



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Citation:

Moss, S (2019) "You can't spell Leeds without LSD and a couple of Es": Independent promoter memories of dance music spaces in Leeds. In: Music, Cities and Popular Memory: A Very Messy Cultural Archive?, 29 March 2019 - 29 March 2019, Southampton. (Unpublished)

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:

<https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/5813/>

Document Version:

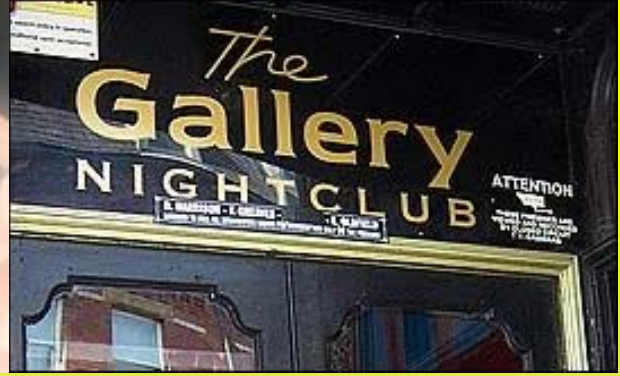
Conference or Workshop Item (Presentation)

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please [contact us](#) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.



“You can’t spell Leeds without LSD and a couple of Es”:
Independent promoter memories of dance music spaces in Leeds

Stuart Moss – s.moss@leedsbeckett.ac.uk
@stuartmoss



My PhD: Its ugly title and what I'm doing

- Entrepreneurship amongst independent club event promoters and environmental influences upon the development of clubs as leisure spaces: The story of independent club events in the city of Leeds, UK, 1990 – 2020.
- Interviewing **independent** 'club' event promoters, who have been active in Leeds between 1990 and 2020.
 - It is a history focussed longitudinal study
 - What drove and shaped promoters as entrepreneurs
 - How 'club' leisure spaces have developed in Leeds over 30 years, taking into account a range of micro and macro environmental variables.
- Attended a series of seminars by **independent** club promoters called 'One Foot in the Rave' (a part of Leeds International Festival, 2018).

Interview questions I have asked that have fed into this presentation

- If you are not from Leeds, what brought you to Leeds?
- What are your first memories of the Leeds club scene (as a customer, employee or entrepreneur)?
- When and how did you first become involved in the Leeds club scene?
- Why did you become a club night promoter?
- How has the Leeds club scene changed since you first became involved in it?
- Who has been the most influential promoter in Leeds since 1990?
- My promoter interviews are anonymised, but 'One Foot in the Rave' seminars are not.

The focus of this presentation is 1990 - 2005

• **Macro factors**

- The British Government introduced the Entertainment's (Increased Penalties) Bill in 1990, this targeted both illegal free-party raves as well as unlicensed commercial parties that had an entry charge (the term 'pay-party' was used to cover such events), this Bill raised fines for event organisers to being up to £20,000 as well as 6 months imprisonment (James, 2002).
- The free party scene ran from the late 1980s until 1994, until it was quashed by the Criminal Justice Act, after this, corporate club culture, which commodified the rave scene was born (James, 2002).
- The commodification of the rave scene onto the high street, allowed for the regeneration of many inner-cities, which thrived around the venues where people wanted to go and experience rave culture (Dance Britannia, 2018).
- 'The 24 hour city' - former Leeds City Councillor Lorna Cohen is quoted in the documentary Music in Leeds - Volume 1 (2015) as saying "there was nothing...that forbid us from allowing these establishments to stay open as long as they wanted, providing of course they didn't serve alcohol. Leeds University got far more applications from students who wanted to come to Leeds because of what we were doing here than any other city in the country".
- Since the 1990s Leeds City Council have been more concerned with promoting the city as a destination for shopping, business and tourism than promoting leisure opportunities for all within the city (Spracklen, Richter and Spracklen, 2013).
- Licensing Act (2003) – new competition from hybrid bars and potential 24 hour opening.

The focus of this presentation is 1990 - 2005

- **Micro factors**

- Rock against racism brought punk and dub sound systems together in Leeds social clubs, including the Brudenell Social Club and Chapeltown West Indian Centre. This attracted students from Hyde Park who brought with them a drum 'n' bass element. This then transferred into house and basement parties around Woodouse and Hyde Park, which developed into free raves and a vibrant squat party scene from the late 1980s and into the early 1990s (The City Talking: Music in Leeds Vol II, 2016).
- Acharya (2018) discusses a culture of DIY amongst music communities in Leeds, when it comes to finding spaces in which to create and appreciate music, which harks back to the early days of punk.
- Party culture has bred in the Hyde Park area of Leeds, the Hessle Streets gave birth to Hessle Audio (Amin, 2017).
- The millennium effect – high prices charged by clubs to customers, marked the beginning of a demise for many venues, as customers were not willing to spend upwards of £50 to gain entry. Many chose to go to their local pubs and many stayed and partied at home, making a proportion of regular clubbers realise that they did not need to be in a nightclub and spending vast sums to be able to party and have a good time (Phillips, 2009).
- In 2000, Ian Scott an attendee at Sundissential died after taking ecstasy, this was the fourth drugs related death to hit Sundissential branded events across the UK in 6 months (Haslam, 2001).

Development of the Leeds scene

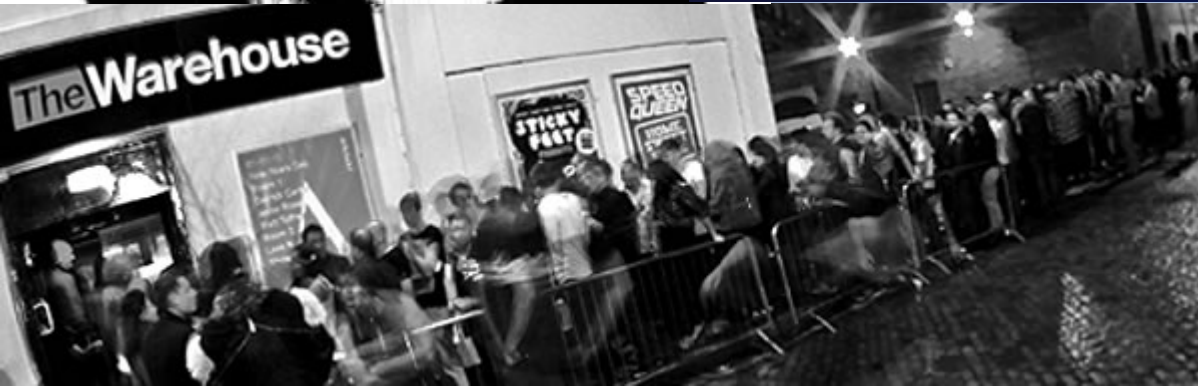
“In Leeds the rave scene was underground in Hyde Park basements and Chapeltown Blues Club after-parties, as the music got better, the crowds got bigger and clubbing moved to the centre” (Music in Leeds – Volume 1, 2015).



one foot in the rave.

**BASICS
HARD TIMES
KAOS
ORBIT
SOAK
RONSON
VAGUE**

28.04_04.05.18 Trinity Leeds, Lower Ground (opposite Superdry)



friday 24th July
then every friday
at the music factory
(back to basics
leeds)

up yer ronson

launch party

featuring d'ja on a mission
grainne park
kashie
brandon block
marshall
lily orange

Promoter memories by key themes

A large, energetic crowd of young people at a night event, many with their arms raised and holding drinks. The scene is dimly lit with blue and purple stage lights, creating a vibrant atmosphere. The crowd is dense, and people are looking in various directions, some towards the camera and others towards the event. Many are holding water bottles or beer, and some have their hands raised in the air. The overall mood is one of excitement and social enjoyment.

Influence

Drugs

Community

Spectacle

Venues

Influence

- “Dave Beer was an early regular at Orbit before he began Back2Basics” (Promoter N).
- “I just remember being on the dancefloor thinking “I could do this”. I was ready to add my own to it, and then 2 months later we had our night...” (Promoter B).
- “Simon Scott was multi-talented, powerful, and very well connected to people, as well as being a very humble person. From a business perspective, I aspired to be like Simon” (Promoter M).
- “The Underground would open at 20:00 on Saturdays for The Yardbird Suite, and anyone who attended early got a free glass of wine. The event developed a solid reputation, Mixmag called it “The Tiger Woods of clubs”, and it was responsible for attracting students to Leeds from all corners of the UK” (Promoter G).
- “Me and all of my mates from sixth-form chose Leeds specifically for the nightlife” (Promoter D).



Drugs

- “You can’t spell Leeds without LSD and a couple of Es” (Beer, 2018).
- “I was DJing at a party in a venue on Kirkstall Road in Leeds, and I noticed that there was a presence of Leeds Service Crew members within the venue, as well as black people too. This was unusual as everyone was getting along together and enjoying the music and the vibe, the reason behind this was due to the sudden popularity of the drug ecstasy” (Evelyn, 2018).
- “Race played a part in event and venue choice, for a white man to attend a hip hop night in a perceived ‘black’ venue, there was an ‘edginess’ to the experience, however when drugs came in to play, particularly ecstasy, barriers fell and people went to lose themselves, attitudes to race and division disappeared” (Gundhill, 2018).
- “Drugs created a shift in attitudes, as people taking them began to think on a different level with greater insight” (Evelyn, 2018).
- “Ecstasy broke down prejudice, all ages from 18-50 mixed and all had the same musical experience” (Mason, 2018)
- “I went to Space just with my girlfriend at the time, and she didn’t do it, and I thought well fair play, but I remember having a pill and thinking “yeah this is alright this” (Promoter B).
- “First memories are going to like my first week, Evolution, Tiger Tiger, and I remember distinctively being like ‘OK I’m in this nightclub, I don’t think it’s very good, but this is meant to be, one pill later...and boom, it turned into the best night ever” (Promoter A).
- “We knew everyone was doing drugs in the toilets, which was great, until MixMag came along and made it the highlight of their feature, that wasn’t the kind of publicity that we courted” (Promoter N).
- “The money to be made on drugs spoiled the scene, contamination, violence and gangs weren’t far behind” (Mason, 2018).

Community

- “We got in, and to see the love that was...people of all walks of life, and dancing is a force of nature and I’d say that’s what Speedqueen is, it’s a movement, it’s a collective force of nature, it’s a family, and erm it just felt accepting” (Promoter B).
- “Speedqueen was designed specifically for Leeds, to break down gender, social, racial and age barriers, and had a members’ programme to support local charities” (Mason, 2018)
- “There’s different people that you meet along that journey. If you’re doing that week in, week out all the time you’re meeting a friendship circle, and my friendship circle of that time...they’re still my bessies now. ” (Promoter B).
- “The fact that members of a racist football hooligan firm were dancing to black music in a venue with black people, was quite remarkable at the time” (Evelyn, 2018).
- “We weren’t keen on cameras in the venue and clubbers were asked to leave cameras in the cloak room. The ethos of the event was about enjoyment and not documenting what went on there” (Promoter N).

Spectacle

- “The sheer amount of students that were out every single night just amazed me, like at any club when you walked past the queue” (Promoter A).
- “We thought we’d just go pop round the corner to Wetherspoon’s and then we’d come back out at like five to 10, and we walked out of Wetherspoon’s back into the view of the club and there must have been a queue that was 100 metres long that was wrapping round the building, and we were like oh my god” (Promoter D).
- “We went into Creation and I’d been into big clubs back at home, but certainly nowhere that was as spectacular as that, and we were just in awe. We were wandering round this club thinking, this is the best thing I’ve ever been to in my life for the entire night” (Promoter D).
- “We turned smoking into art, into a performance spectacle” (Mason, 2018).

Venues

- “House music was responsible for turning discos into nightclubs, and between 1990 and 1995, The Gallery was the epicentre of rave culture in Leeds” (Promoter G).
- “Warehouse had shut down, we’d moved to Kerbcrawler, which is now Mint Warehouse, but apparently when it was Kerbcrawler it was too far outside the town, now it’s Mint Warehouse it’s the most lucrative place to go, because no-one wants to be city centre based” (Promoter D).
- “Monocult, Cetta Loco and Dirty Disco started from house parties, us we had DJs that were playing at house parties. Back2Basics they had the artists that were playing at these house parties and then bringing them on board. For the Leeds scene to continue, we need to not just go to the bigger nights, but we need to reintegrate and re-appreciate the underground scene, which is what Leeds has always been” (Promoter B).
- “We knew our club was super, we didn’t need it to be a super club” (Beer, 2018).

Thank you

Any questions?

s.moss@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

@stuartmoss

Bibliography

- Acharya, K. (2018) Creating chaos with the Chunk collective. [Internet] URL available from: <<http://www.kerrang.com/features/creating-chaos-with-the-chunk-collective/>> Accessed 16th March, 2018.
- Amin, T. (2017) DIY in 2017, how Leeds, Bristol and London scenes are striving to survive. [Internet] URL available from: <<http://www.factmag.com/2017/06/15/uk-diy-venues/>> Accessed 18th July, 2017.
- Beer, D. One Foot in the Rave. Leeds, 4th May, 2018.
- Dance Britannia (2008) Dangerous Dancing [Online] Available at: <<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/00796D11>> [Accessed 20th November, 2018].
- Evelyn, G. One Foot in the Rave. Leeds, 29th April, 2018.
- Haslam, D. (2001) Adventures on the wheels of steel the rise of the superstar DJs. Fourth Estate, London.
- James, M. (2002) Prodigy. London, Sanctuary Publishing Ltd.
- Mason, S. (2018) One Foot in the Rave. Leeds, 31st April, 2018.
- Phillips, D. (2009) Super star DJs here we go!. London, Ebury Press.
- Spracklen, K., Richter, A. and Spracklen, B. (2013) The eventization of Leisure and the strange death of alternative Leeds. City. Volume 17, Number 2, pp. 164-178.
- The City Talking: Music in Leeds – Volume I (2015) [Online] Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03bv0xv>> [Accessed 8th November, 2018].
- The City Talking: Music in Leeds Vol II (2016) Directed by Hicken, L. and Hicken, S. Leeds: Hebe Productions [Online] URL available at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/audiovideo/featured?sorting=justadded#p04d6nfp>>