Chapter 2

The Roots of Trance: Reflections of Space Rock, Psychedelia, Krautrock, and Post Punk Live in the 1970s and 1980s

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the roots of trance by taking a reflective and historical view of the influences of 1970s and 1980s music on the development of trance. The author reflects on concerts which he personally attended, analysing them for music, lyrics, style, performance, and concepts which formed the roots of trance. This includes performances from the following genres: space rock, psychedelia, Krautrock, and post punk. The chapter discusses performances by the Grateful Dead, Pink Floyd, Arthur Brown, The Edgar Broughton Band, Kraftwerk, Joy Division, and Public Image Limited. In each case those elements which have contributed to the development of trance are highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

“Hawkwind Sunderland 1972 – My first ever gig as a 13 year old! Took a position at the front of the stage early so as not to miss anything, the crowd noise crescendoed as lights dimmed and joss sticks were thrust into my hands from the stage. From the first thunderous space inspired notes and dialogue I was mesmerised. The sight of

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two beautiful naked ladies twirling directly over me visually slowed to dream pace by the relentless strobes was my first hypnotic experience and I would imagine the nearest thing to LSD you could experience. An hour in I remember thinking ‘where am I and what is happening?’ an out-of-body experience I have strived but never been able to reproduce. Just two hours that influenced the following 40 odd years of my life.” (comment on http://vintagerock.wordpress.com/).

This chapter explores the roots of trance through the reflective lens of an academic who is also a fan of rock music, and of attending rock concerts (Smith, 2013 & 2014). The author reflects upon how each band’s music and performance can be considered an early influence on trance. In doing so, the analysis draws largely from personal experiences and recollections, but also from musicology theory (Frith, 1998; Longhurst, 1995; Zepf, 2008), cultural studies (Storey, 1996), texts on and by the artists, and reviews of the time.

In particular, the focus is upon concerts which the author personally attended. The analysis reflects on the performance, the songs, the music, the lyrics, and the audience reaction, illustrating those elements which, it can be argued, form the foundations of trance. Personal reflections are underpinned by reference to the literature and by returning to the definitions of Rouget (1985) and Pilch (2004). The chapter draws together those elements and themes from the concerts which demonstrate how these bands and their music influenced trance.

BACKGROUND

Much has been written about trance and several attempts have been made to define trance music (Rouget, 1985; Pilch, 2004). Many accounts (e.g. Cole & Hannam, 1997) attribute the roots of trance to the 1960s and dance parties in the former Portuguese colony of Goa. However, the reality is much more complex. Peril and Chan (1998) argue that the depth and dimensionality of the analysis of Cole and Hannam is limited, and imply that alternative views are needed to capture the richness, depth and complexity of trance. This chapter attempts to provide new historical perspectives by exploring alternative musical genres which exhibit some of the characteristics of trance, and by using performance to contextualise this analysis.

In order to search for evidence of the roots of trance, it is necessary to look to research on different sub-cultures (Bennett & Peterson, 2004; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2005). Becker-Blease (2004) discusses dissociative states, and how these may be reached through exposure to new age and electronic music. Anderson and Kavanaugh (2007) discuss rave culture and the different perspectives taken by cultural studies theorists and those viewing the rave scene through a public health and risk related lens. They also present a historical perspective which explores
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