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Selling the modern day tribe: The commodification of rave culture

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**Selling the modern day tribe:
The commodification of rave culture**

**This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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Edith Cowan University

School of Arts and Humanities

2018

Abstract

This thesis examines youth and rave culture from the late 1980s to the present. It considers the history as well as the global and local impact of rave. I provide a visual ethnographic study from 1999-2014, based on my work as a commercial photographer of the Perth, Western Australian scene. While critically reflecting on existing subcultural research this thesis adds another dimension – the effect that global corporations have had in reshaping subcultural practices, specifically the commodification of rave culture in the form of the contemporary electronic dance festival.

The research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data to interrogate media coverage on rave culture as well as interviews and first hand experience within the rave scene. I analyse mainstream print and electronic media reporting of rave as a deviant youth subcultural practice linked to the use of the drug ecstasy. I consider the effect this had on rave and it's rebranding to become known in contemporary times as EDM (electronic dance music). As a result I examine how rave has shifted from a youth subcultural activity to being not only mainstream and commercial, but also owned and controlled by global corporations. My discussion of the conventions of festival/music scenes will demonstrate how rave, which once operated outside 'acceptable' boundaries, has become a part of the conventional norm.

A unique aspect of this thesis is the inclusion and analysis of my photographs taken over a 15 year period that document the changes that occurred as rave transitioned from a subversive underground scene to corporate run multimillion dollar events. The photographs are also compiled into an accompanying monograph. The monograph allows for an immersive visual experience of non-staged event images and predetermined studio and location photographs. The book offers what words alone cannot fully engage with – a representation of what was and remains a highly visual scene, based on fashion, performance and settings.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or
- iii. contain any defamatory material;



18/6/2018

Duncan Barnes

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Without the unwavering support of my supervisor Panizza Allmark this thesis would never have reached completion. At the times that I had low energy or lacked motivation her continued encouragement kept me going. I really cannot thank her enough for believing in my research topic and in my photographic practice.

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I would also like to give a special thanks to Edith Cowan University for supporting staff while completing further research. I acknowledge the strain on resources such an undertaking can be in what are hard economic times for the education sector.

Lastly I would like to thank Jeremy Junk who ran Delirium Events. Without his belief and trust in me as a photographer none of these opportunities would have presented themselves. Rest in peace.

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Research Outputs from PhD

Barnes, D., (2015), Modern Day Tribe - Part 1: Performance. *Modern Day Tribe. Part 1: Performance*, (Solo exhibition) Spectrum Project Space, Perth Australia.

The exhibit had national coverage from the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission) digital division and radio and had a total audience viewing of 262,066 over a 44-day period.

Selling the modern day tribe: The commodification of rave culture

Introduction

The crowd at Metro City that night packed the floor and filled the rafters of the multilevel club. I watched the scene unfold before me from the privileged position of the stage, hidden in the wings, out of the bright lights. I waited for the DJ to turn his back so I could take the stage and photograph the crowd. Finally the DJ turned to change the vinyl and I discreetly moved to the middle of the stage. The response to my appearance was far from discreet. The front rows of the crowd in particular raised their arms and screamed like their favourite song had just begun, but that adulation was for me. They knew my name and some shouted it, they knew my brand and website and they wanted to be a part of the performance, to be immortalised on film... (Barnes, 2000)

The study of music and subculture, youth and deviance has a long tradition within cultural studies (Cohen, 1972; Hall, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; McRobbie, Thornton, 1995 et al.).

Rave culture and its derivatives have also undergone a great deal of cultural critique (Bainbridge, 2012; Collin, 1998; 2013; Gibson, 2001; Redhead, 1997 Reynolds, 1999; St John, 2001 et al.). In deconstructing the commodification of rave culture, this thesis aims to explore the interplay of music, dance, media and drugs: elements that are not only central to understanding the rave experience but also how it transitioned to become the socially sanctioned, highly capitalistic and corporatised Electronic Dance Music (EDM). While adding to and critiquing existing theory within the field, my thesis provides significant original content –an analysis of rave/dance culture that corresponds to my photographic documentation in Perth, Western Australia, over a fifteen-year period, from 1999. Lee (2005) recognises the lack of attention paid to dance culture in Perth. “What is needed is a negotiation of private memory with accessible forms of history that allow alternative narratives of people, places and moments to exist” (p. 52). My photographs convey the cultural shifts in the rave/dance music scene and its transition to the festival format of EDM. As such, I am interested in how rave changed from an underground subcultural practice to a commercialised and controlled part of the mainstream youth cultural experience. I will convey a localised perspective of rave “within a global network of linked cultural practices” (Luckman, 2003, p. 315) and in particular illustrate

how raves “have gone from small subcultural beginnings with events organised by “word-of-mouth via friendship networks to grander commercial heights.” My research, personal observation, and visual documentation from the mid-nineties to 2015, articulate the transformation of rave culture in Perth, Western Australia, during which dance events became larger and more commercial and moved to legitimate venues as opposed to underground non-sanctioned spaces.

Rave — within the context of electronic music — refers to the (often illegal) appropriation of space for the purpose of listening and dancing to repetitive beats often under the influence of the drug Ecstasy. Raves are renowned for taking place in warehouses or other ‘open air’ remote locations, often eschewing traditional commercial venues such as club spaces and bars. “By participating in these renegade alternative-venue events (later shortened to ‘raves’), dancers were challenging social norms” (Ott & Herman, 2003, p. 253). Such definitions might seem clinical, especially to a ‘raver’, but it works in a theoretical sense to separate rave culture from what later became known by the terms ‘dance’ or ‘club culture’. The term ‘club culture’ is problematic in that the term also refers to the '80s UK club culture, which was pre-rave and elitist in nature (McRobbie 1993; Thornton, 1995). Within this thesis, I intend to look at both rave and dance culture, while also referring to club culture both pre- and post-rave. When I refer to the culture as a whole, the terms rave and dance culture will be used interchangeably, depending on the time period I am referring to.

Rave, especially in the media, has been used as an overarching term to describe both rave and dance culture, often in an unflattering manner. Due to the negative perception created by the use of the word rave by the media (Brookman, 2001; Desenberg, 1997), promoters moved away from using it in advertising and speaking about their events and the term dance culture became a more appropriate descriptor. More recently, the acronym EDM has been popularised to describe the scene as a whole. EDM as a term has been in use since the eighties in reference to ‘dance music’, (Butler, 2006; Hermann, 2014) but by 2010, its use had shifted to become an umbrella term for an entire music genre and festival scene (Matos, 2015). EDM stands for electronic dance music, which will be used to refer to the most recent shifts in dance culture.

Less than a decade ago, the contemporary worldwide phenomenon of EDM was still referred to by the term dance music and in the previous decade, it was rave. Luckman asserts that “[In] Australia, as elsewhere, the local contemporary dance music scene owes much to the explosion in rave’s popularity which occurred post-1988 and what came to be known in Britain as the so-called ‘second summer of love’” (2010, p. 317). As previously mentioned, there has been substantial academic dissection of ‘rave’, ‘dance’ and ‘club culture’ produced in Britain, America and now Australia, yet visual representation and analysis of this phenomenon remain limited. Photographs used in publications have mainly served to illustrate the text rather than figuring as part of an analysis. Most Australian studies also focus on the east coast of Australia and its two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne. Thus, in its use of personal photographs for ethnographic analysis over a 15-year period combined with a critique of the Perth rave scene, this thesis provides a fresh approach and contributes new knowledge to a much discussed topic.

My work is also original in that it can be seen as neither that of an insider nor outsider, but rather as occupying a ‘space between’. In the late 1990s, I was hired as a professional photographer to document rave culture in Perth and, as such, was attempting to ‘adequately represent’ the experience. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) discuss being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. They argue, “the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one’s research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience” (2009, p. 59). While this may be the case the positioning of a photographer cannot be overlooked and my access and literal positioning was more privileged than most. In working directly with promoters within the commercial rave/dance scene I was assigned an AAA (access all areas) pass that allowed for stage access that was not granted to other photographers. Festivalgoers reacted to the camera and to my privileged positioning on stage. My presence as a photographer influenced the reaction of the audience. They engaged with me and this is represented in their body language and poses. My camera offered up a desirable end product that they wanted to be a part of; to have their image immortalised on film as I suggest in the opening description of this thesis. I received what might best be described as cult status, which took me beyond an insider’s view and made me a part of the performance. As Nicholas Carah states “the nightlife photographer uses their status and social network to gain access to venues, attract the attention of hip consumers who want to be photographed, and circulate

those images in influential online networks” (2014, p.252). He further adds “they use their own appearance, bodies, and sexuality, and capitalize on the attention, desire, and intoxication of others (2014, p. 262). Certainly, I do not attest to my photographs to being objective documents. The work that I have produced are subjective perspectives of the rave and dance scene, for the purpose of promotion.

From a researchers’ point of view I will appraise my own privileged position as a white male photographer and what it allowed me to experience; a visual study of participant’s reaction to the camera itself and to document rave’s growth from non-traditional often non-sanctioned spaces, nightclubs and finally corporatised EDM festivals. As Thompson and Greenwood claim “the photographers named gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status as demographic factors that could influence reactivity and... that subjects were, on average, more comfortable with photographers who shared similar demographic characteristics” (2016, p. 13). I share a similar background and characteristics to many of the participants at raves in Perth. Moreover I was part of the scene and the subjects of my photography both male and female seemed comfortable in posing for my photographs. I will acknowledge my role, my encounters, engagement and personal reflection when I was immersed in the rave/dance scene. This approach draws upon Graham St. John’s (2013) important discussion on “Writing the Vibe: Arts of Representation in Electronic Dance Music Culture” in which he stresses the validity of the sensory perceptions of a research artist. My photographic work follows St John’s discussion of the “lived experience of the researcher in dialogue with his/her subjects, an ‘epistemological openness’ where none of the senses are to be excluded from ethnographic reportage” (¶ 2).

In observing performance and politics within rave, I intend to apply Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of carnival. Bakhtin suggests carnival does not separate performer from spectator, as all are a part of the performance (1984, p. 122). In Bakhtin’s framework, carnival’s disruption of the status quo is also temporary and lawless (1984a, p.10), as was the site of the initial rave or the weekend performance of a club that, during the week, remains idle. The notion of carnival fits well with the performance aspects that exist inside rave culture as well as the ‘temporary autonomous zone[s]’ (Gibson & Pagan, 2001) that made up the original spaces and origins of rave before it re-entered into the clubs. Autonomous zones included the appropriation of warehouses, underground car parks or a farmer’s field. A

comparison of rave with carnival and my own experience within the culture will allow me to question the rave paradigm itself: can rave be classified as a subculture at all, or was it just a carnivalesque weekend retreat?

Before I go any further, it is prudent that I acknowledge and define a number of terms and statements that are potentially problematic to the reader, such as subculture, mainstream and even the title of my thesis. *Modern Day Tribe: The commodification of rave culture* could suggest that rave culture was once not commodified – that it existed in some pure, untainted and authentic form until it became commercialised by ‘outside forces’ i.e. the mainstream. As McRobbie suggests, “the old [cultural theory] model which divided the pure subculture from the contaminated outside world, eager to transform anything it could get its hands on into a sellable item, has collapsed” (1993, p. 18). In other words, the idea of an ‘authentic’ subculture untouched by capitalism is a myth. Historically, Franks (1998) further highlights how the 1960s counterculture was influenced by advertising agencies as much as it was from youth culture. While claims that subcultures were exempt from commercialism might appear naïve, groups and individuals attempt symbolic ways of rejecting the mainstream and finding something authentic. Banet-Weiser (2012) further argues that the “concept of authenticity remains central to how individuals organise their lives...” but authenticity is inexplicably linked with commodification (p.10). The discourse of authenticity is produced within consumer culture.

Rave from its beginnings had its entrepreneurs involved directly and indirectly within the scene. Direct involvement in events existed through promoters, DJs, and even those supplying the illegal drugs synonymous with rave culture. Amongst fans, “there was a desire to ensure the rave party functioned as a social space insulating mainstream society. But for those who made a living through performing structural roles within subcultural scenes, mainstream awareness of rave was not only tolerable, but desired” (Williams, 2011 p. 123). Indirectly, there was the supply of rave related fashion and paraphernalia almost immediately through youth cultural outlets ‘in the know’ and, finally, the regular chains of high street stores.

While I align with McRobbie’s perspective that subcultural groups cannot be studied as entirely separate entities from the larger social group from which they ultimately emerge,

the process of capitalism at work can be used to gauge the normalisation of youth cultural activities that at one time were seen as deviant. The corporatisation of events and, in turn, the scale of the commodification as rave culture transitioned into EDM has been a slow process that occurred over a number of decades: a process that can be clearly measured by studying the brands and companies that became involved with the scene and how this in turn, changed the scene itself. It should also be noted that McRobbie (1993) does not completely dismiss the idea of authenticity, asserting that “there still remains an ideology of authenticity which provides young people in youth cultures with a way of achieving social subjectivity and therefore identity through the subcultural experience” (p. 18). While subcultural claims to authenticity have relied on studying participants through analyses of style (Hebdige, 1979), subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995), and ideological commitment (Vannini & Williams, 2009), the capitalist interests in companies leveraging rave culture for high profile brand advertising and corporate sponsorship of events can offer further insight into the erosion (of authenticity) and the homogenisation of alternative youth cultural activities.

The study of subcultural style is best known through work done by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s” (Williams 2007, p. 578). Prior to this the Chicago School “from the early twentieth century until the 1950s and relied on an ecological model of society in equilibrium and on the belief that subcultures in the US arose in part as a result of urbanization” (Williams, 2007, p. 573). In the early 1970s, cultural theorists based at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (hence referred to as CCCS) borrowed and reworked the notion of subculture, shifting the focus of the term from crime and deviance to youth cultural styles of the British post-war period, such as teddy boy, mod and punk (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979). Tied to the social conditions of working-class youth, subcultures were theorised by the CCCS as sites of resistance that emerged as symbolic and aestheticized articulations of disdain for a monolithic parent culture. Imbued with both Marxist structuralism and labeling theory, the CCCS subculture model suggested that style becomes an inherently meaningful form of resistance where clothes, music, dance, haircuts and language constitute a response to the conditions of one's class struggle; thus it is class positioning which rationalises subcultural members' deviance. According to Hebdige (1979), forbidden identities are signified through a limited array of stylistic artifacts and those who do not partake in these differentiating forms of ‘semiotic guerrilla

warfare' (Hebdige citing Eco, 1979 p. 105) are implicitly incorporated into this paradigm as complacent unnamed 'straights'.

In a world increasingly characterized by cultural fragmentation (Chaney, 2002), subcultural theory, as outlined by the CCCS, has since received various unfavourable critiques. In summary, these argue against the theory's presumption of coherent and fixed class, gender and ethnicity identities for subcultural subjects and of subculture's hostile and impermeable relationship to the 'mainstream'; the theory's lack of empirically grounded observations; its inability to account for local variations in style; its sole focus on leisure pursuits; its favouring of spectacular displays of normative deviation over the ordinary and everyday; and its relegation of operative and oppositional musical taste as secondary to visual style (see for example, Bennett, 1999; Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004; Clarke 1997[1981]; Laing, 1985; Laughey, 2006; Muggleton, 2000; Redhead, 1990; Thornton, 1995). While critical of the subculture as applied by the CCCS, many of these authors are not necessarily critical of the term subculture itself, instead drawing attention to potential shortcomings in its application as a catchall term for contemporary youth cultural groupings. While Redhead (1990) applies a staunch traditionalist approach by outright dismissing rave as a subculture due to its non-rigid apolitical position, others such as Lewin and Williams (2009) call for a reimagining of the term. "Recent scholarship has suggested that contemporary subcultural participation tends to be apolitical, not necessarily seeking to challenge 'the system' but to pursue self expression" (p. 70). While Bennett and Thornton propose new terminology for a 'post subcultural' world, Carrington and Wilson (2004) add "invoking the concept of the postmodern does not end theoretical discussion" (p. 77), suggesting new terminology is employed to answer the same questions and offer the same insight into sub-cultural clusters. While not staunch supporters of the notion of subculture per se, they do see endless theorising as unproductive.

...arguments within subcultural theory over whether or not the term 'subculture' should be used at all have become increasingly unproductive. The requirement to be seen to have gone beyond 'subculture' by the invocation of new terms sometimes takes place at the expense of such concepts offering genuinely new analytic insight. (p. 76)

It should be noted that 'subculture' also has strong support (see Blackman, 2005; Gelder, 2005; Greener and Hollands, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2002; Vannini & Williams, 2009) both as a general term but also in its application in dance/rave culture. Williams's relatively

recent book *Subcultural theory* (2011) synthesises the arguments of nearly all of the scholars mentioned above to reimagine subculture, maintaining that this term can coexist with any new terminology. Williams suggests “Rather than pit concepts against one another...(post-)subculture scholars might instead focus on the cleavages and boundaries among these concepts, recognizing and exploring how they may be used in concert to better understand youth cultural activities today” (p. 36). As an example, Williams suggests “‘subculture’ and ‘scene’ [a term recently popularised in discussions around youth and music] do not need to compete head-to-head when we can recognize subculture as a cultural concept and scene as a social concept, performing a complementary role” (p. 36). Indeed, some of the terms proposed to replace subculture are useful in discussions of rave and dance culture and the differences that exist from other subcultural groups both past and present.

Rave’s accepting ethos and its love of technology allowed it to be more fluid than the rigid subcultures of the past (at least as they were theorised by the CCCS) and, I would suggest, more resourceful in terms of capitalising on its popularity. Collin (2009b) suggests a lack of structure or ‘rules’ led to the on going success of rave/dance culture.

Perhaps because a definitive set of musical and cultural rules had never been established, instead of stagnating, as British youth cultures had traditionally done after brief years of vitality, it remained in constant creative flux, regenerating itself as the nineties continued with new initiatives and influences. (p. 294)

This fluid nature of ‘rave’ has Thornton (1995) suggest that youth cultures could be referred to instead as ‘taste cultures’: forming ad hoc communities based on a similar taste in music and common media consumption. Taste cultures also support the theoretical framework surrounding *neo-tribes*, based on the concepts of tribes (Maffesoli, 1996) and applied to British dance culture (Bennett 1999; 2000). “Neo-tribes are distinctive on the basis of their ephemerality: that is, they do not have any permanent membership other than through the duration of rituals” (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2007, p. 113) as opposed to subcultures, where membership is considered fixed, less fluid and lived on a permanent or semi permanent basis. The fluid cultural phenomenon (of rave) is a key element that has allowed it to become largely engulfed into the mainstream (without participants resisting it) and this process of transformation will make up a part of my research in looking at its commodification. However, while terms such as ‘neo-tribe’ and ‘taste cultures’ are referred to within this thesis where appropriate, subculture, as

proposed by Williams (2011), remains a significant enduring term that remains very much in common parlance both socially and academically. For this reason, subculture is used predominantly throughout this thesis when referring to and positioning rave.

When I address ‘mainstream’ within this thesis, I am referring to rave’s general acceptance by dominant cultural values and the status quo. The term mainstream has become a much debated term within cultural studies from the time Hebdige (1979) popularised its use to describe everything that was *not* the subculture. It is argued that an ‘us’ and ‘them’ approach is too simplistic and wrongfully suggests that the mainstream is a homogenous group. One of mainstream’s strongest critics, Thornton (1995 p.114), suggests “whatever its exact status, the mainstream is an inadequate concept for the sociology of culture” and yet the term mainstream (like subculture) remains ubiquitous in descriptions of differences in broad cultural settings. Contemporary users of the *mainstream* suggest a greater need to clearly define it rather than assuming it is self-evident (Huber, 2007, Baker, 2013, Williams, 2013). Williams adds, “while sometimes difficult, it is both possible and necessary to identify the ‘mainstream’ when studying subcultural groups” (p. 9). Therefore, to define mainstream within this thesis, I refer to the popular media institutions that represent and reflect the general moral assumptions that underpin society and decree what is socially sanctioned and acceptable; the level (and type) of media reporting on rave culture and laws and law enforcement (as well as the formulation of new laws) and their application to subcultural groups are two barometers of the mainstream. The process that the media played in rave’s assimilation into mainstream culture both overseas and in Australia will be analysed in detail. The media was responsible for rave culture’s initial growth, as it has been with previous subcultural groups. Media intervention can often play a role in a subcultural group’s long-term survival or rapid destruction. Thornton (1995) discusses the paradox in media reports in that acceptance and support of subcultures by mainstream news sources can be the kiss of death for their ‘subcultural capital,’ while adverse headlines can both add capital and widen appeal (p. 135). While Thornton’s use of the term mainstream suggests what a raver might measure himself or herself against (p. 5), my researching of corporate sponsorship and ownership is a measure of brand safety and brand image, i.e. brand a major corporation would not sponsor an event if it would tarnish its image. The increased marketing at EDM events, as Conner (2015), drawing upon Adorno and Horkheimer (1967, 1975) has argued, has transformed rave events into a culture industry.

Rave's peak period (late '80s -early '90s) of global press coverage has passed. Rave itself, however, remains a significant culture warranting further study in terms of its longevity compared with other subcultural groups, which show clear end points and shorter time periods in the spotlight. By contrast, what constituted rave musically tended to morph into new forms and offshoots were nourished. What started off as 'techno', 'house' and 'acid house' soon saw further fragmentations with styles and names such as 'trance', 'psytrance', 'old skool', 'new skool', 'jungle', 'drum and bass', 'happy hardcore' and 'breaks'. Each style attracted different personalities but, from an outsider's view, all were encapsulated under the united banner of rave, dance culture and were finally defined as EDM, becoming its own genre and currently experiencing a worldwide resurgence. It is what rave has *become* – a global music-orientated youth-driven movement of mass consumption, run and owned by corporations and sponsored by major brands that makes it a worthy study of the transformative nature of that process.

Background

This thesis looks at how rave culture transitioned from a subcultural underground activity to a commodified and homogenised form of mainstream entertainment. As discussed in my introduction, rave and dance culture have remained popular sites for academic analysis both overseas and in Australia. In Australia, most research has concentrated on scenes within Melbourne and Sydney, many of which are discussed within my thesis. *Rave culture in Sydney, Australia: Mapping youth spaces in media discourse* (Gibson & Pagan, 2006) offers an in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis of print media attention given to rave culture. DJ Kid Kenobi (Jesse Desenberg) discusses the media influence on rave culture and Sydney law reform in *Ecstasy and the status quo* (1997), while Brookman (2001) looks at consumption, commercialisation and resistance in 'Forever young': *Consumption and evolving neo-tribes in the Sydney rave scene*. Siokou, (2010) looks at changes in party drug use with the commercialisation of the Melbourne rave/dance scene in "This is not a rave": *An ethnography of changes in the Melbourne rave/dance party scene, 1996-2006*.

Academic research into rave and dance culture in Perth, Western Australia remains extremely limited: a 1997 paper on drug use and harm reduction (Lenton, Boys & Norcross) and ‘Wedding, parties, anything...’ A qualitative analysis of ecstasy use in Perth, Western Australia” (Hansen, Maycock & Lower, 2000) and *An ethnographic study of recreational drug use and identity management among a network of electronic dance music enthusiasts in Perth, Western Australia* (Green, 2012) are all drug-related and the first two articles were released before electronic music and the festival scene of EDM reached their commercial peaks.

Brookman (2001) researched credibility (linked to concepts of authenticity) and sponsorship of events in ‘*Forever young: Consumption and evolving neo-tribes in the Sydney rave scene*’. As the title suggests, the research was east-coast orientated and used quite different methodologies (predominantly questionnaires) to draw its conclusions. It was also produced before EDM exploded across America and Australia. My own research is foremost ethnographic, based on my personal experience and documentation. Bennett has argued that “the use of ‘insider knowledge’ by contemporary youth and music researchers is simply following a current methodological trend in ethnographic work, at the centre of which is an open acknowledgment of the researcher’s tiedness to space and place’ (2002, p. 461). By being involved in dance culture primarily as a photographer but also as an enthusiast, my direct observations and visual photographic record offer original new material in a field that has drawn substantial interest and research. Throughout the thesis and the photographic book that accompanies it, I will retrospectively consider my complicity in a scopic regime that selected certain stylistic (ie commercially appealing) imagery that helped shape perceptions of dance culture.

Methodology

Qualitative analysis

The thesis relies predominantly on qualitative analysis derived from first hand personal observation, photography, interview, media analysis and existing cultural studies academic theory.

Quantitative analysis

A degree of quantitative analysis has been used to track media interest in rave and dance culture as it appeared in *The West Australian* newspaper, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, from 1988 to 2016. In searching for early articles in *The West Australian*, keywords were given to librarians at the Batty Library and manually vetted for their relevance and accuracy to rave/dance culture. *The Sunday Times* is not available as on an electronic database until the 2000s. Editions were searched manually, using microfilm. For this reason, only a small sample was used. Key articles of interest that often included photographs have also been used for qualitative analysis. Key words used to search the database included (in alphabetical order): acid house, drugs, ecstasy, gatecrasher, ministry of sound, raves, rave parties, dance culture, techno, trance, subculture, youth culture.

Ethnography

Direct experience and observation are key components of my thesis and its interrogation of the commodification of rave and dance culture. Experiencing events first-hand as an insider for more than 15 years has allowed me to observe changes in participant behaviour, location, ownership and sponsorship of events. As Pickering (2008) suggests, first-hand “experience is central to cultural studies. It is a key category of analysis within the field, and has been drawn on as a concrete material for many of the issues which cultural studies as pursued” (p. 17). Clifford (1988) suggests “The ethnographic modernist searches for the universal in the local, the whole in the part” (p. 4). An auto ethnographic approach allows me to compare the similarities and differences of how rave and dance music were experienced and the transition from underground DIY to a global rebranding in the form of electronic dance music (EDM).

Direct experience in itself is also potentially fraught, given that “experience always involves interpretation of what happens in life, of what makes our perceptions, feelings, and actions meaningful” (Pickering, 2008 p. 19). Pink (2007) suggests ethnography is intimately linked to subjectivity, and reflexivity is a central feature of that process: “...the assumption that a reflexive approach will aid ethnographers to produce objective data represents only a token and cosmetic engagement with reflexivity that wrongly supposes

subjectivity could (or should) be avoided or eradicated. Instead, subjectivity should be engaged with as a central aspect of ethnographic knowledge, interpretation and representation” (p. 23). Nevertheless, while direct experience and observation provide the impetus for this thesis, other research methods such as interview and qualitative analysis are also incorporated to balance my own value judgements and bias.

Photography

My photographic archive of rave events over a 15-year period supports my qualitative findings. It is important to note that the event photography used within my thesis was not produced with visual ethnographic research in mind. Instead, most of the photographic archive is retrospectively used for ethnographic analysis. This approach is not uncommon with personal and professional work being used for research purposes. Pink (2007), who suggests ethnographic photography is a useful tool, refers to her work asserting, “The personal/professional visual narratives into which I had initially divided them [photographs] gradually became dissolved into other categories... Thus my anthropological analysis began to appropriate my personal experience and possessions” (p. 34). My image archive of electronic dance music was foremost commissioned and produced for event promoters at a time when ethnographic research was not my consideration. Given that my brief of events was to shoot the entire setup of shows and a broad cross-section of performers and attendees, the images translate effectively for visual ethnographic research purposes.

From an ethical point of view, there is the expectation of participants that they may be filmed or photographed given that they are attending a public event. A condition of entry to most major venues is that patrons may be filmed or photographed. Approval for the use of the photographs was also granted from Edith Cowan University ethics committee. None of the photographs offered for analysis show direct drug use or other illegal activity. Close-up photographs of individuals demonstrate informed consent; that is, the individuals know they are being photographed and respond to the camera rather than shying away from it. The camera is always present – it was not a tool that I used covertly.

Interviews

Nine people who were engaged and pivotal with the Perth rave/dance scene were interviewed. Interviewees were asked a series of standard questions relating to rave/dance culture, as well as targeted questions depending on the type of involvement individuals had within the scene (i.e. DJ, promoter, blogger, attendee). Most interviews were conducted face-to-face. Since the information was used for qualitative analysis as an oral history of individuals' experiences within rave and dance culture (as opposed to collecting quantitative data), interviews often went off on tangents. The responses are disseminated throughout the thesis where appropriate, rather than making up a part of one single results-based chapter. The purpose of including interview material is to provide a wider oral history, other than my personal accounts. It is a small sample. Nevertheless, the interviews are from many key figures in the Perth rave/dance scene of the era.

Limitations of the study

While immersive research has become accepted practice (Pink, 2007; St John 2001; Thornton, 1995) first hand qualitative research runs the risk of bias as my own personal experience of this culture has been overwhelmingly positive. Personal photographs have been used throughout this thesis as a form of ethnographic research to support and reinforce my personal observations but these also have limitations in that most of the work was commissioned by the promoters of events that I photographed. This is particularly the case of live event images of attendees whereby I would choose whom I would photograph from the hundreds (sometimes thousands) of attendees at events. Even with such limitations photographs are still incredibly insightful in showing how attendees attitudes, behavior and fashion changed over time as well as the style and size of the events themselves.

Throughout the late 1990s and the 2000s my own experience of events was largely limited to those I was commissioned to shoot. While I attended some smaller events and 'underground' raves it was the commercial rave scene that shaped my views expressed in this thesis. Even though this is the case it can be said that I was attending and photographing for Perth's premiere dance promoter of the '90s and early 2000s (Delirium) who monopolised the legal rave/dance events. I was also commissioned to shoot for The

Drum Club and Rise, which were the two main dance nightclubs of the early 2000s. In mid 2000s I photographed for Mellen Events, a local Perth company who promoted Summer Dayze and Future Music. All this helped to give a broad account of commercial raving of this era in Perth Western Australia and this has been the focus of my localised Perth case study of the scene.

In supporting my own qualitative research and first hand experience (and to overcome some of its limitations) I have incorporated interviews with known key figures within the Perth rave and dance scene. In many instances this corroborated findings and observations in my own research and reduced my own potential bias account of events. My qualitative research also extended to the analysis of newspaper articles written about the rave and dance scene in Perth Western Australia to gauge a sense of public and media opinion from the mainstream print press of the time.

Limited quantitative research was carried out through tracking media reports on rave culture in *The West Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. *The Sunday Times* was reviewed for articles in key years relating to rave culture but a longer overview of year on year media reportage on rave was not possible. This is because there is no electronic searchable database for *The Sunday Times* and manually sorting through years of newspapers was not seen as a viable option and nor would not offer a worthwhile return on time invested. Having said this, not including such data remains a limitation in quantitatively tracking media interest in Perth, Western Australia.

Structure

The written thesis consists of four chapters. Personal archival photographs are referred to and dispersed throughout the thesis where appropriate, adding support to my ethnographic observation of the Perth electronic dance music scene. A photographic monograph supports my thesis and allows for an immersive visual experience of the Perth rave/dance scene.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 gives a history and demography of rave culture globally and of its uptake within Australia. While many biographies and academic texts cover a global history of rave in one form or another, this history still remains an important starting point, which leads to rave's adoption in Perth, Western Australia. Perth remains the principal site of original content and detailed ethnographic research throughout the thesis.

From a subcultural perspective, rave's subversive positioning is addressed, as well as its political nature, both of which are defined in order to comprehend the process by which rave shifted from an underground niche movement to the worldwide corporatised brand of EDM (Electronic Dance Music).

Chapter 2

The process of media reportage on raves and the moral panic that surrounded them make up Chapter 2. While all forms of media are important in this role, the print press serves as my primary area for an historical analysis of rave culture, as print is accessible and tangible, unlike radio or television, which are less archivally accessible. More importantly, newspapers allow for a level of blunt dissection (quite different to video or audio) in that they contain the headline, the story itself and are often accompanied by a still photograph. As Susan Sontag states:

Photographs may be more memorable than moving images, because they are a neat slice of time, not a flow. Television is a stream of underselected images, each of which cancels its predecessor. Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turned into a slim object that one can keep and look at again. (2001, p. 13)

Barthes suggests that the newspaper is “a complex of concurrent messages with the photograph as centre and surrounds constituted by the text, the title, the caption, the layout and, in more abstract but no less ‘informative’ way, by the very name of the paper” (1977, p. 15). This focus on newsprint allows for an analysis of generalised headings used to discuss rave culture and at times to view them within the context of a photograph when one is present. As newsprint is replicated digitally in contemporary times, it permits continued analysis of rave culture as it shifts from ‘underground’ scene to sanctioned commodified corporate events. Microfilm archives at the State Library of

Western Australia were used to track earlier print publications that have not been digitised; research went as far back as 1987, when *The West Australian* print edition made mention of raves for the first time.

Boeri, Sterk and Elifson (2004, p. 83) assert that the “descriptions of the rave scene in published articles and in the news media portray a culture centered on music, dance, lighting, characteristic clothing, a collective ideology, and drugs.” Qualitative research methods are used in the analysis of articles and photographs while quantitative data is used to track the number of articles that appear in selected newspapers to track peak levels of media interest in rave and dance culture.

I argue that the conservative middle class (or those who *perceive* themselves as holding middle class values) felt threatened by rave as represented by the media and its suggested hold over this new youth culture: towards the height of its cult popularity, rave spanned several socio-economic classes and so could possibly affect ‘anyone’s child’. I will also demonstrate that the media’s reporting of rave culture was a significant factor in its eventual assimilation and acceptance by the dominant hegemony. The process of reporting the radical and provocative behaviours associated with rave culture helped these behaviours to become ‘less shocking’ and to those behaviours becoming mainstream practices: normalised or at least tolerated and no longer seen as newsworthy.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 deconstructs the process of commercialisation and commodification as it applies to rave – a far from straightforward process given the contradictions of rave’s relationship to the broader capitalist market. The very nature of rave and dance music is about appropriation, re-appropriation, acceptance and celebration, rather than about rejection or opposition, as previous subcultures have been. While rave in its most belligerent period rejected popular commercial music and venues through the (often) illegal appropriation of spaces for performance, it flirted with objects of a commercial nature and with many forms of consumption; most notably, Ecstasy pills were marked with major consumer brand logos, which gave them unique identifiers and selling points and departed from the naming conventions given to other drugs, which were subversive or benign. This ironic use of brand logos and the appropriation of objects by ravers will be

discussed in detail, as will the use of rave culture's signifiers by advertisers; I will analyse how brands capitalised on rave culture in a show of complete acceptance of the culture, (or at least of its potential profits) and in turn remarketed to participants of this new music genre (electronic dance music) that had become on par with rock and pop. The conventions of festival/music scenes will demonstrate how rave, which once operated outside 'acceptable' boundaries, has become a part of the conventional norm.

As a counterpoint to the commercialisation of rave culture, an overview will be given on 'living outside the brand', recognising the countercultural arm of electronic dance culture that has *always* existed and continues to flourish and refuses to conform. St John asserts, "from the beginning, and indeed both before the beginning and subsequent to the rave explosion, a techno-underground has subsisted, multiplied and evolved, mutating and surviving in a transnational network of techno-tribal formations" (2009, p.1). This countercultural force that has ran parallel to commercialised rave culture will be acknowledged, but will not be a major part of my overall research, the focus of which is the processes and direction of rave's 'mainstream' commercialisation.

Chapter 4

As mentioned earlier in my methodology, rather than my images existing only as an appendix, they are interleaved throughout my thesis, operating as a visual index to support opinions and observations of how electronic dance music was experienced in Perth Western Australia. In this final chapter, I reflect on the work of other photographers within the music scene and analyse my own position and approach to photography within rave/dance culture. What makes a publishable image is discussed and how those images have changed over time as rave culture, packaged in the festival format, has become a mainstream part of the youth cultural experience.

With the smartphone revolution, photography is no longer a practice dominated by professionals and keen amateurs; rather, people 'not necessarily interested in photography per se—are becoming avid practitioners in the making, circulating and socializing of their own images" (Hjorth, 2007, p.228). With the meteoric rise of social media, 'family photos' now exist in the public domain rather than in the photo album gathering dust on the shelf. The role that the general public play in helping to normalise (through the use of

photography and social media) what were once seen as a fringe subcultural activities will make up a part of the final chapter. After all, in this postmodern world, everyone is a photographer.

Photographic monograph

While most books on the rave and dance scene privilege writing over imagery there are a number of photography driven books by photographers. *What Kind of a house party is this?* (Fleming, 1995) includes photographs from rave events across the UK with inserts of flyers and over photoshopped graphic inlays. It has the look of a DIY personal diary and being a self-published title, this appears to be the intent. Its kitsch and confusing but it does go some way to giving a sense of the vibe one might *feel* at a rave. *Raving 89* (2010) with photographs by Gavin Watson focuses on the year that acid house exploded across the UK (1989). Watson's photography is predominantly black and white and photojournalistic in style. The black and white rendering of what were colour driven opportunities help create a document or rave that looks gritty and confronting. It may provide a nostalgic consideration of rave, but it also gives it a cold documentary aesthetic. In contrast my use of colour with its candy coloured flash produced images makes the environment look warm and inviting.

More recently (2015) *Dancefloor thunderstorm land of the free, home of the rave*, by Michael Tullberg is an American photographic book of dance music from 1996 through to 2002. Out of all the photographic books relating to rave and dance culture, Tullbergs style of photographs and his privileged access (back stage and on stage) most align with the my own work. What he was doing in America I was doing in Perth, Western Australia – it's a privileged insiders view into rave and dance culture from a positive promotional standpoint and stylistically it uses long exposures with flash to give a sense of movement to the images.

The intention of my own monograph is to serve as a companion to the thesis that helps consolidate and contextualise the writing. While photographs are already referred to throughout this thesis: some are from archival news sources but mostly they are images I have produced. In this thesis component they are referred to and dispersed largely for

illustrative and ethnographic purposes, to provide added discourse and visual context. The photographic book, however, allows for an immersive visual experience of non-staged event images and predetermined studio and location photographs. The book offers what words alone cannot fully engage with – a representation of what was and remains a highly visual scene.

While my thesis engages with rave/dance culture and EDM from a worldwide perspective, Perth, Western Australia is the focus of a detailed study. This is also the case with the photographic companion book. Even though my photographic archive contains club images from, Britain Ibiza and other parts of Europe, I chose for the book to only contain images that were produced in Perth. This allows for a succinct narrative that plots the gradual transition from an underground ‘tribal’ scene (that was in the process of becoming commercialised) to the mass corporatised events that followed – all within a specific region.

I was a late bloomer in experiencing rave. While I attended some events in the mid '90s, by the time I began photographing ‘rave’ (1999) it was already transitioning into dance culture. Therefore, event photographs of the earliest styles and fashion trends within late '80s and early '90s rave are not featured in the photographic book, unless it is through pastiche, parody or nostalgia; some clubbers continued to wear this period of clothing through the 2000s and beyond. I considered using file photographs of events sourced from the public, but the written exegesis and interviews already evaluate the early development of the Perth rave scene. I decided the book would make a stronger document if it only included my own photographs (with live event images from 1999 to 2014, offering greater consistency and a clear vision of my experience of dance culture over a 15-year period. In regards to imagery, the book privileges an ‘experience’ of rave and dance culture over a strictly linear timeline of event images. This being said, the book does progress that experience starting with the earlier ‘underground’ events through to the corporate sponsored EDM festivals of contemporary dance culture.

Since I have literally thousands of images of live dance events (originally produced on film and later on digital cameras) editing decisions were a crucial part of the books production; chosen based on aesthetic appeal but also as a reflection on my own common shared experiences of the rave/dance scene. Images reflect a sample of the type and mood

of attendees, the clothing styles and hopefully the atmosphere that surrounds the entire scene. Even before having to edit such a large body of work the images already show a bias, in that the live event photographs had been commissioned in advance – I was selling the spectacle (of rave) as a commodity for commercial purposes. While sometimes I was ‘shooting for myself’ my main aim was to produce work that promoters could use for promotion of their events. The book then, while containing live event images that are indicative of the rave/dance scene in general, display a bias towards positive aspects of the scene (i.e., my focus was more on healthy looking people that were clearly having a good time as opposed to those that may have consumed too many drugs and are more commonly reflected in media images to create a moral panic about rave).

The layout of the photographic monograph also consists of juxtapositions between documented images and objects from the rave scene that I photographed in a studio setting. While event images offer a visual history of the transformation of rave and dance culture, studio-based images offer an insight into how banal objects were often appropriated and given new meaning. For example, a pacifier (when shot in isolation) for most invokes an indexical link to a baby, but within rave culture the pacifier became a symbol of regression to a child like state and for others simply a way to reduce teeth grinding (caused by taking the drug ecstasy which is synonymous with rave culture). Creating the photographs of objects in a studio environment removes the objects from its cultural context. Juxtaposing these studio objects with live event images (where appropriate) cements the appropriation of objects within rave culture – something that is often written about but is not often visually represented.

My approach to the photographic monograph is heavily influenced by the iconic '90s magazine *Colors*, which is funded by the global corporation Benetton. Released in 1991 it was ground breaking in its design and content and even its target audience that I call ‘intelligent youth’ as it went well beyond being simply another lifestyle magazine. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s this cutting edge youth magazine bridged the divide between zines (non-commercial grassroots creative products) and traditional lifestyle magazines with their over focus on consumer capitalism. This in itself is rather ironic given that it was also serving as highbrow advertising for its parent company Benetton. On a review of the magazine 20 years after its first release Leslie (2011) writes, “Mixing the sad and comic, light and heavy, distant and close-up, it remains an epic work of

picture editing and storytelling.” While praised, *Colors* was not without its detractors, courting criticism in its approach to foreground social issues in place of Benetton’s products (designer clothing). “The campaign illustrates how the decontextualization of placing issues within the framework of product promotion, creates a tone of discordant meaning not adequately explained by mass culture critiques of consumerism” (Tinic, 1997, p. 3). While this is true it is this deliberate decontextualisation of issues that generated heated discussion. In representing social issues each edition featured objects from around the world, normally shot against a blank white studio background with brief descriptions of their use. Sometimes the object was juxtaposed with an image of the objects purpose; this is the inspiration for my own approach to photographing objects that reference rave culture.

In my monograph, it is not just a style trope in deliberately reproducing the magazine format of *Colors*; this intersection between the subcultural (or ‘other) and commercial products that are presented in *Colors* are similar in my own photographic themes as I shift between documenting rave/dance culture but also in *selling* it as a desirable thing to do. It links the postmodern approach of style to late capitalism.

Furthermore, Tuija Nickson states “*Colors* is a visual magazine in which texts are often superimposed...through its large quantity of visual material. *Colors* can be read fast and easily and it’s possible to go back and forth without missing the point” (1999, p.365). This visual style, to me, echoes the rapid ebb and flow of the rhythms of being immersed in the rave scene.

Landscape images portray the temporary and transformative nature of rave and dance culture. Locations (like the live event images and objects) are scattered throughout the book and show the diverse areas where rave and dance culture occurred in Perth, Western Australia. The locations were determined by my experience of attending events, through interview and online forums. While by no means a definitive list of locations, the images do offer some insight into the varied landscape of rave and dance culture, which often occurred at sites away from traditional club spaces. This is of particular importance to the classical concept of a rave, as opposed to a dance party in that by “transforming a physical *place* into a festive *moment*, raves generated the possibility for a musical experience that was no longer driven exclusively by the logic of the socio-economic order” (Gaillot,

1999, p.20). The sense of transition and impermanence sits well with the 'temporary autonomous zone,' which was a tenet of rave culture. While many location photographs were taken during actual events, others were taken a decade or more after which is by no means a hindrance – being there after the fact further emphasises a sense of rave's ephemerality. Both the contemporary studio and landscape images allow for an exploration and visual representation of rave culture before I began shooting live events – in a sense, a post-mortem of rave. Read in conjunction with the written thesis, the images help to visually decode and comprehend dance culture as it occurred in Perth, Western Australia and its move from an underground scene in a time of transition to a commodified corporatised brand in the form of EDM.

Chapter 1: Rave culture and its manifestations

History

Defining rave and post rave culture is problematic. Academics and music enthusiasts trace rave through music styles with influences that might be seemingly unconnected, such as punk, through to more direct roots, most notably disco, or through its ethos: '50s beat culture, '60s hippie culture and northern soul of the '70s and '80s. According to Stiens, “Rave culture can be traced back as far as you want to trace it. It can be traced back to Native American religious ceremonies. It can be traced back to the sixties Be-Ins and Love Ins and Acid Tests. It can be traced back to anarchist revolutions in Italy and France” (1997, ¶ 2).

The foundations of rave culture as defined in contemporary terms began in North America but was ultimately adopted (and made famous) in Britain. Chicago was synonymous with producing house music, while Detroit became famous for its faster harder beats collectively known as techno. The sound that developed into the acid house (the precursor to rave) phenomenon emerged in the early 1980s with the advent of a repurposed technology that could produce the electronic sounds that started it all, the Roland 303 synthesiser. Developed in 1982 as a bass synthesiser marketed towards solo guitar players (as a background beat), it was discovered a few years later by Chicago House DJs who found the unique synthetic squelchy electronic reverberation it created worked perfectly with the music they were making. Thus acid house was born, the precursor to what would become rave. I refer to the beginnings of rave culture as it is recognised today and not to the beginnings of techno music itself. German band Kraftwerk can be credited with the foundations of techno in the 1970s, which would inspire the music coming out of Detroit in the early 1980s, in turn leading to the rave scene. Kraftwerk’s music relied heavily on the use of synthesizers well before the popularity of the Roland 303, which is not to say that Kraftwerk was not influenced by what was happening in America. On the contrary, there was a two way street of mutual respect and musical influence and appropriation; Kraftwerk was influenced by American soul music while American youth were influenced by the German dance music described by American listeners as “so stiff it’s funky” (Sicko, 2010 p. 9). “Kraftwerk created a new and specialized taste by blending soul music from Detroit and other U.S

cities...Detroit techno artists reappropriated the appropriation when they made Kraftwerk's music part of the new sounds of Detroit" (Lipsitz, 2007 p. 246). House music's heritage is most noticeably linked to disco, which was also born in Chicago, as were the first acid tracks.

In the late 1980s, dance music was blossoming with free warehouse parties in the plentiful open spaces of downtown Detroit. Cities were becoming less populated, following the late '60s and early '70s syndrome of 'white flight' to the suburbs, the decline of the auto industry, and the degentrification of once securely middle-class black districts; Detroit's city centre had become a ghost town (Reynolds, 1999, p. 19). Musically, the end of the '70s saw the supposed death of disco but in reality, it formed the foundations of house music (in Chicago), which then led to Detroit techno, resulting in somewhat of a renaissance for the city; Detroit was recognised and romanticised within international music circles for its famous minimalist baseline (techno).

For a small island off the coast of Spain (Ibiza), the early eighties saw the hippie culture disperse and international tourism become its largest economic import. Ibiza was "the number one European destination for Dance Music fans within the summer months, and has been since the famous 'Summer of Love' in 1988 which led to the emergence of the Dance Scene in Britain" (Sellars, 1998, p. 613). Ibiza was an island with a chequered history in terms of its industry (it once relied on salt as its primary export) and its people whose indigenous population were rural but whose transient international population were liberal, bohemian idealistic individuals. Up until the late '70s, the island catered for those seeking alternate lifestyles and provided a secluded sanctuary for the rich and famous. A new type of tourism emerged in Ibiza in the mid 1980s, which today would be categorised as the 'packaged holiday'. Three decades previously, air travel between Britain and the Mediterranean was the preserve of the wealthy (Dierikx, 2008 p. 61) but now it was an affordable method of travel for working class Britain. There was a sizeable uptake of young 'Brits' who wanted to get away from dreary England and its conservative trappings. In Ibiza, British youth were exposed to a lifestyle that was in stark contrast to what they were experiencing in their homeland. Marie Marden, a young traveller at the time, describes her early experience at a club called Amnesia (which still exists to the present day) before it became a well-trodden British hot spot.

We'd go to Amnesia but we were the only English in there, all the rest would be Spanish and Italians... We couldn't even afford to get a drink. But we'd go there and see the weirdest people we'd ever seen and the richest people we'd had ever seen, then there was us... When your dad's a painter and decorator, your mum works in a shop, you've worked in a dry cleaners, been a dental nurse, done cleaning, you think about that and you're out there, looking at Grace Jones, you just think: 'God! I never thought this could happen!' (as cited in Collin, 1998, p. 49).

They were also exposed to music uniquely Ibizaian (referred to as Balearic) in style but with roots from American house. The important thing to note here is it was not only the music that was imported but also the overall *experience* of being in Ibiza. This island with its history of openness and a laissez-faire attitude separated itself from the Spanish mainland and certainly felt a world away from Britain, yet was less than a four-hour flight. For some, a sense of acceptance amplified by the ambience of its open-air clubs, beaches and drugs created a cathartic quasi-religious moment in their lives. Those with an entrepreneurial nature saw opportunities in bringing the mix in musical style to England. Indeed, some of the biggest names in electronic music, such as Danny Rampling and Paul Oakenfold, credit their change in direction to a chance trip to Ibiza together (Reynolds, 2013). Ibiza's effect on the future of British youth culture and music would be profound and long lasting – a divergence from Punk and New Wave, with pleasure pursuits trumpeted over anti-establishment and anarchy.

Where punk had rejected such obvious pleasure a decade before, with the Sex Pistols singing 'I don't want a holiday in the sun', youth hedonism was now back, with a vengeance. A fortnight's holiday in the sun became packed into a single weekend... Tanned youth queuing up in dreary London streets to get into the club, to get out of it, dance floors as beach, beachwear as night-club garb in British winter (McKay, 1996, p. 105).

The timing of rave culture's birth then, was a result of the temporal convergence of technology, travel and tourism, political environment and designer drugs. Britain was under the last years of the Thatcher government's rule. This conservative government had created a disillusioned working class and youth. Punk was born out of contempt for the state. Punk (at least in its loud recognisable guise and style) was in decline, yet a disenfranchised youth remained and it was against this background that the country gave rise to a new culture and sound. Acid house, initially produced in Chicago, was quickly appropriated by the UK and was given a distinctly British sound and look. It became a hit in London clubs such as Shoom and the Hacienda in Manchester, which soon became known as 'Madchester'. "Ibiza, Shoom, Spectrum, The Trip: this is the endlessly

repeated, ‘official’ history of acid house” (Collin, 1998, p. 72). Shoom was the first club that used the well-known ‘smiley face’ that became the adopted logo of acid house (Collin, 1998; Bainbridge, 2014). British youth was essentially responsible for *branding* acid house (the forerunner to rave culture), giving it a recognisable style beyond the music through fashion, language and symbolism and the press would soon report its existence as the next big wave of youth culture.

‘Rave’ became clearly defined around the late '80s, incorporating acid house and the new music styles that had proliferated. Acid parties became rave parties – an overarching term to describe a matrix of lifestyle and music. Raves were entangled with the drug Ecstasy and demanded the attention and recognition of the mass media. Terms such as ‘acid house’ and ‘rave’ gave names to pin this burgeoning subculture down: defining what had largely been the indefinable, providing a title the mainstream press could use.

Increased pressure from the subcultural press about the ‘drug crazed world’ of Acid House, and the Dance scene’s desire for a moral panic soon meant that Acid House hit the headlines in the biggest possible way. Indeed, what followed may have been the single biggest contributing element in Acid/Rave’s explosion as young people’s most popular form of entertainment at the turn of the decade. (Dizzy, n.d.)

Dizzy, like Thornton (see *Moral Panic* Chapter 2), argues that the participants in this newly defined subculture wanted to be exposed – to gain recognition for what they were creating. The mainstream press helped to define the subculture and create ‘the other’, creating a moral panic as rave culture and in particular Ecstasy were seen as outside threats to the ‘normal’ and simultaneously assuring their longevity due to all of the attention. Britain’s love affair with rave peaked during the summer of love of 1988. Ironically, at this time the dance scene in Detroit and Chicago was experiencing a period of decline. America’s obsession with its ‘War on Drugs’, a term coined during the Regan era, was still being felt in the fast response of police to the flirtatious mass consumption of drugs.

Australia was slower to adopt the rave scene (with peak commercial interest in Australia not occurring until the mid 1990s) and it is also argued that it never did adopt it in the way America and Britain did, with the appropriation of warehouse space. According to DJ Angus (1994)

Everyone's talking about the death of the rave scene and warehouse parties and the like, but the point people seem to be missing is that warehouse parties never really existed in Australia in the first place. The rave scene, ripped from overseas, was never really a true rave scene in the original meaning of the term. (¶ 1)

Although DJ Angus's comments regarding rave being initially 'ripped' from overseas and established as a result of British expats might be accurate, rave still certainly had a flourishing underground presence in Australia. Gibson and Pagan (2001) cite Sydney and other large Australian cities as using unorthodox sites for the consumption of electronic music: from warehouses and factories through to bowling alleys and even circus tents. St John (2001) believes that rave had infiltrated the underground of Australian capital cities of Sydney and Melbourne even in the late eighties as a result of expatriate promoters inspired by the UK experience, and this is supported by interviews given by DJ Rudeboy, who was based in Melbourne around this time and was involved in the early acid house scene.

What it was like in this country [Australia] in '88 is what it was like in England in 1986. I mean, I experienced the more underground scene of the acid house here in Melbourne, and in Sydney as well, which was brought on board by similar people as [sic] myself: English people or Australians who had been overseas at that time, and then they brought it here. (2003, ¶ 2)

Where rave was experienced was maybe not as important as why or how. St John (2001) acknowledges that the economic and social conditions that made rave what it is in the UK were not really present in Australia; instead the scene arrived in Australia "as a pre-packaged UK affectation" (p. 18). I suggest the UK demonstrated a greater sense of desperation and desire for the illegal party scene due to the somewhat draconian operating hours imposed on licensed clubs (at the time that had to close by 2am).

Although it might be expected that Western Australia would simply follow on from the East Coast's adoption of rave culture, it still showed its own degree of originality. Perth, often cited as the most isolated capital city in the world (Whish-Wilson, 2013; Stratton, 2008), still became a hub for rave culture in the early '90s. Perth's geographical location/isolation from the east coast and the pre-internet pre-social media era of the time may have resulted in a slightly slower uptake, but the Perth scene soon established its own style of rave with early local DJs such as Simon Hutchinson (known as Hutcho) playing at and promoting events. The catalyst for west coast rave came from British migrants who influenced music and style, but rather than simply 'adopting' rave, Perth helped define its

own particular style. “Whilst the origins of rave culture were transported from overseas, it was hybridised and appropriated in Western Australia to create its own progeny with south of the (equatorial) border characteristics” (Lee, 2005, p. 49). DJ Darren Brias, a veteran in the scene who has done residencies all over Australia and the UK since the mid eighties, adds, “Perth especially has always had great local DJ’s that have played quality music.... The Perth scene has always had a huge Drum & Bass scene due mainly to Greg Packer & the Pendulum boys, plus a very healthy Breaks scene due to many quality Perth breaks DJ’s” (Personal communication, November, 2014). Further evidence of Perth’s ‘legitimacy’ from an international perspective is evidenced in articles written for the 1990s British underground rave magazine *Eternity*. Simon Hutchinson became a regular contributor to the magazine for a number of years until the magazine folded. For Hutcho, it was clearly a point of pride to get Perth included in a publication gaining international attention and it gave credibility to the idea that Perth, Western Australia was not just adopting rave culture but producing its own style which also influenced the east coast of Australia with its sounds and styles.

Perth experienced a similar model as England when it came to the spread of rave culture: beginning in the clubs moving out of the clubs and then back to the clubs once more as the scene became increasingly commercialised. Gerald Eaton, a keen electronic music enthusiast and local Perth DJ who went by the name Puff, recounts his early '90s experiences.

There was James Street Nightclub and Networks and the Freezer and Berlin and all those clubs, they were early rave clubs and then they started having raves out in fields and warehouses. The Infirmary was the next big thing, like the rave club, the staple that you would go to every week that played underground house music and rave music. Trance techno, trip hop (Eaton. G, personal communication, June 18, 2014).

Puff’s recollection is supported by veteran Perth performers MC Assassin and Hutcho (n.d), who place the event N.R.G, held at Networks in October 1990, as Perth’s first ‘official’ rave. (Networks would remain a fixture of electronic dance club for many years to come – first as O2 and then James Street Nightclub. It rebranded as Rise Nightclub in 1999 through to 2011 and is currently referred to as Air.)



Figure 1: N.R.G Poster. (1990). Arguably Perth's first official rave. [Rave flyer]
Retrieved from: <http://mcassassin.tripod.com/ravesperth.htm>

Just as England used obscure venues away from traditional places of performance, such as warehouses and airline hangers, Perth adopted similar industrial locations in Welshpool and Midland as well as incorporating the open spaces that were still in abundance in the early 1990s as areas north and south of the CBD remained undeveloped. Ravers would be given maps at chosen drop off points, which often led to forested regions both north and south of the river, away from the city and on the fringe of suburbia. The 1993 Perth rave *Emotion*, held in a farmer's paddock in Wanneroo, was well documented by an amateur camera operator, digitised and finally uploaded (by Raul Sobon) to YouTube in 2006. It offers a rare public glimpse of video footage of events from this era. Uploaded in separate sections, Part 12 and 13 show the sun rising behind a small hardcore group of remaining participants. Covered in fine dust and topsoil kicked up from the relentless repetitive dancing, the scene is reminiscent of a *Mad Max* movie; it looks completely tribal and quintessentially Australian, to the point of stereotyping. By any definition, it suggests that rave did not have to be tied to a specific location such as an empty warehouse in downtown Detroit or the outskirts of London. Rave was about the appropriation or reappropriation of any space for performance. Perth's open woodland and suburban fringe suited that definition, and rave was alive and well in Western Australia.

Although Perth had its fair share of illegal or ‘questionable’ venues, it never had the type of flash mob mentality that England experienced through pirate radio and word of mouth with spontaneous raves springing up all over the country in 1989. “You could basically go on the M25 freeway and find raves ...there’d be carloads of people driving around” (Reynolds, 1999 p. 144). Australia simply did not have the population density to support this style of rave culture, which is so fondly recounted in rave folklore from the British scene.

Demography

Angela McRobbie notes that “despite being ostensibly open to all, the codes of ‘rave authenticity’, which include ‘white label’ tracks, fanzines, flyers as collectors’ items, well-known DJs, famous clubs, legendary raves” construct a particular raver (2003, p. 174). Nevertheless, rave’s subcultural demography varied dramatically between different countries and even within their regions. Rave’s hedonistic roots were born within the gay community with clubs such as the Warehouse in Chicago and Paradise Garage in Soho New York, both of which began in the 1970s. “Chicago house music was born out of a double exclusion, then: not just black, but gay and black” (Reynolds, 1999, p. 24). Although billed as gay clubs, they catered and accepted everyone. In a *New York Times* interview in June 2000, Mel Cheren, the owner of the now defunct Paradise Garage, said “one important thing that the Garage did, which is not being done today, is to bring together black and white, straight and gay into one place. When people learn to dance together, they get along” (Pareles, 2000, ¶ 8). In the case of the Paradise Garage, it was also helped by the open secret that the punch was spiked with LSD (Broughton & Brewster, 2000).

As dance music evolved, so did the drugs. These feelings of acceptance between diverse cultural groups and a relaxation of gender norms were in part due to the shared passion for the music but it also relates heavily to rave’s relationship with the drug Ecstasy. MDMA (known by the slang term Ecstasy), originally used by psychologists in the '70s to help people ‘open up’ about their feelings, found its perfect role a recreational drug within dance music. The androgyny within rave culture is often attributed to the effects of the

drug. Straight or gay, women often reported feeling empowered and men emasculated. Reynolds (1999, p.247) relates his own feelings on the drug.

I remember one time on E enjoying a radical sensation of being without gender, a feeling of docility and angelic gentleness so novel and exquisite I could only express it clumsily: 'I feel really effeminate'. The subliminal hormonal 'hum' of masculinity was suddenly silenced.

Rave's boundaries of class and colour were blurred (St John, 2004, p. 5) and certainly rave did not discriminate on the grounds of sexuality. "Women became truly liberated, able to let go and enjoy themselves without fear of being taken advantage of by aggressive men" (Saunders, 1993, p. 21). McRobbie (1999) adds, "dance music celebrates sex without the burden of gender" (p. 293). Pini's (1999) ethnographic study on the early British rave scene drew similar conclusions through observation and interviews with female participants. The early raves were at a time when pirate radio stations broadcast secret locations outside the usual club space, which would later become the norm. Panini quotes a participant simply referred to as Jane. "You're a part of something, and that feeling of being inside something that's bigger than yourself is really lovely" (p. 161). Another participant, referred to as Anna, speaks of being a part of a team, of a sense of belonging. Pini's participants describe feelings of equality within the British rave scene "all insist that, in the 'early days', race, gender, age, sexuality and other differences played no central role in dividing the scene" (p. 162). The descriptions that participants in Pini's study offer are remarkably similar the world over. Importantly, Pini's study provides a voice to female participants, often lacking in traditional subcultural research, which has tended to focus on males and masculinity and is a largely overlooked part of rave demography. The sense of equality on the dance floor was empowering for women and a vast change from the 'meat market' of club culture. This sense of love without sex was entirely misunderstood and misinterpreted by the British tabloids. A *Sun* reporter wrote "OUTRAGEOUS sex romps taking place on a special stage in front of the dance floor" (Reynolds, 1999 p.67). The comment was obviously intended to shock; at the same time, older generations could not break with the idea that a group of youth intensely dancing, men often shirtless, could not be some form of foreplay.

It should also be noted that although women were avid 'consumers' of rave culture, when it came to the means of production, promotion or DJing, they were very much a minority. Feminist cultural writer McRobbie (1999) notes, "behind the decks, in the studios, across

the pirate airways and in the newspapers and magazines, the voices, bodies and images are male” (p. 291). I would only argue with the last points, regarding ‘bodies and images’; although underrepresented in the means of production, females were over-represented in terms of the advertising focus on their bodies. St John (2001) notes on the east coast of Australia, the street press magazine *Techno Renegade* produced “sexist imagery associated with rock—insouciant male posturing with background babe accessories—is endorsed through advertising” (p. 23). The international dance lifestyle *Mix Mag* and *Ministry’s* covers were also saturated with female forms. Indeed, my own photographs had a bias towards female representation, as that was what the market wanted. Whereas males were represented as active in the rave scene, there was still the excessive commodification and sexualisation of the female body in photographs.

London saw the gay community embrace rave and rave culture in clubs like *The Mud Club* and *Heaven*. The north of England in ‘Mad Manchester’ saw something very different occurring. McRobbie asserts “raves take pleasures which have sustained black and gay cultures and makes them available to a wide audience” (2003, p.171). Indeed, rave was picked up en masse by straight, white northerner lads. A city so famed for its football hooligans and general working class background, embraced rave.

Thanks to house clubs like the Hacienda, Thunderdom, and Conspiracy, Manchester transformed itself into ‘Madchester,’ the mecca for twenty-four-hour party people and smiley-faced ravers from across Northern England and the Midlands. By 1989, the famously grey and overcast city had gone Day-Glo. (Reynolds, 1999 p. 93)

Manchester incorporates a large portion of the country’s university population (Parkinson-Bailey, 2000) and students are typically attracted to new styles and experimentation such as what rave/dance music provided. It is strong uptake by working class culture, though, that demonstrates rave’s wide appeal to two seemingly disparate groups of people. Around the late 1980s to early nineties, while rave was reaching its underground peak in Manchester, there was also a reduction in football hooliganism. Redhead attributes this, in part, to the drug Ecstasy and rave culture, which brought together opposing teams to dance rather than fight. “The 1989-90 soccer season became what sub cultural theorist Steve Redhead called the ‘Winter of Love,’ celebrated in chants like ‘oh! We’re all blissed up and we’re gonna win the cup” (Reynolds, 2013, p. 95). That same year, New Order included ‘E is for England’ (no doubt a reference to the drug Ecstasy) in its top of the charts World Cup-orientated song *World in Motion*.

Interestingly, New Order's manager also ran the previously mentioned successful rave friendly Manchester club the Hacienda.

In Sydney, Australia, the rave scene was largely influenced by the Manchester sound and style of gatherings, which is not surprising given the strong British expat community (Montano, 2009, p. 48). As Luckman asserts, "Australia's rave-derived dance music scene is but one localised manifestation of a global cultural movement (or moment)" (2003, p. 315). Sydney's large-scale dance parties began with the help of Recreational Art Team (RAT) and were largely introduced into the mainstream through parties initiated in the gay community. Murphie and Scheer (cited in Gibson & Pagan, 2001, p. 10) claim "events were organised by Sydney's Gay and Lesbian community, the meanings and styles of which increasingly 'spilt over' into mainstream crowds through commercially-orientated parties such as Bacchanalia, Sweatbox and Erasure, which attached a more heterosexual and largely wealthy, inner-city clientele."

In Perth, the gay community and alternative straight community experienced rave (in a semi-commercial but still alternative fashion) through clubs such Connections and DC's, essentially following along the same lines of uptake as Sydney. However, what is of real interest was the demographic of those who became involved in the scene directly following this period. Rave, I suggest, reached its first commercial peak during the late nineties, by which time it was referred to as dance music; if you sampled a five square meter portion of the dance floor at this time I could point out your future doctors, lawyers and engineers. Our future brain trust were here on this dance floor, sweating like marathon runners, grinning from ear to ear, and in most cases high as the sky on Ecstasy. Luckman supports my general observation, stating that rave's participants were "hardly the embodiment of the quintessential 'drop-out' but rather people who are on the whole marked by their stereotypically successful involvement in capitalist employment and/or university study, money enables the attendance at events, but *time* is the harder to procure requirement" (2003, p. 317). Gibson, in an ABC interview, adds "It's a music that's been championed by – initially, English backpackers and tourists – by an inner-city crowd of people, university students, artists, who see themselves as kind of urban, bohemian avant-garde. And it's really come out of that sort of social scene in Sydney and probably in Melbourne too" (Gibson, 2003, ¶ 1).

I suggest that Ecstasy during the peak commercial period of rave and club culture was very much a white-collar drug in Perth Western Australia. Degenhardt and Dunn (2007,

p. 40) draw similar conclusions from research into illicit drug use in Australia, highlighting a privileged class of drug users who have little contact with law enforcement and seldom require drug treatment. “Regular ecstasy users in Australia tend to be male, aged in their mid-twenties, from an English speaking background, well-educated, engaged in either full-time employment or tertiary education.” In part, Ecstasy use by a privileged part of Australian society was possibly due to the fifty-dollar price tag of a pill purchased in a club compared to five quid (British pounds) or less in Great Britain. When compounded by the cost of the commercial venue entrance fee, “raving” was not a cheap night out. Park (1996) confirms my first hand observations of the Perth scene regarding the cost of ‘raving’. “The rave scene however discriminated strongly, if not willingly. The fact that an average weekend for a raver costs around \$100 (drugs, travel, ticket) straight away formed a barrier for poorer kids to make their way in.”

It is interesting to note that studies of the Toronto rave scene also suggest a middle class leaning. Wilson (2006) makes reference to past British working-class resistive groups and how rave was experienced differently in Canada.

Ravers in Toronto are for the most part a middle-class group which, according to the pro-PLUR rationale provided by many ravers, is increasingly alienated by such pre-millennium fears as global warming, AIDS, racial tension, the apocalypse, and so on. The crucial difference between punks and skinheads of 1970s Britain and the ravers of 1990s Canada is that Canadian middle-class youth have different ‘coping resources’ than did their working-class counterparts in 1970s Britain who were victims of oppression that was more clearly class-based. (p. 139)

Wilson fails to elaborate on the distinction between the uptake of rave by working class youth in Britain compared to Canada’s middle class leaning in Toronto. Wilson does suggest that rave in the Toronto scene was born less out of resistance or oppression, similar to the situation I describe in Perth, Western Australia and that its ideas were borrowed. “Chris Sheppard...Responsible for...Canada’s first rave party, he continued to import ideas derived from various trips to New York City and England into the Toronto and Canadian dance music scene” (Wilson, 2006, p. 52). Timing and opportunity in Canada and Australia were clearly the result of rave’s (commercial) migration over anything else.

If we generalise in saying that the American scene begun with gay African Americans and the British scene is famous for its working class northerner lads, Perth’s early commercial

scene had an unusually high level of middle-class participants. Stratton (2008), who has written on the Perth music scene and its cultural and historical context, highlights that Perth has a history of a middle-class suburban lifestyle. In other writing related to popular music and culture, he states “Perth, built on wealth generated elsewhere in primary industry, where there was little in the way of an industrial working class, was able to construct a totalising image of itself as middle class” (2007, p. 2). Stratton correlates the increase in British migrants and their middle-class aspirations of the 1960s and 1970s with the musical taste for English-originated easy listening music. However, I argue that though middle-class culture and taste were prevalent in the rave scene in the 1990s and beyond, it developed into a subculture that moved well-beyond the easy listening music of their conservative parents’ generation.

The early rave scene in Australia offered an alternative activity for people both gay and straight who felt ostracized or at least removed from the '80s and '90s Australian popular culture, which, at least in Perth was very much a pub rock/live band orientated scene. Trainer asserts that “rock music played in pubs would become one of the most popular forms of entertainment in Perth, drawing large crowds and giving rise to a number of particularly successful bands” (2016, p.2). Trainer further discusses the association between pub rock, drinking culture, and an increasingly aggressive and masculine form of heavy rock that took shape in Australian beer barns (2016, p. 10). Rave offered an alternative to the hyper masculine heavy drinking head banging of pubs and beer barns. It offered a space that was more open and welcoming to those who did not feel comfortable in the heteronormative spaces of pubs. For example Emma, a former Perth raver asserts: “When I came out as gay, around age 18, my rave friends were the first ones I told. Even though it was an admission that was fraught with anxiety, my rave buddies were so warm and accepting - they just didn't care about my sexuality.” (personal communication, January, 2017). Furthermore, Emma asserts “it was generally a very accepting culture” (personal communication, January, 2017).

Raves attracted diverse participants. However, there were regional differences. While working class Brits in the North of England embraced rave, the majority of the Australian working class rejected it. “...we all would have been around fifteen or sixteen at Kelmscott High [School]. It was predominately a bogan area, if you will, but a bunch of us, a handful, did not fit into any other category. We were cool with everyone. We were

always a bit different. Cool, but different” (Eaton. G, personal communication, June 18, 2014). This follows the findings of an Australian study on the rave scene that suggests “participants considered themselves participants in an alternative youth subculture rather than being part of the ‘mainstream’” (Siokou, Moore & Lee, 2010, p.195) – in the sense that it challenged or subverted everyday norms, and the mainstream through the choice of music, non traditional venues, clothing drug use and repetitive dancing. I experienced and witnessed this first hand by attending these events, and from the experiences of those ‘extended friends’ that became fans of my photography and my website, ravephotography.com. A loyal fan base attended the events put on by the promoters that I worked for; I would see the same faces time and time again. We all shared a passion for electronic music and they became extended friends – albeit friends that I would only see at events. In time this would change as rave culture entered the mainstream en masse and was normalised. That transitional phase also marked a change in the behaviour and general style of attendees, which will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter dealing with the processes of commodification.

One catalyst for rave in America is suggested as the ‘white flight’ to the suburbs in Detroit against a backdrop of transition from industrial boomtown to post-Fordist wasteland (Reynolds 1999); in Manchester, the disfranchised youth as a product of Thatcherism (Hill 2002) who’s backlash produced a ‘party here and now’ approach, but what about the situation in Australia? What produced the rapid uptake of rave in Australia and in my local area of interest, Perth? Earlier I mentioned DJ Angus’s view of rave being ripped from Britain and in this sense maybe it did not have the same background of post-political angst underlying its uptake in Australia. Traditionally, Australia’s leisure industry has been influenced by both Europe and America, which is evident through their domination of our television airtime, the films we watch at the cinema, and the songs we listen to on the commercial radio. “Like similar countries with relatively small populations and colonial backgrounds, Australia’s music and media landscape has been dominated by British and American culture” (Choi, 2014 p. 82). The late nineties in Perth saw an educated middle-class pack the commercial venues for raves, sipping water and dancing until dawn while the mainstream population, still confused about the allure of rave, frowned upon the scene from the safety of the beer garden within the traditional pub.

Rave's uptake in Europe was rapid and in no small part this was due to the union between the music and its perfect match, the drug Ecstasy, which had been made illegal in 1985 (Gelder, 2005) but was still very readily available. The rave scene in Europe, at its height in 1988, referred to this time as the second 'summer of love', making direct reference to 1968's hippie counter-culture, where musicians, artists and intellectuals came together in an outpouring of ideas and of idealism in politics and rebellion with its catalysts in LSD (acid) and cannabis. The idea of this second summer of love stuck, but its links to the original counterculture were certainly tenuous, given the vast difference between what was considered countercultural in the 1960s and the sub cultural practice of raving in the late '80s. Still, the dubious links remain to the 1960s, both in reference to its mix of drugs and music and to a lesser extent, its ideas and ethos. In the second summer of love, hedonism ruled, rather than revolution, and the carnivalesque over commitment to long-term political change. The field of commercial raving can be seen as a mere blip in the disruption of the status quo, and raves were, for most, a weekend retreat rather than a full-time lifestyle choice.

Still, for many people I knew, the drug Ecstasy combined with the intimacy of dance culture had effects enduring beyond eight hours on the dance floor. It made people question their position within society, allowed friends to be more open and honest about their feelings, and often resulted in general lifestyle changes; for some of my friends, even career changes. Ecstasy does not cause one to 'trip' to the degree that acid might, but in combination with the music, it is still an empathogen drug that has a lasting effect on the individual, and which can lead to abstract ideas and thought and to increase one's curiosity. The attractions of rave and Ecstasy to an educated aspiring middle class of young Australians, who have an international reputation for 'playing hard' and being highly influenced by fashion and music from our European and American counterparts, is of little surprise.

Ritual/Music

Unlike other forms of popular music, the music associated with rave culture did not rely heavily on lyrics, instead using "sound and rhythm to construct psychic landscapes of exile and utopia" (Reynolds, 1999, p. 10). Lyrics were brief, often sampled from other

genres of music, and rarely took pre-eminence over the usual 4/4-drum kit pulse, at a high BPM (beats per minute). “In techno and house, vocals are either eliminated or survive mostly as soul-diva samples, which are diced, processed, and moulded like some ectoplasmic substance” (Reynolds, 2012a, p. 376). More contemporary styles of dance music, such as trance and today’s EDM, are much more likely to contain lyrics but they still remain secondary to the beat and the melody. A trance track by Armin van Buuren or EDM, produced by Calvin Harris, is never going to tell narrative like a Bob Dylan ballad and that is never its intention; the music communicates in different ways. “Low frequencies are felt as much as they are heard. We feel that bass in our chest and gut; the music psychically moves our bodies...in the disco environment it was pummelling and massaging us physically” (Byrne, 2013, p. 120). Reynolds suggests this requires a shift in the critic’s emphasis from what the music says or means to a focus on how it works. The departure that Reynolds sees from rock to rave is in constructing an experience rather than relating an experience (Reynolds, 1999). McKay (1996) quotes a commentator of a TV documentary *Rave New World* on the mechanised approach of the music. “For the first time in its history, lyrics, melody and the human voice were stripped away and the music was dominated by what machines were good at: repeated rhythmic patterns that could go on and on” (p. 110). While African tribal beats might be rave’s oldest ancestor, it is reasonable (although unorthodox) to suggest rave shares commonalities with classical music with its emphasis on rhythm and individual instruments to generate a mood or a feeling without the need for lyrics. Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*, or the famous (and famously re-appropriated in *A Clockwork Orange*) second movement of the 9th *Symphony* transcend lyrics. *The Rite of Spring* written by Stravinsky in 1913 a century later goes a step further by removing melody, causing the first riot in music history with the audience attacking each other and the orchestra (Willsher, 2013). Assessed by critics of the time as a madman and celebrated a century later as a genius, Stravinsky was held up as an inspiration to Seb of the infamous Spiral Tribe, which represented the free party movement that swept Britain in the early nineties, inspiring a chaotic, undisciplined form of techno (Reynolds, 2012a, p.143).

While original forms of dance music such as house and techno relied on the mechanical skills of the DJ to beat match between different records or extend tracks on the dance floor by looping (between two of the same records), the music itself is rarely born in real-time (Reynolds, 2012a p. 366) but is layered in the studio. The advent of computers made

the sampling and layering of lyrics a simple process. Short samples such as women's orgasmic moans, a line from a famous movie, or a famous speech, were all fair game to producers of electronic music. Martin Luther King's famous *I have a dream* speech (1963) has been a frequently appropriated sample for decades. More essentially, rave relies particularly on one element, and the oldest known instrument, the drum. Looking back further to its roots, rave has connections with something altogether tribal and primal. My title suggests that rave and its proponents in their purest forms might be seen as a modern day tribe: something that satisfies a basic desire to belong as a collective and to dance to a collective beat in unison. The pace is controlled largely by the speed of the drumbeat, which is measured in rave/dance music in the amount of beats per minute. Different beats per minute delineate different styles or sub genres of what was once overarching referred to as techno. The number of beats per minute in rave culture averages around 120bpm but some styles (such as hardcore) can be over 150bpm leading to frenetic dancing and often (but not exclusively) the use of drugs to maintain the required pace. It is no wonder that to the casual observer, an 'outsider,' rave culture could be seen as a threat. "To the participant it feels like a religion; to the mainstream observer, it looks more like a sinister cult" (Reynolds, 2012a p. xxiv).

Rituals of dance and courtship with the use of drums are common globally and have their origins in Africa. Captain Hugh Clapperton, an early European explorer, wrote about his journeys through Africa in the early 1820s: "Towards the evening, each day, the sound of the drum calls them to the open space in the centre of their huts, when the men form themselves into circles and dance in a most uncouth though joyous manner" (Southern, 2000, p. 5). Replace huts with houses and each day with weekends and it could be a newspaper report commenting on dance music in contemporary times rather than an early observation of a European captain commenting on 'otherness' in Africa in the early 1820s.

Drums serve for celebration but also in rites of passage, and initiations that have religious overtones. A state of trance achieved by shamans of African and Asian cultures rely heavily on the beat of the drum at the centre of their religious ceremony. "A drum and drumstick were the most important elements of the shaman's outfit. Without them a séance would have been impossible among the Chinese Reindeer-Evenki, since they helped the shaman to fall into a trance" (Chilson, & Knecht, 2003 p. 38). Not only was

the drum important in creating an altered state of consciousness, the process of making that drum was a sacred ceremony itself. In rave culture, the making of a drumbeat has been deputed to synthesisers, while the mixing of beats is the job of the DJ to deliver. The ritual of dance is controlled entirely by this modern-day shaman and the onus of the altered state has shifted to his followers: the drumbeat, often combined with the drug Ecstasy, induces a trance-like state in the members of this modern day tribe. In this post modern world, 'a state of trance' in the western sense has little connection with Africa or Asia but is a weekly radio show hosted by the world's most favoured DJ or shaman, Armin Van Buuren, broadcasting his 'sermon' in 26 countries on over 40 radio stations. The shaman as DJ, had become a commodity.

Modern day tribe: notions of politics, carnival and excess

Rave is somewhat of a paradox in that it is apolitical but ideological, ephemeral yet potentially life changing; its hedonistic and capital-conferring qualities make it an ideal product and allowed it to transition from the heterotopic marginal space to the arena spectacular. In this chapter, I interrogate rave culture's countercultural position its status as a subculture and its politics.

Through the late 1990s and early 2000s, subculture as a term has been criticised for focussing on male-dominated youth styles, being too rigid and, paradoxically, for being a term overused by academics and journalists as a derivative catch all to describe youth activities (Bennett 1999). Rave culture would likely be deemed too 'loose' if it were to accurately fit the somewhat one-dimensional paradigms of subculture set out by Gordon, (1947), Cohen (1955), and Hebdige (1979) but precisely because the term has become somewhat commonplace, as Bennett suggests, it is still useful in defining style traits and behaviours. Williams (2011) contends "We should not forget that subculture continues to be a useful concept because it remains meaningful in the lives of many young people who define themselves as subcultural" (p. 42). Depending on whose definition or argument of subculture one aligns with, rave culture may or may not be seen as a subculture but regardless, as Thornton (1995) suggests, it has *subcultural capital*; its participants shared similar ideas of what was 'cool' through fashion, dance moves and the collecting of dance tracks and remixes.

I position rave culture, as a whole, as apolitical, which is potentially contentious; I am not alone in suggesting this (Bennett, 1999; France, 2007; Langlois, 1992; Muggeleton, 2000, Owst, 2011). I mentioned earlier in this chapter that DJ Angus talks of Australia's rave scene being ripped from overseas and thus stripped of the political context that spawned the desire for rave. Australia was certainly lacking political motivation so what about rave in Britain? Alan Owst (2011), in a personal interview with Paul Staines, a political blogger and former rave promoter who was involved in the early acid house scene in the UK said,

I don't think it was very political at all. [...] I tried to manipulate it for political purposes for my own amusement to some extent. But most of the people had very unsophisticated political views. [...] I think you have to realise that it was a very hedonistic period and the main driver, even for the rave organisers was to have a good time and to make some money but having a good time was a primary motivation. (p. 32)

Another interviewee, Dr Hillegonda added, "Rave never appeared to me as political, more extremely a-political [...] Acid house (and Rave) was about escape not politics."

To say rave is apolitical depends how one defines political. It is not to say that rave is not a form of resistance but rather, that the main driver of resistance for ravers was not politically motivated. Within cultural studies everything can be seen as being political – "...the political everything marked by the de-centering of the state has been a stimulus, provoking critical accounts of media, subcultures, consumption, leisure, popular science and the rich variety of experiences, resistances, exclusions, alignments, subordinations, and pleasures inscribed into the life of the ordinary" (Dean, 2000, p. 8). In responding to writers who describe rave as apolitical, Malbon (1999) contends "The flaw lies primarily in the simplistic construction of the political, a construction in which the political is inextricably linked to narrow preconceptions of the relationships between power and resistance, and between 'authority' and subordination" (p. 164). Olaveson (n.d) suggests, "we need the fundamental recognition that dancing at a rave is a root of political action in that it simultaneously signifies and reifies a form of being-in-one's-body antithetical to the dominant discourses of embodiment." Here I am in agreement – the act of 'raving' may be politicised, particularly in hindsight, but 'ravers' (that is individual participants) on the whole were simply enjoying the hedonism of the moment rather than considering their political implications.

If rave was not seen as political for many participants, it was nevertheless ideological; the term PLUR was often an acronym you would hear at raves, which stood for peace, love, unity, respect. The term was coined in the early '90s by legendary Brooklyn DJ Frankie Bones in response to the racial tensions and gang violence he experienced growing up in rough New York neighbourhoods in the '80s. Speaking about the concept in an interview with Stirling (2016, p. x), Bones says, “PLUR is the raver manifesto. People make fun of it, but they’ve always made fun of it. It’s real for those that live their lives that way.” The feeling of unity, of being equal (at least for the night) felt genuine even if it was somewhat contrived in the comparatively safe suburban backdrop of Australia. The varied and contrasting opinions cited here clearly demonstrate that positioning rave is fraught and depends on your definitions and interpretations of politics itself (as well as being informed by one’s personal feelings and experience of rave).

The politics then of dancing are most certainly subversive in nature and some would also suggest political. That they are limited to the time on the metaphorical ‘dance floor’ of a farmer’s field, a warehouse sporting complex or the literal dance floor within a club space suggests an ephemeral nature rather than on-going political persuasion. Nevertheless, as Ramzy Alwakeel argues,

rave’s aesthetic politics are fluid. In rejecting the notion that difference is territorial, rave embraces the multiplicity of perspectives and cultures to which it appeals and from which it draws. Indeed, this rejection also proscribes any concrete theorisation of what rave itself is (and therefore what it is not), what its core beliefs might be or who its agents are. (2010, p. 55-56)

While Fritz (1999) suggests raves are political as they operate in opposition to governing bodies (p. 216), I do not believe that operating on the fringes of legality and ‘fight[ing] for [one’s] right to party’ qualifies as an overt political act. Trespassing on private property is rather a means to an end – securing a free venue for the purpose of a party. To over politicise rave ignores the fact that for most participants, raving was simply a subversive form of leisure, not a political statement. Alwakeel (2010) surmises, “rave rejects attempts to categorise or dominate it because its aesthetic politics are fluid” (2010, p. 59). Furthermore, as Alwakeel states, “Illegality [in the sense of securing a free venue] does not *necessarily* politicise the very rave experience – Rietveld notes that ‘losing one’s ego to relentless machine rhythms... does not seem to create a strong counter-political force’ – but is *sufficient* to enable it to be read politically” (p. 56-57). As such this aligns with my

own experience of rave and dance culture in which my friends and I and the people I photographed were not motivated by any political agenda.

Nevertheless, as Conner suggests in discussing '90s rave (although he refers to the culture one the whole as EDM),

The participants themselves challenged traditional values by going to clandestine venues, dancing all night, using drugs, and in promoting an alternative value system. More specifically, they were responding to a society that emphasized order through curfew laws, the war on drugs, and viewed success in terms of affluence or economic gain. If the dominant society could be characterized as bland, tightly organized, and overly formal, the EDM scene was characterized as colorful, disorderly, and playful (Conner, 2015 p. 59).

Although there are many offshoots of rave that are overtly political (discussed in chapter 3), rave, generally defined, lacked any on-going political motivation and had no real cause to champion – instead it aligns effectively with Bakhtin’s notion of carnival and the weekend retreat. “The idea of rave as a return to carnival can easily be understood in these terms, as a turning away from the possibility of real political engagement” (Gilbert & Pearson, 2002 p. 163). While Ott and Herman (2003) discuss the rave as a form of resistance, they also acknowledge the temporary (if not ephemeral) nature of rave: “we contend that cow pastures, old theatres, warehouses, and other large spaces that are seized – often with the aid of a crowbar – to stage underground raves furnish clearer cases of transitory carnivalesque spaces” (p. 254). While Bakhtin’s notion of Carnival is political in the literal sense, given the subordinate classes’ (somewhat sanctioned) disruption of the status quo – a postmodern reading of the carnivalesque can substitute the political motivations for hedonistic ones, with pure entertainment and leisure as the main disruptors. This last point is significant as it illuminates how rave could transition with relative ease from subversive activity to multi billion-dollar industry– rave was not bound by dogma or a political code. Even for a youth culture it lacked the usual anti-establishment, anti-commercial rhetoric, another reason why academics such as Redhead (1990) have questioned its subcultural status. Rave culture was malleable and ripe for commercial takeover. As Tammy Anderson (2009) has argued in her key empirical research that in the evolution of rave culture larger economic structural forces have transformed the scene. The forces of commodification can be seen in my photography that provides a visual history of rave and EDM in Perth.

One of the most prolific writers on the rave scene is the English author Simon Reynolds. His documentation of rave draws on lived experience, research and interview and shows a deep passion for rave culture and its effects on a generation of youth culture. When Reynolds comes to describing the purpose of rave, he is mute on its functions beyond the pursuit of leisure.

If one word crystalizes this ambivalence at the heart of the rave experience, its ‘intransitive’ – in so far as the music and the culture lacks an objective or object (‘rave’ is literally an intransitive verb). Rave culture has no goal beyond its own propagation; it is about the celebration of celebration, about an intensity without pretext or context. (Reynolds, 2012a. p. 410)

Reynolds attributes this short-lived transcendence within rave culture to its use of ecstasy. “The energy liberated by Ecstasy felt revolutionary, but it wasn’t directed against the social ‘stasis quo’” (2012a p. 48). Characterised beautifully by the character Jib (played by John Simm) in the British movie *Human Traffic* (1999) the Ecstasy experience might tend to feel like a moment of clarity and transcendence but it tends to be ephemeral.

So many ideas, so little memory. The last thought killed by the anticipation of the next. We embrace an overwhelming feeling of love, we flow in unison. We’re together. I wish this was real. We’re on a universal level of togetherness where we’re comfortable with everyone. We’re in rhythm, part of a movement. A movement to escape. We wave goodbye. Ultimately, we just want to be happy. Yeah, yeah, [laughter] hang on, what the fuck was I just talking about? [Followed by more laughter].

While I have characterised the act of raving as being largely devoid of political intent, rave itself became a ‘political football’ – heralded in the tabloid print press as the greatest threat facing British youth. While 1988 was designated the second summer of love, and rave in the UK exploded into media visibility (Langloise 1999 p. 230), the Castlemorton rave was a watershed moment for the movement, marking the beginning of the end of the free party circuit. In 1994, laws were enacted to prevent unregulated gatherings for the purpose of listening to repetitive beats, through Part 5 of the *Criminal Justice Public Order Bill*. “Defining rave as a mere one hundred people playing amplified music ‘characterized by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats’ the Bill gave local police forces the discretionary power to harass gatherings as small as ten” (Reynolds, 2012a p. 147). While many ravers in Britain had enjoyed the thrill of the chase (between themselves and the police) within the illegal rave scene, political protest itself was not a significant motivator until the proposed legislation of the Bill. July 1994 saw reportedly up to 50,000 people march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square (Mullin, 2014). “News of

the impending Criminal Justice Act mobilised a cross section of activists, travellers and free party people” (§ 10). October that year saw similar protests, to no avail; the Bill was passed in November 1994. While sporadic free parties continued, they were not of the size or scale they had been before the bill was passed. Essentially, the large-scale rave was dead in the water.

Mullin adds, “What the CJA [Criminal Justice Act] did, though, was create an industry, driving parties back into clubs and spawning the proliferation of festivals you’re heading to this summer” (§17). Mullins comment is incisive – without the Criminal Justice Act there would be no forced commodification of dance culture on the scale that it has now become. While the Criminal Justice Act in question applied to England, its precedent lead to similar rulings in other countries, including Australia, in attempts to curb the growth of illegal raves. With raves returning to highly regulated nightclubs and none traditional music venues requiring a barrage of permits, promoters of events went from being DIY entrepreneurial vagabonds to well organised business savvy individuals. In time, those individuals would either form into or be brought out by larger corporate run companies often with no interest in electronic dance music per se. Whilst aspects of the carnivalesque exist, such as in creative dress styles the overall experience is shaped by corporate interests. The impact of commodification, mainstream advertising and corporate branding and sponsorship deals (discussed in chapter 3) has stripped away not only the subversive nature of rave but also the communal shared experience of raving.

Was rave a subculture or was it something else altogether and why does it matter? As discussed in the introduction and at the beginning of this chapter, whether or not rave could be called a subculture depends on whose definition one aligns with. While rave might not strictly adhere to the somewhat rigid definition of subculture theorised by the CCCS, as Williams (2011) suggests, the term itself has evolved. It matters as terms such as ‘taste cultures’ as proposed by Thornton (1995) suggest a somewhat shallow, vapid collective of individuals who fall short of understanding the complexities that engendered and characterised rave culture– the expression of an entirely new form of music and a profound shift in how and where it was experienced. While Redhead’s (1990) reading of British rave as ‘post subcultural pop’ sells rave culture short, his description of a culture whereby pleasure has displaced politics is accurate, as I have outlined in this chapter. Rave remains a paradox in that its rejection of traditional sanctioned sites for performance

and its reputation for rampant drug use ensured it operated outside the mainstream; at the same time, rave parties themselves were highly entrepreneurial (and lucrative) pursuits that the Thatcher government of the time sought to encourage. With new laws, such as the CJA, enacted, rave was contained (if not tamed) and in time would become an economic powerhouse of youth leisure entertainment exported across the globe.

Rave was ostracized by the status quo, as it was a social disruptor; spontaneous gatherings loud music and drug use created a supposed threat but (as has been discussed) for most of its participants, raving was not an act of political defiance. This is reinforced by the fact that it did not lose its audience when it became highly regulated. Carrington and Wilson suggest rave has transformed “into a multi-million pound phenomenon that operates alongside, within and sometimes against the global circuits of capital” (Year, p.66). That rave culture became subsumed from underground scene to commercial product with relative ease gives further credence to its lack of a countercultural underpinning and reinforces its carnivalesque - minus the politics – nature. Other than in minimal protests against direct laws that would see the free party movement all but banned, resistance in a countercultural sense was simply not a major tenet of rave culture. Its apolitical character is one of the reasons it adapted so well in a commercial sense to the EDM culture that followed.

Chapter summary

Chapter 1 gave a global overview of rave culture and how it was adopted in Australia, specifically in Perth, Western Australia; the site of ethnographic study for this thesis. Rave’s demography and its variants depending on region and country were described.

In positioning rave, terms other than subculture were discussed. Concerns around the continued use of subculture as a term have related to its lack of flexibility, particularly in its characterisation by the CCCS cultural studies. While other terms, such as Thornton’s ‘taste cultures,’ have been put forward, I have argued that rave better suits subculture, albeit in an updated form, as proposed by Williams (2013) who argues “subcultures today are more often characterized by either perpetuating non-normativity or by temporariness and liminality than by perpetuated marginalization” (p. 5). Thornton’s taste cultures best describe the state of the contemporary EDM scene. It works to understand the apathetic

acceptance of participants to the constant barrage of advertising at these events, sites of pure pleasure and mass consumption rather than sites that demonstrated a collective ideology or any form of subcultural resistance.

I argued that attendees of raves were ‘raving’ as a leisure activity rather than as a political act. While raves and the early dance scene offered a sense of togetherness and, for some, even a spiritual connection and an ideological framework through PLUR, it was largely still ephemeral: a weekend retreat from the working week rather than a full time committed lifestyle choice. I argue that a postmodern reading of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque (where pleasure takes precedent over political persuasion) is a fitting paradigm for rave culture. Finally, I suggest that the lack of a political or countercultural ideology allowed rave to be so easily subsumed by corporate interests in the form of EDM festivals.

Chapter 2: Rave culture and “The Media” (Moral Panic)

Media reporting and deviance

Stanley Cohen, in his seminal work on youth culture *Moral panics and folk devils: The creation of the Mods and Rockers* (1972; 2002), argues that moral panics arise where there is a perceived new or extraordinary social ‘threat’ to the community order, and this concern is driven and amplified by the mass media. Critcher further asserts, “moral panics are an extreme form of more general process by which social problems are constructed in public arenas” (2008, p. 1134). As such they reaffirm particular societal values. In the mass media in the 1990s and early 2000s rave was primarily seen as a threat and hence rave culture was seen as the folk devil. Significantly, “the news is not a neutral product; ... it is a sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society” (Eldridge, 2013, p. 41). Hall, et al (1978; 2013) suggest that “the media do not simply and transparently report events which are ‘naturally’ newsworthy in themselves” (p. 56), and when there are not enough ‘newsworthy’ events, newsworthiness may need to be manufactured..

Tabloid papers such as *The Sun* helped shape perceptions of rave and its precursor (acid house) in the UK – first as a harmless youth fad and finally as a threat.

The national press’ initial coverage of the Acid House scene was a positive one, with *The Sun* promoting the famous craze of ‘Acid Smiley Face T-Shirts’, now accredited with 1988/89 E-culture, as the latest fashion to impress your friends with. They described Acid House itself as ‘cool and groovy’, but this would soon change. (Dizzy, n.d.)

Fear sells news and sex sells advertising, but if sex is deviant then sex might become news, even if it’s entirely untrue, such as the report mentioned earlier (Chapter 1) from *The Sun* reporter hallucinating “OUTRAGEOUS sex romps take place on special stage in front of the dance floor” (Reynolds, 1999 p. 67). If the fear generated by deviant reporting continues long enough, the media sensationalism around a given subject may contribute to its final acceptance or at least ambivalence. Williams (2011) suggests “news media base almost all of their programming around the notion of fear, stirring up trouble where none might otherwise exist” (p. 112). If the situation is powerful (and titillating), it might stir up moral panics as subsequent news media outlets attempt to tease out ever

more sensational versions of events until that event is no longer seen as a newsworthy commodity.

The fact is the mass media thrive on moral panics; typically, they are ‘the prime movers and...beneficiaries’ of moral panic episodes ‘since the sensation they create – a kind of collective effervescence – sells newspapers, entertains readers, and generates further news and commentary as the story unfolds, the spokesman take sides, and the deviant phenomenon develops’. (Garland, 2008, p.12)

News, like any business, is a commodity. Considerations of newsworthiness might vary depending on the type of publication and, in turn, its target audience, but in all cases it is fair to assume that news has to be popular in order for it to sell. Richardson suggests, “whether produced by the *Sun* or the *Financial Times*, the news needs to be interesting or appealing to the target audience” (2007, p. 91). Newspapers that conform to the market requirements of advertisers generate higher revenue (Richardson, 2007). Fiske cynically suggests news can be defined as “that which is printed on the back of advertisements” (1991, p. 281). Though Fiske’s seminal work in the 1990s on media culture is significant, his cited comment loses its resonance with contemporary media. His statement does not take into consideration the subcultural press and could not anticipate the channels of modern public media distribution through the Internet; nevertheless, it is a worthy (if scathing) observation of the function of traditional mainstream print press.

Within this traditional sphere of mainstream media distribution (television and newspaper), a selection criterion for newsworthy events is often a temporary disruption to the status quo: that is, events or behaviours that are considered to be deviant. As Fiske (1991) further suggests what is news is an event or incident that disrupts the norm. The disruption of the norm, although largely negative in mainstream press, might also be something surprising/positive such as ‘survival against the odds’ or the ‘latest fashion/craze’. Deviance is largely considered negative; as are the news stories that report on deviance, due to what Shoemaker and Cohen refer to as the breaking of laws and or norms of the given society (2006, p. 13). Deviance is one factor in determining the newsworthiness of a story and is particularly pertinent in explaining the interest in and reportage of rave culture. Other factors of newsworthiness relate to social significance to a given society. Shoemaker and Cohen subdivide significance into the categories of political, economic, cultural and public significance. Obviously, stories within these spheres may also show elements of deviance rather than existing only in an isolated

category, and a story may encompass more than one category. “Based on these definitions, we assume that a news item rating as highly intense on all four dimensions of social significance should receive more news coverage in that specific culture than a news item of low intensity” (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006, p. 15). The quantitative analysis study undertaken by Shoemaker and Cohen in *News Around the World* (2006) determined that sport was Australia’s number one news story, comprising of 20% of all news, while other countries favoured internal politics (Germany with 15%; India with 18%). Depending on one’s personal point of interest, this penchant to prioritise sport over all other news events could be considered deviant.

Shoemaker and Cohen describe deviance as being normative, connected to social change, or statistical. Normative deviance is the breaking of laws or norms, while social change deviance challenges the status quo of a social system. Statistical deviance is an event or happening that varies from the norm, such as a plane crashing rather than landing safely. Deviance as a topic for news can often lead to panics (by the general public) that lead to changes in the law or further scrutiny and enquiry. A plane crash, or even a near miss, although a statistical anomaly, may lead to a higher reporting on aircraft failures. Similarly an ‘Ecstasy death,’ also an anomaly give the millions of Ecstasy tablets consumed on a weekly basis around the world, can (and did) lead to more reporting on Ecstasy risks and safety, which in turn lead to a moral panic. Conservative estimates put Britain’s Ecstasy use at half a million consumers per weekend (Reynolds, 2012) with an average of six Ecstasy-related deaths per year. “Statistically, you’re more at risk driving to the rave than being on E at the rave” (Reynolds, 2012a, p. xxxvi). Compared to other socially acceptable leisure activities (which attract much less media attention), Ecstasy appears quite safe. Moral panic around drugs continues today and is unlikely to abate, given the ‘war on drugs’ that began in the Regan era of American politics still rules global opinion. Rave, becoming known as ‘dance parties’ and finally as ‘electronic dance music,’ managed to sever its direct ties to Ecstasy and, through a process of repeated media attention, essentially became normalised.

Outside the domain of news reporting, rave culture seeped into television’s popular culture through episodic appearances in cult serials of time. The American *Beverly Hills 90210* covered rave culture and Ecstasy in an episode called *U4EA* in November 1991 while The British *Inspector Morse* did it in April 1992 with an episode called *Cherubim*

& *Seraphim*. The interesting connection between these early episodes is the decision not to mention the word Ecstasy as the drug of choice but instead to create fictional drugs in its place. In both instances, these fictional drugs mimicked the empathetic qualities of Ecstasy but in the case of the *Inspector Morse* episode, the fictional drug had the effect of inducing some of its users to commit suicide, reinforcing the status quo approach to illegal drugs. In the case of *90210*, Ecstasy is referred to as U4EA (euphoria when pronounced phonetically) while *Inspector Morse* refers to a fictional drug called seraphic. In both serials, tropes of rave culture itself are engendered with secret maps to the rave's warehouse location in *90210*, and pirate radio stations in *Inspector Morse* giving out the last-minute location of the event, which was common in the UK rave experience.

I suggest these television serials chose not to use the word 'Ecstasy' in an attempt to distance themselves from a direct confrontation with how Ecstasy was aggressively targeted and demonised by the popular media of the time. Both serials are underpinned by a high degree of morality and would not want to be seen condoning drugs while still trying to remain relevant as to what was clearly happening within youth culture at the time. (It was not until the late nineties that British television serials such as *Queer as Folk* and *Spaced* gave blatant sometimes-humorous attention to Ecstasy use amongst youth culture.) *Beverly Hills 90210*'s approach to drugs is so naïve it borders on comical, with the drug dealer being easy to spot as he has a large letter '4' emblazoned on his shirt. The British series is rather more sophisticated, if not predicable in its 'say no to drugs' moral stance. As Reynolds (1999) points out "despite its overt 'just say no' slant, the episode mostly works as an exhilarating advert for Ecstasy culture" (p. 237). In the true spirit of rave's re-appropriation, a line from the *Inspector Morse* episode, where Inspector Morse announces to his partner "it's a rave, Lewis," was resampled by pirate radio in Britain as well as by DJs across the UK and Australia.

Over its history, rave has been reported in mainstream press as a fashionable fad, a disruptive force, a threat to youth and finally, somewhat invisible. This last distinction of anonymity is of interest, as rave culture has not gone away but appears to have been assimilated by and to have permeated mainstream culture through a process of commercialisation and in turn, normalisation. When dance music can be heard through the speakers in a shopping mall lift, it can no longer be considered deviant and has lost its subcultural power to shock. Other fads once seen as 'shocking,' such as the regressive

use of dummies by adults within rave culture simply slipped away unnoticed: first in the media and then by the ‘ravers’ themselves once the novelty wore off. Their later reuse in the culture may be seen as a parody or as a sign of nostalgia for an era that has past. Dick Hebdige’s (1979) seminal book *Subculture: The meaning of style* explores the use of fashion as subversive. He asserts that “style in particular provokes a double response: it is alternately celebrated (in the fashion pages) and ridiculed or reviled (in those articles which define subcultures as social problems)” (1979, p.93).



Figure 2: Barnes, D. (2001). Gatecrasher festival held at Belvoir. Perth, Western Australia. [Analogue photograph].

As discussed in Chapter 1, rave’s roots may be in America but British youth are centre stage in the history of rave due to the packaging/branding of the culture a result of key influential promoters within the scene; the reaction of British youth to the movement; and the approach taken by newspaper reporting. Reynolds supports this argument in talking about techno taken from America: “British youth ... took this imported music and built a culture around it, an entire apparatus of clothes and rituals, dance moves and drug lore” (1999, p. 72). With this in mind, looking at rave in the British print press is the starting point of my in-depth analysis. Perth, Australia will be both the end point and point of comparison in terms of its adoption of rave and its own media coverage.

Thornton (1995) suggests at the time of rave's appearance in the British print press, there were eleven daily newspapers printed in Britain. *The Sun* was one of these: a tabloid that is of particular interest for analysis as it boasted a readership of roughly 10 million in the early nineties (Sparkes & Tulloch, 2000, p. 94). Half the British public were reading tabloids daily (Thornton, 1995). *The Sun* today still has the highest circulation of any daily newspaper in Great Britain and so it speaks for (or responds to) the majority population of Britain. *The Sun* could be seen as representing the status quo or mainstream into which contemporary rave has largely become assimilated from its original marginalised position. Rave, not surprisingly, demonstrated its strongest subcultural origins in the early days of the movement. During this time, rave (particularly in the British press) became a popular headline due to its ability to shock and surprise. For *The Sun*, newspaper reportage became a moral crusade to save British youth and to sell a lot of newspapers while doing it. *The Sun* newspaper itself is a paradox when it comes to its desires to report on morality, subcultural fads, fashions and general youth deviance. Renowned for being right-wing and conservative, to this day it includes a topless page three girl of barely legal age.

I would argue that the coverage of rave in all forms of media (and in particular the print press that I cover in this chapter) has been responsible for the success of the movement and its spread into and acceptance by mainstream culture. (I use the term 'success' as a measure of growth and long-term survival rather than in terms of rave's continued subcultural ideology and status.) The role of the media in the spread of subcultures has not gone unnoticed by other academics, not only through the analysis of rave but of youth subcultures in general. Thornton (1995) is credited for recognising that moral panic concepts established by Cohen (1972) and Hebdige (1979) still had relevance in the media attention given to rave; she demonstrated that the process of media 'publicity' was a two-way street and that any publicity, even bad publicity, was something the subcultural press and participants may have relished.

...without tabloid intervention, it is hard to imagine a British youth movement. For, in turning youth into news, the tabloids both frame subcultures as major events and also dissemble them. A tabloid front page, however distorted, is frequently a self-fulfilling prophecy; it can turn the most ephemeral fad into a lasting development. (Thornton, 1995, p. 132)

Reynolds (1999) has similar views on rave's exposure in the press "but the scaremongering tabloid and television coverage did not have the intended effect of

discouraging the youth of Britain. If anything, it helped it grow bigger” (p.67). Collin (1998) goes on to also discuss some of the hype and misinformation surrounding events and the often inaccurate reporting that would soon lead to a moral panic surrounding Ecstasy and raving in general. One *Sun* reporter writes of youth “rubbing shoulders with sinister dealers while drug-crazed youths writhed to alien rhythms, tearing heads off pigeons in their frenzy” (p. 97). Although not quite as absurd, rave’s ‘outing’ by traditional news distribution such as television and newspaper in Australia, most likely contributed to its popularity, just as Thornton suggests it did in England. Ultimately, the media’s reporting of what it saw as deviant behaviour also led to a change in the scene’s direction, lifting it out of the underground due to the tighter regulations imposed by government bureaucracy.

Moral panic

The generation of moral panics is first described in literature as early as the nineteenth century (Maltby, 1830) and the term ‘moral panic’ became academically popular as a term in the 20th century (Cohen, 1972). The *Oxford dictionary* defines it as “An instance of public anxiety or alarm in response to a problem regarded as threatening moral standards of society”. This definition does not adequately describe the term, as ‘public’ suggests the ‘majority’ and that society itself is singular. Thornton (1996) offers a more flexible applicable definition when she says, “moral panic is a metaphor which depicts complex society as a single person who experiences sudden groundless fear about its virtue” (p.136). Traditional media (television, newspapers) in their reporting often act as that ‘single person’, offering a voice that is supposed to speak for all.

“New ‘designer drugs’ deadlier than heroin”; *“Ecstasy message simple – it kills”*;
“Ecstasy has its price/The new ‘fun’ drug is causing deaths in England”; *“Police warn of deaths at warehouse rave parties”*; *“Ecstasy blamed for rave death”*;
“Rave on despite police outrage”; *“Harry Potter used to conjure ecstasy sales”*.

These are headlines from newspapers in America, and England and the final two appeared in *The Sunday Times* (2001) and *The West Australian* (2002) newspapers in Perth, Western Australia. They all invoke a moral panic regarding the mixture of drugs and

youth, an on-going theme for moral panics (Ecstasy use and rave culture have merely been one of the more recent targets).

Drugs, not surprisingly have a long history of panics in the media and that panic tends to be at its peak when the drug is new to the market often leading to outrageous implausible claims. When a previously unknown drug begins to be used on a widespread basis...the media all too often indulge in sensationalistic reports of this brand-new “scary drug of the year” (Akers, 1990), the public gets readily aroused and fearful about the threat that it poses, the politicians make speeches and propose legislation...The details are different, but the common element are the panic, fear and hysteria generated over the use of a novel substance, initially believed to be far more harmful than it eventually turns out to be. (Goode & Yehudap, 2010, p.198)

Moral panics surrounding music and the youth cultures that develop around them are not new. Cohen (1972) outlines the mods and rockers moral panic in England while Hebdige (1979) continues the field of study with punk culture. These studies are viewed as seminal texts and landmark studies in the field of youth culture and deviance but they are not the earliest documents of a threat against social order. Jazz was already demonised by the early 1920s in a similar fashion as ‘the scene’ was regarded as a threat to order and to the individual. Will Earhart, a pioneering music educator and director of music at Pittsburg Public Schools wrote in 1924 “I do not approve of ‘jazz’ because it represents, in its convulsive, twitching, hiccoughing rhythms, the abdication of control by the central nervous system – the brain” (as cited in Cook, 2003, p.42) – comments not dissimilar to reportage on early rave culture.

Early reports on rave in the British tabloids were mixed, shifting periodically from benign or even positive in their positioning of rave culture as the new youth orientated ‘fad’ through to moral outrage and panic. As Reynolds (1999) points out, the early acid house as a musical style (around 1988) caused confusion with the press in exactly what it was they were meant to be denouncing, if anything. Towards the end of the British summer on the 17th of August 1988 *The Sun* newspaper “ran its first acid scaremongering story headlined ‘Fiver For A Drug Trip To Heaven in Branson Club’” (Richards, 2013 ¶3). Echoing comments made by Reynolds, Richards adds “Typical of early dispatches from the acid frontline, it confused acid the music with acid the drug” demonstrating a mediocre approach to research and a general lack of insight. Reynolds quotes a *Sun* newspaper report in which “the screaming teenager jerked like a demented doll as the LSD he swallowed an hour earlier took its terrible toll” (1999, p. 67). Later reports that

year from *The Sun* labelled the scene as ‘cool’ and ‘groovy’ (October, 12 1988) and even sort to capitalise on its popularity by selling smiley face t-shirts to readers for £5.50. A few weeks later the mood would again change with articles extolling the evil of Ecstasy (Reynolds). These sporadic shifts in tabloid opinion on acid house and what would later be labelled rave would continue for many more years to come.



Figure 3: Spaced Out. (1989). *The Sun*. [Newspaper article].
Retrieved from: <https://nickgilmartin.wordpress.com/we-called-it-acid-house/>

In 1989, *The Sun*'s flirtation with negative suggestions of rave continued with headlines such as "Spaced out" (June 26, 1989) with a caption proclaiming "thrill-seeking youngsters in a dance frenzy at the secret party" and a follow up double-page spread with the headline "Ecstasy airport" in the same edition. The photograph (figure 3) that runs the length of the newspaper is less than flattering. I suggest the use of hard flash, which is also overexposed, is a deliberate choice to render the background dark and foreboding and

the dancers frozen, awkward and even crazed or as the headline suggests, “SPACED OUT!”.

On July 14, 1989 Claire Leighton died. She was not England’s first recorded death directly attributed to Ecstasy but she was certainly the youngest at only sixteen years of age. Ian Larcombe is recognised as the first, dying one year earlier after allegedly panicking and swallowing eighteen tablets when he was stopped by police on the way to a club (Collin, 1998, p. 77). Leighton died after taking only one pill in what was believed to be a rare allergic reaction. “The coroner reported that her death was due to an unusual reaction to an amount of the drug which would not normally have had this effect” (Collin, 2009a, p.171). Reporting in the tabloids continued in a negative way according to numerous academics (Collin, 2009a; Reynolds, 1999; Thornton, 1995) but it is not heavily supported in general media documentation of the era. A Google search for Claire Leighton offers scant related articles to her death. She is no more a footnote in the media history of acid house and later rave culture. By the early nineties, headlines such “Rave is all the fave” appeared in the June 1991 issue of *The Sun*, with advice on how to speak the lingo of this youth culture. Gone were the acid smiley faces linked with early rave and drug culture. In this June 1991 article by *The Sun* newspaper (see below), rave is portrayed as a homogenous demographic that appears happy and healthy rather than in the grip of Ecstasy, as previous articles suggested. Interestingly, this shift in representation brought contempt from a subcultural press that wanted to see rave being taken seriously. Thornton quotes *Touch* magazine’s response to the sudden positive press *The Sun* newspaper provided in 1991 by commenting on an article the paper ran in 1988 with the heading “10,000 drug crazed youths” and subsequent press.

Now three years after that headline was printed, The Sun has launched ‘Answers’ – its so called comprehensive guide to weekend raving...What audacity! How dare they? On approaching the Sun about their change in attitude we were informed by some clueless dimwit that the rave scene is now, in their opinion, a respectable, clean and drug-free zone. (Thornton, 1995, p. 135)



Figure 4: *The Sun's* June 26, 1991, Rave is all the fave [Newspaper article]. Retrieved from: <http://www.fantazia.org.uk/Scene/press/press.htm>

For a number of years, rave culture played a less important role in tabloid reportage as it moved from illegal free parties into clubs as a result of changing laws in England requiring a license to hold events in outdoor venues. This essentially stemmed the flow of free parties over night. This change also allowed the tabloids to market products or attract advertisers interested in rave promotion.

With increasing numbers of laws coming in to force rave into the clubs and control free parties, many people saw the growing clubland as a future commercial venture. The press could now capitalise on this new money, and with the split of Dance into Happy Hardcore, Drum & Bass and House in 1993, the press found themselves in a much more convenient situation. (Dizzy, n.d.)

After being responsible once more for 'outing' rave and portraying it in a positive light, the media turned on the burgeoning youth culture, giving it more coverage (and hence power and importance) than any subculture of the past. The media trigger would be the

very public Ecstasy-related death of an eighteen-year-old girl Leah Betts in November 1995. Leah was from a respectable home and the situation was not without a dose of irony, given that her father was an ex-police officer and her mother had worked as a drug counsellor: all the ingredients for a moral panic as it invoked discourse suggesting if it could happen to this middle class family it could have easily been *your* child. “The story made instant panic headlines: the anguish of Leah’s parents; the evil pushers of poison; the insistent message ‘it could be your child’” (Cohen, 2011, p. 15). *The Sun* used this incident to instigate a moral panic in Britain and launched a crusade, demonising rave culture and its drug of choice, Ecstasy. “Before Leah Betts died in 1995 there had been Ecstasy-related deaths of young women... Claire Leighton in 1989, Paula Carrier in 1992, Corrinna Williams in 1993 and Julia Young earlier in 1995” (Blackman, 2004, p.172). The difference was the drive of the parents in supporting a crusade; Leah Betts’ death was described as a ‘media death’, not a private affair.

At a street level, the media reportage did not fuel fear of or result in a reduction in the consumption of Ecstasy. As Phillips (2009) suggests,

The tragic death of Leah Betts had no impact on the drug’s consumption. Indeed the ‘apple’-type ecstasy she took became a popular pill. One clubber was spotted wearing a T-shirt with the billboard’s slogan: ‘Sorted. Just one ecstasy tablet took Leah Betts’. On the back, his T-shirt read: ‘Lightweight.’ (p. 315)

The t-shirt references a media campaign and billboards using an image of Leah Betts and the line ‘just one ecstasy tablet took Leah Betts’ (Blackman, 2004). The campaign failed to mention that the cause of death was related to Betts’ water consumption causing hyponatremia and ultimately death. The campaign resulted in an ‘anti poster’ (produced by the band Chumbawamba) that ran with the byline ‘Statistically you’re just as likely to die from swallowing a bay leaf than from taking an ecstasy tablet. So what’s all the publicity about then?’ Chumbawamba argued the ‘sorted’ poster was produced by a private corporation, which was “selling capitalism showing a young corpse” (as cited in Blackman, 2004, p. 173). It was not Chumbawamba’s first foray into headlines: the band criticized the music industry for profiting off starving children to sell records through Band-Aid Albums (BBC News, Agitpop, 1998) and hit out at the Labour government by wearing shirts with slogans ‘Labour Whore’ and ‘Sold Out’ to the Brit awards in the late nineties. In the case of the *sorted* poster selling capitalism, they may have been on the mark. The original *sorted* billboard campaign had some unusual aspects in that it was

done as pro bono work and three advertising companies constructed it. While the poster may have been created out of a moral sense of duty, there are other possible motives.

...one contributory factor which precludes any of the altruistic intent portrayed by the companies themselves can be found by examining their client portfolios. For whilst Booth, Lockett and Makin have Lowenbrau as a major client, both Knight Leech and Delaney and FFI represent the 'energy' soft drink company, Red Bull. "There's a growth in the energy drinks area and it's very competitive," says FFI's Mike Mathieson. "We do PR for Red Bull for example and we do a lot of clubs. It's very popular at the moment because it's a substitute for taking ecstasy." (Carey, 1997)



Figure 5: Chumbawamba's Distorted anti-campaign poster (1995/1996). Retrieved from: <https://alchetron.com/Leah-Betts-790357-W>

Ian Wardle, chief executive of the Manchester drugs agency Lifeline, suggested the 'Sorted' poster had failed to contribute in any meaningful way to the drug debate. "As a nation we can only have a debate on drugs that's triggered by tragedy.... In that environment you can only have a debate from a very emotive point of view" (Phillips, 2009. p. 314). Essentially, as far as the media was concerned this was just further fodder to endorse a moral panic around ecstasy and rave culture.



Figure 6: Photographer unknown. The 'Sorted' campaign poster featuring Leah Betts. Retrieved from: <http://home.bt.com/news/on-this-day/november-13-1995-leah-betts-left-in-a-coma-after-taking-ecstasy-becomes-a-tragic-symbol-of-the-dangers-of-drugs-11364016177333>

In Perth, Western Australia, the first reports related to rave culture and referencing its relationship with Ecstasy began in 1988 in *The West Australian* newspaper. However, the first articles referenced events that occurred in England rather than reporting on what was happening in Australia. The first reference occurred in October 28, 1988 with the headline “‘Acid’ songs banned by the BBC,” followed by “Police raid craze parties” (November 8, 1988). Two days later on the 10th of November the first local story broke with a double page spread talking about Perth nightclubs playing house music and that it was our turn for the ‘summer of love.’ The article (figure 7) was largely positive and factual, discussing local promoters, general fashion as well as drug controversy that had surrounded the British scene with acid house.



Figure 7: Yeap, S. (1988). House rules (p. 6, 7). *The West Australian*. [Newspaper article].

The positive press continued into 1989 with *The West Australian* running articles on acid parties occurring in Perth Western Australia. On January 19th one headline read “Trance trips to new high” (figure 8) is clearly a pun relating to drugs and the article opens with “The smiley face of acid house refuses to die despite adverse media attention” (Yeap, 1989, p10). The article itself serves as an advert for acid house, naming a number of nightclubs (Network, Palladium, Connections and Limbo) where people were ‘trance

dancing'. The accompanying photograph is about as unthreatening as it comes – it looks like a trashy version of members from *The Wiggles* (an Australian children's entertainment group).



Figure 8: Yeap, S. (1989). Trance trips to new high (p. 10). *The West Australian*. [Newspaper article].

In the months following this article, *The West Australian* printed stories about acid house losing its subcultural capital – Cashing in on urban tribes (March, 1989, p.50) “First came the commercialisation of acid house music and now the fashion. The tribes will be looking for something more underground now” (Bradley). “The smiley face has all but disappeared. Only people slow to catch on to the acid craze, and those who’ve been brainwashed by fashion outlets selling a season too late, dare to wear smiley shirts and badges” (Yeap, 1989, p. 10). Acid house was not yet held up as a threat to youth in the way it was in the UK tabloids. The reporting on youth culture and the ‘acid craze’ was largely accurate, articulate, and well researched.

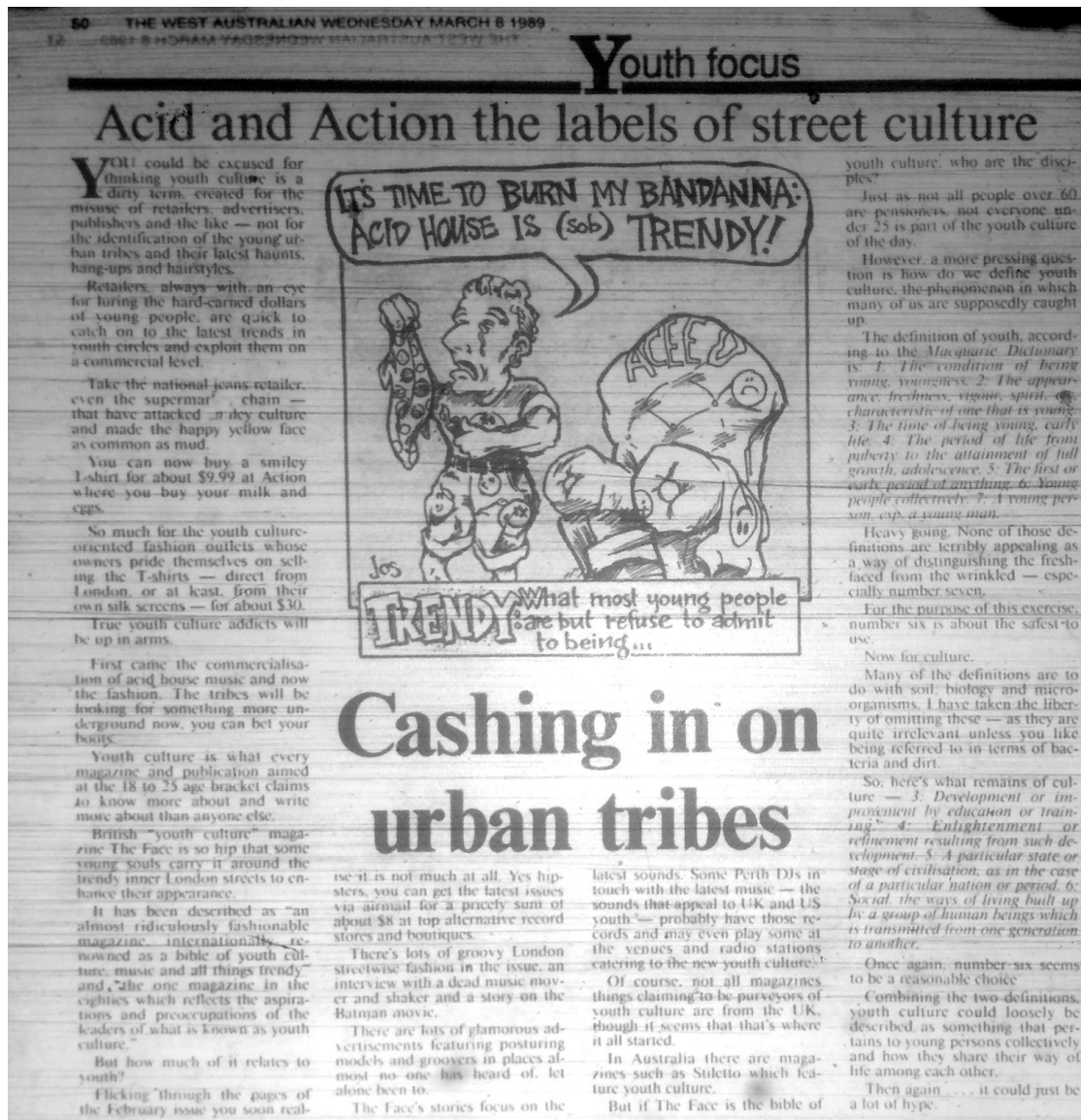


Figure 9: Bradley, H. (1989). Cashing in on our urban tribes (p.50). *The West Australian*. [Newspaper article].

On the 22nd of July 1989 *The West Australian* published an article, "The Ecstasy kids are dancing as fast as they can," (figure 9) written by Hedley Thomas. Hedley is an award-winning Australian journalist, now living in Brisbane, and chief correspondent for *The Australian* but at the time of this article, he was a 22-year-old, living in the UK and supplying stories as a foreign correspondent for News Limited. The story reads like the tabloid reports from *The Sun*, with comments often just as outlandish. Thomas writes "When plainclothes police tried to infiltrate one party last month they failed because bouncers with dogs insisted ticketholders take Ecstasy before being allowed in." The article is supported with an illustration from well-known illustrator Don Lindsay (who still works at *The West Australian* to this day) showing a man spiking people's drinks with Ecstasy. It demonstrates a very different style of reporting from earlier articles but I

would not go as far to say that it started an on going moral crusade against rave culture.



Figure 10: Hedley, T. (1989). The Ecstasy kids are dancing as fast as they can. *The West Australian*. [Newspaper article].

Darren Briais, a popular DJ who was working in the rave/club scene in Perth, says "The rave scene in Perth in the early 90's got heaps of bad TV and newspaper press. I think people didn't understand it and jumped to the worst possible conclusions...there always seemed to be a negative spin on rave culture" (Briais, personal communication, November date, 2014). On Thursday December 3, 1992, 'rave' made the front cover of *The West Australian* with the headline "Perth's rave craze mix of drugs and decibels" (figure 10). A huge photograph accompanied the article, showing a broad shouldered man dressed in a white 'onesie' with the letter "e" emblazoned on the back. A young girl with baggy jeans and a chuppa-chup clenched in hand embraces the man. A young girl 'hugging ecstasy' at an all night rave party in a darkened warehouse – it is an incredible photograph, so newsworthy that it almost looks staged. The opening paragraph reads "The "e" stands for ecstasy, Perth's flavour-of-the-month designer drug, and the place was a warehouse in Welshpool last Saturday night." It is not surprising that this photograph was deemed front cover material. With the headline alone it may have been buried a number of pages back but with this photograph, it makes for perfect hysteria. However, no real hysteria ensued. There were two follow-up letters to the editor in the Saturday edition, December 5th, 1992. In one of the letters, entitled "Better raves than street violence," (p. 58) Bobby Fletcher outlines his involvement in the nightclub and dance party scene during the start of the acid house craze in 1988. Fletcher says, "The hype was focused on the music, fashion and crazy dance movements. As the acid house scene disappeared to make for what is now known as the rave scene, the hype seems to have switched to the drug usage among our 'young West Australians'."



Figure 11: McGeough, P. (1992). Perth's rave craze mix of drugs and decibels (p. 1). *The West Australian*. [Newspaper article].

Throughout the 1990s, *The West Australian* continued to report on rave/dance culture but it did not demonise the culture in the way that Britain's *The Sun* newspaper chose to do. While some headlines and articles appear intentionally inflammatory, overall representation of rave culture remained quite balanced. Some articles were negative, while others were positive and some even reviewed rave-related events. An article in *The West Australian* on September 5, 1994 even quoted the Youth Affairs Minister Ian Mathews, suggesting raves were much safer than pubs and clubs because no alcohol is served: "Alcohol and tobacco are the two drugs causing most problems in society today and that has been recognised quite broadly" (p. 11 ¶ 2). Reportage of raves did not incite a moral crusade, even though conditions were ripe to produce a moral panic in the way that *The Sun* did in Great Britain. This raises some interesting questions. Did Australia really ever experience a moral panic like the one that appeared to grip Great Britain? Does the Australian media reportage show a similar rise in reporting (and particularly Western

Australia, my main area of interest) with the interest of the British media? In tracking and comparing such information a problem emerges in the available style of newspapers in Western Australia. Although *The West Australian* is a daily newspaper in tabloid form (as opposed to broadsheet), it is not as tabloid in content as *The Sun*. As Tiffen (2011) suggests, “The *West Australian* would feel affronted at being in the same category as the London *Sun*” (p. 37). *The Sunday Times* in Western Australia could be considered more tabloid in content than *The West Australian* but, as its name suggests, it is not a daily newspaper. As a Sunday paper it is attention getting, sometimes sensational and is aimed at condensing news for entertainment. In clarifying the difficulties in comparing Australian news outlets with those of Britain, Tiffen (2011) adds “The transfer of British notions to Australia is problematic because Britain has a national, London-based press, while the Australian press has consisted of city states.... As a result, British newspapers manifest greater journalistic extremes than is evident in the Australian metropolitan markets” (p. 37). Tiffen’s observations relate to a greater readership due to the population of Britain; the fact that newspapers tend to be national further increases the number of readers and allows for more localised reporting than we see in Australia.

Given the factors cited above, there was no real benefit in trying to directly compare the media reportage of raves in British and Australian newspapers. I chose to focus instead on media representation in Perth, Western Australia. There are only two major newspapers in Perth Western Australia: *The West Australian*, a daily, and *The Sunday Times* which, as the name suggests, is distributed weekly. Considering that *The West Australian* (now referred to simply as *The West*) is the only daily newspaper in Perth, I have charted key words relating to rave culture from its inception through to present day. To be able to describe and analyse the broader reaction of Australian media, I have included a daily east coast newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Sydney does have tabloid newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph* (*The Daily Telegraph Mirror* until 1996) but the *Sydney Morning Herald* was selected as it makes a similar comparison against *The West Australian* in style, content and reportage. Even though *The Sunday Times* is not a daily paper, information was tracked in the initial years of reports on rave culture and in that time period, it followed a very similar pattern to that shown by *The West Australian*. (Charts illustrating this information can be seen under the sub-heading, Assimilation.)

In late September, through to mid October 2001 there was a brief period where *The Sunday Times* dramatically increased its reporting on rave/dance culture to weekly coverage; all of which damned the scene and even suggested there would be a rave ban. It could suggest that this tabloid was intentionally generating a moral panic with such a disproportionate number of articles appearing on rave compared to other local news. Over the same time period (September 30th to 7th October 2001) *The West Australian* produced 18 newspapers and made no mention of rave culture whatsoever. The first *Sunday Times* article (see figure 12) entitled “Log in, and pills just pop up on the Net” (September 30, 2001 p.8) ‘exposed’ a popular Perth website called Teknoscape (previously called Hypnosis) which ran a discussion forum thread on the drug Ecstasy, whereby people posted their experiences and recommendations. The reverberations were certainly felt in the local dance scene with discussion on website forums about the article and how rave was being demonised but it was not the first time the site was reported on by the media. *The West Australian* had run an article on the website (then called Hypnosis) back in January 7, 2000 titled “WA web page gives pointers on Ecstasy”. Written by Gregory (2000) it was largely a balanced piece focussing on harm minimisation; “The main goal of the Web page is to warn about the bad drugs, according to its publishers.” (§10).



Figure 12: Adshead, G & Flint, J. (2001). Multiple articles. *The Sunday Times*, [Newspaper articles].

The Sunday Times article focussed on drug taking rather than harm reduction and, finally, the forum thread related to pill reports was shut down by choice. "I was getting too much interest in the end... from media. I felt it was starting to tarnish the rest of the site. News stories at the time were heavily focussed on raves and drug use. I felt I was fuelling that stigma... so I closed it" (P. Ceklic, personal communication, August 25, 2013). Ceklic was critical of *the Sunday Times* and its minimal research efforts. He was never contacted about the article before it went to press and had no chance to comment: "They just dropped the bomb". *The Sunday Times* ran a follow up article on potential police action and prosecution if police could substantiate claims made on the website, with an article the following week with the heading "Police to act on rave" (October 7, 2001 p.23). Another website called Bluelight was implicated for its chatter on drug use. Bluelight traditionally saw itself as being a harm minimisation website and its users felt victimised

by what they saw as a one-sided article. One member, Jakoz wrote a letter to *The Sunday Times* that was not published but which appeared on the website.

The article published by John Flint ("Police to act on rave", 7/10) was utterly appalling. In it, he deliberately misrepresented the New Bluelight website for the purposes of sensationalism. The New Bluelight site exists for the purposes of 'harm reduction', and this is made clear throughout the site and is heavily enforced. Chat topics such as selling of drugs, sharing information on where to obtain drugs, and other information not in keeping with the harm reduction theme are quickly removed. (Jakoz, 2001)

Interestingly, all the 'noise' regarding raves and drugs were of benefit to Teknoscape. As alluded to earlier in this chapter, media attention of any kind serves as a form of promotion and advertising that money can not buy. The negative reporting can fuel a sense of transgression very appealing to individuals who want to see themselves as subcultural or separate from the mainstream. The drug discussion forum for Teknoscape, once 'advertised' by *The West Australian* and *The Sunday Times*, turned the website from an obscure niche into a flourishing commercial success. *The West Australian* and *The Sunday Times* were thus directly responsible for generating a larger audience for a website they were meant to denounce, and through their style of reporting, also gave it subcultural capital.

Obviously the media got onto it pretty quick and that's what really propelled the site forward. It [Adding the drug discussion forum] is actually one of the best moves I could have made. You can imagine, page 6 in *The West Australian*. A stupid title that was not really true but it was actually grabbing for people. Anyone that read it that was into raves or into drugs went to the site. Our spike. [In website traffic] went from nothing to huge. And since then it has been very busy. (P. Ceklic, personal communication, August 25, 2013)

While attention grabbing, Petar's decision to close the drug forum after *The Sunday Times* article also occurred for personal reasons: "It just got so much attention. We had cops coming by the office all the time thinking we were selling the shit [drugs]. I got called up a couple of times at work. It had been in the paper with my full name and I just thought after a while that I had to give it up" (P. Ceklic, personal communication, August 25, 2013). By this time it did not matter, as Teknoscape had its audience and the site remained very popular, with its regular discussion forums on dance music, electronic flyers for upcoming events, and photography that actively engaged its users.

On October 14, 2001, *The Sunday Times* ran another article with the bold statement “Rave ban looming,” the lead paragraph stating, “Promoters, venue managers read riot act by police. Police are poised to read the riot act to rave promoters and venue managers and may scrap several events planned for this summer” (p. 18). The ‘rave’ or dance event that *The Sunday Times* were using as the focus of their outrage was the event called Digital, held a fortnight previously at the now defunct Perth Entertainment Centre (which operated from 1974-2002). The location was seen as a family-friendly concert/sporting venue in a public open space within the heart of the city. Previous organised raves generally used nightclubs or venues away from the central city. Digital would be the only time that the Centre ran a rave-related event.

On the December 2, 2001, after no real public or political outcry, or prosecutions from members posting articles on the websites discussed above, *The Sunday Times* ran an article entitled “Rave on despite police outrage”. In fact, there was no police outrage, only the outrage of *The Sunday Times*, which was doing its best to engender a moral panic. Rather, there were level-headed responses by the police and apathy from a public that did not care about the supposed issue/threat. The ‘problem’ (at least for *The Sunday Times*) was that the trigger was not big enough to start a crusade, as the death of Leah Betts had in England. No new laws were passed as a direct result of the articles published and, from my own observations, there was not a dramatic increase in police presence at rave-related events. The article’s greatest effect was excited chatter face-to-face and on website forums between ‘ravers’ who expressed their anger at *The Sunday Times* but, I suggest, who secretly relished the attention. Users of the web forum Bluelight had a dedicated discussion thread called “More bad media in Perth: The latest instalment of the Sunday Times Saga” (Bluelight, 2001). In October 2001, a blogger by the name of Biscuit wrote,

What disgusted me the most about the Sunday Times and this now 3 week saga is that NOT ONE letter to the editor concerning this topic was printed by them [The Sunday Times]...I noticed not one letter in the Times criticised any aspect of the papers reporting...I thought the number one rule of being a journo was to get both sides of the story; unfortunately the Sunday Times doesnt [sic] have the integrity to do this (¶ 9)

Another blogger referred to as Pleonastic responded “The number one rule of being a journo is ‘do what it takes to sell papers’” (Bluelight, 2001 ¶ 10). These comments highlight the emphasis on sensationalist reporting. In particular, an exaggeration and

distortion of the rave scene. The mainstream media tend to focus on events that disrupt the (normal) social order and interpret such events to create what Cohen refers to as ‘folk devils’. The moral panic that developed entails ‘an increased level of *hostility*’ towards the deviants, who are ‘collectively designated as the enemy, or an enemy, of respectable society’ (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994, p. 34). As I have noted above, many Perth dance music enthusiasts relished the attention of being an ‘outsider’. Thornton (1995) identifies in her UK research similar parallels; the vilification of raving by the media resulted in a strengthening of bonds of those that found themselves (or at least identified with the idea of) being outside of ‘respectable’ society.

In contrast to *The Sunday Times* throughout 2001, *The West Australian* did not inflame a moral panic/outrage in its articles related to rave. The reportage of *The West Australian* in that period did not include articles relating either to the website (Teknoscape) or the rave event that *The Sunday Times* reported on in the article “Rave ban looming”. It is interesting that the event did not receive so much as a review or any form of reportage, despite a crowd in excess of 5000 (capacity for the venue was 8500 and the venue was well over half full), which was a significant turnout for any event.

The West Australian was reporting in a positive manner regarding rave/dance culture a full year before *The Sunday Times* began its short moral crusade. Articles written by Nick Miller demonstrated an understanding of the scene in its transition to big business. “Rave set see light and party” written in late October 2000, offered support and advertising for upcoming events. Miller writes “Raves are out in the open, run by big corporations...Perth’s summer of dance music unofficially began with the Ministry of Sound at Belmont tonight, followed by world-famous British-based DJ Paul Oakenfold’s Perfecto tour next week” (Miller, 2000a, p. 12). In many ways, this article shows similarities to the 1991 article *The Sun* published (see earlier in this chapter) with its beginners’ guide to dance music column on the right-hand side. The end of the article also incorporates an advertisement for impending dance events. Miller acknowledged that rave was not a freak spectacle existing only on the fringes of an underground subculture, but was big business: “This is the new face of dance music, no longer secretive raves in warehouses raided by police but big-dollar global commercial organisations marketing T-Shirts, CDs, magazines and that all important image” (Miller, 2000a, p. 12). Unlike *The Sunday Times* articles, *The West Australian* made an effort to

contact people within the scene for more information, including Ceklic from Teknoscape, who commented on the increasing popularity of dance music events over the previous few years.

Rave set see light and party

ABOUT 8000 of Perth's young people will go to a British nightclub tonight — at Belmont Park racecourse.

This is the new face of dance music, no longer secretive raves in warehouses raided by police but big-dollar global commercial organisations marketing T-shirts, CDs, magazines and that all-important image.

Brands such as Ministry of Sound, Slinky, Cream and Gatecrasher are attracting thousands of dance partygoers, as well as sponsorship from alcohol and telecommunications companies chasing an elusive, cashed-up demographic.

Alternately anthemic and hypnotic, the always up-tempo nature of dance music is converting young people in droves from the beer-soaked rock tradition.

Perth's summer of dance music unofficially begins with the Ministry of Sound at Belmont tonight, followed by world-famous British-based DJ Paul Oakenfold's Perfecto tour next week.

Petar Ceklic, editor of the local dance music Web site Teknoscape.com.au, said Perth's dance parties had grown almost five-fold in the past few years.

"Two years ago, a couple of thousand people was huge for a party," he said. "Dance music is becoming more established and recognised, just look at the publicity (Australian dance duo)

□ Raves are out in the open, run by big corporations. NICK MILLER reports.

Madison Avenue have. A couple of years ago they would never have been this big."

But there are hurdles in the scene's growth in Perth, including a lack of venues due to the bad stigma attached to dance parties which is only slowly being overcome by responsible promoters.

Malcolm Wickham, one of the biggest local promoters, organised the visit by Paul Oakenfold, often voted the world's best DJ.

"This summer there will probably be something on every week," he said. "But we have a long way to go. It is accelerating away from (traditional rock) bands but not as fast as it could be. The main clubs in Perth are pushing the commercial stuff and we are now getting big international DJs coming over. Dance music is the way of the future."

In anticipation of this future the British-based dance music brand Ministry of Sound has opened an office in Sydney.

Tim McGee is the Australian managing director.

"CD sales of dance music are growing around 20 per cent a year," he said. "It is bigger than most other independent and alternative scenes."

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DANCE MUSIC

► **DANCE:** The catch-all title. Soul begat disco, disco begat acid house, acid house begat British house, then it gets really complicated.

► **TECHNO:** Electro-funk and German synth-rock became the very un-disco techno. High beats per minute, very electronic. Fragmented into hardcore, ambient and jungle.

► **JUNGLE:** Also known as drum'n'bass. Rhythmically complex, fast drum machines and booming bass.

► **HOUSE:** Meanwhile disco got more mechanical and became house music. In the late 80s it found a pop edge with artists such as Madonna. Then it fragmented into hip-house, ambient house and acid-house. Now reborn as the mainstream dance music.

► **ACID HOUSE:** Born in the mid-80s in Chicago, built around the Roland TB-303 synthesiser. Found popular appeal with S-Express and Technotronic, then evolved into rave music at the dawn of the 90s.

► **TRIP HOP:** Downtempo jazz, funk and soul-inflected post-acid-house dance. Massive Attack, for example.

► **TRANCE:** Brief repetitive synth lines and minimal rhythmic changes put listeners into a trance. Faded after its early-90s birth, then crested in a new, more lively form in the late 90s with DJs such as Paul Oakenfold and Judge Jules.

► **GARAGE TECHNO:** Originally a very disco form of house music, the British Garage of the late 90s is more a synthesis of drum'n'bass and ragga.

FRIDAY 28th NOVEMBER 2000
BREEDER
summer Slinkys
The Hard Dance Experience
COMPILED BY: Nick Miller with help from tekno@tekno.com.au

Figure 13: Miller, N. (2000). *The West Australian* 28th of October 2000. Listed in Factiva database under the heading "Beginner's Guide to...Dance Music." By Nick Miller. [Newspaper article].

While *The Sunday Times* was reporting on the increasing threat of raves and illegal drug consumption, *The West Australian* was questioning the relevance of Australia's first national drug summit in only focussing on illicit drugs. The article gives a sense of balance to the drug debate and, in turn, media focus on subcultures. It puts into perspective the dangers (or lack thereof) of rave and Ecstasy compared to the legal drugs that are the norm.

The baby boomers now in power sometimes seem reluctant to acknowledge that it's the legal substances - alcohol and tobacco - that cause most of the harm in society. Health Department research on drug-related deaths in WA

from 1989-99 reveal there were 21,031 drug-related deaths, 78 per cent caused by tobacco use, 17.2 per cent linked to alcohol use and 4.6 per cent related to other drugs, most of those illicit. There are no cannabis-related deaths on record in WA. (Pryer, 2001, Big Weekend, p. 1)

The reportage of *The West Australian* and even *The Sunday Times* in 2001 never matched the pitch of moral panic that the death of Leah Betts in 1995 engendered in the British tabloids. The same cannot be said for the east coast of Australia. Anna Woods died in an Ecstasy-related death in Sydney in the same year as Leah Betts, and only a month later. Just as catalysing as the deaths themselves were the parents' reactions to those deaths. Earlier, I mentioned Leah Betts had a very public death, with media being invited by the parents to report on the incident. Leah's parents "became instant experts and moral guardians" (Cohen, 2011, p. 15)

Before Leah Betts died in 1995 there had been ecstasy-related deaths of young women, for example, Claire Leighton in 1989, Paula Carrier in 1992, Corrinna Williams in 1993 and Julia Young earlier in 1995. Leah Betts's death could be described as a media death: it was not a private family event, her funeral was filmed for the video (for media use) (Blackman, 2004, p. 172).

Anna's funeral was broadcast on the news and promotional badges (figure 14) depicting her smiling face were used in anti drug campaigning. Anna Woods, like Leah Betts, would posthumously become the poster child for media-driven denouncements of Ecstasy and the rave scene where the drugs had been consumed.

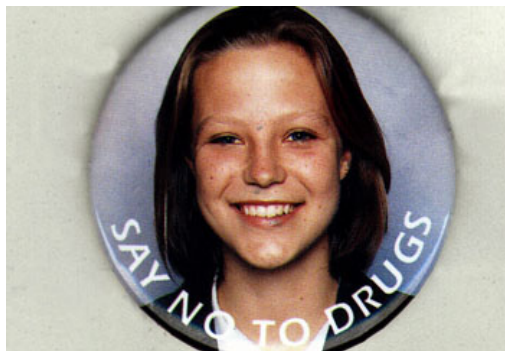


Figure 14: Anna Wood depicted on a promotional badge made by friends and supported by her father in an anti drug campaign following her death. Retrieved from: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/say-no-to-drugs-woods/story-e6freuzi-1111116664936>

In Australia, Anna Woods became the front for the media storm and moral panic that erupted on the east coast. That she was fifteen years old, attractive, middle-class and from the north shore, made her story worth publicising. Jesse Desenberg, a popular Sydney DJ who goes by the stage name of Kid Kenobi, wrote about the Anna Wood

incident and the resulting media attention in his PhD thesis. In particular, he recognises the style of reporting: “Anna Wood – with no disrespect – is a perfect symbol of the reinforcement of the status quo by a framework of interpretation borrowed from previous persecutors in Britain” (1997, p. 2). Kid Kenobi references an article in Sydney’s *The Daily Telegraph Mirror* that uses the sensationalist tabloid language employed by *The Sun* newspaper in Britain to tell its story, hardly surprising given the papers are both owned by News Corp. The front-page article included lines such as “the merchants of the evil trade that killed her were doing...BUSINESS AS USUAL” and “A secret of drug imagery- indecipherable to parents - is being used to lure teenagers to parties throughout Sydney” (as cited in Gibson & Pagan, 2001, p.x).

The reportage of the death of Anna Woods marked a changing point in the rave scene on the east coast resulting in crackdowns on party organisers and negative media attention and paralleling the style and effects of England’s reportage. Of note is the media’s frank admission of their interest in reporting the story. The Sydney tabloid *The Daily Mirror*’s editor said “if [Woods] had died of a heroin overdose we wouldn’t have covered it, no matter who she was” (Hartigan, as cited Homan, 2003, p. 40). It demonstrates that rave had currency, that it was fashionable, and Woods reinforced the idea of an Ecstasy-related death potentially affecting ‘anyone’s child’ creating an appetite for media coverage of the subject (and, soon after, a book deal). Anna Woods died on October 24, 1995 and *Anna’s story*, written by Bronwyn Donaghy and published by Harper Collins, was available in paperback by June 1996. The first edition was rushed into print (presumably to capitalise on the media hype surrounding her death), before the autopsy results were even finalised. Some points are inaccurate and the book’s tone is didactic with comments such as “she was dying of ecstasy?” (p. 83) and “Was it ecstasy [that caused Ann’s death]? Or was it the effects the ecstasy tablet produced? The obvious question is ‘what’s the difference?’” (p. 84) To her credit, Donaghy draws the likely (and ultimately correct, as the autopsy report revealed) conclusion that the death of Anna Woods was a result of hyponatremia due to the overconsumption of water, rather than an overdose of Ecstasy itself. The republished version of the book (figure 15) shows the same smiling image of Anna Woods that appeared on the “SAY NO TO DRUGS” button contrasting with what one is led to assume is a ‘rave’ party. The cover seems to suggest that partying plus drugs equal death. The 2006 version boasts on its cover “Over 120,000 copies sold”.

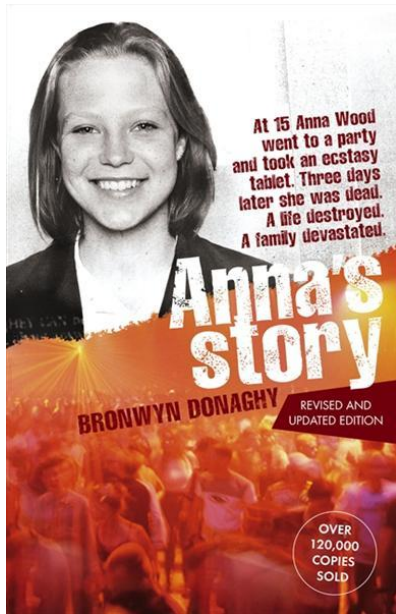


Figure 15: Donaghy, B. (2006) *Anna's Story*. First published in 1996 and reprinted in 2006. [Book cover].

Seventeen years later, Anna Woods' parents are still fighting for a zero-tolerance approach to drugs, at least to drugs that they do not condone. Anna Woods' father, despite growing up in the 70s, has never tried marijuana saying, "Alcohol was my drug of choice" (as cited in Horin, 2012, p. x). In reality, Ecstasy contributes an insignificant proportion of deaths compared to legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco (Nutt, 2010) and certainly attracts disproportional media coverage. Dance promoter Tony Papworth put the incident in perspective: "What people fail to understand is that closing down dance parties is not going to solve the drug problem — the weekend that Anna Wood died, six teenagers died as a result of alcohol" (*60 Minutes*, 3 March 1996, cited in Homan, 2003, 41).

The Anna Woods' effect and the media's campaign of moral panic resulted in a knee-jerk reaction from the New South Wales State Government, led by Premier Bob Carr, whose response was to attempt to close the Phoenician Club, which Woods had attended the night she died. For admitting a minor into the club and for its laissez-faire attitude to Ecstasy use, the club was handed down a \$100,000 fine and a trading suspension for 6 months in an initial court ruling (Homan, p. 39). On appeal, the Phoenician Club was handed a lesser fine and was allowed to keep trading. Ultimately, the club closed soon after the decision and the site is now a block of flats. In the case of the Phoenician Club, the government attempted to differentiate dance music from other forms of 'legitimate' entertainment and, in 1997, this distinction became drafted into a code of practice. The

1997 *Draft Code of Practice for Dance Parties* sought to legitimise commercial sites and outlaw illegal dance ventures, “to assist professionally organised, legal and hassle free dance parties in suitable locations” (New South Wales Ministry of Police, 1997, p. 3). This was reinforced in the ‘advice’ to use the term ‘dance party’. ‘Rave’, it was explained, had a ““negative and pro-drug reputation ... the image it reflects will not help in getting the needed approvals and consents”” (Homan, 2003, p.43).

The Anna Woods incident on the east coast is often cited as marking the death of the rave scene and, of its subversive aspects, this could be partly true. Regulation encouraged rave’s commercialisation, and control of how ‘rave’ was experienced. Homan (2003) suggests the new rules and regulations prohibited spontaneous raves due to the time needed to conform to new laws that demanded arrangements with insurance companies, health departments, transportation and court approvals. “The formalisation of dance events produces a circular economic rationale familiar to the rock music industry, where increased organisational costs to meet technical efficiencies are offset by an increase in the size of venues and audiences” (Homan, 2003, p. 40). Indeed, large-scale promotion with a smaller number of promoters certainly dominates what is now ‘dance music’. The scene has continued to grow with each passing year, both on the East Coast and the West. New Year’s Eve 2008 saw Melbourne’s Sensation rave/dance party, a debut event, sold out Etihad Stadium with 40,000 revellers attending. In Perth on January 4th 2009, Summadayze sold its venue’s capacity of 20,000 people. On February 28th, 2010, Perth hosted Future Music, which reportedly topped the scale, with 29,000 people attending, for any over-eighteens’ dance event in Western Australia; in 2013, that number increased to around 45,000 in attendance (McHugh, 2013). In 2009, the Melbourne based dance festival Stereosonic went national and, in 2014, the Melbourne and Sydney legs of the tour both sold out prior to the day of the event: an impressive feat when Sydney Olympic Park has a capacity of over 80,000. The contemporary version of rave, the dance party, has moved beyond free flyers left in clothing stores and locations spread through word of mouth. It has even moved beyond the full-page advertisements that once dominated the free street music press. Advertising and marketing now include television, radio promotion, and large corporate sponsors only too willing to come on board. In 2013, a billboard promoting the dance event Future Music appeared next to another billboard advertising Nine News that was surprising at the time but it became common practice

(figure 16). This placement demonstrates just how acceptable and mainstream the electronic dance-festival circuit has become.



Figure 16: Barnes, D. (2013). Future Music Billboard, Perth Western Australia: [Digital photograph].

In 2014, the death of Georgina Bartter in Sydney reinvigorated media coverage and once again propelled Ecstasy use back into the spotlight. Georgina was nineteen, attractive and from a well-known wealthy family, and her death was deemed newsworthy. Most of the articles did not directly link electronic music to a culture of drug consumption, and ‘rave’ did not make an appearance in the headlines. However, a police statement was bolder than the initial media coverage with Superintendent Mark Walton saying, “I’m concerned that these electronic music events are consistently associated with illicit psychoactive drug use. It does not matter what location they are held in, there is no doubt the nature of the entertainment is intrinsically linked to that drug use” (Walton as cited in *The Music*, 2014, ¶ 2). Surprisingly, *The Sydney Morning Herald* appeared to be normalising drug use, supplying statistics on how unlikely it was that Georgina Bartter would have an adverse reaction from taking the drugs. Reporter Partridge claimed “The risk that Georgina Bartter would die from the drug she took at the Sydney music festival was 1 in 10 million” (Partridge, 2014, ¶ 1): a surprisingly liberal view for a major newspaper. This account suggests that the incident was an unfortunate accident, rather than decrying the electronic music scene in general.

What's in a name?

In the introduction to this thesis, I discuss the changing names of what started off as rave culture through to its most recent incarnation as electronic dance music (EDM). I have also mentioned that the term 'rave' was used well past its original relevance and definition; the term really referred to non-commercial, often-illegal gatherings and rave became stigmatised due to its early connections to youth culture participating in illegal activities; both in terms of venues and the supposed mass consumption of drugs. At least this is how the press stigmatised the term 'rave'. Rave, from its outset, suggested a disruption to the status quo. The Anna Woods' effect on the east coast literally wrote the term rave out of existence by law. The term 'rave' was still used on the west coast of Australia, especially by the media, but promoters realised the value in distancing themselves from the term and 'dance party' was used instead when applying for licences and marketing events.

An interesting case study in Perth Western Australia demonstrates just how much is vested in the names 'rave' and 'electronic dance music'; in essence, they are the same thing but with very different values applied to each term. On February 13th 1998, *Delirium*, a local electronic music promotion company based in Western Australia, hosted an event called *Sonik* at Marapana Wildlife Park, 30 minutes south of the Perth CBD. Yvonne Thompson wrote an article on the event for *The Sunday Times* headed "Park rocked by big rave party" and led with "THE event held at Marapana Wildlife Park last weekend has been called a rave party in disguise" (p.5). The article suggested that locals had been duped into believing the event was going to be a rock concert and were disappointed when it was a 'rave' party. Inspector Kerford also expressed disappointment and, according to the article, asserted he was misled: "Rave parties are used to distribute drugs to young people," paradoxically adding, "If this had been anything other than a rave party it would have been a very well organised event" (p.5). Also quoted in the article was general manager Kelvin Prince, who said "the event was organised as a legal electronic festival with the intention of bringing electronic music to young people in an acceptable form." Most damning of all are the words of the local council, which granted a license for the event. Thompson writes, "A council spokesman said that if the organisers had made an application to stage a rave party, it would have been denied." Two years later, local DJ and promoter Simon Hutchinson clearly remembered the event.

In an interview with Nick Miller from *The West Australian*, Hutchinson said, "Authorities feel they have to portray a 'we are shocked' face to the press. Big venues had been declared off limits to raves" (2000, ¶ 33). This interview was in June 2000, at another successful *Sonik* 'dance party', not a 'rave'.

It seems the labelling of the event had become more important than the event itself. According to the police and the council, the event was well organised and well run but had it been called a 'rave,' its application would have been denied. The promoter was forced to rebrand the event based on the negative connotations associated with the term 'rave'. The media (particularly *The Sunday Times*) continued using the term well in to the 2000s to construe the movement in negative terms. "Licence to deal" (September 30, 2001) demonstrated tabloid sensationalism, with comments that included "Each week up to 12 clubs compete in the Perth rave market, which lures thousands of drug users."

The contrast between the articles that appeared in *The Sunday Times* and writing style produced by Nick Miller in *The West Australian* in late 2000 are markedly different. Rather than pushing the term 'rave', which, on a subcultural level, was past its used by date, Miller was aware of the term's demise and welcomed in the term 'dance party' as its replacement, with an article written on December 4, 2000 in *The West Australian* about the dance festival Delirious headlined "Dance party the new rave".

WAS it a rave or an outdoor dance party? Is there a difference? Maybe...At a rave, ambulances carry away casualties. At Delirious the biggest medical problem at the first-aid tent was a rash of blisters on the feet of techno-bunnies determined to prove it was possible to dance for 12 hours straight. At a rave, a police raid shuts the event hours before it is due to finish. At Delirious, Insp. John Hart, of Midland district, munched on a hamburger and declared the event to be a professionally run, problem-free youth music festival. (¶ 2)



Figure 17: Barnes, D. (2000). Delirious festival. A punter asks to have a photograph with the police and the officers oblige. Contrary to media reports police always seemed happy with the way events were ran and encountered few problems. [Analogue photograph].

This article and others by Miller at the time suggest police at a grass-roots level were happy with the running of events. This was my own experience when speaking directly with police attending dance events. They found they caused fewer problems than large rock events where trouble was largely caused by the misuse of alcohol. In a number of articles, Miller subtly reports on the ‘other’ media that was causing an artificial moral panic in their reporting, while being acutely aware that that the paper he worked for has, in the past, and could, in the future, feed the same moral panic. “He [the promoter] banned *The West Australian* from photographing his event, suspecting we were fishing for a ‘Youths binge on drugs’ headline” (Miller, 2000, *p.x*). I have identified the *Sunday Times* as the main newspaper instigator of moral panic in Perth. While *The West Australian* ran a number of articles on raves and drug use in the late 1990s through to the 2000s on the whole, headings were more factual than sensational such as “Women caught with big haul of Ecstasy” (October 3, 1996), Rave “Drug faces ban,” (October 9, 1996), “Police seizures of the rave drug Ecstasy have risen” (June 6, 1998), and The rave escape (January 26, 2000).

To underline the importance of ‘what’s in a name’, Miller (2000) writes in “Dance party the new rave,” at the Delirious festival, “Doof, doof, doof, doof - in four big tents, non-

stop for half a day. In fact, there is no real difference between a rave and a dance party except for the all-important reputation” (§ 10). It is a curious comment that is left open-ended in the article. It could be read as a reference to the rebranding of ‘rave’ through regulation or as a comment on the tainting of rave’s subcultural value. Either way, promoters on the east and west coast were forced to rebrand festivals as dance parties, electronic music events or the other names that became fashionable if they were to be able to operate at all. It is good for business to be on side with the authorities and, in these cases, paramount, as they had the power to sanction or stop events going ahead. This further legitimising of events would help to draw sponsors and mainstream advertising for events and paved the way for dance music to become a mainstream phenomenon.

‘Dance music’ is still a term that you will hear in Australia to describe the plethora of evolving electronic sub-genres once referred to as rave culture or techno music by the media. Today, however, the term EDM is the expression commonly used to describe the scene. An acronym for electronic dance music, the term became popular around 2010 in the American music industry and the media to report on the sudden explosion of the dance music phenomenon that up until then had largely not comprised part of America’s mainstream youth experience.

EDM as a simple acronym has been floating around since the '80s...But it didn’t become a popular descriptor of the music and culture until about six years ago, when it was used to market a new generation of dance music artists like Skrillex, Swedish House Mafia and David Guetta, as well as the massive festivals at which they headlined. (Hermann, 2014, § 5)

Matos (2015) believes the term EDM’s sudden popularity originated in academia and spread to the American press. “Scholars began using it because it had no connotations to specific styles” (2015, §45). Earlier, I related that although rave’s roots were in America, the UK was responsible for branding rave culture and contributing to its explosion across Europe and Australia. While dance parties continued in America, through the early 2000s commercial growth remained somewhat subdued. ‘Rave’ was a word used condemningly by authorities in the UK and Australia, even connoting illegality, and it became a word that could be associated with a felony in America: not just accruing slap-on-the-wrist fines for illegal gatherings but the posing threat of a federal prison sentences for their promotion. In the United States The RAVE Act 2001 with its focus on the war on drugs criminalized rave events. It is highly likely that this is a major reason for its stifled growth in America during a time when the scenes in Europe and Australia were really

taking off. Berdellans (2012), editor of House.net, comments on the American scene. “The nearly 30 years in between were marked by volatile growth, decline...There were, at the time of it’s downfall, not only huge turns in public opinion and popularity for the music, but also a dedicated legal crackdown on rave promoter[s]” (2012, ¶ 11). American promoters of dance music would come to embrace the term EDM, distancing involvement from a vilified and ostracised rave.

As previously asserted, a name can smooth the transition of a subcultural group into mainstream culture. In the case of rave culture, its name had to change for its acceptance by regulating government bodies. A promoter could get a license to hold a dance party or, later, an EDM event, while a *rave* was a guarantee of its rejection. After years of being linked to delinquent youth partying, the term ‘rave’ finally succumbed to its own commodification. By the end of 2012, ‘rave’ was a term rarely used by the media to reference dance parties in Australia. This is evident by the lack of articles about dance music appearing in newspaper databases when searching with the term rave. The word rave made occasional appearances in tabloid-style articles by journalists who used the out-dated term out of ignorance or to sensationalise a headline but for sanctioned events it was redundant. It was surprising then to see its sudden reappearance in the international media in mid- 2013. While music promoters had done all that they could to distance themselves from the word ‘rave’ and all that it implied a savvy group from London called Gloryville stepped in to re-appropriate it. Offering a breakfast *rave* with no drugs and no drinking, they appropriated its meaning while effectively removing the subcultural capital that the word still conveyed. The event’s logo is a comical bird (connoting morning) with the motto “Rave your way into the day!” coming out of its beak.

The media jumped on the term. Newspaper headlines appear to love both irony and puns in equal measure and they quickly picked up the story, often working the word ‘rave’ into their headline in witty one-liners. Headlines included *The Daily Mirror*’s “Raving about new trend for morning”, (Mirror Group, 2014), “Rave into the day: Sober rave dances into Australia after raging success in London” (Mail Online, Milowski, 2014), “Hugs not drugs, the order of the day as clubbers get up early” (Munro, 2014) appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and from *The Australian Financial Review* (Smith, 2014) “Eat, Sleep, Rave, Work, Repeat,” a play on the song title from the world’s currently highest paid DJ Calvin Harris “Eat, Sleep, Rave, Repeat”. In a true show of bad taste, *The Age*

used an utterly misleading headline “Dance drugs put on ice” (Booker, 2014) to describe the breakfast rave. If the headline was not bad enough (given that the drug ice was a growing concern in Australia at the time), its opening paragraph gives an account of nineties’ rave culture that is deliberately inflammatory and inaccurate.

In the '90s, ravers were pale, bony-bodied teens in fluffy fluoro pants, emaciated from excessive drug use, Chupa Chups meal replacements and an utter disregard for the sleep cycle. But today, a new dance craze - which may be perceived as just as extreme - is sweeping Melbourne: electronic music parties that are drug and alcohol-free. Shock. Horror. (Booker, 2014, ¶ 2)

The squeaky-clean comedic look of the breakfast rave is a parody and the final subcultural insult to rave culture’s history, and it appears to be gaining momentum around the globe. Pyjama-clad punters mix with those in '70s aerobic outfits, while smoothies supply the energy in this pre-work workout in Sydney. “So many sweat bands and high-cut leotards. It's like stumbling onto a remake of *Xanadu* and finding everyone on the planet is a young Olivia Newton-John” (Munro, 2014, p. 13). The photographs supplied in articles from breakfast raves around the world present what looks like a playschool for adults. Although it is likely to be a short-lived craze, it demonstrates that, with enough time, words imbued with negative connotations can be re-used and commercially appropriated. After the concept began in London (May, 2013) it was launched in 11 cities around the world (morninggloryville.com) including New York, Zurich, Sydney, Melbourne and now Perth. Instead of ignoring the media, Gloryville courted attention and successfully leveraged social media. The Perth Facebook page thanked *WA Today* for a “lovely” article about the upcoming event. The website setup for Perth’s rave breakfast “perthcomebreakfastravewith.me” pointed out the difference between a breakfast rave and a traditional rave while at the same time deliberately leveraging the well worn media drug angle. “The other guys who are into your traditional drug-filled raves already have many of those. But for the rest of us who are not into drugs it’s about time we had our own” (Lowrey & Lee, 2014, ¶ 9). The 2014 use of the word ‘rave’ in the ‘breakfast rave’ was an anomaly. The word rave (as it refers to dance parties) long ago dropped from media usage and its reappearance only served as a parody.

Assimilation

“The cycle leading from opposition to defusion, from resistance to incorporation, encloses each successive subculture.” (Hebdidge, 1979, p. 100.)

‘Rave’, now referred to as dance culture in 2014 and increasingly by the term EDM, remained as popular as ever, as demonstrated by the size and number of events in the Australian calendar in this period. Simultaneously, *The West*’s reportage of the culture (excluding reviews of events) has dropped dramatically, suggesting an assimilation of rave culture into the mainstream and the concurrent loss of its subcultural capital. The media have directly and indirectly played a part in this, particularly in England and on the east coast of Australia. The media gave attention to the culture and thus indirectly precipitated its move from the underground into regulated spaces. Regulated spaces consequently exert controls in keeping with social/governmental regulations and norms, such as opening hours, age restrictions and, to a lesser degree (but increasingly), a responsibility for monitoring drug use within establishments. Dance music and now EDM is markedly different to rave in terms of the way it is encoded. Style of dress has become largely mainstream and early gestures such as PLUR (peace love unity and respect) have been lost. The music, though, is instantly recognisable. The drugs are still there too but there are just as many people drinking alcohol, a departure from the early tribal days where water was the drink of choice and a cheeky smile offered to a stranger the norm, as you knew they were ‘on it’ (Ecstasy). Dance music is simply a *genre* under the banner of EDM, as legitimate as rock or pop music, which assures its longevity.

We saw blips of interest in the media late in 2000 talking about Ecstasy and dance/rave culture but today, the two have become less intertwined. Ecstasy has become a recreational drug used by many beyond the borders of rave culture, further diluting the subversive nature of rave/dance culture. The *style press* (Thornton, 1995) further helped normalise ‘deviant’ behaviour by selling it back to its neo-tribe followers in the form of glossy lifestyle magazines such as *Mixmag* and *Ministry*, both of which quickly garnered an international audience. *Mixmag* is the oldest of these magazines, beginning its life as a now unrecognisable guide; the first issue printed in 1983 was a black and white 16 page mail out to industry types; it later became a full glossy lifestyle magazine. *Ministry* (From Ministry of Sound) followed in 1998 with the first Australian edition of the

magazine launched in February 2001. The Australian edition mainly contained content ripped from the UK and added an Australian feel simply by including local club listings with photographs and reviews from the major capital cities across the country. Through 2001 *Mixmag*, made reference to drugs in nearly every issue with articles, such as “I told my mum I take ecstasy” and “Lisa Lashes [a British DJ] on her drug bust” on the cover of the January 2001 addition. February 2001 was labelled “The Drugs Issue,” the title appearing in large bright yellow lettering on an entirely black background. Other articles revolved around lifestyle such as “Millionaire, get out, have fun, get rich: The *Mixmag* guide to the high life” (April, 2001). *Ministry* followed the same formula, with articles such as “Hollywood gets high: The latest crop of drug fucks” and “How to be white trash: Cheap is chic” (April, 2001). The publishers of *Ministry* must have read the February edition of *Mixmag* as they unashamedly named the July 2001 issue “The Drugs Issue,” likely more than a coincidence. The reporting of drug-related stories by *Ministry* in a liberal manner occurred at the peak of the *Sydney Morning Herald*’s (generally damning) reporting of rave/dance culture: ironic given they were both publishing out of Sydney.

Websites supporting rave/dance culture were also increasing. Teknoscape, which had always been there for the ‘underground’ scene, had massively increased its user base as a result of the negative press (but free advertising) through references made to the website in *The West Australian*, confirming Thornton’s (1995) findings on the correlation between mainstream press reporting ‘sensational excess’ and subcultural capital. My website, ravephotography.com, was generating more and more interest with a good volume of partygoers logging on to see photographs of themselves or their favourite DJs from events. The images displayed were ‘larger than life,’ showing packed venues with excited party people, as I had been commissioned to shoot. I imagine this would have contributed, in its own small way, to a positive attitude towards dance music. Around the same time, inthemix, a website specifically for dance music/youth lifestyle in Australia was founded in 2000 (www.inthemix.com.au). From 2001 onwards, it gained traction and became a recognised brand, further assimilating dance culture into mainstream youth popularity. In 2013, recognising the opportunities in the blossoming North American scene, it expanded into the region with www.inthemix.com and now uses the term EDM, as popularised in the US market, with their *modus operandi* posted in the ‘About’ section on their site: “Our goal is to unite the industry behind a legitimate, independent, trusted

and influential media platform that elevates the quality of conversation around all things EDM” (About Inthemix, 2013).

The commercial acceptance of dance culture appears to be reflected in its representation in the Australian press. An analysis of the decline in newspaper articles relating to rave culture suggests there are fewer elements worth targeting or that *could* be targeted. It is hard to denounce a culture when its music is the score for Coke advertisements and is played at the opening of major sporting events (an Australian dance mix by DJ Mark Dynamix that made the 2010 Winter Olympics in Canada) and when one once niche dance music acts like Moby are played throughout shopping malls. More recently (May, 2013), Audi Australia posted an advertisement for the A3 Sportback on its Facebook page, featuring music from the dance act Daft Punk. It was not just a backing track but an entire video advertisement itself, cut to the robotic vocals of Daft Punk’s 2001 song release “Harder, better, faster, stronger”. In 2014, Audi filmed a commercial in Sydney, Olympic Park for its premium S Line car models. The 30-second campaign ‘Audi Free-Styling Offer’ featured a futuristic neon setting with a DJ behind ‘decks’ controlling the movement of the car through his movement on the ‘vinyl’. Rather than just providing upbeat dance music as a backing track, the advertisement created a direct link to dance culture and to its followers, who, as I have suggested, are predominantly middle-class in Australia, with high disposable incomes. Far from being subversive, ‘rave’ ‘dance music’ or ‘EDM’ or however you want to label it is big business, both in terms of the numbers that attend live events and in its branding potential, sponsors, and music compilation releases.

Chapter summary

Chapter 2 has focussed on media attention to rave and dance culture and the moral panic that followed. The easy-going nature of participants and the bright day-glo colours they sported initially resulted in positive press coverage. When the press began inducing moral panics, these were not a result of fear or aggression but due to drug use, drug-related deaths and transgressive behaviour in the form of all-night dancing to repetitive beats. Concerns around a culture of drug use and the resultant moral panic had a dual effect; on one hand, they worked to keep rave culture positioned as a threat, increasing the time it took for it to become commodified and assimilated into mainstream cultural

acceptance; on the other hand, they lead to government regulation, which allowed rave to become domesticated. As the number and size of raves escalated, so did the number and severity of laws to prevent them from occurring. America, Britain and Australia all created laws that would ultimately make clandestine raves illegal. Australia's regulation of rave saw it shift from appropriated, often illegal spaces to sanctioned venues in a similar pattern to England's regulation of rave a few years previously. North America's early crackdown on rave was so swift and punishing both to promoters and 'ravers' that it resulted in stunted growth throughout the early 2000's (Reynolds, 2013). By late 2000s, North America re-entered the dance scene with an explosive growth in EDM festivals. Regulation brought with it a level of respectability (at least in the eyes of the establishment) and, following the crackdown on illegal parties, there remained strong demand for events. However, subcultural capital had diminished through the sanitising effect of legislation imposed on events. "'Underground' is barely more than an empty buzzword these days. 'Edge' is something to monetise, if you can. The concept of 'branding' has (Reynolds, 2014). By late 2000s, EDM events were too expensive to be run by enthusiastic DIY promoters or even smaller promotion companies. Instead, they were owned and operated by corporate entities.

Chapter 3: The rave economy: commodification and commercialisation

Objects

In Australia, commercials advertising everything from National Parks to breakfast cereals, and in particular, a Coke ad – specifically targeting several youth sub-cultures – have all included dance parties and dance music as central marketing devices. The act of cashing in on the sub-cultures subsequently becomes a commercial cleansing of the sub-culture at hand, a re-rendering of the sub-culture in accordance with the status quotes level of acceptability. Ecstasy, intrinsic to rave culture, is replaced with a placebo. The product being marketed, for example, Coke, becomes a sublimated drug. It is the Coke or Lucozade drink which inspires and drives the teenagers to dance, party and express themselves. (Desenberg, 1997 p. 3)

Kid Kenobi (Jesse Desenberg), a popular Sydney DJ from the late '1990s through to the early 2000s, describes 'the scene' on the East Coast of Australia at that time, an account which was mirrored in national television advertising campaigns seen in Western Australia. Direct sponsorship deals with dance events would soon follow the television campaigns with free giveaways of Red Bull and V energy drinks on offer and even Lipton Ice tea – all handed out by good-looking young girls and guys who appeared to be having the time of their lives.

Desenberg's observation on the pervasive influx of advertisers changing their marketing approach purely to capitalise on rave culture is poignant. Rave culture had borrowed, reinvented, and repositioned objects and music at dizzying speeds, making previous methods of academic subcultural observation and understanding redundant. Objects mediate and embody complex relationships (Carrier, 2001 p.356). Carrier building upon Miller's (1987) point of the symbolic notion of manufacturing argues that objects offer cultural meanings through personal appropriation. In which possession of an object has symbolic value.

As France (2007) suggests, "rave appropriated the 'smiley face' of the hippy movement and the clothes of the sports generation...took a new generation of designer drugs and mundane items, such as Lucozade and lollipops, as its accessories" (p. 142). The rave scene, from its very beginnings, flirted with objects of mass consumption. Mundane everyday items were repurposed and given new meanings, including diver's glow sticks, whistles, babies' dummies, industrial dust masks, and children's stuffed toys. While for

some ravers, the glow stick and the whistle could add subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995) through their skilled use in creating psychedelic patterns or matching the beat, other items were appropriated directly for drug related purposes – dust masks and children’s toys were coated with Vicks, which heightened the effect of Ecstasy, while pacifiers and Chupa Chups reduced teeth grinding and jaw tension, side effects of taking the drug. However, chewing gum achieved the same goal as a pacifier and Vicks could be placed on any item, not just inside a mask or child’s toy. Some academics (McRobbie, 1993; Reynolds, 2013) believe the use of such objects within rave/dance culture (combined with the drug Ecstasy) demonstrated a regression or desire to return to a child-like state and, after observing many raver’s behaviour first hand, I contend that this is a reasonable conclusion to make. At the same time, for many, these accoutrements became fashionable outside the context of the drugs that had originally encouraged their appropriation.



Figure 18: Barnes, D. (2000). Skilled use of glow sticks producing concentric circles. The Globe Nightclub for the event Digital in October 2000. [Analogue photograph].

This repurposing of banal objects within rave can be read as partial echoes of appropriation in previous subcultures, such as punks redefining of the safety pin as fashion accessory. “Objects borrowed from the most sordid of contexts found a place in the punks’ ensembles: lavatory chains were draped around in graceful arcs across chests encased in plastic bin-liners. Safety pins were taken out of their domestic ‘utility’ context and worn as gruesome ornaments through the cheek, ear or lip” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 107). As in punk, this redefining of objects caused shock within the public sphere. What remains different, perhaps, between these two examples is the level of political intent that underlies the repurposing of the object, with rave’s appropriation being orientated around pleasure, communal connection and drug use, rather than around social or economic disruption. Lawmakers in America tried unsuccessfully to ban objects such as pacifiers and glow sticks in the context of rave, labelling them as ‘drug related paraphernalia’ (Brown, 2001, ¶ 2). Also, like punk, some of these attributes of style ended up being sold back to participants, but not as blatantly as the ripped faded jeans or studded jackets towards the end of the punk era. There were clothing outlets in Perth that specifically sold ‘rave-related’ fashion but this constituted a broad palette and punters continued to create their own clothing, often specific to events they were attending.



Figure 19: Barnes, D. (2001). Punters ‘brand’ themselves with the Gatecrasher logo at a Gatecrasher event. Metropolis City. Perth, Western Australia. [Analogue photograph].

Punk branding was foremost about fashion and attitude. The punk subculture may have “signified chaos at every level, but this was only possible because the style itself was so thoroughly ordered” (Hebdige, 1979 p. 137). Although punk was famous for its participants’ excess in drinking and or drug use, the drugs themselves were not individually branded and certainly not *visibly* intertwined in the culture itself. Amphetamines, popularised in the early 1960s with mod culture, became popular once more within punk in the mid 1970s (Childs, 1999 p. 160). Amphetamines came in the form of prescription drugs such as dexies, also known as midnight runners. The drugs themselves were not repackaged or branded to designate different batches or to reference quality, they were largely prescription pharmaceuticals; it just so happened they were popular within the punk scene but they never became a part of a brand or punk’s enduring legacy. In comparison, “ecstasy can be seen as representative of a wider youth culture of conspicuous consumption, rather than simply being another drug used by drug users” (Forsyth, 1995, ¶ 1). Reynolds (2012a) suggests “By 1989, the famously grey and overcast city had gone dayglo; Morrissey-style miserabilism was replaced by glad-all-over extroversion, nourished by a diet of ‘disco biscuits’ (Ecstasy)” (p. 70). You could have a discussion about punk culture without having to directly refer to amphetamine use but you could not really have a frank discussion about rave culture without talking about Ecstasy; the two were so intertwined.

Puff, a veteran DJ of the Perth rave scene and today’s contemporary dance culture, loved the music before experiencing any connection with Ecstasy but recognises its role within the overall scene. “Not discounting the beauty of the music or anything but [sic] it was just another piece of the puzzle that made the whole picture work. It turned up the volume for everyone” (Puff, personal communication, June 18, 2014). It is rumoured that Tony Wilson, manager of The Hacienda Club, famously said Ecstasy made the white man dance (Hook, 2009). Eric Barker, a punter at the Hacienda and later a promoter, adds that it made *everyone* dance. “Who did dance with their arms in the air before ecstasy? No one in Manchester... But when the E arrived, all of the sudden you felt your hands rising up in the air” (as cited in Bainbridge, 2013, p. 65). Forsyth (1995) makes the connection of Ecstasy with lifestyle: “the importance of Ecstasy lies in its place as part of a wider lifestyle, not merely as a drug, important only for its pharmacological effects” (1995, ¶ 1). MDMA was rarely referred to as its chemical name but by its slang name (Ecstasy) and later, by specific (appropriated) brand names given to it. “In the ‘rave’

scene a whole new subculture of Ecstasy brand names and their alleged contents has grown up. Rather than simply being known as MDMA (or its chemical cousins, MDEA and MDA), there has been much speculation about what these Ecstasy brands contain” (Forsyth, 1995 ¶ 5). No other illegal drug in history has been marketed or branded to the degree that Ecstasy was within the heyday of rave and dance culture of the eighties, nineties, and noughties.

Ecstasy was not the first illegal drug to be branded. Before Ecstasy, branding of drugs occurred most famously with Acid (slang for LSD). There are reports of over 200 types of tablets identified and more than 350 different sheet designs (Laing, 2003 p. 39; p. 41). Older sheets of LSD (known as blotters for the paper used) have now become collectors’ items exhibited in gallery spaces. LSD tablets were most commonly round but others came in different shapes such as cylinders, stars, mushrooms and hearts. According to Laing, only one tablet batch was found to have been branded; the rest were either solid or mixed colours: “A single instance of a ‘logo’ on a tablet was the LSD ‘Peace Pill’ with an engraved ‘peace symbol’ on the tablet surface” (2003, p. 40) As LSD became more concentrated, tablets were replaced with blotter sheets of paper that were easier and lighter to transport and also allowed for the designs and logos that Acid is now famous for. Acid is still available and branded in contemporary times but its popularity has never matched the use in the countercultural burgeoning '60s.

Heroin also underwent a process of branding in New York City from the mid 1970s to mid 1990s (Duterte, 2009). This appeared to be a commercial decision by distributors of the drug to protect the reputation of what they were selling and included names such as “No Way Out and “Poison.” Duterte (2009, p. 51) suggests “heroin stamps functioned as a sort of chronicling, of not only of the heroin market at the time but also of inner city life, as a possibly subconscious response to what drug dealers saw in the world around them.” Heroin’s branded names also supported the reputation of the drug itself as dirty and addictive, as these above names suggest. A person is rarely seen by society as a ‘heroin user’ but more often as a ‘heroin addict’. Personally, I have never heard anyone referred to as an ‘Ecstasy addict’ and Ecstasy itself is not referred to as a physically addictive drug (Rassool, 2011 p. 92). I surmise that as ecstasy was seen as a party drug as opposed to a drug used by addicts it likely effected the way it which it was branded/marketed to users.

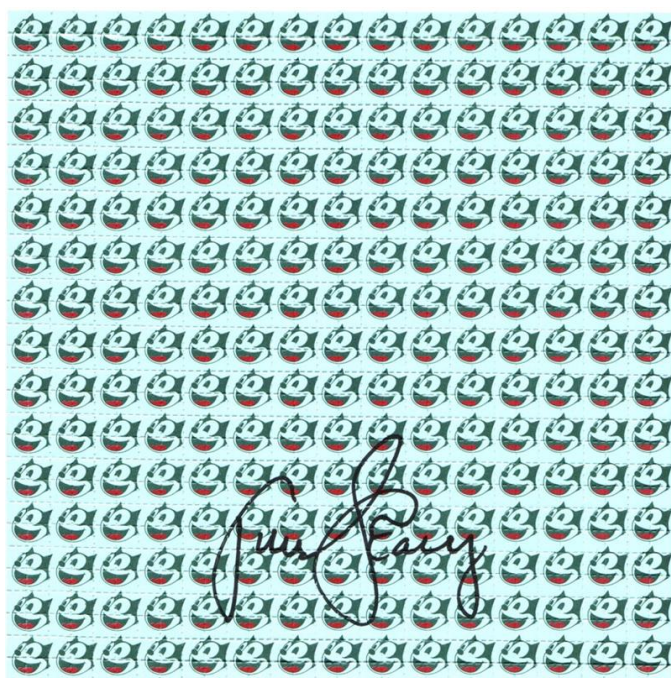


Figure 20: Vintage blotter art: Timothy Leary signed Blue Felix the Cat.
Source – unknown.

Ecstasy was different from its precursors branding in that its tablets re-appropriated manufacturers' logos of mass consumption, with the most famous to appear on a pill being the Mitsubishi logo. Blotter sheets of acid had favoured images of mysticism and fantasy, likely referencing the drug experience, as LSD is a hallucinogenic drug. Advances in printing technology allowed for more detailed designs that mocked the establishment with images of national monuments and even the FBI logo (Duterte, 2009), which was not surprising given the counter cultural nature of those who used LSD in its heyday. Ecstasy's use of the Mitsubishi logo, though, remains an intriguing choice of branding in that it is neither tied up in escapism, fantasy or countercultural comment but signifies a generic mass marketed product that is a symbol of consumerism. More than any other logo, it became *the brand* of a generation of Ecstasy users within rave/dance culture, even appearing on the front cover of *Mixmag*; the pill appeared larger than life, as prominent as any pin up girl icon, covering two thirds of the page in the April 1999 edition (figure 21). Although the choice of Mitsubishi logo itself remains open to interpretation, its popularity on pills was due to its link to a particularly potent batch at a time when quality was low. "Back in the mid-1990s in England, a very large batch of Mitsubishi tablets was introduced that were about 150mg of MDMA; this reinvigorated the Ecstasy market because before that fake and adulterated tablets were prevalent" (Emanuel, as cited in Holland, 2001 p. 162). Invariably, its good reputation led to more

manufacturers using the Mitsubishi logo, which led to its greater popularity. Although Ecstasy remained an illegal product, it had become what marketers drive to obtain: the Mitsubishi tablet had created brand recognition.

The success of the Mitsubishi branded tablet also invariably led to more tablets being branded and well-branded pills tended to carry with them a better reputation for perceived quality. “Embossed designs on Ecstasy are thought of as quality markers. Such markings undoubtedly make these pills harder to fake” (Forsyth, 1995, Results section, ¶ 11). Other branded pills offer representation of many more desirable consumer brands such as Armani, Calvin Klein, Gucci, Motorola, Nike, Playboy, Rolex, Volkswagen. Duterte (2009, ¶ 13) suggests “these labels also seem to reflect the current state of society in which Ecstasy pills could be seen as cultural artefacts of middle class, drug-using social worlds.” This is partly true and certainly reinforces my early suggestions that users of the drug in Australia are largely middle class. This may not describe the early demographic of Britain, who were largely working class, but it *does* reinforce middle-class desires to be a consumer of these brands.



Figure 21: Mix Mag. (1999). Mix Mag assures the elevation of the Mitsubishi pill (ecstasy) into cult status. April 1999. [Magazine cover]. Retrieved from: <http://www.mixmag.net/words/from-the-archives/covers/april-1999>

Late '90s Ecstasy users were already practicing what today might be referred to as a form of viral marketing, sharing their experiences on different types of Ecstasy tablets via Internet forums such as Bluelight (1997) and Pill Reports and by word of mouth. Pill manufacturers also demonstrated an awareness of this phenomenon, copying popular brands of pills that had achieved a good word-of-mouth reputation amongst the rave community. Because Ecstasy is illegal, word-of-mouth through brand recognition and appearance is the main way that people still gauge quality. This is evident with websites such as pillreports.com where user discussions are continuously posted on people's experience on new pills that enter the market. The site is also region specific and even city specific. For example, there is the capacity to search for information on specific pills in Perth, Western Australia. Posters to the website even have the facility to include a scan or photograph of the pill with their written review and a rating guide from zero to five stars, based on the experience the pill gave. The domain has all the slickness of a real-estate website or online travel agency but is largely moderated by volunteers -. Pillreports.com markets itself as "a vital harm reduction service," although it also suggests you can help the site by purchasing pill-testing kits from a link they provide. It is capitalisation and commodification operating in a most efficient manner and, ironically, is a black market trade of non-taxable and highly illegal items. Putting an exact price on the value of Ecstasy is difficult given its illegal status. In a 2008 report from the United Nations, global Ecstasy trade was estimated to be worth 23.4 billion dollars in 2006, up from its last estimated report of 9.8 billion in 2001. When all amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) are included, the income of illegal trade reaches 65 billion (UN, 2008, p. 13) To put this further in perspective, an article in *The Observer* (2002, ¶ 4) compared those statistics against the value of other legal trades within the world economy: "illegal drugs make up eight per cent of world trade, says the United Nations, and are worth more than the combined global market for textiles, clothing, iron and steel."

While Ecstasy, for the foreseeable future, will remain illegal, the marketing of legal drugs and products to the rave generation can be more easily assessed. Raves were traditionally held exclusively after dark (usually after midnight) often in locations not associated with club-orientated culture. These factors fuelled the subversive thrill, underground reputation, and media attention that rave connoted in these early days. As raves were forcefully moved from these locations (abandoned warehouses, underground car parks) and spaces became regulated, the way rave was experienced ultimately changed too.

Over the years, its subversive capital weakened, as demonstrated through the reduced media attention and changes in media reporting discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. By early 2000 in Perth, rave went through another major change. It experienced the light of day, with festivals starting in the early afternoon and finishing before midnight (often at 10pm due to council noise restrictions); this constituted a complete reversal of how rave had been experienced in unregulated spaces or in the regulated space of nightclubs. Around the world, the practice had begun in the late nineties and big brands were taking notice of the change. “The late-90s, [in England] more events sprung up, rave culture became assimilated into mainstream youth society – and companies with no previous connection with music spotted a perfect opportunity to reach that elusive group of affluent, opinion-forming young adults” (Mason, 2001, ¶ 2). While Mason suggests late '90s rave was mainstream in the UK (and I refer that same period as being rave’s first commercial peak in Perth, Western Australia), it was only the beginning: late '90s and early 2000 dance culture would look positively transgressive compared to the modern EDM corporate-branded festival circuit which was set to follow.

This is the future? Brand and brand sponsorship in EDM

I feel like it has been hijacked by Coke and Pepsi and Red Bull and all kinds of other corporate things because they are just trying to sell products – As opposed to a bunch of people getting together and go hey lets dance. This is dance music this isn’t electronic dance music, its not a brand, it’s a tribal thing. (Kelly, 2015)

In the late eighties (and even in the early to mid nineties in Australia) raves were largely underground, which meant there was no corporate sponsorship. The events would target free locations, traditionally warehouses or open fields in the UK, or pine plantations and other semi-rural spaces beyond the suburban fringe in Perth, Western Australia. In Perth, local DJs played for the love of their art and ‘entry’ to the event meant just knowing where and when to turn up and, maybe, a gold coin donation. This is not to say that there was not big money to be made out of underground, often illegal, raves. On the contrary, in Britain in the late eighties, raves became big business and attracted capitalists who were used to operating on the marginal fringe and blurring the legal boundaries.

The involvement of criminal football gangs in the warehouse scene was a sign of the times. The characters who took acid house to the next stage – massive raves in aircraft hangers, grain silos and open fields...weren’t subcultural movers and shakers; they were underworld figures or entrepreneurs not averse to breaking a few laws. (Reynolds, 2012, p. 61)

Money during this early period of rave did not come from corporate sponsorship of events, as corporations did not consider rave culture a legitimate platform from which to market their wares. By the late 1990s in Perth, 'rave' was back in the clubs on a much larger scale and by early 2000, the daytime electronic music festivals were taking root; still, corporate sponsorship of events remained sketchy. The Perth club nights and day festivals themselves were often branded with the namesake of British super clubs such as Cream, Gatecrasher, Ministry of Sound, and God's Kitchen, which were multimillion-dollar corporations in their own right. "Within four years of its launch, [in 1991] the Ministry of Sound...had become the world's biggest nightlife company, with a multi-million-pound turnover" (Collin, 2009a, p. 295). Australian promoters paid good money for the use of a 'pre-packaged branded experience.' There were tight compliance requirements for what it meant to be a Ministry of Sound or a Gatecrasher-themed event, from the sound system through to the amount of lighting production and to the DJs who played at the event.

Surprisingly, this corporate-driven agenda did not seem to affect subcultural capital of its participants, certainly not in Perth Western Australia. On the contrary, punters branded themselves with the logos of these corporate 'super clubs', sometimes permanently; I was often approached by enthusiastic punters who wanted to show me their tattoo of club logos. It seems this was also the case in the UK. "Clubbers were sporting tattoos of the distinctive Cream logo...one Liverpool couple even decided to get married at a Cream event" (Haig, 2005, p. 247).



Figure 22: Barnes, D. (2003) A reworking of the Ministry of Sound Logo as a tattoo. Rise nightclub, 2003. [Analogue photograph]



Figure 23: Barnes, D. (2001). Punter sporting a Gatecrasher tattoo. Gatecrasher event, The Globe, nightclub. Perth, Western Australia 2001. [Analogue photograph].

It was not just the established UK brands that people supported with religious fervor. Local Perth-based promoter Delirium experienced the same kind of adulation from devotees of their brand. Simon Wright (November, 2014) discussed with me the design of the Delirium logo that became a widely recognised sign of kinship in the late 1990s and early 2000s dance culture. It is made up of “three parts. The middle section (ovals) are the DJ’s turntables. The top sections being the light beaming from around the DJ’s head and the bottom sections are the sound waves booming from the speakers” (S. Wright, personal communication, November date, 2014). While the motivations behind the logo design were quite sophisticated punters saw the shape as a butterfly and Delirium ran with that in the way they marketed their shows events.

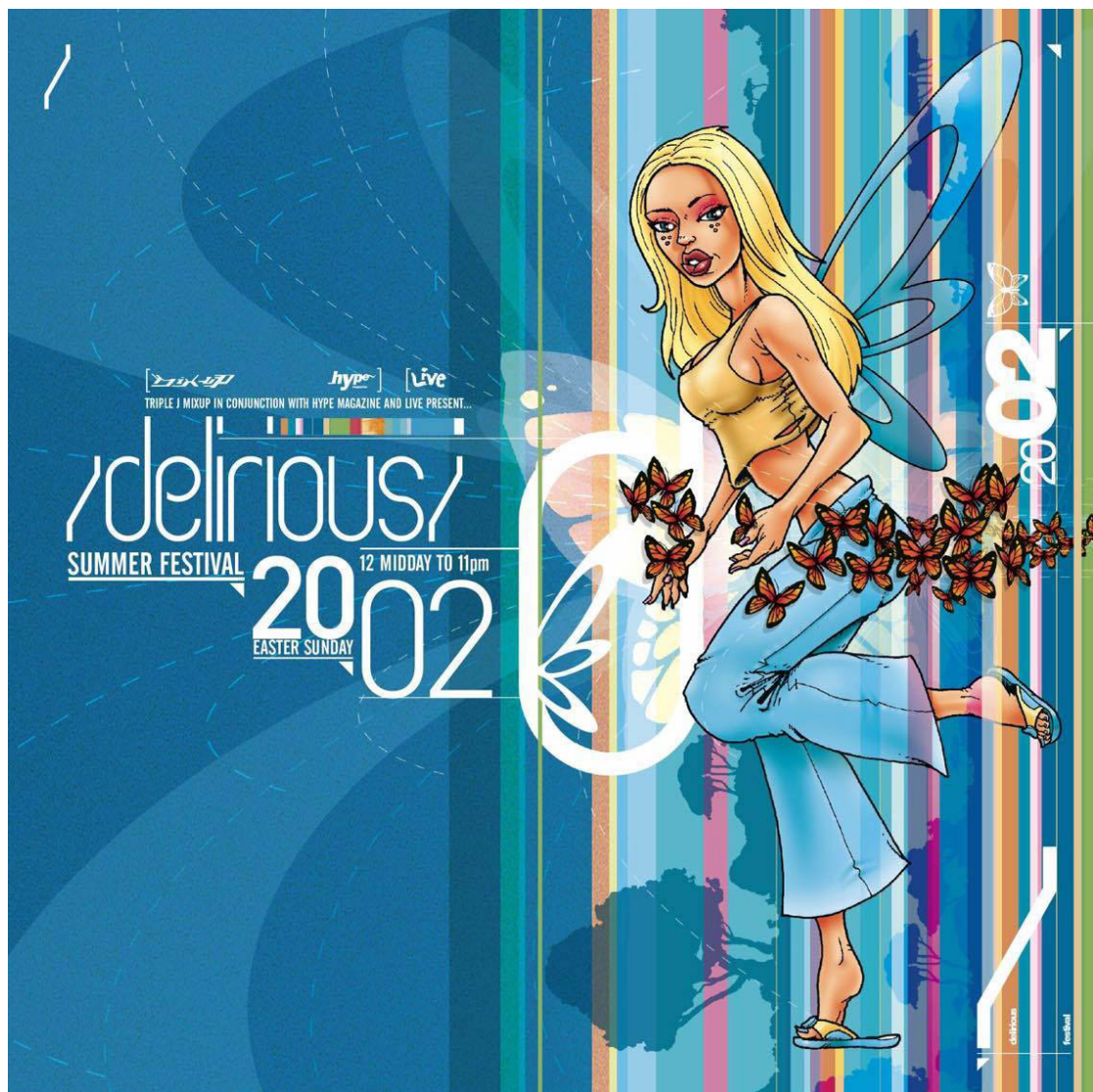


Figure 24: Wright, S. (2002). Flyer for Delirious festival 2002. Image supplied. [Printed flyer].

Girls often wore butterfly wings (or any wings, for that matter) as a sign of their devotion to the brand, while boys would often stencil paint the logo on their backs and some people went even further: “The weirdest thing though is seeing someone with a Delirium tattoo - I remember a check out girl at Woolies showing me hers one day when I was paying for my groceries” (S. Wright, personal communication, November date, 2014). It is interesting to note this loyalty to brands – some of them already corporations in their own right, and yet they still had a level of underground subcultural support. I believe that this suggests that in the early 2000s, there was still a sense of the authenticity of events amongst participants – not just in a fleeting sense but deep enough for punters to even be branded (with a tattoo) of the namesake that they supported. This level of commitment was not something that you would see with the electronic festival brands that emerged after this period. Gatecrasher and Ministry had somehow managed to remain ‘cool’.



Figure 25: Barnes, D. (2002). Delirious festival. [Analogue photograph].

While Ministry in the UK made partnerships with Pepsi and Sony, youth-orientated brand sponsorship was noticeably absent in the Perth scene. Instead, punters parodied big name brands through T-shirt slogans that often alluded, not so subtly, to drug use. While Ecstasy remained entrenched in the media reporting of rave/dance music, condoning events through sponsorship would have been a risky proposition. While brands were

subverted through clothing and Mitsubishi, better known in the scene as a popular pill than a car brand, mainstream sponsors did well to stay away.



Figure 26: D, Barnes. (2002). Outside Metropolis City. Perth, Western Australia. [Analogue photograph].

Early sponsorship of club-based electronic dance events in Perth, Western Australia initially came from brands ostracised from mainstream advertising channels, such as Rizla and Peter Stuyvesant. This appears to have mimicked early sponsorship deals in Europe, which also started with cigarette companies such as Camel and Philip Morris sponsoring the German techno scene and Renaissance backed by Silk Cut cigarettes (Collin, 2009a). Having been banned from advertising almost everywhere else in Australia, over-eighteen events were the only places left for cigarette brands to advertise. While other brands were potentially concerned with the stigma of sponsoring rave related events, the limited choice of markets for cigarette brands meant they did not have much to lose and most likely saw it as a chance to stay relevant in the youth market.



Figure 27: Barnes, D. (2001) Delirious festival with Rizzla sponsorship. [Analogue photograph].



Figure 28: Barnes, D. (2002). Delirious festival. Redbull provides a simple shaded area. [Analogue photograph].

Red Bull, a brand that prides itself as being on the edge of cool, provided sponsorship in a subtle way by providing an open shaded tent at Delirium festivals in the early 2000s and selling Red Bull at the event (Figure 27). Red Bull has had an innovative marketing ‘buzz

strategy' that attract "consumers in exclusive and exciting events" which is aimed at 'alpha bees' to create the buzz about the product" (Gschwandtner, n.d). Kumar (n.d) adds, "That's the power of guerrilla marketing – an new upstart can out run the bug guys with a fraction of the money. All you really need is the buzz" (§ 7). Worldwide, Red Bull has made itself synonymous with youth culture via extreme sports and risk-taking behaviour in general and thus it is not surprising that its branding suited the rave/dance scene. Alcohol consumption at events was also noticeably lower than at mainstream events as people tended to drink less (if at all) when taking Ecstasy. Red Bull thus found a perfect niche market. Mother (Coca Cola) took notice of Red Bull's strategy and saw the opportunity to launch its brand of energy drink. That this ultimately failed is a reflection on the product rather than the marketing opportunities that were opening up through EDM festivals. "Mother is Coca-Cola's fourth crack at the energy drink market since 2001 and follows the failure of Lift Plus, Burn and Recharge by Sprite" (Lee, 2007, § 10).

Red Bull's exit from the Perth outdoor dance events by mid 2000s is just as interesting as its original presence. Red Bull tends to be a marker of what is cool, so its absence at events a decade later might suggest that the dance scene has become passé. V Energy Drinks (owned by New Zealand company Frucor) quickly filled the void that Red Bull left and remains a major sponsor at outdoor dance events today. V Energy offers an entire brand experience that includes a sizeable tent space with DJs and giveaways of its V-branded products and drinks. Clearly this is an expensive exercise but V and other major sponsors see the value in trying to generate cultural capital that it hopes will resonate beyond the single day of a festival. As Carah (2010) suggests, "Corporations develop brandscapes in order to harness these flows of capital. They engage culture and taste makers through the brandscapes they construct to accumulate cultural capital" (p. 71). Although V has become the market leader for energy drinks in Australia, with Red Bull a close second (Evans, 2015), it lacks the edgy cool that Red Bull has managed to maintain through its innovative buzz marketing strategy; globally, Red Bull still remains the market leader for energy drinks.

As I allude to in previous chapters, the market for rave/dance culture post 2000 largely focussed on a middle-class with high disposable incomes. EDM, possibly more than any other music category, had an untapped potential for marketers of premium brands.

The music market provides very accurately definable target group segments, due to the fact that the music taste implies general tendencies regarding brand and product preferences or at least a certain lifestyle. These preferences can incipiently be deduced from stereotypes (e.g a fan of alternative music is rather likely to buy from inexpensive no-name brands, while electronic music fans are more likely to buy premium brands and pop music fans rather prefer mainstream brands). (Hund-gscl, 2009, p. 47.)

Initially, this chapter commented on the Perth Future Music festival of 2010 with its record attendance of 29,0000 (Holland, 2010) making it the biggest dance party that Perth has ever seen and possibly the largest over-18 music event, regardless of music genre. These numbers have increased with each passing year, demonstrating that EDM has been an area of growth and a ripe market for brand sponsorship and brand awareness. The stigma of dance culture was long gone; big brands no longer had to be concerned by the negative connotations that rave culture carried. The word ‘rave’ is now a long buried term, even in the media. The vague expression ‘dance culture’ has been allotted the more focused acronym EDM, giving it a more marketable presence. Before EDM exploded, Ott and Herman (2003) were aware of the early commercial shifts in rave culture in the North American market. As in Australia, major mainstream brands were potentially reluctant to be involved but by 2003 they made comment on the inclusion of local radio station sponsorship and music labels getting on board: “part of capitalism’s appeal lies in its ideological flexibility – its capacity to embrace transgressive subculture, repackage it, and sell it as the latest stylistic innovation” (p. 250). I would reiterate the comments on ideological flexibility but would place a caveat on the idea of ‘embracing transgressive acts’. Major brands tend to wait until it is deemed *safe* to enter a market to avoid any risk of tarnishing a brand. By the time these brands sponsor events, the culture as whole has all but lost its transgressive edge.

The Future Music festival provides a good case study of corporate branding, due to its continued growth. I can offer a first-hand account of its evolution; I have photographed this festival in Perth from its inception to the present day. Future Music began life as an electronic dance festival in Sydney 2006. It was so successful that it became an Australia-wide festival in 2007 and has been every year since. In Australia in 2010, Future Music drew varied sponsorship through Smirnoff, V, Lipton Ice Tea, Jay Jays and Puma. The naming rights of a stages included Jay Jays, which sponsored a silent roller disco and Anjunabeats (a British record label). Visually, the festival attendees were

almost indistinguishable from any other group of youth. While some people wore fluffy boots as homage to a scene long gone and others had dust masks (a drug reference in the days of rave culture), they were very much in the minority. More prominent was the sense of bogan ‘Australianness,’ with Southern Cross tattoos adorning backs and chests of shirtless participants.

In March 2013, the Future Music Festival continued to break records for Perth with reportedly 45,000 people in attendance (Collins, 2013). Photographs of the Future Music Festival of 2013 are the final images for festivals included in my analysis and mark a significant end point in the discussion of electronic dance culture. If 2010 was indistinguishable from any other youth group in regards to fashion, 2013 would be distinguished by its blatant service to a consumer culture and overt advertising, no longer hidden on the side-lines or bothering to appear ‘cool and groovy’ or evoking dance culture itself. A Jack Daniels chill-out bar (Jack Daniels’ White Rabbit Saloon) did not bother to pretend to reflect anything else other than the iconic ‘blokey’ brand that Jack Daniels has always been marketed as. Mazda offered a (rather random) walk-through photo booth as well as continuing to inject enough sponsorship dollars at the event to have an entire stage named after it (which it has done since 2011). V Energy drink made an effort to evoke the ‘authentic’ dance experience with its signature green inflatable dance tent, known as the V Energy Green Room, which had a rather dance-oriented vibe about it. Girls in green V shirts and skimpy shorts greeted patrons as they came through the ticket gates with a free legal stimulant in the form of a shot of V to get the day started, while offering V-branded visors and even green V branded ponchos for the East Coast Australia Festival events when it rained.

Other items were distributed at the gate with show-bag style paraphernalia containing more advertising, which I refused to take (the rather surprised spruiker quipped “but it’s free!”) Some performers offered trinkets to the crowd, such as cardboard hats with their brand on them, and the crowd eagerly participated in the act of branding, wearing the hats without question and seeming excited about anything free (figure 29).



Figure 29: Barnes, D. (2013). En Masse branding. Future Music Festival 2013. Perth, Western Australia. [Digital photograph].

A recently rebranded Strongbow saw sponsorship of the event as desirable, with naming rights to an eighties-style foam party with DJ stage. As well as a general rebranding, it released its summer-fruits range on the Australian market to coincide with the Future Music festival partnership. Marketing manager Clive Coleman, in a marketing press release, commented on the festival partnership: “The summer music festivals capture an easy going holiday vibe and Strongbow, with its refreshing taste, fits perfectly with that. The Summa Warm Up Sessions will be a great way for Strongbow, in association with Future Entertainment, to get everyone in the mood for their favorite festivals.” (Campaign Brief, 2012, ¶ 4). Strongbow is a brand often perceived as stuck in the '80s and it evidently regards involvement in the festival circuit as a chance to shake that branding stigma.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Jack Daniels was a major sponsor of the event but did very little to “rebrand” or “fit in” as sponsors have when associated with dance festivals in the past. Normally, it would be expected that the target audience and the brand would have something in common. Marketing expert Shimp (2009) suggests “Marketers sponsor events to develop relationships with consumers, enhance brand equity, and strengthen ties with the trade. Successful event sponsorships require a

meaningful *fit* among the brand, the event, and the target market.” (p. 563.) Shimp goes on to discuss some examples of meaningful fits of event sponsorship, such as the pairing of NASCAR racing and the Coleman group that supply BBQ grills and other outdoor equipment. Future Entertainment (who promote the Future Music Festival) offers an endorsement of the Jack Daniels sponsorship of the 2013 shows:

The White Rabbit Saloon will undoubtedly be the most eye-catching place to grab a drink onsite, being one of Jack’s own bars from the late 1800’s no less. Add a full day and night of the best music distilled [a pun made just for Jack Daniels] for your dancing pleasure and this is a chance to party with Jack like never before! (Future News, 2013, ¶ 2)

An image on the site shows a DJ wearing a cowboy hat with Jack Daniels in front of the stage. It is hard to interpret it as anything other than a shameless money grab for high paying sponsors, as the home of Jack Daniels (Lynchburg, Tennessee) is a long way from Australia and its connotations an even further departure from electronic music’s past, present or future. However Jack Daniels must have considered its marketing and association with electronic dance music. Of Jack Daniels choosing to sponsor an EDM event one can only arrive at two conclusions; either it radically miscalculated its target audience or perceives a profound shift in the type of attendees of such festivals. The significance of the inclusion of two major alcohol brands sponsoring a dance party event cannot be understated and one wonders if this irony is not lost on ‘old skool’ ravers who, through their choice to consume Ecstasy, could think of drinking nothing but water. With the shift of rave culture to the mainstream, alcohol is indeed back on the menu.

Car sponsorship is also somewhat ironic, given early rave culture’s appropriation of the infamous Mitsubishi logo imprinted on Ecstasy pills in the late nineties and the fact a car manufacturer would never have considered sponsoring a rave at that time. As discussed in Chapter three, the reason for the branding of Ecstasy pills is debatable; it might have been a subversive statement about the brands being fed to mainstream culture at the time or its use of its signifiers (logos) may have been a sign of desire for those brands. Duterte (2009, ¶ 13) suggests “While not every Ecstasy brand is based on corporate identifiers, the essence of consumer culture is apparent in the marketing of this drug with pill brands like Motorola and Mitsubishi.” The Future Music festival was not or was never a *rave*, but its grass roots stem from rave culture. However, significantly, the event did not seem like an electronic music festival; it seemed more like a corporate branding exercise. Klein

writes “the products that will flourish in the future will be the ones presented not as ‘commodities’ but as concepts: the brand as experience as lifestyle” (2001, p. 20). Major sponsors of Future Music in 2013 Mazda and V embodied the philosophy outlined by Klein; presenting their wares not as static products but as interactive experiences through the walkthrough photo booth (Mazda, figure 30) and the inflatable V dance party (figure 31). In early Rave, fashion and products were used for the events but in EDM corporate branding infiltrates the rave experience and transfers to everyday lifestyle.



Figure 30: Barnes, D. (2013). Mazda photo booth, Future Music Festival. Perth, Western Australia. [Digital photograph].



Figure 31: Barnes, D. (2013). V Energy tent, Future Music Festival. Perth, Western Australia. [Digital photograph]

With dance music now experienced *en masse*, not in the dark club or warehouse environment but in the light of day in the festival environment, there is no attempt to hide either the branding or elitist segmentation that rave culture once aimed to dissolve. Even entry into the event is segregated between regular ticket holders and those who have forked out extra money for a VIP ticket. VIP areas were once sectioned off for friends of the promoters, staff, artists and sponsors, but in recent years, VIP offerings have become a commodity put on offer to the general public at a higher ticket price and including additional perks (and for some, status) not available to normal ticket holders. In previous years, this has included an enclosed undercover viewing platform overlooking the main stage, private toilets that offer more luxury than the average portable loo (figure 32) and a separate bar for VIP customers. A wristband designates a VIP customer and marks achievement/status.



Figure 32: Barnes, D. (2012). Signs to separate restrooms for VIP at the Future Music Festival. Perth, Western Australia. [Digital photograph]

In 2013, the VIP advanced on its normal niceties with a hair and makeup area lined with mirrors and hairdressers and there was no shortage of girls taking up the offer. The hair/make up and high heels are such a departure from what the shorts and trainers (fashionable sneakers) of yore that it is hard to comprehend how the culture and its music has devolved to this pre-packaged experience. It cannot help but change the behaviour of those in attendance.

Because the culture has just become more mainstream then the thought patterns become more mainstream. Everybody is trying to look good and project themselves....[In early rave culture] you wore the clothes to show that you were a part of it like a tribe...because you wanted to show your unity. Instead of coming together it causes friction. (Brewster, personal communication, April date, 2014)

The East Coast Future Music festivals VIP sounded even more upmarket (or at least even more pretentious). “It was the place to be seen, with uninterrupted views of all the big acts and offered the best spot of the festival for people-watching” (Stephenson, 2013, ¶ 5) The *Courier Mail* article goes on to list a bunch of b-grade local celebs who attended the event in the VIP section that was called “The first class lounge”.

Finally, the line up cemented the commercial grab with an appearance from Psy, of viral YouTube sensation fame, singing Gangnam Style. He only sang three or four songs, and

Gangnam Style twice. “The South Korean artist, who performed Gangnam Style twice, drew an audience in its thousands and the crowd eagerly busted out the dance moves to match” (Symonds, 2013,p.x). *Perth Now*’s reporter must have missed the bit where punters threw their thongs at Psy, suggesting that some people were not happy with what they likely saw as a sellout mainstream audience grab, which would have been an accurate assessment.



Figure 33: Barnes, D. (2013). Psy performing at Future Music Festival. Perth, Western Australia 2013. [Digital photograph]

Early 1990s rave culture in Australia shifted to using the term ‘dance culture’ and finally morphed into EDM by the late 2000s. Barring a few hiccups, Australia’s EDM scene remained on a constant upward trajectory, while North America’s dance scene suffered considerable decline, until its recent explosion in popularity. Now stronger than it was in its late eighties/early nineties incarnation, US rave culture has undergone the commodification rave culture experienced in Australia. For participants originally ‘into the scene’ for its subcultural value and its tight-knit sense of community, rave today is a shallow reflection of its original incarnation. Rave, rebranded as EDM, is like tie-dyed shirts sold in tourist shops a generation after the hippy movement. It is hard to read people who choose to dress in late eighties and early nineties rave style clothing as subversive or as recognising an identifiable subgroup; instead they parody a bygone era.

Rave's movement from subcultural group to mainstream acceptance/normalisation has left only a hollow echo of its original identity and roots.

We've grown up in America with house and techno. Techno was created in Detroit; house music was created in Chicago. These forms of music had to be more or less erased from the palette in order for this push forward. Not only were the historical aspects shoved in a trash bag and thrown off the bridge, but the culture to a big extent has been slaughtered. PLUR worked in the '90s, but in a 2012 context that doesn't really fly. So how do we see the culture coming back into this? Because right now, EDM really doesn't have a culture. (Sunshine, as cited in Paterson, 2012, ¶ 1)

Long-term American DJ, producer and dance music commentator Tommie Sunshine comes out in support of an 'authentic' dance music scene and expresses his concerns for the EDM scene as it currently exists in America. The concerns revolve less around its commodification than in the perceived loss of quality and the production of the music itself, and about what will happen after the EDM explosion. Others discern that the sudden rise in EDM's popularity could also lead to its demise. Paterson (2012, ¶ 3) writes "The crux of the discussion at ADE [Amsterdam Dance Event], on the panels and elsewhere, was how the long-term players are going to introduce a stronger cultural aspect into the frame. How will they ensure the culture doesn't get A&R-ed out of existence?" Sunshine suggests only time and quality can improve people's appreciation for EDM. American kids will "need more than a couple Es, [ecstasy] they're gonna need some long nights on dance floors with really good DJs. Then they're gonna understand what this culture really is" (cited in Paterson, p.4 ¶ 2).

Although I admire Tommie Sunshine's sentiment towards some form of authentic dance culture, it is hard to understand how it would come to fruition. In the EDM explosion, rave culture has been proverbially sold down the river. Companies such as SFX Entertainment, run by entrepreneur Robert Sillerman, announced plans "to build a billion [dollar] empire largely around the appeal of dance music" (Sisario, 2013, ¶ 3). This marks a significant shift from individual ownership to corporate ownership. Where early promoters of rave and even EDM had vested personal interests in the cultures, Sillerman freely admits he has none. "I know nothing about EDM. I really don't. Of course, I've listened to it and I understand its appeal...I meet the people whose places we're buying. And I haven't a fucking clue what they do or what they're talking about. Not a clue. And I love it. I just love it" (as cited in Mason, 2012, p.x). Sillerman may know nothing about EDM but he knows a lot about corporate sponsorship and its financial value. In the

1990s, Sillerman spent 1.2 billion acquiring independent rock promoters to create a national network to attract corporate sponsorship and it seems he intends to repeat this model with EDM. (Marcucci (2013, ¶ 7) notes, “The dance world has largely been run independently, with minimal corporate branding, and that ethos persists even as the genre has become big business.” As mentioned earlier, this is certainly not the case in Australia. EDM festivals in Perth sold out the look and even the name of stages to the highest bidder and, in the process, sold a sense of rave’s identity. While American festivals may not be offering naming rights for stages, big brands have moved in to market. Writing for *Adweek*, Johnson (2014) outlined the sponsorship details being made with one of America’s biggest festivals, Electronic Daisy Carnival (EDC). Sponsors included 7UP, Bud Light Motorola and Snapchat. Referring to 7UP, Johnson said a “program was launched this year that targets the electronic dance music community. The soda brand has partnered with seven DJs at seen festivals” (¶ 7) while Bud Light will run a VIP lounge that will include a photo booth (which will no doubt be Bud-Light branded) and other paid-for perks.

This ‘culture’ has undergone such a commercial transformation that the idea of ‘authenticity’ that Tommie Sunshine and other seasoned DJs talk about cannot be restored. Most subcultural practices either disappear after a period of time or become assimilated into mainstream culture and in the process become homogenised; this is not a process that can be reversed. On the contrary, EDM will keep pushing its popularity until it becomes so saturated that the public will crave something different. If it has not already reached that point, television is there to give it an extra nudge. HBO is developing an EDM comedy starring the current world number one DJ, Calvin Harris, with Jay Z and Will Smith (Andreeva, 2014); Simon Cowell of X Factor fame is set to launch the search for the *Ultimate DJ*, a product of collaboration between Cowell’s company Syco Entertainment, and SFX Entertainment partnered with T-Mobile. Reality tv represents the kiss of death to any subcultural value in rave/dance culture. Ultimately, its model also suggests that the DJ, not the *shared* cultural scene of rave culture, has become the object of worship, the ultimate bankable commodity: humble beginnings when we consider the acronym of DJ is ‘disc jockey,’ as a person who mixes pre recorded music for an audience.

God is a DJ

This is where I heal my hurts
It's in the world I become
Contained in the hum
Between voice and drum
It's in the change
The poetic justice of cause and effect
Respect, love, compassion
This is my church
This is where I heal my hurts
For tonight
God is a DJ
God is a DJ
(*Faithless*, 1998)



Figure 34: Barnes, D. (2002). Faithless performing at Metro City. Perth, Western Australia. [Analogue photograph].

The performance of the DJ in rave culture differed considerably from the role of performance established in rock culture. “Whereas rock or pop enthusiasts attend concerts, in part; to witness (i.e., behold) a musician or band, ravers attend raves to create and participate in an experience that cannot exist apart from their participation” (Ott & Herman, 2003, p. 255). St John (2009, p. 1) suggests rave “liquidated the star/spectator roles central to the rock and pop experience.” Reynolds (1998) adds, “There was a liberating joy in surrendering to the radical anonymity of the music, in not caring about

the names or tracks of the artists” (p. 4). Ownership of the music was often harder to determine and seemingly less important than the obvious attachments between the performer and producer of rock music. This was particularly the case in the pre-Internet era when recordings were shared on mix tapes or limited release vinyl presses. As Park (1996) suggests “The facelessness of techno has destroyed the idol-worshipping syndrome of the over-blown rock personality – the tracks that you’re listening to at a rave could be coming from anywhere – and it doesn’t really matter *where*” (§ 4). This was not to say the DJ was not worshipped in the lead up to the formation of rave culture itself. At the height of disco, DJ Larry Levan of Paradise Garden fame in the late '70s had a quasi-religious following and the metaphors of club as church, music as sacrament, and Saturday night as mass abounded. Reynolds (1999) describes a number of clubs at the time including the Paradise Garden: “regulars used to call the Gallery ‘Saturday Mass,’ and Salvation was styled a cathedral, Garage veterans regarded the club as ‘their church’” (p. 35). He quotes John Iozia (a Paradise Garden regular) as saying the dance floor was a congregation of “space-age Baptists”.

In my own experience in late nineties and early noughties, the ecstasy of the moment in rave/dance culture demonstrated a collective altruism rather than the worship of an individual ‘preacher.’ Punters were more concerned about their dancing and the enjoyment of their fellow ‘friends’; I use the term friends loosely as this could be your best friend or it could be someone you just happened to meet five minutes ago on the dance floor with whom you felt a shared empathy, caught up in the moment with the music and atmosphere. In moments like these the DJ was the last thing on my mind. Mathew Collin in *Altered States* relates a similar personal experience “The very dynamic of the rave itself felt so liberating – democratic rather than hierarchical. The dancers’ focus was not on the stage, but on each other. The hegemony of the performer was usurped; the energy was coming from the participants themselves” (2009a, p. 105). The DJ still controls the *experience* but that level of control can often pass to the crowd whereby the experience becomes more important than the person creating it. “I experienced raving in its purest and most deranged form; blissfully ignorant of the DJs’ identities or the tracks’ names, lost in music, out-of-time” (Reynolds, 2012, p. xxv). On the other hand, rock culture established notions of superiority and difference, beginning with the aesthetics of a stage being substantially elevated above that of the crowd and often separated by a psychical barrier of metal and security staff. Photographs from

legendary rock festivals such as the UK Bath festivals of 1969 and 1970 illustrate a stage setup that is completely recognisable almost half a decade later at contemporary events (figure 35). The event included new innovations such as huge screens either side of the main stage that projected the live performances of the band. Even the crash barriers around the stage and its elevated status are recognisable at today's music and dance festivals (figure 36).



Figure 35: Cowan, N. (2002). Bath Festival, 1970. Main stage showing screens that the band were projected on during the performance. [Analogue, photograph]. Retrieved from: <http://www.ukrockfestivals.com/bath-ncow-stage-close.html>

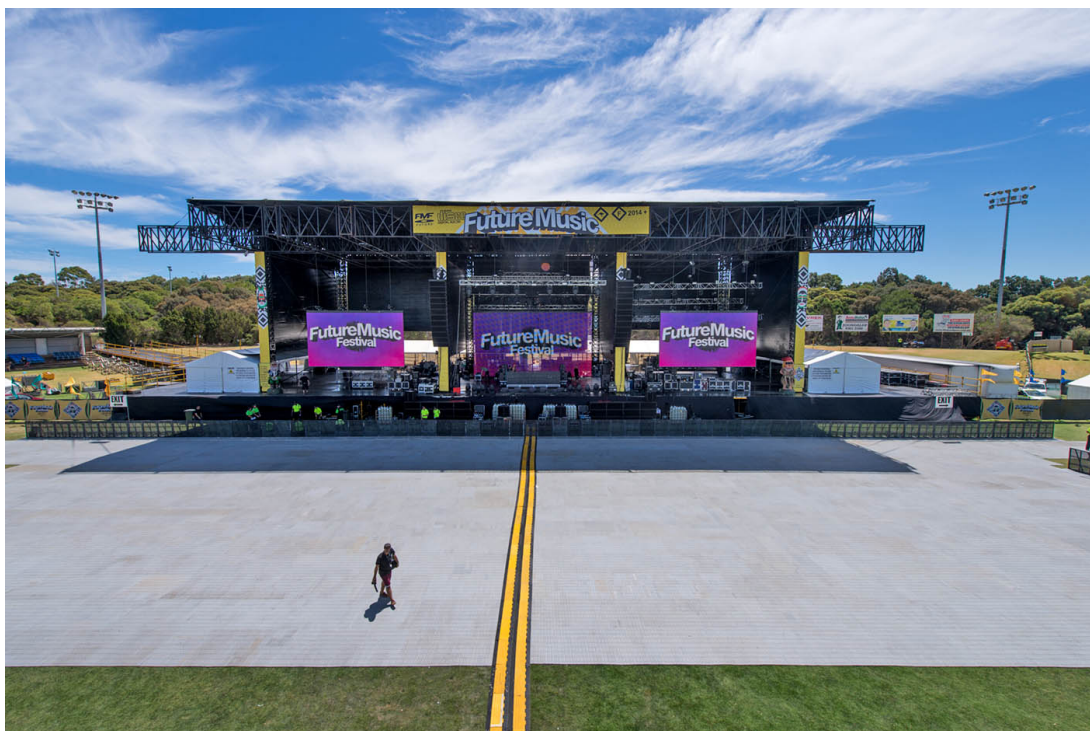


Figure 36: Barnes, D. (2014). Future Music main stage at Joondalup Arena. [Digital photograph].

History demonstrates that the performance of rock bands on the stage was to be worshiped as something separate – as a spectacle to behold, not something communal, equal and shared. At times, that separation could be spontaneously breached when a member of the performance (band) would cross the divide and crowd surf from the stage into the audience, much to the dismay of protective security but to the delight of the fans. The moments were few and fleeting before the artist would return to the safety of the stage and reinforce the role and difference of performer and spectator. Importantly, the performers themselves controlled such acts. If members of the public tried this in reverse (crowd surfing towards the stage) they would be pulled unceremoniously from the crowd over the protective barrier and escorted along the dividing walkway until they had cleared the protective zone of the stage where they could pose no threat. If by chance a member of the public managed to breach the stage itself, consequences could range from expulsion from the event through to punishments often more severe, dished out by overzealous bouncers acting above the law.

In my experience of photographing both rock and rave performers on stage and back stage, DJs were generally humble and rock artists, anything but. Rock performers were treated like gods by their audience and by their promoters and their recognition of their difference was an important element in being a viable commodity, enticing fans to buy records, merchandise and to pay to see specific performances, rather than attending an event according to music genre. Rave culture (in its early days) focussed on the experience and the style of the music rather than the level of performance of an individual artist/performer. DJing was a function and the real performance was the audience. The ‘stage’ at raves outdoor events was rarely elevated or barricaded and often you would not even see the source of the music. The lights (if any) in the warehouse or open space centred on the crowd while the lights on the DJ were purely functional, allowing them to perform. After all, how interesting is a DJ playing records compared to the performance of a crowd dancing to fast-paced techno music? Nevertheless, over time this paradigm shifted, as did the role of the DJ in rave’s commercialisation that is beautifully summed up in the lyrics of Maxi Jazz of 1998 Faithless: “This is my church, this is where I heal my hurts, for tonight God is a DJ.” The DJ took centre stage and was in command of the audience. In a literal and metaphorical sense ‘he’ was elevated to a position of authority.

For something to sell, to be a commodity it had to be recognised for its difference, not a faceless DJ. What rock music understood from the beginning was discovered by dance culture as it shifted from underground to mainstream popularity.

As the DJ was transformed from someone who operates a turntable into an independent artist, the DJ also became a superstar (Mattila, 1999, p. 56). Inside the club, the DJ is no longer decentered or anonymous. The majority of clubs feature elaborate DJ booths, generally at either the head of the dance floor or right in the center. In repositioning the DJ, the grotesque body of the crowd that had characterized underground raves is displaced by the classical figure of the artist. (Ott & Herman, 2003, p 263)

At outdoor festivals in the early 2000s, in Perth Western Australia, stage structures once used for rock performance were used for rave events, then branded as dance parties to disavow the negative connotations of rave culture. Elevated above the crowd, the DJ was a spectacle to be watched up close by dedicated fans in the front rows or by thousands on the huge LCD screens that adorned each side of the stage, projecting the face of the DJ 20 feet tall. Thus the DJ now *had* to perform, and the attention of the crowd was less on each other and more forward facing to the stage. Photographically, this changed ‘the look’ of images that were created by the media, which in general did not have access to the stage to be at eye level with the performer. Like rock photography shot from the pit, the camera angle from below helps create a ‘larger than life’ appearance of the DJ, conforming to an aesthetic that has long existed with rock-and-roll photography. The “long history of music photography, framing the musicians as pinup as well as stage star” (Frith, 1998, p. 225) now equally applies to the photographing of the DJ.

Connoisseurs of rave culture often discussed musical taste in reference to electronic music’s varied genres. People were techno fans, or fans of house, trance or drum and bass. The environment for the event was something that was as important as the DJs performing. Puff (2014) recollects early events where the amount of kilowatts of the sound system was an important selling point. “On the flyers back in the day [1990s] the sound systems and the lighting got almost as big billing as the artists, as the local DJs playing” (Puff, personal communication, June 18, 2014). The same could be said for rave- related events in the UK. Rave zine *Blaze* (Issue 6) advertised an event by Weird Fantasy and Overdose that boasted special effects including “7 Watt Multi-Colour Laster, 50K of pure Sub Bass Visuals, Massive Inflatables, Golden Scans, Flower Strobes, Robo-Scans, multi state dance platforms” (1992, p. 2). Over time, high quality production was

expected and who was playing became the main focus. “All the local names started getting smaller and smaller and the international names started getting bigger and bigger which showed where the focus was moving to” (Puff, personal communication, June 18, 2014). With the DJ now centre-stage (both figuratively and literally), references by fans to what style of dance music they liked also changed. “People even started describing their musical tastes not in terms of genres or records but by reference to particular DJs” (Brewster & Broughton, 2000, p. 386). Puff adds, “another big factor that changed the scene was suddenly it wasn’t [local] DJs getting put on for their merit and their hard work as it was ‘back in the day’ where there was always that ladder to climb.” Instead it all became about “how many tickets you can sell, like this guy is pretty popular, this is how many dollars he is going to bring in. And then it became a Facebook campaign, a popularity contest. It just all moved so far from what it was all about.”

By mid to late 2000s, something started to happen which I had not seen in rock or other music performance. The performer’s platform on the stage became so elevated that the DJs “box” was all that you could see. From the front row, you would have a view of a machine; the performer was no longer visible. Graphics began to cover the stage and the front of the DJ box in ever increasing computer trickery while pyrotechnics also now played a role in exciting the crowd but amongst all the hype often the DJs themselves are noticeably absent. The idea of DJ worship is not uncommon. The DJs status could be considered as a shaman or god guiding the “dancers on a spiritual journey” (Partridge, 2007, p. 47). This was different. The DJ box had become the worshipped god while its operator turned knobs and pushed buttons to keep the well-oiled machine booming bass like a modern day reworking of *The Wizard of Oz*. It has been an interesting, often perplexing change to witness in the music scene, possibly a result of music now being mixed on computers rather than from records that makes the performance not much of a performance at all.



Figure 37: Barnes, D. (2012). Swedish House Mafia at Future Music, Perth Western Australia. The DJ screen was so high that it was impossible to see the three DJs perform. [Digital photograph].



Figure 38: Barnes, D. (2012). David Guetta performs through smoke and a constant array of lasers at Creamfields, Perth Western Australia. [Digital photograph].



Figure 39: Barnes, D. (2013). The stage is so elevated the DJ is barely visible to those in the front row. Future Music. Perth Western Australia. [Digital photograph].

In Future Music events, which were held across Australia, the DJ is centre staged. Future Music by Australian standards was big with the March 2013 show the largest electronic festival that Perth, Western Australia has ever seen with 45,000 attendees. In comparison at the Ultra Music Festival held in Miami Florida in March 2013 over 330,000 people attended, making it one of the largest electronic festivals in the world. This two-weekend festival is so big and expensive that it has its own payment plan for tickets. The main stage elevated the DJ and stage worship to a whole new level. One of the stages itself resembles that of a pharaoh's pyramid (figure 40), a fitting metaphor for the rise of dance music and the decline of rock.



Figure 40: Ressler, D. (2013). The stage was a place of worship. Ultra Music Festival, Miami 2013. [Digital image] Retrieved from: <http://photo.rukes.com/umf13b/umf13b.html>

Richard Neville, director of MandyLights, said the programming for the lighting effects alone was amongst the most difficult he had experienced. Neville is based in Sydney, Australia and has been involved for many years in the EDM scene here and in Asia. With massive changes in technology, stage lighting for dance events has moved from a few gobos, smoke machines and strobe lighting to sophisticated visuals working in time with the music and specific to DJs' sets. In big franchise productions such as Future Music and Ultra Music, lighting designers (LDs) play a significant role alongside that of the DJ. In these events the aesthetic aspects of production, such as lighting and staging are highly theatrical. Design elements are tailored to suit the various styles of music. For example during an electro house set the lighting is intense and flashes fast, whereas in trance the lighting sequence would be slower with a wider range of colour schemes. Hence, the lighting for EDM music is not random but rather a highly orchestrated experience.

The move to more elaborate set designs for the headline DJs falls in line with the big billing rock tours such as the 2009 to 2011 U2 360° world tour where the stage spectacle was just as exciting, if not more so, than the act itself. Through a process of commodification, rave culture's idols (the DJ) have to be larger than life to justify album sales, merchandise and product sponsorship and in most cases be male. More than two

decades after rave's explosion, women still are still underrepresented in electronic dance music festivals worldwide. McCarthy (2014) looked at the top ten booking agencies used by major festivals in North America, which showed that on average women make up only 7.85% of DJs on the roster. Furthermore, none of these women have reached the high level of earnings achieved by their male counterparts. "Most dance music fans are unaware of the glass ceiling for women artists in electronic music, but a look at the numbers underscores the reality that even as the genre is growing, audiences are not seeing themselves reflected by the people in the DJ booths" (McCarthy, 2014, ¶ 6).

The term 'rock god' is part of the popular vernacular. Currently, the DJ is promoted as god and mainstream record companies such as EMI have lined up to make that happen, signing up big name DJs in the business such as David Guetta and Paul Van Dyk, Swedish House Mafia and Australian electronic music group Empire of the Sun. Although EMI has a long-standing relationship with electronic music's originator Kraftwerk and contemporary electronic dance artists such as Goldfrapp and Massive Attack, it still lacks DJs in its portfolio, a situation that it is seeking to change with a dedicated focus, establishing EMI Global Dance Network in March 2012. Billboard.biz reports

EMI Music is looking to capitalize on the electronic dance music explosion by launching its own international A&R and marketing network solely dedicated to dance artists and records... The company claims that the globally-focused initiative makes EMI the first major to set up a global organization specializing exclusively in electronic dance music. (Smirke, 2012, p.x)

The effort by EMI came at an interesting time, when Goldfrapp had announced they would be leaving EMI after nearly ten years and David Guetta (voted world number one DJ by DJ Magazine in 2011) announced on stage at the Ultra Music Festival in March 2012 he would be starting a new electronic label. Although potentially concerning to large labels such as EMI, it is not surprising given that DJs (as a result of operating outside of mainstream music genres) have a history of working on smaller labels or their own labels. Instead of making the transition to an international label such as EMI, which always seemed a natural process for successful rock bands, DJs have often resisted. Paul Oakenfold is an example of a 'superstar' DJ setting up his own label, Perfecto, in 1989 to service his own needs as well as releasing singles and albums for other DJs.

If the name was little known at first that soon changed with the 1992 Perfecto mix of U2's Even Better Than The Real Thing. The track, with delicious irony, attained a higher chart position on release than the original song, thus signaling a watershed in the history and growth of dance music. 1993 saw Paul hired to provide the warm-up sonics on U2's Zoo TV world tour, and as a result the de facto arrival of the superstar DJ. (e.d Kbagla, 2016, ¶ 19)

Oakenfold's commercial success is evident in mainstream popular culture, with the DJ scoring sounds tracks for Hollywood blockbusters such as *Swordfish*, *The Bourne Identity*, *Collateral*, *Shrek 2* and *Matrix Revolution*. Without question, Oakenfold was responsible for helping push electronic music into mainstream popular culture by remixing popular rock music, producing film scores, and playing live DJ sets internationally.

Like many DJs, Oakenfold is not just a musician but also an entrepreneur as a producer of music as well as owning his own record label, Perfecto Records. Ultimately the role of the DJ is expansive when compared to traditional rock or pop. While a DJ may compose and appropriate material to produce a track in its entirety, by contrast rock or pop music may have the artist singing a song written by a songwriter, produced by a production company and finally released on a label. The nature of the DJs' production of music gives them greater control and, I would argue, greater confidence in general entrepreneurial pursuits.

David Guetta joins a growing number of DJs who go beyond simply producing their own music; acutely aware of how his fame can be utilized to engage advertisers and sponsors. As Carah (2010) states "In a rapidly changing music industry, brands and musicians find that they no longer just commodify their music recordings. They also earn an income by connecting their image, meanings, values, and performances to corporate brand-building activities" (p. xv). Already well known for promoting and collaborating with other DJs, Guetta has extended his skills as a fixer to link advertising with artists, launching, in June 2011, a business called My Love Affair by his wife Cathy Guetta. (www.my-loveaffair.com). Leveraging off contacts within the music industry, Guetta and wife have sought to match artists with brands. The website says "We believe that music is one of the greatest emotional vectors to help carry a brand's image over time and for the public's best interest." It will do this by leveraging social networks, not surprising given the DJ's

willingness to engage with technology. DJs, because of the music they create, are at the cutting edge of change and their business models tap into the world of future possibilities. Following My Love Affair, a fresh company was launched in early 2012 called My Product Placement. (www.myproductplacement.com) Similar in concept to My Love Affair, it aims to capitalise on the recent rise in popularity of music videos, acting as a mediator between the brands and record labels. Guetta is not afraid to leverage off his own success and be the guinea pig for his own business ventures. His music video The Alphabeat features a new electric car by Renault called the Twizy to the point where product placement becomes shameless advertisement (and his music secondary in importance). The irony is inescapable: rave culture hijacked the Mitsubishi car logo to brand its illegal products, only to have car companies like Renault and Mazda pay top dollar, a little over a decade later, to be associated with the dance scene.,.

Guetta's timing could not be better, with leading media econometrics company PQ predicting huge growth in this form of advertising. Quin, (2014) CEO of PQ media, asserts "Our research indicates that a marketing strategy which empowers brands to develop emotional connections with target consumers through desired entertainment content will continue to receive a growing portion of marketing budgets" (§ 5). PQ reported that double-digit growth in product placement is expected from 2010 to 2014 in Europe, due to the relaxation of once-strict advertising rules and new media opportunities via a maturing Internet and new opportunities in the video game industry.

Dance music's resurgence is not restricted to Europe but is 'coming home' to America. More than two decades have passed since Great Britain witnessed an explosion of rave culture that largely passed America by. 2012 may well have seen Americans embracing their own 'second summer of love' but there was not a warehouse in sight and the parties were not free. Frenchman David Guetta was given a hero's welcome in the USA, headlining gigs like Ultra festival in Miami with 200,000 attendees.

If you're part of the original acid-house generation, for whom dance music was a genuinely counter cultural movement born out of dirty raves in basements and warehouses, it couldn't be a more alien world. Dance music went mainstream in the UK in the 90s with the rise of superclubs and festivals, but the likes of Ministry of Sound and Creamfields have nothing on its current commercialisation in the US. All week in Miami, planes fly overhead trailing 40ft banners advertising new gigs in Las Vegas for Guetta, Afrojack, Swedish House Mafia, et al. Vegas has no interest in alternative

music only in who sells the most tickets, and the casinos that used to court Elton John and Dolly Parton are now scrambling to offer residencies to DJs. (Bainbridge, 2012, ¶ 7)

Paris Hilton grooved behind the decks as Guetta played, and pop icon Madonna made a surprise appearance the night before, adding legitimacy (while trying to appear relevant) to dance music's mainstream success: "Electronic music has been a part of my career since I started, and I can honestly say...A DJ saved my life" (as cited in Bainbridge, 2012, ¶ 4).

This is not a rave

"This isn't Rave, it is a commodification of Rave. Corporate music, for a corporate theme park" (Circuit cited in Reynolds (2012b) ¶ 48).

Rave, packaged as EDM, have become corporate run profit driven enterprises. Over the last few years, the popularity of EDM in America has not subsided and its commercialisation is evident in the scale of recent EDM events and in the Vegas casinos that remain in a bidding war to host the big names. Leach reported in May 2014 that MGM Grand were offering resident DJ Calvin Harris a 10-million USD bonus to extend his current two-year contract by an extra 12 months. Harris's success was evident the previous year: "Forbes Magazine reported that Calvin was the highest-paid DJ in the world last year, grossing an estimated \$46 million from his worldwide appearances" (Leach, 2014, ¶ 4). People are willing to pay \$7500 for a table at his event with 'normal' ticketing costing at least \$100. (Leach).

To understand the impact of EDM in Perth, it is necessary to consider the global scene. 'Rave' and its commodified acronym EDM in America is currently experiencing what surely must be a bubble; an unsustainable peak of electronica love more than two decades after the 'second summer of love' and the United Kingdom's explosion of rave culture. That's not to say that rave or EDM did not exist through the early 21st century in America but it certainly was not blossoming on a national corporatised scale on which is now operates. It experienced peaks and troughs due to the popularity of big name DJs and producers such as Paul Oakenfold but on the whole its popularity had declined to the

point that many DJs looked to Europe where the EDM scene remained more constant and less regulated.

In America, a number of law enforcement ‘rave acts’ had similar (and even more dire) consequences to those enacted in Australia in order to force shut downs and prosecute promoters, pushing the music back underground. US legislation varied from state to state but one of the most dramatic moves was to apply laws drafted to close down crack houses to raves and clubs, where drug taking *might* occur, holding the promoters and club owners responsible for the actions of its patrons (Reynolds, 2012b). The RAVE Act of 2001 (the acronym standing for ‘reducing Americans’ vulnerability to ecstasy’) “aimed to modify the original Crack House legislation to ensure that the law would apply not just ‘to ongoing drug distribution operations, but to single-event activities, such as a party where the promoter sponsors the event with the purpose of distributing ecstasy or other illegal drugs’” (Hunt & Moloney & Evans, 2010, p. 83). Providing ‘chill-out’ rooms or legal paraphernalia that the law associated with rave culture and Ecstasy could be interpreted as ‘promoting’ drug use. (The RAVE Act was not enacted. The bill lost support of two senators due to increasing public unpopularity and a campaign against the act. It was instead modified in a slightly less stringent law referred to the *Illicit Drug Anti-Proliferation Act* in 2003).

As outlined in Chapter 2, Australian promoters found ways around ‘rave’s’ ostracised brand, largely by using the terms ‘dance parties’ or ‘electronic dance events,’ a ludicrously simple way of avoiding stigma. North America followed suit. Simon Reynolds (2012b, ¶ 1) wrote an article for *The Guardian* called “How rave music conquered America” in which he discusses the rebirth (and rebranding) of American rave culture: “the phenomenon isn’t so much *deja vu* as a rebranding coup. What were once called ‘raves’ are now termed ‘festivals’; EDM is what we used to know by the name of techno. Even the drugs have been rebranded: ‘molly’, the big new chemical craze, is just ecstasy in powder form as opposed to pills.” As in Australia, in the US the mantra was *this is not a rave*. “How did the US electronic dance scene claw its way back? Basically, by doing its best to shed the word ‘rave’ and all its associations... The word ‘festival’ itself represents an attempt by promoters to draw [a] line between today’s EDM and 90s rave” (Reynolds, 2012b, ¶ 8).

Rave, rebranded in the guise of the electronic dance music festival, is a multi million dollar business. As a commentator on the Reynolds article wrote, “This isn't Rave, it is a commodification of Rave. Corporate music, for a corporate theme park” (Circuit cited in Reynolds 2012b, ¶ 48). It is well said and accurate. The Ultra Music festival made 30 million dollars in ticket sales and even had a payment plan in place (Sherburne, 2013), complete with a hefty service fee. A VIP ticket cost \$750 USD. The 30 million dollar figure does not include the substantial amounts that corporate sponsorship can now deliver to events and alcohol sales. Further revenue avenues exist online as it was broadcast to an audience of eight million through a YouTube live streaming channel. The organisers of the 2013 Ultra Music festival suggested that their event brought in 79 million dollars for South Florida (Miami CBS Local, 2013).

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to Robert Sillerman of SFX Entertainment and his plans to invest one billion dollars in EDM music. 20 billion-dollar advertising company WPP is investing money into Sillerman’s SFX Entertainment company in a hope to reach what has been seen as an elusive but sizeable youth market.

WPP ‘recognizes the power of dance music to coalesce and address an increasingly difficult-to-reach audience,’ Mr. Sillerman said in an interview. “Clearly their endorsement to the overall marketing community, and in particular to their clients, provides a jump start to fascinating sponsorship and marketing opportunities.” (Sisario, 2013, ¶ 4)

SFX’s major buy up of festivals has not been limited to America. SFX has made global purchases that included the acquisition of the Australian dance festival Stereosonic for 75 million in 2013 (Koha, 2013). The event was ‘Americanised’ and followed the format of Ultra and Electric Daisy Carnival, which ran over two days in 2014. In late 2013, SFX Entertainment was listed on the American stock exchange valued in opening trade at US\$57 million (Agrawal, 2013).

For many of the reasons outlined above (money not least), EDM needed to be branded as ‘clean’ and disassociated from the roots of rave culture. Although the RAVE Act in its modified form removed references directly to objects it saw as ‘drug paraphernalia,’ some dance party promoters chose to ban their use anyway, to promote their respectability in the eyes of the public and policy makers. The Reynolds article for *The Guardian* is an insightful precursor to a new third edition of his highly popular book, first published in 1998, *Energy flash*. At the time of writing, the insights and changes are so new they only

appear on the iBook electronic edition (the print edition is yet to be published) under the heading “Update chapter or the 2013 edition”. Reynolds writes about his encounter at a 2012 festival put on by the promoter Hard Events.

Saturday 4, August, 2012: Los Angeles. As I approach the entrance to the Hard Summer festival in downtown LA, I’m confronted by a forbidding black sign. Literally forbidding: No backpacks, No dolls, No toys, No kandi, No plush or furry items, No glow-sticks, light-gloves or other light-toys, no bandannas, gas masks or pacifiers. These outlawed items are considered unsightly throwbacks to the nineties...the promoters realised that the only way for their company to survive in the face of hostility from local politicians and police was to put as much distance between their events and rave’s daft, disreputable past. (Reynolds, 2013)

At least on the surface, EDM displays a veneer of normality projected by both the promoters of the events and by the attendees themselves. This is not a rave; this is a dance party for mainstream youth culture. At the end of the day, does that matter? I believe through its (raves) mass commodification and corporate ownership the relationship of the attendees to one and other and to the artists is what ultimately has suffered. Putting on an event yourself or becoming a ‘successful’ DJ seems about as unattainable as becoming a lead singer in a major rock band. No subcultural group can maintain a subcultural practice forever and rave did for longer than most. Eventually, subcultures become a part of the mainstream or fade away altogether. Rave has the legacy of fashioning a music genre and that is more than most subcultural groups can lay claim to.

Doof! Living outside of the brand?

“In Australia, the term ‘doof’ has become a synonym for youth cultural dissonance, a ‘rave underculture’, its habitués embodying a refusal— ‘to be subjected to what the beer barons and the mainstream culture cabal dole out as entertainment’” (Graham St John, 2001, p. 24). In examining the process of rave culture and music’s gradual commodification, it would be remiss not to examine doof culture. While rave culture’s apolitical position and lack of will to resist led itself to its branding and commercialization, doof may be described as a counter-culture of resistance; it thrives on its subcultural capital and its differences from mainstream society. As Susan Luckman asserts Doof organizers and participants employ “hybridised imagery and discursive frameworks drawn from myriad indigenous, traditional, ‘New Age’ or just counter

cultural belief systems” (2003, p. 323)

From the very beginnings of rave culture, alternative splinter groups, more politically active and countercultural in blending techno music with lifestyle, have formed. Rather than a ‘weekend retreat of the carnivalesque,’ some forms of rave-related culture have fought to remain outside and in opposition to mainstream branding. In Australia, St John is the most influential and prolific writer on the bush ‘doof’, placing emphasis on the spiritual elements of these countercultural groups connected to rave culture but existing outside the brand. St John’s book titles give away his own leanings towards the spiritual: *Rave culture and religion* (2009); *Global tribe – Technology spirituality & psytrance, technomad – Global raving countercultures* (2009) and his earliest book, a collection of essays which reads as a counter culture ‘rave-o-lution’ manifesto, *Free NRG – Notes from the edge of the dance floor* (2001). Other Australian writers on doof include Luckman, (2010) and Tramacchi (2010).

Alternative cultures operate on a slippery slope, a balancing act of being appealing but not too appealing, of garnering attention without ‘selling out’. A lot is asked of these alternate cultures: in the spirit of things to remain ‘authentic,’ to remain ‘underground,’ to be seen as not for profit, and certainly not to be seen as ‘commercial’, yet still to remain relevant. St John’s comments on the internationally successful Earthcore (New Year 2000/2001) event discern this almost obsessive concern with selling out. Speaking about the east coast Earthcore festival, St John suggests dollars have become worth more than sense: “Yet [the festival] has, nevertheless, grown to imitate and cultivate that which appears to be the life-force of the international dance music establishment, and that which is transparent in club and rave scenes—commodification” (2001, p. 14). In doing so he sets up a binary and an ‘us and them’ approach to what is authentic in the alternative rave/doof scene and what is simply a commercial enterprise disguised as countercultural authenticity. Like St John, Luckman (2010) acknowledges the importance of subcultural capital to doof and recognises the threat of its popularity to notions of authenticity.

the term ‘doof’ resonates in Australia with subcultural capital, certainly, more so than the more generic name ‘rave’ or more commercial phrase ‘dance party.’ However, in true subcultural style, this status is seen as fragile and transitory with mainstream adoption of the term (and academic writing on the subject) posing a constant and ongoing threat to the scene’s identity. (p. 319)

The ‘doof’ ideal is based on DIY (Do It Yourself) culture, not only at the level of promoters but of participants. The ‘bush doof’ is quintessentially an Australian colloquialism, an adaption of DIY culture. Within doof, the performer-spectator divide is dissolved. All roles are part of the performance, from art installations through to fire twirlers, effectively removing the DJ worship that exists in contemporary rave/dance culture. The temporary autonomous zone, the claiming of non-commercial space and turning it into a *place*, is a part of the doof ideal as it was in early rave culture. “The experience of autonomy is sought through the symbolic suspension or rejection of state imposed structures” (Tramacchi, 2010, p. 203). The temporary transformation of space to a “practiced place” (de Certeau, 1988, p 117) in the bush doof occurs through the creative involvement of all its participants rather than by an individual company in conjunction with an established (and sanctioned) venue that was the norm in commercial rave culture and EDM.

If rave culture aligns with Maffesoli’s definition of neo tribes, a term used to describe this variant, ‘doof,’ is technotribes (St John, 2001). Compared to rave, the Australian doof was motivated more by political gusto than the convenience of a free ‘venue’ in which to party. Luckman (2003) still aligns doof with Maffesoli’s neo-tribal definition, invoking the strong sense of collective affiliation beyond usual religious affiliations or traditional kinship bonds. “Maffesolian tribalism provides us with another theoretical model by which to appreciate the spontaneous communitas felt by participants. But in Australia I would argue there is another denotative meaning in play” (2003, p. 324) Luckman uses tribal as not just to describe a link between like-minded individuals but to Australia, to the landscape itself and to the original indigenous owners of the land, links that have led to the politicisation of doof culture. Unlike a ‘weekend retreat,’ a commitment to politicised ‘doof’ was often ongoing, with protests lasting days or even weeks rather than weekends.

The bush setting was preferred over urban settings such as warehouses; hence the popular term ‘bush doof’. “The bush parties made sure that everyone who travelled the many kilometres [sic] to get to the party were there for the right reason - more avoidance of the homeboy element” (Park, 1996, ¶ 18). Ironies often exist within bush doof and its perceived opposition to mainstream society and government. On one hand, it seeks to operate outside the space of regular governance while at the same time it realises the needs to attract the attention of the mainstream public and media that it appears to reject if

it is to achieve its political goals: “the intention is to attract the major networks, raise public awareness and influence policy through staged events and symbolic gestures.... This is techno as political agency” (St John, 2001, p. 27)

Although English rave culture was *inspired* by the political environment of the times, as I outlined in Chapter 1, rave culture itself remained largely apolitical, or maintained what Alkaweel refers to as ‘aesthetic politics’. Rave generated a lot of noise about ‘raging against the machine’ but only created a temporary disruption to the status quo. On the other hand, doof collectives genuinely sought political change as well as pleasure. In Australia, many doof collectives operated through the nineties, such as Vibe Tribe, Non Bossy Posse, Ohms not bombs, and Labrats. Concerns centered on non-corporate music production, indigenous rights and environmental issues. Peter Strong of Non Bossy Possey and the Ohms not Bombs collectives, suggests, “partying and the protest are inseparable” (St John, 2001, p. 32). Many of the collectives from the nineties, including some listed above, no longer operate now, which is not surprising. Given the tenets of not-for-profit, a lack of hierarchy, and disdain for capitalism and the corporate, succession planning was not high on the agenda. When groups of like-minded individuals move on to other interests or even become a part of ‘mainstream’ society through work or a mortgage or to support a family, these groups of resistance tend to rapidly peter out. But this is inevitable. Resistance is, something expressed by the young of any given time period against the ‘older’ establishment’s values. However, Earthcore, which St John gave a critical somewhat condemning appraisal for becoming commercial, is still flourishing in 2014. It suggests that becoming commercial, that *selling the modern day tribe*, is a necessary outcome for longevity. Whether ‘selling’ needs to mean ‘selling out’ is a matter of opinion. Earthcore still promotes itself as being spiritually connected, with ‘zones’ at its events representing the four elements of earth, wind, fire and air. Though, this connection with spirituality may be considered merely a marketing feature from a corporate enterprise. The Earthcore website give an insight into its formation of parties in the Australian bush setting. “A party experience outside of confined walls. Beyond the artefacts and artifice, and if we're particularly poetic we'd say it was an armistice, a brief pause for all of us, to get out of "it", the city, for real” (Earthcore, n.d, ¶6). St John (2001) contends that Earthcore’s intentions are to profit financially from “high demand experiential commodity—dance” (p. 14).

Many of the collectives mentioned earlier were born in direct response or reaction to a political situation, which serves to explain their comparatively limited lifecycle compared to the more generic holistic Earthcore. Vibe Tribe (1993) held its parties to 'reclaim the streets' (St John); Oms Not Bombs (1995), which later became Ohms Not Bombs was a direct action group with an anti-nukes, anti-war focus, particularly active during protests over the Jabiluka uranium mining in the late nineties; Labrats (1998) were famous for their solar-powered sound system, pushing clean alternatives over nuclear power, long before renewable energy was a fashionable topic. Labrats "manifested in Darwin at a time of the Jabiluka protests in 1998" (Brown, as cited in St John, 2001, p. 142) When it was decided mining would not go ahead (at least in the short term), some protest groups disbanded or found new causes to champion. Labrats have successfully done this through leveraging social media to fund ongoing projects such as Freedom Flotilla in late 2013, through funding site Pozible.com.

While North America is experiencing EDM reach what many believe must be a bubble (Jarvis & Berdellans, 2013) with the expansion and explosion of countrywide dance parties coast to coast, Burning Man takes place in a remote part of the Nevada desert known as Black Rock City. Like a mirage, this ephemeral city exists only for the week-long event and is disassembled to the point of 'leaving no trace': one of its overarching principles. Burning Man never was and never will be a rave festival per se, although the word rave is often heard in discussions surrounding it (Sylvan, 2013; St John, 2009). It does have some tenets in common with rave and doof culture, particularly the idea of using a temporary autonomous zone of the Playa, the dry lakebed that the temporary city surrounds. The festival attracts electronic dance music aficionados through the individual themed camps that make up a part of the whole of Burning Man experience. The festival is aligned with spiritual tenets that mix fluidly with the methodical tribal beat of electronic music, and it was inevitable that electronic music would be incorporated.

Burning Man provides an informative case study of how alternative, subcultural practices can escape formal branding and still manage to capture the imagination (and money) of the mainstream population. Burning Man is perceived as living outside of the brand to the point of deliberately rejecting any formal branding or sponsorship of events. The elaborate sculptures and interactive structures that make up Burning Man are funded either by the artists themselves, through Burning Man art grants, through community

fundraisers, and more recently, through crowd sourcing websites (Limbach, 2014). Corporations that traditionally sponsor arts initiatives are kept out of Burning Man, or at least they are meant to be. Kozinets (2002, ¶46) notes “many instances of people evaluating, judging, and ranking the artistic gifts of participants...a group of participants from Microsoft was mentioned for their \$80,000 theme camp display.” The larger, more elaborate art pieces gifted to Burning Man are invested with cultural capital and privileges are given to the donors and or the creators. Over the last few years, this has led to some tension within the Burning Man community, as wealth is manifested in a number of ways that could serve to undermine the principles that have made this temporary city an egalitarian experience. Burning Man’s founder, Larry Harvey, defends the importance of the art, no matter how it comes into being.

Very little can be said to be new amid the postmodern marketplace for style. The qualities that make the art of Burning Man remarkable, however, derive from its communal and economic origins. This is not art that can be viewed independently of the social process that fosters its creation....This work is not designed to reify critical theory, nor has it been subsumed as a commodity within the market place. (as cited in Traub, 2011, p.171)

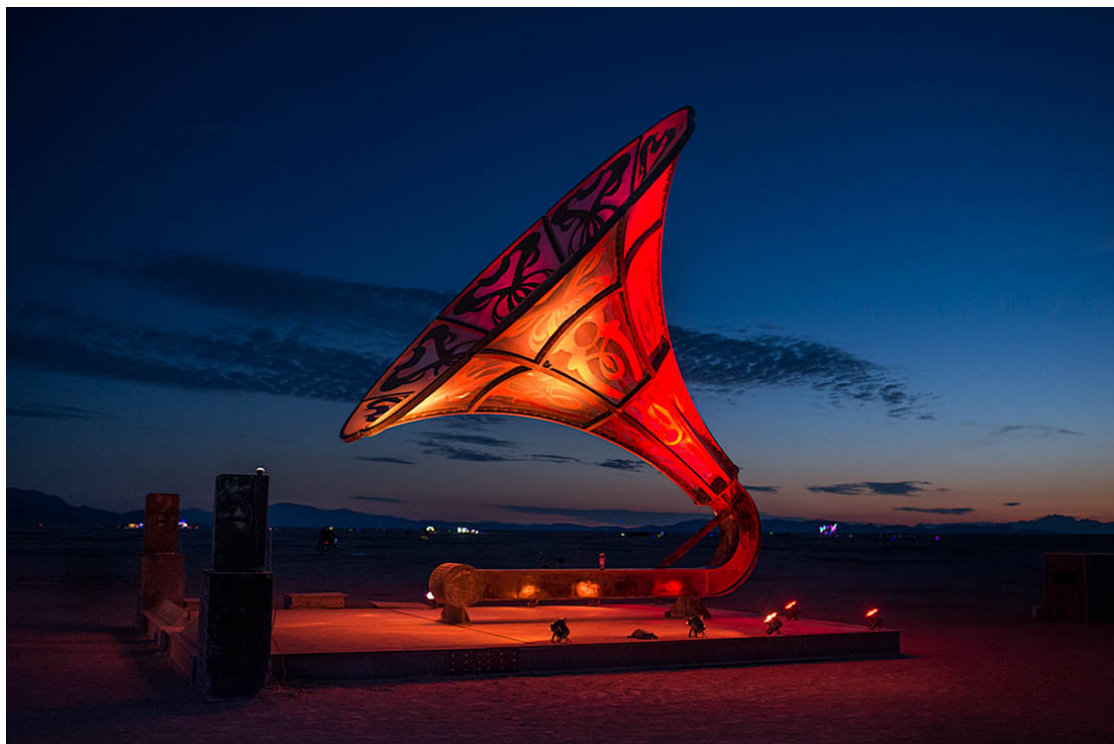


Figure 41: Barnes, D. (2016). Art installation Burning Man. [Digital photograph].

Brands do still exist in Burning Man: it is not necessary to soak the label off a bottle of beer or to wear a plain t-shirt or cover up a Nike logo on a pair of sneakers. What you will not see is the selling of brands through giveaways or in the form of a blow up

branded tent or a name given to a stage, as seen at Future Music festivals and similar events in Australia. “Although brands and commodity goods are the raw material of the *Burning Man* experience, the decommodifying rituals of nonmonetary exchange seem to overwhelm the commercial nature of the brand and create a communal atmosphere held to be apart from the market” (Kozinets, 2002, ¶51). For the same reasons, no vending exists at Burning Man with the exception of monetary exchange for essentials for living in the heat of the desert and dancing all night – ice and coffee.

The media’s impact on rave/dance culture has been covered in detail in this thesis. If Burning Man is to avoid the media backlash and the consequent kneejerk government policies experienced by rave culture as a result of not acknowledging (or caring) about media perception, it needs to formulate a response to media curiosity and scrutiny. An over regulated space would be detrimental to the tenets of self-reliance and self-expression that are defining characteristics of Burning Man. In its earliest most radical years in the desert, Burning Man risked media backlash (Chen, 2009) due to its chaotic nature and disregard for safety measures. Burning Man organisers moved to self regulate their activities before regulation was forcefully imposed upon them. At the same time, rather than snubbing the media (which often happened in rave culture and only fueled speculation) Burning Man devised the ingenious idea of ‘embedding’ the media without compromising its core values. (Chen, 2009). ‘Media Mecca,’ a volunteer group made up of Burning Man participants, essentially regulated the media in subtle ways that aimed at reducing the kind of moral panic coverage that rave culture had received. In a tongue in cheek way they subverted media norms that would include at the very least free entry and often other privileges such as free drinks and food. “Volunteers distributed a so-called press pass to registered media. The illustrated badge stated ‘This pass entitles you to absolutely nothing. Have a beautiful experience’ (Chen, 2009, p. 133). The handling of the media in this way was marketing genius and the humor continued with other media requirements to follow. Chen recounts the experience of a Burning Man volunteer at an event in 1995. “Media Mecca also used playful rituals to encourage participation...The media had to put their hand on a picture of Elvis and repeat: ‘I will not spectate,...I will participate,...I will take at least one picture of a non-naked person’” (p. 133). Humorous as it was, it showed the media its own shortcomings in the representation of radical or subcultural events.

Long-term attendees assert that Burning Man becomes more ‘commercial’ with each passing year. Its ever-increasing media popularity suggests this is the case, but commercial may not be the best descriptor. As horrified as ‘burners’ might be at the thought of the Burning Man being labeled or becoming ‘mainstream’ it might be a better descriptor than commercial, since the event now appeals to a wider demographic and the words used to describe it, such as ‘alternative’ and ‘radical,’ mean less. Still, its tenets of rejecting brands, of a gifting economy over a traditional monetary system, and of civic responsibility in the form of the volunteer Black Rock Rangers (reducing the need for traditional paid security) set it apart from how mainstream society functions and *appear* to be at odds with capitalist consumer culture. The system of gifting at Burning Man is intentionally put in place to remove it further from the market forces that impose upon our daily lives. In its system of barter, the goods and exchange may not necessarily be tangible or have the same emphasis placed upon the value of goods; a smile or performance might well be enough to exchange for a drink or a meal. At a bar called the Space Lounge, a tall tale could be enough to get you a refreshing beverage. “If you want a drink, the bartender asks you to provide a story or a joke in exchange for it. Everyone present at the bar listens and, if the response is favorable, the bartender provides you with your drink” (Kozinets, 2002, ¶ 43). Burning Man organisers encourage gifting without the necessary requirement of an equal valued gift in return to engender a sense of community and togetherness: “our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, or advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist the substitution of consumption for participatory experience.” (Ten Principles of Burning Man, n.d.) As far as radical self reliance goes (another one of the Ten Principles of Burning Man) bringing all your packaged food and drink, likely purchased from a Reno supermarket, for the week-long event does not demonstrate self reliance or sustainability but the omnipresence of the capitalist consumer culture in our day-to-day lives. Many people point out that the high-ticket price is another marker of capitalism. The ticket structure does favour wealthy individuals. In 2014, presale tickets were available for \$650 each, dramatically higher than the starting price of \$380. Having said this, a low-income ticket program exists; however, with only 4000 released, it is rather a token effort.

Even though Burning Man sells itself as an alternative not-for-profit festival, the growth of media coverage in recent years has propelled it into the spotlight and its earlier

methods of ‘embedding’ or subtly controlling the media seem less effective. Much of the media coverage in 2014 focused on the rich tech elite at Burning Man. It is hard to determine who started the trend but every media outlet got on the bandwagon. Headlines included “Burning Man festival being ‘ruined’ by tech billionaires” (Chester, 2014); “Why Silicon Valley billionaires are obsessed with Burning Man” (Ferenstein, 2014); “K Street Black Rock: Burning Man's Billionaires Row (Bowles, 2014) In particular, a *New York Times* article “At Burning Man, the Tech Elite One-Up One Another” (Bilton, 2014) received substantial attention and re-blogging through social media networks. In the article, Bilton interviewed an attendee who explains why he has lost his desire to attend Burning Man. For Mr Hanson, Burning Man seemed to have lost its edge. “Burning man is no longer a counterculture revolution. It’s now become a mirror of society” (§ 16). Burning Man is a victim of its own success, which can herald the death of any countercultural movement; Hanson would not be first person to become jaded when things change within a ‘scene’. An article in the Huffington Post by Mohit (2014) laments that the rich are ruining the event. “People went from camping in tents in 1999 (back when I first went to Burning Man) to renting U-Haul trucks. Now the privileged stay in luxurious, air-conditioned RV camps, open to others by invitation only” (§ 2). Any statement prefaced by “when I first” or “back in my day” has to be met with a degree of suspicion. A part of Hanson’s disillusionment is due to having worked as a ‘Sherpa’ for a plug n’ play camp, a term given to a camp where everything is provided for the attendees, from luxurious accommodation to cooked meals and even the supply of costumes. This complete prepackaged Burning Man experience is paradoxical, given that ‘radical self reliance’, ‘radical self expression’ and ‘communal effort’ are amongst the ten principles of Burning Man. “‘You know, it’s funny, these camps want to experience Burning Man but by coming in and having everything planned for them they deny themselves the actual experience,’ says an older gentleman who goes by the name David Magic Hands” (Buhr, 2014, § 29).

Some of the harshest criticism of Burning Man comes from Mohit (2014). He articulates the common complaints regarding the tech elite and uber rich but targets the organisation itself for its excessive theatre; according to his sources inside Burning Man, the effigy (the burning man itself) cost more than \$400,000 to construct in 2014, likely the case given 2013’s Burning Man cost \$407,055 (Burners.Me, 2014). 2014’s Burning Man also had a ‘smaller’ 72 foot art sculpture of a man and women titled ‘Embrace’ burn and with

it went the \$266, 000 it had cost to construct (Weisman, 2014). It is a paradox that upsets some commentators who believe the money could be better directed and that Burning Man has lost its way in such extravagant displays: “The once profound and uplifting philosophy behind the original movement has been sacrificed on the temporal altar of a disposable economy, blind to needless waste...At Burning Man, the hymns of Capitalism are sung with deafening notes” (Mohit, 2014 ¶6). Burning Man cannot exist without capitalism, and the gifting economy is only a token, but there is still power in its ideals. Burning Man’s founder Larry Harvey rebuts the notion regarding world economics “because we have a principle of decommodification, that we’re against money. But no, it’s not really about money. It would be absurd if we said we repudiated money. In order to assemble a city, we have to use market economics” (Limbach, 2014, ¶ 18).

Burning Man may be perceived as becoming more ‘mainstream’ in its broader appeal and its increasing media coverage, but it still makes a concerted effort to adhere to its ten principles. Tenets such as decommodification and gifting are expressed in the final burning of the man and other major art pieces. Far from remaining commodities sold on the open market, many epic art pieces perish in the flames in this pagan ritual of purification. Harvey also has a response to those that suggest Burning Man has become too big or worse, that it has lost its ‘authenticity’.

When people say ‘What if we get too big?’ I ask them, ‘[Too big] for what?’ They are worried we’ll become inauthentic. Because in their experience, when something gets bigger and bigger and bigger, it is alienated from its audience. But that’s if it’s just an item for consumption. (Limbach, 2014)

Harvey’s words and ethos seem genuine. Had he wished to sell the Burning Man production, he would have made millions from such a transfer. As mentioned previously, companies like SFX Entertainment have been on a multi million-dollar buying spree of smaller independent EDM companies across North America. Burning Man could never be considered an EDM event but it suggests the value being placed on successful festivals. Instead, in January 2014, Burning Man succeeded in registering as a not-for-profit organisation. What this portends for the company is uncertain but it should allow for survival beyond the life of its founders. It should also result in greater transparency as, with its new not-for-profit status it will be required to make its revenues public (Kopytoff, 2014).

From the bush doof through to the Burning Man, for alternative festivals, existing outside of the capitalist paradigm is essential. These organisations rely heavily on a volunteer workforce and could not exist in their current form without it. Burning Man has a database of over 2000 volunteers (Doherty, 2007). Therefore, remaining ‘authentic’ to a common goal or belief is a strong motivator and a reason these cultures of resistance work to maintain their subcultural or alternative status. Invariably, as these alternative organisations grow in size they are forced to interact more with capitalist structures and government agencies and, in doing so, their authenticity is often questioned. To encapsulate DIY culture in all its forms, as doof, the more commercial Earthcore, or the wildly popular Burning Man, Duncombe (2002) paraphrases Walter Benjamin: “the content of culture means little, for today’s cultural resistance is tomorrow’s art object or commercial product. Instead it is the conditions of cultural production, how culture is produced, that holds the political key” (p. 10).

Chapter summary

Chapter 3 unravelled the ‘rave economy,’ from the objects used by participants through to the rise of corporate sponsorship of now-legal ‘raves’ and the astronomical repositioning of the DJ from facilitator to high-priced commodity, on a par with rock and pop icons. For the corporate sector, EDM was a chance to capitalise on a cutting-edge youth cohort that had proven somewhat resistant to traditional marketing strategies. Corporate entities paved the way for the world-wide festival circuit that followed and currently dominates dance music today in the form of EDM festivals. In opposition to this overtly commercial sanctioned form of rave ‘Doof Living outside of the brand?’ (a subsection of Chapter 3) highlights what Graham St John described as a ‘rave underculture’. Often spiritual and or political, they serve as the antithesis to the ‘selling the modern day tribe’. Described by Graham as a ‘synonym for youth cultural dissonance’ (2001, p. 24), doof culture remains highly spiritual and often politically motivated. While dance culture and certainly EDM might better suit terms such as ‘taste culture’ or ‘neo-tribes,’ some factions of doof could be considered countercultural in their abject rejection of the mainstream and the ‘commercial’; individuals also demonstrate a tendency to show a commitment beyond the weekends festivities.

Chapter 4: Case study: Everybody's a photographer

The publishable image

How can words – simple, linear words on a page – evoke this delirious maelstrom of movement and elation? Again and again I arrive at this point in ‘The night out’ and simply cannot describe it any further. How can I convey the deep, thundering bass which is felt more than heard? The mass of bobbing bodies: blurred, colourful, dimly-outlined and unceasingly in motion? The space itself, which fleetingly seems as though it has no edges, no end in time or space, yet at the same time only stretches as far as you can see into the lights, the black walls, the heaving dancing masses? The sensation of dancing, of moving without thought, of moving before thought, of just letting go, letting it all out? Words fail me; words become redundant and unnecessary, words become pointless. (Malbon, 1999 p. xii)

Unlike in rock photography, there is no quality archive of nineties and noughties rave/dance culture on which we can draw. Low-budget rave-based magazines, known as ‘zines,’ such as *Atmosphere*, *Blaze* and *Eternity*, give an insight into the types of images produced in UK in the early '90s. The images have no set continuity or style, and render the club/warehouse/sports center dark and the subjects overexposed from the use of uncontrolled flash. Clearly, this aesthetic is unintentional and a product of fan-based amateur photography. The images are interesting from an ethnographic point of view, offering insight into the clothing styles of the era and the size and scale of early '90s rave events. However, I consider my images offer further insight into the experience and feeling that Malbon attempts to describe: the sensation of movement through both blurred and partially frozen dancers, and the sense of just letting go to the rhythm of the music. The purpose of my images was to romanticize and to commodify dance culture. As Sontag (2001) states, “A capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying” (p. 140). My early work produced commercial images of an underground scene –the images were planned and calculated moments rather than just social snapshots and even though nightclub venues were often used, the crowd itself was alternative compared with the mainstream pub and general nightlife scene. I was acutely aware that my images were helping to normalise a scene that was still very ‘left of centre’ in the early noughties. Sontag (2001) suggests, “The production of images... furnishes a ruling ideology. Social change is replaced by a change in images” (p. 140). At the time, the photographs consumed offered

a product that looked alluring and in time, the images reflected the acceptance of social scenes by mainstream culture.



Figure 42: Barnes, D. (2000). Delirium hosted event at Metro City. [Analogue photograph].

As I have already addressed, rave culture in the early noughties in Australia received much negative press coverage and very little visual representation, as media access was limited. My motivation behind photographing the scene was to offer a counterargument to the negative press that rave/dance was receiving and to produce a body of quality images representing a scene that was visually underrepresented. My work is the most extensive coverage of the dance scene in in Perth, Western Australia, due to my unfettered access and the lengthy time period covered 1999-2015.

Although the eighties and nineties saw no serious music photographers within the rave scene, the mid noughties saw the emergence of Drew Ressler who goes by the name RUKES. Without doubt he is the best-known international photographer of EDM today. His images are modern and his marketing of the images seamlessly leverages social media, combined with impressive website design and branding. The images are in stark contrast to the work done a decade past and, certainly, to the work of live music photographers from the sixties, seventies and eighties, a reflection of how technology can affect aesthetics and styles within the photographic medium; cameras simply did not have

the ability to freeze movement in extreme low light conditions. I see parallels with my own early photography in RUKES' supersaturated colour and his exceptional detail in night scenes. Recent technological advances in digital camera sensors allow for even greater control in low-light conditions, offering higher sensitivity to light (ISO settings) than film could ever allow, with such detail and minimal grain. At times, it seems to make the images 'too perfect' as the precision of the camera settings available rarely result in the 'happy accidents' that sometimes occurred with film. This is not a criticism, but an observation. As in the case of my own music photography, RUKES' work is less about creating a document of an event than about creating products (images) of desire. DJs are photographed with super wide-angle lenses, making them appear larger-than-life. Images are also shot from the back of the DJ with their arms of a crowd of thousands outstretched to cheer him with evangelistic zeal; the images are most certainly a commodity.

Technology has changed my stylistic approach to producing images, partly due to the number of images now expected out of a day's shoot and the speed at which these images need to be transmitted. Digital photography has been responsible for changing expectations whereby speed of turnaround and quantity are valued over quality. Combined with the growing importance and immediacy of social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter with photo sharing), images often have to be post-processed and transmitted while events are still in progress. Social media is now the first line of image distribution and traditional print-based forms such as newspapers and magazines are simply yesterday's news. At least for editorial-based photography, digital capture and supply of photographs is the norm and many images will never be displayed in the tangible form of a print. Nevin (2013) suggests this recording of images as binary 1s and 0s devalues the image's significance, for professionals and amateurs alike: "As time has passed photographic images have become more easily reproducible and less substantial. For many photographs, their only mode of existence is as code. Stored on hard drives or online as digital information, many are destined never to be converted into a printed, physical form" (p. 124). Sadly for photographers, online digital content is still undervalued compared to tangible print-based media, which means online distribution of images is regarded as an unpaid space for hobbyists. While the *value* and importance of social media (and hence photographs) for DJs is understood, it is also seen as intangible and incalculable. In most cases, since there is no direct revenue stream from social media

per se, there is the expectation that images distributed within the medium should not attract a fee but that photo credit for shared images is suitable compensation.

The transition to digital and the need for a fast turnover of the images has transformed my shooting habits. I do not take the flash off the camera as often as I once did and deliberate blurs with movement (using longer exposures combined with flash) do not record in the same way on digital as they did on film – they tend to *look* digital/artificial. I described earlier some of the reasons for using off-camera flash, which was a deliberate style. Off-camera flash creates a different look to the camera flash either inbuilt (on a compact camera) or mounted directly above on the camera's hot-shoe. In both instances, the flash is close to the lens that takes the photograph and this results in a snapshot aesthetic that sometimes signifies authenticity/honesty in the reproduction of a scene but rarely contributes to its beauty. Richard Billington has famously employed this snapshot aesthetic, rendering stark unforgiving images. Billington's *Ray's a laugh* (1996) was both heralded and loathed for its content and also its *style*. "Originally intended to be used as the basis for paintings, the pictures were shot on out-of-date 35mm film using a cheap instamatic camera in the spontaneous style of snapshots" (Manchester, 2005). Martin Parr uses the flash in a similar if not more polished manner. His use of flash renders the world in a sense of stark hyperrealism, "combining saturated hues and daylight flash to produce a discordant, detailed aesthetic" (Dawber, 2006, p. 256). The overexposed flash, often brighter than the daylight or overpowering the lights within a room in which he shoots, creates a sense of artificiality. The banal often becomes striking and the crassness of commodity culture is exposed in their flash-lit glory. As popular as these styles have become in the art world, I did not want my images to align with either of these aesthetics. To render the flash too hard and remove the subjects from the experience of the club was not desirable and it certainly was not sellable. Images such as those that appeared in *Blaze* magazine (figure 43, 44) muted the club lights and the energy of the event. While the flash was necessary to record sharpness within the blur of my long exposure images (see figure 45) it was the available and unpredictable light of a club space that I wanted to use to render most of the scene. It was a fine juggling act that often failed. When it came together with the right mix of moving objects and those frozen by the flash, it created moments that I felt perfectly rendered the mood I was looking to capture in these spaces.



Figure 43: To render the flash too hard and remove the subjects from the experience of the club was not desirable. Blaze Zine, Issue 17, p. 3.



Figure 44: Blaze Zine, Issue 17, p. 31.



Figure 45: Barnes, D. (2000). Metro City. [Analogue photograph].

I am a photographer

I began photographing rave in Perth, Western Australia towards the first peak of its commercial popularity in early 2000, and during its move towards mainstream assimilation. I had attended events as a punter before photographing them in the late '90s, but I was a late bloomer. I say photographing 'rave,' but even by Australia's rave timeline (marginally behind Europe), the only people using the word repeatedly to describe the mostly sanctioned dance events in the early noughties were the media, and usually in a derogatory sense in order to sensationalise. The crossover period of rave to dance culture (as previously described in this thesis) was encouraged by promoters to increase respectability of their events in the eyes of the law and the public. Although illegal raves were in decline, the late '90s and early 2000s dance culture would be viewed in hindsight as 'alternative' compared to the mainstream appeal and scale of contemporary EDM in Australia and overseas (Bainbridge, 2012). Warehouses (albeit largely sanctioned as opposed to 'acquired') were regularly used as event locations and the general vibe and ethos remained the same. MC Assassin, a veteran of the Perth rave scene says, "I find the essence of these larger scale events are of rave origin what with lasers shows, international DJ's and the selected music genre's [sic] represented at them" (MC Assassin, n.d, ¶ 3).

During this period there were hardly any e-zines or music based websites featuring club photography or rave photography in Australia and there were no digital cameras of any quality. Street press sent photographers from *Xpress* and later *Drum Media* (launched in Perth September, 2006) but their photographers were overworked and underpaid and, as a result, only had time to create a few happy snaps before they moved on to the next location. The niche market for photographing electronic dance music/culture had not attracted any commercial photographers in Perth and filling this void happened quickly and seamlessly. At the time, I was working with a local newspaper and freelancing as a commercial photographer and had a personal interest in the rave/dance scene. Even though the size of the dance parties was increasing at an astronomical rate, coverage was limited in the print press, so I sought to change that.

The most successful commercial arm of dance music at that time was controlled by Delirium. Jeremy Junk was both owner and operator of Delirium and was well respected in the scene both as a DJ under the name MRW, and as a promoter. Within weeks of calling him, I had photographed my first rave/dance party for a local newspaper, which received a decent spread. As a result, I became Delirium's first and only 'in-house' photographer. I make it sound easy, but the initial process was laborious. Even being able to photograph a Delirium event for a newspaper was no easy task due the precedence of negative press that rave culture had been receiving. I still remember calling Jeremy when I finally found a contact number for him. He was curt but not rude. I asked for two tickets (one for my 'assistant') and he gave me one. We laughed about that many years later. He was a mix of creative meets businessman – an amazing DJ and promoter who also happened to have a law degree (something that he never told me himself, as he never bragged). After I shot that first event, it took a half dozen phone calls for him to agree to meet with me and go through the photographs I had produced. Jeremy knew what he liked and he liked my photographs. At that point, I became a part of his employ.

My life from then on changed quite dramatically. What for most photographers was a fan-based pursuit, done for love, became a part of my employment. I developed a photographic style that few people at the time could re-produce, and none in Australia (at least none that were publishing.) Only film was used, as digital photography was still in its infancy, making it even harder for most photographers to experiment with image production in the low-light situations of a club. While most photographs of clubs were

rendered in muted colours through the use of heavy full-frontal flash, my images brought together the colours projected by gobos onto the people or the stage, and conveyed the energy and enthusiasm of dance and movement. The longer exposures, combined with the targeted use of the flash off camera, rendered parts of the frame crisp while other parts (those the flash missed) remained dreamy and blurred. The result was a flattering candy-coloured look at club culture that sold, and it sold well. When it came to the supply of images locally and internationally, I had the added advantage of access to professional image scanners (through the newspaper where I was freelancing), allowing me to supply clients with a digital end-product rather than with negatives or prints. It also allowed me to keep full control over 'the look' of the images instead of relying on a third party to produce scans from the negatives, which was both costly and more difficult to control. Controlling the workflow from shooting to scanning allowed me to create a glossy aesthetic that helped further commercialise the look I gave to rave/dance culture. After all, these were commercial products, not photojournalistic images that imply a level of objectivity or 'truth'. They were taken and distributed with a deliberate bias, rendering the positive aspects of dance culture.

Within months of working for Delirium, I was getting calls from other clubs and promoters to shoot for their events. Sometimes they were for one-off promotional images but some became long-term collaborations. I worked with Perth promoters Big Mac and Lilly for many years, shooting at The Drum Club in Northbridge as well as their annual Madhatters Ball, still held in warehouse spaces in Welshpool. I also became a regular photographer for Rise nightclub run by Simon Barwood. Soon after that, calls were coming from EMI records and their division for Ministry Australia and *Ministry* magazine. The demand for images was ever-increasing and the majority of my commercial photography became all about dance music within a very short period of time. It was my niche alone and furthermore, I was not paid with a bar card or free tickets. I was charging normal commercial photography rates, which brought a new level of respect (and profitability) to a scene where photographers often shot and supplied the images for free.



Figure 46: Barnes, D. (2001). The Drum Club. [Analogue photograph].



Figure 47: Barnes, D. (2000). Warehouse party (Old Berlin) in Northbridge. [Ministry Magazine].



Figure 48: Barnes, D. (2002). Album artwork for HARD NRG for Ministry of Sound. [Album release].

To support and aid the supply of my images I started up a website, www.ravephotography.com. I was aware that the word ‘rave’ was somewhat passé but I knew it would strike a chord with the market I was targeting, as a large portion of the audience were veterans of the initial underground rave scene. Delirium remained my biggest client and many punters and performers classified Delirium events as raves or at least were aware of their ravesque origins. Of Perth’s largest raves, MC Assassin (n.d, ¶ 3) asserts “If you would accept the mighty Delirium events into the Rave category then by far they take the cake with Science Fiction ’99 reaching in excess of 10,000 people at Belmont Park.... I personally think that events such as Science Fiction [Delirium] classify as a rave.”

My niche market grew a niche following, and before long, people at events were asking about my brand. They did not want to be photographed by the street press as they had in the past; they wanted to be photographed by ravephotography.com. I had successfully (although unintentionally) marketed a brand, and my images were a recognised product through their style, even if they did not have my name attached to them. In response I made up small cards with my logo and website address which I would give to attendees I photographed, further adding to my audience – a commonplace marketing tool for event photographers today but it was not a common practice in the early 2000s. The logo on the card was an illustration of a needle on a record which was an intentional ‘nod’ to the use of vinyl records instead of CD’s for the mixing and playing of ‘techno’ music. It also appeared that the record was framed with the lines one would see through a viewfinder while taking a photograph. These details were important to me and I believe they were important to my fans. Punters who were really into the dance scene loved making the connection that the logo was a needle on the record. I believe it further helped them to

connect with the brand by creating this shared sense of understanding and respect for the thought that went into creating it. This same attention to detail was given to the photographs that I produced under the brand of ravephotography.com.



Figure 49: Barnes, D. (2000). Logo for www.ravephotography.com [designed by Jodi Maggi].

The images that I created romanticised the dance scene, and that's what made them so popular to the clubs and promoters who purchased them. I believe what I photographed was influenced by the type of images being purchased. The images I bothered to scan (from my negatives) were those dictated by the market. It was a simple process of supply and demand. The image of two girls grinning (figure, 50) shows the type of image that people wanted to see or at least what promoters and publishers wanted to *buy*. This model of selling was nothing new or out of the ordinary and no departure at all from general commercial consumer culture in which the suggestion of sex or 'sexiness' sells (Soley & Reid, 1988; Reichert, 2003;). The undertones (from publishers and promoters) of image production although subtle were to show beautiful people with a bias towards females having the time of their lives. Seeking out such photographs was relatively easy due to the rave culture's demographic. Where rock music production and audiences were traditionally dominated by male counterparts (Frith & McRobbie, 1978) rave and early dance culture was well represented by women and *enjoyed* by women in different ways. Interestingly, 'sexiness' within the scene at this time was often seen as somewhat androgynous. "'Unisex' clothes and the 'dress-to-sweat' emphasis of the scene are important factors in the perceived erosion of sexual differences" (Pini, 1997, p. 161). The rave aesthetic could be considered empowering to women compared to the stereotype of female femininity as is subscribed within traditional western culture. "What seems to emerge within rave is a space for new modes of femininity and physical pleasures" (Pini, p.168). To me, women felt empowered by what they were wearing and how they behaved. From homemade clothing specifically for events and nearly always in the style of what today we would call active wear, sexiness was in the attitude, not in a pronounced cleavage or high heels. Sharon Dutton, a well-known local Perth DJ and promoter of events says, "There was most definitely a healthy level of respect for your fellow punter

at events. You'd get random hugs from people you didn't know, but the intent was never anything but to share in the joy of the night" (Dutton, personal communication, May 19, 2016).



Figure 50: Barnes, D. (2000). Ministry of Sound, Belmont Park, Perth Western Australia. [Analogue photograph].



Figure 51: Barnes, D. (2001) Ministry of Sound, Metro City, Perth Western Australia. [Analogue photograph].

During this time, I photographed the spectacle, the dance. Photographs “do not mirror reality, but reflect someone’s view of reality; there is always an element of selectivity involved, always someone deciding what to shoot and what not to shoot” (Berger, 2008 p. 126). At some events, people were carried off the dance floor, but it was only a momentary distraction. People on the dance floor parted with what seemed rehearsed efficiency to allow the ‘affected’ person to be carried away. I stared for a short time myself but quickly returned to photographing the spectacle in the most commercially acceptable way I could.

There are reasons why I did not shoot the people on the stretchers, the ambulances, or the first-aid station. There was no gain in photographing someone at their lowest moment and it would have been no use to my clients to record such an event. The incidents of things going very wrong were few and I did not want to be paparazzi, waiting for a clichéd ‘newsworthy’ incident to occur. The news media were already reporting like this and I did not want to be a part of it. I realise that ignoring it altogether makes my coverage of the events biased but I was not working as a photojournalist. I was there as a commercial advertising photographer. Secondly, I felt that stealing a photograph of someone’s worse moment was immoral. I worried about their dignity and what my representation in that moment would be to the individual. Lastly, there was the reason for employment and my respect for my employer. I was there to photograph the event and was paid well for doing so. The images were used to promote future events and to document the event itself, which meant shooting the crowd, the spaces and the performers. What I would and would not photograph was never explicitly discussed. I certainly did not have anything dictated to me and nothing was explicitly prohibited. It was an unspoken idea; I was there to capture the positive experience and the exploding energy, not to create an unbiased document (were that even possible). Interestingly Carah (2014) observes similar experiences in his contemporary research into nightlife club based photography. Through interviews he concludes, “nightlife photographers are not instructed to find particular cool identities, but just identities that want to be seen and that others want to see” (2014 p. 262).” I was selective in what I photographed and I further edited the images I chose to present. The promoter would have little use of an image of shocked faces as someone was carried through the crowd. The image, had I made one, might have become a sellable commodity in the mainstream press but it would have heralded the end of promoters sanctioning my photography and rightly so. Being allowed

to photograph in the late nineties and early 2000s was a privilege, not the expectation it is in our contemporary camera-phone saturated culture. Miller from *The West Australian* in his review of the Delirium event *Sonik* (June, 2000) writes “[The promoter] banned *The West Australian* from photographing his event, suspecting we were fishing for a ‘Youths binge on drugs’ headline. Mr Junk said he had been burnt in the past.” What I chose to commodify was the dance, and to represent dancing, clubbing and ‘raving’ as something people wanted to be doing and be *seen* doing. This was not hard as I was enjoying doing it myself and had a positive belief in aspects of rave culture. Photography was still a job but it was a job I enjoyed very much.

To present day, I still photograph the dance/music scene. The promoters have changed and the big events are now advertised on television and radio and on roadside billboards. The audience has changed, since most of the ‘rave generation’ are busy with young children and paying off mortgages and the attendees has expanded beyond a niche alternative market to largely engulf mainstream youth culture. The representation of the body (how it is posed) toward the camera has also changed due to a stronger awareness of self-representation and the ubiquity of photography. While academic discussions of ‘the body’ in rave culture have revolved around the erosion of sexual difference (Pini, 1997), androgyny and asexuality, (Anderson, 2009) and less focus on sexual gratification (McRobbie, 1993; Reynolds, 1999; 2012a), the mid-noughties saw the return of highly provocative sexualised behaviour and shows of masculinity – common traits of club culture and rock-based music fans but largely absent in the early days of rave and dance culture. Ecstasy was often cited as the facilitator for the change in behavioural patterns of young men and women but as Reynolds (2012a) suggests, the drug experience depends on the context in which it is taken. “One of the secrets of the drug’s success is its context-dependant adaptability. MDMA provides a profound but curiously ‘meaningless’ experience. You have to supply the meaning”(p. 416). Ravers shared a collective ethos based on sense of unity, respect and a love for a music style that was recognisable to that collective. As the rave scene transitioned to the dance scene and then morphed into the modern day electronic dance festival run by multimillion-dollar corporations, that sense of connection disappeared and in turn the drug (Ecstasy) had no meaning – it was just people getting wasted without a context.

As social media has taken off and become an everyday part of our lives, the events have turned into more of a social event or social thing. Not that they

ever weren't but it has gone away from the music, which was what the basis of the raves were back in the day. Drugs have always been involved. They have always complemented electronic music but without a doubt the festivals have taken everything to do with the culture to a mainstream audience (Kenny L, personal communication, December 1st, 2015).

While the rave and early dance scene had its fair share of shirtless men it was more often due to the heat or for using the body as a canvas for the event in question (figure 52), as opposed to an overt parading of masculinity itself (figure 53, 54).



Figure 52: Barnes, D. (2001). Gatecrasher 2001. Belvoir amphitheatre. [Analogue photograph].



Figure 53: Barnes, D. (2007). Summadayze Supreme Court Gardens. Perth, Western Australia. [Digital photograph].



Figure 54: Barnes, D. (2008). Future Music, Supreme Court Gardens. Perth, Western Australia. [Digital photograph].



Figure 55: Barnes, D. (2010). Presenting for the camera. Summadayze on the Esplanade, Perth Western Australia. [Digital photograph].

As well as an increased show of masculinity, sexual gestures (figure 55), dresses and heels (figure 56) were becoming more popular. Heels were never seen at a rave or within the early dance scene; the androgyny of sneakers as footwear fashion for both sexes and pants or shorts rather than dresses were a by-product of practicality. I would suggest that androgyny in clothing was a factor that led to greater equality on the dance floor, as people were not competing for sexual attention. David Brewster, who attended many raves in the '90s and 2000s, recalls his experiences at the early events.

All the girls wore baggy jeans and long sleeve tops. That was kind of it. No dresses, no skirts...when you walked in those doors everyone was an equal. That was the beauty of it. There was not like that kind of 'look at me' with noses up in the air. Everybody was there for the same reason (Brewster, personal communication, April date, 2014).

This idea of a 'rave uniform', of a diverse but distinct style of dress, was expressed by a number of people I interviewed in Perth, Western Australia and is also apparent in academic literature overseas. Reynolds (2012a) writes regarding the UK scene "There was a uniform – floppy chapeaux, hoods, woolly hats, white gloves, gasmasks; loose-fitting or stretchy clothes (baggy jeans and T-shirts for boys, Lycra for girls), along with accessories like whistles, air-horns, and fluorescent light-sticks" (p. 118). Puff recounts his experiences with the Perth scene. "It was a tribe. Everyone dressed from the same

type of shops. Everyone was like in their uniform for partying. They were all dressed to look and be comfortable for dancing” (Puff, personal communication, June 18, 2014). Puff also comments on how things have changed to present day. “Now days it’s very glamorous, glitzy sort of thing. The girls dress right up and the guys dress as far down as they can.” Some of the early rave ethos lives on at a modern dance festival but it is mixed with the regular club crowd, who tend to be more concerned with how they look than how practical their attire is to dance.



Figure 56: Barnes, D. (2012). The awkward lean. Summadayze festival, Perth Western Australia. [Digital photograph].

A comparison of the image above (figure 56), from Summadayze 2012, with the earlier image from Ministry of Sound at Belmont Park in 2000 (figure 50) encapsulates my experience of the transition between rave/early dance culture and the modern day dance festival. The address to camera is of particular interest. In Erving Goffman’s (1979) seminal work on gendered advertising, he identifies a canting posture in women. In social media, the slightly arched back with the hand on the hip is a style of posing that has been labelled ‘the awkward lean’, in relation to women who echo a stylistic feminine pose seen in advertising in which women mimic model styled poses of hands on their hips and a tilted body.

For some strange and inexplicable reason, the 18 - 30 year-old female has developed an uncontrollable physical reaction to having their photo taken in

a group. Just like peristalsis, the young female's body instinctively turns approximately 90 degrees, places their hands on their hips, and leans back at anywhere between 20 to 30 degrees from an upright lateral position. (Jamieson, 2011, p. x)

The eponymous blog site, “theawkwardlean-blog.tumblr.com,” contains a plethora of gendered poses, predominantly of young women. The address to camera in figure 56 is completely *manufactured*. Other elements include a pout rather than a smile. A sense of ‘coldness’ and control exists in figure 56 rather than the abandon and playfulness that figure 50 suggests. The clothing is also wildly different; while figure 50 invokes rave fashion of the time it also has a real focus on function – to be comfortable while dancing and sweating. The clothing and makeup shown in figure 56 suggests the subjects are here to be seen rather than to dance. In John Berger’s (1973) notion of ‘ways of seeing’, the women are to be noticed, they present themselves for an audience and this is particularly conveyed in their hyper feminine gendered appearance in EDM, which is more so than in early rave and dance culture where androgyny was more prevalent. I am only discussing two photographs here, and a photograph can be deceptive and does not necessarily represent the modern day festival or style of clothing overall, however, figure 56 represents a phenomenon unseen in nineties or even early noughties rave/dance culture - indeed through my entire back catalogue of photographs. The photograph (figure 56) rather ironically represents the kind of style expectations of '80s club culture was with a greater emphasis placed on being seen and in control rather than the sense of abandonment in rave and dance culture represented in figure 50. As McRobbie (1993) suggests “The attraction of the rave can partly be explained through the way in which in the 1980’s club culture had become exclusive...Getting into clubs had become so difficult that many dance and music fans ended up staying away” (p.26). From personal experience I found even in the late '90s rave and early dance culture in Perth at the turn of the millennium it was still very much populated by individuals that dressed for the practicality of all night dancing and with that, open friendly attitudes.

As warehouse and club-based rave/dance culture shifted to the festival scene in the early 2000s, the crowd has progressively expanded from the niche of dance music enthusiasts to encompass a greater spread of youth culture. A sense of ‘Australianness’ has become more apparent, with the appearance of the Australian flag at festivals, and an increased

prevalence of symbolic Australian tattoos on punters such as the Sothorn cross: perhaps a harmless shift but certainly noticeable as these symbols are generally a sign of working class or ‘bloke’ culture. Since the mid 2000s, the ‘Aussie bloke’ has comprised a good portion of the crowd and with this shifting demographic there has been a noticeable increase in alcohol consumption. Dance festivals appear more like the rock festivals as the crowd has become more homogenised.



Figure 57: Barnes, D. (2007) Crowd with Australian Flag. Future Music festival, Perth Western Australia. [Analogue photograph].

As a photographer, finding the ‘publishable image’ became more difficult. The styles had changed and the people had changed too. This was more than a generational shift; it was simply harder to find an aesthetic worth photographing, publishable in a way desirable for the promoters, my end goal and what I was paid to do. In 2011, I had a drink poured down my back at the Future Music festival because I politely declined to take a photograph for a group of girls. The disrespectful act was a sign of changing times in the Australian dance scene and this became more noticeable as time went on. The festival scene in Australia 2014 was marred by a well-publicised violent brawl at the Sydney leg of Stereosonic. The incident (filmed by a number of onlookers) involved a large group of young heavily muscled mostly shirtless attendees and went viral on social media. It inspired the Stanton Warriors (2014) to create a poster with the headline “ROID OF THE RAVERS”, a cleverly reworked version of a 1980s anti UK football hooliganism

magazine cover from the popular fictional football character 'Roy'. 'Football Hooliganism' (2014b) is replaced with 'EDM Hooliganism'

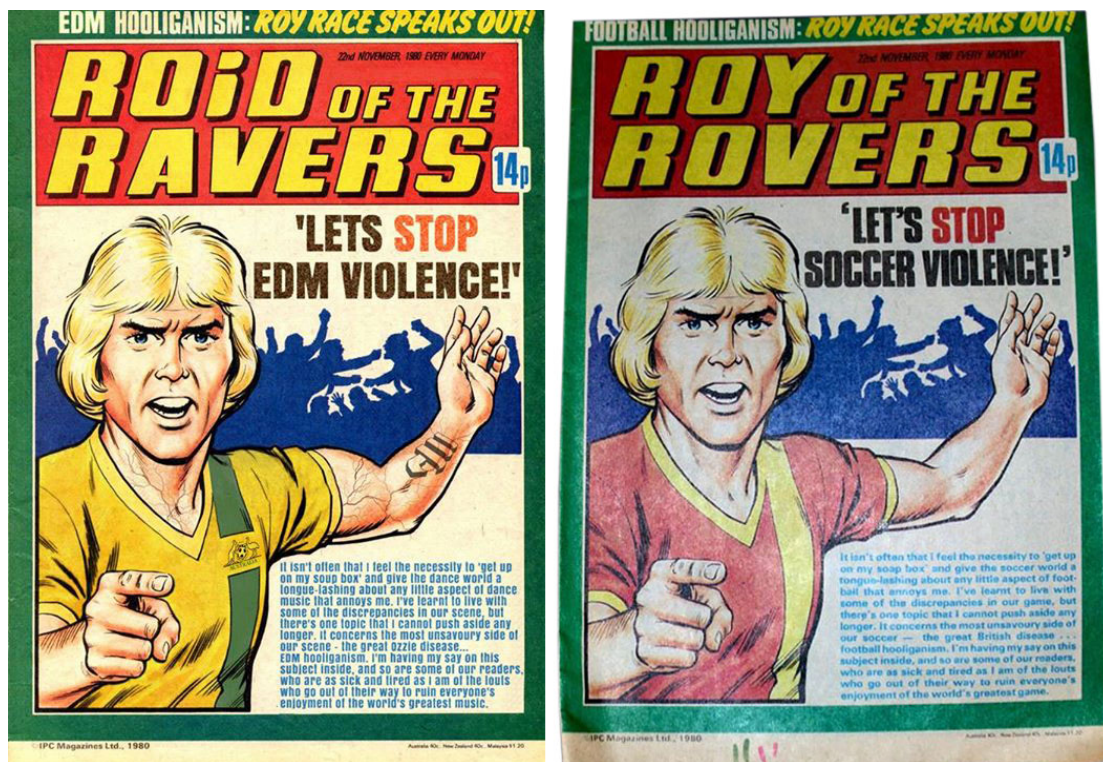


Figure 58: Warriors. S. (2014) The reworked Roid of the ravers (left) and the original 1980s anti soccer hooliganism poster (right). Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/stantonwarriors/photos/a.88623283888.75935.21461308888/10152632679858889/?type=1&theater>. [Composite montage].

As well as being amusing, the poster is accurate in describing the most recent shifts in attendees at dance festivals: the presence of an Australian bogan culture that also includes the overworked masculine gym junkie. The violent incident served to highlight a change occurring in dance music in Australia for many years. It is not just due to festivals being larger that has resulted in an increase in problems. The huge commercial success of electronic music has resulted in a broader demographic of the attendees, greater consumption of alcohol at events (where once water and ecstasy were the norm) and a general lack of respect for what dance music once represented. In my own experience, I never saw fights in nineties and early 2000s, at nighttime club events or daytime festivals in dance culture. This was also the case of people that I interviewed. "I never saw a fight ever in all those raves I went to. In those kind of raves, warehouse raves, never even the sniff of a fight" (Brewster, personal communication, April date, 2014). Facebook user Michael Cotter commented, "Surely you guys remember a decade ago when the Australian scene was world class? It's just a joke now. None of the punters have a clue

about the music and what's involved. It's sad watching a counter culture being destroyed as it becomes mainstream.” (Cotter cited in Warriors, 2014, ¶ 2). The fight scene (uploaded to YouTube) appeared on a number of news sites with headlines denouncing ‘muscle culture’ and a satirical headline stating “World’s Supply Of Steroids Used At Stereosonic Festival” (Stu, 2014). Even Stereosonic’s co-founder, Frank Cotela, said they might start refusing admission to punters based on how they look (Moskovitch, 2014).



Figure 59: (Stoneyroads, 2014). Even Stereosonic’s Founders Are Fed Up With The ‘Muscle Culture’. Retrieved from: <http://stoneyroads.com/2014/12/even-stereosonics-founders-are-fed-up-with-the-muscle-culture>. [Digital photograph].

Insider/outsider/performer

“I became a part of the spectacle performing the part of the photographer. The spider dance of the camera around the photographed contributed to the total tableau vivant” (Traub, 2011, p.13) In the introduction of this thesis, I write about my own photography within the rave scene as part of the performance: in theoretical terms, a privileged position of insider status. The self-reflexive approach itself is not new and neither is research into the phenomenon of insider outsider status (Song and Parker, 1995; Thornton, 1995; Brewer, 2000). Researchers gravitate to areas of personal interest and in social research this can mean a level of participation on a variety of levels. “Ethnographic research on youth cultures, particularly at doctoral level, is often conducted by investigators with some degree of initial cultural proximity to the individuals or cultures under the microscope” (Hodkinson, 2005).

More than an insider, I occupy the position of a performer in my own right, as I often had to perform to get my subjects to perform. I seek a reaction to my camera and my presence by engaging the subject(s) through my body language and verbal encouragement. As Carah (2014) suggests making a photograph is a two way process between the photographer and the photographed. "Nightlife photographers exploit their identities, the identities of their peers, the sociality of nightlife, and their communicative capacities in the course of their work. They capitalize on the attention, desire and intoxication of others, to do their work" (p. 262). Often I am on stage and this further elevates me to the position as a performer, commanding attention of the crowd. This is in comparison to other photographers that do not have this access and are relegated to the pit that holds the ravers. Traub (2011) while photographing at Burning Man acknowledges that her photography was not just observational but often required interaction to produce the images she wanted. Although I would suggest that my own photography was less staged as some of Traub's, photography is rarely objective. There are too many factors that prevent photography from being neutral. Mechanical choices such as the type of lens used, aperture, shutter speed, film type and the use of ambient light or flash light all affect the end result of how a scene may be represented. The notion of photographic 'truth' is problematic. As Sturken and Cartwright (2001, p. 16) suggest, "No matter what social role an image plays, the creation of an image through a camera lens always involves some degree of subjective choice through selection, framing, and personalization." Further layers of choice exist in making selective edits of what will be printed or scanned or, in digital terms, processed, as half to two thirds of the images are unlikely to ever see the light of day.

My positioning as 'insider' in regards to the analysis of my photographic work creates even greater bias in my representations as I was frequently working for festival promoters when I produced the images. Nevertheless, looking back over this archive of work allows for an assessment of content that gives some insight in the participants, changing styles and performers over a significant time period. It also serves as a visual record of the 'venues' themselves; some were sanctioned club spaces but others were warehouses, underground car parks or farmer's fields. In writing about the events retrospectively, the images themselves help me recollect certain objective facts about the event that cannot be denied. For example, an image can document the sponsor of an event or allow for an

estimation of numbers or a general look at the age and or demographic. The positive aspects of 'insider status' are discussed in terms of gaining access to or the trust of a group of participants in order to observe them and interview them (Hodkinson, 2005) but is rarely discussed in reference to *visual* access in terms of photography. Without the insider status granted through working at the events, I would never have been able to gain access onto stages (this is not even permitted to a press photographer) allowing me to photograph the crowd from these raised vantage points, or to shoot areas back stage or make logistical shots prior to attendees even arriving at the venue. Before camera phones existed there were often 'no camera' policies enforced, meaning there would be little or no visual record at all at these events. If the media were taking photographs, they would usually be of the performers with a token photograph of the attendees. As illustrated, the images presented here give an indication of the size and style of some of the stages used at events and other production logistical elements as well as documenting the style of attendees. My photographic record of the rave/dance scene contributes to a visual understanding of its history and development in Perth, Western Australia over the last sixteen years.

Everybody's is a photographer

Not only does the proliferation of digital photographs make it more difficult to obtain photo credentials, it also has an impact on the amount of money that music photographers can earn...The days of making a living solely from photographing rock bands are pretty much over, so if you got into concert photography with the intensions of become (sic) rich and famous you may want to reconsider. (Thomas, 2012, p. 238)

Thomas's statement, cited in *Concert and Live Music Photography: Pro Tips from the Pit*, is not far from the truth for most photographers working within the music industry, particularly since the advent of digital has resulted in keen hobbyist photographers moonlighting for any publication that can offer access to an event. Moreover, there is a precedent of photographers shooting events for free. A recent proliferation of 'how to' books also caters to this market of keen amateurs hoping to 'make it' in the scene such as the one above. The digital era means that a photographer can (and often does) take numerous shots, hoping that from the possible hundreds of images one will be aesthetically pleasing, for the cost of only a memory card which can be continually reused. Photographing with film required precision: you only had 36 frames until it was

time to change the roll, *and* there was the added cost of the film processing and scanning. Film was laborious and expensive. In the post-photographic world of digital photography, the image as a commodity has been devalued, partly because so many images are produced but also through the prolific distribution of images on social media platforms. Indeed, the photographer has become dispensable in the digital photographic revolution. When the digital camera became miniaturised and married to ‘smart phones,’ how we experienced *everything* changed almost overnight: “many users – not necessarily interested in photography per se – are becoming avid practitioners in the making, circulating and socializing of their own images” (Hjorth, 2007 p. 228). That our phone doubles as a camera, as a social communicator, as a flashlight to wave in the air in replacement of cigarette lighters at rock concerts and of course the ability to make phone calls, making that need to meet at the front gate at a agreed time before a show, a rather redundant pastime.

My memory of concert venues throughout the eighties and nineties were that they imposed a strict policy of no cameras or recording devices of any kind. This was easily policed during this time period, as a ‘camera’ was an easily identifiable device. In 2000, a camera appeared for the first time on a smartphone, making the policy of ‘no camera’ ambiguous, but the phone camera still posed no real threat to illegally recording or making photographs, as the quality of the image was so poor. By early 2000s, Ministry of Sound realised the potential of smart phones as a commodity for their own wares in the form of music releases and images. Ministry of Sound in Australia is a dance music division of EMI. In 2003, Paul Van Dyk posed for me with a phone capable of taking images, an impromptu promo opportunity for a sponsorship deal he had with Motorola (figure 60). The same year I was asked to provide stock images from dance events to Ministry of Sound. The images were to appear on the screens of phones (as if the phones had taken them) for an advertising campaign joint venture between a phone company and their own music releases, preloaded on the phone. While my photography had been used on many occasions to advertise ‘the scene’ in general it was usually in an editorial format or inside the CD jacket of album releases; being used to sell an actual product (the phone) was a departure from this and made my images more than ever before a commodity. My work was developing into a capitalist product, rather than a documentary practice.



Figure 60: Barnes, D. (2003). One perfect day at Metropolis City. Paul Van Dyk shows an image he has shot of the crowd on his Motorola phone – Motorola was one of his sponsors. The image was altered to add the screen picture on the phone, as the phone image was not bright enough and just appeared black in the photo. [Composite photograph].

In 2006, the UK division of Ministry of Sound teamed up with 3 Mobile to release an LG branded phone with its logo and branding, including free Ministry of Sound downloads of videos, tracks and wallpapers and a stereo headset. None of these ventures proved overly successful and it took the release of the first iPhone in 2007 to popularise the combination of camera phone/music player and Internet device for the masses. It was not the highest quality camera phone available but it was the entire package that counted. The iPhone “quickly became the most popular type of camera used on photo sharing sites, responsible for more of the uploaded pictures than any other single type of camera” (Gerard Goggin & Larissa Hjorth, 2014, p. 247). It was a significant technological leap with significant consequences; the now high-quality camera and the social medias maturation with the rise of Facebook (2006) changed the behaviour of many concertgoers; their experiences became mediated through the (phone) camera rather than experienced in the moment. Filming or taking photographs of the performance through a smartphone became acceptable, even expected. What was once a transgressive act was normalised almost overnight. Promoters could no longer enforce a ‘no camera’ policy when it was so ubiquitous and formed a part of technology (the mobile phone) that was already a socially sanctioned instrument of youth culture and the greater population in general. It would

hardly be feasible to turn around and ban mobile phones at an event and at any rate, why would they?



Figure 61: Barnes, D. (2013). Mediated reality. Future Music Festival, Perth Western Australia. [Digital photograph].

The numerous low-grade photographs now form an integral part of promotion on social media outlets for any event.

It is not that users of technology fail to engage with the ‘here and now’, but rather that technological affect constitutes the only coherent response to something more than a choice of immediate vs mediated reality. This multiple presence is now assumed to be in the normal repertoire of behaviours at our disposal in the public sphere. (Taylor, 2012 p. 39)

A sudden technological twist saw the phone and camera converge in one device; instantaneously, by default, everyone was a photographer. While a no-camera policy applied at rock concerts, photography attendees of EDM festivals are encouraged to share their photographs on social media platforms.



Figure 62: Barnes, D. (2014). Future Music Festival, Perth Western Australia. [Digital photograph].

While most of this technology was encompassed in phones, the miniaturised GoPro sports camera also became a popular way of filming. In a case of extreme narcissism the person operating the camera on a pole aims it not at the performer on the stage but backwards, creating either video of the moment or ‘selfie’ snapshots (as evidenced in Image 1.4). It was at the Future Music festival that I first observed what became known as the selfie stick (Goldberg, 2014). For so many attendees, it was no longer good enough just to be having a good time; it was equally important to be *seen* having a good time. Sontag prophetically announced in 1975 “While there appears to be nothing that photography can’t devour, whatever can’t be photographed becomes less important” (as cited in Movius, 1975, ¶ 14). Sontag’s comment could not be more apposite in describing the mediated lived experience of today’s youth, who photograph and then meticulously edit and (re)represent their ‘experience’ on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed people’s increased awareness of how they wanted to present themselves towards the camera (figure 56) when I photographed them. It is no coincidence that the convergence of technologies in the form of camera phones and social media and the changing orientation of the body towards the camera are simultaneous. “In

becoming an incorporative aspect of the hand, the mobile phone thus enters into an intimate and habitual relationship with a body part that is in itself of some consequence as a communicative and world-shaping tool” (Richardson, 2007, p. 210). Whether it is posing for the camera of another photographer or a camera belonging to the person taking the photograph (in the form of a ‘selfie’), the relationship with the camera has dramatically shifted. The camera is longer seen as a precious item, the image is intangible (as the majority of images are no longer printed) and the photograph is truly a product of the masses. EDM has become an increasingly valuable commodity while photography has become an increasingly devalued commodity; yet the image plays an increasingly important role in promoting events through shared images on social networks. “The final reason for the need to photograph everything lies in the very logic of consumption itself. To consume means to burn, to use up – and, therefore, to need to be replenished. As we make images and consume them, we need still more images; and still more” (Sontag, 2001 p. 140). It is not only the general public producing and curating images that sum up their ‘experience’ at events; artists (DJs) produce their own selfies, while some even have personal tour photographers to produce images and video for their Facebook and Instagram accounts, continuously feeding insatiable fans and what a fan base it is – in 2016 Calvin Harris and David Guetta, two of the DJ’s I have discussed in this thesis respectively have 7.3 million and 6.3 million followers Instagram followers (<https://www.instagram.com/>).

Electronic dance music, or EDM, can no longer be seen to be representing ‘the other’ as did the ‘modern day tribe’ within rave culture. Instead, in behaviour and appearance, EDM enthusiasts encode themselves as mainstream. The androgynous outfit of fashionable sneakers, shorts and fitted shirts and singlet’s of the late nineties that encoded one as a ‘raver’ changed significantly from 2006 onwards. My photographic representation at festivals around this time shows a sense of style and dress that expresses nationalism and ‘Australianness,’ including Australian flag bikinis, full Australian flags, Southern Cross tattoos and other Australian motifs. The Australian flag became prevalent in popular Australian culture in the mid 2000s due to resurgence in patriotism in John Howard’s prime ministership. In 2006 John Howard, in his Australia Day address, stated that “.... we expect each unique individual who joins our national journey to enrich it with their loyalty and their patriotism” (The Australian 6 March 2006). As Allmark (2006) suggested, the flag was “used, worn and celebrated in the public arena” (p.33). To see

rave/dance culture conform to mainstream concepts of patriotism was surprising, as the scene always seemed apolitical and alternative. It did not contain the divisive aspects of flag wearing, Southern Cross tattoos and a nationalistic fervour.

By 2010, there was no set collective style, simply a broad representation of mainstream youth street fashion, which for men often appeared quite ‘daggy’ and effortless and for women became highly feminine and sexually provocative. The fashioning of the body, as Susan Kaiser argues, “involves *becoming* collectively with others” (2012, p. 1). My photographs clearly illustrate the dominant and shifting style trends in the rave/dance scene, a scene that once suggested a collective shared ethos, expressed in a rave ‘uniform.’ This has noticeably transitioned over time to regular street fashion and mirrors the erosion of the sense of collectivity, the sense of belonging to a tribe of early rave culture. EDM culture has simply become a mainstream rite of passage of the broader youth cultural experience. Attending an EDM event is no longer a subcultural practice.

EDM – a fully corporatised and commodified version of earlier music styles such as techno and house, an amalgamation of aesthetic styles from acid house, rave and dance culture that leverages photography at all levels – DJs become gods preaching from the altar, stages are lit with lasers and fire, the preselected crowd shots show youth having the time of their lives, and social media disseminate these images to boost attendance of the next big show. As a paid commercial photographer I have been complicit in the selling of this modern day tribe.

Chapter summary

This final chapter provides a self-reflexive view of photography and its role in documenting the changes within the rave/dance scene. Early rave photography is discussed, as is my own role in producing commercial images for promoters in Perth, Western Australia. What makes a publishable image is discussed in detail, as are the effects of digital photography, both on the production and publication of images.

Over the fifteen-year period of photographing rave/dance culture, style and attitudinal changes can be seen – photographs show a significant shift in clothing and participants’ attitudes towards my camera and to each other. The images clearly demonstrate the shift

in the commercial rave culture of (1999/2000), abandoned, collective, androgynous and asexual, through to contemporary dance culture (in for form of EDM festivals) with its performative, sexualised feminine and its masculine, sometimes aggressive, muscle culture. These shifts reflect the homogenised youth culture represented at EDM events and EDM's decisive departure from the smaller collectives of like-minded (and somewhat marginalised) attendees of rave and early dance events.

The role that social media plays in the attitudes of attendees, their responses to my camera, and the use of their own cameras was discussed; it was theorised that a reason for the rise in narcissistic behaviour is the ubiquity of the camera to attendees who facilitate consumption by documenting the event; with the rise of the smartphone and social media, everyone has become a photographer.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the processes at work that transformed rave culture from a subcultural DIY practice to becoming a global multi billion dollar corporate run enterprise in the guise of EDM. While initially inspired by the likes of Hebdige (1979) my approach to understanding the process of commodification moves beyond the limitations of style; incorporating a study of media, sponsorship and corporate ownership of events as a predetermine to the erosion of subcultural status claims and concepts of authenticity. While offering a global account of this transformation, Perth Western Australia was used as a detailed case study. This was due to my first-hand experience within the scene since the late '90s through to present day as both a patron but predominately as a photographer. In reflecting upon my work over this time period, there are significant changes to my photographic approach and this is a result to changes in the rave scene. For example, when I first began I had greater autonomy in documenting the scene. I was of only a few night life photographers. In more recent times, there are numerous photographers with the growth of music festivals and online media outlets. My 'access all areas pass' has been scrutinised more closely and photographic clearances and contracts are required. As such, there are more legal implications involved in taking photographs. As a result, my work is become less intimate and focuses on more broadly on the cultural landscape, for example wide shots, iconography etc.

My photographs and personal first-hand insight offer a qualitative approach into how rave, dance culture and finally EDM were experienced within the Australian context. My recent creative practice demonstrates the ambivalent relations between authenticity and commodification. In witnessing these changes my personal observations and photographic work follows St John's discussion of the 'lived experience of the researcher in dialogue with his/her subjects' (2013, ¶ 2).

Historically North America is credited as the birthplace of techno and house music but it was the UK that appropriated the sounds and gave 'rave' a worldwide-recognised identity. While the American scene ebbed and flowed through the late '80s and '90s England's scene, in popular parlance, went viral – reaching its underground peak with what was referred to as the 'second summer of love' in 1988. Through promoters, participants and media attention (both positive and negative) rave culture became a recognisable brand of music, fashion and lifestyle.

While the political background of the UK is considered the catalyst behind rave's initial success, Australia was quick to adopt the scene via British expats. The uptake of rave culture in Perth, Western Australia used similar venues to those found in the UK (i.e. clubs and warehouses) but my work also highlights some unique aspects of the Perth scene both in terms of venues and participants which ultimately gave an Australian style to rave culture. Nevertheless I have highlighted the global local similarities between the Australian and British scene. Thornton (1995) is acknowledged for her research in demonstrating that the print press played a role in 'advertising' rave culture through its coverage. When reporting became negative it only served to further validate raving as a subcultural (and therefore desirable) practice. It also served to form a moral panic in mainstream society.

My own research suggests a similar situation in Australia although the negative effects were more noticeable on the east coast than they were in Perth Western Australia. I suggest this was due to the death of Anna Woods – a young teenager who, like Leah Betts in England, became an unwitting poster child for the moral crusade against rave culture. Rave was ultimately ostracised in the British and Australian press, which while resulting in a spike of interest in the culture ultimately contributed to laws that were enacted against it. Restrictions placed on illegal raves resulted in larger sanctioned events that would become increasingly commercially exploited and eventually owned and run by corporations rather than individual promoters. Rather than being seen as the 'other' existing somehow outside a broader mainstream, rave became a homogenised part of the youth cultural experience; a process that led to a loss of its identity and its underlying tenets of PLUR that underpinned the original DIY culture of rave.

In a seemingly constant desire to be seen as ‘authentic’ amongst youth cultural groups (and understood by researchers) when is subcultural value truly lost? Hebdige (1979) argues that the death of punk’s subversive nature was due to the commodification of its transgressive tenets (such as hand ripped jeans and safety pin earrings), which were being sold back to everyday consumers on the high street, pre packaged and mass-produced. For Thornton (1995), claims to authenticity of participants in rave culture revolved around ‘subcultural capital’ – linked to the individual’s knowledge of and participation in key events, and ownership of prized (often limited edition) items within the scene. For Vannini and Williams (2009), authenticity centres on ideology and commitment to a given subcultural practice. While a subculture’s style (Hebdige, 1979) or an individual’s cultural capital (Thornton, 1995) or ideological commitment (Vannini & Williams, 2009) offer useful insights into youth cultural practice, this thesis along with its photographic archive provides insights into the rave/dance evolution to finally become a corporate mainstream enterprise. I have considered rave culture’s diminishing authenticity and increased commodification through the involvement of corporate interests, sponsorship and, finally, ownership – essentially buying a commercialised version of what was a DIY culture through controlling the means of production.

Ultimately authenticity (or at least claims to an individuals subcultural capital) are negotiated differently depending on how they are defined and whether they are measured by examining participants within the culture or the companies that cater for the culture. Through my experience of rave/dance culture and EDM festivals in Australia, it is clear that authenticity claims to a recognisable subcultural practice have diminished over time. From the point of style, what encoded one as a ‘raver’ has been replaced with regular high-street fashion but this shift marks more than just a style trope; the inclusion of women wearing high heels and dresses to events and groups of men displaying highly masculine behavior demonstrates a cultural shift. While the ideology of PLUR within the Australian rave/dance scene was less invoked in Western Australia than it was in some parts of the American scene, its ideas were universal – peace, love, unity and respect were the tenets of rave culture that allowed a diverse group of people to be a part of a shared collective experience. Over time, the sense of group identity diminished as dance events increased in size, promoters changed from local individuals to global entities, and brand sponsorship visibility eroded the ‘underground’ vibe of events. While late eighties and early nineties rave provided an alternative to the hyper masculine beer-barn drinking

culture of wider Australia, the two merged under the EDM festival scene. While water was the most common drink at a rave, alcohol makes up the bulk of consumption at EDM festivals and brewers and distillers are often the major sponsors of events. The music that made up rave, now packaged as EDM, has costs equivalent to an extravagant rock festival – elaborate stage setups with giant video screens, explosive lighting and pyrotechnics and DJs who are treated like the rock and pop idols that came before them and commanding at least the equivalent prices to perform. While rave was once a proudly ad hoc DIY egalitarian culture run by enthusiasts, today's multi million-dollar EDM festivals are funded by corporations; propped up by sponsorship deals to make the practice profitable.

This gradual commercialisation and deteriorating authenticity of rave was a process that had already begun in England towards the end of the '80s following the 'second summer of love'. The rise of '90s super clubs Ministry of Sound, Gatecrasher and Gods Kitchen further capitalised the rave sound; helping to brand the music and the whole pre-packaged dance experience that by the early 2000s began regular worldwide tours. In Australia by the mid 2000s major corporate brands began sponsoring events and used the tropes of rave culture in television commercials. By the late 2000s rave, repackaged as EDM finally returned to where it all began; the America market saw explosive growth of festivals many of which were subsequently brought out en masse by *SFX Entertainment*.

Just how big has EDM become? I mentioned earlier in this thesis that it was not uncommon for 'bottle service' at a Calvin Harris show in Vegas to cost upwards of \$7500. For 2014, New Year's Eve prices entered the stratosphere with a bottle service package costing \$500,000 at club Hakkasan. Known as the Dynastie Package, it included an entourage of staff at the customer's disposal for the evening, a gold disc signed by Calvin Harris, and the customer's name flashing on video screens during a confetti drop (Tost, 2014). Clearly, the rapid rise of EDM worldwide with the American market pushing it into the stratosphere could not last. Shares in American events giant *SFX Entertainment*, debuted at \$13USD in October, 2013 (Karp, 2013), were trading at \$4.11USD in January 2015, and were worth only .11 cents by January 2016. *SFX* filed for bankruptcy on February 1, 2016 (Gleason, 2016). *SFX*'s a huge stake in EDM festivals worldwide (in at least 19 countries) is bound to have an impact on the festival scene. *SFX*'s worldwide acquisitions included Australian promotion company *Totem OneLove*, famous for its annual national festival Stereosonic, which could leave its future

in doubt due to the lack of financial viability. Future Music, referred to throughout this thesis, was purchased by Australia's largest music conglomerate, Mushroom Group in 2013, only to be shelved indefinitely in April 2015. A falling Australian dollar and increases in operational costs were cited amongst reasons for the festival's failure, but one cause stands out as being rather ironic: the death by popularity of EDM itself resulting in spiralling costs of major headline acts. Chairman of Mushroom Group, Michael Gundinski, said, "the increasing popularity of EDM in the States has seen DJ fees escalating out of control" (as cited in Knox, 2015, ¶ 4). The days of selling this modern day tribe as a pre packaged worldwide touring festival circuit could be numbered. "Instead stand-alone location festivals such as Coachella and Lollapalooza are going from strength to strength" (as cited in Knox, 2015, ¶ 6). Gundinski is referring to American festivals but Western Australia is also seeing a rise in independent events such as Disconnect, which ran for the first time in Perth in December 2015. It ran with the catch phrase 'How a festival should be' and stressed the importance of incorporating art and a village atmosphere into the long-weekend camping event. This was by no means an EDM festival but an event that sought to fill the void left by the collapse of other national festivals such as The Big Day Out and Soundwave, each of which met a similar demise when the events became unwieldy and experienced cost blowouts. Disconnect appears to be taking cues from the likes of Burning Man and Earthcore, incorporating public art to create a community feel rather than the corporate-driven marketing opportunity that has become the norm for EDM festival scene in Australia.

What is clear is the evolution of electronic music through rave, dance culture, and EDM has finally reached what seems like an endpoint, an impasse where the culture has 'nowhere else to go.' There is a certain irony that at the point where electronic music, experienced in the EDM festival format, has become assimilated into mainstream culture is has, in many regions, become untenable; not for provocative illegal behaviour that dogged rave but for economic reasons. There were dire predictions of an EDM explosion back in 2012 with DJ Tommie Sunshine and Paterson expressing concerns around how to deliver an 'authentic' experience during the global EDM explosion. EDM remains wildly popular in America but the collapse of the stock price of SFX Entertainment suggests global investor concern over an obviously (at least in hindsight) overpriced oversaturated market that could only go down. EDM, the commodified version of rave culture, cannot go any further – it is as corporatized and mainstream as it can go. If corporate investment

subsides, the international touring festivals will no longer be a viable model: certainly not in Australia, due to its smaller market than Europe and North America, and in light of a falling Australian dollar. This may see the electronic music scene in Australia return to smaller, more intimate venues where only one DJ plays at a time, rather than five or more DJs playing simultaneously on different stages, the norm for EDM festivals. A modest format could lead to a return of like-minded DJ styles performing at events that would in turn encourage like-minded people to attend. The diversity of acts and styles at EDM festivals led to a diverse audience that did not always mix well and that failed to generate the shared experience felt within rave and early dance culture. Another possibility is a return to an underground of illegal raves. In 2016 Vice made a documentary on the illegal rave scene thriving across Britain. It might be labelled ‘rave,’ but there are no smiley-faced logos of acid house here nor Ibiza-inspired colourful clothing; it is post rave, dark and gritty. While some are calling it a rave renaissance (Gilmour, 2016), others disagree. Acid house and rave veteran Sean Johnston says “Don't call it a renaissance, it's a continuum. They [raves] have been going on every weekend for as long as I can remember. It's just the social, economic, and political situation that conspire to make it more visible” (Harrison, 2016, ¶ 18). Either way, it is unlikely that this will lead to the massive illegal rave parties that Britain once experienced in the heyday of the late '80s due to changes made to the Criminal Justice Act (see chapter 1) in order to prevent them. Could this underground ‘revival’ that Britain is experiencing happen in Australia? As discussed in this thesis, Australia has also had an underground scene that has always run parallel with rave and the now corporatised EDM, the bush doof, but it is not to everyone's taste, nor is it city orientated. Given that a driving factor for the British revival is the closing down of half the country's nightclubs in the past decade (Gilmour, 2016) and given Sydney's strict nightclub lockout laws (Gleeson, 2016) it is not inconceivable that an underground rave scene could see a resurgence within the city limits. With the demise of so many touring festivals, youth will find something to fill the void, whether that be a return to smaller intimate events or something all together new that has not yet been conceived.

Future Research

The bulk of what makes up this thesis was completed by 2016 by which time EDM was experiencing a lull in Australia after the collapse of Future Music and Stereosonic, the two major touring festivals discussed at length in this thesis. While the unsuccessful attempt of *SFX Entertainment* to buy a large portion of the international EDM festival scene (which led to its bankruptcy) was well publicized what happened after its collapse is less discussed and what it might mean to the industry. While *SFX* has emerged from bankruptcy and a new company (LiveStyle) has been formed to try reestablish the brand. Restating a mission statement not dissimilar to *SFX* to become the largest producer of electronic music events (Sisario, 2016) it is yet to see how this will be resolved.

Meanwhile the buy up of worldwide music brands continues with American giant Live Nation making seven major acquisitions in 2016 that include a number of boutique Australian festivals; Splendour in the Grass and Falls (Ingham, 2016). Regarding the purchase Live Nation's CEO Michael Rapino acknowledged they were "uniquely Australian. We look forward to partnering with them to find new ways to grow our live event footprint across Australia" (Ingham, ¶ 17). Live Nation have diversified their holdings rather than focusing solely on EDM but their folio does include Electronic Daisy Carnival which has led to the anticipation that they may tour the festival in Australia in the near future; Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC) filed for a trademark of the EDC brand in Australia in 2015 (Jarvis, 2015). The use of the word 'carnival' is also strategic, in that it attempts to convey the emancipatory atmosphere of the carnivalesque, in its evocation of playful personal style and escapism from the everyday, that early rave is renowned for. Nevertheless, as a major commercial enterprise and also applying to a different generation of young people, it is yet to be determined the cultural impact and influence of events such as these. It would also be interesting to follow up on how one of the biggest EDM brands in the world would fair in the Australian market and to see if they brought with it a more Americanized version of EDM.

While a chapter in this thesis has been dedicated to looking at various attempts to reject commodification in the rave and festival scene both on a global scale (with the likes of Burning Man) and a local national level (through the Australian bush doof) I believe this is an area worthy of further research. While there has been much academic writing on the Australian bush scene some of which I have drawn on within the scope of my overall

thesis (Luckman, 2003, Miller 2000), serious photographic documentation of these events appears rather limited. I attended the second Blazing Swan, a West Australian affiliation of Burning Man that began in 2014 as well as the original Burning Man in America, but more as a participant than a critical observer. While I made some photographs it was not the driving reason for attending but it does make a starting point for future contact. Blazing Swan completed its fourth annual event in 2017 and continues to grow with every passing year. Researching the motivations for attending a not for profit anti-commodification event, such as Blazing Swan, could be an interesting area for further qualitative research. Following how not for profit festivals manage expansion without sponsorship and corporatisation (or at least seen as not being corporate) seems to be a logical trajectory for future research. How (and if) they manage to keep true to their 'subcultural roots' while continually expanding could be advantageous to how corporations could better manage acquisitions of boutique festivals and the modern day tribe.

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