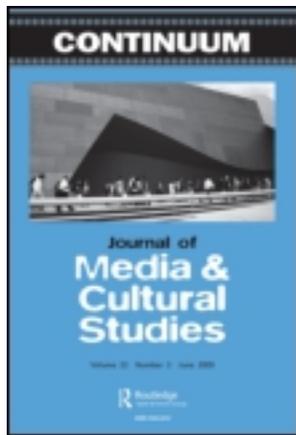


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### Freak media: Vibe Tribes, sampledelic outlaws and Israeli psytrance

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## Freak media: Vibe Tribes, sampledelic outlaws and Israeli psytrance

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As an electronic dance music movement, for over 20 years, psytrance (psychedelic trance) has been a context by which sonic, visual, pharmacological and virtual media have facilitated the expression of interwoven narratives, experimental modes of performance, and the experience of intense sociality in scenes the world-over. A key theme adopted within this movement is the ‘tribe’, the discourse around which is multivalent, though here I focus on the transgressive dimensions of psytrance to which one is attached as a member of *a tribe apart*. The article provides detailed examination of the *outlaw* figure and sensibility in psytrance, illustrating how cultural producers – e.g. DJ-producers, label owners, scene writers, event management – facilitate the party vibe, and a distinct ‘psychedelic’ or ‘freak’ identity via this trope. Among the chief icons of performance, prestige and tribalism sampled within psytrance music and culture, the outlaw is adapted from popular cultural sources (especially cinema) and redeployed as a means of dissolving and performing difference. The exploration of the outlaw conceit in what I call *nano-media* amplified by the producers of psytrance music illustrates how a psychedelic fiction is generated. Specific, although not exclusive, attention is given to Israeli producers, which offers comment on psytrance in Israel where this music is considered popular.

### Introduction

Rooted in full-moon parties held on beaches and hinterlands of Goa, India, and incubated within ‘Goa trance’ scenes developing in Goa and translated to scenes around the world from the mid 1990s, psytrance (psychedelic trance) has proliferated globally (see St John 2010a).<sup>1</sup> Heir to the ecstatic and conscious pursuits of the 1960s counterculture, developing independent music production technologies, evolving a multimedia psychedelic arts scene, and harnessing the communication capabilities of the internet, psytrance is an electronic dance music culture (EDMC) attracting both younger participants and retaining those in their thirties, forties and fifties.<sup>2</sup> A remix aesthetic integral to EDMCs drives the sampling of existing sound in psytrance, including the history of recorded music, along with vocal dialogue from popular cultural sources including film, TV series, documentaries, and computer games, revealing a *sampledelic* sensibility and fluid cut ‘n’ mix styles of identity formation pervading contemporary social life. Furthermore, both self-conscious and articulated via social theory, psytrance possesses a ‘tribal’ socio-sensuality. Deviating from the anthropological invention and political recognition of ‘tribe’, following Maffesoli (1996), the designation ‘neotribe’ connotes the liminal sensual paroxysms typical to dance cultures, and yet also freedom of choice, fluidity of identification, informality, and

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multiplicity. While psytrance is distinctly hyper-liminal – its sources of identification and forms of sociality many, its methods of transcendence multiple, its outcomes uncertain (St John 2010b, 2012a) – the *outlaw* is a chief narrative of transit, mode of sociality and mediated trope sampled and mixed in the lives of enthusiasts. This article explores the significance of the outlaw/ed conceit, assisted as it is by digital reproduction and performance technologies and animated by a pharmacological cornucopia *sampled* (consumed and mediated) by enthusiasts and producers. It is shown that an outlaw/ed figuration animates distinction while at the same time orchestrating singularity. The circulation of this trope within Israeli psytrance music and culture is given specific attention, not least since psytrance became a popular music in Israel, and as prolific producers, Israelis have provided a wealth of material for analysis.

### **Tribes apart, the psychedelic outlaw and freak media**

From LA's Moontribe to Australia's Tribeadelic, and from the Mid Atlantic's Tribal Records to Europe's Psy Tribe, psytrance events, producers and enthusiasts readily adopt the term 'tribe' to convey a desired mode of sociality in which the performance of electronic music and dance takes precedence. The widespread adoption of 'tribe' here is not dissimilar to its adoption among virtual communities like 'tribe.net' where idealized and utopic imputations of traditional forms of social organization are commandeered towards specific objectives (Davidov and Anderson 2008). Across parties, event management organizations, internet forums and virtual networks, among the habitués of psychedelic trance 'tribe' connotes an intentional experimental mode of organization which, distanced from those aspects of 'tribalism' associated with traditional or colonial contexts – e.g. hierarchies, homogeneity, ethnocentrism, hostility – approximates that which Ronald E. Rice identified in his foreword to *Electronic Tribes* (2008: viii), where 'tribe' may 'encourage individual identity', is based 'primarily on frequency of interaction', possess fluid boundaries, and 'heterarchies (webs, networks) instead of hierarchies (strict vertical subsets)'. While the 'tribes' here are not primarily 'e-tribes', the electronic tribalism enabled by the internet and its social networking platforms, and membership in e-tribes relating to genre, event promotion and management, label, file sharing, etc. are integral to psytrance (see Greener and Hollands 2006; Lambert 2010; Ryan 2010). Indeed psychedelic trance (formerly Goa trance) has co-evolved with the internet from the mid 1990s, with the internet possessing a strong influence on the development of psytrance, from a veritable labyrinth of local and regional scene forums and blogs produced in dozens of languages to the ubiquity of Facebook groups, artist and event promotions, and from a multitude of scene release sites to the growing prominence of net-labels. Moreover, the technologies – including an array of travel, digital and chemical (alongside cybernetic) technologies – that enable psytrance events and identifications, ensure experimental formations. In other work, I have illustrated how self-identified 'tribalism' in psytrance effectively facilitates both the performance and dissolution of difference (St John 2009a), and have also explored how trance tribalism coincides with a capacity to sample from and creatively revise the desired symbolic and material culture of others (see St John 2012b). Such remastering is performed in iterations whereby the 'originals' are often lost, a process which is consistent with the growth of a digital remix culture, the exploration of which provides insight on practices of identity re/composition in contemporary social life.

Within psytrance, as in other EDM scenes, synthesizers, samplers and computer-mediated-communication technologies enable modes of sociality that are ephemeral, accelerated and fusional. Eshun's take on George Russell's *Electronic Sonata* – a 'fleeting

friction of timbral incongruities [and] incompatible sound blocs rubbing against each other' (1998, 01[003]) – denotes a 'mixillogical' sensibility characterizing the new sociality. A profusion of styles inheres in single dance tracks (comprises a fusion of styles), in single dance events (accommodating a profusion of genres), and in online media sharing networks and social networking forums (such as electro-music.com where members share programmed digital music samples). The open cut 'n' mix character of electronic music underlines the 'compositional sensibilities' of post-WWII culture (Bennett 1999, 610), further amplified by post 1960s psychedelia, post 1980s electronic arts scenes, and post 1990s net culture. Since identification is enabled through electronic sound media, internet communication developments, and chemical technologies and blends (including LSD, MDMA – or 'ecstasy' – cannabis, ketamine, methamphetamines and cocaine), these are determinably *techno-tribes* whose digitized, cyber and chemical means ensures their independence, experimentalism and globalization.

Another factor of psytrance or 'psy' tribes is that they are intentionally set apart from the everyday. That *psytribes* are social organizations outside and in between is most clearly evident in parties and festivals, the paramount expression of psytrance culture. Promoted and experienced as 'other worlds', these events are demarcated from the world outside, marked off in the fashion that habitués imagine themselves, sometimes hypocritically, to be alternative to national and official culture. They are also *inbetween* since the sociality cultivated within their precincts is commonly reputed to be a threshold to alternative futures. The chief grounds of this liminality is the dance floor, the locale of the *vibe*, that optimized socio-sonic aesthetic universally recognized across EDMCs, from disco to hip hop, and from techno to psytrance. The *vibe* is an aesthetic that obtained popularity in global cosmopolizes in a period post-structuralist sociologist Michel Maffesoli had dubbed *The Time of the Tribes* (1996 [1988]), and is a chief illustration of the 'neotribal' heuristic. In the 1980s, Maffesoli was arguing that post 1960s France had become witness to a Dionysian revival, a re-enchanted 'de-individualized' sociality. After Maffesoli's work received English translations in the 1990s, the concept of neotribalism grew appealing among researchers of EDMCs, all the more since received theories of 'youth subculture' developed by cultural Marxists had grown steadily unsatisfying. For the latter, dance – the practice of girls, queers and hippies – constituted an, at best, inappropriate, and, at worst, eviscerated, sign of 'resistance'. The vast sensual underground, according to material structuralists, demonstrated unrestrained hedonism serving to maintain capitalism by permitting its service populations temporary 'breaks' from work to 'recharge their batteries'. As research into clubbing became legitimate ethnographic practice by the late 1990s, studies emerged in which Maffesoli's ideas gained weight. What Maffesoli named 'underground centrality', a sensuous and shifting network of nodes of attachment and identification, seemed apposite to the dance *vibe* that techno-tribes and participants in EDM cultures everywhere seek to reproduce. As I outline in *Technomad* (St John 2009b), the EDM *vibe* is a social aesthetic with a convoluted background at the crossroads of Afrodiasporic and European histories. It became apparent that the dance *vibe* is differentially inflected, that its ethos is shaped by motivations, principles, aesthetics, that differentiate it from other scenes, and indeed, other *vibes*. Separate microcultures are not simply different *nodes*, or 'emotional communities', but different *modes* of sociality, different registers of being-together-in-dance. Psytrance, and more to the point, the Goa trance aesthetic in which it is rooted, is best characterized as a 'vibe of the exiles' (St John 2012a), a socio-sonic aesthetic at the confluence of multiple sensibilities, modes of performance, prestige and sociality. While prestige is accorded in psytrance to those whose efforts are considered self-less and ethical, with the principled holding allegiance to a

variety of social and cultural movement causes (see St John 2012c), here my gaze is focused not upon the activist, but upon the outlaw, a cardinal figure in EDM.

The circulation of the outlaw figure makes sense in a 'psychedelic' music culture; one predisposed towards obtaining *experience* through altered states of consciousness orchestrated via a range of technologies and techniques, including audio, lighting, décor, psychoactive substances and other media affecting sensual, aesthetic and synaesthetic alterations in consciousness. To begin with, the outlaw/ed is allegorical of the dissolution of distinction between those who participate in the psychedelic experience. Though other figures circulate – e.g. the alien, the zombie, and the indigene (see St John 2011) – the outlaw is one of the chief mascots of the vibe, an icon of shared transgression, abandonment of standard codes of conduct, routine states of mind and disciplined embodiment. In *Inside Clubbing: Sensual Experiments in the Art of Being Human*, Jackson (2004) made one of the strongest cases in EDM studies for the intrinsic value of clubbing, where 'the vibe' is not primarily mediated, represented and consumed, but is experienced sensually in dance events where, over repeated incidences, extraordinary intimacy with friends and strangers 'weakens' or 'seduces' the logic of the 'habitus' – described by Bourdieu (1990) – in which participants are otherwise embedded, potentiating a new 'moral sensibility' (2004, 119, 152). Jackson refers to various socio-chemical states, including that influenced by LSD: the 'temperature immediately rockets and I curl around the beat, skanking along with the mass. Wondrous. Arms and legs and torsos weaving and writhing around each other, all held together by the virus known as bass. An inevitable act of aural seduction, guttural sounds, viscous and sticky and inexplicably wise. My body feels liquid' (2004, 12). This 'sensual intensity', and what Jackson calls the 'chemical intimacy' (2004, 147) of clubbing – and potentially all EDM sites of experience – holds radical potency without being conscious domains of 'resistance', especially since clubs 'expand' or 'validate' capitalism (see Jackson 2004, 102, 121, 160). While the clubs Jackson researched are remote from psychedelic trance events, a comparative assessment would be useful, since psytrance participants make considerable noise about the intensity of the vibe, the wild, or lawless nature of the trance dance; or what Israelis call *karahana*, that condition in which participants pass outside of themselves in dance. What concerns me here is that such an intense dissolution of difference between trance dancers relies upon the maintenance of a distinctive 'psy' identity and comportment, which Jackson appears to have pursued in the embodied sociality of clubbers who break from the governing constraints of the 'defensive body' – although they are distinguishing themselves not so much from 'others' against whom they assert their identity and status as authentically 'psy', but from their 'straight' or non-'psy' personas outside the party. The outlaw is a cultivated signifier of this intensive differentiation.

Techno-tribes are notoriously ambiguous with regard to law, official rules and propriety. They are characterized by a 'hardcore' sociality, whereby law-breaking, unruliness and risk taking – *transgression* – defines identity, and may be converted into status. By comparison to activists whose 'freedom' is defined against the laws they seek to change or the crises they desire to redress (including those which incriminate their own activities), holding some equivalence to 'secret societies', outlaw tribes are clandestine and secretive, with identity invested in unlawfulness of one kind or another, including involvement with illicit drugs and unlawful states of consciousness, trespass, unlicensed events, code violations, data piracy, undisciplined embodiment, etc. As Brewster and Broughton (1999, 369) noted, 'whether he had clipped the locks to play in a warehouse in Holloway, or clambered down tractor tracks to spin for a field of ravers, or climbed up on the roof of Hackney housing project to put up a pirate radio antenna', by the early 1990s the DJ was synonymous with being outside the law. In Jamaica, the home of the sound system and birthplace of the remix, DJs traditionally

crafted a stylized violence adopting personas ripped from Hollywood gunslinger and gangster figures (Partridge 2010, 51–2). And if the outlaw is among the most influential of characters fused in that mass-mediated American cultural sensibility known as ‘hip’, where according to Leland (2004, 224) ‘yesterday’s crime has consistently proven to be tomorrow’s recreation’, the trope has become archetypal to that Lone Ranger of spin, the DJ-producer, whose very practice is notoriously ambiguous in relation to the law. Indeed, with the sampling and often unlicensed remixing of controlled media content, an appropriative sensibility *beyond the law* is native to electronic music production itself, and is rooted in the cut-up and remixing of popular culture in punk, and in the techniques of William Burroughs before that – all of which is the inheritance of electronic artists whose adherents mount samplers and sequencers to reprogram hustled sounds which are released on independent labels. This is the story of Goa trance (and after it, psytrance), which emerged from the seasonal party scene in Goa of the 1980s sculpted by cultural exiles, and transposed to a multitude of locations globally during the 1990s. Goa trance and its progeny became fertile ground for expatriates, for *freaks* whose category disruptions, outlawed mind states, weird sexuality, neonomadic lifestyles, and consequential uncertainty, constituted their transgressive practice.

Psytrance productions are stamped all over with a library of sound-bytes citing cultural outlaws, freak folk-heroes and cognitive libertarians. Beseeching listeners to ‘question authority’ and ‘reclaim your mind’, the voices of Timothy Leary and Terence McKenna have been especially common in music productions. The name of the most popular act in the psychedelic diaspora, Shpongle, might designate the desirable ‘psychic deterritorialisation’ (D’Andrea 2007) amplified under significant bass pressure and increased doses. In a sample on their track ‘Room 23’ (*Tales Of The Inexpressible* 2001), it is confirmed that to be ‘Shpongled’ is ‘to be kippered, mashed, smashed, destroyed. Completely geschtonkenflapped!’ Archetypal outlaws have been recruited to narrate the story of altered mind states ambiguous with regard to the law. On his Goa trance album *The Lone Deranger* (1997), Hallucinogen (Shpongle co-founder Simon Posford) adopts the image of the DJ as independent hero (the cover features the silhouette of a lone rider on horseback), at the same time subverting the image of the frontier enforcer, the title evoking the nomadic outlaw, a mercenary of the psychic frontiers, an ‘easy rider’ seeking thrills and excitement, looting old and pushing new sound, destabilizing minds and subjecting authority, propriety, and property to the whip. There is an aspect of anonymity to this identification favouring quiet technique over celebrity, the stranger with quick hands and few words like Clint Eastwood’s archetypal ‘Man With No Name’ character in the ‘Dollars’ trilogy of the 1960s. Indeed, Man With No Name is the chosen identifier of Goa trance veteran Martin Freeland, whose first 12-inch release ‘Way Out West’ (*Way Out West* 1990), samples from the final film in the trilogy, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, its cover design rendering a classic gunslinger’s duel. More recently, the frontier rebel mentality is harvested on compilations like *The Duel* (World People Productions 2011) with tracks referencing that film and other spaghetti westerns in track names and the sampling, for example, of cocked revolvers and spinning chambers. While the morally ambiguous anti-hero has been popular, others evoke a Robin Hood figure who, in the tradition of independent electronic musicianship, redistributes found sound and gets the better of The Sheriff of Nottingham, only here the ‘goods’ to be redistributed are purposed to pleasure, the ability to assist such states earning reputations far and wide. Breaking camp early with 909s loaded and holsters filled with secret weapon ‘white-label’ productions, these high planes mixers, cyber-junkies, and pushers of fresh sonic product were becoming authorities unto themselves.

Unauthorized practice is a source of cultural cachet in psychedelic trance, and other EDMCs. Since identity and membership is afforded within EDMCs to those who perform transgressions of one kind or another, it might be stated that ‘being together’ is dependent upon a shared ambiguity in relation to the law, in being on the ‘other side of the law’ – a status reliant upon the maintenance of existing laws, against which ‘freedom’, and authenticity, is defined. In this juridical ‘boundary maintenance’ (Cohen 1985), the ‘other’ from which one is distinguished in order to retain self-identity is *the law itself*, and by extension, those who are disciplined by it, adorned in it and live under it. Thus, in the cultural economies of EDM, hierarchies of taste distinguish ‘hardcore’ exponents from those whose activities are sanctioned, whose aesthetics are acquiescent, disciplined and immobile. Echoing Thornton’s (1996) Bourdieusian investigation of ‘subcultural capital’ within clubcultures, where actors are driven to maintain distinction from unhip others against whom their own authenticity is re/defined, marking distinction from the authorized is a perennial performance. In the cultural politics of subcultures, an unauthorized status may be stoked by raconteurs and designers via niche and micro media in the interests of maintaining an outsider, crazed, freak status. In the case of acid house, the scene media producers were observed to turn ‘difference into defiance, lifestyle into social upheaval, leisure into revolt’ (Thornton 1996, 129). While it might be observed that the psytrance vibe absorbs and accommodates otherness – for such is consistent with the porous and fusional aesthetic of *psychedelia* – it also generates a coded domain whose habitués distinguish themselves from lawful ‘others’ (including their own habitus outside the party). In Goa and domestic contexts differentiated difference has been observed to rely on modes of exclusivity leading to charges of elitism, prejudice and racism (see Schmidt 2010, 136; Saldanha 2007).

### Nano-media and Israeli psytrance

Study of the mass mediations of psytrance in Israel may uncover tabloid news-media fulminations baptizing the scene in a fashion not unlike the invention of ‘acid house’ in the UK where such reports were collected and mounted by insiders as a trophies of their radicalism (see Thornton 1996); processes of media collusion which could challenge or complement the more conventional understanding of ‘moral panic’ and scene repression (see Meadan 2001). But here, I am interested in how formations maintain the fiction of contumacy and freakiness through internal broadcasts, principally the vocal samples used in music productions. If ‘mass media’ consists of regional and national print and television news, ‘niche media’ includes scene specific publications, and ‘micro media’ includes event flyers and album cover art (that which Eshun [1998] called ‘concepttechnics’), and ‘social media’ refers to virtual social networks, then the sampling of popular culture (e.g. cinema and documentary sources) using the medium of the programmed music itself might be considered *nano-media*: fleeting, heavily edited sound-bytes, entire film scripts condensed into a few carefully chosen lines on eight- to 10-minute-long tracks, patched together amplifying what might be considered psytribal ideologies, and conveyed to habitués in those principal locales of reception: the dance floors of clubs, parties and festivals. The psychedelic vibe is infused with law-defying, limit-testing and boundary violating themes broadcast and reaffirmed through its sonic fiction, as can be determined in these remediations.

Psytrance music and culture has permeated everyday life in Israel, where it emerged as a popular music by 2000. This music culture has formed something of a response to the crisis of the everyday in the region, with investments in psytrance incited by the pressures of social obligations, dutiful citizenship and the burden of sacrificial mythologies. In an age of globalized media, *trancistim* (the self identification of Israeli trancers) have responded to the

absence of the freedoms enjoyed by youth elsewhere around the world. But contradictions do not go unnoticed. Joshua Schmidt focuses on what he identifies as paradox in the behaviour of *trancistim*, stating that they effectively ‘duplicate what they often profess to refute’ (2010, 131), sometimes replicating elitist practices and divisions in everyday life in Israel, with inconsistencies observed in the professed adoption of pluralism, indicating that alarmed traditionalists (see Sagiv 2000) may be over-reacting. Doubtlessly, military service shapes the unique mode of abandonment embodied at Israeli *mesibot* (parties), as does the day-to-day anxieties and insecurities associated with the country’s historical conditions. When young Israelis stumbled into party scenes in Goa, Manali, Thailand and Tokyo in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many were travellers who had recently completed their military duties in the Israeli Defence Force. Warrior backpackers smuggled this new style of music and event back into the Holy Land, and at remote sites removed from social, religious, and military obligations, Israelis were experimenting with a disassociational sensibility evoking violent states of mind, and inner turmoil. Early 1990s parties featured behaviour described as *balagan* – Hebrew for ‘chaos’, or ‘psycho’ – by scene commentator, DJ and party producer Levit (2002), and producers hold court as ‘psycho’, earning reputations as volatile, unpredictable, freaks. This is the attitude apparent on Oforia’s debut *Delerious* (1998), which includes the track ‘psycho-sonic’, and is evident in Israel’s most commercially successful act, Infected Mushroom. Their early hit ‘psycho’ (*The Gathering* 1998) is an affectation which seems prescient in the light of more recent albums like *Deeply Disturbed* (2003) and the EP *Becoming Insane* (2007).

Evinced by its sonic outriders and the wider party aesthetic, Israeli trance illustrates the desire for belonging to techno tribal associations whose outsider and outlaw pretense is expressed in a dramatized *psychosis* achieved via increased doses and accelerated BPM. Released from the tightly regulated, tense and insecure world of the everyday in a militarized state, producers and habitués undertake a secular Jewish quest for an alternate reality cultivated in a liminal lifestyle. In *mesibot*, risk-taking and transgression become integral to the lifestyles of enthusiasts who convert risk performance into empowerment (see St John 2012a). By the early twenty-first century, the quest to conquer limits was being expressed in a music that had turned away from its Goa roots towards a metal machine music that would develop with accelerated beats into Israeli ‘full on’. As one enthusiast hyperbolized: ‘It’s a ride with 100 jet thrusters. Hyper to the max and even scary at times’ (Glassball 2006). The work of Steve Goodman (2004) offers insight on the prevalence of this aesthetic. In noting that a ‘virtual architecture of dread defines the affective climate of early 21st century urbanism’ and that, as a character from William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition* states, ‘we have no future because our present is too volatile’, Goodman discusses late twentieth-century urban machine musics that are pre-occupied with ‘generating soundtracks to sonically enact the demise of Babylon’. Of course the sonic enactment holds an imagined result, and may be used as a selling point. While Infected Mushroom evolved away from their psychedelic roots, their example is instructive. Celebrated in the May 2007 *DJMag* cover story as ‘the only true mega-stars of psy-trance’, covered in Italian *Vogue* magazine that year dressed in suits, and headlined at the Ultra Music Festival in Miami, I am reminded of Bataille’s comments on transgression, namely that it, like the festival, ‘consecrates and completes the order of things’ (Bataille 1989, 90), which is a position not far removed from Bakhtin’s carnival (1968). It should be noted that Infected Mushroom have been widely disavowed within the psy community. For outlaws of the digital prairies adhering to unwritten codes of practice, performance and production, they are like the objects of ridicule found regrettable within the progressive rock trajectory: bloated egos, avaricious promoters, aggressive marketers, ‘rockstars’. Yet, while Infected

Mushroom's drive for cross-over success, cowboy opportunism and lucrative claims to destabilization cannot be read as a barometer for a diverse transnational scene, the destabilized aesthetic that assisted their commercial success is not far removed from that which attracts habitués to the demilitarized zones of the mind of *mesibot*.

While cinematic samples burlesque altered mind states in a 'chemical intimacy' temporarily levelling distinction, *mesibot* also offer evidence of a prevailing hallucinogenic machismo as chemical renegades and psychedelic warriors are layered into a sonic graffiti. On their 'Pulse', duo Beat Hackers (*System Error* 2003) adopt a line from *Blow*, the 2001 feature about a cocaine smuggler: 'Danbury wasn't a prison, it was a crime school. I went in with a Bachelor of marijuana, came out with a Doctorate of cocaine'. Central Processing Unit (on his track 'Haight Street Freak', *Central Processing Unit* 2003) rewinds back to 1965, to 'the great San Francisco acid wave. Clearly I was a victim of the drug explosion, a natural street freak'. The line is from *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998), adapted from Hunter S. Thompson's 1972 novel. On 'Storm Reaction', Israeli Eliad Grundland (aka Space Buddha) uses a scripted line from the story's protagonist, and Thompson's nom de persona, Raoul Duke: 'In a few hours, she'll probably be sane enough to work herself into a towering Jesus-based rage at the hazy recollection of being seduced by some kind of cruel Samoan who fed her liquor and LSD' (*Storm Reaction* 2003). On the busy 'L.S.Dance', Udi Sternberg (aka Psysex) had earlier lifted a scene in which Duke imagines the character Lucy exposing his complicity in a courtroom in which he and Dr Gonzo, in convict garb and chains, are sentenced with 'castration': 'They gave me the LSD and they took me to the hotel. I don't know what they done to me but I remember it was horrible' (*Expressions of Rage* 1999). Amid a spectacularly depraved drug binge through Las Vegas, indeed nothing less than *A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* (the novel's subtitle), the protagonist and his 'attorney', Dr Gonzo, become willing accomplices in that reckless experiment, the United States of America, in the city often recognized as a monument to the mean, the greedy and the ludicrous. The rape and inebriation of a teenage 'jesus freak' is a critical juncture in the story, the transgression at this place (in a room at the Hotel Flamingo) at this time (at the end of the 1960s), illustrating that 'high water mark' where, as Thompson wrote, the wave of 1960s idealism and hope 'finally broke and rolled back'. It seems that Sternberg had little interest in, nor understanding of, the tragic scent of Thompson's narrative. The same might be said for Yoni Salah (aka Psydrop), whose *Fantasy Seeds* (2003) features 'Fear and Loathing' which celebrates a checklist of Dr Gonzo's stash amid a not atypical 'full on' register: 'Two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half-full of cocaine and a whole galaxy of multicolored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers'.

Psychedelic trance tracks use varying sources for sound-bytes, often featuring no vocal samples at all, but these examples illustrate how iconic psychedelic themes become sonic décor to the vibe, where the consumption of higher doses of psychoactives in cocktails of stronger substances became the fixation of the re/writers of psychedelic fiction, which speaks to the way prestige is converted from such ostensible practice. On 'Sunset in Sa'õ Paulo' (*Prepare to Fly* 2003), Israeli Star-X offers the digitized exclamation 'you just ate the most acid I've ever seen anybody eat in my life' (from *Cheech & Chong's Up In Smoke*). In an economy where the outlaw holds competitive advantage, braggadocio becomes native to the mix. Thus, in '51 Times' (Vibe Tribe & Ananda, *Light* 2004), it is stated that 'my product is 51 times stronger than cocaine, 51 times more hallucinogenic than acid, 51 times more explosive than ecstasy' (from the film *51st State* 2001). Early entry into this terrain had been carried out by California Sunshine's Har-El Prussky, who, in 1994, borrowed William Burroughs' *Interzone* from

the world-wide library of 'killer' samples. His track 'Inter-zone', released on the Phonokol compilation *Trans Nova Express*, was bookended with Burroughs grumbling 'hash, coke and heroin to last a hundred years and the longevity drugs to enjoy'. On another unspectacular Goa track from that release, 'Outer-zone', Prussky found it useful to repeat those last words: 'drugs to enjoy'. Nearly 10 years later, amid the distinctive onslaught of Israeli full-on club trance, Space Buddha ups the ante with '56 pounds of unprocessed, uncut, Bolivian cocaine' ('Acid Prophecy' 2003). By 2006, the boasting grew out of control care of X-Noise and Assi. On their '15000 micrograms' (*The Next Generation*, compiled by Hypersonic), an inspired young man claims to have necked that amount (presumably LSD). This medley of examples serves to illustrate that, using recycled psychedelic drug- and crime-related samples from cinematic sources, producer-DJs of psytrance in Israel and elsewhere write sonic fiction amplifying a risk-laden and contumacious identification. Immersed in repurposed technologies and media hyperbolizing a liminal underworld removed from the crisis of the everyday, membership in a psychedelic tribe-apart is reaffirmed.

### Conclusion

That psychoactive compounds are sampled (i.e. produced) in the mix and sampled (i.e. consumed) by participants – is a *sampledelic* dynamic pivotal to the transgressive tribalism of psytrance. Indeed transgression is integral to psychedelic trance, where the outlaw experience and its sampled trope are a chief source of identity, status and sociality. A principal effect of the law, rule and code breaking that is conveyed via vocal samples in the context of psytrance productions and performance is that one's real or fictive status 'beyond the law' enables identification among those sharing in the transgression. Break-neck rhythm structures and the deployment of samples dramatizing mind alterants and their consequential effects are the twisted song-lines of a tribe-apart, that must maintain stature beyond – or at least be ambiguous in relation to – the law. An icon of 'being together' and 'underground centrality' (Maffesoli 1996), the outlaw is a principal accomplice to the time of the (vibe) tribes. In psytrance, the liminal outlaw/ed mediation – most commonly deployed to signify altered states of consciousness (which are often outlawed) – serves to maintain an identification and sensibility in contradistinction to the everyday. And as formations are distinguished in and by this liminalized derangement, their being different together sustains distinction (i.e. as 'psychedelic' or 'freak'). This is the dynamic landscape of the psychedelic carnivalesque where the outlaw may be a lone rebel and an indivisible part of the whole. As the attention to Israel's psytrance music and culture is intended to illustrate, the *sampling* of drugs on the trance dance floor amplifies conditions at a dramatic remove from the militarized state, and stressful conditions in which participants have been raised. Here outlaw, freak and deranged figurations possess uncertain emancipatory potential, although there remains considerable room for further research on a subject merely broached here. The article also introduced the artifice and technique of 'nano-media'. Complementing work on 'sonic fiction' undertaken by Eshun (1998), and not to be isolated from the unmediated experience of trance dance itself, nano-media involves the remediation of samples from popular sources (principally film) as part of the repertoire of electronic musicians in their efforts to create a distinct liminalized socio-aesthetic ('vibe').

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## Notes

1. This article was produced as part of a research project on the global psytrance movement investigating its technical and cultural interface (see St John 2012a). Employing ethnographic methodology in addition to music analysis, the research has taken me to various regions and events globally in which psytrance flourishes. For instance, in Sep-Oct 2007, I travelled to Israel on a six-week research visit.
2. By contrast to the suspension of adulthood typical to 'raves', with psytrance, it is more accurate to speak of the extension of 'youthful' sensibilities into adulthood. Thus while psytrance attracts young enthusiasts the world-over, it is only questionably a 'youth' culture.

## Notes on contributor

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