

Though clubs have been around for a while (in the sense of venues for dance), the 'decade of dance' has only really been recognised as starting from the end of the twentieth century, mainly 1988-98 (Measham et al., 2001). For clubbers, the term refers to the survival of dance, despite suppression by authority (McDermott, 1993). However it does not describe one stable and/or coherent dance club scene as such (Garratt, 1998). Rather dance culture during this time was extremely fragmented, and mutate, with many sub-cultures splitting off from each other. Reynolds (1998) and Henderson (1993a) identify three main 'waves':

1988-89	The first 'wave'	Acid House
1990-92	The second 'wave'	Rave
1993 +	The third 'wave'	Dance

When trying to link ecstasy to dance culture as such, it is important to be clear about which period this drug used is being linked to.

How has ecstasy been linked dance club culture?

"...links between British youth, dancing, leisure and indeed drugs can be traced back to another post-war era." (Measham et al, 2001, p.20).

Pre-1950s there is evidence of drugs linked to dancing, but this was mainly through cocaine-use (Pearson, 1983; Kohn, 1992).

"Attending late-night clubs to drink, dance and socialise has been a more or less central part of the weekend for considerable numbers of young people for decades." (Measham et al., 2001, p.21)

The idea of dancing originally was seen by some as a reaction to politics, and a rebellion to middle-class values.

"a part of identity politics, or working-class (male) youthful rebellion against middle-class values through their development of a distinct subcultural style (Hall & Jefferson, 1976)" (MEasham et al., 2001, p.21)

Though dance was very popular in the 1970s, not much research has been done about it (Mungham, 1976).

"Raving" too has been linked to drug use. For people it means a release from the pressure of life.

"the working-class weekender life cycle of drudgery, anticipation and explosive release" (Reynolds, 1997, p.110)

There is an important link between clubs and youth culture, with the club serving a key social need of young people.

"Without cars to cruise in, without warm and dry weather most of the year to sit outside in, without large houses for privacy and entertaining guests, without cheap or free local phone calls, with few affordable evening eating venues, with indoor shopping malls a relatively recent phenomenon, pubs and night clubs have traditionally been key social spaces for working-class British young adults, by comparison with Europe or North America." (Measham et al., 2001, p.22).

Problem of drugs being so inter-linked with dance culture is specific to British youth (Thornton, 1995).

characteristics of clubbers in 1990s British dance club culture:

According to Reynolds (1998), the rave scene is hard to write about as it is fundamentally an experience.

A key feature of the initial rave/dance scenes were their emphasis on the utopian ideal of peace, love and positivity (Measham, et al., 2001).

It served a spiritual purpose with many clubbers speaking of collective bonding and unity with other clubbers, and of a euphoria and ecstasy within the dance scene (Measham, et al., 2001).

Rave scenes promoted unity and got people together: "Everyone was dancing...going for it big time: dancing for five or six hours, tops off, sweating like fuck...No one wanted a battle. No one was pissed and falling all over you. All anyone wanted to do was dance." (Russell David, quoted in Harrison, 1998, p.2)

For some, the club scene was just another example of hedonistic, risk-taking youth (Plant & Plant, 1992). There is concern of whether "getting high" is not simply about being happy but more to do with risk-taking, as most drugs are illegal.

There is a suggestion that as a decline in religious activity took place, dance clubs provided some kind of spiritual relief.

dance + drugs = collective social bonding

dance + drugs = collective spiritual bonding

"people were walking round like they'd found Christianity" (Jak, quoted in Garratt, 1998, p.114)

repetitive chants of music beats, similar to religious mantras

DJs = priests?

"...DJs are the high priests and priestesses of the rave ceremony, responding to the mood of the crowd, with their mixing desks symbolising the altar (the only direction towards which ravers consistently face is the DJ box)." (Newcombe, 1992b, p.5)

This spirituality and quasi-religious tone was extended to some drug-dealers too (Lewis, 1994).

"...the ancient human instinct to celebrate existence and alter awareness by group dancing and drug taking..." (Newcombe, 1991, p.5)

Some have argued that dance culture is not replacing religion, but helps people to lose their sense of identity - "no meaning could be found other than pure escape" (Rietveld, 1993, p.43)

"This was the dance in which to forget, to lose oneself; this was the Dionysian ritual of obliteration, of disappearance." (Rietveld, 1993, p.63).

There is evidence that people who raved didn't do it to oppose politics as has been suggested.

"Their radicalism is basically apolitical, concerned with inner perceptual states and the pursuit of sensations of collective intimacy. They have no pretensions to changing the world." (Kohn, 1997, p.140)

Though did want to be political, what ravers actually did, did have political significance to it "It's a swift and street-level reaction against the self-consciousness of the 'cool' designer Eighties." (Garratt & Baker, 1989, pp.106-7)

The club and drug scene provided links for people to meet others:

"After 12 years of Conservative government our society has become disparate, cocooned and cold. One of the few communities that remains today is that of the networks built up around clubs and drugs. However flawed and fake they may be they exist, and provide one of the few support systems some people have." (Hill, 1993, p.143)

Dance club culture was seen by the authorities as a political threat, which prompted legislative changes and policy initiatives designed to make it harder for raves to be run (Farratt & Taggart, 1990).

Perhaps one of the reason there were so many tensions between ravers and the police was because ravers were not given room to express themselves.

"And survival, taking pleasure at a time when misery is all that's on offer, can surely be a political act in itself." (Garratt, 1998, p.321)

"For those who participated, it *felt at the time* like there was great political potential in these gatherings and perhaps this was its significance: the direct personal experience of the power and potential of collective mobilisation, of being a part of a community, regardless of its form or direction." (Measham et al., 2001, p.30)

According to McRobbie (1999), part of the attraction to dance culture, lay in the possibility of new opportunities it created in terms of jobs in that industry.

two major themes of dance clubs: they prioritised dance over sexual encounters, and dance drugs.

For women especially, there has become increasing concern of using drugs in clubs, particularly as it alters their state of mind, and can potentially make them more vulnerable (Henderson, 1997).