

Then Was The Beat, And It Was Good

Electronic dance music in Singapore: a case of an emergent
post-subculture

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Abstract

Electronic dance music has been a subject of scientific scrutiny for the past four decades. Many-coloured global club culture is most often seen as lacking political and social agenda, purely pastime-related occurrence within youth subculture. However, in different cultural backgrounds electronic dance music may play different roles and occupy different places. This thesis researches the case of electronic dance music in Singapore. It is studied as a newly emergent subcultural formation in the city-state, which opposes local mainstream youth culture. The main argument is that electronic dance music scene can be described as a local expression of a global post-subculture, influenced by factors such as cultural globalisation, specificities of Singaporean music tastes, and cultural and media policies of the state. The work examines the conditions of electronic dance music development, with a special attention to the nation-building processes of Singaporean state and their impact on popular culture. A try to classify the local electronic dance music scene as a subcultural formation is made. Certain predictions about the possible future of its development are attempted. The study is conducted on the basis of interviews with scene participants and professionals, as well as media and historical analysis.

Key words: electronic dance music, Singapore, post-subculture, nation-building, globalization

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1 Introduction

Electronic dance music has been around for over 50 years now, globally – for about three decades (Poschardt 1998; Huq 2006)¹. Nowadays dance music is widespread on the planetary scale, and exists in a variety of forms and genres. Dance music scene is often characterised as a post-subculture, being ‘variously global, diasporic, multifaceted, and hybrid’ (Huq 2006 p. 91). Unlike many other subcultural formations, dance music scene has often been seen by researchers as the one ‘lacking agenda’, not charged politically, and mostly connected to leisure and pastime:

Club culture, like acid house and rave before it, has always been more about having a good time than shaking the establishment to its very foundations or shaking the dominant order (Huq 2006 p. 102).

However, in specific local situations dance music may take different positions and play different roles. It may even be in the underground, and become a basis for statement-making and opposition to the mainstream culture.

This thesis researches the case study of dance music in Singapore as a subcultural formation with its distinct peculiarities, predetermined by a set of conditions.

Singapore has been an independent state for only 45 years. Original Singaporean culture, and popular music in particular, is young, and has been defined by the peculiarities of both its geopolitical location, and state policies:

Since 1960s <...> popular culture in Singapore more and more came to reflect Chinese and Western orientations, perhaps of the very small market for local music and little possibilities of foreign sales. <...> Singapore has also strived to create a cohesive and coherent national identity <...> The government closely monitors and sometimes interferes in artistic expression (Lockard 1998 p. 227, 233)

Some of the music genres have never been present in the city-state; some, as indie-rock, have developed and gained popularity only recently. Nonetheless, the mainstream youth culture and its music taste is quite definite. Electronic dance music in Singapore is a very special case, epithets such as ‘alternative’ and ‘underground’ can be easily applied to it without the guilt of appearing elitist, as dance music scene here has emerged only recently. In this thesis, dance music as a subcultural formation is examined.

The main argument of this work is that electronic dance music can be described as a local expression of a global post-subculture of electronic dance music, influenced by factors such as cultural globalisation, specificities of Singaporean mainstream taste, and cultural and media policies of the state.

¹ Humanity has always danced, and did so to different kinds of music, from tribal drum beats to waltz and polka to hip-hop. However, in this thesis I will talk about a particular kind of music to dance to, which is generally referred to as electronic dance music. As a genre of its own, it appeared in the second half of the 20th century and has developed since in a number of sub-genres, from disco and rave to ambient and downtempo.

1.1 Aim and objectives

The subject of electronic dance music in Singapore has not been researched in-depth so far. There are certain findings on the formation of club culture of the Lion City, but they are yet to be collected into a coherent analysis. This thesis makes a primary attempt of such a research.

The aim of the work is to find out whether electronic dance music scene in Singapore possesses subcultural characteristics, and if so, how can it be defined and classified in the context of global dance music scene, and what factors influence its development. In focus will also be the nation-building and cultural policies of Singaporean state and their possible affect on the local dance music development.

The objective is to analyse how the factors, embedded in the state policies, work together with the development of global music genres, youth forms of self-expression and music choices of Singaporean night clubs. Among other objectives are: to see how these factors influence the way dance music in Singapore has evolved, how it functions in the local conditions; and try to map out the possible patterns of its further development. The endeavours of Singaporean state in relation to culture, state-prompted media policies, and the music tastes of Singaporean population, especially youth, all juxtaposed onto the current situation of the global electronic dance music scene are the coordinates, locating research topic and research question.

The research topic is ‘Electronic dance music in Singapore as a case of an emergent post-subculture’. The main research question this thesis is trying to answer is: ‘What are the main driving forces behind the development, and factors influencing electronic dance music as a scene in the young city-state of Singapore?’

More specific questions to be covered during the analysis are:

- What are the main factors influencing the development of dance music in the local Singaporean, and in the global context?
- What impact do state nation-building policies have on the dance music development?
- What role has media played and what role does it play nowadays in this process?
- How can dance music as a cultural formation in Singapore be defined and classified?
- How does electronic dance music in Singapore fit into the currently existing theorising on youth subcultures?

These questions may seem broad, yet I believe they can be answered within the research, considering that electronic dance music in Singapore is a new occurrence. Theoretical framework for the research is constructed out of several main elements: theories on subcultures, post-subcultures and fan cultures, and their relationship in the research context; research on dance music as a gravity point for subcultural evolvment; and theories on identity in its variety, from understanding of identity as embedded in cultural and discursive practices to the theories on construction of personal identities.

1.2 A note on methods

Methods chosen for the research are predetermined by its qualitative character. The reasons to opt for qualitative methodology derive from the specificities of the research object – electronic dance music scene in Singapore, which is small-scale and has just started its development. As the previous study on Singaporean electronic dance music scene is very limited, any type of coherent research about it has to be started from scratch.

Research aims are directed at uncovering the self-definition of the electronic dance music scene in Singapore, which could only be done by qualitative means. Methods had to be selected accordingly.

Firstly, contextual analysis had to be done in order to realise what are the pre-conditions determining the local development of dance music scene. For this purpose historical and documental research of secondary sources was conducted, including books and articles on Singaporean history, the development of its nightlife and entertainment, general soundscape, as well as the nation-building policies of the state.

In order to better understand the current perception of various expressions of electronic dance music in Singapore, and to add broader current context to the research, media analysis was made.

The main part of the research consisted of interviews with people interested in dance music on various levels, and involved in it as a scene and an industry. Some interviews helped to further contextualise the development of electronic dance music in Singapore.

The chosen methods, working together, created a certain triangular framework, or ‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena’ in order to minimize ‘the biases of one research technique’ (Denzin 2009 p. x, 297; Flick 2006). Via the two-step contextual research, the results of the interview analysis were set off in a more objective manner.

Each of the chosen methods is outlined in more details in the relevant chapters.

2 Theoretical Framework

The research of dance music in Singapore is a study that borders between several theoretical areas: subcultural studies, fan culture studies, research on dance music, and theorising on identity building on personal and nation or state level. This broad framework is applicable to the subject of dance music scene as a locally-specific type of subculture in the historical and socio-economic context of Singapore.

2.1 Theorizing subculture

There are many definitions of a subculture, based on different approaches.

Chicago school of sociology sees subcultures as formations or unities, composed of several factors or ‘factorable social situations’ like class, ethnic background, religion and place of residence. Such unities are considered subdivisions of a national culture (Cressey 1932 p. 46 in: Gelder 2005). For Chicago school, the *urban context* of subcultural development is important (Cressey 1932; Park 1925 in: Gelder 2005). Robert E. Park in his 1925 work *The City* noted the character of the cityscape:

The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in those customs and transmitted in these traditions. <...> city possesses moral as well as physical organization, and these two mutually interact in characteristic ways to mold and modify each other (Park 1925 p. 25- 26 in: Gelder 2005)

The city with its geographical and spatial organization, and human stratification, both rooted in and defined by it, is a vessel, in which the citified ‘customs and traditions’ are contained.

Focus on the cityscape is relevant for the research of subcultural formations in Singapore as a city state. The rooting and evolvement of the subcultural system here may be rather complex, as the city spatially equals the state itself. Therefore, arising subcultures function not simply within the geography of a city, but within Singaporean society at large, with the abovementioned customs and traditions embedded in the whole state development.

Chicago school approaches subcultures as communities of people with various degrees of marginalisation and delinquency, existing in certain urban space. It is developed out of the studies of subcultures in relation to deviance (Park 1925; Cohen 1955; Polsky 1967; Irwin 1970 in: Gelder 2005):

In the great city the poor, the vicious, the delinquent crushed together in healthful and contagious intimacy, breed in and in, soul and body <...> We must accept these ‘moral regions’ and the more or less eccentric people who inhabit them (Park 1925 p. 33 in: Gelder 2005)

Subcultures in this sense possess their own specific 'divergent moral codes' (Park 1925 in Gelder 2005), and their own patterns of *adjustment* (Cohen 1955 in: Gelder 2005), which becomes a key point in their development.

... The ways in which structure of society generates, at each position within the system, characteristic combinations of personality and situation and therefore the problem of adjustment (Cohen 1995 p. 52 in: Gelder 2005)

Sameness or similarity of mechanisms of adjustment, the ways people react to and deal with the same social dissatisfactions is an important factor in the process of unification of individuals into specific subcultures for Chicago school (Gelder 2005; Gelder 2007).

For the case study of dance music in Singapore this approach is helpful, as it opens up a possibility to relate the similar patterns of adjustment to the music taste, somewhat unconventional for Singaporean context. It can help see, whether this taste, and the similarity of adjustment patterns of those sharing it in the city-state musicscape can be a basis for the more or less unified subcultural formation.

Thus, the subcultural studies of Chicago school provide certain concepts and notions, applicable for the electronic dance music scene in Singapore, are the urban context and city-space of subcultural development, as well as unifying patterns or mechanisms of adjustment and 'dealing with dissatisfaction'. In this case it may be dissatisfaction with the mainstream music taste and possibly – rocky path of scene development of those involved in the electronic dance music.

As the Chicago school approach towards subcultures is based on the studies of marginalised sub-strata of society, it has a strong tilt towards treating subcultures as social formations with a high level of delinquency and deviancy. However, this may not be applicable to many of the more recent and contemporary subcultural formations, especially those related to various kinds of cultural expression.

An approach, which focuses on this latter facet of subcultural expression, is found in the Birmingham tradition and cultural studies, based on the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University. Theorists of this school were fascinated by the cultural aspects of self-identification and self-distinguishing patterns of certain groups within particular classes, rather than concentrating on their patterns of adjustment. In this sense it can be said that, as compared to Chicago school, CCCS approach was more focused on the *difference* of the group from society at large, rather than the delinquent core of such groups. Based on the variety of early subcultural studies, Ken Gelder (Gelder 2005) gives a definition of Birmingham school 'modern' subcultures, describing them as groups of people that are in some ways represented as non-normative and/or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do and where they do it (Gelder 2005 p. 2). The main characteristics of a subculture seen here are: firstly, a certain degree of opposition or subordination to the dominant culture (or one of its main aspects, be it property, class, or law); secondly, the everyday, common life practices each particular subculture is embodied into; and thirdly, a limited number of people within this unity. They are also bounded to the society they function in (Fine/Kleinman 1979 p. 2-3).

Birmingham school took a closer look at such means of cultural expression, or 'socially cohesive elements', as preferred music style and manner of dressing (Cohen 1955 p. 89-90 in: Gelder 2005). By developing their specific ways of such

cultural self-expression, subcultures end up with 'construction of style'; this is meaning- and value-laden for each subculture (Hebdige 1979). This contradicts the dominant 'parent culture', which in the understanding of Birmingham school is homogenous and 'monolithic' (Cohen 1972 p. 89; Clarke/Hall/Jefferson/Roberts 1975 p. 95 in: Gelder 2005; Muggleton 2003 p. 7).

The second outcome of the generational conflict <...> was the emergence of the specific youth subcultures in opposition to the parent culture. <...> The succession of subcultures which this parent culture generated can thus all be considered so many variations on a central theme – the contradiction, at an ideological level, between traditional working-class puritanism, and the new hedonism of consumption; at an economic level, between a future of socially mobile elite or as part of the new lumpen proletariat (Cohen 1972 p. 89 in: Gelder 2005).

Even though designation 'lumpen proletariat' is hardly applicable to the modern-day entity of working Singaporean, the Birmingham school approach is relevant to the city-state society. The 'no-nonsense' attitude of the government, where 'Singapore's leaders have been concerned with maintaining (and even strengthening) those aspects of Asian culture <...> promoting hard work, social stability, responsibility, morality and community' (Lockard 1998 p. 233) created a rather homogenous parent culture, highly focused on economic development. Taking up this point is important during researching the case of dance music as a certain type of subcultural formation, as it may somewhat, perhaps unintentionally and unawares, oppose such dominant culture in an 'attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture' (Cohen 1972 p. 89 in: Gelder 2005). In the case of dance music such elements may be embedded in the organic, originally Singaporean culture and art (and its less traditional forms, namely dance music), the development of which has been significantly modified by the state endeavours.

One of the prominent researchers of Birmingham school Dick Hebdige saw subcultures as sign systems within the broader cultural structure, ideology, or hegemony. In his view, subculture can be 'read' and analysed if one can

...discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces of style, to trace them out as maps of meaning which obscurely re-present the very contradictions they are designed to resolve or conceal (Hebdige 1979 p. 18)².

Developing the previous point, this idea of subculture as an ideologically unified small group of people within dominant hegemonic culture is relevant for the research of dance music in Singapore. Mostly because the unification is embedded in the sameness of music taste and the connotations adhered to it, especially if one takes a closer look at the way dance music functions within the cultural, historical and socio-economic conditions of Singapore as a city-state. The 'hidden message', if any, of the local dance music scene, needs to be seen as partly and indirectly tailored with the tools of Singaporean nation-building, and partly by the natural cultural spin-offs.

Yet, the approaches of both Birmingham and Chicago schools do not fully underpin the research of dance music in Singapore as a subculture, and firstly because dance music scene here is rather new. It has fully developed only since

² This approach is similar to that of structuralist, particularly Derrida's idea of deconstruction and looking out for differences (différance) as a mean of reading identity. The two approaches combined, give a tool set for digging into subcultural self-expression in order to reach subcultural 'core'.

1980s in a variety of genres and forms, and nowadays exists as a varied, multi-layered and complex 'meta-genre', which is 'far from being a singular entity' (Huq 2006 p. 90). The specific case of Singaporean dance music scene is also hypothetically rather scattered and diverse, lacking the solid structure.

To diversify and richen theoretical underpinning for the specified case of study a helpful approach is the theory of post-subcultures (Muggleton 1997; Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003; Bennet/Kahn-Harris 2004), which carries necessary elements to complement the conceptual framing of dance music in Singapore as subcultural formation.

The post-subcultural approach focuses on the ways social, cultural and political changes, as well as evolvments of music and youth taste of the post-modern world influence youth organisations, which are described as post-subcultures (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003 p. 2-10). The heaviest part of post-subculturalist critique falls on the Birmingham school approach, which Muggleton sees as tending to treat subcultures as politically charged and undeniably backboned:

Critics of the 'heroic' CCCS model of subculture emphasize that the complexity and shifting nature of the current youth cultural practices can no longer be explained with a framework that imputes to these forms linear temporal logic <...> Group identities ... are no longer formed along traditional structural determinants (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003 p. 6, 12).

The emergence and development of post-subcultures is influenced by the processes of social and cultural fragmentation and technological development, especially development of the Internet and mass media, digital networking and communication platforms, which 'aid what are initially diverse and diffuse cultural fragments to cohere as recognizably defined subcultures' and 'prolong their existence' (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003 p. 8).

Such use by subcultures of contemporary media, especially the Internet, is also a critique point for the 'classical' subcultural research, which

veils the role that the media play in subculture's own internal construction but it posits the media along with the forces of capital and commerce as instrumental in the eventual 'defusion and diffusion' of the subculture (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003 p. 8).

This close relationship with modern-day media is important to take into account for the case of dance music in general with its originally 'hi-fi' character (Huq 2002 in: Hesmondhalgh/Negus 2002; Huq 2006), and especially in technologically advanced Singapore. For the local dance music scene the Internet may be a type of a 'meeting platform'.

The use of various new media fosters the novel forms of connection and communication, which become a basis for 'temporary substream networks' (Weinzierl 2001), which form often short-lived webs and chains of individuals with similar interests and tastes. These temporary networks have unifying identities within which, however, are 'profoundly unstable' (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003 p. 12), fluid and mobile.

Post-subcultures are like 'affectionate tribes' (Maffesoli 1996), they tend to be shiftable in time and space, they are not as rigorous in manner of involvement and participation as the solid and monolithic 'modernist' subcultures with definite ideology. One of the main characteristics of post-subcultures is the high degree of individualism of participants, who place their personal interests higher than the group interests (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003 p. 12). They do not necessarily have

political interest as the guiding force, though may be politicised, but usually 'combine it with fun' (Weinzierl 2001). In any case, it does not necessarily deprives them of certain agenda on a personal level, which can also be shared by many participants and is not necessarily political. In this sense there is

the possibility of authenticity in the activities of post-subcultures, albeit a shifting sense of authenticity in line with postmodernist perspectives on media saturated simulations and ahistorical aesthetic sensibilities (Laughey 2006 p. 46).

In the case of dance music in Singapore it can be contemplated, that as a scene it may have at least some characteristics of a post-subculture with its sheer individualism, underground tastes, fluidity of identity and lack of political agenda (even though another type of agenda might be present).

Subcultural globalisation is a reality in contemporary world. The general post-subcultural development is largely connected in the development of culture on planetary scale. As Douglas Kellner and Richard Kahn state in their article 'Global youth culture',

the thoroughly mediated aspects of today's youth culture, with technology like the Internet able to provide youth the world over with instant access to a wide diversity of cultural styles and artefacts, has led recent theorists to question the applicability of the concept of "subculture" in a global context. (Kellner/Kahn 2003 p. 303)

Contemporary youth cultures 'localize global media influences and globalize local lifestyles', and vice versa (Kellner/Kahn 2003 p. 304).

In the case study of dance music scene in Singapore it should be noted that its development may significantly depend on the global cultural processes. This is connected, firstly, with the abovementioned orientation of Singaporean culture towards the West on the one hand, and the state efforts to maintain certain 'Asian' values, on the other. Such dichotomy creates the unique situation of Singapore, and is a ground for evolvement of dance music in Singapore as a local development of the globally present dance music chain.

It is often pointed out in the research on globalisation of subcultures, that they are increasingly connected with consumption, 'marketing vernacular' (Kjeldgaard/Askegaard 2006), based on the global practices of 'consumer tribes':

Active and enthusiastic in their consumption, sometimes in the extreme, tribes produce a range of identities, practices, rituals, meaning and even material culture itself. <...> They both absorb and resist the pre-packaged, off-the-shelf, brand-and-product meanings of marketers (Cova/Kozinets/Shankar 2007 p. 4).

In this sense, global youth culture is seen as 'a manifestation of a transnational, market-based ideology <...> which serves to cast consumers in certain ways that give rise to certain similarities in their consumption patterns' (Kjeldgaard/Askegaard 2006 p. 231-232)

The shared global consumption practices, which derive from the marketers-fostered commodified coolness (Kjeldgaard/Askegaard 2006), lead to the globally shared systems of preferences, ideas and everyday practices. These globalised practices, nonetheless, are adjusted to the local, traditional backgrounds, and therefore become 'glocalized versions of youth culture, always contextualized locally and always shaped by the global ideoscape of youth and youth consumption practices' (Kjeldgaard/Askegaard 2006 p. 234).

Such *similarity of difference* of cultural consumer goods may be applicable to Singaporean youth at large. However, in the case of local dance music scene as a subculture the situation may be different, despite its transmission channels are similar to those worldwide, such as club nights out, DJ gigs and parties, as well as

CD and MP3 releases. Dance music as a subculture within Singaporean youth, hypothetically, can be driven by forces other than what may be called global consumption ideology of affectionate branding.

Altogether dance music in Singapore, as a subcultural formation, doesn't fall entirely into any theoretical approach. However, when combined, the outlined approaches create a ground for defining this specific case. Hypothetically, dance music scene in Singapore may be defined as a local variation of global post-subculture of dance music in general. The recent history of dance music in Singapore in a sense brings it in some ways closer to the notion subculture in the early understanding of Chicago and Birmingham school, for instance via shared patterns of adjustment and somewhat – ideology. To put it shorter, dance music in Singapore may be defined as a glocal post-subculture with fairly recent history.

2.2 Fan cultures and media

Close to subcultural theories stand fan culture studies. Taking them into account is vital for studying post-subcultural formations, as they are less solid and more individual-practices driven than classical subcultures. In the case of dance music in Singapore as a summation of people with common interest in music, it is important to discern to what extent this entity is a subculture and/or a fan culture.

Central to the concept of fan cultures is the notion of a fan, or 'somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV programme, band; somebody who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom, and can quote their favourite line or lyrics, chapter and verse' (Hills 2002 viii).

Fandom and fan cultures are understood differently by researchers. Often fans are considered a product of media-nurtured celebrity cults:

The fan is understood to be, at least implicitly, a result of celebrity – the fan is defined as a result of star system. This means that passivity is ascribed to a fan – he or she is seen as being brought into (enthralled) existence by the modern celebrity system, via the mass media (Lewis 1992 p. 10).

In this understanding fans are often defined by their utter devotion, which may sometimes border with pathology, to a particular star, and which derives from a blend of 'fandom, celebrity and pressuring media emphasis' (Lewis 1992 p. 11) and may lead fans to becoming 'loners' in their adoration.

Such an approach towards fandom rather sees fans as individuals, affectionately gravitated towards a particular *celebrity* or person, rather than a concept. In this sense it is hardly applicable towards electronic dance music scene in Singapore: firstly because of the lack of celebrities within the dance music culture; and secondly because the fandom in this case, if present, seems more likely to be directed towards certain genres, music mixes or the concept of electronic dance music as such with all the connotations it bears. However, the relationship between the young people interested in dance music with what Lewis calls 'the crowd', and media, as well as the level of passion they have, may be to a certain extent outlined within this notion of fandom.

A milder approach towards fans and fandom is presented by Matt Hills in his Adorno and Bordieu driven work on fan cultures (Hills 2002). Hills sees them as

entities of people with same or similar cultural interest, who are actively involved in promoting this interest and communicating their passion towards it in a variety of ways. He distinguishes three degrees of such involvement: fan, cultist, and enthusiast, which are differentiated by the 'spectrum of identities and experiences, distinguishing between them by liking increased specialisation of interest, social organisation of interest and material productivity' (Hills 2002 vii).

Hills sees fan cultures as being close to the abovementioned cultures of 'global consumption'. They form communities, originating within hierarchically mediated cultural flows:

While simultaneously 'resisting' the norms of capitalist society, and its rapid turnover of novel commodities, fans are also implicated in these very economic and cultural processes. Fans are, in one sense, ideal consumers' (Cavicci 1998:62) since their consumption habits can be very highly predicted by the culture industry, and are likely to remain stable. But fans also express anti-commercial beliefs (or 'ideologies', we might say, since these beliefs are not entirely in alignment with the cultural situation in which fans find themselves) (Hills 2002 p. 29).

Such understanding of fans is, on the one hand, close to the post-subcultural theorising – the ideology of scattered fandom is similar to that of sparse and atomic post-subcultures, unified by a set of shared ideas, beliefs, attachments. On the other hand, it differs from the post-subcultural approach, as the identity of a fan remains stable, unlike the ever-changing identity of a post-subculture participant. In this sense such approach is both complementary to the subcultural studies, and relevant for the case study of electronic dance music scene in Singapore. It may possess certain characteristics of a fan culture in Hills understanding, considering the patterns of involvement in dance music within the existing in Singapore hierarchical cultural flows and ways of exercising and possibly spreading the cultural interest of dance music fans.

One more view focuses on the creative aspect of post-modern fandom, which goes beyond passive intake (Jenkins 2006). According to Henry Jenkins, fan culture participants are involved in the processes of cultural consumption and re-consumption, and exercise their interest through activities such as fan writing, fan video making, artistry, and so on. According to Jenkins, One becomes a 'fan not by being a regular viewer of a particular program, but by translating this viewing into some kind of cultural activity <...> For fans, consumption naturally sparks production' (Jenkins 2006 p. 41).

Such creative expressions of fandom should be taken into account while researching dance music scene in Singapore. Here, in the conditions of widespread new media, it can be exercised in a variety of ways from making own mixed CDs to DJing. Yet, the division between fandom and being involved in dance music as a subcultural formation might be a fine line in each particular case. The integrity of electronic dance music scene as an emergent subcultural formation may depend on the level of emotional attachment of its fans, and the fan-based promotion of dance music to the broader audiences.

In general, fan cultures theorising is helpful while answering the questions about the participant identity, patterns of interest expression, etc. of dance music scene in Singapore.

2.3 Global dance music subculture – a local thing

Dance music is a ‘meta-genre’, based on technology of sampling and scratching, as well as the use of various computer-based techniques. It is characterised by the ‘complexity of the overlapping plural scenes’ (Huq 2006 p. 90).

Electro and dance music has been a special research subject of musicology and cultural studies since the late 1960s – early 1970s. It appeared first in the USA in forms of house and disco, and for a long time was the music of minorities, sexual and ethnic (Poschardt 1998 p. 22, 101-112). Since then dance music was mainly driven ‘by a longing for more freedom and self-determination’ (Poschardt 1998 p. 22), unlike the many politically-embedded subcultures as, for example, hippie or punk. As a globally widespread system of genres it exists since late 1980s, deriving from the 1970s heritage of disco and 1980s electronica (Huq 2002 in: Hesmondhalgh/Negus 2002). It is important to keep in mind the origins of dance music when putting it into the particular historical, social and cultural context of Singapore, where the culture is young, and the youth is still seeking its own face.

Research on dance music, so far unabundant, can be divided into two main categories: historical research (Poschardt 1998; Gilbert/Pearson 1999; Dyer 2002 p. 151-161), and research on dance music as a subculture (Thornton 1995; Huq 2002, 2006; Hesmondhalgh 2000; Roberts 2004).

Historical research is directed towards understanding the underlying forces behind and grounding principles of dance music development. Dance music is often portrayed as a ‘body-oriented’ music form (Poschardt 1998), aimed solely at having a good time, and most often not expressing any kind of social or political position. It is perceived as inauthentic, commercial product of leisure consumer society:

Much of the hostility to disco stems from equation of it with capitalism. Both in how it is produced and what it expresses, disco is held to be irredeemably capitalistic (Dyer 2002 p. 151)

Still, over the years dance music has developed a wide spectrum of genres and sub-genres from house to disco to rave and trance, and a variety of adjacent music forms (ambient, chill out, drum-n-base, acid jazz, etc.). As a notion, it embraces both global ‘mass’ pastime and club music type, as well as very underground, abstract and obscure genres (Huq 2006).

The dialectic of the genre spectrum development is better understood and explained by the research on dance music as a *subculture*. It was mostly conducted during and about the period of late 1980s - mid 1990s, when dance music became extremely wide-spread and popular, mainly in the four forms – rave, trance, techno and house (Poschardt 1998; Huq 2006). In the early 1990s it was closer to the subculture in its ‘modern’, Birmingham school understanding: dance music was mostly associated with the visually expressive rave and techno ‘tribes’ with the bright, almost costume-like outfits of ‘acid kids’; it existed temporally and spatially in the nightclubs, and even had its very own widely popular clubber Meccas – legendary clubs as Gatecrasher, Ministry of Sound, Pacha, etc (Poschardt 1998).

Nowadays, after three decades of global development, defining dance music as a subculture is more problematic. On the one hand, it possesses certain ‘anti-

establishment' connotations, mainly deriving from association of some forms of dance music with drugs, particularly ecstasy. The latter became a subject of media-scrutinised moral panics (Holland 2001; Thornton 1995; Huq 2002). Resistance, 'celebratory and rebellious opposition' to such perception cause the raise of subcultural capital of the dance music scene (Thornton 1995). On the other hand, dance music and club culture can hardly be considered a subculture *sensu stricto*:

Whether contemporary dance music cultures display the traditional characteristics of subcultures in being tightly-bonded, high-visibility, fringe-defined working class group, or can even be conceived of as a "youth culture", is a complicated case... Club culture, like acid house and rave before it, has always been more about having a good time than shaking the establishments to its very foundations or challenging the dominant order (Huq 2006 p. 91, 102).

Huq Rupa considers dance music to generally possess more post-subcultural characteristics with its 'overlapping scenes' and shifting identities (Huq 2002 in: Hesmondhalgh/Negus 2002). Among such characteristics is the 'worldwide' nature of dance music cultures in the 1990s and early 2000s, embodied in arising of the planet-scale club-space and 'post-rave tourism' (Huq 2006; Hesmondhalgh 2002; Roberts 2004). Rave, techno and house parties attract clubbers all over the world to the places like Argentina and Brazil to London to Ibiza to Goa and back again. The 'tribalism' and 'neo-paganism' of electronic dance culture draws inspiration from various kinds of music from a variety of localities (Carrington/Wilson 2004 in: Bennett/Kahn-Harris 2004; Bennett 2006 in: Bennett/Shank/Toynbee 2006).

Certain subcultural and post-subcultural characteristics of dance music are applicable to the particular case study of Singapore. It can be said that dance music, being a globally shifting meta-genre, was imported to the Lion City. Therefore its local development can be highly dependent on global trends. The roles it plays in the city-state can be similar to those dance music played on the dawn of its history in other local contexts, such as USA and the UK. Among these roles, for instance, is active expression of one's sexuality and opposition to the mainstream culture (Poschardt 1998). Dance music as a scene is not necessarily 'commodified' and 'capitalistic' in Singapore.

It should be noted, that the most recent stage of evolvement of dance music at large, is characterized by appearance and development of new genres. They are based on collaboration and convergence between typical dance music sounds and other genres, such as pop, rock, indie-rock and post-punk. Among these new forms are what some journalists and music critics call, with a degree of ambiguity, *new rave* and *new disco*. They have been ruling both dance-floors and street fashion since 2006 (Dazed & Confused no. 164 Sept 2008; i-D no. 270 Oct 2006; NME Oct 10 2006), when British band The Klaxons released their single 'Magick', followed by the album 'Golden Skans' a year later. Even though these new music trends gained popularity among listeners and are widely covered in mass media, they are yet to be given serious academic attention.

This fresh development of dance music, which was 'edgy' and new in 2006 (i-D Oct 2006), is becoming increasingly popular and widespread on the global scale. This music fashion should be kept in mind while researching the pathways contemporary dance music takes in the local places.

The case study of dance music in Singapore is complex in a sense of defining the type of subcultural formation it is, the roles it plays, and the level of popularity

it enjoys in Singaporean context. As a young formation in this local place, its current development may be similar to the early stages of dance music culture; as a rather recent genre in Singapore it may originally possess many post-subcultural characteristics, inherent to dance music as a meta-genre.

2.4 Identity, a matter of many layers

The concept of identity, which is central to any the study case related to subculture, is one of the most complex notions. There are several theoretical approaches, concerning identity and the processes of its shaping, which can be applied to the case study of dance music in Singapore. Firstly, these are approaches concerning the personal identification or ‘construction of self’. Secondly, it is theorising on nation-building and state building in relation to shaping group identity, which is particularly important, considering Singapore’s postcolonial heritage. While researching how subcultural interests are intertwined with personal levels and forms of self-identification, as in the case of dance music in Singapore, it is necessary to bear in mind these two grounding perceptions of identity.

In the common-sense understanding,

identity is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin of shared characteristics if another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation (Hall 2000 p. 16).

The ‘traditional’ perception of identity is defined in categories of ‘all-inclusive sameness without internal differentiation’, stability and something inherent to a person by birth, before the person enters society (Hall 2000 p. 18).

This way of understanding identity has been widely critiqued, especially in works on structural linguistics and philosophy of deconstruction (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault). In this approach, which we may refer to as cultural, or discursive take on identity (Hall 2000 p. 17), it is perceived as anything but pre-determined, fixed and stable. On the contrary, in the structuralist (and generally postmodernist) approach identity is seen as something socially constructed, embedded in language and conditions of existence. Individuals become subjectified, their identities shaped by means of discourse practices – whether these are dominant, power discourses, or subordinanted discourses, which in Foucauldian sense are not just forms of representation, but also the ‘material condition (or set of conditions) which enables and constrains the socially productive ‘imagination’ ’ (McHoul/Grace 1995 p. 34).

The very idea of *constructing* identity presupposes presence of certain elements, of which the identity is composed. Abovementioned social conditions, language and discursive practices can be considered such elements. However, be these only elements of construction, identities would be if not same then increasingly similar on the broad scale. Yet, this does not happen. An explanation of how identities become personified is found in the work of Derrida. He considers the matter of personalising or ‘customising’ identities in differences, or *différance* (Stocker 2006). For Derrida, the inimitable combination of ‘traces of traces’ within language, culture, symbols and signs of various character, to which individual or social body

happens to be exposed, become definite for the outcome of the identity-construction process (Derrida 1972 in: Du Gay/Evans/Redman 2000). This conjunction is predetermined by unique time-space coordinates for each particular case:

Whether we are concerned with the verbal or written sign, with monetary sign or with electoral delegation and political representation, the circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself, make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence (Derrida 1972 p. 87 in: Du Gay/Evans/Redman 2000)

Thus, in postmodernist and structuralist view, the combination of social pre-conditions and discourses creates a unique set of mosaic pieces for shaping one's personal identity, or 'constructing a self' (Côté, Levine). This is particularly relevant for the state of postmodernity, when identities 'are increasingly fragmented and fractured' and may operate in the conditions different from those in which they were 'originally generated', adjusting accordingly (Hall 2000 p. 15, 17). In the view of Stuart Hall, postmodern identity 'is such a concept – operating 'under erasure' in the interval between reversal and emergence' (Hall 2000 p. 16).

Structuralist approach can be applied to the case study, as it helps to see how personal identities in Singapore are pre-determined by the set of historical, social and cultural circumstances, postcolonial heritage, multilingualism, as well as the power discourses of the Singaporean state.

However, structuralist approach has its limitations. It tends to view individuals and social bodies merely as objects of construction, even on cross-border with manipulation, as passive mobs with no share of voice. This position, even though true to a certain extent, especially considering the all-pervading character of contemporary mass media, seems somewhat pessimistic. Individuals, despite being undoubtedly influenced by all the conditions they are born or brought into, are not completely deprived of power to make their own choices. For the case study of dance music scene in Singapore it is important to note how these choices are made under the conditions of heavily mediated state messages, as well as general mass tastes of young Singaporeans.

In order to read and, to use Derrida's terminology, deconstruct subcultural identity of dance music in Singapore and unveil the factors which influence it, it is important to have a look at the ideology of state and nation-building as a defining tool of the construction of national identity. This type of identity is different from the 'construction of self' of a single individual; it is directed at unification and homogenisation of persons under the wing of state.

For Singaporean state, it took much endeavour to intertwine personal identities with the nation-wide and state identities (Stockwell 2005 in: Wang 2005; Lau 2005 in: Wang 2005). It was embodied in nation building policies, and reflected in the official ideology. Nation-building can be defined as a process of constructing a sense of a nation within particular state, aimed at creating a unity within the state, national identity, and connections of various types between the state and its population. The process of nation-building, or 'forging a nation' (Stockwell 2005 p. 191 in: Wang 2005) most often takes place in the newly independent, post-colonial states, for example African or Southeast Asian states in 20th century (Bhabha 2000 in: Du Gay/Evans/Redman 2000). Thus, creating national identity is often associated with forming a stable and sustainable state, a people unity. In the case of Singapore, which had originally been 'an immigrant society', this process took a

shift towards pursuing 'modern goals and has planned for a future in which city-state will remain indispensable to the region' (Stockwell 2005 p. 212 in: Wang 2005). The nation-building processes in Singapore have been defined by a set of local-specific factors:

Nation-building here is also different from the experience elsewhere in Southeast Asia largely because of the features that distinguish the island from its neighbour, such as size, location, commercial traditions and Chinese minority (Stockwell 2005 p. 212 in: Wang 2005)

Among other factors, the diversity of population and co-existence of several main ethnic groups needs to be looked at closely. It makes the case of state-identity building in Singapore particularly complex, as it is not an ethnically homogeneous state. Officially such ethnic division is described by the CMIO model: Chinese, Malay, Indian and 'others', which mostly refers to Eurasian population and 'Westerners' (Teo/Chang 2000 p. 125). Therefore the process of building a nation here can not be evolved around a single ethnicity or a single language, which is considered one of the factors to defining a nation (Wright 2000). In order to avoid ethnic tensions and create a sense of unity within one state, Singaporean government had to tailor the identity-building of the city-state with amendment to these socio-cultural pre-conditions, and opt for multiculturalism and 'ethnically neutral meritocracy' as a state ethnic ideology (Brown 1992). English became the main official language, understood and used by the majority of citizens.

As a result, the nation-level identity in Singapore seems to be somewhat dichotomous: more narrow ethnic identities of the four groups of Singaporean population on the one hand, and common 'Singaporean' identity within state at large on the other.

While researching self-identification of dance music participants in Singapore, cultural, historical, economic, geopolitical conditions of the city-state should be taken into account. They make the process of construction of self here increasingly complex. In each particular case the identities may be notably multilayered, and shaped on several levels, such as: personal, subcultural, ethnic, class, and Singaporean nation at large. In this sense, the *différance* embedded in ones' personal life-story and cultural interests might be balanced by the state-prompted, more homogenous identification according to ethnicity and nation at large. Naturally, not every identification level may necessarily be present. This is important for the case of dance music scene in Singapore as a subcultural formation, where dance-related identity may overwhelm other identities. The strength of the scene-participants' identities in relation to dance music can give a clue as to what extent it can be considered a subcultural formation, and how solid it is. The role of state-prompted discourses is to be noted while researching the factors, which have influenced general subcultural development of the city-state.

In general, the study case of electronic dance music scene in Singapore may be an exception to the discourse and structuralist analysis of 'construction of self', and even contradict it at times.

3 Singaporean context: Nation-building, Culture, Media

3.1 Socio-cultural context of Singapore and dance music development

3.1.1 Method: Secondary Analysis

The context analysis of the relationship between socio-cultural situation in Singapore and local electronic dance music scene development was done using the technique of secondary analysis, on the basis of the ‘information, collected by others and archived in some form’ (Stewart/Kamins 1993 p. 1; Gidley 2004 in Seale: 2004). Secondary analysis was conducted in order to contextualise the primary research within the already-established theoretical and historical discourse around Singaporean culture. It aimed to see how it relates to the specific case of the local dance music scene.

The data which I was interested in during my secondary research was mainly factual and historical material, as well as some data which could shed light on the *perspectives*, included in the research (state, culture, electronic dance music scene). As Stewart and Kamins note, ‘the fact that secondary data were collected for particular purposes may produce problems’ (Stewart/Kamins 1993 p. 6), such as data outdated and aggregation of a particular type of sources, as well as ‘borrowing the logic’ of the secondary sources (Booth/Colomb/Williams 2008 p. 93). To reduce the possibility of these problems, the chosen sources were of several types:

- Books
- Scholarly articles
- Other research data (dissertations and academic exercises of the National University of Singapore researchers and students)
- Some historical and current official documents and statements

Perspectives were diversified by taking up varied sources: literature included in the National University of Singapore curriculum (esp. historical books); works published in the regional Southeast Asian and global scholarly journals; some unpublished material, available at the National University of Singapore library; and as several online sources, such as governmental bodies websites, club websites, etc. Data topics concerned the history of Singaporean state, its entertainment system, nation-building and multiculturalism policies, and the relation of the latter to the development of culture, especially popular and electronic dance music.

3.1.2 Nation-building on the dance floor: Historical pathways of pop-culture in Singapore

Today Singapore is a highly developed state, where multiethnicity, multiculturalism and modernity are the key notions, shaped in the city's past and prompted by the state. Heterogeneous cultural life of contemporary Singapore can be described as postmodern with diverse historical influences and multilingualism (Khiun 2003 p. 217-219). At the same time, it is a vibrant urban milieu, influenced by global cultural processes. This also goes for music, and especially when it concerns nightlife (Kong 2006 p. 103). There are several key factors shaping cultural scene of the Lion City, which have also predetermined the development of electronic dance music scene here.

Dance music in Asian context

In Singapore as a South-East Asian state music scene is defined by two main routings: local traditions and global influence. Symbiosis of the two appears in shapes of unique local-specific popular music forms and genres, based on the use of regional languages, and modern global technology and music trends.

Cultural inflections and political and economic distinctions such as these within Asia enable us to claim that the materiality in which pop music is always embedded gives rise to cosmopolitan flows, political temporalities, and aesthetic industries that are not translatable as arbitrary signifiers of a unified regionalism or universal globality. (Chun/Rossiter/Shoesmith 2004 p. 6)

Postcolonial Southeast Asian states' music is highly defined by 'the seeming dominance of Anglo-American pop music', which in recent years, however, is giving way to larger local adaptations (Mori 2007 p. 7). The influence of Anglophone dance music and club culture is still unsurpassed, with the electronic and dance-music production and market mostly located in the USA and Western Europe. However, it is acknowledged that geographically dance music centres have been moving around the world, and reached Asian states:

Importantly through Englishness itself is redefined by rave and its offshores which include entities such as the 'New Asian Dance Music' (Sharma et al 1996 p. 98 in: Huq 2006)

In Singapore, along with partial adhering to patterns of regional cultural development at large, the evolvement of culture and music has taken a unique path. The popularity of Anglophone music here is explained by the very origin of the city-state, which emerged as a British colony and homed several ethnic groups. Thus, the notion of multiethnicity here is prompted at a state level (Kong 2006).

"State music policies also serve as a means of control and management over the (re)production of music and culture" (Ching 2001 p. 20).

Despite possessing a developed entertainment infrastructure, Singaporean music scene evolvement and the state's take on it have shown remarkable changes through the time. The history of Singaporean entertainment system started in the last decades of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. First dance venues appeared in forms of jazz clubs in the 1920s or dance spaces in casinos, such as the New World Casino, created following the Western models (Wong/Tan 2004). Urban lifestyle of the island started to shape, with nightlife as its characteristic feature. Since the city, being a port, became one of the largest centres of commerce

in Southeast Asia, it had to offer its visitors proper pastime infrastructure (Turnbull 1989 p. 135-138). However, for security reasons, there was no nightlife sensu stricto: 'Entertainment was pleasant but restrained, all hotels restaurants and clubs closed at midnight' (Turnbull 1989 p. 137).

Nation-building and popular music in Singapore

First years after the independence, mid-1960s and 1970s, were an economically tough period for Singapore. Arising business development and the heterogeneous society made the government of the newly emergent state look for ways to build an original identity and keep the population united (Rajaratnam 1972). Thus, Singaporean state decided to adopt the policy of nation building, and to a certain extent opposed to the West: the government re-emphasized the

contours of a moral geography at the scale of the global, distinguishing between a "moral" "national" polity and an immoral "rest of the world", particularly the "west". In this, he argued that to wean young people from rock was for "the benefit of the country's security", for a "small, closed society like Singapore" could not "afford" this type of liberalization (Kong 2006 p. 105).

In this situation culture and music functioned as tools, which the state used to create the spirit of community and nationhood. Various actions took place in this respect: from concerts and dance events, to fostering the popular music performers to compose and perform songs in "Singaporean" spirit (Kong 2006 p. 107-108). Trying to keep its young population under control, and seeing arising popular culture as a potentially destabilising element, Singapore's press started a campaign against the 'dirty' Western music and 'immoral' behaviour it causes (Kong 2006). Interesting enough, independence of Singapore coincided with the emergence of dance music as a genre in the American house parties, where it became a way of self-expression and liberalisation (Huq 2006, Poschardt 1998).

Popular music genres like rock, which were all about being carefree, seemed dangerous to the government of the young state, struggling under economic pressure. It comes as no surprise that then-emergent disco also fell under the category of 'immoral' cultural activity. However, the country that was historically influenced by the West could not but follow emerging global trends (Rajaratnam 1972). Therefore, state's efforts to cause moral panics and make young Singaporeans turn away from Western popular music were not very successful. Eventually, Singaporean government had to realise that 'in order to stay in touch with the public, it had to acknowledge some of the public's social-cultural preferences and embrace some of its activities' (Kong 2006 p. 105).

At that time state-prompted discourse shifted slightly towards accepting new lifestyles and music influences. Locally produced Anglophone popular music, most appealing to the youth, was viewed as a tool of national 'heritage' construction.

Given the directions and emphases outlined by the Committee on Heritage, the question of why the National Archives, a state organisation, has become involved in questions of popular music heritage in Singapore arises. If there is any aspect of heritage that is ordinary and everyday, it is popular music (Kong 1999 p. 10).

1980s were marked by a dramatic rise in popularity of disco dance culture. Singapore became a place with its very own map of nightlife, including nightclubs as major dance music venues. The largest discotheques and clubs, however, were all quite mainstream, described by epithets such as 'rather low standards' in music with

music policy of an average top-40 radio (Dingwall/Swabey 1989 p. 28). As a result, disco and other dance music genres never became popular; dance music didn't seriously establish itself as a well-sustained scene in Singapore.

The state's take on popular music was more in line with the 'nation building' policies, with many state-prompted activities, related dance and rock music:

This propelled a slew of activities in the next few years that appropriated rock/pop to serve state objectives: the Singapore Police Force organized Police Rock Concerts (1985, 1986) and disco nights (1986, 1987), and the National Crime Prevention Council a Let's Rock Concert (1986). From 1988 to 1990, Orchard Road also came alive near National Day (Kong 2006 p. 106).

All in all, 1980s laid a ground for the dichotomous relationship between the state and private sector, related to dance music. For instance, the privately owned venues are used for the state-organised pop-culture events (ex. launch of the official youth online portal Youth.sg in the Ministry of Sound club in 2006).

1990s were the dance music decade, with newly emergent genres rave, trance and techno being most noticeable. Singapore, that had by the time become a highly-developed and stable state, took up an idea of 'modernity' on official level (Kong 1999; Ching 2001). Now the government aimed for the Lion City to become a cultural capital as well. This line was marked by the creation of the National Arts council (NAC) in 1996. NAC holds events, designed to even further unite population in one spirit, and to make Singapore a culturally developed city.

The Committee has <...> recommended that other aspects of Singapore's heritage be viewed as "national assets", with "monetary value as antiques and works of art" and as "a valuable tourism asset", "mak[ing] us different and interesting for visitors" (Committee on Heritage Report 1988, 3). (Kong 1999 p. 9)

Special attention was paid to the popular music, and dance music as a part of it (Kong 1999). NAC events in many ways paved a way to the massive outdoors music and dance events (www.nac.gov.sg).

Following global trends, in the 1990s Singapore experienced a fast-paced growth of club scene, with places like Zouk club opening up. The whole soundscape and nightlife organisation started taking its current shape. The major event that asserted Singapore's status of a world-level music city was opening here the head office of MTV Asia 1992. It, on the one hand, prompted the development of the local scene not only in Singapore, but also in the whole region, broadcasting videos from local performers and bands (though mostly those that fit into the MTV style) (Kwong 1997/98 p. 69). On the other hand, MTV Asia format had limited coverage of certain genres, electronic dance music among them. The development of interest in electronic music, somewhat fostered by the global trends, wasn't maintained in Singapore on the broader scale locally.

In the beginning of the 21st century long-lasting attempts of the state to create a community feel and a 'Singapore style' had to be tailored according to the global cultural development. One of the steps in this direction was the creation of a series of annual events to make the city attractive for the visitors from all over the world (Kong 2006). Concerts of internationally known performers, as well as many music and arts festivals shape the cultural life of Singapore today (<http://www.nac.gov.sg/mus/mus05.asp>).

Local nightlife took a very distinct shape, with many independent clubs appearing on the scene. Among the opened venues that became gathering points for

the local clubbers and tourists became, along with Zouk, St James Power House, Attica, The Butter Factory. They invite DJs from Asia and world-known international acts. Playing there also helps local DJs to promote and develop their work (Juice Sept 2008 p. 54-60). Yet, as can be seen from the websites of popular Singaporean clubs, not many of them nowadays play electronic dance music.

Both state attempts in nation building and the predominant notion of 'modernity', and independent music scene development, as well as good economic situation and safety created a favourable setup for the evolvement of local nightlife and club culture. It became a natural cultural by-product, adjacent to the urban setting and high-level business development. However, along with the positive sides, such as general scene development and attraction of international acts, vibrant nightlife as the defining factor of youth lifestyle has its drawbacks. Among them are the orientation towards more mainstream music, lack of genre diversity in the night clubs and on the radio, and hardships with production and appreciation of certain local scenes, including electronic dance music.

Cultural development in Lion City was from the start largely connected with the state policies of nation-building and promoting multiculturalism and modernity as the main notions of Singaporean culture. Attitudes towards both international and locally produced popular music shifted with time more than once. Eventually, it leads to the vast exposure of Singaporean audiences to global popular music, mainly pop, R'n'B, and some rock, jazz and classical music. Local music development from the state side was fostered towards the production of what may be called 'patriotic' music in local-specific genres – firstly Anglophone, and later ethnic-specific, for example Cantonese pop, Malay pop and hip-hop, ethnic music, etc. The National Arts Council officials in the e-mail interview defined Singaporean cultural landscape in the following way:

As Singapore is an immigrant society, a Singaporean culture draws its roots from the origins of her ancestors from the Asian region e.g. we see that rites, rituals and expressions of the Malay, Chinese, Indian communities being practice in current times. Besides being rooted in the traditional Asian heritage of its multi-cultural population, the Singaporean culture also offers perspectives of a young cosmopolitan city. Singapore is a confluence of east and west, tradition and modernity.

With an impact on preserving and developing cultural heritage of its multiethnic population, as well as building of Singaporean nationhood, electronic dance music could hardly be among the state's set of priorities. In fact, in Singapore in the grass-root understanding collocation 'dance music' rather relates to the various types of ethnic music and different genres of dance (Cheng 1998/99), rather than the electronic scene and night-out pastime. NAC in its overview of dance music says:

The dance industry in Singapore is increasingly vibrant with various dance groups representing different races and cultures performing in a wide variety of genres. There were almost 500 dance performances in 2003 compared to 112 in 1993. <...> The ethnic dance scene in Singapore is equally dynamic with a strong focus on dance training and education. (<http://www.nac.gov.sg/dan/dan01.asp> April 28, 11:30).

Singaporean recording industry, which consists of no more than a dozen of recording companies (12 companies in the Record Association in Singapore) specialises on the above-mentioned locally popular genres (Lockard 1998 p. 208; <http://www.rias.org.sg/rias.html>). At times it causes artists to move away from Singapore to other parts of the world:

Most musicians struggle to earn a living; they face a declining number of performing venues, modest recording contracts, sojourning foreign competition, and the difficulty of breaking into foreign markets (local English recordings are still discouraged and

unmarketable). This situation has led some musicians to move to the United States <...> or Australia <...> to seek wider opportunities and creative challenges. Peter, a bona fide star, attributed her 1989 migration to persistent frustration with the rigid formulae and modest pay of the local record industry (Lockard 1998 p. 259)

Such situation is also a challenge for Singaporean electronic music producers. However, at the current stage of electronic music development, recording and production per se is not such an obstacle in terms of music production. The industry is digitalised, with tracks created by electronic equipment or a computer and distributed online (Puckette 2007). However, general lack of the local industry support falls back on the development of Singaporean dance music scene.

3.2 Media and cultural production – dance music and its point of representation in Singapore

Modern-day media play a large role in social construction, in production and reproduction of societal normality. Media representation affects the course of social, and cultural development (Hesmondhalgh/Toynbee 2008). In order to add texture to the research and see the ways dance music discourses in Singapore are shaped, and how media policies and journalistic attitudes may influence the general perception of electronic dance music at its current stages of development, media analysis was conducted.

Two mass media were chosen for the analysis: Juice magazine, and the Straits Times Singapore newspaper. These sources can be considered purposefully ‘extreme cases’ (Flick 2006 p. 131). Taking up the extreme cases is helpful as ‘the field of the study is disclosed from its extremities to arrive at an understanding of the field as a whole’ (Flick 2008 p. 27). Drawing on the differences and similarities in the debate of the two extremities, the analysis helps to create a broader outlook at the development of electronic dance music scene in Singapore.

Straits Times is a popular, mass, can even be said tabloid-type paper, read by all categories of Singaporeans. It covers wide range of topics from politics and local news to arts and leisure (Seow 1998 p. 7). It belongs to Singapore Press Holding (SPH), and is arguably considered the voice of the government. As of August 2006, its circulation was 388,500 copies.

Juice is an independent, freely distributed magazine, and published in a number of 30000 copies. It is considered to be the only magazine in Singapore, dedicated to electronic dance music and adjacent genres. Juice also covers fashion, mainly in relation to music. Therefore the magazine somewhat weaves a *subcultural* palette of contemporary Singapore in relation to the global development.

In the case of music debate, the broad focus of Straits Times is opposed to the narrow, very music-targeted position of Juice magazine. Research sample comprised six issues of Juice in August – February 2008, and music coverage in Straits Times from 1st December 2008 to 20 January 2009. The timeframe was chosen for comparability reasons. Juice is a monthly magazine, utterly dedicated to electronic dance music scene, as admitted by the editor Wayne Lee. Straits Times is

a daily newspaper, and has certain music coverage in every issue of its culture/lifestyle supplement *Life!*. Specific position of Straits Times in Singaporean mediascape predetermines the way music coverage is shaped: it has to be targeted at a broader audience, and messaging might take a certain angle. Electronic dance music coverage here is limited. The analysis of media debate complements the information, received from the interviews with Wayne Lee, editor of Juice magazine, and Eddino Abdul Hadi, the Straits Times music reporter. (See Appendix for journalist profiles)

3.2.1 Method of media analysis

Media analysis was conducted in order to see whether the existing debate on electronic dance music in Singapore relates to the hypothesis of it being a type of subcultural formation, and how so. The purpose was not only to look at the ‘on-surface’ coverage, but to ‘illuminate deeper meaning which may be revealed by their style and coverage’ (Ritchie/Lewis 2003 p. 35). Another purpose was to bring light to topical and categorical spots, which have not been discussed during the interviews. It is not, however, discourse analysis as a study of sources in its own right, but rather a review of coverage, relevant for the general research.

Since media research per se was not the main focus of this study, the chosen technique was simple yet, I believe, efficient for this particular case. After collecting data from both of the sources, it was decided to do a separate analysis within the topicality of electronic dance music. The second step was the comparison of obtained topics and categories between the media, and of the *manner* of dance music coverage of each source. Analysis followed several steps:

1. As suggested by David L. Altheide (Altheide 1996 p. 26-28), firstly a short *protocol* of the study was made. It contained: titles of the media, number of coverage, topical areas or categories brought up in the interviews which were later to be broadened in some cases by analysis the media coverage.
2. Secondly, the *articles related to electronic dance music as such were chosen*; with noting those which had to do with dance music in Singapore.
3. Next, key concepts within main *frames, themes and formats* were noted for each source (Altheide 1996 p. 28-29). Altheide suggests outlining communication formats of each media as a main conceptualising point. However, in our case it seemed unnecessary, as the format of both media was quite clear. Thus, the focus was more on the coverage as such, rather than the policies of each media.
4. Then, *frames* and *themes* were categorised in two ways: firstly, divided into broader categories between themselves; and secondly, in accordance with the categories established in the interviews. In this way, the analysis, still being independent in findings, complemented the main research.

Special attention was paid to the language as a ‘medium of access to social and cultural phenomena’ (Jensen 2002 p. 240). It both helped understand journalistic attitudes, and see the connotation of dance music connotations inscribed in the articles. In this sense, the analysis bore some similarities with semiotic

interpretation (Berger 2004 p. 15-17). It supported the topical and categorical data of the content analysis, rather than deconstructing the whole narration system of the chosen media. The analysis was more focused on the connotations as ‘the symbolic, historic and emotional matters’, attached to the journalistic texts on dance music.

Lastly, media analysis was placed next to the general context analysis of Singaporean situation. It created what David Altheide calls ‘the double loop of analysis’ or ‘developing a general approach to relevant documents as information and, second, placing these documents in a context of meaning to interpret them’ (Altheide 1996 p. 53).

Altogether, the method was designed to take a look ‘from the outside in’ in order to complement the main (interview) analysis.

3.2.2 Electronic dance music in Singaporean media

Juice magazine

Juice is a Singaporean magazine with a decade long history. The magazine started off as a nightlife publication in 1998 and began as a somewhat mainstream youth culture magazine, covering the then-trendy electro parties. The columns such as ‘Babe of the month’ and the heading of the first issues in pseudo-oriental ornate golden font hint at the mainstream orientation of Juice, which used to be sold for 2 Singaporean dollars (Juice Nov 2008, 10th anniversary issue). In 2000 the magazine became free, supported by advertising, which made it possible for Juice to opt for a smarter cover. According to Wayne Lee, over the years electronic music trends and the local club scene was the main priority of the magazine with gradually adding more international music and fashion coverage.

Arguably, Juice is the only magazine in Singapore that keeps in focus electronic dance music genres and scene, both local and global, as well as other not-so-mainstream scenes in Singapore, such as indie and various types of rock music. By now, fashion coverage makes up a significant part of Juice. Smaller topical areas are art (mostly modern art and exhibition going on in Singapore), some large-scale Singaporean events (ex. festivals, such as state-organised Indochine festival which attracts a lot of DJs) and anything related to music – from video games (The Beatles videogame review, Juice Dec 2008) to album cover art (Juice Oct 2008).

The whole *music* topicality of Juice can be divided into: a) Local music scene/ international music scene; b) Bands and acts coverage/ event reports.

Local music scene coverage mainly evolves around Singaporean DJs, and sometimes indie rock bands. Main genres are interviews and music reviews. The magazine’s attitude can be described as friendly and supportive, with Singaporean dance music portrayed as a scene and an industry. Judging by the articles, it is not only locally present, but also developing, and has quite a bit of already established and newly-emergent talent.

The largest part of coverage in terms of Singaporean electronic dance music as such evolves around DJs and music events (parties). Talking about DJs, as well as the other local acts in the spotlight, the magazine presents them as talented, confident and well-grounded individuals pushing Singaporean ‘alternative’ music

scene upfront. For instance, on the cover of September 2008 issue of the magazine appeared DJ Inquisitive, who is successful even on the international level (Lime Magazine, Aug 2008). In the short passage accompanying the cover, it said: *'He's been pulling rave-techno-hip-hop shapes at your local hipster parties and snagging DMC championships like nobody's business'*. At the same the issue introduced DJ Hong, who is a new resident DJ in Zouk club. Apart from DJs, on the magazine cover appear young Singaporeans who are in one way or another involved in the scene, as designers (Juice Oct 2008), radio presenters (Juice Sept 2008), etc. Coverage of local dance events and parties is extensive. It takes forms of previews, photo essays and reports from the most 'colourful' parties. Among covered events are often DJ competitions, such as Juice's own DJQuest VII, events as Freakshow Fashionista at The Butter Factory club on music and fashion, and large-scale sporadic events, like FLOAT DMC/DJ festival, which took part in October 2008.

From the event coverage one can say, that dance music parties take place in more or less same places: Zouk, the Butter Factory, at times Attica club, in August and September issues there was coverage of then-open Ministry of Sound events. This may be interpreted as personal preferences of Juice magazines reporters, but I rather see it in line with the general content policy of the magazine, directed at electronic dance music as the mainframe of Juice content. It also portrays the specific soundscape Singaporean dance music scene, which is a subcultural characteristic.

The consistent coverage by the magazine of the people, involved in the dance music scene creation and management also hints at its subcultural character. Juice has rubric for, filed under 'Special', which usually contains interviews with the club/ event companies' management. For instance, in January 2009 issue it had an interview with Jeremy Lim, a manger of Zirca club (ex-MOS); in September 2008 with Donovan Kinmat, a DJ and director of Singaporean event management company Kinemat, which brings to Singapore international dance music acts.

Despite the upbeat tone of the articles, hinting at the fast-paced evolution of dance and indie scene in Singapore, from the content becomes clear that it is still considered underground. Many readers in the reader letter section write about *'the Scene'* (Nov 2008) and how Juice 'is doing good job' with 'giving local acts some exposure' and covering 'non-mainstream' trends and genres. Some of the published pieces illustrate this point, often unobviously. For instance, in August 2008 issue, answer to one of the readers' letters read: *'If this year's DJ Quest [DJ contest] proves anything, it's that your armchair DJs should have nothing to fear stepping out of the bedroom and into the main room'*. So, the self under-estimation of the local DJs is seen as something that is a reality which needs to be changed.

Along with domestic music coverage, magazine gives much space to the international acts, mainly working with electronic music: DJs, bands, and somewhat obscure acts. At times the 'hipper' and coming-up indie-rock (Franz Ferdinand, The Ting Tings) and even pop (Katy Perry, Lady Gaga) acts appear on Juice pages. However, the content is obviously filtered, and the covered acts are within the specific music spectrum. The genres for the international scene coverage are interviews (either when artists are visiting Singapore, or conducted online or on the

phone, or sent in by the record labels to which the artists are assigned, according to the editor Wayne Lee), and traditional for music publications album reviews.

Most important here in relation to local music scene is, of course, the coverage of the visiting acts, from hip-hop star Kanye West to veteran electro acts like Kraftwerk. The large number of such articles also illustrates the high level of live music exposure, as opposed to the limited variety in radio/other media exposure.

It is traceable that Juice tries to educate its readers about non-mainstream trends in music. The magazine has reviews of historically notable acts, for instance The Jesus and Mary chain (British 1980s alternative rock band). It highlights important trends in recent music development, for example a large spread on 'indie disco' genres (Juice Sept 2008) from electroclash to new disco.

Relation to music spreads to the *fashion and style* coverage. A monthly 'style of the band/artist' page showcases how to create a look, typical for this or that band or artist. From time to time in the magazine are injected articles about musicians' participation in fashion, ex. French electronic duo Justice launching their clothes-line (Juice Sept 2008). The relation of music and fashion is intentionally highlighted. In the 6-page spread, sponsored by Armani Exchange, 3 Singaporean DJs (Has, Flame, Aldrin) talk about style and its relation to dance music and club culture. Even the purely fashion articles are music-intertextual. For instance, bimonthly column on the fresh fashion designers is called 'The next (rave) wave'. All this, undoubtedly, is done in order to maintain the mainframe of the magazine.

Another reason behind such music-related fashion content is to attract broader readership among young Singaporeans, who admittedly are very fashion conscious. In the broader perspective it can help promoting the less hyped music genres and smaller scenes in Singapore, especially electronic dance music in all its variations.

The *language and tone*, adopted by Juice, is an important point in its positioning. The style of the articles can be described as funky and laidback, ironic and slightly obscure. The magazine talks to its readers in an edgy (which may even be considered rude by more conservative readers), yet intelligent manner. Such tone is not untypical for this publication type globally. However, for rather homogenous Singaporean mediascape it is a smart and efficient move to attract young readership.

Juice magazine by its general direction, content and style, can be considered a subcultural magazine in Singapore not for one particular subculture, but for the whole 'alternative' scene, which here consists of electronic dance and indie music. Apart from music acts, events, genres and trends, it has extensive music-related fashion coverage, some art coverage and more general articles about the industry. The magazine coverage of local electronic dance music presents the latter as an eventful and upbeat scene. However, some coverage undertones hint at a certain under-representation of dance music within broader Singaporean musicscape.

Straits Times Singapore

Straits Times is Singapore's largest daily newspaper. It is arguably a mass targeted and easy to read paper, and, like many state-scale dailies, covers a broad variety of topics. Music is not the priority of the paper. The majority of cultural and musical news one finds in a daily supplement *Life!*, devoted to lifestyle, leisure, and such. According to reporter Eddino Abdul Hadi, who writes music pieces for Straits

Times, the coverage is 'mainstream' for Singaporean landscape in the majority of cases. It includes popular local and regional acts, incoming big names (internationally well-known popular acts like Kylie Minogue, Sting, etc.), and the records of similar type. Still, according to the journalist, the newspaper, along with the need to keep its format, tries to 'educate' its readers about various music trends; at times, though not often, the coverage even shifts towards more abstruse acts.

Straits Times coverage from 1st December 2008 to 20 January 2009 included 81 articles (47 in December, 35 in January) within the broader topicality of music.

Unsurprisingly, quite a few articles were dedicated to the state-prompted music development, like music events at the Esplanade (central Singaporean concert hall), actions of the national arts and culture bodies as National Arts Council, etc. Many publications talked about local acts, mainly pop and hip-hop, less often rock bands; solo singer-songwriter artist, and more traditional music genres, such as Cantonese opera. Coverage of the local music scene included popular nightspots, as well as interviews with club/bar owners. For instance, in December 13 issue was published the article 'Cheap Parties', narrating about inexpensive ways to party during economic turmoil. Such type of news/coverage, without focusing much on music, represents the 'night-out' culture of young Singaporeans. Music review section Soundbites most often featured pop/ hip-hop/ Chinese and sometimes jazz artists.

However, it was noticeable that pieces on the less mainstream acts, including electronic dance music, appeared during the two months on the pages of the newspapers steadily. They mostly featured international acts touring in Singapore (The Ting Tings, The Prodigy, Kraftwerk, etc.), like the article 'Let the Music Play on' (Straits Times Dec 4 2008) about a great many indie, new wave and pop-disco bands coming to the city. Some articles, in line with the general newspaper direction, profiled certain electronic acts, usually already famous such as DJ Sasha or Everything About the Girl, whose tunes may be familiar to older Singaporeans.

Soundbites section had a number of electronic dance music reviews, mainly of established artists, ex. Anthony and the Johnsons (Straits Times Dec 12 2008). Once, however, there was a full two-page spread under the title 'Low-key wonders' (Straits Times Dec 19 2008), dedicated to non-mainstream music acts, including such critically acclaimed intelligent electronic artists as Sigur Ros and Portishead.

Singaporean electronic dance music scene was covered on a much smaller scale. Among the very few local electronic acts, mentioned in the paper, were 'electro-pop band' The Karl Maka, and 'shoegaze/electronic' act Amberhaze, represented by Singaporean music label concert organisers Kitty Wu and Lesley Chew (Straits Times Dec 11 2008). Apart from very seldom and occasional featuring of certain local acts, Singaporean electronic dance music scene received extensive coverage in December because of the MTV/Zouk arranged party ZoukOut. The event was brought out to the first page of *Life!* supplement, and covered in 6 different journalistic pieces. Such extensive coverage in the major Singaporean newspaper is explained by the fact that ZoukOut is an immensely popular event. The focus of the articles shifted from music to the general attractions (ex. Tarot cards readers and massage boots put up for the party), Sentoza beach as a party-place, and the crowd attending the event. Some materials were written in a joking and kind-heartedly ironising manner, especially when they concerned the 'kids' flocking to Sentoza.

However, two pieces of coverage talked about the international electronic acts performing at ZoukOut, like Nouvelle Vague and The Teenagers.

The Straits Times coverage of electronic dance music was infrequent and rather descriptive. However, small-scale yet steady presentation to the broad readership of some established and high-quality electronic dance music acts tells about the interest in dance music of the journalists themselves, as well as the newspaper's attempts to introduce different types of music to its readers. Some articles cover Singaporean nightlife, including some newly-opened places which play downtempo and chillout electronic music. Such coverage, along with materials about electro acts visiting the city-state, hints at the presence of dance music scene in Singapore is present on the small scale, and might be growing, yet not very fast.

Altogether, music coverage in Straits Times is rather broad and mostly concerns state-prompted attempts in relation to music, and the popular local and international acts. Dance music is not often in the spotlight, which confirms that even if the scene is present in Singapore, it is rather underground.

Outcome

The two analysed media have different, even polar concepts behind, topicality and the way of presenting information; they are targeted at different audiences. If Straits Times is the broad-audience newspaper with a variety of topics and covers music only partly, Juice is a music-oriented magazine, directed at young people, especially those interested in non-mainstream types of music.

Policies of these media are both affected by, and affect back Singaporean soundscape and tastes of target audiences. Based on the coverage, a conclusion can be made that broader Singaporean audience (Straits Times' target audience) is mostly responsive to the articles on local and international pop and hip-hop music acts, and a number of singer-songwriters and jazz musicians. Very small number of articles on the electronic dance music tells about the not very high interest of Singaporeans in dance music.

Newspaper's choices of featured artists and music trends may be also influential in terms of exposing the population to various music genres. Singaporean population is affected by mass media. Therefore dance music under-representation in the biggest Singaporean paper does not foster the development of interest in it among the population. Yet, the sparse efforts of the newspaper to introduce well-known electronic acts hints at both the wish to educate Singaporeans in music, and the growing interest towards the 'non-mainstream' genres for the city-state context.

The popularity among the youth of Juice magazine, which has been around for 10 years now and has editions in both Malaysia and Indonesia, tells about the existence in Singapore of supportive dance music fan base. The coverage of international dance and indie music acts and DJs, including a fairly high number of incoming acts, illustrates the involvement of Singapore in the global electronic dance music development. Presentation and promotion of local Singaporean acts constitutes large part of the coverage, which tells about the existence and development of electronic dance music scene in Singapore, with a shift towards taking up certain subcultural forms. The very presence of Juice magazine, which consistently maintains its content policy of covering nonmainstream music and

music-related fashion, affects the level of exposure of Singaporean population, especially youth, to dance music.

Relatively small circulation of Juice and its free distribution is an evidence that interest in this type of information is not very big in Singapore, and most likely exists among the very particular groups of population, mainly 'progressive' youth.

From the perspective of the mass media affect on the cultural production, media in Singapore are influential. And we talk here not just of the Adorno and Horkheimer commodification of culture per se, which they witnessed and criticised in the age early age of cultural massification (Adorno/Horkheimer 1944 in: Adorno/Horkheimer 2002). Rather, such commodification in Singapore has been adjusted to its very own 'form of capitalist production' (Hesmondhalgh 2007 p. 17), becoming one of the many culture industries of the globalised world (Hesmondhalgh 2007 p. 15-17). Considering the young age of the city-state, state-prompted cultural production here is evident and has been tailored in need to keep society intact. Mass media, including the Straits Times, played big role in it:

The government's use of the mass media (which it effectively controls) to instil a crisis of identity in citizenry in order to mobilise awareness and muster support for its policies has been widely noted (Hill/Lian 2005 p. 170)

From the analysis of Straits Times the direction of cultural production in Singapore from the state side is clear. To a large extent it focuses on the businesslike, mercantile side of Singaporean culture (Hill/Lian 2005 p. 88). It seems to have worked well during the course of the island's history.

Looking at the media in relation to electronic dance music in Singapore, it can be said that in this particular segment an alternate cultural industry is springing up, or to be more precise, subcultural industry. Electronic dance music scene in Singapore possesses its very own trumpet – Juice magazine. Its presence makes the system of Singaporean cultural industry if not contested (which is one of the cultural industry characteristics according to David Hesmondhalgh 2007 p. 18), than definitely ambivalent, with added degree complexity to it.

Juice magazine, entirely funded by advertising and therefore independent from income by sales or subscription, managed to partly avoid such cultural industry problems as 'creativity vs. commerce' contradiction (Hesmondhalgh 2007 p. 18). Juice contains a lot of information targeted at Singaporean youth, namely fashion (which also serves as an income source with some articles being advertorial) has an opportunity to publish articles on electronic dance music in a manner, preferred by the editorial teams. In this sense it is a more edgy, on-the-front read for certain groups of Singaporean society, most often youth. Thus, Juice keeps up the reproduction of the subcultural industry.

Both of the analysed media extensively draw on the international star/celebrity system (mainstream in the case of Straits Times, indie and electronic in the case of Juice) as a cultural industry resource. It includes them in the global cultural industries production. Thus, the government-supported, state-scale cultural industry, reproduced and communicated by Straits Times, is balanced by the subcultural narrative created by Juice magazine. For the case of electronic dance music in Singapore it creates a unique situation: as a scene here it establishing itself through the dominant information flows by maintaining its own cultural production.

4 Interview analysis

4.1 Case study: pilot interviews and main interviews sample

4.1.1 Pilot interviews: research and outcome

The research in Singapore was started with the pilot interviews, which were conducted among the randomly picked students of the National University of Singapore.

The aim of pilot interviews was to find out the general music tastes of young Singaporeans, motivations behind favouring particular music types; grasp the factors influencing self-identification, system of interests and lifestyles, especially in reaction to music. Another aim was to give a 'trial' to the questions, as Bill Gillham puts it (Gillham 2000 p. 53), to test their relevancy and completeness, as well as whether the interview structure is research-efficient.

The pilot interviews outcome raises the question to which extend electronic dance music is a relevant subject within the frame of interests and preferences of the interviewed young Singaporeans. Some core questions proved to be irrelevant for the chosen group of interviewees; some turned out to be either too straightforward or rather presuming a high level of abstraction and self awareness of the interviewees, which lead to some confusion. Apart from highlighting certain drawbacks, pilot interviews revealed some behaviour and lifestyle patterns of Singaporean youngsters, which helped better understand their reality they live in.

Firstly, going out and clubbing appeared to be a frequent pastime choice for young Singaporeans. Some interviewees said that they go out 3-4 times a months; some mentioned that they are only out in clubs when they do not have studies, or 'on occasions'. A big part of social life for young Singaporeans, especially looking good and being 'glammed up' on the night out. 'Social pressure and 'peer judgement' were often mentioned as factors, affecting going out patterns, dress sense, and lifestyle in general. Going out in Singapore as a way to 'let loose', 'let go' and 'distress' was also mentioned the reason to choose clubbing as a pastime. This need to release the pressure was related to the stressful student lifestyle and social life in general. One interviewee said: *'There are many restrictions in our state, so going gout is the way to let yourself loose'*.

Secondly, unsurprisingly, friends' influence and taste appeared to be a defining factor in the music tastes of the respondents. Family and ethnicity were also influential for some interviewees. The popularity of Chinese and American music was mentioned among taste-shaping factors of young Singaporeans. **(For more information on the pilot interviews, see Appendix)**

4.1.2 Main interview data

Considering the findings of the pilot interviews, the final research topic was focused on dance music in Singapore as a phenomenon of limited scale, as well as the local-specific socio-political and cultural conditions, pre-determining it. Interview questions needed to be re-worked in order to make them clearer and more directed at the immediate research topic.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so the topics covered were same or similar in all of the interviews. However, some topics, brought up by the interviewees themselves, were interview-specific, and elicited peculiarities of each respondent case, and certain differences in relation to the research topic.

Altogether, 13 one-on-one interviews, and a group interviews with 2 participants were conducted during the time frame of two months in December 2008 – January 2009. The general timeframe of the interviews was from 45 to 75 minutes; the duration depended on the level of knowledge, personal involvement and willingness to discuss various topics. The chances of responses to be affected by others were slim, since most interviews took place on a strict one-on-one basis.

The process of finding interviewees was at first rather intricate, for none of the contacts gained on spot seemed to know anyone interested in dance music. However, after searching for interviewee basis and asking around, I came across synQ, which is a fan-based DJ school in the National University of Singapore. There gathered people, interested in dance music in its different forms. In the end, 6 out of 11 interviewees were found in the studio or otherwise related to it. However, I believe it has not affected the outcome of the research, for the interviewees were not acquainted before synQ, and thus were not affected by each others' opinions.

The main group of interviews was with young people, interested in dance music. This group constituted 9 interviews, and the group interview. The main aim was to uncover respondents' personal relationship with electronic dance music and how it is developed in Singaporean context.

The second group of interviews included Singaporean dance music industry professionals, and consisted of two interviews: 1) with Wayne Lee – editor-in-chief of Juice magazine; 2) with Aldrin Queck aka DJ Aldrin – a trance/house DJ and producer, a long-time Zouk club employee and currently a full-time self-employed travelling DJ. (For more information see Appendix) These interviews mostly aimed at finding out first-hand information from professionals about various aspects of electronic dance music as an *industry* in Singapore, and partly at discussing their personal attitudes and beliefs about the local dance music scene.

The research topic also concerns the way state policies within media and culture. Therefore, some interviews were made with people, working with media, music and culture on the state side. The other objective in this case was to bring in a viewpoint from a different background. The participants were: 1) Cho Pei Lin, director of a medium-size Singaporean PR agency Asia PR-Werkz, which works extensively with state and government projects in culture, such as National Family day; 2) journalist and rock-band leader Eddino Abdul Hadi, who is a music reporter for Straits Times. These interviews helped to receive more information on the state-prompted activities in relation to culture, media and nation-building policies work, as well as get

viewpoint from the people who are more involved in work with culture and music from the state side.

The interviews created a spectrum of insights which stretched from personal beliefs, attitudes and opinions of the young Singaporeans who started to be interested in dance music recently to those who have been into it for a long while, to dance music professionals who are actively involved in the industry, to the persons working with music and culture more from the side of Singaporean government.

4.1.3 Additional interview data

The main interviews were complimented by two e-mail interviews. The e-mail interviews were made with Tracy Phillips, who was the manager of Zouk club for over 10 years (until April 2009), and with the officials in the National Arts Council of Singapore (NAC). The replies from Zouk manager were important, as Zouk is the club that shapes to a great extent Singaporean soundscape, and especially as its policy largely gravitates towards electronic dance music. The replies from NAC bear their importance, as the council is the main body, defining the cultural policies of Singaporean state. Requested one-on-one interviews could not be arranged.

4.1.4 Interview analysis: interview types, questions, methods

Interview types and questions

1. Interviews with young people untested in dance music

The interview type and questions for each particular group within the case study were chosen in accordance with the broader objective of interviewing in this group.

The first group of interviews – with young people interested in dance music and synQ DJ school participants, was conducted in a semi-standardised manner. The general aim in this case was to reconstruct ‘subjective theories’ (Flick 2006 p. 155) of the respondents about electronic dance music and the role it plays in both their personal live, and in Singaporean society at large. These interviews were more of *biographical* type, interviewees were treated as single cases: as individuals with their subjective views, opinions, beliefs and feelings about dance music.

The questions for this group of interviews were of two types. The first type was open questions, based on ‘the knowledge interviewees have immediately at hand’ (Flick 2006 p. 156). It allowed the interviewees to unfold the question topic and drift it more in a direction of more personal relevance, in order to construct highly personal and subjective narratives. Topics such as influences of family, friends, other social surroundings and various relevant personal themes were covered. Using this type of questions, individual relationship of each particular respondent with electronic dance music was researched.

The second type of questions used was what Uwe Flick calls ‘theory-driven’, or ‘hypothesis-directed’ questions (Flick 2006 p. 15). They were mostly based on the subcultural theories, and covered sub-topics related to the respondents’ knowledge and beliefs about patterns of music listenership in Singapore, dance music scene in

the city, its ways of development and subcultural capital. This way, subjective theories on the development of dance music in Singaporean context were researched.

The group of personal interviews was conducted in a semi-structured manner, in order to have the opportunity 'to probe beyond the answers in a manner which would appear prejudicial to the aims of standardization and comparability' (May 1997 p. 111). Respondents had their freedom to elaborate on the topics, most relevant for them. In this manner more information was brought out, embedded in subjective background of each particular respondent. However, since the semi-structured interview provides 'greater structure for comparability over that of the focused interview' (May 1997 p. 111), it also gave a basis for comparison of all of the interviews throughout the first group. This assisted to trace down similarities and differences in behaviour and belief-systems.

2. Expert Interviews

The interviews with professional individuals were conducted as an expert interview type. In this group case, 'the interviewees are of less interest as a whole (person), than their capacities of being an expert for a certain field of activity' (Flick 2006 p. 165). The professional interviewees' responses could be partly treated not as a single case, but representing a group (Flick 2006 p. 165). Therefore, the information from the expert interviews was important for the factual, contextual basis of the research, and could be used to verify or put into question the information of the biographical interviews concerning Singaporean context of dance music in Singapore. However, personal attitudes and beliefs of this respondent group were integrated into the research as a part of subjective theories, comparable to the ones deriving from the first-group interviews.

As for the interview technique, the choice was made in favour of interview both problem-centered, and focused. Being a focused interview, it gave the respondents a possibility to answer questions 'within their own frame of reference' (May 1997 p. 112), and allowed for higher level of interview flexibility.

Being problem-centered interviews, it followed the criteria (as outlined in Flick, 2006 p. 161) of: a) problem centering, namely the functioning of dance music as a certain type of subcultural formation and state media and culture policies; b) object orientation, namely coming up with research questions based on the preliminary done research on dance music and researchers pre-conception, embedded in it; and c) process orientation, namely the process of understanding the dance music in Singapore as an object of research during the process of interviewing.

The narratives, constructed with the help of such expert interviews, were important for the understanding of dance music as a subculture from within. They also helped to see the general impact of 'governmental' media and the policies of Singaporean state on the development of dance music as an emergent subculture.

3. Additional Interview Data

Information, gained from the additional interviews, was categorized together with the information from expert interviews. It was useful for understanding dance music in Singapore as an object of research, and helped to identify and further contextualize the conditions of its emergence, existence and development.

4.1.5 Method of interview analysis

Conducting and analysing interviews was a process of several steps. All of the interviews were digitally recorded and in the most cases notes were taken. Then they were listened to several times; while notes on the most important topics were taken. Expert interviews of dance music professionals were transcribed in full, as were three of the first group interviews; the rest of the interviews (first group) were mostly transcribed partially, more than a half each.

The methods of interview analysis were adjusted according to the aims of interviewing within the particular sub-group. Semi-standardised biographical interviews, due to their characteristics of 'equality and comparability' (May 1997 p.124) within the researched group, were analysed in order to find common topics and compare them within the interview framework. These common topics later on were categorised and mapped out in order to unveil the common patterns and major differences for all of the respondents of that group.

This part of analysis also included the biographical parts of the interviews with Singaporean dance music industry professionals, mostly of their personal attitudes and beliefs about dance music, which could not be interpreted as group representation. In this group case, the analysis was

focused not only on motivations and reasons, but also social identities and how these are constructed within the social setting in which people live and work <...> Interviews are used as are source for understanding how individuals makes sense of their social world and act within it (May 1997 p. 127, 129).

For the expert interviews, the main aim of analysis was to find out information about the conditions and reality of functioning of dance music as a scene and industry in Singapore on the one hand; and contextualising research within the governmentally-defined frame of media and culture policies, on the other.

The technique for interviews analysis was a combination of those suggested by David Silverman (Silverman 2005; Silverman 2004) and Ian Dey (Dey 1993). Silverman's works helped to take the first steps towards the analysis of interview narratives, and in general helped to build a broader, more philosophical take on the interviews; Dey's methodological suggestions were useful for designing a specific and precise step-by-step plan of analysis for my particular research case.

According to suggestions found in Silverman (Silverman 2005), the interviews were treated as *narratives*, or personal stories with specific topics and key themes, deriving from 'the reality of people lives' (Silverman 2005 p. 154). From this position 'information about social worlds can be achieved through in-depth interviewing' (Silverman 2004 p.126). The interview-based narratives are treated as representative not only of the individual respondents, but are also subjective projections of the social reality in which the interviewees live. They tell something about the general situational background, or how subjective meanings of interviewees relate to the 'objective' social structures' (Silverman 2005 p. 155). Such technique, according to Silverman (Silverman 2004 p.131), is applicable to the open-ended interviews as the ones that were conducted during research.

In light of treating the interviews as narratives, the in-depth analysis was made.

1) The first step was **listening** to the interviews and creating general fields of **aspects** of personal relationships with dance music. The so-called 'checklist' of these aspects

was created in order to ‘generate ideas for analysis’ (Dey 1993 p. 85). The checklist included in most cases the following points:

- **Occupation**
- **Personal music taste/ music interest**
- **Music listening history**
- **Influences according to music taste**
- **Relationship with family and friends (Social conditions)**
- **General ideas about dance music**
- **General ideas about Singaporean social context**
- **Ethnicity (in some cases)**

2) The second step was *annotating data* and making *memos of the interview themes*, which appeared to be most relevant to the research topic and questions.

3) The third step in the cases of interviews which were not transcribed fully, was *transcribing* parts of interviews, and noting what themes appeared in each particular interview and mapping them out for each interviewee, and then sketching out the relationships between the brought-up themes within the interview case. The data ‘belonging’ to each particular group was drawn out (Dey 1993 p. 96).

4) The fourth step was *outlining topics in each interview case* and making a *chart* of topics with *crystallising categories* and sub-categories for each particular case.

5) The fifth step was *evaluating the categories* in order to ensure that the categorising was comprehensive and actual, as opposed to imposed and intended, and *defining* the categories.

6) The sixth step was *comparing the broadest topics and categories through all of the interviews, and looking closely at those, which appeared most often*. These categories in perspective were compared with those derived from media analysis and preliminary theoretical research on subcultural theory. This particular part had to be done cautiously, and, according to Ian Dey’s suggestions, had to have two aspects:

An internal aspect – they must be meaningful in relation to the data – and external aspect – they must be meaningful in relation to other categories (Dey 1993 p.96-97)

Then, the formal relations between the interview-derived categories were established, as well as their relationships with the categories derived from media analysis and context analysis.

Taking all of these steps of interview analysis was necessary in order to stay away from imposing the categories derived from theoretical research, on the interview data (Dey 1993 p. 99). The relationship between categories, derived from the interview narratives, with the media-based categories, and theory-embedded categories was to be established during the actual analysis.

Therefore, it can be said that narratives of the interviews were deconstructed in order to crystallise the general categories and meanings, embedded in the social and personal situations of the interviewees.

4.2 Music and participation: analysing interviews

4.2.1 Topic analysis and categories

In order to keep the privacy of the interviewees, the names were changed; the names expert or professional interviewees were kept real under the agreement with the interviewees. The names were sustained in order to give better overview of the similarities and differences in opinions between the interviewees.

After listening, annotating and transcribing individual interviews, the topic chart was made. (See Appendix)

The topics, which were covered during individual, biographical interviews with the young people, interested in dance music in Singapore, included four main groups, or categories.

The *first* group of topics covered the societal aspects of music evolvement in Singapore, especially how the local specificities in music taste can be explained by the policies of state and media in culture. This category is defined as ‘Singaporean cultural context’. The *second* group of topics covered electronic dance music in Singapore as a type of subculture and was mainly directed at the dance music development as a scene and industry, functioning in the specific socio-political conditions of the city-state. The category is ‘Electronic dance music in Singapore as a subculture’. The *third* group of topics covered the relationship between one’s social circle and music preferences, with a focus on family and friends as the main points of influence. The category is defined as ‘Social aspects of music’. The *fourth* group of topics covered the respondents’ personal relationships with music, including music interests and tastes. This category can be defined as ‘Music and personality’.

The topics brought up in the expert interviews mainly covered two broad areas: music scene in Singapore at large, as well as electronic dance music scene; and the state influence on music and culture development. The latter mostly concerned the cultural, nation-building and media policies of Singaporean state. Therefore, main categories covered in the expert interviews were ‘Singaporean music scene’, and ‘Electronic dance music as a subculture’. Considering that in interviews with dance music professionals the topics of personal taste and involvement in dance music scene were covered, the category ‘Music and personality’ was also brought up. This information helped to gain deeper insights into some of the topic aspects, previously discussed with young people, interested in dance music.

4.2.2 The place to live in: Singaporean cultural background

General Singaporean cultural scene, as well as the general social/state background of Singaporean life was the category, brought up in most of the interviews. The

interviewees mentioned, often unintentionally, the influence of governmental policies on the everyday life practices, including those connected with music.

It was mentioned, that Singaporean government did a good job with keeping the multi-ethnic state together after it gained independence in 1965. Cho Pei from PR Werkz evaluated these attempts as very successful: *'We were multiracial the moment we were born [1965]. What government tried to do is to believe that we should live in harmony. <...> There are special efforts to embrace the multi-racialism, for example in the curriculum or in the division of HDB flats'*. The commonly acknowledged policy of promoting multiculturalism from the side of Singaporean government had an objective to shape the CMIO model of Singaporean society and keep all of the groups of population in peace and balance (Hill/Lian 2005 p. 178).

By emphasising multiculturalism and multilingualism as fundamental principles of the state, the Singapore leaders aimed to inculcate a sense of commitment in the state and to existence in racial harmony (Velayutham 2007 p. 30)

E-mail interview with the National Arts Council in Singapore summarised it as follows: *'Time is needed for a young nation to forge and evolve a singular culture. Considerations also need to be given on how a Singaporean culture could be related to the new immigrants in Singapore, and conversely, how the constant influx of migrants would have an impact on the Singaporean culture'*.

However, the focus on keeping the state peaceful and making it successful economically, resulted in the cultural development in a sense of focusing on fine arts not to be the utmost priority of the state. In this regard, DJ Aldrin said: *'For many years the government was only about money <...> It's only in recent years that the government has pumped in money into the arts sector.'* Cho Pei Lin supported this view on the 'business-like' nature of Singapore and the concentration on promoting the values of multiculturalism: *'[Singapore is] very much a meritocracy country, you are recognised because you're good at what you do'*.

It was also noted, that Singapore as a young state does not possess its deeply rooted original culture, and it will take time and effort for it to develop. DJ Aldrin said, that *'it would take a generation in Singapore'* or even two generations to change the situation. Wayne was more sceptical about the future of culture in Singapore, noting that *'it might be a bit too late'*. Yet, the opinion that fine arts and culture in general are more at the forefront of the governmental concern and that there is more freedom for cultural development than before was expressed explicitly. NAC, being a governmental institution, stated: *'Over the past few decades, there is increasing musical diversity and options for Singaporeans. More performance platforms are available to showcase local talents. Singaporeans are exposed to different music genres ranging from classical and world, to ethnic and electronica'*.

Younger interviewees also felt this cultural development. According to Brian (student, 22), *'the government moved from the more conservative to opening local art scenes'* and *'censorship has been toned down a little bit, and it favours now more the art culture and music will benefit'*.

Thus, state and government came across as one of the most important factors, influencing cultural and music development in Singapore, with nation-building policies being a tangible background. Such extensive reference to the state can be considered a result of the state-prompted discourses, which over the years entrained the collective conscious of Singaporean population (Bhabha 1990).

The presence of such strong collective conscience is something, which is also influential in terms of cultural preferences and music tastes. In the interviews it was mentioned several times that 'everybody's' preferences, peer opinions and social pressure, as well as the 'commercialised' taste formed a background for the general music taste development in Singapore context, along with the media exposure. In this sense, the private taste is much publicly affected:

The idea of consumption-driven modernity as an intellectual slice of public space cuts deeper into the private space of citizens that is nominally perceived (Rappa 2002 p. 64)

In this regard Cole, who is originally from India, expressed a rather strong point of view: *'I've been in Singapore for 3,5 years now, and people here <...> go for something already established. When they go out shopping, they go to the same brand. <...> Everything in Singapore is really commercialised, and everybody has the same taste. Hip-hop has just established itself here. It's all commercial songs that they like, if they introduce him to Tupac they will not know who is that. They listen to Snoop Dog and Eminem <...> They'd be opened to new thing for a very limited time, and then they will close themselves if I doesn't pick up with everyone else'.*

Expert interviews supported this opinion indirectly. DJ Aldrin said from his personal perspective: *'Whatever music I was growing up with, it was always pop. My parents introduced me to things like Abba. <...> It also goes for now: hip-hop, R'n'B really is Top40, like on MTV.<...> This is what our kids are open to, what they are influenced by, so that's why pop, whatever the idea'.* Wayne shared this opinion, saying that, along with 'cheesy music' played in most of the clubs, *'there is also a strong and intelligent underground music scene going on'.*

Nightlife and clubbing as an integral part of general Singaporean youth culture was mentioned to be another important lifestyle-shaping factor. However, it is not necessarily connected with music as such, but more being a way *'to see and to be seen'*. Zouk club manager Tracy Phillips said: *'For many, clubbing is just a social thing in Singapore, an opportunity to meet up with friends & music is not the priority but for the real dance followers it's a lifestyle and a weekly affair'.*

Younger interviewees shared this opinion, saying that not that many people do appreciate the music. For instance, Aaron (24, student) mentioned that 'Singapore is very turned on by media' and that 'hyped-up' big performers, bands, DJ names are guaranteed to have the crowd, no matter what music is.

Thus, the widespread nights out in clubs are not the result of musical interest, but rather the general lifestyle culture, and, again, a social occurrence. Such situation may be to a certain degree related to both the young state of Singaporean culture, and to the promotion of the values of hard work and 'meritocracy', resulting in the lack of general interest in culture, but also the very socially-oriented self-conscience of Singaporeans. *'I think it's a matter of Asian culture as well, which is you gotta get good job, and work in the office 9-5, best be a lawyer, doctor, not be a dance music producer'* stated Wayne in this regard.

The perceived under-development of the originally Singaporean music scene was partly explained by the fact that Singaporeans often are not particularly interested in the locally produced culture. *'We listen to foreign music, even if its developing its not our local, as in we are more interested in music, but not in our local'* said Alicia (student, 19) about Singaporean youth. Jay (tutor and freelance DJ, 23)

developed this opinion, brining up attitudes towards local DJs as an example: *'I think its Asian inferiority complex. <...> If it is a foreigner [playing a DJ gig] he always gets more reception, and I don't know why, I would go just the same'.*

State policies in creating the solid Singaporean identity were traceable in the interviewees' ways of self-identification. Most of the interviewees referred to themselves as 'Singaporean'. Many respondents also identified themselves according to their ethnic origin. This dichotomy of national/ethnic identity, inherent in the character of Singaporeans, is partly the result of both nation-building of Singaporean state, and the promotion of the CMIO multicultural model of Singaporean society, which, according to Cho Pei, starts at an early age through education: *'I guess there is definitely some kind of good will, because I remember it was taught to me from the young age that how have to live in harmony'.*

Such national and ethnic self-identification is expressed in music tastes in surprising ways. At times the interviewees considered their music preferences influenced by ethnicity. *'For some reason Chinese and Caucasians listen more to trance; Indians and Malays to hip-hop'* said Uchit (student, 21). Alicia mentioned in regards to the music policy of most of the clubs, that *'In clubs they play hip-hop, because there are a lot of Malays'.* She indirectly expressed an opinion that most of her Chinese friends listen to different music genres, such as pop, retro-pop, rock, or indie-rock. Brian also noted that *'Malay and Indians like hip-hop more than Chinese'.*

The small-scale research could neither prove nor confute the point of music taste/ethnicity relationship. It is hard to tell here whether the situation is really as portrayed by the interviewees. However, the very existence of such opinion tells that state-prompted discourse on multiculturalism influences the set of beliefs and ideas among Singaporeans and the general 'message that the population of Singapore comprises of several types' (Kahn 1998 p. 52).

The high level of development of Singapore can be an advantage for music, allowing bringing in to the Lion City well-known and high-quality acts and creating greater exposure to various music types, including electro dance. The affordability of music instruments can help to spread of music-making as a hobby among Singaporeans, and thus foster the emergence of the truly-Singaporean music scene, which, according to some interviewees, can now be described more a cover-version of the western music trends. The technological advancement of the city-state makes the access to various kinds of information easier, and increases affordability of basic music-making equipment. *'I think that it's easy to be a DJ, especially now, because everyone has MP3s, everybody downloads music, it's cheaper as well <...> when I was entering DJing in the late 1990s, I was saving to buy a turntable, a CD recorder, I was making sure that it will last forever, nowadays everything its much cheaper to get equipment'* said Wayne, talking about DJing.

Conclusions:

Singapore is a young state, which has been independent for only 4.5 decades. Thus, culture, especially in a sense of fine arts and popular culture, historically has never been among the utmost priorities of Singaporean government up until recently. Together with the lack of original Singaporean culture and music, explained mainly by the young age of the city-state, government attempts influenced and perhaps slowed down its development by directing the discourse at very particular music

genres that helped creating the multicultural Singaporean spirit. Promotion of 'meritocracy' as one of the key features of Singaporean character and a strong direction towards business development also contributed to the lack of focus on arts, and music in particular. The strong collective consciousness, fostered by government discourses (Braczyk/Cooke/Heindreich 1998 p. 387) contributes to the uniformity of music tastes of Singaporeans. In this sense clubbing, which is a big part of Singaporean youth culture, is connected more with the peculiarities of social life, rather than with music preferences.

However, from the interviews a conclusion can be made that the situation started to change on both state and society levels. A broader diversity of visiting music acts is present; more people become interested in music genres, 'uncommon' to Singapore. Especially in the case of youth, involvement in culture in general, and music in particular is evolving into the original Singaporean music scene with prevalent music genres are hip-hop and R'n'B, as well as pop. Yet, alternative music scene is developing, even though slower than the mainstream.

High level of economic and technological development of Lion City is a factor, which can contribute to the local music development with affordability of both music equipment and information on global music trends, easily accessible online.

4.2.3 Dancefloor underground: Singaporean dance music scene

Dance music as a scene or an emergent subculture in Singapore was the main category, discussed during the interviews.

Interviewees noted, that in Singapore dance music as such is not widespread among younger population. It falls far behind in the numbers of people who are interested in it as compared to pop and hip-hop, which are the most popular music genres in Singapore. Cole (student, 19) described one of his clubbing experiences: *'I was at St James once, and there was a DJ, a guest DJ who was playing house, and I was like okay there can exist house in Singapore and I looked around and most people didn't enjoy it, but there were few that were really going crazy'*. He said that most of the people he met tend to listen to R'n'B and hip-hop. Rock was also mentioned as a popular genre among Singaporean youth, especially the fairly new for the city-state indie music culture. Expert interviews supported it. DJ Aldrin stressed that *'hip-hop here is pop'*. Talking about Juice magazine content, editor Wayne noted its recent attention to indie music and fashion. He mentioned typical post-subcultural expressions of music tastes, such as an online gaming activity Second Life, apparently widespread in Singapore: *'I was logging in and searched "indie", and there were indie clubs, and I went into club total copy of SBJB, and there were a lot of avatars dancing to Radiohead and stuff, and I was like wow, and I was amazed'*.

The general music tastes of Singaporean population were mostly explained by the matters of media exposure. The prevalent opinion was that due to the lack of rotation of dance music on the radio stations, listeners don't have initial exposure to the genre for the interest to develop further. Jay said in this regard: *'Singapore crowd is <...> still very much influenced by our radio, airwaves. So I feel that [radio is] the only chance dance music really has to become something mainstream <...>'*

They should start bringing more tasteful dance music'. Nick (student, 21) noted that *'media only cover their particular music spectrum'*, while Alicia added that Singaporean young people since high school *'are only exposed to this kind of music, it is extra effort to go and find alternative music'*.

Expert interviewees were in accord with such explanation. Wayne said about the lack of knowledge on dance music: *'I guess in other countries <...> [they] have a lot of radio stations with good electronic music. <...> Maybe it's not that big but it helps'*. Eddino noted that the main culture is connected to the radio, which plays mainstream music. Yet he mentioned 'pirate or independent radio stations' in Singapore, for example unpopularradio.net or sweetmusic.fm, which can be listened to online. He noted that, though in Singapore *'a lot of people are radio listeners and passive listeners, who just listen to what DJ tells them'*, the situation is improving in terms of music choices, especially under the influence of the Internet.

Jay and Nick mentioned radio station Lush, which, according to them, is the only station playing chillout and lounge music.

Some interviewees explained radio music choices by financial matters, which make DJs opt for the genres that are sure to keep the listeners. However, the situation may also be influenced by the use of media in the nation-building processes of Singaporean state, and censorship which has been 'matter of fact' for decades in Singapore, even if toned down nowadays:

state-created discourse became effectively internalised by the masses through the use of a complaint, state-controlled media (Peterson 2001 p. 26)

It also goes for the printed media. Most of the newspapers and magazines appeared to not cover dance music, or do it rarely, occasionally and irregularly. In this regard Nick said: *'Magazines like Juice are somehow more underground <...>. Here are some magazines that I find in stores, <...> they are definitely mainstream'*.

Expert interviews were in line with this opinion. According to Eddino, in Singapore there are almost no original music publications. He mentioned the Big O magazine, which *'used to be the only independent music magazine in Singapore'* before Juice came on stage. Currently it only functions online. Eddino said that there were not many Singaporean publications devoted to music, and the only way for those which might appear to survive is to be free. Such situation also has to do with the attempts of Singaporean government to 'create an identity based on an 'ideology of pragmatism' (Velayutham 2007 p. 35), which resulted in certain commercialisation of culture and media (Seow 1988 p. 117-118).

Apart from media policies, the lack of dance music related content may partly be a result of a certain deviant connotation, inherent to dance music in Singapore, which was mentioned in the interviews quite often.

It can be, firstly, an echo of the discourse on dance music relation to drugs in the 1990s (Huq 2006), especially considering that drug regulations in Singapore are particularly strict. The 'clubbers' drug ecstasy was here 'cited as a "class A controlled drug" in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1992' with a penalty of 20000 Singapore dollars (approx. 10000 Euro) for its possession and consumption (Holland 2001 p. 157). Often the interviewees were sceptical about the possible future of dance music in Singapore. For instance, Nick said that *'in the end of the day it is still associated with drugs and stuff'*. Brian also mentioned some small clubs, which used to play dance music, but *'police shut them down for drugs'*.

Secondly, such connotation of dance music derives from its association with the local marginal group ah-bengs and ah-lians, their female friends (Trocki 2006 p. 149). In common perception they are hooligan-type youngsters, who dress in bright trashy clothes, listen to trance and eurodance, and are likely to be involved in asocial types of behaviour (see 'Ah Beng Rap 1' for illustration). Brian described them as such: *'Ah-beng is a Chinese boy or young man who doesn't have a good command of English, a sloppy dress sense, swears a lot – these are the stereotypes. <...> They are a more rebellious type of people; they tend to listen to techno and trance'*. Jay elaborated on the topic of ah-bengs and electronic dance music: *'They have ah-beng chants with euro-dance music playing on the background <...>. They actually sprung up from the secret societies back in the past <...> and they progressed in what they are today <...> You know how dance music is connected with drugs, and these guys are likely to take these kinds of substances, and listen to stuff like eurodance and trance, so maybe that's why but it is hard to generalise'*.

This perception of dance music genres like techno and eurodance as something connected to marginal society groups relates to ideas Chicago school about subculture. Firstly, it is an urban, spatially-embedded phenomenon in the city-state (Gelder 2007); secondly, ah-bengs possess such subcultural characteristics as their own argotic language, associations with hooliganism, drug abuse and other 'modes of 'backward' behaviour' (Chua 2003 p. 87-88).

Despite such less than favourable connotations of dance music in Singapore, the interviews show, that in the current Singaporean situation its perception is shifting from 'deviant' and 'marginal' towards 'edgy' and 'up-front'. It has a great deal to do with the landmarks of electronic dance music in Singapore as a subcultural formation. Among them were most often mentioned Zouk club as the largest dance music venue, and Juice magazine as a scene-shaping media.

Zouk was referred to by most of the respondents as their favourite going out destination. Jay elaborated on the topic: *'There's really no other places as big and as well marketed at Zouk. <...> And you go there because you like the place, not because you pay for it <...>. So you can say from the way they are marketing that it is all music centred, around guest DJs, and kind of events they organise'*.

Dance music professionals gave an insight of the music policy of the venue. Wayne described Zouk as *'pretty forward, especially for a club in Asia'*. DJ Aldrin, talking about the history of the club, which he joined in 1996, said that Zouk had sustained its music policy. It evolved around from 'American-sounding' house towards soulful house and trance, and later on tribal house and minimal/electro house. Thus, the genre progression over the years *'has been very subtle'*, centered around electro.

Zouk's marketing manager of over 10 years Tracy Phillips described club's music policy: *'Zouk was the first club to champion house music and electronica in Singapore, introducing a fresh sound to the populace and keeping abreast with the most upfront global trends at the time. <...> The sound has changed as the music has evolved and splintered into even more and more sub-genres, from the Euro & Balearic sounds of the early 90's to current day trends, the Zouk main room (capacity 2000) embraces the bigger room sounds of house, trance, techno, minimal & electro'*. **(For more information about Zouk club music policy, events and DJ, see Appendix).**

Both DJ Aldrin, who used to book artists for the club, and Tracy mentioned that Zouk is also oriented at international acts, both established and new:

'[We bring in] the names that are so big you just can't say no. <...> And then of course you keep in touch with the global scene, who's playing, who's up and coming, new and fresh. At the same time, with new and fresh at Zouk we really have to consider carefully if there are enough listeners' said Aldrin.

'Zouk is obviously a driving force of the dance <...>. This includes playing genres like house, techno, big beat, hip hop, minimal & indie disco before they were popular locally and making them accessible to the public' stated Tracy.

As an electro club, Zouk manages to attract globally known dance music acts, such as Björk, Chemical Brothers, Tiesto, Paul Van Dyk, Danny Tenaglia, DJ Shadow, Nouvelle Vague, Sasha, Carl Cox, Justice, Armin van Buuren, Marco V and many more (according to Tracy Phillips), host DJ contests, and in partnership with MTV Asia arrange an annual beach party ZoukOut, targeted at broader audiences. The fact that Zouk has opened a mirroring club in Kuala Lumpur in neighbouring Malaysia can be interpretable both as a business success of the club (www.zouclub.sg), and as a success of Singaporean dance music as an industry.

Another electronic music landmark, Juice magazine, is closely connected with Zouk in terms of shaping Singaporean dance music soundscape. Talking about the music coverage choices of the magazine, Wayne said: *'We always try get it back to the anchor theme of clubbing, and I think that electronic music and DJs are naturally the themes that we cover most <...> We try to do something a bit cutting edge, something not so mass, because there are a lot of magazines and newspapers in Singapore doing pop music, so I thought it would be nice for us, for Juice to offer a different alternative to people, about electronic music'*.

According to Wayne, the magazine, originating from dance music culture, also tries to feature local DJ acts, and hosts events, connected with dance music, as the annual DJ contest. The latter help more DJs showcase their skills to broader public.

According to the interviews, Juice manages to maintain interest in what Eddino referred to as 'smaller scenes' in Singapore. It contributes shaping the ideology of dance music scene in Singapore, helping to accumulate its subcultural capital.

The interviews lead to the conclusion that both Zouk club and Juice magazine are popular among young Singaporeans, and have steady following. It hints at the fact that electronic dance music, even if small-scale, is sustained and developed.

Apart from Zouk, a few more venues playing various types of electronic music, were mentioned. For instance, Uchit told about several clubs, playing his favourite Bollywood dance; Cole said that he had heard of some underground parties. Several interviewees talked about the legendary house club Ministry of Sound branch in Singapore, which used to be one of the dance music landmarks in Singapore, until closing down in autumn 2008 after losing their license. DJ Aldrin noted that Ministry of Sound *'made more people come out on the weekends'*. So, despite the short 3-year-long lifespan and apparently questionable quality standards of MOS, it can be said that the club contributed shaping local dance music scene for the time being, and had fostered interest in it.

Expert interviewees also mentioned newer places like 'little bars' which play various types of dance music, such as House, Hacienda, Luff, Home Club (drum

and bass and indie), New Jazz café (local DJs with ‘more intelligent sound’, according to Wayne), The Butter Factory (hip-hop, electro and new rave). Even though younger interviewees did not pay much attention to these smaller venues, by the opinion of professionals it can be said that they contribute to the evolvement of dance music as a subcultural formation in Singapore. Even though on the small scale, dance music has its enthusiasts who contribute to its structural development.

Electronic dance music as creative industry is closely connected and reflected in the profession of a DJ. The respondents mentioned several times that it is hard, and sometimes almost impossible to be a full-time DJ in Singapore. For instance, Nick said: *‘All Singaporeans who want to be a DJ start looking for something else, they come to the same conclusion’*. Jay stated that Singaporean DJs *‘underestimate themselves, and club owners and bar owners exploit this’*. Yet, he also mentioned that as hobby and profession DJing is developing, with more DJ schools opening. DJ Aldrin, who has worked in the field for a long time, expressed similar opinion. On the topic of being employed as a DJ, he said: *‘If you DJ, you DJ maybe twice a week at most, but you still go in to work for 5 days’*.

Several reasons were given as an explanation for such situation: bad DJ pay rates in Singapore, not enough work space, the fact that club owners often prefer not to hire full-time DJs for financial reasons. DJs usually work in clubs a couple of nights per week, and need to have day jobs to make the ends meet. The interviews lead to the conclusion that as a profession in Singapore it is a semi-hobby, usually part-time occupation, based on the people’s enthusiasm.

Still, despite the embryonic state of dance music scene development, there are few Singaporean DJs who made it big outside Singapore, too. Among successful names were mentioned, along with DJ Aldrin, KFC, DJ Inquisitive, DJ Quinter, DJ Sunny, Morris, GJ, Ko Flow, Has, Dean & EJ, Xhin. Nonetheless, other Singaporean DJs are not that successful, according to most of the interviewees. Some of the respondents could not name any Singaporean DJs, while the others mentioned a couple of names. The growing number of small clubs and bars that allow local DJs to play their gigs is an evidence of the scene development. The expert interviewees showed that the situation is getting better in terms of the amount of young people interested in DJing. All this indicates progress of the local dance music scene and its evolvement into a more complex, levelled network.

One of the biggest problems of dance music in Singapore appeared to be production, especially the lack production studios and technologies. DJ Aldrin commented on the local dance music industry: *‘It is very hard here to produce music. Very, very, very few people know stuff about electronic dance music. <...> There’s no PR expertise, there’s no marketing expertise, no studio engineering expertise, no final basic clients, nothing, you know’*. He mentioned that it is hard to release a CD, and that he himself, being an internationally successful DJ, has to release music digitally via his production studio One with Aldrin (www.onewithaldrin.com). Wayne elaborated: *‘I think one reason that’s holding back Singaporeans from going into production is that there is no money and no opportunity to make this a career’*.

Digital production and online distribution is something typical for the global electronic dance music both as a scene, and a post-subculture, and is inherent in the specificities of its temporal and creative development (Thornton 1995). Even

though 'some of the writers dismiss the computer-literate kids, DJs and other who have begun to make records by means of electronic technologies, as not entitled to the term 'musician'' (Gilbert/Pearson 1999 p. 112), the technological ease of electronic music production and communication is a favourable factor for the scene development in Singapore. Other conditions, such as the lack of dance music recording studios and the reluctance of Singaporean consumers to pay for the CDs by local artistes (Billboard, Jun 14 2003) may be obstacles for its development.

Despite the respondents were at times rather pessimistic about the situation with the local dance music, it was clear that dance music in Singapore is in the process of development. Wayne in this regard said: *'I think Singapore is pretty positioned <...>. But I think Singaporeans there are quite pampered though, 'cause it's cheap to party here'*. Tracy noted: *'there is more variety in club nights now and genres embraced. Sure, the more obvious sounds or fashionable genres will always be bigger, like trance or the current indie/ electro craze'*.

Other interviewees, like Nick, said that that nowadays there is crowd attending even small music events: *'I often see that there is a really awesome DJ playing but there are people who are just stand there because they don't understand it'*. Even though he sounded negative, the growing attendance of dance music events tells about the increasing popularity of dance music as compared to several years earlier and the 1990s, when, according to DJ Aldrin, Zouk was often almost empty.

The scene evolution can be considered subcultural in some of its expressions. Along with small underground parties, Jay said that he had practiced exchanging CDs and MP3s with a certain number of people, and that it is likely to find someone he knows at a dance music event. So, from the interviews it is quite obvious that dance music has a number of people who are interested in it and attend the relevant events, and the number of those interested in dance music is growing. This is a start-up networking process, characteristic of a subculture:

Although as a symbolic structure it does provide a diffuse sense of affinity in terms of common lifestyle, it does not necessarily prescribe any crystallized group structure (Cohen 1972 p. 92 in: Gelder 2005).

Scattered individuals, interested in dance music as a meta-genre, gravitate in Singapore towards the landmarks such as certain clubs, events, etc. In future they might become solidified into a certain type of structural unity. Despite some concerns about the perspective of electronic dance music in Singapore, expert interviewees were also hopeful about its possible future development. *'It has a lot of potential, a lot of potential. Its just we need to have an infrastructure, we need to grow it faster. Because there are people <...> who can do things, but it's just that. <...> By infrastructure I mean PR, marketing, agencies, record labels, and all that, to really, you know, to have a scene here'* said DJ Aldrin in this regard.

Two waves of dance music in Singapore

One aspect of dance music development in Singapore, which was brought up unintentionally, is that currently dance music in is one the stage of return Lion City. Starting out of Zouk in 1991, emergence of Juice magazine in 1999 are the evidence of dance music presence in Singapore in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Wayne said about the time when the magazine was founded in 1998, which was also the peak of fashion for dance music: *'We started off as a nightlife magazine, it*

was lot of dance music and stuff, which was the key attraction <...> The dance music scene especially was a lot more interesting, there were a lot more things happening <...>. And there also were more clubs back then, like small houses, and small warehouses and stuff, and I don't know why, but it just stopped'.

In line with that, DJ Aldrin spoke about some venues that had existed in Singapore previously, such as Central, which had similar policy as Zouk, and Power Black Chic, where local trance DJs had residence. These venues had to shut down because of business insufficiency and lack of space.

Electronic dance music had a start in Singapore in the 1990s and early 2000s. Its prior existence here can be best explained by the high level of popularity of the meta-genre globally in the 1990s. Almost utter disappearance of electronic dance from Singaporean soundscape relates to both passing of global fashion, and association of genres as rave to drug abuse and the local marginal group ah-bengs. Dance music back then was a more on-surface cultural occurrence for Singaporean context, and did not manage to accumulate enough subcultural capital to become more grounded. DJ Aldrin summarised it: *'I would say in the 90s the scene was more made up. <...> It was fresher in a sense that dance music was still very new, and it might have influenced the crowd there, everyone was just getting to know about it. <...> As compared to now, the less we produce the less they are interested in who is the DJ, who we are bringing in, who is the up and coming, who is the new, blah, blah, blah. They are just interested now in coming out and having a good time'.*

The situation nowadays looks like a 'second wave' of dance music in Singapore. It can be explained by the three main factors:

1. The ease of music research via Internet for the people who are interested in it, and low prices of music downloads, as well as the affordability of DJ equipment.
2. The return of global fashion for dance music via the new genres, well-received by the young Singaporean population, for instance connected with indie music new rave and new disco, and dance styles such as Tecktonik.
3. The growing support of culture and music by Singaporean state, and the grass-root rise of social acceptance of music as a hobby in Singapore.

Under these conditions, and following the spiral of dialectical development, electronic dance music in Singapore from a current post-subcultural formation, bordering with a scattered fan culture, may emerge as a well-oiled subculture of its own, deeper-rooted in the local, originally Singaporean music scene.

Conclusions:

As seen from the interviews, electronic dance music in Singapore is neither popular nor widespread, and can be described as an underground, alternative scene.

The reasons for that are the mass taste of Singaporeans, and especially the apparent 'Americanisation' and 'Westernisation' of young Singaporeans, who are more interested in commercial hip-hop and R'n'B, as well as pop and indie-rock music. Another big reason is media policies, and especially radio music content, which seriously lacks dance music content. Hence,

The indoctrination of 'pop' culture to youths in Singapore has to do with the widespread exposure to the mass media (television, magazine, radio), its effective bilingual population (English and Malay, English and Mandarin; and English and Tamil) and its growing affluence (Dawson/Larke 2003 p. 102)

State policies also play their role in shaping Singaporean musicscape, and the underground position of dance music in Lion City can be partly explained by the drug-related discourses around it, and its association with the local marginal group ah-bengs, who are related in common perception to trance and euro-dance.

Dance music industry is not very well-developed in a sense that it lacks recording studios and other production infrastructure, as well as support from local music listeners. The profession of a DJ in Singapore exists, but in the most cases one can only afford to do it professionally on a part-time basis.

However, it looks like electronic dance music is starting to attract more and more people. There are new venues opening up that not only play various dance music genres, but also give an opportunity for local DJs to play. Young people become more attracted to DJing and music production, as well as broader variety of music genres. The growing interest of Singaporeans in culture fosters broader social acceptance of music as both a hobby and full-time occupation.

The current stage of dance music scene development in Singapore can be described as a second wave of its popularity, as it has already been present here in the 1990s on the peak of worldwide fashion in dance music (techno and rave). This second wave brings dance music back to the city-state. Partly this process is driven by the interest of young Singaporeans. Partly its comeback to Singaporean dance floors is connected with the worldwide spread of genres as new rave and new disco. Music, produced by Singaporean DJs is often released overseas or digitally for the global market.

All this lays ground for the development of local dance music as a well-oiled subculture under the influence of several factors, which are: state-embedded (government support of culture), socially-embedded (growing interest of population in various types of music), and personally-embedded (passion and devotion of dance music fans in Singapore to their favourite music type).

4.2.4 Friends are good, but tunes are important: music and social surrounding

The respondents' juxtaposition of dance music taste onto their social surrounding was the topic, brought up in most interviews, and of high importance for the majority of interviewees.

Friend circle and 'peer pressure' appeared an important factor, influencing one's social behaviour: *'most people if they don't have friends who listen to it will stay away from it'* said Nick in this regard about electronic dance.

However, most of the interviewees said that their *personal* interest in electronic dance music was developed *despite* the general tastes of their friends. Most of the interviewees stated that their friends are not really interested in dance music. Jay in this regard mentioned that his friends *'are still more into indie music and R'n'B'*; Alicia noted, that music preferences of her friends *'are not the best example, they listen to a lot of old-school music like Backstreet Boys and Beatles'*. Others, like Aaron and Shen (student, 23), admitted to have some friends who share their taste and are knowledgeable about it.

Only two respondents, Nick and Uchit, states that in their social circle there are many people who share their tastes. Nick connected it with his part-time journalistic job, involving communication with 'artistic' professions like writers and designers. Uchit considered it a matter of his cultural background and the fact that his particular favourite type of music is widespread among his friends: *'Indian community in Singapore <...> tend to share same tastes'*.

The scattered character of dance music listeners and fans is rather typical for the post-subcultures, or as Nicola Maffesoli calls them, 'neo-tribes', consisting of small groups of people or even single individuals:

The constitution of micro-groups, of the tribes with intense spatiality, arises as a result of *belonging*, as a function of a specific ethic, and within the framework of communications network. (Maffesoli 1996 p. 139)

The sense of belonging was clearly expressed as emotional attachment to beloved dance music genres.

Entertainment practices, shared with friends, such as going out to clubs, were not much affected for interviewees by their music choices, and they preferred not to obtrude their music tastes on their friends. Jay noted: *'I try not to turn into this thing, into this kind of music, because you can turn into this very elitist thing'*. Jay, Cole, Aaron and Shen stated that they go to dance music events by themselves, without friends to enjoy the music. So, the personal entertainment practices were based on the need to express the sense of belonging to the music via such common practice as clubbing, even if it did not include sharing it with the friends.

As for acquiring new friendships, similarity in music taste became more important, even though it was often mentioned that it is unlikely to find many people interested in dance music. Nick elaborated on the topic, noting that in Singapore *'it is very hard to meet this kind of people because they are very few'*, even though he hoped to meet more people who share his interest in minimal house. Cole said that similar taste in music would open him more to the new people, make him less shy, and that generally it was 'really important'.

Music preferences became even more important when getting acquainted with potential love interest. For instance Jay said that he was 'lucky' that his girlfriend liked trance. Cole told a story about his ex-girlfriend, who he broke up with because she did not appreciate his music taste: *'When I used to come back from my DJ class I would blab about it, and this girl was like okay, here we go again. And then at one point <...> I realised that she doesn't care. Then I met another girl, she is also Indian, and she likes house <...>. She wasn't even that pretty, I wouldn't catch her by the first look, but when I started talking it turned out she likes house, and it really caught me'*.

Thus, the respondents indirectly expressed the desire to create broader communication network of people with similar music interest. This wish to meet 'music soulmates' and establish more music-related social connections may in the case of Singapore become a driving force behind making the scattered network of dance music enthusiasts more unified and solid. This process in the longer run can bring the summation of people interested in dance music in Lion City closer to the subculture in its 'modern' understanding – as a more or less established network which take a 'subordinate', 'oppositional' (Jenks 2005 p. 118-119) place within the mainstream music culture of city-state. Such development, which might seem 'downgrading' from theoretical perspective, can become the new stage of dance music progression in Singapore, fostering both scene, and industry evolvment.

The possibility of such development was supported in the expert interviews. According to the opinion of DJ Aldrin, the subcultural capital accumulated on the current stage of development may be passed on to the next generation: *'Now at least people who become parents, who have kids they will be opened to that [DJing, break dancing, etc.]'*. Eddino also said that *'now more parents are buying expensive guitars; churches encourage music, a lot more bands today than 10 years ago'*.

Talking about interviewees' parents, their attitudes towards their children's music taste were mixed. Nick said that his parent after a while became supportive of his music passion. Cole described his parents' attitude as 'neutral'. Uchit was the only interviewee who said that his parents were knowledgeable about his favourite type of music as it was a part of Indian culture. Yet again, he connected it with his Indian heritage rather than dance music as such. In the most cases, parents were not against interest in dance music of the interviewed young Singaporeans.

A conclusion can be made, that such situation may to do with both growing interest in culture in general, as well as acceptance of dance music in particular, as well the 'easier' attitudes of the state towards a variety of the forms of popular music and culture in general as opposed to the previous decades (Kong 1999).

Conclusions:

The immediate social circle, especially friends and family, were an important factor for all interviewees, influencing their lifestyle choices and leisure/ pastime practices. In most of the cases the interest in dance music was something unique for the respondents' social circle. They preferred to follow it, notwithstanding the preferences of their surrounding. This showcases the high level of devotion of the participants to their favourite music type, which may be considered as an expression of fandom in its classical understanding, where the fan appear to be 'a lonely but heroic' (Hills 2002 p. 49) figure. The atomic character of dance music listeners in Singapore, unbound in their interest by class, ideological, family and other characteristics (Muggleton/Wenzierl 2003 p. 19) also tells about dance music post-subcultural characteristics in the Lion City soundscape.

However, the respondents expressed a desire to establish a broader social network of people with similar taste in music level of passion for it. In the longer run it may become an inner force behind solidifying dance music listenership into a stronger-connected subcultural formation. In this sense dance music landmarks in Singapore may become points of gravitation for dance music fans.

The seeming bigger acceptance of various genres of electronic dance music among various categories of Singaporeans, including parents, is an evidence of cultural development of culture in general. Parental support, which proved to be important for the young Singaporeans, also seemed to be growing in terms of acceptance of their children's music taste. This can be interpreted as a broader social acceptance of various cultural expressions, even those uncommon or previously unsupported in the city-state. In is a factor, which can also foster subcultural development of electronic dance music scene.

4.2.5 Beats identified: personal relationship with music

One of the main categories was the personal relationship of the participants with music, including ways of involvement, exercising music interest, and the relation of their tastes to the music preferences of their immediate social circle.

Two main ways of engagement in dance music came up. In most of the cases, the introduction to it was unplanned, accidental, and happened with the help of acquaintances, friends or family (sibling or cousins). The span of involvement in electronic dance music was different for all of the cases. For instance Nick was introduced to dance music by cousin when he was about 10 years old; Cole started listening to electro house after in 2007 his friend introduced him to electro; Aaron got involved in dance music through his brother, who 'used to listen to electro'. The second path of involvement is through some kind of related activity/pastime, like join as a part of 'extracurricular activities' (Alicia) or by attending clubs during a famous DJ night or festivals, ex. ZoukOut, with electronic dance acts in the playlist. Nick said in this regard: *'Now DJ in Singapore mix into hip-hop some electro sounds, so the crowd gets to listen to some more electro'*. With such type of involvement, the exposure to dance music is rather irregular and occasional.

Most of the respondents stated, that they turned to the Internet to explore new music once the interest in dance music was established. Expert interviews supported the idea of Internet as a main information platform for music research. DJ Aldrin elaborated on the topic: *'...the Internet is fantastic, <...> that's where they get the information from – those who want to, instead of just sitting here and getting the information from the media, whatever information they want to feed us <...>. So with the Internet now you can just cut out the media, and do your own thing'*.

For some interviewees World Wide Web became a main mean of communication about their music interest. For instance, Aaron and Shen both mentioned online forums and discussion boards as a way of music communication or, as Shen put it, to *'see people who share the same ideas'*. Internet-based communication can sometimes lead to unexpected ways of music interest expression, like in the case of Shen who once in a chat room came across a co-producer of a famous track sent him an autographed CD.

The patterns of acquaintance with dance music as a genre via friends and small-scale social networks as DJ schools or club nights bear similarities to 'channels' and 'subchannels', or 'temporary substream networks' (Weinzierl 2001), characteristic to post-subculture. These new 'forms of social engagement that are more suited to the modern age' (Furlong/Cartmen 2007 p. 97), typical for the electronic dance music devotees in Singapore, are closely related to the technological advance of the city-state, where new media are commonly available, and the specificities of production and distribution (overwhelmingly digital) of dance music (Huq 2006). In the broader perspective, the Internet-based acquaintance with global dance music scene includes Singaporean dance music listeners in the global network basically in the real time. This is characteristic to global post-subcultures:

Internet subcultures are desirous of a certain immediacy of experience that seeks to circumvent dominant codes in the attempt to access a wealth of global information quickly and directly, as well as the immediacy and production of the same (Kahn/Keller 2003 p. 300 in: Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003).

The interviews showed that involvement in dance music genres oftentimes derives from a desire to gain music knowledge as a part of personal development. For instance, both Nick and Alicia noted, that they would listen to something new to be 'different' or listen to something not many people know.

It appeared that developing one's music taste in dance music is not always an easy way in Singapore. In this regard Nick said that in order to listen to electronic dance music in Singapore *'you have to be very open-minded'*. Jay gave his general impression of the people involved dance music scene he is acquainted with: *'Singaporeans have this thing that if you are different from them you are kind of cool, and you are above them. I get very pissed off when people from my industry, my scene <...>, when they are like 'it belongs to us. <...> Arrogant, that's the word'*.

This idea that young people, interested in dance music stand on the front line of Singaporean youth in terms of music taste are proud of it was supported by the expert interviews. DJ Aldrin said, talking about the younger generation of dance music listeners: *'There are those who will be leaders <...>, they wanna go out and look for this kind of things. Naturally it will affect the people around them'*.

Apart from this apparent 'coolness' of electronic dance music fans, there are more common features, outlined as characteristic to young Singaporeans, interested in dance music. The interviewees, who were involved into the scene *actively*, described themselves as 'more mature' than their friends who listen to genres such as pop, Top-40 (which in the case of Singapore we dare considering a genre of its own), commercial hip-hop and R'n'B. When speaking about the general crowd of young Singaporeans, they sometimes appeared to have a slightly patronising attitude, distance themselves as dance music listening individuals, and consider themselves to be in the music avant-garde. Jay said in this regard: *'Singapore crowd is not yet mature enough to be opened to it <...> It [dance music] is something that you have to look for yourself, whereas songs from the 80s or pop you can get anywhere, you can hear it whenever you want it'*. This type of respondents didn't openly express the desire to keep dance music in the 'underground' in Singapore, but sometimes mentioned that they know people who think that way.

The very presence of such thinking tells that dance music in Singapore as a scene, involving a number of individuals, has its subcultural characteristic in a 'classic' understanding of a subculture. One of them is certain ideology, opposed to the dominant ideology of the particular state, society, culture (Gelder 2005 p. 14; Hebdige 1979 p. 11). This ideology in the case of the electronic dance music listeners in Singapore can be defined as 'progressive music taste'. In this sense, the dance music culture to some degree interprets 'cultural texts in a specific relation to the dominant social order' (Dant 1991 p. 167), in this case predominant music genres, preferred by Singaporean youth, and expresses certain opposition of electronic dance music to the mainstream youth culture.

However, contrary to the underground 'romance of subcultures' in the classical understanding (Gelder 2005 p. 9), not all of the respondents stated that they would like to keep dance music off-mainstream. Many would like for it to be more common and wide-spread in Singapore. Some, like Cole, try to share their passion with others: *'Whenever I get high [in a sense of taking some alcohol] I talk about my*

music with my friends, and then they will call me crazy again, and will be like, here he goes again' he said.

In this sense, dance music scene in Singapore possesses certain characteristics of a fan culture in the more 'common' understanding of fandom as deep and passionate attraction towards someone/something (Jenson 1992 p. 10-12 in: Lewis 1992). Only in this case attraction is expressed to the music genre, rather than a celebrity. The idea of closeness to a fan culture was also supported by the expert opinion of music journalist Eddino, who mentioned that in Singapore there is 'a small number of dance music fans', who not only go to clubs such as Zouk, but would also fly to different places worldwide to attend dance music parties. Young Singaporeans, interested in dance music, also spoke about a small in numbers, yet devoted and passionate dance music fan base. For example, Alicia said that *'there are not many people interested in it, but those who are they are really hardcore'*. Cole described the music that he likes as 'godlike', while Nick referred to it as more 'rich' and varied, comparing to other music types. Wayne, being a magazine editor, openly expresses his devotion to dance music: *'I think that dance music is really an out of this world experience. <...> It's basically one song, one people and one dance floor really'*. The level of passion allows talking about Singaporeans interested in dance music as fans. In this sense, electro dance becomes a meaningful gravitation point for its listeners, who seek for alternative (as opposed to mainstream), perhaps more emotionally and intellectually fulfilling experiences in the highly mediated and rather homogenous in terms of pop-cultural expressions Singaporean context. Dance music fans 'make it mean something that connects to their own lives, experiences, needs, and desires' (Grossberg 1992 p.52 in: Lewis 1992).

One more aspect, which brings dance music listeners in Lion City close to a fan culture, though more in Matt Hills' understanding, is promoting their music interest in a variety of ways. Among such 'fan skills' and 'fan activities' (Hills 2002 p. 47-48) the respondents mentioned sharing electronic dance music with friends, blogging about their favourite genres and tracks, and even, like Nick, writing about music for the magazines.

The ways of 'creative' exercising of fandom, bend dance music scene towards fandom as 'creative consumption'. The fans are 'active, critically engaged' in the re-creating and re-producing the object of their passion (Jenkins 2006 p. 5-7), in this case – electronic dance music. These ways of exercising fandom include making own music mixes, taking DJ courses, part-time DJing and MCing. At times the line between being involved in dance music as a fan, and as a part of the industry, is thin, as in the case of Jay who has gigs quite often, or Wayne, whose music taste led him to become an editor of Juice magazine, rooted in electronic dance genres.

The level of passion of dance music fans in the city-state may even foster subcultural development of electronic dance music scene here. Sharing music and exposing more people can help create bigger knowledge of certain electronic genres and trends, and find broader support among young Singaporeans. Involvement in creative re-production of dance music culture in the longer run may foster the development of the necessary professional skills and qualities of participants, important for the development of originally Singaporean dance music culture.

Being a young scene, still seeking its place in Singapore, dance music didn't appear to possess such subcultural characteristics, as slang/ manner of speak or fashion/ way of dressing, typical for a small-scale subculture in the understanding of Chicago school (Gelder 2005; Park 1925 in: Gelder 2005; Polsky 1967 in: Gelder 2005). For instance, Cole said that his taste in clothes was not influenced by music, while Wayne mentioned that the subculture may be not as 'visual'. Still, some respondents admitted that their personal style might be somewhat influenced by the taste in music, yet not intentionally, as in the case of Nick, who said: *'I don't do it on purpose, but it happens'*.

The lack of visual expression may be one of the reasons why dance music is not so popular or noticeable in fashion-forward Singapore, where 'almost every international fashion house is represented from mass market diffusion to the exclusive couture lines of all the well-known designers' (Chua 2003 p. 20). On the other hand, the popularity of such music trends and genres as indie-rock and hip-hop in Singapore can be to a certain degree explained by more obvious visual means of expression, in particular dramatic style. For instance, Brian talked about hip-hop, which, to his mind, 'can be considered as a subculture, by the way they dress', Alicia mentioned indie crowd fashion sense, and Nick talked about the 'bright colour and combinations are all catching now in Singapore', referring to the new rave scene.

In terms of such important element of subcultural formation as self-identification of its participants, there was no single pattern. Some of the respondents, like Alicia, Cole or Shen did not identify themselves as members of some type of a social group, unified by music interest, even though on the personal level they expressed strong relation to their favourite music types. However some, like Jay, felt very close connection to it, even certain type of 'music patriotism': *'My scene – I consider it my home. <...> It is like a country <...> and if somebody comes down and says something I get very upset, I try to protect it'*. The variety of self-identification patterns, which are all evolving around electronic dance music, is typical for this particular scene at large as a post-subcultural formation:

Neo-tribalism in urban dance culture is, therefore, understood to involve highly localised, individualistic practices that construct – rather than are constructed by – a sense of collective identity (Laughey 2006 p. 45)

The fluid identities of the respondents are also embedded in the unique set of preconditions for each particular person. It relates to both specificities of post-modern self-identification of youth, 'constructed not as essential and core identity formation, but as fractured and discontinued line of organisation performances' (Skott-Myhre 2009 p. 16), and the notion of *différance* as a main principle for 'construction of self' in relation to a variety of inter-related signifiers (Derrida 1972 p. 88 in: Du Gay/ Evans/Redman 2000). Among such signifiers in the case of dance music in Singapore are, along with the state and ethnicity, age, family situation, friend circle. The strength of connection to electronic dance music as a meta-genre and a scene for many respondents grew with the progression of their interest and larger involvement in the scene. Other signifiers of self-identification, apart from family and friends, became less important. Increasing self-identification in relation to the music scene can be seen as development of tighter connection on the level of subcultural formation.

Conclusions:

From the personal perspective of the respondents, involved in dance music scene, it can be said that electronic dance music in Singapore possesses definite characteristics, unifying it into a certain type of subcultural formation.

It requires personal initiative from young people to develop their interest in electronic dance music, do independent research, and exercise their interest, despite the 'lack of exposure' and information about dance music in Singapore. Those involved in dance music distinguish themselves from the 'general crowd', and feel that they are 'more mature' in terms of music taste, compared to 'the mainstream' crowd. This may be considered a 'progressive music taste' ideology of Singaporean dance music listeners, which is a characteristic, attributed to the notion of subculture in the understanding of Birmingham school (Gelder 2005; Gelder 2007).

However, contrary to the 'modernist' Birmingham school understanding, individuals interested in dance music are not a solid group. More often than not they described their music taste as 'different' and unique for Singapore. They noted that their interest in music was hardly ever visually reflected through clothes style, or by through subcultural slang. Other expressions of interest, like creating own music mixes, writing about music on blogs and for magazines, part-time DJing, and such were common for the interviewees. In this sense dance music scene in Singapore appears to be on the border between a post-subculture and a fan culture. It is rather close to the general understanding of electronic dance music scene:

the general perception of club cultures, which are considered 'faddish, fragmented, and heavily dependent on people 'being in the know' – being 'hip', 'cool' or 'happening' (Thornton 1995 p. 184 in: Gelder 2005).

Music research is most often conducted through the Internet, communication about dance music often exists through chats and forums, MySpace pages, Facebook and other channels and 'temporary substream networks', which brings the summation of participants closer to the notion of a post-subculture.

Another factor, supporting this idea, is the patterns of self-identification on a personal level of the young people who are interested and involved in dance music. The identities in relation to music did not appear to be steady and fixed. However, most interviewees expressed strong emotional connection, and at times the desire to make dance music more widespread in Singapore. This also to a certain extent relates to the characteristics of a fan culture.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis an attempt was made to outline the development of electronic dance music scene in Singapore as a certain type of subcultural formation. Coherent research on the subject has not been previously conducted, and therefore had to be done from scratch. Outlining the development of electronic dance in Singapore covered a variety of topics, concerning Singaporean history, media policies and musicscape. The research aimed to examine the driving forces behind its development, study the factors influencing it, note the main characteristic features of dance music listenership, and classify it within subcultural theoretical framework.

The main question in focus of this study was related to the driving forces behind shaping electronic dance music in Singapore as a scene and a certain type of subcultural formation. Other questions in light concerned the factors, influencing electronic dance music development, such as nation-building policies of the state and the role of media in this process. The study attempted to classify electronic dance music in Singapore as a certain type of subcultural formation within existing theoretical framework. On the current stage of its upgrowth the local electronic dance music scene may be defined as an emergent local variation of global dance music post-subculture. Its dynamic is embedded in a set of preconditions, which include historical development of the Lion City, and the evolvement of the still young Singaporean culture.

First and foremost, electronic dance music as such came to the city dance floors only recently. There are several reasons for that.

Since Singapore gained independence in 1965, its government stepped in the city's popular cultural landscape in order to adopt it to the needs of the young multiethnic state (Turnbull 1989; Bhabha 1990; Bhabha 2000). The implementation of nation-building policies often embraced variations of popular culture to get closer to the grass-roots. Among such actions are the creation of patriotic songs, arranging state-scale events like festivals and open-air concerts, supporting the Singaporean spirit, etc. At the same time, many 'Western' displays of popular music, like rock, punk-rock, and disco were put into the category of 'immoral' cultural phenomena (Kong 1999; Kong 2006). In light of theorising on identity, such policies have created strong top-down discourses within Singaporean state, which influenced not only cultural development of the city, but were designed to create strong identity in relation to it (Du Gay/Evans/Redman 2000). The CMIO model of multicultural Singaporean population, adopted by the state on official level, added to the layering of the Lion City culture in terms of ethnical diversity. Enhanced emphasis on maintaining ethnic multiculturalism as a source of cultural development prompted the progress of certain pop-cultural occurrences, such as Cantonese pop or Malay hip-hop in music. Yet, it also caused the notable lack of attention to many other contemporary popular music genres in its variety, including electronic dance. All

this added up to certain homogenisation in terms of popular culture of the city-state (Chua 2003), and somewhat slowed down the original development of some popular occurrences on Singaporean ground, with dance music among them.

As the study showed, nowadays young Singaporeans mostly prefer such types of music as hip-hop and R'n'B, Top40, as well as indie rock, which became popular here quite recently. Pastime and clubbing practices, which are commonly shared with friends, are often juxtaposed onto youngsters' personal music tastes. 'Peer pressure' in general can be considered one of the important influences in terms of music choices. It is partly the result of the state emphasising the abovementioned development of common Singaporean spirit, as well as centring on the values of hard work and spirit of new Asian pragmatism. The implementation of ideas of meritocracy, business-like attitude, aiming at the economic development, together with the policies of multiculturalism to a great extent defined the cultural (and pop-cultural) landscape of modern-day Singapore.

Such situation is also closely connected with the policies of Singaporean mass media. The media in Lion City appeared to play large role in forming public opinion, including promotion of certain music tastes (Hill/Lian 2005). The 'commercialised' format of radio stations, which opt for well-known tunes mainly of the above-mentioned genres, as well as MTV Asia's playlist shape the city's mainstream culture, which does not include electronic music. The same goes for printed media. An example is the Straits Times newspaper, analysed during the research. It is very influential in the city-state, being closely connected with the government, and represents the general cultural orientation of Singaporean government (Seow 1998). Music coverage here mainly consists of established and mainstream acts, well-known locally and internationally. Electronic dance music coverage is occasional and very moderate.

In general, the policies of mainstream media in Singapore can be considered efficient in terms of cultural production (Hesmondhalgh 2007). Media to a great extent mirrors the general direction of Singaporean state, and the local cultural industry in terms of mainstream culture is shaped mainly in line with the official policies. To a certain degree the mainstream youth culture influenced by the global industry of popular music, which is sharply reflected in music tastes. Altogether, not only media content, but also strong gravitation to the peers, family, ethnicity, society, comes around in music tastes, which can be considered the influence of state-prompted discourses (Du Gay/Evans/Redman 2000; Hall 2000).

Unsurprisingly, the lack of exposure and listenership is an obstacle for the development of infrastructure, necessary for the progress of the local electronic dance music. Namely, the lack of production and recording studios and PR expertise, as well as under-appreciation of DJ profession in Singapore are the main outcomes of such situation.

One more aspect, relating to the 'underground' path of development electronic dance music took in Singapore, are the widespread connotations, inherent to it here. Among them are firstly, the relation to drugs and, secondly, association with the local marginal group ah-bengs. This results in reluctance to listen to electronic music, and to take part in it as well. The 'deviant' character of ah-bengs, who are considered main dance music listeners in Singapore, brings it as a subcultural

formation closer to the Chicago school understanding, with subculture seen as a small, tight and often marginalised formation (Gelder 2007; Park 1925 in: Gelder 2007; Cohen 1972 in: Gelder 2007). Functioning within urban space also relates to the Chicago school definition of a subculture.

However, it can be said that electronic dance music is slowly coming out of the underground in Singapore. Partly it has to do with the often-mentioned recent support of various cultural expressions from the side of the government, which can be considered as a positive sign. It may foster the bigger acceptance of various cultural expressions, including electronic dance music. It also may foster development of more positive attitude from both media and public to this non-mainstream genre for Singapore.

The high level of economic development, as well as technological advance of the Lion City can also be favourable for the local dance music scene. It allows inviting a great many international music acts, including electronic performers and DJs, who willingly come to perform in Asia. This creates greater exposure to live music for the younger Singaporeans who, as it was pointed out in the interviews, are always excited to see famous performers of all types of genres. The use of Internet, widespread among computer-literate Singaporean youth, eases music research and exploration of new artists and genres. Affordability of music instruments and equipment such as turntables makes fan-based, semi-professional involvement in music more and more common among local youth nowadays.

Another factor, influential in this sense, is global music trends (Huq 2002; Huq, 2006). Here should be named the return of dance music fashion on the in fresh genres such as new rave and new disco, which are a convergence between various rock/ indie music types and classic electronic genres. Considering that indie rock is a very popular scene in Singapore nowadays, it may bring more attention of the youth to electronic dance music.

Nonetheless, electronic dance scene in the city-state is small-scale and very new. Even though it had been present in Singapore on the peak of global dance music popularity in the 1990s, it did not manage to deeply root itself within the local musicscape. Still, electronic dance music established in the Lion City notable scene-shaping landmarks, the most important of which are Zouk club and Juice magazine. Zouk club is one of the city's biggest nightspots, focusing mainly on electronic dance music of various types. Juice magazine is the dance-music oriented media, which spreads, maintains and to a large extent creates the cultural, or rather subcultural production of electronic dance music in Singapore. Thus, the industry on the small-scale was sustained over the years, creating primary exposure in the city.

The research showed that dance music listenership in the city-state is very few in numbers and rather scattered. However, the listeners, who have been interested in this type of music for some time already, were quite passionate about it, and proud of their music preferences. They are often involved in such music-related activities as DJing, creating music mixes, at times music production, and writing or blogging about dance music as a hobby or semi-professionally. It tells that electronic dance music listenership possesses certain characteristics of a fan culture (Hills 2002; Lewis 1992).

However, as a fan culture electronic dance music in Singapore may be a special case. In the most fan culture and fandom studies it is accentuated, that fandom is a product of popular culture and capitalist production (Hills 2002; Lewis 1992; Jenkins 2006), fostered by the easy accessibility and promotion by the mass media. In the case of dance music in Lion City, however, the situation is opposite, as dance music here is rather a part of 'unpopular' culture. Emotional connection to it and expressing fandom happens athwart mass media and mainstream culture, and in some cases may be maintained because of its 'uniqueness', increased by the lack of easily available information.

This idea of 'uniqueness', exclusiveness of electronic dance music in Singapore is in a sense typical for a subcultural formation (Gelder 2005; Gelder 2007). In terms of classification within subcultural framework, it possesses some definite characteristics, which bring it closer to the notion of a post-subculture (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003; Muggleton 1999). Atomic character of scene participants is one of such characteristics. The patterns of involvement of the participants heavily dwell on the Internet and other new media. They use it for both music research and communication, and are often involved in temporary human networks, such as chat rooms, forums and discussion boards, social networking websites, etc. Such use of new media is very typical for a post-subculture. The identities of the research participants, interested in electronic dance music or involved in it professionally or semi-professionally, proved to be shifting and unstable in relation to music scene (Muggleton/Weinzierl 2003; Côté/Levine 2002; Maffesoli 1996). However, for many participants with time and bigger involvement in electronic dance these identities proved to become more music-gravitated, and scene-oriented. It shows the accumulative potential of electronic dance music's subcultural capital.

The abovementioned characteristics of dance music scene in Singapore are also close to the 'club cultures' or global electronic dance music in general (Huq 2006; Hesmondhalgh/Negus 2002; Thornton 1995). The scene is not politically-charged, and is more oriented towards hedonistic, emotionally and physically fulfilling (in the bodily expressions of dancing to the rhythm) experience. However, the local electronic dance music scene has certain specificities, which are untypical, and some even opposing the general understanding of club cultures and post-subcultures.

Among such characteristics is a degree of self-differentiation of electronic dance music participants from the general crowd, and an ideology they seem to express, which can be defined as 'progressive music taste'. In this sense, the scene may even somewhat oppose the dominant, or, to put it more precisely, mainstream youth culture in Singapore. This brings electronic dance music scene in the city-state closer to the 'modern' idea of a subculture in Birmingham school understanding (Hebdige 1979; Gelder 2007). In the longer run such set of ideas, underground and small scale character of dance music scene, as well as the desire of participants to establish more and closer social connections, based on music tastes, can become driving forces behind making it more unified and solid. In theoretical sense it may seem going back in time. However, in the case of electronic dance music in Singapore it might foster the growth of listenership network, taste variation, as well as diversify the ways of involvement in the scene and support industry development.

Established and respected dance music landmarks in Singapore like Zouk club and Juice magazine in this case would be gravitation points for the subculture, reproducing it on philosophical and ideological levels.

The research showed that electronic dance music is a newly-emergent scene in Singapore. It possesses the majority of characteristics of a post-subculture, yet cannot be unequivocally classified as such, as it has some strong features, close to the 'modern' understanding of a subculture. Singaporean electronic dance music scene draws considerably on the fandom of its participants, expressed in creative reproduction of dance music in various forms. It is involved in the international development via online-based channels and temporary networks. The recent growth of electronic dance music scene in Singapore is largely explained by global fashion in music. It can be considered a development of the Lion City musicscape, where electronic dance music is uncommon and underground.

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“**Brian**”, student, 22 – 2 December 2008, National University of Singapore Forum, Singapore
“**Cole**”, student, 19 – 27 November 2009, National University of Singapore, Chunky Monkey cafe, Singapore
“**Jay**”, tutor and freelance DJ, 23 – 3 December 2008, the Esplanade, Singapore
“**Nick**”, student, 21 – 12 December 2008, Millennium Walk Shopping Center, Singapore
“**Uchit**”, student, 21 – 23 January 2009, Plaza Singapura, hawker center, Singapore
“**Aaron**”, student, 24 and “**Shen**”, student, 23 – 24 January 2009, private apartment, Singapore

Professional interviews:

- Aldrin Queck aka DJ Aldrin** – 21 January 2009, Toa Payoh MRT station, Singapore
Wayne Lee, editor-in-chief of Juice magazine – 9 January 2009, Red Dot Design Museum cafe, Singapore
Eddino Abdul Hadi, Straits Times music reporter – 29 January 2009, Singapore Press Holding foyer, Singapore
Cho Pei Lin, director, Asia PR Werkz – 22 November 2008, PR Werkz Asia office, Singapore

E-mail interviews:

- Tracy Phillips**, Zouk club marketing manager 1998-2009 – answers received 6 January 2009
National Arts Council – answers received 15 January 2009 from Mah Yen Ling, Manager, Corporate Communications & International Relations, National Arts Council, Singapore

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix I. Note on pilot interviews

The real names of the interviewees were changed

Altogether, there were conducted 6 one-on-one pilot interviews, and one simultaneous interview with two participants. The interviewees were between 19 and 23 year of age, all students of National University of Singapore, and all living in Singapore permanently. Thus, the interviewees were ‘representative’ of the researched group – Singaporean youth, but not ‘from’ the particular group – of young people who are specifically interested in dance music (Gillham 2000 p.55). Therefore, the outcome of pilot interviews was a real test shot within the study case of Singaporean youth.

The interviews were conducted within the time frame of two weeks in October 2008. The character of the interviews was rather general: the questions were grouped, and those covering the broader topic areas, prioritised (Gillham 2000 p. 53). Every pilot interview lasted between 15 and 25 minutes.

The questions, asked during the pilot interviews, were directed at finding out what are the music preferences of the interviewees when they went out clubbing, and what music genres, artists, etc. they choose to listen when they are by themselves; how much time they spent listening to music, and how much it meant to them; what were the music preferences of their friends music; what factors they consider to affect their music tastes.

There was a strong division between the type of music the interviewees preferred while going out to the clubs, and the music they enjoyed listening in their day-to-day life.

The music for ‘going out’ and clubbing was hip-hop and R’n’B for all the interviewees. Some also mentioned pop or ‘anything that has good beat’, according to Jamie, 22. Aditi, 22, said that ‘a good mix of R’n’B, Top 40 and salsa is fun’. Both Jamie, and Aditi, both being of Indian decent, said that they often go out to that play Tamil and other Indian-inspired music. Only one interviewee, Chaitra, 21, mentioned that she ‘doesn’t mind house music’, though she has always been twice to the rooms that played house music. Six of eight interviewees mentioned Zouk, which is the biggest electronic dance music club in Singapore, as one of their favourite places to go out. However, they all noted that they go to Phuture, which is an R’n’B room of the club, or visit Zouk on Wednesdays during ‘mambo nights’, which are, according to Kelly, 19, is a mix of music from the 1980s and 1990s, which is danced to with special ‘mambo’ moves. She called it ‘mambo’ culture;

Jamie, talking about mambo, said that ‘it is an era of its own’ and that ‘mambo night especially more than anything else’ has defined club culture in Singapore.

Among other factor which shape music taste of young Singaporeans, Kelly also mentioned the influence of different music cultures: ‘In Singapore pop-culture is influenced by American – for those who speak English; and for the Chinese it is Hong-Kong and Taiwan’. Samantha also that Singaporean culture is very ‘Americanized’, and that this affects the fashion and music taste of young Singaporeans a great deal.

The outcome of the interviews part concerning music tastes contrasted and even contradicted the supposed popularity of electronic dance music in Singapore, which was one of the main research-shaping notions.

The music the interviewees said they listen ‘for themselves’ partly coincided with their ‘going out’ tastes. Three out of eight interviewees said that they liked R’n’B and hip-hop, which Chaitra, 21, characterised as ‘more commercial stuff’. Three others stated their preference to alternative rock, Samantha, 19, stated that she is into indie-rock music; Jin, 21, said that she liked listening to Japanese pop music; Chuck, 23, said that he preferred Cantonese pop. The interviewees with Indian heritage also said that they listen to Bollywood and ethnically-inspired music.

This somewhat coincided with the idea that personal music tastes may differ from the going out tastes. Again, it contradicted the idea that dance music in Singapore is popular and widespread.

When talking about how much means to them, seven out of 8 interviewees states that they do not feel that music represents their personalities. Only Samantha said that her favourite type of music, which is indie-rock music, was somewhat a representative of her as a person. She mentioned that her boyfriend plays in a band, and she is more into the ‘scene’. She also said that her fashion sense was also influenced by her favourite bands like Paramore (an American rock band with a strong emo twist). Jamie said, that the lyrics of certain songs somehow influence her world outlook, and mentioned artists such as Bono and Mary J Blige to be her role models and inspirations.

Other than that, the interviewees were not particularly passionate about the music they listened to.

The patterns of listening to music for the interviewees proved to be embedded in their university-student lifestyle: all 8 respondents mentioned that they listen to music while travelling to the university. Aditi also mentioned that she has her mp3 player on while in gym. Chaitra said that she listens to music while studying, and that often it is radio, normally two stations: ‘98,7, which is music for youngsters, mainstream, and Class 95 – more mature crowd, some oldies from 1980s’.

Three interviewees said that they tend to watch music videos on YouTube or MTV Asia, but mostly during weekend or in their free time.

Seven of eight interviewees said that their friends listen to similar kinds of music as themselves, apart from Jin, whose friends don’t listen to Japanese pop, which she prefers.

Generally the interviewees hardly mentioned any kind of electronic dance music and those who did (Samantha and Chaitra) did not express any interest in it, and Samantha even expressed strong dislike of this type of music.

7.2 Appendix II. Topic chart for personal interviews and a group interview

X – very important X – important XO – not so important

	Alicia	Brian	Uchit	Nick	Jay	Cole	Aaron	Shen	Aldrin	Wayne	Eddino	Cho Pei Lin
Fav. type of music	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	XO	XO		
What matters in music	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Ways of getting into dance music	X	XO	X	X	X	X	X	XO	X	X	X	
Friends, social circle & music	X	X	X	X	X	X	XO	XO	X	X		
Music research	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	XO	X	X		
Music scene in SG	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Dance music in SG	XO	XO	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	XO	
Media, exposure	X	XO	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
State	XO	XO	XO	XO	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ethnicity	X	X	X			XO						X
Personal participation in music		X		X	X	XO	XO	XO	X	XO	X	
DJing	XO	X	X	X	X	X	XO		X	X	XO	
Zouk	X			X	X		X	X	X	X		
Religious beliefs	XO	X										XO
Music and personality	XO	X	X	X		XO	X	X				
Young SG scene					X		X	XO	X	X	X	
Juice mag	X			X	X				X	X	X	

7.3 Appendix III. Extracts from the e-mail interviews

1. Tracy Phillips, Zouk club marketing manager 1998-2009

Zouk music policy:

Zouk was the first club to champion house music and electronica in Singapore, introducing a fresh sound to the populace and keeping abreast with the most upfront global trends at the time.

This policy remains as reflected through our bookings and the musical direction of the Zouk residents, always champion edgy sounds in dance, suitable for the different rooms throughout Zouk, Zouk main room, Phuture, Velvet Underground & Wine Bar.

The sound has changed as the music has evolved and splintered into even more and more sub-genres, from the Euro & Balearic sounds of the early 90's to current day trends, the Zouk main room (capacity 2000) embraces the bigger room sounds of house, trance, techno, minimal & electro.

Velvet Underground developed as an older, more sophisticated club to Zouk's tougher sound, with house still being the core but allowing for the deeper, more soulful and musical sides of the genre to be expressed.

Phuture, as the smaller leftfield alternative (400 capacity) has gone through the widest ranging changes, riding the upward trends of big beat, drum & bass, then breaks and finally hip hop, always embracing the genres, ahead of the competition.

Wine Bar as the laid back, chill out option, before entering the club has always had an eclectic mix that has traversed the lounge and world music route, to funk & soul to IDM and deep house.

Zouk's success is also owed to the variety it offers through its 4 distinct rooms.

Hip Hop's pull is undeniable and that is why Phuture was one of the first clubs to take that musical direction 6 years ago, before hip hop was top 40 like it is currently.

But to stay true to the clubs ideals, of ever evolving and being at the forefront of club culture, the only appropriate music choice would be electronic dance music, as it is constantly changing & ties in closely to the other creative industries like fashion, multi media, design etc.

Invited acts

Each act we bring through is thought out carefully, having to balance several factors like commercial success, music education for our clubbers, artists popularity, financials, variety in a given month & most importantly getting the timing just right, and when several of these factors are in our favour.

Most famous would be Bjork, Chemical Brothers, Tiesto, Paul Van Dyk, Danny Tenaglia, DJ Shadow, Nouvelle Vague, Sasha, Carl Cox, Justice, just to name a few.

If you're talking about non music events, we've stage many interesting fashion, art & design shows too, like Dior, Anna Sui, Adidas, local designers through our Annual Wardrobe Series, a quarterly flea market called Flea & Easy, ResFest and numerous outdoor parties with varying concepts too.

ZoukOut

ZoukOut was conceptualised after Zouk had been around for 9 years. The management decided that it was time to bring the spirit of Zouk to the great outdoors and an even larger audience and the market was ready for a dance event of scale and thus ZoukOut was born.

ZoukOut is successful for many reasons, a phenomenal and varied lineup, high-end quality production; the full festival experience that includes fringe activities, food and quirky talents plus a great location makes ZoukOut an ideal festival to attend. Initially targeted at just the local community, because of the above, the successes of each year and neighbouring countries lacking large scale dance events on par with ZoukOut, has made it the definitive year end party for the region too, with tourists numbers growing year on year.

DJing events Zouk hosts:

DMC/ Technics World DJ Championships Singapore finals, Heineken Green Rooms, Redbull Music Academy Events, Resident DJ monthly nights like We Luv House with DJB, TAB with djB and Tony Tay, Flava with Andrew Chow, Holla with Nervous, One with Aldrin & the best international names on a weekly basis.

Zouk DJs:

Zouk's main room residents are djB, Tony Tay and bi-monthly Aldrin
Velvet Underground residents are Jeremy Boon, Hong & Brendon P.
Phuture residents are Andrew Chow & Nervous.

All the residents have toured throughout the world and are at the top of their game with the main room DJs as well as Brendon P all also producing their own tracks that have been released on international labels.

For international DJs, we try to not repeat names within 9 months to a year, to keep things fresh and to allow us to embrace more genres. DJs who return to play year after year include Carl Cox, Sven Vath, Laurent Garnier, Danny Tenaglia, Sister Bliss, Louie Vega, Steve Lawler to name a few.

2. National Arts Council of Singapore

Singaporean culture

As Singapore is an immigrant society, a Singaporean culture draws its roots from the origins of her ancestors from the Asian region e.g. we see that rites, rituals and expressions of the Malay, Chinese, Indian communities being practice in current times. Besides being rooted in the traditional Asian heritage of its multi-cultural population, the Singaporean culture also offers perspectives of a young cosmopolitan city. Singapore is a confluence of east and west, tradition and modernity.

Time is needed for a young nation to forge and evolve a singular culture. Considerations also need to be given on how a Singaporean culture could be related to the new immigrants in Singapore, and conversely, how the constant influx of migrants would have an impact on the Singaporean culture.

“Singaporean” character

Perhaps we could take references from the media. We read about how Singaporeans are seen to be “pragmatic” and “kiasu” (competitive). We also read about how Singaporeans could be “generous” e.g. in helping the less-privileged, and contributing to communities stricken by calamities.

Citywise – Singapore is seen to be well-organised – clean and green city.

Singaporean musicscape

Singapore’s music reflects a distinctive multi-cultural identity as well as our Asian context. We hear songs of different languages - English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, and sounds of varied musical idioms e.g. western classical music, traditional Chinese music, Malay folk music like *dikir barat* etc...

This unique Singapore trait has attracted interest from other countries like Russia. In 2005, under the Martynov Project, Russian composer Professor Vladimir Martynov and violinist Tatiana Grindenko were commissioned to compose music on the theme of Singapore. The highlight of Singapore Po-Ruski was the October 2005 world premiere of the symphony, SINGAPORE, written by Vladimir Martynov at Moscow's Tchaikovsky Concert Hall.

A cultural-business extravaganza named Spotlight Singapore in Moscow was organised in Moscow from 4 to 7 June 2008 by The Arts House of Singapore and supported by the Singapore Embassy in Moscow and IE Singapore. This initiative also saw the premiere of *Generation/s*, a musical-theatre work directed by Ivan Heng and composed by Iskandar Ismail, on 4 June 2008.

Over the past few decades, there is increasing musical diversity and options for Singaporeans. More performance platforms are available to showcase local talents. Singaporeans are exposed to different music genres ranging from classical and world, to ethnic and electronica.

Singaporean musicians in the classical and pop genre have matured. The SSO began with a modest assembly of more foreign musicians than Singaporean musicians. About 80% of its performers are Singaporean. The SSO performs over 50 symphonic concerts a year. Today, our orchestras and musicians engage in international collaborations and tours to critical acclaim.

As part of efforts to promote the Singapore music industry overseas, a delegation of 11 companies led by the National Arts Council and The Composers and Authors Society of Singapore (COMPASS), set up a Singapore Pavilion in *Marché international de l'édition musicale (MIDEM)* for the 4th year. A Singapore Showcase was staged for the first time in MIDEM. It featured award-winning music talent Andrew Lum and Corrinne May on 29 January 2008.

Increasingly, the plethora of home-grown artists in the Mandarin pop-scene has put Singapore on the international music scene. For example, Ah-do, J J Lin and Stephanie Sun are household names in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

There is also more specialised grooming for youths as more training and educational programmes are developed to nurture talents. For example, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory, NUS offers a four-year full-time music degree programme with an emphasis on music performance and music academics. The curriculum provides a strong foundation for students to continue their artistic development at outstanding graduate schools or become international artists at the highest professional level. Arts educational institutions such as NAFA and LASALLE provide comprehensive music programmes at the tertiary level. The School of the Arts (SOTA) is Singapore's first independent pre-tertiary school to offer a unique integrated arts and academic learning experience for youths aged 13 to 18.

Some key actions include commissioning National Songs (written in a popular music style) to be sung during National Day celebrations. e.g. "Count on Me Singapore", "One People, One Nation", "Stand Up for Singapore" and "Home".

Programmes like Sing Singapore and Song Fest were organised by the state in the 1980s to 1990s, where songs reflecting the rhythm and beat of Singapore were promoted to and sung by the community.

Singaporean popular music and club culture

Popular music and dance club music are a part of the wider arts ecosystem. They play a role in contributing to a vibrant arts scene in Singapore. They serve as an entry point for Singaporeans to partake in the arts.

Singapore has a vibrant club scene where Singaporeans are exposed to the latest trends and some of the best international artists of this genre. The annual dance party ZoukOut is a crowd-puller locally and regionally. Overall, the club scene adds to the diversity of Singapore's arts and entertainment options and projects Singapore as a cosmopolitan city for work, live and play.

7.4 Appendix IV. Expert interviewee profiles

I. Electronic dance music professionals

Aldrin Queck aka DJ Adrin

Information from: <http://www.myspace.com/onealdrin>

Voted Local DJ Who Gets You Onto The Dancefloor: Who else but one of Singapore's prominent spinmeister Aldrin to clinch this award. He really does get us on the dancefloor to shake our bons bons till the lights come on. Just go to one of his ONE nights and see for yourself. He's the man and you, our readers are spot on.

One of Asia's biggest DJ export to date, Aldrin has been championing his genre-bending sounds through his signature ONE nights at Zouk in Singapore, and guest spots all over the globe, including Pacha, Space & DC10 in Ibiza, Turnmills and The Cross in London, Cielo in New York, Womb in Tokyo, and Home in Sydney. In the studio, his releases have received support from big guns like John Digweed, Carl Cox, Hernan Cattaneo, Dave Seaman and Tom Stephan. His remix of "Love In New Wave" by Singapore rock band Electrico received massive airplay by Pete Tong on his BBC Radio One show.

ONE WITH MUSIC - Aldrin's very own digital imprint, is where he continues to showcase his musical output. The label is also a platform for the many talents in and around Asia! 6 releases on and the label has already seen support from the likes of Hernan Cattaneo, Laurent Garnier, Stacey Pullen, DJ Chus and more! This, coupled with his Essential Mix set making him the only South East Asian to be on Pete's show, plus Danny Tenaglia And Marco Bailey both singling him out in the DJ Mag Top 100 Poll as a DJ to watch, Aldrin is clearly an international DJ/producer that Asia can call their very own.

Tracy Phillips, ex-marketing manager of Zouk (at the time of our interview she was still working with Zouk, but left the job in May 2009)

Interview from:
<http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:ZqC0U6P4PnEJ:www.todayonline.com/Print/Plus/EDC090428-0000025/It%E2%80%99s-Zouk-...-out-for-this-clubber+tracy+phillips+zouk+club+interview&cd=4&hl=en&ct=clnk&client=opera>

Veteran marketing manager Tracy Phillips on saying sayonara to Singapore's most famous nightspot

April 28, 2009, Genevieve Loh

ZOUK might be the party place for many people, but for Tracy Phillips, her partying days, so to speak, are over.

Yes, come Thursday, the very familiar face and spokesperson of Singapore's premier clubbing icon will be serving out her last working day.

She is leaving the proverbial "nest" after 11 years in the business since she joined in 1998 as marketing executive. She was part of the team that started up Singapore's biggest beach party, Zouk Out, and she contributed to making Zouk not just a household name here, but for clubbers and DJs all over the world.

Now, she is looking forward to other challenges in her life, said the opinionated 31-year-old, who is also known for her quirky fashion style.

But how does one clear a desk full of memories accumulated over more than a decade? “In three big blue Ikea bags!” said Phillips. “That should take care of my CDs!”

The big question: Why are you leaving?

It’s time for a change, to explore other interests and take on new challenges.

That’s the politically-correct answer ...

But it’s true! It’s time for a change. Come on, working 12- to 15-hour days just doesn’t have the same appeal it had. But before everyone out there gets ‘paranoid’, I want to allay all concerns: I really do want a change in lifestyle.

So, no more nightlife for you ... at all?

I am sure there will be a lot of speculation that when I leave, that there is a probability I would work for other nightlife establishments. But I can honestly say that is not the case at all.

To me, Zouk is the pinnacle of nightlife and it wouldn’t make sense for me to work for someone else. It wouldn’t be a good fit. I mean, I don’t think any other club matches the same kind of philosophy, ideals and values that Zouk has.

I am not getting out of nightlife to jump right back into it. I have a lot of loyalty to Zouk. They really have been like my family.

What do you consider to be your career highlight at Zouk?

It has always been a team effort. Perhaps I’ve been a bit more prominent, being the spokesperson for the club, but everything we do here, we do as a team.

We have a lot of discussions and a lot of the final decisions are made by Zouk CEO Lincoln (Cheng). We really have a good time brainstorming collectively. In that sense, I can’t take credit for anything alone. It really is a team effort.

Still, 11 years in any job is a long time. Didn’t you get bored?

I was very fortunate because Zouk and I were a perfect fit. I think how lucky I was to have found a job that suited me to a T. I mean, I would have been bored if it was just about music. I was so lucky that there was fashion, design, arts, events, production ... That’s obviously what kept me on for so long.

Some people assume marketing for a club is just booking DJs and such, but it’s not. It’s so much more. I was constantly stimulated. I was always around creative people all the time. The energy kept me going. There was (always) something going on.

People have said to me: ‘I cannot believe you stayed on at Zouk for so long’. I can genuinely say there was never a dull moment.

So, why leave such an exciting job?

Now, it’s really the time to look for new challenges. I do think it’s fair for me to want to be able to pursue other interests now.

I mean, over the years, there were a lot of opportunities given to me, which I couldn’t take because Zouk always came first. I think now, after more than 10 years,

it's actually time for me to think about ways of developing myself personally, instead of always putting the club and the brand first. That is the truth.

That's why I am starting a class in May in merchandising. And driving lessons! I want to learn how to drive! (Laughs)

Any projects other than learning to drive a car?

The merchandising classes is with the view of creating a retail brand. The project has yet to find its feet, so for now I will have to keep it under wraps. I have many ideas and projects I would like to work on.

I am currently pitching for a project to work with and support young creative people and entrepreneurs. It's a project that really resonates with me as there is a clear social objective and is an extension of some of the things I have been doing at Zouk, coupled with new interesting challenges. So, I'm crossing my fingers.

I'm also open to consultancy and ad hoc projects where I can make a difference and share some of my knowledge on youth, music, design and urban trends. Be it with government agencies or other creative businesses.

What will you miss most about Zouk?

Leading such an amazing creative team, being at the forefront of Singapore's fashion, music and design scene, and engaging global music trendsetters on a regular basis.

Won't you miss the perks?

Haha! I will miss going to the DJ console to find out what exactly was the one track that moved me on the dance floor! And the secret passages within the club that makes the journey around it so much shorter. They are very useful (when you're) in painful high heels!

Wayne Lee, DJ and the editor-in-chief of Juice magazine since 1998.

Information from: http://www.festivalsg.org/worldwidefestival/?page_id=581

As Editor-in-Chief of JUICE magazine (Singapore), Wayne Lee acts as the eyes, ears and voice of the local music and street culture scene. Born in the post punk era, Wayne has pledged eternal allegiance to the guitar twangs of Radiohead and Joy Division, as well as the electronic bleeps of deck luminaries Richie Hawtin and Erol Alkan. He loves reading trash, eating junk food and listening to good tunes. When the lad is not hauling late night mental blocks in front of his computer, he is out there playing 12" records and smashing dance floors with his DJ sets.

II. Culture and media professionals

Cho Pei Lin, the Director of Asia PR Werkz PR agency.

Information from:

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/pei-lin-cho/b/522/864>

<http://www.asiaprwerkz.com/>

Armed with an Honours Bachelor of Laws Degree from the National University of Singapore, she was called to the Singapore Bar in 2001. Due to her background in

legal counsel, Pei Lin's forte is advising on communications issues which are dominated by financial considerations or complex commercial terms or public policy issues and providing strategic communications solutions to clients.

Articulate and sharp, she is a pioneer in introducing Litigation PR to Singapore and cleverly combines her legal expert knowledge and experience with communications strategies to provide workable solutions for her clients.

In the past two years, Pei Lin has provided PR consultancy to companies listed in the Singapore's mainboard as well as strategising communication issues with local and China companies seeking to list in Singapore.

In the realm of Public Affairs and Educational Campaign Communications, Pei Lin led the Asia PR Werkz team with colleague Julie Chiang to clinch the PR project for Singapore's National Family Week for three consecutive years since 2005. In 2008, Pei Lin led the team to rebrand National Family Week to National Family Celebrations and strategically recommended for the National Family Council to designate a day as National Family Day.

In 2006, Pei Lin and the Asia PR Werkz team conceptualised and executed the celebrations of We Are Married! for the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, an inaugural event of its kind in Singapore and continued to lead the celebrations in 2007. Her other clients in this area of work include the Making Businesses Pro-Family Workgroup, the National Family Council, Halogen Foundation, I Love Children and The Boys' Brigade Sharity Gift Box. Pei Lin led the team to win the "Outstanding Campaigns by Non-Government Organisation PRISM Award 2008" – the most distinguished PR Awards in Singapore.

Eddino Abduh Hadi, Straits Times music reporter

Straits Times music reporter and a member of a Singaporean rock band. Previously used to work for the Big O magazine. Currently covers a variety of music events, local and international artists, at times writes music reviews.

7.5 Appendix V. Samples of analysed media

Juice magazine



*Jay our anniversary
Juice. 100 KiTouni!*
*Manayn. VE NEED
SOM E JUICE!
NOUS AVONS BESOIN
de JUS!!!
GILDAS*

It's our birthday, y'all. Send your presents to inbox@juice.com.sg.

MAIL OF THE MONTH

TEN-TATION

Hi **JUICE**,

Has it been 10 years? Oh my, it's almost like yesterday that I was reading you in college, checking up on Scene pictures (Babe Of The Month!!), finding out where to go this weekend and looking up the latest local streetwear shops. How time flies when you're having fun! You have also come a long way, adding more international content over the years and making yourself such a monthly treat. Happy birthday, **JUICE**!

Leon Z

We've received a load of love this month telling us that we might be an oldie, but still a goldie. It's nice to know that all those late nights we've spent getting drunk with Uffie, stalking McQueen and making up stories about Jack White have paid off. We appreciate you appreciating us, Leon, so have this \$100 Lee Jeans voucher and a wet kiss.

ROOTS MANEUVER

Hi **JUICE**,

Wow, you guys have been around for a loooong time. I love that you have more international bands and brands in your mag recently, though I was beginning to miss the local DJs and shops you used to feature. But all's not lost: I'm glad you're bringing back some local chats and featuring local people like Inquisitive and SBTG for your cover. We should never forget our roots, anyway. And also, a very happy birthday to you!

Kenny Pang

While we do love our strokes and daft punks, we haven't forgotten the people who were there for us when we started JUICE out of our mum's living room. Which is why we've invited a bunch of them to work some collaborative magic for our anniversary. It'll be magical, like losing our virginity all over again.

GREAT WHITE HOPE

Hey **JUICE**,

Thank you, thank you, thank you for bringing The Whitest Boy Alive to Singapore! Erlend Øye is such a genius, I've loved him ever since Kings Of Convenience. Can't wait to catch them at your anniversary party!

Rachel

Sure, The Whitest Boy Alive will be a great treat at our party, but just wait till you see our bouncy castle. For your friends who haven't gotten a pop, they can also buy tickets to this event from SISTIC. For more information, just check out www.mtv.asia.com/juiceanniversary

CHEAP & CHEERFUL

Dear **JUICE**,

10 years and still rocking in the FREE world! You people are our true Singapore heroes and there would be no scene without you. Keep on keeping on! And stay FREE!!

Maya

We know we give it away too free and too easily, but it's all in the name of love. And our love does go on and on after all, kind of like that guy who died in Titanic.

JUST CHEAP

Hey **JUICE**,

Wah... how come you're charging for this year's party? Why can't it be free like your mag?? I would really love to go but I don't really want to pay because I'm only a student. Is there any way to get complimentary tickets to this event? Please let me know how.

Han Lee

Unless it's your birthday as well, a grand just don't come for free, kids.



This month's Mail Of The Month winner wins a \$100 Lee Voucher, courtesy of Lachmann Marketing.

INDIE DANCE 2000

No longer the sole domain of dance and electro acts, the dancefloor has cleared the way for an influx of indie bands keen on a bite of the boogie by boosting their rock/punk stylings with a crafty dance ethic. **JUCE** traces the rise and rise of this movement — from its earliest rumblings to its current reincarnation as nu rave — that's been teaching indie kids how to dance again.

Text: Mike Chen

ELECTROCLASH

The earliest version of indie-dance saw primarily electro artists fusing their chance leanings with a new wave sound. Christened electroclash, the faction blew open future possibilities for a precise genre mash-up.

OCT 1999

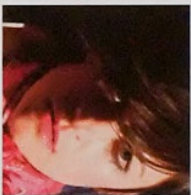


LE TIGRE

Heated by the inimitable Kathleen Hanna, Le Tigre drew on their punk and raucous roots to create this electro-punk masterpiece that had indie kids everywhere taking notes. The frantic yelp of "Decapitated" has since become quite the dancefloor staple.

Highlights "Hot Topic", "Decapitated"

SEP 2000



PEACHES

THE TEACHES OF PEACHES

The electro-punk on Peaches' debut was as fiery, loud and brazen as they come. While the production attempts to shine things up, Peaches' foul-mouthed delivery and filthy subject matter manage to work their way to the top.

Highlights "F---K, The Pain Away", "Rock Show"

OCT 2000



RADIOHEAD

KID A

Premier Britrockers Radiohead dropped their latest release to an unsuspecting public, polarizing opinion about their new experimental phase, but in the meantime, opening up a brave new world for indie kind. The band's foray into the unknown and bold innovation with electronics (on top of jazz, classical and Kraut elements) set a stellar example and standard that would inspire anyone attempting to make something special.

"When we put Kid A out, I specifically remember saying, 'Copy that, you f---ing...' Then Yoko on putting Radiohead copyrights out of business."

SEP 2001



DFA RECORDS

Motorminded by James Murphy (of LCD Soundsystem fame), Tim Gelsworthy (Who Vex album) and Jonathan Galin (their motto), the establishment of DFA Records in 2001 provided a definite bridge between dance and post-punk, inspired by the '80s dance music, and Gary Numan, the label signed up peeps like The Fugure and Radio 4, cementing themselves as a central for the dance-punk genre and furthering dance's appeal to indie.

OTHER NOTABLE DFA SIGNINGS

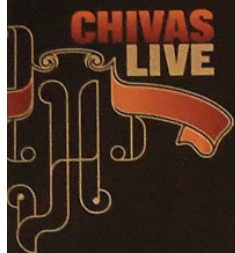
Heretics & Love Affair
Sitt Robot
Mowling Urns
Pylon
Black Dice
Printron Dance School



special

LIVE & LOUD

BROUGHT TO YOU BY CHIVAS LIVE



UNIQUE LIVE EXPERIENCE WITH...

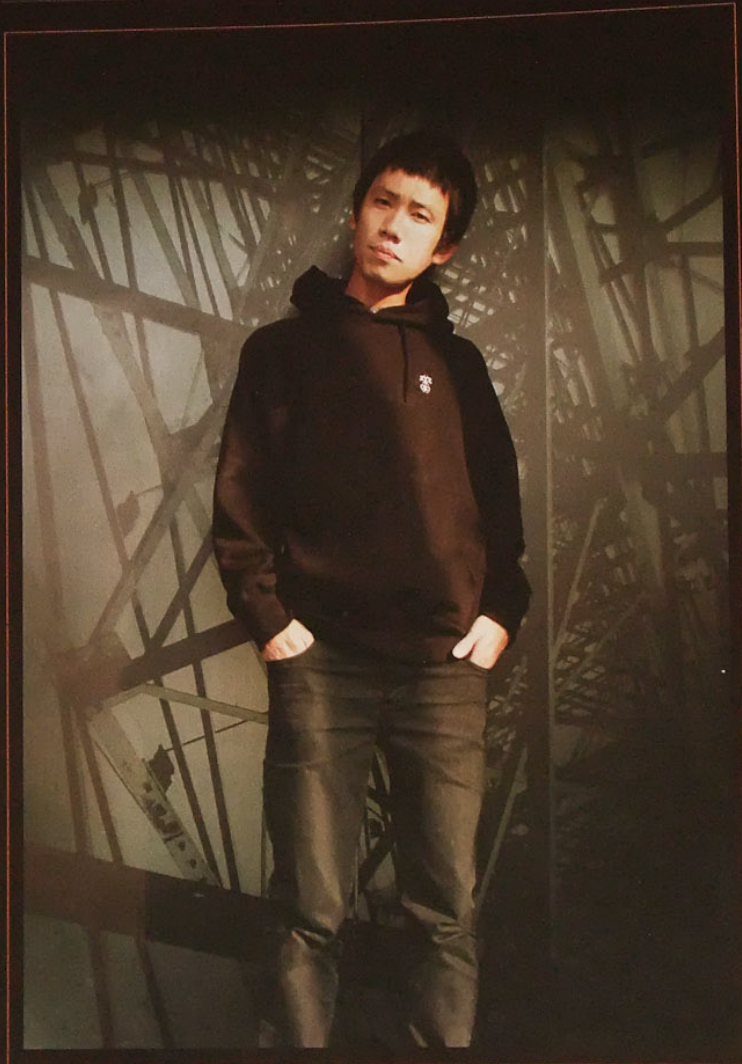


Image Aaron Wong

DONOVAN

This month, we catch live fever with Kinemat's burning ambition, Donovan, to find out how he's been keeping kids dancing. Then, we check up on the loud stuff on the local and international scene – from the EXIT festival in Serbia, to the awesome parties brought to you by our kind hosts, Chivas Live.

worldwide festival



worldwide festival



What's so amazing about the live experience?

It depends on the content and of course the style of music because the dynamics and boundaries behind a live gig empower greater senses with performance, interaction and musicality.

Tell us what made up your unique live experience.

Being given the honour to engage, connect and collaborate with the numerous artists hosted over the years has made an impact on me. Moments like these have heightened my passion, inspiring a story for me to look back in time at.

Speaking of your passion, what was it that inspired your career choice?

A collection of mid-90's flyers from Europe and the US triggered initial interest when grunge and *Velvet Goldmine* were still in the system. After a switch in OZ, the urge to play out and promote ourselves as musicians and DJs was tempting. We experimented with audio-visual aesthetics customising a thematic treatment. The first gig was a shocking success leading to an addiction to build.

Are there some factors you consider to make an event that extra special?

All you need is love, and slight attention to details that can move your audience.

Where would you travel to for the best live experience?

Wherever the sun is shining... wherever it takes me to... worldwide! I've just returned from an amazing festival down the South of France which was by far the best vibe I've experienced. Worldwide Festival in SETE! Olé!

Give us your ultimate MP3 playback list...

"Problem 1 & 2" - Harmonic 313
 "Stranger In Paradigm" - Pascal Comelade
 "Heartbeats" - both versions by Jose Gonzales and The Knife
 "Wonder Years" - Lukid
 "New Joint (White)" - Karizma
 "Heysatan" - Sigur Rós
 "Not Over Yet" - Skream Remix
 "Tears From The Compound Eye" - Boards of Canada
 "Bopinst" - Hudson Mohawke
 "Lay Back In The Sun" - Spiritualized

Are we more likely to see you in a club or at an outdoor revelry?

You'll catch me at either one, as long as the software makes me move. I enjoy indoor acoustics for the right kind of music and substantial lighting. While an outdoor environment with good weather enables the freedom of space - roll over greens or getting muddily booty as long as you are having a good time with an AV treatment, our wish is fulfilled and the job is sealed.

Why would people remember who you are?

Maybe because I'm not a funky drummer?! But I can make you dance!

I am where I am because...

I keep myself positively focused on what I'm capable of, or even when I'm not... it's all about the risk of experimentation.



worldwide festival



worldwide festival



karizma

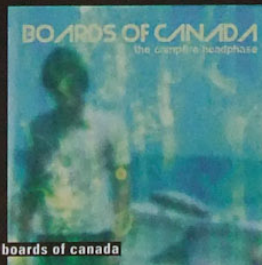


lukid

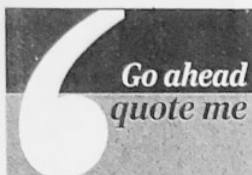


sigur rós

the knife



boards of canada



'It seems to get cheapened somehow as it goes through the filters and the airwaves – and some things you just want to keep close to the chest'

Actor Brad Pitt (left) on his dislike of talking about Angelina Jolie and their six children



'You'll enjoy it. But going to have a cla right here. I read al Internet. I know wh Smashing Pumpkins si (left) in concert

The Welsh DJ returns to spin at ZoukOut this weekend

eddino abdul hadi
music reporter

Dance guru Sasha may be one of the most recognisable names in the DJ world. But his musical career began very far from the trance, house and other electronic dance genres he helped popularise.

As a boy, the Welsh DJ and music producer, whose real name is Alexander Coe, was forced to take piano lessons.

"I hated it when I was a kid, I wanted to be outside playing football, it used to drive me crazy," he says.

Those lessons became highly useful later when he started DJ-ing and producing dance tracks.

"It gave my ears musical training, it helps me with DJ-ing too, I always hear things in key, I know how to put chords together."

Fans will get a chance to hear his melodic offerings when he spins at the ZoukOut dance festival at Siloso Beach on Saturday.

He is no stranger to Singapore, having played here several times before. Last week, he took time out to speak to Life! over the telephone while in transit here on the way to Bali for a holiday.

He describes Singapore clubbers as being "very enthusiastic", "open-minded" and "clued-up".

"The local DJs have high standards and play such amazing music, they're always on the cutting edge of sound," he enthuses. "And Zouk is one of the best places to play in the world. The club is amazing, it's a pleasure to play there."

Sasha also played at the annual Zouk-Out festival in 2003, which was held at Marina Bay Waterfront.

The 39-year-old has been DJ-ing since the late 1980s, starting out in illegal underground raves.

Not long after, he went legit and as his popularity soared in tandem with the rise of dance music in the 1990s, he was soon playing in well-known British clubs such as The Hacienda in Manchester and touring with major dance party organisers/music label Renaissance.

One of his favourite sets was playing

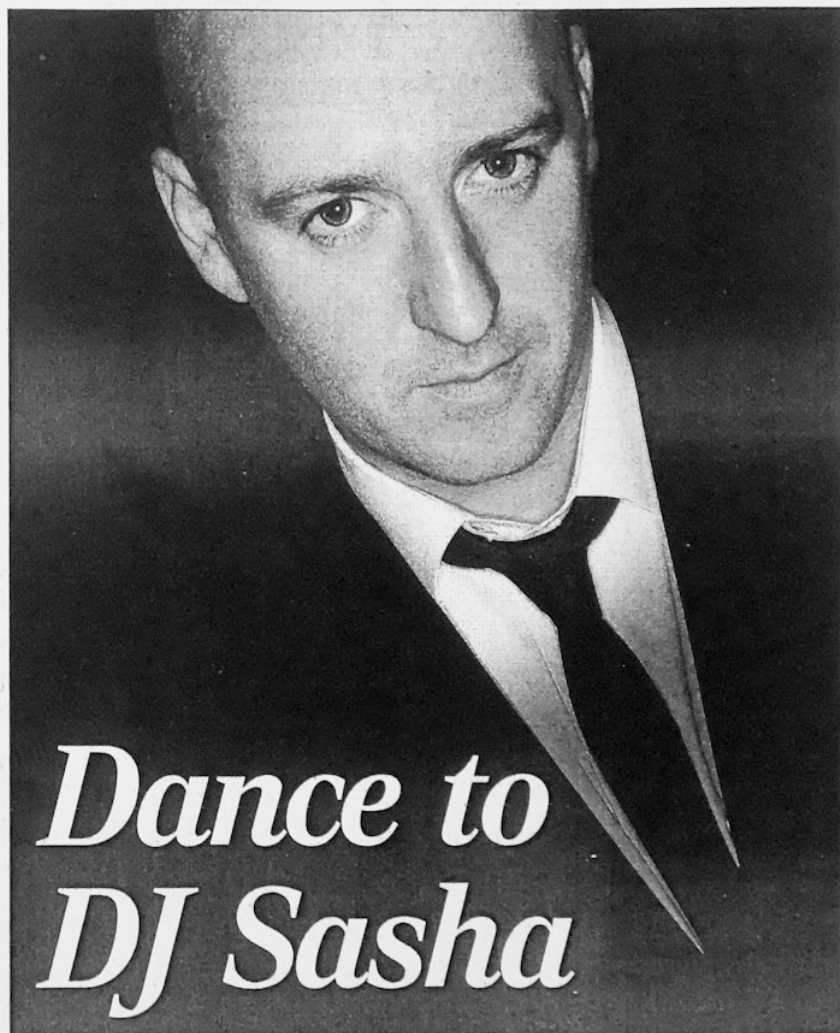


PHOTO: ZOUK

Dance to DJ Sasha

to a crowd of one million people at Berlin's Love Parade in 2002. "The most memorable moments are the biggest crowds, really," he recalls.

He achieved mainstream success with his remix of Madonna's 1998 single Ray Of Light. More recently, he also remixed songs by Thom Yorke, the singer of British band Radiohead.

But the music has changed since he first got into it in the 1980s. "The soul of it is still there. When you get a good crowd and the DJ is locked in to what the crowd is doing, that's always been part of dance music culture, but everything around it has changed.

"It's massive now. It has become a real business. There are agents and managers, sponsorship deals. It's nowhere near as underground as it used to be."

book it

SINGTEL PRESENTS ZOUKOUT – A DANCE MUSIC FESTIVAL

Where: Siloso Beach, Sentosa
When: Saturday, 6.30pm till Sunday, 8am
Tickets: \$48. Buy advance tickets from Zouk, Sistic (www.sistic.com.sg or tel: 6348-5555), HMV Heeren (tel: 6733-1822) or CityLink Mall (tel: 6238-7218), \$58 for event-day tickets available at the Zouk ticketing booth (all day) and at the venue (from 6.30pm onwards)
Details: Log on to www.zoukout.com

It is his job to make millions of people dance. But what makes Sasha boogie?

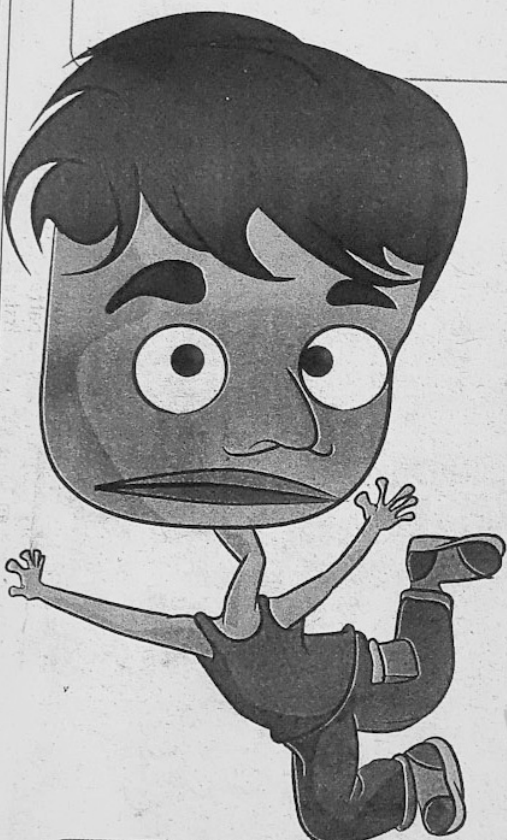
"I don't go out often," he confesses. "I'm usually bouncing at the DJ console, I don't know if you'd call that dancing."
dinohadi@sph.com.sg

Meet the party people

Life! compiles a tongue-in-cheek guide to the five tribes normally spotted at ZoukOut, the annual dance festival in Sentosa

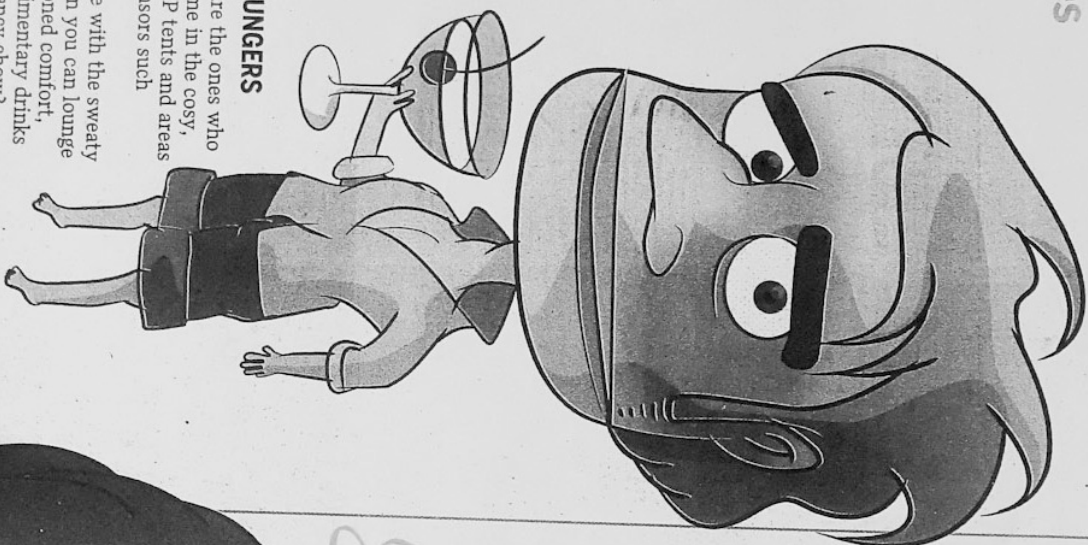
THE ENERGIZER BUNNY

What: These are the pumped-up dancers who will be bopping and merry-making all through the night and well past sunrise. Past ZoukOuts have shown that not even rain will deter their passion to party. At last year's event, hundreds of them were still at the beach when the music finally ended at 8 the next morning.



VIP LOUNGERS

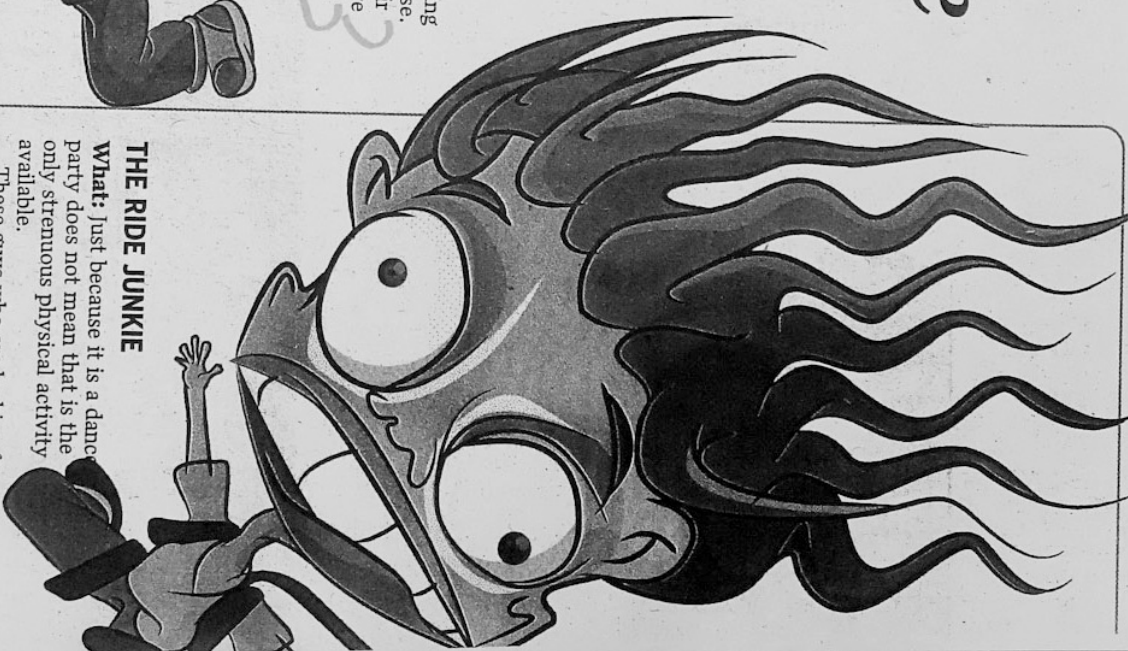
What: They are the ones who spend their time in the cosy, exclusive-only VIP tents and areas set up by sponsors such as VirginTel. They mingle with the sweaty hollers when you can lounge in air-conditioned comfort, sipping complimentary drinks. Now that is the classy way to party.

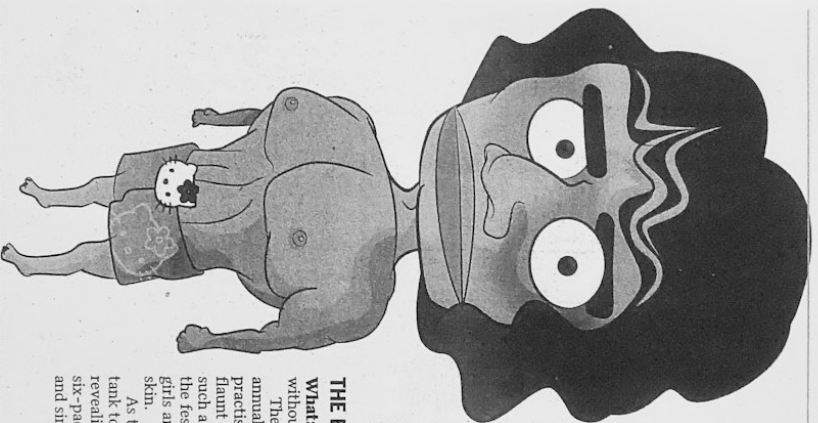


THE RIDE JUNKIE

What: Just because it is a dance party does not mean that is the only strenuous physical activity available.

These guys who are looking for a little adrenaline rush can be found jumping around on the ever-popular Euro Bungee, a giant trampoline.



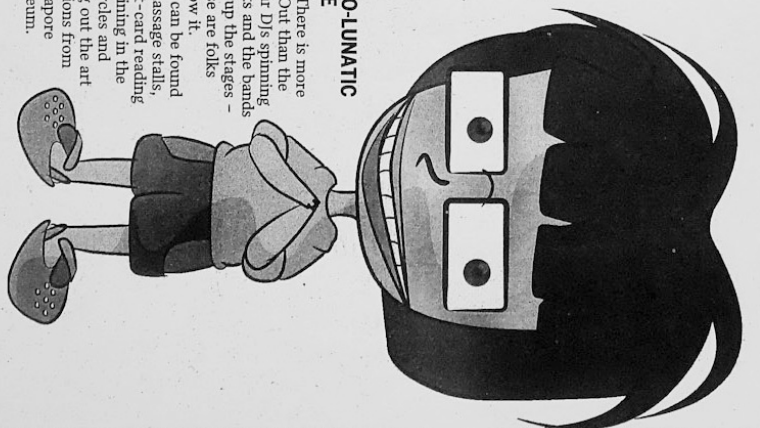


THE EXHIBITIONIST

What: What's a beach party without the requisite eye candy?

The hot young things at Singapore's annual beach party have always practised the adage that if you've got it, flaunt it. Bikini-clad belles have been such a staple of ZoukOut they now front the festival's promo campaigns. And girls are not the only ones who show off skin.

As the outdoor party heats up, the tank tops and T-shirts usually come off, revealing tanned, toned, walking six-packs with gym-cultivated torsos and sinewy, muscled arms.



THE NOT-SO-LUNATIC FRINGE

What: There is more to ZoukOut than the superstar DJ's spinning the decks and the bands lighting up the stages – and these are folks who know it.

They can be found at the massage stalls, the tarot-card reading tents, joining in the drum circles and checking out the art installations from the Singapore Art Museum.

Are you ready to dance the night away?

Facing page Hydrated and fed

ch. To help shorten queues, Zouk has led two bars, bringing the total to 12. array of food from vendors such as ishorts, Flame-Grilled Burgers, Old King Kee, Frollick Yogurt and local del-

ies will be sold on the beach. For some seasoned ZoukOut revelers, do-it-yourself approach is the way to Market manager Alan Tang, 29, s: "I'll bring some food and water and

put them in a friend's car, just in case the queues for drinks and food are too long." If you intend to go DIY, make sure you store the food properly and consume it outside the party premises, because outside food and drinks will be confiscated at the door.

Know where the security and safety points are located

Take note of where the information counter is located: At the centre of the beach where the main entrance is. Should any security or safety issues

arise, the ZoukOut staff are the best people to approach. You can also alert one of the 220 security staff who will be patrolling the beach and the waters. A first aid ambulance will be set up on the beach and an area will be also on standby.

Pack light

You want to dance the night away and not get bogged down by baggage. Women should stash essentials in sling bags while men can keep them in trouser pockets. Bring only essentials such as your mobile phone, credit cards, cash, a form of photo

identification for entry and Ez-link cards. Pack a light cardigan or jacket and an umbrella in case of wet weather.

Deposit bulky items in one of the 800 lockers just outside the venue on Siloso Beach. Each locker costs \$5 for the whole night.

Book a room

For those looking for a place to crash or recuperate from the night-long event, there is only one option.

Of the six resorts on Sentosa, only The Sentosa Resort & Spa has deluxe

rooms available at press time as all the other hotels are fully booked. Be prepared to pay about \$380 (before taxes and service charge) for a room.

A shuttle bus ride away from the party venue is Fragrance Hotel Viva in Wisheart Road, just off Telok Blangah Road, about 10 minutes from Harbourfront MRT station.

At press time, all rooms were fully booked, but you can call today or tomorrow to check if there are last-minute cancellations. Double rooms here cost \$106 nett.

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7.6 Appendix VI. Top playlists of some participants

Wayne Lee: Time To Pretend - MGMT Replica - The Shortwave Set Island - Whitest Boy Alive Pocket Piano - DJ Mehdi Veronica's Veil- Fan Death Harmonise - Ipso Facto Ulysses - Franz Ferdinand Elvis - These New Puritans Paris Is Burning - Ladyhawke The Bucket (CSS remix) - Kings Of Leon	Jay: Aya – Sean Deep Dish – Flashdance Pete Tong + Chris Cox – More intensity Hyper – No Rockstar Miki Moto + Bobby Blanco – 3 AM Adam Freeland – We Want Your Soul Nubread + Luke Chable – One Day Aldrin + Akien – Love in New Wave; A Night at Zouk Soul Central – String of Life Jakarta – Ever So Lonely (Photok Remix)
Nick: 1. Kai Randy Michel - Der Spiegel 2. Orbital - Halcyon and On and On 3. Justus Kohncke - Yacht 4. Gui Boratto - Beautiful Life 5. Art Bleek - Euphorized 6. Tim Track - Panic Voice 7. Dominik Eulberg - Klangeppichverleger Wolle 8. Tony Rohr - Slowburn 9. Richie Hawtin - Minus Orange 10. Underground Resistance - Inspiration 11. Richard Davis - Bring Me Closer	Cole: The girls: Calvin Harris Give Love: Tristan Garner Push the feeling on: Roger's release mix Pilling me: Greg Cerrone Candy: Lick me Rise up(Vandalism Mix): Yves Larock Candy on the dance floor Right here right now (Freemasons mix)- Fatboy slim IIO- Rapture Riva mix I wanna freak you: Eddie Thoneick I wish you would: Matrjin Ten Velden Fashionista: Jimmy James Joan of Arc: David Guetta What the fuck: Funkagenda(Benny bennassi remix) Just another groove: Tocadisco remix Let me think about it: Ida Corr
Aaron: 1. Simon Patterson – Smack 2. Richard Durand – Weep 3. Paul Van Dyk – For an Angel (E-Work Mix) 4. ATB – Justify 5. Fragma – Toca’s Miracle 6. Tiesto’s RMX – Adagio for Strings 7. Ben Gold – Life (Sean Tyas RMX) 8. Alex Gaudino – Destination Calabria 9. Infected Mushroom – Becoming Insane 10. Walt Jensen- Let the Music Play	Shen: 1. Sasha – Xpander 2. ATB – 9 AM (Till I Come) 3. BT – Dreaming 4. Hybrid – finished symphony 5. Gonryella – Gonryella 6. Chopin – Fantasie Impromptu 7. Rob Dougan – Clubbed to Death 8. Rabbit in The Moon –Phases of an on.off body experience 9. Orbital – Halcyon on + on 10. Space manoeuvres – Stage one