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Generation Ecstasy: Into The World Of Techno And Rave Culture



Synopsis

In *Generation Ecstasy*, Simon Reynolds takes the reader on a guided tour of this end-of-the-millennium phenomenon, telling the story of rave culture and techno music as an insider who has dosed up and blissed out. A celebration of rave's quest for the perfect beat definitive chronicle of rave culture and electronic dance music. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

"I finally grasped viscerally why the music was made the way it was; how certain tingly textures goosepimpled your skin and particular oscillator riffs triggered the E-rush.... Finally, I understood ecstasy as a sonic science. And it became even clearer that the audience was the star." British-born Spin magazine senior editor Reynolds (*Blissed Out*; coauthor, *The Sex Revolts*) offers a revved-up, detailed and passionate history and analysis of the throbbing transcontinental set of musics and cultures known as rave, covering its brightly morphing family tree from Detroit techno and Chicago house to Britain's 1988 "summer of love," on through London jungle and the German avant-garde to the current warehouse parties and turntables of Europe and America. One chapter explains, cogently, the pleasures and effects of the drug Ecstasy (MDMA, or "E"), without which rave would never have evolved; others describe the roles of the DJ, the remix and pirate radio, the "trance" and "ambient" trends of the early 1990s, the rise and fall of would-be stars, the impact of other drugs and the proliferation of current club "subsubgenres." Assuming no prior knowledge in his readers, Reynolds mixes social history, interviews with participants and scene-makers and his own analyses

of the sounds, saturating his prose with the names of key places, tracks, groups, scenes and artists. Reynolds prefers and champions the less intellectual, more anonymous and dance-crazed parts of the rave galaxy, "from the most machinic forms of house... through... bleep-and-bass, breakbeat house, Belgian hardcore, jungle, gabba, street garage and big beat." If you don't know what those terms mean, here's how to find out. Two eight-page b&w photo inserts and a discography. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The title refers to the drug of choice at the multimedia events typical of Reynolds' subject: the "rave" scene, in which impressionable youngsters congregate in such roomy venues as pastures and warehouses to be musically entertained while under the influence. Rave music includes techno and several other strains, all of them electronic. Reynolds traces it from the German group Kraftwerk's "Krautrock" to disco and funk to the many rave-friendly formats extant today. Besides this music history, Reynolds discusses the panoply of rave-worthy drugs and proper rave attitude and deportment. His occasionally hyperventilating prose may discourage nonfan readers, yet this is a neat history of a cultural anomaly--a strain of pop music with a large audience but nearly no presence in the regular pop music media. And as a special bonus, Reynolds reveals why nitrous oxide is called "hippy crack." A solid addition for pop music collections and perhaps a source of ideas for an in-library festival (well . . . maybe not). Mike Tribby

Excellent book for those interested in the origins of electronic dance music. Simon Reynolds, unlike many scholarly authors, writes in an engaging and personal way. He tells anecdotes from his own experiences in the dance music scene but also brings in an enormous amount of research and knowledge. There is so much good information in this book that it definitely deserves more than one reading.

Most depictions of the Rave scene tend to preach from an extreme. They either present a picture of modern-day-Sodom, or will extol the discovery of Nirvana-on-Earth. Reynolds has the ability to [beautifully] describe both faces of the scene with an impartial voice. Unfortunately, that is the end of what he has done well. Simon will take one paragraph to state that in years past the focus was simply the event, and no one bothered to learn the names of DJ's, let alone the name of individual tracks. After which he will begin a 10-page meandering description about specific track titles released in a 6-month period. That example highlights Simon's shortcomings: no one involved in the scene at that time can recall every DJ or specific song names. Worse yet, those names are going to

be meaningless to everyone reading the book in an attempt to learn about the scene. Scenesters of the day aren't seeking a book that provides a blow-by-blow account of Simon's search for an illegal party on a particular night, they're looking to be reminded of a bygone time, feeling, and vibe they recall from those days. And people reading the book to learn about the history of "rave" are seeking to understand the human experience of the time, and not the name of a producer living in Germany who released a top-40 track at the end of the 80's. In truth, Simon does cover enough information from front cover to back cover that the reader will indubitably have gained a clear understanding of the history of raves. Unfortunately, the reader will have to winnow through 90% fluff to reach that goal.

It can be a little in-depth sometimes, almost to the point of being inane, but the author carries the story so well, you find yourself being swept up in the madness, almost as if you were standing in the middle of the rave culture yourself. It sheds an important light on a rarely-reported but highly relevant side of music history; a must-have for any true fan of the art.

This is so far the best book I've read on Electronic Dance Music, due to its multiple perspectives (technological, historical, sociological, musical, cultural, chemical) on the phenomenon. I just think it deserves a proper and updated re-edition that and I hope Reynolds considers doing it!

If you told me in 1992 that in 2006 I would be reading a book about "Rave" culture in the local public library I don't think I would have believed you. But..here I am. At the time of this writing it has already been at least 8 years since this book was published and I think we can see how the author's takes on the phenomenon has held up. Good points: The author has a great understanding of the esthetic strengths of the genre, i.e. what makes these songs and their various presentations work. He has a good knowledge of the artists, events and venues that helped to shape it (leaning mostly from a UK perspective, while very relevant, isn't the whole story). He has a great understanding of the technical aspects of the music and how cheap and malfunctioning gear is sometimes used and how these songs really often take a good degree of skill and effort to produce despite popular public misconceptions to the contrary. I particularly loved his observation that a tepid corporate pop production like Celine Dion uses much much more expensive state of the art equipment than your techno record. The author also has a great understanding of the, in my opinion, wonderful and vibrant philosophical concepts that went into this music and scene, and emerged through and because of this music and scene both expected, intended and unexpected and unintended. I would

love to go on about them but I will spare this forum. Bad Points: I am sad that this author thinks that ecstasy and many other drugs were so important to this movement. I found this element to make for more boring music and conversation. It was also a cause for tragedy. I am disappointed that this author dismisses so much of the more "avant garde" elements that came out of this scene. He even, very wrongly, suggests that this side was not somehow as legitimately rooted in the scene as a whole. This is complete nonsense. In fact, 8 years after this book was published..when I bump into people I remember from this scene I get the following: The big druggies are dead or crippled. The main scene is declared "dead". And..the avant garde is alive and blissfully unaware of their own reinvention in progress.

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