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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

Generation Ecstasy is probably the best book-length study of electronic music available right now. It is comprehensive and discusses just about every sub-genre of electronic out there. Reynolds even makes a few categories to suit his own critical purposes. While certainly well worth the read, the book has serious flaws. In an effort to disavow his own bourgeois status as music critic and connoisseur, Reynolds routinely sides with the more "populist" sub-genres out there. Jungle and gabba are good. Trip-hop and IDM are snobby. Hardcore and house get the thumbs up, 'intelligent drum and bass' and illbient get the thumbs down. While he often has a point, this siding with what 'moves the masses' turns too easily into apologetics for the culture industry (the mass manufacture and consumption of musical cliché). Under the misguided notion that if a certain class or ethnic group consumes a certain type of music it must be good stuff, Reynolds gets pulled into the knee-jerk dismissal of more "marginal" creativity. At certain points in his book I get weird echoes of Edmund Burke attacking the French Revolution and insisting on the necessity for incremental change within the hallowed lines of tradition. Whatever happened to radical criticism? Reynolds

should know that "what sells" is not necessarily the destiny of a genre. The future of music is often (but admittedly not always) heard in its avant-garde. I think Reynolds' pseudo-populism goes hand in hand with his annoying habit of tracing electronic music back onto the grids of music he already understands.

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.

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