this hyper masculine environment. Intoxicated women face a number of issues, not least the accusation that they are inviting harms such as sexual violence by being intoxicated. Often policies to make the night time playscape safer are gender neutral, ignoring the issues faced by women in particular, although Roberts points to two promising initiatives based on improving mini-cab safety, and raising the profile of the unacceptability of sexual violence and harassment of women in nightlife venues. However, the challenge to undo deeply embedded notions of traditional masculinities and femininities in spaces of intoxication is fraught with tensions that “require concerted and explicit action to challenge” (143). The development and commercialisation of the leisure industry and night time spaces has led to the normalisation of the use of illicit drugs in some clubs and venues. The notion of pleasure, bound up with illicit intoxications, is explicitly engaged with by Helena Valente, Christina Vales Pires and Helena Carvalho in chapter 12 in their exploration of harm reduction in the Portuguese context. They focus on a peer based harm reduction organisation that offers advice to club and other party goers around alcohol and other drug use, and sometimes provides reagent testing of substances. The importance of engaging with discourses of pleasure is noted by the authors of this chapter, as well as the necessity

of moving away from medicalised notions of harm reduction that are not necessarily appropriate for a mainly youthful population using drugs in a recreational manner. The success of this approach is demonstrated through interviews with users of the services, who note their behavioural change in terms of not mixing drugs, taking less of a substance or drinking less alcohol. Reducing the harms related to the city nightscape and moving patrons successfully through their intoxication experiences is an important part of urban development that should not be forgotten or sidelined.

It is clear from the chapters in this volume that the night is a complex phenomenon, entangled in a number of debates related to space and place as well as numerous social, cultural and historical contexts. The arguments presented by the authors in this edited collection raise important questions around gentrification and development of city nightscapes, not least *who* benefits or *should* benefit from these kinds of developments. Sadly, it seems that often such developments sweep away existing thriving and diverse nightlife cultures displacing marginalised populations and moving them further to the outskirts of urban life. However, that resistance is still apparent speaks to the importance of diversity in shaping nightlife spaces and places, even if from the margins. This volume grapples with the thorny problems surrounding the development of nightlife, gentrification and regeneration in a global context, not least the complexities in developing nightscapes that are as risk free as possible, while maintaining diversity and respect for existing nightlife cultures – a highly recommended read.

**DUTCH DANCE, 1988-2018:
HOW THE NETHERLANDS TOOK THE LEAD IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC CULTURE**
MARK VAN BERGEN (TRANS. ANDREW CARTWRIGHT)

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In an iconic scene from *The Social Network*, young Mark Zuckerberg and Napster-founder Sean Parker are sitting in a sleek dance club in San Francisco. While discussing business, they are immersed in some hypnotic music bordering on progressive house or trance. The track is Cassius's "The Sound of Violence", but as remixed by Dennis De Laat, a producer from the Netherlands. Moreover, De Laat's mix was released on a sublabel of Spinnin' Records, one of the bestselling dance labels in the world—itsself based in Hilversum near Amsterdam. That a Dutch producer would soundtrack a key scene from a film concerned with big-tech entrepreneurship would come as no surprise to Mark van Bergen, the author of *Dutch Dance, 1988-2018: How the Netherlands Took the Lead in Electronic Music Culture*. The topic of this book is primarily the history and rise of Dutch dance music both within Holland and abroad.

When exploring the lineups of major EDM festivals over the last decade, the presence of global stars from the Netherlands certainly stands out: Tiësto, Armin van Buuren, Martin Garrix, Afrojack, Hardwell, Chuckie, and Nicky Romero, to name a few. However, partly because of underground tendencies that avoid the commercial mainstream, EDMC studies has scarcely touched on why and how these Dutch stars came to have such prominence in dance pop. *Dutch Dance* is the first book in English to attempt a recounting of this history up through commercial success. The book is divided into four chapters, or "dance stages", that explore the respective decades of this history, from the 1980s to the 2010s. A longtime journalist and lecturer on EDM and the music industry, van Bergen has assembled an impressive array of interviews and insider knowledge. *Dutch Dance* is also a long-time project, as this book is an expanded edition of an original 2013 publication that covered a 25-year history. Van Bergen's publisher, Mary Go Wild, is itself the publishing wing of a key dance store in Amsterdam that was launched in 2013. Mary Go Wild, as store and publishing house, resulted from a successful book launch of a volume of the same name. Multiple books focusing on Dutch dance have followed, the majority of which have not appeared in English (e.g. Bergen 2013).

Given this relative scarcity of English scholarly resources, questions of presenting and translating Dutch dance history for an international audience are key. The volume's strengths lie here in that it is primarily a *scene* history, with a wealth of details, although I will discuss some critical responses to the framing and analysis of this history. I recommend that readers focus on the insights into the music industry and the regional dance scenes discussed by van Bergen. As an overarching history of four decades, the book explores key styles in Dutch dance's evolution. In the 1980s chapter, van Bergen primarily explores the reception of disco, house, techno, and new beat in Holland, emphasizing the foundations of dance music in queer and Black American dance cultures. Regarding the 1980s scene in Holland, particular attention is given to pioneering DJs such as Eddy de Clercq and Joost van Bellen at the Amsterdam club RoXY, as well as Hillegonda Rietveld's experiences at the Hacienda when house music exploded. Van Bergen promotes the notion of a Dutch "Autumn of Love" as a response to the famed British "Summer of Love" in 1988. This idea resituates and complicates the UK focus in the development of rave culture, demonstrating a transnational evolution of rave across Europe.¹

In the 1990s chapter, van Bergen shifts to a key period of transformation in Dutch dance culture. He emphasizes the innovations of Dutch gabber and hardcore, and the founding of the event organization ID&T, which has had lasting marks on Dutch dance to this day. Importantly, van Bergen does not forget Holland's key success at this time with respect to Eurodance, exploring acts from Twenty 4 Seven to 2 Unlimited, followed later by the Vengaboys. Such a focus demonstrates the long history of dance pop in Holland beyond current EDM stars. Van Bergen points out key features in 1990s rave, such as the links between gabber and soccer culture, as well as the full array of hardcore DJs from Paul Elstak to Gizmo. He further addresses the debates on the shift by Paul Elstak to happy hardcore, along with stars such as Charlie Lownoise and Mental Theo. Still, critical limits to the national focus in this narrative emerge here. A number of transnational stories are left out. With respect to gabber, van Bergen surprisingly only makes mention of inspirations from the Belgian scene, with no discussion of the influences of Marc Acardipane and PCP Records from Frankfurt, as well as Lenny Dee and Industrial Strength in New York. In terms of techno and house, I would also have been interested in more discussion of the international networks of pioneering artists such as Speedy J and Miss Djax. To be sure, there is a great deal to cover in this history, and van Bergen lays important groundwork in addressing this decade.

When he turns to the 2000s, important shifts are also highlighted. By the beginning of the 2000s, the massive influence of three Dutch trance stars—Tiësto, Ferry Corsten, and Armin van Buuren—could be observed, along with the refinement of gabber into the more accessible and popular genre of hardstyle. He also highlights the founding of another major events company, Q-Dance, in connection with hardstyle. Important stories are recounted here in how various artist networks evolved: for example, Ferry Corsten's production talents were combined with Tiësto's focus on DJing. Trance stars were also becoming

representative of a new transnational European identity, reflected in Tiësto's famous DJ-set at the opening ceremonies of the 2004 Summer Olympics in Greece. Van Bergen also reminds us of some major shifts in monetary and political organization that are sometimes not addressed in dance history—for example, the introduction of the Euro in 2002, along with the continued expansion of the E.U. and the Schengen area (172-73).

These developments of trance and hardstyle then lead to the 2010s and the “fourth stage”, with the particular Dutch stamp on EDM pop with a new generation of stars such as Martin Garrix and Hardwell, with major commercial success in the USA. Indeed, this final chapter is properly called “Vegas Billboards”. Van Bergen emphasizes that “enormous billboards in hotspot cities like Miami and Las Vegas display the faces of Dutch DJs” (234). I can attest to such billboards in Hollywood, as well as on a visit to Las Vegas in 2013. Images of Tiësto, along with Scottish star Calvin Harris, were displayed on the MGM Grand casino in sizes equal to the announcements of David Copperfield and Cirque du Soleil. However, despite the chapter's title, I did not find many details on Las Vegas's particular history, such as Tiësto's move to Las Vegas and his residency at Club Hakkasan at the MGM Grand.² Still, in taking this review full circle back to *The Social Network*, van Bergen at least discusses the rise and expansion of the aforementioned Spinnin' records as a global label and brand (249-256).

Beyond these detailed scene histories, however, the results in *Dutch Dance* when it comes to a critical analysis of the music industry and dance culture are decidedly mixed. The tone of the writing tends too much toward pop rhetoric. For example, Van Bergen states with casual positivity that Dutch dance's brand “has gone from strength to strength” (10). The constant mix of historical narration and interview quotations, some of which read like PR statements, does not provide enough variation in analysis. A troubling feature for scholars, there are also no footnotes or page number citations, so it can be difficult to locate van Bergen's sources (though a bibliography and an index are included). Furthermore, there are repeated attempts to compare Holland in the age of EDM to the Dutch Golden Age, which borders too much on clichés rather than a close analysis of Dutch politics, culture, and economics since the 1970s. Van Bergen primarily positions the Netherlands as a place of neoliberal entrepreneurship, with music little different from any other import cargo, which can be refined and sold around the globe (272–273). Little critique regarding this is offered, although Dutch EDM stars have come under heightened scrutiny regarding cultural appropriation and the excesses of commercialization – more recently by house legend Marshall Jefferson.³ Quite a number of underground Dutch artists are left out of the picture in this later EDM-star focus, though again, EDMC scholarship has also not done enough to address the pop mainstream. How this history is framed and critiqued within the context of dance music and the current crisis in the festival economy will be ever more important. Van Bergen does, however, provide a detailed history across four decades, which demonstrates that major stars such as Tiësto certainly did not emerge out of thin air. More research on Dutch dance history and festival culture is needed, which hopefully

will include translations of more recent memoirs published by Mary Go Wild and related organizations.

NOTES

- 1 For a comparable discussion, see Gert Van Veen's "Amsterdam's Autumn of Love" in *Resident Advisor*: <https://ra.co/features/1945>
- 2 See the report in *Rolling Stone* in 2013: <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/tiesto-commits-to-long-term-residency-in-las-vegas-48833/>
- 3 See Marshall Jefferson, "Why I Quit Djing", in *Mixmag*, 28 October, 2020. <https://mixmag.net/feature/marshall-jefferson-why-i-quit-djing>.

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THE NEW AGE OF ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC AND CLUB CULTURE

ANITA JÓRI, MARTIN LÜCKE (EDITORS)

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In the time since *The New Age of Electronic Dance Music and Club Culture* was written, everything has changed for Berlin's nightlife and the world's clubbing landscape. Yet the ideas articulated in this edited volume still stand up to, and illuminate, the changes to clubbing brought by the pandemic and point to important considerations as clubs begin to contemplate emerging from shutdowns.

Anita Jóri and Martin Lücke's volume emerged from a conference in June 2017 held at Berghain in Berlin, which brought together academics with industry professionals. The breadth of discussions in this volume is a testament to the extraordinary cross-disciplinary work being undertaken to enhance and challenge our understandings both of Berlin as a clubbing metropole and the wider electronic music industry. The project is inspired, in Jóri and Lücke's words, by the belief that "scholars and practitioners should work more closely with each other in order to create a common language amongst them, thereby aligning research and practical fields" (2). The range of different written styles, personal reflections and academic insights is one of the strengths of the book, as are the many chapters that demonstrate the potential for analysing unconventional sources of knowledge on dance music to improve our understanding of the face-to-face and virtual networks around electronic music. Contributors analyse online communities (YouTube and Facebook), work by activist collectives, bookshop bestseller lists and even techno music created live without recorded sound. This powerful case for drawing on different kinds of expertise shows how work on electronic music can contribute a great deal to similar trends across humanities scholarship today.

The volume's introduction describes the background to the conference and outlines the content of the articles. It avoids broader statements about the book's contribution to existing scholarship, which rather undersells the important insights its authors and editors bring to the field both individually and collectively. Some of the volume's authors, too, could signal more clearly the potential reach of their ideas and methodologies and their significance for wider scholarly debates. This leaves readers to draw connections and trends between articles ourselves, but in some ways this approach is welcome, given that the authors and editors could not have foreseen the changes to the club industry so soon after the essays went to press.

One such connection is the closure or repurposing of clubs as physical spaces and the increase in virtual clubbing and musical communities. Botond Vitos's proposed project on how music fans might use audio media to recreate club experiences in their personal spheres, for example, will have gained in salience over the course of the pandemic. Jóri's own contribution on Facebook groups for collectors of the Roland TB-303 Bass Line explores computer-mediated discourse analysis methods that will be of interest for scholars now researching the online club communities that have flourished during the pandemic, such as Club Quarantine, United We Stream and Keep Hush. Some reflection on the conference's own setting at Berghain would be interesting in this respect, given that the club's physical space has been given over to art exhibitions since March 2020, with other Berlin clubs like the KitKatClub even operating as test centres during the pandemic.

The concern around gentrification and closures in Berlin—a live issue since the earliest years of the twenty-first century—also takes on new urgency in 2021. Of particular interest here are Lukas Drevenstedt's piece on changes and gentrification in Berlin and Kata Katz's article about the closure of Echo Books. Drevenstedt and Katz both show that clubs and electronic music depend on a complex and "sensitive ecosystem" and call for recognition of the components that make up these musical worlds (10). Further investigation is needed into musicians' and nightclub proprietors' creativity in the face of extreme, often prohibitive pressures caused by Berlin's rapid gentrification. These insights have acquired new international significance since the pandemic, with scholarship of this sort having an important role to play as clubs continue to respond to the hardships of 2020 and 2021.

The volume's focus on Berlin is interesting and justified: the city plays such an important role in the world's electronic music scenes, both as a symbolic centre and in terms of the opportunities it offers to DJs, producers, club promoters and clubbers. The best contributions are those that "provincialise" Berlin – to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's term – not just as a place but an *idea* that means different things and is mobilised in different ways depending on context, both within and outside the city (2000: 3–6). Such articles locate Berlin scenes in their specific environment and resist the urge to extrapolate to other contexts, which can be tempting given Berlin's symbolic weight in electronic music culture. Benedikt Brilmayer's history of electronic musical instruments, for example, situates important developments in Berlin alongside significant innovations that came to Berlin more belatedly. This work is a reminder that the city's symbolic importance for clubbers is a relatively new development, historically speaking, but that it has nonetheless been a centre for musical developments over many years. Ewa Mazierska's article analyses the symbolic, economic and stylistic importance of Berlin for "musickers" (a neologism by Christopher Small encompassing musicians, other industry professionals, clubbers and fans (1998)) in Vienna and cities in the West of Poland. These local scenes demonstrate how Berlin's prestige in other European contexts is shifting and contingent. In fact, a strength of the volume is its differentiated focus specifically on Austrian electronic music (Bianca Ludewig, Mazierska, Josef Schaubruch), a context often overlooked in studies of club culture.

The volume is most clearly aligned with current scholarship on electronic music where it turns its attention to diversity and social justice in club scenes. Ludewig's article serves as a good introduction to this topic in Berlin and Austria, ranging widely from her feminist collective work with female:pressure and Meetup Berlin, through discussions of racism and whiteness in the telling of techno history in Germany. Patrick Valiquet addresses the industry's gendered assumptions and hierarchies—both implicit and explicit—in his analysis of Darsha Hewitt's YouTube pedagogy. Katz asks just how radical the crowds are at Berlin's many protest parties, a question that has gained relevance given some of the Berlin scene's responses to 2020's Black Lives Matter protests (Kirn 2020). Reflecting on these articles, I found myself asking similar questions of material from elsewhere in the volume: Jóri's examples suggesting further possible conclusions about how masculinity works in online communities around electronic music, and Lücke raising the question of how quantitative surveys might contribute insights around gender, race and class to understanding the social component of club scenes. It would be interesting to reflect on how the articles in this volume fit alongside work on other genres of electronic music in Germany and Austria. I think, for example, of research on hip-hop in the German context (e.g. El-Tayeb 2003; Weheliye 2009; Saied 2012), on Germany's reggae and dancehall scenes (Aikins 2005; Pfeleiderer 2018) or on Eurodance (Thom 2016), which allow a more expansive definition of 'electronic dance music cultures'.

The New Age of Electronic Dance Music and Club Culture will be welcomed by students and scholars in many disciplines working on Berlin, Austria, electronic music and popular music, social media, and many topics besides. Individual articles will no doubt find a home on course reading lists: Ludewig's already features on my own course on German Popular Music and articles like Lücke's and Brilmayer's function as potentially useful reference works for statistics and historical information around electronic music in Berlin. The book is meticulously referenced, and its bibliographies provide a wealth of further reading. Taken as a whole, the volume provides insights into many of the ongoing questions guiding current scholarly debates, and even as those debates shift in response to the pandemic, these essays suggest where our future enquiries might go.

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JOIN THE FUTURE: BLEEP TECHNO AND THE BIRTH OF BRITISH BASS MUSIC

MATT ANNISS

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IAN TROWELL

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Matt Annis' book on the bleep scene feels like an extension or output of Warp Records, exuding the purple colour scheme that distinguished the Sheffield label from its outset. It takes its title from the early (and somewhat overlooked) record release from Tuff Little Unit and employs the sans serif font and simple design of tight blocky design with italicised elements seen on early releases such as the LFO album *Frequencies*. The label, established in 1989 as both a continuum and fresh direction of previous initiatives such as FON (a studio, a label and a shop), initially became the imprimatur of the bleep sound. Annis grew up through this scene and clearly holds on to its importance. His book draws heavily on his recent journalism work for the Red Bull Music Academy where he has been documenting the early experiments and activists in this Yorkshire scene. He writes in an impassioned and detailed style, the narrative constantly driven by both the author's own feelings for the scene and a need to establish himself as an original participant in it. At times it feels as if the book is written for a cohort of believers who keep the faith, like an updated occurrence of the Northern Soul mythology.

There is an important rationale to the book, as Annis argues for re-assessing the historical understanding of this scene within the wider complex chronology of dance music. He has a point here, and he sets out to demolish myths, redress historical versions, timeframes and figures, and re-situate the northern origins of bleep. This intent is signalled early on, where Annis sets out the official version of "British dance music finding a distinctive voice" (6) with a when (1991) and a where (London). The originators and perpetrators of this version of history are not initially called out, though Simon Reynolds' go-to work on dance music *Energy Flash* is clearly the main culprit. Reynolds' book, dense and magisterial, covers bleep and the Sheffield scene in an eight-page section within the chapter "Second Wave of Rave 1990-1992" (Reynolds 1998: 97-104). Annis ultimately calls out Reynolds, whilst acknowledging his pioneering work, towards the end of the book where Reynolds is accused of mixing cause and effect, downplaying the north and overplaying the south (238). This version of events set out by Reynolds—his *Hardcore Continuum* within a wider lineage of dance music linking Detroit, Chicago, New York and the UK—proliferates as an authoritative discourse, in some way a testament to Reynolds' powerful writing. Annis does not list the numerous sources that peddle this accepted version of events, but examples

are plentiful. For a typical (recent) case, Richard King's *The Lark Ascending* sees UK rave culture having the simplistic lineage of Ibiza clubbers pioneering the Balearic scene and moving on to set up the London club Shoom (King 2019: 267). End of story.

Annis conducts his careful counter-history, exploring what Michel Foucault considers as the important rupture points, unearthing an "archaeology of a silence" (Macey 2019: 95). This is both a noisy silence of dance music at full volume, and a silent noisiness as the sub-bass that defines the bleep scene is often felt through the vibrations that engulf the body and surrounding environment of the nightclub. There is a constant trope throughout all of Annis' interviews regarding the severity of the bass sound; stories of household hi-fi speakers unable to detect the sound, of studio engineers saying it's more than my job's worth to cut the record, of club spaces and glass fittings dangerously vibrating as the white labels are played out for the first time. The bass horror script of blown out equipment and speakers, akin to Star Trek's Scotty engine-room scenario, is an apocryphal story that crops up in many testimonies of dance music.

The book is structured in four parts named after classic bleep records, riffing on (or more appropriately, sampling from) the Warp catalogue. The first part, covered in four chapters, is most interesting for me, and Annis works hard to craft a different history to the bleep sound, establishing his counter-narrative to rave mythology. He covers the cultural, social, political and topographical background of the places and spaces that gave rise to this sound, settling on three pivotal ideas. Firstly, the north of England in the second and third terms of Thatcher's government, depicted as a kind of war mentality with left wing councils such as Sheffield offering youth opportunities in arts. Secondly, Annis carves out an interstitial place in the subcultural slew of the early 1980s, a post-Northern Soul fandom that was previously hindered by racist attitudes. New protagonists repopulate the husk of the scene in the early 1980s to hold jazz-funk all-dayers, dance competitions, the nurturing of dance crews. This quickly leads to an embrace of the nascent electro and break-dancing scene around 1983, with venues such as Nottingham's Rock City and its Saturday afternoon sessions offering an important beacon. Thirdly, Annis documents the important role of sound system culture, the lovers rock and dub genres, and the illicit and distinctive blues club scene. Annis identifies a convergence of these trends, giving rise to clubs such as Jive Turkey in Sheffield. Further influences are added such as the championing of house music around 1986 and the influx of a small cohort of fashion obsessed northern hooligans or grafters noted for stealing and dealing designer goods. Some of these peripheral characters are clustered on an Ibiza scene, but two years before it became famed for the Balearic sound. Annis touches upon the importance of fashion without significant detailing – there is mention of Jive Turkey being very dressy and, from experience, I'd say this was something of an understatement!

The second part of the book documents the key activists, chapter by chapter. Manchester's Gerald Simpson (A Guy Called Gerald) takes the chronological priority with his 1988 track Voodoo Ray proving a club hit and eventually breaking into the mainstream charts. Annis suggests that this provokes a response from Sheffield, who admired the record,

giving birth to bleep. This movement is carefully tracked through Bradford's Unique 3 who release *Theme* in late 1988, Leeds based Nightmares On Wax who debut in 1989, their city colleagues LFO from 1990, and importantly Sheffield's Forgemasters who provide Warp's inaugural release *Track With No Name*. Part three of the book documents the spreading out of the scene, starting close to home with the relatively overlooked Sheffield label Ozone, and then radiating out to Midlands based Network, Luton's Chill, the wider bleep and breaks movement, and finally an overseas perspective. Part four is Anniss' take on the decline and legacy of the scene, taking the Castle Morton 1992 rave as a watershed (the moment where King commences his writing). Anniss suggests a split into darkcore/jungle and happy hardcore/rave, such that bleep and bass has an increasingly vestigial presence.

There are some insurmountable problems. The elephant in the room concerns Warp's disputed origins and divergent versions of an acrimonious break up, hindered by co-founder Steve Beckett's declining to be interviewed. Whereas Beckett contributes to both Reynolds' overarching work, and Rob Young's *Labels Unlimited* focus on Warp, Anniss powers on and is driven by his enduring closeness to the scene, sharing spliffs with the protagonists as they recall hazy nights in bedroom studios and dub-plate mayhem. Anniss doesn't proffer any academic or subcultural theory, though his historical approach of testimony and anecdote glimpses oversights and omissions. There is little contemporaneous source material apart from a single *i-D* report on the northern bleep scene. Further, in 1990 a clutch of Warp releases made significant inroads into the mainstream charts, jockeying with early 1990s dance-era novelty records such as MC Hammer, Partners in Kryme's *Turtle Power*, FAB and MC Parker's Thunderbirds tribute and Timmy Mallett's glib sampling of early house records. Both Tricky Disco and LFO climbed the charts, sharing similar videos of cut-up scenes from early cinematography and Eadweard Muybridge stop-motion photography. None of this recalled or analysed by Anniss.

The pace is urgent, intense and breathless, with dot-to-dot detail of dance spaces, club names, tracks and dance moves. Anniss takes an occasional moment to stop and sample the air, such as on Snake Pass between Manchester and Sheffield (64) or at Park Hill flats for a brutalist memoir to accompany the concluding paragraphs. Anniss forgoes an index for a pure chronographical time-line that carries the book through, mimicking the urgency of a dub-plate record – a desire to get the thing out there as soon as it is produced.

REFERENCES

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