

Club Adorno

Transcript of a roundtable discussion centring on dance music. Participating in the debate were **Tony Lamprey** (resident DJ at the House of Chords club in London, founder of the legendary *Sigh* night), **GX 303** (techno producer based in Middlesbrough, latest EP *Rubber Bullet* out soon) and **Theodor W. Adorno** (leading member of the Frankfurt School of social theory, his publications include *Negative Dialectics* and *The Jargon of Authenticity*). Discussion chaired by **Mandy Leatherall** (reader in sociology at the University of Guildford and experienced clubber).



image: SIMON PAYNE 'CLUB ADORNO'

Mandy Leatherall: Good evening. Before we begin I'd just like to thank our guests for their generous participation in what I'm sure will be a lively and provocative discussion. Particular thanks to you Theodor, as I think you must have had by far the longest journey to get here tonight. OK, so, if I can turn to you first Tony? What do you think has been the defining experience of the British house music scene?

Tony Lamprey: Well, for me there have been so many great clubbing experiences over the years but I suppose that if I had to pick out just one it has to be that feeling of freedom and elation that we first felt in Ibiza during the famous summer of '88. You know what I mean? Pure pleasure—you just can't get that anywhere else.

ML: Theodor, you've been working on critiques of pleasure and aesthetics since before the rest of us were born, in addition to having some famous experience of that first Summer of Love, 1968. What's your position on the Balearic pleasure aesthetic?

Theodor W. Adorno: Here the watchword is 'relax and take it easy', a formula borrowed from the language of the nursing home, not of exuberance. Happiness is obsolete; uneconomic.

TL: What? No. No. I think you're missing the point—it wasn't about making money, it was...

GX 303: Yeah! Yeah! The keyword being "wasn't". I know what the professor means. These housey housey characters are bleedin' morons. Corporate pop house producers making tunes for the under sixteens!

ML: Let's keep it intelligent please.

GX 303: That's what I'm saying to you. These millionaire hippies are an insult to the intelligence.

T.L.: Oh come on! Listen mate, we're all on the same side here you know.

GX 303: Don't fuckin' mate me! I know your type, one of these middleclass flyweights with sun and moon symbols all over your stripped pine scatter cushions.

ML: Any thoughts on that Theodor?

TWA: The tendency to occultism is a symbol of regression in consciousness. Monotheism is decomposing into a second mythology, 'I believe in astrology because I don't believe in God.'

GX 303: Right again Einstein! Fuckin' Notting Hill sun worshippers! Scum of the earth.

ML: Okay. Okay. Let's move on shall we to discuss the clubs that you DJ at. Tony, you tour the country playing to packed houses in Leeds, Manchester and Glasgow but you still turn up on your home turf every Friday. Is that important to you as an artist?

TL: Well, I've been resident at the House of Chords for over four years now and the amazing thing is that the vibe is still so strong after all that time. It just feeds back into the music and seeing all those familiar faces week after week really makes you want to turn on the style, you know.

ML: How would you answer those charges of elitism that some in the music press have levelled at you? After all, that strict door policy of yours is legendary.

TL: Yeah, but it's a necessary evil for any top club. I'm afraid you've got to be selective to keep the atmosphere.

TWA: Professional warmth, for the sake of profit, fabricates closeness and immediacy where people are worlds apart.

TL: Listen mate, there's nothing fake about our atmosphere. You should come down and check it out. Tell you what, why don't I put you on the guest list for 'Sigh' this Friday? If I put you down plus one you could bring a friend.

ML: It is a 'must go' night Theodor, I've been loads of times. Maybe you can take Max? Oh go on!

TWA: What a state the dominant consciousness must have reached, when the resolute proclamation of compulsive extravagance and champagne jollity, formerly reserved to attaches in Hungarian operettas, is elevated in deadly earnest to a maxim of right living.

ML: Look, I appreciate your conception of a fully commodified and administered leisure culture but surely there's room for selfish abandon, or losing control.

GX 303: I think she wants you to cheer up.

TWA: My friend, Schiller's dictum that 'Life is good in spite of it all', has become idiocy now that it is blown into the same trumpet as omnipresent advertising. The entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms. Ever since these cultural forms first began to earn a living for their creators as commodities in the market-place they had already possessed something of this quality.

GX 303: Well, there are chances to stick a spanner in the works, just use a bit of cunning my man.

TL: Why so negative all the time? Honestly, knocking success is like a plague in this country.

GX 303: (laughs) Sometimes it's necessary to squeeze something out of the mainstream, even if it's only money to finance the real tunes. Use a different name in a different style, or whatever takes yer fancy. Listen, are we done yet?

ML: Almost!

TWA: In the age of the individual's liquidation, the question of individuality must be raised anew. While the individual, like all individualistic processes of production, has fallen behind the state of technology and become historically obsolete, he becomes the custodian of truth, as the condemned against the victor. A pencil and rubber are of more use to thought than a battalion of assistants.

GX 303: Or as we say in the old school, a Stylophone is more useful than CD mixer. Thankyou and goodnight.

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