# Media, Moral Panic, and British Rave Culture

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## Acid House, Ecstasy, and the Emergence of British Moral Panic

Moral panic exploded surrounded by raves and ecstasy in the mid-1980s when most of the Disc Jockeys came up with a sub-genre of house music called Acid House. Ultra Deep bass lines, drug intake, especially ecstasy use and extreme erotic exposure formed the characterization of the Raves. Stanley Cohen, in 1972, expressed and related the concept of moral panic to the reactions of the public, authorities and the media. Music was the focal point of the youth's way of life, and for many decades, acid music reigned as the most prominent revolution for young people in the 80s. The reaction of the British media, especially the Sun Newspaper, influenced the views in many ways.

The period of youth in a person's life is one of "maturation" (Malbon, p13, 1999), with which youths learn how to develop into adulthood. From the start of youth culture in Britain in the year 1987, societies became dominated by the rave culture, which is also referred to as the Second Summer of Love. Societal views split a big deal from the mainstream media's opinion on the acid and rave culture kind of music. The subculture grows every day to the point of global commercialization. As it materialized, the rave civilization still maintained the top population amongst the young people. Epstein asserts that young people go through "procedures and operations of social mixing into the supreme civilization" (Epstein p3, 1998).

The founding of changes in music sales met great success when acid music was invented. Fathoming how hopeless clubs were before the genre's inception is a hard nut to crack because business can never be good with sanity. People just went to drink, others even fought and bonked, and the music was a secondary reason to attend a club, but when the new era of acid music came, the songs and dances took guys there. Phil Cohen believes that when relating with those who go to work every day, then individual changes are inevitable, and also displacing your normal behaviors helps because even cohesion with parents sometimes becomes a hard nut to crack; thus, one becomes a subcultural being (1972).

## Early Media Promotion and the Popularization of Rave Culture

The first coverage of the acid house music show in the national press had a positive impact as Sun magazine printed out T-shirts with an Acid smiley face, which was a means of promotion. Acid House

culture was described as groovy and solely cool, but this changed. Panic sprung up when the acid music got too erotic, and the old people became detrimental when the youth got involved. The music and dance seemed too much of a threat to ethics and values, and the media quickly identified the dangers. The general public got concerned then social changes followed in music like jazz, waltz, and dancing. The rave solely related to using drugs, some ecstasy and dance moves like the instance of Ibizan (Redhead p32, 2000). Pleasure-seeking got ultimately political with the rave culture and the controversies around acid music. Marijuana business and intake increased with the same civilization, and in the mid-90s, the use of cocaine also grew.

The young people's self-indulgence, desires and use of drugs such as alcohol frets the adult society, making them seek solutions to put the youths under control. The erotic nature of acid music triggers addiction to the rave kind of life, leaving the media and the public with no choice but to intervene in the matter. Acid house, added on to ecstasy, truly defined the county clubs into the real definition of fun. A technical overview puts culture in the limelight, and for a while, it has been a bone of contention that pop culture influences living standards. Folks from all walks of life and races harmoniously bonded under the influence of ecstasy and acid house music, and for a moment, everyone forgot their differences and social classes to enjoy the feel of the drug and music.

On the dance floor, the Disc Jockey technology propelled the addiction, and massive crowds gathered to listen to the mixing sessions. The DJs became the god of the nights, and fans looked up to them to make their nights. Even songs were released concerning excellent disk jockey services. Indeep also released a lifetime hit song called Last Night, a DJ Saved My Life (Brewster and Broughton, 2017). The culture was quickly embraced and respected, and the few DJs saw themselves more like demigods in the entertainment industry. Through word of mouth, acid houses spread like bushfire. Even news anchors recognized the position of acid houses in the changing culture. Rave parties reached a point whereby some of the events got aired on live TV and celebrities attended the exploding new genre in town.

# DJs, Dance Music, and the Transformation of Youth Entertainment

The turntable became the focal point of entertainment as local DJs rocked the clubs and changed the attendees' lives. Irrevocably, the reception and the mood of the acid house and electronic dance music tremendously shifted to the negative side. Many stories from the media and television, which included: 'Evil Of Ecstasy' (19 October, *The Sun*), 'Ban This Killer Music' (24 October, *The Post*), and 'Acid House Horror' (25 October, *The Sun*). Others were 'Drug Crazed Acid House Fans' (28 October, *The Sun*), 'Girl Drops Dead At Acid Disco (31 October, *The Sun*) '56 and People Held In Acid House Raids' (7 November, *The Times*). I guess the nation had to take necessary action. Great threats were posed by the authorities and the media; they had to appeal to the youth.

The organizer of the rave parties and the acid house music became rich and could easily dodge the

law enforcement authorities. Despite the strong laws and searches, the organizers still managed to gather over a hundred thousand people to attend the shows. The acid house got more exciting than the drugs because of its erotic nature. Surprisingly enough those who ensured the success of the rave parties received lots of praise and money and got motivated to succeed more. The indoor parties became so erotic that their abolishment was no matter of discussion anymore. After tight regulations got enacted, acid music still had to continue therefore a softer version outside the houses with the favorite DJs took over.

As the acid house music and the rave civilization seemed out of hand, a moral panic erupted because it was the first time a death arose from the use of ecstasy. One Clare Leighton crumpled, passed out and died during a party in the Hacienda club; it was perceived that she took a pill of ecstasy. When a sixteen-year-old dies out of drug use, then the pills are not just a societal menace but a grave threat. The media received a big blow in that they had initially sponsored an Acid music show and introduced it to the public. They had not only to retreat but also clear their tainted image. Some clubs closed down in response to authority calls, and after a while, the scene looked a little forgotten and died off, and the newspaper stories cleaned it up. Acid houses lost popularity but went to the underground market not as before the death. Funny enough, about two years later, acid house resurfaced as Rave music. Credit was to that hype that came with Acid House in the first instance.

A youth uprising was propelled by the media's moral panic as the stereotypes go that every moral panic has its very evil drug. Stanley Cohen (1972) outlines that the hype created by the newspapers and other media sources led to the hostile reactions and the riots experienced. When the tabloids got dropped, news and directives were never easily identified. The research by Cohen showed that subcultural publications are elements that influence newspaper coverage, especially with the Acid House music conference, but the principles hold some water. Thornton, on the other hand, explains: '…without tabloid intervention, it is hard to imagine a British youth movement. For, in turning youth into the news, the tabloids both frame subcultures as major events and also disassemble them.

## Tabloid Reporting and the Self-Fulfilling Construction of Deviance

A tabloid front page, however, distorted, is frequently a self-fulfilling prophecy; it can turn the most ephemeral fad into a lasting development' (Thornton 1995: 132). Research like the one Stuart Hall conducted in 1978 suggested that media panics sometimes came up to distract the public from very grave social problems. Moral panic over muggings in the early 70s suggested that the mass media was sensitive to the increase of blame and attacks beyond what can be seen, thereby supporting the case for the public's eye to be off the government for a moment, and this helps a great deal in curbing unemployment and crime rise. The target audience to divert their attention often is the young and poor people. Issues like child abuse, rave culture, pornography and drug abuse get dealt with through media panic, thus distracting the general heed to the crucial problems of the slowdown and

maybe civic problems, too.

The government battling the Ravers and Acid House seemed an easy way to win because they would put all the blame for social and moral erosion on them, too; therefore, Acid House or Ravers served as a scapegoat to clear off the government's name. The Sun Touch magazine sold its highest after taking advantage of the Acid situation unlike when they opposed the mission of the civilization as one of the major stories around moral panics. The sun also covered the rave culture with federal litigation. The Sun used a catchy headline to attach Acid House. The tagline went like 'ten thousand drug-crazed youths. 'These were all compositions of an uncompromised attempt to disgrace then destroy the name of rave that was rapidly expanding in the nation. We later find that three years down the line, the company that talked ill of rave talks so sweet about it. How did the sun change their attitude all of a sudden? What made them change? No one has the answers, but for sure, favors go to the growing companies and where there can be gains. High hypocrisy is very evident here, like the Tory bandwagon (Touch December 1991).

In 1991, Rave sprung up with a bang back into the industry, but a mass panic strategy that it went through a year earlier never came up with it. Political and economic convenience looked like the Sun's sole concern, and that's why they shifted from opposing to supporting the Acid. House was in the clubs and licensed places playing music while the ravers were playing their loud Drums and Bass. The Acid House appeared more safe, organized, clean and acceptable means of entertainment all across the country as compared with the Ravers. The primary characterization of the Rave culture was an association with drugs and social immorality. Their venues were all deemed illicit, but they attracted a lot of working-class young people.

# Illegal Gatherings, Public Fear, and the Criminalization of Ravers

The report of evil and good dance has been comprehended well by now. The ravers put up two substantial illegal gatherings that brought it to the limelight, that is, the one in May 1992 at Castlemorton Common and the other at Castle Donnington just months later on. Rave got branded as a social menace, and a call for laws to abolish such kind of partying from taking place without a legal license was in the air. When Leah Betts died in 1995, live press coverage somehow increased, and the parties received some attention. From this event, ecstasy came up to public concern, and the media believed that the stories would intrigue the viewers, readers and listeners' attention. Betts death caused massive media panic, thus damaging the Club's civilization thus forever cleaning the image once and for all. The hotcake for newspapers then became ecstasy where the issue came from raving or clubbing; its coverage was a priority.

From a qualitative research method results, findings show that by going to the parties and getting deep into the raving culture, a literal civilization as a subculture. The youths celebrated years of rave culture and vitality but remained in constant flux, getting new influences and blood after a year. The

assimilation of the society and the cultures slowly merged to influence the British recreational industry. The idea of polished club civilization by the ministry comes out as a perfect marketing strategy for the nightclub because it can result in pure products. (Collin p269 p270 1998). The mainstream media changed the rave culture, resembling some high street dance.

Moral panic is therefore believed to be archaic because of the different levels of media available and that also media moral panics play a vital role in every news reporting. Parts of the ethical model can apply to the mass media as they get deemed as evil folks, leading to public condemnation to enhance public control. Youth amazes the older generation, and it won't stop. The free access to information availability makes the public get liberal to various cultural and social behaviors. The media content that consumers enjoy today is moreover lee, the same as the content they enjoyed yesterday. It is evident that moral panics are always an integral part of news reporting because most of the public is aware of how compromised and scandalous the news is. In a society where Media Avenues believes in rights will be the opposite of what they think on the following day. It is all a matter of politics, convenience, and gain (Garland, 2008).

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