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**Listening Session: Seeing Through Flames:
Love Saves the Day by Tim Lawrence**

Tim Lawrence 00:04

is whether the what version I go for I don't really know but anyway, I mean, I try and do a short version was the My parents died when I was quite young. I was living in London, I found solace on the dance floor in the early 1990s. Quite early into that experience, I realized that all the music that I was into, at the time, house music was coming out of New York City, excuse me. So I kind of gave up the day job, I was working in journalism and went to live in New York City, I was doing that all the things that someone who was into house music should be should do in the early to mid 1990s, which was going to see Louie Vega at the sound factory bar on Wednesday nights, and then later, migrating to body and soul, when that began to take off and during this period, a professor, because I had gone to study to a doctorate in English Literature at Columbia University. Professor said, Why don't suggest that I write a quick book about dance music. It was this was around 95 96. 1994 There was a Criminal Justice Act was passed by the John Major governments. So rave culture was kind of in the news effectively. So I was gonna I thought, yeah, I'll do my doctorate and I'll write a book, which was not a very good idea. It turned out but that's that's how I set out and quite early into my research. A guy called Stephen Prescott, who was working alongside Joe Claussell, who some of you might have heard of is a kind of renowned New York based DJ, deep house DJ who draws on kind of quite a lot of global sounds as well. Stephen suggested I speak to this guy David Mancuso, who was around somewhere at the beginning of this culture. At the time, as I like to say, my ears were electronic, all I

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could listen to was electronic music and like I was, you could not take me to the 1970s. They kept trying in this right in the shop dance tracks to get into some of the classics, and I wasn't really interested. They said go and meet David Mancuso, you know, he was around, I didn't really know who David was, I was quite well read, I think I'd read pretty much everything there was to read on this culture at the point and David wasn't in these books, really, the way the most accounts sort of began, and it was mainly journalistic accounts at the time, was to say that, you know, really, dance culture and DJ culture began properly with Larry Levan at the paradise garage and Frankie Knuckles at the warehouse and it's out of these two venues that you know, garage music as it would be pronounced in the United States, which was really vocal house music came through and it was out of the mythologically out of the warehouse that that house music was born. There's some truth in that, but by the time the house music didn't actually come in to be pressed until the warehouse had actually closed but that's a different story. So this is where dance culture began, really DJ led dance culture and, and, and so the assumption was really that the warehouse had opened in 77 and it was it was paradise garage also opened in early 1977, but properly opened in 1978 and these were the venues that you know, survived the backlash against disco. But the backlash against disco was kind of was something which also shaped our entire understanding of the 1970s that disco was a commercial culture. It was a cheesy culture. It was a manufactured culture. It revolved around these two iconic kind of institutions Saturday Night Fever, Saturday Night Fever, the film and studio 54. The Midtown discotheque, which was notoriously exclusionary, and generally speaking in popular culture, disco was kind of a term of offence really, it wasn't seen as being a kind of a credible culture and having electronic ears I didn't really want to go there myself, either. I wanted to write about electronic music, but I met David. This was in I guess, April 1977, roughly maybe March 1997 and yeah, we it was it was an it was an interesting experience for me and it was during a three year long, three, a three year a three hour lunch. Yeah, my entire understanding of the history of DJ led dance music culture was was overturned really and David's line with somewhat to my terror was you know, don't begin in 1984 or the mid 80s for the rise of house music. You've got to begin in 1970 and at this, he was saying this to someone who didn't want to go to the 70s at all. But it was interesting. It was immediately interesting and when I say

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interesting, it was immediately captivating. There was something about David, is he up on screen? No, he's not. Let's bring David back. There's a way to have this not go off. Probably. Do you know how to do this? Do you want to play around with it? Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

Tim Lawrence 05:39

Yeah, so it was I'll just say it was kind of it was immediately captivating. I mean, what my own experience there was, I mean, on one level, it was, I guess, you could say intellectual, David was referencing all of these names, and all of the all these people, all of these parties, all of these phenomenon that I just hadn't heard of, and I was someone who thought I was quite knowledgeable about dance music history. So that was the journalist in me, because I've been a journalist not that long ago, start the light, that kind of the light bulb started a flash that he was a big story and it was an interesting one as well, because part of what I didn't really want to get into this straight straight from the beginning was this, this culture called disco, which I didn't have a particularly strong affinity with. In part, it's because I was, I was born in 1967. So the height of disco was when I was 10 years old and most people when they get to be 30 years old, or however old, yeah, 30 years old, don't really aren't that interested in the music that they were listening to as a 10 year old. It's just how things tend to go. David, though, was proposing to go back to a much earlier point in time and he was proposing something kind of quite radical to me, which was just to kind of, you know, to start before disco even became a thing, before DJ culture even became a thing and in this time period, when, in the early 1970s, downtown was largely about downtown New York City was largely abandoned, and it was had become it was increasingly becoming a home for phenomenal music and artistic movement that went on to define much of the 1970s and early 1980s. It's in the the last book I wrote, life and death on the New York dance floor that I kind of put 1983 as a changing year in the, in the city of the history. As one as the year in which what we now call neoliberalism, largely began to take root, and started to shift the kind of history of that city it's also the year in which he reached epidemic proportions and soon afterwards, crack kind of became a, arguably an epidemic as well. So there was a shift in there was also a shift going on in in New York City. Anyway, so I met David, and there was this whole pre history was kind of opened out to me of this kind of downtown

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movement that really kind of flourished and redefined, I would say, many people would say, I suppose music culture during those years apart from anything else, we have the birth of DJ, DJ culture, culture, we had the the birth of disco, we have more or less the birth of punk though you could sort of point to Detroit as another originary place if you wanted to, I guess and you have the beginnings of rap music and hip hop culture. So for kind of one kind of one decade in one city's history, there was an awful lot went on in that decade, that kind of changed everything. So, so there was so there was this was part of the this was part of the backdrop was this kind of this idea of, of writing a history about a moment, a moment in time that hadn't really been written about, and the birth of a culture before it became somewhat commercialized and I don't know how much I'll end up talking about disco. But for many, you know, part of what I ended up doing, I suppose with this first book, I'm not going to talk about it in these terms for much longer at all, was I wanted to, resuscitate disco, as a culture that shouldn't really be sort of denigrated and ridiculed because there was an awful lot of very good music, and you know, innovative music, dynamic music, captivating music, happened under the name of disco. But if you asked someone like David Mancuso, and who I did ask many times, or you spoke to someone like Nicky Siano who was kind of this DJ at the gallery, who was very influenced by David, you speak to someone like Larry Levan, which I didn't get to do because he died in 1992. But I've heard this was his. This was his understanding. You asked any of these people about disco and they saw it as an imposition, and attempt to commercialize a kind of a grassroots and organic culture and by the time that there was the backlash against disco in 1979, this kind of celebrated moment the burning of records in Chicago. They the DJs, who were kind of had inspired this movement in the first place. Were there Very happy to see the back of disco. So it's a contested it remains a contested term. I mean, it's one that I, as I say I wanted to kind of give credibility to because there was an awful lot of racism and homophobia and sexism, and, and also just musical. I'm just trying to think of the word here. You know, bad musical analysis, I would say, to kind of just say that all of disco was kind of was deserved to be denigrated and yet, at the same time, there was this other thing and this, I would say, came through from David, that, you know, why do we need to have these categories? Why do we need to have these labels, you know, music is about freedom and

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when you start to put something in a box, you're starting to contain it, and you're gonna kill it. So this is not this is not all, this also isn't going to be me talking a lot about genre and the reasons we should be grateful for genre or the reasons we should find, we should be opposed to genre, because these are these debates don't generally go very far. I mean, on some sort of level genre is just a musical vocabulary that we had. But there also becomes one example of the way that David sort of became captivating. Because he wasn't really interested in any of this terminology and gradually, what kind of emerged, as you know, he was someone who I think, got closer to the heart of exploring, you know, what it might mean to, you know, be alive, and to express that idea of being alive on a dance floor, and what the potential of being alive is being on the dance floor more than anyone else and David also took this question, and, you know, he connected it to, you know, ideas of examining what it just, you know, meant to be human within the context of the universe and these were questions that I hadn't really been considering too much. So I'll, I'll try and see if I can sort of tease out some of the reasons about you know, about what David was kind of, you know, about and yep. What else do I want say? The thing of the, the other. I don't know, how many does anyone is anyone in the room not familiar with who David is because I can just be a slightly maybe I should just introduce him a little bit more clearly as well. So what I suppose one of the things that a few of the things I would say about DJ teaching about David, he was one of the first two kinds of key key DJs who transformed what it meant to be a DJ. During the DJing, took roots in New York City, which was probably the most progressive city in terms of sort of discotheque culture in the 1960s and, really, up until the very end of the 1960s DJing was a limited art form, and had a limited musical range. The role of a DJ in in discotheque culture was to get people to dance, but primarily to get people to go and buy drinks, because they were employed by the venue and the way that most venues made their money or all venues made their money pretty much was to kind of go and get people to drink. So generally speaking, the way that the DJs were to kind of fulfill this role as they would build up their crowds into this kind of quick frenzy, it would usually take them five or six records, it would go from something slow to something which was much very energetic, and then when they reached some sort of peak of energy within that sort of pretty short space of time, they would then do what they they would then

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do what they call kill the dance floor and that would invoke involve going from a kind of high energy record to something that was like a kind of a slow, basically a slow record and that was the sign for dancers to leave the dance floor to go to the bar to buy a drink and this was a particularly patriarchal well, an ongoing patriarchal moment in history. So it'd usually be guys buying a woman a drink and inviting a woman or in and or inviting a woman to dance. Dancing was partnered, it was always in couples. It had to be it only took place in straight couples. It was still illegal for two men to dance with each other in New York City. In fact, it was not only illegal for two gay men to dance with each other in New York City, it was illegal for two straight men to dance with each other in New York City. We could hypothesize why it's pretty easy actually. But anyway. So this was DJ culture. I spoke to one of the during the research for the first book, I spoke to the guy With a guy who was the most renowned DJ of this period, a guy called Terry Noel and he described to me the way that he saw DJing as a form of puppetry that he would manipulate the crowd. That was his job and he could kind of, you know, twist them around his little finger, because he had that degree of control over them. So this was these were the limits of DJing and it was it was primarily the Manhattan scene. In these most of the discos, Discotheques were in Midtown, or even the kind of you know, Upper East and Upper West Side. They were private, they were also primarily white, they were sort of upwardly mobile, in terms of like new new,

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new professionals, sort of, you know, shop assistants, hairdressers would be going to these places, but the crowds weren't really mixed in any way whatsoever. So this is the background really to this kind of big change that happened in the beginning of 1970. Which David was really the central figure, I argue, although there was another very important person who I should sort of mention really just at least in passing, called Francis Grasso, who was a DJ, the sanctuary and Francis is often attributed as being the first DJ who mixed two records together. So kind of maintain the, the energy of the crowd. So So David became this one of two key figures who I would say in, you know, invented the art of DJing. David would go on to, you know, not entirely sure of the date of this but maybe from the beginning, on some sorts of level, refuse, refuse the idea of the DJ as a category. So I sometimes refer to David as a DJ, but

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that's also a kind of shorthand but anyway, this is this is where we're at. So David was the kind of this key figure at the very beginning of the kind of the rebirth, if you like, or the reinvention of DJ culture and I'll go into this in a little bit more detail, I'm sure at some later point but the main thing that David did, is he kind of drew out the way in which DJing could be conversational, or an expression of what in terms of African American music is often referred to as antiphony or call and response as the kind of thing that you'll see in the black church with the preacher calling out and the congregation replying. So this is the same in jazz music musicians that kind of clearly in, in sort of conversation with each other, the conversation is a musical one, but they're forming phrases that are intersecting with each other in this kind of this, this different language. So this is the difference between I mean, sorry if this is a bit basic, or whatever, but this is kind of what started to happen in February 1970. In the loft, and in terms of the sanctuary, it's hard to get an exact date, but it's pretty much the same week or two. What I do know is the on New Year's Eve 1969, going into 1970 as a sanctuary, it was still owned by the old ownership. That was part of this discotheque scene that would only let straights into the dance floor and where the DJ was required to, it was Francis Grasso was required to work the bar. I mean, just as the final aside, maybe on the sanctuary, what Seymour and Shelley what happened at the sanctuary is two entrepreneurs who owned a series of gay bars in the West Village called Seymour and Shelley took over the sanctuary sometime in very early 1970 and they became the first discotheque owners to openly welcome the LGBTQ community into a discotheque, even though it was still illegal and there was a long history in New York City of gay bars, for example. So this wasn't the first venue to accept a gay crowd and those bars would only be able to stay open as long as as they were usually often run by the mafia and would pay off the police in order to have to be able to stay open and for the police to turn a blind eye. So there had been kind of gay institutions before the sanctuary but the sanctuary was the first discotheque to openly welcome gay men into its midst and it was incidentally, given we're on the topic it was, it was that transition and that transition in the crowd, which led Francis Grasso to start to innovate beat mixing because all of a sudden, he wasn't able to in his I interviewed Francis quite extensively, a very sweet guy who sadly died during the writing of the book but what Francis would say is that he didn't feel that he could kill, you know this

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phrase again kill the crowd to work the bar he wouldn't be able to do that with this new the new crowd that was coming into the Sanctuary because they were so the energy level change so much they were so so intent on partying that he thought there would be some sort of riot if he basically went from playing an energetic record to a slow record. So he went with the flow, he went with the energetic flow the crowd were buying drinks anyway. So he didn't really even have to attempt to kind of get them to do it. It was like there was a natural kind of inclination that just wants a party and have a good time and it was in this situation that Francis alongside David became this other really significant DJ. Right. So this is David and that's his kind of beginning really, if you like that he was this kind of I will try and say a little bit more about why he was an interesting DJ and his the ambition of his ideas of DJing. Again, using the shorthand and as we kind of carry on, I guess. So the other thing, the other thing, I suppose I should say, is that I mean, David passed away in November 2016. So we started as parties, he, he had run parties before 1970 but it was in 1970 as I'll go on to kind of describe that the the template that came to be known as the loft, if you like, was introduced, in the place where he was living on 647 Broadway, which is now the area of Manhattan that we think of as NoHo lower Broadway, above house above North of house NoHo, who is north of Houston Street. So David started in earnest, if you like this party in 1970, he passed away in 2016. So this also is this this, he was effectively hosting parties for this entire time span. That's a 46 year time span. So this is of interest. I think, this is a this is like a phenomenal physical and psychological commitment really, to be hosting parties for that length of time. So this is something to consider as well, like, what's going on here? Really? How can any party have that kind of longevity? How can people kind of want to gather and support it for that long? So this is of interest to me, and I'll try and kind of, you know, see where we go, if we look into what's going on with that. I don't know if we'll get much further in the in the time scale, I doubt ii. But interestingly, one of David's great wishes was the parties would continue after he died, which is also an unusual ambition within club culture, basically, or DJ culture. I mean, I've gotten sort of erroneously referred to club culture. So the other thing that's very interesting about David, and that will be woven into whatever happens here tonight, is this idea that actually David wasn't in this at all interested in or connected to club culture, or what would have then been known as discotheque

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culture. He came from an entirely different tradition and he pursued an entirely different path that we could call the rent party, or the house party. So I will be, this is something else I want to really to think about. Right. Do you want to how do you feel about like musical interludes? You're up for a bit of musical interludes? Alright, so let me put on a bit of

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if I can find. So this is a track by Fred Wesley and it's one of David's favorite records. It's a track call. Oops, the other side track called house party. So this house party is just absolutely central to everything that David really was about. and it's something. Yeah, we it's, it's his real belief was the this is you can go further with your music selection. I mean, what I really want to try and tease out tonight is like, what happens around music and sound when you do things the way that David wanted to do it and it's like a very carefully calibrated set of kind of conclusions that are always evolving on some subtle level but at the same time, hardly evolved at all, from February 1970 until David passed away in 2016. So it's kind of but it's, yeah, so it's just kind of riding that tension, I suppose. Anyway, this is try and do this without Okay, so this is Fred Wesley House Party.

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there's lots to get through. So I thought I'd interrupt that a little bit. So, I mean, I guess so just one of the things as a kind of as the mini intro, which has gone on for a bit of a long time maybe already but I think I want to draw out for folks who are not so familiar with David is that he did things with his sound system that have never been done before and have never been done since. As simple as that and the summary of of that is that he spent more money and unquestionably dedicated more of his life to perfecting sound than anyone else involved in the history of certainly dance culture or DJ led dance culture. There's just no there's there's no one who no one comes remotely close to doing what David did with sound and he was really almost entirely adjacent to what was going on within the rest of the kind of discotheque nightclub industry in this regard. So this is another reason I think I'm here probably as part of this, the series is to kind of explore what happens when you when you start to try and do that. So we'll come back, this is another another theme we'll come back to, but with with everything that David did, there

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was an intention and the tension, the intention was always to maximize, I suppose what we could probably call collective drawing. So there was always a social intention. So this is So David, I would always say, you know, it was was it I, basically the most radical person I met, in terms of basically his approach to sound and to music on the one hand, and then in terms of his approach to sociality, the social on the next and he saw the two as being intertwined. He saw the dance floor as a space of liberation and transformation. Yeah, I mean, I suppose another way of summarizing what's going on with with David and what why am I here? And why do I keep on going on about this guy? And it's that he was, he was also unquestionably the first person to approach the dance floor and to self consciously, or less, maybe I should say, sorry, I should rephrase that. The DJ led dance floor, and was the first person to conceive of it I don't know maybe it's not even the DJ let dance floor is anything that we conceive of as a, as a conventional dance floor in the 20th century, at least I what I didn't want to do is go back throughout the years to generalize about the entire entire history of time by saying this, but anyway, but what I'm what the point I want to make is that David understood the dance floor as a potentially utopian space and it hadn't been understood in that way, conventionally, at least within commercial entertainment culture that's what I'm probably trying to say. Previously, within commercial entertainment culture, the dance floor was understood as a space of pleasure and there's absolutely nothing wrong with pleasure, I really approve a pleasure if you want to have a good time tonight. That's okay with me. So and also a meeting, you know, of basically meeting meeting someone to be, you know, to basically have sex with and maybe even a relationship and maybe even babies, these have been the primary roles of the of the dance floor, across almost all of the 20th century and if we go back in the 19th century, even more, we may I mean, I'm primarily talking Okay, let me let me rephrase this, reframe this a little bit. I'm mainly talking here about North and about North America and Europe. Okay, so these are these are these are big, I think these are big stories with David, actually, you know, he, he turns the dancer into utopian space, he spends more money on perfecting sound than anyone else, ever, a bit. Some private individuals have, of course, spent more money on sound, but it's on their own personal sound systems. They never, it's never a public, it's never intended for the public or social consumption. So this is obviously important and yeah,

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and he kind of, and he basically defines the potentiality of the DJ and generally speaking, and this is obviously a generalization, and I don't want to offend anyone in the room. Obviously. If we look at what DJing has become, it's become a lesser thing than it was in 1970. It's become something which is anyway, as I say it, the point isn't to put down DJing but when I think about what David was doing in the in the 1970s, right, things began to change. I'll say one more thing, which was a little bit random. Things began to change for David in particular around about 19, When I first met him, actually 1997, 1998 at the beginning of 1998, after a long run was over 28 years. Yeah, they started in 1970 is a bit of a summary here. First place was on lower Broadway 647 Broadway, then he moved to Prince Street in the heart of Soho, that was 1975 through to 1984. Then he moved to Alphabet City, which was he stayed there from 1984 through to 1994. Then he went briefly to Avenue A then briefly to Avenue B, then he just fell on absolute destitution, having been you know, riding very, very high, although always private. Okay, so this is I feel this is all a bit confusing and I suppose that this is this is this is David as well, everything seems to interlink some to something else, really. It's very holistic when it comes to David. It's an entire lifestyle. So and this is what I really wanted to this was the other thing I wanted to the last thing I really wanted to say is that part of his refusal of the idea of being a DJ is his idea that that was just one of his roles, and he's not being falsely modest when he says this is absolutely true but putting music putting selecting records in a live situation with a dancing crowd was only one thing that he did. He was a host of a party. He was inviting people into his home and until he lost that this is what I was saying until he lost his, he lost the last home. That was big enough for him to host a party in in 1998. After that he moved to a tiny tiny flat He had no money whatsoever. He continued to still host parties and partly through desperation, started to travel, he was invited first to Japan complete disastrous trip but something happened in that disastrous trip that enabled him to return to Japan and he had a better trip and then he started to travel around as this is, then, amongst other things, I ended up co-hosting parties with him for about 10 years in beginning in June 2003. In London, that was part of his adventure. To my mind, these are always these are, these were beautiful experiences that have always led in inevitably less than had been the case of the loft at its peak, which was in 1970 through to 1998. Basically, although the, you know, arguably the real peak was until

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1984. Okay. So there we are, that's the end of a long and rambling intro. That was supposed to take five minutes, I think. So I'll maybe so I kind of want to tell the next bit of via story to see how that goes and the story is that at some point in, I think it was around 2007. I was doing one I must have interviewed David about, well, it was 22 times and I forget what number interview this was, but it was for I think it was for a magazine or something. So it was like there was no assumed knowledge of the of the reader about who David was. So I just thought as a kind of fun kind of intro question I'd ask him what what do you do when you want to host a party? It was kind of I wasn't expecting a very detailed reply, really, it was, it was meant to be a flippant question, but I got an interesting reply. Okay. So this is the bit where we get in. I wasn't planning on this being interactive, but let's do it. What's the first thing you do when you organize a party? Wake up, folks. Booze? Good, good. Good point. No, no, I wasn't even going to mention this. David never sold alcohol. So people could take his own alcohol, people could take their own out to see his can't believe that people can take their own alcohol to the parties, but he never sold alcohol, his whole thing was to not sell alcohol. I'll get into a little that a little bit more in just a bit but one of the one of the reasons for that is if you sold alcohol, you had to get a cabaret license in New York City and that meant amongst you know, David was very against.

Tim Lawrence 37:39

This was the early 70s, the very early 70s, it was the late 60s, it was obviously it was a completely different era, we're at the height of counterculture, I will come back to this but one of the things about counterculture was that it developed a great suspicion of the state. I mean, we probably it's probably safe to say we kind of have that now, in the UK at this present moment, because the state has been so kind of crumbled down. But on some level, if you know, for the at least for the left, and the left of center, the state is seen as something that can be hopefully should be a force for good. It's about, you know, a commitment to the public sphere, providing essential services and all of these, all of these things and the problem maybe we've had in the UK as the state has been kind of has been under attack and besieged for probably since 1979. If, if not earlier. So but the state for David in 1970 was one for many people's like it was about it was oppressive, it was interfered with

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people's lives. You know, clearly the Vietnam War was reaching a peak, the state was clamping down on anti Vietnam, you know, anti Vietnam demonstrations, it was a state that four years earlier, had made LSD, illegal, etc and it was generally it was about containing people. I mean, there was also the historical context, if you like, is the entirety of the post war era, which was quite progressive in terms of promoting social equality. If you look at all the graphs of, you know, equality and inequality across the course of the 20th century, the period running from roughly the mid to late 1930s, through to the end of the 1970s as the great is the period of greatest economic equality in the West, by quite some distance, and from 1979 onwards, which is the election of Thatcher and then Reagan in the United States, inequality goes exponential. So this whole period was a period of kind of was a period of kind of, you know, whether it was a period where the welfare state grew it, you know, provision of education kind of spread in impressive ways, etc but it was also a very rigid and hierarchical and oppressive society, the 1950s in the United States notoriously with a period of McCarthyism, there was a great deal of kind of sexual conservatism. It was a you know, there was ongoing segregated, you know, de facto segregation between the races in the United States and life was boring. This was the main point. You know, the expectation that most people had is that they would kind of live a regular regular life, they would get a job, it would be a job for life, you'd go, you'd clock in at nine in the morning, you would kind of clock out at five in the evening, you'd go home to your home. Supposedly, according to all the adverts, you know, if you're a guy, and your wife would prepare you a cocktail, and then you might have a barbecue in the back garden with the two kids and this might sound like, you know, bliss to some people in the room as I'm not against it but to a new generation that were coming through the 60s, they wanted radical change, they wanted more autonomy, they wanted more creativity, they wanted more agency. So the problem with the cabaret licensing law is it just meant that you're inviting the state into whatever you're doing and particularly importantly, it meant that, well, you had to sell alcohol, which David didn't want to do, he was interested in other stuff. You had to be open to the public and David didn't want that and I'll come back to this in a moment and most importantly, arguably, you had to close at 3.30 in the morning and David definitely didn't want that. Because he was only going to work he only opened at midnight and his idea is in the entire

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idea of counterculture if you like and this was obviously a hard thing to put into practice but this was the general ambition was liberation and freedom. So if you're having a good time dancing, you don't want to come to come 3.30 It's like, oh, okay, party is over. So not alcohol. Good guess, but incorrect answer. What's the first thing you do when you put together a party? Sorry, venue? That's a pretty good answer. Let me see what number answer that is. That's number two. Very close. Sorry. You need a date. That's ambiguous. But no, no. All right. The first this could go on a while, couldn't it? How long have we all got? You want to go late? So we're going to stop at 8.30? We're going to run into Canan is looking nervous now, the first step of the David's answer and I think this is a beautiful answer. The first thing you do when you organize a party, is you need to have a group of friends who want to go who want to dance with each other. Without that don't even bother basically and I think this is a really, you know, if I was to get a bit didactic, I'd say this is a good principle about starting at any party. You don't want to, yeah, there's a social experience. It's about bringing people together and if you're going in it for other reasons, maybe it will have it might be great. You might have a fantastic party. I suppose the question I keep asking myself is why did the loft last for 46 years? And why is it still going? Even after David died? You know, five years, five years? Seven years ago now. Crikey six. Yeah, let's and and this is this is clearly the answer actually is is there's the communal basis. Right. Let's rewind a little bit. Let me I've got this photo up already, though. I was getting organized with the last round. So who's that? Who's the little boy in the front? Do you think that's David? Of course. Does anyone recognize this photo? I'm sure a few of you do. Oh, this is this is the this is the children's home where David grew up. He went into the children's home about about two days old. His mum was not able to look after him. He was he never knew and he never found out anything about his dad but it was a kind of it was he was born in October 1944 and his mum had a very brief affair as far as I understand it with someone else from the military. You know, her husband was away at the time and that's why she then had to sort of shuttle David into a children's home when he was he was born. He never found out I think already said he never found out anything about who his dad was. So from two days old he was he was he grew up in the this children's home it's an is kind of a, it's a compelling story for me. It's it's a he he was looked after by a woman called a nun called Sister Alicia. She

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had only arrived I found out fairly recently in the in this children's home shortly before David was a two year old two day old baby went in there and she had seen quite a lot of miserable kids when she arrived and she was found quite troubling that the you know, there was so much kind of, you know, there just wasn't more happiness in this home and she found that there was this kind of room, which was like a play area that was kind of all barricaded off, and she decided to turn it into a party room and what what, you know, what David remembered is the and what Sister Alicia then later recounted in an interview is that she would started to put on a party, for every child who had a birthday in this children's home, and she would decorate the room with balloons, she would go to a local record store to buy music, and this was this was the environment in which David grew up. He was, you know, it was as if he was being kind of pre programmed effectively to, to live his life wanting to live in, you know, to find the party, the moment that he would feel most at ease with the world, that he would feel most connected with himself, you know, having grown up without parents around him but within this extended family, that was constantly shifting, because kids would always move in and out of these children's homes, that was the nature of them. So it's precarious but it was also very sociable, you got lots of brothers, you got lots of sisters and the person who's in charge of you is basically understands that the best time that you can have the time when you can really let yourself go and overcome the inevitable trauma that you must have experienced, leaving your family at a young age, because all these kids are obviously young David was particularly young, and going into sort of social care. The way you can overcome this trauma is through kind of music and dance. So this is when David says this is what I you know, what's the most important thing you're going to do when you're organizing a party have a group of friends? I think it goes but I mean, everything goes back to this whole, you know, their children's home effectively as a as an experience, I think. I mean, just to kind of give a bit of the biography, I guess, at the age of I think it's five, David returned to live with his mum, because if that doesn't happen at the age of five, according to New York state law, the child goes into foster care. So David, went to live with his, his mum and her lover, David's new stepdad, it was a very troubled home. There was definitely it was a lot of abuse and neglect, hunger. Clearly some violence as well. David became a runaway from home effectively,

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Tim Lawrence 47:40

eventually went into what sometimes called as called reformed school and as soon as he turned, as soon as he was old enough, he just trying to remember if now off the top of my head, and for some reason, I'm blanking if it was age 16 or 18. I'm thinking it was 18 went to live in New York City. In I believe it was 1960. Hang on, if it's 1962. Yeah, that's right. He was 18 years old and with with, like, \$2 in his pocket, so not much money, but already, you know, he was, you know, set on being, you know, set on the kind of, well, it was actually the weekend of the Cuban Missile Crisis, more or less and David, or the peak of the Cuban Missile Crisis, I should say, because they went on for a few weeks and David had already visited New York once for a weekend with a friend of his and it was like, Okay, well, if we're going to have the end of the world through, there's going to be nuclear war and the world is going to end. I least want to have one weekend in New York City. So he went to he went to live in New York City at the first opportunity he could and the reason I'm partly giving a bit of this biography as to say that once David was in that setting, and he had already started to experience this with his mates, he found that he was drawn not to the discotheque scene whatsoever. He wasn't, he was not into transience and he was not into commercialism in any way whatsoever. I think it's fair to say I've never met anyone who is less less interested in commerce, or sort of, I mean, David appreciated the value of making money but the value of making money aside from having enough food to eat was basically to do what sorry, throw party if you don't need that much money to throw a party do you? Sorry, sound system you spent all of your money on the sound system. Hundreds of 1000s of dollars you spend on sound system reach achieving perfection, as all David's spend money on and taking out friends to eat? Yeah. Well, he's running a successful party. Well, yeah, it's good. It's a good question. Broadway his first I mean, we'll hop we're flying around here, but that's okay with everyone isn't it? I hope it better be at Broadway his first location which kind of the party around 70 to 74, I'll keep reminding everyone of the dates because there's lots of different maybe I should put a map up on them but as the first one, it was more or less, it was kind of, I can't really get into this just yet but it was almost subsidized. I think we can say that. I'm right, the next book I'm writing is, is just on David and I'll be getting into I'm not gonna give all the secrets of that book

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away right now but by the time you went to Prince Street, it was a much larger operation and you know, New York City was also changing and already becoming a bit more expensive. I mean, Broadway, the capacity when David moved into Broadway was maybe 150 people is very small, and a Prince Street in Soho, he had two floors, and the capacity was more like 1200 people. He didn't get that every week but he would definitely get 500 or 600 people every week and he was, you know, I think the average price was probably around \$13. So he's got money coming in. The thing with David is he would spend money, always as quickly as he had it coming in, so that there was always a tension there but he did have a proper income from the parties for sure. So going rewinding back to when David arrived in New York City, he wasn't interested in discotheque's, at all, but he loved this scene that this this thing, this scene that was called the rent party scene, does anyone know about the rent party scene? Okay, so the rent party scene is very it's, it's underwritten, it's under historicized but it goes back to 1920s, Harlem, the Harlem Renaissance and it was rooted in that particular period when so this, I mean, the Harlem Renaissance itself kind of grew out of this kind of great migration of African Americans from the rural south to the industrial North, in search of work and Harlem became this area where, you know, predominantly white, New York and overwhelmingly white and your most of the immigration had been from Eastern Europe at that point in terms of migration to New York City. So this Harlem was opened up as a space of where African Americans could live quite often, the rent, they were charged. I mean, I've never quite understood this, but it seems to have been there was a limit, there was limited space, there was limited places where African Americans could live and the rents were often inflated, and the landlords were often absentee. So to solve this problem, African American kind of, you know, tenants would put on a party in order to pay the rent and at that party, it was a house party, they would ask their friends to make a contribution at the door and then they'd go inside, and they would be dancing and they would be, you know, there might be like, they would generally be live music, actually, when when recording technology started to come through more prominently, there might be a record player, but there'd be dancing, there might be some other things that you could buy food, basically food and maybe some alcohol but this was a how this was the beginning of a house party scene effectively within the black community and when

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David arrived in New York City, this was the scene that he was drawn to and it was also there was also what by this point, what had emerged was also kind of a black, queer or black gay kind of rent party scene as well and David became part became particularly drawn to that he'd become, he'd enjoyed hanging out with, you know, young with people of color from a young age from the point when he went from the orphanage to return home and lived within an abusive household, he would often be kind of doing whatever he could to spend the afternoon with his mates and you know, he would tell me about going to what he called the other side of the tracks where the black community lived and that was where he would sort of spend quite a lot of his kind of partying time so this was also a point where he got into black music basically is what day this was David's line about disco is like we we called it r&b What's wrong with r&b You know, why did have to give it a new name, just to kind of give it a new market. They have Larry Levan was the same as they called it r&b music, they didn't really use that term disco. I'm not saying this to denigrate disco just to add an add a little nuance. So this rent party scene that David liked, why did he like the rent party scene because it wasn't transient, and it was intimate and you would get to know people, you wouldn't generally get to know people if you enter into a public discotheque but if you went into someone's home and they invited you, and you sort of started hanging out, you would get to know people and this was just where David felt comfortable and I think it was like an echo of the orphanage on some sort of some sort of level. Obviously not in any literal way, but it was there was a sense of the intimacy, there was a sense of bonding, there was a sense of a diverse community, there was a sense that it clearly wasn't a commercial operation. So David felt at home here and when he eventually opened the loft at where he start, actually, I should say he started to have no, they weren't actually, it was in 1970, that he basically decided, having lived in in Manhattan for what this is about eight years and having lived on 647 Broadway, for about five years, he decided to start his own rent party. So all of this is about ways that you can sort of bond with friends, this is the overwhelming importance of the loft, or the for David of the loft. All right, so we want friends, and we've had the second answer already, which was a space who said space? Well, thank you. Alright, so this is so question to David, what do you do when you organize a party, you get a space, you get your friends, you need a space, space is becoming we all know is becoming

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increasingly precarious, expensive, regulated, often unpleasant now, in, you know, in cities in the United in the United Kingdom, and it's obviously the same in throughout the most of the western world, really, back in the late 1960s and early, early 1970s. In particular, this was a this was a transformational time in terms of the experience of space. As everyone in the room will know, the this was the kind of this moment of the late 60s through the early 70s and it carries on for a little while is this is the moment that marks the shift from industrial to post industrial capitalism. So it was industrial capitalism that had motive to the Western capitalist economy, for most of the wealth for the entirety, really, of the 19th and most of the 20th century. It was around the late 1960s, early 1970s. That industry in the East, in the emerging kind of Tiger Economies started to outperform industry in the West and partly in spite, you know, partly because the labor cost of labor and the cost of space were were cheaper in these in these rising economies.

Tim Lawrence 57:20

And that prompted, shift, it prompted a shift to deindustrialization, in, in the Western world and this in particular, in New York City, the industrial sector was located in downtown New York and it started to empty out during the 1960s. As either man, either manufacturers and small industries closed down, or moved out of the kind of cobbled streets of NoHo and SoHo and went out of Manhattan to a space that was cheaper, easier to access, all of this kind of thing and it was in this situation, again, as many of you will be familiar that we have this, we have this thing emerged that is sometimes referred to as loft living and at the time, it was illegal for anyone to live in these abandoned industrial spaces because they were zoned as commercial in industrial use but the artists and the musicians were kind of you know, had historically been drawn to searching out cheap space for because cheap if something was cheap, it enhanced one's freedom, because it meant you had to spend less money trying to earn money to pay the rent, because the rent was was going to be lower with these spaces. There wasn't even any rent, you would buy the key. I think there wasn't actually no, there must have been some rent. Yeah, there was some rent, it was a very low rent, but you would basically buy the key for a fee, it might be \$1,000 or something and then you could kind of stay living there and pay the rent of the landlord, but it was all it was all effectively legal. Again, as a

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number of you will be familiar. Am I doing really badly for time I am actually aren't I? Yeah, but again, move on. As many of you will be familiar, the, you know, loft living was a kind of as it was, I mean, now it's been completely corrupted. As a it's just about, it's just part of the, you know, out of control kind of property market where everyone is trying to make, you know, trying to make the maximum money on kind of wherever you're going to be living and it's strangulating human beings and the way that we live our lives back in the early, late 60s, early 70s loft living was this kind of experimental form of living, in which generally partly because it was illegal, it meant that the kitchen and the bedroom had to be hidden from view if an inspector came around. So so a lot of the beds were kind of hidden away. There wasn't really any kitchen. So as a way of living in spaces that didn't prioritize domesticity. You know, we were supposed to live in our homes. We were told to live in our homes in order to kind of, you know, ideally get married, have kids, you know, send them, send them to a school, whatever, make some money, this was the purpose of kind of investing in property have a stable environment for a family, which was always revolving around domesticity, but in in this particular era, you know, the the artists and the musicians said, actually, we want to use space more flexibly, we don't really care so much about cooking, we don't really care about, you know, the bedroom side of things. We want to use our space in a creative way and this is what David did. He took he was he was there had been some other artists who were starting the whole parties in, but they weren't anything like the parties that David ended up hosting. So that was the space side of things it was about kind of and it was the other thing about the spaces. Well, what do you what do you have, if you've got an ex industrial building, you've got pretty good space for a party. The floors were beautiful wooden floors, which is fantastic for dancing. It was a fairly intimate space, it may have been, I think it's about 1500 square feet, the ceilings weren't incredibly high. So it was quite intimate space, it was quite nicely divided. There was a kind of, anyway, I don't have to give you the details of how the space was divided but the the acoustics are also pretty good. So this was an it was a part of this was a movement, it was a it was an exciting new lifestyle and when David would eventually start to invite people to party in his home, it was like you're going to a different world, it's going to a different universe, you know, there were no, there were no street, semi abandoned, there were

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no street lights, there were no shops, Dean and DeLuca didn't open until 1977 was the first kind of place where you could buy food in Soho Noho. There were a couple of bars where actors would kind of hang out basically. So it was very it was, this was no go territory, and in some ways, but it was a very exciting development and you would kind of wind your way into into the loft, and enter into this kind of transformational space. All right. Next thing you want to get together if you're going to hold a party. According to David, we've got the friends we've got the space. Sound System. Very good. Fantastic. Well done. You're getting all you got the hang of this by this point. It's great. So yeah, so David from David got very, very interested in sound. The it's transformational moment was when he visited a friend called Jimmy Miller who lived in Brooklyn Heights, I believe, and he was invited over by Jimmy to kind of hang out a little bit and he walked into this room, and he heard this beautiful sound and he's like, what the hell is this sound and it turned out that what the sound was, was a klipschorn speakers powered by a Macintosh amplifier, which at the time was the amplifier, the klipsch, which is the company that made the klipschorn speaker, were promoting as the best kind of amp for that for that setup and David couldn't really believe as is and he became obsessed with sound, he quickly bought his first set of klipschorns, and he very quickly started to get into kind of basically trying to build the most beautiful sound system that he could and the idea was always to kind of accurately reproduce sounds as accurately as, as he could. He had several kind of epiphanous moments during this period where he experienced sound, maybe a nature or live music, a Nina Simone concert at the Fillmore East, or going to the Caribbean for a holiday and here in Trinidad, I believe it was an hearing kind of a steel band practicing in the middle of some woods. Another kind of incredible moment, when he went up to Woodstock, wherever he would go for weekends. He eventually bought a second home up in Woodstock and he kind of saw there was a babbling brook as he described it, and in this babbling brook, in this babbling brook, there was a whirlpool and he put his ear to the whirlpool, and he and he said he heard the infinite detail of the universe and he thought and it was like there was so much sonic detail and it was so complex and from that moment on, it's like I wonder what happens if you can reproduce this level of sonic complexity and accuracy in a party think how good that party is gonna be it's like going to be amazing so so we got very into

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sounds i mean i i'm kind of yeah I don't know how we're gonna get we're gonna get through everything is yeah, we've only got two and a half hours we need 10 The David is just so yes. So anyway, I'll resist going into may well, maybe I should do it now. I'll do it now because we may not get otherwise we may or may not we may not get there. Yeah, I've already said David spent, you know all his spare money pretty much on sound, I mean, he certainly didn't spend it on clothes, there's a little period where he would spend, you know, buy clothes be lost interest in that around 1975 and it was in the second venue on Prince Street to sort of jump forward ever so slightly, that David got into what he would refer to, as you know, where he, he didn't really use these terms. To be honest, the term he was most comfortable with his class A sound, the term that is in more general circulation, I think that he would sometimes uses audiophile sound equipment. What it really means, as far as I understand it, is buying the best possible equipment available. So that the reproduction of sound is is is accurate, you're effectively trying to have it so that the you know, you listen to the original sound recording and the sound that will the way that David likes to put it is you don't hear the sound system. So this is this is completely this is completely against almost every principle that the sound is now organized in DJ culture, and probably more widely. There's, you know, that I mean, David is partly responsible for this. So to add a kind of come in. So to add a little to add a little layer to this in 19, after the loft had sort of opened in February, effectively in February 1970. It's a Valentine's Day party. David was in his experimentations on sound, he introduced two major innovations. One was to introduce what we call tweeter arrays, which was the get and he asked her a sound engineer who he was working with Alex Rozner to help him with this. Actually, let me put let me at least change the photo to kind of make this a little more multimedia.

Tim Lawrence 1:07:02

Where are we? Because I meant to do this? Oops Oh, no. I didn't even bring in that photo after all. I did I did.

Tim Lawrence 1:07:27

So I think I mentioned David's, how much money David didn't spend on clothing, right? So yeah, it was always just like some regulation t shirt loft t shirt that he didn't have to pay for and it was socks whenever

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possible, who it was all when they would come to lunch, this service was taken in London in the in the light, which is where we hosted parties with David for maybe were 10 years until he No sorry, 8 years until he stopped coming over and this was the first party where we guess every does every one recognize that speaker? This is the klipschorn but as you'll see, there's what we call false corners. Coming out of the back of those two that kind of you know, the flap the two flaps of wood if you like, which are quite heavy to carry, as Canan also knows. So so the reason the the does anyone know about the klipsch? Why we have the false corners? What was the klipsch designed for? Yeah, suddenly it's pretty close. Yeah, I mean, first of all klipsch was designed for it was the klipsch the design of the klipsch, the klipschorn has hardly changed since 1947. I believe when it was first kind of when it was first introduced, maybe there was some significant changes between 1947 and 1948, I think but basically, the principles of the speaker haven't haven't altered during that, that entire period and it was designed this was this was at the beginning of the golden age of hifi and stereo and this was a growing economy now is a time of rapid growth in the American economy, post war economy and as the klipsch was the klipschorn was designed for reasonably wealthy people or very wealthy people who would have nice big living rooms and could put the speakers in the corner of their living room and the reason why the klipschorn is was so large is because it has this huge horn and one of the ways of making that horn more efficient, was to have the bass come out of the back of the speaker, and then deflect forward because it's in the corner of a room. So this is the basic design of the klipschorn. What wasn't anticipated is that the klipschorn might be used for other purposes such as running a dance party and in particular you might want to have 4 klipschorn's rather than just 2, because usually this was designed for kind of listening in stereo with 2 speakers, or is it the parties that David would would run I think on Prince Street there eventually 16 of these speakers maybe generally in London, and most places David would go, there will be 5 of them. There'll be a kind of square and then a center, or a rectangle with 4 speaker in each corner, and then a center channel and then the treble frequencies come out of the top part of the speaker and the the rise of as we actually klipsch came up with this design, it wasn't anyone in London or wherever, klipsch came up with these false corners. The riser or I'm not so sure about I think maybe the riser or wasn't an invention of klipsch, I

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can't quite remember, maybe it was even but the point is that obviously it takes the treble frequencies above head height. So if someone is standing in front of the speaker, the speaker of the person standing in front of the speaker won't have all of the treble frequencies absorb into their bodies. So if you want to have this speaker run to a play to a large group of people, then that's the reason for for rising for raising it in the way that we've done in that particular picture. So, and the, the klipschorn was, it was the the, I would say the klipschorn is the key component of David's sound system. I always, I increasingly think over time, I mean, the sound of the klipschorn is very nice. Some people say that the mid range is particularly nice on a klipschorn, some people also say the bass isn't particularly strong on a klipschorn the more I listened to klipschorn the less I am either convinced or bothered about that, I don't know. We had a party, you know, with the speakers 2 Saturdays ago, and, you know, the bass felt kind of pretty full to me. I mean, what it won't do is it won't rumble the bass so that it's kind of you know, coming, you know, it's kind of like your whole body is trembling. It doesn't have that kind of bass is it's rare, I would say it's relatively balanced. Certainly, there's some people who are critique this, this speaker and say that there are now low end frequencies which are being used in especially electronic music production productions, which the klipschorn can't detect and I believe that is true. So there you go, it's no longer is no longer the there's a there's a limit to the fidelity, or the honesty, if you like of the klipschorn, because musicians through you know, new technologies are introducing sub bass frequencies that the speaker can't detect. So that's the limitation. A great deal of the music, if not all of the music that tends to get played at these parties doesn't operate in that way anyway, with these kinds of with rumbling sub bass frequencies that are. Yeah. So anyway, that's just that's the the the thing about the klipschorn I mean, I do think it sounds beautiful, actually. It sounds very balanced, the mid ranges, you know, arguably is particularly good. I think the whole speaker sounds nice personally but to me, the thing that's more significant, and I think probably for David is that there's, it's like being in the presence of some kind of, you know, kindly alien being, when you look at that, to me, it looks like some sort of you want to, you want to you just you feel very comfortable. I mean, I don't want to be critical of the system that is in this room at all but I mean, this is also has a kind of alien sort of presence, doesn't it almost but there's obviously the wood, the

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veneer. The shape, is very endearing. I mean, some one of my good friends called Martin Beck, who's done some very interesting artwork around the loft. In particular, a series of works called last night, which referenced the last night party at Prince Street, which or which happened sometime in June 1984 and it was one of the only parties while probably the only policy from that entire first 15 year period that David allowed to be recorded and the tape it was recorded by Francois Kevorkian, who's a well known remix from producer based in based in New York City and the tapes got to be released, more or less around the time around the late 2000s. You know, 2007 2008 It's a long story that I won't I won't get into but that provided some information about what went on for the entirety of a part a 12 hour I think it was a 12 or 13 hour party. So we can we could hear what all the all the lists were like Martin Beck this friend of mine made this series of really interesting artworks around it. Anyway, Martin told me that when you listen to music on a klipschorn is like being hugged Did I pronounce that right? It's a very warm, it's very intimate. So this is part of the experience and for David, it was the most important thing that you could have on the dance floor is to relax. It's only when you relax, you kind of let go of the tension that you can kind of and you basically, you can do this through music, and maybe some other things that we'll get to later, depending on how it all goes here. There's only there that you could actually kind of, you know, what's the word you could let go of your everyday life, everyday stresses, you know, the trials and tribulations of life and enter into a different dimension that could result in an experience of liberation. So the relaxation was very important, David really felt that if you went to a kind of a public discotheque or something, you wouldn't really be able to kind of relax there. The music, you know, the sound system might be bad, you wouldn't really know the people, there might be funny things going on, there was no way you just wouldn't feel comfortable. So this idea of comfort for David was integral to this idea of kind of transcendence effectively, of love, you know, leaving the individualized self, the self conscious person, the person who has kind of has concerns and troubles and fears, and basically an ego and we all that we all need, we all have egos, and we need our, we need our ego in order to survive. We don't have an ego, we just we flop, as far as I understand things. So some ego is necessary and David was engaged, you know, was constantly engaged in a battle with his ego, effectively. There's another

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side of the DJ that we may or may not get into.

Tim Lawrence 1:16:50

But it's when we let go of our ego, arguably, this idea that we are important and what we do is important, because let's face it, it's not. I mean, it is and it's not, I mean, I'm not advocating that no one ever does anything to try and make the world a better place because I'm very committed to that idea but if we step back from ourselves and are able to observe ourselves or others able to are able to observe the planet, or we're able to observe the you know, what we look like from you know, the expanse, the time and space expanse of the universe, we can see that what we, you know, we're not that important. We always think that we are more important than anyone else. This is I think, this is the truism of human existence. Now, am I being controversial here? Okay. Okay. Cool. So and so to let go, we have to feel relaxed, you know. So there's something about this klipschorn to me that there's this ongoing question, How come it's we How come people love dancing to the klipschorn as much as they do? Why? Sorry?

Tim Lawrence 1:18:07

Yeah. It feels very comfortable, it feels very warm. So this is something people say about I mean, I'm sure that most people in the room I'm convinced you'll all know more about sound than than I will and it's not really my I don't really have an area but what I know about something about one word that kind of comes up in discussions around sound I find quite interesting is this kind of whether whether it's engaging, does sound engage here, sometimes people distinguish between digital sounds and analog sound by using this word, the word engagement. So all I can say is, I think the klipschorns are engaging so so it was at Prince Street, around around around around so I should just the one thing I'll sort of add is the klipschorn is the only ever present component in the lost sound system. Basically, every all other components have haven't been there from beginning to end but it was around 19. This is already, the klipschorn in 1978 79 80, when David started to spend ridiculous sums of money on sound equipment in a kind of completely addictive and obsessional way but it was the best possible kind of obsession and addiction, I suppose I'd say. It was around 78 79 1980 that David started to buy all these other equipments. So there were there were two

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components that I'll reference or reasonably briefly. One is the well let me switch the photos while we're here.

Tim Lawrence 1:20:13

So anyone recognize that? A koetsu, a koetsu cartridge? There are three types and I can't remember which type that is. This was taken in London. So we did actually buy this stuff. I mean, just to give you a little I mean, it's a bit anecdotal but just to give you an idea of what was good. When David came over to London, it was like, he asked me and he asked Colleen Murphy, if we're putting parties with him, Colleen had been involved in the scene in New York and sort of DJing and stuff, but I wasn't, I was writing books, basically and it just started, just started working in university and David said, Do you want to put on parties? And I was like, you know? No, David, you've been ridiculous. I'm not a party promoter and David's response to that was to say, exactly, he didn't want to work with someone who was in the industry if you like someone who has apparently never used the word promoter, he would organize a party, he would host a party. He never promoted a party. I don't know how boring this is for all of you but this this was stuff. This was an education for me, like the nuance language that you had when you started to work with David. I mean, I learned as I sometimes say, is actually not true but I like to sort of give the impression or is at least it's an idea that I learned as almost as much putting on parties with David, as I did when I was writing the book about the 1970s and David's influence on that this book, Love Saves the Day. So David would host parties who had organized while he didn't promote parties, and it was actually, it was technically true in all the 46 years that David hosted loft parties he never once created a flyer. He never once advertised anything on social media. He never once placed an advert on a Village Voice and it makes perfect sense. It's the house party. It's like a rent party. You're asking someone into your home like a birthday party, that sister Alicia would maybe put on to the kids in the children's home. You don't advertise this stuff. Yeah, because it's not for strangers. You're doing it. We're going back to we're doing it for friends and then it's friends and friends of friends and friends of friends, etc. But everyone knows someone and you create an invite list and you write letters. For that invite list. I'll just kind of in my attempt to be a bit more multimedia. I mean, this is this is the letter from 1970 is going backwards and forwards a bit here. Oops. This is from 1972. I think

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it is. I'm just going to enlarge it a bit because it's quite good fun. Can you see that? Yeah. We're on Saturday, December the 23rd. We will have our annual Christmas party. No money will be accepted at this party under any conditions.

Tim Lawrence 1:23:14

Sorry, I thought it was very dramatic and I can see no one is. He wasn't David was it was it was always about community and sharing and it sounds a bit cheesy. I know and a bit kind of cliched, but this is this is kind of what was going on. He was he was a child of the counterculture. Right. Where was I was on the correct. So it was my well, you would ask to be added. So this was the thing? I mean, it's a really good question. This is the thing is that no one was ever turned away but it was you know there was the thing about the loft is it was limited. You could only on Broadway, you could get up maybe 150 200 people in it. Following the summer of 1973 David was able to expand into the next door apartment. It wasn't entirely legal. What he didn't get permission for some of the changes that he did, although they were safe. Basically, there were some arches between these two loft apartments, I guess you'd call them that, that had been filled in with brick work. The arch have been filled in in order to turn them into separate apartments and David removed the brick work. It wasn't structural, this brickwork the arch remained, you just took away the bricks that filled the arch and at that point, he maybe had a capacity of 350 or 400. So, but it's a small number. It's a relatively small number of people and one of the reasons when David went away that in the summer of 1973 to Europe, about which more will be revealed in this next book. Like Nicky Siano who was an acolyte of David who had been going as a 17 year old to the loft and going, you know, having the best time of his life effectively but then got kicked kicked out. After he dealt he was kicked out for the third time for dealing drugs on the loft dance floor. David was adamant that you shouldn't sell anything on the loft dance floor there was no money to be exchanged. So this is one of the things you would pay your money at the entrance, you would you would go in, and once you're inside the party, it was like \$2.99 or something to get in one night it was pretty cheap. Once you were in, everything was free. So the drink the fruit, the food, the fruit punch the cloakroom. Nicky went in there, Nicky Siano, this young kid, and he was dealing drugs, mainly qualudes, it's as far as I'm aware, and whatever

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down is basically and on the third time that he was caught, David kicked him out, Nikki's reaction was to say, Okay, you kick me out I loved I'm going to open up out of my own, initially here at this party was called the Gallery, which went on to be in a hugely influential venue is where Larry Levon and Frankie Knuckles kind of got some work, early work and got more and more into the scene, these two guys who went on to become these kind of legendary DJs of the late latter 70s and 1980s. In particular. So Nicky opened, the Gallery initially opened as a straight, straight party, and it doesn't, it didn't take off at all and then David went to the some to Europe in the summer of 73, to conduct a little business and at that point, Nicky Siano reopened the gallery, and basically the last party that David gave before he went away, that summer, Nicky was standing outside the front door of the loft saying come to the Gallery next week comes over party with us and the Gallery at that point took off. By the time David came back, the Gallery was, you know, absolutely. You know, it was kind of it was it was, there's no question, it was a great party and David visit there was there were numerous copycat parties, the you know, replicated aspects of the loft, including the Paradise Garage and the Warehouse. Try and get back to this a bit later, and David always said the Gallery was the one that was, you know, closest to the loft in spirit and kind of feel and design. Why was I talking about Nicky Siano and the capacities? Oh, yeah, that thank you very much. Thank you. So don't go away. So when David came back, there was a thing of like, well, what's going to happen? You know, you know, everyone that all these Well, actually, David, David's regulars came back people the gallery was a great party people want to get into, this is about the capacity, there was just there was so much demand to come into these parties, but you only would generally hear about it word of mouth. Word of mouth is really interesting. I'm just going to say like, I'll try and say in 15 seconds, that I started a party five years ago, almost to the day, minus couple of months, called All Our Friends for various reasons, but it was very much inspired by many of the things that David, you know, David did and I wanted to explore and to a certain extent, recontextualize but you know, holding on to the core values, really, and All Our Friends has been more or less run without any advertising at all. We're not on social media, we've never advertised you know, how is there's it's been quite an interesting experiment. How on earth can you actually do anything in the world today without advertising on the without social media, and the

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conventional, not all the audience, we have a very simple website, although you can't get entry on the website, if you if we do any pre selling. It's not there's nothing, there's no automated link anywhere. Anyway, it's been interesting to try and build a party from scratch without any social media whatsoever and it's been fantastic. So like, how do people hear about it, you know, people just is everyone writes it down. I have a friend of mine told me this party, and it just spreads, you know, and it's organic, and it's actually feels more solid. So that was the that was the question of capacity and I think I was talking about somehow rather about this there's still about the sound system and saying that David developed the sound system to a very high end. That was pretty much a well is incomparable in New York City in in well, David's venue, David sound was always incomparable. As soon as he got going, sounds engineers would go to the loft and they would say, David would say, what can you introduce, you know, what, can you teach me how I can improve the sound? And the regular reply was no, what can you teach me? David was just kind of developing everything in ways that were unprecedented, really, in terms of a public sound system. I mean, that started a shift, you know, that was challenged when the Paradise Garage opened initially in 1977, and then properly in 1978 and well, we're talking about it. So I might as well just kind of try and, you know, bring bring in this, this this topic roundabout now, but before I do, I'll just say that so, the way that Dave had to first explain what David did, he, the koetsu's were one he started to go he was introduced to a shop called Lyric Hifi on the Upper East Side, which was selling the best equipment available and they had they ended up having a special deal with the, with the money with the creators of the koetsu cartridge in Japan, it was they were being built by someone who was used to kind of create martial arts swords. So it was like very refined kind of use of materials, and put together with, you know, remarkable precision. So he got into the koetsu cartridges, which were the most, I think, Well, they certainly at the time were the most expensive cartridge on the market and you can vary the I think this stone is made of onyx, I think, or some, I'm not quite sure, actually, I'd need to check but you can they're very, they're, they're very impressive, and very dynamic cartridges. So they're perfect, really for a dance party and the other kind of piece of equipment that David got into a big time was was Mark Levinson equipment. At some point, I'm not quite sure if the day I could look it up, I don't

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remember off the top of my head. But I have a feeling it was in the early 1980s. Maybe it was a little bit later, Mark Levinson. Sold Levinson and at that point, Levinson continued but not to the same level of kind of audiophile quality as far as I understand things, but at the time, when Mark Levinson got going, his aim was to he was a musician, as well as an engineer, and his aim was to reproduce was to improve the quality of stereo components. So the so that this so that again, as David also wanted, you wouldn't really hear the sound system when you heard the music, it was like a faithful reproduction of the original recording, so that the sound system itself would be transparent, and the highest end amplifiers and preamps which was the ML one that Levinson introduced were again, they were just the they were the very cutting edge of sound equipment technology back then, and remained so for quite a period of time. I think David's said to me that he thought he ended up spending maybe \$250,000 on his sound equipment at Prince Street that's in terms of money in 1970s. So it's quite it's quite a lot of money and all of this I think is really worth emphasizing is because David had this belief in the power of music. David would often say music is a gift from the gods and by that I it's there's a phrase of sorts of somewhat troubled me for a while I did doesn't trouble me quite so much anymore. I mean, I would sort of think like all music

Tim Lawrence 1:33:09

terrible misses, you know, what about really rubbish music and I think what what David is really talking about is the is the sense of for want of a better term spiritual transcendence and connection and release that you can experience through music, music, it takes it can take you out of yourself, it changes how you feel about about your your day about your life about the moment, David became a roundabout 1980 81 a book was published by a researcher called John Diamond called The Life Energy of Music and David bought like 100 copies of this book and will give it out to everyone and this book was really about the way that certain music can enhance your your life energy, John Diamond was interested in exploring the way in which he was interested if the actual mood and the mental state I suppose you could say, of the musicians at the time of the recording, could be, could be, were effectively transposed into a musical recording, and then could be really listened to at a later day, which is the whole purpose of recorded sound right, by someone else, who would

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then be able to absorb the spirit of the musician and how that musician was feeling at that particular time in that musical experience through the recording. Now, some people think that that argument is a little stretched and far out that you can't necessarily detect the sort of the psychological mood of a musician and have that kind of transposed through the experience of recording, but it doesn't really matter, because what the wider message is very clear and this was David's purpose really, it was the idea that it was through music that we could experience this, this spiritual transformation effectively, this release. I mean, this is music, right? What we know about music, maybe this is way too basic but when we see things we project, that's how the eyes work, the eyes tell us what's around us, especially if there's danger, but maybe also if there's something attractive, and it and it sends those messages to our brain that then tells our body to respond in different ways that the eyes are always externalizing, we look at a picture of a iceberg a painting of an iceberg, we don't feel cold. Generally speaking, if we go to an art gallery, we're in one here, what we generally go around and we do is we we look in relatively quiet contemplation of what's on the wall and we don't generally have a physical response, it's almost anti physical, you're not really encouraged to move your bodies very much, you're not, you're not you generally don't display much emotion. Whereas if we go to a music event, the behavior will generally be very different. Obviously, the Cole invention of the orchestral music space, tried to repress the physical response to music, you were supposed to listen in, in in semi dark and conditions in a chair and concentrate on the music and not move. It was basically amongst other things, an intellectual exercise for the new middle classes of Europe, to give themselves a sense of meaning because they hadn't inherited they hadn't made money, which was not seen as very kind of an enlightened process. They hadn't got whatever they had got through some inheritance through, you know, an aristocratic line that kind of gave you a sense of all this history, and all of this knowledge and all of this wealth. So they bet the middle classes better themselves through class orchestral music, and through art, and through art. This was two this was these were two of the key strategies but when we think about music, and we go to a music concert, or we go to a dance space, of course, what's going on as we're we're constantly moving our bodies, and we're constantly interacting with people around us and this is

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because of the different nature of music to sound music actually come you know, we absorb music in our bodies, this you know, music is a material, unlike. Unlike vision, music, moves around the world through matter. The one thing that music can't, can't move through is a vacuum, obviously, nothing. So music is a material experience and this is why we're always like, you know, find ourselves involuntary moving to music, or whatever, because it is actually entering our bodies and without us even consciously registering that is move we move to it. He also there was a really fascinating piece about rats, dancing rats in the newspapers the other day, did you see that? is the only other animal because we're animals and rats are the only other animals that consciously dance the music. Anyway, I don't know why I said that but it's interesting, you see how you know how we respond to music and for David, this was I mean, I can see I'm sort of running out of time on time. So I'll try and just throw in some thematics as a bit in a bit more of a hurried way and random way than I was planning but for David, this was about it was all about transcendence and music was the key to this, and music could elevate you, it could take you into a higher plane and it could and it was something that worked collectively, it was a way for people to come together. So it was social and, you know, to kind of cut to one of the most interesting things that David sort of said, and so I think which lies at the heart of what he was trying to do is to say that, you know, David said that he said it to a very good friend and colleague of mine who also has been involved with doing parties Jeremy Gilbert, he said some things that he said I'm sort of trying to paraphrase it but sometimes I think that all that's going on is in in the universe is that there's one big party and every now and again we tap into it and the every now and again that we tap into this that's the end of the quote it does I wish it went further but it doesn't the what David meant I know from the every now and again we tap into it was primarily when we go on to the dance floor and so what does it what does this mean? Why is going on to the dance floor kind of you know, help help just kind of tap into the universe and listening to music? It's because of the vibrational state of the entire universe. This is all there is vibrating kind of, at, you know, atoms, there's nothing else across the entirety of space and time, there's vibration and this is all that this is what music is, is vibration and it's all dances, its vibration, and the way that we can understand our, the way we can kind of attain some level of humility, potentially, and through

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some humility, a sense of spiritual transcendence and release is through entering into these situations where there is all this vibration going on, where there is music, and there is dancing and by engaging in the music and the dancing, we actually at some point, forget about our individual selves, and we enter into something which is on it exists on another dimension. So this was, you know, this was this was this was the kind of the role of sound, really, the sound and music was to provide access to this and then there's kind of there's then it's about, you know, maximizing that experience through the sound system and it's, this is why and David became particularly just became he was unusually devoted to music and to musicians. This was part of his issue with DJing and it became sort of I don't want to say legendary, but maybe it did really. He developed a whole ethos, if you like, arounds for grounding the music and and respecting the music, and therefore, David would say the musician, I mean, there would be points where it'd be but David, you don't understand. So David might say that, you know, for example, a remix is always worse than the original recording. This is one of his kind of lines because by the through the remix, you're kind of basically destroying the original musical intention. At the time, I thought it's a ridiculous thing to say. Now I think probably David's like 95% right probably, but maybe I'm just getting older I don't know but you know, like it's like yeah, so much remix thing is like is a complete waste of time and does kind of actually less than some music but but it's all but what David but David was playing a whole bunch of remixes without knowing it. So you know, it was like so and of course people who do people who do remixes are also musicians. So I'm not trying to say that there's not complexity here or the David's always right but anyway sorry you were

Tim Lawrence 1:43:00

to make it more what Sure, well this is the whole of remix and David look, I'm sure we do you want to have listen to a bit of music? See if I can find it. Does that electricity thing is we're on the subject of Larry Levan. Seeing as we're on the subject of Larry Levan h2.

Tim Lawrence 1:46:46

sorry tough luck right oh let me get my useless notes so yeah that was a that was Man Friday Larry Levan remix that David played and yeah, there's there wasn't consistency and what David was saying on this

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regard but when I first met David in 1997, and first went to a loft party, you know, quite soon afterwards, and there might have been three people in the loft that night, it was David David was the was, was so out of sync with history, it's almost impossible to describe when I first heard him, he didn't mix records. He didn't play above 100 DB. Hopefully, I'll get on to talk about that a little bit. He wasn't using PA equipment, he was using kind of high end stereo. He wasn't open to the public. He didn't mix records here. He actually advocate he was anti mixing, he thought you shouldn't mute. I mean, more than the remix, David was actually because he understood that the role the role of the remix, that can also remix was also form of musicianship day David's real thing is, then don't interfere with the intention of the of the musician, even if the musician is a remixer. So he just didn't want to hear this was this was some I mean, we're here talking about sound I'm sorry if this is a bit random, but everything kind of connects eventually to something else, I suppose but this became David's big thing and it happened in the late 1970s When he went into class A audiophile level equipment throughout his entire system. I mean, I'm going to read I'm going to flip back ever so slightly to something that I know I started to talk about, and then I kind of got lost sidetracked somewhere, but around about I did I did start to say, and then I can't remember what happened, but he around 72 I guess 1973 maybe he worked he commissioned Alex Rosner this engineer to create these tweeter arrays, which was clustering tweeters together as if they formed some sort of like chandelier or some sort of alien spacecraft hanging on the hung them from the ceiling and this enabled David to accentuate the treble frequencies when he thought they would be worthwhile doing that. Give the party a bit more energy. This is this is the Prince Street loft, by the way, okay, if anyone's wondering. So he created these tweeter arrays, he thought some, maybe some records are a little bit muddy, and he wanted to be able to accent the kind of treble frequency. Once he had done that he realized that he created an imbalance in the system. So he then got this guy Richard Long who had become the the engineer who created the sound system at the Paradise Garage, but hadn't yet gone down that route. So Paradise Garage wouldn't happen for another 4 years or so. He got Richard Long to build him bass reinforcements so that he could sometimes boost the bass and he had the ability to create as much extra bass as he had extra treble and these were, these are transformative developments within

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the for want of a better term, I don't know the discotheque industry, nightclub industry, whatever we're going to call it. Not only because all the private parties that were beginning to emerge in one way or another duplicate, replicate what David was doing also kind of were interested in these technologies. In night around 1979 1980, when David started to go with Mark Levinson amplifiers and Koetsu cartridges and a whole bunch of other kind of esoteric kind equipment, he started to phase all of this out and disowned it and he said, actually, you all you need to do, and this is goes back to his kind of, if you like, respect, respect for work for music, all you need to do is reproduce the music as it was intended by the original musicians, including the engineer, the producer, and everyone involved in that. That's the we need. This was David's like you should have humility in the presence of this music. It was all it was semi religious and there was always something religious about what David did. He wasn't entry wasn't involved with organized religion. But he was raised by a nun who put on parties. I mean, I didn't get in this line earlier on, but that's what date David was basically a bearded sister, Alicia, this is what he grew up to do and he carried some of her religiosity with him, basically, you know, you went to the loft and this was like a spiritual experience. You had a you it was transformative. You came out, David would always say was the London parties, but it was his general, like, you would leave with more energy than you went in. After dancing for 12 hours, which shouldn't really be the case, obviously. So you went people had this kind of let David also looked, we haven't got him in the photo, but you look like Jesus, as well. Basically. I mean, there's a lot of people that like Jesus in those days, so maybe that's not so such a notable thing but, but yes, but David looking like Jesus, so so people were, you know, people were a bit higher than that could also kind of resonate, that that sense. Certainly does old flip back to Francis Grasso the Sanctuary this the other key guy he only Francis was only really on top of his game, if you like for for maybe two years and then he went the way that you know, DJ culture, discotheque culture is a transient culture largely and David didn't want transience and he created a situation where himself where he wasn't vulnerable to transience. He didn't like, you know, it wasn't what he was into but the this the nightclub industry, discotheque industry is it comes in and goes, Francis was out after two years but for those two years, he was influential and the Sanctuary was located in an old church that had become fallen into disuse and the Francis Grasso DJ

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booth was in was by the altar and the pulpit and so you have this immediate kind of link kind of gets to be established between the preacher and the DJ and then it's obvious really, it's, you know, people, this was, I mean, I never I'm not sure I ever fully understand religiosity in the United States, but from what I understand it's on the rise, and has been for some time. So it's possible that it's a more religious country than the United, there's more following of organized religion in the United States than there might be in the United Kingdom but still, what we've seen across the course of the 20th century, in particular, the post war era, in particular from the 1960s onwards, is, well, it is a readiness to kind of, you know, to question, the way that institute organized religion in particular kind of operates, and the rules and regulations that are required of it's kind of, of its of its of its congregations and there have been many people in particularly young who've been willing to switch to kind of switch, you know, get rid of religion and stop going to kind of, you know, religious, you know, organized religious practices but that doesn't mean that they want to let go of a kind of, you know, the spiritual dimension of what it might mean to be human on this planet and clearly, what happened in with with DJ culture, is that you, you had the emergence of these new figures, who had, you know, a kind of a charismatic, semi religious, spiritual presence. So the DJ, the DJ kind of took the place in some respects of the preacher of the priest. You know, there's clearly ties with the shamanistic cultures as well and what goes on within with DJ cultures and this is this is how David was sort of understood. So he, he spent he it was all about so when, by the time he started to spend maximum money on this stereo equipment, he's like, I don't want to interfere with it anymore. This is what's going on here is higher than I am, what these, you know, he's like, I, you know, I can barely play the triangle, you know, nevermind a musical instrument. So I'm going to let the musicians get on with what they're going to do and I'm not going to interfere. Now this went against everything that was kind of developing within why the DJ culture, the DJ culture was all about the kind of the presence of the DJ, the skill of the DJ, the ability to kind of start mixing between two records to extend. So I mean, I co host a podcast. The love is the Message with this friend of mine and colleague, Jeremy Gilbert, and the last the episode that's just gone out, and the episode that's just about to come in is on the rise of the 12 inch single and remix culture and I'm going to do a special kind of episode for patrons on

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Walter Gibbons, who is also a hero of mine. So I fully understand the kind of you know, and Walter was the DJ who was more than any other DJ in New York City, including Kool Herc up in the Bronx, was mixing between the breaks with unbelievable skill and position precision and extending those breaks, to the point that it kind of

Tim Lawrence 1:56:14

created additional demand for the 12 inch single to come out and for DJs to acquire a remix role, because they were the ones who understood indeed, where those records how those records could be reshaped and David would play all those records, you play hit and run by the Loleatta Holloway, which was one of Walter's greatest hit Play 10% by double exposure, Walters. So it's not like David was against remix culture. He just had this instinct. I think what David was really talking about is house music. So it's a remixes of giving a house remix to a disco track and so I did end up agreeing with him largely on this, I bought so many of these records, masters at work remixes of disco classics or whatever and eventually, I got rid of every I think every single one of them probably but it's I still love remixes but maybe there's maybe there's a particular kind of there was a rapaciousness to DJ culture and dance culture in the 1990s in particular, is the rise of the superstar DJ \$20,000 or pounds or whatever, for re mixing a high profile artist, just as much money if not more for a high profile gig, you know, egos out of control and this was when I met David and it's like, Ah, I've met someone who has a set of values about the communal spiritual experience of the dance floor. That is not about all this kind of throw away big money, ego way of going about the culture, but it's actually much more grounded in something that's sort of community based. So I just, it's not about being right or wrong. I'm not here to tell anyone who's got a good a house remix of a disco classic. That is just how I reacted to it and how I related to David, but I'm also trying to explain he wasn't against remixes per se. He understood the he certainly understood the value of them. So he got to the point. and this became interesting, where he didn't want to interfere with the record and he stopped that he initially David would always blend records, you know, and he described it to me in quite a nice way I thought his his like, he's like, it's because he was saying this after he had stopped it altogether. But he said look at a little bit of blending is all right, you know, you've got the outro of one record and the intro of another

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record and it's like they waving hello hello to each other as they pass one from to the other. I really like that and the parties I'm involved with this is primarily what will go on, you let the record end we have just a little brief little blend, little Hello, little wave. As a as a crossover, is kind of nice. It's not about but the point when I mean, again, to provide this context about why David was and I think remains so compelling. I was going to let's just depersonalized this, I'll just say I was going out and some DJs just seemed to be so interested in playing with the equalizer constantly. That it got to the point where you just couldn't hear the record and it sort of initially I love this stuff. I thought it was like ingenious. I thought there's people who were doing this play around reinvent the record in a spontaneous way were were the real artists and then after a while I found it got tiring. It felt like everything felt the same act really and it was actually about the performing DJ and I mean, this isn't something really I've touched on yet but I'll throw it in because I know time's running out and I just saw it I was like this is a bit of a great random greatest hits moments in the life of David Mancuso, and my They acknowledge of it rarely but David's whole thing was while we was maybe I'll get to it anyway, maybe I shouldn't spoil it as kind of a punchline almost but no, I'm just gonna say they got to the point where David's life is all about the science of the party and this transcendent communal experience, and how can you maximize that and David's thing is, you maximize that by reducing the presence of the DJ. So when I was going out was all about the DJ, I moved, I moved continents to be closer to a DJ called Louie Vega, basically, you know, it was worship. I bought it was I bought masters at work remixes in the same way that as a 13, and 14 year old about David Bowie albums. It was like it was a rock mentality, basically, for want of a better term. I didn't really understand yet that dance music is much more pragmatic. You don't buy every single remix of your favorite remix, because some of them are great, but some of them can be very boring or not so great and it's a different relationship. This is the beauty of 12 inch culture as it eventually emerged. It means that people who are buying music could really buy the music they wanted, and often wouldn't buy the version that appealed on thseven inch or the album because it wasn't as good as the 12 inch single and who was bothered if the music industry made a bit less money that way, it was kind of because the music industry's whole model was to rip consumers off. You sell the 7 inch, the 7 inch, the seven inch consumers about the 7

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inches, then you sell them the album and they're buying all the seven all the music a second time, plus some often fodder. So the 12 inch was kind of you know, this whole the culture that David was part of, and we're not even going to get into the record pool, which was his attempt to kind of successful attempt to get you DJs.

Tim Lawrence 2:01:56

So nicely colored this one, why couldn't I have this one earlier? Anyway, so David, let's just cut so yeah, so David's whole thing that I was talking about, again, this experience of meeting David at the point where the DJs were the heroes, but it was getting it was the culture was getting tiring, it was actually getting a bit boring, and David's whole thing was more powerful this mic, David's whole thing was, isn't the party's not about the DJ. The party is about the people who dance, and you will have the best party if the dancers are encouraged to dance with each other. If the focus of attention is the DJ, and this is that still the case, probably in most venues, I would imagine. If the focus or the attention of the DJ, then basically what you have is all of the dancers facing in one direction towards the DJ, that means that most dancers are dancing with someone else's back. Because everyone's facing in the same way. It's as if you're a concert, a rock concert, everyone's facing in one direction. Whereas actually, the dance floor comes alive as if there's kind of interaction and on you turn on one spot, and you find you're dancing with eight different people. This was what was going on. Clearly at the loft at a great deal. It was a very free form very kind of free environment. I'll switch photos quickly to at least bring on a dancer so that you get see a few more of these images. Did I even bring this one in? Oh, no. Maybe Oh, yeah. Loose. This is Loose Kee, I think is Roseanne, I'm not entirely sure of her name. Loose was a kind of loft and garage regular for decades. So it's all about it was always about the dancer. For David, it was not about the DJ. So he would set up the entire sound system to encourage people to not face the DJ booth but to face the music. Effectively when he moves into Prince Street, a second location that the architect talked him into building having a raised DJ booth because it suited the architecture of the building and David did that and after a couple of years he was it just wasn't comfortable at being like you know, this raised figure that everyone should be looking at and so he moved the booth a great expense back onto the floor because that's where he

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wanted to be and when we were doing parties in London, this this was clearly something he did wherever he went, he would always he played this little game and say, Okay, where are you going to put the DJ booth? The booth? Where are you going to put the speakers? And what I quickly learned is that his his approach to this was as you went into the room, the first thing you would always see would be the dance space and the mirror ball and then as he fully entered the room, the final thing you would see would be the DJ booth, the booth. Because the party was not supposed to be about the DJ, it wasn't about the ego of the DJ, the performance of the DJ, the beauty of the DJ, the charisma of the DJ, it was about a space where everyone was going to interact and it was through that, that you would have this kind of transformative experience, you know, the policy would go higher, or I got 10 minutes. It's going to be tough. What else? I mean, I'll briefly say that the garage went in a different direction, you know, but this is this is not the garage went in a different direction, but the other direction it went in, into or down towards whatever the right word is, was very considered, and very sophisticated and developed and David had, you know, under, you know, had a lot, you know, he's close with Larry Levan. He understood that Larry Levan was all was was all about the music and was, you know, very brilliant in his own way. His concern with the garage is that for David, it's sort of ended up trying to give the impression of being something it wasn't the garage tried to frame itself as being a house party but it wasn't a house party. It said that it was an invite party. So come to my birthday kind of thing that David was doing but it actually sold the invite cards, which were called membership cards. So David felt like it was kind of avoiding new, the cabaret license laws somewhat deceitfully, because it was still effectively being run as though it was a club but I mean, you know, I'm not sure you know, I think there are complexities here. It's not like I'm just trying to take David side on everything. Clearly the garage wasn't all set, it wasn't a regular, a regular club, you had to be a member or guest of a member in order to get in. So there will and there's no doubt that the energy and the sense of communal transcendence, the garage was something extraordinary. If I had more than 10 minutes, I'd now play Go Bang. The Dinosaur L 12 inch, which I'm sure many of you are kind of familiar with anyway, so I see some smiles. So that's good but that was you know, this was a favorite record for both Larry Levan and David Mancuso, but it was that there was something

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about that the you know, the Julius Eastman kind of going the operatic kind of climax on on Go Bang, that would produce this kind of, you know, remarkable kind of crescendo, which captured in particular what was going on at the garage. It was like Francois Kevorkian with, you know, said in at least I mean, to me, but I'm sure to many other people. How, you know, there was the the other time many people thought that the garage, just kind of you know, they blew the loft away. Danny Krivit another one who would say this, you know, the sound system was so the sound system wasn't a stereo sound system, they tried to retain a great deal of precision but they also wanted to kind of make it louder than David was interested in going. It was about 100 and you know, they played it to 130 decibels. David would play 100 DB, almost religiously, he might go up to about 103 DB. Why did the loft last longer than the garage? I mean, there's, you know, there's lots of answers to that question and some of them are quite simple. But why has the loft endured for so long? Why did David into it for so long? It's partly about I think it's partly about 100 DB. You know, you're you're not really supposed to listen to music above 80 DB for more than 40 minutes. As far as I'm aware, you go into a conservatoire and you go into one of the piano practice rooms, and it will say it will, there'll be warnings on there'll be signs on the wall that warn you against prolonged piano play, because it's above 80 DB, and if you carry on, you'll damage your ears and if you're gonna go down, if you're going to hold our weekly party, you know, there's going to be an awful lot of ear damage if you're playing it too loud and David, I haven't really talked about this David is ridiculous. We've got to find a different way to do this. David in a way the key thing is David came out of counterculture. You know, this was the context of the entire time and David was very invested in it. So it was you know, he was very invested in the anti war movement. In particular he was definitely you know, committed he was committed to all of the all of the liberation movements Gay Liberation, feminism, and you know, perhaps more than anything I can't believe I'm only saying this now it's because it comes last on this list of the got 4 page, 4 pages of points to get through and I haven't even got through the first So it doesn't really matter the answer to the I mean, I should maybe I should just say quickly, it was like you know we got I was gonna ask you what do you do to prepare a party shall I at least finish that we got friends space sound system was struggling to get through sound system right now but let's just say the garage took

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the sound into suddenly that became overwhelming. You know you lost yourself completely in the music and many people learned that they love that experience and they didn't want to go to somewhere like the loft, where you weren't overwhelmed by the music, you know that the peaks at the garage were were were higher, were more powerful than the peaks at the loft but David stuck to what he was doing and loft regulars stuck to what David was doing, because that's what they wanted. They didn't they wanted something that was kind of, you know about kaleidoscopic musical energies and movement and synchronization rather than something that was more tribalistic. If you go for a very big volume, you get something that's kind of you know, is more of a unitary tribalistic response and arguably, this is would be David argument is less sustainable over time. Because you just become your body becomes tired, you know, Larry Levan became tired.

Tim Lawrence 2:11:21

It's a it's a, it's a whole other area to get into but I mean, just to kind of at least wrap up this thing about the music because I know that that was that was kind of also connected to so to top that, that that strand, David got to the point where he got rid of the tweeters. He got rid of the bass reinforcements because he said it's a corruption you don't need it, just listen to what the musicians are doing. That's enough. It was about the DJ not having an ego and interfering is if the DJ is more important than the actual recording. Now, this is you could say this is very old fashioned and I accept that entirely and I would also say that it got to the point where the act of a DJ mixing beats between records became something that I've thought was sort of become profoundly boring. Especially because the mix itself became predictable. It encouraged producers and remixes to make predictable records that always had beats as an outro to make them easy to mix and this is like you know, this is infantilizing music on some sort of level, arguably and it also meant that the records that the DJs would start to select were easy to mix, because there was so much emphasis on that so the quality of the music went down the almost everyone agrees on this, maybe I'm completely wrong and it also meant that all the records started to sound the same, it became boring, you know, it's everything was 120 BPM give or take a few BPM. So we can argue with David for being old fashioned and for being on you know, conservative and billet you know, and wanting to get rid

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of the mixer and wanting to get rid of the tweeter arrays and want to get rid of the, but what it did in effect is it promoted a much more dynamic, much more diverse kind of music culture. There was much greater variety in the music that you would hear at the loft than anywhere else, including unquestionably the garage. You know, David's music went further. I mean, I haven't really talked about this, have I but this is crazy. So let me just try and also briefly say that what David and this comes also to LSD. Let's talk about LSD for at least you know for a few minutes

Tim Lawrence 2:13:43

oh, I took away the I was gonna, I was gonna quickly say, you know, the the list. Let's get through this bloody list drove me mad. Fantastic. So I think we've dealt something with some some of this stuff to do with the sound, which I really did want to try and cover. So then it's like we and we also got the other how do you how do you even what, what, what's the next thing you do with the party, you invite your friends. First of all, you got to get together with a group of friends to organize it. I can just vouch for this. It works. Well, you know, Lucky Cloud sound system that we started with David in 2003. It hasn't always been entirely smooth but somehow or other we're about to celebrate 20 years, is it's just not that common, really. So I think they're getting together with friends is a really in this was David's thing. He didn't want to work with promoters who wanted to work with people in user builds of social foundation. If you're going to stop, right, so then you invite the friends and David would do it. I showed I think I showed a letter just before didn't I would send out these letters. Anyone could join the invite list and anyone on the invite list could bring a guest we now I now do the same thing at all our friends for example, there would be food provided you wouldn't want to you wouldn't pay for the food and the food would help you dance throughout the entirety of the night. So I think this is kind of you know, it's you don't usually you wouldn't go to a discotheque or a club and get food but at the loft, there was always food and again, part of the idea was about social inclusion, some people haven't always got food to eat. So you kind of you make sure that there's an offering and it's back on my list. This was David's anecdote to me. What do you do when you're only when you arrange your party? The last thing? Come on, we're gonna throw this open. Just what's the last thing you do? When you organize a party, according to David? Very good. I liked that reply. Yeah, no, this is

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before the party actually starts, but you're organizing a party? Oh, I see. That's probably now I think you've actually added a new answer there. That's actually legitimate. So thank you very much. Yeah, I'll add that to the next time I give this rambling talk. What's the last thing? Well, did I say decor? I sort of did I did I tried balloons, bit of lighting. Yeah. David loved balloons, because it was like, you know, reminded him of the chart of the shore of the birthday party. So David, love it. I should also say with the decor, there were never any clocks or any mirrors in the loft. You shouldn't be watching what the time is, you shouldn't be looking at yourself in the mirror to kind of because you become inhibited. It's about letting go of these things and entering into a different dimension effectively. It also got to the point, when once phones became popular, there'll be no phones on the dance floor. There were never one of the reasons why these images are maybe seem a bit odd to some of you is there were never any cameras on the dance floor or the loft. Maybe it's a some you know, the more recent parties, people use their phones surreptitiously, and you can see, but very little even even then there are no photos of the loft dance floor in action, barely of the loft interior, for this entirety of 1970 to 1985. It's quite remarkable, really and again, it was because people might feel inhibited if they feel like someone's photographing them. This was a you know, as I was talking about counterculture, wasn't I, this was a this was a thing that defined the loft and put it at sync also with the Paradise Garage or to be throwing this stuff around a little bit randomly now, but David's thing was everyone is welcome. No one is checking your identity at the door. So when I first met David, the few summary lines I'd heard about the loft was it was a black gay party. I said David Davis, a black a party. It's a black gay party. Was it black gay party? No. There were a significant number of black gay men there. David was dating at the time a black gay man called Larry Patterson have thrown a little anecdote. Some months into the loft starting I don't know how many months maybe it was even a year. I don't know. Not that long. Larry Patterson turn round the David and said, David, David, what's more important to you, me, or the party? That was the end of the relationship and David, never, you know, this, David was became married effectively to the party. It was his entire life. You know, there might be occasional flings here or there but you know, basically, it was an entire this is anyway. So I was throwing in random things, and now it lost track of what I was saying.

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Tim Lawrence 2:18:27

So the last thing you ask, do we answer that question? No, we never got that, did we? The last thing you do other than clearing up is find someone to put on the records. The DJ. So this is a bit disingenuous, arguably, because David went on to become, you know, the person who would be putting on record so you know, most of his policies for the first 15 years, I think, you know, he hardly took a week off. I mean, I do want to sort of give some emphasis to the sheer stamina of David, who did this on a week put on weekly party and when he moved to Avenue A they became he fell on hard times. They became fortnightly and David got into some sorts of complications, shall we say between 1984 and roughly 1997. When I met him, the member he asked other people in particular Douglas Sherman to step in for him, but it would always be at the last minute. So the the idea that that you are the anyway, that generally speaking, David was doing the musical hosting he liked to call it that became his preferred term. It didn't like the time DJ. He didn't like the term DJ because he wasn't into transience and he'd never played outside of his own home and he didn't perform. David's line was have I got like that 3 minutes or something? One? David's whole thing was, you know, he doesn't want people to this was partly the no photos thing he didn't want people videoing him and photographing because he, mainly because he wants, he didn't think he was that important to the party. He wanted people to be dancing with each other and David's dream was that the party would carry on without him. There were a few times he came to London and he fell sick while he was over. He always found London a bit sort of cold and damp and Colleen, stepped in a couple of times this occurred and when it turned out that a whole bunch of people, maybe 50 people out of 300 people wanted a refund. David was absolutely appalled that someone would not go to a party because he wasn't playing. He always does he thought was a disgrace and so after that, we stopped even putting on the when we were sent out, we we basically ran an email list to kind of publicize the parties and we at that point, we stopped saying that David would be the musical host. So that when people wouldn't therefore ask for a refund but anyway, this is how David saw things and because I've got no time. I mean, I just want I'm gonna got I gotta have like two minutes or something. So as the DJ, the last thing you think about as the DJ, okay, and this is there's a tension

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here because David was so innovative in the way that he would DJ and part of the innovation partly relates to LSD and that is the one thing that he didn't mention to me when he says, What do you got to do to prepare for a good party. He didn't say make sure you got a good supply of LSD or people know how to access LSD but it can help and it certainly helped the Valentine's Day party of 1970. The first loft party even though the loft didn't have a name. People eventually called it the loft and it became what David described as a given name but that party as is, many of you in the room may be well aware of this, it was a Valentine's Day party. So it became the Love Saves the Day party love saves the day evokes Valentine's Day, maybe a more universal idea of love, than the sort of heteronormative version of love that has come to dominate Valentine's Day. So those that love saves today, universal love. I was talking about counterculture. This is another thing that this is the black gays. Everyone was welcome at the loft. David said no one is checked. When I was going David was a black gay party. No one was checking your identity at the door and one of the his reasons he started to have some distance from the garage is that the garage in order to make it so enable itself to run successfully two nights a week turned Saturday night into gay night and Friday night effectively into straight night. David's thing is why can't we all dance together? He's like, the revolution is to be had when people come to dance together is more or less that. Now this is somewhat there is some tension between this and the the rise of identity politics and the gay men of color who would go because it was Latin as well as Black, who would go to the garage on a Saturday night felt that there was no there were very few places in the world where they could feel comfortable and felt feel like they were they were in a majority, let's say and so we can see this happening throughout the Western world and beyond from the in particular the late 1970s onwards, groups are beginning to organize around identity and wanting to be with people of their own kind but you know, it preceded this as well. It wasn't it wasn't the first time this has happened but it started to accelerate around then. There's there's no right or wrong here. Of course everyone is free and should be encouraged to gather as they want to in safe conditions where they can express themselves fully and you know, I will always be supportive of that. I at the same time have some sympathy with David's idea that there is something particularly beautiful about a situation where everyone irrespective of their race, their gender, their religion,

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their sexuality, at their age, can come together as at one and this sort of I would think on some level links into David's experience with LSD. He started to take LSD when it was still legal. He continued to take it after it was illegal and the second the other reference point of the Love Saves the Day party of Valentine's Day 1970 was that it was an LSD party love saves the day has the initials LSD, and that everyone at that party was taking LSD and LSD LSD trip would generally last for 10 hours, maybe for 12 hours depending how much you take and all the rest of it and this is the beginning I would say of kind of contemporary DJ culture but also this experience of the centrality and the multi-dimensional wonder of music is I mean, it's music and on its on its own terms, which we've all experienced as being kind of, you know, you can have this you can be completely enraptured with it, and it can take you over. But when you're on LSD, you can, again, depending on how much you might take, it kind of heightens your auditory and visuals, it heightens all of this, all of your senses actually have touch of sight, sound, smell and you one can have the experience of like the music, fully entering your body and your and the music effectively moving your body. I mean, I've had a few experiences where I'll say, Okay, I'm not going to intentionally move my body at this point, and just see what happens and see what happens when the music starts to move your body and it's a beautiful experience. So the the thing to note about LSD as well is that it's it's, it's, it's a journey and the journey has stages and Timothy Leary may be somewhat controversially drawing on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, or define these stages as 3 Bardot's and there was the the entry, the circus and the reentry, I think those were the terms that were used but effectively, what you're doing is you're kind of entering into the psychedelic experience where thing, your perception of what's going on around you and your place in the world and indeed, the universe starts to kind of change and David started to develop a whole new kind of musical introduction that would go with this prelude, in particular, when he moved to Prince Street, and the party started to run for 12 14 16 hours, sometimes, this is a this is a long party, it puts what goes on today, generally to shame or personally. So there will be this kind of long intro, and then there would be this deep transcendental phase that might be kind of more introspective, that, you know, would be you know, there will be kind of more esoteric kind of outro kind of records and then the final stage would be the reentry where you would reconnect with your

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surroundings, the people around you. In musical terms, it might be more uplifting, there might be more vocals and the thing that happened is that David kind of selected music, in relationship to the LSD trip, but also in relationship to the dancing crowd. The acid enabled him to have this, you know, this kind of communication with the dancing crowd that became kind of very direct. There was there was, I mean, there was no real obvious separation, I think David would say, for example, that people come up and request a record and that that record would already be on the turntable as the next election, it became quite psychic, David called this the third ear is like the third eye, the all seeing eye, the third ear is the all hearing ear and this is what this is, this was what this was, what kind of different became this new definition of the potentiality to use this quite crude term of DJ culture but it's not really about the DJ, it's about someone selecting music in a kind of energetic relationship to kind of everyone who's dancing and for it to become a conversation and I suppose just to end because I know it's I feel like we're just getting going, I know everyone's exhausted, I'm sorry, I'm gonna let you go and live your lives and become happy again, and all the rest of it.

Tim Lawrence 2:28:33

But what was I gonna say, just reached the climax, I forgot. This was this is like, this is the most radical music in the history of the world. What can go on in this situation, there's nothing that compares to it, you know, to a certain extent, DJ culture, you know, digital, you know, you press the right buttons and mixes digitally and everything is kind of smooth and kind of, etc. I don't know, there's there's nothing wrong with that, per se but it's not, it doesn't I'm not sure how it necessarily kind of captures one emotionally and spiritually in terms of a relationship. Obviously, it can. I'm not gonna get into vinyl technology and that whole thing about the the emotion and the tactility and the engagement you have when you play vinyl versus something that's digital, the digital might sound cleaner and even more precise than the rest of it, but doesn't usually engage in quite the same way but anyway, be that your many of you may well disagree with that. I don't know but what I want to say is from 1970, and in the loft, basically, and it carried on for a good while though, I'm not sure it's been taken forward significantly since let's say 1984 85 That maybe it was the peak of the culture, but DJ culture as through David in the loft primarily as the as the key pioneers

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where this took the musical experience further than it had ever gone historically, previously and I would say further than it's ever gone, since you would have 14 hours of music that cuts across time and space, in terms of genre in terms of tempo, in terms of kind of, you know, energy in terms of form different forms of musicianship, it was David, who was the first to break artists like Manu Dibango, and Fela Kuti in New York City and therefore, in, in the Western world, on some sort of level, there was an open environment to integrating all of the sounds in the world that was facilitated by sound, it was facilitated by acid, it was facilitated by a mixed crowd, that came from diverse communities that therefore wanted would respond to different kinds of sounds, different kinds of energies and this, this musical experience drew on the on the entire pad had the potential and effectively did draw on the entire entirety of recorded music history, across time and space and it would, it would process or, or integrate that music, as an as a journey as an interconnected journey, every record that was selected made sense, and was connected to the previous record, and the record that was about to come in. So there's nothing random about this and it was improvised. It was democratic, because it was never, this could never happen if David was just kind of in his own room, you know, in his own front room, basically doing it by himself. He perfectly understood that this was a collective enterprise, he got to the point where he said, I am not the owner of the loft, I don't put a set I might I might put a record on a turntable is as far as he would go. In terms of what he actually did is put a record and send it I tried to make sure it's technically correct, the record was clean, the needle was clean, it would play Okay, without bumping or whatever. You know, that's the rest was all about an energetic communication enabled by this infrastructure that I'd been trying to sort of describe and this, this, this was democratic. So it was collectively reproduced, and it was improvised. It was unrepeatably and you could not come modify it. You couldn't reproduce, you couldn't record this and then release it and I just look, maybe I'm ignorant. But I don't know when you have anything musical. That's kind of what it was and it was weekly. So this deep community was formed and through that deep community, which was formed partly through it being a house party and a rent party in someone's front room. Someone estimated that David invited, you know, if you if you count all the people, not as individuals, but as you know, people going through the front door, David

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invited hundreds of 1000s of people into his home, and didn't tell anyone what to do. Didn't need take off your shoes. Can you do the dishes pleased? Can you make the bed after you said can you not drop litter? Can you clean the toilet? It never asked anyone to do anything and it was this communal effort that went into making this music over this period of time and formed this depth of the community and there's still people who go to the loft in New York today who've been going since pretty much day one. I mean, many people have died. Of course, many people are going in different directions but it's this. So this is what I want to just kind of end on in terms of sound and music. It's like where on where on this planet? Have we been taken further? And the answer to that is I don't know. All right, that's as far as we're gonna get tonight. Thank you

Canan Batur 2:33:52

Thank you so much Tim for such generosity. I know. Thank you for bearing with us. We had some other plans, but we wouldn't. We didn't able to kind of like do them but usually, as you know, with study sessions, we do q&a at the end. Now. It's okay, it was thank you so much for this presentation. So what we're gonna do instead, we're gonna go to junkyard if you don't know, please, Google is two minutes away from here and if you have any questions to Tim you will have the chance to pose those questions, then thank you Tim again for accepting our invitation. Thank you so much for your generosity again, another round of applause. Thank you.