

A State Of Trance (And Sorts)



To appreciate this short essay, you must first understand that the Florida underground dance music (UDM) scene has exponentially been influenced more by Miami bass and breaks that whatever the UK exported "back" to the US circa 1989. That exportation was rave culture.

UDM has often been a hard sell in Jax. Beginning in the late '80s, when local jocks would deviate from the standard playlists and drop an import 12" that was *not* on the Billboard Club Play chart, raves slowly began to take foothold in Northeast Florida. Jax was never going to be Miami, Tampa, or especially Orlando (whose largely unsung contributions to US rave culture are sinfully under-represented). Jax had it's day in the sun, too.

The early-2000s crackdowns both here and in Gainesville (home to Simons - the real Simons, not what passes for Simons today) didn't help our scene. Since 2002, Jax has had a somewhat fragmented, sometimes consistent series of parties, collectives, and club nights.

The best part of the events from 1989-2000, or for any clubber of any generation was the *newness* of everything: the experimental music, the friendly attitudes, and the positive vibes.

This is the part of the essay where I want to talk about the evolution of psy-trance music and culture and its place in Jax. But I won't. I'll let Graham St. John's must-own book for any psy fan ('Global Tribe') explain that. What I wish to focus on are awesome club nights.

Nowhere was this newness on full display than this past friday night at 1904 Music Hall for the

Night Out Of Time gathering. From the start, everyone in the venue, from front to back, was kind. I bought a bottle of water, got distracted by a friend, and left it there, unopened. Fifteen minutes later, I remembered I left it on the bar, and through the now-packed front-of-house (the above pic was a shot at the very beginning of the night), my water was kindly handed to me by another patron and his girlfriend, both with smiles on their faces.

Would you get this with any other crowd in town? At any other venues? Honestly. Or just a straight-faces and/or attitude? Ask yourself.

That exchange was a metaphor for the evening. The music was wonderful psy-trance. The kind of music I haven't danced to since Harthouse, Perfecto Fluoro, and Dragonfly (among many others) ruled the roost in the mid-'90s. Wildly oscillating, psychedelic, trance-inducing music. Back when DJs would still deviate and play what they wanted. Not what their laptop told them was in the same key. Not what they thought they could key match. Nobody gave two squirts of piss about key in 1995. Only good music mattered then, as it should now.

On Friday night, I could see everyone dancing in their own zone. Hardly ANYBODY was on their phone (aside from a few videos taken of this memorable night). They were enjoying themselves. Crazy, I know. From one DJ to the others: well done. You all did a splendid job. And let's not leave out the drummers and patio talent. Well played.

The artists (Noel, Baruška, and others I was not able to meet) displayed phanstasmagorical works. Art they worked hard on and put their soul into. The venue *itself* was decorated like the raves of yore: From the floors to the walls, to the beautiful stage and altar, this was the show that made YOU, the patron, *the patron who deserves to be treated with respect*, welcome from the moment you stepped in the door.

Putting the obvious *on* Front St., the aggressive bro-culture may work in Miami, but it does not make for a loving, fostering, and caring club scene here. It just makes it about monetizing the fucking culture I've spent 26 years supporting through music purchases, DJing, writing about, talking about, and going to shows. This welcoming attitude was the bedrock of the Jax UDM scene. Some of the new schoolers have lost the plot. Money will be made, and then those will move on to the next money-making venture in a couple of years. And those people are brash about it. I've seen it for decades now. "U ain't really house". We're not all sheep. My wallet will not support the monetization.

Perhaps my fellow UNF students aren't wise yet, but there was a time when students (high school and college students were less-mainstreamed in the Clinton-years) would venture to nightspots such as Euphoria (a hole housed in the Burrito Gallery on Adams from 1993-1995) and get a real taste of underground dance music. You didn't *know* who was DJing, you didn't *care* who was DJing, you didn't *face* the DJ - your only concern was the cool music, your friends, and this wonderful new experience. Newness. That's what Night Out Of Time was for me. A veteran.

Psy-trance has, over a quarter-century of culture, influenced the world with its mixture of culture, music, and art. Again, I cannot recommend 'Global Tribe' enough. Any psy-fan would do themselves the biggest favor by reading this book. Get educated. We need more events like this in Jax. I have never seen 1904 more crowded at 11:19 p.m. for an EDM event than I have at this one. Fans drove states to get here. It's what we used to do. Obviously, it's still done.

Trance and psy-trance from 4 Strings to Simon Patterson to Angry Man has had a difficult time being supported here in Jax for several years now. The status quo has been watered down. If some of these cats have trance in their box, why am I the only local jock I can think of who plays trance like Radion 6 or stuff off the still-running Perfecto Fluoro imprint? Because ArtWalk. There seems to be an unwritten "no-faster-than-128" club rule here somewhere.

If we want to cultivate a larger psy scene, sure, any DJ can load a USB with Beatport's Top 10 psy tracks and run a set. That's not what it is about. I do not believe it is wanted or needed. We need the good intentions, the warm hearts, and the friendliness from the artists and community that believe in this scene. It's more than 140+ bpms and black lights. It's a higher state of consciousness. One that our town can achieve. One that I hope we will continue to ascend to.