

“Groove is in the Heart”

A Postmodern journey through Dance Culture.

BY

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Introduction.

'Kids who weren't even born during the original summer of love in 1967 are slipping into paisley shirts and bell-bottom jeans and heading for up-dated love-ins known as "raves". Scrubbed and mellow, their Monkees' haircuts bobbing and their bright, baggy clothes flapping, they dance until dawn... The motto of this dance-mad generation: Fun is Good'
(Bussman, Jane. 1998:63).

Since its beginning back in the hazy days of 1988, dance culture has evolved not just as a musical genre but as a musical phenomenon. Its permutations have been prolific and its followers diverse and devoted.

Perusing through the extant literature pertaining to past and present genres I noticed that they had one thing in common. Nearly all if not all were incorporated under the heading of 'subculture'. Aside from the term's deleterious connotations, I no longer feel that the concept is applicable and as such believe that it has outlived its welcome in academic circles. It is therefore my aim, to readdress this issue of subculture. In doing so I will suggest that dance culture is not the deviant aberration that many people believe it to be, but is in fact part of an ongoing musical tradition whose positive momentum is expressed through the dynamics of a group and music respectively.

Using the Gramscian notion of hegemony, I will discuss the ways in which clubbers have attempted to carve out for themselves various autonomous spheres and cultural settings.

Following on from this I will explore Michel Maffesoli concept of the 'tribe'. This term is more acceptable as it recognizes the instability of late modern society. No longer are identities fixed and unchanging. Instead postmodern identity has become much more fluid as individuals forsake the security of conformity.

In relation to the music I will readdress the Adornian concept of standardisation.

Inappropriately depicted as repetitive I will endeavour to show the innovative and futuristic side of the genre.

Similarly I will highlight the importance of ethnic culture and indigenous sounds.

Focussing particularly on one sub-genre I will attempt to show how dance music is no longer place specific and parochial.

Dance culture has always prided itself on its ability to embrace difference. It is therefore my endeavour to show how 'otherness' is represented in this musical environ. Similarly, Djing until now has normally been a male prerogative. In an age where boundaries are diminishing and gender relations significant, I will discuss the growing role professional women within the genre.

In this age of consumerism, access to wealth means access all round. I want to show how the principles of corporatism have impacted on the club scene in Ireland.

Finally I will discuss the finer intricacies of dance culture i.e. the role of dancing, the importance of authenticity and underground status (pirate radio) as well as the ideology behind the scene itself. It is thus my intention to elucidate as many of the aforementioned ideas as possible using participant observation and interviewing respectively.

Dance culture is about feeling good about oneself and sharing with others something special. Clubbing is a perpetual playground whereby innocence and playfulness are maintained. It is also an environment where we can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that 'fun is good'.

Literature Review.

“ They say that death kills you, but death doesn't kill you, Boredom and indifference kills you ” (I need more: Iggy Pop).

Rising suicide rates, deteriorating health care and disparate wealth distribution combined with political corruption. Ingredients that have both soured modernity's cake and contributed to our green felines bellyache. Was Iggy Pop the best kept secret of twentieth century social thought? Or was he just voicing what we residually felt but dare not say. If the eighties failed us then surely the nineties paper was not even worth grading. For if there is a single defining motif which history might apply to modern Ireland, it is that we are living through an age not of boundless riches but of cynicism and disappointment (Dodd 2000: p6L). Public life has clocked us in but we are too lethargic even to retrieve our cards, with the result that we perpetually remain part of a machine that continually keeps us on time and in check. Work satisfaction for many is a sugarcoated illusion. We may somehow sense the financial rewards but guessing that final digit to the monetary vault is but a weekend lottery away. Unfulfilment therefore leads to frustration and inevitably cynicism. For if the Irish people excel at one thing, it is begrudging the success of others. It is wrong to say that we inherently possess the c- gene or cynic gene. In fact, society has nurtured in us and socialised us to this way of thinking. We are in every regards just as materialistic as our 80's cousins, so much so that 26% of respondents questioned in a recent IMS survey (Ibid.) said that the main cause of stress in life was

related to money issues. So if the sceptics are correct, we are reaping the rewards from an illusory economy that is more symbolic of the Cheshire Cat than the Celtic Tiger.

“Can’t get a job”- Sister Bliss 1994

Equally important is the spiritual impoverishment that modern society has managed to accentuate. Let me emphasise that this is not a polemic against modernization per se, it is however a cautionary note reassuring us that if we place all our eggs in the proverbial economic basket we negate the possibility of ever enhancing the private or civil core. Likewise, if the principles of economics are indicative of the spirit of modernity then it is true to say that cultural politics is the main protagonist in the postmodern era. Whatever jurisdiction we may lack in public life, we are autonomous beings, the guardians of choice in the cultural and private sector.

Music, that omnipotent and gratifying sound-scape is still one of the most profound ways of igniting emotion. Whether listened to via the privacy of one’s own Walkman or through the shared experience of a 50,000 capacity outdoor concert the reaction can be quite the same. The unfettered overtones expressed by the music successfully fills that spiritual void that other areas of life fail to accomplish. The explosion of acid house and the multi- tentacled pleasure zone of contemporary dance music has made a break with the embarrassing 1980’s memories, setting an uncomplicated, egalitarian agenda which has succeeded in bringing more people together than Billy Bragg could ever dream of (Irish Times Fri July 16, 1999). For Keith Negus 1996:4 music is created, circulated, recognised and responded to according to a range of

conceptual assumptions and analytical activities that are grounded in quite particular social relationships, political processes and cultural activities.

Not unlike other music cultures, dance music typified a reactionary stance against a society that neglected to serve the interests of contemporary youth. For clubber's the bond is not the overt drug use associated with the music (although many would disagree) but the actual music itself. Normally accused for its absence of meaningful lyrics, the real message emanates from the title of the songs themselves. 1987 titles like 'Notice me ' by Sandee and 'Tired of being pushed around' by Two men and a drum machine, succinctly expressed the long overdue need for somebody to sit up and take notice. Like punk in the seventies, dance music became the medium of reaction and discontent, albeit in a more subtle and innovative way.

According to Antonio Gramsci (Simon 1991: 27), civil society is the sphere where the subordinate social groups may organise their opposition and construct an alternative hegemony- "a counter-hegemony". As said, dance music became the medium, while raves became the cultural podium to voice the extant dissatisfaction. It would be another three years before dance music proper would grace the shores of Ireland. This does not mean however, that discontent was non-existent. Here, we were still riding the wave of a debilitating recession while interest rates remained ashamedly high. As a counter-hegemonic form, dance music continued to grow, embracing the apprehensive and alleviating the worries of those already engrossed. But as Gramsci (ibid: 38) views it, hegemony can never be taken for granted, but has to be continually fought for afresh. If ever a musical genre flew in the face of adversity, it was dance music. Redefining the boundaries and setting new targets, it has constantly shifted in terms of reference and

adjusted its verticals and horizons to suit rapidly changing fashions and sensibilities (Irish Times Jan 16:1998). Twelve years on and the movement shows no signs of rescinding. The reason that it is reluctant to do so relates to the many guiding principles that lie at its foundation; hedonism, unity and jouissance (pleasure) to name but three. According to Gramsci, ideologies are not individual fancies, but are embodied in collective and communal modes of living (Simon 1991: 59). To paraphrase Gramsci further, the unity of this ideological system will stem from its nucleus or central unifying principle- the music.

From acid house to modern day Garage, the ideology remains the same; a movement made by us for us. Inhibitions resolved; it is a milieu built on non-differentiation between creed and sexuality. It's about like-minded individuals, coming together, sharing an experience that does not judge and demarcate. Also, a key narrative of the dance movement has been personal transformation as introverts become extroverts, aggressive thugs miraculously pacified and arrogant souls softened (Cole 1998: 50).

The positive momentum that dance music has generated has been virtually unstoppable. For Ciaran O'Hagan 1998: 50, clubbing has allowed us the freedom to dream, to love, to live intensely and to transform others and ourselves. The temporary gathering that assembles each weekend attempts to resolve the unease that radiates away from the collective. The rave was the idealised version of clubbing and the stalwart of this counter-hegemonic structure. As Brewster & Broughton (1998: 92) see it, it wasn't about visiting some purpose-built place, it was creating somewhere new, and it was about building a city for a night; a dream city full of friendly strangers. A club had a venue, a place in space and time, but a rave was all about possibilities. A rave existed in the minds of the people who danced together.

For this I am reminded of Ferdinand Tonnies (1957: 64/65) *Gemeinschaft / Gessellschaft* typology. Although used in a different context, I still feel that many of its finer points are indeed applicable to dance culture. Accordingly, the theory of the *gesellschaft* (society) deals with the artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings, which superficially resemble the *gemeinschaft* (community) in so far as the individuals come together and share an experience (my emphasis). However, in the *gemeinschaft* they remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in the *gessellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all unifying factors. It is therefore interesting to note that dance culture combines many of the said disparate characteristics. It is the splicing together of both typologies that makes dance culture such an innovative and important movement. To borrow a widely used postmodern anecdote, it is the 'unity in difference' that gives the genre its emphasis and strength. Negus (1996:23) picks up on this when he suggests that scenes simply do not spontaneously emerge from a particular group, class or community, but from various coalitions and alliances, which have to be actively created and maintained. Even Lisa Lewis (*ibid.* 25/26) acknowledges that fans create communities with a collective shared sense of identity that is built around their appreciation of a particular performer e.g. the DJ (the new musical cult hero).

Moreover, this physical and spiritual coming together acts as a nexus, which is strong enough to write its own rules and flexible enough to avoid establishing boundaries. For these precious hours, time becomes suspended, locking those present in a dream-like world overseen by the ritual of dance. The spectacle according to Maffesoli (1996:77) assumes the function of communion. For what characterizes this milieu more than

anything is the supple intersection of multiplicity of circles whose articulation takes the form of sociality.

Conceptually, there is nothing new about this specific communion and sociality, suffice it to say that dance culture (like the hippie culture of the sixties) carries within its repertoire; secret meanings (Hebdige 1979: 18): meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination. The 'smiley face' logo juxtaposed the abject wish for pleasure and hedonism with the elusive and sinister drug motif of the culture. Other contemporary styles such as baggy trousers, long sleeve T-shirts emblazoned with illuminous patterns elucidated brilliantly the Gramscian notion of counter- hegemony. For him, it was these cultural styles and others that symbolically stamped the seal of resistance (Hebdige 1979:77).

In their seminal 1950's study of gangs, Cohen and Miller (ibid: 76) concluded that the core values of straight world-sobriety, ambition and conformity were replaced by their opposites: hedonism, defiance of authority and the quest for kicks. Sadly, unconformity throughout the years has been stigmatised with an air of deviance. What the authorities fail to acknowledge is that dance culture was born out of necessity: to combat the debilitating norms of contemporary society. This quest for alternatives should not be seen as a retreat from the prescribed mores but as an endeavour to parallel choice so that a more holistic comprehension of society may be attainable. It is therefore inaccurate to prioritise and accentuate the seemingly negative aspects attributed to the culture. Dance culture like previous music cultures should not be viewed as essentially subcultural but part of the normative structures usually ascribed to disparate pastimes. In other words dance culture inherits and builds upon the musical traditions of the past.

Loveland – 'I need somebody' 1995.

Andy Bennett (1999:599) takes this idea one step further when he remarks that the term 'subculture' is unworkable as an objective analytical tool in sociological work on youth, music and style. For him the dance music scene is part of late modern lifestyles in which notions of identity are 'constructed' rather than 'given' and 'fluid' rather than 'fixed'. Bennett's work follows on from the 1996 publication 'The time of the tribes' by Michel Maffesoli. For him, too much dwelling has been done on the dehumanization and the disenchantment with the modern world, and the solitude it induces that we are no longer capable of seeing the networks of solidarity that exist within (1996:72). For this reason, the term subculture is insufficient due to the fact that it places too much emphasis on the jaundiced aspects, neglecting to ever surmise at the possibility of the culture's inherent positive momentum.

"Neo-tribalism" is an altogether more appropriate identification because it breaks away from the archaic stigma in favour of concentration on characteristics such as sociality. For Maffesoli, the person plays roles (1996: 76); both within his or her professional activities as well as within the various tribes in which the person participates. In contrast to the stability induced by classical tribalism, neo-tribalism is characterised by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal (ibid.). Interestingly, clubbing rhetoric such as "livin' for the weekend" and "largin' it" encapsulate the spirit of these ideas. There is no better way to sum up the efflorescence an effervescence of neo-tribalism (ibid: 75), which in various forms, refuses to identify with any political

project whatsoever, to subscribe to any sort of finality, and whose sole raison d'être is a preoccupation with the collective present.

Even the collective present, which in this case refers to the club, maintains its awareness of temporality by which boundaries are fluid and memberships floating (Bennett 1999:600). Here disparate groups unite to celebrate one overriding feature: the absence of working time.

'Give up yourself on to this moment, the time is now' - **Moloko: The time is now**

These seemingly lyrics indicate the importance of the here and now, the present. Although transient, this neo-communal feeling triumphantly agglutinates us to others and to the situation. The accompanying hedonism pays tribute to a culture that acknowledges the importance of the group's cultural diversity while at the same recognising the importance of individual autonomy. Democratised space in its entirety.

According to Maffesoli (ibid: 605), the tribe is without the rigidity of the forms of organisation with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambiance, a state of mind. This is an important point and one which Maffesoli refers to in his book as 'the law of secrecy' (1996: 96). Although he was referring to the underworld of the Mafia, there exist many comparisons, albeit unwittingly between Maffesoli's concept and the organisation of illegal raves, for both represent symbolically the bi-polar effect of liberation and resistance. In particular, raves represent the protective mechanism with respect to the outside world i.e. in relation to the overarching forms of power, as well as pointing out that the secrecy it engenders is a way of confirming the group (ibid.).

As an organisation raves were only as good as those running it. Its success depended upon the entrepreneurial experience of the protagonists. In typical postmodern

fashion, incoherence and decentralisation provided the winning formula as pirate radio and mobile phones maintained the oblique form of contact. To offset the established order even further, playback messages via privy lines were established with telephone companies. As Maffesoli declares (ibid.), it is impossible to stress enough the unifying structure of silence, which has been seen by the great mystics as the ultimate form of communication.

Raves were about young people establishing their own leisure-scapes (my emphasis). The playfulness and *jouissance* were intrinsic to the performance. Last minute cancellations and relocations only heightened in the profound longing to be part of something bold but new. Underlying all this was the hypothesis of ‘collective privacy’ and ‘sociality’. Its expression may of course vary widely, but its logic remained constant: the fact of sharing a habit, an ideology or an ideal determining the being-together and allowing the latter to act as protection against any imposition, from whatever outside source (ibid: 92).

Apart from the superbly executed endeavours by promoters, raves were victorious because their patrons made them so. The pleasure seekers donned their temporal robes, and engaged themselves in a process of collective association. White collar’s danced with blue, gays with straight and blacks with white etc. Moreover, in positing ‘experimentation’ as a cultural characteristic of late modern societies, the concept of lifestyle allows for the fact that individuals will often select lifestyles which are in no way indicative of a specific class background (Bennett 1999:602). Before leaving this section it is important to consider the words of David Chaney (ibid: 608). According to him, a fully developed mass society liberates rather than oppresses individuals by

offering avenues for individual expression through a range of commodities and resources which can worked in particular lifestyle sites and strategies.

“ Fascinating Rhythm”- Bassomatic 1990

For T.W Adorno and Max Horkheimer (During 1993: 29), the modern culture industry produces safe, standardised products geared to the larger demands of the capitalist economy. Writing when he did one could forgive Adorno for taking the moral high ground on issues such as music. Despite this he did uncover one of the best-kept secrets in the history of the music industry. Standardisation not only worked as an economic instrument but as a clever cultural devise. Due to the inept knowledge of 1930's & 40's Jazz music I am unable to probe further into Adorno's understanding of the genre. I am however competent enough to relate the author's writing to a more preferred style, that of dance music.

Dance music, like jazz during Adorno's era has been painted in an equally unfavourable light, so much so that many people disregard its importance as a musical revolution in favour of the increasingly tired rhetoric of 'it all sounds the same'. Musically speaking the 1990's played it safe, favouring everything that was bland and ordinary. Amongst the indistinguishable, lay dance music, whose subdivision grew in strength and variety as the decade progressed. From acid house to garage, and techno to drum n' bass, its permutation's were unstoppable. Despite the offshoots, its fundamental rationale was the metronomic beat. Likewise, what one seems to forget is that 4/4 timing is the foundation of all musical science, as we know it. To accentuate or manipulate this

rhythmic pattern is not a regressive project but in contrast, a progression in the way we relate to this modern day musical genre.

According to Adorno (Frith1990:320), standardisation guarantees that regardless of what aberrations occur, the hit will lead back to the same familiar experience, and nothing fundamentally novel will be introduced. This is a very important point especially in relation to dance music. As hinted at earlier, the very essence of this musical form is its repetitive structure. Standardised to some, innovative to others, dance music must be looked at from the point of view of performance. Although produced for the listener, its alternate purpose is for dancing. Formulaic or not, dance culture is an experience; a neo-Marxian community bent on celebrating a unity devoid of antagonism and enmity.

The slight aberrations i.e. breakdowns and build-ups are intrinsic to the success of the experience. It is accepted that producers incorporate these characteristics in the music to facilitate to chemical adventure, yet even this is not revolutionary considering Pink Floyd were doing exactly the same in the 1970's. As a genre, dance music succeeds because it is premised on the idea that anything goes. As such, its sustainability and continued proliferation is down to its ability to reinvent and revolutionise itself away from the core while maintaining what is essential to it; the aforementioned rhythmic structure. Hypnotically inducing the individual into a state of altered being, the music attempts to de-regulate his/her societal roles. This may be what Adorno has in mind when he states (Frith 1990: 309/310) that the frame of mind, to which popular music originally appealed, on which it feeds, and which it perpetually reinforces, is simultaneously one of distraction and inattention.

Standardised it may be but indifferent it is not. In an age where technological advancement is unparalleled, fleeting projected images and intermittent lighting effects make clubbing a truly miraculous spectacle. Moreover, by engaging both our aural and visual senses, the whole extravaganza becomes much more emotionally gratifying.

Adorno is a little too precocious when he says that popular music is for the masses a perpetual busman's holiday (Frith 1990: 310). However temporal the clubbing experience may be, it is nevertheless important to the individual and in the large majority of cases more important than what life deals out on a regular basis. This cathartic effect is what relinquishes the individual from the verge of boredom and discontent. The language that dance music communicates is alien to the language communicated in the workplace. Eliminated are verses of time constraints and constant observation. The difference is also evident when compared to other forms of music. The producer's conscious decision to omit lyrics permits the encounter to be a lot less subjective. As such, we can place our own individual stamp upon the music, taking from it what we choose to take. The compositions are energetic and they instill in us an innate desire to move, to shake free any inhibitions and join others in that sacrosanct dance to the exalted rhythm and beat.

Both Adorno and Horkheimer (During 1993: 30) are correct when they purport that under monopoly all mass culture is identical. In that short distance between 88 FM and 108 FM it is not uncommon to come across the same song three or four times. Whether it's Britney or Boyzone, one feels like Bill Murray in 'Groundhog Day'. For him the frustration becomes so overwhelming that he daringly tries out other alternatives to alleviate the monotony. Unfortunately, the ventures are momentary and he ends up right back at the start. How Adornian is that?

In this case there is light at the end of the tunnel and that takes the shape of Pirate radio. Pirates are also indicative of the Mafessolian concept of the 'law of secrecy'. In Ireland, there are between fifty and sixty stations broadcasting illegally without a license. In Dublin alone there are about twenty- five stations offering jazz, hip-hop, dance, indie and techno (Irish Times Sat Aug 29, 1998). Pirate radio was meant to disappear ten years ago when the Radio and Television Act was passed and the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) established. The stations were told that if they wanted to be considered for a license they must close. Although some ceased broadcasting many continued and even acclaimed cult status like 'Power FM'. To paraphrase Adorno (During 1993:37), style represents a promise in every work of art. The promise held out by the work of art is that that it will create truth by lending new shape to the conventional social form. As such, maintaining this status means that pirate radio also retains a certain degree of 'authenticity'. Toni Walsh, DJ with Power FM says that the numbers listening to pirate stations are small but are specialised in taste. Also, Pirate radio offers young DJ's a place to demonstrate their talents. He continues, there is a gap in the market that is not being filled by either 98 FM or FM 104, which he says, plays "musical wallpaper" (Irish Times Aug 29: 1998). Overall, one can not dismiss the importance of pirate radio for it symbolises a small oasis in the barren stricken desert of banality.

Mr. Dermot Hanrahan, the chief executive of Fm 104 vociferously views pirates as radio for 'anoraks'. Toni Walsh prefers to see them as guardians of specialist music, an extension of the club scene. In a sub-point worth noting, Dublin pirates attract about 5% of the Capital's radio listeners (ibid.). Figures such as this justify the relevancy of dance culture as a counter-hegemonic structure. The proliferation of stations highlights the

growing autonomy that young people have or want to have. The freedom to choose makes this a truly postmodern milieu as start-up costs are minimal and professionalism undermined. The rawness that pirate stations imbue successfully sets them apart from their commercial counterparts. It's about taking matters into one's own hand and nourishing a genre that ubiquitously divides and regenerates.

In a more negative manner Adorno (During 1993: 4) claims that the deception is not that the culture industry supplies amusement but that it ruins the fun by allowing business considerations to involve it in the ideological clichés of a culture in the process of self-liquidation. In a cover story entitled 'Dublin heads for a rave to the Grave', Mick Heaney (1998: 10/11) enthuses that Dublin's dance scene, and Ireland's in general is at the height of a boom, awash with corporate cash and giddy from its sky-high confidence. This bubble-market however, is close to bursting. He continues by saying that at the root of today's problems is the fact that Ireland's clubs have developed too fast. Where a home-grown dance scene should be, there is instead an uneasy amalgam of international DJ's and big business trying to cash in on an affluent youth culture. Once again we witness the attempts of corporatism to cut a slice of cultural logic: a logic that up until now was dismissed and brutalised by media moguls and society in general.

Harry Browne (Irish Times May 19: 1998) sums it up succinctly when he says that the appearance of the music, the lingo and the visual style associated with house in advertisements for alcohol and banks for example, attest to the rising age and growing respectability of the chemical generation. Overall, Irish clubbing is far from being the unique experience its corporate and tourism industry flag-wavers would have us believe. According to Heaney (1998:11), it is locked into something akin to a global dance

market, it shifts according to fashion. At the moment, Dublin and Cork may be seen as locations on par with Leeds and Barcelona, Paris and Manchester, with a hard-partying reputation that attracts international stars. But with a slump in the popularity of the faceless superclubs looming and an underdeveloped base of exciting local talent, Irish club culture could well be headed underground, as in six feet under. Thankfully, such extremity has not resulted but it is important to acknowledge the displeasing impact that liberal capitalism can have on a specific ideology. Homegrown dance culture will remain an undercurrent until it sees fit to surface under its own control and supervision. Only by doing so will it maintain its unique feeling of authenticity and significance.

Postmodernism and musical identity.

According to Brian Boyd (Irish Times: Jan 16, 1998), in a musical culture which is very much in a post-rock phase, everything and every style is on the table and up for grabs with mixing, matching and merging beats being the *modus operandi*. As suggested dance music is a truly postmodern phenomenon, which could not have existed during any other period of time, due to technological requirements. Its originality thus rises out of its ability to remodel past and present structures into a unique modern musical form. In a similar vein, Zygmunt Bauman (1995:266) remarks that the world seems less solid than it used to be. It has lost its apparent unity and continuity... [I]n other words, the world we live in appears to be marked by fragmentarity, discontinuity and inconsequentiality.

Donal Scannell, DJ and journalist recognises this fact (Irish Times Jan 16: 1998) when he says that genres tend to co-exist rather than one 'replacing' the other. This is particularly true when one considers the genre of speed garage. Basically the said style is London's reappraisal of the US garage sound which DJ's Larry Levan and Mel Cheron instigated in the 1970's and early 80's. More recently, The Chemical Brothers managed to merge elements of techno, hip-hop and rock n' roll and in doing so created a distinct sound which has become their trademark. In an article entitled 'Dance is the new jazz', Richard Brophy (Irish Times July 16, 1999), stated that despite the use of highly sophisticated studio tools, dance music paradoxically returns to older musical sources for inspiration, fulfilling Detroit techno innovator Derrick May's advise to "look to the past to reinvent the future". For example 1970's disco has recently given modern house music and a groove and unwittingly kick-started the careers of Daft Punk, Cassius and a seemingly infinite entourage of French Producers (Irish Times April 24: 1998).

Having recently purchased New York producer Francois Kervorkian's essential mix album, I came across a beautiful passage from his short discography. It goes as follows: 'One of the things I've been learning, as a DJ is that we should value our roots. Being able to draw upon this vast body of music and beauty from different parts and put them together. Incorporate some of the beautiful new things, some of the not so old, some of the undiscovered and some of the very old' (Essential Mix album, London Records 2000). The above extract brilliantly encapsulates the veritable spirit of the postmodern musical era. According to Mike Featherstone (1990: 18), there is less interest in constructing a coherent style than in playing with, and expanding, the range of familiar styles.

Furthermore incoherency and fragmentarity are not necessarily equated with explicit chaos and dysfunctionality. Instead postmodernism represents a break with the old established order; favouring a more democratised space wherein the 'mass' is duly located and accepted. This is one of the reasons why the likes of Smirnoff, Bicardi and Playstation attach their insignia's to dance music tours. They obviously recognise the spending power of the new culturally acclaimed and hip young clubber.

Paul Willis (1990: 128) accepts that the strengthening, emerging, profane common culture is plural and decentred but nevertheless marks a kind of historical watershed... [T]he coming dominance of common culture marks, if you like, a decisive stage of cultural modernisation, whereby the 'mass' has become properly and popularly culturally differentiated through the active and creative use of widely available cultural commodities and cultural media. Why else do more than three hundred companies worldwide prefer to use the music of Moby rather than Mozart for their advertisements?

"There are no female DJ's, only DJ's that happen to be female"
(Chucky "7" magazine May 3: 2000).

The postmodern condition according to Lyotard is one in which 'grand narratives' of legitimation are no longer credible, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, and regardless of whether it is speculative narrative or narrative of emancipation (Lyotard 1984: 37). Recently the proliferation of females in the industry has called into question the grand narrative of steadfast patriarchal work-related structures. Ten years ago, spinning the decks in a dark, smoke filled room may not have ranked highly on your average girl's career but times have changed and more and more women are venturing in to the clubworld in increasing numbers (In Dublin 20/08/ 1998: 64). Whether it is novelty, equal rights or a superb marketing ploy, the recognition of gender difference is important as it poses an alternative to the preconceived notion of masculine superiority inherent in the legacy of modernity. Jurgen Habermas, the self-professed guardian of reason equates the non-rational and the emotional with 'nature' just as for centuries men have equated emotion and nature with the female sex (Wallace 1989: 121). For him, reason is devoid of emotionality and is indefatigably patriarchal in structure. As emotion is equated with growing irrationality and subjectivity there can be no place for it within the parameters of Reason (ibid: 122).

It is faulty universalizations such as these which have maintained the premise that male domination is rooted in and reproduced by the assumption that Reason is superior and thus that reasonable men are superior to emotional women (ibid: 129-130). As suggested the exact foundation of dance music lies in its ideology of 'emotion'. Irrational or not it

exists so that a disparate but engaging community can communicate in a musical language, which is boundless and indiscriminate.

English DJ Andrea Parker points out that the kind of dark soundscapes she has produced for independent record label Mo'Wax have perplexed some of her male colleagues- 'I had a all these guys coming up to me, who wouldn't believe it was mine, because they don't think women producers can be dark within the electronic scene for some reason' (Chucky 2000: 27). Moreover sociologically speaking females are not as single minded as males, they are natural multi-taskers and therefore tend to do a lot of things well rather than just one thing to a degree of excellence (ibid: 28).

Postmodernism therefore attempts to undo the chains of theoretical imperialism. Moreover, it is somewhat akin to the theory of feminism as it decries the inappropriate and faulty universalizations. Lyotard himself recommends a society that is tolerant, pragmatic and pluralist, one that celebrates difference and avoids monolithic certainties (Lyotard 1984: 37). The teachings of Nietzsche are also important to postfeminist philosophy as they attempt to re-evaluate traditional views on autonomy and individuality, as well as continuing the search for newer kinds of feminist politics (Robinson 1999:49). Hence the way forward is through valorizing difference and heterogeneity and only by conferring equal status to women in the clubbing environ will this be attainable.

Black on White: **'Going back to my roots'- FPI project 1990.**

In his seminal book 'postmodernity', Barry Smart (1993: 128/129) enthuses that postmodernity is a condition closely articulated with processes of Globalisation. To this I would like to add another important term, 'hybridity'. As inferred, dance music is essentially disparate in that it mixes n' matches different genres and cultural foundations. For Andy Bennett (1999: 610) dance music is both a multi-faceted and distinctly fluid form of expression. He continues: because of the style of mixing involved in the production, it serves to provide a series of 'snapshot' images of such shifting sensibilities of musical taste being exercised by consumers. Contrary to popular beliefs, house music did not originate as a Eurocentric phenomenon. Its roots stem much deeper and further away from this core. Granted British DJ's appropriated certain aspects of the music and moulded it to form Acid house, but the rhythm, the energy and emotion emanated not from shades of white but shades of black.

Dick Hebdiges book *Cut n' Mix* captures the sense of combining and recombining bits and pieces from various sources and then putting them together in novel combinations (McGuigan 1992:101), such a typical feature of black music from the time of slavery to rap and hip-hop, and which is emblematic of the postmodern supersession of cultural 'purity', the blurring of boundaries between forms and styles.

Two locations which, stand out amongst all others are Chicago and Detroit. Likewise, what both regions have in common is their large proportion of Black diasporic settlers. But why did these musical tastes evolve here and what importance did World Music play in its fruition? To answer these questions we must look at African music, but

not as ethnomusicologists would look at it but more importantly through the eyes of sociologists and cultural theorists. According to John Miller Chernoff (1979: 28), African music like other African arts is admired mostly as a spontaneous and emotional creation, an uninhibited, dynamic expression of vitality. It is also essential to life in Africa (ibid: 54) because Africans use music to mediate their involvement within a community.

Similarly in Detroit the resulting collision of ideas produced electronic music of the most formalist austerity but still containing the emotional intensity of the most spiritual soul or gospel (Brewster & Broughton 1998: 83). If acid house in Britain symbolised the counter-hegemonic stance against the established order, then house and techno in the United States acted as successful agents against the discriminating white hegemonic form.

For Chernoff (1979: 155), an African musical event is concerned with sound and movement, space and time, the deepest modalities of perception. If Chicago in the eighties (Brewster & Broughton (1998: 83) became a hotbed of musical creativity precisely because it combined musical tradition with comparative isolation, then it's no wonder that Detroit, an altogether more forgotten outpost, with a more recent musical past produce techno. As referred to earlier, dance music is not only a celebratory musical genre but also a reactionary structure. In Chicago and Detroit respectively, pioneers such as Ron Hardy and Kevin Saunderson set about creating a nonpareil that would explicate the contemporary issues of the two impoverished societies. In Chicago soulful black lyrics gelled with 70's gay disco grooves to form a genre that accentuated the aforementioned principles of black vitality and spirit, while in Detroit a more hard-edged European electronic sound pronounced the arrival of intelligent beats sliced with groove

and attitude. Before this, when Ford and General Motors brought the Motor city full employment (ibid: 83) the soundtrack had been feelgood Motown; as continuing affluence brought black and white countercultures together, funk had fused with acid rock and given us Parliament-funkadelic. Then, as the shrinking auto companies betrayed the population and made Detroit a post-industrial ghost town, along came techno's moody cerebral futurism.

From the above, it is important to acknowledge that as a hybrid form, dance music is a very powerful medium. Opposing demarcation and divide it reaches beyond any one colour and creed. Today whites embrace the differences that once disturbed them: appreciation and enjoyment have replaced uneasiness. What was once disparaged and mocked is now regarded as part of legitimate culture (Cashmore 1997: 1). Therefore out of struggle comes unity of purpose and identity, a sense of resolve and cohesion (ibid: 9). For as Cashmore sees it (ibid: 2), cultures, whether African or European in origin, have merged and melded over time.

From this I would like to probe further, the issue of dance culture and Globalisation. According to John Tomlinson (1996: 22), globalisation refers to the rapidly developing process of complex interconnections between societies, cultures institutions and individuals worldwide. It is a social process which involves compression of time and space... [S]o making the world seem smaller and in a certain sense bringing human beings 'close' to one another. This is what dance culture has been attempting to do for a long time.

The worldwide transfer of this musical culture (ibid: 27) did not occur in a linear unidirectional way. As shown, movement between cultural/geographical areas has always

involved translation, mutation and adaptation, as the 'receiving culture', brings its own cultural resources to bear, in dialectical fashion, upon cultural imports. Detroit techno's musical imprint was in fact nurtured in Germany by the likes of 1970's electronic maestro's Kraftwerk. Their futuristic utterances were quickly appropriated, copied and shipped back across the sea where they soon became enmeshed in the glorious indigenous grooves of Motown and Jazz. According to Richard Brophy (Irish times: July 16, 1999), jazz played a subtler yet more integral role in the development of dance music. It also injected a warmth that outsiders often felt was lacking among the seemingly oppressive sound structures of modern club music, with the legacy of Sun Ra, Miles Davis and John Coltrane giving many a doubting Thomas the necessary road to Damascus Enlightenment. Overall this is an excellent example of attempts made to locate the local within the global context. Furthermore, musical forms such as those mentioned do not necessarily represent the process of cultural imperialism. In contrast, dance music symbolically represents the growing cosmopolitanism that has been evident in society at large. It is therefore becoming harder and harder to specifically locate a genre to any one particular area. In doing so, we undermine the authenticity of sounds. Chicago house and Detroit techno may seem to be place specific but this is only part of an ingenious and well thought out marketing stratagem.

According to Alberto Melucci (Modood 1997: 61/62) the rhythm of change accelerates at an extraordinary pace. Our presence urgently needs a firm foundation; we search for permanent anchors, and question our own life stories. In the age of speed, we no longer have a home. We constantly have to build one, like the three little pigs in the fairy tale, or we have to carry it on our backs like snails. All in all, the characteristics of

difference are paramount to the understanding of every day life in a globalised era. Replacing notions of certainties and fixities are ideals of fluidity and temporality. For Bauman (1997: 188) difference stands for the profusion of choices between various ways of being human and living one's life. Democratized technology such as samplers is symbolic of the way society is moving. The ability to manipulate disparate sounds into seamless whole is what hybridity and cosmopolitanism are all about.

With regards to rhythm, it is hardly necessary to emphasise the importance of drums in African music. The drum is, without question, the instrument that best expresses the inner feelings of black Africa (Bebey 1975: 92). It communicates a language that is similar to the beat of the drum in dance music. Both voice the intensity and emotion of a community bent on highlighting the social importance of their own distinct musical tradition. As a cultural expression, music is a product of this sensibility, but more significantly, as a social force, music helps shape this sensibility (Chernoff 1979: 154).

The vivid decentralising force of late modernity suggests that we are seeing a shift from ethnic or national cultural imperialisms to supranational forms predicated upon a truly 'cosmopolitan' technological infrastructure, one which will create a genuinely global culture (Smart 1993: 140). However, the creation of a truly global culture does not necessarily mean that we will lose our distinguishing characteristics altogether. To comprehend the future of culture in a postmodern age, we must look no further than the realm of digital music (Frith 1996:115); for it is best understood as producing not new texts but new ways of performing texts, new ways of performing the making of meaning. The pleasure of montage comes from the act of juxtaposition rather than from the labour of interpretation. Ellis Cashmore (1997: 179) understands this when he claims that today,

the scope of commodification is so wide that everything, including difference, can be reshaped into a package that can be bought and sold.

***[Dance as a collective vocation].* “Work out”- Frankie Knuckles 1992.**

As Doreen Massey (Negus 1996: 184) remarks, a place and a sense of space are different- materially, experientially and conceptually. A place as the particular, concrete site of specific social activities does not always coincide with a ‘sense of space’, the more abstract way in which we might locate ourselves in the world, that ‘stretched’ sense of where we belong in relation to other parts of the planet. In this section I want to look at the relevancy of the club as a ‘space’ specific phenomenon. I would also like to continue the discussion on postmodernism, focussing particularly on the topic of ‘leisure’. Clubs, for many have become the modern mindset of raves. However, unlike the illegal raves of ten years ago, clubbing has become such a dynamic power that it has now legitimated itself as one of the most important fixtures in the weekly leisure planner. For Jean Baudrillard (1998: 51), leisure presides within the realm of freedom. It also explicitly oversees the praxis of satisfaction (ibid: 156). For the clubber, the arrival of the weekend marks a significant break from the habitual tedium of the working week. Leisure time (ibid: 158), thus allows the individual the freedom to fulfill himself or herself, a sort of social salvation if you like.

In a television interview, one of the stalwarts of dance culture, DJ Alfredo, elegantly depicted Ibiza as the adult Disneyworld. Although said in a joke-like manner, it did however provide food for thought. Hence, if Ibiza is the adult Disneyworld the surely

clubland is more akin to 'Universal Studios'. Both mindsets of a dreamscape devoid of reality but yet equally significant. To paraphrase Douglas Kellner (1992: 145), clubs are predominantly governed by the aesthetics of representational realism, of images and stories, which fabricate the real and attempt to produce a reality effect. However transient the clubbing experience may be, it is nonetheless an important part of the clubbers cultural sphere. This is an autonomous milieu whereby diverse peoples descend in order to create a structure premised on the ideals of hedonism and vivacity. A quasi-world made real through role playing and image construction (ibid: 153).

For Kellner, the notion of a 'player' (ibid.) is central to identity construction. Players play with and often flout social conventions and attempt to distinguish themselves through ritualized activities on other leisure and social concerns. The players become someone if they succeed and gain identity through admiration and respect of other players. In this case clubbers unite under the guiding principle of music. The therapeutic quality of the music thus enables the players to partake in a performance, which is uninhibited and spiritually fulfilling. According to J.H Kwabena (1988: 217) music for the dance thus performs two major functions. It must create the right atmosphere or mood or stimulate and maintain the initial urge for expressive movements, and it must also provide the rhythmic basis to be articulated in movement or regulate the scope, quality, speed, and dynamics of movement through its choice of sounds, internal structural changes, or details of designs.

This task of setting the tone falls to the new post-rock star and cultural icon, the DJ. More so than ever, it is his/her job to provide some continuity to the performance, making sure that the experience is uplifting and mentally enhancing. According to

Kwabena (1988: 206), sounds, however beautiful are meaningless if they don't offer the experience or contribute to the expressive quality of a performance. For DJ Francois Kervorkian (essential mix album) Djing 'can still be a very uplifting experience where you try to be the conduit, the instrument for people to really have a good time, not just dance mindlessly'. This is an interesting point because in a club situation, music and dance are interchangeable. Acting as a release mechanism, it can convey (Kwabena 1988: 207), thoughts or matters of personal or social importance through the choice of movements, postures and facial expressions. Unlike other forms of dance, here there are no set rules. Movement is irregular and liberated, a physical discontinuity overseen by a spiritual and mental uniformity. The only codes that exist are that of fun and play. Also inherent in the rhetoric is that of 'escapism'. In other words, clubbing is symbolic of a desire to return to a second 'childhood', whereby life is much more pleasing, innocent and amusing. At such events it is not uncommon to see both males and females sucking lollipops, or chewing on baby soothers. According to Bauman (1995: 275), identity must be seen as such: the dividing line between socially accepted and merely individually imagined identity is one between self-assertion and madness. This is why we all feel time and time again an overwhelming 'need of belonging' - a need to identify ourselves not just as individual human beings, but as members of a larger unit. Whether it is madness or just harmless fun, dance culture shows no sign of growing up. In an intriguingly related article, Ian Burkitt (1997: 43) puts forward the concept of a 'smiling emotion' - in which the smile is a signal of friendly intent towards others or the reaction when greeting a friend. The feelings associated with this sign prepares a person for a certain type of action, for the gestures of friendly and the subsequent actions of friendliness. We may not

actually know the person whom we dance alongside yet we feel an overwhelming sense of affiliation. Clubs are the new churches in which devotees come for replenishment. The 'unity in diversity' is what accomplishes this emotional satisfaction. For Kellner (1992: 158), the postmodern self accepts and affirms multiple and shifting identities. Identity today, becomes a freely chosen game, a theatrical presentation of the self, in which one is able to present oneself in a variety of roles, images and activities.

Overall there is a manifest difference between the way a person relates to colleagues in work and the relative strangers in a club. The logic that we ascribe to clubs, illuminates the desire for a different, better way of being (McGuigan 1992: 247). It's about 'winning space' within and against the hegemonic order (ibid: 96). As such, clubs highlight the failures and inconsistencies of daily life; preferring to offer what individuals really want, an innate desire to belong; to be part of something that advocates joy and fulfillment. This had led Frey and Dickens (1990: 264) to conclude that leisure should be considered a primary institution in advanced industrial societies. For them, the increasingly organised nature of contemporary leisure, the prominence of leisure activities in the search for communal bonds are viewed as the primary factors contributing to the experience of leisure as a major social institution.

Music for a fragmented generation:

According to Paul Willis (1990: 81), musical performance, in the wider sense, amounts to an important expression and celebration of sociability, enabled through a shared sense of ground aesthetics. In other words, the music both creates and articulates the very idea of a symbolically creative community. Despite their (authorities) protests,

dance music has legitimated itself as a truly magnificent musical genre. The characteristic rituals of performance (ibid: 74) help to socialize the experience of dancing to recorded music, turning it into a creative performance and an event. Of all these practices, perhaps the most important are the improvised forms of oral poetry of Djing, rapping and MCing.

Dance has also broken free from the shackles of older forms of musical expression. Hence, dancing has now acquired a more fluid and individualised structure. Bodies according to Sara Ahmed (1999: 101/102), have become reconstructed through techniques which serve to approximate an image. That bodily image takes on the life of the fetish; it perpetually re-creates itself as the signifier of desire through affirming and disavowing the difference. Similarly, this culture does not engage itself in specifics of fashion precisely because the said symbolic creativity emanates not simply from physical superficialities but from what lies within. Motivations are ulterior: preferring to accentuate the social ethic of togetherness. According to Freitas et al (1997: 334), the question is not simply what do clothes mean or not mean. Rather, how do we use them to negotiate border spaces-spaces we need to conceptualize as tenuous, fragile, barbed or elastic rather than fixed and dichotomous?

We no longer live in a society, which is bent on maintaining uniformity. Instead our lives, like the symbolic representation of dance music, rely on the ability to reconstruct patterns of change, which celebrate otherness and diversity. For Bauman (1995: 277), the siren song of community is all about the warmth of togetherness, mutual understanding and love. If postmodernism proclaims the death of the subject (Moore 1988: 169 & 174), then it is no longer possible to speak of the individual or the self as a coherent unity, but instead we must understand that we are made up from, and live our

lives as a mass of contradictory fragments. It is therefore dance culture's endeavour to bring all these fragments together, enmeshing them in a cultural space which the clubber can call his or her own.

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Theoretical Framework.

Only in the last number of years has dance culture become wholly encapsulated in the area of academic research. Prior to this, the majority of written work centred on the endeavours of journalism, which tended to err on the side of detailing rather than delving. Since then academic research has sought to unfold some of the more perplexing questions and features attributed to this culture.

As a result of the genre's narcotic affiliations, dance music, like many of its musical predecessors has continued to be talked about and written about in a subversive manner. Similarly, this persistent negativity has undermined what the culture is really about. It is therefore my aim to extrapolate and investigate, using the following points and sub-points, the importance of this genre to the individual and collectivity alike. Due to the profound lack of investigation in Ireland, it is hoped that some new and interesting facts may be uncovered. The following Research questions I wish to address are:

Background-

- The contemporary politics of the day prior to and after the emergence of dance culture, Its impact and influence?
- Referred to by academicians as the postmodern era, I would like to investigate the role played by dance music in this era. Are both commensurate?
- Dance culture, a culture of avoidance or part of reality?

The Music-

- Subculture or tradition?
- Innovation or Retrogression?
- Universal of parochial.
- Sound and 'authenticity'.

Identity and Gender issues:

- Identity and Consumerism.
- Individualist or conformist.
- Transformation of Gender Roles/ the role of women.
- Ethnic influences in the culture.
- Uniformity or Unity in difference?

Sociality:

- Clubs- ad hoc communities.
- Clubbers: subcultural group or Neo- Tribes.
- Style and Symbolic Interaction.
- Style and Music.
- The social act of dancing.

Research Methodology.

In this case, accepting one form of qualitative research method over another would greatly impair my proposed endeavour. In doing so, I would be neglecting to illuminate many of the intricacies ascribed to the culture.

I therefore decided that it would be more advantageous to utilise as many methods as possible, and as such attempt to acquire a more holistic and factually enhanced response.

In relation to 'participant observation' Jennifer Mason (1996: 60) purports that the researcher should immerse himself or herself in a research setting, systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions, events and so on within it.

Moreover, the appropriateness of the method rests on the fact that it places emphasis on the non-verbal aspects of human behaviour (Philips 1976: 235). This method is invaluable as it captures the respondents in a normative setting. As a devoted clubber myself, I will thus be able to infiltrate other clubbers who are unaware of my purpose and goal. This degree of anonymity is crucial for as Mason (1996: 63) sees it, the observer may feel it is more ethical to enter into and become involved in the social world of those you research to gain your understandings than to attempt to 'stand outside', by using other methods.

On the downside, there remains the possibility of misinterpretation especially relating to mannerisms and symbolic interaction. There is also the slight chance that I

may undermine the method by maintaining a certain degree of subjectivity, however inadvertent.

According to Mason, one cannot fail to participate in some form and the problem is that you cannot control how others perceive your participant observation (ibid: 64). That said, participant observation is an important method but one which must be used correctly. Knowing what to look for and the relevancy of it can take a lot of practice, however I deem it a necessary procedure and one which can deliver a high level of accuracy used in parallel with the next method; Interviewing.

In relation to other forms of research, interviewing can and indeed does attain the highest level of accuracy. Before proceeding with the research, I eliminated two other possible forms of research i.e. survey (closed questionnaires) and telephone interviewing. I needed to understand what makes the clubbers tick, their knowledge and their passion.

Unfortunately, the said forms would uncover neither. Surveys I deemed too impersonal, as well as the potential risk for inadequate responses. Inconsistencies may also arise in relation to telephone interviews due to time and cost factors. Furthermore interviewing is more substantial as it allows the interviewer to notice and correct the respondents misunderstandings, to probe adequate on vague responses and to answer questions and allay concerns, thus maximizing complete and meaningful data (Judd 1991: 218).

Maximizing complete and meaningful data therefore meant that questions had to be open-ended as they allow respondents the chance to convey the finer shades of their attitude to their satisfaction instead of forcing them to choose one of the several statements that may be more motivating to respondents (ibid: 239).

A couple of weeks prior to the proposed date of interviewing, I undertook a minor pilot study with three people whom I relied upon for complete honesty and diligence. Granted some inconsistencies did arise but were soon eradicated. The decision to rectify wording and question order proved very rewarding and actually enhanced the future responses.

Recording the interviews using a Dictaphone rather than documenting them manually meant that important features like hesitations, pauses or laughs could be recorded. According to William J. Goode (1981:191), interviews are like a pseudo-conversation; to be successful warmth and personality must be present. According to Gavron (*ibid*: 187), bias cannot be avoided completely but awareness of the problem is the key factor. Moreover a face to face interviewer can best establish rapport and motivate the respondent to answer fully and accurately, again improving the quality of data (Judd 1991: 218).

In summation, the advantage of using a focussed interview with open-ended questions enabled me to go into the interviews with a predetermined but flexible set of questions about the topic of dance culture. Apart from the aforementioned methods I decided to bring together four young people with one thing in common; their incredible passion for clubbing. Running along the lines of a focus group, we spent two hours engaged in sprightly discussion about the said topic. According to Richard Kreuger (1988: 18), a focus group can be defined as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The relaxed atmosphere thus encouraged members to enunciate without prejudice any ideas or notions, which they felt important to the discussion.

However, according to Kreuger (ibid: 43), there is a risk in using focus group data to generalize to a population because the sample is not necessarily intended to be reflexive of the entire population. This noted; measures were thus taken to limit generalities and maintain subjective responses.

Overall, one of the greatest advantages of focus groups, or qualitative methods in general is that they give us information in depth. Furthermore, this procedure attempts to capture the dynamic nature of group interaction, which is not present in one-to-one interviewing (ibid: 44).

[Sources of Data]

As stated, I asked three clubbers with an average age of 22 to take part in a short but substantial discussion session. The informal discussion lasted for the duration of two hours. After sifting through an extortionate number of transcripts, I appropriated the necessary material, which was pivotal to the topic as a whole.

For the purpose of participation I attended three different venues, each with their own distinct characteristics; in order that I may observe discreetly, individual clubbers and other young people engaged in their own cultural spaces. Finally, I deemed it necessary to interview someone responsible for playing and producing dance music i.e. (local Dublin DJ/producer).

[Methods of data analysis]

In dealing with the data, my interpretations will take the form of three readings; literal, interpretive and reflexive (Mason 1996: 109), whereby I will be interested in the language used, the understanding behind it, as well as my own interpretation respectively.

Using such methods of interpretation, it is hoped that the end results will be accurate and relevant.

Discussion.

'Dakota and Cocoon'

Before venturing out into the voluminous nightlife of Dublin's city- scape, I first had to decide for the purpose of the research, which would be the most appropriate venues to visit. It was important to do so because I wanted to unearth as much dissimilarity as possible. A preliminary list was drawn up and gradually one by one, those with the weakest case were eliminated. Interestingly, the amount of newly opened trendy disco bars continues to grow, traversing every other building in the economically and culturally embellished Dublin 2 location.

The first port of call was 'Dakota', a medium- sized and aesthetically pleasing establishment, yet typical of the ever-increasing amount of bars geared towards the 18-30's age bracket. Here, the music played second fiddle to the loud and continuous drone of people talk. I could not help thinking that even if Charlotte Church sang a number from Metallica's new album; the response would still have been the same. It was obvious that those present were not here to dance but to chat and be chatted up.

Glancing eagerly around the room I could see the female sex greatly outnumbered their male counterparts. However what both sexes had in common was their exquisite taste in fashion with designer labels being the norm. Narcissism in all its regalia, with males outdoing the females in the tanning department. Moreover, Dakota prides itself on its gay-friendly attitude, and this is evident by the overwhelming sense of ease and relaxing atmosphere. The outgoing perception of the crowd suggests that Dublin may now be realising the importance of a 'live and let live' disposition. The nonchalant

intermingling of disparate sexual orientations eliminated the archaic stranglehold of division, which heretofore would have ensured the secularisation of members of the gay population. Noticeably absent from the crowd were members of the black community. Except for three or four males, the distinct lack of ethnic groups suggested that places such as Dakota are less preferential to other clubs and bars with larger ethnic populations.

After a couple of hours I felt that it was time to savour the delicacies of another establishment, namely 'Cocoon'. Once inside I could not help but feel a grave sense of similarity between both places. The décor was remarkably alike and I was sure that those in Dakota had uprooted and followed us here, slipping in the back door as we entered through the front,

In contrast the music was more uptempo and noticeably louder. Apart from the noticeable absence of a DJ, funky house music emanated from the innumerable amount of speakers dotted throughout the room. Once again, the choice of music did not pay dividends and like Dakota, people preferred to stand and chat. Unlike Dakota however, Cocoon had a more egalitarian feel about it with mixed identities gracing the venue. Similarly the atmosphere was relaxed if not moreso than Dakota.

Opened recently under new management, the venue prides itself on its cordiality and warmth. Despite this, I was somewhat apathetic towards both venues. It was evident that those present were not only here to carry out their duties to sociality but were here to be recognised. The males seemed much more vainglorious than the women did, so much so that the queue for the wash-hand basin (or mirror should I say) was three times the depth of the queue at the bar.

Back inside, I tried listening albeit with great difficulty to some of the ongoing conversations. One particular group was discussing the previous week's activities at work. As if to prove something, money matters and big deals provided the mainstay of conversation. Normally, pomposity is met with solemn disdain, however in this instance the group actually seemed engrossed in each others monetary endeavours. In a bid to avoid undue attention I decided to retreat back to where my colleagues were seated. Although not much company that evening, they recognised the significance of my excursion.

As I sat back down, I noticed that the arrival of a few media honchos. The normally stringent door-keepers were only too delighted to greet and usher in the aforementioned. I recalled that earlier on I barely received a 'how's it goin'. Interestingly, the media moguls preferred to retain their daily attire of shirts and ties and despite the odd nod and wink they paled into insignificance as they made their way through the bubbling crowd.

At the table next to mine, a group of women were discussing their imminent holiday plans. In the space of twenty minutes, I was taken from the Canaries to Barcelona and back to the Caribbean. All this coming and going left a feeling in my stomach, which was more symptomatic of the prospective air miles rather than the demon drink.

Pondering on the previous night's experience, it seems that we are visible better off than past generations. Yet even those who frequent Dakota and Cocoon are hardly representative of the rest of society. Instead these are middle class zones with middle class tastes. Turning up in a tracksuit and trainers would have warranted an instant refusal by the door-staff.

In a way I am reminded of the 1980's again where you were judged not by the size of your heart but by the size of your bank balance. Similarly at the end of the 90's and into the new millenium, appearance still seems to mean everything. Those present are able to power dress because spending power allows them to do so. The Celtic Tiger's offspring who seem to live in an environment that is perpetually work-related. Whether it be their physical attire or their money- matters conversations, we are re-sensing albeit in shadowy manner, the individualism of 80's culture. According to Irene Thomson (1985: 276) the narcissist pursues no goals other than his own gratification, since nothing has meaning except in terms of the self. It would be a gross misjudgment to say that this is entirely the case, but is true to say that we are witnessing certain aspects of it. Maybe this is what consumer culture has instilled in us. It happened in England so why not here? For many years our economy has been playing catch-up, but now we hear the positive rhetoric and visually notice the change. Places such as these epitomize Dublin's new cultural economy. Despite this, greater polarities exist ensuring those who rise, rise even further, while those at the bottom, remain in the undergrowth. We are once again 'living for the present' albeit in a different way to the rhetoric of clubbing. In this case, alcohol no longer provides the instrument for escapism; instead it invigorates its patients, prolonging the pleasurable experience. We share this milieu with others because capitalism's new guise has permitted us to do so. This new guise has also successfully managed to marry work with leisure but herein lies the ambiguity. We may feel that we have left the office but in fact we are only on a sojourn. All the attributes no matter how trivial are present: the suit, the money and the lingo. 'To spend or not to spend, that is the modern day option'. Unfortunately if this continues the rest of society is destined to

become like the music in Dakota: acknowledged for the first few minutes but then tapering off into insignificance, an indifferent soundtrack for a disinterested listener. Normally, I would not frequent venues such as these but having said that, they did reveal some brilliant and thought provoking ideas. Likewise for the benefit of the research the experience proved invaluable.

[Club 3345]-

The following weekend I headed off with a notebook and pen intact to club 3345 in Vicar Street. Heralded by press and clubbers alike to be the most innovative clubbing venture to surface in Ireland since the cloudy days of 'sides' in the Olympia. What makes this club unique is its strange opening hours. 4pm may seem a bizarre time yet across the water this has been happening for quite some time. Clubs like the aforementioned are now advertised under the heading of the 'Sunday Social'. Therefore missing from the frame are those all too familiar glassy eyed and boisterous patrons whose sole aim is to consume before 2.15 am, the equivalent of a blood transfusion storage centre.

Instead 3345 prides itself on its laid back attitude combined with music from every corner of the musical spectrum. Upon arrival, it was evident that those inside were actually interested in listening to the various styles. Surely, the social lubricant was important, yet here it preferred to reside away from the limelight.

Kicking off with instrumental hip-hop and African vibes was Paul Murphy, an ex-pat and stalwart of everything that is left of centre. Those entering seemed to be aware of his reputation and his style, so much so that a few failed to respond to the barman as he shouted and prodded at their jackets. This was a truly unique situation: an Irishman living

in London playing Afro-beat to a predominantly mixed crowd in a Dublin venue. How's that for cultural postmodernism?

It would be incorrect of me to say that that missing from Dakota and Cocoon were true music lovers. However in 3345, the music is brought down from the shelf, given a good polishing and deservedly placed on display for the admiration of everybody. From deep house to drum n' bass, it seemed that every genre was well represented.

Furthermore, the ideology behind 3345 is that of a 'social gathering', whereby sobriety rather than intoxication takes precedence. Mingling amongst the crowd I saw that casual attire was the norm, with trainers, cargo pants and T-shirts being the preferred choice.

Interestingly the T-shirts worn, were indicative of the mentality of the crowd, for emblazoned across the shirts were logos not of extortionately priced designer wear but motifs of independent record labels and dance acts. From 'D1' to 'warp' and 'skint', the simulacra suggested that this was a discerning crowd bent on highlighting their inherent individualism and passion for alternative music. Moreover, the terms 'independent' and 'social' are important as they reflect the individuals wish to retain a certain sense of autonomy while at the same time preferring to conform to a movement that is responsive to one overriding feature- the music.

The Sunday social is therefore a dress down affair, whereby appearance becomes secondary. It's also about feeling comfortable and relaxed; a milieu devoid of contrived looks and style. As the evening progressed, my notebook began to swell with notes and pointers. The talk became a little more vociferous and to my delight, I was able to overhear two individuals close-by. Their conversation centred upon the night's main attraction, Ashley Beedle. Their mannerisms said it all, as they clearly excited by the

prospect of seeing one of the most innovative underground DJ's of the last ten years. Delicately bopping up and down, they talked about his upcoming releases, as well as his musical back catalogue and associations with the aforementioned Paul Murphy. As a DJ of black progressive music, he had successfully captivated the attention of these two young Dubliner's. It was evident that the two were emotionally attached to the music, for their exuberance reminded me of two giggling schoolgirls rather than two twenty – something males. Overall, it was the pleasing atmosphere and sense of togetherness that retained my undivided attention. 3345 is thus indicative of this new form of social meeting wherein there is a fixation with fluidity and flexibility. According to Thomson (1985: 277) there has been a shift in emphasis, from self- interest defined in economic terms to self-interest in non-economic spheres, we now compete for experiences instead of dollars. Moreover the late 80's and 90's have witnessed great intermixing of both conformity and individualism. Clubs like 3345 and other events, which I will discuss later, encapsulate brilliantly the said concept. Dance music is about expression, but expression in an unfixed manner. It's like joining a voluntary organisation or charity. Although our main work takes precedence, this is not to say that what we partake in outside work-time is any less significant. In fact, it can be more rewarding and in some cases pivotal to the development of the individual. At work the egotistical mind takes over negating everything else; however outside this environment, we embark on an altogether more rewarding past time, which is premised on a mixture of both altruism and egotism. Likewise we desire to be part of a community which is egalitarian in nature, a place where we can fall back on for support and reassurance.

3345 is only one of many clubbing experiences that offer an alternative to the banal musical experiences of other locations. Apart from the better known DJ's, the club also nurtures and promotes young Irish talent. It is also symbolic of a democratised space which chooses to break down divides, while at the same time adhering to late modernity's notions of innovation and revitalization. For instance, to complement the music, audiovisuals are projected onto a large screen within. These images originate from a variety of independent sources and depict elements from short film, to photographic study and flash animations to club visions. Similar to the MTV visuals, they lack coherency and continuity. The meanings are in fact fluid and the individual is left to place their own subjective understandings on the proceedings. Altogether 3345 enmeshes itself in the spirit of postmodernism, as there exists no overall answers, just micro-discourses. As a result, modern day identity is no longer derived through a sole reliance on uniformity but through an amalgamation of conformity and individualism respectively.

D1- techno label.

In the literature review, I wrote at considerable length about the significance of black music and roots music as a globalised form. In particular, I focussed on one such hybrid, Detroit techno. How does this relate to what I was saying about postmodernism? Located in Dublin, independent record label D1 epitomizes the principles of time-space compression and more notably globalisation. I therefore decided to interview the man in charge of the operation, Eamonn Doyle. Due to hectic work commitments, the interview was unfortunately cut short, yet despite this, I managed to retrieve and build on some interesting points.

In 1996 Eamonn and his close friend Graham O' Sullivan initiated the D1 recordings project. Once underway, both men set about producing and releasing techno, which deviated from the harsher edge of the genre. I asked Eamonn about his influences, "Being the Motown capital I grew up listening to the likes of Stevie Wonder. I was also into the reggae sound of Bob Marley. There was something exciting about these musical styles". For him the precursor to techno- dub reggae was omnipresent the early 70's. "Even before Kraftwerk, people were experimenting with these dub sounds; they were using equipment like desks and effects units. It was this funk and soul sound which was still heard ten years later in Detroit". From this it is evident that Detroit techno came about as a result of this musical fusion. Only when the right technological equipment existed, did the genre begin to take on such major significance.

Despite releasing the music from a small operation in Dublin, the international profile of D1 is much bigger than the profile received here. This may be due to the fact that the sound D1 creates retains many of the characteristics fundamental to the Detroit genre. As France and Germany have their own generic sounds, Eamonn is adamant that "D1 can craft its own unique style; which is inherent to Ireland". Despite his great effort to persuade me to his way of thinking, I feel that D1's releases are not essentially generic but global in make-up, for they retain many of the genres ethnic origins; which is amazing considering all of D1's producers are white and Irish.

This is another example of a musical form, which stretches across geographic and creative boundaries. The ability to reproduce a sound that is thousands of miles away from its origin is testament to the advances in digital technology and musical venture. As stated earlier, identities are no longer fixed and stable. It is important to note that the label

does not imitate Detroit's sound. In contrast, D1 contributes an enormous amount of fresh ideas and perceptions. In doing so, the label manages to create a sound which maintains a sense of 'authenticity' while at the same time depending on its earlier influences, such as funk and soul for inspiration. Here we witness the unraveling of the 'collage effect' as disparate styles are superimposed upon one another in an unrestricted manner: thereby creating new meanings and texts. The end product is such that we are no longer able to say with resounding confidence that the sound is American, Irish or otherwise. Instead, its originality emanates from its multi-faceted and ingeniously distinct sources.

Homelands-

Until last year, an open-air dance music festival was unheard of in Ireland. Organisers met with constant objections, but thanks to the continued trials and tribulations by Irish dance music aficionados, the first ever homelands festival was finally secured. Gathering together all of dance music's variegated sounds and conscious that at some stage in the future I would be undertaking this piece of research I decided that homelands would be an excellent choice of study.

Queuing for buses did not attract the same amount of tedium as waiting for one during rush hour. Instead the air of excitement was overwhelming. Groups chatted in eager anticipation and not surprisingly most of the conversation centred upon the acts playing at the impending event. Everyone seemed to have his or her own superstar. Forty-five double-decker buses later the Mosney holiday centre was alive to a mass of people, ducking and diving from one genre tent to the next. Having read other researchers

chemically aided experiences I thought that it would be interesting to look at the episode from the opposing standpoint.

Later that evening we were treated to the drifting and oblique sounds of Orbital, who are beyond a shadow of a doubt one of the finest acts to come out of dance culture. The response of the crowd was stupendous as they danced in a joyous and liberated manner. Nowadays, the DJ exacts the same respect that rock groups once did in the past. The ability to mix dissimilar records into a seamless whole reflects the clubbers wish for some continuity amongst the incongruities of modern life. The build-ups and the breakdowns within the musical pattern are symbolic of life's turn of fortunes. Furthermore, the uplifting tempo of dance music instructs the listener to move; for this is not a genre bent on feeding negativity but instead on accentuating the positive. The spirit of rave still survives in its modern form. Looking around, the clubbers still imbue the community atmosphere of ten years ago. As I was saying this is a cultural sphere where non-economic factors come into play. More importantly is the desire to share a musical space to which the clubber can call his or her own. In a passive and indirect way, it is a two-finger salute to the hegemonic structures of society. It is also a space whereby the only rules are rules of fun and pleasure. In a society where increasing dichotomies are prevalent, events such as homelands are indicative of the egalitarian nature of a cultural milieu. If politicians want to know the real definition of a classless society then maybe they should don their dancing shoes and join the rest of the masses in a celebratory caper in honour of Marx, the old skool raver himself.

Wandering nonchalantly from tent to tent, it was easy to spot the starry-eyed revelers for they were gyrating with enormous dexterity. Almost in time, their bodies

maneuvered to the sound of the pulsating beat. The attire was comical with some preferring to wear 'Barney' and 'Teletubbies' T-shirt's, while others were more industrious in their white protective clothing and masks. Glancing across and situated at the corner of the park was a fun fair: Baudrillard 'depthlessness' in a nutshell. As stated, clubbing forsakes the profundities of modern society. Nothing else matters but sheer hedonism and jouissance. It is a wish to return to the more simplistic times when bungling with the box was much more entertaining than playing with the gift inside. In an endeavour to recapture that spirit, dance culture provides all the necessary requirements to do so.

Returning to the group, I noticed that the stimulants had taken full effect. Two members in particular were so sensitized that bodily embraces were becoming much more frequent. However, they were not carried out in a sexual manner, rather in an emotive and supportive way. Meanwhile the rest of the group was swaying gracefully to the sounds of uber-DJ Paul Oakenfold. It has been acknowledged that DJ sets from the aforementioned read like the classic novel. Aware of the crowd and in particular his substance- aided fans; he introduced the tone, then gradually built to a crescendo: whereupon he unraveled the plot in climactic fashion. In this instance, he had just released a best seller as the symbolic read was met with whistles, shouts and claps of approval from those in attendance. Moreover, the male clubbers in particular showed no signs of inhibitions as they bopped up and down in a liberal and unrestricted fashion. There was also a great sense of camaraderie as friends and strangers alike smiled and gestured to each other in a pleasing and affectionate demeanour.

Interestingly, the idea of fluid identities came to the fore as Professional friends mixed and grooved with young and old on the dance-floor. Defrocked of their suits, their attire was much more casual and club-wear oriented. As posited in the literature review, this is indicative of late modern society's fascination with 'experimentation'. Away from the office the aforementioned become enrapt in milieu of considerable difference. Their identity is no longer fixed as they become subsumed in a classless and floating organisation.

What makes homelands an innovative endeavour is its ability to provide this musical spectacle which embraces every sub-text of dance music. We must not underestimate the role of 'experimentation' because without it, the music would become just another banal and unimaginative by-product. Furthermore without experimentation, different alliances would not be formed and celebrations of otherness would be prematurely curtailed and at worst repudiated.

As stated in the research methodology, I brought together four people with a particular passion for dance music. In order to maintain a degree of confidentiality, I have changed the names of the following respondents. Making up the group were John, a 24-year-old DJ and dance music producer; Sean, whose 23 and also a DJ; Mary 23, a habitual clubber and James, a 21-year-old gay clubber. The conversation took place one Saturday afternoon in a quiet café in Temple Bar, Dublin. Beginning with a few simplistic questions, I then gradually moved on to some more thought-provoking topics. The first question I asked related to the respondents preferential choice of music: John- *"anything with a good beat really... ehm to narrow it down, I would have to say house music with an American feel, followed by breakbeat stuff... it's these styles I usually drop*

*when Djing, however depending on the night, anything will go really... you've got to remember that you are playing for the crowd and not just for yourself". Mary's response was similar: "got to have a beat (banging)... I hate drum n' bass... you got to flow you see, drum n'bass just doesn't do that. It's maybe a little ignorant of me, I don't know... sometimes drum n'bass lacks the rhythm that other scenes have, I like something you are able to bop to... ". What about you Sean? - "Hmm ... I have a great love of funky and minimal techno and like John this is what I play when I'm out. I don't know why... suppose I like the bleeps and squelches... very acidic and groovy. On the other hand I was once a f***** metallor, balls and all the rest... I think that both styles play off each other, there are a lot of comparisons... the commercial aspect I suppose. Metal had an underground status, now it's the same with techno... it makes a nice change from some of the other s*** you hear".*

From this is clear to see the dynamics involved in dance music. The respondents infer that its power lies in its rhythm and momentum and its ability to instill in the clubber the desire to move. They also denote the non-commercial aspects of it, as if it means a lot more to retain this status.

I then asked James about the importance of dancing- "*yeah its everything man, you can't have one without the other, I like to dress up in something cool, not cool cool but cool in the sense of something light. The more melody and rhythm a song has, the more I want to move, sometimes that just doesn't happen in 'the George' (Dublin 2 gay venue). A lot of people are there just to show off... 'this costs more than yours attitude', which is alright but when I'm in the frame of mind, I'll go to a specialist night elsewhere... like Ri-Ra's, where I can have a serious boogie, with other serious*

clubbers... I sound like Dave Fanning here... no to answer the question, dancing is important, the freedom to do what you like ...feeling good with no one saying 'look at that'... ". Likewise, Mary views dancing as an essential element- "Dancing is the main aspect, I also like to wear something light... dancing is about letting loose and with the right music... What a buzz?. Both go hand in hand, like salt and pepper; it's the energy of the music and crowd together". I then inquired from a producer/DJ point of view, "I think it's an important part of the scene. I use to dance, in the 'temple of sound' but I've only done it once in the last couple of years and that was in the Funnel Bar... with live PA's no-one really dances, therefore there's not that much feedback; 90% I'd say are just there to listen to you... Its like a live gig but when I Dj, I like to get the crowd involved... afterall they've come to dance, so I have to put on a show. There's a link between good Dj's and the crowd, he... oh and she must know how to entertain, the more people on the floor, the better job the Dj has done... you can feel the enjoyment, the dance-floor is the clubbers area and they are in control and there's no questions asked"- Sean.

Following on from this I asked about the role of 'identity' in dance music, John-
"Identity!!! I think it's about the freedom to decide, it's an anything goes scene. Everything is shaped around the music... personally the music is the focal point. Some feel the need to dress up, like the poseurs in other bars, which I won't mention. They're into their own thing and the music is definitely not one of them. The places that I go to don't feel the need too, there's no need to impress. It's about expression, yes that's it- 'expression' ... the scene provides the means of expression, about how we feel I suppose. It's maybe somewhat philosophical but for me the music is the input and satisfaction is

the output". Mary was also very forthcoming with an answer. - "I think John's right, for a long time people looked down their noses at you- like all clubbers were junkies or something. The way I feel about it is... I go to work and although I love it, I find that there's something spiritual in going to a club with friends or standing in the middle of a field with the bass drum banging away in the background. You know that people are here for one thing ... not only drugs, it's a culture away from 9-5. Why else would 25,000 people pack homeland s last year. I suppose I've never lost my hippie mentality, freedom to do what you want, to express yourself". Turning to James, I inquired about the influence of the gay community in dance culture- "well you know all the best things start here; no seriously you've got to remember that dance took off as a gay thing. From disco to Frankie Knuckles and now with David Morales. Gay culture brought something special, it brought the extravaganza, the sex and appeal overall. Studio 54 in New York had it all- gays, lesbians, blacks and trannies (transsexuals) and what not. There was a fun element to it, catchy melodies and sexy beats... dance music is not just a white thing ... it's about inheritance. Even today there is still the same appeal. Here in Ireland clubbing has exploded but the same principles remain".

To my delight, this question uncovered many of the important themes pertaining to the spirit of fun and the influence of different cultures in the scene. In an attempt to find out more about Ireland's role in dance culture, I asked the respondents the following question- "Do you see the dance movement in Ireland as being a proactive or reactive entity?" John: *"Hmm... that's a tough one... Ok! Some will say it was reactive... that it happened in England and then caught on here but on thing I will say is that young people are similar in many ways, as the wants and desires for many can be the same. The*

movement could have caught on here first but I don't think the moment was right ... it was the conditions in England that fed its appeal. It did take a while to catch on here, but the mentality was different... Irish rock was still a big thing. Eventually when it did filter over here the meaning it brought with it was different... the music offered something special to young people; yeah maybe the drugs thing was important but apart from that... the music struck a chord deep down... something new, something fresh, something many 18+ could identify with". As Sean saw it- "when it started I was (pause) twelve or thirteen. Everyone was talking about acid but I didn't know what this was... battery acid? I was more into playing guitar and listening to heavy rock and everything else really. Looking back now I'd say drugs had a lot to do with... the warehouse thing, it was about people getting together and enjoying this new sound... that proactive ain't it?"

Querying about the growing role of women in dance music in Ireland, I asked both Dj's for their thoughts and views- *"Yeah Djing has down through the years been a male thing but fortunately in recent years more and more women are becoming involved...for example take Aoife Ni Canna and Claire Maloney, Aoife in particular is better than the majority if Irish Dj's out there. It's her open-mind and just pure talent that has allowed her to be up there with the best..."*(John). *"John's hit it on the head, many of the women probably felt threatened, I don't know... it's true the music industry is fickle, maybe the girls thought they would be judged by the size of their you know what rather than anything else... I've seen Aoife play and she's fantastic plus she's gained the most important thing- 'respect'..."*(Sean). To get a female perspective on the proceedings I asked Mary what she thought- *"More power to them, I wouldn't have the confidence, maybe I just prefer the dance floor... I'm all into the equality stuff- I actually attended*

that cross border initiative thing they did recently, What was it called? yes 'chicks with decks' – hate the name but it did give the girls the opportunity to show others what they can do, but I don't know why they have to justify themselves in the first place. It's still a very male thing but I think that's changing". As said earlier, the end of grand narratives now means that important concepts like gender differences are becoming less viable. From the responses it is true to say that dance culture has helped to acknowledge and accept the term 'diversity'. It has also attempted to breakdown any archaic gender divides and prejudices.

In true postmodern fashion I asked the respondents the following- "*Dance culture has always professed the rhetoric of 'unity'. What does this mean to you and which is more important –Uniformity or Unity through difference"*- "*F*** that's deep, where did you pull that one from? Give me a minute (pause) from a gay point of view there has always been a certain amount of unity, maybe that's to do with politics, the gay community has always maintained a firm standing; after all things in the past were not that rosy. Even now there is still apprehension, however we've always had a great community spirit ...I like experiencing things with people who are of the same frame of mind- but as a clubber, I would have to say that more so than ever, society is much more liberal, well a little bit at least but dance culture has been like that from the start, regardless of sexual preference"*. So in the long term, it's better to have 'unity through difference' is it? John reply runs somewhat similar- "*dance culture does recognize difference and in the club everyone is equal... like I said everyone comes to share a common bond and you as a clubber know what that is and feels like. Dj's like myself are the providers, we are only one link in the ongoing chain, and the rest is made up from*

clubbers of all backgrounds. So yeah, the culture is outward looking and that's why it survives". Notice the powerful language and convictions used by respondents for this is how I am grasping the profundities of the topic.

On a separate but related point I asked the respondents about the role of clubs and media in promoting dance culture, Sean- *"I think both were and still are vital to the survival of the scene. Years ago the 'warehouse' was a symbol of this culture... giving young people their own freedom. The music was new, emotional and exciting... the drugs thing became much more of an issue, but mostly it was about enjoyment. Today the club provides the same function. The enjoyment hasn't gone away and the music seems to change each year... however at the moment big companies are pumping a lot of money into the dance scene... I think its got more respect these days... Dj's are now paid massive sums to play, they're the new rock-stars, but sometimes this has the opposite effect, I mean we pay to see the big guys and sometimes forget to think of our own talent here in Ireland".* I asked Mary whether she felt the same- *"Absolutely it's the same what we saying about the female Dj's, it's okay paying £30 to see the likes of Digger's (John Digweed) and Sasha, but we have to remember our own. A lot of the problem comes from the media; sometimes they blow these people right out of proportion. Companies are now buying into dance culture because they see it as a growing market... the 18-30's supposedly have all the money so that's what they focus on".* Maintaining the media vibe, I asked John about the role of Pirate Radio? - *"Hmm... it's about accessibility isn't it? Pirates provide a service that commercial stations aren't interested in... the 4/4 beat has always been something outside the norm, except for the odd cheesy cut's... pirates offer an alternative, something you won't hear everyday and that's why they are important to*

dance culture. Nowadays more and more commercial stations are getting in on the scene... the big boys on radio have now realised that not everyone is in to the Steps and Boyzones of this world. For me the dance scene always been about growth. More and more young people are listening to this type of music. Personally, I believe that it offers something more to young people". It is noteworthy that respondents are keen to maintain some authenticity in the scene, and not forsake it for the realms of commercialism. On a technical note, I asked the respondents about their thoughts on the role of technology in the genre- "people have always experimented. In the seventies there was Kraftwerk and there was New Order in the eighties. As the technology became cheaper and more accessible, people started messing around... take punk, you didn't have to be skilful but the music meant something. The same with dance; its about experimenting"-(John). "As a person (Sean) who buys this equipment the options are infinite. Being part of the computer age, I can dabble; mixing sounds and with the help of sampling, I can make old things sound new and new sound old. It's about free expression in a technological world. For dance music, this is great as new genres are established all the time. Drum n' Bass only occurred after a DJ mistakenly played a record at 45 (speed) instead of 33. Look what happened after that? Samplers are the new guitars. Anything is possible but you don't have to musical to work them, but you do have to have a good taste in music".

Here we see the importance of computerised technology. Moreover dance music was born in this era and it depends on this technology for its continuity. On a final not I asked the respondents to give their opinions on the future of club culture; Mary- "*... it's getting bigger, a new generation are getting involved. It has lost something due the commercial elements, but it's just the world we live in: consumerism and all that craic.*

Give it a few years and it will return to its old position, but in better working order”.

Sean- *“Innovation is essential. Look at the change in the ten years between 1988 and 1998; new Dj’s and producers arrive all the time, the music is becoming more and more progressive. Look at drum n’ bass, that had a fresh feel to it. More positive things are happening. Although cracks show, people are more intelligent than you give them credit for. I hope the scene in Dublin and Ireland gets stronger... the Irish succeed at practically everything they do.”*

To change the question slightly I asked the following- *“dance culture... Innovative musical tradition or just another stale reactionary subculture?”* James- *“Good question... people will go clubbing for as long as they want to, but clubbing will change. The late bars are having a huge impact... the younger generation seem content on staying here and are therefore not pushed on going to the clubs, but true clubbers will fly the flag for dance culture. It has given individuals a new sense of confidence. I think the term subculture is wrong... there’s something negative about it isn’t there, something bad, that’s not dance culture. Apart from the drugs, it has offered people an awful lot. You won’t stop people enjoying themselves. After a hard week in the office people want to relax, that’s why they go the club, it acts as a stress- buster. As the music becomes more diversified, so will its followers, but one thing I hope is that it will maintain its credibility”.* John is in agreement as he ventures to say- *“thirty years from now people will remember this culture for a lot of reasons. Okay, the drugs will be one but there’s a lot more to it. Personally I think that it will be remembered as a decade of change, musically and otherwise...the late 80’s and 90’s witnessed something new, there was a great sense of community; of shared experiences and some fantastic music. For the*

future, I'd say the music will change, it will adapt but we won't see it end. It's something far too important to let go. In relation to clubbing, people need something to hold on to. So many positive things have happened and are still happening. It's about progress and it's about accepting that change in whatever form that may be"

For the purpose of the research, it was necessary to contrast one form of nightlife with another. In doing so, I endeavoured to highlight the intricacies of clubbing. The participant observation worked well as it caught people in their normative settings: whereas the interviews and discussion group proved invaluable as they uncovered many interesting and informative ideas. From the above, it is true to say that dance culture acts in a peculiarly ad hoc manner. This musical culture, no matter how temporal, is as important today as it was twelve years ago. Clubland carves out for itself the same cultural space that raves did in the past. The communal spirit is unchanging. Unaccounted for in the aforementioned aestheticised bars are many of the attributes of dance culture. The reason being is that places such as these have different priorities and goals. As stated, dance culture's ideology is different. Whereas bars such as Dakota and Cocoon highlight symbolically and realistically the principles of consumerism, the spirit of clubland is remarkably dissimilar, preferring to detail its non-economic values. Today we value experience, and that experience is clubland. With its egalitarian and altruistic overtones, dance culture embraces a variety of styles and differences, in a reassuring and encouraging manner.

It is noteworthy that each respondent at some stage throughout the interview, enunciated many of the soundbites (e.g. emotion, freedom and expression etc), that I discussed at length throughout the literature review and discussion respectively. They

recognised that society needed a change and that change came with club culture. Away from the discordant and overpowering complexities of society, dance culture managed to establish itself in a counter-hegemonic way. Today these are represented by events such as Homelands and Creamfields. These are cultural spaces wherein the clubber maintains his or her sense of autonomy. More notably, is the consuming force and power of dance music, for it is this that affixes the clubber to his establishment i.e. club 3345 and homelands.

In the interview, the clubbers suggested that appearance was considerably less important than the music. Their inherent sense of individualism was marked by an altogether more playful mode, hence the idea of Barney T-shirts. In a world where speed has become a predominant feature, identity is no longer fixed and unchanging. Instead, its instability leads to fluctuating boundaries and divides. Intriguingly, dance culture represents this ubiquitous shift as it splices together in a seam-like procedure, the multi-faceted and variegated strands of a culture bent on progress and innovation.

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Conclusion.

As shown, dance culture epitomizes a counter-hegemonic structure bent on highlighting a musical collective in a positive and egalitarian manner. Similar to other musical traditions the unifying principle is the music. In true postmodern style it has divided, changed and resurfaced under many different guises, while continuing to maintain a sense of freshness and vitality. For the individual it has sought to fill the void of spiritual impoverishment that has been so neglected in society of late. The culture also offers an experience away from an impinging and deleterious economic milieu. It negates any holistic forms of self-indulgent individualism e.g. Dakota and Cocoon, preferring instead to splice together characteristics of conformity and individualism.

The club therefore becomes a cultural space whereby different alliances and coalitions are formed. In a way, they are ad hoc communities whereby disparate groups unite to revel in the musical possibilities and celebrate the absence of working time.

With regards to the music, I have disputed the Adornian notion of Standardization. In an era where technological change is inimitable, dance music's permutations have become incalculable. Experimentation now means that we can now revolutionize and reinvent sounds in the most innovative of ways.

Time –space compression also means that everyday culture has become more cosmopolitan. Furthermore, we can no longer speak of a cultural purity; instead modern life is more akin to a 'collage' whereby mini-narratives take on an even greater significance, i.e. music and personnel diversity in club culture. Unity occurs not as a result of uniformity through difference.

Overall, dance music's success is premise on the idea of 'togetherness'. Clubbing acts a form of social gathering and despite its transient nature, the experience is in no way undermined as it grows in significance from year to year. Clubbers (neo-tribes) unite to celebrate the past or future but the present. Clubbing is therefore part of reality and not escaping from it. It offers a private jurisdiction where the only rules are rules of fun and pleasure. The social act of dancing allows the clubber to act in an unrestricted and liberated manner. Clubs are therefore symbolic of democratized space where the clubber constructs his or her identity in a way which is unregulated and uncontrolled. The emotion and energy that emanates from the collective (homelands & Club 3345) is indicative of the positive momentum inherent in dance culture. Apart from punk rock music, no other musical genre has been able to move a youth culture in quite the same fashion and no other genre has succeeded in bringing together groups of such distinguishing background and tastes.

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