THE PSYTRANCE PARTY

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CHARLES DE LEDESMA

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Abstract

In my study, I explore a specific kind of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) event - the psytrance party to highlight the importance of social connectivity and the generation of a modern form of communitas (Turner, 1969, 1982).

Since the early 90s psytrance, and a related earlier style, Goa trance, have been understood as hedonist music cultures where participants seek to get into a trance-like state through all night dancing and psychedelic drugs consumption. Authors (Cole and Hannan, 1997; D'Andrea, 2007; Partridge, 2004; St John 2010a and 2010b; Saldanha, 2007) conflate this electronic dance music with spirituality and indigene rituals. In addition, they locate psytrance in a neo-psychedelic countercultural continuum with roots stretching back to the 1960s. Others locate the trance party events, driven by fast, hypnotic, beat-driven, largely instrumental music, as post sub cultural and neo-tribal, representing symbolic resistance to capitalism and neo liberalism.

My study is in partial agreement with these readings when applied to genre history, but questions their validity for contemporary practice. The data I collected at and around the 2008 Offworld festival demonstrates that participants found the psytrance experience enjoyable and enriching, despite an apparent lack of overt euphoria, spectacular transgression, or sustained hedonism. I suggest that my work adds to an existing body of literature on psytrance in its exploration of a dance music event as a liminal space, redolent with communitas, but one too which foregrounds mundane features, such as socialising and pleasure. In addition my work contributes to popular music studies and youth cultures research notably when related to field work methods and ethnographic approaches.

My inquiry harnesses a variety of fieldwork methods to argue for re-evaluation of the psytrance party. Attention in particular is paid to the event's many material elements and how they interact. They include site spaces, infrastructure, dancing, or 'chilling', bodies, DJs, sound systems, organisers and drugs. The study applies concepts developed in cultural anthropology such as communitas, in the new ethnography (Goodall, 1999; Marcus 1998) - reflexive researching and partial insiderness – and, lastly, the 'vibe' and the DJ-dancer relationship, which remain fundamental to electronic dance music cultures.

The Psytrance Party

<h1 style="text-align:center">Contents</h1>

List of Plates

Chapter 1

Challenging the Spectacular in Electronic Dance Music Accounts

> The psy-festival... allows its inhabitants multiple freedoms, including the freedom to join one's flame to the conflagration, and to hold self-promotions on and off the dance floor.
>
> Graham St John (2009a, p.48)

Introduction

My ethnographically-informed analysis of a psychedelic trance party [1] explores the 'multiple freedoms' Graham St John (2009a) refers to. Key to my account, however, is the lack of conflagration St John detects, or hopes to find, in this reference to the psychedelic trance mission as it spread from Goa, India, to the wider world. I argue that a certain amount of mythologizing surrounds this kind of cultural practice and that, based on research at one event, more attention should be paid to pleasure and community. My argument - that fun, sociality and connections are highly prized products - calls for a wider examination of such Electronic Dance Music (EDM) events which could lead to a more confident conclusion. My research into one particular event suggests there are grounds for these questions to be asked.

The study differs from some academic work (Chan, 1998; Cole and Hannan, 1997; Gore, 1997; Greener and Hollands, 2006; D'Andrea 2007; St John, 2010b; Saldanha, 2007), as I examine in detail the event site and the technologies used, drawing on the experiences and perspectives of around twenty participants over a 14-month period. The fieldwork at the fully-legal, four-day, medium-sized, event, incorporated its lead in and break down too. [2] Fewer than 1000 attended the event which took place at the end of July 2008 in southern England. [3] Research methods were primarily participant

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[1] Offworld took place from the 31st July to the 3rd August, 2008 at Liddington Warren, Berkshire, UK.

[2] Most UK psychedelic trance outdoor events are not properly licensed and tend towards shorter, all-night time frames, but some last for 24 hours or longer. The first legal festival to centrally feature the style was 2004's Glade Festival (www.gladefestival.com) which is an annual event

[3] The following is a list of 2008 UK and Irish festivals featuring psychedelic trance: *Glade Festival*, July 18-20 Berkshire; *Life Festival*, July 4-6, Lough Cutra Castle. Gort, Co. Galway, Ireland;

observation with repeat promoter, participant and DJ interviewing. Use was made too of a focus group, email dialogues, social media, artefacts, digital photography and reflexive analysis of notes and reflections.

As a result of my fieldwork I conclude that social connectivity is paramount for participants. Other authors (D'Andrea 2007; Lambert 2010; Ryan 2010; St John 2010a, 2010b, 2009a, 2004; Schmidt 2010; Sylvan 2005) have drawn attention to this facet of trance culture, but, my findings constitute the first sustained analysis in English of psytrance's social qualities at one research site.

The conclusions to my analysis reveal some surprising areas. Dance moments can be deemed enjoyable and successful when the dance floor is not apparently a magnet for involvement or the music considered of high quality. Elsewhere, I monitor the work of psytrance DJs as they try to invigorate dance floors populated by small numbers and follow the impact of their sonic journeys (Cole and Hannan, 1997) on dancing. A final key subject are the 'body technologies' (Rietveld, 1998, p.176) that dancers favour at psytrance events. As consumption of various dance drugs, and occasionally alcohol, is a constantly recurring theme in my study I will now offer Hillegonda Reitveld's definition (ibid.) which is precise and enveloping enough for application here.

> Body technologies are devices used to enhance a feeling of 'other worldliness' and of escape from daily reality. In this context, I use the world 'drug' not to distinguish between what is legal and what is not; rather the word 'drug' refers to a substance which affects the user in a physiological manner, with noticeable result's to the user's mental state. The drugs taken enable the user to last through the night and to make it an ecstatic experience.

This wide perspective helps me make sense of the range of body technology practices encountered at Offworld. Although chemical concoctions such as LSD and Ecstasy were available, dancers I talked to often shunned them, or displayed an ambivalence. Some told me that such intoxicants reduced the degree of social connectivity at the psytrance party.

Shamania, 31 July-5 August Pendle, Lancashire, *Waveform*, 12-14 September, Liddington Warren Farm, Berkshire.

1.1. Goa and Psychedelic Trance Development

The embryonic Goa style was first played at late 80s full moon parties on the beaches of Goa, south India (Cole and Hannan, 1997; D'Andrea, 2007; Partridge, 2004; Saldanha, 2007). These were frequented by long stay travellers and locals, involved in event infrastructure rather than as fellow revellers. Beach gatherings around the villages, Anjuna, Arambol and Candolim in North Goa had been taking place since the late sixties and were attended by hippie visitors cognisant of an alternative traveller global map - others included Ibiza, north India and Marrakesh, Morocco – where drugs were easy to buy and the density of like-minded people created opportunities for cafe/bar culture, dedicated forms of retailing and informal all-night music sessions (Odzer, 1995; McAteer, 2002). [4]

Subsequently the social and music milieu has fanned out, extending to Europe through the early 90s; Japan, Israel, South Africa, Australia, Brazil and the US in the mid-to-late 90s and, from 2000 onwards, to Russia, Mexico, much of South America and Morocco (see www.Chaishop.com). In Israel by 2010, for example, psytrance's popularity was such that it could be classed as a pop, as opposed to an underground, or alternative, form (Regev, 2007). [5] Psytrance, faster and more abrasive that the early Goa style, is created on software unlike the classic early nineties tracks which used analogue technology.

A major appeal of electronic trance has been all-night, or all-day, dance sessions where dancers intoxicated by powerful body technologies immerse themselves in the digitised rhythms to better effect a kind of trance dance state. Trance dancing at the psychedelic trance party must not be mistaken for shamanic trance dancing (Becker, 2004; Rouget, 1985) which has a clear structural purpose. I suggest it is an umbrella

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[4] Cleo Odzer's *Goa Freaks: My Hippie Years in India* is an enjoyably, sassy autobiography by one of the 'original' Goa hippies from the sixties. Michael McAteer's thesis 'Redefining the Ancient Tribal Ritual for the 21st century: Goa Gil and the Trance Dance Experience' (2002), incorporates well blocks of interview transcript from Gil, regarded as the progenitor of Goa trance, who argues that Goa's psychedelic trance is a direct continuum from sixties psychedelic music and culture.

[5] "By 2000, the term "psytrance" was coined, initially as an umbrella to corral a sector of electronic trance micro-genres which were generically, if only in practice, slightly psychedelic" (De Ledesma, 2010. p.103).

term with at one end of the continuum, drug-inspired, interior-focused movement and more outward playful body moves at the other. Also characteristic of the outdoor events emergent from the Goa model are the multi-coloured backdrops adorning the dance spaces printed with computer-generated designs and patterns often with Hindu, pagan and sci-fi imagery.

A starting point in my argument is that much academic work and fan discourse have upheld the view that psychedelic trance events are part of and shaped by a "psychedelic continuum", with roots and patterns traced back to 60s counterculture, particularly the aspect represented by West Coast psychedelia and transgressive escapades, such as author Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-aid Acid Test* (1969). Hillegonda Reitveld (2010) finds that late 60s and early 70s psychedelically-inspired German, US and British music, ranging from new age, jazz, rock and contemporary genres, is stylistically central to psychedelic trance aesthetics.

Such a "psychedelic legacy" is perhaps underlined by the controversial premise that psychedelic drugs are transformative. Indeed, Arun Saldanha (2007) sees the increasingly popular psychedelic trance scene in 90s Goa as a direct product of these 60s scenes. He suggests that key individuals, such as Goa Gil (see also St John, 2011) were formative along with others who provided the seasonal cohort with supplies of the hallucinogenic chemical LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), first synthesized and ingested by Swiss scientist Albert Hoffman.[6] This foregrounds an activity - the "trance quest" - where the intoxicated dancer would internalise the experience, effect a shift in consciousness and, purportedly, access profound realms.

This dissertation will question these assertions – or at least question their validity for the present day – by understanding the contemporary psytrance party as a liminal space triggering a variety of affects, most rather softer, and more everyday, than hitherto suggested. My method is, through an in-depth study of one contemporary event, to ask questions about the general assumptions around psychedelic trance, now commonly referred to as psytrance. I argue that, at least in the event studied, any promised transformation has been replaced by an emphasis on fun, light heartedness and inter-personal engagement.

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[6] See Albert Hoffman's *LSD: My Problem Child* (1980) for a full account.

I find in this psytrance sociality a form social *communitas*, a term explored by Victor Turner in his coverage of African social rituals (1969; 1974; 1982; with E.Turner, 1992). When Turner (1982) writes, 'Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous communitas become totally absorbed into a single synchronized, fluid event' (48), he could have been commenting on a psytrance party. In dance event connectivity communitas is not required to be dramatic or spectacular. As I endeavour to show, the connective communitas at Offworld met a different formula than is customary in studies of psytrance or, often, in wider EDM cultures. For example Des Trammachi (2000) coins the term, "psychedelic communitas," to encapsulate his reading of turn-of-the-century trance bush parties in Australia, commonly known as "doofs", and Joshua Schmidt (2005) uses "hallucinatory communitas" to understand Israel psytrance culture, circa 2000-5.

This argument's research base is different from other authors, with more emphasis on the material components and how they interact in the event spaces. I will now provide a short summary of psychedelic trance history, before looking in more detail at my methodology. I will then identify pivotal themes which have emerged in the analysis of the fieldwork data and summarise the study's chapter breakdown.

1.2. Situating Psytrance: Widening a Little Culture

The central feature of psytrance music which it shares with a wider palette of electronic trance styles, is all-night dancing to a multi-layered 4/4 beat cycle where the tempo is relatively quick for an EDM - around 142-50 beats per minute (bpm).

Dancing to this abstract music is often in tandem with body technologies, with participants traditionally favouring drugs (highs) such as hallucinogens, including LSD, stimulants, primarily MDMA[7] and synthetics such as Ketamine, also used to tranquillise horses, and, through 2009-10 in particular in the UK, Mephedrone. The purportedly soft drug, cannabis, is also popular for its reputed capacities in facilitating social bonding and as mood-altering agent aiding come-downs from psychedelic or

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[7] The full name for MDMA is '3,4 Methylene-dioxy-N-methylamphetamine' or 'Methylenedioxymethamphetamine'

other hard drugs passages. A further body technology, alcohol, is present at psytrance parties but my personal experience view is that few fans habitually over-indulge. The dance moves preferred in psytrance vary from the robotically repetitive to aerobic and extravagant gestures although, as with other EDM, despite the rapid tempo some participants will move slowly, as if exploring a range of speeds, or choose not to dance at all.

The sonic possibilities realised by the Goa trance producers when shaping the genre, emerged from a particular style of Djing. The hybrid mixes played at late 80s Goa beach parties by Western DJs, including Ray Castle, Five-Fingered Eddie, Goa Gil and Raja Ram (Rietveld, 2010; St John, 2011; Saldanha, 2007) , selected the hypnotic 4/4 beats and miasmic qualities from instrumentally repetitive passages in US house and German techno in particular, to entrance dancers. Another popular tactic was to take from industrialised post punk, grating, twisted noises.

Rave-era acid house parties had arrived in Goa, albeit in a smaller form than in the UK in 1987-9, and DJs incorporated the acid house sound with eastern elements they had been exposed to in India. Later, in the mid-90s, I had been drawn to Goa trance by its use of voice samples which were sometimes snatched from Indian classical raga and tribal artefact but such melodic and coherent elements were usually transmuted by a production framework characterised by a headlong rush of persistent electronic beats, rhythms and unsettling noise. Dancing in the Indian heat, Anthony D'Andrea describes Goa trance in this way. 'By persistently listening to the endless pounding, listeners report no longer to hear music, but a meta-music of absurd sounds' (2007; p.212). Early psychedelic, or Goa, trance (1991-97) was consequently inspired by these formative DJs, especially Goa Gil (see St John, 2011).

A further technical, shaping input was a set of West European traditions ranging from Britain's hippie festival legacy through to electronic body (EDM) music acts like Front 242 and industrial UK bands including Throbbing Gristle and onto early rave acid house acts such as, Cybersonic and The Shamen (Partridge 2004 and 2006; Rietveld, 2010). Chris Partridge (2006, p.46) notes,

> The roots of trance lie deep in the soil of festival culture, as well as in the extended, energetic music of bands such as Hawkwind, the dub reggae

> scene...and the avant-garde electronic music of groups and artists such as Brian Eno and Cabaret Voltaire.

The embryonic genre was made on analogue drum machines and synthesizers by Western and Israeli producers in the summer months in preparation for the winter party season. The music gradually became faster (from 130-136 bpm) and, increasingly, integrated trance like passages and eastern elements.

The consolidation of a cohesive psytrance style, denser busier and faster than Goa trance and rising from around 136 beats-per-minute (bpm) to 146 bpm, emerged as producers, increasingly using digital synthesis, exploring complex software packages like Logic and Cubase. [8] Psytrance also pronounced the bass beat and low pitch sound elements more than Goa trance. This development made the music more "funky", as a degree of syncopation was written into the electronic collage. Another aesthetic shift was away from a brighter, high-end sonic palette toward a more crammed, darker mood. I have examined elsewhere (De Ledesma, 2010) how, by 2010, psychedelic trance contained few of the distinctive features of the earlier Goa trance.

Psytrance, a very specific genre, nevertheless has similarities with other EDM trance modes. The styles – also developed through the 90s in Britain and elsewhere – include euphoric trance, Euro, vocal, and deep trance.[9] A further style, progressive trance - which I discuss briefly in Chapter 5 – is for the purposes of this study subsumed within the wider psytrance wider rubric. I do not intend to detail the characteristics of these other electronic trance styles but I would like to note that, despite some internal differences, they are commonly more melodic in composition and anthemic in effect than psytrance. A further difference between the Goa-derived mode and other EDM trance is the latter's popularity in what is referred to as commercial clubbing, attracting a more "mainstream", and less "alternative" crowd, although Measham and Moore (2009, pp.439-41) in an overview of research on this subject, convincingly caution against simple dichotomies when categorizing EDM fan groups.

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[8] Digital synthesis refers to the combining of increasingly powerful computer platforms with complex audio editing software. The synthesis in the term referring first and foremost to a way of conceptualising and developing music electronically

[9] See www.moodbook.com/music/trance.html for a solid glossary on wider trance styles.

Psytrance party spaces, in contrast with commercial urban spaces, tended initially to be likened to, or inspired by, "temporary autonomous zones" – or TAZ - (Bey, 1991), and have been a class of EDM which has not been severely restricted by the UK's 1994 Criminal Justice Act. Bey was not writing on the rave phenomenon of the late 80s and early 90s but, given the proximity of rave to psytrance music culture, the concept of the TAZ remains apposite.

Like their colleagues in other trance styles, psytrance promoters do hire commercial urban clubs but the spaces of choice tend towards flamboyant locations, such as warehouses and squatted buildings, as hiring costs are lower, surveillance minimal and anti-smoking legislation seldom enforced. Psytrance fans, or "psytrancers", clearly prefer outdoor events where the TAZ practice, by early 2012, still occurs, albeit on a small scale.

My event case study site, Offworld, took place at the official end of this continuum, a legally sanctioned event in common with numerous festivals incorporating EDM which occurred in Western Europe in 2008. It was a four-day, medium-sized, psytrance party with just under one thousand attendees, taking place in southern England over a long late July/early August weekend in 2008. I considered Offworld ideally suited for my research needs because it was akin to many others in size, aesthetic quality and demographic constituency taking place that year.

It was important that I researched an event that had a high chance of coming off, rather than an illegal, fly-by-night one, which may have been cancelled or even halted during its passage. An optimistic view is that such a party would last just till morning and, anyway, would not provide enough data for a single-event research model. Acquiring a temporary festival licence makes it much more likely that the party will take place and, importantly, provides the green light for a promotional team to advertise and sell tickets.

The study uses a framework in line with much work in the field of new ethnography (Goodall, 1999; Marcus, 1998). My primary strategy has been to apply a largely inductive and empirical approach to fieldwork data gathering over a 14-month time line (December 2007- January 2009) with the chief methodological tool, participant observation. I have augmented this with interviews, both structured and semi

structured, with those involved with the event - organisers, dancers and DJs - over the research period. On some occasions these interviews were in-depth, while others were conducted in a more fleeting manner. I collected data from participant observation at parties leading up to the late July 2008 main event, at the event, and at subsequent gatherings where participants attended. Data was also obtained from a focus group in early July 2008 and by analysis of in situ DJ and music maker performances, with close attention afforded to music texts present in CD and transferable audio file formats. Visual artefact - images and video - were important in the ethnography too for, as Sarah Pink (2007) attests, 'Images are "everywhere"' (21), with 'Ethnographic research... intertwined with visual images and metaphors' (ibid.).

Many of the study's participants play central roles in the evolving analysis. I found the participant I will call Amy, which is not her real name, socialised to find the right people for her kind of play and used costumes to explore various personas.[10] Another, 'Ben', adopted various roles to heighten event involvement, whereas 'Steve' and 'Franko' appeared closer to regular trance fans as depicted through their fondness for multiple drug highs and dance floor marathons. [11]

1.3. Central Concepts and Pystrance Party Findings

To help in my understanding of the psytrance event I have explored, besides body technologies, a range of concepts, most of which have been useful for other authors of EDM studies. The ideas which recur with some regularity through my study, and which I now define, are communitas, the liminal, vibe and peak and psychedelic. A further one, the spiritual, will be considered in Chapter 2.

The first key concept that has helped me explore the significance of social interaction and community at the Offworld psytrance party is social *communitas* (Turner 1969, 1974, 1982, with E. Turner, 1992). Given that I focus in some depth on communitas

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[10] Henceforth the names of interviewees referred to as 'participants' are aliases by convention. However, DJs and promoters keep their original names throughout.

[11] See Appendix B for letters of ethical approval from fieldwork participants.

in Chapter 4, I continue by introducing its various strands before identifying further concepts important for the study.

Turner first developed communitas as a way of explaining social religious experiences in a variety of cultural spheres from indigenous African societies and to pilgrimage. In addition, he saw its appeal for 60s and 70s musico-cultural trends such as the US subculture which had built around formative psychedelic rock band, The Grateful Dead. Turner divides social communitas three ways: spontaneous, normative and ideological. He writes,

> I distinguish three types of communitas: the *spontaneous*, "existential" types... which defies deliberate cognitive and volitional construction; (2) *normative* communitas, the attempt to capture and preserve spontaneous communitas in a system of ethical precepts and legal rules... and (3) *ideological* communitas, the formulation of remembered attributes of the communitas experience as a utopian blueprint for the reform of society... (Turner and Turner 1992, p.59, authors italics)

Although all three types of communitas are relevant for my study of a psytrance event , it is the first which fits best, as it is more applicable to events which feature hypnotic music and drug consumption. Psytrance culture enthusiasts finds affinity with spontaneous communitas in the high value placed on social connections and on an expectation of bonding.

Another, and more specific, instance of spontaneous communitas occurs when music and dancing gel powerfully. At Offworld such moments were few but one, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 5, occurred during a set by Liquid Ross. Dancers told me in contemporaneous conversations, interviews and email reflections, that they experienced a strong sense of communal melding during peak passages. A further, if more mundane example was the non-hierarchic co-mingling at the event. At most outdoor psytrance parties - Offworld was no different - there is no backstage area sectioned off for VIPs. Consequently there is little social hierarchy of the type noted in some coverage of EDM's club milieu (Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Thornton 1995).

I also saw a latter day form of ideological communitas in the learning curves considered vital, not just for Offworld's organizers, but for party participants too. Working and helping at the event both to imbue it with meaning and to forge social connections. Similarly, the event was akin to a form of contact zone (Pratt, 1992)

where skills and interests can be traded and built upon (Saldanha, 2007; Ueno, 2003). I go into this subject in more detail in Chapter 4.

A further key Turner idea, which was he developed prior to communitas, is liminality (Turner, 1969). Indeed, Turner did not coin this idea but shaped its usage from Arnold Van Gennep who he describes as a 'French folklorist' (1992, p.48) Liminality refers to 'rites of passages in many cultures... with a tripartite processual structure... marked by three phases: separation; margin (or limen) and reaggregation' (ibid.) A number of authors have seen the relevance of such liminal processes to psytrance events. For example, Graham St John (2010b) defines the liminal culture of large "festal" events such as Portugal's Boom and Morgan Gerard (2004) the "processual liminality" of DJ sets in EDM club settings. I will refer occasionally to the liminal but have found the term, with its emphasis on ritual and a specific pattern of experience less useful for my fieldwork analysis than other authors.

Through an understanding of communitas and to a lesser degree liminality, I have brought to the fore the psytrance party's social features. As I examined the event's material elements - dance spaces, party plant infrastructure, the camp site, bars, eating zones, sound system technology and DJ's musical selections - I saw how participants negotiated dance, music and drug consumption to enhance social connectivity. I understood those elements as an affective continuum, ranging from powerful dance floor moments to participants relaxing and bonding in the green grass site. I saw too how dance floors extended beyond the specific spaces defined by the sound system speaker stacks into the fields, bars and cafe zones nearby.

A further central element of my data analysis is role of the psytrance DJ. I found that s/he was less a mystically intuitive artist, or technoshaman as some would have (McAteer, 2002; D'Andrea, 2007; Gerard, 2004; St John, 2011; Sylvan 1999 and 2005) and more a sophisticated information gatherer watching and assessing the dance floor dynamics and calibrating her or his selection of music to maximise opportunities presented. The interaction between the DJ and the dancer emerged as a strong theme when the data revealed how much of an uphill struggle achieving a strong dance floor "vibe".

The term vibe is the second key concept of central importance for my study. My use of the term centres on both specific moments in the DJ-dancer dialogue discussed in detail in Chapter 5, and in the more general sense in which event promoters earmarked spaces and participants and music intermingled to generate affect (and communitas).

The idea of the vibe, often found in both academic and popular work on music and youth cultures has its roots, St John (2009b) suggests, in the '*happenings* and pyschedelic *jouissance* of the Summer of Love in the mid-1960s San Francisco' (95, author italics). St John emphasizes the experiential quality of the vibe, which is 'only know through affect' (93). Certain core features of a generic vibe are however apparent. St John's definition is a useful starting point: 'the vibe most commonly denotes a successful or optimum social dance-music experience, one participants are compelled to re-live' (94).

Other authors of EDM offer insights into the kind of vibe which has emerged in their research areas. In discussing African-American house music Sally Sommer (2009, p.285) sees the shared sensual physicality of expressive dance as a cornerstone.

> The vibe is an active, communal force, a feeling, a rhythm created by the mix of dancers, the balance of loud music, the effects of darkness and light and physical/psychic energy. Everything interlocks to produce a powerful sense of liberation. The vibe is an active, exhilarating feeling of "nowness" that everything is coming together, that s good party is in the making.

Whereas Mark J Butler (2006), in his analysis of techno music, finds that 'Individual dancers collaborate with the DJ and with each other to create a sense of "vibe" - a powerful affective quality associated with the experience of going dancing - among those present' (.72).

In turn, authors of psytrance have interpreted powerful moments in even reverential terms, where the collision of a critical mass of dancers, surfeit of body technology intake and the hypnotic, trance-like music rhythms drive the vibe towards the transcendent. St John (2009a) draws on his field work at multi-faceted "neotrance" festivals to suggest that a vibe at such a party might approximate 'a religious or spiritual experience for its participants' (38). As well, St John (2009b, p.100) goes on, '... vibe designates a duration of time (or time-out-of-time) in which a group of

people, members of a party, many of whom are typically strangers to one another, experience both the dissolution and performance of self within the context of music and dance.'

In my ethnographic study of social connectivity through sharing a sonic experience, vibe appeared as less sharp-edged or all-encompassing. As I show in Chapter 5, some music-dance passages fitted such definitions, but much of the time the excitement required for a palpable, shared EDM vibe was in short supply. A vibe of sorts was however certainly apparent as the social connectivity harnessed by promoters, music providers and participants maintained a presence at and beyond dance floor spaces. This form of softly affectual vibe has parallels with Kathleen Stewart's notion of ordinary affects: 'The ordinary is a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life' (2007, p.1). The vibe was certainly present at Offworld but it was not of the order or calibre discussed elsewhere.

An important specific aspect of vibe is the dance party peak, which I discuss in Chapter 5 with reference to DJ-dancer conversations and the prime time set from Liquid Ross (Ross March). [12] Peak can be construed in a general manner and in so doing is commensurate with vibe but when seen as a process, can be detected as a potent product triggered by the successful meshing of various components. St John (2009b) highlights such coalescence, '... event organizers will attempt to optimize space, time, art, and other resources to achieve a synchronicity variously referred to as "trance", "tribal" or "shamanic" states"' (100), whereas Melanie Takahashi (2005) understands that peak time DJing 'is built around a series of tension-building episodes, which are resolved, with each subsequent cycle of tension and release being more intense that the previous one' (256). She goes on to describe this affect of this sonic catharsis: 'At this point a surge of energy is released by the dancers, who exhibit their approval and gratitude by jumping up and down' (258).

The last idea I would like to define is the psychedelic, by which I mean a generalised pursuit of a psychedelic experience. This is important to my discussion, given that the

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[12] London-based psytrance DJ and entrepreneur Ross March was interviewed by the author on six occasions, June 2008-November 2010.

first syllable of the music style I am discussing drawn from "psychedelic". In re-accessing the countercultural psychedelic legacy of the 60s, Glenn O'Brien (2005) reminds us of the potential impact of hallucinogenic body technologies on the individual and on social groupings. In his essay, *Psychedelicacies: Psychedelia and Its Legacies*, he says, 'To take psychedelics was to lift the veil on a kind of consciousness that was not ordinarily possible' (354) while, John Harris, in the same volume, reports, 'Psychedelic… was self-consciousness and body-consciousness, and a new *social* consciousness too' (2005, p.11). In addition Hillegonda Rietveld (1998) seeks to explain the desire for such a potent "high" in the dance club settings of 90s Britain. 'LSD or "acid" is used by members of the dancing crowd in order to get a giggly high and to have an experience of being submerged in the sound, lights and social company of dance events' (177-8).

Also, as will be noted in Chapter 2, many authors on Goa and psytrance confer an almost a priori psychedelic practice or intent, to the trance party milieu from Trammachi's description of the event as a 'psychedelic ritual' (2000, p.201) to Saldanha's (2007) analysis of trance fans in Goa, embodying a psychedelic worldview as an 'ethical practice, a relationship to oneself, one's body, one's place in society and the world' (12). Saldanha, like Rietveld, explores the symbiosis between the drug-fuelled psychedelic experience and specific music genres. He writes (62),

> It should be remembered that psychedelic trance music reacts strongly with LSD. The crunchy squelches and ominous bass synth stable the militaristic kick drum, the sci-fi voices and completely inhuman fluttering of sound are, after all, specifically designed to make your brain, stomach, legs, and inner ear dwell in a fractal world quite inexplicable to the initiated.

Whereas Saldanha is concerned with his "white freak" protagonists' embodied behaviour and worldview, other authors, as I note below, apply the term psychedelic with less precision.

In concluding this section on the overarching concepts used in my study, I consider that the methodology introduced earlier has facilitated an understanding of a "differentiated vibe" in particular. Moreover, my approach has enabled a critique of an assumed psychedelic core to such events, at least at the specific party central to my fieldwork. I have needed to account for how participants spend their time, when they danced, if at all, and what music worked for them when they did. Key too was a

candid portrayal of drug consumption, often assumed to be prolific at these events. I explored down time, when not much appeared to be going on. These periods were not inactive ones, for it was then that the dynamics among participants, and between them and the organising team, often developed and cohered.

In sum, my research suggests that the constantly euphoric, spectacular dance part event, with its well-timed peaks, and substantive plateaux, need to be re-evaluated to include finer gradations. Further, the analysis of the fieldwork, at least at this one event, indicates that mundane, softer elements can be central to contemporary psytrance's appeal, rather than the psychedelic, or notions of a spectacular ritual, which are prominent in other accounts. This diluted affective ordering can be of a more subtle measure with the dance floor less a place for experiencing a sequence of psychedelic moments and more a space to pass onto and through, with people lingering for a time if attuned to the music, or if friends found.

1.4. Chapter Overview: a Material Analysis of a Psytrance Party Event

This introduction concludes with an overview of the rest of the study. In Chapter 2, titled, "The Psychedelic' Trance Party: Literature Review of Scholarly Works", I contextualise my findings around the central value of social connectivity at the psytrance party by considering authors' work on Goa and psytrance. Here I indicate that this aspect of events is under-discussed while other perspectives, such as ritual, religion, self transcendence, and technoshamanistic DJ practice, dominate. To counter a lack of attention paid to organisational and fieldwork data, I evaluate relevant literature on clubbing, and on recreational drug use, which offers engaging approaches, notably in a promotion of party participant viewpoints and experiences.

Chapter 3, "Am I or am I not an 'Insider': Methodology and Methods", covers the study's methodological foundations and fieldwork method and practice from the perspective of choices. I begin with a discussion of the challenges facing new ethnography (Goodall, 1999; Halstead, Hirsch and Okely, 2008), and consider the impact of my partial insider status on fieldwork choices (Hodkinson 2005; MacRae,

2007). The chapter also examines choices made by the five-person promoting team [13] as they endeavour to design an environment that for four summer days will facilitate communitas. I also introduce my study's participants, whose opinions and experiences are central to the study. The chapter concludes with an account of the evolution of the Offworld event. I identify the DJs, live music acts, sound systems and infrastructural elements, including tents for the music stages, bar and catering.

The main body of the fieldwork analysis is located in Chapters 4 and 5. Here I report on the event's peaks and lulls, finding sustained forms of communitas (Turner, 1979, 1974, 1982, 1992) and providing evidence that questions connections between EDM events and endemic drug consumption. Chapter 4, Offworld: "'It's just a Tea Shop and we're having a Laugh': Social Connectivity at the Psytrance Party", introduces my key finding, that social connectivity lies at the centre of psytrance appeal. Much of the narrative follows the activity at the party site with the ways participants negotiate drugs in social groups being a central thread. Chapter 5 - "Psytrance Information Channels: The DJ-Dancer Conversation" - considers in detail the dance floor's DJ-dancer interactivity with a close study of three DJ sets and dancer responses.

My conclusion, Chapter 6 – "Psytrance Communitas: Heterogeneity, Cognitive Connection and the Dance Music Moment" - commences with an overview of study findings and draws out their significance. In addition, I consider what social classifications, if any, can be applied to psytrance culture, and I identify some limits in my own research – limits that I, or others, may address in future work.

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[13] As well as Ben Grant and Paul Bacon, the team consisted off site supervisor Graham Langley, marketing manager Mohit Mamtani and Chai Emporium boss, Alex Bristow.

Chapter 2

The 'Psychedelic' Trance Party: Literature Review of Scholarly Works

> The psychedelic era in music can truly be said to have burned out. Like a joint. But ever since, somebody's been trying to light the roach. Techno, trance, rave... it's all a revival of the psychedelic era. Contemporary psychedelic music, the rave soundtrack, is not so much about breaking through to the other side as visiting it on weekends. The ravers have returned psychedelic music to its early sixties, pre-Summer of Love therapeutic roots. There's nothing like nice rave to tune you up to full humanity after a mind-numbing work week.

> Glenn O'Brien (2005, p.358)

Introduction

How is my data situated in relation to literature on psychedelic trance culture? The work I now discuss on Goa, psytrance and to a lesser extent on rave music culture, has helped me arrive at the methodology I will outline in Chapter 3. However, additional material - ethnographies on dance club spaces, EDM music and recreational body technology consumption in night time economies (NTE) – has been additionally invaluable. The different fields of knowledge I have consulted, including social anthropology, cultural geography, popular music studies and religious/spiritual cultures, offer a wide range of insertion points to help make better sense of the psytrance event under discussion. Through a review of varied, often inter-related academic work, as well as journalistic and fan-based publications, I have been able to better shape my fieldwork results on the high value afforded to pursuit of pleasure social connections and community spirit at such events.

The chapter is divided into three sections. First, I provide a mostly chronological survey of specific literature on psychedelic trance and demonstrate how this work has located the early psychedelic trance style, Goa, and now psytrance, largely within a psychedelic outlook and worldview (Cole and Hannan, 1997; Davis, 2004; D'Andrea, 2007; Gore, 1997; Maira, 2005; Sylvan, 2005; Saldanha, 2007; St John, 2004 and 2009a; Taylor, 2001) where social connectivity is not adequately explored or fore-grounded. The second part explores connected themes that further reflect the preoccupations of researchers. I signal out as major preoccupations spirituality, ritual,

the DJ as a quasi-magical intermediary, the endlessly euphoric dance party and self-transcendence, or transformation. I suggest too that an empirically-based picture of event dynamics is seldom at the forefront in these writings and my contribution to this field consequently lies in the emphasis on material elements and themes surrounding the nature of social interaction at event spaces.

The chapter's last section turns to published work, not always directly connected with psychedelic trance culture. It is in a series of ethnographies of dance music club milieu (Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2001) where I find a more considered and convincing use of fieldwork data used, wherein participant voices and worldviews are closely analyzed. Likewise I consider papers on recreational drug use (including Aldridge, Measham and Williams, 2011; Measham and Moore, 2009; Moore and Measham, 2008; Moore and Miles, 2004) which offer analyses of detailed empirical reports focusing on risk, harms and pleasures as well as highlighting complexity and ambivalence.

2.1. Psychedelic Trance Studies and the Globalising of Exotica

Early coverage of the electronic dance music party events (Collin and Godfrey, 1997; Melechi, 1993; Redhead, 1993; Rietveld, 1993, 1997 and 1998) focuses primarily on the effect of hypnotic, repetitive music on dance floors ranging from Manchester's legendary Hacienda, to the outdoor raves popular across the UK in the late 80s, and to the beach clubs and bars of Goa and Ibiza.

Popular insider accounts, Simon Reynolds in *Energy Flash* and Matthew Collin in *Altered State*, emphasise the euphoric, relentless music flow and the tendency for intoxicated dancers to seek temporary transcendence through drug consumption, a loss of self, the tactility characteristic of expressive dance and the attractions of implicit sociality. Such commentary however, was less drawn to developments in mid-90s commercial British club culture that, after the Criminal Justice Act of 1994, largely replaced the spectacular outdoor rave. Following the purportedly liberating transgressions of the earlier era, the replacement - regulated and less overtly

'alternative' stylistically and sonically – appeared to many authors less worthy of comment.

I suggest that the narratives on Goa trance, which appeared from 1997 onwards, some journalistically-oriented (Bussman, 1998; Reynolds, (1998) another from a popular music studies perspective (Cole and Hannan, 1997) while a fourth emerging via a cultural studies viewpoint (Gore, 1997), aimed to re-enliven commentary on a form of EDM party event, one with few commercial trappings and where participants were ostensibly committed to extravagant expression. These early weeks, developed through the period 2000-5 and into more recent accounts, reveal dominant themes: counterculture history, the role and perceived value of psychedelics, travel and the exotic. My research, albeit drawn from just one event, reveals more mundane and less colourful or dramatic activities.

The first paper on Goa trance, from Georgina Gore (1997), can be seen as furthering a view, first applied to British acid house music culture, that the music effected a personalised 'ecstasy of disappearance' (Melechi, 1993, p.29) and a hedonistic, Dionysian tribalism. In conflating Goa trance with the British acid house phenomenon, Gore suggests that 'raving become a form of positive escapism from the humdrum constraints of the quotidian' (1997, p.64). This underlines the contrast with safer more commoditised and stratified club cultures which dominated EDM in the mid-90s. Gore writes, 'The antithesis of modern corporate clubbing, the acid-techno-trance scene represents the political wing of techno' (56).

Meanwhile, others (Bussman, 1998; Chan, 1998; Cole and Hannan, 1997; Reynolds, 1998), elevate trance music's origin moment, the exotic location, Goa, by romantically dramatising the all-night, full moon party events held there. Fan-author Bussman comments (somewhat prematurely), that, 'Of all the acid house sub-cultures, trance is the one that has taken off over the world' (1998, p.134), while popular music critic Reynolds judges that, 'by the late 80s Goa had evolved into a dance-and-drug paradise, albeit oriented around LSD rather an ecstasy' (1998, p.175).

Likewise, comment on trance music edged towards the general and romantic. Frank Cole and Michael Hannan (1997) discuss sonic aesthetics, suggesting that the form and purpose of a trance track was shaped by notions of the psychedelic voyage, as

understood in the 1960s argot of countercultural "gurus" Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert (1964) and other authors since.[14] In *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* they declared that a psychedelic guide is 'perhaps the most exciting and inspiring role in society' (1964, p.110). To paraphrase Metzner and Alpert, this guide is a liberator, one who provides illumination and frees men from their life-long internal bondage. Consequently Cole and Hannan couple Goa trance with such a purpose, 'in general, the structure of a Goa trance track reflects the idea of a journey, both in a mythological sense and as a reflection of the LSD experience' (Cole and Hannan 1997, p.7).

If the romantic and generalist appear the dominant narratives, then one paper in this first wave of writings on Goa trance indicates an alternate focus. Sebastian Chan (1998), in response to Cole and Hannan's paper, questions any intrinsic radicalism around Goa trance. Chan argues, 'Psychedelic trance culture can, in many ways, only be separated from the White excesses of the psychedelic culture of the Sixties by its technologically-different music' (2).

Chan's article goes on to pinpoint specific material omissions in early work on Goa trance. He explains, 'Rather than bring to the fore the issues of communality among dancers or philosophies of liberation through dance, the musicological approach (of Cole and Hannan) ignores these positives by ignoring the social contexts of consumption' (Chan 1998, p.8). To draw a parallel with my study's analysis, the fieldwork analysis highlights the social benefits derived from organizing and attending the four-day event, while seeing few signs of purported psychedelication in action.

Finally, I consider a study of a group of New York city-based Goa trance fans. Timothy Taylor (2001), likens his enthusiastic and committed party-going group to a "little culture" (McCracken, 1997) emphasizing 'the multiplicity and diversity" (179)

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[14] These include, Andy Roberts who, in *Albion Dreaming* (2008) provides a popular history of LSD in Britain and the Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle-edited *Imagine Nation* (2002), a collection which revisits the American counterculture of the 60s & 70s. Additionally, Sheila Whiteley (1992) explores the idea of "psychedelic coding" in *The Space Between the Notes,* showing how a sample of key musicians drew on shared drug experiences to build formal elements. She says, 'my analysis explores the way in which the different styles of progressive rock have common codes which convey a musical equivalent of hallucinogenic experience' (4).

in an era which McCracken suggests are characterised by 'cultures of commotion' (in Taylor 2001, p.179). Reacting against the loss-of- self agenda promoted by Gore through to Cole and Hannan, Taylor declares, 'Goa/psy trance people do not simply deemphasize the individual… after all, you can't have communitas without individuals coming together, and you can't transcend the self without having a self to transcend' (2001, p.200). Opting for a site-specific if not slightly cynical tone, Taylor reminds us that 'after the party, psy-trancers go slowly back to their profane languid lives, which is made tolerable by their memories and anticipations of their connectedness' (ibid.).

I suggest that these comments point in the direction of a more pragmatic, even mundane, reading of the psytrance party. My fieldwork on psytrance culture strongly indicates an affective type of communal networking and a valorising of belonging. For my group of study participants, drawn from the organizing team, party helpers and typical punters, a supportive, empathic and mature social environment was the chief draw and rated above preoccupations with music aesthetics, preponderance for dance and dance music stimulants. Even for the five-person organising team, the event was perceived as first and foremost a forum for engagement, rapport and fun.

If there appears to be a division developing in psytrance scholarly discourse around the maintaining of fundamental themes driven by the counterculture and psychedelic on the one hand and material detail on social grouping, dance and music specifics on the other, then a number of social anthropology writings from 2000 to 2006 (D'Andrea, 2004; Davis, 2004; Saldanha, 2004; Tramacchi, 2004; Ueno, 2003) reflect a union of sorts, as well as a gratifying attention to trance culture detail.

Popular culture author Erik Davis' (2004) account of a Goa trance party held in a neighbouring Indian state propels psychedelic trance into the 21th Century although his "traveller's tales" account is laden with India exotica. Names and facts are deployed, but psychedelic romance is the predominant currency. Davis describes an epiphany in a rather overbearing fashion: 'As the rising sun and the setting moon touched the horizons on either side of us, the heavenly bodies seemed momentarily to align and balance the fragile, fantastic orb on which we danced' (270).

A contrasting thread emerges in social geographer Toshiya Ueno's (2003) work which explores material factors, and particularly party event pragmatics. In an observation of open-air techno trance parties in Japan, he suggests, 'the open air party can become a sort of node or entrance to different activities or 'tribes' in a global as well as local context. In this way it can surely become the en-trance (a gate of entering the unknown field with pleasure) to various movements and activities' (114). But he also sees the party space in socially interactive and material terms, as 'a contact zone (for)... other possibilities and developments' (ibid.).

At larger-scale events attracting an international clientele, Ueno finds instances where 'local people prepare domestic food dishes in their shops and cafes' (111) and when 'some older people collaborate with techno musicians or DJs by playing traditional drums' (ibid). Later work by cultural anthropologist St John (2010a and 2010b) includes mention of the plethora of roles, facilities and services present at major psytrance events, including Portugal's Boom, Australia's Rainbow Serpent and Hungary's Ozora. This turn towards event detail is encouraging even if St John's account tends to uphold his concept of the sacra, whereby a generalized community's prime intent is to tap, through ritual, into the potential for transformation. My research does not so much indicate that ritual is entirely absent, or that transformation is unattractive or unattainable, but rather that some psytrance parties may have migrated from a place of experimental spirituality to one of experiential sociality.

The overall trend in the psytrance coverage of this middle period, however, was to deepen the scrutiny on the psychedelic by exploring various interfaces. The St John-edited collection, *Rave Culture and Religion* (2004), finds some authors using psychedelic trance as case studies. Assuming that the psychedelic trance moment has is transformative, these essays present a picture of an activity beyond the recreational, again more akin to Timothy Leary's LSD sessions (Alpert, Leary and Metzner, 1964; Bravo, Metzner and Dass, 2010), or along the lines of voyages of personal discovery and new age therapy's dynamic workshop environments. In one of his social geography papers, D'Andrea (2004) finds that 'as the production of localities and of subjectivities are interrelated, the "self" become the "new strategic possibility"' (245), while Des Tramacchi (2004) considers that 'psychedelic dance music is imbued with certain para-religious qualities' (136).

In sympathy with Ueno's (2003) concern with the local and specific, St John (2004) notes that any self-work cannot spring out of nowhere commenting that 'there is more to these events than "peak experience" or trance-state, as they sometimes require a high level of participation - the kind of personal sacrifice embodied in the rule of no spectators'(38). As I will go on to demonstrate, my fieldwork supports this insight. A central need for most participants at my selected psytrance event, Offworld, was a desire to co-build the event, as much as the organizers assessed their efforts in terms of learning curves and self growth.

Scholarship over the last four years (2006-10) has widened the understanding of the psychedelic trance event. Yet there remains hesitancy in investigating material processes over apparently grander themes. The sole single-authored work exclusively on Goa trance culture, Saldanha's *Psychedelic White* (2007) discusses trance culture through the dramas associated with backpacker 'freak' lifestyle, an exotic fixation with the post-colonial setting in Goa, India and the penchant for serial intoxication.

It is important to note that Saldanha's data-set is tightly-focused on party season, long stay travellers migrating mostly from the West to south India over the research period, and consequently contrasts with the discursive approaches adopted by other authors. Saldanha's focus on "psychedelic white" trance fans makes sense within the post-colonial setting of Goa, where tourists – in this case also hardened dance party enthusiasts who are often experienced consumers of hallucinogenic body technologies – are generally regarded as "white", but any wider application of "globalised whiteness" for psytrance is redundant in the context of its significant migration patterns. While Bizzell (2008) draws attention to the large black caucus regularly attending Brazil's massive parties from 2006 onwards, St John (2010a) emphasises the cosmopolitan cultural mix evident at large events such as Portugal's Boom which includes bodies of all colours. The inference here is that this psychedelic trance started out in the 80s by attracting an almost pure-white fan base from its exotic traveller circuit and alternative rock roots but has since widened racial, as well as cultural and musical, parameters. However, beyond an argument which explores the materiality of race from a human geography standpoint, Saldanha writes little about the trance dance floor, why or how the music may affect a trance state, or indeed

what, beyond body technology consumption, compels the (always) white trance freak to devote so much time to these activities.

Besides Saldanha's geographically-precise study, further work on psytrance supports the view that psytrance springs from a cult of hedonistic abandon with D'Andrea (2007) discussing destructive legacies of wild behaviour. Adding to the view that psytrance springs from a cult of hedonistic abandon, he discusses destructive legacies of wild behaviour. In a study on neo-nomadic "expressive expatriates" berthed in three locations including Goa, D'Andrea explores a climate of danger and risk that can characterise the Goa party event. He writes, 'the seriousness of freaks at trance parties dramatizes the dangerous effects of psychedelic experience upon the self, therefore justifying the sacred sphere of protectiveness' (176).

However, D'Andrea takes the reader into a generic Goa trance dance but then ignores event specifics. He says, 'trance parties have been designed to engender a magic aura that remits participants into a cosmic temporality' (2007, p.210); and… 'the trance party unravels as a dynamic machine that gradually absorbs the dancers, by making them feels as members of a pulsating organism' (211). We find out little on event location, dancers/participants; DJs; musicians (usually referred to as "live acts"), organizers, or if indeed any local people are present in his chosen party enclaves, Goa and Ibiza.

A more careful attention to events and participant perspectives emerges in Sunaina Maira's paper *Trance-Formations* (2005). Drawn from a collection on US youth culture trends, Maira delves into psytrance party detail during a short examination of the local and the global characteristics of a small group of trance ravers in the Eastern USA. An illustration is that some of her respondents think the trance parties are "underground": that is that they are not linked to so-called mainstream US culture.[15] 'Raves are spectacles that are very much intertwined with the leisure industry and the targeting of youth as a niche market, even if psytrance parties are going underground and trying to distinguish themselves from commercialized events' (Maira, 2005, p.27). Maira also shows interest in party specifics and, following talks with

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[15] Psytrance's exposure in mainstream settings, commented on earlier in Europe and in particular Israel, had not reached the US, even by 2011.

organisers, she writes, 'successful party producers pay special attention to the visual decorations, which include not just the digital displays found at other parties but also installations of fabric and banners...'Om' symbols and images of Hindu deities are also common' (19).

In addition, Maira records psytrancers' experiences on the dance floor and their views on the wider cultural significance of psytrance little culture. But again, her work does not address how and why this particular music can generate a potent affect, or trigger such enthusiasms. Later in this study, an analysis of DJ sets, wherein a range of techniques are employed to trigger dance floor affects, aims to redress this balance. Through hypnotic beats, voice samples and various musical "mottos" (Butler, 2006; Rouget, 1986), attempts are made to galvanize, consolidate and deepen dance floor energy.

Finally, *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance* (2010) shows ongoing commitment to the psychedelic foundation argument, although the position is now significantly imore nuanced and variegated. St John (2010a) sees the legacy as still central to the large "neotrance" festivals of recent years with their multiple music genres stages. He argues, 'the psychedelic character of the psytrance festival (and its culture) should be recognised as critical to understanding its fluidity of genre, scene and style' (3). St John emphasises that this defining character must now be understood in terms of difference, attracting 'diverse cultural and musicological experiments' (10).

A critical point emphasised by some authors in this collection is that the Goa effect has largely waned. Social anthropologist Luther Elliott (2010) leads the reappraisal with a timely acknowledgment that the peak era of the trance party in Goa is now long gone. Indian authorities aggressively market higher end, or at least shorter-stay, tourists, rather than Saldanha's hedonistic freaks. For Elliott though, Goa still has a very palpable presence, transmitted as 'a feeling, a vibe, or a state of mind' (38) to be exported and re-assembled in other territories. D'Andrea (2010) reiterates this sentiment, reminding us (given that 'electronic dance scenes must be....considered within the context of complex globalisation' (50)) that 'a period of apparent decline in one scene may be temporarily compensated by peaks of performance in other remote

scenes' (53). These last two positions contain intriguing points but still isolate and elevate the trance dance experience at the expense of material detail into specifically how the affect is arrived at.

In addition, the collection offers accounts on psytrance in new territories, with music studies contributor Botund Vitos (2010) discussing one of the harshest stylistic departures from the initial Goa trance aesthetic format, "demence" on "dark psytrance" dance floors in the Czech Republic. Fresh insights into psychedelic trance music's founding influences are offered by Rietveld (2010) and Rob Lindrop (2010), respectively.

In sum, *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance* reflects assessments of both the widening geographic reach of Goa-originating music culture, as well as updating prevailing themes which serve to entrench a psychedelic worldview and a nostalgia for sixties countercultural values.

My survey has sought so far to illustrate the trends in works on Goa and psytrance which, I suggest, indicate that a space has opened up for a different kind of analysis, one which is site-specific and where the material elements, and how they interact, are looked at in some detail over the course of an event, and which allows for a lens to be focused on social networks, dance floor interactions and modes of pleasure.

2.2. A Spiritualised Ritual? Dominant Themes in Psychedelic Trance and Rave Studies

Another set of writings seek to append Goa trance and psytrance to wider spheres of cultural activity, some usefully developing Victor Turner's concepts, communitas and liminality. The key themes I explore in these studies are the religious (or spiritual), in psychedelic trance; a fashion for seeing events as rituals or neo-rituals; the preoccupation with transformation of self or transcendence; the elevation of the role of the DJ to one of a shaman, or 'technoshaman' and the promotion of a notion of the endlessly euphoric party event. These themes further conjoin psytrance culture with the exotic and the dramatic, privileging a form of spectacle, and by underplaying the

communal nature of events reinforce the case for research on social value and connectivity.

The assertion that some forms of EDM are examples of contemporary rituals is forcefully conveyed by some authors (Gauthier, 2004; Hutson, 1999 and 2000; Olaveson, 2004; Sylvan, 1999 and 2005; Tramacchi, 2004). The perception of psychedelic trance party as ritualized moves quickly to parallels with religious community and indigene cultural ceremonies. Tim Olaveson (2004, pp.88-95) understands raving's neo-tribal affiliations - and the shared musical and bodily interests of a sub-group like trance fans - as exemplifying collective/social effervescence, a term developed early last century by Emile Durkheim (1995, originally published, 1912; in Olaveson, 2004). More generally, ideas on liminality in indigene social groups have been foregrounded to help explain the impacts of the rave dance party machine. Morgan Gerard (2004, p.167) draws attention to Turner's interest in seeing a secular version of liminal activity. Gerard argues that 'in his quest to locate contemporary manifestations of liminal performance, Victor Turner wrote about "retribalization as an attempt to restore the original matrix of ritual"' (Turner 1984, p.25 in Gerard, 2004, p.167).

Robin Sylvan, an expert on the religious and ritualized aspects of the US rave formation, (1999) argues for ritual as a psychological need. US rave, especially psychedelic trance, can be 'rites of passage' (8) for participants. He writes,

> These rituals emphasize the liminal, "betwixt-and-between" (Turner 1969) quality of this time of life by separating the initiates from the rest of society, stripping them of their normal social identities, and placing them in their own temporary form of alternative community that Victor Turner has called "communitas" (ibid.).

Sylvan (1999) explores the neo-ritualized rave party in a number of ways. He understands a party's 'temporal sequences' (138) as ritual-like. These can include tracking down locations for party events, music peaks and chill outs periods. He also looks into spatial configurations at events with a tendency for functionality to be twinned with the 'unique nature of the spaces' (140) and the trend towards multiple rooms providing a variety of musical flavours. In a later work, Sylvan (2005) coins term 'ritualization' (98) to cover 'activities and practises such as planning, publicity,

set up, transportation, DJ-ing, dancing, chilling out and after-party' (ibid.), and then locates the presence of ritual technologies which enable a sacred mood to pervade events. He says powerful (sacred) experiences happen at raves (97),

> by combining certain identifiable structural elements, e.g., DJ-mixed EDM, lights and visuals, decorations and alters, opening and closing ceremonies and so forth, in a consistent manner that has proven effective.

As will become clear, my fieldwork questions these assumptions by showing that such combinations of elements are not certain to trigger potent effects. These accoutrements can be viewed as stage props enabling theatrical effect and are in need of wider component interaction to enable the kind of frisson Sylvan assumes.

Sylvan has however developed an influential argument: 90s rave expression, particularly in psytrance, helped fill a gap made by the 'inadequacies of organised religion' (1999, p.1). The immediate danger with this position is that it presupposes a transcendent aspect to these events. Sylvan (4) goes on:

> (This)… musical subculture provides almost everything for its adherents that a traditional religion would. In the heat of the music, it provides a powerful religious experience which is both the foundation and the goal of the whole enterprise, an encounter with the numinous that is at the core of all religions.

Trance participants, for Sylvan, might not see their involvement in specifically religious terms, but their involvement nevertheless mirrors earlier religious rituals. In a wider sense, if a transcendent impulse inhabited Sylvan's trance habitués, then the social milieu I encountered in the UK seemed more comfortable with less mystical, and more outward and social, interrogations.

Given that authors on EDM have often turned to ideas of the spiritual to understand a purportedly transcendent aspect of the trance dance experience, I pause to define this concept before returning to this section's review of dominant themes in relevant literary works.

In his work on rave in the turn-of-millennium US, Scott Hutson (1999, 2000) suggest that 'meaningful spiritual transformations occur at raves' (1999, p.54). As with other authors (Gauthier, 2004; Olaveson, 2004; Sylvan, 1999, 2005), Hutson (1999) finds that, often, ravers, 'Claim that techno music itself (especially genres like Goa and the

suitably named "trance") is enough to cause an ecstatic experience on its own' (62). Hutson goes on, 'With dance, light and music as techniques of ecstasy, ravers claim to have ecstatic experiences in which they enter' (ibid.), as one of his informants describe, 'areas of consciousness not necessarily related to everyday "real" world experiences' (ibid.) Hutson suggests further that these ecstatic experiences at raves leads to ravers wanting to 'create a framework for spiritual healing' (63) which extends beyond the party to wider spheres of life. In such a way, he argues, the proto-transcendent insights experienced on the dance floor are viewed not just as insightful but psychically nourishing too. Hutson, like Sylvan (1999), reminds that the kind of healing he is referring to exists outside of organized religion, an argument developed by Gordon Lynch and Badger (2006) in their work on "secondary institutions" and EDM events.

Chris Partridge (2004, 2006) offers a cultural and historical perspective on trance culture's reputed spiritual dimension, in suggesting that it is also sourced from different, European roots. He locates psychedelic trance as a mini culture absorbing pagan ideas and motifs, and adding to the visual and exoticist interest in Eastern mysticism. Partridge partially locates psytrance in a broad sweep of ideas encompassed as occulture. But, like Rietveld (2010), he understands the intricacies of musical detail - such as how early psychedelic and progressive rock, and *motorik* German beats, as well as ambient electronic, draw various legions of fans to psytrance. Partridge underlines the temporal and arbitrary; processes constantly altering taste and expectation. This highlights how spirituality among psytrance fans - the drive Sylvan assumes - is hard to quantify and difficult to generalise about.

Sylvan's (1999) project is characterised by an eagerness to find in rave's potential a new religious possibility. This reading of Californian raves leads him to imbue the dance "ecstasies" as 'ephemeral moments, connection and unity; an experience of something larger' (72). My field work data indicates less epiphany-driven experiences or times of high melodrama, and a downgrading of discourses around spirituality, as organizers, DJs and participants pursue pleasure and maximise social bonding in the party spaces.

A further theme permeating works on rave and psytrance – already seen as part of a nuanced definition of the spiritual – is that of transcendence, or the urge to explode the boundaries of self through continuous trance dancing and body technologies intake. My research suggests that dancers downplay self-working, turning their attention mostly outward in their desire for communitas (Turner 1969, 1982, 1992).

In addition, contextualising psychedelic trance's evolution within the exotic and the pagan, Partridge (2006, pp.46-7) seeks to account for an urge to go beyond:

> It was not just the pulse of the beat and the hallucinogens that made Goa trance 'special' music – there was also a sense of transcendence; a sense that the music was connecting dancers to that which was beyond the mundane.

More generally, the concept of transcendence is often bound up with vibe and peak, in the sense that an alliance of factors: crowd response, stimulating music, pleasing spatial configuration and, often, 'quality' drug' availability - has generated an electric, all-consuming affective energy. Again, my research critiques this view. My analysis of fieldwork data from one well-resourced, psytrance party indicates that such affects are materially produced and do not always happen.

It would be understandable if psytrance music per se was thought to be the key ingredient behind transformation; a centrifugal ritual component capable of shifting the dancer towards the transcendent and leading the collective towards spiritual togetherness. In this narrative the spotlight would be clearly on the DJ who is the chief music mediator, in psychedelic trance as in most rave music. Although it is hard to generalise out of one event, my study suggests it is time to question the prevailing view that the DJ in psychedelic trance is a kind of shaman with almost magical abilities. I find that, on the contrary, the DJ is hard-working in his approach to his craft, meticulous in technical execution and, usually, topical in his music selections. [16]

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[16] The DJ as digital or technoshaman is also discussed in Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton (1999); Scott Hutson (1999, p.71); Chris Partridge (2004, pp.166-175); Hillegonda Rietveld (1998, p.195); Robin Sylvan (2005, pp.112-3) & Timothy Taylor (1999, p.198). As well, the Tyrone Adams & Stephan Smith-edited *Electronic Tribes: the Virtual Worlds of Geeks, Gamers, Shamans, and Scammers* (2008) contains a wider discussion on digital shamanism as applied to tribes, community, dreams and images. Much of Terence McKenna's writings, notably *The Archaic Revival* (1991) considers the related techno-paganism.

Butler's work on DJ method and delivery in US techno clubs (2006) is of particular relevance as he explains in detail how the music is materially constructed. In analysing elements in Detroit techno - rhythm, meter and musical design - Butler shows how tracks are built by using a variety of patterns. 'I contend that many of the nuances in EDM rely on ambiguous structuring to achieve their effects' (137). The building blocks available in the modular, loop-based, technology then leads producers to design tracks where affect can be used to sustain and surprise. For example, Butler theorises the practises of "turning the beat around", "dropping the beat", "withholding the beat" and applying "breakdowns", all of which apply to trance DJ sets analysed in this study.

Butler understands that a complex of techniques leads to a dance floor experience where pre-planning is never enough. It is clear that Butler's Mid-West DJs are no "technoshamans" with supra-normal gifts but, rather, skilled professionals with a necessary ability and instinct to tune empathically into dancers' needs. These workers must persistently evaluate their audio texts within a wide understanding of spaces, sonic potential and dancing/non dancing bodies.

The DJ-as-technoshaman explanation, however, has been endorsed by many authors, including Gore (1997). While she declares, 'DJs.... like chief priests, are simultaneously guardians of a musical tradition as well as potential innovators' (1997, p.64), Rietveld (1998), when referring to Ecstasy-fuelled Chicago house events, writes: 'The DJ could be represented by the shaman who leads the dancing community through a 'hell' of loss and back again ideally finishing the experience of total loss with a re-embodying anthem' (195). In turn, Sylvan sees the male (seldom female) DJ as a preacher harnessing technologies to bring the throng, or flock, towards a promised land. 'The DJ is responsible for leading dancers into the powerful experiential states that connect them to the sacred' (2005, p.112); (He)... has a set of tools and strategies to facilitate the peak dance-floor experience' (113). Moreover, D'Andrea (2007) emphasizes a fluid, possessed aspect, with the DJ a dashing figure, a stylish shaman with technical nous. He writes (211),

> Rather unconsciously, the DJ emulates traditional shamanic techniques, improvising on a sequence of music tracks which follow a seamless beat-matching pattern. By "taking the crowd on a journey," the DJ seeks to

engender an atmosphere in which ordinary notions of time, space and self are dissolved.

More specifically, Gerard, drawing on Kai Fikentscher's description of the DJ as a 'soundscape architect' (Fikentscher, 2000, p.8), argues, 'the DJ... draw(s) from a blueprint of performance techniques to resituate the dance floor as a place transported (ideally) from "here" to "there", a task more complex than simply beginning and ending a set with a series of interspersed peak moments' (Gerard, 2004, p.177). As with other claims, affect is too quickly assumed, indicating a need for site-specific accounts with detailed narratives. My study sets out to do explore this area in detail, in an examination of DJ-dance floor interaction. These points imply close observation and attention to detail but betray a view of the DJ as supra-talented and implicitly gifted. My research, on the other hand, reveals that success is most certainly not assured in DJ dance floor combinations.

From a less shrill perspective, Taylor (2001, pp.197-8) concludes that the DJ was first and foremost an integrated part of the psytrance little culture. Again he declares, 'The DJ in the Goa/psy trance little cultures... is not some kind of shaman, or god substitute, as some have said about the DJ in other electronic dance music little cultures (197). Rather, 'They are simply a critical constituent in a complex interplay of site, visuals, sound systems, dancers, clothes, drugs and music (198).

I suggest that a view of the DJ as a technoshaman supports the conjecture of an endlessly euphoric dance party with authors too often taking the musical peak for granted, thereby erasing distinctions between music (DJ) and dance energy (dancers). The reality of a difference dynamic – examples include overly complex sets that fail to ignite a dance floor or an entirely predictable one which applies a similar tempo throughout – is thereby obscured. So too is a whole set of variables governing event participants and how their bodies, interests and prejudices interlace on the night, or through the day time dance sessions, when gaze is held and dancers exchange smiles and gestures.

In conclusion, there is a need for a general foregrounding of attention to everyday, even mundane, factors at psytrance spaces. Additionally, it would benefit psytrance studies if there were a closer examination of DJ work, notably with a detailed regard for mottos and elements in psytrance musical arrangement and more precise detail paid to dancing bodies and dance floor sociality. Also lacking in coverage of psytrance events is discussion on event organization and particularized participant experiences and perspectives.

2.3. Bodies, Dance Floors and Drugs: Towards an Analysis of the Late Rave Moment

I have highlighted how prevailing themes preoccupy much of the work discussed above while less scrutiny is afforded to material elements and participant interaction. However, authors researching other EDM genres have followed different trajectories, privileging the social and often, a more tongue-in-cheek, parochial, mundane side of dance culture and event practice. What I find valuable in these accounts are the dancers' tales and the inclusion of material detail, notably anatomies of fan procedures as they prepare for, attend, and then return from, clubs (Buckland 2002, Fikenstscher, 2000; Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Moore and Miles, 2004, Pini, 2001). I have adopted elements of these authors' strategies in my fieldwork methods to help me collect data, respond reflexively to situations, and to circumvent temptations to rely on assumptions surrounding psytrance or over-wide cultural equivalencies. In particular, Ben Malbon's (1999) ethnographic methodology in analyzing club events from various theoretical and pragmatic positions has been of central use.

Probing into why impressive numbers of people in the mid-90s went so frequently to night-clubs, Ben Malbon frames his study around identity and purported transformation. Malbon says clubbing, 'fosters a going-beyond of individual identities' (49). The notion that the club world contains embodied, dancing social selves is explored and theorised but, unlike the time-limited project from Maira, over a longer, 12-month period. Malbon tracks his subjects while they prepare for their night, go to the clubs, and "come down" afterwards with varying degrees of

"afterglow"'. Like St John, he finds affinity with Turner's idea of the liminoid, a development from the earlier liminal, as his subjects collectively pursue the urge to 'get out of ourselves' (77), for the shared experience, suggesting that there is more than a degree of rite of passage to their hedonism. [17]

Malbon (1999) derives from his fieldwork a number of themes which convey dancer experiences and dance floor processes. His ideas also suggest that dance culture lifestyles significantly affect outlooks and worldviews. His key themes include "playful vitality" (149-155) which highlights the enervating, light-hearted, nature of long dance floor sessions. Another, "oceanic consciousness" (132-143), 'evokes the sense of in-betweeness or liminality that characterises clubbing (108), and 'the fluidity and constantly shifting socio-spatial dynamics of the dance floor' (ibid.).

These insights - forged from a close attention to party materiality - help us understand a 90s club dance floor and also provide an entry into the cosmology of Malbon's night-time denizens. But, in another insight into clubbing, from Phil Jackson (2004), excitements over EDM-fuelled "experiential transcendence" (Malbon, 1999) are turned around. Jackson finds clubbers primarily occupying a 'sensual landscape' (2004, p.22), where the oceanic is just one feature of a wider matrix. He says, 'if you only focus on these moments of intensity, as Malbon does in his discussion... you can miss out so much of the dance experience' (ibid.). Interestingly, Jackson finds that for his clubbers, the oceanic was little more than a 'sensual trick' (ibid.), seen as less important than 'the Dionysian sociality of the dance floor (ibid.).' Also of note is Jackson's discovery that clubbing isn't just for youth; a find reflected in the less mainstream psytrance milieu where a post-thirty demographic is not unusual. My fieldwork reflects this perspective forcefully.

In Malbon and Jackson's club ethnographies we find an emphasis on the importance of energy and vitality in EDM fans' experiences but, importantly, both find space for the downsides of habitual body technology intake in club land which can lead to hard "come-downs" (Jackson 2004, p.22) depression and worse.

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[17] Turner (with E.Turner, 1992, p.56)) explains that liminoid is a term better suited to 'the profusion of genres found in modern industrial leisure. Turner clarifies that liminoid is 'very often secularized' (ibid.), unlike his use of liminal which is often bound up with ideas of religion.

Come-downs as well as gender are questions addressed in key work from Maria Pini (2001), many of whose findings are reflected by my study's female participants. Based, like Malbon and Jackson, on club field work in 90s Britain, and using participant observation and in-depth interviewing across an all-female sample numbering eighteen, Pini focuses on 'the modes of femininity which are being lived, figured and otherwise constituted in relation to these cultures' (2), referring in particular to rave and club lifeworlds. She finds that 'for such women, it is not simply attending a rave event which is pleasurable, but also the whole performance of an otherwise quite unlikely mode of femininity; a performance which rave culture is seen to make possible' (2001, p.122) .

Another vital area largely missing in psytrance and rave works discussed above are the potentially destructive psychological and physical impacts of long-term clubbing and accompanying drug consumption. Pini detects a shadow "other", a darker side which can emerge from her dancer's experiential and interpretive accounts. [18] She subsequently observes how attempts at empowerment via the dance floor can trigger a powerful chain of effects for her subjects (136).

> Rave encourages and enables a 'suturing into' the stories of madness and confusion which it generates. But these are not stories as separate from other more material aspects such as chemicals, music and club-decoration for example. All of these aspects are inseparable parts of the 'body' which is rave culture.

Pini (2001) also comments on the liberating potential of these types of events for her subjects, and offers a novel reading of gender interaction. She writes, 'If the rave is seen by these women to provide a 'comfortable' space for the playing out of a sense of 'belonging' and a 'madness', then… this is also centrally because it is seen to involve new forms of *masculinity*' (114, author italics). The conclusion she draws is that within the embodied experience most of her subjects report there is potential for individual and collective transformation. Clubbing and dancing can deeply affect respondents' specific understandings of the body, self, sociality and life expectation. Later in this thesis, I consider a number of women dancers, whose views on and experiences of psytrance concur with Pini's findings.

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[18] Collin and Godfrey (1997) discuss the "dark side" in their narrative on the early days of acid house and rave in Britain.

A final area of literature my study engages with is body technology consumption, in particular, LSD and Ecstasy, in dance music cultures. The symmetry between potent, chemical intoxicants and dance music could not have been better identified than in an early rallying cry from Mary Anna Wright (1998). She exhorts, 'The Ecstasy revolution is based on a series of profound moments when the baggage of British values was brought out for an airing under the influence of this Class A drug' (228). The love affair between powerful body technologies and 90s Goa trance goes back, like Ecstasy, some years and is underlined by Simon Reynolds who notes in *Energy Flash* (1998) that the 'scene's drug of choice is acid' (151), namely LSD.

Wider coverage of stimulants in EDM cultures range from a chronological account of leading actors and geographic "scenes" by Matthew Collin (1997) to Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson's interrogation of EDM through feminism and psychoanalysis (1999). Attention to meticulously-organised chemicals consumption is central too in the ethnographies discussed above (Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2001), with clubbers citing situated body technology preferences and comments on behavioural effects, from the apparently profound to the sensual. Considering the large role technologies such as Ecstasy and, in recent years, ketamine (Measham and Moore, 2008) often play at dance party events, such considerations are certainly valuable given the contested nature of the commentary offered by my fieldwork participants (see Chapters 4 and 5). Body technologies are part of each participants' portfolio but are embarked upon, experienced and understood in markedly different ways.

Goa and psytrance studies have tended to under-explore the precise part body technologies play. Although one finds some material on such consumption in the main works on psychedelic trance (Cole and Hannan, 1997; Maira, 2005; Saldanha, 2007; Taylor, 2001), few details are supplied; rather, it is assumed to occur hand-in-glove with psychedelic trance party purpose. Elsewhere, doses of hallucinogens are understood as aids to spiritual insight and self transformation (see Bussman, 1998; Davis 2004; St John 2004 and 2009b). One writer, D'Andrea, however, views the impact of long-term use of potent intoxicants at his research sites, Goa and Ibiza, as potentially destructive (see D'Andrea, 2006, pp.214-21). He highlights a syndrome he dubs 'psychic deterritorialization', a kind of "India madness". D'Andrea, referring to a wider set of Western travellers who over- consume easily available drugs like

cannabis and ketamine, finds examples of travellers, sometimes hardcore Goa trance fans, succumbing to 'derealization' (218) and 'personalization' (219).

While most authors on Goa and psytrance trance, D'Andrea aside, assume body technology availability and likely potent effect, this study has followed participant's specific choices, often finding a range of nuanced decisions around times of imbibition and whether party drugs serve any further purpose for them. For some psytrancers, while LSD and Ecstasy remain intoxicants of choice, many eschew drug-taking altogether, or affect a situated ambivalence. It became clear too that Offworld habitués held a wide range of views on drug use. By tacitly assuming that drugs, especially the hallucinogen LSD, or the potent mood enhancer Ecstasy, are essential for a perceived successful party outcome, it is clear to me that authors have tended to sideline technical elements such as the sound system, lighting, site configuration factors, and, most important, the character and density and of the crowd.

Besides these mostly uncritical narratives on intoxication at party spaces, material in dance club research (Aldridge, Measham and Williams, 2011; Measham, 2004; Measham, Aldridge and Parker, 2000; Measham and Moore, 2008 and 2009; Moore and Miles, 2004; Riley et al, 2001), in contrast, offers a detailed picture of the prevalence and patterns of drug consumption across the UK. Such valuable work helps demystify the dominant narrative of the perpetually hedonistic dance event, characterised by voracious drug taking, perpetual music peaks, transcendence and symbolic ritual.

The primary intention behind the profusion of paper and collections, spear-headed by Fiona Measham, is to balance data on risks, harms and pleasures collected from young people engaging in drug consumption before, during and after night club events, as well as in longer-term contexts. For example, in a paper on the rise of ketamine use in clubscapes, Moore and Measham (2008) say, 'contrasting experiences of intoxication may be viewed as being situated within a "pleasure nexus" with two intersecting axes, with the point of intersection providing the maximum pleasure for each individual user' (242), while Moore and Miles (2004), following detailed qualitative surveys on youth, clubs and dance drugs, write that, 'much like other forms of consumption, young people's use of drugs is less about exploring the

unpredictability of risk, and more about them actively maintaining a sense of stability in their everyday lives' (506).

Moore and Miles convey an at times mundane and often less spectacular side to clubbing and consumption by considering processes like procuring drugs and preparing for the night out. They conclude, 'drugs play a key role in providing young clubbers with a liminal space in which they can put real life on pause. This is not merely an escape from real life but more than that, a counter-balance to it' (2004, p.521).

To conclude, I have shown that much of the work on psychedelic trance has been dominated by a set of assumptions that appear to be grounded in interpretations of the earliest formation of Goa trance, even though the culture has, in my view, mutated in significant ways over the ensuing years. I have also illustrated how other approaches offer convincing ways of understanding the culture: empirical, in the examples offered on drug research, and experiential and qualitative, in the accounts of club and underground dance culture. Thus, it should be clear that a material reading of the psychedelic trance event remain under-worked in psytrance literature up to this point. My concern is to place greater attention on a number of overlooked areas, notably social interaction, communality and fun, and to show how elements interact during the passage of one long, UK, psytrance party event.

Chapter 3

Insider and Participant Research: Methodology and Methods at the Psytrance Party

> To over-determine fieldwork practices is therefore to undermine the very strength of ethnography, the way in which it deliberately leaves openings for unanticipated discoveries and directions.

> Vered Amit (2000, p.17)

Figure 1: The first structures to go up are, left, the crew canteen, and right, the Chai Emporium (progressive trance dance floor). The latter would be most party-goers' first port of call to get refreshments; later, they would dance to the slower, funky trance in this tent. See Chapter 5 for analysis of DJ Alex Sense's set. (Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

3.1. Guaranteeing Communitas

In this chapter I present the fieldwork conducted at the Offworld psytrance party. My intention is to consider the choices, and the material effect of those choices, of the five-person promotional team as they planned and executed their event. I will argue that a commitment to realise the event's potential for connectivity and communitas underpinned the choices they made. Before my evaluation of the choices made, I will outline the methodology and research methods I deemed appropriate for the research. And while a detailed study of just one event cannot be used as a blueprint for all, I would suggest that the principles and practices I encountered are likely to occur in other psytrance settings.

One of the central elements I had to negotiate during my research was my own embeddedness, not only in psytrance culture but also in the pragmatic unfolding of the event. My contemporaneous and reflective notes convey times when I questioned my role - such as when I was helping to build structures, or on gate duty, and consequently felt and acted as though I was one of the organising team - or when the event was winding down, when I appeared to have lost my connection with my group of participants. Again, at its outset, I could not be sure if I was observer, participant or low-level organiser - or a blend of all three. It became clear that in constructing a narrative, or to "tell a tale" (Goodall, 1999; Van Maanen, 1988), I would reflexively evaluate emotions and self at various stages of the research. The fieldwork process, perhaps especially for an insider, consequently reflected Measham and Moore's (2006), notion of the 'operationalisation of reflexivity' within a call for an explicit, systematic placing of the author in ethnographic research narratives, and especially in work on youth, and music, cultures.

3.2. The Operationalising of Reflexivity in Psytrance Party Fieldwork

Before discussing questions of insiderness and fieldwork methods at the Offworld psytrance party, I consider the ethnographic approaches which framed my study. These wider perspectives affected how I used, or prefer to not use, my insider status and how I assessed and responded to decision and choices.

The methodology applied to the fieldwork and to analyse resulting data is broadly in line with ethnographic approaches stated centrally in new ethnography commentary from 1980 onwards. George Marcus (1998) has talked of over-theorization in the discipline. He suggests extending field site boundaries by considering a variety of spaces, times and forces, to help construct an ethnographic account from disparate cultural practices. Marcus argues, 'The multi-sited imaginary lends itself to this moderation of the tendency towards over-theorization in contemporary ethnography in that it focuses attention on the mapping of complex spaces into which fieldwork literally moves' (9).

Marcus's pointer is reflected in my fieldwork. Sites included events pre- and post-Offworld, and extended to a wider psytrance imaginary that included on-line dance culture forums like PsyMusicUk, the social media site Facebook, and more generally, a "state of mind" (Elliott, 2010) where preconceptions built around psytrance event history support a dance culture form of normative communitas as outlined by Turner (1969; 1992).

A view from Vered Amit (2000), reflected in the quote that heads this chapter, urges a research process that opens doors for serendipitous and unforeseen occurrences and insights. The self-questioning and reflexive nature of my fieldwork and ensuing analysis was intended to align my work with these prerogatives.

A further fundamental position which has underpinned my epistemology is a wider question: what kind of authorial voice constitutes authority and confers meaning? Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) follow James Clifford's (1986) querying of earlier modes of ethnographic writing that embodied a single authorial voice and thereby 'a privileged ethnographic gaze' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.203). Subsequent authors have often adopted postmodern perspectives and a high degree of self-reflexivity in experiments in ethnography which, it was hoped, were 'self-consciously more artful compositions' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.204).

These approaches have in common more open ways of writing ethnography, ones less arranged by precedent and style. A connected approach from Narmala Halstead (2008) explores the "ethnographic moment", first discussed by Marilyn Strathern (1999). Here a lineage in ethnographic work draws on self-reflexivity and concerns

with situating knowledge as 'a continual process of discovery that draws on new understandings of past encounters, to result in an ethnographic present as "multiply constituted"' (Halstead 2008, p.2).

Examples from my field notes reflect Hammersley and Atkinson's call for 'self reflexivity' and Halstead's (2008) concern with " processes of discovery". In this note scribbled in mid-July 2008, two weeks before Offworld, I reflected on a tendency towards self-importance and taking the whole thing too seriously.

> *One leeching of the Offworld outlook (on me) is the role of humour - I could do with a lighter, more humorous practise/way of the world. Maybe I can learn a bit about that here!*

Alternately, once at the party site on 29th July, I was a novice in the practical matter of the infrastructure building and proved something of a liability for dome-supplier Pete Wilson. My note commented,

> *Helped to put up 3rd dome, didn't do too well, couldn't work out (remember) the complicated connecting of the poles which were to be slotted onto triangular nodes. Pete got frustrated with me a few times, and I felt upset but didn't show it. Again it struck me how practical skills have brought many of the people here. And how lacking I am in this regard. What is interesting are the moments when time appears locked; it seems like no progress is being made, we are waiting for a decision, or for guidance.*

Marcus's (1998) interest in multi-sited spaces resonates with my initial experiences of the Offworld. When the five-person team, plus initially just a dozen helpers, arrived on site, I saw how a new space was being constructed – geographically and psychologically. Within this psycho-geography, I was, as Measham and Moore (2006) advise, "operationalising reflexivity", that is, overtly applying reflexivity at each stage of the fieldwork. I had two prime roles to interweave at the outset: the quasi-objective researcher, and the more familiar one, that of dance party participant. Throughout the event I would be pulled at least two ways: towards the dance floor to immerse myself in the captivating music played by psytrance and progressive trance DJs, or to follow

a strategic urge to interact with interviewees, often away from the dance floor, to peripheral spaces from where I could interview and best take notes.

Figure 2: Day 1, the solar-powered showers were working well, and were first enjoyed by crew who had been on site a week. (Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

An overarching concern was my status as a researcher: how distinct was I now from the other party-goers, or from the production crew members whom I had grown close to? I worried over what use I had been when helping with setting up the event infrastructure (tents/stall holders/ sound systems) and more widely I wondered if this messy fusion of roles of researcher, insider and impractical site helper would be counter-productive in my data-collecting strategy and impact later on the constructing of an "ethnographic account" (Coleman and Collins, 2006).

I consider that my contemporaneous and reflective notes indicated an engagement with the practical challenges in fieldwork, clearly echoing Marcus's concern with

"relationships and connections" (1998). Some of the questions I asked myself bordered on anxieties and perhaps illustrated Stephen Tyler's (1986) comment that a reflexive ethnographic work 'will be a text of the physical, of the spoken, and the performed, an evocation of quotidian experience, a palpable reality that uses everyday speech to suggest what is ineffable not through abstraction but by means of the concrete' (136). However messy the process it would inevitably be beset with choices, quite unlike the numerous dance party events I had attended where my role as fan and dancer was clear to all, and importantly, myself. With no such thing as perfectly objective research, I was primarily dealing with a whole set of questions around embeddedness that are in the final instance integral to all aspects of research.

3.3. Insider Research at the Psytrance Party

My partial insider status (Bennett, 2003; Hodkinson, 2004 and 2005; Measham and Moore, 2006) framed early choices, helped to navigate event meetings, facilitated the building of a participant set, and eased link-ups with DJs, music producers and infra-structure providers. Some youth studies researchers suggest that such partial insiderness is best utilized as a productive starting point. Paul Hodkinson (2005) argues that its value lies in '*initial* proximity between the sociocultural locations of researcher and researched' (134) whereas Rhoda MacRae (2007) reminds that close affiliation can come with certain risks. She offers examples of researchers describing 'research situations characterized by social proximity and familiarity' (55) but cautions that a non-insider, an 'acculturated stranger', can be 'in a better position to come to a critical understanding of the social world in question' (56). An observation on partial insiderness from Measham and Moore (2006) was particularly applicable to my position, given the years of investment in psytrance culture. They write that such status, 'has deeply personal, emotional and even physical ramifications for both the research process and the researcher in question (16).

How did I become a partial insider in the culture of psytrance? In the mid-90s I started to go to Goa-style trance parties, drawn by this electronic music's abstract elements and rhythmic propulsions. (See Chapter 5 for an analysis of Offworld DJ set analysis.) I was captivated by the voice samples used in the lengthy tracks, ones often snatched

from Indian classical raga, tribal artefacts or speeches from countercultural heroes like Timothy Leary and Terence McKenna. Many participants at these trance events were intoxicated by specific chemicals, with LSD, Mescaline and Ecstasy the drugs of choice, all of which I sporadically enjoyed. In the UK a demographic grew around this electronic trance music micro-culture that suited me perfectly, inasmuch as there was a significant middle-age presence at the events.

Taking vacations to tie in with international trance parties, I started to write on the genre for magazines and specialist books. Given my age (40 when I first took an interest in 1995), I got to know in particular the older enthusiasts at these events, some, it turned out, authoritative and well-respected denizens of the early Goa scene of the 1980s. Following the decision to base my thesis on trance culture, I began to question whether I would be able to disentangle myself sufficiently from its trappings, and attain sufficient distance. This starting point has triggered auto-ethnographic queries that, as I have already suggested, recur in the study around the benefits and drawbacks of insiderness.

Among the literature on insider research Hodkinson (2005, 2007) and MacRae (2007) were particularly helpful in allaying my fears. They both argue that 'insiderness' is not an end in itself and requires the applying of critical distance, most notably in the writing-up phase following field work if, as Goodall (1999) declares, "new" ethnographies - 'creative narratives shaped out of a writer's personal experiences within a culture' (9) - are to contribute to knowledge. Indeed Hodkinson (2004, 2005), in his work on British Goth subculture, identifies a key shift between the insider and that of insider researcher (as well as suggesting that most insiderness is likely only to be partial). He urges for a space to be negotiated between the scene and the distance required in producing an ethnographic text. Through fieldwork I indeed discovered that the advantages of early insiderness did not help me avoid conundrums, or "messiness".

Following a plea in May 2008 by one of the organizing team for help in raising funds for spiralling running costs, I pick up in this note on Hodkinson (2005) and MacRae's (2007) concern with a neat application of insiderness, indicating an altogether messier

positioning. The subsequent 23rd June note was written while returning from a meeting with promoters.

> '*A merging of roles: I am now hopping out of researcher mode and thinking about how money could be raised (as well as try to generate interest by handing out fliers, etc). Am I trying to 'please' my contacts, to look more effective, or useful, in their eyes? To be less of a 'passenger'?*

This potentially compromising situation was soon forgotten by the cash-strapped organisers but not before I had felt a certain degree of panic and confusion. I was absorbed in my project but could not walk away easily while the promotional team could face long-term debt.

In their work on northern UK dance club scenes, Measham and Moore (2006) say that the role of the insider is likely to 'raise questions about the issues of interpretation and understanding, and for the practical negotiation of the research process, including access to the field and the undertaking of interviews' (16). I was finding that the event script, and the promotional team discourses behind it appeared to change daily; thus requiring further scrutiny of my method and perspective.

3.4. **Site and Gatekeepers: Finding the Party and Contact Immersion**

My insider position was further shaped by choices on the ground. To demonstrate this, I identify sites and gatekeepers and then turn to fieldwork methods.

My first key choice involved the event I would need to cover. Through insider knowledge I drew up a basic criterion to help lead me to the party most appropriate for my research.

- It needed to happen in summer 2008 and be no less than three days long. (This would be enough time to collect substantial data on the peaks and troughs and keep in touch with participants.)

- I would need to exclude events like the UK's annual multi-tent, multi-genre, EDM festival The Glade (www.gladefestival.com), or Ireland's Life

(www.life-festival.com) and Waveform (www.waveformfestival.com). These would be too large to cover and were not anyway events fully devoted to psytrance or "neotrance" (St John, 2010a).

- Candidates from the European psychedelic trance festival milieu should be rejected too. This meant no to Portugal's Boom (www.boomfestival.org; 25-30,000 attendees), Hungary's Ozoria (www.ozorafestival.eu;12-15,000), and Germany's Vuuv (www.vuuvfestival.de; 8-10,000). The main reason for this was that I would encounter language problems when conversing with organisers and would be unable, due to distance, to attend meetings.

- I also needed to discount dedicated psytrance club events, normally held in confined spaces, as there were nearly always of too short a duration.

- Discounted too, would be those beneath the legal radar held in forests, fields or squatted buildings as they were ephemeral and could undermine the research.[19] My party needed to come off whereas these were often dependent on luck; dates and sites could move suddenly, or the authorities (Police, Health and Safety, Environmental Services) would stop the event before it began or during its evolution.

The choices I made to identify the right event cast an interesting light on insiderness. I was eschewing my usual preferences but using my knowledge and connections to locate the appropriate event. My knowledge of the culture would usually draw me to large, well-resourced events where an older international demographic, and my friends, would attend. [20] Instead I would pinpoint a fresh event where I could apply my methods as fully as possible, although I was mindful that the researcher is always

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[19] This type of party is spontaneous and edgy, usually attended by a younger crowd and, by 2011, often sustaining a more hardcore sonic aesthetic with greater use of software-generated noise and distortion. I knew that in UK psytrance these events tended to be small, short and regionally-focused with few resources such as plentiful decors, renowned known DJs and live acts, or even well-maintained toilets or security staff.

[20] The chief attraction at the big events are top names, such as Infected Mushroom, Sphongle, Total Eclipse, Tristan and X-Dream. In 2008 these acts would usually charge between £2000 and £5000 for a 1-2 hour set.

positioned (Hastrup, 1992) and any purely empirical, or objectivist model, unworkable or indeed discredited.

A first choice was to consult locations PsyMusicUK (www.psymusic.co.uk), Mushroom Online (www.mushroom-online.com/v2), Tranceculture (www.tranceculture.com), Chaishop (www.chaishop.com) and Access All Areas (www.accessallareas.org; henceforth AAA), where event information was publicized. Like other EDM milieux the global trance scene is highly active as a virtual community (Elliott, 2004; Greener and Hollands, 2006). In his virtual ethnography of a particularly active list, goa@party.net, Luther Elliott (2004) says, 'Following the Goa trance discourse as it spirals out of the mailing list and into sites from any number of internet subgenres has revealed the wide range of appropriations and re-significations on which this particular scene has been erected' (286). I hoped that such a line of signification, from websites to user-generated forum threads, would lead me to a prime event and an associated demarcated field, or "multi-sited fields" (Coleman and Collins, 2006).

The Offworld festival, found on the AAA site in December 2008 looked ideal. I estimated that it would be a mid-sized event (1500 estimated capacity); neither a small, fly-by-night party nor a large international festival. My insider status helped me convince the two main promoters Paul Bacon and Ben Grant, to grant me unfettered access to the event planning process. Through early exchanges we established that we had been to many of the same parties and had a number of friends in common, which in turn eased my entry into the core organising team. Indeed Bacon and I recognised each other the moment we met; we had talked at the first Sonica trance festival, in Italy, in 2006.

The fieldwork subsequently consisted of a series of meetings between January-May 2008 at Bacon's home in Maidenhead and Ben Grant's home near Oxford. At these planning meetings I conducted interviews but found like Saldanha (2007),that promoters were mostly reluctant to go on digital record, usually citing the media's tendency towards negative publicity. Finding anyway that conversations were more usually stilted when taped, I shifted to contemporaneous memos (Barz, 2008) with a full note typed on the train back to London. At these planning events the division

between insider and researcher were often blurred. I would be asked my view on how to speed up sluggish ticket sales or would find myself competing loudly in a discussion on EDM style and on the efficacy of competing psytrance events. The team understood clearly that my research was independent and could not to be considered a promotional tool. At the same time they appeared to believe that, as a psytrance insider, I would write up the event favourably.

The choice of an event to research that both met my checklist and was new and not closely linked to my psytrance milieu had major implications when I extracted some key themes. The emergence of social connectivity and the pragmatic nature of drugs consumption in the party spaces gained weight as the fieldwork evolved through the 14-month period. The emphasis I would place on material factors could be tracked from early observations, such as how promoters/gatekeepers conceptualised the trance party experience. They persistently weighed material considerations and attended to logistics in an attempt to maximise the likelihood of a vibrant, interactive community.

Another theme that emerged forcefully during the team meetings was the intention to emphasise the surreal or the wacky – the urge towards fun and joy, clearly distanced from Sylvan's model of the ritualised and neo-spiritual trance party, or Partridge's "occultist" intent (Partridge, 2004 and 2006; Sylvan 1999 and 2005). One note I made at the time (11th January, 2008) backed up the sense that any spiritual intentionalism had no evident role in the Offworld trance party experience:

> *Throughout the evening the discussion returned to: 'it's about making the party good, pleasurable, fun for friends'. There was little hint of a, spiritual, informative or educational experience. Paul (Bacon) told the police that the age range was from 3-63 and identifies with the comic, wacky, British festival tradition, at the first Offworld in 2007 festival getting the litter collectors to dress up as clowns with sad faces.*

In time, the research field become multi-sited, expanding out from the team bases to other locations for interviews on event construction and marketing. With data on the organizational term accruing, the next pressing matter was assembling a group of event participants, whom I would want to interview and track over a long period - before, during and after the late July 2008 Offworld party.

3.5. Negotiating the Psytrance Network: Dancing Bodies to Audio Texts

Although a combination of partial insider knowledge and research checklist had identified the suitable event, I would need more than the small group of enthusiastic promoters. My fieldwork required studies of psytrance participants and DJs as well. This section considers participant engagement through ethnographic method: focus group, interviewing formats, participant observation and artefact. Again, my discussion was framed by choices made at fieldwork stages and driven by a sense that the insider needed to move away from known perspectives.

A key fieldwork requirement was to conduct in-depth interviews with Offworld ticket holders, and to establish enough confidence for medium-term research relationships. But at the outset I needed to consider a potential area of concern: the cult of silence traditionally surrounding the relationship between drugs and the trance dance experience. In his fieldwork in Goa, Saldanha (2007) found that many participants were reluctant to discuss the party world and during his spell in Goa, D'Andrea (2007) had noted the same concerns, describing many informal discussions he had with the trance freaks as 'desultory' (.188). I expected my partial insider status to aid this endeavour, although I was mindful of MacRae's (2007) concern that too much insiderness might limit the researchers' access to data, or that s/he may 'fail to problematize what they see or hear' (60).

In contrast, I found that participants I approached were indeed talkative, once they had moved beyond an initial caution. The relative ease with which Offworld attendees shared their experiences and personal histories was connected to the very lack of identification with Saldanha's "subcultural pristinity". It was clear that did not think of themselves of belonging specifically to a subculture, and soon conveyed that Offworld, and other psytrance events they attended, were about inclusive social interaction and exposure to music styles. Clearly my partial insider status was less important when researching this cultural niche in 2008 than it would have been five to ten years earlier. On reflection this enabled me to be less preoccupied about my own

position within the setting's hierarchy – because the setting itself did not encourage value to be placed on hierarchy.

I collected Offworld attendees (research participants) through the Offworld page at the social media site Facebook and with the help of AAA co-ordinator Karim.[21] Following emails, a July 2008 date was set for a focus group. It consisted of two couples - Pixie and Polly, Rob and Claire (all names changed as with others in this participant set) - and another man, Franko.[22] The first couple were in their late thirties, the second, their early thirties, while Franko was in his late twenties. Retrospectively I judged all participants to be middle class although I did gather data on this during the session. The ethnic composition of the group was almost exclusively white and Caucasian, which largely reflected the ethnicity at UK trance parties held in the south and/or in rural areas. Franko however was Brazilian and of mixed-race, while Rob and Claire were South African, and Pixie and Polly were British. The international composition of this small set is a fair representation of national identity in psytrance, given contemporary middle class mobility patterns and the growing global appeal of psytrance.

Confidentiality was respected at all stages of the process an informed consent requested and received from all participants. [23] I was aware that ethical issues are important in research of this kind, notably in compiling data on an individual's drug-use, and informed consent mandatory. I considered however that such permissions should not be viewed as an end in themselves. Rather, integral to my research ethics was a respect for all participants privacy and at the writing up stage, the application of a critical perspective on the use and interpretation of, material, in line with my ethical standpoint.

Knowledge of psytrance history proved fruitful, although not essential, during the ensuing focus group as it helped to initially draw out the participants, notably Franko,

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[21] AAA's Karim, a long term contact from the London acid techno parties of the nineties, gave me his ticket client list for Offworld.

[22] See Appendix A for participant profiles and Appendix B for Schedule of Meetings.

[23] See Appendix D for copy of the generic consent form given to all study participants and for copies of signed permissions. The application to undertake research received ethical clearance from university authorities at the appropriate point.

who started ill-at-ease. [24] I chose not to direct or probe too deeply, in the hope of triggering as unmediated a discussion as possible. I did however offer autobiographical points from my personal trance history.

Keeping questioning open is a key feature in some Goa and psytrance ethnographies (D'Andrea, 2007; Maira, 2005; Saldanha, 2007; Taylor, 2001) and dance music ethnographies (Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2001). In particular, my methodology shared the strategy adopted by Pini (2001) who tracked an all-female sample of 12 in her study of clubbers' experiences and perceptions, concluding that 'contemporary social dance cultures offered them access to a different "world"' (3). Also Malbon (1999) offers guidance. He had started with around 40 respondents and kept his questioning loose, a cornerstone of qualitative fieldwork, to better portray clubbers' lives. Malbon (32) clarifies,

> Primarily, I was keen to attain, as near as possible, an equal relationship between myself as interviewer and the clubbers as interviewees. I did not want to be seen by the clubbers as more of an 'outsider' than was partly inevitable.

The rapport with my engaging, articulate participant group thus allowed for a quick accumulation of information in line with Malbon and Pini's largely parallel approaches. All my focus group members were reliable e-mailers too and would offer off-the-cuff views on themselves, music and events shaping the 2008 summer and beyond.

An obvious location to recruit more participants was Planet Bob's Chai Emporium, an all-day party on 15th July, 2008, in south London. There I met Amy, Rose and, Ben, all of whom were attending Offworld and showed interest in helping the research. Again, all three were white, Caucasian, middle class and British. Amy would be decorating spaces at the festival site and Ben stewarding; both got free entry, but no pay. [25] Rose, a flautist and, in 2008, a school teacher, was quick to emphasize the

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[24] The broad, interrelated areas covered during the three-hour session were psytrance party background, preparing for Offworld, predictive time management at the party, expectations of party peaks and post-party perspectives.

[25] In exchange for free entry to Offworld and food from the crew canteen, stewards committed to two 12-hour shifts at the site.

value of community in the trance scene. Any insider status was unnecessary - it appeared to mean little to them that I was a trance culture veteran, only that I appeared enthusiastic and honest in my endeavour.

A snowball approach to participant recruitment helped on the festival's opening day when Amy introduced me to Stretch, who was eager to contribute. Concluding my sample were Steve and Jason, both in their early twenties, who got in contact by Facebook soon after the pub event, where I had continued to monitor the forum and its various threads. [26]A key choice I made in gathering data on this second set was to loosen the structure of my methodological parameters. I had wanted to undertake a second focus group so as to collect a parallel data set, but had to relinquish the plan as a date could not be arranged as the festival was soon to begin. Consequently I conducted one- to-one interviews from 15-28 July with the second group, sometimes over the phone or in the trance-oriented InSpiral cafe in Camden, north London (www.inspiralled.net). Similar questions were posed as with the earlier focus group and in the same qualitative manner, I observed that in a one-to-one setting the data acquired was more interviewee-led and less lateral and meandering.

Interviews with DJs at Offworld (Ross March, Mark Young and Alex Karanasos) completed the study's participant range. I based the process of identifying which of the many DJs to approach through insider connections. Interviews were straightforward to organise as these DJs were known to me from earlier dialogues in social and professional arenas. I considered that the sets by the DJs chosen would be interesting from the sonic perspective, as each specialised in various styles of trance music, and would also generate a range of observations on the dance floor.

A central method chosen, but one which proved difficult to plan reliably, was participant observation, an element of ethnographic research (Aull Davis, 1998) and one particularly central to research into youth cultures. I found that, as the event unfolded, planned discussions, taped or otherwise, were increasingly hard to conduct. Promoters would be stressed with tasks, and participants were often too absorbed in the event to describe, or reflect on, their experience. Certainly during peak moments

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[26] The three young men were likewise white, middle-class and university-educated. While Steve had a passion for psytrance, Stretch and Jason were coming to Offworld more for social reasons. Jason hoped to deepen pre-existing friendships and Stretch hoped to develop new ones.

participants were not open to interviews whereas during the lulls informal chats were relatively easy to conduct. Consequently, spontaneous and undirected conversation replaced the structured interview throughout much of the passage of the event. The prime method of retrieval was the reflective, or reflexive, field note (see Barz, 2008 and Kisliuk, 2008).

Finally, post-party, I again found that the focus group setting was impractical, as participants had either returned to work or study or were travelling further field to other trance festivals or late summer vacations. The main format I used to collect further data on post-event impressions through autumn 2008 and early 2009. was the interview, either recorded on the phone or in person at InSpiral Cafe. In addition, I kept in close contact by email. In the cases of Rob and Steve their views were tracked on internet forums, as their web synonyms cropped up regularly on PsyMusicUK (see Appendix D) and promotional portal MySpace.

As Greener and Hollands (2006) note, dozens of virtual communities are populated by psytrancers globally with user profiles updated regularly, even daily. A survey they carried out indicates that postees attached multiple meanings to this virtual culture. They observe, '(T)he connections between virtual psytrancers did not dissipate when the music stopped as predicted by theorists (Thornton, 1995), but were nurtured through regular (often everyday) contact on psytrance website discussion forums and face-to-face attendance at events' (2006, p.414). This, I suggest, is a contemporary example of Turner's ideological communitas which he identifies as 'the formulation of remembered attributes of the (social) communitas experience' (1992, p.59).

A further method of data collection fundamental to my study was psytrance artefacts. Like most music cultures psytrance is packed with materials including memorabilia, music releases, still and moving images. An artefact record of the event would aid a material analysis and help highlight how material elements interacted. I collected audio materials, such as artist CDs and DJ mixes, as well as further DJ lists and visual images including fliers, in-house texts and photographic images of the event.

In considering artefacts, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest 'rather than treating the analysis of such artefacts as a separate domain, we wish to stress that material goods, objects and traces need to be analysed in their broad ethnographic

contexts' (134). As a result, I collected CDs from psytrance, progressive trance, and chill-out DJs who played sets at Offworld, as well as some of the music producers who played their own music at the event. Consequently, I could observe how this CD artefact takes on new meanings in the context of the party and often lacks these meanings outside, especially in the pre-party moment. Although these various CD collections would form the basis for the sets, some material, as is customary in most competitive EDM cultures, was yet-to-be-released material. [27] Other DJs at Offworld, for example Psy-Clone and Flimsy Wing, were in the early stages of their music career and reliant on self-promotion. They used mixes on MySpace and gave bespoke mixes away to interested parties (media, event promoters, label owners and friends) to promote their style.

Last, turning to visual technology, Hammersley and Atkinson stress the value of 'incorporating visual materials into an integrated ethnographic enterprise' (2007, p.149) but Pink (2007) reminds that photographers 'whether or not they are ethnographers, are individuals with their own intentions working in specific social and cultural contexts' (35). I had observed over some years that psytrance parties were increasingly being documented by the moving image, supplied by fans and citizen reporters for an increasing number of web outlets. A popular practice was to record snippets of action on mobile phones. [28] Although moving image (phone or video) could have contributed an additional and valuable strand of documentation, I decided it was outside the scope of my study. The choice I made was to focus on digital photography, while fully aware of Pink's concern for a reflexive awareness as well as a commitment to participants' privacy. For example, I was clear that no image would be taken of any individual partaking in drug consumption or, in the event of an adverse reaction to an intoxicant, any image providing visual evidence of associated behaviour.

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[27] In a pre-Offworld interview, DJ Liquid Ross identified that as much as 50% of his mix would often be tunes he had "exclusive ownership" over. By this he meant music no other DJ had, at that moment, access to.

[28] See Karenza Moore's '"Sort Drugs, Make Mates": The Use and Meanings of Mobiles in Club Culture' (2005) for an analysis of the importance of mobile phones for period club culture.

With these provisos in place, I have relied on the sequence of images embedded in this text to offer a pictorial passage through the event spaces and to help convey dance floor peaks and lulls, illustrations of the vibe, descriptions of the site, and evidence of some of the art work on display. I was however inconsistent in collecting these stills. I did not, for example, take pictures at the focus group meeting, or at the promotional team meetings, or at any of the subsequent one-to-ones at InSpiral.

3.6. Temporarily Autonomous: From Cereal Field to Psytrance Party

Prior to Chapter 4 and 5's analysis of the overarching themes emerging from the fieldwork, I will devote the next section to Offworld's various elements, focusing primarily on how the site was divided into zones and shapes to realise the promoters' vision of promoting social communitas. I examine the choices made by the organizers in constructing a space for 'music, dance, theatre and buffoonery' (festival flier, 2008). Chief promoter Bacon, always confidant that the event would be success, told me when we visited the site two weeks before the event that planning and execution was 'a case of constantly shifting priorities - a weird game of chess. You just keep moving these pieces about with the ultimate goal - the gate opening pretty much on time.'

Spatiality and infrastructure has largely been overlooked in academic work on psychedelic trance, with the exception of St John (2009a, 2010b) who shows that the 2008 Boom festival's 'multiple EDM sound stages' (2009a, p.36) reflected a 'cornucopia of difference' (54). St John says, 'In this disparate sonicity, different kinds of "noise" accumulate in two diverse arenas, that represent rather polar sites' (ibid). St John continues by arguing that cultural variety at Boom keeps interest in the massive, mostly 24-hour psytrance stage, fresh. Similarly, but on a much smaller scale, Offworld provided various music venues and other loci of interest to keep participants engaged and inter-communicative.

Bacon's conversion of the 25-acre site into discrete zones was generally successful in facilitating rich rapport among the attendees although less effective in generating the degree of music intensity many psytrance fans are used to. Organisers worked with

numerous sets of plant, or kit, including variously sized sound systems (rigs) at music stages and other spatial aspects like tent construction, fencing, car park and camping zone.

Grant and Bacon were using the cereal field at Liddington Warren Farm, Wiltshire, for the second time. [29] The site's appeal did not lie in its beauty or specific features (trees, hills, water zones, etc) but simply because it possessed a 24-hour entertainment licence, granted by Wiltshire County Council and obtained through event planning company EMS.[30] The licence allowed for a high capacity – up to 10,000 - but most promoters, using less than half the maximum acreage, would expect far fewer payers than this maximum. The Offworld 2008 gate, at just 900 with around 200 crew, artists and stall holders, was low, but double the amount at the inaugural Offworld, held there one year earlier. The promoters however had calculated that they would need 1200 payees (the ticket prices varied from £50 to £80) to break-even, as the budget earmarked for the event was £50,000. Consequently, in the run-up to the event, it became clear that the organisers faced a worrying shortfall.

The choice, for the second year running, to select a relatively expensive and large site had had repercussions. The lower gate receipts led to two issues of concern although neither in retrospect was overwhelming. First, the overall cost, closer to £65,000, put a severe strain on the budget reserves, with the music space organisers in particular required to economise and trim their slice of the common fund. Second, Bacon and Grant had spent more time than expected on logistics, as a result of their commitment to jump through the many legal hoops, or, to coin a phrase, "be legit". Elements included but were not limited to, collecting paperwork covering the site licence, police authorization, evidence of contract with St John's Ambulance, plus full details on Health and Safety procedures adopted. Despite the efficiency demonstrated by the promoters, council officials requested a short list of site improvements which delayed the opening by three hours.

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[29] The first Offworld was held in August, 2007, the second, 31st July-3rd August, 2008.

[30] EMS ceased trading in 2010

Figure 3: Day 1 and the researcher was snapped in relax mode in front of the chill out tent. DJ Fluid, from Fluid Radio (www.fluid-radio.co.uk) sits behind. (Photograph by Karen Louise Thomas, © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

The promoters' plan for the site layout reflected their desire to stage an event which was simultaneously cohesive and spacious. They wanted to prevent collective energies from dissipating, which they perceived might occur if the site was over-extended. But neither did they want a party environment, like the 2008 Glade Festival, which had a congested feel. The form of communitas the organisers wanted to engender could, given a decent number of attendees, be then both intimate and expansive.

The lay-out imagined two orderly sections with a central zone set aside for the psytrance fans to create their own tent village. [31] "Upstairs" referred to the higher part

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[31] Bacon's arrangement with site farmer Dennis Ford, allowed access to the site on 24th July, a week before show time, with fencing soon arriving to corral the main 25-acre section part of the site.

of the field closer to the B4192, 'downstairs' to the lower part abutting a steep hill (see figure 1), which lay outside the perimeter while, dominating the centre of the field, lay the camp site, roughly divided into rows. The upper part of the field, laid out in a slight arc, contained four crew Portacabins; a 20m- long, 10m-wide tent made of Indian fabric accommodating the Planet Bob Chai Emporium progressive trance music stage; a large white tent housing the main food stall; a 14m-round dome for crew catering; and ten stalls selling textiles, fast food, groceries and bric-a-brac. In turn, "downstairs" featured the main psytrance stage's two domes, one 14m and the other 10m round, both around 5m high, the chill-out tent, main bar and cafe. In this design the camp formed the festival heart, with the upstairs the head and downstairs the corresponding midriff and legs.

In keeping with the vision of offering an impressive, well resourced event, Grant hired sizeable domes from two southern England companies on the web, Geo-Lite (www.geolitesystems.com) and Floating Lotus (www.floatinglotus.org.uk). They were made of white poly-cotton canvas; the flaps rolled up or pegged down as required. These domes were difficult to erect as they had around 50 hubs fashioned from a solid rod of plastic, and more than100 poles made from galvanized steel (see figure 5). All of the component parts had to fit together in just the right way; a three-hour job that required four workers, including myself.

What choices and decisions had the research participants (minus the DJs) made in the party's early phase? Almost all arrived right at the outset of the four-day event, or within a few hours of it opening. At the focus group, Franko explained that he liked to get to events right at the start so he could 'pitch the tent and then walk around and check out all the stages.' Next, he would 'see if I can find any friends, locate the food, and then go dancing.' In a phone interview just prior to Offworld, Rose added that she would usually be hyper-active in the lead up, 'making sure I've got everything ready.' After arriving, she would re-establish social bonds. She told me,

> I will say hallo to people I know. Then, I'll put the tent up, unpack, make a
> little home, go to the chaishop, relax! Also, it really depends what's happening
> at the party because, if the dance floor's going, then it's straight there really.

These comments suggest that participants expected to steadily launch themselves into the social melee but would first establish a secure base. However, another participant,

Steve, told me he would, if late, usually head straight to the dance especially if a DJ he was keen to hear was already playing.

Figure 4: Two days before the festival started the chill out tent is already constructed downstairs at the bottom of the main field. The coach to the left was home to Merlin's cafe from Reading, south England, who served teas, vegan breakfasts and two main meals per day. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

Figure 5: The day before show time, Geo-Lite's Pete Wilson (orange, or darker, jacket) directed Flying Lotus' Alan Turnbill as he connected hubs on the smaller of the psytrance stage two domes. The invisible presence in the dome-erecting team was me, on a steep learning curve. (Photograph Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

The organising team's vision had taken account of early arrivals but being 'legit' had consequences. The participants started arriving on Thursday lunchtime but entrance was delayed for council health and safety checks. Prompt arrivals (around 150 by 16:00) started 'partying' in the car park section of the field, some smoking cannabis and dancing along to psytrance tracks on car sound systems. [32] Among the 500 or so

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[32] £10,000 out of the £50,000 budget was reserved for security, provided by a Wiltshire-based company known to Bacon. Although the company's policy stated guards would come down hard on drug-taking

arriving Thursday were all eleven study participants, most of whom pitched camp in the centre of the site. A small number of festival goers preferred to camp closer to their vehicles in the car park 200m nearby. The gender split among attendees was largely equal between males to females; the age range spanned small babies to mid sixties (there were about 20 small children on site), and, true to the racial phenotype of most European psytrance events, the majority were Caucasian with, I judged, less than 10% black. When considering nationality, the picture becomes less monolithic, with, I reasonably guessed, 50% British and the remainder mostly from other European countries.

I continued with duties, checking tickets and directing vehicles into the site at the B4192/ farm entrance junction. Stint over, a betwixt-and-between (Turner, 1969) period commenced, continuing through the next day, where roles - worker, ethnographer and psytrance insider - smudged and folded. I noted at 20:00 on the first day, *A slow return to a distance, but still very much in the push and pull of the counter-veailing forces.*

The discrete locations of the music stages were among the most important choices made by the promoters. Because the progressive, chill-out and psytrance spaces offered contrasting sounds and spatial opportunities, the organisers placed them at three corners of the site. This was not an obvious strategy. At the 2009 Glade, for example, the psytrance zone comprising a number of stages was highly condensed, in order to better facilitate a concentrated vibe.

Considering the lay-out design, a chief factor for the organisers was the prevention of "sonic bleed", whereby each stage's decibel level was arranged so that it did not substantially overlap with any other. Dancers required a clean sound not just on each dance floor but at the various peripheral spaces as well. Given that much of the all-important socialising took place on the slight hill leading down to the stages, it would appear that the Bacon/Grant strategy was sensible and effective.

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in practise it would turn a blind eye to 'soft' drug consumption, unless it was obvious the person was trafficking.

The progressive trance music stage, located at the top of the hill, enclosed the Chai Emporium - the name given to the mobile sound system cafe Bristow and Bacon had run since 2001. This was the first to get going, three hours after the gate opened, and the last to close at 5am on the Monday morning. Its functions were not just musical but also social and organizational. The stage served as a lounge area for the promoting team and their friends. It was positioned just 10 metres from the Portakabin used as the festival's nerve centre, so access was straightforward.

Figure 6: Following the delayed festival gate opening (now 5pm, Thursday), the first 200 arrivals have set up their tents in the middle of the sloping site, which looked down towards the Spindrift's chill out tent. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

The choice of early music in the Chai Emporium gave an insight into the promoters' aims. The DJ list began with Spoona, who played chuggy, mid-tempo progressive trance (130-135bpm), a melodic, less bracing, sub-genre of psychedelic trance. This music was consequently easy to consume and an ideal soundtrack for conversation. After midnight, when the first wave of enthusiastic dancers locked into the music, faster tracks characterised the selections. The DJ/live act line-up played mostly at low-to-medium volume on the Super Mario 10k sound system (two speaker stacks at either end of the tent), which was programmed by event manager Bacon, himself a

DJ, with help from Lithuanian record label owner, Robert Anuskevic, who had booked four progressive trance producers from overseas.[33]

Figure 7: 8.30am Sunday morning, progressive tent/Chai Emporium. German DJ Frechbax crafted a 'minimal' set. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

The next day, Friday, the chill-out tent, located at the bottom of the field and at the opposite end to the psytrance stage, was the first to put on music. Chill-outs at psytrance festivals are often located far from more frenetic activity, to better enable a relaxing space for punters to unwind, socialise, roll cannabis joints, consume non-alcoholic beverages and snacks, and often, sleep. However, given the smaller-than-expected gate, very few punters visited this out-of-the-way corner. In retrospect, this choice had been a poor one, as a chill-out positioned upstairs in the market area would have attracted substantially more interest. The Offworld team had planned for their chill-out to start up first, but the tent's elaborate decoration had not been finished in

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[33] These were Frechbax (Ajana Records, Germany), Liftshift (Electrikdream Records, Netherlands), and Bassid and Pradox (both Arkona Creation artists from the Netherlands). DJs performing on this stage included Alex Sense (Greece), Bedouin and Hamish (UK), Nadi (Israel) and Sinan (Turkey).

time. Programmed by drummer and ambient DJ, Sean 'Spindrift', much of the music played here, like the progressive tent, was by producers airing their own material.[34]

Figure 8: 22.15pm, Saturday night, chill out tent, Orchid Star, pulled the biggest crowd of the weekend here, at around twenty fans. The eight-piece was fronted by two female singers, Myo and Samanta, and led by keyboard-player Pete Ardron, pictured back left. The band was energized and delightful with Ardron's arrangements whimsical and multi-layered. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

Some hours later and by now early Friday afternoon production, psytrance stage manager Grant began his programme in the adjacent downstairs corner. It is not unusual at psytrance festivals for the main music stage with its DJs and live acts to lag some hours, if not a full day, behind the less energised music zones. The strategy is to give dancers time to acclimatise before the headline DJs and most popular live acts start. Grant's space opened later than he had hoped as the decoration work ran behind schedule. During much of the first few hours of psytrance, decoration artist Bjorn,

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[34] Artists performing their own material in the chill out tent (One hour-90 minute sets) included: Kuba (UK), Orchid Star (an eight-piece band, UK), Perpetual Loop (UK), Solar Quest (UK) and Filin & Zooch (Russia). Djs included Bobby (from Loop Guru, UK), Chandrananda (Italy), Tom Fu & Luna Lis (UK).

from Berlin, Germany, and the mural canvas painter Liquid Sam, from Brighton, UK, continued with their elaborate work, hanging, fixing and connecting their art inside and on the edges of the space. Sam carefully positioned a set of 10 psychedelic-inspired prints five metres above the floor on dome posts while string artist Bjorn (see figure 9), wove coloured threads to form patterns of various sizes and depths.

Figure 9: Decors at the psytrance stage included string designs by Bjorn and various fluorescent inflatables bought on the web by Grant. (Photograph by Karen Louise Thomas; © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

These intricate decorations, or decors, were impressive but quite sparse by general psytrance event standards. At well-resourced festivals, including Boom and Ozora, decoration aims to saturate the visual eye, better to approximate an other-worldly scenario and heighten the impact of the music's relentless beat and encoded, quasi-psychedelic embellishments. Grant, who had been planning his space's look for months, was disappointed with this side of the aesthetic presentation, identifying the

66

twin problem as lack of time and financial resources. He would have preferred a greater profusion of banners, drapes and moving objects. He told me after the party, 'there was lots of decors that didn't get used as I didn't get the chance to tell the guys where I wanted it. I had plans for it to look a certain way. Although it looked great it wasn't quite how I wanted it to look.' Despite Grant's downbeat assessment, the stage attracted from the start a decent group of enthusiasts who did not seem to care that it was unfinished. Rose, who positioned her home-made flags around the domes, told me when we met there Friday afternoon that it 'looked great.'

As with the Chai Emporium's programmers, the decision to hold back main acts was sensible. Punters were still trickling in with decent numbers now queuing at the bar and at the Pedro's Cafe. However, by late evening the sonic pulse had gradually intensified towards 148 bpm; the psytrance tracks attracting a crowd of around 100 attendees with approximately half of that number dancing.[35] The stage's calling card was a 20k twin-stack Opu*s* sound system, Twisted Clarity, owned and run by South African Frank Beisenbach. [36] Beisenbach is a "wet pack" supplier, meaning he provides all the kit needed and installs and runs it exclusively, while other providers may set up and then the leave the control to others. As well as the stacks, his plant packet consisted of Opus amplifiers and crossover, Vestax DJ mixers and Pioneer CDJs for CD mixing (see www.twistedclarity.co.uk).[37]

Grant was forced by budgetary constraints to make a further choice lay about lighting. Psytrance events, like other EDM parties (and indeed popular music shows more

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[35] Live acts playing 1hr sets on the psytrance stage included Deviant Species (UK), Flimsy Wing (UK), Noctem (UK) and Zubzub (five-piece band, UK). DJs playing 90min to 2hr sets included Beardy (UK), Carlos (Brazil) Kana (Japan), Jaal (Germany), Liquid Ross (UK), Moonquake (France) and Neutral Motion (Japan).

[36] K' refers to kilowatt, a unit of electrical power consumption. One kilowatt is equivalent to 1000 watts. To put '20k' into perspective, a small home stereo sound system usually consumes around 250 watts, an eightieth of the power of the Twisted Clarity Opus rig.

[37] Beisenbach has, since 2006, been popular with crews as he is reasonably priced, although it is commonly known in psytrance circles that a competitor, Funktion 1, is superior. One promoter, Nano Records' Regan Ticon, told me in an email that the key difference of Funktion's ambisonic (multi stack) rig was 'the clarity of sound and its warmth.' Given his place in the niche but highly competitive world of outdoor sound rigs for hard dance music events, Biesenbach rejects any claim that Funktion 1 is superior. He stresses Opus' ever-reliable performance built around complementary elements.

widely), are made more enthralling and effective by arrays comprising lasers, sharp rays and strobes as well as projections, smoke and dry ice. Not only was the psytrance stage the only one of the three to use a professional lighting company, but the array was markedly simple. Grant booked Celestial Lightworks (www.celestiallightworks.co.uk) for fixed-structure lights and just one accoutrement, an 18k laser projection system. The lasers were used fitfully and aimed to coincide with peak times when the music was at its fiercest and the crowd most numerous. Pre event interview material and data obtained from the focus group had indicated that most study participants rated lighting at an outdoor event quite low in importance. One however, Stretch, felt that a more elaborate set-up would have kept him on the dance floor longer and provided visual stimulation when the music became too repetitive or over-bracing.   For the two other music spaces, stage organizers adopted a thoroughly DIY approach, using variously shaped and coloured bulbs on threads, wires and trestles and videos projected onto white and pastel sheets or drapes.

Giving the commitment to legit status, all music stages closed down at 2am Saturday morning, before starting again six hours later. From that point the permit allowed for the music to be non-stop. The psytrance and chill out stages closed at 10pm, Sunday, while the progressive trance stage stretched on until 5am Monday with promoter Mamtani rounding off the event with a set of down tempo trance. Although this might seem to be a surfeit of music, many psytrance fans prefer the music to be non-stop throughout the party. Non-stop music helps maintain an intensity favoured in psytrance whereas the stop-start variant requires more effort from all to build a dance vibe up again. Study participants, in this case, mostly preferred opportunities to rest and, as Stretch told me, 'recharge batteries'. However, as prolific dancer Franko explained to me in an email, 'I never really got the chance at Offworld to have a mammoth dance session. Once or twice I was just getting into my stride and the music stopped. On another occasion, the style of music changed abruptly, and I lost my flow.'

To conclude this account of choices made at Offworld, I briefly touch on a key side of festival culture: the provision of food and drink. Whereas a high number of attendees, including study participants Jason and Steve, opted for simple meals made on tiny gas stoves at their camps others, such as the older professionals Pixie, Polly, Claire and

Rob, made the most of three cafes on site. However, a straw poll I conducted indicated that the majority of the 900 punters, perhaps because of budget limitations, seldom eat at the cafes. Indeed, Reading's Merlin vegan team, was poorly located downstairs close to the chill-out at the southern edge of the site, receiving next to no punters. It closed earlier than expected, at midday on Sunday. By comparison, Pedro's next to the Chai Emporium received substantially more visitors including crew. Again, choices made around party layout and design were rendered less effective by the lower-than-expected gate. A further 200-400 punters would inevitably have meant more business for Merlin, if for no other reason than that Pedro's team was slow to supply their tasty dishes and often ran out.

Figure 10: A dozen stalls were set up around the upper far edge of the site. This one, run by an elderly couple, sold books, bric-a-brac and plants. It was at once both an eccentric oddity for such a setting and an enjoyable side attraction. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

On Monday morning, following the closing down of all music spaces, the rain continued with parts of the sloping field resembling slippery mud slides. Many people had left or were packing up to go, while others looked for mugs, stalling their exit. The pancake stall (savoury and sweet) was doing brisk business while the Pedro's tomato sauce was more watery by the helping. Local taxis to the closest train station, Swindon, could be caught twenty metres up from the showers.

The event officially closed at midday Monday when those who remained were asked to vacate the site. This left stall holders and crew, now around 100, to "break down", a job done languidly and lasting a full two days. It is often the case that after a large or medium-sized trance event a crew would continue to party, a process referred to as the "after party". This did not occur in the case of Offworld as numbers dwindled at a steady speed with the weather deteriorating and the site becoming unpleasantly muddy. Another factor was that most of the organizing team had day jobs they needed to return to.

3.7. 'I'll see you at the Chai Tent'

This chapter has introduced the psytrance party as a valid and absorbing research model while offering an analytic account structured around a number of themes. Prior to an introduction to the prime site, a transformed cereal field in southern England, I critically considered my role as a partial insider and, with reference to nuanced perspectives from Hodkinson (2005) and MacRae (2007) identifying both strengths and limitations of this mode of research for an ethnographically-informed case study into a single EDM event.

The key argument is that the organizers' vision was to make the potential for a form of affectual communitas as feasible as possible. The choices they made - from envisioning party design, to pragmatics on the ground, through to final chores like rubbish-collection – were aimed at maximising, even guaranteeing rich social benefit. They understood their event an interactive, communal moment to be explored through adult play, fun, dance and music.

A final important theme was my contemporaneous self reflexivity noted through data-collecting methods, participant observation and reflective note-taking (see Barz, 2008). As confidence in my insiderness waned, so doubts surrounding my role, or roles - and uncertainties around my research subjects - increased. I was on occasion marooned between the habitus of a long-term psytrance fan and a new identity as a fledgling academic researcher. Once Offworld got underway this fruitful split-personality got waylaid in the action, and I trusted study participants to stay centre stage. But as this note entry from the party's Sunday morning shows, I had come to over-rely on this team, even seeing event passages through their eyes and ears.

Is one stimulated? Is one amused? These questions drift into mind, where before they were of little importance (or hardly featured). Also apparent as the day wears on...a lack of communication between the respondents and me. What is the data here? Asking questions isn't really appropriate (all the time) and then there's my 'agenda', and push and pull between checking in with them and following my own musical whim.

I faced the music alone. But there was no music - at least then - to occupy me and offset boredom and uncertainty. The moment passed and the sonic lull segued into a final, chiaroscuric sequence of psytrance DJ music, played to a much-reduced party mass. This passage is discussed in Chapter 5, where I examine the music and dancer conversation. Before this discussion in Chapter 4, I argue that a psytrance party of this kind is first and foremost a communal event, an opportunity to generate and deepen social connectivity.

Chapter 4

'It's just a Tea Shop and we're having a Laugh': Social Connectivity at the Psytrance Party

> In this busy life you can easily not socialize much at all… a part of us needs to be discovering new people.
>
> Rob, festival participant

> Is there any of us who has not known this moment when compatible people - friends, congeners – obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level, when they feel that all problems, not just their problems, could be resolved.
>
> Victor Turner (1982, p.48)

I will now explore the key theme to have emerged from the fieldwork. I suggest that modes of communication, often everyday yet still distinctive, have primarily replaced the more self-regarding intimacies of earlier psychedelic trance phases. Saldanha (2007) had described an exclusivist society, one which, he argued, shunned the local Goan habitués. D'Andrea in turn studied his Goa trance subjects psychologically; in his view the dancer was seeking a "limit-experience" with the aim being to 'transgress the boundaries of coherent subjectivity' (D'Andrea, 2007, p.209). Offworld participants in contrast thought and behaved inclusively, eager to socialise with and befriend their neighbours in the camp site or partners on or near the dance floor. There appeared to be no great thirst either for self-expansion or self-destruction.

I continue by accounting for what was of value at the party, with participants, promoters and DJs understanding the event as a node in an ever-widening social network - a phenomenon St John, in the term 'underground sociality' (2010a, p.7) considers to be cultural and political. Flag maker Rose explained that, 'there's often an immediate connection between people at good parties – you can see it in people's eyes and the ways they move, and not just on the dance floor.' Organisers, meanwhile, understood their undertaking as a primarily social event incorporating a

72

skills depot and an opportunity for learning curves. One of the Offworld promoters Mohit Mamtani, who lives much of the year in north India, found his 'social horizons had widened' while Bacon believed his party was a 'magnet for involvement'.

Figure 11: Psytrancers socialise, early Saturday evening to the left of the psytrance dome. Japanese DJ Kana prepared the way with bouncy, melodic psytrance. She was followed by live act Neutral Motion (also from Japan), and DJs Liquid Ross (see Chapter 5) and Zooch. (Photograph by Karen Louise Thomas; © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

Many of those at Offworld highlighted a kind of knowing fellowship, which made it possible to move rapidly beyond the decorum and etiquette associated with modern society. This kind of social connectivity brings to mind the communitas Turner (1969, 1974, 1982) spoke of so often. He explains that 'Communitas is spontaneous, immediate, concrete – it is not shaped by norms, it is not institutionalized, it is not abstract. [It] differs from the camaraderie found often in everyday life, which, though informal and egalitarian, still falls within the general domain of structure.' (Turner 1974, p.274). I now apply this model of communitas to help explore psytrance conviviality, drawing out from participants at the festival those specific qualities that attracted them initially to trance culture, and now specifically to Offworld.

A further element in the next chapter's argument is that psytrance social connectivity is better understood when the role of intoxicants is acknowledged. Such technologies in psytrance act both to connect bodies and to drive them apart. It is noteworthy that nearly half of the participants I mixed with avoided potent body technologies, or felt that they had no more use for them. A few, in contrast, explored ever more exotic polydrug combinations, even when the effect led to isolation. Below I sketch mini events which deserve commentary and I apply insights from Turner and other authors. First, I explore a snapshot of a festival sequence where study participants Rose, Amy, Rob and Claire were immersed in a night of outdoor psytrance.

4.1. Exploring the Psytrance Social: Rob, Friends and the Peak Sets

The peak moment at the psytrance stage was late Saturday night when a dense, dressed-up crowd danced energetically inside the cramped dome. Hundreds more congregated on the hill and on the flat below. Teppei Nishimura (DJ Neutral Motion) from Japan was proving particularly popular, with a hard and fast set of 2008 psytrance hits. 32-year-old enthusiastic dancer Franko was locked into the rhythm, 'running nicely' as he said in an aside at the time, on his Ecstasy (MDMA) powder, taken earlier. For his part Steve, who is 27, was absorbed in a cocktail of intoxicants, following his tab of Ecstasy with LSD (taken in the blotter form, rather than as often preferred in psytrance circles, a liquid). In contrast, 30-year-old Rose was "drug-free", believing that the music, when high quality, was enough to carry her along. Close by, at the dance floor edge, Amy, who is 32, and Stretch, 30, were engrossed in conversation, swaying lightly and, likewise, not on a chemical high.

Just at the point when Neutral Motion handed over DJing duties to Liquid Ross, Rob and Claire ventured down from the camp site and joined the crowd. Rob remembered a strong feeling of support and "togetherness"

> It may have been because we had felt so vulnerable and frazzled on Friday night after taking the trips (LSD), which had quickly made us feel alienated, but the feelings of warmth and support after we headed down the hill and joined the others, was amazing and very powerful. No one talked - the music was too loud - but our new friends were smiling in a lovely way and just wanted to hug us.

Figure 12: Psytrancers dancing early Saturday evening at the start of Neutral Motion's popular set. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

34-year old Rob could be considered a "veteran" of the milieu, having gone to psychedelic trance events for over 10 years in his native South Africa before arriving in the UK. [38] The prime attractions of the psytrance scene had remained constant throughout for Rob: the 'dynamic vibe', the social interaction, and what he called the 'processes of the self' and the not unconnected 'chemical stimulation'. It was this urge to re-create an intense personal experience which had proved counterproductive the night before, when Claire, who is also 34, and he had had a "bad trip". Rob told me in a phone conversation after the party that they had felt compelled to hide away

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[38] Rob told me during a March 2010 conversation that the psytrance he was now writing was incorporating stylistic elements from Neutral Motion. Via DJ-dancer conversations mottos and motifs are passed along a chain to be re-interpreted and encoded by digital synthesis into new psytrance tracks.

in their tent for much of the time. Rob had also reflected on the event's social dimension:

> I think I met and stayed in contact with more people than I have at any festival so far (in the UK). It was pushed along by the fact that a lot of us met waiting to get in, as well as seeing again the guys from your focus group day. I had quality conversations, some of them taking place on the hill and many of an intellectual nature. It seems to be that psytrance culture attracts more creative, relaxed beings that get quite a lot out of talking to strangers, and discovering things. I found it quite surprising the kinds of questions I got asked.

Rob had drawn attention to key strands in psytrance sociality: the smooth flow by which fans meet and identify with each other and the kind of direction conversations would go in. He added, 'I'm always amused that so many people at psytrance want to talk (about) Terence McKenna's ideas – he's a complicated, difficult writer, and not to mention, obscure.' But a third aspect is perhaps the most compelling: psytrancers for Rob are frequently deeply sympathetic and particularly supportive in instances when others are having a bad time on powerful drugs. (See Moore and Measham, 2008, for insights into how clubbers on the dance drug, Ketamine, offer each other support and guidance.)

Turner said of individuals and groups in the midst of spontaneous communitas that,

> 'We feel that it is important to relate directly to another person as he presents himself in the here-and-now, to understand him in a sympathetic (not an empathetic – which implies some withholding, some non-giving of the self) way, free from the culturally defined encumbrances of his role, status, reputation class, caste, sex or other structural niche' (1982, p.48).

It is this quality of openness, of giving - a kind of secular grace - which had endeared Rob to psytrance culture and left him enthusing about Offworld even when the music, to his experienced ears, was not of a consistently high standard.

Other authors have touched on the nature of psytrance sociality. Whereas Saldanha (2007) highlights an almost impenetrable density in the Goa freak social scene, St John (2010a) has written on a more current trend, the contrastingly inclusive 'affectual sociality'(2010a, p.7) of global psytrance "neotribe" gatherings. Of Portugal's Boom he says, 'it is in such mobile cosmopolitan complexity that "community" can be recognised' (8). In addition, D'Andrea (2007) used the construct

"expressive expatriates" to type-cast the 90s global, alternative lifestyle, trance techno party circuit.

Figure 13: 11pm, Saturday night, psytrance stage, during Liquid Ross's peak time set. Franko is centre-left, wearing a dark track suit top.   (Photograph by Karen Louise Thomas; © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

There has however been little discussion on the more everyday, yet distinctive, forms of sociality at psytrance events besides that in Maira (2005) and Taylor (2001). Maira talked to party organizers who were passionate about event planning and reflect the influence of exoticism. She also tells the story of a young Indian woman who had started going to parties in the area, concluding that '[her story]... shows the ways in which Asian American participants in this largely white, middle class subculture can use the music to negotiate their own class anxiety...'(2005, p.25). Taylor (2001) presumes that although the trance fans he meets are 'nonpolitical - or postpolitical...' (200), their keenness to seek 'the vibe, attempting to heal the world, as one person told me his efforts in the trance scene were about, may not sound very political, but is still worthwhile' (ibid.). The Offworld community was as bound by the same kind of affective connection Maira and Taylor found in their respective cultural "milieu" (Webb, 2007).

4.2. Exploring the Psytrance Social: Rose, Amy and Connectivity
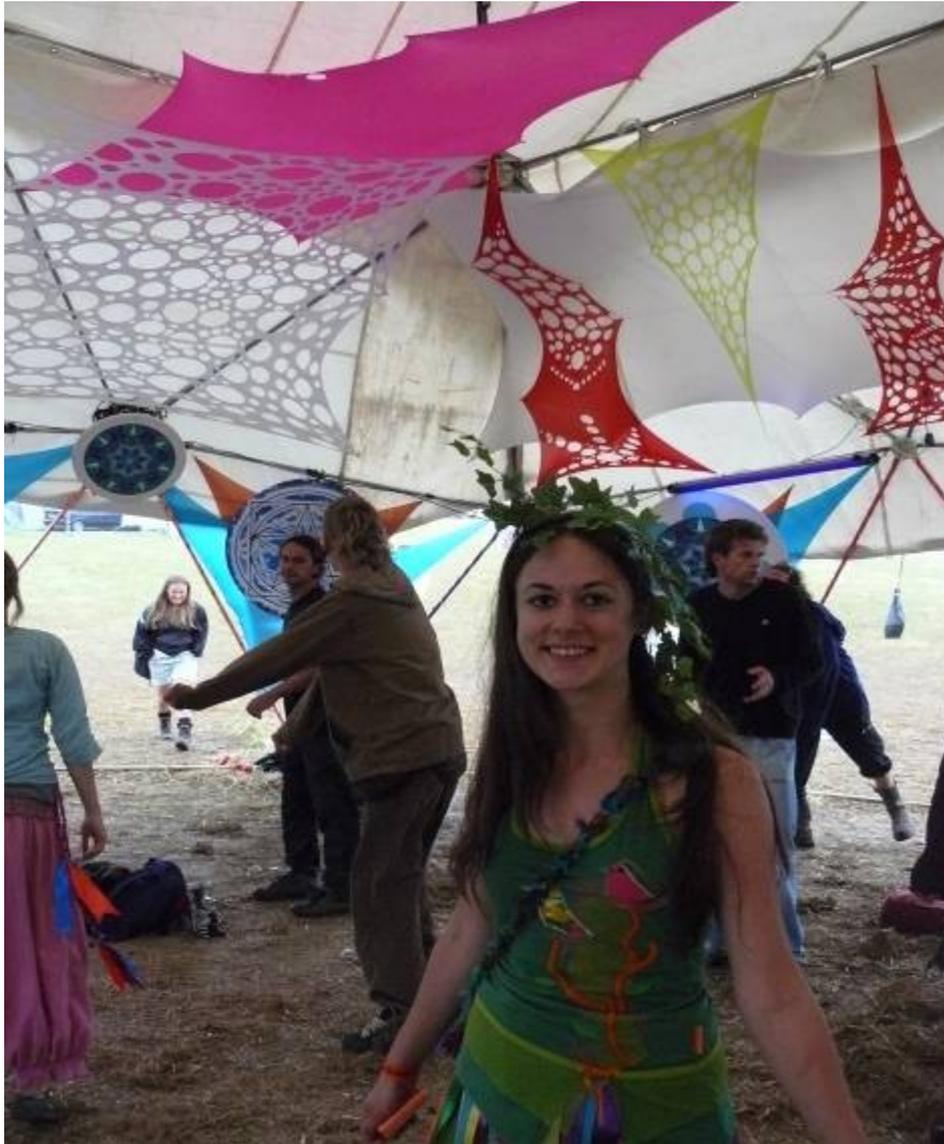
Figure 14: Early Sunday evening at the psytrance dance floor, Amy changed into her 'final day' costume and after 'forty winks' danced with a ballerina's gusto while her friend Fordy played psychedelic trance classics. Rose is coming down the hill in the rain towards the dome. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

Following the Offworld Saturday night peak period there was a dramatic drop in energy and participant activity including my own: earlier I remarked on a researcher crisis that had overtaken me early on Sunday. This query over my place was however partly answered by the highly absorbing North European progressive trance music

played in the Chai Emporium through Sunday morning. Amy came into her own at this point, both as an expressive dancer and personality and as a connector of the disparate micro groups wandering the now-damp site. She embodied the community aspect of the psytrance event, her physical presence launching outwards as an energy conductor. Amy's dynamism and impact on people reflected the organising team's vision of communitas and their ethos of light-heartedness.

On reflection, she explained, 'I danced more-or-less about non-stop, unaided, so to speak. I got the energy from the music, it just kept me going. I did lots of really silly dancing with people which was very amusing... just clowning around.'

Amy had told me in an interview before Offworld that psytrance parties over the previous three years had helped her find her place socially and were platforms for a theatrical experiment with "multi-selves". She considered it vital to develop and sustain a joyous and consistent vibe at these events, and, while dancing, would shift along an axis with an internalised "trance state" at one end and an outward gaze, absorbing the visual aspect of the party experience and communicating with eyes and smiles, at the other.

Her close friend, Rose, considered trance parties more in terms of personal ethics, finding the non-sexist atmosphere liberating. After Offworld she told me by phone that she can take girl friends from work and be assured that they will get along with her trance friends and enjoy the event without any intimidation.

> You can rely on meeting up with people who are on the same wavelength as you. I've made the best friends in this life at these parties. Everyone's so open and relaxed and free and themselves – they haven't got this big ego that you've got to break through to get to the real person.

Through the theatrical and the personal-political, Amy and Rose understood social connectivity at Offworld and similar events as embodying progressive feminist values. Their projections and understandings, which fuse Turner's (1969) distinction between the sympathetic and the empathetic, also exemplify a further aspect of communitas - levelling. Turner, who often took the religious as his starting point in writings on the liminal and communitas, says '(communitas)… is almost everywhere held to be sacred or "holy," possibly because it transgresses or dissolves (the) norms…. and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency' (1969,

p.128). He goes on to say that, 'the process of "levelling" and "stripping" to which Goffman has drawn our attention, often appear to flood their subjects with affect' (ibid.). For Rose and Amy psytrance enabled a safe, creative and fun-filled adult environment ripe for levelling and the kind of self exposure Goffman is presumably referring to in "stripping". [39]

The allure of strong social bonds birthed at parties and developed in post party 'chill-outs', home visits and on virtual forums, was given a further twist by a riskier, more dangerous edge, often associated with the body technology consumption prevalent at psytrance today and, for some participants, at other EDM events. 36-year-old Polly had told the focus group that she had felt 'liberated' by 90s dance music's sensitivities and thrills and, like many of Pini's (2001) respondents, excited by the drug high, especially how Ecstasy had made the body feel. She had been a prolific raver in the mid-to-late 90s - the period when Pini conducted her research in clubs - but found psytrance far less engaging than Rose and Amy. (See Moore and Miles, 2004, for an account of the often stabilising role body technologies, and particularly dance drugs, can play in young people's lives.)

At the focus group she had explained, 'I used to cane it. Ten years ago I would go out on a Saturday night and come back late on Sunday and not worry about work and being a little wired. Come the Wednesday – suicide Wednesday as we called it – I would be well depressed.' In fact, Polly was going to Offworld only because her partner Pixie had wanted to go. She had explained at the focus group held on the 6th July that she had 'outgrown this scene', referring to rave party events generally: 'I had come particularly disillusioned after observing close up the destructive effects of "dark drugs" - (mostly) speed, Ketamine and crack'.

Dance music communitas for Amy, Rose and Polly did not come without complications. A productive flow on dance floors and around the talking zones at parties was often interrupted by intoxicants. Like the women in Pini's study (2001), Rose had anxieties, most of them connected to chemical highs. In a candid interview

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[39] Turner does not provide a page number in this reference to Erving Goffman, but in his bibliography he cites one work, *Asylums* (1962). This print was published by Aldine in Chicago.

on the party's opening night, she told me that they could get in the way of strong rapport:

> I think it's not necessary (to take drugs) - a lot of the time they get in the way. The journey I've had with drugs is you take something from each experience. You do it at a couple of parties and you'll realise how you got there; like. MDMA teaches you how to be compassionate and loving freely at a party and that you can be like that. Once you know the secret you don't need to take it again. You can, but I think often at social events, psychedelics aren't really the best stuff thing to take as it makes it very difficult to interact with your fellow species.

At this point Rose chuckled as if catching herself in self-parody: 'I did though love taking LSD on the dance floor as it can take the experience to another plane.' She added,

> I used to not be able to dance without it but I went through that journey and came out the other side and realised it's very easy to get to that place all by yourself. And it really helps if the music's good. Because if the music's bad the first thing you will turn to make it better are drugs – well the first is probably alcohol and then MDMA because you don't care what the music sounds like on MDMA.

Amy and Rose experienced social connectivity at psytrance events along a continuum of embodied experiences which included body technology consumption, freedom to express, valued community and the visceral adventure that came with travel and camping out in various climates. These short illustrations need to be considered alongside Pini's avowedly optimistic model of a new femininity where raving bestows 'a new sense of affective identity for women' (Pini, p.104).

For Polly, Amy and Rose, Offworld promised varying freedoms and personal advancements, delivering a supportive social environment to re-nourish and expand networks linked by community, dance history references, and an absorption in, if not necessarily a passion for, psytrance and progressive trance music. This social communitas is clearly of a less dramatic mode than the "hallucinatory communitas" Schmidt (2010) finds with some Israeli transistim. [40] Offworld women participants

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[40] Joshua Schmidt defines transistim as 'Israelis who attend all-night dance parties where psychedelic trance is played' (2010, p.131). Israelis preferring outdoor psytrance have in recent years needed to travel outside their nation's borders as authorities have strictly enforced anti-party regulations.

plugged into a distinctive vector which integrated shared experiences and mutual viewpoints in a space scattered with an array of technological components.

4.3. Exploring the Psytrance Social: Promoters, Participants and Opportunities

Following Liquid Ross' Saturday night peak-time set (see Chapter 5 for analysis), the psytrance stretched towards harder and darker moods in sets from the French artist Moonquake and the UK's Deviant Species. Biesenbach's Opus system seemed to be on full power and Celestial Lightworks' twin-laser stack on alternate six-minute beams was giving the vivid impression that the small dance area was substantially more elongated. Conversation among the crowd dissipated as drugs gripped and the 148bpm tracks strode relentlessly onwards, a pile-driven collage of snares, high-end frequency curves, percussive crescendos and sampled voice shards. Social interaction now seemed diffuse with dancers turning inward, while the crowd on the hill had thinned.

The social centre of Offworld had moved upstairs to the Chai Emporium progressive tent. A dozen people, including Pixie, Polly, Ben and Rose, were close to the counter, hugging mugs of tea. Serving the chai was Alex Bristow, Paul Bacon's partner in the Emporium. The rest of the tent combined dancers, which Rose described as 'wigglers', while others were deep in conversation, some stood, some sat, with most rolling or smoking cannabis joints. Around four people, at this 03.15 point, were sleeping. The music, unlike at the psytrance stage was not pitched at a deafening decibel level, but was not so soft that it was merely background.

Here I caught up with Bacon as he was re-filling his chai mug. Not on any kind of high, and a non-smoker, I had taken a detour on my way back to the tent, but Bacon got me a tea and was in the mood to talk. Gesticulating towards the tent's occupants, he explained, 'It's just a tea shop and we're having a laugh', then with a grin added, 'It's all activity in the chai shop: dancing, drinking tea, sleeping.' Bristow concurred while Rose added, 'It's become like family for me, there's always someone there to give you support, talk or just have a giggle with.' Bacon continued, 'I'm learning

about a big group of people surviving in the middle of nowhere. I see the chai tent as the beating heart of the festival. It's where those of us putting it on are based.'

Figure 15: Night time trance dancing during Offworld's hardest set by Moonquake, from France**. (Photograph by the Karen Louise Thomas; © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

As if on cue, a small group of dreadlocked smokers leapt up. One rushed through the tent, cackling and baying, while another was hot on her heels. The pursuit involved a number of near-collisions but no one seemed to mind. Indeed, this kind of theatrical, playful expression was met by smiles and encouragements. Bacon's riposte was typical of the Offworld raison d'être: 'I know it's childish, but it's the whole basis of our festival - the celebration of stupidity.'

Social connectivity, whether non-conversational and affective as with a dance floor's electric vibe or of adult-as-child variant, was a treasured and fundamental feature of the promoters' vision of a bonding community. Besides putting on a good show where technological components meshed as ably as possible, the quality of the social was a

fundamental trigger making the months of hard graft worthwhile, even gratifying, for those few days of reward which, Grant later told me, were spent in a 'stupor of tiredness'. Donald Getz draws attention to this when he takes Alessandro Falassi's use of the term valorization to mean the commitment by organisers to 'make event-goers aware that they are entering a space/time that has been set aside for a special purpose' (Getz, 2007, p.178).

Within this setting of special purpose, event pragmatics required the promoters to share new information with each other. Susan Luckman (2008) finds in her work on Australian EDM cultures that, 'Young people use their social skills, including their networking, their grassroots-acquired business strategies and a wide variety of media forms to accomplish their goals' (198). Similarly at Offworld, organisers Bacon, Grant, and Mamtani saw the event as a key stage in an "event career", despite, or perhaps because of, the steep learning curves.[41] Getz explains the appeal of event production and also highlights what may lie beyond the relatively straightforward, spatial alteration: 'Planned events occupy, and temporarily transform spaces, and for the duration of the event one's experience of that place is altered' (2007, p.20).

Bacon had explained in an earlier conversation that putting Offworld on for the second time was like 'a logistical maze you have to work your way through', leading up to and beyond those four main days. It was only the second time he'd coordinated such an enterprise, and Bacon underlined the planning and hard work necessary for seamless organization. Unlike other trance event promoters I have talked with, he likened the event to a military operation where he was in charge, issuing orders 'down the line'. Bacon did indeed act like an officer and was often abrasive, but appreciated too that robust discussion was vital for a good result. He had told me in before Offworld, 'you don't get anywhere by agreeing with each other. There must be opposing views.'

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[41] Offworld 2008 was Mohit Mamtani's first taste of event promotion in the UK. He had put on psytrance parties in India from 2003-6 –held at farms bordering Delhi – and by 2011 had got deeper into promotion, co-running Offworld offshoot, Cosmo, in 2010 and 2011, as well as his own Indian Nights strand.

A further mode by which the organisers deepened the connectivity and forged connections with participants was by presenting opportunities for skills accumulation and exchange. At the grandest level - the Boom festival in 2006 - artists and technicians from Bali, Indonesia, were commissioned to build a vast bamboo structure and run workshops for organisers and participants. Elsewhere food stalls promised numerous global cuisines and offered shifts which out-of-pocket party goers took advantage of. In this form of "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992; Saldanha, 2007; Ueno, 2003) a useful feedback loop develops where organisers and punters pooled resources and made gains. Such exchanges echo Turner's view that communitas can "bind diversities". He explains, 'When communitas operates within relatively wide structural limits it becomes, for the groups and individuals within structured system, a means of binding diversities together and overcoming cleavages (Turner, 1974, p.206).

Rose said that, after Offworld 2007, she had wanted to tangibly contribute. As a result, she had spent long evenings in early summer 2008 sewing two dozen flags which, soon after arriving, she positioned around the psytrance dome. Bristow and Bacon both pointed out that the Emporium could not have run 24 hours a day without help from volunteers, although none of the study participants were in this crew. When Getz (2007) says 'when the customer becomes part of the interplay (i.e., a co-performer) the experience becomes individualized' (171), he could have had in mind Rose and Ben, the latter a chief steward, as they worked to maximise their own sense of worth and to realise the promoter's vision.

Ueno (2003) in his discussion of Western-style techno parties in Japan, sees promoters encouraging, even depending on, local involvement. 'The open air party can become a sort of node or entrance to different activities and "tribes" in a global as well as local context. In this way it can surely become the en-trance (a gate of entering the unknown field with pleasure), to various movements and activities' (114). In *The Ritual Process,* when discussing Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow, Turner (1969) highlights how members of a team can draw on 'inner resources' (.62) and possess a 'will to participate' (ibid.) to be so immersed that 'only *now* happens' (61, author italics). Work at Offworld, like in Csikszentmihalyi's sport and

competitions research, was shared, built upon and offered rewards, and resulted in the widening and deepening of event social connectivity.

The Offworld 2008 parabola had started with a handful of promoters who had been joined by infrastructure providers, stall holders and 900 punters. Together they had created a moderately ambitious, legal version of a temporary autonomous zone (Bey, 1991). At party peaks social connectivity of one form or another had been palpable and strong. The sense of community held firm to the party finale. But, on reflection, Ben Grant told me the warm sense of integration soon disappeared as the psytrancers scattered:

> We were just exhausted. And there's people trying to track you down for money - certain things are being picked up in a lorry at certain time. For example, picking up all the rubbish and people's knackered tents and shit in a massive field… standing waste deep in piles of rubbish, in the pouring rain…the bags are falling apart, and food's still in them, you're soaked through and then you have to go back and do another run.

Figure 16: Tired but exhilarant, Ben Grant enjoyed the Sunday afternoon, as the ever-reliable Fedro and Fordy played a set of vintage Goa tracks. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

Both Bacon and Grant felt their artistic and aesthetic vision had been realised, although they did earmark improvements for next time. Grant later said the endeavour had 'reinforced my capabilities' while Bacon, refilling his mug in the Chai Emporium, had said that he would be carrying on 'doing this (as I want) to see how far we can go.'

The quality of the social at Offworld was a product of a tight and enabling support system. Promoters erected a temporary environment in which to nurture social value. Participants responded, some passively, others dynamically, by occupying, adding to and even re-shaping the terrain to help manifest social communitas.

4.4. Connecting the Lulls: Recreational Drugs and Communitas

Rob had through most of his personal history of engagement with psytrance viewed dance music technologies as axiomatic to the party experience. But a complication developed where potent hits could paradoxically stop him from dancing and being social, undermining what had increasingly become a key event objective. On the Friday night at Offworld, Rob and partner Claire took LSD – it was for Claire her first time.[42] As an over-powerful intoxication closed in, they retreated to their tent in the middle of the party field, staying for hours while party acoustics appeared to reverberate in a 360 degree motion around them. Later reflecting on the festival, Rob told me, 'I'd started thinking a bit too much about myself', while Claire reported that, 'I couldn't handle the psytrance. It was aggressive and made me feel isolated.'

The incident was for Rob and Claire a fissure in the social connectivity they had hitherto tapped into, and, as I explained above, returned to with gusto on the Saturday night while on Ecstasy. The effect of drugs are unpredictable, and indulging, notably in hallucinogens, often aligned with risk as well as, evidently, coming with a health warning (D'Andrea, 2007; Measham, 2004; Measham and Moore, 2008 and 2009; Saldanha, 2007). I had learnt this to my cost at earlier trance parties. At one occasion

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[42] Data on Offworld participants' body technology consumption comes from in situ conversations (recorded later in the day/night) and b/ interviews conducted offsite (see table of fieldwork, Appendix B). So, no specific system was used to measure the drug amounts consumed by Rob and Claire or what times the 'high' started and ended.

in Spring 2002, a chai tent worker I vaguely knew "talked me down" for some hours through a long night in a Kentish wood when I had appeared out of the darkness anxious and confused.

I am not about to suggest that such highs and lows are outside the connective tissues of psytrance sociality – indeed intoxicants, as I have made clear, lay at the heart of this cultural milieu. The purpose of this section is, again by analyzing participant perspectives, to understand party body drug consumption as an interactive technology among a host of material factors. If such triggers can draw dancers and listeners into an inclusive affective web, they can also sever such gossamer. Manuel De Landa's point on information exchange in some systems is apposite: 'In a dense network in which everyone knows everybody else and people interact in a variety of roles, the information that circulates tends to be well known to the participants' (2006, p.35). To apply this to the psytrance party, shared chemical experiences and their appended meanings had the potential to seal bonding, even in instances where drug-taking presented a communicative obstacle course.

Claire told me that the change of her intoxicant had had a markedly contrasting effect. The Ecstasy had drawn her to people, unlike the LSD when she felt that she was forced to maintain a distance: 'It was awesome... I felt I wanted to be around people again.' Claire's reaction to some body technologies showed up her inexperience or, to apply a Saldanha term, reflected a low level of 'socio-chemical monitoring' (Saldanha, 2007, pp.64-9). Morgan Gerard (2004) had found "freshers" encountering similar obstacles at a Toronto EDM club night. He explains, 'While neophytes make their first ritual passage through events somewhat tentatively, the initiated are more sure-footed' (178).

Of course, this is just one narrative, and other participants in the case study, particularly Ben and Steve, both took LSD at the party and were able to focus outwardly as well be more internally absorbed. Neither were scared by their experience or had negative reactions to their chemical intake. Steve, when we met on the hill on the first day, had told me he was dependent on hallucinogens. 'I don't like getting completely messy any more – but I do like to have a bit in me so I can

maintain dancing for a few hours, to get me into the groove. Acid in particular is amazing - it adds a whole new element to the sound.'

When I joined Steve for a late breakfast on the Sunday, his views reminded me of the obduracy of Whiteley's (1992) concept "psychedelic coding". Steve said that 'psychedelics are pretty important as the psytrance scene is built around music which tries to emulate psychedelic sounds, which in turn come from the drugs.' Steve, who in 2011 was still regularly going to psytrance events, conceded he has danced drug-free 'just a few times to prove to myself' but found maximum enjoyment 'without the aid of some party stuff' quite difficult.

33-year- old Ben, for his part, had said when we had met in mid July 2008 at InSpiral Cafe that 'LSD can help you get into a state of consciousness. It will take you away from everyday concerns and swallow you up in the music. I think from that perspective it's 100% beneficial.' But by 2010, Ben was taking hallucinogens much less often for two reasons. First because he felt less drawn to the harder, more formulaic contemporary psytrance, preferring the warmer, earlier, more melodic style; second, he recognised the dangers of 'caning it' when he was holding down a nine-to-five job.

When participants Rob, Steve and Ben talked about their body technology histories, they nearly always saw the experience in relation to other key elements, such as site spaces, vibe, subjective assessment of the standard of the music, dance floor energies and the kind of community which had collected at events. Attuning to party particularities had been a prime reason given by other participants for shunning such highs altogether. They doubted that party drugs were axiomatic anymore to their psytrance experience and were aware that they can blunt the easygoing sociality they held most dear. Similarly, Amy had told me she had come to view them through a pragmatic lens, judging that the sort of youngish people found at Offworld, would take party drugs for a time, then stop, or just use sporadically. 'Drugs have limits and I've found that the skill is to know, if you take them, where that "limit" is.'

Rose presents an interesting case. She danced more at Offworld than any interviewee other than Steve. In an interview after the festival, she told me the music in the

progressive tent in particular had been so powerful and evocative as too not require chemical enhancement:

> The music the (DJs) play is good enough that you don't need to take anything – it'll take you there all by itself. I've (also) realised that over the years that it's often preferable if you don't (take any drugs). When you are around people who have taken too many it can get really nasty. It's what the kids do, ending of up not being able to join in as they've got too wasted. So, I think a lot of the time it (drugs) gets in the way.

But despite the confusion and isolation a LSD experience can bring, Rose had enjoyed the hallucinogen on dance floors. 'I used to not be able to dance without it but I went through that journey and came out the other side, realising it's easy to get to that place all by yourself'.

Rose's view that you 'can get to that place all by yourself' is backed up by Melanie Takahashi's qualitative research on EDM-related body technology input in Canada, notably her identification of "neural tuning" (2004, pp.157-59), where dancers can revisit earlier highs but, crucially, not in the form of frightening flashbacks. Her argument suggests that such neural tuning can be enjoyable, even instructive. Takahashi (2004, p.154) comments,

> Continued participation in the rave environment and repeated exposure to the rave event's driving mechanisms such as dancing and repetitive auditory and visual stimuli, strengthens and develop previously tuned structures such that participants through time become adept at re-attaining these states naturally.

A different picture emerges from some research on British EDM milieu which reflect a range of results. Focusing on clubber consumption in the night time economy (NTE), Measham and Moore (2009), Moore and Miles (2004) and Riley et al, (2001) show a trend towards polydrug use where often low-strength Ecstasy is frequently mixed alongside other substances such as ketamine, cocaine and alcohol to generate arcs of pleasure and surprise.

At Offworld Steve remembered taking a cocktail of drugs on the Saturday night while some of the main DJs and live acts played on the main stage. He later listed the potpourri as 'acid (LSD), Ecstasy, base (cocaine), ketamine, weed (marijuana) and nitrous oxide', commenting, not surprisingly, that it had all seemed 'a bit of blur.' Steve too couldn't recollect the exact order in which he had consumed the various

drugs, only that LSD was the "launch high", while the flattening, disembodying and mildly hallucinatory effects of ketamine, came later.

For his part, Rob vowed that he would never again take LSD 'without Ecstasy close at hand' as he had 'issues which could come out on LSD', requiring Ecstasy to stabilize, or, even push away. Rob told me that through 2010-11 he had stopped taking Class A drugs altogether, better to devote himself to various projects, including producing psytrance music.

These voices reflect pluralist, as opposed to monolithic, drug consumption patterns. For fans going to psytrance parties the sheer prevalence of potent intoxicants had made them both a prized functional resource and a peripheral product. This is turn problemizes an often assumed co-dependence between EDM music, its dance floors and highs. Although there has been a recognised downgrading of energizing party drugs in some EDM cultures - in house music scenes alcohol is privileged often in tandem with cocaine and "herbal highs" are popular when available - the prevailing mythology is that copious amounts of drugs are usually available and avidly consumed. Saldanha's (2007) socio-chemical monitoring refers to Goa freaks' 'capacity, circa 1998-2003, to stay standing after copious amounts of drugs, notably chillum smoking' (58-9), but also applies just as well to hardened EDM fan in 2011.

4.5. Building Community

Nonchalance towards body technology consumption, and the lack of appetite by many Offworld participants to strive for psychedelic heights, clearly impacted on social connectivity. The connections between bodies tended to be clearer, more mutually beneficial and easier to understand and develop when highs were not central. A specific kind of crowd had been attracted to Offworld. They included a few neophytes like Claire but most were experienced in the ways of psytrance and had developed nuances on dance technologies consumption, polydrug cocktails and predictive abstention. At the same time, the functionality of highs in the bounded party space was twinned with a social assessment.

The agreed position among Offworld participants was that dance party drugs were ubiquitous in psytrance and, while tempting to consume, were also, quite easy to say no to. All supported the view that, in moderation, they helped accentuate psytrance communitas, notably in on the dance floor, but generally could in the way, especially if the event was quite small requiring punters to 'muck in' to maintain flow, energy, vibe, and St John's 'affectual sociality' (2010a, p.7). Reynolds (2008) stresses the symmetry between subjectivities, technologies and the social in his teleological account of EDM: 'Rave culture as a whole is barely conceivable without drugs, or at least without drug metaphors; by itself the music *drug*s the listener' (xxiv, author italics). But Reynolds assumed that music would always be the quintessential motivation for such events. At Offworld, however, music, like intoxicants, was understood and experienced as parts of an array of interacting elements and not necessarily preeminent.

Participants, initially shaped by music taste, were closely bound by the quality of the social communication they expected to share. In promoting the sympathetic above the empathetic Turner (1982, p.48) could have been pinpointing a further facet of psytrance social connectivity. With body technologies an endemic feature of the party landscape, psytrancers could offer an embodied understanding to others: when trips got rough their experiences were pooled to help navigate the sufferer away from the bumpy ride.

Offworld social connectivity was not an isolated phenomena; it was perpetuated through discursive spaces like the virtual environment of social media web sites lists and chat forums (see Lambert, 2010 and Ryan, 2010) and at other local, national and international parties. In such a manner the performance of psytrance was, to return to Turner (1969, 1982, 1992), "normalised". Turner (1982) identifies normative communitas as the establishing of a '"perduring social system"; a subculture or group which attempts to foster and maintain relationships or spontaneous communitas on a more or less permanent basis' (49).

Finally, Offworld's brand of communitas fused participant lifeworlds with organiser strategies in a contact zone where skills exchange, play, music appreciation, dance, body technology knowledge and conventional conversation interacted creatively. The

four days at Offworld offered a less spectacular, kind of temporary autonomous zone (Bey, 1991) when contrasted with other relentless euphoric trance parties but what was not in doubt for Offworlders was the quality of the sociality that transpired.

Chapter 5

Psytrance Information Channels: The DJ-Dancer Conversation

> Heard at its best over a big crisp, sound system, psy-trance is a fierce, aggressive music full of shredding and ripping sounds. Sometimes, the music seems to sizzle.

> Simon Reynolds (1998, p.437)

> Trance dancing's the union of mind, spirit and body... like meditation. I close my eyes and travel.

> Dancer and flag-maker, Rose

Figure 17: Offwold psytrance stage during Deviant Species' 03.00 Sunday set. Celestial Lightworks' strobe beams are working in tandem with a blue filter to distort and extend Bjorn's string art. (Photograph by Karen Louise Thomas; © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

I begin this chapter which explores DJ dancer dialogues by setting the scene at the psytrance dance floor some hours before the final set by DJ Beardy.

5.1. Good Time DJs and the Solo Dancer

Little-known outside London's underground psytrance scene where most parties are held in squats or warehouses, Fedro and Fordy specialise in psytrance classics, the kind of seven-to-nine-minute dance tune which seek to thrill, and keep the psytrancer locked on a sequence of hammering kick drum loops, galloping bass lines, sheer drops, fuzzy dabs and zany samples. Their style also leans towards the more euphoric trance mode which garner more mainstream appeal.

Figure 18: 18.00, Sunday evening, the psytrance stage viewed from the hill, and towards the end of Fedro and Fordy's 'good times' set. Visible are a few of the flags sewn by Rose which have held up well despite rain and clumsy dancers. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

At 16.00 on the Sunday afternoon Grant's psytrance dome dance floor was half populated by die-hard dancers who had lurched through from the Saturday night peak, while others were fresh, readied for the final stint. Most were prancing around and generally acting in a madcap way as Fedro and Fordy worked Beisenbach's Opus rig hard. Steve was the only one of the participants present. He was dancing mostly on the spot, doing a decent upper-body Marcel Marceau imitation with limbs gesturing expressively. His flaying arms pumped at twice the speed of his legs as his head bobbed up and down appreciatively. Resting after the set, he explained:

> The good thing about psytrance is that you're not limited in the kind of dancing you can do. Because of all the weird sounds, I've got to a point where I can predict what's coming up and I can do these sort of strange hand movements which I find really expressive. It's best when the dance floor is rather sparse – that way it's less likely someone will bump into me.

Enlivened by a polydrug cocktail, Steve would not want to take his eyes away from the action. His love affair with psytrance would keep him on the dance floor, he confesses, for most of the distance at every event: 'It's the rolling bass lines, the different layers, the build-ups and the quality of the sound itself which grabs me'. But dancing to his favourite music did not need to be an overly social act. For Steve, the sonic conversation was more individual than communal. He told me, 'Sometimes I strike up a conversation (on the dance floor), usually around how good the music is! But I often go "off on one" and find it more fulfilling to internalise the experience.'

In this chapter I consider the DJ-dancer conversation at Offworld. Dance floor spaces hold the promise of communal bonding, or spontaneous communitas while top DJs' sets are expected to be among the most thrilling moments in a psytrance party. I argue too that these dialogues provide central insights into the qualities of connectivity at the Offworld psytrance party. I have limited my account to three music sets at Offworld, revealing moments when the dance floor components gelled and others when the connections were more fissiparous. When considering which of the dozens of sets played at Offworld to include, I choose these as each offered a contrasting mix of elements and challenges for the DJ. The analysis sets out to make sense of an event where Greek DJ Alex Sense thought the party 'good', but for at least half his set, hardly anyone danced.

I caution that it is never possible to predict a dance crowd's reaction to a DJ set, however much of a "deck wizard" (s)he is. The DJ-dancer conversation is often an entangled one, which can lose direction or become superfluous in any moment. In addition, it would be instrumentalist to assume that a full dance floor leads inevitably to a particularly good dialogue and a half-empty one, a largely poor one. On Sunday afternoon at least one dancer, Steve, appeared glad of the extra space after numbers had dipped to single figures.

Dancer modes of communication varied too. Whereas Steve liked to dance on the spot in a self-contained manner totally absorbed in the music's harsh beats, Amy and Rose were substantially more interactive, moving freely when the DJ chose slower times with warmer textures as if in a loosely choreographed electronic ballet.

As in Chapter 4, I stay close to field work event narratives and participant embodiment and reflections. But here I add the perspectives of DJs, which support the contention that those featured - Beardy, Liquid Ross and Alex Sense - are collectors and processors of information and practitioners in sonic knowledge. As I said earlier, they are skilled operators who leave less to intuition and serendipity than has often been supposed (Brewster and Broughton, 1999; D'Andrea, 2006; Gerard, 2004; Sylvan, 2005 and 1999). I have decided on this number of DJ sets so I can discuss the sonic material in some detail.

This analysis provokes an alternative reading of an EDM dance floor where spaces can be lightly populated rather than permanently occupied by rhythmically-attuned bodies in collective abandon. I suggest that the psytrance party may not be immediately spectacular, governed by ritual or overlaid by spiritual urgency, but a product of a melange of material factors, a zone apparently less autonomous than many authors suggest.

5.2. Alex Sense: Greece's Progressive Trance Haberdasher

My first analysis is the Friday set by Alex Karanasos, whose DJ moniker is Alex Sense. Karanasos was one of twelve international DJs invited to play in the progressive trance tent (Chai Emporium). As Karanasos was not well known in the

UK, he had accepted an early-evening slot where the crowd numbered just 20 to begin with. While most sat and chatted at the outset, towards the end many had taken note. The tent had become full with the mass swelled to 40-plus. During the passage of Karanasos' set the space had metamorphosed from chill-out where friends socialised to a decently busy dance floor of animated bodies moving to significantly louder music. Rose, who was camping near Karanasos (see figure 22), offered me some thoughts on the set development:

> He began with rather nondescript track list, which is often the way with progressive DJs. Early in the party, people often aren't really geared up for dancing. Then about twenty minutes in he shifted up a gear, the music got louder and more distinctive. At one point I saw Stretch and ran over to get him. Later, loads of people were dancing and the music warm, beautiful and very well mixed.

The slow start had not concerned Karanasos much. He told me that when playing progressive trance in the bars of Thessaloniki, and in the second rooms in psytrance or house music parties, he was often only half heard. Nevertheless he would apply technique and keep totally absorbed in the music whatever the situation.

During the two-hour Offworld set Karanasos had gradually built a sonic density around progressive tunes mixing on the twin Pioneer CD deck console provided by Mario while adding loops and extra sound effects (fx) from his Apple Mac computer's hard drive. Working within a tight 134-136 bpm tempo range, he juxtaposed new material by established artists Vaishiyas and Ritmo and young producers Visua and Nok. Despite the lack of early dancer density and apparent inattentiveness, Karanasos told me that he treated the set like he would any other: 'What made me select these tracks was their fat pumping bass line that, together with the fresh, sweet pads, and the right percussions and driving melodies helps compose the absolute progressive psytrance vibe and atmosphere.' [43]

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[43] The author exchanged emails with Alex Karanasos, October-November, 2008

Figure 19: Karanasos (Alex Sense) pats a CD onto the beat of the progressive trance tune playing. Karanasos told me that, as this style of trance is significantly slower than psytrance. 'The frequency content is very important and there is a higher need for precision.' (Photograph courtesy Alex Karanasos, 2011)

I had asked Rose on reflection to describe the type of dancing she did when her favourite trance music, progressive, was on. After pointing out that other elements needed to be right, such as location, vibe and quality of sound system, she explained how she had moved in the Emporium tent to Karanasos.

> I did a number of different types (trance) dancing which, I suppose, was in tandem with the moods and speeds of the music. After a while I stood, dancing very subtly on my toes - that's more of a vibration than moving. Then, when it got really good and the sounds seemed to widen and kind of stutter, I got into dancing up and down fast. I suppose my body was responding to the mix of rhythms. Towards the end when Alex played his top tunes, I was putting my hips into it, doing spins, and gliding sideways. I think by the end I was on the move, shimmering along the ground, if that makes sense.

Rose's description to some degree correlates with Karanasos' DJ technique. He told me that in that set he had applied a pattern which had worked elsewhere, and had dramatically altered the mode of mixing twice over the two hours.

> First I had expected the crowd to absorb the tracks passively so I made sure the music wasn't so demanding. I beat-mixed close to the end of tracks, to keep the flow distinctive, not dense. Then, in the first shift, I notched up the volume, and lengthened the mix overlays - as well as selecting tunes with vocal samples which should grab the attention better. Then I turned to more twisted, harder progressive tracks where the production ideas had more impact, rode the EQ toggle in a busier way, added fx from the Mac and moved the mixing around more to disrupt the flow. And of course worked Mario's little rig for all it was worth!

Rose and Amy were not the only participants to get physical and aesthetic enjoyment from progressive sets like Karanasos's. Stretch told me that his love of prog trance started with the Offworld sets by the north Europeans Pradox, Frechbax and Liftshift, having tired of psytrance's relentless throb and other-worldly noises. He said, 'Once I allowed myself to be patient, I started to enjoy prog more, as the tunes tend to have long build-ups, which admittedly you can tire of, and less irritating production (like in psytrance proper).' Prog was more varied, Stretch said, with 'lots of layers'. Whereas Amy said she liked listening to 'melodic uplifting prog' more than psytrance but when it came to a full workout she would more likely be at the psytrance space where the energy was more visceral and the crowd quicker moving. Amy had missed Karanasos, but spoke highly of Dutch producer Pradox, whose tunes had developed subtly, using phasing and pads to soften and elongate abstract vistas.

My first analysis of DJ-dancer conversations at Offworld has shown that it is not necessary for a crowd to be dense for an effective and rewarding set to ensue. It was certainly to the DJ's advantage if the dance floor population increased quickly, as was the case at Offworld, and would be at most parties and festivals. However, as important as an eager, potentially responsive crowd, was a DJ's dexterous approach. His or her technique must be adaptable if a variety of presentational modes look like they are needed. To return to Turner's (1982) distinction between the more passive empathetic and the more active, sympathetic, a proficient mixer like Karanasos detected the precise times to take command. These moments in the DJ-dancer conversation can often be when showmanship, forthright skill application and, simply, the right tunes can lift a dance floor into the next phase. The DJ invariably leads in the conversation, pre-judging rather than second-guessing her/his crowd.

5.3. Liquid Ross: an Account of his Visit to 'Stealthy Fungus' and Return

An expert British DJ in his early thirties, March told me he had needed to change the mood dramatically at the beginning of the set, in order to steer abruptly away from the dark, fast and unwavering material from the DJ Neutral Motion. [44] When I met March a few weeks later at InSpiral Cafe, he told me, 'Rather than continue where Teppei's peak had been, I knew I had to change the vibe, put some life back in, open the window.'

March was not basing this judgment on the crowd. Unlike Karanasos' set, the floor was already packed with dozens of dancers in full stride. He was assessing how his likely track list would evolve affectively. As a seasoned DJ, March knew the dangers of trying to maintain a previous DJ's peak when his own material was stamped with a different groove. This could invite, if not a dance floor calamity, then an inevitable low to follow the high. March added, 'I wanted to pluck them from a comfort zone where it was banging and predictable and move into a lighter, fluffy - but less certain - world.'

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[44] Liquid Ross played the peak period set of the weekend, midnight -1.30, Saturday night. Following him came Pradox (minimal progressive, 142-44 bpm); Moonquake (dark-psy, 148-50); Deviant Species (Goa psychedelic, 146-48) and EVP (industrial psytrance, 148-50).

His impromptu choice, in retrospect, surprised him. The opener, System 7 and Slackbaba's 'Scramble,' was rarely used in most groove-driven, psytrance sets. System 7 - whose veteran musicians used to play in the 70s space rock band Gong - use guitar glissando and strong melodies while break-beat producer Slackbaba adds polyrhythms to make the track's groove more organic. In an email, Franko remembered the impact on the dance floor of the shift in direction.

> I was locked in a trance through the Neutral Motion set. It was easily done as each track meshed tightly with another. But it all changed with Liquid Ross. Momentarily we all stopped moving. The dome seemed to get brighter - maybe the lighting had been turned up on purpose. I pulled on my bottle of water and looked around at the sea of faces. Everyone looked high and I realised the Ecstasy I'd taken hours earlier was almost overpowering. Then a guitar swept across the speakers and we were off again. That early part of the set had such variation, so many different moods and styles of trance – it seemed to go on forever. It was probably my highlight of the weekend.

March's choice tells us more about the DJ-dancer conversation. Faced with a full floor, March had taken nothing for granted, his counter-intuitive act actually quite logical. In fact, he knew from experience that, at a party peak, dancers will conversely use a change of DJ as an opportunity to take a break, often to up their drug intake. By interrupting the music flow, highlighting a pause, and softening the mood, he had re-energised the dancers, now more curious than they might have been if the mix tone has remained the same.

March followed his popular openers with Beatnik and Tron's 'HD', a signature tune of his characterised by heavy kick and bass and a sublimated melody. The tempo, at 145 bpm, was quicker, but March pulled the bpm back, he said, 'to make the track fatter'. March was impatient to get these two producers' styles into the set believing Beatnik's material a gift for a prime time set, with its hook-laden synthesizer sequence and clipped motifs. In turn producer Patricio Tron's work exhibited deep punch production which appeared to take the Opus rig up a gear in clarity.

For the first time in the festival the dance floor was densely packed. Grant had worried some weeks earlier that the dome space would be too small. Now, on his party's second night, he was proved correct. More fans nudged onto the ground within the poles - an excited Stretch and I among them. Stretch said something I half caught which approximated to 'this guy is great - the sound's really got punch, it's bloody

amazing!' I wormed my way to the side of the decks to watch the prime-time DJ at work.

Figure 20: Ross March (Liquid Ross) "dropped" Mood Deluxe's 'Stealthy Fungus' at probably the party's top peak moment. (Photograph by Karen Louise Thomas; © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

March's tactic was to keep ahead of his floor, so his next selection was a mid tempo (142bpm) Tron one, its funky winding bass hypnotic but less charged. It was apparent that March was designing his track selection to keep prime-time dancers absorbed: no bpm tempo was left to linger too long with all commandeered to keep dancers alert and guessing.

Now firmly into his stride, March dropped a 2008 psytrance anthem, Mood Deluxe's 'Stealthy Fungus'. This was the moment when my researcher persona fully dissolved. My muscles catapulted me back onto the dance floor, joining Stretch and Grant, who had earlier been leaning on the dome flaps. Soon I had bounced up beside Franko with

Rob and Claire dancing wildly close by. March had timed his top tune perfectly. Having tightly mixed the previous numbers, he drove 'Fungus' from its early seconds allowing the giant tune to evolve from an ambient start to its ultimate twinkling keyboard washes.

The track included a long voice sample on the potent impact of ingesting LSD - which concluded, "It'll make you go fuckin' insane." March told me the location of the sample at three quarters along, added to the inter-textual impact. 'The sample, so far in, is uniquely well-placed, then is followed by a dramatic bass drop, one which can usually be relied upon to fire up the dance floor.' The impact of the 'Fungus' bass is reminiscent of Gilbert Rouget's (1985) comment on mottos in possession trance music, defined as a sign 'whose "signified" is to the god to which it refers' (1985, p.101).

Such signification is also addressed by Butler (2006) in his technical discussion on rhythm, meter and musical design in EDM: 'The beat is not only heard, but also physically felt as well as enacted through bodily motion' (91). In testimony to its obvious popularity 'Stealthy Fungus' was played at least three times at Offworld. March told me in October that he had removed it from his sets as it had become 'too noticeable'. Despite Fungus' impact DJs would soon considerer it stale and, wanting to keep their list current, would leave it out for a substantial period.

March's probing of the dance floor was not going to lessen. Whereas Fordy and Fedro would happily play classics back-to-back, March interspersed them, even at his set's peak, with abstract shapes. Rising out from the Fungus fade, Panick's uncluttered, linear 'Blind Sensation' galloped in. Comparatively short at six minutes, it exemplified March's enthusiasm for contrasts. In the quote below, when March mentions 'experience,' he is talking about a Class A drug journey:

> 'Sensation's' very hypnotic, minimal and industrial with just three or four sounds in it. Put together, it's an immense, but dark, even spooky, track. For anyone having an "experience" this is the one which will allow them to go to the next level inside themselves. It'll give them "a little scare" but nothing they wouldn't want, nothing they wouldn't have fun with.

When I pressed Claire for her memory of the night, she had something to say about these two tracks.

> 'The 'fuckin insane' one was unbelievable! I have never been on a dance floor where everyone seemed to be moving as one being. It felt like we were on a trampoline! Then, I think I felt lost and a little confused... I guess the next one was a total contrast.'

In due course, Ross prepared for the final phase of his 90-minute set. The last three tracks, at 142 bpm, were a lot slower than the earlier ones. He explained, 'Some artists end on an ultimate peak but I like to peak earlier and end on something thoughtful, or even perhaps a bit sombre.' March's actual final tune was, like the opener, completely unplanned. Grant had asked him to keep playing as the next DJ, Zooch (Robert Anuskevic) was late.

March remembered that 'instead of trying to kid them (the dancers) that everything was as planned,' he had gestured with theatrical perplexity and rummaged for another disc to prolong the set. Then he had pulled out of the box a 10-year old Goa beach favourite, 'Trippy Night' by Sharigrama, patting the sunny classic in from the first bar and leaving whole. 'This has a very emotional, beautiful piano drop in the middle', he explained. 'It's a very refreshing track for the dance floor – and for an end, it's thoroughly uplifting with a deep psychedelic grind'. Among the dancers Rob had responded very powerfully.

> I had thought Ross's set was over, so was leaving the floor... then I heard the beginning of that tune. It was like those early Goa tracks, thin and shimmering like a breeze. I was hooked, dancing to it blissfully right on the dance floor edge, almost caught up in the tent poles, beside some rubbish bags.

March, who evidently planned his sets closely both in a generic sense and for specific instances, had built a technique which holds in tension the creative and the controlled. Depending on a practised reading of the moment, crowd response and track structure he may mix in short spans or overlay up to five minutes. At Offworld his busy, dramatic set could not have been second-guessed. On occasion - the Panick and Sharigrama tunes are good examples - he left them unmixed, preferring to use another device, such as a dramatic change in key, for segue effect.

However, March's cavalier approach was not to every participant's tastes. Steve, who I did not see on the floor, told me that the set had been too full of contrasts and had not flowed smoothly. 'It went through a vast amount of styles and moods and was

slightly hard work. I enjoyed it but found myself wondering how to dance to this one, or that part.'

The two DJ sets I have considered were in many ways similar despite the different backdrops. Both DJs were highly skilled, applying a broad palette of mixing to music taste regimes. In addition these processors of sonic information possessed an extra, crucial ingredient: the ability to read the sympathetic distinctions of a dance floor. In both instances they led from the front, taking risks to better propel the dancers on. They also adopted disorientating strategies which aimed to shock or amuse. I demonstrate next how DJ Beardy (Mark Young) applied a different methodology to March where a hypnotic affect is generated by sharp abrupt mixes. Young however had an altogether harder job, but similarly combined situated knowledge with sonic information to successfully bring Offworld 2008 to its close.

5.4. Beardy and the Whacked Out Crowd: The Closing Act

I have presented the final day at Offworld as a personal low point where I briefly examined the research endeavour I was engaged in, commenting that the vibe was flat and that many study participants had chosen to leave by late morning. I then demonstrated how dependable DJ duo Fedro and Fordy had re-energized the psytrance stage and become a magnet for the remaining dancers. But a perennial problem throughout Offworld had been a lower-than-desired density of dancing bodies - although that had not been the case for Liquid Ross, and the acts which followed him, Moonquake, Deviant Species and EVP. Despite some limited prancing at Fedro and Fordy, dancers had wandered off and another lull ensued. The stage awaited the final psytrance set from Mark Young as the rain became persistent.

On the face of it, Young's highly stylised technique looked inappropriate for the moment. Psytrancers, like other EDM fans, can differentiate from a set that is easy to follow and one which is hard going. Steve who along with Ben, Stretch, Amy and Rose was the only other participant remaining, told me his impression of the early part of the set: 'I was attempting to make figures (with my hands) with all the sounds jumping from the mix but it was hard to do as the music was that relentless.'

Young's key DJ-ing model was the darker, night-time Goa style of the mid-90s. From that aesthetic he had refined an abrupt, breaks-driven mixing technique, juxtaposing it with a more customary psytrance method, in sync beat-mixing. This approach brings to mind Rick Snowman's overview on trance mixing. 'The whole idea is to link one fast section to another without losing the speed or feel of the track' (Snowman, 2009, p.236).

By 2008, and on eve of a penultimate August set at the Boom's pan-trance festival in front of 25,000 people, Young had synthesised these elements adroitly. He mixed crisply on the beat dropping keyboard loops in blocks of around 60-seconds from one CD to another. Like other dramatic EDM DJs Beardy used his EQ technology liberally, punching the exposed track in and out, but not doing this too emphatically, as in nineties acid techno. Young's exposed tracks lasted on average around three minutes - the full length of most comes in at six to eight. The Offworld set early on had a busy, compressed feeling to it.

Young recollected, in a post-Boom festival interview at InSpiral Cafe, what he was up against, considering the flagging crowd:

> I started with a heavy-duty, psychedelic set, but found it hard to get into the groove as everyone was quite tired – it had started raining and was, frankly, a bit grim. It was quite hard working out exactly what were the requirements of the moment. I had to build myself into a groove which I did by mixing tightly on the bass-lines of tracks from my own label. I know the style of these tunes intimately.

The lightly populated dance floor however did not empty completely - a 'DJ nightmare,' according to Beardy. The diehards took a while to lock into the quick-fire psytrance sequences but soon others were drawn to the dome from across the site. True to form, Amy was one of the first, while I stayed on the edges with Stretch who had joined us. The selection over the set's first hour was drawn from Young's label, Wild Things Records, and featured tracks by artists Hoodwink Archaic and EVP, all of whom make fast psytrance, the kind of harsh hard music Claire had found 'scary'. Early on too he played Swiss producer Ajja's 'Juicy Shrooms,' which exalted in a menagerie of synthetic, warped noises laid over a density of filtered keyboard lines. Young's approach was opposite to Ross's, in that he was compressing the sonic range for the dancer instead of opening it up so that, as Ross put it, the 'air gets in'.

Thirty minutes in, Young's game plan seemed to be going smoothly with the floor gradually turned around. The music patterning had emerged on the hoof - in that sense mirroring Ross's decision to play the System 7/Slackbaba track. He had intended to avoid much of his label material in that first section and dip into older, more colourful psytrance tracks, some well-known chestnuts and other more obscure material. Young had quickly changed the strategy, assessing that the de-focussed crowd required more abrasive, alert, and, as he called it, more 'contemporary music'. The ploy paid off and by the one-hour mark, a respectable number, around fifty, were working their way around the fast tracks, some by Wild Things producers, Avalon and EVP.

Amy remembered how she had become fully immersed as pystrance tracks elapsed with the hold of the music consequently tightened:

> Beardy's set wasn't one I could follow like with progressive, or other styles, which are mostly easy-on-the ear, fun tunes. After a while the bass and kick were like a deep drone and I was just exploring the stuff at the high end: the zany samples, ripping keyboard lines and delays that kind of froze me for a moment before I'd lunge forward again, as if on command. I felt little control, more a sensation of being lost on a dance floor that seemed so much bigger than before.

Both Reynolds (2008) and Rietveld (2010) have written evocatively on this dimension of trance music and its potential effect on dancers. Reynolds points out, 'Heard at this best over a big, crisp sound system, psy-trance is aggressive music, full of shredding and ripping sounds. The textured freak-out... layered on top of a pounding four-to-the-floor kick and implacably chugging Moroder bass' (2008, p.337). Rietveld (69-70), goes beyond the structure, suggesting a dancer's inner visualisations:

> By propelling itself forward, yet simultaneously repeating itself, the subjective experience is of travelling through an endless spiralling tunnel, into an infinite vortex, hi-tech sonic mandala, hypnotising the dancer into trance. This sensation is often enhanced by digital delay, which generates a soaring sonic space that seems much larger than oneself.

In the set's second half, Young returned to his earlier Plan A, widening the selection to "old skool" psytrance. In a final flourish he returned to Wild Things, with EVP's 'Zombie Killers'. Steve recalls this moment vividly, as his favourite producer of the 2008/9 seasons was EVP: 'It's his groove - there're no cheesy elements; no build ups - just pure, relentless groove. Added to that is his sound manipulation: samples are

done so cleverly.' Young cites the sonic knowledge he had applied to get him through the tough moments:

> After the Wild Things material, I dug into the fifty hours of music I'd had brought along specially. By doing that you can come up with some interesting alternatives to what you normally play. This (material) wasn't too quick - I needed to slow down all the music that day given how whacked out everyone was.

Figure 21: Mark Young (DJ Beardy) applied deep concentration in order to perfect elaborate, quick-fire mixes. Note, this image is not from Offworld, 2008. (Photograph courtesy Mark Young, 2011)

The feat Young pulled off was to turn a depressing situation with apparently low potential into an emblematic trance dance which in time generated a taut vibe. His deck skills and more fundamentally his ability to process the spatial information at that period of the party had enabled Grant to bring his DJ and artist roster to closure with a dramatic finale. Young's assertive technique, most notably his ability to syncopate creatively, had cut through a tepid environment and initial lack of interest.

In an era when much psytrance has become formulaic, or, as Rietveld suggests, displays 'a streamlined aesthetic' (2010, p.71), Young had partially re-invented tracks with a feast of tricks: pitching a slow tune upwards, tugging a fast one back, working the percussion at a slower tempo, and moving loops and phases about to intensify and disorientate a willing density of dancers. Butler stresses the important role of beat dexterity in the most abstract of EDM genres, techno: 'Playing with the beat is essential to the metrical, textual, and former processes that occur in EDM. [Examples are] the removal of the bass drum- followed, of course, by its eventual return' (2006, p.91).

Young had married technical knowledge with a more spontaneous tune selection than observed with Karanasos and March, to better build that slipperiest of phenomena, crowd vibe. He concluded, 'It hadn't been there for the taking, and had to be work hard for.' St John says of vibe in EDM, 'Vibe, the phrase replicated across dance genres, is that which defies description since it's known only through affect, an experience lost in textual translation' (2009b, p.1).

Steve remembered the feeling towards the end of the Beardy set when his Mudra-like hand movements seemed to possess a life of their own:

> There weren't a lot of us there, but everyone was going for it, totally locked into the sound. The vibe felt sort of spontaneous, intimate and secret - like Beardy was leading us to a strange place where everything was just insane.

Steve's thoughts exemplify Botond Vitos' analysis of dark-psy dance floors in the Czech Republic. Vitos explains that 'the psychedelic experience, especially at its peak, blurs the altered inner condition of the participant... and therefore the subject transgresses her/his own bodily limits' (2010, p.166).

My final set analysis has re-emphasized the complexity at the centre of the DJ dancer conversation. The DJ accesses psytrance sonic history, technical skill, taste preferences and situated knowledge in a distillation of information for dance floor affect. But this is just one side of the dialogue. For a palpable vibe of various qualities and moods to elapse, a wider set of components need interact in complementary ways. De Landa (2006) emphasizes a non-reductive approach to systems, where '...a whole (is) not reducible to its parts' (4).

Young could not rely solely to his music to generate sufficient energy, nor could energetic dancers alone make the conversation a truly memorable one. It was a synthesis of interacting elements, including the technological - Beisenbach's sturdy rig; pharmacological - with Steve's residual dance drug cocktails and performative – as in Amy's trance cheer-leading. Much else besides would contribute to the synthesis of exciting and memorable, shared energies.

This analysis of Offworld sets by Karanasos, March and Young has reflected varying degrees of absorption. I suggest that these examples are pointed illustrations of Butler's definition of DJ craft: 'The DJ uses equipment to create a continuous flow of music. There is never any silence between records; instead, records are overlaid, or "mixed" in a variety of ways' (2006, p.52). March and Young's creative choices might even fit with D'Andrea's flamboyant prescription for psytrance DJ technique (2007, p.211):

> The queuing of chosen tracks is decided on the spot, as the DJ tries to intuit and influence the reactions of both dancing and standing crowds. By 'taking the crowd on a journey,' the DJ seeks to engender an atmosphere in which ordinary notions of time, space and self are dissolved.

But whereas the DJ figure in EDM, as I clarified above, has occasionally been viewed as a digital, or technoshaman (D'Andrea, 2007; Gerard, 2004; Sylvan 1999 and 2005), Taylor (2001), my analyses show that the DJ is no extra-intuitive technoshaman drawing on ritual to facilitate transformation. The practitioners I have featured - skills-dependent, receptive and responsive - bring to mind David Hesmondhalgh's forthright comment (1997): 'absurd ramblings... portray the DJ and other artists as magical shamen, rather than people who earn a living through cultural communication' (177). They invoke and combine fore-thought, spontaneity, instinct and knowledge.

These EDM professionals know that, whatever they have presumed, it is good working practice to utilise the unexpected. In addition to their technical skills, they process information from the past to better use site-specific knowledge in the re-shaping of their play lists from one event to the next. Trance DJ-ing among these Offworld experts was a part-prepared but often spontaneous navigation within clearly

demarcated generic boundaries - a journey in which no map could be accurately drawn or indeed relied on.

5.5. Interludes in the Conversation

The above sections have foregrounded the DJ side of the sonic and corporeal exchange which often lies at the heart of the EDM event experience. These accounts show how Offworld DJs exploited a wide number of factors to galvanise psytrancers Steve, Amy, Rose, Rob and Franko to help work up a decent dance floor vibe. Their contributions, along with the effective interplay of other elements, enriched social connectivity and heightened the level of spontaneous communitas where, as Turner (1982) puts it, 'compatible people - friends, congeners – obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level' (48). But Offworld 2008 was as much about lulls as peaks, and, as I have reflexively noted, there were moments of boredom and inactivity.

In this section I identify some of the periods when the energy dropped and interactivity was apparently less forceful. I also look further at participant views on dance and music which in turn problemizes any straightforward reading of the dance party as a spectacular or continuously euphoric. In contrast, powerful moments, which can be likened to spontaneous communitas, are materially produced and do not always happen.

When I inquired into the value placed on the DJ-dancer conversation, some participants explained that they did not expect the dance floor to be busy or the music gripping for most of the party's three main days. Ben, when not stewarding, treated it as a space for socialising, while committed dancer Franko told me he saw the floor exclusively as a conduit for 'the thrilling music' and sustained body expression. Franko's approach to dance practice is well-documented in EDM literature with Fikentscher (2000) declaring, 'Dancing is first of all a physical act: hence, one's own dancing body interacting with the music is the central source of sensation (Fikentscher, 2000, p75). By contrast, Amy's project, where costume, role-playing and mimicry united self expression with the social, is understood in this way by Buckland (2002, p.85):

112

When a dancer worked with the sound scape, he or she worked, not only with the structure, contents, and qualities of the sound itself, but with its history and appropriated meanings. Through music, dancers connected themselves to their own compositional desires and abilities.

But whereas an attendee at a club night, or a briefer psytrance outdoor event, might be disappointed by an apparent collapse in the DJ-dancer conversation, study participants did not resent in-stasis dance floors. Rather, they saw them as enjoyable places to frequent even when near-empty or when not triggering any palpable charge. David Mario Matsinhe (2009) writes, 'the invisible walls of affect are shrunk, thinned out and made porous' (123). A permeability characterised participants' perspective on dance floor spaces. They reviewed these occasions within the frame of the wider festival hardly differentiating between specific floors, perceiving them porously, absorbing and bouncing back, as Ben told me, 'a share of the festival's good vibes'.

Dance floors were nodes in the site's geography, a space non-dancers Pixie, Polly and Jason would check out, or pass by on the way to elsewhere. Field note entries indicated that few of the respondents danced much beyond the peak periods (Friday and Saturday, 9pm-3am; Sunday 5-8pm). Stretch was frank when reflecting on the psytrance dance floor. 'I didn't ever find myself getting lost (in dance), in the sense of finding myself stomping away for hours in one place'. Claire, on the other hand, new to psytrance, was often wary of the main dance floor, finding the chat and tea-dominated progressive tent less demanding. Rob, who with Claire had missed Beardy's extraordinary set, told me after the festival:

There were some moments when I jumped up and down and felt a part of it, but a lot of the time the music doesn't really do it for me. With the mostly low numbers, the dance floor was quite hard work. It seems that you create your own level, your own affect. I think I came away from this one realising that we all make it what it is and each one of us has a very individual experience.

Rob's comment suggests that Offworld's brand of psytrance communitas was different to that found at larger parties, such as Boom or Ozora, where dance floor and DJ flourish remain fundamental criteria by which the event is to assessed. In contrast, Offworld dance floor environs were agreeable loci to experience intoxications, stream-of-consciousness thinking, and to socialise. Rob, like others, found strong connectivity in the totality of the event, revelling, simply, at being in the countryside for four days (three as it turned out) at a well-resourced, temporary (mildly)

113

autonomous zone, with a stockpile of drugs and like-minded, quite mature people who could "talk McKenna."

For some dancers, exploring creativity on the dance floor was the main point. Neither Steve nor Rose needed a dense floor to work on their dance moves. Whereas Steve was drawn to the psytrance floor where the music was strong, fast and thrilling, Rose's first home was the progressive music arena which promised a supportive space for women dancers. An example of the music she adored most was Frechbax. Playing off laptop, the young German coaxed taut textures from a thin pulse while incorporating abstract noises and snippets of vocal samples. After total absorption in Frechbax's slowly rising 08.00 Sunday set, Rose explained, '(During Frechbax's set) it seemed like I was floating over water, or...in a dark forest floating through the trees.'

In fusing music and movement with dream-like or hallucinatory images Rose was taking control of the conversation, loosening her mobility and thought patterns from the beat and mottos. The glow Rose felt from these dancing highs was reminiscent of Pini's insight into what clubbing meant for her subjects: 'Women today are seeking out and finding spaces for expressivity and autonomy beyond the normative structures of prescribed femininity, masculinity and heterosexuality. There is a new kind of independence and autonomy here' (2001, p.150). Rose later told me that 'the psytrance scene is very non-sexist, un-nationalist or "gender-narrow"'.

5.6. Social Connectivity and the DJ-Dancer Dialogue

I have shown that social connectivity is threaded throughout the psytrance party's DJ-dancer conversation. I suggest too that such connectivity is akin to Turner's (1969, 1982) vision of communitas, even when it is not of the electrifyingly spontaneous form first envisaged. The dance floor dynamic at Offworld was hardly the Goa party frenzy found with Saldanha's (2007) psychedelic white cohort or D'Andrea's (2007) "expressive expatriates" seeking a "limit-experience". D'Andrea's dance floor moment is full of giddy promise: 'Sounds and lights acquire tangible textures, engulfing the dancer in the protective space of a cosmic womb, entailing self-transcendence, ecstatic epiphany and pleasurable death' (213). Similarly, dancing at

Offworld - Liquid Ross's set notwithstanding - seldom highlighted the impression, claimed by Pini (2001), of a corpus of melding bodies. She writes, 'A body subjected to raving may well experience a sense of merging into a larger body, such as the body of the dancing crowd' (2001, p.47).

Figure 22: DJ Alex Sense, left, with a friend (middle) and flag maker and wiggly dancer, Rose, right. (Photograph by Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

Clearly, a four-day event with dance floor sessions lasting for 12 hours or longer could not easily rival the more packed, five-to-eight-hour formats of night clubs (see Moore, 2011), [45] but nevertheless, at Offworld lulls persisted longer than peaks with the dance floor lacking sustained euphoria, a coherent trajectory, or body density. What emerged however were amenable, supportive and unthreatening environments where the DJ-dancer conversation never fully stalled, and always held promise and meaning. As D'Andrea reminds us, 'a trance party never climaxes but remains

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[45] Moore's 'Exploring Symbolic, Emotional and Spiritual Expression amongst 'Crasher Clubbers'', discusses night-time economy clubbing with reference to the commercial space, Gatecrasher One, in Sheffield, UK where uplifting, euphoric trance, and not psytrance, is the favoured genre.

looping and spiralling in plateaus of intensity' (2006, p 213). His observation applies as much to the varied pulses and low peak-vibe ratio at Offworld as for other more spectacular trance party occasions.

Significantly, however, at Offworld the "plateaus of intensity" were few but memorable. At Beardy, just a small percentage of the party appeared but for Steve that final EVP moment was unforgettable. With Rose, a will to community and dance freedom coalesced at Alex Sense when she mimicked maypole-dancing at the end to Vaishiyas's progressive trance classic 'King for a Day'. When the DJ-dancer conversation connected, the moments were as exciting to my ear as premier sets at lavishly resourced trance festivals or the best night-only event. (Wider comparisons with pan-trance parties like Boom remain outside the scope of this study).

Figure 3: A couple embrace in front the psytrance drome late on Saturday night. (Photograph by Karen Louise Thomas; © Charles de Ledesma, 2008)

Finally, the circuitous forms contained in the music/dance dialogues were a cornerstone of social connectivity at Offworld. The conversations discussed have in common certain qualities which keep DJ procedure both predictable and explorative and the dancer's response, singular and communal. Both seem to exemplify Turner's (1982) notion of communitas, where individuals can have a '"gut" understanding of synchronicity' (48) as they 'relate directly to another person as he presents himself in the here-and-now' (ibid.). Dance might not have been reliably euphoric or avowedly spectacular at Offworld, but DJ skills and dancer support had resulted in an agreeable assemblage where components interacted beyond the sum of their parts.

Chapter 6

Psytrance Communitas - Heterogeneity, Connection and the Dance Music Moment

> Applied to event experiences in general, we can say that communitas applied to the temporary state in which people are together, removed from ordinary life, so they have something very special in common… but event organizers cannot guarantee this sense of belonging and sharing.

> Donald Getz (2007, p.178)

> Psychedelic music has evolved beyond a few beach parties and mystical horizons of Goa. The idea is to build a safe sanctuary for you to come and express yourself around the forest of the English country side. We create the stage and invite all you people to come, dance and create their own stories. Come and realize the true expression of oneself through the presence of cosmically amplified full moon.

> (COSMO festival 2010 mission statement)

I have argued that, following a close observation of one psytrance party event, a form of affectual communality lies at the core of the contemporary trance experience. In Chapter 2 I illustrated the degree to which earlier work had privileged a series of themes, understanding psychedelic trance through a variety of filters including the psychedelic, the neo-ritual and the spiritual, as well as a transformational process that featured party events that were hedonist and spectacular. In Chapter 3 I introduced my ethnographic approach, which I considered valuable for an alternative reading of the psytrance party event. I explained how I combined an inductive-leaning, reflexive methodology with a degree of insiderness to collect data on materials and components in the ethnographic field. Following an explanation of choices made during the evolution of the event, I analysed connectivity and interactivity in Chapters 4 and 5 from various standpoints: interpersonal communication, the DJ-dancer conversation, a shared vernacular around body technologies, expressivity and play on the dance floor and, in a more everyday manner, via skills development and contact sharing. Throughout I have endeavoured to show that the psytrance party can offer both a sense of being in a liminal space, redolent of communitas, as well as mundane experiences of social connection and fun.

I will conclude this dissertation with a review of my main findings and draw out the significance of my reading of the psytrance party. This will include reflections on concepts such as neo-tribalism, the psytrance scene and the psytrance genre. I will argue that no one classification perfectly suits psytrance in 2011, as the formation's qualities defy easy categorisation and are in a state of flux. I will also reflect on some of the limits of my research and identify future directions for further work in the field. In particular, I believe it would be fruitful to explore articulations around psytrance's specific sonic elements, social class make-up and geographic situatedness. It is my contention that psytrance communitas will remain of central significance even though, as Getz observes in a discussion on generic events, 'organisers cannot guarantee this sense of belonging and sharing' (2007, p.178).

6.1. Reviewing Fieldwork Results

My fieldwork demonstrated that psytrance participants share, through actual and virtual communities, a vernacular sensibility that I have likened to Turner's communitas (1969, 1974, 1982). This psytrance communitas is characterised by expected communal bonding, understandings around music, a shared knowledge on body technologies, an appreciation for decoration and a taste for philosophical and new age ideas. Turner's framework has helped me frame my defining argument around social connectivity, which is broadly in line with the "affectual", or "underground sociality" St John (2011a) identifies at the Boom festival. The high value designated to modes of communication at the psytrance event further embeds the de facto connection with Turner' spontaneous communitas.

I have recorded the arc of the promoters' journey from the early planning stages of the event to the moments when, despite a financial loss, they started organising for the next one. Promoter Grant remembered, in an interview after the event, that the 2008 party had been 'an amazing journey', with the tasks he set himself 'a challenge which reinforced (my) capabilities.' Fellow organisers Bacon and Mamtani had to postpone a party for 2009 but, in the summer of 2010, they returned, as COSMO, eager to 'create the stage and invite all you people to come, dance and create their own stories'

(2010, mission statement). Without Grant, the duo executed an ambitious follow-up with a further one organised for July, 2011.

A central focus of my fieldwork, and one seldom adopted in other studies on psytrance, was the continual tracking of fans before during and after the main event. Veteran psytrance fan Rob had had a roller-coaster ride with partner Claire, made new friends and contacts, and would go on to return in a different guise - as a psytrance music producer he performed material at COSMO in 2010. Another of the study participants, costume designer Amy, found opportunities to fully express herself while adopting personas in performance and, like Rob, she deepened her friendship network. Amy also followed the psytrance festival circuit in late summer 2008 but concentrated on making music during 2009 and 2010.

A facet of the connective network was the eagerness with which participants helped in daily duties, making the party a type of contact zone for skills and exchange. Besides Ueno (2003), few other studies have touched on this aspect of the psytrance event. Indeed one of the new organisers, Mamtani, joined the team to learn about the task of organising psytrance events in the UK after he was introduced the previous year as a curious fan. Others combined work with recreational pursuits. Ben multi-tasked across dancing, LSD-consumption and site stewarding; Rose could be seen, as the weather deteriorated, breaking away from the dance to repair the frayed flags she had sown. String artist Bjorn DJ-ed when Grant needed a temporary replacement and also worked as a pasta server at Pedro's cafe. I highlight these activities to show that the psytrance party has become an instance of a mutually supportive, flexible, creative community.

The results around music took on a different tenor. On the surface the event's core components interacted effectively. The DJs were equipped with play-lists spanning the evolution of psychedelic trance, leading music producers from West Europe unveiled their latest progressive tunes, an industry-recognised sound system rig functioned reliably, and just about enough dancers contributed to dancer-DJ conversation and the generation of a vibe.

Nevertheless, my findings, when set alongside existing accounts of psytrance culture - and in particular the research of St John (2004; 2010a and 2010b) - show that parties

may not generate a high degree of dynamic activity. St John argues that 'psytrance festivals are natural sites of excess, for the wild consumption of... "energy"' (St John 2010a, p.231). Offworld was clearly not an energy vortex and there was little excess on show.

The psytrance stage was under-developed for a variety of reasons. Site decoration remained unfinished with the visual spectacle lacking coherence while corporeal flamboyance on the dance floors - as described by Buckland (2002), Jackson (2004), Moore (2011) and Sommer (2009) in other EDM fields - was sporadic. Despite a perceived absence such as this, participants, promoters and music providers consistently judged it to be a rich social and aesthetic value. Dancers like Amy, Franko and Steve maximised opportunities to enjoy themselves, responding to the style, mood and shape of the music, their social contact group and the scale and mode of dance floor activity. Many DJs however did not often play at a euphoric pitch and, as I have pinpointed earlier, sometimes played to a near-empty dance floor, but commented on the ripening of dance floor fission as their sets developed groove. I have also dwelt on how Offworld dancers did not seem to mind apparently frequent dance floor lulls. However, they knew they could rely on the experienced sonic practitioners to tap into a reservoir of information to aid them in their re-ordering of style and movement.

I also noted a range of views on a further key component of the psytrance party, intoxicants, which, drawing on Rietveld's (1998) definition, I have classified as "body technologies". Here, too, I uncovered a series of ambivalent attitudes. At the outset organisers eschewed the notion that dancers would be "flying high" most of the time and applied a situated knowledge around this which was borne out by the event itself. They hoped and expected that, when consumption (including the drinking of alcohol) occurred, it would be done responsibly, with consumers avoiding the practice of becoming so intoxicated they might miss out on the broader goal of social connection.

This accumulated evidence led me to conclude that Offworld's mode of psytrancing was one that looked outwards to embrace a temporary community based on connective value. However, one participant, Stretch, alluded to a certain lack of intensity when, after the event, he told me that his experience could have been

different but that the time had been spent rewardingly. He noted that he would have 'gone for it more and danced longer and harder' if he had found "good drugs"'. Rob, who for many years had considered LSD synonymous with the psytrance party package, had had a fractured Friday night when he focused entirely on his partner's bad trip. He had told me in an interview after the event that he had given up taking hallucinogens at parties while he concentrated on music-making and performing.

Outwardly, the party appeared to be almost pedestrian, one where extreme experiences were not available or were simply avoided. In particular, the often inactive dance floor contradicted most expectations of an EDM party. But none of this undermined the resounding acclaim participants, DJs and organisers bestowed on the event. As I have noted, the organisers expected progressive trance tent visitors to chat and sip tea while dancing or as an alternative to it. Even sleep was an acceptable activity for the Chai Emporium.

My findings also indicated that the low payee aggregate had not dented participants' buoyant assessments in the least. All told me that they sought to find a stimulating, empathetic environment at all trance parties they went to, whether big or small, crowded or sparse. Steve and Ben had gone to the Glade in mid-July and had not considered the music or dance to have been any stronger or better than Offworld, despite the higher numbers of payees, louder sound systems and better-known DJs. And in Offworld's favour, Amy, Stretch and Rose had, in separate conversations, opined that Boom's size had militated against the more intimate, supportive sociality they had found at Offworld.

Amy had told me that the music at Boom in particular had not been to her taste – in that year the promoters had privileged harsh, gritty psytrance over more melodic modes. However, the trio spoke in almost reverent tones of Boom's spectacular scale, with Rose explaining, 'I stayed up all night once and in the massive psytance arena and was entranced by the play of the lighting on the UV decors and intricate, fractal banners and hangings.' Stretch was also divided: 'Overall I found Boom hard to handle - it was rather impersonal but the sound system was massive and the dance floor a crazy experience.'

My argument is not that aspects such as a shared psychedelic intent is now a chimera within psytrance, but that for some it has been partially subsumed by a stronger desire for a lighter, commonplace experience where the emphasis is on community, pleasure and play. Of course it is quite possible that both can co-exist contentedly. Certainly some Offworld participants, notably Rob, Steve, Franko and Ben, enjoyed passages on powerful stimulants, and indulged in polydrug use, while reserving long periods for more conventional styles of conversation. However, my sense was that experienced Offworlders such as Rob, Ben, Pixie, Amy and Franko, could take or leave the intoxicant-immersive sojourns of the past and related little to the romantic legacy of the culture's earliest manifestations. Vitos (2010) may well see a trend towards a '"demented" psychedelic experience' (168) in the Czech Republic and St John a 'variable *sacra* within the counterculture to which psytrance is heir' in Portugal (2010b, p.229, author's italics), but in this very English cereal field the activity was of a less dramatic order entirely.

6. 2. Classifying a Little Culture

I began this study by drawing attention to psychedelic trance's perceived roots in the countercultural movements of the 60s, the free festival scene of the 70s, and the explosion of temporary autonomous rave zones in late 80s and early 90s UK. One element that persists is that 60s psychedelic art is frequently recycled in the patterns, shapes and motifs of the drapes, banners and artefacts of psytrance event design. While I have suggested that a more sober assessment of psytrance culture be considered, it would be foolish to suggest a full de-coupling from the culture's historic roots, whether they be aspects of psychedelic culture birthed in the Goa beach party scenes of the 70s (St John, 2011), or contemporary drive for weekend hedonism containing powerful hallucinatory periods locked into trance-inducing rhythms. Psytrance events are clearly more than consumer-driven event packages, and psytrancers cannot be easily cast as uncritical weekenders who change outfits to fit the musical or scenic flavour of the month. There is an alternative set of codes that give the milieu coherence and identity as well as indicating a distance from, if not opposition to, dominant culture as well as other EDM scenes. Given that psytrance in

2011 remains a coherent social formation, what can be said about psytrance's form of social connectivity?

Although based on an in-depth study of just one event, my findings suggest that British psytrance has become an accessible but niche little culture where social, sonic and corporeal elements intermingle within a clearly defined aesthetic. The party sites owe much to earlier models in design and volition but the expressive practise points up everyday affects and more negotiable transgressions than the subcultural order Saldanha (2007) finds with his "Goa freaks" or the "nomadic expressivity" D'Andrea (2007) detects in Ibiza, Spain, and among Goa-based expatriates.

The high number of events that fill the European psytrance calendar invite a pick-and-choose approach that contrasts with the scenario just five years ago (2006), when there were far fewer on offer. As a result, no single social classification encapsulates the practice of psytrance sociality, which is in a state of flux and is gradually becoming more distant, at least in temporal terms, from the countercultural period.

Several authors (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Hodkinson, 2004; Lambert, 2010; Ryan, 2010; St John 2003 and 2010a; Sweetman, 2004; Ueno, 2003) have suggested that Michel Maffesoli's (1996) classification, neo-tribe, is a useful model for theorising the flexible, shifting, often youthful, "alternative" post-subcultural groupings. Sharing Hesmondhalgh's (2007) concern that positing the term neo-tribe to the distinctive dance culture of psytrance is to favour a 'level of abstraction that the emotions of human beings are hardly registered at all' (41), I find that this social classification is therefore unable to capture adequately the experience of Offworld psytrancers. I suggest that the descriptive terms I have frequently used – "little culture", "scene" and "milieu" – better account for the pragmatic and refreshingly unromantic outlook espoused by the psytrancers I have talked with.

I have developed the idea of a community shaped by common interests and a distinctive quality of communication, but music plays a key role too. Rob Lindrop (2010) understands the concept of genre to be useful in explaining the growing appeal of psytrance. He sees the music as ecumenical, with an inclusive social scene, and as such, can be considered a "meta genre" in which UK psytrance events cheerfully embrace other music styles from a wider EDM and world music pantheon. He

explains that psytrance is aesthetically distinctive as it is, of course, an "actual genre" with precisely defined sonic characteristics. Lindrop's emphasis on levels of genre echoes Hesmondalgh's suggestion that 'genre is a much more satisfactory starting point for a theorization of the relationship between particular social groups and musical styles than are subculture, scene or tribe' (2007, p.45).

One claim to classification status is made by Saldanha (2007). He suggests that Goa freaks in the early period of psytrance development conform to a form of spectacular subculture: 'So subculturally pure in Anjuna comes to mean racially pure' (131). These long-stay trance fans, he considers, associate 'specific subcultural signs with their bodies' (91). My research has found no such parallels with Saldanha's thesis and so, correspondingly, cannot denote a relatively cohesive classification, such as subculture, to contemporary psytrance culture, at least for the UK.

Echoing Saldanha to some degree, Ben Carrington and Brian Wilson (2004) have advised that greater attention should be paid to race and class in EDM research. They maintain that 'dance cultures are not just about individual lifestyle choices made by autonomous consumers….(C)ontemporary dance cultures do exhibit patterns of class and racial differentiation that necessitate some form of materialist understanding' (78). Psytrance research, as with wider EDM culture, could certainly benefit from attention in this regard.

6. 3. Psytrance, Communitas, and Dance Music Research

I have argued for psytrance communal interactivity to be in part equivalent to spontaneous and ideological communitas. Andrew Wegley (2007) summaries Turner's conception of communitas as a 'harmonious spirit' (57) that 'opposes the order of things with a form of dramatic/poetic license' (ibid.). Turner wanted to apply communitas both with anthropological precision and in a fashion that could be more broadly useful. Of course, this opens up the charge that it is an insubstantial idea with little sociological weight. Amie Matthews (2008) suggests a developed definition of the concept that fits well for EDM culture. She explains (178),

> I would speculate that just as there may well be "different kinds of depths of flow" (Turner 1982, p.59), there may also be different kinds and depths of communitas. Maybe what we are (or should be) talking about, in the study of communitas, is not so much a pure, ethereal, or all-encompassing unification, but rather a relative unification or bonding: if you like, a continuum of communitas states that involve moments of both bodily and cognitive connection; a heterogeneous communitas, or a fluid movement between moments of consensus and contestation within the liminoid space.

It is this kind of "heterogeneous communitas" that has helped me explore the social connectivity displayed at Offworld. The situated knowledge found inside this psytrance party's form of heterogeneous communitas is reflected in party narratives, drug information and the music archive. Further work on psytrance, and in wider EDM cultures, could find more to say on such an updated definition of communitas.

New scholarly work on psytrance culture continues to test original themes and forge articulations across disciplines and theories. [46] One encouraging intervention from St John (2011) expands the archive on psytrance history with a profile of the formation's most famous DJ, Goa Gil, and richly contextualises Gil's contribution from Goa, India to northern California, USA. In addition Victoria Bizzell (2008) takes Goa Gil's story as a starting point for a discussion on globalised EDM cultures, posing interesting questions about trans-nationality and neo-colonial identity, using the rapidly expanding Brazilian trance scene as a case study. There are numerous further projects around EDM in academe and in popular writing which will continue to inform our understanding of this pan-cultural, globalised dance culture.

My final thoughts concern the type of research model I have followed and its potential uses for the field of psytrance studies. Has the focus on the relationships between elements at one psytrance party generated observations that are ethnographically coherent and a significant contribution to the field?

A largely synchronic, material case study approach is of value to psytrance and wider EDM work, not least because analyses of fandom and participatory cultures help to situate these areas of social activity. To reach more sweeping conclusions I would have needed to complete further case studies but this is beyond the scope of the

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[46] See the on line journal Dancecult for regular scholarly articles on psytrance. The journal can be found at http://dj.dancecult.net.

MPhil. Within the parameters set, I believe the methodology identified in Chapter 3 has been applied and produced some surprising, and I suggest useful, results. I would have also liked to gather more material on the sound system set-up, but unfortunately the person who owned and operated the equipment was not prepared to engage in the research exercise.

I suggest that my research might encourage a more materialist approach that examines the actual experience of psytrance events rather than ones privileging wider cultural trends that are too heavily invested in discourse. Examples of the set of statements and ideas that circulate around trance include spiritual transcendence and the neo-ritual. Further, focusing on the material experience of trance, notably fan perspectives and organizational imperatives, may enable a move away from musicological approaches that are overly concerned with trance music as a kind of text. Such discursive and textual methodologies are important but on the basis of my study do not account for the totality of the trance experience, a reality which can be less spectacular, and more everyday, than is generally assumed in other research. The more modest ambition of achieving a sense of connectedness at a trance event might come across as being comparatively dull, but the resilience of these flexible, collaborative, sonically-inspired communities should not be underestimated.

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Appendices

Appendix A

List of Participants (ages at end of 2011).

Alex Karanasos (DJ Alex Sense, 30)

Alex from Thessaloniki in Greece, has been DJing trance styles since 2000. He started playing classic psytrance (140-144 bpm), but has gradually shifted to slower styles. By 2004 he was mixing mid tempo trance (134-136 beats-per-minute) which was influenced by other styles like techno and house. By Offworld, 2008, he had fine-tuned his method of presenting progressive trance which entails 'mixing the right sounds and rhythms with a particular concern for the frequencies in the music.'

Amy (32)

Flute teacher Amy is musically active, both as a busker and flautist with Attria, a chill- out band formed in 2010. Amy is from Surrey, south England and currently lives in north London. She has been going to music festivals for eleven years, and psytrance events for nine. Her attendance became sporadic throughout 2008 (coinciding with the time of the fieldwork), as she was recovering from ME.

Ben Grant (36)

Ben Grant from London works in risk analysis and now lives in Oxfordshire. Before promoting Offworld 2008, Ben co-promoted a number of psytrance parties while living in New South Wales, Australia. Since leaving the Offworld team between the 2008 and 2010 events, he has concentrated on making psytrance music.

Ben (33)

In summer 2008, at the time of participating in the fieldwork, Ben worked in a London bank but quit his job in 2009 to become a cycle-courier. Brought up in the Home Counties, he has a degree in photography and aspires to work as a music journalist. Ben has been going to festivals since 2001, starting with that year's Glastonbury, and psytrance parties since 1996. Ben was the only one in the fieldwork

group who frequently went to the first wave of psychedelic trance parties in the mid-nineties London clubs and warehouses. He considers the scene to have deteriorated in recent years and throughout he attended only the occasional party or festival.

Claire (34)

Claire, from Cape Town in South Africa, left education after secondary school and currently lives in London with her husband Rob. She works as a web campaign manager and aims to become a campaign director. She was introduced to music festivals by Rob, with Offworld 2008 being her first long psytrance outing.

Franko (32)

Franko, from Sao Paulo, Brazil, has a degree in computer science and is pursuing a career in computer programming. During 2009-10 he undertook a Masters Degree in this field at the prestigious Swedish university Uppsala. Franko has been going to music festivals, and psytrance events, for 14 years.

Mark Young (DJ Beardy, 37)

Mark Young lives in London, works as a tree surgeon and runs Wild Things Records. The label releases fast psytrance designed to be played at the peak of a party. Mark has been Dj-ing EDM for nearly 20 years, and psychedelic trance for 15.

Mohit Mamtani (30)

Mohit Mamtani, from New Delhi in India, joined the Offworld team in 2008, and, co-promoted the Offworld offspring, COSMO, in 2010 and 2011. Mohit had put on parties close to New Delhi before moving to the UK in 2007, and has more recently promoted small events in Goa, south India. Mohit also DJs, specialising in playing down-tempo and chill-out music.

Paul Bacon (50)

Chief Offworld 2008 promoter and co-promoter of COSMO, Paul Bacon, also co-runs the Planet Bob Chai Emporium party organisation. The Emporium has been putting on parties showcasing progressive trance as the main style for nearly ten years. Paul

also produces down-tempo and chill-out music under the moniker, Lemon Tree, and his DJ sets covers those styles as well.

Pixie (40)

Pixie the oldest participant in the fieldwork group has a BSc, and a recently completed PhD, in Mathematics. He worked as a lecturer and Statistics consultant before moving to South Africa with partner Polly in 2010, to take up a full-time academic post. While in South Africa, he expected to go to psytance "bush" parties, as well as city club events. Pixie used regularly to go to London techno trance clubs like Pendragon and Escape From Samsara, as well as early psytrance nights. Following ill health, Pixie had stopped going to clubs, but occasionally went to festivals like the world music extravaganza, WOMAD, and the down-tempo Big Chill.

Polly (36)

Polly from Wales has a degree in Sociology and was a primary school teacher in central London before moving to South Africa with partner Pixie, in 2010. She has been going to music festivals for ten years, night clubs for 15, but, unlike anyone else in the group, she was not particularly fond of psytrance. Polly predicted she would occasionally go to psytrance events with Pixie in South Africa, given how vibrant and popular the scene was there.

Rob (34)

Rob is from Johannesburg, South Africa, and now lives with his partner, Claire, in London. He has a post graduate diploma in Character Animation and works in that field. Rob has been attending festivals for 14 years and psytrance events for 11. From early 2010 he produced his own psytrance tracks, under a moniker, at parties such as COSMO.

Rose (30)

30-year-old Rose has a degree in chemistry and is now studying homeopathy. She grew up on the south coast and currently lives in Guildford in Surrey. Rose has been going to music festivals for ten years, and frequenting psytrance events for seven.

Rose also helps put on parties. In 2008 she set up a chai shop tent (with music) called Pixiechill.

Ross March (DJ Liquid Ross, 35)

A founding member of the Liquid Connective psytrance party organisation, which has its origins in Kent, Ross now lives in London. Eleven years ago he formed Liquid Records with other Connective colleagues. The label releases a variety of EDM styles as well as psytrance.

Steve (27)

Steve is from the Home Counties and now lives in London. He finished a degree in Linguistics in 2010 and is currently unemployed. Steve has been collecting psytrance music and going to parties for five years.

Stretch (30)

Stretch, from Guildford, Surrey, has a degree in electronics engineering and works as a software engineer in satellite construction. He has been going to music festivals for seven years and psytrance events for four. Stretch follows other styles of music with acoustic folk among his favourite genres. He has made clear that Offworld, and other psytrance events, offered a valuable and alternative experience to his demanding day job with its focus on detail, complexity, training and deadlines.

Appendix B

Table 1: Schedule of Meetings and Interviews with Offworld Organisers, 2008-9

Date	Duration	Name	Mode	Subject/method of recording
11/01/2008	3hrs	Paul Bacon, Ben Grant, Graham Langley	Home visit	Introduction to 2008 Offworld festival strategy; overview of Offworld 2007. No contemporaneous note or recording made with reflective note compiled on journey back to London.
6/05/2008	3hrs	Ben Grant	Home visit	Biographical account of involvement in psytrance event organisation and outline of current duties, updated plan and concerns; recorded on mini disc.
20 & 25/05/2008	1hr total	Ben Grant	Phone	Further itemisation of duties and focuses, with special attention paid to music scheduling (DJs and 'live acts'); recorded on mini disc.
3 & 24/06/2008	40mins total	Paul Bacon	Phone	Reflects on meetings with police and licensees & comments on Event Manual; recorded on mini disc.
9/06/2008	3hrs	Paul Bacon & Graham Langley	Home visit	Biographical account of involvement in psytrance event organisation and outline of immediate duties, updated plan and concerns; recorded on mini disc.
23 & 30/06/2008	1hr 10mins total	Ben Grant	Phone	Discussions centre on event budget 'crisis' and Grant's concerns with decors at main stage; recorded on mini disc.
2/07/2008	2hours	Paul Bacon	Site visit	Tour of Hampshire site green field with 'vision' of festival map; short meetings with farmer & water supplier. No digital record made; reflective note compiled on journey back to London.
9 & 10/07/2008	4hrs	Mohit Mamtani	Home visits	Biographical account of involvement in psytrance event organisation and outline of current duties, updated plan and concerns; recorded on mini disc.

11/07/2008	4hrs	Ben Grant	Home visit	Work with Grant laminating passes, update on duties, concerns and discussion on psytrance music and DJ scheduling. Ditto digital record/reflective note.
16/07/2008	5hrs	Paul Bacon & Graham Langley	Home visit	Shift in roles as this visit focused on organisational duties - I made guest passes - while conversations covered low ticket sales and discussion on music scheduling/ trance styles. Ditto digital record/reflective note.
23/07/2008	25mins	Ben Grant	Phone	Final update before arrival on site; recorded on mini disc.
29/07 - 4/08/2008	7 days	All organisers	OFFWORLD FESTIVAL	Informal interviewing; participant observation; contemporaneous and reflective notes collected.
1/09/2008	40mins	Ben Grant	Phone	Post event overview; recorded on mini disc.
6/09/2008	25mins	Mohit Mamtani	Phone	Ditto.
9/11/2008	30mins	Ben Grant	Phone	Event post mortem; recorded on mini disc.

Table 2: Schedule of Meetings and Interviews with Offworld Participants, 2008-9

Date	Duration	Name	Mode	Subject
6/07/2008	3hr	Pixie, Polly, Claire, Rob & Franko	Focus group (rec)	Psytrance party histories; preparations for/expectations of, Offworld; recorded on mini disc.
24/07/2008	80mins	Amy	Phone int (rec)	Ditto
25/07/2008	90mins	Ben	In person, at InSpiral (rec)	Ditto
25/07/2008	70mins	Rose	Phone int (rec)	Ditto
28/07/2008	1hr	Steve	Phone int (rec)	Ditto
29/07 - 4/08/2008	4 days	All participants	Participant observation	Updates on activities; comment son music, insights into mood/feelings if intoxicated; ongoing views of event
7/08/2008	2hr 40mins	Claire, Jason & Rob	Phone ints (rec) at different times	Immediate post-event impressions; recorded on mini disc.
1/09/2008	1hr 20mins	Stretch	Phone int (rec)	Psytrance party history; impressions of Offworld weighed alongside prior expectations; recorded on mini disc.
4/09/2008	40mins	Amy	Phone int (rec)	Post-event impressions; recorded on mini disc.
30/10/2008	30mins	Steve	Phone int (rec)	Ditto
9/11/2008	40mins	Stretch	Phone int (rec)	Follow up with comments on other trance festivals in 2008 late summer.
11/11/2008	1hr 30mins total	Amy & Rob	Post	Post-event impressions; recorded on mini disc
1/01/ - 31/08/2009	-	All of the above	Emails; informal meetings & phone (some rec)	Casual, i.e., not systematic, contact, covering latest events attended; shifts in interests; progress in music-making & DJ-ing.

Table 3: Schedule of Meetings and Interviews with DJs, 2008-9

Date	Duration	Name	Mode	Subject
7/7/2008	70mins	Mark Young (Beardy)	In person, at InSpiral	Biographical account of psytrance DJ and wider work in the field; preparations for Offword/other summer sets.
24/07/2008	75mins	Sean Spindrift	Phone	Detailed discussion on 'chill out' tent at Offworld and profiles of DJs/acts playing there.
28/07/2008	60mins	Ross March (Liquid Ross)	In person, at InSpiral	Biographical account of psytrance DJ and wider work in the field; preparations for Offword/other summer sets
1/09/2008	70mins	Mark Young (Beardy	Phone	Follow up analysis of Offworld set.
st3/09/2008	50mins	Ross March (Liquid Ross)	In person, at InSpiral	Follow up analysis of Offworld set.
16 & 17/10/2008		Alex Karanasos	Email dialogue	Discussion covered perspective on his Offworld DJ set and elements in progressive psytrance
23-26/10/2008		Regan Ticon	Email dialogue	Points raised centred on types of sound systems used ad medium-sized and large psytrance events.

Appendix C

Profile of the Website PsymusicUK with Posts on Psytrance music

The British-based portal PsymusicUK (www.psymusic.co.uk) has had a complicated history. The first site, psy-trance.co.uk, was created in 2002 but changed later that year to psy-forum.co.uk. It was primarily setup as a simple discussion forum and had a small membership aimed at UK profiles. In late 2003 Etienne Newkirk set up a photo hosting site called psypix.net to host photos on psy-forum. A few months later Newkirk also initiated the site, psystream.net, to host mixes and live radio shows for psy-forum. Following that, psy-forum closed in February 2004 as a founder member 'lost all interest in the scene' (Newkirk, author interview, 8th December 2009), but opened again under new management in March 2004. At that stage the membership was just under 2,500 on psy-forum, and 800 on psypix.

The websites continued on separate domains for another three years. Newkirk says that, by summer 2007, it had become a financial loss-maker. The license fees and hosting costs for three big websites was more than Newkirk could afford. He explains, 'I (then) made a decision to merge all three sites together - confident I had enough experience to merge 3 different databases into one database - and it worked. PsymusicUK was born'. At the time of the merger the combined Psymusic.co.uk membership was just over 16,000. Since then there's been a steady increase of 200-300 new registrations per month. 2010 had been the busiest year to date with an average of 400 new users per month.

The edited debate below was extracted from the site as an exemplar of how fans in the PsymusicUK music chat rooms (just a few of dozens of available streams) discuss psytrance divisions. The site was accessed on 22nd November, 2009, and the material spans ten days (10th-19th November). The text has been modified to correct basic spelling errors while the syntax remains unaltered. Ages were correct at the time of data collection and have not been adjusted for 2011.

Thread title: *Why do I still love psytrance even though so much sounds the same?* (Online at: www.psymusic.co.uk/forum/showthread.php?t=78188)

10th Nov, Evil Will, 30-years- old:

I am really, really bored of that sound; no melody of any sort, or driving bass line, with no, or only very minor, variations...just generic squeaky psy fx noises over the top, It hasn't got much structure, interest, or soul. You get hours and hours of this stuff played in a row (at parties) with no break, which compounds the issue. Fair enough if I was wasted I'd happily dance to it for a bit, and fair enough plenty of tunes I really like have sections in them exactly like that, but whole tunes (or sets, or even parties) like that is rubbish. Compared with some of the other stuff going on in the world of electronic dance music it is uninspired and formulaic.

10th Nov, Digifrog:

So what? I asked for recommendations, not invite critique on what I like. For someone who rarely listens to any psytrance, I happen to like it.

19th Nov, Sideshow Bob:

First, early psytrance... an introduction of otherworldly synth chords, leading to a rich bass line, followed by stuttered leads and arpeggios all with textures completely different to one another. So different to the rest of dance music I knew at the time, which sounded all the same - within tunes and between tunes - by comparison, generally just taking one or two themes and making a whole track out of them. But now, so much of psytrance seems to do the same! The same full on rolling bass lines and syncopated string chords. The same driving dark psy with the usual synths. And I still love it :-). Can anyone enlighten me as to why? Seriously...

19th Nov, PsycheDanic, 25-years-old.

Psytrance has changed considerably since the 'LSD' days. (Note: this is a reference to the 1993 track by the artist, Hallucinogen.) I wouldn't say it all sounds the same - in fact, nowadays you can find more variety. There's still the epic Goa journey stuff, all the modern Goa, which sounds nothing like Suomisaundi, which in turn sounds nothing like Israeli shizz, which in turn sounds nothing like the UK night-time sounds that is popular in London at the moment... I'd actually say that psytrance was a lot

more limited in its sound back in the 'LSD' days as it was still a genre in its formative years. Oh, and I love it because it combines relentless energy with trippy technicality and groove. I think psytrance is always in danger of being pinned down by its conventions or being over defined but as long as people are willing to make and listen to different things all the time then it's all good.

19th Nov, Psyfi, 31-years-old:

I know exactly what you mean! Especially when your tastes get picky so that there is a very small window of stuff that you LOVE and they all have the same elements but there is something magic about it! I guess it's not really about the sounds themselves, but how they make you feel. And so what if it's a similar bundle of sounds that make your heart nearly shoot out your chest. The challenge is to keep those sounds and the movement of the piece hold your attention and that still takes huge amounts of skill. I feel a lot like psytrance (when it's amazing) tries to capture a perfect moment and hold it there. And it can't hold it there by keeping static, it has to keep making tiny adjustments but one wrong adjustment and it all goes to awry and you've lost it. I fell in love with psytrance over the weekend again.

19th Nov, Mangomaz, 23-years-old:

That's how I relate to dance music - be it psytrance, techno, house, whatever. (I'm not big on breaks.) It's the groove more than anything that I look for. Some tracks have it, some don't. I can't explain why one tune works for me and the next one doesn't most of the time, but some tracks I just can't keep still too!

19th Nov, Franki, 39-years-old:

There doesn't seem to be any alternative psy at all.?..I like psy with guitars, I like psy with some vocals, I like psy/metal fusion, I like psy with some cheesy, euphoric tuneage (sic)...I like old-school psy... (perfecto flouro)... I don't like dark stompy, unfluffy psy though ... I got techno for that. So, no, I don't think it all sounds the same.

Appendix D

Ethical Approvals

The following are examples of permissions completed and signed by Offworld participants indicating consent for data collected during the fieldwork to be used in the study. This appendices starts with a copy of the letter, Consent to Participate in the Research Study, which was given to all participants. The letter is in line with the University of East London's research ethics policy.

Docklands Campus, 4-6 University Way, London E16 2RD

Date:

University Research Ethics Committee/ Instructional leaflet

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate please contact the Secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee, Graduate School, University of East London, Romford Rd, Stratford, E15 4LZ, (telephone 0208 223 6274)

Researcher:

Charlie de Ledesma
116A Chamberlayne Road, London NW10 3JP
Tel: 0208 9643502

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need when participating in this study.

Project Title & Description

The aim in 'The Trance Party Experience' is to build a full ethnographic picture of the trance party experience. I require contributions from people who go to, or work at, trance parties to help me in this qualitative research project. Questions will be about your experiences at the parties and responses while there. I foresee no hazard or risk attached to participation.

Confidentiality of the Data,

The researcher will identify you by name in study reports as well as in documents that may be deposited in an archive. If you do not want to be identified by name in reports please notify the researcher.

Following the digital recording and processing of material the interview will be deleted from the researcher's computer and copies securely stored at another site.

I propose to hold data copies at the site above.

Location

The interviews will take place at a number of sites including homes and trance parties.

Remuneration

No remuneration can be offered for participation.

Disclaimer

Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme
[*The Trance Party Experience*]

I have read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me and I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study will have access to the data.

I hereby fully and freely consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Participant's   name   (BLOCK   CAPITALS):
....
............*DAVID BEER*............................

Participant's   signature:
....

Investigator's   name:
....
....

Date: .....*6 / 7* / ....2008............

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

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Participant's   name   (BLOCK   CAPITALS):

KAR'EMA bEER

Participant's   signature:

Investigator's   name:

Date: 6 /7/ 2008

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Participant's   name   (BLOCK   CAPITALS):
...... PAUL BROWN ....

Participant's   signature:
....

Investigator's   name:
....

Date: ...... 6TH JULY ......2008...........

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

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Participant's   name   (BLOCK   CAPITALS):
ANOWIA   ANTHONY

Participant's   signature:
S. Anthony

Investigator's   name:

Date: 6th July 2008

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Participant's name (BLOCK CAPITALS): NEL SON Di oTTo ....

Participant's signature: ....

Investigator's name: ....

Date: ....2008............