

For the Love of Music

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Are you E-ing, rolling, dropping, or popping? This is a question that the author was constantly asked when she attended a rave at the LA Sports Arena, basically asking if she was on Ecstasy. Not knowing what to expect, she was very surprised by the journey on which she embarked on. The author explores a subculture full of people who want to escape the realities of life. These same individuals gather every year for these eight to twelve hour parties, no matter what part of the world they are from. It is a subculture that is all about love for one another and for music.

¹Think of the biggest gathering of people listening to the best electronically charged music, people dazed and confused on drugs, people dancing around, some jumping with their hands in the air, lights flashing everywhere, girls scantily dressed, and people just acting free. This was what I encountered when attending a huge outdoor party, also known as a rave. Not knowing what to expect when arriving at LA Sports Arena, I was highly excited and wondering what it was going to be like to finally experience something that was totally out of my norm.

My first thoughts about a rave were basically what it is; a huge eight to twelve hour party full of drugs and music. At first, I did not want to go because I felt as if I was not going to fit in. I was not going to take

Methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDMA) a psychedelic drug also known as Ecstasy (Eisner, Bruce 1989: xvii). MDMA is a popular drug of choice when attending one of these huge outdoor parties. I thought that people were going to be mean, rude, or weird because they were under the influence of something. I also had the preconception that being on drugs would be universal.

As I got to the rave, the first thing I noticed was how scantily-dressed the girls were: an underwear, bra, and fairy wings bedecked most of them. Some wore 6 inch platform boots with fake fur, and every inch of their skin was covered in glitter. I thought, "Wow, what a place to really free one's sexuality." There were homosexual men dressed as fairies too. This is where people can act like grown-up kids, full of psychedelic imaginations, music, and fun.

As I sat back and enjoyed the music, I started to scan and study the

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crowd. Some were high out of their minds on weed or other drugs, some were drunk, and some were like flies to light. E-ing, on E, on X, dropped, popped, and rolling are all jargons that were constantly mentioned referencing the use of Ecstasy. At the sides of each venue, people were giving light shows to people who had “dropped”, it was one of the most beautiful and interesting things to look at.

The people there acted like hippies and they were very friendly. Because Ecstasy intensifies senses and perceptions, people were rubbing each others backs, some were making out on the dance floor, and some were glued to the flashing laser light shows of the stage. One person who looked to be 14 years old actually went to the hospital because she had overdosed on a cocktail of different drugs, her eyes were rolling back into her head and she was acting as if she was having a seizure.

As the night went on, I was trying to dance without anything in my system, and my feet started to hurt after the 5th hour. It is as if the people who go to raves are professional all night dancers. This one boy I saw when I first walked into the venue was dancing with super high energy. Towards the end of the night, he was still dancing with the same energy as he started out with. It was amazing and very impressive to see.

I started to talk to some of the people who were as tired as I was from dancing and found that some came from out of state to go to the raves in California. A boy from Arizona said that we have the best raves and the best people, and a girl from Texas said that she has gone to the raves every year since she was 17 because it is like an escape and a get-away from home. They were all recovering from the last pill

they had swallowed, and then they told me how it feels like to drop. The girl from Texas said, “It is like an out of the body experience, something that can’t really be explained; only that it feels amazing when you are dancing and listening to music. The flashing lights and the light shows are like the most amazing piece of art, coming to life when you look at each and every single stroke.” The boy from Arizona said that, “It just gives you a feeling of euphoria and there is a feeling of no care or problems in the world.” Then I thought to myself: maybe I should have dropped. Ecstasy is not something that I would want to try because I heard that it makes holes in your brain. It was surprising to know that there were people just like me who were not on drugs; we were there for the music and entertainment.

Another thing that people do at raves is trade off colorful beaded bracelets. These bracelets basically represent a friendship statement, and the more bracelets people have means that they are long time ravers and have a lot of friends. Besides the exchanging of bracelets, senior ravers would also give nicknames to new ravers. These names usually describe how the individual is dressed or acts on first impression. I was given the raver name “Bubbles” because the person who gave it to me said that I had a bubbly personality.

A rave is a huge gathering of people who dance all night and promote PLUR: peace, love, unity and respect, and most recently added responsibility (Wikipedia, 2010). I noticed that the word PLUR was expressed excessively in the process of exchanging beaded bracelets and personal information. Unlike church, which does promote the same morals, the rave subculture is full of people who want to escape the

realities of life and just have fun. These same individuals gather every year for these eight to twelve hour parties, and it does not matter what part of the world they are from. Some use drugs like Ecstasy to enhance their enjoyment and pleasures as they dance the whole night away. They all have different reasons for why they go to raves; some go because it is a get-away, for the fun of it, for the music and entertainment, to meet people, to dance, to experience something different, or to use drugs. It is definitely a subculture that is all about unity, love for one another, and love for music.

REFERENCES

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