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How to cultivate a sustainable club music ecosystem

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Creative Enterprise

Toi Rauwhāangi
Massey University Wellington,
Aotearoa New Zealand.

Frederick Blyth Williamson

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Abstract

Club music has always been an art-form rooted in community, resistance and freedom. It is a powerful and potent music form that has captured audiences and become a staple in contemporary night life around the world, offering life-affirming moments and a convivial experience of the cities it occupies.

This thesis discusses the decline of club music and night life in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand and proposes a framework for an authentic experience that creates the foundation of a sustainable club music ecosystem. The research draws on the historical significance of club music as a space for liberation and freedom and highlights the need for such spaces in our current social context, just as they were in 1980s America. Drawing on empirical evidence, this research argues the importance of club spaces in fostering a sense of community to combat isolation in a post covid society. The document draws upon academic literature on club music history, authenticity, scenes and sustainability to support its arguments.

The proposed club, T.A.Z., aims to create a transformative and timeless space that delivers an authentic club music experience. The methodology used in the research presents six components that contribute to an authentic club music experience and explores how these can be replicated and sustained, providing the basis for a successful nightclub operation. The exegesis is accompanied by creative works and a business plan which discusses the economic and cultural viability of the proposed club music venue. The research concludes that the proposed ecosystem requires a social institution to develop around suggests that T.A.Z., through delivering an authentic experience, becomes that institution at the nexus of a sustainable club music ecosystem.

To Catherine, Ben and Jon

*for lending your knowledge and guidance.
Thank you for empowering me with your trust
and sticking with me.*

To Milo

*for your invaluable kōrero, passion
and understanding of the club music culture.*

To Mum and Dad

*for your love, generosity, support
and food you cooked me.*

To Isabel

*none of this could have happened without you.
I love you so much.*

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“Escapism has always been an adjective used to describe the dance. That’s an outsider’s view. Solidarity is what it really offers.”

—Theo Parrish, 2023

Intro

This exegesis serves as the critical accompaniment to my creative works, a series of club music events as Wellington-based record label Racquet Club, which are documented on the website <https://readymag.com/4298737>.

This document critically discusses my background as both an active music industry practitioner and observer, the decline of night life in Wellington and the historical context of club music’s origins, where the theme of authenticity features heavily throughout. I examine the contribution club music can make to Wellington’s overall viability and detail the value of a healthy nighttime economy, which is supported through the creation of a sustainable club music ecosystem. Although Wellington has seen successful nightclubs in its past, it has never been able to cultivate an environment conducive to supporting a network of club music venues, resulting in a nightlife centred around the commercialised Top 40 bars of Courtenay Place.

The exegesis posits that a club music ecosystem has never developed because past clubs haven’t been able to deliver an authentic experience aligned with original club music scenes. The project thus responds to this issue by asking “what are the replicable elements that constitute an authentic club music experience?” and proposes a nightclub that embodies those elements, T.A.Z., to become the bedrock for a sustainable club music ecosystem. The framework is realised as a set of six criteria and, through an action research approach, used this as an analytical tool to gauge the success of six club music events held as Racquet Club.

Since its inception, club music has provided a space protected from the outside world for people to revel in wonder and freedom. Historically, these places provided respite from disenfranchisement, racism, homophobia (Cooper 1995, Thornton 1995, Lawrence 2003, 2011, Buckland 2012, Attias et al. 2013, Munuera 2020) and in our current day provide respite from capitalist systems and a future tainted by the seemingly inevitable environmental collapse. These spaces have been important meetings of minds, sharing of ideas and creating discussions of a more forgiving way forward underpinned by empathy, love and freedom—or ‘Peace, Love and Unity’ as was adopted by cultural heavyweights The Love Parade throughout the 1990s, captured the central message for rave and dance music scenes across the globe. Fast-forward to the present day, where Aotearoa New Zealand finds its nightlife and music economy in a steady decline due in part to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic (Venuto 2022, RMNZ 2021), the ongoing threats of gentrification and changes in policy and laws related to nightlife (Stahl 2019), the need for these liberating spaces rings true as it did in 1980s New York.

A childhood attraction to collecting and cataloguing music led by the developments of musical hardware and software informed the decision to pursue DJ and electronic music production after high school. Academic and practical exposure to DJ culture and the role DJs played in the proliferation of electronic music forms encouraged a deeper engagement with local gigs, club nights and festivals up and down Aotearoa New Zealand as an attendee, performer and organiser. The continued learning and discovery culminated in a life-affirming musical experience at the 2016 edition of *Let Them Eat Cake* in Melbourne, Australia, where Daniel Avery performed the closing set of the festival in front of a lit-up Werribee Mansion. For the first time, my friend and I experienced the transformative power of club music: a palpable sense of unity and solidarity across nearly 7,500 seemingly unconnected people, dancing with no care beyond the freedom of that exact moment. While the memory drifts further into the past, what remains from that moment is a profound understanding and unwavering commitment to deliver this experience to the people and community that surround me in my hometown of Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington and Aotearoa New Zealand at large.

Further study in music scenes, business, history and culture resulted in a university exchange to Edinburgh at the beginning of 2019, affording the opportunity to engage with the famed clubs and festivals across mainland Europe and the United Kingdom. Six months of experiencing both the world’s best DJs and local up-and-comers at some of club culture’s most infamous venues helped form the framework I now hold every event against to

determine whether those events have the potential to deliver that transformative feeling to those in attendance—the feeling I experienced during Let Them Eat Cake in 2016.¹

Wellington is faced with a nighttime economy grappling with alcohol harm and sexual violence related incidents (Ainge Roy 2019, Harris 2021), earthquake-prone buildings and gentrification, where the city council's arbitrary policies around noise control and "amenity values" have adversely affected the local music scene (Stahl 2019) and the unique parameters it requires to thrive. The projected outcomes of T.A.Z. will address Wellington's relationship with nightlife and encourage a cultural shift towards uncoupling the need for alcohol with a night out by offering a standard of experience that doesn't require one to be drunk to enjoy it. This idea is supportive of the lowering interest in youth drinking as compared to previous NZ generations (Thomas, 2023) and will be utilised in conjunction with an investigative door policy (simple questions around why someone had decided to come to this specific club, which artists they were excited to see) similar to what I experienced at European clubs.

My personal experience and continued research has led me to develop a framework that measures the qualitative success of club music nights and whether they deliver the sense of fulfilment and solidarity required to build a community; where a healthy and supportive community can offer positive benefits and changes both internally and externally (Henricksen 2000)—many of the same changes the council has attempted to enact through regulation and policy. The framework then in turn provides a proposal for a club music venue that facilitates a sustainable club music ecosystem in Wellington.

First, I offer a context review of the key themes in scholarly discourse on club music and review comparable examples of recent club music venues in Wellington. From here, the methodology employs the developed framework to identify the replicable aspects of each event and any adjustments required. Finally, discussion around the results reveal the success of the method and further discussion. This material leads to the final component of my thesis, a business plan detailing the creation of T.A.Z., its projected operating costs and a comprehensive strategy to ensure its qualitative and quantitative success.

¹ These club music experiences are often facilitated through the use of drugs—most notably ecstasy (MDMA), cocaine and ketamine—to which the history of club music maintains an inextricable link. However, due to the scope of this exegesis I will be omitting the role that drugs play within club music culture to further delve into the social, cultural and economic viability of an authentic club music experience.

Context Review

The research conducted for this study draws from the academic literature surrounding the history and origins of *club music* (the myriad of sounds and genres stemming from Detroit techno, Chicago house, New York garage and UK jungle), *authenticity* in how it relates to the experience of music and finally, youth culture and urban *scenes* and their contribution to their localities' social, cultural and economic viability. It also assesses Wellington's recent history with club music venues and the internal and external factors that led to their closure.

Authenticity is a contentious term and one that draws much critique and interpretations. The use of it throughout this document is understood as "being faithful to the original" (Varga, Somogy, Guignon 2020), where 'original' refers to the aforementioned foundational scenes of club music: Detroit techno, Chicago house and New York garage. The knowledge of these scenes are that their experiences were rooted in feelings of freedom, liberation and joy as a form of resistance to a society oppressive towards minority communities (Reynolds 1998, Brewster and Broughton 2014). The authentic club music experience as outlined in this document is one that delivers those same feelings, while the framework reveals the replicable aspects that constitute the authentic experience. Understanding the context these scenes were born out of and identifying the similarities and differences to our current society provides a roadmap to construct an ecosystem that, like theirs, has persisted since its creation.

Scenes are outlined as "loose social structures with institutions and celebrations, which create space for people to occupy across a spectrum of cultural commitment" (Perry, 2019), which is a direct continuation of Stahl's (2014) statements that a scene is "a cultural space that contains institutions allowing for the intersection of social and cultural acts that inform one another". Straw (2014) also offers two interpretations that resonate with this research: "as spaces of assembly engaged in pulling together the varieties of cultural phenomena; as workplaces engaged (explicitly or implicitly) in the transformation of materials". These definitions inform the idea of the physical club space and one that I suggest becomes a nexus for a sustainable club music ecosystem. Throughout this research, I use 'ecosystem' and 'scene' interchangeably, however, the term ecosystem more aptly encompasses the circular, sustainable and economic nature of the project outlined in this exegesis; qualities that aren't explicitly mentioned in the literature's discussion of scenes.

2017 saw the opening of Wellington's single dedicated club music venue, Club 121. As the only permanent purveyor of this sound, they could have become the institution that a club

music scene developed around, however, beyond tangible reasons that halted their ability to continue operations (both sites closed due to earthquake-prone buildings), I suggest that a club music ecosystem never formed around 121 for two reasons. The first being that they didn't deliver an authentic club music experience and secondly, that individual profit can't cultivate a sustainable economy by virtue of not giving back to the ecosystem in which the profit is gained. Both points are central to the kaupapa (a Māori word loosely translating to theme, ethos, initiative in English) of the major project proposal; the economic success of T.A.Z. is committed to supporting the education of club music in Wellington, fostering the next generation of club music constituents. Without the profit generated feeding the infant scene it will never grow to the point of self-sustainability.

While Peterson and Bennett (2004) and Khan-Harris (2006) discuss the value of virtual and digital scenes, this research looks toward the literature interested in scenes that, as outlined by Straw (2004) "require investment in space and other resources", which I interpret as relating to physical spaces and locations. As a result, this document circumvents many of the qualities of digital and virtual scenes while still acknowledging their value and existence. It became clear through the global covid-19 pandemic that while there's immense value in digital and virtual connectivity, physical contact remains a critical part of the human experience. This intra-subjective feeling combined with the knowledge that historically scenes have been birthed through physical spaces, hubs and meeting places (nightclubs, music stores, record stores) (Reynolds 1998, Brewster, Broughton 2014) affirmed the idea that a physical club space is imperative to a sustainable club music ecosystem in Wellington.

Drawing from historical rather than modern scenes is a critical element to creating T.A.Z. as an authentic club experience, in keeping with the definition as outlined earlier in this section. Furthermore, examining Allan Moore's ideas of authenticity in music, it is a quality that is "ascribed, not inscribed", echoing Thornton (1995) and Rubridge (1996). Thornton describes how authenticity "is perceived as a cure both for alienation (because it offers feelings of community) and dissimulation (because it extends a sense of the really 'real')" while Moore continues that authenticity is often judged by the person involved in the output, rather than the output itself. Both Moore's and Thornton's articulation of authenticity play a significant role in the formation of T.A.Z.'s kaupapa and the understanding of the term in this research.

These musings owe a lot to the groundwork laid by Simon Frith, especially as it relates to technological developments for artistic use (1986). Frith's *Art versus Technology* argues that music technologies oppose community, while Thornton (1995) counters that "technological developments make new concepts of authenticity possible". Between the writing of these two

texts sits the creation of Detroit techno, Chicago house and New York garage scenes, which are all formed (and centred around) musical developments made possible by technology. Moreover, the communities that comprised these scenes were bound by the wonder and enthrallment of newly generated sounds that were free of cultural and social baggage—bonds inextricably forged to each other as a result of the music technology utilised by the creators of these two genres. While Frith's work examines the concept of authenticity in music in a general sense, his later works (1996, 1998) touch on the influence these foundational scenes had on the discourse of authenticity in club music.

These readings suggest the authenticity of the experience at T.A.Z. rests heavily on my personal involvement and those that I choose to work with. By Moore's definition, my long-standing commitment to club music in Aotearoa New Zealand, my exposure to global club music and the intention to create a club that exudes those traditional qualities intrinsically weave authenticity into this project. However, I add that achieving the criteria detailed in the methodology will increase the number of people likely to perceive T.A.Z. as an authentic extension of club music culture.

The proposed name for the club itself—T.A.Z.—after Peter Lamborn Wilson's (Hakim Bey) 1991 text *The Temporary Autonomous Zone* is yet another nod to the historic threads that are woven through this project. Reynolds (1998) cited it as a text containing parallels to early rave culture—specifically the one-night-only nature of events and the themes of resistance and liberation—while others criticised the ideas presented for being too idealistic; promoting escapism rather than sustainable social change (Bookchin 1995); due to these 'zones' not existing for long enough to enact the social change Bey suggests. In adopting this banner for the nightclub, I interpret 'temporary' as 'won't be around forever', yet long enough to positively influence the nightlife in Wellington, which I estimate to be in the realms of 1–5 years. Temporary when looking at the bigger picture, permanent in the moment.

Another observed aspect of club culture important to the major proposal is its ability to create what's labelled as the "timeless condition" (Perry 2019). The pursuit of creating a timeless space informs the music created (many house and techno tracks exceed 10 minutes with minimal change) and why house and techno were built around these highly repetitive and consistent beats. Within the club, "the rules of the everyday world and its structures are cancelled out... the sense of time is rendered powerless... past and future are irrelevant" (Perry 2019) while Reynolds (1998) noted the "mind-nullifying repetition [of the music] offered liberation through trance-dance". Creating events and moments that cultivate this

timeless condition and sense of liberation became important considerations within the criteria outlined in the methodology.

The research surrounding scenes is long and well-documented; however, lacks extensive research around the sustainability of scenes, particularly as it relates to small and/or isolated markets—of which Wellington is both. The major texts in the field examine the creation, output and benefit of significant scenes across the globe yet haven't offered much insight towards how or why some scenes survive and others die out beyond resonating with a large enough population able to access the scene, often through modern developments of cheap train and air fares. The contribution of my research is that it examines the creation and sustainability of a scene as it pertains to a small *and* isolated market—Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Aotearoa otherwise known as Wellington, the proclaimed “cultural capital” of New Zealand.

The context review demonstrates the importance of physical space and technology to club music and points to authenticity's significance in the success of projects being held under a club music umbrella. These two considerations greatly influence the realisation of T.A.Z. while highlighting important considerations when presenting a niche offering, in a small market of an already small and isolated country. While the size and isolation of Wellington initially presents an issue for the sustained success of club music, it's allows for innovation such as utilising the economic success of the club to directly support the community through enjoyment and education, as detailed in the concluding section of this document.

Methodology

The methodology analyses six events that seek to deliver a club music experience that will be perceived as authentic by those judging it. I had extant experience prior to the Masters that informed the foundational understanding from which to launch this project suggest that through achieving these six predetermined components, rather than savvy commercialisation and business practice, the resulting experience can be replicated in a sustainable manner which, in turn, forms the basis of the club's success.

The six events being analysed for this research are (in chronological order):

1. Racquet Club with Marcellus Pittman (Marcellus 1.0)
2. RCQT003 Release Party
3. Aunty Records with Marcellus Pittman (Marcellus 2.0)
4. Swamp81 with Loefah
5. Racquet Club with Kush Jones
6. Racquet Club with Al Wootton

I followed an action research methodology through iterative design in the organisation of the events. The events were followed by analytical reviews to determine whether they achieved the definition of an authentic club music experience as developed through academic research and empirical evidence. The criteria for this definition was developed after six months travelling around the United Kingdom and mainland Europe attending the world's top nightclubs and festivals with an observer's perspective, witnessing some of the culture's most highly regarded DJs perform live and the atmosphere they created.

Post-event discussion with the fellow club music devotees I attended these events with helped discern what made some nights feel fulfilling and authentic, while other nights—sometimes in the same venue—felt lacking. We determined that the nights which felt fulfilling and authentic contained these six components:

1. High fidelity, loud soundsystems designed to showcase the low-end frequencies of club music
2. Patience and length of time, relating to DJ sets and/or the event itself
3. A feeling of communal respect, engagement and excitement
4. A feeling of freedom, liberation and safety to express yourself however you see fit
5. A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions
6. Something unexpected (musically, naturally or spiritually)

Going forward, I'll refer to this as the Authentic Experience Criteria.

One point we discussed, excluded from this criteria, was "energy in the room". This can often be judged by what percentage of the event space's capacity is occupied. However, this point was omitted because it wasn't consistent across the events that instilled that sense of fulfilment. I believe this is due to being offset by high-level engagement from the audience in attendance.

When attending club nights and events in Wellington or anywhere in the world, this Authentic Experience Criteria is my reference to determine why a night does or does not achieve that sense of fulfilment and authenticity. It formed the foundation of analysis for each event produced as part of this research and, following the critical post-event analysis, enabled me to discern in which aspects the event had been successful and whether those successes could be replicated within a permanent venue.

An iterative cycle was employed throughout the organisation of the six events to anchor the research and apply a standardised method to the creation of each event. This cycle was:

- Create and hold an event
- Review the event against the developed criteria
- Identify areas for improvement
- Attend other events for comparison
- Apply the improvements
- Repeat steps

Full notes, reflections and revenue summaries from each event, recorded as part of my action research approach, are provided in the attached appendix (p. 40).

Event 1: Racquet Club with Marcellus Pittman (Marcellus 1.0)

Friday 26 March 2021

Public Trust Hall

131-135 Lambton Quay, Te Aro 6011



¹ Poster designed by Samuel Forbes

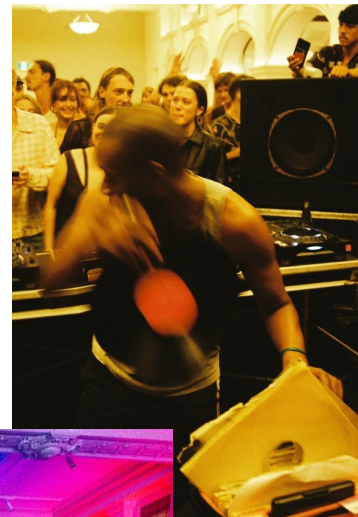
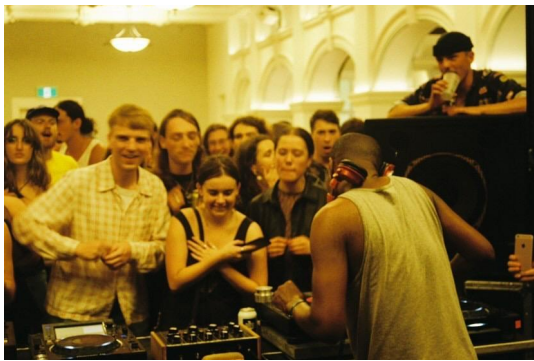
Being the first event organised as part of this research methodology, I organised the show with the knowledge and insights I'd gained from past events as Racquet Club to create my standard and upon review, provide my first areas of improvement for future events.

Understanding the Authentic Experience Criteria, the steps I'd taken to achieve each of the six components were:

Criteria Component	Actions and outcomes
High fidelity, loud soundsystems designed to showcase the low-end frequencies of club music	Public Trust Hall is a corporate/wedding venue, so the soundsystem isn't adequate for a club music event. I decided to hire Western Audio to provide the main soundsystem alongside Thomas Voyce of Rhombus provided Hi-Fi monitors for Marcellus' booth due to Marcellus' artist calibre and expert understanding of soundsystems
Patience and length of time, relating to DJ sets and/or the event itself	Book Marcellus to perform a six-hour set
A feeling of communal respect, engagement and excitement	Offering of a new venue (for club music gigs) and hosting the NZ debut of one of the culture's top DJs Respect in a club setting is shown by giving other people space to dance and not passing judgement. The provisions I took here was setting up the venue tight enough to feel a sense of intimacy while leaving enough space for a (hopefully) sold-out show
A feeling of freedom, liberation and safety to express yourself however you see fit	Knowing Marcellus' performances well, I knew he'd offer that sense of freedom and liberation through his track selections. Drawing from experience, patiently building tension toward a musical crescendo combined with the power of the soundsystem is what conveys that feeling of liberation
A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions	I relate "releasing inhibitions" to the dissolution of feeling self-conscious. This is often cultivated through dark, windowless spaces. Because that wasn't the case with this venue, I drew the curtains to darken the space as best I could. I would then reflect during the analysis with the hope a future solution would become clear
Something unexpected (musically, naturally or spiritually)	I believe you can't orchestrate something unexpected beyond booking DJs that will surprise you—which I knew Marcellus would, considering his stature. Furthermore, I believe in an attempt to orchestrate something spiritually or naturally, you actively undermine the magic of it, so it's something I hoped would occur as a result of giving my full effort in the organisation of the event

The event didn't fulfil every criteria component, yet still felt successful in achieving an authentic experience. I put this down to Marcellus himself being a DJ from the city which created techno (Reynolds 1998, Brewster and Broughton 2014) which points to the artist(s) being a significant contributing factor to an authentic experience, irrespective of the event.

With vocalised feedback that the event was "the best ever experienced in Wellington" for some of the attendees, it was clearly a success in some respects. Financially, however, the event was far too ambitious and while it grossed close to \$20,000, I was left with a \$12,000 deficit. I believe the attendance was lower than expected due to multiple festivals and concerts that same weekend combined with a high ticket price. While the Authentic Experience Criteria doesn't account for economic success within events, this detail would influence decisions for the next couple of events.



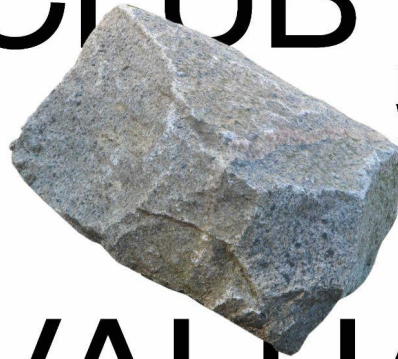
Event 2: RCQT003 Release Party

Friday 16 April 2021

Valhalla

154 Vivian Street, Te Aro 6011

RACQUET CLUB

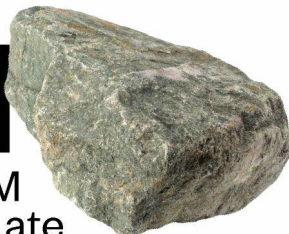


RCQT003
WYN Remixes
Release Party

VALHALLA

Benny Salvador
Current Bias
Uber Driver
URKI

16.04.21



9PM
—Late



Armed with the analysis of my first iteration, I reviewed the outcome and made necessary changes to fulfil the criteria that wasn't met with Event 1. Maintaining the iterative design process, I tried to change only one major detail with the next event, however external factors beyond my control resulted in a couple of aspects being changed for Event 2.

The main consideration was moving the event to a venue that is more conducive to releasing inhibitions and closer to the spaces we know club music historically occupied—dark, grungy, often disused warehouse, industrial and basement spaces. Valhalla, it could be argued, sits as the antithesis of a venue like Public Trust Hall by way of its aesthetic and association. While it may seem an odd fit to put underground club music into a venue strongly linked with metal, the venue has welcomed “misfitted toys that all the other venues don't cater for” (Lynch, 2020) making it a suitable home for a diverse range of niche artists performing in Wellington.

With the venue change in mind, the considerations I took to meeting the criteria for Event 2 were:

Criteria Component	Actions and outcomes
High fidelity, loud soundsystems designed to showcase the low-end frequencies of club music	Hiring Western Audio to provide the main soundsystem. As a live music venue, Valhalla's house soundsystem doesn't accurately portray the club music sound
Patience and length of time, relating to DJ sets and/or the event itself	I was unable to book Marcellus Pittman for every event, I booked four artists to each play 90 minutes. This was to balance the patience of performance time while appealing to multiple artist's fan bases (an attempt to increase ticket sales after the financial deficit of Event 1)
A feeling of communal respect, engagement and excitement	Telling people their support would help make up the deficit incurred by Event 1, I hope to encourage those feelings of respect and engagement through transparency and honesty
A feeling of freedom, liberation and safety to express yourself however you see fit	The programming of the artist was made to try and cultivate those feelings of freedom and liberation. The musical progression from Current Bias to Benny Salvador I hoped would result in the tension and release required to feel liberated
A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions	Changing the venue from a brightly lit, precious feeling space, to a dark, windowless venue
Something unexpected (musically, naturally or spiritually)	Booked artists that would provide different spectrums of club music that haven't been heard at Racquet Club events before, in the hope that it would cultivate some unexpected moments, musically speaking. See Event 1 considerations on orchestrating something spiritual/natural

The main takeaway from this event was that the architecture of Valhalla negatively affected the feeling of freedom and liberation. It was successful in achieving Criteria component 5, but prior to the event, I hadn't considered the multiple bottlenecks that occur with a near-capacity show at Valhalla.

While Event 2 was a fulfilling experience, I don't feel it achieved the mark of an authentic experience. I felt the financial overtones undermined the perceived authenticity of the event; an idea examined by Thornton (1995), Shuker (2017) but aptly surmised by Moore (2002) as the "fundamental authentic/commercial paradigm". However, the transparency in the marketing was important to cultivating the feeling of respect and engagement, especially when considering the quick turnaround from Event 1 which resulted in minimal lead-in time to promote the event.

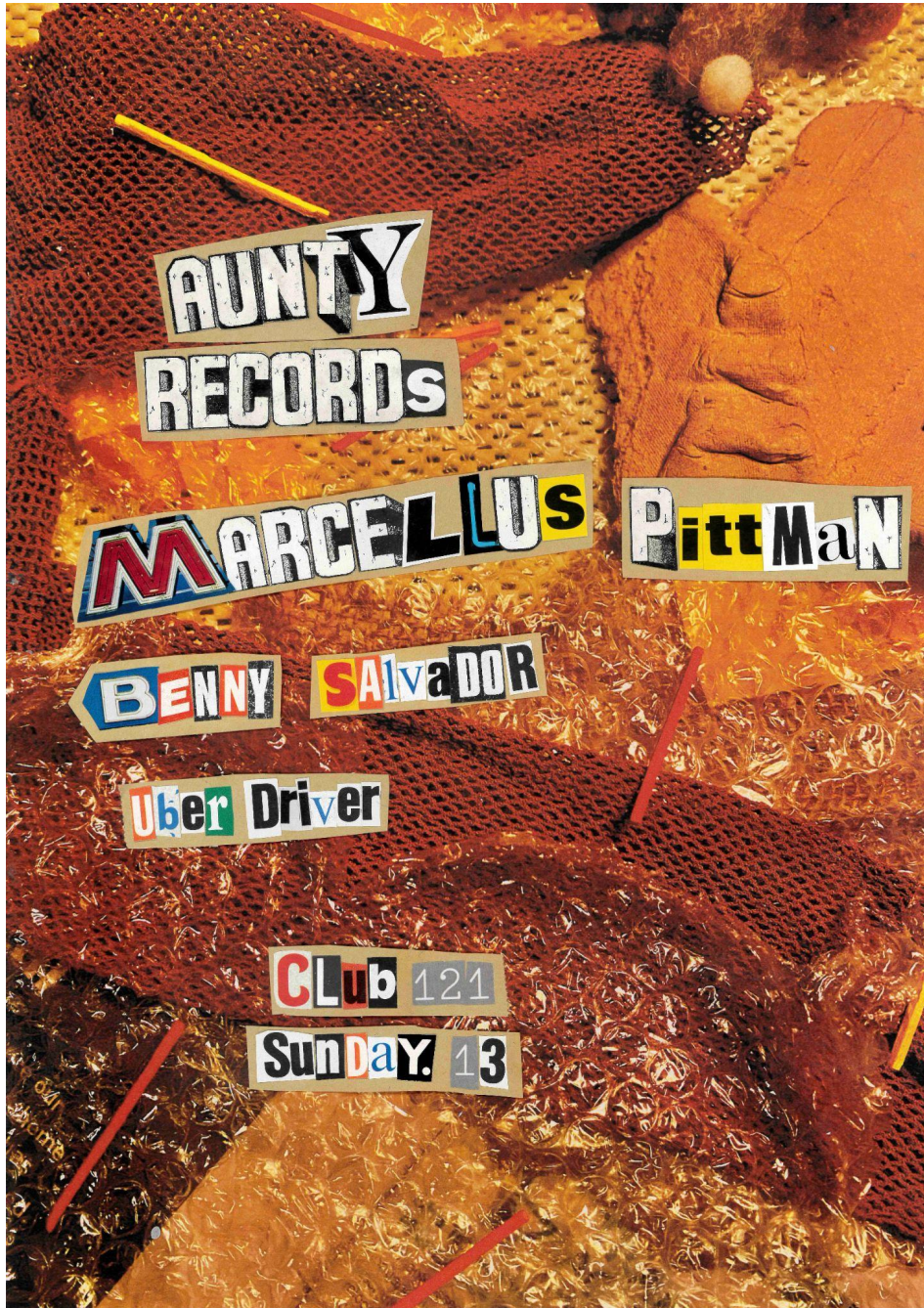


Event 3: Aunty Records with Marcellus Pittman (Marcellus 2.0)

Sunday 13 June 2021

Club 121

21-23 Cambridge Terrace, Te Aro 6011



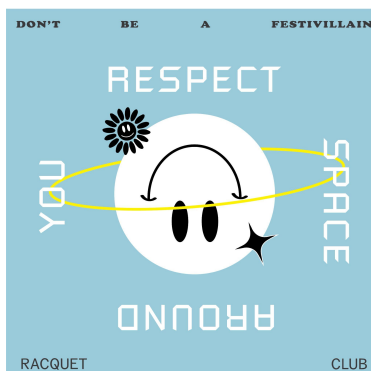
⁵ Poster designed by Benny Lindsay-Williams

Event 3 was based around the chance to host Marcellus Pittman again after being trapped in Australia due to covid-19 restrictions. It afforded the opportunity to analyse whether certain aspects (feelings of liberation, freedom and respect of Event 1) could be replicated while changing the aspects that weren't achieved (encouragement to release inhibitions). It was difficult in Event 2 to analyse whether it was the venue change, the artists performing, or something else that led to feeling Criteria component 4 was unsuccessful. With that in mind, the considerations I took for Event 3 were:

Criteria Component	Actions and outcomes
High fidelity, loud soundsystems designed to showcase the low-end frequencies of club music	Hosting at Club 121. Being a dedicated club music venue, Club 121 provides one of the few house systems in the city that accurately represents club music, covering this first component
Patience and length of time, relating to DJ sets and/or the event itself	<p>Considering the event had to be held on a Sunday due to availability (it was the week of the Wellington Jazz Festival, so availability was extremely limited), I booked Marcellus for a four-hour set, rather than six, like Event 1.</p> <p>This was to balance the knowledge that typical nights at Club 121 aren't busy until 1-2 hours after the doors open (I booked Uber Driver and Benny Salvador play support slots to ensure Marcellus had an energised dance floor for the beginning of his performance) with finishing the event at a time that meant people would still be able to attend their Monday commitments (midnight finish)</p>
A feeling of communal respect, engagement and excitement	Based on social media content and word-of-mouth promotion following Event 1, excitement and engagement for this show was palpable. I employed Don't Be a Festivillian to design safe space assets in an attempt to cultivate the feeling of respect within the space
A feeling of freedom, liberation and safety to express yourself however you see fit	Booked Marcellus Pittman
A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions	Hosting the event at a dark, windowless basement—Club 121
Something unexpected (musically, naturally or spiritually)	<p>Booking Marcellus for the musically unexpected, hope for the spiritual/natural to occur (as per Event 1 consideration)</p> <p>The knowledge that the architecture of Valhalla negatively affected the overall club experience in Event 2 influenced the decision to host this event at Wellington's sole dedicated club music venue, Club 121.</p>

Club 121 provides the dark, windowless aspect that was successful in Event 2 while offering a better architectural layout for dancing space (observation discussed in Event 1). However, during the organisation of the event, I received feedback from attendees that Club 121 didn't provide a safe space for everybody—some dancers had felt invalidated by the way they'd handled harassment incidents in the past. As this directly affects Criteria components 3, 4 and 5, I employed Ari from *Don't Be a Festivillian* to design assets I could post stating our duty of care and intention for the event in the hopes this would facilitate a more safe and comfortable experience for our audience.

Upon review, I felt this event was successful in achieving the Authentic Experience Criteria. However, this is in large part to Marcellus' presence and believe that substituting him for another act would greatly affect the success of the event.



⁶ Safe space assets by Don't Be a Festivillian

Event 4: Swamp81 with Loefah

Thursday 16 June 2022

Valhalla

154 Vivian Street, Te Aro 6011



Further covid-19 lockdowns meant I was unable to hold my fourth iteration until almost exactly one year later. The offer to host a pioneer of club music (albeit a very different realm of club music from Marcellus Pittman) provided a great opportunity to place a different artist in a previously used venue and analyse any changes in the outcome.

Building upon what I learnt from the first three events, I felt confident in my ability to achieve Criteria components 1, 2 and 3 but was yet to draw conclusive evidence around how to achieve components 4, 5 and 6. With this, the considerations I took for Event 4 were:

Criteria Component	Actions and outcomes
High fidelity, loud soundsystems designed to showcase the low-end frequencies of club music	Employing Mayhemsound to supply the soundsystem. Mayhemsound have close ties to the bass music scene, so I felt it was an appropriate pairing for a show featuring Loefah
Patience and length of time, relating to DJ sets and/or the event itself	Book Loefah to play a three-hour set. Time constraints on a weeknight meant the timing of the gig itself was condensed to just 4.5 hours
A feeling of communal respect, engagement and excitement	Utilised a give-away marketing tactic to encourage engagement and excitement
A feeling of freedom, liberation and safety to express yourself however you see fit	My conclusion from the first three events is that freedom and liberation is greatly influenced by the ability and sound of the artist. By booking a high-level performer, I hoped to single out if the musical selection influenced the feeling of freedom and liberation
A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions	Altered the layout of Valhalla (see Event 2 discussion) to mitigate bottlenecks and create a better dance floor space
Something unexpected (musically, naturally or spiritually)	Install a flower arrangement to alter the feeling of the space—something unexpected for the audience at least. See past iteration discussion for thoughts on orchestrating something spiritual/natural.

Most notably, although the musical selections were darker in nature, the skill and stature of Loefah facilitated a feeling of freedom and liberation. This points to the tension/release aspect (as discussed in Event 1 and 2) as well as not only the power of the soundsystem as a facilitator, but also of the audience's regard for the artist.

Altering the layout of Valhalla also made a significant positive impact on the overall event experience. I felt this event was successful in achieving the Authentic Experience Criteria.

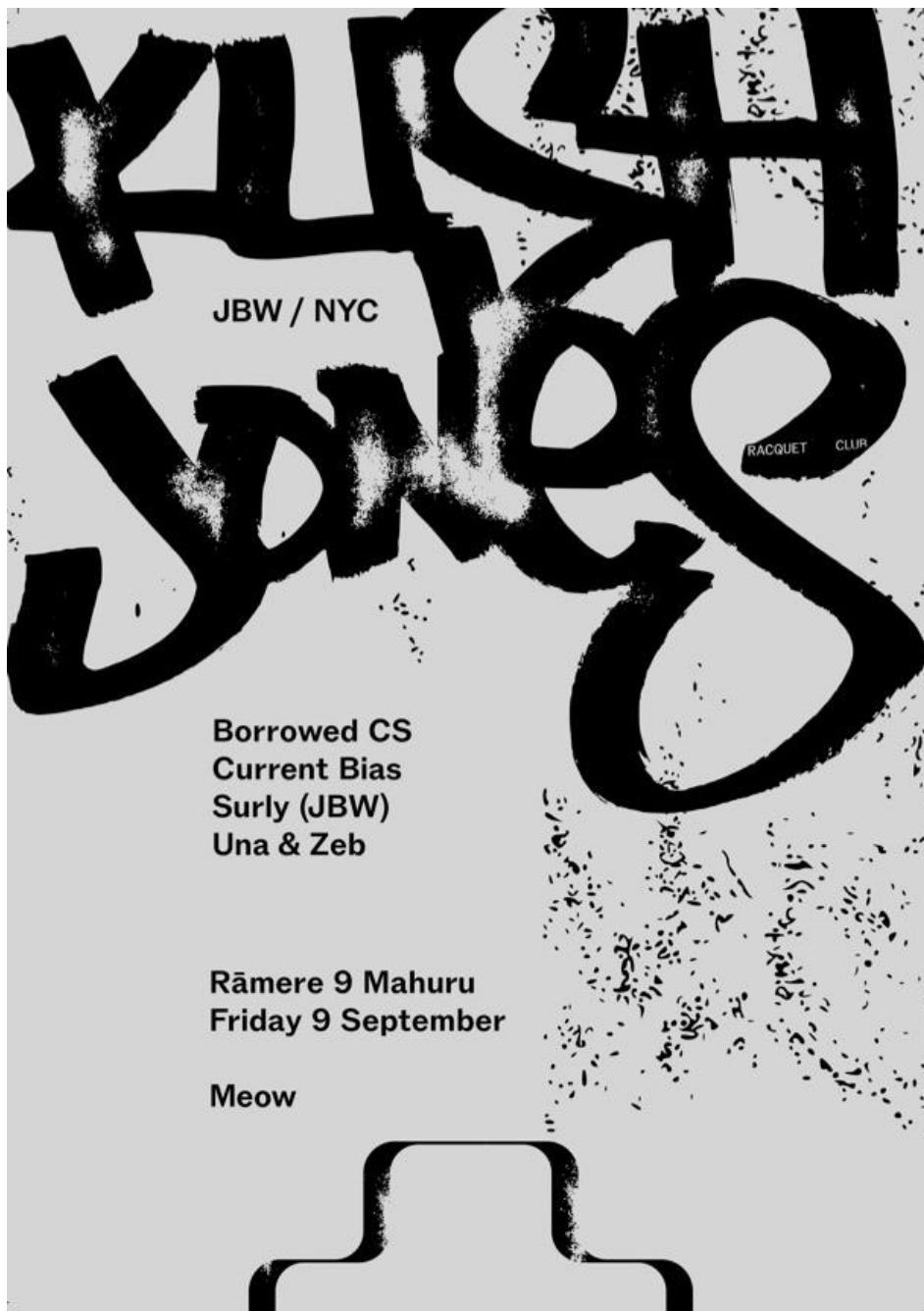


Event 5: Racquet Club with Kush Jones

Friday 9 September 2022

Meow

9 Edward Street, Te Aro 6011



JBW / NYC

RACQUET CLUB

Borrowed CS
Current Bias
Surly (JBW)
Una & Zeb

Rāmere 9 Mahuru
Friday 9 September

Meow

⁹ Poster designed by Awatea Randall

Having established that the artist(s) significantly affect the Authentic Experience, my fifth iteration was centred around New Yorker Kush Jones. Yet another New Zealand debut of a well-known artist, I was confident this event would achieve Criteria components 2, 3 and 4 but was interested to see the results of components 1, 5 and 6 due to hosting the event at Meow (a predominantly live music venue) and having to use their house soundsystem. With that in mind, my considerations for achieving the Criteria for this event were:

Criteria Component	Actions and outcomes
High fidelity, loud soundsystems designed to showcase the low-end frequencies of club music	Employ an engineer who understood club music to represent sound output appropriately (for more detailed observation of the effect the engineer has on Component 1 see appendix)
Patience and length of time, relating to DJ sets and/or the event itself	Starting the event earlier than usual to allow for longer sets and imbue greater patience into the event itself to rectify the feeling from Event 4
A feeling of communal respect, engagement and excitement	Allocating a reduced number of tickets to allow for dance floor space (Meow states their capacity at 420, so I allocated a maximum of 300 tickets)
A feeling of freedom, liberation and safety to express yourself however you see fit	Booked Kush Jones due to his musical selection and skill
A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions	Hired a large smoke/fog machine to mitigate the visibility of Meow as a venue. Hired Hype Entertainment to supply lights to allow us to turn off the house lights while ensuring there's adequate lighting to meet health and safety requirements of Meow
Something unexpected (musically, naturally or spiritually)	Hype Entertainment also supplied a visual element on stage to facilitate an unexpected element for the audience (in accordance with the positive feedback I received about the flower installation at Event 4)

The most valuable outcome of this event was the knowledge gained around the importance of the audio engineer. Starting the event much earlier than usual was effective in making the event feel more patient; however, the situation made clear that the feeling of patience is also tied to time-exposure of the gig in "full flow" i.e. when the soundsystem is at its peak amplitude.

The analysis of this event reiterated the significant role of the physical context in which club music is presented. Although Valhalla isn't a perfect space either, it has more of the qualities that club music requires, therefore having less of an impact on the overall experience.



¹⁰ Photo by Fenn Braithwaite



Event 6: Racquet Club with Al Wootton

Sunday 23 October 2022

Club 121

21-23 Cambridge Terrace, Te Aro 6011

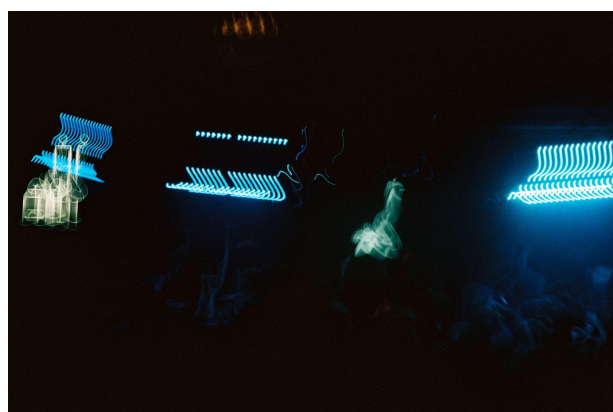
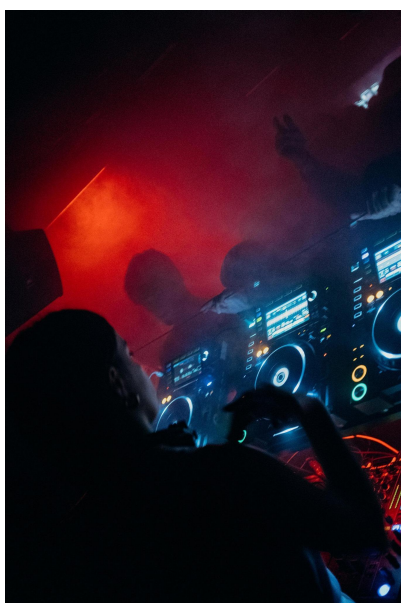


¹² Poster designed by Freddie Williamson

The final iteration was a club night with UK artist AI Wootton. Securing a booking at Club 121 for this event afforded the opportunity to measure the significance the artist themselves have on the overall experience—a concern I outlined in Event 3.

Drawing from the knowledge gained from the previous iterations, I was confident I could achieve all the Criteria components, bar component 6 as previously discussed. I replicated as much of Event 3 as possible to measure the significance the artist has on the overall Authentic Experience. The considerations taken for this final event were:

Criteria Component	Actions and outcomes
High fidelity, loud soundsystems designed to showcase the low-end frequencies of club music	Using the Club 121 soundsystem
Patience and length of time, relating to DJ sets and/or the event itself	Secured a Sunday date and booked two support acts on the lineup
A feeling of communal respect, engagement and excitement	Market the gig in the same manner, including re-using the design assets created by Don't Be a Festivillian
A feeling of freedom, liberation and safety to express yourself however you see fit	Substituted Marcellus Pittman for AI Wootton
A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions	Host the event at Club 121
Something unexpected (musically, naturally or spiritually)	No consideration beyond booking the artist themselves (as per analysis of the previous five iterations)



Results

The iterative design method was successful in discerning replicable elements that can deliver an authentic club music experience. It showed the fundamentals of what anchor an authentic club music experience and which details have the most impact on the experience itself. It points to what any authentic club music experience requires, be it temporary or permanent.

One of the main findings from the analysis was the impact the artist has on the perception of authenticity of the event. This echoes the thoughts put forth in Moore's writing, where he suggests the authentic label is perhaps more appropriately ascribed to 'who' rather than 'what' (2002). The methodology highlighted that there are two strands of authenticity at play: the authenticity of the artists playing and the authenticity of the event itself. This methodology was intended to determine whether you can create a framework to deliver an authentic event, but showed that the artists performing play an intrinsic role in the perception of the event—perhaps the most significant contribution alongside the soundsystem.

This finding greatly influences which DJs perform at T.A.Z. and informs the decision to engage with each artist ahead of booking them to hear their personal reasons why they are a purveyor of club music. Some of these artists exemplify this through their sustained commitment and pursuits, while other, less experienced artists may be required to articulate their intentions and vision before securing a booking. This reinforces the importance of my personal involvement and highlights the responsibility of my role as a curator in the proliferation of club music in Wellington.

The events revealed the difficulty in cultivating feelings of freedom and liberation which, as with authenticity, is a quality ascribed by the audience. However, understanding the role aspects like architecture, time-exposure and musical style play means you can influence the likelihood that people will ascribe these feelings to the experience. Reynolds (1998) suggests that liberation can be cultivated through the steady repetition of club music, which justifies the importance placed on extended DJ sets (3–4 hours plus) and attention to details such as venue layout (as observed in Event 2), where people move through and bumping into one another snaps you out of the magic, or 'trance-dance' to put it in Reynold's words.

Event 5 showed the critical role the audio engineer plays. There's been a belief among the older generation of event organisers in Wellington that the soundsystem should be capped for support acts, allowing for whoever is headlining to 'shine': a term that refers to how the

main act is perceived. For the casual club goer, 'good' or 'better' is often tied to amplitude. When the soundsystem is at its most powerful for a single set, that artist performing will often be perceived as good, great, or at least better than the artist prior. This communicates a subconscious hierarchy to those in attendance and something the creation of T.A.Z. abolishes. The DJs booked to perform will be viewed as equal to each other, which will physically manifest in terms of set fees, visually (on the lineups) and the amplitude of the system for each artist's performance, irrespective of the set time or place on the program. The scheduling of each club night will be based on the artist's musical styles and how I believe they'll interweave and progress from one another, rather than popularity or calibre.

Criteria component 6 is something I found that couldn't be orchestrated beyond booking artists that will offer up something unexpected, musically speaking. I discussed the fact that attempting to orchestrate something spiritual or natural undermines the special quality the moment then embodies, and therefore by attempting to orchestrate something unexpected only seeks to diminish its effect. This component was originally identified through experiencing moments such as lightning and thunderclaps during an open-air event, power surges cutting light and sound for a brief moment, feeling love for someone you just met, the bar waiving your drinks' payment, seeing an old friend out-of-the blue, to name a few. With the six events exemplifying the inability to orchestrate this component, I now view it as a bonus component—one that will positively affect the experience if it occurs but doesn't take away from the experience if it doesn't (which is more often than not).

A challenge I can foresee will be public discourse around the fact that I am part of neither the black nor queer communities that the creation of these scenes are significantly attributed to (Frith 1996, Reynolds 1998, Henricksen 2000, Brewster and Broughton 2014) and how that affects the authenticity ascribed to the experience. As examined throughout this research, authenticity is understood as a socially constructed concept which "relate[s] to an interpretation of the perceived expression of an individual on the part of an audience" (Moore 2002). With this understanding comes the ability to offer a sincere and informed experience, while remaining truthful to the person I am (encompassing, but not limited to, race, sexuality and nationality), will only further solidify the authenticity as the commitment to extend a culture is a result of passion and education rather than birthright. Moreover, the authenticity of T.A.Z. is not something that will be marketed or publicised but through delivering the standard of experience I deem authentic, hope that the label will be ascribed by those who experience it.

Analysis of the methodology detailed that the soundsystem is the single most important aspect of an authentic and fulfilling club music experience. Prioritising sound as the central focus where other aspects of the club (architecture, alcohol, dancing, profit, et cetera) facilitate that experience is what differentiates T.A.Z. from anything else in Wellington's recent history. Combined with a clearly defined kaupapa and commitment to continuing tradition with a localised interpretation, T.A.Z. will be a successful offering to the conversation of authentic club music expression, resulting in tangible economic success that fuels a sustainable club music ecosystem.

Discussion

The events held under Racquet Club were successful in showing that there is a market within Wellington for club music and there are tangible steps you can take to cultivate what I deem to be an authentic experience. However, successful as the methodology was, it shows the authentic experience alone is not enough to create a sustainable club music ecosystem, as in Wellington, there is currently no ecosystem or scene to speak of. I posit that the authentic experience is the *foundation* for a successful nightclub—where the nightclub itself becomes the nexus of the ecosystem. This is due to a weekly nightclub being able to generate the opportunity and revenue required to tangibly support the local community upon which its operational success is built (for more on this support, see conclusion).

While the developed methodology highlighted the necessary aspects to create an experience that I deem authentic, it didn't account for the feelings and perception of the audience. Ethnographic research would be necessary to evaluate whether the feelings I hold are shared by those in attendance. While T.A.Z. is a personal project and a physical realisation of what I believe is an authentic club music experience, at this point, audience corroboration can only be loosely measured by the success, attendance and continued support of each Racquet Club event. The scope of this exegesis was narrow enough to evaluate my own perspective and the success of temporary events, while the business model details how I seek to translate that perspective into the successful operation of a weekly nightclub.

A foreseen difficulty of navigating this club experience will be balancing the values of an authentic club music experience while monetising enough of the business to keep it operational, as we know due to Moore's (2002) authentic/commercial paradigm. While there are no other consistent club music venues in Wellington, T.A.Z. will have to be the example that appeals to not only the clubbers themselves but also WCC, shareholders and investors, which requires a level of commercialisation that will need to be carefully managed as not to undermine the perceived authenticity of the club itself (as discussed in the methodology, Event 2).

The Authentic Experience Criteria can be offered as a framework for anyone looking to contribute to club music, either locally or globally, temporarily or permanently. Coupled with continued exposure, research and understanding of club music, its foundational scenes and the artists upheld as heroes both past and present allow for a better-informed perception of what constitutes an authentic club music experience.

Conclusion

This thesis project sought to respond to a lack of sustained club music cultures in Wellington through developing a framework for authentic club music experiences. In response, this project discerns the replicable elements to construct an experience that emulates the historic club music scenes, while updating it to suit modern technology and a modern standard of experience. It proposes that utilising the framework will provide a basis for a nightclub's sustained success by understanding the qualitative and quantitative aspects of club culture and distilling it into a regular, weekly offering. The project shows that, due to the market size of Wellington, this framework has to be used in conjunction with a kaupapa that directly supports the club music community in order to cultivate a sustainable scene as we don't have the luxury of population to sustain the club music ecosystem on attendance alone. Wellington city contains a population of approximately 212,000 versus the 3.7 million, 7.2 million and 15.8 million that Detroit, Chicago and New York boasted throughout the birth of these scenes in the 1980s.

In the time during this research, a number of club music collectives have cropped up in the city (Insession, Third Party, Lacuna, Froth NZ, 909 Tekno, Full Disclosure, Femme-n-Bass, Deep Fried, Ghost Media, DNG, Insanity, BOND ST, Booty Shakers to name a few) and began occupying the available spaces in an attempt to proliferate this art-form. While these are all valid contributions to the club music ecosystem in Wellington, it hasn't coalesced into a sustainable scene. I believe this hasn't occurred due to the instability and irregularity of temporary events not allowing for the economic support required to nurture an ecosystem; this is a double-headed idea where, as well as being a financially successful event, it also requires a commitment from those profiting off the scene. I believe this commitment would arise from expanded knowledge and understanding of club music's history while understanding the differences of our context to those where the scenes originated—namely the global isolation and population size of Wellington.

The example of Club 121—a dedicated nightclub with the frequency and economic potential to support a sustainable ecosystem—shows that a sustainable scene isn't going to form just by existing, due to not having the aforementioned luxury of a population large enough to sustain a scene purely through attendance. I suggest that the profit generated must go into supporting local music institutions and individuals from the community to further their knowledge and understanding of club music and its social, cultural and economic benefits. This is due to the awareness that my position within club music in Aotearoa New Zealand

has been a direct result of the institutional music education I've received (among other factors), and hope to create an ecosystem that allows for that to happen again.

The proposed ecosystem is cyclical in nature, where the cultural and economic success of the club is organised to support club music education through local music institute's use of the space, sponsoring degrees to further education and developing pathways for people to contribute in a manner that positively affects the ecosystem. The intention is that through education and understanding, the community will grow and continue to support the nightclub, knowing that the club's success is not only increasing the social and cultural viability of the city but also supporting the community directly. This cyclical model is an imperative factor in cultivating the sustainable aspect of the club music ecosystem.

A nightclub with some sense of permanence allows the opportunity to develop relationships with our nearest major market, Australia, where we can offer artist swaps to open up territories for both Aotearoa New Zealand and Australian artists that may not get the chance otherwise. This relationship has begun to develop through my work with Racquet Club, but is hamstrung by third-party venue availability in Wellington. By assisting artists and contributors with these kinds of opportunities that are otherwise much less feasible, it increases the likelihood of developing local club music heroes—a critical component of inspiring belief in either the individual or in the system that allowed that individual to flourish, in this case, T.A.Z. This would then, in turn, encourage continued support of the club... around the sustainable club music carousel we go.

While gentrification and supply of usable space perhaps pose the most real threat to the existence of club music in Wellington, a nightclub that authentically embodies the values of the original scenes can offer change that is worth fighting for—change that the governing bodies are becoming willing to protect. Aotearoa New Zealand's government and local councils are beginning to welcome in the minds that are calling for sustainable and positive change. Minds which value social and cultural viability alongside economic viability, while understanding the external factors that hamstring that development. These burgeoning changes provide promise for the creation of a sustainable club music ecosystem, while calling to attention the work still required.

The project highlighted what it takes to achieve a personal level of fulfilment, success and what I deem to be an authentic club music experience. I have identified how I can deliver that to my community, in Wellington, in a way that is sustainable, positive, successful and authentic to myself. The reflection brought to light that my ability to run a club, and in turn

create a sustainable club music ecosystem, is a direct result of tertiary-level music education, a sustained career in the club music industry and first-hand experience of club music's upper echelon. I find myself in a privileged position at the centre of these variables and feel a responsibility to deliver the same positive experiences I've had as a result of club music to my local community. The proposal has intentions to affect not only the positive development of a sustainable club music ecosystem and artistic expression but also Wellington city as a whole—making it a more attractive city for the people who will bring innovation, ingenuity and prosper to the city's future.



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Appendix

Event 1

Racquet Club with Marcellus Pittman

Analytical Review

1. High quality, loud soundsystem that specifically cater to accurately showcasing the low-end frequencies

I employed Western Audio to equip the venue who supplied a Solid State Logic SiX console for Front of House, two D&B Audiotechnik B2 Sub Enclosures, two D&B Audiotechnik Q Sub Enclosures and four D&B Audiotechnik Q1 speakers for the main left and right speaker stacks, two D&B Audiotechnik Q7 Speakers as extra fill speakers all powered by three D&B Audiotechnik D12 amplifiers. A major highlight and success on the soundsystem was working with Thomas Voyce (Rhombus) who, on behalf of the NZ School of Music, supplied two Tannoy J200s and one Crown XLS 8002 stereo amplifier for the booth monitors. Utilising these coveted HiFi speakers for Marcellus' booth monitoring encouraged a better performance due to the relationship of believing what you're playing to the crowd is sounding great to your own ears in the booth.

2. Patience and length of time (relating to both DJ sets and the event itself)

Marcellus Pittman performed a six hour set soundtracking the event from start to finish (6PM—12AM) playing a range of styles from hip hop, funk and disco through to deep house and Detroit techno. This was the first time a Racquet Club event featured a single artist—a decision we were confident in due to Marcellus' global recognition and artistic calibre.

3. Communal respect, engagement and excitement

The event contained that feeling of excitement by being a new venue offering for our audience and including complimentary catering for the attendees. With the venue typically being a wedding or corporate function venue it meant the building standard, interior design and facilities were at a much higher standard than any music venue in the city however the exorbitant hireage fee meant doing future events there would be untenable.

4. Cultivating a feeling of freedom, liberation and safety in order to express yourself however you see fit

The diversity of the attendees cultivated a feeling of safety through having multiple age groups represented. In past events we haven't been able to attract many attendees over 35-years-old and believe we managed this because of the venue, the sustained success of Marcellus' career since the 90s, having complimentary substantial food and having team members from those generations that assisted with the organisation.

There was a feeling of elation and liberation through the tension/release of Marcellus' track selection, the amplitude of the soundsystem and a specific moment when the lights were turned off to make the space much darker—this was assessed through positive cheers from the crowd.

5. A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions

The high standard, expensive fit out and condition of the space meant people couldn't let go of all their inhibitions due to not wanting to damage or negatively affect the space accidentally. The venue looks and feels precious which doesn't cultivate that liberating feeling of "nothing matters" as no one wants to get stung with a bill to replace the expensive curtains. Seeing and feeling the restrictions and hesitations from the venue management meant any behaviour deemed 'unseemly' would negatively affect the chances of working together again and possible fines/bill payments to clean/tidy up any wear-and-tear from the event. This cautious disposition was then fed to the staff and as a result, the energy in the room which affects attendees. A cautious disposition can easily become the antithesis of releasing your inhibitions.

6. Something unexpected (musically/naturally/spiritually speaking)

Musically speaking, Marcellus Pittman is a master of unexpected track selections. He does this by blending two seemingly disparate genres but makes it work through his ability to hear the similarities and highlighting those through the blend. He also does this by suggesting he's about to take the energy one way (bringing the energy up or simmering it down), then pivoting and going the other.

The other unexpected moment was turning the lights off 4.5 hours into the party, which saw the communal energy increase significantly. No noticeable natural or spiritual occurrence to report.

Event 1

Racquet Club with Marcellus Pittman

Revenue Summary

REVENUE SUMMARY – Racquet Club w Marcellus Pittman				
REVENUE – Tickets	QUANTITY	INCOME	GST	INC GST
TICKET SALES - Pre Sales \$70	40	\$2,434.78	\$365.22	\$2,800.00
TICKET SALES - General Admission \$80	127	\$8,834.78	\$1,325.22	\$10,160.00
TICKET SALES - Final Tier \$100	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL – Tickets		\$11,269.57	\$1,690.43	\$12,960.00
REVENUE – Bar	QUANTITY	INCOME	GST	INC GST
ALCOHOL SALES - Eftpos		\$4,119.14	\$617.87	\$4,737.01
TOTAL – Bar		\$4,119.14	\$617.87	\$4,737.01
TOTAL REVENUE				\$17,697.01
EXPENDITURE – General	SUPPLIER / REASONING	COST	GST	INC GST
Marcellus Pittman	Set Fee	\$4,500.00	\$675.00	\$5,175.00
Marcellus Pittman	Flights	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Marcellus Pittman	Accomodation	\$229.00	\$34.35	\$263.35
Airport Transfer	Koa Williams	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Freddie Williamson	Organiser Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Benny Lindsay Williams / Alicia Williams	Organiser Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Venue Hire	Public Trust Hall	\$4,365.22	\$654.78	\$5,020.00
Security Hire	Brian Morris +1	\$365.22	\$54.78	\$420.00
Soundsystem	Western Audio	\$1,200.00	\$180.00	\$1,380.00
Sound Engineer	Mike Hammond	\$750.00	\$112.50	\$862.50
DJ Booth	Pete May	\$140.00	\$21.00	\$161.00
CDJ Hire	Benny Salvador	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Visual Technician	Emma Kiko	\$365.22	\$54.78	\$420.00
Doorperson	Eric Hong, Christian, Ruby	\$260.87	\$39.13	\$300.00
Artist / Crew rider	drinks for green room	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Artist Dinner	Ortega	\$333.91	\$50.09	\$384.00
Photographer	Oscar Perry	\$173.91	\$26.09	\$200.00
Advertising – other	Eventfinda	\$34.74	\$5.21	\$39.95
Advertising – other	Radio Active Activity Guide	\$125.00	\$18.75	\$143.75
Poster Design	Samuel Forbes	\$260.87	\$39.13	\$300.00
Festivillian Design Assets	Ariel Hughes	\$152.17	\$22.83	\$175.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE – General		\$13,103.96	\$1,965.59	\$15,069.55
EXPENDITURE – Bar / Catering	SUPPLIER / REASONING	COST	GST	INC GST
Special Licence Application	WCC	\$237.39	\$35.61	\$273.00
Food Catering	Food Envy	\$6,935.00	\$1,040.25	\$7,975.25
Amelia Enticott	Duty Manager	\$304.35	\$45.65	\$350.00
Reusable Plastic Cups	Globelet	\$990.00	\$148.50	\$1,138.50
Bar Chillers	Hiremaster	\$840.00	\$126.00	\$966.00
Alcohol Stock – Beer	Parrotdog—32 cases total	\$1,280.00	\$192.00	\$1,472.00
Alcohol Stock – Wine	Wine Diamonds	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Alcohol Stock – Spirits	Pals	\$1,077.30	\$161.60	\$1,238.90
Non-alcoholic	Almighty	\$134.79	\$20.22	\$155.01
Keg Taps	for Wine	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Eftpos Terminals	Eftpos NZ	\$327.00	\$49.05	\$376.05
Bar Staff	Milly, Polly, Teresa, Kaleb	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE – Bar / Catering		\$12,125.83	\$1,818.88	\$13,944.71
TOTAL OVERALL		\$25,229.79	\$3,784.47	\$29,014.26
BALANCE		-\$9,841.09	-\$1,476.16	-\$11,317.25

Event 2

RCQT003 Release Party

Analytical Review

1. High quality, loud soundsystems that specifically cater to accurately showcasing the low-end frequencies

The event was powered by Western Audio who supplied two D&B Audiotechnik B2 sub enclosures, two D&B Audiotechnik Q sub enclosures, four D&B Audiotechnik Q1 mid/high enclosures and one D&B Audiotechnik D12 3-way amplifier rack. It was over-powered for the size and capacity of the venue but this is ideal as you then don't need to push the audio signal into the equipment.

We used Valhalla's house system for the booth monitors in order to save on overheads as we were making up financial losses from the previous event.

2. Patience and length of time (relating to both DJ sets and the event itself)

To encourage higher ticket sales (as we marketed the event as effectively a charity show to make up the losses from the previous event—trailing a transparent marketing approach after further demographic research) we wanted to bill as many artists as we could to increase audience pull but without compromising the integrity of the musical diversity or the patience/length of time. Through years of performing both short and long sets, I've personally found that one hour sets feel rushed and that even an extra 15 minutes goes a long way for making the performance feel more patient. With this in mind, I was able to book four artists to each play 90-minute sets, which succeeded in both widening the audience pull and not compromising the patience of either the performance or the event.

3. Communal respect, engagement and excitement

There was definitely a communal feeling of respect and solidarity as we sold 75% capacity at \$25—a high price point for a local club music event at Valhalla. I felt this was a show of support and belief in the events Racquet Club organises and this in turn led to a strong feeling of respect and engagement.

4. Cultivating a feeling of freedom, liberation and safety in order to express yourself however you see fit

I don't feel this event had a strong sense of freedom or liberation by virtue of the event's purpose (effectively a charity show) and the venue's size/layout. The layout of the venue itself means there's multiple bottlenecks is not only a physical representation of restriction but does a lot to snap you out of the magic.

5. A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions

Valhalla as a venue is rough-and-ready, so I believe it encourages people to let loose and release your inhibitions being a dark, windowless space.

6. Something unexpected (musically/naturally/spiritually speaking)

Nothing unexpected to report.

Event 2

RCQT003 Release Party

Revenue Summary

REVENUE SUMMARY – RCQT003 Release Party				
REVENUE	QUANTITY	INCOME	GST	INC GST
TICKET SALES - General Admission \$25	97	\$2,108.70	\$316.30	\$2,425.00
TICKET SALES - Door Sales \$30	44	\$1,147.83	\$172.17	\$1,320.00
TOTAL REVENUE		\$3,256.52	\$488.48	\$3,745.00
EXPENDITURE	SUPPLIER / REASONING	COST	GST	INC GST
Benny Salvador	Set Fee	\$217.39	\$32.61	\$250.00
Current Bias	Set Fee	\$217.39	\$32.61	\$250.00
Urki	Set Fee	\$217.39	\$32.61	\$250.00
Uber Driver	Set Fee	\$217.39	\$32.61	\$250.00
Venue Hire	Valhalla	\$130.43	\$19.57	\$150.00
DJ Booth		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Poster Design	Olly Campbell	\$130.43	\$19.57	\$150.00
CDJ2000NXS2 + Pioneer DJM900 Hire	Benny Salvador	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Soundsystem	Western Audio	\$173.91	\$26.09	\$200.00
Sound Engineer	Seb Hesp	\$240.00	\$36.00	\$276.00
Lighting Technician	Seb Fraser	\$173.91	\$26.09	\$200.00
Lighting Gear Hire	Grouse Lighting	\$339.20	\$50.88	\$390.08
Doorperson	Sam/Freddie	\$86.96	\$13.04	\$100.00
Artist / Crew rider	Bar Tab	\$43.48	\$6.52	\$50.00
Photographer	Fenn Braithwaite	\$130.43	\$19.57	\$150.00
Facebook Advertising		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Radio Active Advertising	Activity Guide	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$2,318.33	\$347.75	\$2,666.08
BALANCE		\$938.19	\$140.73	\$1,078.92

Event 3

Aunty Records with Marcellus Pittman

Analytical Review

1. High quality, loud soundsystems that specifically cater to accurately showcasing the low-end frequencies

The event was powered by Club 121's house system—a Martin Audio Coaxial Differential Dispersion system “balanced for the space” as it says on the tech rider for the venue. I've always known they run the system EQ flat, whereas we've always attempted to balance the EQ in favour of the low-end frequencies to sound larger in contrast to the mid and high frequencies. The time we managed to change the EQ the way we wanted it, we got unsolicited feedback about how great (and different to other nights) the club was sounding.

This revealed that a great engineer is imperative as well as the soundsystem

2. Patience and length of time (relating to both DJ sets and the event itself)

Understanding that regular Club 121 attendees typically turn up 1-2 hours after the opening track, we wanted to ensure Marcellus had a crowd when he stepped up to perform so we decided to put Uber Driver and Benny Salvador on the bill as support (because both artists were involved in the initial Marcellus Pittman show where we lost money, they dedicated their time for free to increase our profit for the show to make up the losses). We still managed to give Marcellus a four hour set to achieve that patience, which was incredible and perhaps contained even more energy than the initial show a couple months earlier. This was judged by the amount of people still there and dancing for the final track.

3. Communal respect, engagement and excitement

The engagement and excitement for this gig was through-the-roof because people had heard how incredible he had been for 1.0 and many people who missed out due to the high price point of the first show were able to get in this time. It quickly became the fastest-sold ticketed event we've hosted, selling 80% of tickets in the first 48 hours.

To combat the discourse surrounding Club 121 and its handling of alleged harassment incidents, I employed Ari from *Don't Be a Festivillian* to create eye-catching design assets stating our kaupapa and zero tolerance approach to discrimination. No incidents were reported back to Racquet Club or Club 121 staff that night, which indicates a successful campaign, however it's difficult to draw conclusions around whether the messaging played a role in that.

4. Cultivating a feeling of freedom, liberation and safety in order to express yourself however you see fit

There was a definite feeling of elation and ecstasy in the air that night. This is measured by the screams and cheers when big musical moments occurred and again, how many people stayed until the end even on a Sunday night. The feeling of being able to safely express yourself is always difficult to cultivate in Club 121 as it's not part of the space's kaupapa, so that feeds into any night that is held there. Club 121 is a very hetero-normative club in terms of its regular attendees and staff members so that feeds into the perception of the space.

5. A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions

By virtue of being a blacked-out, windowless basement the space does encourage you to release your inhibitions however the tight security still makes you feel overly 'seen' which fights against that freeing feeling.

6. Something unexpected (musically/naturally/spiritually speaking)

Musically, the unexpected came from the way Marcellus mixed James Brown's "Get Up Offa That Thing", which set the club alight. Although the track itself isn't necessarily unexpected, his ability to present it in such a way fulfilled that unexpected component. Naturally speaking, the unexpected came at how many people were still there for the final songs even though it was a Sunday night.

Event 3

Aunty Records with Marcellus Pittman

Revenue Summary

REVENUE SUMMARY – Aunty Records w Marcellus Pittman				
REVENUE – Tickets	QUANTITY	INCOME	GST	INC GST
TICKET SALES - Pre Sales \$28.75 (\$25 + GST)	300	\$7,500.00	\$1,125.00	\$8,625.00
TOTAL REVENUE				\$8,625.00
EXPENDITURE – General	SUPPLIER / REASONING	COST	GST	INC GST
Marcellus Pittman	Set Fee	\$2,500.00	\$375.00	\$2,875.00
Marcellus Pittman	Flights (covered)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Marcellus Pittman	Accomodation	\$389.30	\$68.70	\$458.00
Freddie Williamson	Organiser Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Benny Lindsay Williams / Alicia Williams	Organiser Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Venue Hire	Club 121	\$700.00	\$105.00	\$805.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE – General		\$3,598.26	\$539.74	\$4,138.00
BALANCE		\$3,901.74	\$585.26	\$4,487.00

Event 4

Swamp81 with Loefah

Analytical Review

1. High quality, loud soundsystems that specifically cater to accurately showcasing the low-end frequencies

This event was powered by Mayhemsound who supplied two Martin Audio CSX218 Active subs, two double 18" Beyma subs and eight Martin Audio WPM Mid top elements which is certainly overpowered for a venue of Valhalla's size but as a result, can balance the EQ accordingly (absolutely imperative with the genres Loefah performs). These UK post-dubstep and adjacent genres are special because of what is happening in the lowest frequencies of music, so without being able to feel those accurately, you lose sight of why the genres were created in the first place. Only feedback from Loefah himself was that we required better monitoring for his booth as he felt he couldn't hear his mixing properly. This confirmed that the added attention for the booth monitors during the Marcellus Pittman 1.0 gig was worthwhile.

2. Patience and length of time (relating to both DJ sets and the event itself)

After booking local talent BABETECH to command the first hour, we had Loefah perform a three-and-a-half hour set taking us past midnight on a Thursday. The entire event felt rushed being 8PM–12:30AM but thought it was necessary being a weeknight. The patience of Loefah's set was great and allowed him enough time to venture through multiple sounds and styles, however the gig itself felt rushed overall.

3. Communal respect, engagement and excitement

The excitement was palpable and extended beyond the event itself by a tactical marketing ploy upon the announcement of the gig. Through a multitude of Instagram user's sharing to their stories, we saw incredible social media engagement and even resulted in fake pages created by bots to try to capitalise on the surge of attention. It's a sinister marker of success, but I understand that these accounts are created automatically when there is a notable rush of engagement for a single page/post.

4. Cultivating a feeling of freedom, liberation and safety in order to express yourself however you see fit

Judging by people's actions (eyes closed in a state of bliss, jumping up and down, cheering for drops and changes in energy), the night did contain that feeling of freedom and ability to exercise your self-expression. At the end of the event there were around five individuals who came up to me and thanked me for putting on the night, which exemplifies the sense of gratitude that comes with experiencing deep communal connectivity.

5. A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions

As with the RCQT003 release party, Valhalla has that dive-bar feeling where there isn't anything precious about it, it feels kinda grimey and sticky underfoot, which I believe is conducive to that feeling of not being overly-sensitive to the space/you couldn't do any worse to the space than is already done.

6. Something unexpected (musically/naturally/spiritually speaking)

It wasn't exactly unexpected, but we had multiple comments around the flower install that we hung from the ceiling and how it changed the feeling of an otherwise well-known venue. The install was unexpected for the attendees rather than us as the organisers.

Event 4

Swamp81 with Loefah

Revenue Summary

REVENUE SUMMARY – Swamp81 with Loefah				
REVENUE	QUANTITY	INCOME	GST	INC GST
TICKET SALES - General Release \$35	40	\$1,217.39	\$182.61	\$1,400.00
TICKET SALES - Final Release \$40	70	\$2,434.78	\$365.22	\$2,800.00
TICKET SALES - Door Sales		\$335.26	\$50.29	\$385.55
TOTAL REVENUE		\$3,987.43	\$598.12	\$4,585.55
EXPENDITURE	SUPPLIER / REASONING	COST	GST	INC GST
Loefah	Set Fee	\$1,173.91	\$176.09	\$1,350.00
Babetech	Set Fee	\$130.43	\$19.57	\$150.00
Loefah	Accommodation	\$260.87	\$39.13	\$300.00
Venue Hire	Valhalla	\$130.43	\$19.57	\$150.00
Soundssystem	Mayhemsound	\$633.91	\$95.09	\$729.00
System and gear transport	Mayhemsound	\$108.70	\$16.30	\$125.00
DJ Booth	Mayhemsound	\$27.83	\$4.17	\$32.00
CDJ2000NXS2 + Pioneer DJM900 Hire	Mayhemsound	\$360.00	\$54.00	\$414.00
Sound Engineer	Mike A	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Lighting Technician		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Lighting Gear Hire		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Doorperson	Valhalla provided	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Artist dinner	Loefah, Patrice, Sam, Stella, Freddie	\$173.91	\$26.09	\$200.00
Artist / Crew rider	Bar Tab	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Photographer		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Facebook Advertising		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Radio Active Advertising	Activity Guide	\$125.00	\$18.75	\$143.75
Poster Design	Samuel Forbes	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$3,125.00	\$468.75	\$3,593.75
BALANCE		\$862.43	\$129.37	\$991.80

Event 5

Racquet Club with Kush Jones

Analytical Review

1. High quality, loud soundsystems that specifically cater to accurately showcasing the low-end frequencies

The sound for this event was provided by Meow's house system comprising of two Nexo PS15_R2 FOH boxes, two Nexo R18 cardioid subwoofers, four Nexo LS1200 subwoofers, six Nexo ps15 monitors, four CAMco dx24, one DTDAMP4x1.3 and DTD Digital TD Controller, one Nexo NXAMP4X4 and three Powersoft digam 7000.

We had a couple issues with the audio engineer who disappeared for periods of the event and left the control desk locked with the system running about half power, which negatively affected how the opening acts were presented, in turn dampening the overall experience for both the organisers and attendees. This highlighted a critical consideration for events going forward that the soundsystem itself needs to be coupled with an engineer that is committed to the event as much as we are as organisers.

Due to the system being at half volume for the opening acts, it didn't feel like it "got going" until Kush began his set.

2. Patience and length of time (relating to both DJ sets and the event itself)

We began this show at 5PM with DJ's Zeb Morrow and Una DL performing for three hours and allowing attendees to start their night as early as they like. We'd initially discussed with Kush Jones around doing a four hour set but he preferred to play for two hours and offer the other two hours to Surly (Auckland-based producer/DJ and one of Kush's close friends).

The early start imbued patience into the event however, experiencing Kush's set, the others I organised the event with were in agreement that he could've done more with an extra 30 minutes (judged by the trajectory of his set and knowledge of his productions and past performances). However, chatting with Kush afterwards he said he felt two hours was adequate.

3. Communal respect, engagement and excitement

The feeling of respect was exemplified through people leaving enough space for each other on the dancefloor and knowledge of a number of people making the effort to come in from out of town (we had a group travel down from Auckland specifically for the event). There was lots of buzz and excitement around the show as Kush Jones and the collective he represents (LA-based record label Juke Bounce Werk) have many ties to New Zealand, yet this was his debut performance.

4. Cultivating a feeling of freedom, liberation and safety in order to express yourself however you see fit

At this point Racquet Club has developed an accepting and inclusive brand which results in people knowing they are able to express themselves freely and without judgement. However, beyond that I didn't actively make any considerations towards cultivating the feeling of freedom or liberation beyond booking an artist whose musical selections and skill would encourage that feeling.

I believe it is difficult to retrofit that feeling in a space that people are familiar with which hasn't exuded that feeling at events in the past. This is a large reason why I think running my own space is critical to this cultivation as you can set that kaupapa from the inception.

5. A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions

Again, difficult to retrofit ideals into a pre-existing space and the interior fit out of the venue itself is set up with a live music context in mind, so trying to present club music and club music kaupapa is always going to be an uphill battle at a venue created with live music in mind. This is because of the unique requirements of club music and the spaces it's presented in. Club music benefits greatly from basement, windowless spaces as it is a physical realisation of blocking out the outside world which you're attempting to free yourself from. Meow is a bright, highly visible space so requires extra work to make it feel like a protected bubble (through the use of little/no lighting, fog machines)—something you gain naturally from basement spaces.

6. Something unexpected (musically/naturally/spiritually speaking)

Nothing unexpected to report

Event 5

Racquet Club with Kush Jones

Revenue Summary

REVENUESUMMARY – RCQT w Kush Jones				
REVENUE	QUANTITY	INCOME	GST	INC GST
TICKET SALES - First Release \$36	112	\$3,506.09	\$525.91	\$4,032.00
TICKET SALES - Door Sales		\$521.74	\$78.26	\$600.00
TOTAL REVENUE		\$4,027.83	\$604.17	\$4,632.00
EXPENDITURE	SUPPLIER / REASONING	COST	GST	INC GST
Headliner Fee	Kush Jones	\$2,608.70	\$391.30	\$3,000.00
Opener Fee	Borrowed CS	\$350.00	\$0.00	\$350.00
Opener Fee	Surly	\$260.87	\$39.13	\$300.00
Opener Fee	Current Bias	\$217.39	\$32.61	\$250.00
Opener Fee	Una & Zeb	\$260.87	\$39.13	\$300.00
Accommodation (INTL / out of town artists)	Kush—one night	\$179.48	\$26.92	\$206.40
Artist / Crew rider	Green room drinks	\$199.72	\$29.96	\$229.68
DJ Booth	Benny Salvador	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
CDJs, Turntables, Mixer hire	Benny Salvador	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Soundsystem Hire		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Audio Engineer	Mike A	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Supplementary Gear	CDJ2000nxs2	\$170.00	\$25.50	\$195.50
Supplementary Gear	Link Hub, USB	\$74.33	\$11.15	\$85.48
Visual Technician	Andy Binns, Hype Entertainment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Lighting gear hire	Andy Binns, Hype Entertainment	\$870.00	\$130.50	\$1,000.50
Venue Hire		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Doorperson	Amelia Enticott	\$78.26	\$11.74	\$90.00
Photographer	Fenn Braithwaite	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Photography Equipment	Splendid NZ	\$124.17	\$18.63	\$142.80
Photo Development	Splendid NZ	\$33.91	\$5.09	\$39.00
Videographer		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sponsored social media posts		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Advertising placements	Radio, press	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Artist dinner	Kisa for artists	\$301.74	\$45.26	\$347.00
Artist dinner	Pizza at Meow	\$69.13	\$10.37	\$79.50
Artist breakfast	Realm	\$43.65	\$6.55	\$50.20
Design	Awa Randall	\$217.39	\$32.61	\$250.00
Printing & Placement	A3 printing, glue, brushes	\$130.43	\$19.57	\$150.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$6,144.40	\$921.66	\$7,066.06
BALANCE		-\$2,116.57	-\$317.49	-\$2,434.06

Event 6

Racquet Club with Al Wootton

Analytical Review

1. High quality, loud soundsystems that specifically cater to accurately showcasing the low-end frequencies

This show was held at Club 121 again so the event was powered by their house system (refer to Marcellus 2.0 for full breakdown of soundsystem).

An unforeseen by-product of hosting this event on a Sunday was the venue having less staff on, resulting in no dedicated engineer being present for the event. This meant I was able to EQ the system myself and get it balanced how I've always wanted Racquet Club events to sound. Shaping the EQ in a personal way adds another unique touch to the event and I received comments from trusted musical opinions Benny Salvador and Cory Champion (DJ and producer Borrowed CS) that they "haven't heard the club sounding this hot before".

2. Patience and length of time (relating to both DJ sets and the event itself)

I've found it slightly harder to cultivate patience for a Sunday event (although this was a public holiday so the majority of the city had the next day off work) understanding that people are often tired/lower energy come the end of the weekend so typically have shorter attention span.

Considering a slightly condensed Sunday gig, I booked Al Wootton to perform for two-and-a-half hours from 11–1:30AM. The lineup also included local support acts BABETECH and Kodi Lotto who each played 90 minutes from 8–11PM.

3. Communal respect, engagement and excitement

I overestimated Al Wootton's popularity in Wellington, which resulted in lower than expected ticket sales. This can be offset by employing harder marketing tactics but further research and understanding of club music and its core values I've taken a step back on aggressive marketing as it undermines the authenticity of the overall experience.

Those in attendance definitely conveyed those feelings of excitement and engagement so still felt like this component was a success.

4. Cultivating a feeling of freedom, liberation and safety in order to express yourself however you see fit

No discernable feelings of freedom or liberation from this event. I do believe these feelings are closely related to the type of club music being played—disco, house and techno genres seem to hold more of that elation required to feel liberated than bass and adjacent genres judging by past experience attending and organising both types of club shows.

Sustained commitment and practical steps taken to cultivate a sense of safety have solidified the feeling at Racquet Club events—it has become a selling point for the events hosted under the Racquet Club banner.

5. A feeling of support and safety to encourage the release of inhibitions

As mentioned in Marcellus 2.0, the basement space of Club 121 does make you feel like you can release your inhibitions as you're removed from the outside world. However, the heavy authoritarian presence at the club creates tension and uncertainty around what is deemed acceptable in the space, therefore creating the opposite feeling for some attendees.

6. Something unexpected (musically/naturally/spiritually speaking)

Nothing strictly unexpected to report. BABETECH played an amazing set which really anchored the event and significantly affected the feeling of fulfilment personally.

Event 6

Racquet Club with Al Wootton

Revenue Summary

REVENUE SUMMARY – Aunty Records w Marcellus Pittman				
REVENUE – Tickets	QUANTITY	INCOME	GST	INC GST
TICKET SALES - General Admission \$20	104	\$1,808.70	\$271.30	\$2,080.00
TICKET SALES - Door sales \$25	35	\$760.87	\$114.13	\$875.00
TOTAL REVENUE				\$2,955.00
EXPENDITURE – General	SUPPLIER / REASONING	COST	GST	INC GST
Al Wootton	Set Fee	\$2,500.00	\$375.00	\$2,875.00
Al Wootton	Flights	\$234.78	\$35.22	\$270.00
Al Wootton	Accomodation	\$389.30	\$68.70	\$458.00
Al Wootton	Visa	\$42.50	\$7.50	\$50.00
Al Wootton	Rider	\$76.50	\$13.50	\$90.00
BABETECH	Set Fee	\$173.91	\$26.09	\$200.00
Kodi Lotto	Set Fee	\$173.91	\$26.09	\$200.00
Venue Hire	Club 121	\$1,000.00	\$150.00	\$1,150.00
Artist Dinner	Napoli	\$131.27	\$19.69	\$150.96
Advertising	Radio Active	\$200.00	\$30.00	\$230.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE – General		\$4,933.88	\$740.08	\$5,673.96
BALANCE		-\$2,364.31	-\$354.65	-\$2,718.96