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# dance music, and multi-media/new media

PART 2 OF OUR EXTENSIVE LOOK AT THE ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION AND ITS EFFECT ON CLUB CULTURE

## The Light Surgeon

Beneath the streets of London, the launch party for Ninja Tune's new **Kungfusion** night is about to begin, and the basement floor of Turnmills is about to be turned into a full-on, multi-sensory clubbing experience. Screens dotted all around the venue are starting to fill up with images as numerous projectors click into action, and an assortment of film loops, video tapes and slides are slotted into place. It might sound like a strange set-up to find in a club, but here at Kungfusion, it is almost as important as the sound system.

Fast-forward a couple of hours and you can begin to see why. In the club's backroom, experimental film-makers **The Light Surgeons** are transforming a performance by Ninja Tunes supremos **Coldcut** into a dazzling visual spectacle. At least a dozen film projectors flash clips from old kung fu films, diagrams of military hardware and kitsch erotica into every corner of the room. Next door, digital arts collective **Hex** are using a Mac and a simple video mixing set up to bombard the main dancefloor with Manga animation and footage of old-school hip hop jams. It is an impressive display. Ninja Tunes are not the first promoters to bring visual elements into their nights, of course, but they were one of the first to make use of a new generation of visuals crews, like **Hex** and **The Light Surgeons**, who have taken club visuals onto a whole new level. These artists are using their work to explore club culture in new ways and take it in fresh directions, which is where Kungfusion, club visuals and the crews themselves begin to fit into a wider pattern. Perhaps it was only ever a matter of time before people began to find other ways of expressing themselves within dance culture besides DJing and making music, and in recent years this is exactly what has happened. An assortment of film-makers, artists, designers and computer programmers who have grown up on clubs and dance music have started to use their involvement in the scene as a means of experimenting with new art-forms, media and technologies. And although such projects are still at an early stage, they could have the potential to transform the way we think about dance culture. The cross-fertilisation between dance music and new or multi-media work takes many shapes and forms. It is as likely to involve junk equipment left over from another era as it is the digital technologies that are transforming the creative arts today. It could just as easily mean using visuals to expand the club environment as it could putting audio-visual elements

onto CDs. It is as much about experimental arts groups using interactive media to challenge conventional conceptions of music as it is the video games industry selling similar ideas to the masses. But there is something going on here and dance music is at the centre of it. **Being a DJ** Maybe it is not a revolution yet, but it might be the beginnings of one. The dance scene has always been driven forward by the complex interplay between people, technology and club culture, but until now, it has been in music production that the most noticeable changes have occurred; clubland's insatiable desire for new music inspiring producers to twist hardware in ways for which it was never intended and come up with new sounds. But as this process is extended into new areas, we could begin to see other aspects of club culture develop as spectacularly as dance music has done. If this does happen, the effects could change the face of post-millennial clubbing and take dance culture into exciting new territory, as well as having important implications for the arts and entertainments industries. On the other hand, of course, all this experimentation could amount to nothing. So what exactly is going on here, and is it really a taste of the future or just a short-lived fad?

### art on the dancefloor: from backdrops-and-fractals to visual hip hop

There is no need to look into the future to get an idea of how multi-media work can be used to open up new possibilities for club culture. A new breed of club visuals crews, such as **LAZY EYE**, **VEGETABLE VISION**, **ANTI-ROM**, **HEX** and **THE LIGHT SURGEONS** have already been doing it for years. Although the idea of bringing visual elements into clubs is not a new one in itself, the work of these collectives is a world away from the fractals-and-backdrops school of rave visuals that went before. They have built their performances into a complex art which can add another dimension to a night out, and according to Robin Brunson from Hex, it is a change that is long overdue.

"I'm always amazed that so many people go to clubs when all they are is a DJ and a dancefloor," he comments. "I think people want a





## MUTANT TECHNOLOGY AND THE JUNKYARD REVOLUTION

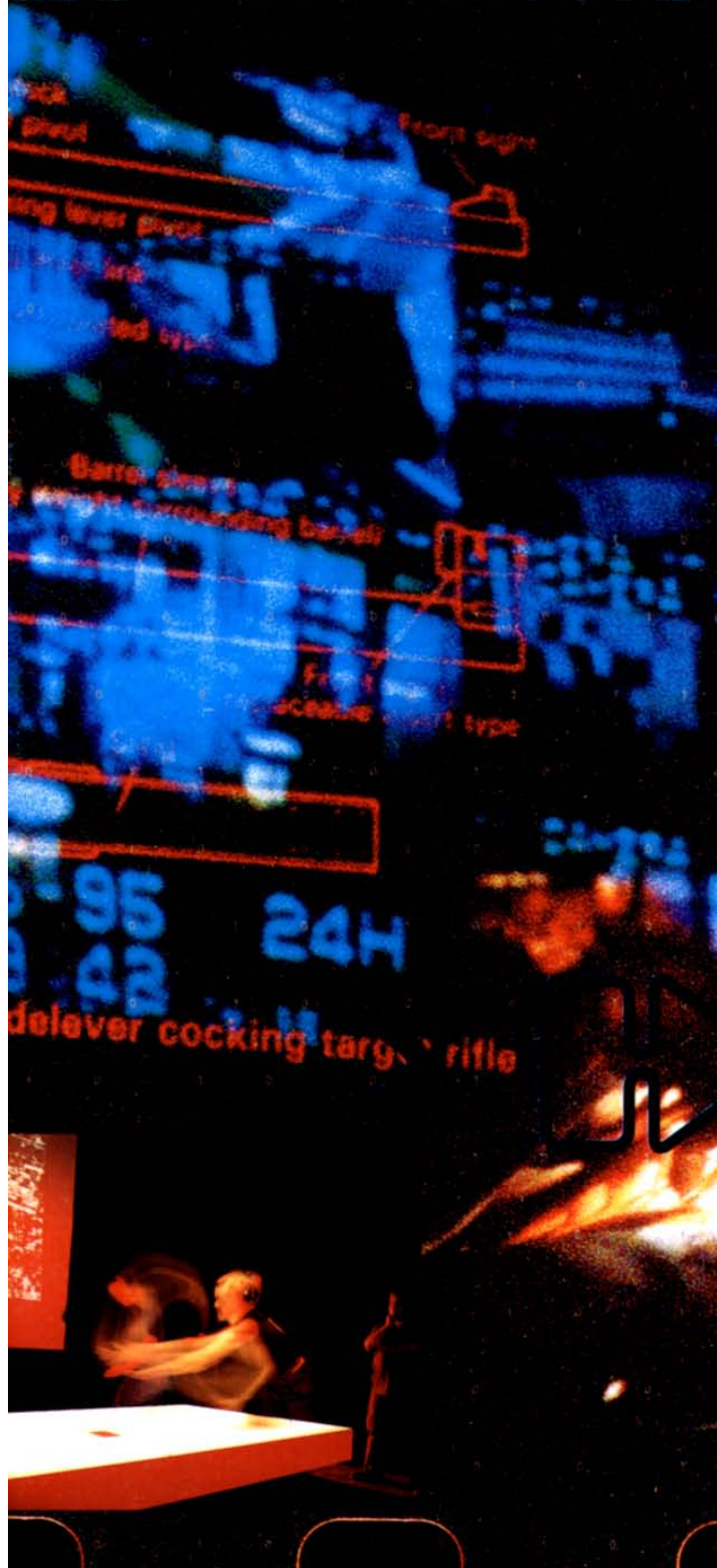
One of the most important factors in the development of dance music has been the ability of producers to stretch new levels of creativity from even limited equipment. It is a tradition that is mirrored in the work of clubland's visual and multi-media artists, who are adopting the same inventive approach to their kit as their musical counterparts. Here's some of the ways how...

**JUNK TECHNOLOGY:** Visuals crews like the Light Surgeons have become famous for using redundant equipment picked up for next-to-nothing at boot fairs. 16mm, super-8, and slide projectors are all favoured for their high-quality image, affordability and accessibility, while The Light Surgeons' Andy Fly Wheel even knows an American crew who use over-head projectors, but The Light Surgeons are keen to emphasise they are not Luddites. **"We're not purists who are saying that you're cheating if you use digital technology,"** says the Surgeon's Chris Allen. **It's just that it would need major backing from a sponsor to use digital equipment and get the same coverage we get in a club. As high-end digital technology becomes available to the masses, we should see some incredible results."**

**COMPUTERS AND BEDROOMS:** Some people are already using low-spec computer equipment with interesting results. As well as Hex's DIY music video work, Squarepusher's Psittan single on Rephlex records will be accompanied by a video edited in a bedroom by first-time film-maker Damien Prigg, who is directing series of home-made videos for the label. Similarly, Anti-Rom's Nic Roope explains that the set-up they use to create their impressive audio-visual and interactive work costs less than many home audio studios. **"We use a set-up on a Mac that costs about £700. The hardware's getting much cheaper, and in two years time you're talking about having a better computer, with video grab from a cam-corder, affecting capabilities and video processing for about £600, and that will also give you the capacity to make the visuals interactive."** And as new specially-designed software, like Steinberg's new visuals generator which allows images to be synched perfectly with individual elements of music, come into circulation, even more exciting work could be created.

**THE HUMAN BRAIN:** Chris Allen from the Light Surgeons reminds us that whatever exciting possibilities new technology presents, we should never forget that the people using it are the most important factor of all. **"It's too easy for people to get seduced by the equipment and stop thinking about what they're doing. I'm not to saying you can't do good work on complicated equipment, but we are trying to remind people to use their brains, because that's the most powerful hard disk you'll ever get."**

**MUTANT TECHNOLOGY:** Stuart Warren-Hill turned video editing software into a music application for his Timbre piece. The Light Surgeons want to learn electronics so they can start re-building their kit and AudioRom have turned sequencers into an interactive light harp using movement sensors. Missing equipment has helped dance producers to take their work onwards and now it is helping these artists to do the same.





## NEW MEDIA AND DANCE MUSIC: CLUB CULTURE FOR COUCH POTATOES

The idea of different media converging into each other is already becoming a reality with the Internet, CD-ROMs and Enhanced CDs. Internet connections should improve dramatically in the next few years, interactive TV is looming on the horizon and Digital Versatile Disks (the next generation of CDs) are already in production. These new formats should make it even easier to create multi-layered products spanning different media, but what will this mean for dance music and what will multi-layered dance music products actually do? Well, for a start they could include:

**Video footage, animation and text** like E-CDs and internet sites do already. Such products could provide an outlet for dance music's new media artists. **Header** have included rare interview footage on their disks and **Coldcut's Let Us Play CD-ROM** included a specially commissioned video for each track, while including sound and video clips alongside textual information is already standard practice on the net.

**Interactive and gaming elements** like the **Ninja Tune** trivia game on **Let Us Play** or the interactive story from cult author **Alan Warner** included on the new disk from new media/music group **Header**. And the recent **Oasis** interactive songbook CD-ROM was a big success, so why not extend this idea to dance music and give people products that teach them how to mix?

**Interactive music and visuals.** Could this be the killer application for new media in the music business? Who knows, but it's bloody good fun and there's a number of Enhanced CDs and web sites about that will let you try it out (see below).

## YOU CAN DANCE TO IT, BUT IS IT ART? DANCE CULTURE VS HIGH CULTURE

A couple of years ago, stories circulated of conceptual artists sticking installations into clubs to give them extra exposure. It's an interesting idea, but at the end of the day, who wants to see a sheep picked in for a night out? Not many people it seems, as it's certainly not a trend that's caught on. But now that people are using other media to explore dance culture, there may be room for a more genuine cross-over between dance music and the art world.

**AUDIOMOM'S ANDRE KTORI** is a fine arts graduate who sees the new media/club culture cross-over as a way to escape the conceptual straight-jacket of high art. "What's the use in doing highly conceptual work that only a small clique of people can understand?" asks Ktori. "What we're doing is more about giving people control, letting them play with things and questioning the relationship between production and consumption, which is what club culture has been doing since its inception." AudioRom are now as likely to show their work in clubs as galleries and Ktori feels that digital art can help to bring club culture and the art world together. "We're interested in taking different forms of content into clubs, but we're also creating a different audience for places like the ICA and the Barbican by taking our stuff in there, and the art world needs to draw in different sorts of people like that."

**NIG ROOPE** and **LUKE PENDRILL** from **ANTI-ROM** are also both from a fine arts background and moved into new media for similar reasons to Ktori. Most of the group were already involved in the club scene, so it was natural for them to bring this out in their work, and in the past they have been involved with a lot of work at clubs and larger events. However, they are beginning to feel that some of the art coming out of the scene is simply too good to remain on the dancefloor. "I think club culture tends to inform the art world rather than the other way around," says Pendrill. "Once things go into clubs, they just get subsumed into the night as a whole, which is fair enough, but people like Eye-Kon and The Light Surgeons are doing some incredible stuff which deserves to be shown where people can get a proper look at it."

**CHRIS ALLEN** from **THE LIGHT SURGEONS** agrees that clubs are not the place for art-for-art's sake. "Our work isn't just wall paper and we do try and get a message across, but clubs are social spaces and we don't want people standing around scratching their chins, thinking deeply about our visuals," he comments. The Light Surgeons think their stuff is good enough to work as art in its own right, but Allen is cautious about the idea of getting mixed up with the art world. "As long as it doesn't become high art, it's fine. We don't want the Saatchi's picking up on it and turning it into a coffee table thing, like what happened with graffiti, where the art world turned it into an institution."

Perhaps the way forward is in events like underground cinema night **Kentra** or **The Light Surgeons** forthcoming night at the **333** which provide a dedicated forum for club art without cutting it off entirely from its roots in club culture. **Kentra** features club visuals performances alongside short films, accompanied by downtempo sets from suitable DJs, while **The Light Surgeons** forthcoming night at the **333** will act as a showcase for their audio-visual work. Look out for similar nights as the idea catches on.

bit more these days, which is where we come in. We're going into clubs and re-creating the environment, taking that space and bringing it to life, giving things a totally different atmosphere."

It is an argument that is obviously being taken seriously in clubland. Nu-skool visual artists have become an established fixture at many clubs, and this comes as no surprise to **CHRIS ALLEN** of **The Light Surgeons**. He stresses that the work of the Surgeons and similar crews is deeply rooted in dance culture, drawing on already-existing elements and representing them in new ways.

"When we started there was a big gap between the quality of design you would get on record covers or flyers and what you'd see in clubs, which is one of the things we wanted to change," recalls Allen. "But we've taken it further, and our work is about integrating graphic design with film, putting images onto loops to mirror the way music is made nowadays."

The Light Surgeons have developed this approach to create their own distinctive brand of underground film-making, based around a scratch-and-sample model borrowed from dance music production. Others have built up very different styles and techniques, reflecting the diversity of the dance scene itself. As these visual artists have matured, they have branched out in new directions, performing at concerts and festivals, as well as experimenting with audio-visual sets, dropping in sound on top of bands and DJs. Perhaps most interestingly, their work has begun to break free from the confines of the dancefloor and into fresh viewing contexts, like cinemas or art galleries. They are even being commissioned to produce pop promos and concert films. As these artists take the styles and production techniques they have developed in the clubs and apply them in other areas, they could prepare the way for dance culture to be fully represented through audio-visual media for the first time. After all, while the standard of dance music videos may have improved immeasurably in recent years, there still aren't many promo directors who describe themselves as making 'visual hip hop' like the Light Surgeons do. And by transplanting the DIY ethos and cut-and-paste aesthetic of dance culture into other media, their work could help to transform the audio-visual arts in the same way that dance producers have transformed the way music is made.

Besides reflecting the way that dance music is structured in their work, as in **The Light Surgeons'** use of film loops to form cinematic samples, clubland's visual artists have also adopted the same subversive attitude to technology favoured by so many pioneering dance producers. Some apply it to film and slides, others to video and computer imaging, but the underlying philosophy of finding cheap, accessible equipment and bending it to your own needs remains the same whatever format is used.

"We're trying to show people that you don't need the latest technology to create interesting work," Chris Allen emphasises. "You can get really good images and put out powerful messages without using high-spec equipment. It's about pushing limited kit as far as it will go, whether you're working on 16mm or an Apple Mac. All these things are just tools and what really matters is whether people can use them to get their ideas across effectively."

Over the last few decades, a constant flow of technological advances has made entire formats of film and TV equipment obsolete, and therefore easily accessible to clubland's DIY film-makers and video artists. And as the rate of progress accelerates, and even relatively new digital technology is made available to the masses, it is becoming even easier for people to get involved. Which means the small-scale experimentation of today could lead to much greater things—perhaps even the multi-media equivalent of the bedroom production boom that has occurred within dance music over the last decade.

## zeroes and ones...dance culture and the digital melting pot

The effects that digital technology has had on the development of dance music are huge and wide-ranging, but one of the most important is that it enabled producers to make records at home on even a limited budget. Since the introduction of affordable samplers, sequencers and computer equipment, an explosion of new producers and tunes has driven the music forward at an ever-increasing rate. And for the likes of Hex's Stuart Warren-Hill, it is only a matter of time before this pattern is repeated in areas outside music production.

It has been possible to create multi-media work using relatively cheap computer equipment for some time and groups like Hex have been quick to take advantage of this, in **WARREN-HILL's** case by creating complex audio-visual pieces using editing software and a Mac. He believes more-and-more dance producers will follow suit once they realise they already possess most of the hardware and skills needed to do so.

"You've already got all these people making records in their bedrooms on computers, and it would be easy for them to add a visual element to what they are doing," he reasons. "All you need to do is put a video board in there and the cost of the boards is coming right down, so very soon all these people making tunes will be making videos as well."

Warren-Hill has already put his plans into practice to create the **Timber** trilogy, using a combination of video and music editing software to blend audio and video samples into totally synchronised pieces of music video. He is now working on an album work project for Hex based around the same idea. His





work provides a good illustration of the way in which elements of dance culture and digital technology are being brought together to produce new forms of multi-media art. Warren-Hill's aim was to integrate music and video in a way that had never been done before, using visual and audio samples taken from the same piece of video footage to construct sound and visual tracks simultaneously. There was no software available designed to do so, but by employing the pirate mentality towards technology developed by dance producers, he was able to hijack existing software for his own needs. But Warren-Hill also points out that without the introduction of computer editing software, his work would never have been made possible in the first place, and that digital equipment has made it much easier for people wishing to blend together different media in this way.

"With Hex, we do a lot of different work, but it's all linked up by the fact that it's digital," he explains. "Everything digital is coded in ones and zeros, which means you can mix up everything that's around you. You turn it into digital information and then spit it back out again however you like."

At the same time that digital technology is enabling producers to blur the boundaries between different media, digital delivery systems are doing the same at the point of consumption, so that different forms of entertainment can be mixed within a single format. And the new media that have grown out of this technology are already being used to add new layers to dance music as a home entertainment product, in the same way that club visuals add new levels to the club environment.

One way of taking advantage of this capacity is by using text, video footage or computer animation in conjunction with music, as is often seen on the internet or on Enhanced CDs (audio CDs with a CD-ROM element). Another possibility is adding interactive or gaming elements. But possibly the most exciting opportunity that these new media present to the dance scene is of allowing people to interact with the music itself.

## instant re-mixes and the interactive dancefloor

Groups like Hex, Header, AudioRom and Anti-Rom have been experimenting with interactive music products for the last few years. Although each group has its own approach, all of them produce work that enables users to re-interpret other people's music, through various kinds of mixing toys that can be loaded onto a PC. Their work is still only just beginning to filter out to the public, but while interactive music products may seem like a fairly recent innovation, they are part of a well-established tradition within dance culture.

Dance music was born from technology that democratised music, allowing people with no musical training to produce records, and interactive music products extends this process still further. In the same way, the idea of producers and DJs putting new interpretations on other people's tunes, by sampling them, re-mixing them or cutting them up on decks, is an important part of dance culture. **NIC ROOPE** from Anti-Rom feels that his work is simply a way of giving more people this kind of experience.

"Our work is about getting people involved, in the same way that DJing does," he argues. "When DJs get a record, they'll listen to it a couple of times, then start thinking how they can mix it into other records and create something with it. We're just trying to make it very easy for people to get into music on that level."

Roope is convinced there is a demand for such products, and it looks like the music industry may be coming round to the idea. An Anti-Rom programmed Enhanced CD from Wildlife Records featuring interactive music and visual elements will be released later this year, the new 4 Hero album will also include an interactive segment and simple mixing toys are becoming available over the internet, as on the Daft Punk website. But some people feel that interactive music has the potential to move beyond the world of the PC into a truly mass-market product and are looking at ways to make this happen.

**ANDRE KTORI** is part of AudioRom, a collective set up to

## LOOK, LISTEN, PLAY - THE 21ST CENTURY DANCEFLOOR?

Clubbing has always been about more than just loud music and dancing - but not that much more in the past, some flashing lights and a smoke machine were just about all clubbers could expect in the way of multi-sensory stimulation, but this is all changing. Loud music and dancing are always going to be the most important part of a night out, but there are plenty of other ways to make clubs more interesting places...

**CLUB VISUALS:** "The link between music and visuals is so obvious, but there are still a lot of clubs that don't exploit it," reckons Hex's Robin Brunson, but Hex are one of many groups in the process of changing this. The DIY visual artists have shown that you don't need to spend a fortune to transform a club, while at the other end of the scale, groups like Synergy and Visuality 2000 are using the latest in computer animation and image manipulation to bring club art to the super-clubs.

**AUDIO-VISUAL PERFORMANCES:** Hex and The Light surgeons have already performed audio-visual sets, dropping in audio on top of DJ or live sets. They believe this is the way forward for club visuals.

**INTERACTIVE CLUBBING:** Clubbing is already a highly interactive phenomenon that has helped to dissolve the gap between audience and performers, and with interactive media it could be dissolved altogether. Andre Ktori from AudioRom explains they have already developed an installation that tracks people's movement and uses it to guide music, which they have already used at a club night in Rotterdam. "It doesn't have to mean the end of the DJ," reasons Ktori, "but it could mean a new level of interaction between DJ and dance floor." Hex used a similar technique for their interactive night at Nottingham's Bomb Club, with clubbers punching buttons to bring in samples on top of a DJ, while Anti-Rom have set up interactive visual installations in clubs.

## MUSIC ON THE PLAYSTATION - A SNEAK PREVIEW OF CREATIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Some people might dismiss music-based video games as a novelty, but at Sony Computer Entertainment, they are taking the idea very seriously. Games like Parappa the Rapper have already been big hits in Japan, and Sony Computer Entertainment's Pete Devry explains that the company have been planning the move into this area for some time. "There's a unit called Sweepstation in Japan which is made up of people from Sony Computer Entertainment and Sony music," he explains. "They made the visuals thing you get with the demo disk and now they've done Fluid - they've been working on it for years."

In fact, there are already a stack of Japanese music-based games waiting for their UK release, which is why the Creative Entertainment range has been created. So here's Pete's guide to what music-loving console gamers can expect in the future (see also our videogames feature on page 26).

**(1) FLUID:** Creative Entertainment's first release, aimed firmly towards the dance market. Players move a dolphin around the screen, changing the music and gradually picking up samples, which can then be manipulated in the 'groove editor', where samples can be manipulated in real-time. While Devry feels that the game will appeal to anyone who loves music, he is particularly excited about its potential as an educational tool. "For young kids who are into clubbing and want to emulate people like Goldie or Paul Oakenfold, this is the ideal way for them to get into it," he claims. "They might not be able to afford decks or studio equipment, but the chances are they will have a Playstation."

**(2) BABY UNIVERSE:** Not strictly a music-based product, this is a visuals generator that allows people to manipulate images in time to whatever CD the put in. Should be out this year.

**(3) BUST A MOVE:** Works along similar lines to Parappa the Rapper, except instead of making characters rap, you make them dance. "This is more like a traditional game, but it's a different form of gameplay," explains Devry. "It's more esoteric than playing Tekken, you're more interested in throwing freaky moves than winning."

**(4) GENKI GROOVE:** Along similar lines to Fluid, but the samples are collected through a series of bizarre games. Allows users to do more to edit the samples. No release date in this country.

**(5) STOLEN SONG:** A game made for anyone who's ever played air guitar. "It's got a plug in that's basically a huge plectrum that you bash against a tennis racket or whatever, and play along to the music," explains Devry. Sadly unlikely to become available in Britain just yet, as it is based around a Japanese rock star who is strangely unheard of in this country. "We'd Oasis or someone to get involved," comments Devry.

**(6) SPICE GIRLS GAME:** Not part of the Creative Entertainment range and probably causing Sony nightmares now that the girls have split up, but Devry still thinks it's a good idea. "An interactive musical experience, rather than a game," where players take the Spice Girls into the studio, then choreograph a dance routine. "Technically it's superb, and if you replaced the Spice Girls with say the Prodigy, you'd get a lot of older teenagers going for it as well," Devry maintains. "Games like this and Fluid will open a lot of people's eyes. Record companies and musicians are going to be interested once they see what you can do on the Playstation."



experiment with interactive audio-visual work. Although AudioRom use Enhanced CDs and the internet to get their work out to the public, they have also developed other methods of doing so. Concentrating on the idea of music as a communal experience, AudioRom have developed installations that allow groups of people to engage with music collectively, using light beams to control what is going on, Jean-Michelle Jarre-style. After testing the pieces in art galleries, AudioRom are beginning to place them in clubs and the initial response has been extremely positive. Ktori explains that combining musical and social interaction in this way can have powerful effects. "The whole idea of a club is that it's a social thing, so we've come up with interfaces that are a basis for social interaction, as well as engaging with the music," he states. "Any musician will know that performing in a group is a wonderful feeling and you can get the same effect with these installations. When it really gets going, people interact with each other and the music at an intuitive level, and that's musicianship."

Ktori views interactive music as much more than just a gimmick, claiming it will grow into a huge market. His ambitions extend further than putting installations into clubs and he feels that AudioRom's work could have an appeal beyond the dance scene. It seems interactive music may have important consequences for the video games industry as well as for dance culture, and AudioRom are already preparing to take advantage. "As much as we're into dance music, we're also into the idea of pushing new forms of gameplay," states Ktori. "We would like to see the installations made into arcade games and the CD ROMs put onto consoles. It could be a way of getting away from games where you're just shooting the fuck out of something or trying to go faster than anyone else, and moving into something that is more about creativity and having fun."

## consoles, clubbers and creative entertainment

The idea of music-based games taking over from Tomb Raider and Tekken might seem far-fetched, but in actual fact, the games industry has already begun to pick up on the potential of interactive music, after the surprise success of **PARAPPA THE RAPPER**, a Playstation game based around the adventures of a 'hip hop hero' who players teach to rap. Although Parappa allows players to interact with music at only the most basic level, Sony Computer Entertainment, who developed the title, have plans for games that will demand much greater levels of creativity.

Sony product manager **PIPPA DAY** explains that the company are about to launch **CREATIVE ENTERTAINMENT**, a new range of games designed to reflect a somewhat different form of goal-orientation than traditional sports sims and beat-em-ups. Games released on Creative Entertainment will be about exercising players' imaginations rather than their fingers, and finding satisfaction in creativity rather than competition.

"The idea behind Creative Entertainment is to enable people to use the Playstation to express themselves and produce things they can actually look at or listen to," reveals Day. "Although, obviously, you can still play about with them and have fun, these products are about more than just gaming."

The first release on Creative Entertainment will be **FLUID**, a music-based game in which players guide a dolphin around an underwater landscape, picking up samples which can then be dropped into a number of different tunes. A game based around sample manipulation is obviously borrowing heavily from dance culture, so it is hardly surprising to find that the tunes on Fluid are strongly dance-influenced and that it is being marketed towards a club audience. But Pippa Day stresses that the game is not simply a cash-in, and will actually put something back into the dance scene.

Day points out that there is already a substantial cross-over between clubbing and video-gaming. It is easy to see why; both are highly interactive activities and it is probably not a coincidence that they have become the two biggest leisure phenomena of the nineties. When the Playstation was released, Sony targeted clubbers by placing consoles in clubs and they have now become a familiar post-club leisure accessory. Day claims that games like Fluid are a way of reflecting this, giving clubbers a product that lets them become more closely involved with dance culture by giving them an insight into music production.

"Fluid is very accessible and a great way to mess around with music, which is something we think clubbers will definitely be interested in," reasons Day. "For some people, it could act as a springboard to move into music production, but if people just want to enjoy the game, that's fine. I know a lot of people use the Playstation to chill-out after clubs and Fluid would definitely add to that because it's so relaxing."

## now is tomorrow: future dreaming and the state of play

On the face of it, a Playstation game might seem a strange way to help people get more out of dance music. But then, when you think about it, messing around with old cinema equipment sounds like an unusual method of livening up the club environment and it has still proved to be a very successful one. There are already enough examples around to show that new and multi-media work of all varieties can be used to explore dance culture in fresh and exciting ways. The question is where do things go from here?

To the people involved, the cross-over between dance music and multi-media is more than just a trend. The new and hybrid media they are experimenting with share the same sort of qualities that have seen dance culture develop at such an incredible pace, making the dance scene an ideal testing ground for their work. Like these emergent media, dance culture is progressive and fast-moving, giving artists freedom to try out new ideas, and both are also being driven forward by increasingly rapid rates of technological innovation. As well as making the dance scene a useful environment for such artists to experiment in, these factors also mean that their work should continue to open new possibilities for dance culture in the future, and there is another good reason to believe that there is still plenty of valuable work to come in this area. As **CHRIS ALLEN** from the Light Surgeons points out, the main thing to remember is that things are still only just getting started, which means there should be some exciting developments waiting around the corner.

"If you think about it, electronic music and hip hop are over twenty years old," Allen muses. "We've been doing this for four or five years and we're probably still only getting to the level of the first scratch DJs. It's still in the early stages of development, and you should see some major advances in this sort of work as time goes on."

It will be interesting to see if he is right, and we might not have to wait too long to find out. No-one is really claiming that club visuals, digital media or interactive music products are going to revolutionise club culture, but they are already helping to take it off down some interesting avenues. If you want to know how multi-media artists or new media technology will effect the dance scene in the future, the best thing to do is to take a look at what is happening today, because the latest development is probably already happening, right here, right now and right under our noses.



Fluid - what the DJs think  
**paul van dyk**

"I think this is something that could give people a start in music. If people haven't got their own studio, they want to know what it's like, and they've got a Playstation, then this is a good way to find out. I never realised the Playstation could be used like this, I thought it was just about Formula One and Ace Combat pilot, but this is creative, so it draws you so much deeper into it. I think it's got the potential to be the biggest game since Tomb Raider, because it's something so many people are interested in and I would be interested to see what they do next. I would be up for letting them use one of my tunes, if it was an old one, because it would be a cool thing to be involved in."





Fluid - what the DJs think  
**paul oakenfold**

"I've only had it for a while, but from what I've seen it looks great. I think it will be brilliant for kids, because they can make their own music, changing the structure and everything. The way I see it, if I want to get on there and play around with it, then other people will want to as well. I make music in a real studio, but me and my partner Steve Osborne couldn't wait to check it out when we saw it - I'm thinking of taking next week off to mess around with it! I'm going to get a few mates around who are nothing to do with the music, get a few beers in and see what we come up with. So it's not just for kids, but it is a good way for them to learn about making music before they go into the studio. I'd love to put one of my records on a game like this, because I'm always interested in seeing what people do with my music, the more the better!"



Fluid - what the DJs think  
**nic warren**

"I've got Resident Evil, Tomb Raider and all those games, but it's nice to be able to play something that's relaxing - definitely something to chill-out with. It's something to have fun with. If people are seriously interested in making music they're better off getting Cu-Base, but it could definitely open people up to the possibility of making music. People think it's really difficult to produce dance music and this will open doors just by letting them put loops together and it sounding good, but it's not like making music, because there's no sequencing function. We'd be up for Sony using some of our music. You could give people the parts of your track and let them play with them. I suppose the ultimate thing would be doing it over the net, so that anyone could mix your track and then you could listen back to it."

#### Check out these realted clubs/events, people, products, web-sites...

##### Clubs/Events

**KUNG FUSION:** Thursdays monthly at Turnmills, London. With resident visual crews Hex and The Light Surgeons. The Light Surgeons performing audio-visual sets with DJs.

**HEAVENLY SOCIAL:** Saturdays weekly at Turnmills, London. Film projections from Lazy Eye.

**333 CLUB:** Various nights, London. Excellent reputation for encouraging club art and cinema, Light Surgeons' night expected to start some time this year.

**VISUALITY 2000:** various nights at the Ministry and the End, where they'll be using the new Xposure visuals software licensed from Archaos, who do Daft Punk's visuals, among others. "Like seeing music". Dates to be confirmed.

**THE LAB:** Wednesdays at the Bomb Club in Nottingham. Experimental films, projections, live art and performance artists, "based on the idea of Warhol's Factory". Always looking for local talent - call them on 0115 950 6667.

**THE EMPIRE:** Middlesbrough will feature visuals from Sheffield's Synergy crew on 19th June, 17 July and monthly there-after, "using new technology with traditional arts, cutting edge animation and video imaging with kinetic projection structures".

**MINT:** Dave Beer's new club in Leeds will also be home to Synergy on selected dates, although details are still to be arranged.

**KENTRA:** Experimental films and music from various cool guests. Not a club night - "no dancing". Kentra will be touring the country later this year.

**THE ICEA FESTIVAL** will take place later this year in Liverpool and Manchester. The festival is set up to showcase digital art and AudioRom will be setting up interactive work at Cream as part of it.

**THE NOW/LOVEBYTES FESTIVAL** in Sheffield.

##### multi-media/interactive music products and web sites

**WILDLIFE E-CD/LEVIS CD-ROM:** both programmed by Anti-Rom. Both products feature interactive visuals and music, ranging from the simple to the obscure. Stands out in terms of visual design.

**HEADER 2:** New Header E-CD, programmed by Header and including interviews with Lloyd Barnes, interactive music and an interactive Alan Warner short story. See the Header web site at [www.header.com](http://www.header.com) for sample mixing toys.

**4 HERO LP/E-CD:** programmed by Header. Featuring mixing toys based around tracks from the album.

**DAFT PUNK WEB SITE:** programmed by Header. Play with music and visuals taken from the Daft Punk video. Silly and good fun.

**'SHIFT CONTROL' E-CD:** programmed by AudioRom. Featuring music from T-Power and AudioRom and a wide variety of mixing toys (real-time and sequenced) based around the same. See the AudioRom website at [www.audirom.com](http://www.audirom.com) to download simple mixing toys for free.

**COLD CUT 'LET US PLAY' CD ROM:** programmed by Hex. From last year, but still worth a look. Videos, mixing toys and a train-spotting trivia quiz, as well as the Timber trilogy. Expect a Hex album next year.