

SPECIALE The Digital Discotheque. Club Events in the Internet Age

The aim of this paper is to explore the receptive and aesthetic characteristics and shifts that are implied by the discotheque (or club) event as it has become a digitized and globally shared phenomenon of internet culture. By analyzing a specific case (DJ Harvey's performance at Milan's Boiler Room), I will point out, first, the immediate experience of this new form of entertainment in juxtaposition to traditional forms of clubbing experiences; second, the wider implications of this shift as it regards for instance the roles of the DJ and the club space, aspects of performance, participation as well as social practices.

Within the grand narratives of disco's cultural history one finds a number of typical *topoi* and subjects, which are considered to be essential: the emergence of disco as a music genre, the histories of famous nightclubs from the pioneering Loft to the nightlife enterprise Studio 54, the intertwinings of disco and gay culture, the anti-disco movement, race and gender issues, disco and film, disco and fashion as well as the music industry's commercial strategies of selling disco, to name but a few¹. What is often underrepresented or even neglected in these historical accounts is the establishing, popularization and elaboration of the club or discotheque event as the great innovation of disco music and culture². Rather than from disco's historical narratives, this media innovation has received far more recognition from analytical studies on club culture³. If we regard the club event as a medium in itself, it is to be defined as a singular collective (and exclusive) performance of music, dancing, bodies, fashion, interior design and architecture, light, smoke and mind-altering substances at a specific time and space, arranged in an institutionalized environment. During the club event, the artistic performance of the DJ is just one of many (though a prominent one within the discourse of disco and club culture). Moreover, every individual body on the dance floor, every flicker of stroboscope light and every song being played are contributing to the collective performance of the event⁴.

With this, the discotheque also becomes a late and resounding contributor to modernity's project of overcoming distinctions and barriers between artist and audience, sender and perceiver, art and life. While the collective aspect of disco's performativity led to a now well established topos of club culture as a new form of tribal ritual⁵, it might also be a good idea to consider the club event as a strange (and ironic?) fulfillment of Richard Wagner's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*⁶. With the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and its attempted realization in the *Festspiel* ("festival") Wagner meant to create a collective multimedia production and performance in which distinctions between artist and audience are resolved. Similarly, and with Wagner in mind, Friedrich Nietzsche described the Greek tragedy as an artistic institution that balances collective musical rapture (the *Dionysian*) and social individuality (the *Apollonian*), thereby achieving a controlled transformation of the individual recipients into a collective of Dionysian satyrs⁷. As we will see in the subsequent analysis, these aspects of performativity, multimediality and the tension fields of collectivity and individuality, chaos and conventionality are equally significant for the experience of club events.

Now that we have roughly defined and contextualized what is at stake here, I argue that the very essentials of the club or discotheque event (as described above) have gone through significant transformations over the last years. The cause for these transformations is the recording, digitization and publication of disco events on the social media and video sharing platforms of the internet. Club venues, magazines, radio stations, festivals and media companies specialized in club culture present club events from all over the world on platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion or Soundcloud⁸. In order to consider this phenomenon in its full significance and complexity, I will undertake the following analytical steps: first, I will describe and analyze in detail what the digitization of the club event implies in regards to its immediate experience. What kind of entertainment are we dealing with, and how does it differ from the traditional forms of discotheque entertainment? Second, I will point out the wider implications of this shift.

SPECIALE This regards for instance the expanded range of producers and participants, the roles of artistic positions and the status of the discotheque as an institutionalized space of transgression, local peculiarities and auratic qualities, aspects of performance (who is performing for who?) as well as the social practices that are implemented by the discotheque's becoming a digital and globally shared space. These analytical steps will be carried out on the basis of a specific case study: the (online) performance of disco and rare groove legend DJ Harvey at the Boiler Room of Milan, Italy⁹. While the analysis of this particular case does not claim to be representative (according to the methodological principles of sociological studies) for all digital club events that are shared on the internet, I at the same time think that the following analytical investigation of this case's aesthetic and receptive aspects will also potentially reveal some of the key characteristics that are defining for the majority of events as such.

The Boiler Room is an online platform for music events that was founded in 2010¹⁰. Having become one of the most popular presenters of club music events on the internet, there are now more than 60 Boiler Room locations all over the world. Within the broader scope of viewing and sharing club events on online video and audio platforms the Boiler Room features are to be found among the top hits with viewer numbers in the millions (Carl Cox's *Ibiza Villa Takeover* DJ-set has for instance been viewed more than 13 million times¹¹); and they generally receive consistently fairly high quantities of viewings (with an average of roughly 73,000 views per video and more than 900,000 subscribers on YouTube). Besides other genres such as jazz, hip hop or pop, the main core of music genres presented at Boiler Room consists of club and dance music (esp. house, techno, disco). Thus, the majority of performances are club events with DJs as the central artistic contributors. Commonly, these events take place within discotheque venues, but also alternative locations such as festival stages, music studios, pool facilities or tropical beaches are being used. In contrast to the unlimited access that the platform provides to its content, the participation within the actual club events that are recorded and posted is strictly based on exclusiveness and selection. Only those who are exclusively invited to the event gain entrance. Inside there are a number of DJs playing one by one, each for around one to two hours. The event is being recorded by camera, fragmented into individual artistic performances within postproduction and then released on the internet as video or mere audio stream, both on the webpage boilerroom.tv and on music and video sharing platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, Soundcloud or Dailymotion.

DJ Harvey has worked as a DJ (with residencies in several clubs), musician, record label owner and music producer. While originally born in Great Britain, he now lives in Los Angeles, USA. As a DJ he is known for his eclectic sound mix between disco, rare groove, house, techno, garage, rock, pop and other genres. In 2012 he was listed by Rolling Stone Magazine within the top ten of *The 25 DJs That Rule the Earth*¹².

The performance of DJ Harvey at the Boiler Room Milan, Italy took place on June 11th, 2015. Until April 7th, 2016 it had been clicked ca. 140,000 times on boilerroom.tv, ca. 82,000 times on youtube.com, ca. 24,000 times on dailymotion.com and ca. 35,000 times on soundcloud.com (audio only). While the architectural structures of the club space are not easily recognizable, we can note that the DJ desk is given a central position, set up on a stage that places the artist slightly above the main audience-space. But also the stage itself is densely filled with people. This space will remain the primary target of the camera during the event. Other areas of the discotheque get less coverage or remain completely unknown to the viewer. Behind the stage there is a video screen projected on the wall showing various film footage and visual effects as well as the brand names Boiler Room and Ray Ban (in this case a collaboration partner of Boiler Room). Additional visual effects for both clubbers and viewers are provided by the club's lighting system. Apart from the music played by Harvey, the recording also captures the club's diegetic soundscape (the cheering and humming of the crowd).

The video sets off with a fast montage, blending different perspectives of the location into one another until the most frequently used camera position is found: capturing the DJ behind his equipment in an

SPECIALE American shot. Harvey is shown from a slightly low angle position and is located right in the center of the image. The dancing crowd gathers behind his desk. Other shots from farther distances and high angle perspectives reveal that the DJ is in fact completely surrounded by people. This observation enables the viewer to experience the American shots in front of the DJ as eyeline matches, in other words, as perceiving the artist from the perspective of one of the dancers in the crowd. Through these montaged eyeline matches, the video seeks to convey and imitate the embodied perception of the participants in the club, who experience the event as being surrounded and affected by a space of multisensual intensities. The question, however, remains if this somatic experience is so easily adaptable to the screen experience of the online stream. Given the fact that the – perhaps even multiple – framing of the image¹³ remains very present in its perception due to the (in most cases) moderate size of the monitor screen, the constructed eyeline match cannot be experienced as an immersive teleportation into an illusionistic virtual space¹⁴ but merely as a mediated approximation.

On the other hand, the producers of the digital event seem to be very aware of the limitations of the medium's illusionistic appeal, for the video employs its very own strategies to immerse the viewer in alternative ways¹⁵. One distinct example for this is a shot that begins at the played length of 00:30 min (according to the video on boilerroom.tv). Initially, the camera captures the DJ stage in an extreme long shot from a high angle perspective. After seven seconds the camera starts zooming in. This occurs parallel to and in interplay with accelerated train ride film footage on the venue's video screen and the driving drum beat played by Harvey. This multimedia interplay causes a strong immersive effect of being pulled into the screen. No longer seeking to imitate the sensual and somatic experience of being in the club, the video makes use of its full film technological and formal potential, which is first of all a multimedia intensification and spatio-temporal dynamization of the image¹⁶. The distance view of the club venue from a high angle perspective generally represents a deviation from the immersive experience of actually being there. It puts the viewer in a commanding position and gives him/her an overview over the location and the participants in the event. With this distance view, the recipient's position as an outsider looking in, cut off through time and space from the material and somatic presence of the event, is underlined.

At 08:31 min an interesting visual effect is introduced: with the beginning of the song *Starlight* by Risque a thumping of a bass drum rhythm occurs, causing vibrations in the visual field of the camera. This rather accidental effect (an inevitable vibrating of the recording device) can be described as another mediation of the music's somatic impact on people's bodies in the club. Instead of the "gut feeling" that the bass drum causes, the viewer is presented with a visual translation on the plane of the screen (for this viewer's body is unlikely to receive the sensations and somatic effects of the event with the same intensity as the bodies in the club).

As already implied in the former descriptions, the event is presented from a variety of different shot types and perspectives. While camera movement rarely occurs, techniques of zooming in and out are repeatedly used. For the most part the camera either focuses on the DJ (American shot) or on the club audience as a whole (extreme long shots). Only in a few occasions the camera singles out smaller groups of people, thereby giving more intimate views of the event's social interaction and dancing. In terms of the montage, the varying shots are usually blended and faded into or onto each other, rather than just being cut straight. These montaged transitions create a floating and organic movement of the audiovisual field. In accordance with the DJ's coherent and continuous mixing of music, the digitized club event can be experienced as a continuous flow and organic intertwining of visual and auditory spaces. In addition, effects of light, darkness and color are not merely performed for the clubbing crowd but also for the camera and the viewer. Though they will appeal less intense, sharp and colorful on the screen, these effects are blended into each other through montage procedures, in order to intensify the impact on the viewer's perception.

One element of the event that also deserves particular attention is a woman who makes her appearance in the American shots of Harvey. Wearing a dark belly top and red shorts with medium-long and dark

SPECIALE hair, she can be seen right behind and next to the DJ for most of the video. With her physical presence, claiming quite a big section of the visual field, one may assume a high degree of media awareness and reflexivity as the foundation of her performance – an important aspect we will get back to later. At the end of the video, both sound and image fade out. As a viewer, we do not actually know if this ending also marks the conclusion of Harvey's set. What the video surely does not entail is the club night as a whole. Fragmented and portioned, the video focuses clearly on the performance of Harvey.

Then again, even this fragmented unit of the club night becomes an object for manipulation and editing in the course of its digitization and release as a file for online streaming. The viewer is free to fast forward and backward within the event, skip, cut out or repeat parts of it, numb it or isolate the audio track. The club event's experience as a continuous flow of time in a specific space is suspended; its unity of time and space is becoming the material for interface operations. Even more fundamentally, we have to consider the media translation process of digitization in its transformation of matter and material: from the staged and institutionalized club performance to being recorded and translated into digital code (bits) to being made available and performed on an interface level. As media archeologists like Wolfgang Ernst argue, digitization translations as such imply a shift from human temporality to the micro-temporalities of the machines that actually organize and perform the recording, archiving and interface presentation of content¹⁷. As part of the digital archive and translated into digital signals, the club event is re-performed and re-translated into human time-space by the machine for the viewer.

At the same time we have to be careful about the premature assumption of a clear opposition between the "real" club event as a mainly somatic (ergo pre- or a-discursive) performance and experience and the digital club event as a multiply mediated, constructed and framed (ergo discursive) screen performance and experience. As scholars like Silvia Rief and Mark J. Butler demonstrate, the nightclub or discotheque is far from being a neutral white cube for the club collective to perform. Instead it represents an institutionalized framework for its events, including spatial arrangements, specific practices, rituals and technologies, aiming to both discipline and free the bodies of its visitors¹⁸. The discotheque is a space in which alterations of the body's sensuous and affective state take place under the influence of technological interventions – stimulating body, perception and nervous system¹⁹. Viewed from a different perspective, we can also call into question the authenticity and the immaculate affective state of the freed bodies in movement, for "all acting that involves the body (...) and is not mere mental deliberation is performative and is a form of acting "as-if" insofar as it mimetically re-enacts previous actions following certain models of how to comport the body and how to perform social roles"²⁰.

On top of these mimetic re-enactments ascribed to discotheque dancing, we also have to reckon with an increased media awareness and engagement of the performers, especially in cases like the to-be-digitized Boiler Room events. I have already mentioned the woman behind DJ Harvey as a case in point for this. Although we can merely speculate here, it appears as if her dance performance is first and foremost addressed at the camera and ultimately at the recipient in front of the screen. Her dancing flirts with a sphere beyond the here and now; it is directed towards a virtual, space and timeless re-performance. And this is something that can be observed in many Boiler Room events. Despite the fact that the two audiences (club and interface) are separated from each other through a spatio-temporal distance and only connected through a series of media translation processes, they are very aware of each other. In case of the screen audience, this getting-to-know-the-others is simply part of the viewing experience and one important source of its entertaining appeal. Looking back into the past, the digitally re-performed event becomes material to be manipulated and played with, to comment on and discuss. This is a particular instrument of power given to the screen audience over the others. The power of the "real" event's participants resides in the fact that they were present at this specific time and place. They were at the core of what "really" happened, whereas all the others from "hereafter" remain outsiders looking in. Moreover, those lucky few can claim that they were part of the creative process that gave shape to the club performance, which will ultimately re-appear in digital form²¹. Thus, in terms

SPECIALE of the discotheque event's exclusiveness, we can note that this auratic quality is upheld, perhaps even increased, in the course of its digitization. Although there is no entrance fee to be paid or a bouncer to get past (thresholds that Rief describes as rites of passage²²), the exclusivist nature of the event is now conveyed through its "back then" status. Making its re-appearance from the past, the event can take on an almost elegiac quality, a melancholic tone that can only be overcome through the immersive and aesthetic appeal of the screen performance.

Another possibility for the screen recipient to fill the void of "never being able to be there" is the given set of practices of interaction and participation. In the comments sections of the video and audio sharing platforms users are enabled to share their views, experiences, questions and answers with others. The enclosed and ephemeral social culture of the club is substantially extended (and discussed) in the course of its digitization by the global and enduring (resp. archiving) social culture of the internet. The most common topics and practices in these comments are: the experience of the music being played, the performance of the DJ, the identification of singular songs and artists (in form of questions and answers), the (often collective) compiling of tracklists, the sharing of gossip, the badmouthing of specific participants in the events or other commenters as well as the drawing attention to minor and ephemeral details of the event (e.g. the dance style of a particular person, the social behaviors of others). Additionally, a club event can be taken as occasion to discuss topics of more general character: the underground vs. the commercial status of music and club culture, authenticity, the music industry and questions of gender, race, sexuality and politics. Against this, in the club space itself topics as such are considered to be performed and negotiated through bodily practices (according to the academic discussion of club cultures). This is where the utopian and subversive potential of the discotheque surfaces. However, applied to the age of the club event's digital mediation and online accessibility, these somatic negotiations themselves become objects to be discursively re-negotiated through interface operations and means of interaction – a phenomenon we shall take a closer look at in the following.

The club event as a form of transgression, as an event performing "subjectivity-at-its-limits"²³ is significantly transformed through its digitization. Traditional concepts of the club event believe in its transgressive power to (temporarily) bend or even break social rules and celebrate and explore otherness and alternative modes of being within a protected and enclosed space:

Popular and academic representations of clubbing are strongly infused with images of "otherness". The dance club is often regarded as an atmosphere of ecstatic feelings, (...) where the structures of everyday life are temporarily suspended through thresholds that separate the visitors from daily routines, education, work and family commitments; where social identities are undone and new identifications and roles are taken up and played with; where social boundaries between groups dissolve and where participants act out transgressive, carnivalesque bodies²⁴.

However, as Rief demonstrates in her subsequent analysis, there are certain limitations and contradictions inherent to this experience as well. The claim for a complete isolation from the outer society's conventions is for instance untenable; so is the idea of a space in which alternative ideas can freely float and transform without ever crystallizing. Opposed to this, we have to take into account the establishing of subcultural sets of social rules, roles and hierarchies. As have been said before, the club experience is extensively framed and controlled by the institutional practices and technological arrangements of the discotheque space, thereby defining the scope and the limits of clubbing's somatic transgressions. Applied to the digital discotheque event, these transgressions as well as their limitations are to be re-negotiated. The discursive means of interaction, which the digital interfaces provide, function in extension, affirmation and contestation of the inner conventions of the clubbing sphere. As for the discotheque's transgressive potential, digitization might also lead to a domestication of such transgressions, a mode of re-entering

SPECIALE discursive formations. But this seems rather far-fetched, given the fact that the screen experience always succeeds the “actual” event in time as a digitized re-performance. Then again, as I have demonstrated, the digital means of presentation, reception and interaction clearly seem to shape and inform the conventions of performing and interacting of the immediate clubbing experience.

Another common assumption within club cultures’ academic discourse is the persistence of local characteristics and peculiarities: “Although club culture is a global phenomenon, it is at the same time firmly rooted in the local. Dance records and club clothes may be easily imported and exported, but dance crowds tend to be municipal, regional and national”²⁵. And also Rief insists on “distinct local histories, politics, economic and social structure, religious cultures, demographic trends and relations of class, gender and ethnicity”²⁶. In digitized club events such as the Boiler Room sessions these particularly local features become topics of discussion as well; that is if they even become visible, for rather than exploring local, regional or national club micro-cultures, we can observe tendencies towards a global social code of discotheque practices, according to which local features become unified, standardized and dissolved. Accordingly, the Boiler Room’s broader appeal to its users seems to celebrate an underlying concept of cosmopolitanism, emphasizing and promoting intercultural encounters, an international mindset of community and global party culture. And this also intersects with a more general point, namely that the global accessibility, sharing and discussion of discotheque events is itself a strong undermining factor for the remaining of local club cultures.

As the last part of this paper, I would like to reflect on the roles of artistic positions within digitized club events. Since the videos produced and published by Boiler Room and other institutions present in most cases singular DJ sets, the position of the individual DJ artist is strengthened and emphasized. The focus of the viewer is directed towards the DJ set as the central art form and medium of expression employed in the club event as well as towards the DJ’s craftsmanship of selecting and mixing music, “reading” and enrapturing the crowd.²⁷ At the same time institutions like Boiler Room, whose videos often attract millions of people, become decisive variables regarding career opportunities of the artists (both the ones playing at the club and the ones being played). Getting the opportunity to perform at one of the Boiler Rooms has become a door opener for many DJs. Speculating on increased popularity and lucrative bookings, DJs, as a result, seem to tend to present the very essence of their sound (resp. their corporate identity) at such events. In contrast to the Boiler Room’s initial concept, which was providing a space for musical experiments and unconventional sets, the performances of the invited DJs also have to be regarded as brand presentations and sales pitches.²⁸ But also the dancers within a club’s crowd perform now for a much bigger audience, one that itself is not present and not contributing to the club event in the here and now.

Viewed from a less culture critical perspective, we have to recognize that the digital discotheque also involves a much broader collective of artistic participants and contributors, not merely bodily and sensual agents but also extensively discursive (the users) and non-human (the digitizing machines) ones. As we began our investigation of the digitized online club event with a rather ambitious drawing of parallels between the club event and Wagner’s Gesamtkunstwerk, we might as well close it with another attempt as such: the artist Joseph Beuys’s concept of the *Soziale Plastik (Social Sculpture)* comprises an enhanced understanding of the term of the art work. Conceptualized in extension of Wagner’s approach, it not only includes its immediate sensual and individually produced components but also its receptive, participatory and discursive circulation and further development in society. This is perhaps – and once again in a rather strange way – the direction in which the digital discotheque in the internet age is taking us.

Nikita Mathias

SPECIALE Notes

1. See for instance: Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff. Disco and the Remaking of American Culture*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York-London 2010; Peter Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around. The secret history of disco*, Faber & Faber, London 2005; Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day. A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-1979*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2003.
2. Of course this medium did not emerge out of nowhere. As the term “discothèque” already refers to the French (and British) dance culture from the 1940s to the 1960s, there were predecessors of disco’s nightclubs. At the same time I think it is safe to claim that a broad popularization and standardization of the club event medium was initially achieved by the American disco culture of the 1970s.
3. See Mark J. Butler, “Introduction”, in *Id.*, (ed.), *Electronica, Dance and Club Music*, Ashgate, Farnham 2012, pp. xi-xxxI.
4. While these general defining features remained approximately consistent over the last decades, we should nonetheless note at this point that the club event medium is of course not to be understood as a static entity but as a historically dependent and regionally differing one, which has been going through various transformations since its establishing. This historical and regional complexity and variety is for instance represented in an encompassing manner in Peter Shapiro, *op.cit.* as well as (although limited to electronic music clubbing culture) in the (thus far) seven volumes of the online journal *Dancecult*, <https://dj.dancecult.net/index.php/dancecult> (last accessed April 6, 2016). Some of the technological developments of the club medium are described in: Hillegonda C. Rietveld, “Journey to the Light? Immersion, Spectacle and Mediation”, in Bernaedo Alexander Attias, Anna Gavanas, Id. (eds.), *DJ Culture in the Mix. Power, Technology, and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music*, Bloomsbury, New York-London 2013, pp. 79-102.
5. Scott R. Hudson, “The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures”, in *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 73, n. 1 (2000), pp. 35-49; Christina Goulding, Avi Shankar, “Club Culture, Neotribalism and Ritualised Behaviour”, in *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 38, n. 4 (2011), pp. 1435-1453; Andy Benett, “Subcultures or Neo-tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste”, in *Sociology*, vol. 33, n. 3 (1999), pp. 599-617; Graham St John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality & Psytrance*, Equinox, Sheffield-Bristol 2012.
6. Richard Wagner, “Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft”, in *Id.*, *Richard Wagner. Dichtungen und Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe in zehn Bänden. Band 6: Reformschriften. 1849-1852*, edited by Dieter Borchmeyer, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt 1983, pp. 9-157.
7. Friedrich Nietzsche, “Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik”, in *Id.*, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, vol. 1, DTV, Munich 1999. – However, against Wagner and Nietzsche’s initial plans, disco does not provide the experience on which a new society can be built. Just like Wagner’s *Festspiel* (as the realization of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*) turned out to be inappropriate for such an undertaking, disco rather provides a temporary transgression (and release) without a significant impact on the main structures of their societies (at least not to the degree that Wagner and Nietzsche were speculating on, namely a rebirth of society as one organic art collective).
8. Certainly, aspects of mediation – as for instance in the form of film and video footage – have always played a significant role within disco culture. And it is worth noting in this regard that this older “historical” material now also becomes re-published and shared in digitized form on the internet.
9. *Milan: Ray-Ban x Boiler Room 007. DJ Harvey* (Boiler Room), [<http://boilerroom.tv/recording/dj-harvey/#video> – alternatively: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7hdNv4IOG0>] (last accessed April 6, 2016).
10. The following deliberations are based on my analysis of the Boiler Room website [<https://boilerroom.tv/>] (last accessed April 6, 2016).
11. *Carl Cox Boiler Room Ibiza Villa Takeovers DJ Set* (Boiler Room), [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy-k0FopsmY>] (last accessed April 6, 2016).

- SPECIALE** 12. Rolling Stone Magazine, “The 25 DJs That Rule the Earth”, [<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/the-25-djs-that-rule-the-earth-20121109/dj-harvey-19691231>] (last accessed April 6, 2016).
13. In terms of pictorial framing as an essential component of digital media see: Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window. From Alberti to Microsoft*, MIT Press, Cambridge-London 2006.
14. In accordance with the more narrow definition of the experience of *immersion* by Oliver Grau, namely the experience of being completely surrounded by an illusionistic virtual space. Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art. From Illusion to Immersion*, MIT Press, Cambridge-London 2003, pp. 13f.
15. From now on we are dealing with a wider and more general notion of *immersion*. Viewed in this light, the term signifies the experience of being entirely drawn into a piece of art, be it by its narrative, its means of interaction, its affects or its technological setup.
16. Erwin Panofsky strikingly describes this potential as a “*dynamization of space* and, accordingly, [a] *spatialization of time*” (Erwin Panofsky, “Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures”, in Leo Braudy, Marshall Cohen (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*, Sixth Edition, New York-Oxford 2004 [1974], pp. 289-302, here p. 291.).
17. Jussi Parikka, “Operative Media Archeology: Wolfgang Ernst’s Materialist Media Diagrammatics”, in *Theory, Culture, Society*, vol. 28, n. 5 (2011), pp. 52-74.
18. Silvia Rief, *Club Cultures. Boundaries, Identities, and Otherness*, Routledge, New York-London 2009, p. 79; Mark J. Butler, *op.cit.*, p. xix.
19. Silvia Rief, *op.cit.*, pp. 104f.
20. Silvia Rief, *op.cit.*, p. 102.
21. A process that the club audience also constantly contributes to itself. Due to the participants’ media competence, the digital recording and publication of the event is not merely restricted to the producers of Boiler Room. Rather, the “official” videos are surrounded by an enormous quantity of image and video fragments, which circulate on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat.
22. Silvia Rief, *op.cit.*, p. 84.
23. *Ivi*, p. 5.
24. *Ivi*, p. 79.
25. Sarah Thornton: *Club Cultures. Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 3.
26. Silvia Rief, *op.cit.*, p. 15.
27. A nuanced and detailed discussion of these artistic practices of the DJ can be found in: Bernaedo Alexander Attias, Anna Gavanas, Hillegonda C. Rietveld (eds.), *DJ Culture in the Mix. Power, Technology, and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music*, Bloomsbury, New York-London 2013.
28. A critical essay about the Boiler Room phenomenon and its impact on DJ and club music culture was published on the German blog for popular and digital culture Das Filter. Mariann Diedrich, “Das neue Top of the Pops? Boiler Room und die Auswirkungen auf die DJ-Kultur”, [<http://dasfilter.com/kultur/das-neue-top-of-the-pops-boiler-room-und-die-auswirkungen-auf-die-dj-kultur>] (last accessed April 6, 2016).

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the receptive and aesthetic characteristics of the discotheque (or club) event as it has become a digitized and globally shared phenomenon of internet culture. By analyzing DJ Harvey’s performance at the Boiler Room Milan, I will point out, first, the immediate experience of this new form of entertainment in juxtaposition to traditional clubbing; second, the wider implications of this shift, particularly in terms of the roles of the DJ and the club space, aspects of performance, participation as well as social practices.