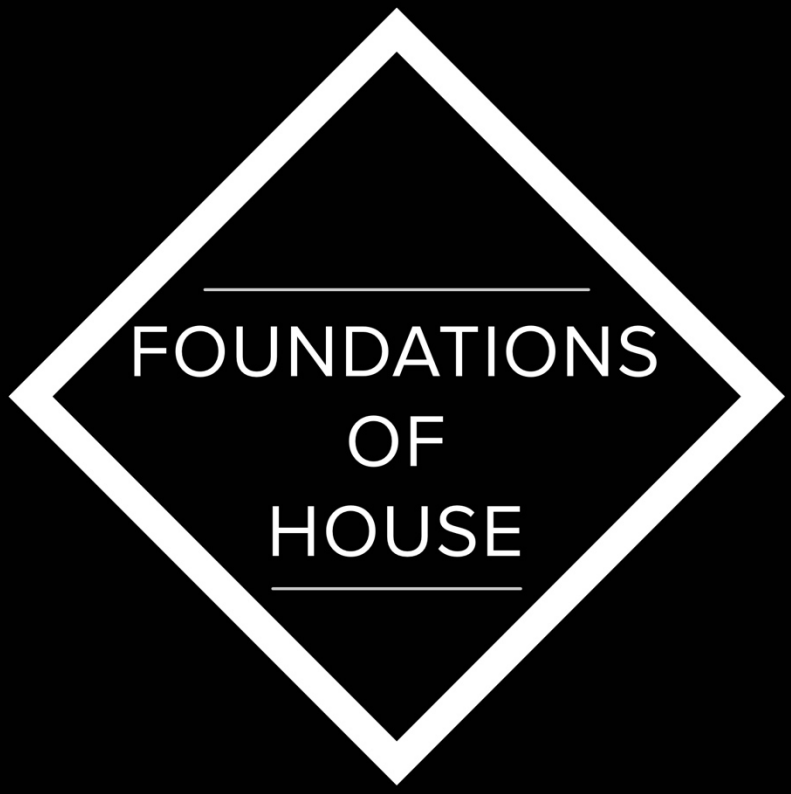

House Music: Creating A Secular Christianity For The Gay Diaspora

liam thomas maloney
York
Finzi Scholarship 2016

Introduction

Foundations of House is an academic project exploring the connections between house music and Christian iconography, and how these ideas intersect with the gay or LGBT community (especially in the late years of disco and the early years of house music). This work is an attempt to understand the link between ideas of religion and spirituality, and reveal how these ideas manifest themselves in the music.

"House offered a sense of communion and community to those whose sexuality might have alienated them from organized religion."

— Simon Reynolds

From 1984-85 onwards house music began to develop stylistically, continuing the heavy beats and drums of disco, it added in organs, pianos, and Black gospel vocals carrying messages of hope and salvation for the listeners. Songs began to quote lines of scripture, psalms, and prayers from Christianity and blended them with ideas of sexual freedom. Even the night clubs and venues in which house was played began to reflect these notions (clubs being named Salvation, Sanctuary, Heaven, Paradise Garage, The Saint, and even The Limelight's venue was that of a de-consecrated catholic church). These religious motifs are most visible in Chicago/Deep house, and New York Garage/Jersey sound strands of house.

The project aims to: **explore, examine, and document ideas of religion and spirituality in house music.** The story of house music is often hidden and marginalised as an irrelevant fragment of the greater narrative of popular music. But house music's signs and signifiers, as well as it's musical/stylistic elements, are deeply engrained into contemporary popular music from many different genres. Taking its cue from disco, it is often seen as a purely musical development, when in actuality the seeds of house music were sown with Stonewall and the liberation movement. And is arguably the original derivation of electronic dance music, pre-dating Detroit's techno scene.

The Finzi Trust Scholarship

The Finzi Trust was incredibly generous to grant me £3118 to travel to the USA for 2 weeks of field research. The field research was an attempt to begin to place the ideas and preliminary research I have already conducted into it's appropriate context. The excursion was to both New York and Chicago with the time split equally between the two cities.
My time was spent performing several key tasks. Firstly, numerous interviews and visits were arranged for my time in both cities speaking with DJs, producers, vocalists, and label managers from the history of house music. In some instances, I was invited into individual's studios, or guided around specific sites by individuals who had worked there. I was also able to visit archives pertaining to the music scene's history and spend time exploring the Frankie Knuckles archive. Other work during my time there involved mapping and photographing aspects of the city that are often ignored due to their relatively inconspicuous nature. This was high resolution RAW photography that can be stored for future reference. As some of the outputs of this grant relate to performance I also spent time searching for specific hard to buy records (purchased with my own funds, not those provided by the Trustees), this is discussed in the *Outputs* section.

Outputs

Of particular importance to me when applying for this grant was ensuring that it would benefit my professional aspirations. As a PhD student, the importance of producing academic journal publications is paramount, as is presenting new and original work at academic conferences. I am happy to say that this grant has enabled me to achieve both of those goals, and further my professional portfolio.

The Finzi Trust Scholarship has:

- Enabled me to present this work at two academic conferences (with more to follow hopefully).
- Allowed an abstract based on my findings accepted to a significant academic journal.
- Given me material with which to generate an on-going website dedicated to furthering the project beyond the timespan of the grant (foundationsofhouse.com).
- Placed me in a position to be invited to present the keynote presentation at an internal conference in the Spring of 2017. This will be a interactive A/V presentation with elements of video, photography, discussion and live DJing using the records collected during my field research.
- Allowed me to collect the digital materials I need to begin the first digital archive dedicated to house music in academics.

Thanks & Acknowledgements

I would like to firstly expressly thank the Trustees of the Finzi Trust for such a show of support, and lending their support to a field that is in desperate need of real academic scrutiny before the resources are no longer available. This is also my first sizable grant of any kind that has allowed me to perform original research, and is an incredible boon to me as an early career researcher.

I would also like to offer my thanks to Lindsey Myers and Kirstyn Radford from the University of York Library for all their invaluable advice on data gathering, qualitative sources and potential copyright issues.

Field Research Diary Extracts

The following extracts are selected pieces of research diary writing from each day of my field research. The tone of the writing is more conversational than an academic paper and shows the progression of my ideas and thinking across the course of my research. The extracts deal with some of the intricacies of my research, but also some of the aspects of researching itself; methodologies, experiences, and questions that arise from it.

These extracts have been edited in the interests of brevity, and include numerous images relating to my activities including documentary photography, some examples of the large format "stitched" photos that will be archived, and maps.

FoHDiary Day 1: Time To Jack
Nov 7th 2017

Figure 1 Arriving in NYC

Flying into JFK is an experience. As the flight path twists out over the sea before spiralling back in on itself to land, you catch a furtive glimpse of Manhattan. It's bigger, darker, and certainly more intimidating than I'd imagined. Given the nature of this project I was referencing the scene from *Paris Is Burning* on the pier with Venus Extravaganza and the ghetto blaster in my head, and the Emerald City Sequence from *The Wiz*. Instead, I was presented with a distant city bristling with 50 story high needles of glass and steel.

And once you're in among the skyscrapers the same intimidating scale isn't lost, if anything it's amplified. It's no wonder central park is so big, it's needed just to allow New Yorkers a moment of direct sunlight without it being reflected threefold off building facias and down to street level. It's different from any other city I've ever been to. Oddly, it feels smaller. There's less space. The buildings aren't part of the city. They're obstacles to get around, and although long straight grids allow distant vistas and vertices to display themselves, the buildings don't *feel* like part of the city. They're incursions and extrusions that life has to happen around.

That being said the reason I'm here is, in part at least, to think about escapism. Or hedonism. Or rebellion. Or even conservatism in a roundabout way (small c). It's odd that in *the city that never sleeps*, a city full of excitement, creativity, and endless variation, that night world (see Haden-Guest's *The Last Party*) developed so fervently. If we think of night world as escapism, why on earth was its epicentre here?! There are a million other things to occupy even the most bourgeois yuppie. Why escape? I have a sneaking suspicion that the city offers too much. Constant shift and change on some churning undercurrent of what is deemed this week to be *culture*. Lest we forget: a city is never finished. But when confronted with all that constant, erosive change, I'd be tempted to find something constant and/or simple. Wouldn't you? And what could be more simple than 9 hours of four to the floor kick drums? Or experimenting with drugs to imbue that *PLUR* (peace, love, unity, and respect) sensibility upon yourself and those around you? Perhaps over saturation causes simplification. And in a city with the likes of Warhol and Basquiat still prancing around, it's unsurprising that places like The Loft, The Gallery, the Paradise Garage, and Better Days all cropped to offer something simple and unequivocal. Acceptance and unity through some shared musical tropes. *Simple* musical tropes.

Today was set aside for travel and getting acclimatised. I also lost my bag containing my laptop, passport, clothes, and everything I need to work. Hence I'm working on my phone until I can hopefully get my luggage back tomorrow.

FoHDiary Day 2: One Nation Under God
Nov 8th 2017

I had to visit Queens today to be reunited with my luggage and I can properly work now. Unfortunately, it's eaten into my time here, but there were two days set aside as contingency so I'm on schedule. Just about.

While I was out in Queens I saw a few things that really surprised me. Not surprised actually. Rather, changed my opinion. Walking through the suburbs, killing time, waiting for my luggage, there was literally a church every 2 blocks. Some big, some smaller affairs. All well kept and obviously used. As I walked further I saw a weird little doorway that offered some Santeria services and fortune telling. Houses near the luggage office had stickers that said "GOD" with "One Nation" written under it (One Nation Under God. Not a particularly inspired that sticker/pun). And while waiting at the bus stop a Hispanic lady in a bubble jacket who was also waiting spied a dead blue jay in the gutter. I heard her mumbling, and realised she was saying a prayer for this little creature no one had noticed.

Religion here isn't like the way we treat religion back in the UK. It's not "something private", it's something to be celebrated and espoused to all that will listen.

Religion *permeates* the place. It's literally in the walls. I walked past the restaurant I was eating in last night. It's inside a converted church from 1812 and I never even noticed. Religion is everywhere, for all to see, and it's not shameful or taboo. Maybe that's why these ideas of religiosity and Christianity in house music seem so strange to us across the pond, we're not proud of religion in the same way. In the UK, god is something that happens on Sunday morning or in dark moments. It's not something that follows you throughout your day. Is it odd to have god in your music if god is everywhere else? Not really. It stands to reason he'll get a look in in every area of life. That being said, I'm in no way convinced that's why house contains so much gospel. That's too easy a connection to make, and doesn't really play out when you consider the subversion and subtext with which so much house in the 80s and 90s is filled.

FoHDiary Day 3: Dancing Is Dangerous
Nov 9th 2017

Today I travelled half the length of Manhattan, down streets no tourist has any business in. Lots of parking garages, local deli's, hardware stores, and apartment blocks. Nothing of the usual sight-seeing fodder. And after tramping the streets for 8 hours solid I definitely have a better understanding of how the map works (and some serious blisters!). While there are still the same number of places again to tick off the list (and those are the ones that are essential, leaving out Twilo, Tunnel, Roxy, and Sound Factory) there's a band of several that cut a swathe across the lower east side. That's the plan for tomorrow.

Today I was able to cover the following:

— The Continental Baths. Upper West Side. Now an ornate apartment building with a bank on the ground floor. The facade exists at the very least, but nothing of its sordid past (and yes, it was definitely sordid!).

— Regine's. Lennox Hill. Originally in the Delmonico's hotel, now owned by the new president elect, and hosting none of its former glory.

— Studio 54. Midtown. If anything on today's tour should need no introduction it's the hedonistic wonderland that made a mockery of disco's message of egalitarianism. Now a theatre.

— Better Days. Time Square. One of the few clubs to weather both the death of disco, and the upheaval of the 80s only to die a quiet death in 1990. Demolished and replaced by an Italian restaurant.

— Sanctuary. Hell's Kitchen. Converted Lutheran church. Now a theatre. At least something vaguely artistic still happens in the place. Home for Francis Grasso post-Salvation II.

— Xenon. Times Square. Overblown futuristic disco opening in 1977 after the success of *Saturday Night Fever* in the old Henry Miller Theatre. Xenon closed in 1984. Now a theatre again.

— Le Jardin. Times Square. Pre-Studio 54 hot spot. Stomping ground for Steve D'Acquisto. Housed in the rather gorgeously dilapidated Hotel Diplomat. Literally across the road from Xenon/Henry Miller. Razed to the ground. Now a parking garage for a bank.

— Haven/Salvation II. Greenwich Village. Legendary for the birth of slip queueing and beat-matching (or at least should be). Francis Grasso's experiment in hedonism before it got shut down in 1972. Now an opticians, although the building remains remarkably unspoiled.

— Stonewall Inn. Greenwich Village. Should require absolutely no explanation. Now with the Gay Liberation Monument right outside, and still going strong.

I have also begun experimenting with stitching photographs together. The files are huge and take a long time to process. However, the detail and resolution they provide should be incredibly useful for further researchers.

Dancing In The City

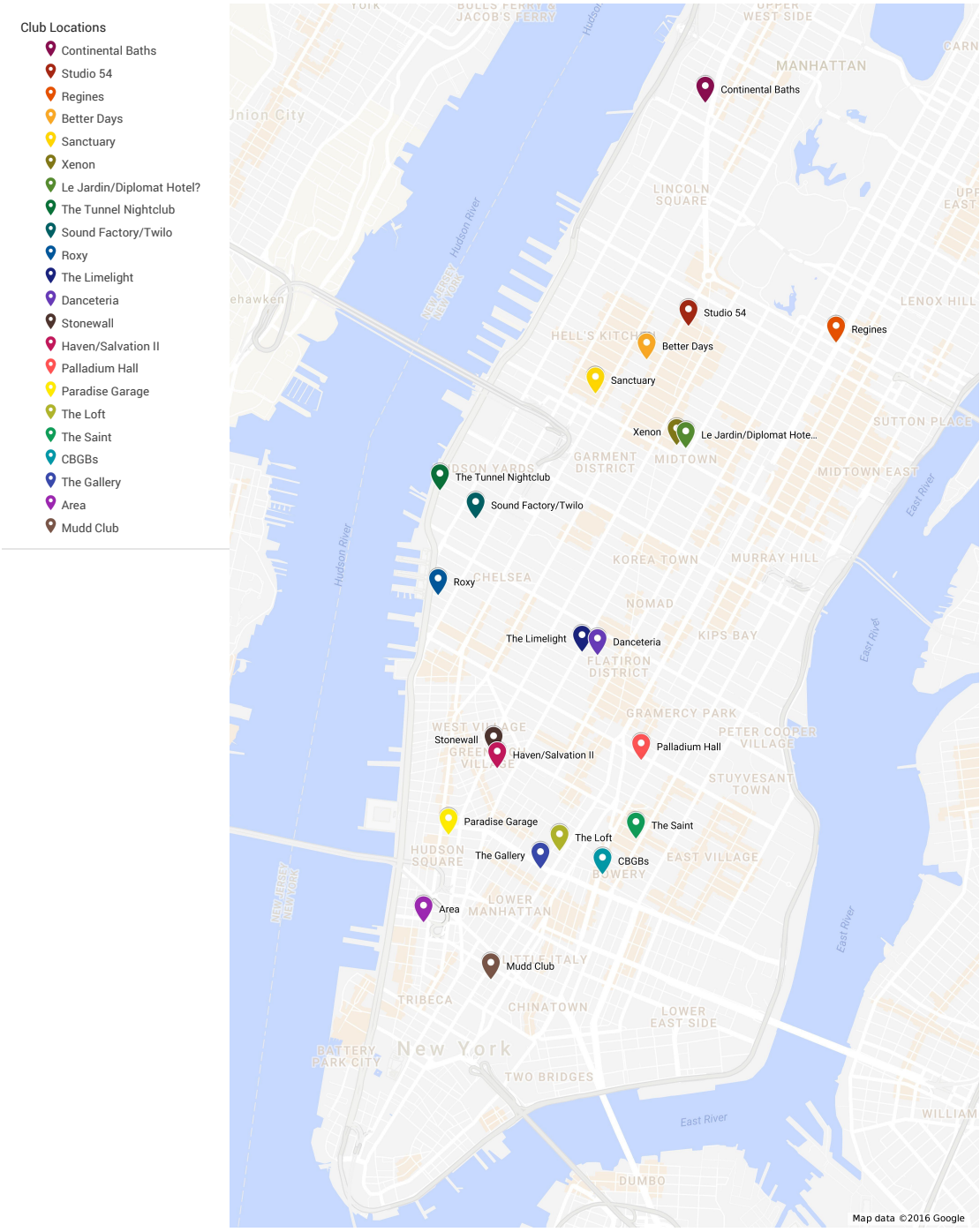

Figure 2 Locations for photographing. Ranging from original discos at the end of the 1960s such as Sanctuary and Regines through to mid-90s clubs like Tunnel and Twilo. It's a lot of ground to cover, especially as many are off the main thoroughfares and routes around the city.

Figure 3 First experiments with photo-stitching. Continental Baths (where Levan & Knuckles first DJed together)

FoHDiary Day 4: Too Old To Disco
Nov 10th 2017

In its younger days NYC was responsible for building an entirely new culture, that of dancing to discs. The city has existed for centuries, but in the world we've only been engaging and dancing to recorded music selected for us by those "in the know" for less than 50 years. In living memory there are people who danced before DJs and disc dancing were even a consideration. It's easy to view the current state of musical engagement as the status quo; as it is, so it always was. But not at all. The microcosmic view of disc dancing as a base state is incorrect. It's still new, it's still evolving. But NYC has already given up on its own past.

It begs the question; is there anything of value in disco and in disc dancing? Is it worth remembering and examining our history as dancers? Or should we simply move on and accept it's not the done thing anymore? The narrative of disco as an "unfortunate fad" has thankfully been more or less rejected and a more measured story of the late 60s to late 80s reflects a more nuanced approached to thinking about our/dance music's history. But until we actually have a view of the field that accepts that dance music is important, and recognise how it altered our perspectives of ourselves as audience/participant/subject we can't properly do justice to what happened in this city.

I did the next batch of mapping today. I covered:

— **Limelight.** Chelsea. Deconsecrated church. The centre of the 90s *club kid* culture, somewhat masterminded my James St James and Michael Alig. Now a gym but still referencing the logo and marking its location.

Figure 4 The Limelight gym. The sign outside still references the original logo.

— **Danceteria.** Chelsea. 80's happening disco featuring Madonna and Jellybean Benitez. Building unchanged but now home to a natural stone showroom.

— **Palladium.** Gramercy. Another swanky disco. Was originally beautifully decorated and adorned. Demolished. Now an NYU campus building but still called Palladium.

— **The Saint.** East Village. Building still remains but now home to a bank and apartments. Absolutely no reference made to its history as an infamously debauched gay nightspot. Very few surviving photos.

— **CBGBs.** Bowery. Punk's version of Mekkah. Now a "punk themed boutique" with fragments of original walls and posters.

— **The Loft.** Greenwich Village. Mancuso's original loft apartment remains just another apartment above a deli and a shoe shop. Entirely inconspicuous.

— **The Gallery.** Greenwich Village. Nicky Siano's version of the loft is again an apartment building with few distinguishing features, but at least not demolished.

— **Paradise Garage.** SoHo. Outside has been altered significantly and now is a truck depot for Verizon. No information available about the state of upstairs. The famous ramp entrance is still used.

I've been doing further experiments with stitching. David Mancuso's Loft at 647 Broadway, NYC. I'm really starting to appreciate these images. The details and the features you can see with the full rendered versions is stunning.

Figure 5 The Loft, 647 Broadway

FoHDiary Day 5: We Built This City
Nov 11th 2017

David Depino was kind enough to let me interview him. And I'm the most enthusiastic I've ever been during my time in NYC. His wealth of experience, hilarious anecdotes, and general pragmatic outlook on the state of dance music as it was and as it is is refreshing. "Spiritual? F*** off!".

His answers were insightful and offered a wealth of detail I've not had access to with the limited resources that were available to me. I now understand the floorplan of the Paradise Garage, and the musicological makeup of garage music, where the intersection is between that and house music proper, how the garage connected to the vogue scene, more about those forgotten places like *Sanctuary*, and how the map of it all works together. I understand those connections much better, and the links and fluidity with which it all worked.

Figure 6 David Depino, DJ at The Paradise Garage

In all sincerity, speaking to David was worth the day of travel and a day of lost-luggage horror. It was incredible to speak to him, and glean a sense of what the Garage was like.

FoHDiary Day 6: The Spirits In It?
Nov 12th 2017

I've just grabbed a quick coffee in a little place in FiDi. I feel stupid sat here trying to tease out some meaning, some signs of this disco *thing* I'm here to search for. Obviously, it isn't here in this coffee shop. I'm in entirely the wrong place. But the coffee shop is symptomatic of Manhattan, and the USA, and maybe even the West in general. David Depino said the final thing that killed the Paradise Garage was the gentrification of the area, and noise complaints from new build apartment blocks. Raucous, sexually permissive, and sexually progressive night world doesn't really have a place alongside brunching families and kitchenware stores. I'm here searching for ghosts in a land of new-borns. Disco's crowd, and disco's message have aged out. There's no space in the system for them anymore.

I don't know what I expected to find in this city. Don't get me wrong, so far it's been wonderful to visit new places and really get into this project in a way normal life doesn't permit. And yesterday's interview with David was worth the 8 hour flight alone! And the mapping will be absolutely invaluable for the archive. But I must be honest, I feel like I'm late to the party. In actuality the party has been over for 20 years, and I knew that was the case before I came here. But I had hoped to find something of it still here, some echo reverberating around the city, but this city is too loud, too unreflective, too dense for those fragments to still be perceived amongst the noise. All those echoes are drowned out by the sonic edifice of urban renewal, regeneration, and in the name of almighty progress.

Figure 7 Patti Labelle's The Spirit's In It. One of the tracks I need to perform the keynote in March.

I leave for Chicago at 5am tomorrow. Hopefully they're pastures that still hold some greenery, rather than paving paradise (yes, Big Yellow Taxi, so sue me). I realised, completely accidentally, that I've planned this trip to follow the timeline. Disco in NYC, House in Chicago, the back to NYC to finish with NY Garage.

FoHDiary Day 7: Wide Open Space
Nov 14th 2017

Travelling day. Up at 5am to get to Chicago from Newark. I feel like I saw the best of New York this morning. Sunday 5am. The place was quiet, almost deserted. It's the calmest it's been for a week.

Landed in Chicago and grabbed a transfer into the city. One thing was particularly noticeable on my drive. I found the wide open highway, and lack of towering buildings surrounding me a little disconcerting. There was a quick flash of agoraphobia to the whole business, and felt a lot better once we'd hit the city proper and I was once again hemmed in on all sides by glass and concrete. I completely now understand those stories of New Yorkers who never leave Manhattan. When you've been surrounded by giant sentinels guarding your every flank I can understand how the appeal of the Hamptons or Fire Island is somewhat lessened.

I met Suzanne Palmer for an interview this evening. She kindly came to the hotel to meet me and we chatted for 2 hours! That's going to be a LOT of transcription. But we did get into some really interesting material. She can certainly spin a yarn, but is incredibly fluent at connecting disparate dots into something more cohesive that tells you something *more* about what you're exploring than just a simple straight "yes or no" answer. And I did the thing I was dreading in the interview; I opened up the pandora's box of race. Speaking to a White vocalist working ostensibly in a Black or African American form of music (house) it's certainly a consideration worth exploring. And Suzanne offered some interesting insight into the way her voice has often been perceived by some of the powers that be as "too Black" (as a negative, which is of course ridiculous). We also got into the queer theory stuff, threw in some spirituality and Simon Reynolds for good measure. All in all a very successful interview. Oh! And we talked at length about the work she did with Mark Picchiotti and (drum roll) there's some new material coming out from The Absolute. Very exciting as far as my project is concerned.

Figure 8 Interviewing Suzanne Palmer, the quintessential house vocalist

Tomorrow is Vince Lawrence. The whole time in Chicago should be much more relaxed. Less walking, More interviews and chatting. This is the point where I gather a lot of really solid qualitative data from various people.

FoHDiary Day 8: Love Saved The Day
Nov 15th 2017

58 minutes ago the news broke that David Mancuso has passed away. A few days ago I asked David Depino to explain the difference between garage and house; his response was "well at the end of the day it's all just dance music, disco. Really it's all *loft music*. That's what David (Mancuso) started so we should really call it that". I wish I were in New York right now. I'd have jumped on the subway up to 647 Broadway and hung out there all evening. The Loft. The first disco. Disco before discos even existed. Before the word was even a thing really. The source of it all. It's difficult to compartmentalise such a small, communal thing like Mancuso's *Love Saves The Day* parties. They're so small but so influential that it seems to defy historical reference. All the music I make, so much of the music I love, and the reason I'm even here sat in a hotel room. Do we need those spaces still? Should we mark them? Or are we being too precious? What certainly is clear, is that Mancuso deserves the same respect and reverence someone like Knuckles gets here in Chicago or the Beatles get in Liverpool.

That *thing* I was looking for is here. It certainly feels that way. House music isn't something people speak about in the past tense. It's here, and living, and going on all the time. It's not NYC and disco, it's not something passed and gone only remaining as a memory. House is something *alive* in Chicago. That being said, there's no money in the music. In a recent radio interview Marea Stamper aka The Black Madonna said there's no money in this country for house musicians. DJs have to get on a plane to work Europe to make ends meet. That's the same impression I got from Vince Lawrence this evening in a more fleshed out manner. House music is so integral to this city and its culture, yet from the outside no one cares. The scene is so locked into this city it doesn't really penetrate beyond the city limits. When speaking to Vince he suggested names of people in the town that run parties and clubs, many of whom I was completely unfamiliar with. It's a case of that "big fish small pond" scenario.

The weird part is that the scene here is almost secret, hidden from the outside world. House is very much of Chicago. If you look at Chicago from the outside you don't see it, and it's all you can see when you're here on the ground. It's impossible to argue that house's influence isn't incredibly wide-spread. But is it actually respected? Do we value it? I believe we should be valuing and respecting house music more, a sentiment echoed by many interviewees. A main driver for this project, and for this trip, is to somehow start to redress the balance in some small way. A small handful of others have tried but no one has redeemed it. Vince believes, as do many others, that house's time will come again. And when it does we'll hopefully be in a better position to appreciate its value and creativity.

Figure 9 Interviewing Vince Lawrence in his studio

FoHDiary Day 9: Higher and Higher
Nov 16th 2017

I went to Stony Island Arts Bank today, and spent 2 hours searching through the thousands of records hosted there as part of the Frankie Knuckles archive. His personal collection, all the promo's he received, everything he played out, all up on shelves for anyone to go and explore. I've been trying to think of a parallel in terms of its importance. The dead sea scrolls? The Rosetta stone? They all feel obvious and none of them seem quite right. It's not a canon in the normal sense, this isn't every record that made house happen (although many of them are in there). It's more personal and more prolific than that. As you flick through the racks you see duplicates of records stacked together, not for alphabetical reasons, but rather because Knuckles was obviously gigging with them and juggling between the same record live. In other instances you go through several doubles until you hit one on its own, and then its twin appears further into the set; implying he either didn't juggle or brought back elements later into the narrative of the mix. You get runs of artists together in vague alphabetical order, and you get themed collections that were most likely special sets he'd put together. I stumbled across a segment clearly related to a Paradise Garage themed thing, and another one running the funkier side of Motown and classic disco. His stickers, his marking system, and hundreds of promos with hand written notes to the God Father of House adorn the collection. As I went through I wish I'd recorded myself. Multiple audible gasps, laughing, confused "eh" sounds.

I also met Thomos Oakes who runs the *Let's Pet Puppies* label (friend of Luke Solomon and Marea Stamper etc). Nice chap, even drier than me! He pointed out I'm looking at this experience from the position of production, not from reception. What part do the dancers/heads/fans play in the experience? A huge one would be a good guess. Instead I'm looking at names, and the names that made it happen. I'm asking why something was made, not how something was perceived when it hit the dance floor. However, I'm hoping meeting Abra Johnson, going over her mapping project, and seeing this event at Boleo tomorrow night she's invited me to will throw a little light into that dark corner of my research.

Figure 10 The Frankie Knuckles Archive at Stony Island Arts Bank. More records than I had time for.

FoHDiary Day 10: I'll Take You There
Nov 17th 2017

How free you feel is how free you fly
— Duane Powell

I met Duane and a few of his friends at Boleo. He was DJing to a rather trendy crowd in a hotel bar. Duane was actually really insightful, kind, and very frank about just what was happening in the scene. If he had an agenda it wasn't obvious, he just seemed genuinely interested to speak with me and share his opinions. We even got into a bit of a debate about what can happen next. I'd gone out specifically *without* my recorder to have conversations rather than interviews. It felt more natural and much less formal. And I feel like I understand something that's difficult to articulate about how people feel about house in this town.
I also met Abra (who was the catalyst behind me seeing Duane @ Boleo) and Jo De Presser. Both warmly and openly shared their opinions and recollections of the scene and offered great background. As researchers their areas of interest was very clear and prominent in the discussion. Abra's focus looks heavily at the Black, queer and female experience. It's great someone is doing it! But whilst we circle the same territory, our exact focus is very different. Abra and Jo's work is trying to gather local remembrances of spaces where house music happened within Chicago. I can't wait until it's published. I'm approaching them with the possibility of mirroring their materials in the archive this project is going to start.

Figure 11 (L-R) Myself, Abra Johnson, Bravette Fleet, Duane Powell

FoHDiary Day 11: Community Of The Spirit
Nov 18th 2017

I'm leaving Chicago VERY early tomorrow morning. On my last night in the city, a particularly warm, balmy evening considering it's mid-November, I thought I'd try to share some of my thoughts and impressions of the place.

I landed expecting to find a city all wrapped up with itself, house music, and bracing itself for the coming winter. Which to some extent I did. But I didn't expect to find a city struggling with its identity, its make up and a city do deeply divided along racial and geographical lines. Visiting Stony Island on the South Side, and comparing that with heading north up to Grammaphone records threw into stark contrast the experience of people of colour in the city. It's understandable why people are so desperate to put some claim or some stamp onto the music that reflects their experience. In my time here I've been told that house music is a purely Black thing, and I've also been told that house is unequivocally a gay thing (regardless of race), I've been told it's youth culture, it's counter culture, and it's merely a commercial product with no specific affiliations. These varying opinions are as varied as the city itself.

Figure 12 Interviewing Jamie Principle

I interviewed Jamie Principle (one of the nicest and most easy-going people I've ever had the pleasure to interview). He echoed a view that house never really happened that I've heard a lot while I've been here. The scene and music was ramping up 84 to 86, at which point the music jumps the pond to places like the Haçienda in Manchester, while back in Chicago the in-fighting starts. Jamie estimates he's missed out on about a million dollars from Trax taking *Your Love* and releasing it without his consent. That's probably not far off as far as estimates go. Jamie, Thomos Oakes, Vince Lawrence, Chip-E all seem to think that money killed the scene. It became unpleasant and it became unliveable for many of those 1st and 2nd generation artists. The scene to a certain extent was tainted by the money and the backstabbing, which implies that it never really happened in Chicago.

Chicago has been a fascinating, enjoyable, and, frankly, bizarre experience. I feel like I've been able to gather some enlightening comments and insights from great people, and I have a much stronger idea of where this paper is going. But I'm happy to be leaving for the last leg of my oddly chronological journey through disco, house, and finally to the garage/Jersey sound. I feel that if I'd spent much more time here I'd have come out with an oddly twisted view of what house is. House in Chicago is its own thing. It belongs to nobody and everybody. House everywhere else belongs to everyone. It's my house, your house, our house music.

FoHDiary Day 12: Love Is The Message
Nov 19th 2017

Back in NYC. The second time around the city seems far less intimidating. It's understood (vaguely), it's a known quantity and the rules of engagement are understood. Arriving here two weeks ago felt different. I was more apprehensive about what I'd find, there was a fraught election looming, and it felt like a new kind of ethnography I'd not practiced before. Now it feels familiar and I'm more excited to be here.

It's not surprising that The Loft and the Garage started here in NYC, because it's such a diverse city infused with so many people from so many backgrounds that diversity becomes simply background noise and something to ignore. It's a mongrel city and benefits from its mixed cultural structure, as opposed to struggling with it.

Figure 13 Duane Powell's slipmats at Boleo

NYC doesn't care about its musical legacy, not in a way that somewhere like Liverpool does. It doesn't feel the need to celebrate or venerate. New York is easy about its history, and not precious about it, whereas Chicago feels slighted by its history. Old wounds, going back as far as the Great Migration, that are festering rather than healing. New York is onto bigger and better things, happy with its contribution but not smug about it. Chicago is struggling to come to terms with exactly what its contribution was. Jamie Principle said that if the city were to in some way recognise its contribution with a museum or some kind of establishment to celebrate house there's no way that establishment could be built by a local. It would have to come from outside, from someone appreciative of the music but not connected to it (don't worry I'm not trying to start a museum). His views make sense but it's a real shame.

Bad news: Today's interviews didn't happen. Bruce Forest from Brighter Days is still unwell, and Kevin Hedge of Blaze couldn't make it into the city. I waited for him at the radio station for several hours but due to an accident in the Lincoln tunnel he couldn't meet me. We're doing a phone interview tomorrow. I'll try Bruce on Skype when I'm back from the USA.

FoHDiary Day 13: Musical Freedom
Nov 20th 2017

It's my final full day in America. It sounds trite but I came here looking for some kind of answers to the concepts I'm playing with for this project, but I feel like I'm leaving with even more questions than I came with. I suppose the problem with this kind of ethnography, or any kind of ethnography for that matter, is that as an outsider you can't ever really understand the internal dimensions of things. I've been greeted with open arms and enthusiasm by everyone I've spoken to and spent time with. But in a scene and a country so divided, the views expressed by my participants mirror that fractured distribution.

Today was the rescheduled interview with Kevin Hedge. As with every interviewee there seems to be a lack of consensus between people's various opinions. I won't be able to properly identify the resonances and differences until I've transcribed and coded all these interviews, which will take a few months realistically. Kevin was very enthusiastic when we spoke, he seemed genuinely excited and pleased that someone is attempting to look at the area from an academic perspective and was very complimentary.

I know I haven't written much about religion during these diary entries but I've found that the stuff I'm investigating, while important and the body of the work for this paper, isn't the stuff that's going to help me understand the thing. I've got a picture in my mind of the argument, and have great material to start backing up my conjecture. But, it's all useless without appropriately contextualising the scene. The interviews, the mapping, the photography, the stories; all useless without context. That's what I've got from the past two weeks.

Figure 14 Frankie Knuckles' Tears. The original white label single-sided press. This was one of the first records I fell in love with. And this physical disc may well be the first test-press of it ever created.

FoHDiary Day 14: Someday…
Nov 21st 2017

I'm sat waiting for my final flight home. Exhausted, frustrated, over saturated, elated, and ultimately sad to be leaving.

The more I explore the ideas I'm playing with for this paper, the more I find resonances that span eras, genres, people and places. There is a thread you can follow through all these concepts to create a cohesive, coherent whole. At least that's my hope. There are still more interviews to deal with, a few people who cancelled or postponed that I need to chase up. There's still a few more stones to overturn to see what weird, confusing things they reveal.

I want to say something profound but I've not got anything left to say, or at least anything else I understand enough yet to talk about. It's been a strange time to be here, a time of upheaval and change, and to be frank, a fearful time for a lot of people. I found a scene in absolute disarray, cities struggling with their identity, cities and people that just don't care about their history, and a confusing path to where I wanted to get to. But I also found a lot of passion and love for the music. I've spoken to people who really believe in what they're doing, really do care about the past and connecting it to now, and I've found clues as to what needs to happen next. That utopian, spiritual, *PLUR*, communal communion that's the bedrock of house is right around the corner I think. There's small pockets of it happening still, and I'm hoping to see that grow and evolve into a force for good again. The Loft spirit isn't dead, but it needs tending and nurturing. And we need that spirit more than ever before.

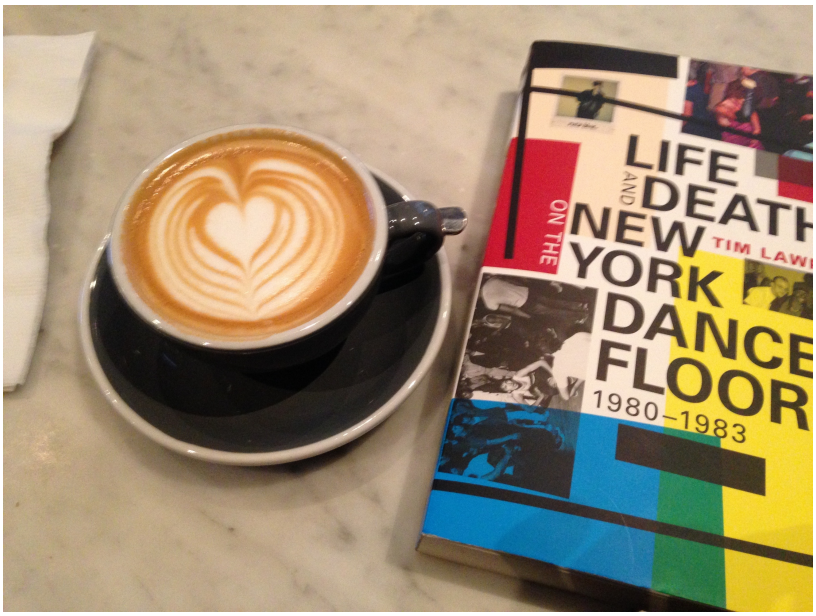

Figure 15 Tim Lawrence's latest book covers some of the history that's been forgotten between disco and house. It was essential reading while I was on my field research.

Here's to hope.