

Dead beat?

FILMMAKER'S RAVE NEW WORLD

By Sam Baltrusis

George Reasner, Los Angeles-based DJ and co-producer of the documentary "Liquid Vinyl," says underground dance music is making an old-school comeback—one beat at a time.

"The minute anything underground becomes mainstream, it kind of kills its underground status," explains Reasner, a veteran cinematographer who traveled the world to interview DJs—from the '70s to the present—who defined a fallen era.

"The problem with the 'Super Club' dance scene in the '90s is that it got too big and the branding became too global," he laments. "All of these larger-than-life things had nothing to do with the music."

"Liquid Vinyl" is an evocative docu homage to superstar club DJs and traces dance-music culture from its humble underground roots at the Paradise Garage in NYC to its global omnipresence that spans as far as the Love Parade in Berlin.

While dance music is still around, Reasner says the craze became over-saturated in the late '90s and is currently experiencing a rebirth of sorts.

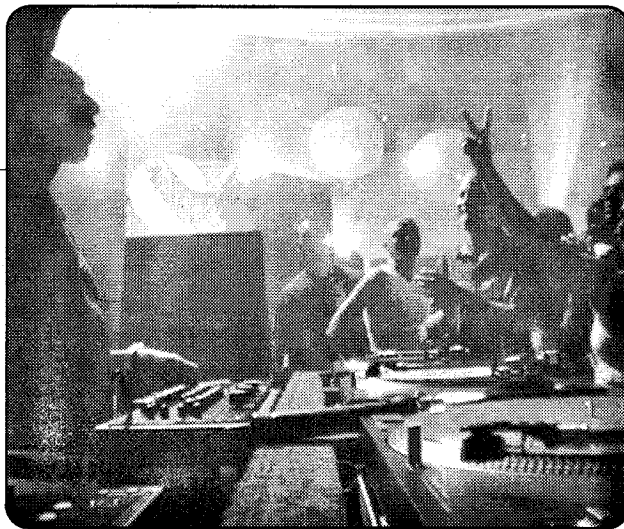
"Gone are the days when DJs are paid ridiculous sums of money for one night of work," he says. "House music has to go back underground to survive. It has to go to its roots and become simpler. Bottom line."

The documentary also sounds a cautionary note regarding Internet downloading and CD-burning as dire threats to recording labels and DJs who double as remixer.

"We've seen over the years that the popularity surrounding dance music comes in waves," Reasner quips. "It's definitely in a down period right now, especially with the current music-sharing technology."

As for the idea that dance music raves and rampant drug usage go hand-in-hand, Reasner says it's an anecdotal myth.

"That's the first thing the DJs asked us when we started the documentary," he says. "Every promoter and DJ we talked to wanted to make sure we weren't going to talk about drugs. We fought with the idea and came to the conclusion that the scene isn't about drugs. It is, and always has been, about the music."



CAST: Frankie Knuckles, Tony Humphries, Carl Cox, David Morales and Louie Vega.

HEAT FACTOR: "Liquid Vinyl" had its world premiere at Slamdance, the alternative film festival in Park City, Utah, last month. "Have you been to Sundance recently?" Reasner bites. "We initially tried to submit our film to Sundance, but we were overwhelmed by how corporate the festival has become." Reasner says Slamdance was a perfect fit for his documentary's edgy style. "After screening the film in January, we're

extremely happy with the underground feel of the festival." The co-producer says that he's still tweaking the film and adding some animation, but he's ready for the PBIFF. "This will be the second time we've shown 'Liquid Vinyl' at a festival. We're excited to interact with the audience and get some feedback."

LOWDOWN: At the heart of "Liquid Vinyl," explains Reasner, is the euphoria associated with these mass dance music celebrations. "There's this great segment that goes into the spirituality of the music and the spirituality a crowd experiences during a certain song at a certain moment," he says. "And how the spirituality becomes a driving force to these people in the outside world."

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