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As Night Turns to Mourning: YouTube's Ahistoric Rave Archive



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Abstract: Often with little visual content aside from a static information sticker from the centre of a 12" vinyl record, electronic dance music releases from the late 1980s onwards are now widely available as YouTube uploads. Subsequently allowing for their embedding on other platforms/sites—including extensive crowdsourced music database Discogs—they go from literal records to digital approximations of the tracks that permeated UK nightlife since the emergence of acid house in the mid to late-1980s. Focusing on a sequence found within these recordings identified by Reynolds as “the Hardcore Continuum”, this paper examines how the documenting of rave culture on online platforms is feeding nostalgia. This can be expressed through user comments that centre on themes of loss. However, it is argued that this practice runs in parallel with a later generation of UK-based musicians who continue to draw influence from these earlier recordings. Three contemporary examples are considered in detail: Overmono (a production duo made up of brothers Ed and Tom Russell), Joy Orbison (real name Peter O’Grady) and Burial (the recording guise of William Bevan). Noting an influence of YouTube on some of their output, it also asks if this retrospectively informed approach is a direct response to our digitally connected present. While YouTube supposedly facilitates a portal to this pre-internet past, the chapter considers the platform as a space for reframing recordings as nostalgic yet ahistoric. It particularly looks to this practice of memorialisation in conjunction with its displacement of time.

Keywords: Rave Nostalgia, Hardcore Continuum, Digital Nostalgia, Electronic Dance Music, Ahistoric

Résumé : Souvent dépourvues de tout contenu visuel autre qu’un autocollant au centre d’un disque vinyle, les productions de *dance* électronique de la fin des années 1980 sont désormais largement disponibles au téléchargement sur YouTube, permettant ainsi leur intégration à d’autres plateformes – y compris la vaste base de données musicale crowdsourcée Discogs. Ces morceaux, qui ont imprégné la vie nocturne britannique depuis l’émergence de l’*acid house* au milieu et à la fin des années 1980, passent

donc, littéralement, d'enregistrements physiques sur disque à des supports numériques approximatifs. S'appuyant sur une séquence trouvée dans ces enregistrements et identifiée par Reynolds comme le «Hardcore Continuum», cet article examine comment la documentation de la culture *rave* sur les plateformes numériques alimente la nostalgie. Cette dernière peut s'exprimer à travers les commentaires des utilisateurs, qui se concentrent sur les thèmes de la perte. Cependant, cette pratique nostalgique est aussi contemporaine d'une génération de musiciens britanniques d'aujourd'hui qui continuent à s'inspirer de ces enregistrements des années 1980 et 1990. Trois exemples sont examinés en détail : Overmono (un duo composé des frères Ed et Tom Russell), Joy Orbison (de son vrai nom Peter O'Grady) et Burial (le pseudonyme de William Bevan). Relevant l'influence de YouTube sur certaines de ces productions, notre article pose également la question de savoir si cette approche rétrospective s'inscrit en réaction à notre présent numériquement connecté. Alors que YouTube est censé faciliter l'accès à ce passé pré-internet, cette étude considère la plateforme comme un espace permettant de définir ces enregistrements comme étant à la fois nostalgiques et ahistoriques. Nous nous concentrons en particulier sur cette pratique de mémorialisation en conjonction avec son décalage dans le temps.

Mots clés : Nostalgie *rave*, nostalgie numérique, *continuum* hardcore, *dance* musique électronique, ahistorique

Introduction

The title of this paper is knowingly mawkish and indicative of it detailing a certain, often overwrought, type of nostalgia. It should be noted that quantifying it in this way is an important factor in relationship to the research: given that this paper's focus—electronic dance music and rave culture—may often be characterised as primarily technologically driven and, by association, forward-looking. To an extent, electronic dance music can seem to reject nostalgic impulses. For example, the dancefloor experience itself remains primarily concerned with the physical and the present while nostalgia instead discards that 'corporeal now': preferring the emotive charge of the past while lamenting the idea of a time, a place or an experience that supposedly holds more significant meaning (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt & Routledge, 2006). Yet despite some prevalent techno-utopia narratives and a purported reputation for newness, electronic dance music can have an intense relationship with the past that, while often underexplored, has its manifestations. These may become more obvious when music producers promote a vision of the future that seems to be borrowed from Kraftwerk in the 1970s or when supposedly cutting-edge sounds employ all the retro kitsch associated with sci-fi B-Movies. A track's composition can also be built around obsolete technology rather than the latest gadgetry while, elsewhere, audio samples are shamelessly borrowed from yesteryear. However, the

referencing of previous styles should not be viewed as inherently nostalgic. In many cases where electronic dance music will recall another age, it is with an irreverence that is clearly detached from nostalgia and its notably more sentimental tendencies.

Initially a diagnosis for homesick soldiers by 17th century Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, nostalgia may now be understood as a psychological construct rather than a medical condition (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019).¹ Yet it retains those initial associations with a desperate longing. While its status may have been demedicalised, this has not prevented researchers identifying additional ‘symptoms’ of nostalgia. For example, it has been observed that it can support unrealistic idealisations of the past as a side effect of “dissatisfaction with the present” (Sweeney, 2020: 188). Nostalgia has even been linked to individuals’ difficulties in adapting to a changing world: where it helps facilitate a resistance of new experiences in favour of the familiar (Wildschut *et al.*, 2006). On the other hand, there have been cited psychological benefits including nostalgia’s use as a coping mechanism for dealing with loss or the improved stability and associated social connectedness derived from a relationship with one’s own past (see Sedikes & Wildschut, 2016; Wildschut *et al.*, 2010; Batcho 2013).

Within the fields of electronic dance music and rave culture, we might then see nostalgia most clearly during periods of stasis, rather than at those points where elements of the past are incorporated superficially within its productive endeavours. This is certainly the case with the activity that forms one strand identified by Reynolds as the “Hardcore Continuum”: a bass network evoking Deleuze and Guattari’s “rhizomatic” structure (1987); where offshoots emerge unexpectedly, and new hybrids are cultivated. Mutating from euphoric melodies underpinned by frenetic breakbeats (essentially reconfigured and accelerated snatches of old records), Reynolds noted rave’s initial burst of innovation as having already decelerated some 25 years ago (1997: 102-104). There have also been more recent eras said to be typified by inactivity and, in some cases, regression. In 2010, Matos observed dance music going in reverse: labelling its perceived stagnation as “Permaretro” (2010: online). Five year later, Harrison was interrogating dance music’s “nostalgia problem” while pointing to revivalist tendencies proliferating via online spaces (2015: online).

The following sections subsequently explore the role that internet platforms play in supporting bouts of rave nostalgia. The role of digital spaces such as YouTube are considered in terms of memorialisation and glorification of eras prior to highlighting their further potential and

1. A translation by Carolyn Kiser Aspach of Hofer’s 1688 medical dissertation on nostalgia was published in 1934. Its introduction cites the original document as containing the first usage of the term.

influence within a more active and arguably restorative approach. Using three examples of music producers whose work incorporates elements derived from Reynolds' Hardcore Continuum while also citing instances where YouTube content has instigated new activity and artefacts, it looks to understand the motivations behind a wistful engagement with a once youthful scene that was considered to represent nostalgia's antithesis (2011: 234).

Digital Nostalgia

There were early signs of a nostalgia trade within UK electronic dance music that Thornton observed via a 1991 advertisement placed by the organisers of the Sunrise parties (1995: 140). Having already gained notoriety for illegal events thanks to outraged coverage from the country's tabloid press, the Sunrise promoters used this advert to sell video cassettes featuring footage from its raves in 1988 and 1989.

In 2023, the material once sold through magazines is freely available on YouTube. Unified by shaky camerawork and distorted audio, this documentation of Sunrise's large scale open-air events can be found alongside other parties such as Fantazia at Donnington, Shropshire. Other uploads converted from the original VHS tapes highlight a whole series of warehouse parties that took place across English towns and counties. Yet despite the uploaded media's poor quality, thousands of YouTube users are undeterred from engaging with these recordings. If anything, their grain and lack of production values are a patina: with the low resolution likely contributing to understandings of a video's age and authenticity. And while some of these sequences have also been incorporated into the numerous documentaries and exhibitions that have gone on to explore the history and culture of rave, the YouTube uploads offer further insight into how users are interacting and responding to them.²

In some cases, there are additions to the comments section simply request "Track ID?": further information/identification of individual records that appear at points in the recording. (This request is also common for uploads of DJ mixes transferred from their original cassette tape to sites such as Soundcloud.) Elsewhere the comments section can indicate a sense of community and identity including the kind of user anecdotes that have been collated by Twitter/X account, @UKRaveComments

2. Examples of the documentaries to focus on dance music's history and culture would include Jeremy's Deller's *Everybody in the Place* (2018) and the *Pump Up the Volume* series (2001) which, despite both projects being made for its British TV broadcast, have since been uploaded to YouTube. Exhibitions have included 2019's *Sweet Harmony* at London's Saatchi Gallery.

and 2016 fanzine *Hardcore You Know the Score*.³ These might include first-hand accounts of the events including variations on “takes me back to the days when the music was fresh and the vibes were pure” (Simmonds, 2016: 10). Martin says that these comments are from people “who know that their raving days are over and are looking back on them rather than trying to recreate them” (2013: online). In such examples, there is no attempt to recapture the spirit, but rather it appears to serve as a comforting reminder. The videos sold by Sunrise in 1991 were explicitly flagged as fulfilling this particular purpose: the opportunity for past participants to be reminded of a lived experience (Thornton, 1995: 140). However, the appeal of these recordings is alternatively described as being more for those who “wished they had been there” (*ibid.*). A substantial number of comments on the YouTube-uploaded versions will suggest similarly motivations. So, while memories of these early UK raves live on within online communities (in this case, with people using YouTube as a platform to share footage from their youth), these do sit alongside an arguably more regressive use of the comments section that details a sentimental longing for an unexperienced past. For example, “why wasnt i born 10 years earlier!” (sic) reads one comment added by, user, @illhorse (Deeman72, 2012: online) while another from @megankeily4858 (in response to footage from a *Dance Britannia* documentary uploaded to the platform) says: “I’m 21 and I’ve danced at all sort of modern legal “raves” that just don’t seem to beat the authenticity of this” (Goodstuff79, 2010: online).

The reference to the illegality of early rave events could also be part of the attraction for those clearly too young to have participated. The illicit nature of the parties featured on YouTube is most likely in contrast to the more widely adopted club culture that now exists as part of an established entertainment industry. Seemingly becoming dance music lore, rave culture may instead represent a form of youth rebellion against mainstream society with its own distinct fashion, music, and drugs.⁴ For many, it clearly indicates a time of freedom and self-expression that allowed a deviation from mainstream society (if, most likely, only for the weekend). The vicarious nostalgia—this rave dysphoria—may therefore suggest a desire to escape the present. However, the nostalgic urge that accompanies it is also evident in responses to YouTube content that focuses less on the scene’s more transgressive aspects. In terms of music located within Reynolds’ Hardcore Continuum (a discography that extends well beyond

3. The UK Rave Comments Twitter/X account started operating during the Covid outbreak (and subsequent lockdown) in the UK (see Gorton, 2020: online). The cited fanzine was produced by Jake Simmonds while at university. At the time of writing, Simmonds is a graphic designer at XL recordings: a label that developed in tandem with the growth of the UK rave scene and has included Jonny L, Joy Orbison and Overmono on its roster.

4. For historical and sociological accounts of dance music cultures see Collin (1997), Garratt (1998), Rietveld (1998), Reynolds (1998), Sicko (2010) and Brewster and Broughton (2000). McKay (1996; 1998) alternatively questions developments as radical or resistant while Redhead (1999) looks at dance music scenes as representations of modern youth culture.

the era documented in the footage from illegal raves), such comments are also present where individual tracks are added. These are often minimal in their visual content: with static images of the information label from a 12" record that, for the purpose of the upload, has had its audio digitally ripped.

Warner describes the vinyl record as music's "central artefact" (2003: xi): then touching on the disc's symbolic status; something that seemingly transcends a primary function as a carrier of sound. Indeed, it has been argued to be a medium that "engenders a semiotic configuration and an aesthetic experience that is not reducible to music alone" (Grønstad and Vågnes, 2010: 11). In dance music, the 12" single is specifically understood as an alternative to its more "pop" 7" version. Prior to distribution as digital files, the vinyl 12" single was the format for the extended remix and other alternate dancefloor versions. Subsequently the mainstay of the specialist dance music record stores, it also operated outside of more typical music distribution with the use of additional networks for upfront promo, white label and acetate 'dubplate' pressings that fed demand for exclusive new tracks: often months before a record would receive wider commercial release. With a reputation as the preferred format for tastemakers (something that dates back to disco's heyday), the depiction of the 12" single on YouTube serves as a reminder of their place in the cultural zeitgeist. Since embedded on sites such as the extensive crowdsourced Discogs platform, the imagery now mainly helps to complete the documentation: adding to the discography with both audio and visual indexing of a specific recording.⁵ As archived ephemera, these may be perceived as memorials: not dissimilar to the materials that online platforms facilitate in remembrance of the departed (see Moreman and Lewis, 2014).⁶ However, borrowing from Zeavin, interaction with digital nostalgia in this way can be a "stuck melancholic performance" (2023: 181) while Harrison addressed the associated inertia as "the stifling effects of looking back" (2015: online). To this end, digital rave nostalgia that functions in this way might best be viewed under Boym's definition of "reflective nostalgia" (2001): built around materials from the past and driven towards emotional responses that incorporate "elements of both mourning and melancholia" (Boym, 2001: 55). Essentially, they are indicative of passive engagement. More active engagement—in warehouses, fields and nightclubs—was another place and another time. Here the uploaded media serves as a simple 'marker': a cenotaph commemorating what happened elsewhere.

5. Discogs was first registered in 2000. It predates YouTube by five years.

6. There are occasions where the discussed YouTube uploads explicitly converge with actual online memorials. For example, tracks from producer DJ Tango attracted comments of "R.I.P." on his death in 2018. Further to this, certain pieces of music may be associated with a friend or relative whose death is being grieved. These can prompt comments that will mark that connection such as "R.I.P dad still can't believe your gone I will be pumping plenty hardcore tunes for you [...] love you dad" (sic) (EmotionsBySound, 2009: online).



While engagement with original rave content in digital spaces may have been viewed in the last section as a regressive act, Boym provides us with an alternative to this merely reflective nostalgia in the form of “restorative nostalgia”. This section explores this more constructive approach as an alternative to casual reminiscence through a consideration of pre-existing materials as offering opportunities for new artefacts that connect with contemporary scenes and eras. To do this, it notes instances where this has already taken place within Reynolds’ Hardcore Continuum before looking at how a reactivation of archived materials has come to permeate the recordings of three music producers who emerged in the first part of the 21st century.

As Boym asserts, nostalgia is not always about the past: “it can be retrospective but also prospective” (2001: xvi). Evidenced through examples such as The Fabulous Baker Boys’ ‘Oh Boy’ track: a 1997 garage record that utilises the vocal hook from Jonny L’s 1992 rave anthem ‘Hurt You So’ (see Reynolds, 1998: 420-421), it can recontextualise what is often a simple refrain and allow sonic fragments to persist as a kind of distant folk memory.⁷ Reynolds sees these traces of earlier works as “pledging allegiance” to the Hardcore Continuum’s spirit (Reynolds in Cookney, 2015: 191): a respectful nod to other styles that share the same underground roots. Explored most comprehensively in a series of essays for *The Wire* magazine, this Continuum then plots a graph between UK electronic dance music forms including hardcore rave, jungle, drum n bass, UK garage and dubstep while united by many key features including that use of specific samples/musical elements alongside shared means of dissemination and the involvement of the same participants across genres. In defining the “systematic core of The Hardcore Continuum” Reynolds explains it as “a particular set of relations based around pirate radio, dubplates, raves and rave-style clubs, along with certain kinds of music-making technology” (2010: 70).

It is with an apparent reverence for these relations that, production guises, Burial, Joy Orbison and Overmono pledge their own allegiance to the Hardcore Continuum while seemingly avoiding mere pastiche.⁸ The

7. Jonny L (real name Jon Lisners) additionally re-emerged as one half of, UK garage duo, True Steppers. (True Steppers also reworked his earlier ‘Hurt You So’.) Other producers also appear at different points in the Hardcore Continuum. One regularly cited example would be Steve Gurley whose work includes hardcore rave and drum n bass releases as Foul Play and Rogue Unit plus later UK garage output under his own name.
8. Other examples that could be explored in terms of the Hardcore Continuum’s continuing influence on later music would include The Streets - ‘Weak Become Heroes’, M.I.A.’s ‘XR2’, Toddla T’s ‘Take it Back’, ‘All Under One Roof Raving’ by Jamie XX, Pearson Sound’s ‘Alien Mode’, ‘Problems’ by Floating Points, output from Manchester’s Lone, Zomby’s ‘Where Were You in 92?’ long-player, Paul Woolford’s Special Request project and tracks such as

three embody a shift from the reflective to the restorative in their embrace of bygone eras. Burial, a pseudonym for producer William Bevan, evokes a sense of wistfulness regarding hardcore rave and UK garage resulting in records that are considered innovative reimaginations of the past. Joy Orbison, a less introspective prospect, still intertwines the influences of drum n bass and UK garage: incorporating samples and spoken vocals that strategically weave a narrative harking back to the early rave culture. Overmono (contrastingly a duo) vividly embrace the Hardcore Continuum: blending 1990s euphoria with deep bass that somehow “side-steps pure revisionism” (Anon, 2018, online).

Reboot 1: Burial



Burial can already be plotted within the Hardcore Continuum through his emergence alongside a wave of London-based dubstep producers in the early 2000s. Yet, there is a reactivated nostalgia within his output that teases at styles that preceded dubstep. As one commentator states, his approach is cited as “nostalgic feelings which somehow give life to active memories” (sulli, 2022, online): where an influence does not manifest through the explicit use of samples as cited previously. Instead of some recognisable, crowd-pleasing vocal that might be borrowed from the past, Burial’s records are more mournful, distant recollections of hardcore rave and UK garage: half-forgotten sounds under a layer of crackle akin to a needle encountering the dust particles collected within a vinyl record’s groove. Fisher described them as “like walking into the abandoned spaces once carnivalised by raves and finding them returned to depopulated dereliction. Muted air horns are like the ghosts of raves past” (2014: 98). Another reading acknowledges Burial’s ability to take “the standard tropes of 2-Step and UKG-pitched-up feminine pressure and syncopated shuffle-beats—and transform them into a crackle-shrouded pirate broadcast from some spectral, re-imagined past” (Kek-W, 2012: online). Receiving widespread critical acclaim since the release of his 2006 self-titled debut album, Burial’s haunting vocal snatches, melancholic tones and skeletal UK garage-influenced rhythms are then quite distanced from the more aggressive and bombastic sounds of many of his dubstep contemporaries. Sometimes forsaking the dancefloor entirely, he has gravitated towards incorporating field recordings within drawn-out ambient soundscapes seemingly with the intention of capturing the evocative and emotional. Observing that distance from more typical club-focused DJ tracks, he has said that the music is “more about when you come back from being out somewhere [...] dreamlike, and you’ve still got the music kind of

[‘That’s Too Slow’ by Jasper Tygner \(complete with its video that incorporates some of the vintage rave footage discussed in this paper\).](#)

echoing in you, in your bloodstream, but with real life trying to get in the way” (Hancox, 2007: online).

On the track ‘Gutted’ (2006), the producer incorporates the spoken word sample “sometimes you’ve got to go back to the ancient ways” and we may consider this in terms of Burial’s musical output: how his productions might prompt a return to some ancestral past. Certainly, there’s that influence from rave and UK garage yet, more specifically, there’s a rawness to the work that comes from a reliance on old software and what he has referred to as his recordings’ poor technical quality that will link back to records from another generation. Yet his approach to public life also sees him tapping into a legacy. As Hancox states: “Burial doesn’t do DJ gigs, live performances or radio shows, and only a few photos exist of him” (2007: online). In fact, the producer is notorious for maintaining a degree of anonymity. What’s generally known about him comes from the few interviews that exist and, within these rare media interactions, he has indicated how his aversion to stardom is “not a new thing [...] it’s one of the old underground ways” (Fisher, 2012, online). Burial then subsequently reminds us that the rave scene was initially built on word-of-mouth promotion, printed flyers and a network of dedicated, yet largely anonymous individuals who organised and promoted its events (see Thornton, 1995: 137). That mystery has also surrounded many producers of rave records: with tracks circulating as white label pressings and under obscure aliases. As Hsu notes, Burial pays homage to the “beloved niche dance music of the past” (2019: online).

Reboot 2: Joy Orbison



Born Peter O’Grady, Joy Orbison is a British electronic music producer and DJ guise known for a style of production that blends aspects of house, dubstep, techno and garage music. Gaining prominence in 2009 with the release of, debut single, ‘Hyph Mngo’, he has similarly been reluctant to engage significantly with the press. However, like Burial, he has participated in some interviews where he highlights the importance of elements from the Hardcore Continuum. Drum n bass, he says, “was really forward-thinking music [...] there’s no date to it” (Hinton, 2022: online) while his formative interest in UK garage would prompt his teenage self to “make bootleg tapes of pirate radio shows” (Szatan, 2019: online). But it is his own ‘Ellipsis’ vinyl release from 2012 that most explicitly highlights the influence within his recordings. While lacking the rhythmic complexity of his early output, its lush chords are notably accompanied by a repeated spoken vocal sample: “we just used to, like...”. Taken from a 1996 Dutch TV interview with drum n bass duo Source Direct that has since been

uploaded to YouTube, the refrain is part of a longer response to a question regarding the twosome's introduction to the scene (Prestonloyola, 2008: online).⁹ In the original video, childhood friends, James Baker and Phil Aslett document their time staging pre-Source Direct parties while trying to evade the police. Joy Orbison then takes the first-hand account of underground rave culture and reconfigures it within a modern composition that nods to the past again through the eventual addition of a piano line that could easily have been included in a record from 1991.

Reboot 3: Overmono



The guise of brothers Ed and Tom Russell, Overmono utilises a blueprint where “ruffneck drums [are] in check with smiley-face signifiers and notes of '90s euphoria” (Ravens, 2020: online). The influence of UK garage's 2-step variant is additionally evident in the rhythms that underpin their outputs: resulting in the kind of groove and swing that Reynolds described as “a kind of slow-motion Jungle – a languorous frenzy of micro-breakbeats, hesitations and hyper-syncopations; moments when the beat seems to pause, poised, and hold its breath” (1999: online). On the track ‘So U Know’, the pair's production takes its hook from a sampled and sped up R&B diva vocal much like “two thirds of Hardcore/Jungle anthems between 1991–94” (Reynolds, 1999: online). Presumably in recognition of the pair's ability to reconfigure vintage sounds for modern audiences, Overmono was invited to create the soundtrack for *Better Days: The Story of Rave*: a 2021 documentary focusing on 30 years of UK club culture.

Kindred



The connections between the work of the three producers introduced in the last section highlight a specific kinship. Further to the reactivation of their Hardcore Continuum interests, Joy Orbison and Overmono have also recorded together while signed to the same record label: suggesting an obvious bond. (Burial, meanwhile, is notorious for being reclusive: seemingly rejecting interaction with all but a handful of rare collaborations.)

9. Burial also has recordings that incorporate elements from YouTube. In 2007's ‘Etched Headplate’, he uses a vocal sample from Alicia Reynolds. Otherwise known as YouTube user @Caramelma4o1, her disembodied voice is manipulated across a spacious, clicking six-minutes complete with slow pulsing bass. It winds “through pitches with massive anxiety, with lingering sadness” (Hennings, 2007: online): then radically recontextualising what is a blurry upload of an American teen singing an a capella cover version of Amada Perez's ‘Angel’ in the direction of her webcam.

However, there remains further relatedness that is integral to each example. Only despite what could be mistakenly assumed to be informed by active participation in the first wave scenes that influenced their subsequent productions, the individuals behind all these production guises have been largely informed by secondary accounts of rave culture. Joy Orbison, born in 1986, has discussed the explicit influence of his family on both his knowledge and interest in earlier scenes. The cover artwork for his *Still Slipping Vol.1* release pays tribute to this: featuring a photograph of his auntie Leighann: the family member who first introduced him to club music.¹⁰ Additional influence has come from his uncle: drum n bass DJ/producer Ray Keith.

These familial connections have proved pivotal, yet he suggests they are commonplace insisting that: “when we were growing up, dance music seemed so relatable, everyone got into it through their older brother or your mate’s older sister” (Hinton, 2022: online). Burial has also discussed how he drew from the experiences of others when confessing “I’m not old enough to have been to a proper old rave in a warehouse or a field but I used to hear these stories about legendary club nights, about driving off into the darkness to raves” (Hancox, 2007: online). Particularly, he has documented his own brother’s proximity to the scene where “he was out there, going to places. He’d tell us stories about it. We were brought up on stories about it” (Fisher, 2012: online). As Hsu elaborates on that relationship, “the brothers would listen to new twelve-inch jungle records together, and Bevan (Burial) would imagine what it was like to experience these sounds in their native environment” (2019: online).

The Overmono brothers have a ten-year age gap between them, and articles have discussed how the younger sibling—who seemingly was the first to embrace more retro Hardcore Continuum-aligned themes in his preceding Tessela solo work—was introduced to dance music when hearing it come from his brother’s neighbouring bedroom. In interview, the pair have additionally discussed how they were gifted “tons of vinyl” by their brother-in-law: a DJ in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Eede, 2017: online). With this archive being used as sample sources for many of their own tracks, they exemplify “the ease with which records travel in space and time” (Thornton, 1995: 112).

10. The artwork itself feels nostalgic. Much like Overmono’s ‘Everything U Need’ release (2020) there’s a banal, British, suburban quality that almost evokes the kitsch photography of Martin Parr. In interview Joy Orbison has spoken of the incorporation of his suburban roots into his practice saying that “it’s making something glossy out of the mundane” (Hinton, 2022: online). Furthering this aesthetic, promotion of Overmono’s 2023 album included a takeover of a typical London pub alongside a range of retro merchandise including commemorative plates and tea towels.

However, as with Burial and Joy Orbison, there may remain questions surrounding authenticity and the producers' stake in the scenes that foreshadow their recorded output. For Overmono's Ed Russell, he believes that his own "sense of ownership" is precisely because he was too young to have experienced rave culture first time around (Eede, 2017: online). He explains that:

It is still what I've come from and what I've grown up with. For me it feels much more natural to take influence from '90s UK rave culture than making disco records or something, because it wouldn't feel authentic at all. Obviously early rave records were doing stuff like that in that they were speeding up parts of early hip-hop records or whatever, so that's not to say that you have to always have some ownership over what it is you're producing, but for me it feels that I can go through and take influence from this big archive of samples we have, and have it still feel genuine (*ibid.*).

His argument is then one that questions rave's own musical originality while highlighting a creative process as being faithfully maintained. Yet, for some commentators, there is still "a discontinuity between the current moment and the heady days of the rave scene" (Davidson, 2023: 430). For example, in Burial's music, listeners might locate a "somewhat voyeuristic aspect of his music, the way that it always feels as if you're lurking" (Hsu, 2019: online). Yet more than just the outsider looking in, there are also unsettling feelings of incompleteness for some: a despondency that seems to permeate his tracks. This may be traced back to Burial's own views of early rave music when he laments how "it's got this sadness now, because most club culture got commercialised in the 1990s; oftentimes it got taken off ravers and sold back to them" (Hancox, 2007: online). In turn observing rave as representing a false prophecy, we might consider that the optimism found in its nostalgic artefacts can never truly be recaptured due to the knowledge that it would still lead us to our current state.

Building further on the romanticising of the experience of an older rave generation, there can be an additional tendency to reject technical developments that happened in the period after recordings were made. This would include the paradox where the technology that now grants access to this material is viewed as having deprived a later generation of a more authentic experience. Examples of this are evident on YouTube comments for rave video uploads such as "NO PHONES... just real interaction with each other...can we have this again please???" from user @crystal Dawn8875 (Oldskool Raver, 2012: online) or @jakjak4271's "I'd trade all my technology right now for one night like this..." (Maskevito, 2013: online). Now existing as digital copies, these videos still point directly to an era prior to the mass adoption of the internet and social media: "before

YouTube algorithms, before streaming and payola playlists” (Ribakoff, 2022: online). However, in its idealistic return to the past, such commentary avoids acknowledging that the depicted participants within the footage were still subjected to a voyeuristic gaze through the use of electronic equipment (in this case, VHS cameras). Instead, it is presented as somehow unmediated: where the thoroughly camera-shy Burial even suggests that “...It wasn’t as artificial, self-aware or created by the internet. It was more rumour, underground folklore. No mobile phones back then. Anyone could go into the night and they had to seek it out...” (Fisher, 2012: online).

The curious aspect of rave nostalgia’s digital resurgence is then its ability to reshape that relationship with technology. Hassan discusses this pre-digital era as one where analogue means prompted cultural traditions to diversify and evolve (2020: 168-169). By comparison, he argues that contemporary life has birthed “a state of stasis, a stagnancy, in the mass cultural lifeblood, where growth, evolution and change are being forced out in direct proportion to digitality’s colonisation of every sphere of society” (2020: 169). Whether reframing the captured cultural moment as more real than our 21st century social interactions through to rejecting the progress that now affords us the ability to reminisce, this privileging of the past over the present somehow refuses to implicate YouTube itself as ‘technology’. Maybe, to quote Don Draper in *Mad Men*, the platform isn’t assumed to be some space-age rocket ship: instead, it’s that time machine that “takes us to a place we ache to go again” (2017).

Conclusion



The distinct romanticising of analogue material uploaded to YouTube as indicative of freedom from technology’s tyranny is an absurd contradiction. Yet, as Andersen suggests, the popularity of nostalgic content on the platform may be due to “an unconscious collective reaction to all the profound nonstop newness we’re experiencing on the tech and geopolitical and economic fronts” (2012: online). In a world where social interaction is assumed to be increasingly mediated by mobile technologies, there is a documented desire to return to what is viewed as simpler times. Producer Burial has referred to his childhood “listening to pirate radio in my room at night and buying records” before stating that such practices have been ruined by “the internet” (in Clark, 2006: online). The mythology that then surrounds the past and the ease in which we might now vicariously access its artefacts prompts some dissatisfaction. The future once imagined has given way to these portals: to now, where “new technology has reinforced

the nostalgic cultural gaze [and] now that we have instant universal access to every old image and recorded sound” (Andersen, 2012: online).

On platforms like Discogs, that content is painstakingly archived: classified and carefully curated. Materials that define the Hardcore Continuum are located within its vast, chronologically arranged discography. Elsewhere, the historical framing is often removed resulting in what Matos described as a “curious kind of flattening out” of our audio-visual heritage (2010: online). Users can then have access to an archive that is ahistoric: one where the documentation of history as a series of ordered events is of little concern. YouTube’s algorithm, as the key example, appears to have the past as a randomized playlist: where footage from old raves is merged with Joy Orbison or Overmono’s 21st century reconfigurations and UK garage anthems. Content from official record label channels can be followed by fan-made videos for Burial’s pathos-tinged tracks (see Cookney, 2017: 255-267). There is seemingly little attempt to present rave as a sequence with a reliable, logical order. Everything is ‘on shuffle’. Reynolds addresses this as an “atemporal smorgasbord” with specific implications for younger audiences when saying:

Historical depth drops out, the original context or meaning of the music becomes steadily more irrelevant; music is just material to redeploy. If you’ve grown up, as anyone under the age of 30 really has, with a relationship to music based around total access, superabundance, and the erosion of a sense of sounds having placement within an historical or temporal scheme, then thinking about music in terms of causal links and development through time becomes ever more alien to your consciousness. (Reynolds, 2010: 73)

When presented by YouTube, that barrage of displaced moments simultaneously (and paradoxically) includes comments highlighting resentment that users experience through their engagement with the type of modern technology that facilitates these nostalgia trips. Yet, like those stories passed down from an older relative who experienced it ‘for real’, this content still contributes to “a powerful collective memory which expands to include each new generation of those who weren’t there” (Ravens, 2020: online). However, perhaps like memory itself, what’s left are the disjointed flickering glimpses of something just out of reach.

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