



**Changing Scenes, Changing Trends**  
An overview of the impact  
of the overt commercialisation  
of dance drugs culture

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### **Introduction**

I would like to begin by thanking the organisers of this conference for holding a consumer plenary and for allowing me to deliver this paper



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on the commercialisation of dance drugs culture and the costs and harms that arise for the individual and collectively for dance drug users. In doing so, I also will reflect on my experiences as a clubber in the UK and more recently here in Australia. I would also like to thank the clubbers that have taken the time to talk to me about this important issue and to my employer the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) for supporting me in the development of this paper. AIVL is the national peak organisation representing the State and Territory Drug User Organisations, and issues of national significance for people who inject/use illicit drugs.

In preparing for this paper I entered an amazing world of cultures and subcultures. I felt at times that I had opened a door to a bottomless pit of information and analysis on clubbers. I have to admit that I was not aware that the life of the clubber was of so much interest to academics. That clubbers needed to be understood and that clubbers behavior is seen as strange almost mystical however this was in some ways more uplifting than the demonisation that occurs in the media on a daily basis.

I do not have the time today to delve in too deeply. So then, what I am going to attempt to present to you is a taste, a canapé almost of the process of commercialisation more broadly across the dance drugs scenes which in practice is the blatant theft of a vibrant subculture and making it mainstream.

### **The process of Commercialisation**

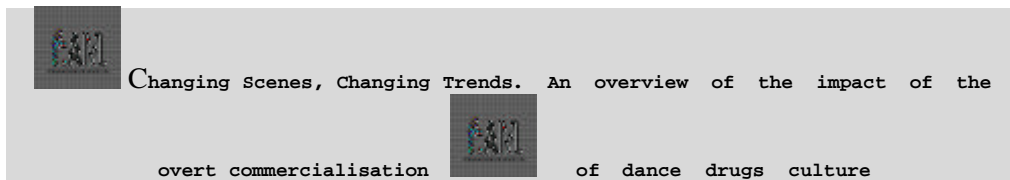
Clearly, members of the dance drugs scene are participating in a vibrant subculture. However as with all subcultures change occurs and this is not necessarily for the better. In looking at this process I am going to use the most familiar narratives about subcultures and their relationships with the “mainstream’ or ‘mass media’ as were



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defined by the Music Subcultures and the Media department of Queensland University<sup>1</sup>:

The first of the narratives is:

### **1. Subcultural styles emerge as street solutions to social problems or conditions experienced by particular identity groups**

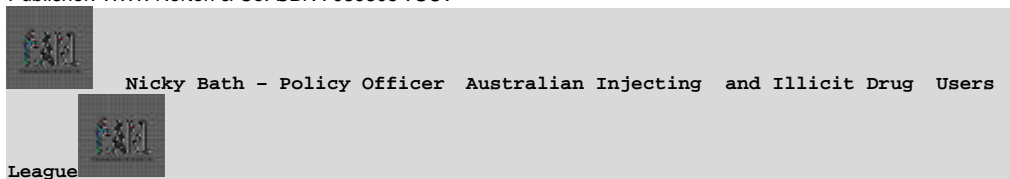
It is important in looking at where we are today, to look back to where this so called phenomenon started. I am going to do this briefly as no doubt many of you here will know the origins of dance drug culture.

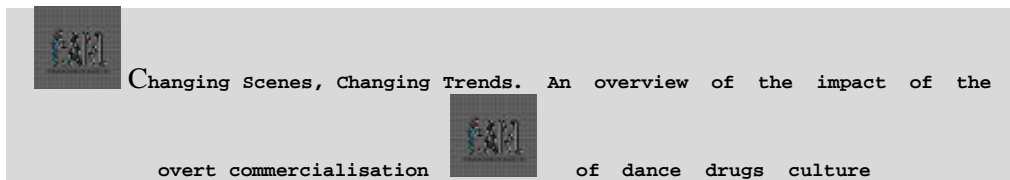
Some have said that rave culture can be traced way back. Back to Native American religious ceremonies, the sixties to Love Ins and to the anarchist revolutions in Italy and France. *On Peace, Love, Dancing, and Drugs a sociological analysis of rave culture written by Eric Stiens*<sup>2</sup>, it is stated that the evolution of techno music had its origins in Chicago and Detroit disco and gay dance clubs, in progressive dance music from Britain such as bands like Depeche Mode and from Germany. The trade in musical influences back and forth between America and the UK in the late seventies and early eighties resulted in techno starting to be formed. Also within the USA in Texas at the Stark Club a gay venue, MDMA was in being sold legally over the bar. This continued in the other clubs that followed including its spread into the scenes of college jocks and rich frat boys. This ended in July 1984 when the sale of MDMA was made illegal (possession was legal up until 1985). In the book *The Pursuit of Oblivion* by *Richard Davenport-Hines*<sup>3</sup>, Wade Hampton a rich Dallas teenager says “*The banning while it degenerated the quality of the drug itself also did something quite positive – it created a counterculture. It was the first sign I ever saw of these pampered kids*

<sup>1</sup> MSTU2000 Music Subcultures and the Media, University of Queensland, <http://emsah.uq.edu.au/courses/mstu2000/lecture.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.phantasmagoria.f2s.com/writings/raveindex.html>

<sup>3</sup> *The Pursuit Of Oblivion, A Global History of Narcotics*, Richard Davenport-Hines, 2002, Publisher: W.W. Norton & Co. ISBN : 0393051897





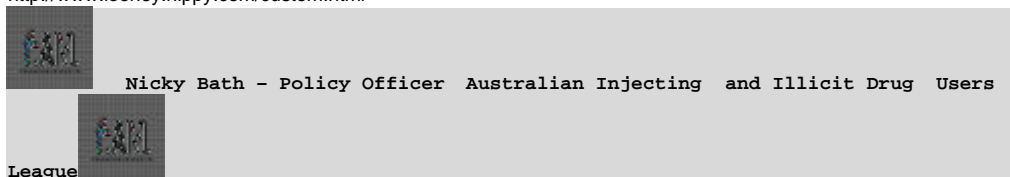
saying “fuck the system” in a big way. It provided a defining aspect of the rave movement: the fight the power side, people thinking I am doing the right thing, I’m doing it for my own reasons and I will do it by any means necessary”.

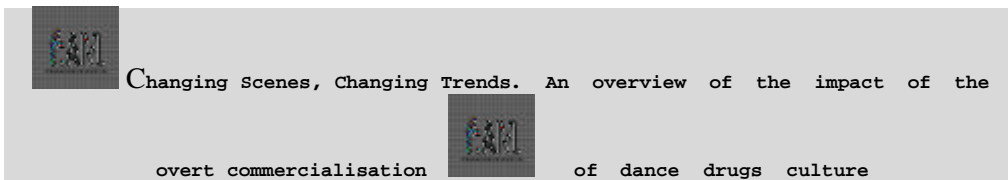
The actual dance drugs scene took place in England in the mid to late 1980’s and was influenced by what was occurring in Ibiza.

While in the UK there were some parties that took place within the walls of legitimate venues, the scene in Britain exploded with the dawning of warehouse parties. These events brought together large numbers of people desperate to escape from the ever burdening years of Thatcher rule. Raves became huge and would often leave motorways particularly the M25 which was opened by Thatcher herself, like a car park as people made their way to the secret location.

The “Second Summer of Love” as it is defined, that took place in the UK in 1988 was liberating for the masses that took part. As DJ Dizzy says, *“The rave phenomenon will go down alongside rock and roll, punk, rock, disco and new romanticism as one of the great all time youth movements in British history. Appearing as a Acid House in the late 1980’s, Rave developed to become one of Britain’s most renowned industries – that of Dance music...”*<sup>4</sup> The early days of the scene supported environments that were described as families and that were held within an ideology of PLUR – Peace Love Unity and Respect. In a paper on the Lewis and Clark College website in the USA - *The Northwest Rave Scene as a Postmodern Community*, PLUR is discussed by the author who researched the term to find out what it meant. The author states, *“Then and only then did I get a clue. I had my moment of clarity and I discovered the real reason those crazy British people got together to dance all night. They came together to celebrate each other. They saw the world collapsing around them into a place of violence, ignorance and depression.*

<sup>4</sup> A History of Rave Culture and the Media a Modern Day Love (hate) by DJ Dizzy;  
<http://www.looney.hippy.com/custom.html>



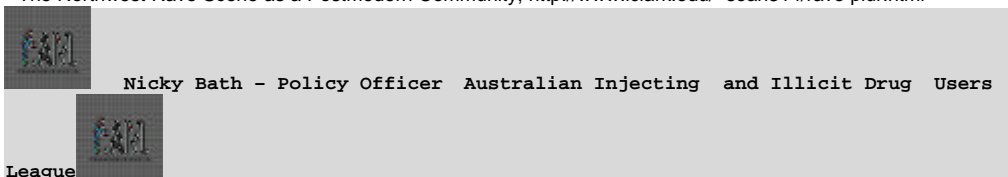


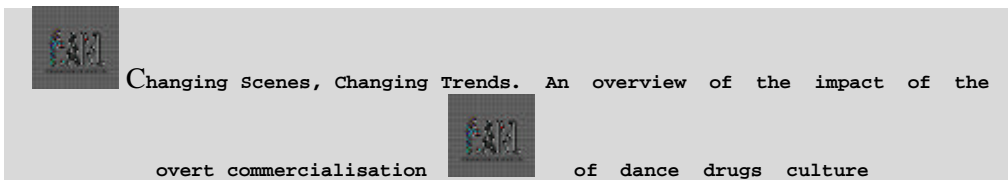
*...They needed to reaffirm the LIFE that was seething within their minds, hearts and souls. So instead of giving it all up they got together their records, called their best mates and proceed to have the very best time of their lives. They got together to change the world. And indeed they have<sup>5</sup>."*

The origins of the dance drugs scene were not then based on what we predominately see today. The scene was more to do with a reactionary process. A process of celebration, a gathering of like minds and a sharing of experiences that were encompassed in music, dance and of course illicit substances. This was not necessarily a new phenomenon per se. Humans have sought escape and solidarity through these avenues before. Jazz and disco are just two of many that I can refer to. The latter disco, as is stated by *David Wilson McLeish* in his paper "*Work It*" *How Disco Got Down* talks about how disco walked hand in hand with social reform as minority groups were asserting their rights for autonomy and equality. He discusses how the infamous club Paradise Garage offered an ideal setting for a particularly marginalised group of gay African-Americans to build a cultural identity. He also goes on to say that, "*Dancing is a physical interpretation of an acoustic phenomenon. The dancer hears the music and makes it his own by incorporating it into his physical being. The ability to feel the music completes this integration. The beat of the drums emulates the beating of the heart - the sound resonates within your body, as if it originated there. Dancing bridges the gap between the acoustic and physical worlds, and blurs the distinction between private and public expression.*" It is clear as to how such a process is both empowering and liberating. What is also interesting here however is that the author claims that, "*Even today, the remnants of the disco backlash haunt us. The music industry had to change the name of the genre from "disco" to "dance music," because "disco" had officially become "black faggot music."*" House,

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<sup>5</sup> The Northwest Rave Scene as a Postmodern Community; <http://www.lclark.edu/~soan314/rave-plur.html>





*trance, and techno, might have all been called disco, if it weren't for bigotry. Disco is irrevocably linked to a style and demeanour, which has less to do with real disco than with its commercial byproducts (i.e. Saturday Night Fever). It is remembered as shallow, hedonistic and worthless music, devoid of any real musical value"<sup>6</sup>. This he claims is because of the process of commercialization that took place in relation to the culture of disco. And here I am today...Life really is full of cycles...fashion, music and the theft of cultures.*

The second of the narratives states that:

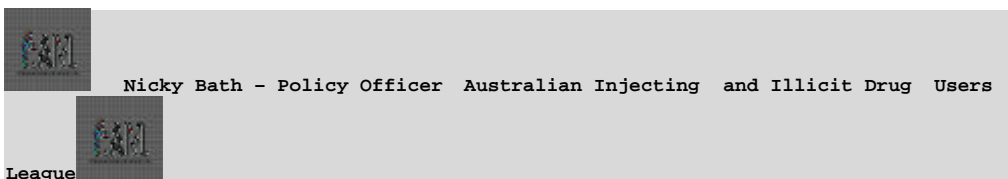
## **2. Subcultures are at first treated as novelties or strange and dangerous by “mainstream” media**

Instead of looking at the way in which media responded here as I am sure that Matthew will be covering this, I will explore the response from law enforcement. This indeed treated those involved as novel, strange and dangerous.

*In the UK various bills were introduced that brought an end to the warehouse culture that was alive and vibrant and resulted in various sound systems moving to Europe. As is stated in the paper “From the Summer of Love to the Great Dance Rip Off” by Southwell et al, “On one side there was a fusion of the empathic and collective spirit of MDMA devotees, mixed with the entrepreneurial spirit of the pay party promoters. On the other side were politicians who criminalised ecstasy as a class A drug, while launching a special unit within the Police, known as the Pay Party Unit, to disrupt and destroy this legitimate expression of youth culture...Importantly, the development of the dance drugs culture in the UK was taken out of the hands of the early MDMA evangelists. Quality of both ecstasy and the wider dance drugs experience was increasingly overlooked, as profit became the primary motive for the illicit businesses. When the*

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<sup>6</sup> “Work It” How Disco got Down, David Wilson-McLeish e.Peak Features, 13, vol 110 -- April 8, 2002  
<http://www.peak.sfu.ca/the-peak/2002-1/issue13/fedisco.html>





*authorities realised that they could not halt the spread of the dance drugs culture, they relaxed licensing laws, while upping the penalties for 'illegal' promoters. The explicit desire of both police and politicians was to drive this culture into a commercial club setting where it would be better monitored and controlled...<sup>7</sup>*

The upping of penalties in the UK saw amongst other legislation the introduction of Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in 1994 which includes a definition of rave music – *“sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats<sup>8</sup>.”* Stuart Borthwick of the Liverpool John Moores University in his chapter *Public Order and ‘Kill The Bill’* states that, *“For the first time in British legal history a musical form has been legally proscribed, albeit in a particular social context. Sadly the only logical recent comparison to make is with legislation in Nazi Germany during the Second World War that outlawed various forms of jazz<sup>9</sup>”*. He goes on to state that, *“Not only does the act criminalize any two or more persons ‘preparing’ a site for a rave, but also crucially criminalizes those on their way to a rave, those waiting to attend, and those at the event<sup>10</sup>.”* Many people mobilized and protested against such legislation. And just last year, in 2003 the legislation was amended - Section 58 amends section 63 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to extend it to cover raves where 20 or more persons are present. The previous Act applied to raves where 100 or more persons are present.

In the USA the RAVE Act makes it easier for the federal government to punish property owners for any drug offense that their patrons commit. Similarly, the CLEAN-UP Act contains provisions that would make it a federal crime - punishable by up to nine years in prison - to

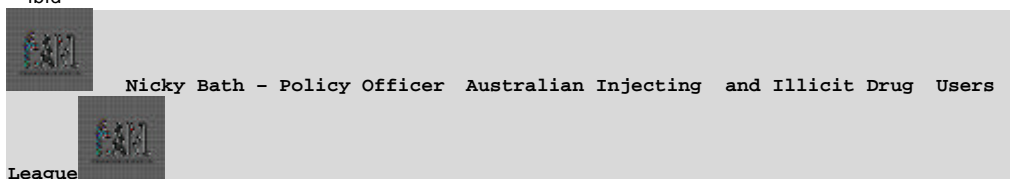
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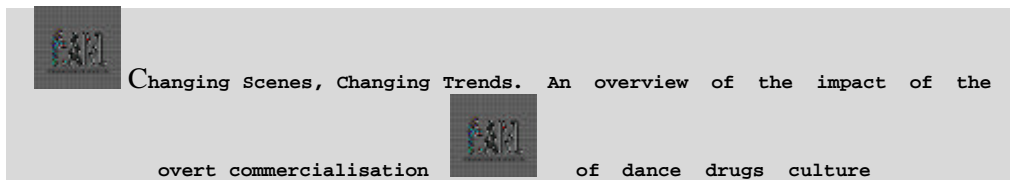
<sup>7</sup> From *The Summer Of Love To The Great Dance Drugs Rip-Off*, Matthew Southwell et al; <http://www.drugtext.org/library/articles/southwell.htm>

<sup>8</sup> *“DANCE, CULTURE, TELEVISION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE CULTURE AND ITS TELEVISUAL REPRESENTATIONS”*. © Stuart Borthwick BA (Hons.), PGCert., PhD. <http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/mccsbort/thesis/ch1.html#Public%20Order>

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*





promote "any rave, dance, music or other entertainment event" that might attract some attendees that would use or sell drugs. Congress can effectively ban live music and dancing, as well as any other event that might attract someone that would use drugs. Since its enactment protests against the new law have been held in cities around the country, including Washington, DC where a free concert and protest was held in front of the U.S. Capital. The event featured internationally known artists and attracted two thousand voters and electronic music fans<sup>11</sup>.

In France the Anti Rave Legislation amendment was part of a bill on safety which would allow the seizure of sound equipment from rave parties as well as fines for organisers of raves that are not registered beforehand. Such authorization is apparently hard to obtain. One demonstrator against this legislation stated, "*When you go 300 kilometers (180 miles) to have a party, it's not just to get high. There is a real musical and cultural current behind that*"<sup>12</sup>.

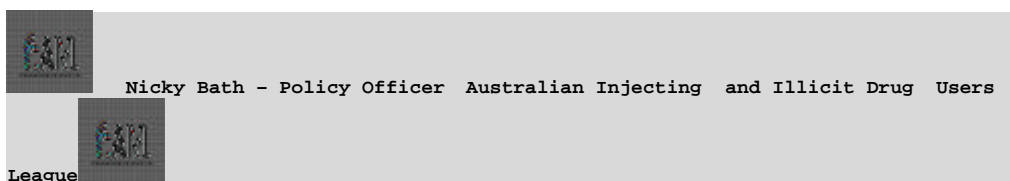
Narrative three states that:

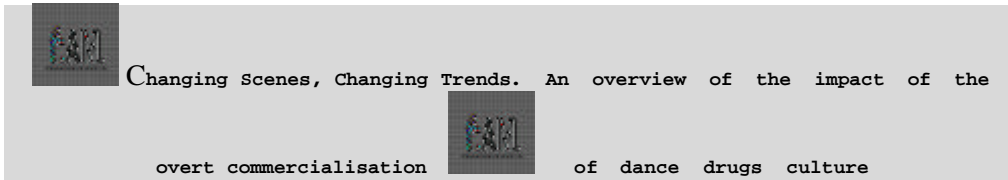
**3. Threats of the subculture are *contained* via a strategy of assimilation: it is reworked so that the safer elements of the subculture can be represented as the "next big thing" or the "cutting edge" of music, fashion, youth culture.**

This is an interesting dichotomy when looking at the development of dance drugs subculture. We have seen so far that in its infancy, dance drugs culture was organic, particularly within the UK parts of Europe such as France and Germany and the USA. This not true of everywhere. It is here that I would like to reflect on my time in this country. When I moved to Australia and it has to be acknowledged that I live in Canberra – the nations capital - well that it maybe but it's

<sup>11</sup> What's At Stake! Property Rights and Right to Dance Under Attack, <http://ga1.org/campaign/rave/explanation>

<sup>12</sup> French ravers clash with police, BBC News, Friday, 25 May, 2001, 14:42 GMT 15:42 UK, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1351757.stm>

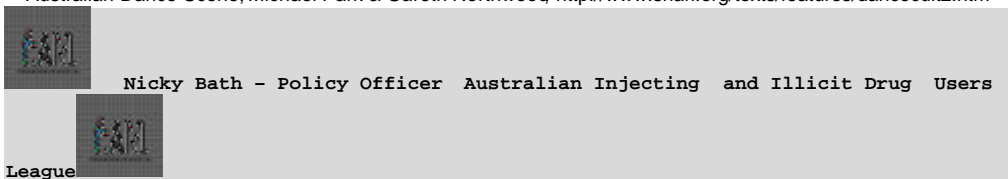


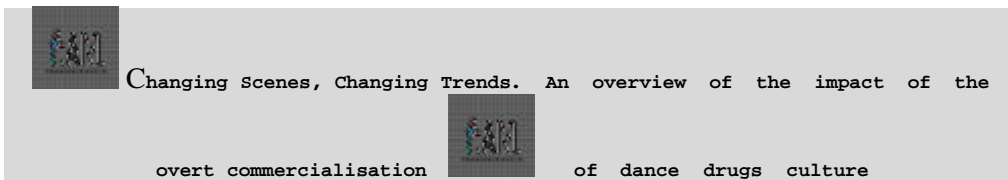


certainly not Australia's clubbers capital I really felt like something was missing. Part of this was where I was living, the population of the country as a whole being much smaller, not having my friends around me and of course I was and still am an outsider. Now I say this with respect as in parts of the country there are amazing scenes, culture and identification with the dance drugs scene however, *Michael Park and Gareth Northwood in their paper Australian Dance Culture* really sum it up for me...they quote DJ Angus in 1994 who says, *"Everyone's talking about the death of the rave scene and warehouse parties and the like but, the point people seem to be missing is that warehouse parties never really existed in Australia in the first place. The rave scene ripped from overseas was never really a true rave scene in the original meaning of the term<sup>13</sup>".* The authors who agree with DJ Angus go on to say, *"The rave scene as it existed even at its peak in Australia barely resembled the word of mouth tribal gatherings occurring in England."* And they say, *"Since the late 80's the development of dance culture in Australia has evolved from and relied on changes occurring overseas. It has its own intricacies (e.g. the evolution of the 'Vibe Tribe' parties) and internal history (the subsequent fragmenting of the scene), but nothing to really distinguish itself from developments overseas. In fact, developments in Australia have faithfully and predictably copied those of overseas - everything seems to happen here months later though! They continue, "Our physical distance as a nation from the rest of the world can be seen as a factor here. The English dance magazine Mixmag wrote up a tourist's overview of the Sydney dance scene, snidely commenting "Sydney.....where happy hardcore is still huge and jungle is just about set to explode". The snideness in this comment would be obvious to the English reader - happy hardcore had subsided over there a long time ago, while jungle had been absolutely massive in the UK for at least more than a year at the time of the article being written. Sydney was caricatured as cultural*

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<sup>13</sup> Australian Dance Scene, Michael Park & Gareth Northwood <http://www.snarl.org/texts/features/dancecult2.htm>





*backwater reliant on changes and progressions emanating from the UK and Europe, which, if we were smart enough, we would eventually pick up on<sup>14</sup>”.*

My point here is not to dismiss or devalue the dance drugs scene here in Australia but to demonstrate that the theory is pretty accurate, what is happening here is the importation of what the theory says is the strategy of assimilation, the dance drugs scene in Australia is the safer elements of the raw original subculture being promoted as the next big thing or the cutting edge. As a result, the strength of the subculture is maybe diluted and may have less meaning. However even within the subculture here, similar battles that occurred elsewhere are happening with the increasingly heavy handed approached of law enforcement and legislation changes targeted directly at clubbers.

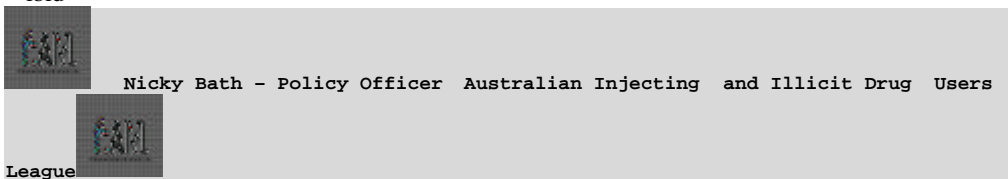
Narrative four says that:

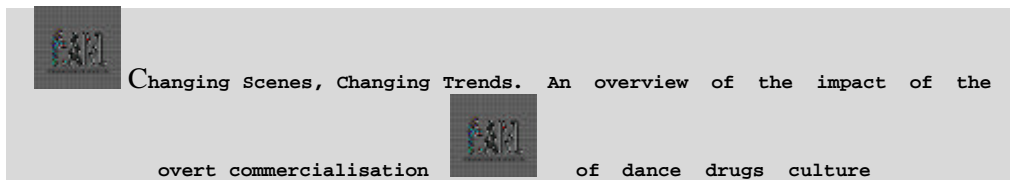
4. The subculture becomes widely known and available → Increased participation and/or co modification

This conference is for me symbolic of the process of the relationship between subcultures and the mainstream. Here we all are debating what on earth to do with the millions of people who are engaging in dance drugs culture. Let's face it, the only real reasons we are here is because of the explosion of clubs on the high street and the misunderstanding of mainstream agencies on the cultural activities within the clubbing movement. By using traditional models of drug treatment for the control of the people who use club orientated illicit substances, service providers, researchers etc... are banging a square peg into a round hole and are wondering what went wrong. As is stated in the *DJ Mixed* article *Where Have all the Revolutionaries Gone?* “Club culture seems to embrace the idea of collective disappearance. There does not seem to be a dramatic style carried

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<sup>14</sup> ibid





*on in everyday life like the hippies and punks of earlier scenes... The idea of a part time subculture is created, meaning that it is possible for ravers and clubbers to explore "rebellion" on the weekend and then return to work on Monday. The idea of dropping out or becoming a revolutionary, as was expressed through earlier youth cultures, no longer applies. The raver then subtly rebels within society—evolutionary not revolutionary<sup>15</sup>*". I am not sure that I agree with the notion of part time subculture however what I do agree with here is the fact that you all just do not know who the clubbers are and it is really frustrating for you. One thing that is right in the last quote is that the majority of clubbers do disappear, by day the bank manger by night the social deviant.

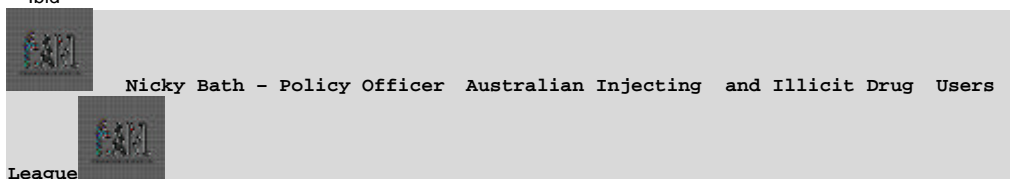
Without a doubt dance drugs culture is now mainstream and more widely available well a form of it is anyway. And as the theory states, there is increased participation while retaining a slight aura of "deviance". It is the history of the culture and illicit drugs that maintain the "deviance" within dance drugs culture and that alone. The DJ Mixed article states, "...I feel everyone who participates in this culture plays a small part in a greater revolution and political statement. The taking of drugs defies all government laws and yet they are still readily available..."<sup>16</sup>

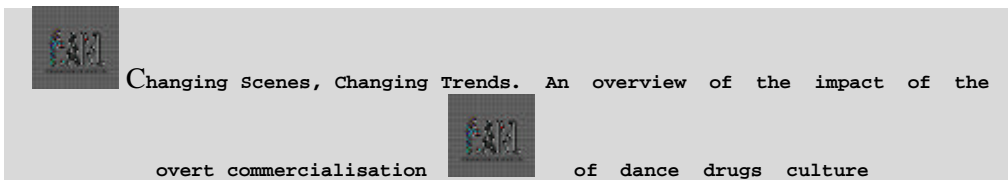
Dance drugs culture is now everywhere except that it is not. Now I do not want to confuse you. What is all around us are the elements of the original dance drugs culture that have been stolen and reproduced by those external to it. It is BIG BIG Business...Clubbing has been repackaged over the years and has lost its soul.

The Overload Electronic Music and Wired Culture website has an article within it called Brewers Droop and states that, "*The UK's once anarchic festival circuit is now dominated by brewery conglomerates and big business. Dance music is the soundtrack to predictable*

<sup>15</sup> WHERE HAVE ALL THE REVOLUTIONARIES GONE, Kevin Logan, <http://www.clubbing.com/guest/guest20.asp>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid





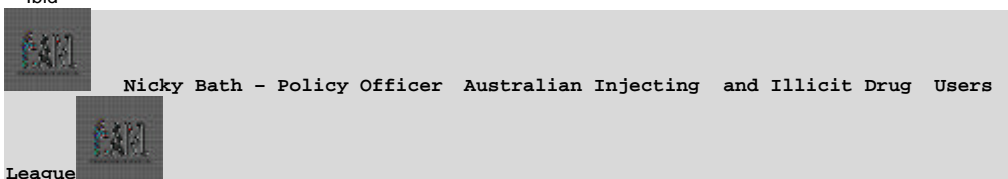
*events that are little more than a chance for the clubbed-to-death generation to get some fresh air. Same regulations, same security, same feeling of being ripped off at every turn...*<sup>17</sup> It also goes on to discuss that in 1989 a new PR alliance was formed between several alcohol companies to promote “sensible drinking” “*Take a look around*” the author invites, “*Our cultural landscape is littered with pre club bars – The new clubs as has been totted by the specialist dance magazines, alcohol sponsored events festivals and record label tours are commonplace, advertising campaigns that associated alcohol with the imagery, assumptions and soundtracks of dance culture have infiltrated the mainstream*<sup>18</sup>.” And sadly it does not stop there. In the same article I was horrified to find out that Red Bull the drink marketed heavily at clubbers PR company 'FFI' co-produced the appalling anti-ecstasy billboard campaign that showed Leah Betts (a young woman whose death is related to ecstasy – she actually drank too much water) ... with the words ‘SORTED’ just one Ecstasy tablet took Leah Betts<sup>19</sup>.

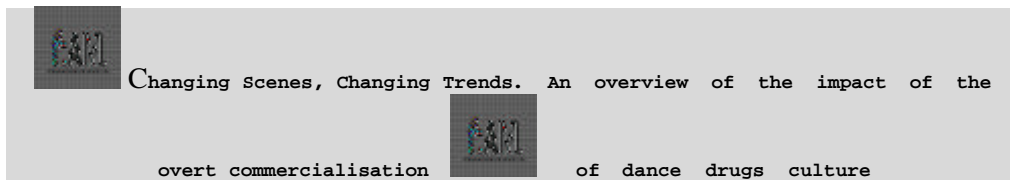
And this is not all. Commercialization is seeing DJs becoming Gods and being paid large amounts of money. A friend told me of a night in Ibiza while Fergie was playing and it was impossible to hear the music over the crowd chanting his name. I quite like Fergie but not that much. DJs should be no more than one of the facilitators or partners in the process. As is stated on the Urban 75 RAVE site within the article Rave: The Hard Sell – rave is big business, “*This new breed of 'superstar' DJ's have turned their backs on the very scene that spawned them and are only too happy to abandon the people and the principles that helped them on their way up to their new-found rock'n'roll lifestyle. The true products of a Thatcherite generation, these money-grabbing DJs have shown no interest in displaying any stand of defiance or unity with the DJ's and sound*

<sup>17</sup> Brewers Droop, Overload Electronic Music and Wired Culture, [http://www.overloadmedia.co.uk/archives/miscellaneous/brewers\\_droop.php](http://www.overloadmedia.co.uk/archives/miscellaneous/brewers_droop.php)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid





systems who are finding things considerably harder since the Criminal Justice Act. These guys broke through out of the illegal rave/warehouse parties scene - so why don't they give a bit back? Laughably, some of these superstar DJs like to cling on to the dishonest notion that they are still 'underground'. Witness the Oct 2001 TV advertised adverts for the 'Underground Garage' mix album which boasted, "Real rough cut underground UK Garage, mixed by me, DJ E Z, containing all the underground club cuts.... Available now from all major Tesco stores<sup>20</sup>" Tesco is a nationwide supermarket chain in the UK.

And it goes on, clubs cash in at any given moment, either providing glam environments that cost the owners a fortune and patrons have to cover the loan repayments or providing at the other end of the scale down right dangerous environments that still have high entry fees.

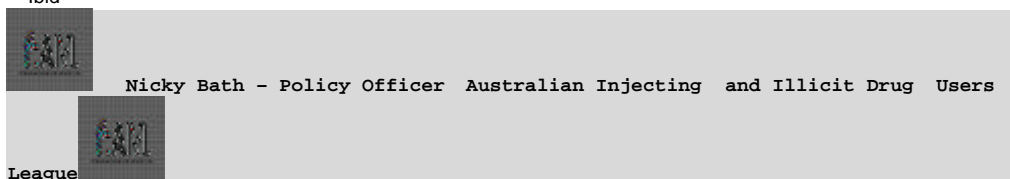
We now also see clubbing holiday packages to far off lands to party under the stars. Wolfgang Sterneck in his paper: ISLANDS - Techno, Tribes and Politics states, "In the middle of the nineties Goa became a new fashion...The energy of a good Goa party which can hardly be described became an alternative to the more and more commercialized and impersonal mass raves<sup>21</sup>". He goes on, "But Goa isn't the only place anymore. It's already possible to book journeys to different African countries, even countries of the so-called "3. World" to special party events. Who cares that some miles away people have to live in inhuman conditions, maybe have to starve, provided that the "paaarty is great" and the drugs turn on. And even the party-paradise Goa isn't so beautiful anymore, if the beach is swamped with beer cans and other trash<sup>22</sup>".

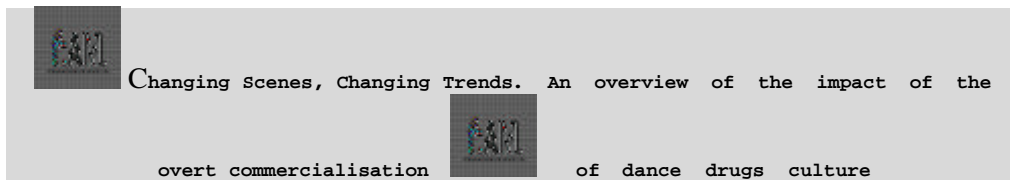
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<sup>20</sup> Urban 75 RAVE, Rave: The Hard Sell- Rave is big business, <http://www.urban75.com/Rave/raverant.html>

<sup>21</sup> Wolfgang Sterneck , ISLANDS - Techno, Tribes and Politics, [www.sterneck.net/cybertribe/musik/wolfgang-sterneck-inseln/index.php](http://www.sterneck.net/cybertribe/musik/wolfgang-sterneck-inseln/index.php)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid





Clearly I could go on. WE have lost control. The drugs have changed too and at times in the mix with everything else we are encountering concerning health outcomes.

And so to the last element in the subcultural narrative:

5. The “original” participants police the boundaries of their cultural territory by rejecting or criticising the newcomers, usually on the basis of inauthenticity.

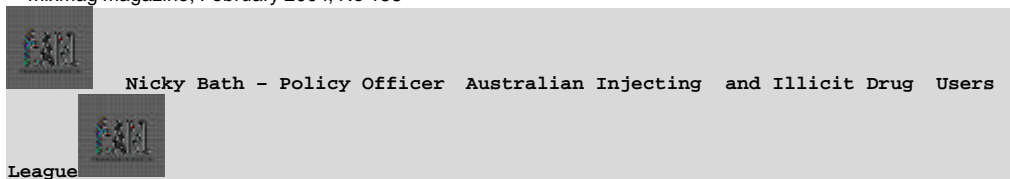
It is true to say and I will freely admit to being one that “policing” what is occurring today. I do this not for being a purist but out of concern.

Today club land is not for example the after hours playground that the new so called super club in Canberra advertises itself to be. It is a highly regulated and controlled money making operation. The scene has splintered to such a degree that at times it is not recognisable.

The shift that is occurring in the drugs that are being consumed including the massive increase in alcohol use is also playing a part in this process. It is not only so called legitimate businesses that are looking for new opportunities, consumers of substances seek new chemicals and plants that will alter the conscious state and producers and dealers are happy to oblige. The increasing use of methamphetamine and cocaine are fuelling the consumption of alcohol and the uprise in lounge bars. I understand that dance drugs culture is now visible within sex clubs within the UK. There is now even raver porn which was covered in the February 2004 edition of the magazine mixmag<sup>23</sup>. At times it is easy to think that mixmag itself is a soft porn magazine, the objectification of women is appalling. On another tangent some of the larger UK super clubs such as Fabric are considering opening restaurants to meet the needs of the original over thirty participants of dance drugs culture.

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<sup>23</sup> mixmag magazine, February 2004, No 153





New drugs are proving to be a challenge and you have deliberated on this issue over this conference. I ask you this though. Why is it that we can't control how people are using? In days gone by, clubbers were able to educate each other without fear and could be in control of what was consumed. Dance drugs users cannot do this now. It is impossible to openly use drugs at venues for fear of law enforcement. The meaningful rituals of sharing experiences of taking care for each other, going on drug induced journeys that are heightened by dance and music have been taken. Venues will not even let peer based harm reduction organisations operate for fear of attracting police attention. I can tell you right now how to reduce GHB overdoses. Have legitimate sources of GHB on sale where people can buy weight appropriate doses from someone who can explain what will happen and how it will feel. I am horrified that mixmag magazine in the UK is running a campaign to "Kick GHB MONGS out of clubs"<sup>24</sup>, this is not the answer and encouraging club owners to place this advert around their clubs is irresponsible. We are not allowed to tell people about the real facts about illicit drugs the new ones or the old ones. All of our hands are tied in prohibition. It is prohibition that we should be campaigning against not each other.

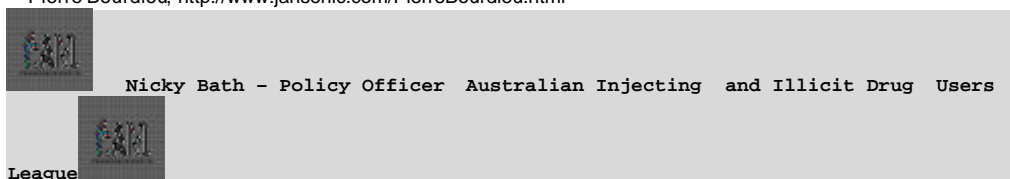
Dance drugs culture is being torn apart piece by piece day by day. Clubbers never had to worry about what they looked like. You only worried if your friends needed support. Now being out of it is not part of what was intrinsic to clubbers cultural milieu. Too often I see designer clad clubbers stepping over and looking down on people who prior to co-option of dance drugs culture would have been tended and cared for as part of the clubbing experience.

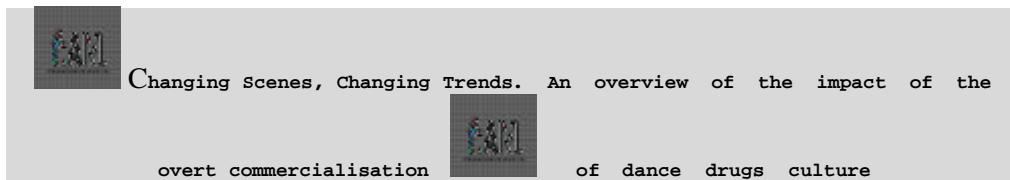
Pierrs Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital refers to the knowledge that enables an individual to interpret cultural codes and has been taken further by Thornton in her work on subcultural capital<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> mixmag magazine, February 2004, No 153

<sup>25</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, <http://www.jahsonic.com/PierreBourdieu.html>





She states that subcultures reproduce cultural hierarchies (of authenticity, of belonging and of hipness in particular) and are structured by logics of cultural capital. She says that these systems of knowledge and power work to construct internal hierarchies distinguishing the real insiders from the wannabes and try hards. In all cases she says hipness like good taste is not an inherent personality characteristic, but is learned and is accessible only to those with the appropriate experience and insider knowledge; therefore it works to maintain boundaries around the authentic core of the subculture and to exclude those whose repertoire of cultural competencies is deficient<sup>26</sup>.

The problem that we are facing is that the majority of people involved in the current dance drugs scenes have little if any subcultural capital. They have no idea; they are wannabes and money makers. Of more concern is that those individuals with subcultural capital are moving away from the commercial scene, and new clubbers are being initiated into a very different world with no history and no understanding about how to use illicit drugs more safely. A friend in Canberra said to me some weeks ago, we used to have a culture now it is just meaningless and common.

### **Conclusion**

I am aware that this paper has only skimmed the surface of this topic. I indeed only promised you a canapé and I hope that you were able to pick it up, chew it over and even swallow it! Where to go on this? I am not sure. I know that I am not alone and that there are many of us that “police” dance drugs subculture for the good and are finding ways to rebel against the commercialised scene.

To all of you here with no subcultural capital I ask you to think about what you are doing and why. Involve dance drugs users, who are the experts.

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<sup>26</sup> Sarah Thornton, <http://www.jahsonic.com/SarahThornton.html>



Changing Scenes, Changing Trends. An overview of the impact of the  
overt commercialisation of dance drugs culture



What I am concerned about are those that are new to the scene, with little context or knowledge of the original subculture. They are being introduced to a scene that holds minimal cultural or subcultural capital. We must pick them up along the way. If we do not they will continue to be exploited by the commercialisation of the scene and the inherent dangers that are no longer being addressed.

Clubbers will reclaim dance drugs culture and the philosophy of PLUR. Because there is a lot to be proud of and a lot to protect.



Nicky Bath - Policy Officer Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users

League

