

Mixed Messages

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Mixed Messages: Enter at Your Own Risk

Drum and bass and other forms of computer music would not exist without technology so, logically, tech-savvy fans are quick to embrace new forms of communication like message boards, forums and listserves brought on by technological advances such as the Internet. But this is proving to have both positive and negative implications.

During the past 10 years as the Internet has grown from a novelty accessed by only a small percentage of the earth's population to a worldwide phenomenon, numerous online resources have become established for music fans, artists, promoters and others with an interest in the scene. Some like [Ravetrash.com](#); [Phillyjunglemassive.com](#); [SceneOhio.com](#); [Lolli.org](#) and hyperreal's pb-cle rave list cater specifically to local regional groups, while others like [Dogsonacid.com](#); [breakbeat.co.uk](#) and [bluelight.nu](#) cater to a global audience. Still others like [breakbeatscience.com](#) have grown from catering to a local perspective to catering to a more global perspective.

One of the oldest means of online communication is via listservs that use e-mail as a medium for discussion. A message sent to a listserv goes to everyone on the list. Listservs are often topic oriented and require members to "subscribe" to the list in order to receive the emails.

In most instances, however, the majority of activity takes part on message boards where members (who must register but can usually use a pseudonym) post messages in online forums or post their thoughts as a follow up to another member's message. In some instances no registration is required to post, and messages can usually be read by anybody viewing the website, even non-members.

"Message boards now days serve good and bad (purposes). They can be used for so many reasons," says Damian Higgins, a well-respected drum and bass artist also know as DJ Dieselboy. "I have mixed feelings on it personally."

Overall, I see message boards as a good resource," explains DJ Freaky Flow, another well-respected artist. "For me, benefits of message boards are that (a) they provide artists, promoters, and others a free forum to post information, which (hopefully) reaches a good number of people, and then continues to spread via word-of-mouth, and (b) the boards give people from all over the globe the chance to discuss issues with each other, an activity that could cost people a lot of money without these boards"

But he also recognizes some of the negative aspects of message boards.

"Unfortunately, I find that when many people receive any kind of information, be it from the media, from friends, and even from message boards, they initially accept it as fact without much scrutiny; and, as with in the news, most of what appears on the boards (from what I've witnessed) seems to be negative," he adds. " Sadly, I'm finding that people are intrigued by negative things, and bored by positive things."

"It's good for people to build their own community and get to know one another locally and to coordinate and help organize gigs together," says Higgins, but he is also quick to qualify this in terms of message boards' negative effects. "You have a lot of people who go on these message boards and some people just have strong opinions, but other people go on message boards and just straight up say the (most incorrect) shit and just go on there to talk shit. And from that end, I think that they're bad."

Simon Kellman, also known as DJ Catnap, the current owner and operator of well known, local message board Ravetrash.com also sees both negative and positive aspects of message boards' role in the dnb scene. Because Ravetrash.com caters to the local Ohio scene, Kellman feels it plays an important role.

"Ravetrash, like its peers Bluelight, SceneOhio, and Lolli.org, is a crucial venue for promoters to advertise electronic music events. They form the number one online resource for event listings, and account for more attendance than probably printed flyers or word of mouth," adds Kellman. "Also, DJs, producers and promoters all network with each other on Ravetrash.com, (and) message boards, email and chat rooms allow them the ability to exchange mixes, songs, flyer designs and other things faster than in-person meetings."

But Kellman also sees some potential problems that can arise from message boards, particularly from the people who post on message boards. "Numerous events have been hurt or ruined when people post negative responses to the events, or when some people have purposely posted that events were cancelled when they were in fact not," he adds. "A very vocal minority of people can set a negative tone about events or music, when there is a much larger, but silent, majority of people who feel like they can't or shouldn't say anything for fear of being publicly insulted or made fun of."

Mike Harrington, an artist with Sunken Records also known as Structure, helped create and establish Phillyjunglemassive.com. As a producer and performer himself, he also recognizes that message boards have both a positive and negative role in the dnb scene.

Although Phillyjunglemassive.com has been taken offline temporarily, Harrington believes it is too valuable of a resource for the Philly dnb community to keep it down permanently. Look for it to be up again soon after a brief hiatus to re-group.

"I think message boards, in some ways are the best things and worst things to happen to drum and bass," Harrington explains. "I think it's a great way for people to connect. I think it's a great way for labels and event promoters to get right to the fans and directly market to them, and I think it's a great way for labels to get feedback about releases directly from the fans.

But Harrington sees problems when individuals bring private disputes public by posting about them on message boards. "People are quick to lose their temper in a public forum, and that's really not the way you should do things," he says adding that if you have an issue with another person you should call them up or send them a personal email.

"The best rule I've always heard (is) if you post something on a public forum, would you say the same thing to the person in front of you?" he adds. "I think in some ways there's been a loss of respect to drum and bass because of message boards ... there needs to be more respect in regards to what we say (about) major talent, incoming talent to your town and local DJs."

Harrington attributes this lack of decorum on message boards to people being too quick to post comments without really thinking about what statement the post is making or what they are really trying to say.

Carl Collins, A&R Manager of Hard Leaders Recordings and resident dnb specialist of Blackmarket Records Toronto agrees somewhat.

"Like any media, they can be used and abused," says Collins. "They're great for promotion, they can also misfire and mislead because not everyone in drum and bass does have access to the Internet, and some countries have more access than others so it can give a misleading opinion."

Collins cautions that just because something is published on the Internet does not mean it is a fact. "I've been around a lot of the DJs at the higher end of it who find it dismissive because it is so easy for someone to get on a board and be extremely negative based on little fact," he says noting that one can post information on-line on a board instantly and readers will tend to take seriously because it is a form that looks more legitimate than it is. "We've held events where the DJs have read what they've seen on the board after they played and just had to laugh because it was so misleading."

But Collins also recognizes some of the good aspects. "They're great for the community aspect and the movement of information rapidly, but at the same time they're not to be taken too seriously," he cautions.

Due to their very nature, international message boards like Dogsonacid.com tend to be free of the beefs and lack of decorum associated with some of the local boards. Usually discussion focuses more on songs or upcoming albums and there are often stricter codes of conduct pertaining to what can be posted and what

can't. Moderators are usually quick to enforce the codes by censoring or removing posts that aren't in line with the professional nature of the board.

"I read Dogsonacid.com just to read what people are saying about certain tracks," says Higgins.

Most tend to agree, however, that despite the negativity sometimes associated with them, local message boards have a definite place and purpose in the dnb scene and will not be going anywhere soon.

"Their main functions have always been to post information on upcoming events, and allow for networking and discussion among people in the rave scene," says Kellman.

"They're the best ways to get (a) people who may not be into drum and bass, into drum and bass on a local level; (b) (they're) great for local DJs to be able to promote their sound and get their mixed CDs out to a massive audience especially in regards to mp3s and things like that; and (c) I think (they're) great for local promoters who want to do events with dnb, or whatever style of music, to directly market their music to the masses in addition to street level promotions," adds Harrington.

"Overall, I see message boards as a good resource. I only wish that the people who use them would make up their own minds rather than just believing everything they read," says Freaky Flow.

Which is a good point to end on. Message boards are best viewed with a little bit of thoughtfulness. They help to bring local dnb communities together and they are great sources of information, but not all information posted online is true.

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