National College of Art and Design

Visual Communication

The Design of Dublin Club Flyers

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies in
Candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of Design 1997

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the following:

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Introduction

Club flyers are disposable pieces of paper or card which are distributed to promote club nights. Having originated in the late 1980s, they are quite a recent phenomenon and so present a relatively fresh and as yet largely undocumented design genre. In this thesis, I hope to discuss the design of flyers with reference to Dublin clubs.

Although I was eager to write a thesis on this subject, I had considerable difficulty finding written source material. British club culture is in general reasonably well-documented, however, little has been written purely about its flyers and I found only two rather sparse books and a handful of articles on the subject. Documentation of Dublin's club culture is considerably less - and any mention of its flyers virtually non-existent. To date, the most attention Dublin flyers appear to have received are two published articles and a small exhibition with accompanying short leaflet.

I sought information from live sources instead, and interviewed two people that I thought could help. The first person was Luke Clancy, freelance journalist and, to my mind, the only writer in Dublin to have taken any real notice of flyers so far. Secondly, i spoke to Tonie Walsh, longtime DJ and club-runner in Dublin since the early 1980s, who has often been involved in the design and production of flyers.

I would also like to note how I amassed the flyers discussed in this thesis. Creating an amalgam of three peoples' quite substantial flyer collections, I then viewed approximately 800 Dublin flyers. It must be remembered that flyers as a whole are simply a mass of coloured pieces of card or paper. They are produced from many different sources and come in no particular order. Flyers have never been 'catalogued' as such, but float freely about, bearing no apparent relation to one another. What I attempted to do in this thesis was to thoroughly examine a collection of flyers and to divide them up into some kind of order. Grouping together any flyers which appeared to have a common theme, I found that certain points did emerge, and I created a structure based around these points. The examples I use then have all been selected to typify a larger group of flyers. While certainly not claiming to have seen *every* flyer in Dublin, I hope that this thesis is at least based on a roughly representative cross-section of flyers of the past decade or so.

A few terms need to be defined. 'Club flyers' of course relates to 'clubs' and 'dance music'. This music was originally called 'rave', however this term has now been updated and replaced by an array of new and differing genres. For the sake of this thesis, I propose to refer to all such music under the umbrella term of 'dance music'. The word 'club' is more difficult to define. A club is of course a place or venue, e.g.

the System club on South Anne Street. However, a 'club' can also mean any *night* which is run with regularity, e.g. the 'Honey' club every Friday at the System club. To avoid confusion, I propose to place inverted commas around the names of such 'floating' clubs and not around the names of venues, e.g. 'Honey' at the System. Finally, it needs to be noted that such floating clubs or 'nights' can move from venue to venue while keeping their identity intact. If the organisers of 'Honey' were to move to the POD, for example, the night would then be called the 'Honey' club at the POD.

With regard to what source material I did find, I have attempted to base this thesis on the writings of Clancy, the comments of Walsh, and the writings of two further authors, Stephen Kingston and Michael Dooley. The latter two authors deal with British and American flyers respectively, but I found that they made some very intelligent and perceptive comments which could equally relate to Dublin flyers. It is however a reflection on Dublin flyers that overseas writing is also applicable to them. Overall indeed, I found Dublin flyers to be disappointingly similar to those abroad - particularly their English cousins, and this is something I will discuss.

I would like to begin by briefly outlining the history of club culture, both generally and in Dublin. I hope then to look at the origin and function of flyers and how they are created. After this, I will discuss what techniques are used in designing flyers, and look at the imagery which I have found on them. Taking this further, I hope then to look at particularly experimental flyer design. On a different tack, I wish to discuss clubland's links with the corporate enviroment and how this affects flyers. I hope then to examine the relationship between flyers, clubbers, and clubs. Finally, I would like to make a few notes on the recent trends of collecting and exhibiting flyers.

Chapter 1. A Brief History of both General and Dublin Club Culture

In this section, I hope to briefly outline the history of club culture and a history of Dublin club culture. I would like to divide it into two sections;

- A General History of Club Culture
- A History of Dublin Club Culture

A General History of Club Culture

'Dance music' as we know it today began as something called House. These were gay black records form New York and Chicago. During the early 1980s, such records were gradually imported to Europe and particularly to Britain. They had "stark [and] geometric" rhythms, were very suited to dancing, and by 1986 or so had become very popular (Collin, 1996, p.111). As the demand for House music exceeded American supply, people then began to grab the latest tools to hand (e.g. samplers and synthesisers) and create their own versions of House. At this time, a new drug was also becoming popular. This was called Ecstasy and was very conducive to dancing. Drug and music fused together in roughly 1988 and 'Acid House' was born, later to be renamed 'Rave'.

The original 'raves' were "hurriedly arranged" and held in disused warehouses or country fields after dark (Savage, 1995, p.8). Such events were usually illegal; as was the consumption of Ecstasy, and rave became the subject of much public suspicion. Laws were introduced to thwart such 'outlaw' events e.g. Britain's 'Entertainments Act' of 1989 (Collins, 1996, p.111). Rave culture then simply migrated into more licensed venues and came then to be called 'club culture'. Its original underground feel has in a sense never been lost however, and Ted Polhemus describes mid-1990s club culture as being "at heart secretive, cliquey...and under the carpet" (Polhemus, 1996, p. 75).

Dance music has changed along with the rave movement with its music-makers having begun to push it in many different directions from 1990 onwards. 'Rave' then split into a myriad of factions such as 'hardcore', 'techno', 'ambient', 'trance', and so on, and it continues to change and subdivide today. Such fracturing is a key factor in explaining how dance music has survived for so long. Instead of running along one trajectory and then dying out, it has instead been continually reborn since 1988 and so

could be called "a self-regenerating virus, perennially diversifying and mutating into unexpected shapes and forms"(Collin, 1996, p. 110).

A History of Dublin Club Culture

The earliest "underground dance club" in Dublin was the Hirschfield Gay Community Centre in Temple Bar (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1). The centre ran a disco to raise funds which was called 'Flikkers' and began in 1979 (see diagram, fig.1.0). Through this club, the first House records were imported to Ireland. The next 'dance' club to open in Dublin was Sides in Dame Street in 1986, followed by Shaft in Ely Place in approximately 1987. Both these clubs were gay, but in the late 1980s a more mixed crowd began to attend for the music. Walsh notes that such clubs also witnessed the first arrivals of Ecstasy on Irish shores, being brought in via "well-travelled gays" (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1). There was little interest in producing flyers at this time, and the clubs used only very basic photocopies to circulate information (fig. 1.1).

In my research, I have found it generally agreed that dance music really exploded into Ireland's national consciousness around the turn of 1990. No one seems to be able to precisely account for it, however, it appears to have been the result of two factors, the growing popularity of the early House clubs, combined with the arrival of 'rave' from England. Raves were then hastily organised around Dublin city centre, in venues such as the Mansion House and the Olympic Ballroom, along with the established dance clubs now being "stuffed" with people (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1) Flyers of this era had also considerably changed from the earlier photocopies, being now better printed and using computer-generated imagery (fig. 1.2).

Although Sides, Shaft, and such clubs continued to host busy nights, both the Mansion House and Olympic raves were stopped after a time. Such activity had however "proved" that there existed a Dublin audience, "ready, willing, and able" to support new clubs and venues, and Dublin clubland now entered a new phase (Carroll & McKervey, 1996, p.1). New dance clubs began to open one after another, such as the Columbia Mills on Sir John Rogerson's Quay in April 1993, followed in rapid succession by the POD on Harcourt Street, Ri-Ra in Dame Court, and the Ormond Multimedia Centre and the Temple of Sound, both on Ormond Quay. The Kitchen then opened in Temple Bar in 1994, followed by the System on South Anne Street, and the Mean Fiddler on Wexford Street both in 1995. Collectives were also being set up; groups of people running nights around the city, such as 'Sin Sin' and the 'Horny Organ Tribe', of which Walsh was a member. With all this new activity, the Dublin club scene began to grow very competitive, and the era of more expensive and colour-
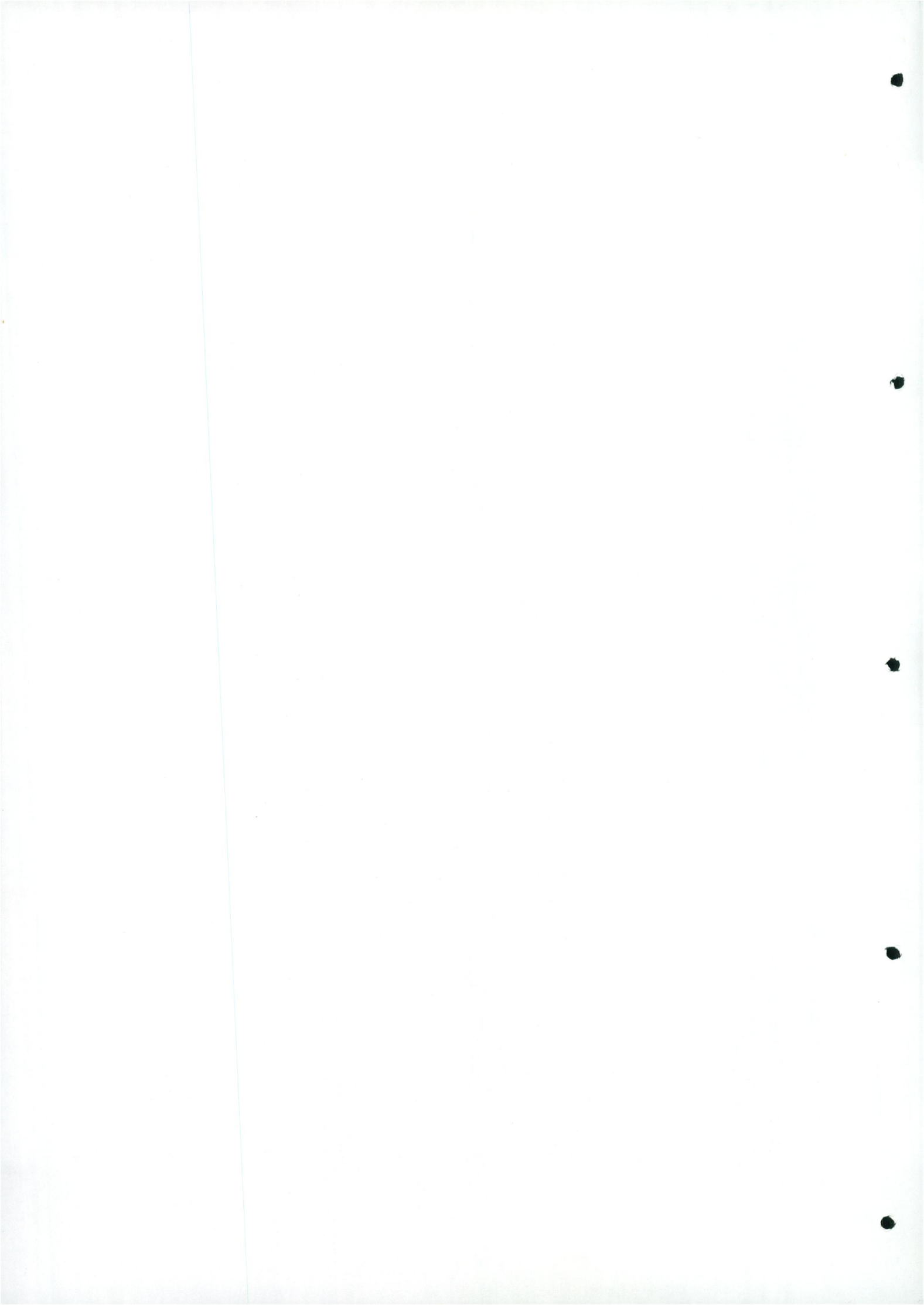
Fig. 1.0: Diagram of Clubs in Dublin

| 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 |

Flikkers

Sides

Shaft

Explosion: Sides & Shaft Full, Olympic & Mansion House Raves

First actual 'rave' in Ireland (held in a basement off Bachelor's Walk)

POD

Columbia Mills

Ri-Ra

Ormond Multimedia Centre

Temple of Sound

Asylum

Kitchen

System

Mean Fiddler
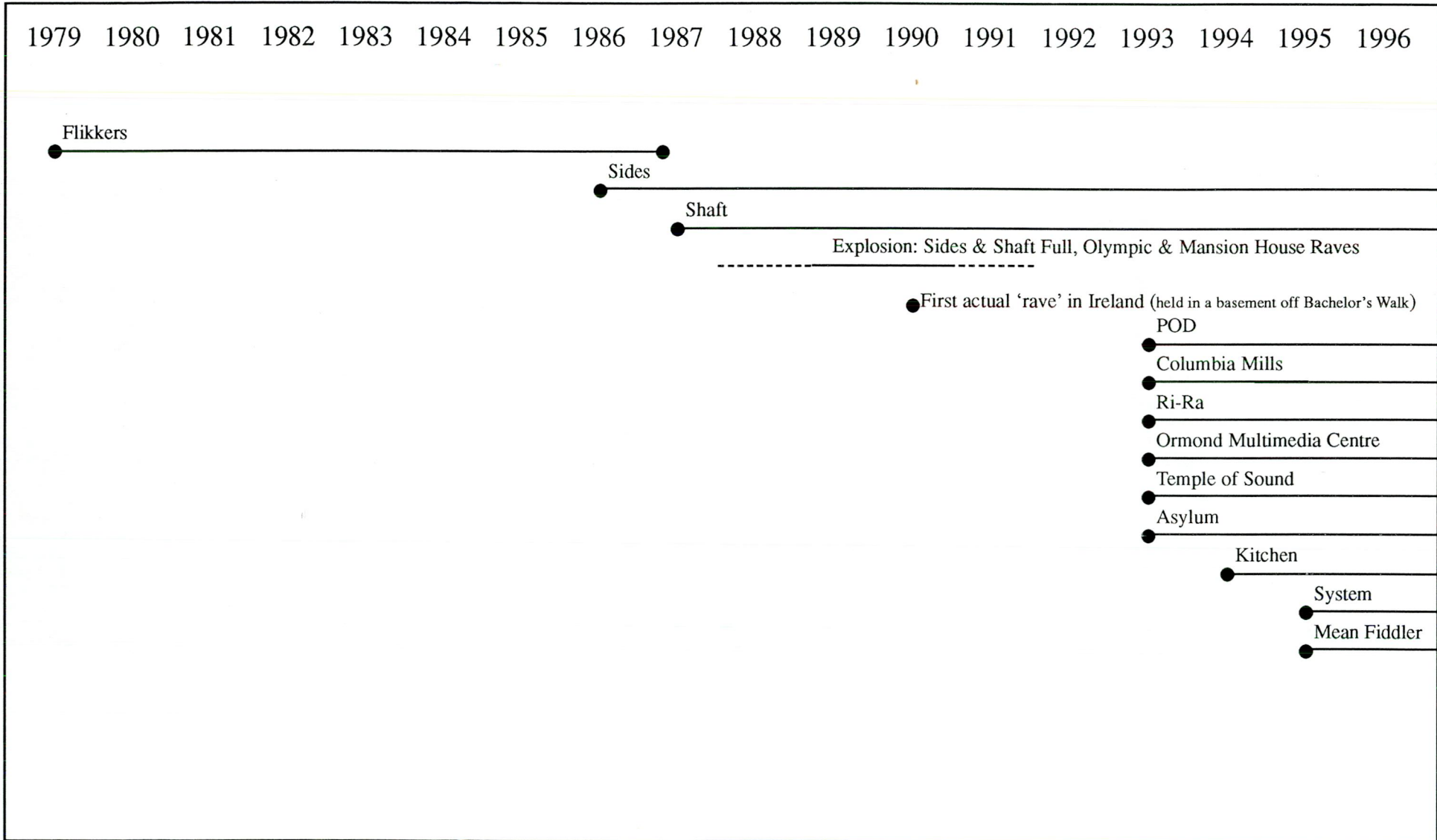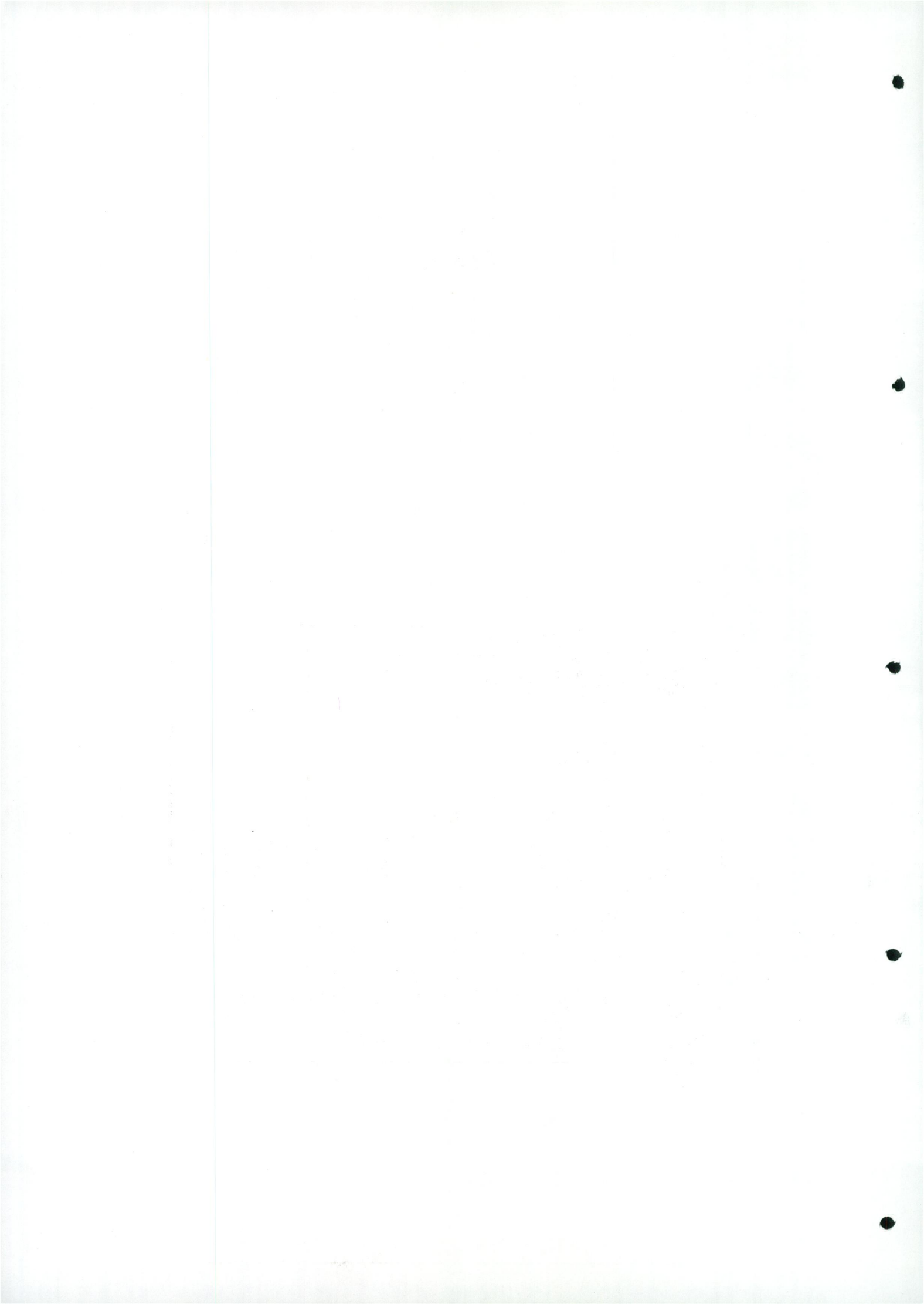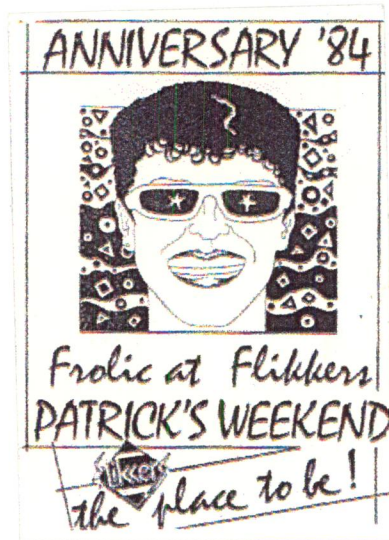
Fig. 1.1: Flyer for 'Flikkers' at the Hirschfield Centre

Fig. 1.2: Flyer for 'Earth' at the Olympic Ballroom
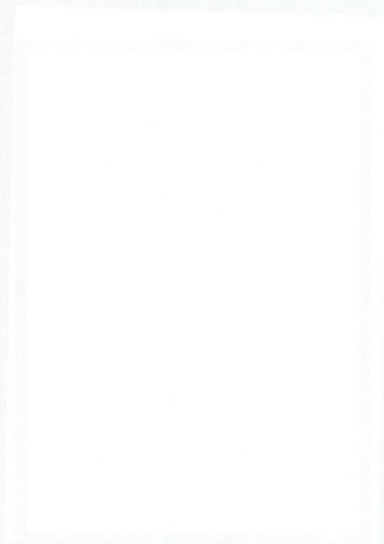
ful flyers began.

Flyers for a long-running club such as the 'UFO' provide a fascinating micro-cosm of 1990s Dublin club history. The 'UFO' dates back to pre-POD and Ri-Ra days, having been a once-a-week night run in the Rock Garden in Temple Bar. The flyers from this time (fig. 1.3) are rather inky photocopies which look crowded and rather difficult to read. The photocopies then improved, becoming simpler and using more memorable imagery (figs. 1.4 and 1.5). Within a year or so, the flyers had become upgraded to colour printouts, signifying the increasing amount of money being spent on them (fig. 1.6). In 1994/5 'UFO' then moved to the larger Columbia Mills and began to employ a professional designer (Aidan Grennell) for the flyers. The flyers have now undergone a revolution: no longer wobbly photocopies, they are printed on quality card and feature fractal imagery and deep colours (fig. 1.7). 'UFO' then changed its name to 'Alien' and its flyers of the past year have featured complex, com-puter-generated Aliens (fig. 1.8). In this way one can virtually *read* a history of club-land from its flyers.

We have seen then, how club culture in general began, and how it later arrived in Ireland. I consider that Dublin clubland has so far followed a more or less upward trajectory from the 1970s until today, and we have looked at how this has been visibly reflected in its flyers.
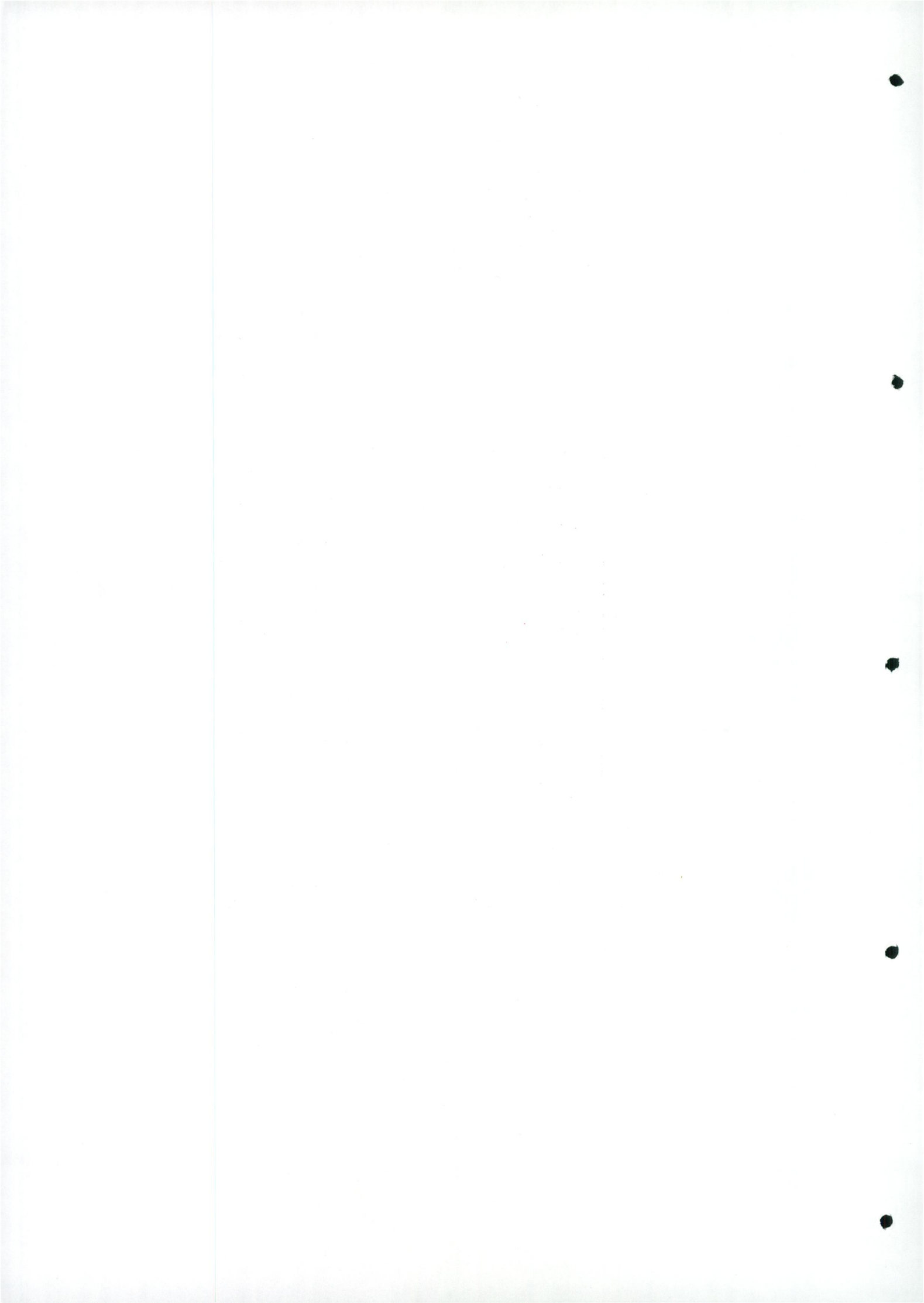
Flyers for UFO/Alien

Fig. 1.3: Flyer for 'UFO' at the Rock Garden
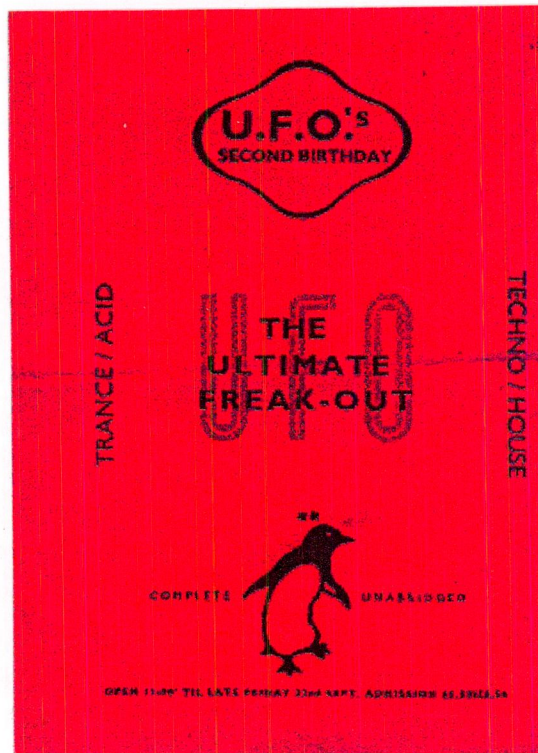
Fig. 1.4: Flyer for 'UFO' at the Rock Garden
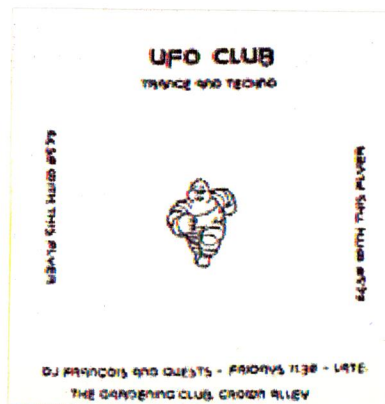
Fig. 1.5: Flyer for 'UFO' at the Rock Garden
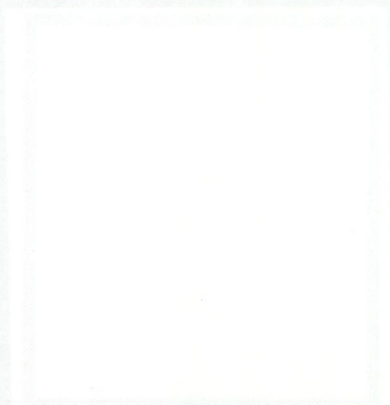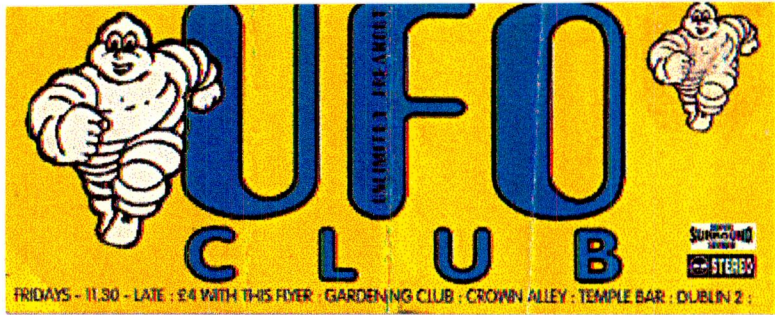
Fig. 1.6: Flyer for 'UFO' at the Rock Garden
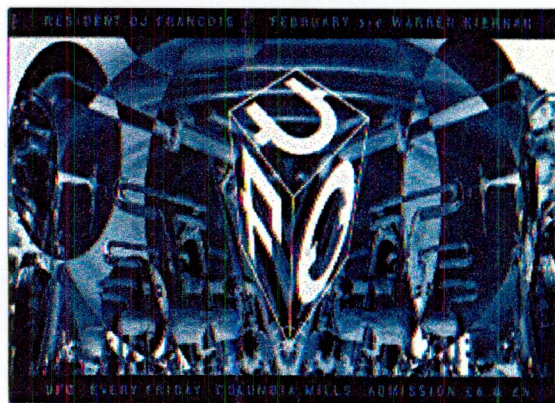
Fig. 1.7: Flyer for 'UFO' at the Columbia Mills
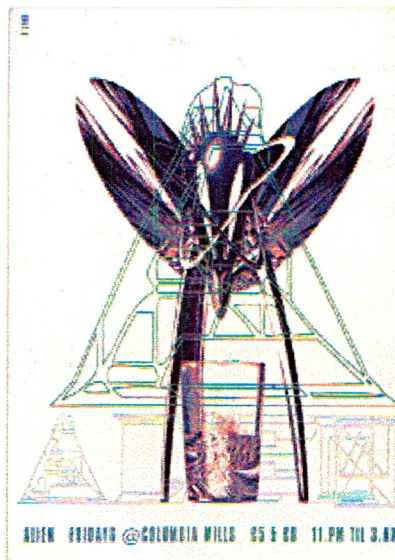
Fig. 1.8: Flyer for 'Alien' at the Columbia Mills

Chapter 2. A look at the Origin, Function, and Creation of Flyers

In this section, I hope to look briefly at how flyers 'come into being'. I would like to discuss this under the following headings:

- From Where Does the Flyer Originate and What Is Its Function?
- Where Is the Flyer to be Found?
- Who Creates the Flyer?

From Where Does the Flyer Originate and What Is Its Function?

Flyers are not confined purely to club culture; Savage notes that many companies offering services (e.g. pizza delivery) have long been distributing flyers, and that the flyer has been used in the 'pop' scene since the 1960s. I consider, however, that the word 'flyer' has become mostly linked with the club scene in recent years. The reasons for this appear to be twofold: firstly, the sheer colour and magnificence of club flyers, and, secondly, because club culture was effectively *built* upon the use of flyers. As we saw, many early rave events were illegal, and flyers provided a very effective means of broadcasting information about them at short notice, e.g. fig. 2.0. Although club culture of course later became less 'outlawed', Savage notes that "a context and urgency for this form" had been permanently established (Savage, 1995, p. 8)

We know then that the basic function of a flyer is to provide information about a club night. This information can vary, however , from 'teaser' flyers which merely hint at a forthcoming event (fig. 2.1), to 'calendar' flyers which map out a venue's plans for the month (fig. 2.2). Flyers also frequently offer concessions on a club's door price, and in a competitive scene of established clubs, have come to offer less 'vital' information than to be a statement of a club's 'style', which will be further discussed later.

Where Is the Flyer to be Found?

At first glance, flyers would appear to be distributed "at street level" (Roche, 1996, p. 32). However, much of clubland's original "clandestine" attitude still remains, and closer examination reveals that flyers are not cast about quite so freely (Dooley,
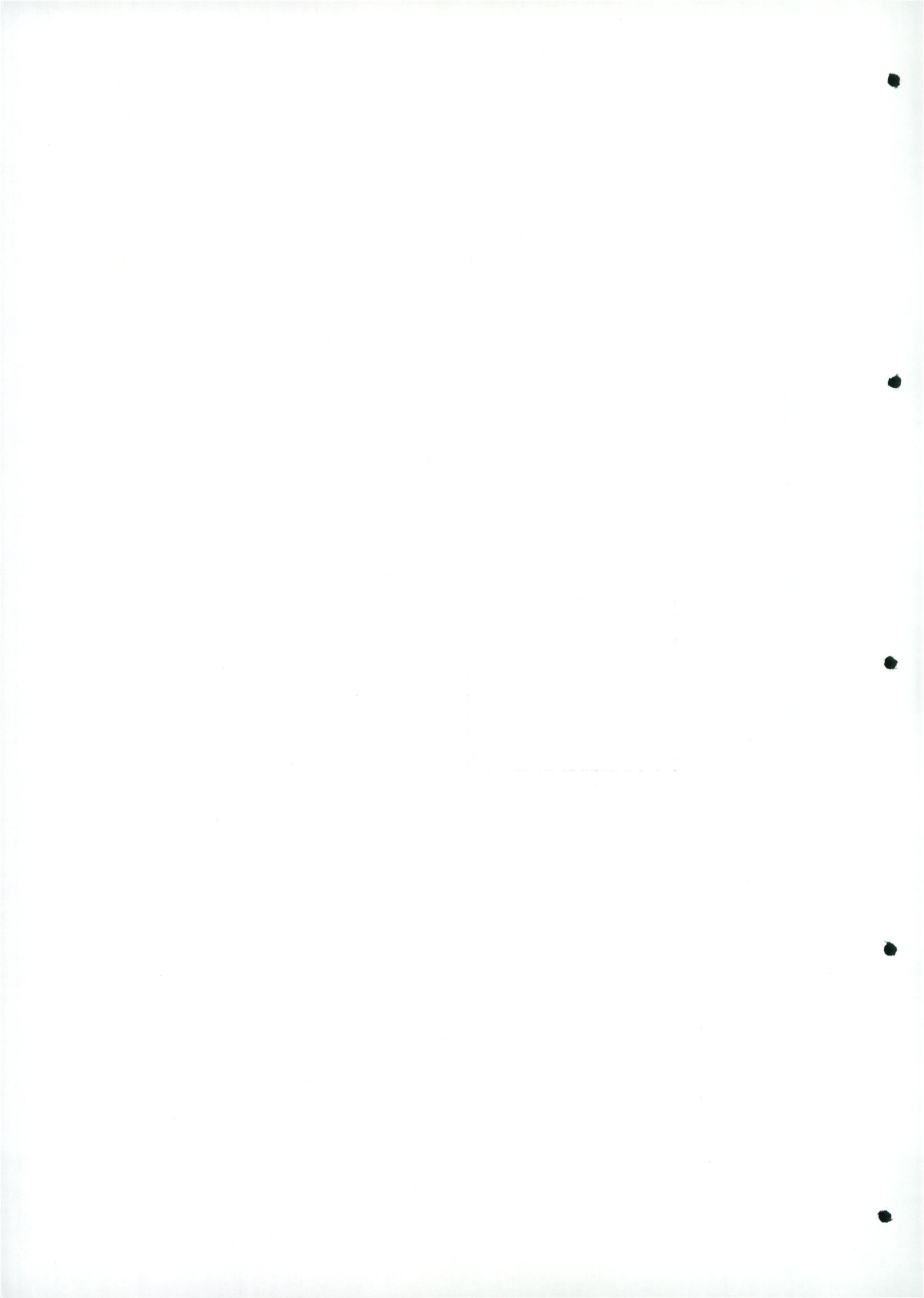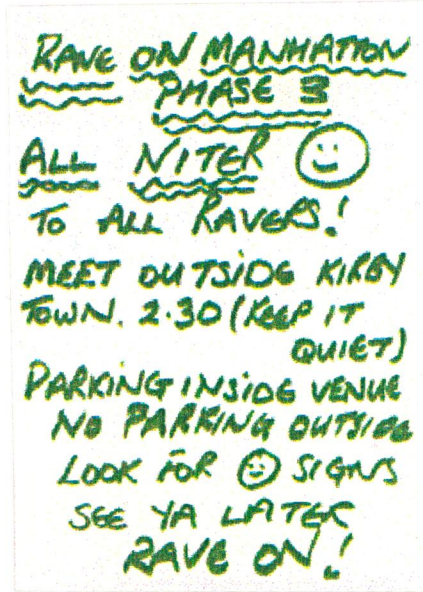
Fig. 2.0: Flyer for 'Rave on Manhattan' in Liverpool 1988
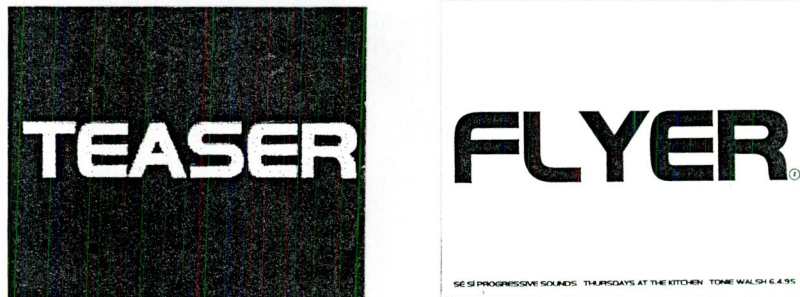
Fig. 2.1: 'Teaser' flyer for the Kitchen (front and back)
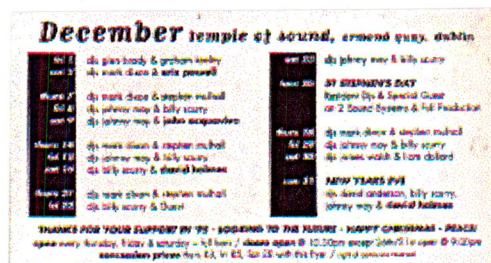
Fig. 2.2: 'Calendar' on the reverse of a Temple of Sound flyer

1993, p.45). Polhemus, I feel, paraphrases club-runners' attitudes very well, saying:

"You've got this little...club you're running in some magnificently obscure venue. You want a lot of people to know about it, but...you don't want just anybody to know. How do you narrowcast this information to the right people?" (Polhemus, 1996, p.72).

The solution is of course for flyers to be placed in very particular places, e.g. fashionable clothing and music shops, and pubs. Dublin examples of these would be 'Makullas' clothing shop on Wicklow Street or the 'Globe' pub on George's Street. Such places are frequented by a young and "keyed-up" clientele (Polhemus, 1996, p.72). Measures such as these are taken to even greater heights by club-runner Phillip Sallon in Britain, who tells of his flyers being produced from *under* shop counters, if a person is deemed "sufficiently interesting", thus giving his club a real sense of exclusivity (Polhemus, 1996, p. 75). Equally, in Dublin, the POD are described by Clancy as having "a database of suitable customers who are regularly targeted by direct mail" (Clancy[1], 1995, p. 3). The flyer thus becomes less of a quick handout than a carefully-addressed invitation. All of these examples prove then that the flyer is very carefully aimed at a specific sector of the population, and that it could almost double as as "membership card" to the club scene (Rose, 1992, p. 38).

Who Creates the Flyer?

Flyers are the product of a "consultation between the club promoter and designer", according to Walsh (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1). However, the term 'designer' appears to be a loose one in clubland. "A knowledge of the Mac and an intimate understanding of the music, rather than formal design training are the vital qualifications," says Roche (Roche, 1996, p. 33). Flyers then are designed by "rank amateurs and seasoned pros alike" (Dooley, 1993, p. 42). Such freedom of design has obviously varied results, as we will see later, but it is at least commendable for creating a "democracy" within design and allowing a certain freedom to exist (Roche, 1996, p. 33).

Such freedom for anybody to create flyers is in fact endemic of a general "D.I.Y." attitude in clubland (Plant, 1993, p. 7). This is something I find particularly interesting about club culture; that it encourages a very group-oriented creativity and is, in the words of Plant, "a scene produced by everyone in general and no-one in particular" (Plant, 1993, p.7). Such a 'starless' environment to my mind is primarily responsible for the wide variety of imagery and exciting design to be found on flyers; in the absence of 'stars', the designers' imaginations can take centre stage.

This chapter has looked then at how club culture has made the flyer in a sense

uniquely its own. We have seen that the primary function of a flyer is to broadcast information but that such information is very much 'narrowcasted' to a small and select group of people. We have also noted that strict rules do not apply in relation to who designs flyers, and we have considered that this is in fact endemic of a certain boundary-free creativity in club culture.

Chapter 3. A Discussion of the Techniques Employed in Designing Flyers

In this section, I hope to explore how the flyer is created and what techniques are involved. Flyer design in the main consists of two elements: image and type. I hope to look at *Image* under the sections:

- Hand-Created Artwork
- Computer-Generated Artwork
- Sampling

and *Type* under the sections:

- Purely Typographic Solutions
- Interesting use of Typography

Image

Hand-Created Artwork

Although flyer design in most peoples' minds is associated with computer-generated images, hand-created artwork is also used and I found quite a high incidence of this on Dublin flyers. Hand-crafted imagery is explainable enough on early flyers, having been necessary, as clubs were not able to afford computer technology. An example of this would be the 'Sheela-na-Gig' flyer produced by a 1993-era Horny Organ Tribe (fig. 3.0). Walsh tells me that all the H.O.T. had access to at the time was a Gestetner machine which printed only three colours. The H.O.T. then had the idea of hi-jacking the 'Sheela' image and blurring all three colours for fun, so that the image became three-dimensional when viewed through coloured glasses, thus creating a very amusing flyer (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 2).

In more recent years, however, hand-created artwork has continued to be used, only now as a stylish option. A notable example of this is the series of 'Willpower' flyers for Ri-Ra (figs. 3.1, 3.2). Created by David Begley, these flyers feature feisty and energetic figures, rendered in Begley's individual style. Moreover, these flyers also boast a very individual colour scheme; compared with the general synthetic colours of clubland (pink, blue, bright green...), Begley's artwork is full of deep rusts, sea-greens,

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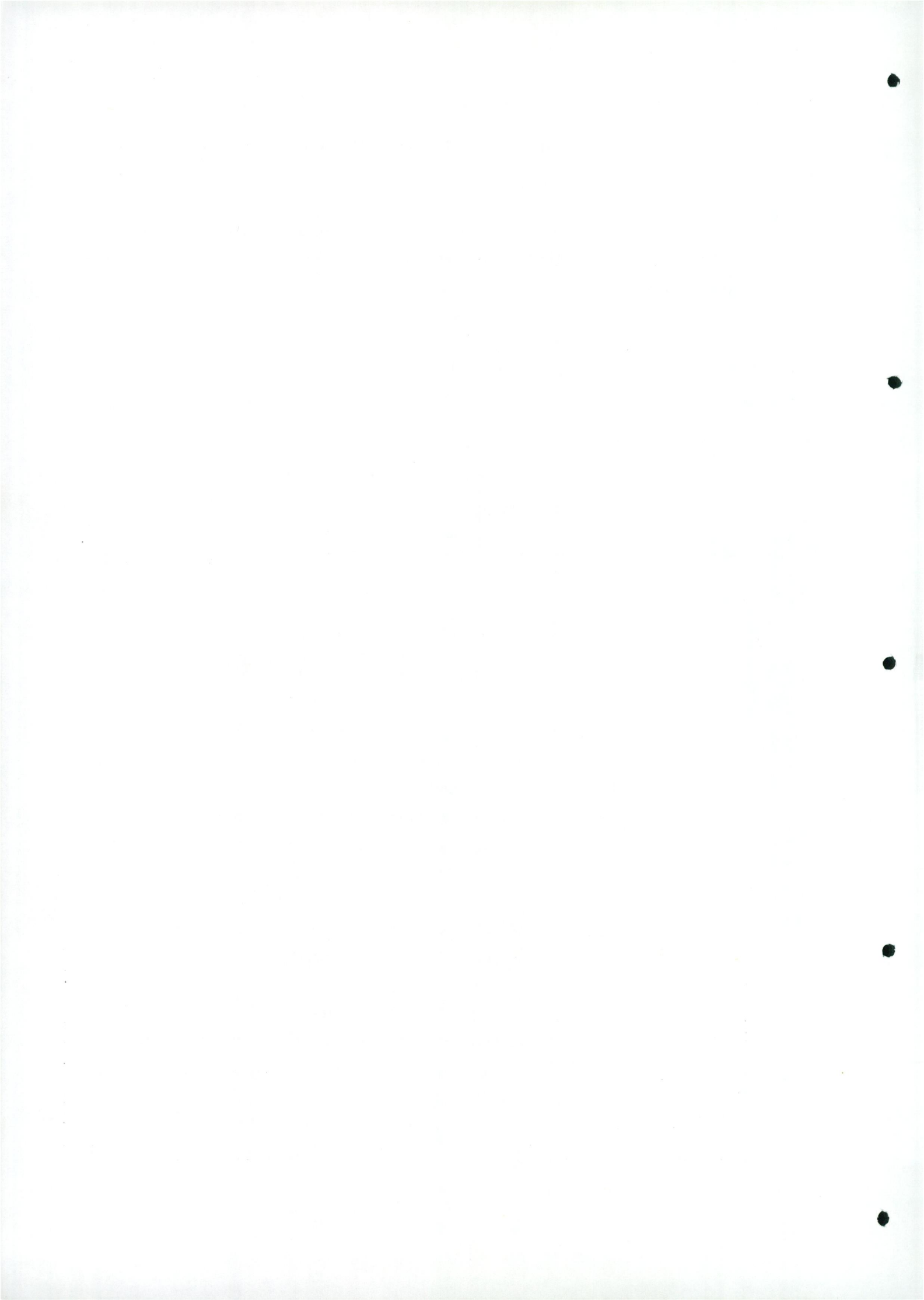
Hand-Created Artwork

Fig. 3.0: H.O.T. 'Sheela-na-Gig' flyer

Fig. 3.1: Flyer for 'Willpower' at Ri-Ra
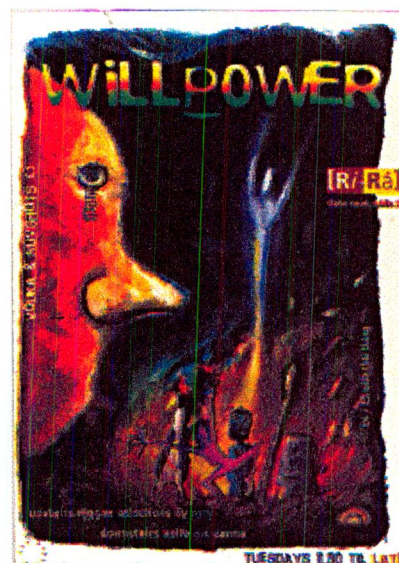
Fig. 3.2: Flyer for 'Willpower' at Ri-Ra
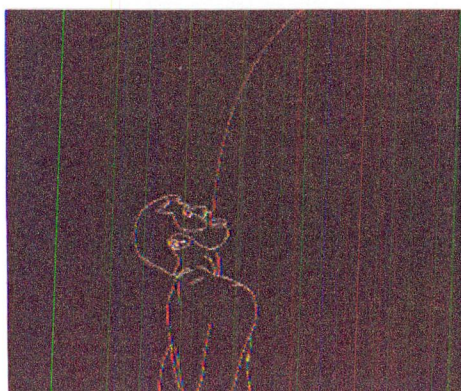
Fig. 3.3: Flyer for 'Gag' at
the Ormond Multimedia Centre
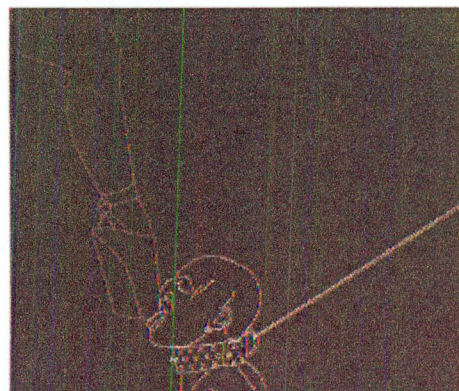
Fig. 3.4: Flyer for 'Gag' at
the Ormond Multimedia Centre

and sombre dark blues. Another example of signature artwork are the flyers produced by Niall Sweeney for the 'Gag' club (figs. 3.3, 3.4), which are graceful line drawings on plain copper backgrounds. We see then that hand-created artwork can be used on flyers with a modern and engaging effect.

Computer-Generated Artwork

Most of the imagery on flyers however, *is* computer-generated. As Savage remarks, "What Xerox was to Punk, the Mac is to the flyer" (Savage, 1995, p. 9). As we saw, much of flyer design is created by non-professionals. An American design tutor, Mick Haggerty, makes what I feel are some valid comments about this: he says that trained designers tend to be "puritanical" about the Mac, not wanting "the machine to design for them," but that flyer designs are often "completely computer-driven, and the people who do them take complete delight in that" (Dooley, 1993, pp. 49-51). Obviously, this could result in some very poor design, but enjoyable work is also produced. I consider a 'Surreal' flyer, designed by Paul O'Donoghue, to be a case in point (fig. 3.5). It is an ultra-saturated, warped image of a sky with various objects floating in it. The picture was obviously constructed and manipulated in a program such as Photoshop, and in its 'surrealism', perfectly fits the flyer's title. Less successful would be flyers such as for the Boardwalk club (fig. 3.6) or 'State of Independence' (fig. 3.7), where both flyers look over-computerised, lack definition, and are much less appealing.

Another designer who *does* produce effective computer-generated artwork is Aidan Grennell. His work includes a flyer for the POD (fig. 3.8) and of course the flyers for 'UFO / Alien'. Clancy calls such flyers as fig. 3.8 a "glaring collage of CAT scans", but it is for this very reason that I like Grennell's work (Clancy[1], 1995, p. 3). This flyer is indeed a no-holds-barred assemblage of colours and shapes: anything and everything appears to have been thrown into the mix, suggesting frequent and gleeful use of the 'Get Picture' facility on the Mac. Again, other flyers also attempt this effect but with less success, for example the flyer for 'Nofo' (fig. 3.9), which looks merely rather garbled and uncommunicative. It must at least however be said of all such flyers that they do exemplify the spirit of taking certain delight in the Mac facilities, or as Rose puts it: "Go in and grab those new technologies by the balls!" (Rose, 1992, p. 25).

Fig. 3.5: Flyer for 'Surreal' at the Ormond Multimedia Centre

Fig. 3.6: Flyer for the Boardwalk Club
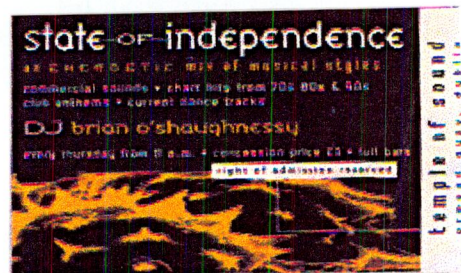
Fig. 3.7: Flyer for 'State of Independence'
at the Temple of Sound

Fig. 3.9: Flyer for 'Nofo' at the Da club
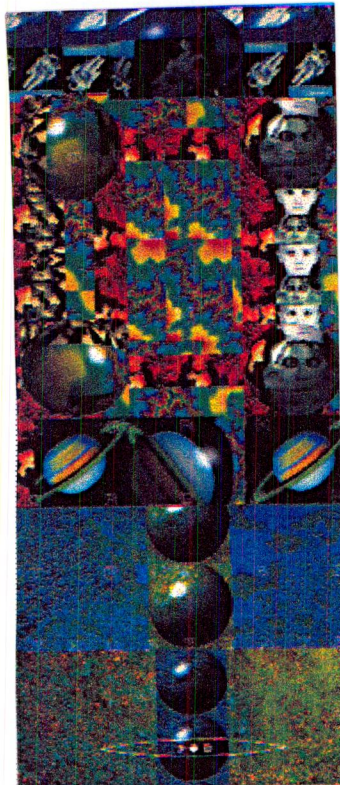
Fig. 3.8: Flyer for Thursdays at the POD
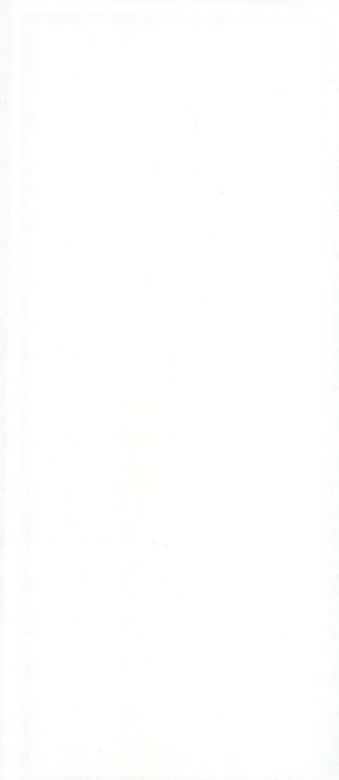
After computer-generated imagery, clubland is also renowned for its hi-jacking of images created by others, for example logos and photographs. Indeed, Dooley, when describing the techniques of flyer creation cites a "Mac complete with...scanner" as essential to the process (Dooley, 1993, p. 42). Scanners are of course the means of pulling images in from any source, almost like colour-copying into the computer. Gehr speaks of the "kleptomania" of club culture in general, which brings us to an interesting point: the use of appropriated images on flyers neatly mirrors the sampled sounds of the music they advertise, the scanner being in effect the visual equivalent of a sampler (Gehr, 1988, p. 16). Of course, in the case of both the music and visual imagery, such sampling is usually illegal. The non-authorship of flyers then becomes particularly relevant in the area of copyright. "Through their anonymity," observes Burgoyne, "the designers protect themselves from the full weight of [any] corporation coming down on them...for using an image without permission" (Burgoyne, 1994, p. 46).

Visual sampling appears to divide into two categories: 'straight' sampling, and sampling and then manipulating images. 'Straight' sampling is when an image is lifted wholesale. Examples of this are the 'Superman' symbol (fig. 3.10), a flyer which plagiarises the entire poster design for the film 'Trainspotting' (fig. 3.11), and the Michelin Man for 'UFO' as we saw earlier (fig. 1.5). More cautious, however, are the designers who use an image but attempt to "warp" it "beyond the realm of copyright infringement" (Dooley, 1993, p. 42). One example of this is a 'Cybernia' flyer (fig. 3.12) designed by O'Donoghue (who designed the 'Surreal' flyer). The image of a banknote has been 'borrowed'; however the monetary value has been carefully reversed, the lettering changed, and also the lady's face "morphed" (Ni R., Walsh interview, part 2). However, according to Walsh, these changes were still not sufficient and Dublin's Central Bank contacted the club's organisers and requested the flyer be withdrawn. Another flyer to sample official imagery was the H.O.T.'s 'Organ Donor Card' (fig. 3.13). This entirely copies the format of the original (fig. 3.14) but wittily substitutes its own wording. As Walsh, joint creator of the flyer, reasons, "You doff your cap to something that's gone before, but get fun out of it" (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 2).

Flyers indeed appear to have a predilection for stealing images from the past rather than the present. Roche notes how eras such as the 1960s hold a certain fascination for designers (e.g. figs. 3.15 and 3.16), along with old film stars (e.g. Marlene Dietrich, fig. 3.17, and Audrey Hepburn, fig. 3.18) (Roche, 1996, p. 38). Nor is 'high art' safe, when the System features an old master (fig. 3.19) and the Temple of Sound a rather futuristic-looking train (fig. 3.20). But why would the future-obsessed club scene travel through the past for its imagery? Rose offers the explanation that such fly-

16
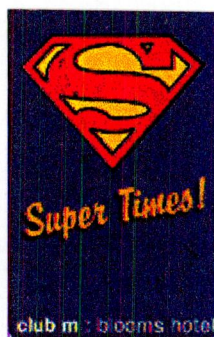
Sampled Imagery

Fig. 3.10: 'Superman' flyer for Club M

Fig. 3.11: 'Trainspotting' flyer for the Temple Bar Music Centre
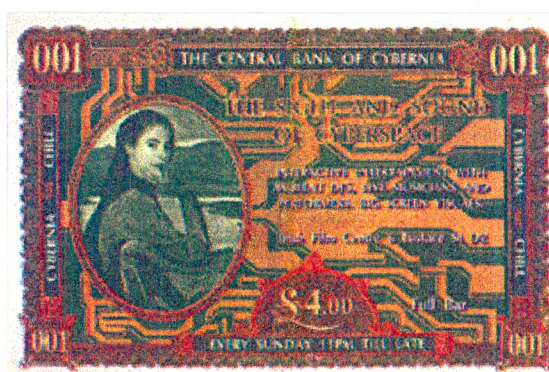
Fig. 3.12: Flyer for 'Cybernia' at the Irish Film Centre

Fig. 3.13: 'Horny Organ Card'
flyer by the H.O.T.

Fig. 3.14: Original
Organ Donor Card
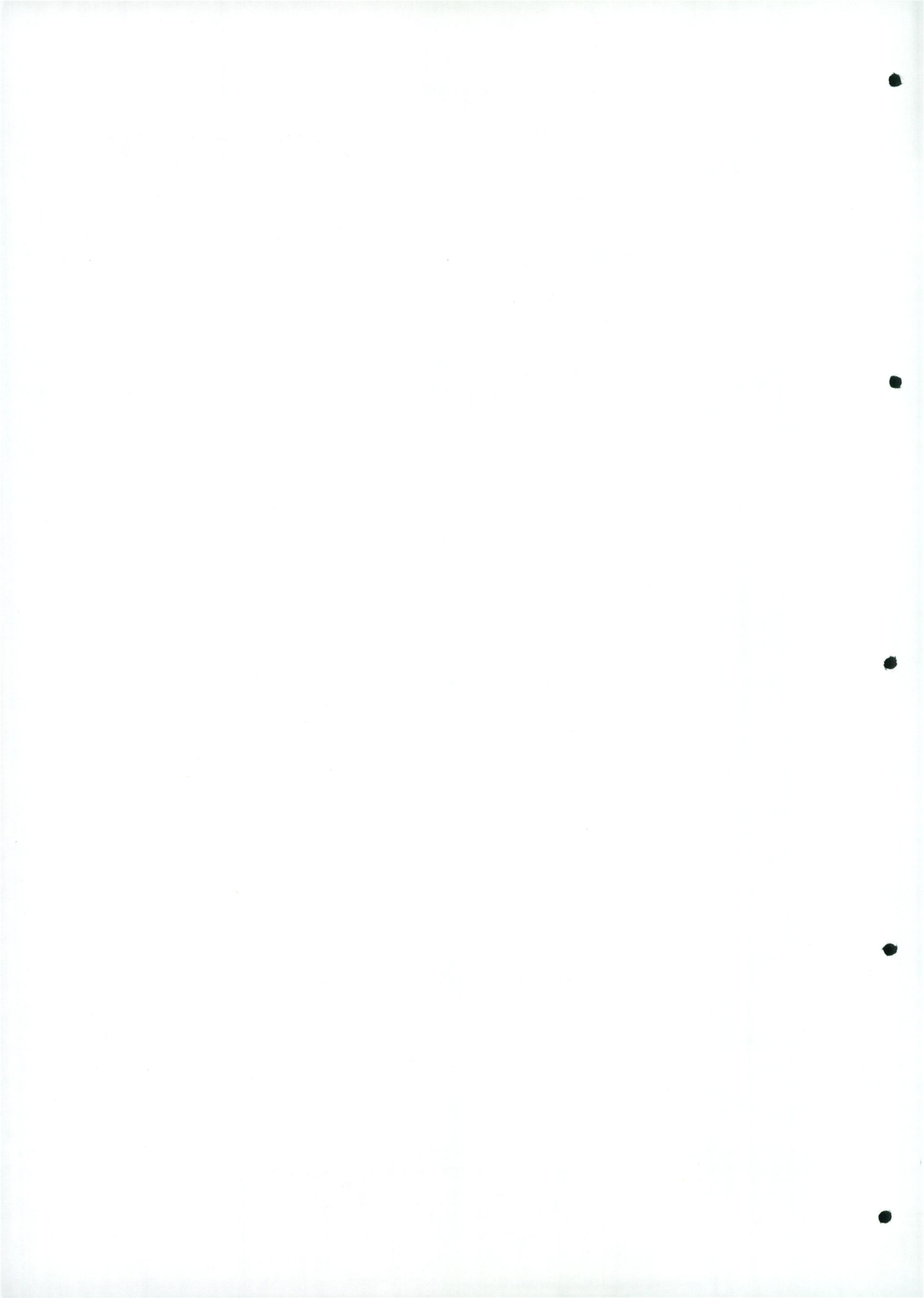
Fig. 3.15: Flyer for 'Stereotype'
at the Mean Fiddler
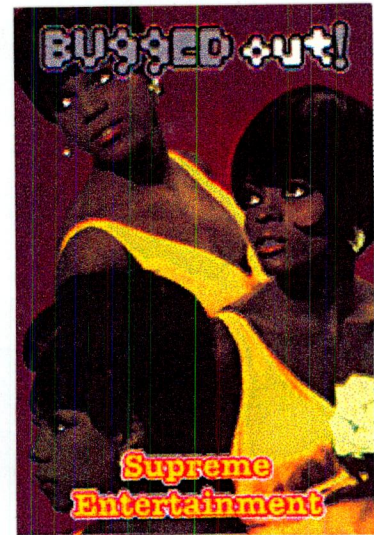
Fig. 3.16: Flyer for 'Bugged Out'
at Sir John Rogerson's Quay

Fig. 3.17: Flyer for 'Peg
Woffington's City Club'
at Powers Hotel

Fig. 3.18: Flyer for 'Mambo' at the Gaiety Theatre
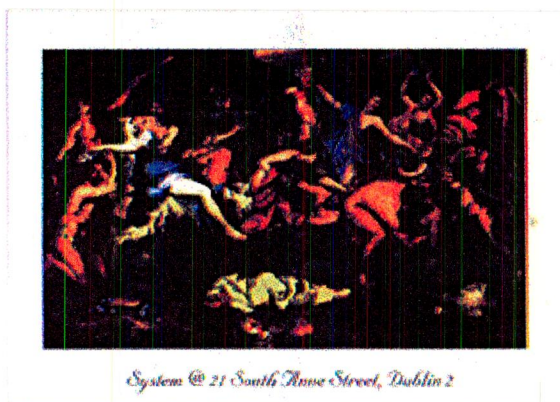
Fig. 3.19: Flyer for the System

Fig. 3.20: Flyer for 'Motor City Detroit'
at the Temple of Sound
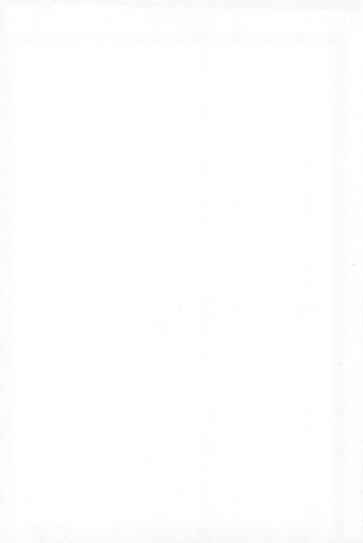
ers are "inventing new versions of the classics", and perhaps this is true (Rose, 1995, p. 10). The 'Bugged Out' flyer (fig 3.16) for example, uses a very 'techno' typeface and lurid colours to give its beehived image a modern twist. Savage's reasoning, however, is darker and more complex. He attributes such sampling to a form of end-of-millennium panic, describing flyers as "mincing up images of the past into a whirligig, millennial dance" (Savage, 1995, p. 10). Further than this, flyers could perhaps be commenting, or indeed capitalising on the jaded eye of the 1990s clubber. In an age of information overload, perhaps the designers feel that any image at all can be cast before clubbers and that they will understand it - or perhaps not even feel the need to seek any meaning from it. Either way, once-seminal images are now printed on card and tossed around pub tables. I find confirmation of such possible reasons for historic visual sampling by Plant, who writes "The club scene...tends to commodify the most radical gestures of its ancestry...leaving the messages behind in another age" (Plant, 1993, p. 7).

Not all flyers carry such serious messages however. Many sample visual images purely for fun. I find this evident in a flyer for 'Divine' (fig. 3.21). This flyer was printed at the time of the Hugh Grant scandal and features Grant's police photograph with a humourous accompanying thought bubble. Equally, a Temple of Sound flyer (fig. 3.22) presents an old-fashioned statue of a couple, and plonks a helmet on top of their heads for fun.

Designers appear to lose their sense of humour very quickly however, when it comes to being sampled themselves. Commenting on his abandonment of flyers, British designer Dave Little says crossly, "Often money owed and copyright were completely ignored" (Blink, 1996, Blue Section). Things also begin to get rather strange when we have the phenomenon of one designer sampling another designer who, in turn, has sampled someone else. This becomes weirdly apparent in the flyers for 'Trash' at the Kitchen (fig. 3.23). Designed by Redman, these flyers in the words of Roche "borrow heavily" from the Designers Republic in Britain (fig. 3.24) who, in turn, are described by Kingston as "hijacking and sampling" images from Japanese 'Manga' comics (fig. 3.25) (Roche, 1996, p. 33) (Blink, 1996, Org. section). In Dublin then, the resultant flyer features a Manga illustration - twice removed - and the result is not, apparently, a success. Roche condemns the 'Trash' flyers' lack of originality and calls them "visually static and unengaging" (Roche, 1996, p.33). I feel that I agree: while the 'Trash' flyer is colourful and pleasing enough, it does not look in any way convincingly different from its British counterpart, and lacks the cheeky and personal appeal of flyers such as 'Sheela-na-Gig' or 'Divine'.
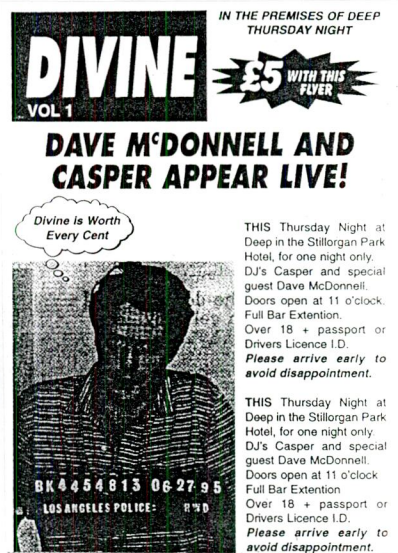
Fig. 3.21: Flyer for 'Divine'
at Deep

Fig. 3.22: Flyer for the Temple of Sound
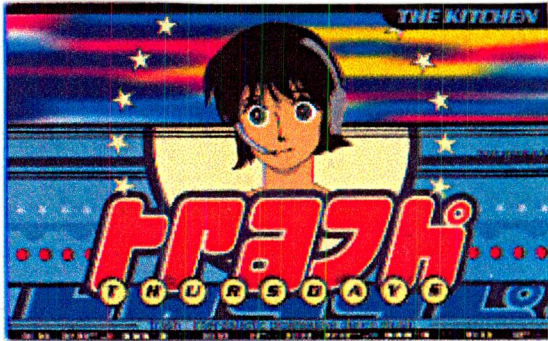
Fig. 3.23: Flyer for 'Trash' at the Kitchen

Fig. 3.24: Flyer for the Capitol Nightclub
in Sheffield
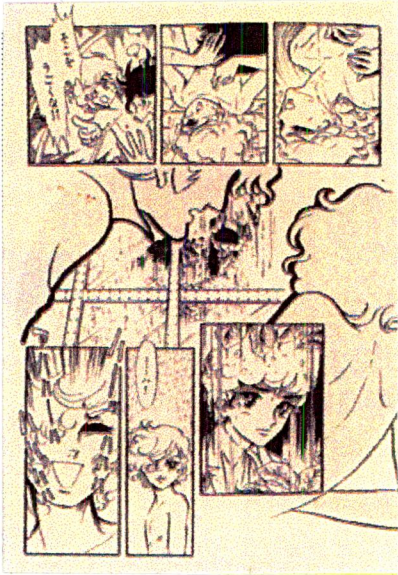
Fig. 3.25: 'Manga' comic illustration
by Keiko Takemiya

Type

Purely Typographic Solutions

Flyer designers on occasion use no imagery at all and opt for purely typographic solutions instead. An example of this is a 'December' flyer for the Temple of Sound (fig. 3.26). Rather than having placed type on a swirling background, image and word have been made one, using, I assume, some sort of 'mask' facility on the Macintosh, and thus creating a very striking flyer. Another flyer which makes use of type alone is for 'Bliss' (fig. 3.27). This features an ultra-modern, pared-down typeface, with the word 'Bliss' being implied rather than said in shades of silver and electric green. I consider that this flyer is very stylish, yet without featuring any 'trendy' image. Such a flyer also demonstrates the observations of Pesch and Weisbeck on clubland typography; that "having lost its subservient role, typography itself [becomes] a conveyor of meaning" (Pesch & Weisbeck, 1996, p. 112). Less successful in this attempt would be the David-Carsonish 'Access' flyer (fig. 3.28), where the word 'Access' struggles for supremacy against an undergrowth of type, and the whole flyer, I feel, begins to look rather grubby. Such flyers as these however demonstrate that a purely typographic solution can at least create an image that is interesting.

Interesting Use of Typography

While not opting for purely typographic solutions, other flyers still manage to make imaginative use of type. One favoured motif appears to be the recycling of very retro typefaces, such as the open-ended characters of 'Alien' flyers (fig. 3.29) which I feel convey well the feel of 1970s science-fiction films. Equally, the zany 'travelling' typography of 'Mars Needs Women' flyers (fig. 3.30) harks back to 1960s TV programmes such as 'Lost in Space'. Not only through image are old memories resurrected. The System's luscious rendering of the word 'Honey' on its flyers (fig. 3.31) has a more contemporary feel, but is equally evocative, as is a suitably wobbly 'Limbo' on an Ormond Multimedia Centre flyer (fig. 3.32). Typography such as this is generally achieved by computer manipulation using the 'Skew' and 'Twirl' facilities in programs such as Illustrator. Further special effects on the Macintosh see type being made into a three-dimensional object in itself. A 'Velure' flyer illustrates this very well (fig. 3.33): the letters stand up and throw shadows, moreover, within each letter shines a little golden light. The effect is cosy and glowing, illustrating the comfort of the title 'Velure', but again, without need of an image.

When flyer typography becomes very adventurous, it can however be difficult
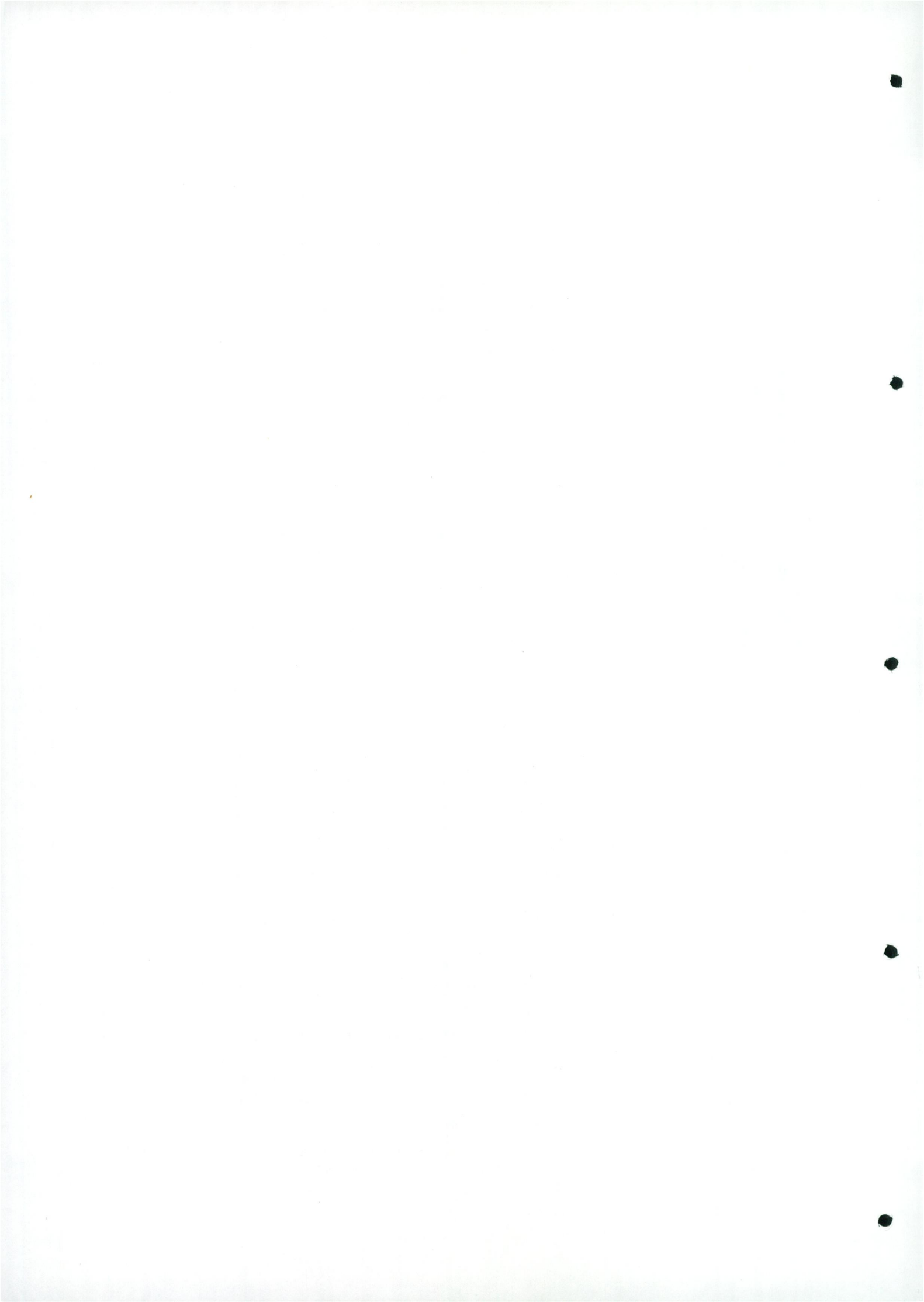
Fig. 3.26: Flyer for 'December'
at the Temple of Sound
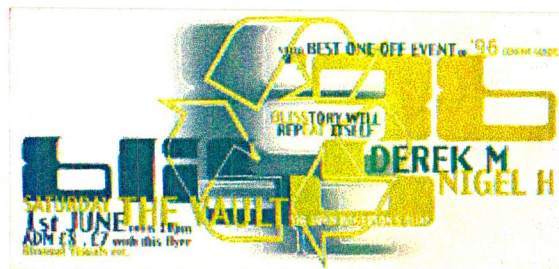
Fig. 3.27: Flyer for 'Bliss' at the Columbia Mills

Fig. 3.28: Flyer for 'Access'
at the Temple of Sound

Flyers which make Interesting Use of Typography

Fig. 3.29: Flyer for 'Alien' at the Columbia Mills

Fig. 3.30: Flyer for 'Mars Needs Women' at the System

Fig. 3.31: Flyer for 'Honey' at the System

Fig. 3.32: Flyer for 'Limbo' at the Ormond Multimedia Centre
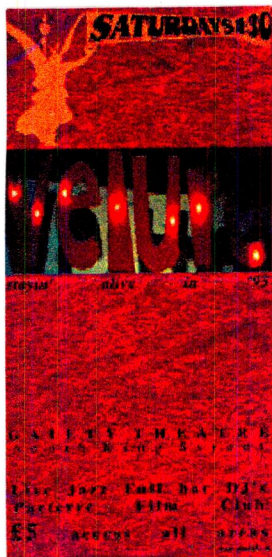
Fig. 3.33: Flyer for 'Velure' at the Gaiety Theatre
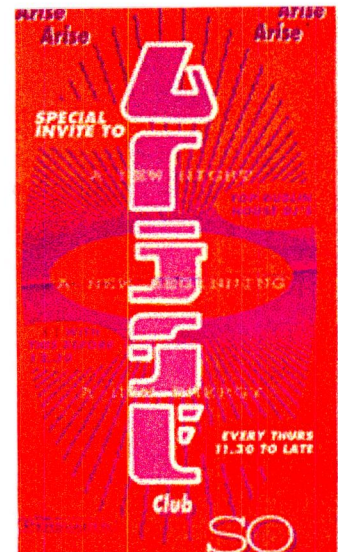
Fig. 3.34: Flyer for 'Arise' at Club So
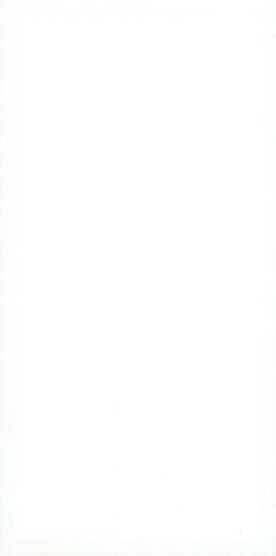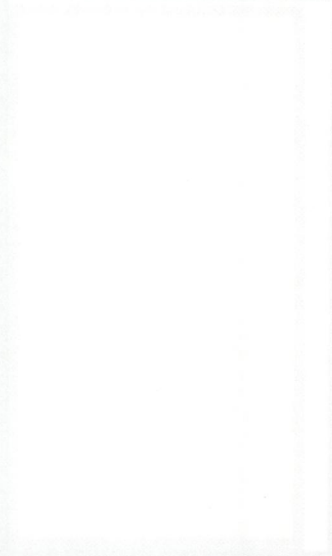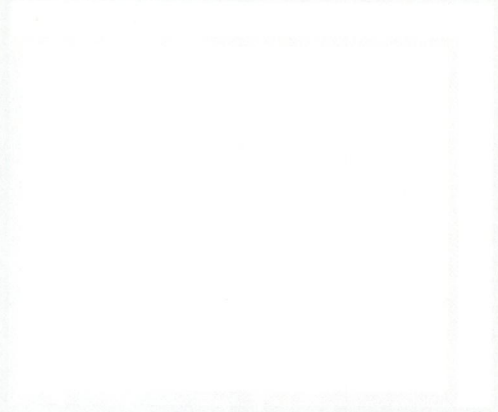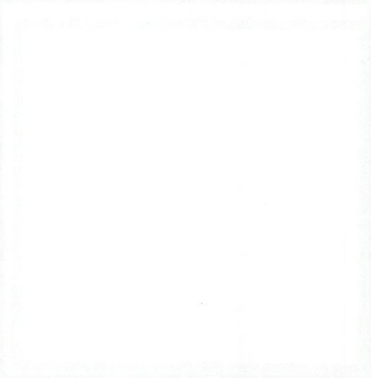
to read. Instances of this include the 'Bliss' flyer (fig. 3.27) and also an 'Arise' flyer (fig. 3.34), which to my mind only spells 'arise' after much examination. It may seem odd for a flyer to so conceal its most basic tenet - information, but Pesch & Weisbeck find this quite normal behaviour and offer an intelligent explanation: the secrecy and exclusivity of clubland, saying that flyers are in this way "sealed typographically against outsiders" (Pesch & Weisbeck, 1996, p. 112).

This chapter has looked then at some of the techniques employed in designing flyers. On considering that the flyer is made up of image and type, we have seen how the image is generated in the main via three methods: hand-created artwork, computer-generated artwork, and sampling. We have also looked at typographically interesting flyers, the techniques used in designing these, and considered the possible exclusive meanings of such use of type.

Chapter 4. An Examination of the Imagery that is to be found on Flyers

In this chapter, I hope to discuss various types of imagery that I have found on flyers and their possible implications. One characteristic of flyer design is that it can feature almost *any* imagery, however, I did find various recurring themes and I hope to discuss them as follows:

- Imagery that represents Music being Played at Clubs
- Imagery that represents the Type of Music Played at Clubs
- Imagery that represents the Essence of Clubbing
- Imagery of Science
- Imagery of Women
- Imagery related to Sex
- Imagery related to Children
- Imagery related to Drugs
- Imagery to represent 'Visiting' DJs and so on
- A Discussion on whether the Imagery on Flyers is particularly Irish

Imagery that represents Music being Played at Clubs

A number of flyers seek simply to communicate through image that most basic of messages; that clubs play music to dance to. Interestingly, I found only two or three of such flyers which featured any image of a DJ, reinforcing, I consider, the idea that club culture is 'starless'. Even when a flyer did show a DJ, it was generally done in a careless manner (e.g. a snapshot on fig. 4.0), and never stated whether the picture was actually *of* one of the DJs listed. Record decks themselves were far better represented, and usually in a more considered manner (e.g. a lino-cut, fig. 4.1, or cropped and colour-treated photography on fig. 4.2). I found an equal number of music speakers - they being after all the club goers' first point of contact with the music. A pleasing example is the thin-lined 'Evolver' flyer (fig. 4.3) which is more inventive than more standard photography (fig. 4.4). If speakers transmit the music, the clubber of course responds by dancing. I was surprised, however, at the low number of flyers which featured any dancing. Begley appears to be its main exponent, with his wild, painted figures (figs. 4.5 and 4.6) . On the other hand, perhaps the message of 'dancing' is implicit. I came to this conclusion after noticing that almost all flyers for clubs which are *not* about dancing e.g. 'chill-out' nights, feature very prominent chairs, obviously feeling

Imagery that represents Music being Played at Clubs

Fig. 4.0: Flyer for 'Def Row' at McGrath's
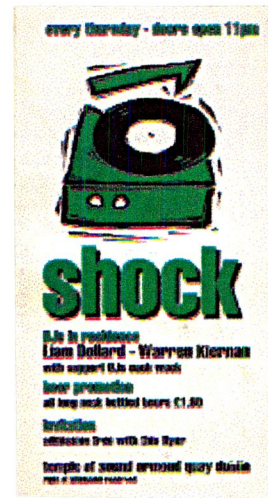
Fig. 4.1: Flyer for 'Shock'
at the Temple of Sound
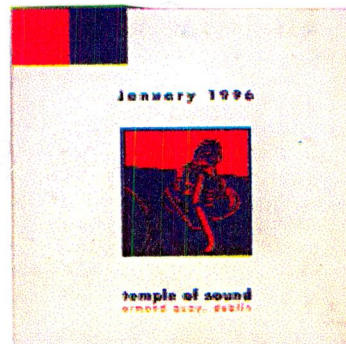
Fig. 4.2: Flyer for 'January'
at the Temple of Sound
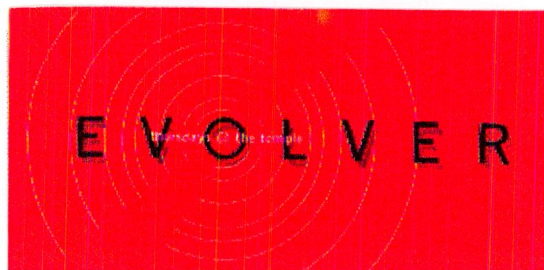
Fig. 4.3: Flyer for 'Evolver' at the Temple of Sound

Fig. 4.4: Flyer for 'Penetrate Deeper'
at the Temple of Sound
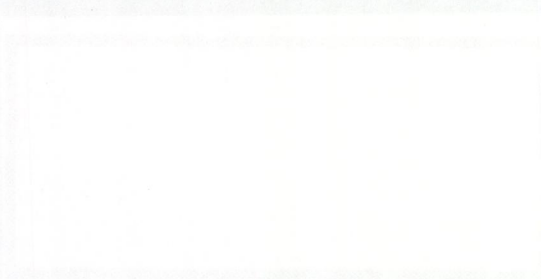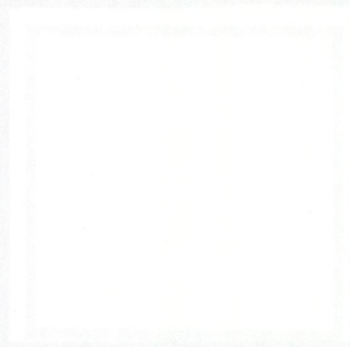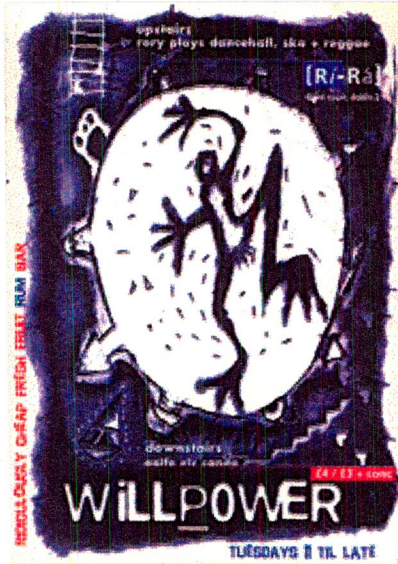
Fig. 4.5: Flyer for 'Willpower' at Ri-Ra
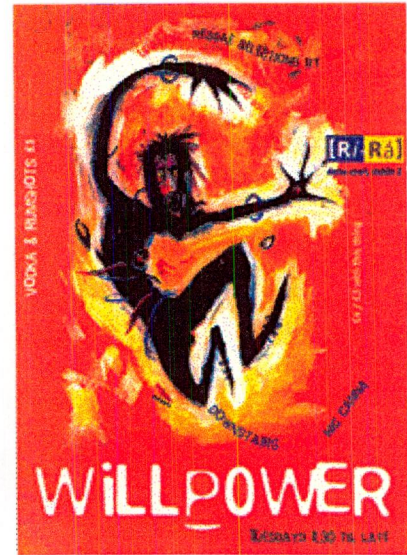
Fig. 4.6: Flyer for 'Willpower' at Ri-Ra
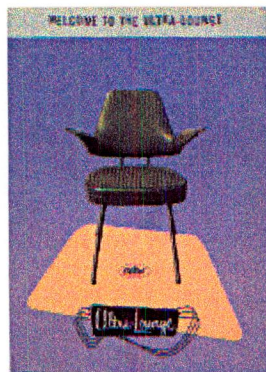
Fig. 4.7: Flyer for
'Ultra-Lounge' at McGrattans
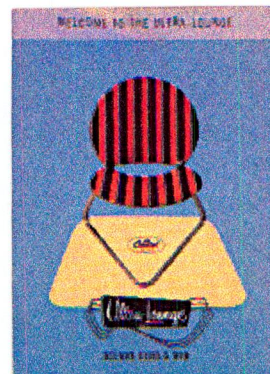
Fig. 4.8: Flyer for
'Ultra-Lounge' at McGrattans
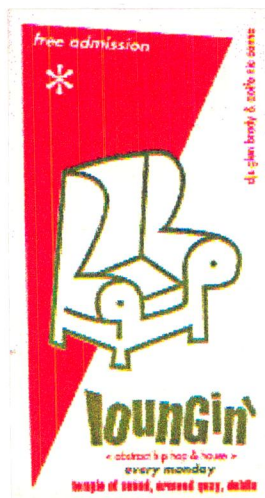
Fig. 4.9: Flyer for 'Loungin''
at the Temple of Sound
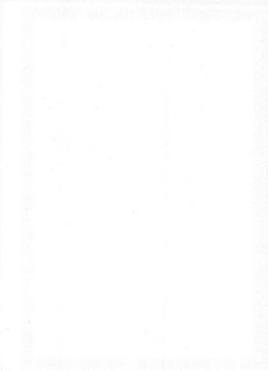
the need to strongly emphasise the idea of sitting and relaxing (figs. 4.7, 4.8, 4.9). In relation to all the above imagery however, we see then how a certain strain of imagery communicates quite simply that clubs are about music.

Imagery that represents the Type of Music Played at Clubs

Further than communicating 'music', some flyers are intended to suggest which particular *type* of music will be played in a club. The term 'handbag' for example means rather cheesy and dated dance music, and so illustrating this theme proved an easy task for designer Brian Nolan, who produced a series of flyers featuring prominent handbags for 'Strictly Handbag' (figs. 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13). This solution has also been used by other designers (fig. 4.14), however, I find Nolan's flyers particularly charming and entertaining in their seemingly endless variations on the theme. A profusion of flyers with religious iconography also exists (fig. 4.15) which are explained by Dooley as reflecting "the bluesy gospel undertones of House music" (Dooley, 1993, p. 42). More evident to me however, is the musical meaning of aggressive images on flyers such as figs. 4.16 and 4.17. Such themes can be easily linked to the "rapid assembly-line, anvil-pounding rhythms" of 'hardcore' dance music and apparently equate clubbing with going into battle (fig. 4.18) (Dooley, 1993, p.42). All of the above flyers, I consider, show how the type of music a club plays can be visually communicated.

Imagery that represents the Essence of Clubbing

The following flyers have all moved beyond simply documenting a club's music or type of music. I feel however that they do communicate a certain 'essence' of clubbing, that it is "party music...party culture" (Pesch & Weisbeck, 1996, p. 120). A common theme on flyers is 'love-hearts' and there even exists a club called 'Love' at the Columbia Mills (fig. 4.19). I particularly like Grennell's take on the 'love' idea, showing two ears joined together in a heart-shape (fig. 4.20). This, to my mind, most effectively communicates that one should 'love' the club and 'love' the music. A more chemically-induced sentiment could also be implied however, as we will discuss later. Lips also feature largely on flyers; almost all lipsticked and smiling (figs. 4.21, 4.22, and 4.23). I feel that this communicates both glamour and fun. They could also be said to suggest sensual pleasures, e.g. kissing, eating, as is evident in fig. 4.23, which combines both lipstick and chocolate. Indeed many flyers are themed on food. Examples of this would be nights with titles such as 'Relish' and 'Chipshop' (figs. 4.24 and 4.25)

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Imagery that represents the Type of Music Played at Clubs
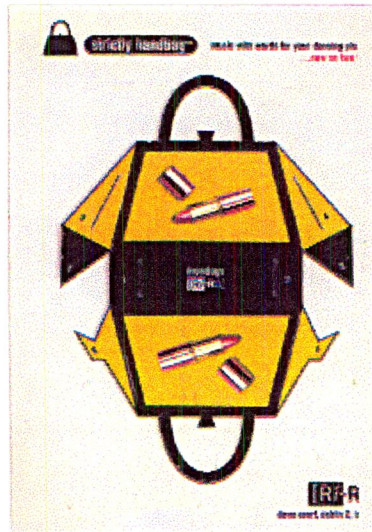
Fig. 4.10: Flyer for 'Strictly Handbag' at Ri-Ra
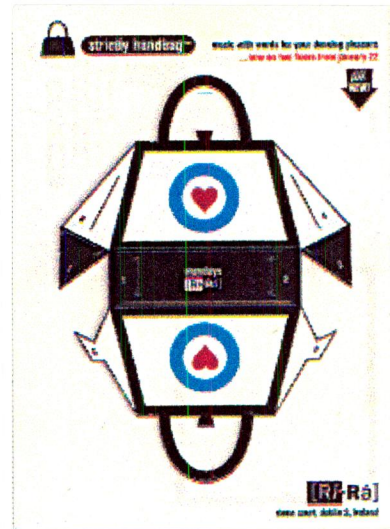
Fig. 4.11: Flyer for 'Strictly Handbag' at Ri-Ra
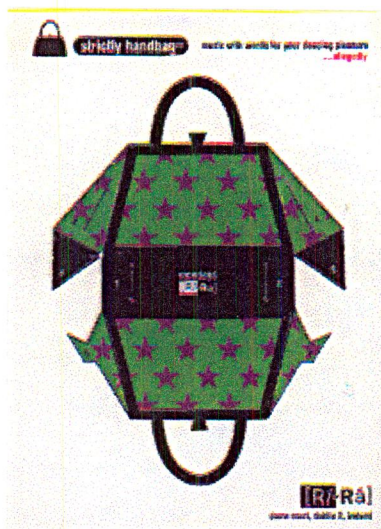
Fig. 4.12: Flyer for 'Strictly Handbag' at Ri-Ra
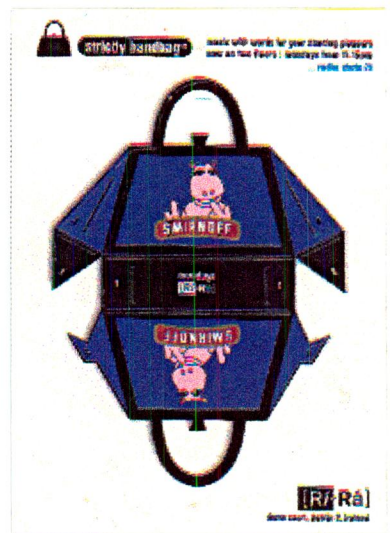
Fig. 4.13: Flyer for 'Strictly Handbag' at Ri-Ra


Fig. 4.14: Flyer for 'Little Green Bag ' at the Mean Fiddler
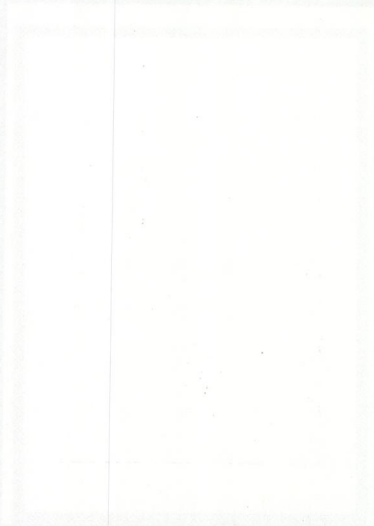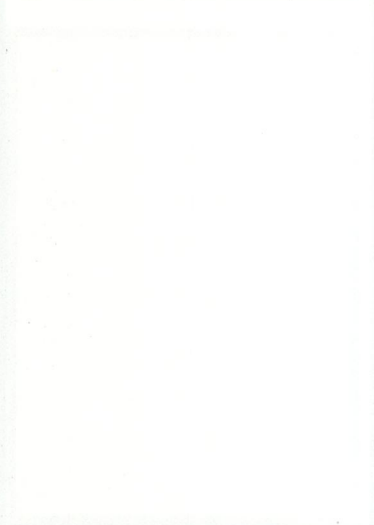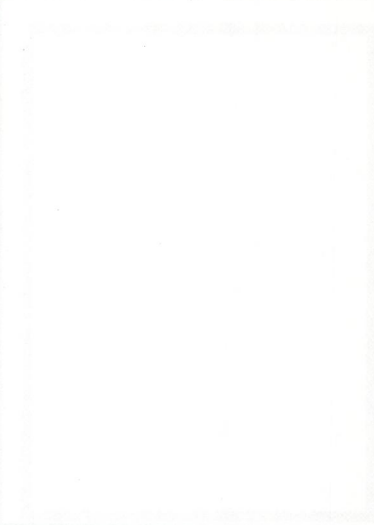
Fig. 4.15: Flyer for
'August' at the
Temple of Sound
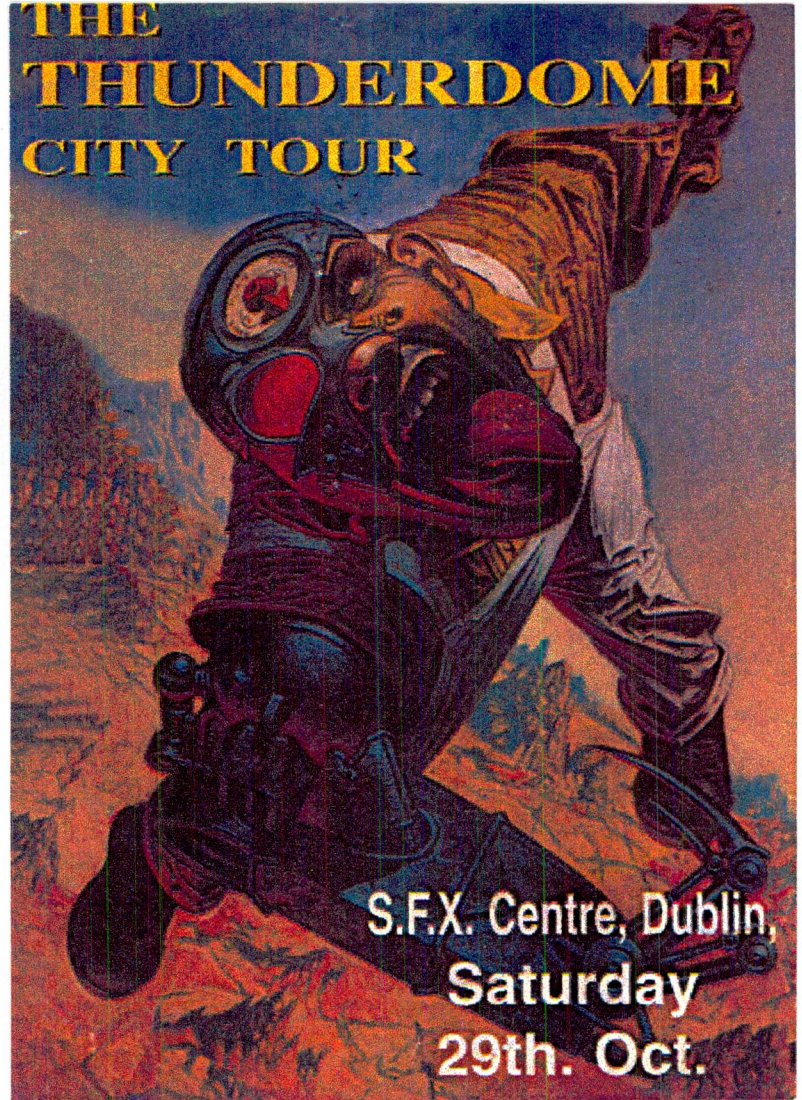
Fig. 4.16: Flyer for 'Thunderdrome City Tour' at the SFX

Fig. 4.17: Flyer for
'Sushi' at the Ormond
Multimedia Centre
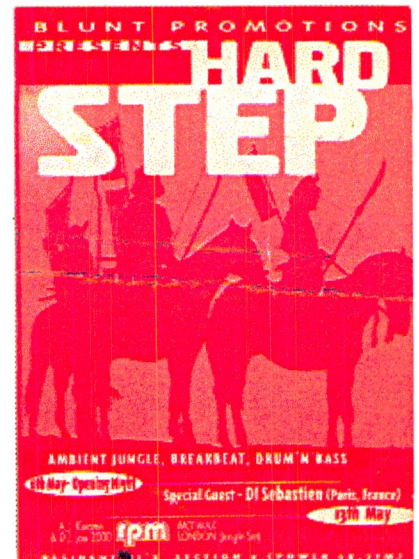
Fig. 4.18: Flyer for
'Hard Step' at the Ormond
Multimedia Centre

and a flyer for 'Sushi' (fig. 4.26) even features humourously a 'DJ menu'. Food then is not only equated with the ambience of clubbing but with the music. Good-time and pleasurable eating is mainly featured, e.g. luscious fruit and chocolate on 'Taste' (fig. 4.27), and a 'picnic' at the Ormond (fig. 4.28). This is then taken to its irreverent zenith with 'Bulimia' (fig. 4.29), boasting of a possible 'overdose' of music and fun. A flyer of this genre which I particularly enjoyed is for 'Bliss' (fig. 4.30) which has a very humourous twist, showing a shark delightedly chasing a swimmer with knife and fork.

Further flyers have purely a theme of 'bliss', with titles such as "100% Pleasure" (fig. 4.31), and 'Paradise Found' (fig. 4.32). Such themes have lately been brought to new ironic heights, for example the sun-drenched 'Honey' flyer (fig. 4.33) and the POD issuing what look like cliched tourist postcards (fig. 4.34), all communicating 'fun' and 'party', albeit with a twist. We see then how the idea or essence of clubbing can be communicated through flyer imagery.

Imagery of Science

Not content with promoting itself as being heavenly, clubland also appears to want to encapsulate the universe. Thus we have a glut of flyers featuring science-fiction imagery; aliens (fig. 4.35) and spacemen (fig. 4.36), and nights titled 'Another Planet' (fig. 4.37), 'Sputnik' (fig. 4.38), and of course 'UFO' (fig. 1.7). The more everyday scientific world is also brought into play; see the 'DNA' (fig. 4.39) and 'Laboratory' (fig. 4.40) flyers. With regard to flyers of such themes, I consider that they relate in a sense to electronically-generated dance music. An example of this is the 'Logic' flyer which promises 'Rhythmic Technology' (fig. 4.41). Flyers such as these suggest the futuristic and very modern qualities of dance music. There is also a darker possibility, however. With regard to 'experiments' and 'laboratories', one could relate such themes to the unpredictable effects of unlicensed drugs. Furthermore, such flyers as these could even indicate a more long term uncertainty. "Ravers may be aware", suggests Reynolds, "that E culture is a massive, uncontrolled psychosocial experiment whose long-term costs are only now becoming clear" (Reynolds, 1994, p. 56).

Imagery of Women

What of the most familiar image of all to club-goers, the human itself? I found surprisingly few to no flyers featuring men or even mixed groups of people. Women, howev-

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Imagery that represents the Essence of Clubbing
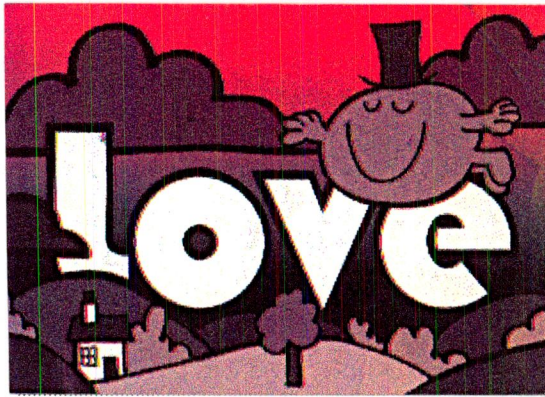
Fig. 4.19: Flyer for 'Love'
at the Columbia Mills
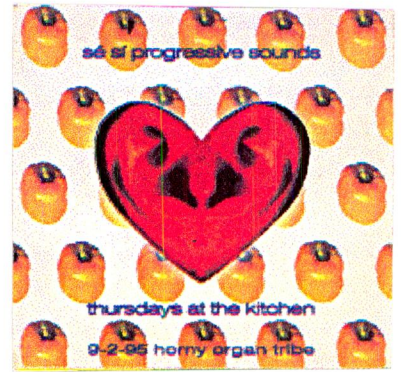
Fig. 4.20: Flyer for 'Thursday'
at the Kitchen

Fig. 4.21: Flyer for
'Peg Woffington's
City Club' at Powers Hotel
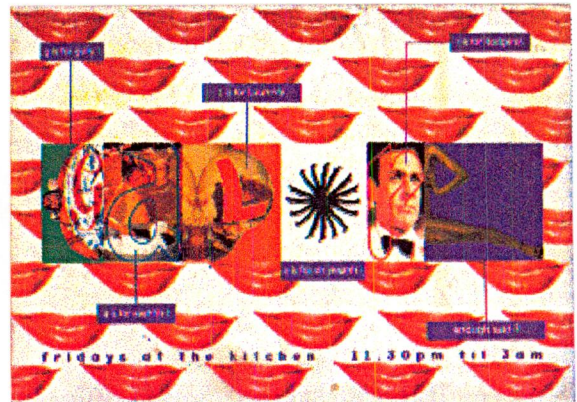
Fig. 4.22: Flyer for 'Galore' at the Kitchen
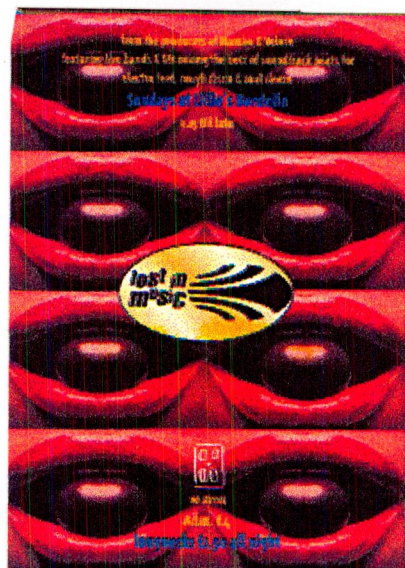
Fig. 4.23: Flyer for 'Lost in Music'
at Lillie's Bordello
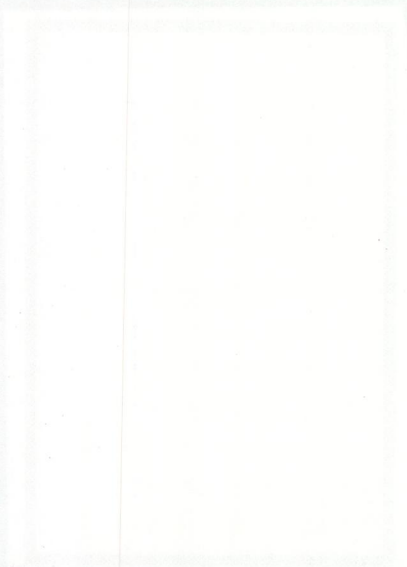
Fig. 4.24: Flyer for 'Relish'
at the Mean Fiddler

Fig. 4.25: Flyer for
'Chipshop'
at the Parnell Mooney

Fig. 4.26: Flyer for 'Sushi'
at the Ormond Multimedia Centre

Fig. 4.27: Flyer for 'Taste' at the Kitchen
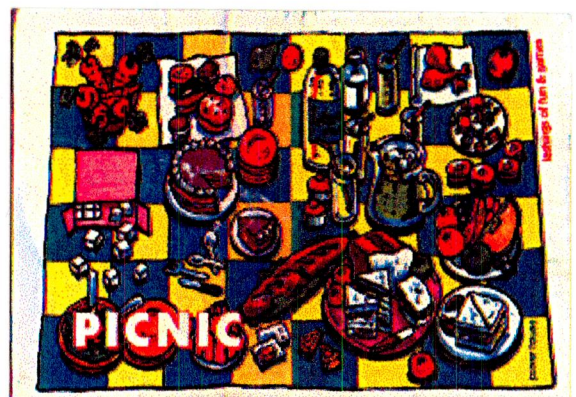
Fig. 4.28: Flyer for 'Picnic'
at the Ormond Multimedia Centre
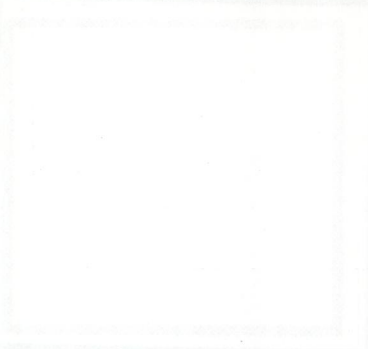
Fig. 4.29: Flyer for 'Bulimia'
at the Kitchen
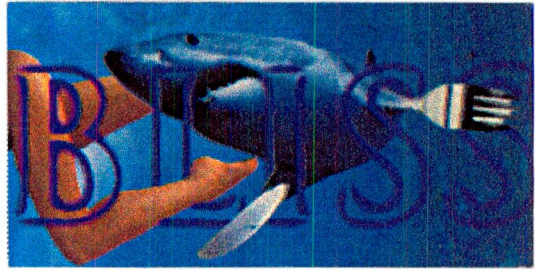
Fig. 4.30: Flyer for 'Bliss' at the
Ormond Multimedia Centre
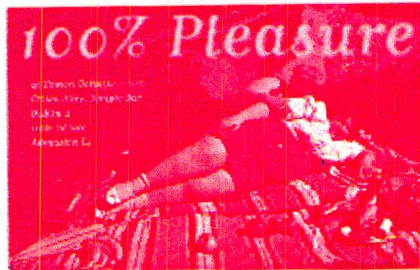
Fig. 4.31: Flyer for '100% Pleasure'
at Eamonn Doran's
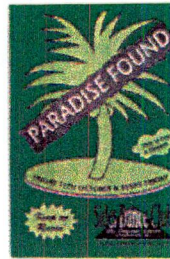
Fig. 4.32: Flyer for 'Paradise
Found' at Sides
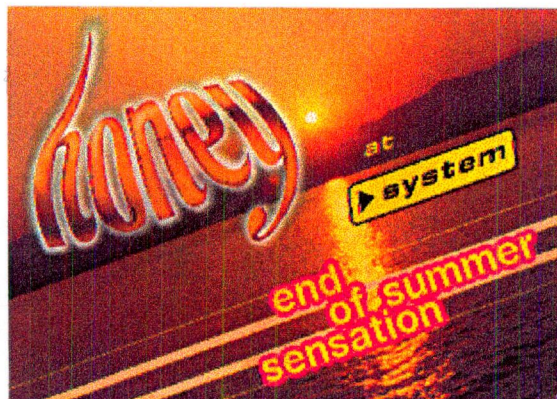
Fig. 4.33: Flyer for 'Honey' at the System

Fig. 4.34: Flyer for 'Fridays' at the POD
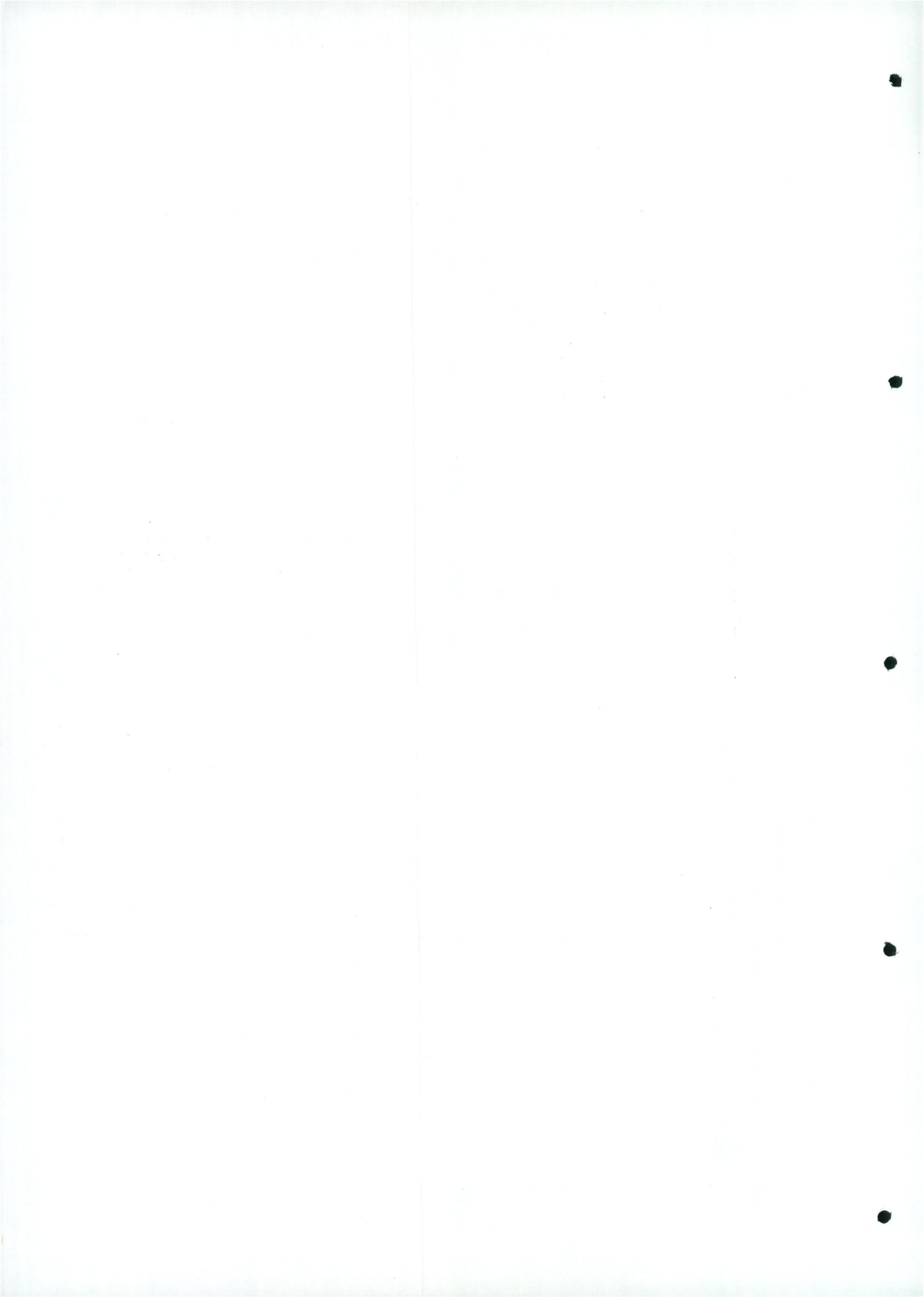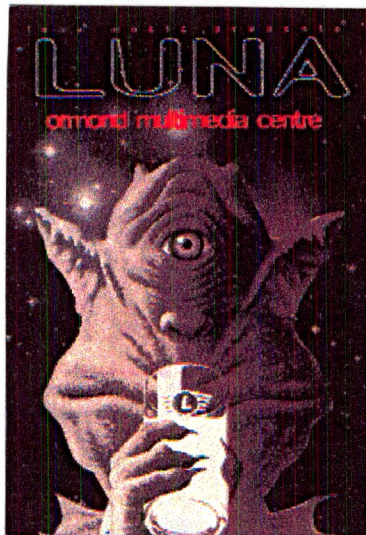
Fig. 4.35: Flyer for 'Luna'
at the Ormond Multimedia Centre
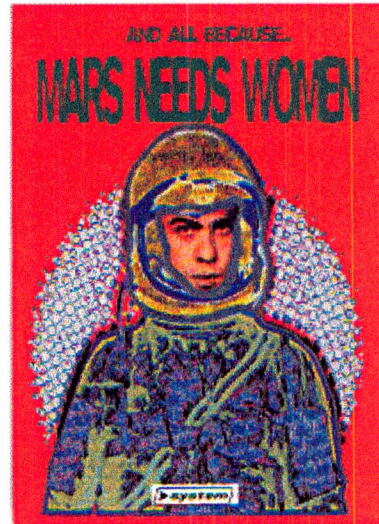
Fig. 4.36: Flyer for 'Mars Needs
Women'at the System
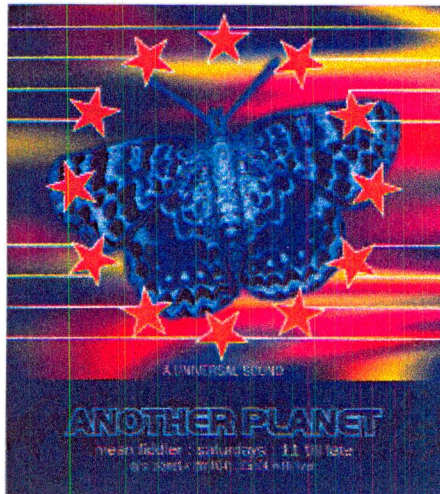
Fig. 4.37: Flyer for 'Another Planet'
at the Mean Fiddler
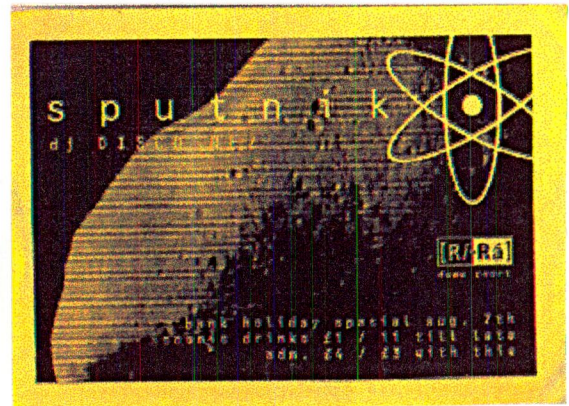
Fig. 4.38: Flyer for 'Sputnik' at Ri-Ra
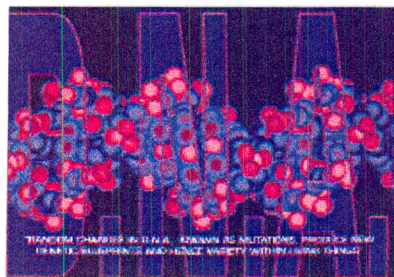
Fig. 4.39: Flyer for 'DNA'
at the Parnell Mooney
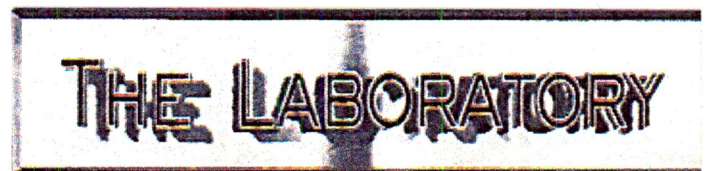
Fig. 4.40: Flyer for 'Laboratory' at the Furnace
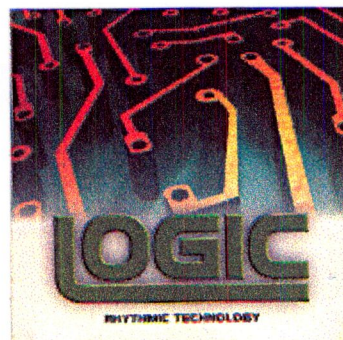
Fig. 4.41: Flyer
for 'Logic' at the
Temple of Sound
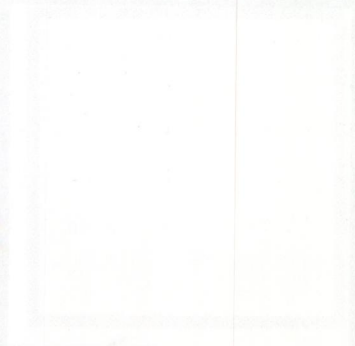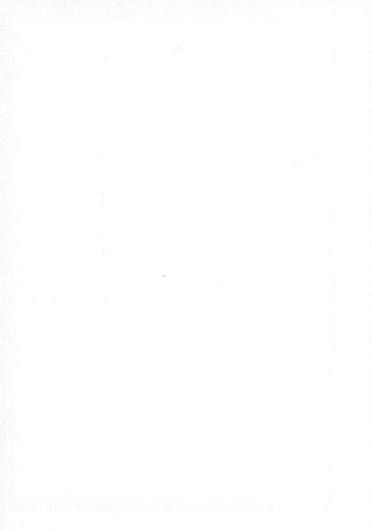
er, did feature to a degree and a currently controversial issue in club culture is the use of sexist imagery of women in both its flyers and advertising (see Aitkenhead's 1996 article). Compared to what I have seen and read of English clubs (for example figs. 4.42 and 4.23), the amount of sexist imagery of women on Dublin flyers appears to be considerably lower. I did find incidences of it however, such as the 'Ransom' flyer (fig. 4.44) for the Ormond Multimedia Centre (did the kidnapee have to be a woman? And in her underwear?). A flyer for 'Lost in the Woods' at the Furnance (fig. 4.45) brings to mind Aitkenhead's comments on clubland's "[Less of] the fantasies of post-feminism, as...the fantasies of certain club promoters" (Aitkenhead, 1996, p. 5). Equally, club 106.4 fm were either joking with their 'Christmas Party' flyer (fig. 4.46) or should have known considerably better. It is however possible to feature a beautiful girl on a flyer to better effect. A flyer for 'Honey' at the System (fig. 4.47) treats the matter in an attractive and fun way: stealing an image of a famous model in a pink fur bikini, it plonks her in a silly setting, replete with humourous slogan. I feel that this flyer is successful, as the woman's image is used in context, unlike the 'Lost...' or 'Christmas Party' flyers, and to fun effect.

Imagery related to Sex

This brings us then to another feature of a club night: the idea of meeting potential partners, flirtation, and the possibility of sex. How do flyers deal with this? In general, I have found the count of sexually-related imagery quite low, and usually only dealt with by very particular clubs, usually gay venues. Flikkers for example, was an early exponent of sexually-themed flyers (fig. 4.48). A similar frankness exists in the flyers for 'Gag' which is a recent fetish / gay club. These flyers, designed by Sweeney, run through a variety of treatments, from line-drawings (fig. 4.49) to photography (fig. 4.50), and later take a cartoonish turn (fig. 4.51). The imagery on these flyers is very clear and explicit, and aggressively reinforced with shocking pinks and fluorescent oranges. I must confess that I find some of these flyers disconcertingly upfront, but this may be simply due to their contrast with the general hedging of other flyers. Another shock-impact flyer was fig. 4.52 for 'Honey', featuring a most graphic illustration, which caused rather a furore on its appearance, as I remember. More typical however of general Dublin clubland are the Kitchen's 'Blue' flyers (figs. 4.53 and 4.54) issued last summer. Rather than the fleshy artwork of the 'Honey' flyers, these flyers feature computer-generated images and jokes about plugs. Such flyers interest me because they are 'obscene' in a sense, yet *without* being obscene - perhaps because they use such dehumanised images. Equally, Ri-Ra plant a photograph of a 'screw' on their flyers (fig. 4.55) and leave the rest unsaid. We see then how Dublin flyers have

Fig. 4.42: Flyer for 'Centrefold'
at the Gardening Club in London
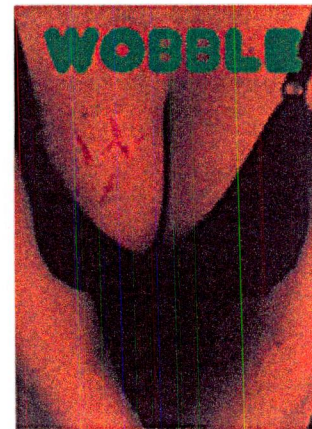
Fig. 4.43: Flyer for 'Wobble'
at Branstons Venue in Birmingham

Fig. 4.44: Flyer for 'Ransom'
at the Ormond Multimedia Centre
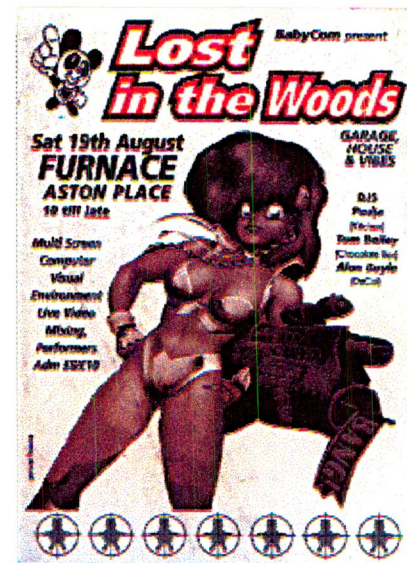
Fig. 4.45: Flyer for 'Lost in the Woods'
at the Furnace

Fig. 4.46: Flyer for the 'Club 106.4 fm
Christmas Party' at the Boardwalk
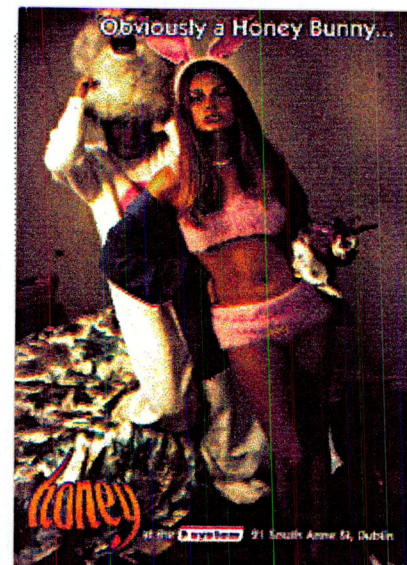
Fig. 4.47: Flyer for 'Honey' at the System
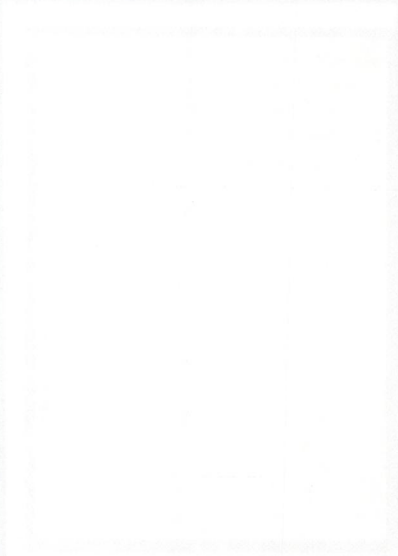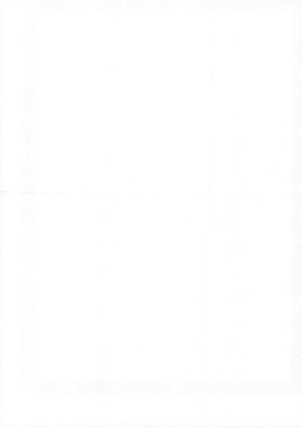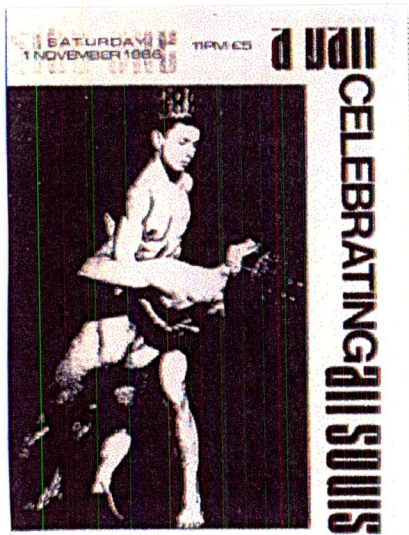
Fig. 4.48: Flyer for 'Flikkers'
at the Hirschfield Centre

Fig. 4.49: Flyer for 'Gag'
at the Tivoli
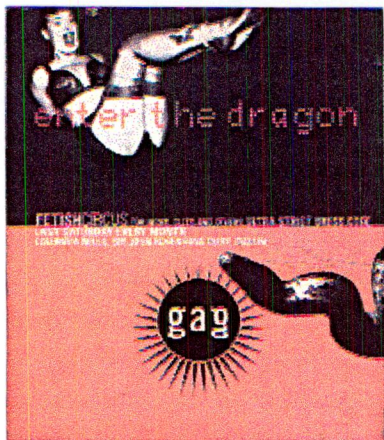
Fig. 4.50: Flyer for 'Gag'
at the Columbia Mills

Fig. 4.51: Flyer for 'Gag'
at the Columbia Mills

Fig. 4.52: Flyer for 'Honey'
at the System
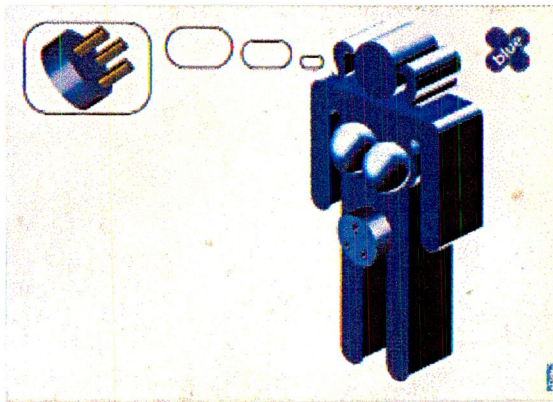
Fig. 4.53: Flyer for 'Blue' at the Kitchen
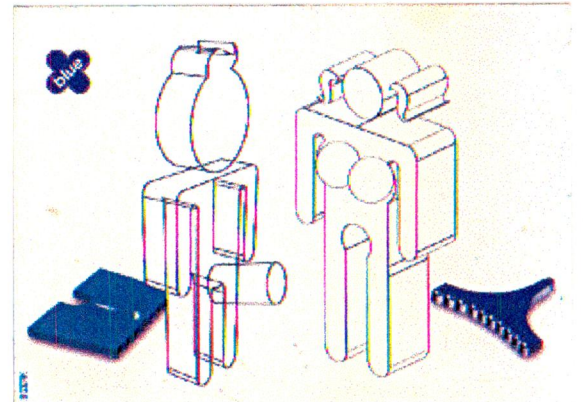
Fig. 4.54: Flyer for 'Blue' at the Kitchen

Fig. 4.55: Flyer for
'Tongue 'n' Groove'
at Ri-Ra

different policies with regard to featuring sexual imagery, and that the policies vary according to the clubs.

Imagery related to Children

A prevalence of children's imagery is to be found on flyers; fairytales are illustrated (fig. 4.56), toys remembered (Duplo, fig. 4.57 and Plasticene, fig. 4.58), old television programmes resurrected (fig. 4.59), and of course Mr. Men featured for 'Love' (fig. 4.19). Such images on club flyers may appear rather strange, however, I consider that they communicate the idea of anti-seriousness and 'being at play'. Ross takes this idea a step further, suggesting that such flyers symbolise clubbers not wishing to 'grow up'; describing "[rave's] commitment to the good old utopian principle of 'not yet'" (Ross, 1994, pp. 11-12). I am not sure that matters are as pronounced as this however, and I consider that childrens' imagery essentially communicates 'fun'. There exists another possibility - that there could be a subversive quality to such imagery; perhaps the flyers could be a said to suggest anything *but* innocent childish fun. Furthermore, the cheerful, zany figures could imply a gaiety that is in fact drug-induced.

Imagery related to Drugs

"Rave culture [is] now irredeemably associated with the drug Ecstasy" states Ross (Ross, 1994, p. 11). Other drugs however are also frequently used in clubs, such as LSD, speed, and cocaine. Obviously the possibility of drug use in a club is not something openly communicated on flyers because of its illegality. As Polhemus notes however, many designers make use of sufficiently "off the wall" graphics instead to communicate subliminal drug messages (Polhemus, 1995, p.75).

A common theme in many flyers is the use of swirling, computer-generated imagery as we have seen, for example on a flyer for 'Phat Kat' at the Blue Note club (fig. 4.60). Such a flyer, to my mind, resembles the graphics of the late 1960s (fig. 4.61) and so could be said then to imply the use of hallucinogenic drugs. An Ecstasy connection also exists, however. Reynolds describes ecstasy as being a "flow" drug and that it "melts...rigidities, releasing oceanic feelings of connection and empathy"; I consider then that such 'fluidity' as exists in a flyer such as the 'Phat Kat' flyer implies a fairly general drug use (Reynolds, 1994, p. 55).

Ecstasy has also frequently been called a 'love' drug, and indeed as we saw, a sizeable proportion of heart-shaped images exist in clubland. The flyer for 'Love' (fig. 4.19) then fits two bills; both that of 'love' and that of childrens' imagery to imply

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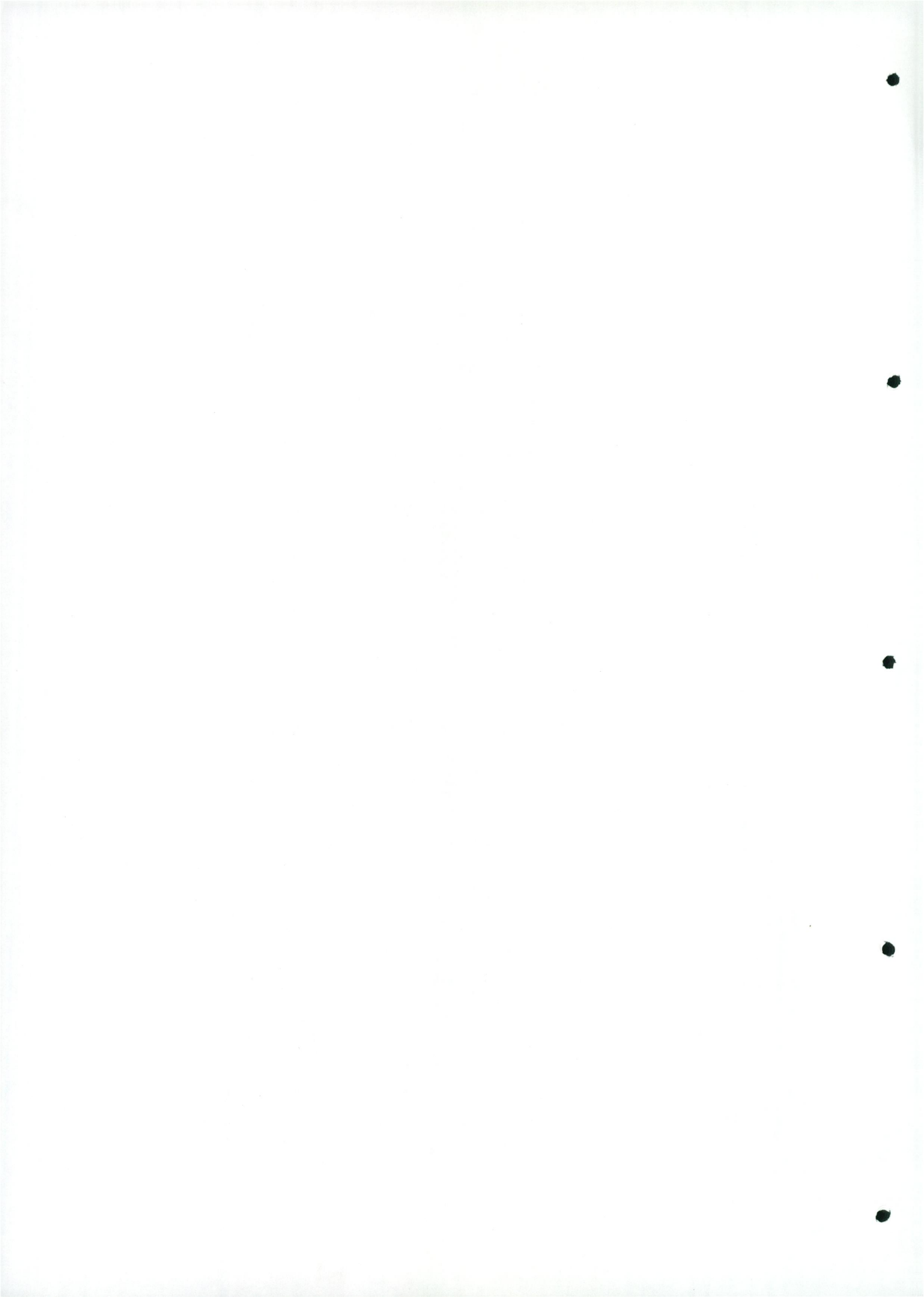
Imagery related to Children
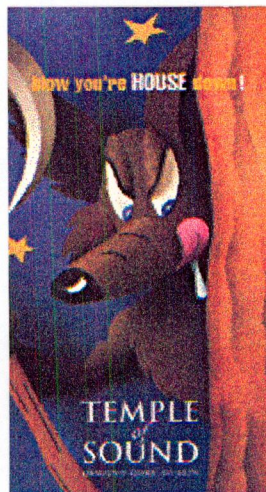
Fig. 4.56: Flyer for 'January'
at the Temple of Sound

Fig. 4.57: Flyer for 'December'
at the Temple of Sound
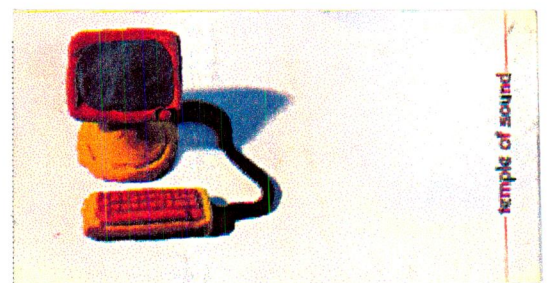
Fig. 4.58: Flyer for the Temple of Sound
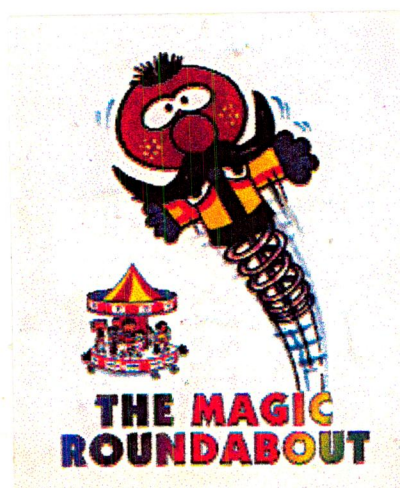
Fig. 4.59: Flyer for
'The Magic Roundabout'
at the Ormond Multimedia Centre

extreme gaiety. Other 'Love' flyers to my mind are equally communicative about drugs, for example figs. 4.63 and 4.64. Both these flyers feature busy, hectic backgrounds and rather frantic-looking figures in front; fig. 4.63 shows a maniacally-grinning frog with glowing red eyes, and fig. 4.64 a sweating creature pulling faces, a term known as 'gurning' in clubland, and refers in all probability to the over-heating properties of Ecstasy.

An early flyer for 'UFO' (fig. 4.65) uses a more subtle and humourous twist. This flyer plagiarises the format of Penguin books and delicately tinkers with the image of the penguin to suggest drug use. As Clancy describes it: "This particular penguin had already supped with the aliens, because instead of his usual up-and-at-'em carriage, he was a bit hunched..." and moreover, stars have been added above the penguin's head (Clancy[2], 1996, p. 1). At the opposite extreme is a flyer which I consider makes both a very bold visual *and* verbal statement about drugs: fig. 4.66. This flyer declares triumphantly 'Faceless in May' - a pun on the Ecstasy term to be 'off your face', i.e. on a lot of drugs.

We see then how designers have found many different ways of communicating drug messages on flyers. Moreover, such ingenuity as we have seen manages even to communicate which *type* of drug is in question, while in no way providing any grounds for official accusations.

Imagery to represent 'Visiting' DJs and so on

I asserted earlier that club culture is not constructed around any 'star system'. Over the years however, the club scene has developed a certain hierarchy of DJs, with renowned names going on 'club tours'. The past half-decade has also seen the emergence of 'dance acts'; people or bands who are prepared to recreate their sound live onstage. Finally, clubs which become very successful also go on 'tours' around venues e.g. the 'Cream' club in England. In short, some 'big dance names' then tour to Dublin among other cities, for example, DJs Kemistry and Storm (fig. 4.67), dance acts 'Underworld' (fig. 4.68) and Portishead (fig. 4.69), and 'Cream' (fig. 4.70).

Looking at these flyers, we see that while any 'faces' are as absent as ever, *names* however have become important. The flyers then print such names in large bold type and feature very little else. In the case of 'Cream' (fig. 4.70), the club has evidently arrived in Dublin replete with its own identity, and little or nothing is required of the Irish flyer designer. In the remaining three cases, the designers' imaginations have suddenly become extremely limited; all of the flyers are virtually without image and even their typography is rather boring. It appears then that in the case of flyers for 'big name' nights, invention and humour are no longer considered necessary to attract
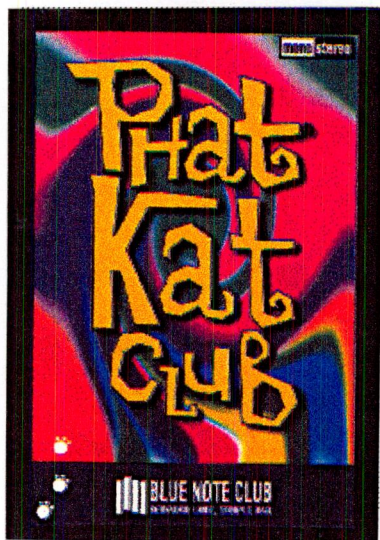
Fig. 4.60: Flyer for 'Phat Kat'
at the Blue Note Club
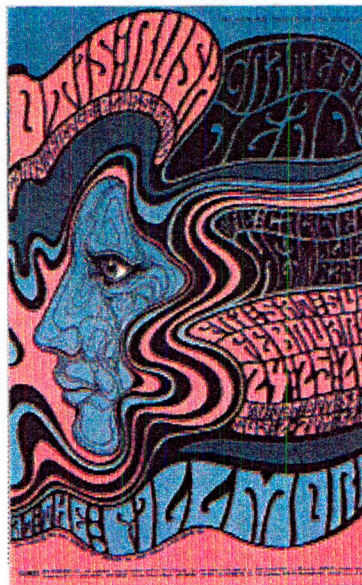
Fig. 4.61: 'Peackock Ball' poster
by Victor Moscoso, late 1960s
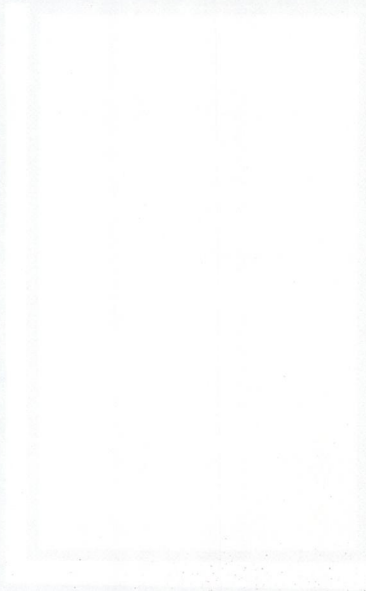
Fig. 4.63: Flyer for 'Love'
at the Columbia Mills
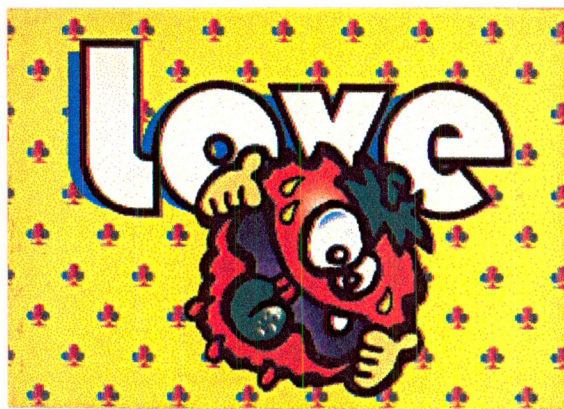
Fig. 4.64: Flyer for 'Love'
at the Columbia Mills
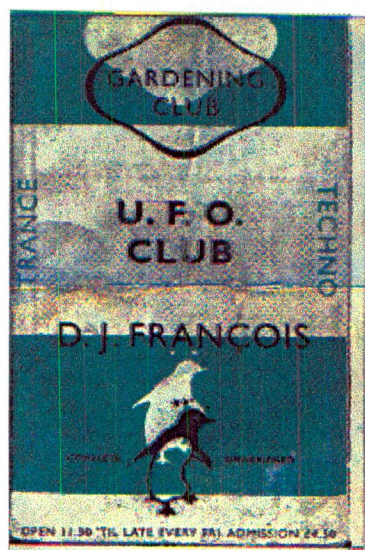
Fig. 4.65: Flyer for 'UFO'
at the Rock Garden
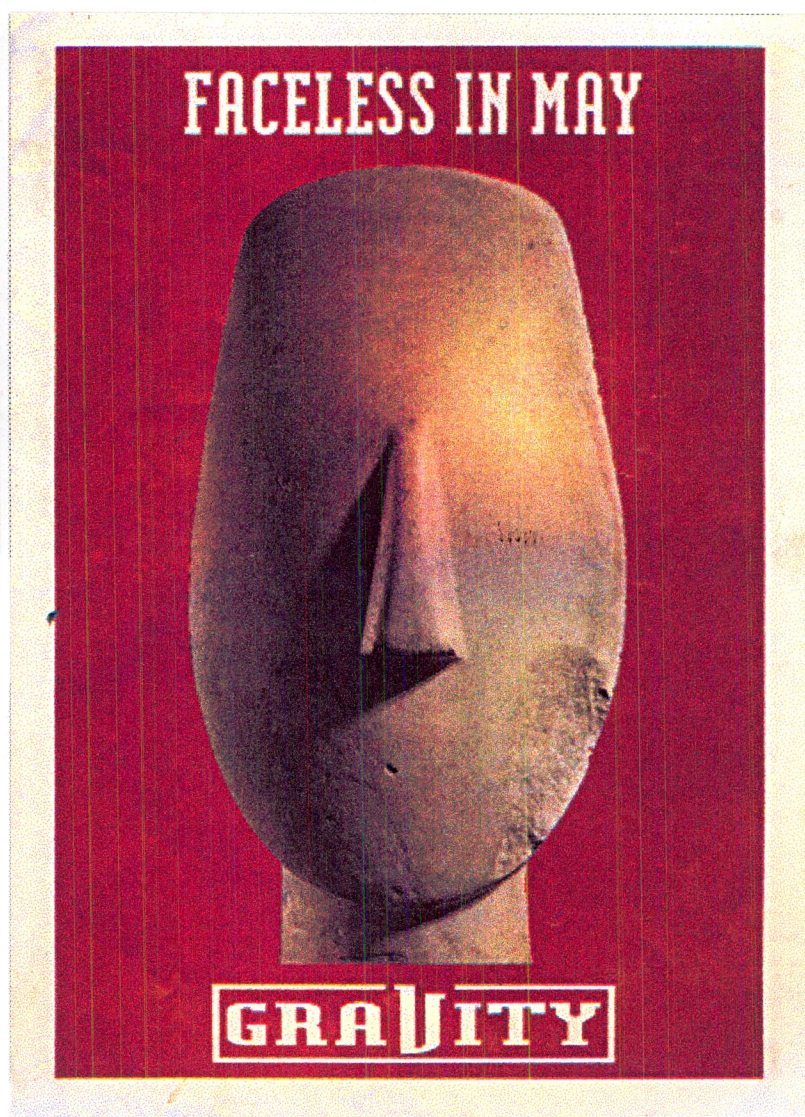
Fig. 4.66: Flyer for 'Faceless' at Spectrum

Imagery to represent 'Visiting' DJs etc.

Fig. 4.67: Flyer for 'Kemistry and Storm'
at the Kitchen

Fig. 4.68: Flyer for 'Underworld'
at the Mean Fiddler
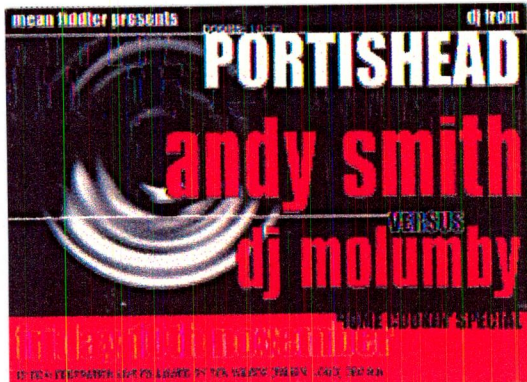
Fig. 4.69: Flyer for 'Portishead'
at the Mean Fiddler

Fig. 4.70: Flyer for 'Cream'
at the POD

attention, the idea apparently being that such 'names' will draw a crowd irrespective of the flyers. I consider then that we witness a worrying phenomenon with regard to such flyers; as clubland takes its first faltering steps towards any sort of 'star' system, the standard of its flyer design descends sharply.

A Discussion on whether the Imagery on Flyers is particularly Irish

"I think the flyers are very English altogether," commented Clancy on Dublin flyers (Ni R., 1996, Clancy interview). Overall indeed, a flick through the British produced book 'Highflyers' and a look at a bundle of Irish flyers appears to offer little to contrast. British flyers are produced using similar methods, e.g. Mac-generated design, sampled imagery, and so on. The imagery featured on flyers also follows similar themes, e.g. party and 'love' images (fig. 4.71); religious imagery (fig. 4.72), science fiction (fig. 4.73); sexist, as we know; childrens' imagery (fig. 4.74); and drug references (fig. 4.75). Club culture having originated in Britain, and Irish clubland generally taking its cue from there, we must then conclude that many Irish flyers borrow ideas from England. One wonders how healthy this is, and indeed Walsh condemns it: "I think this is very boring. I hate flyers that just rip off English clubs. They should speak to us as Irish people" (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 2). He also maintains that such copying contains an inherent problem, that the flyers "ultimately run out of steam" (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1).

Certain clubs and nights *do* have Irish characteristics however. The club Ri-Ra uses an Irish name for example ; 'ri-ra' meaning 'wildness and mayhem', which is an apt metaphor for a club. Specifically Irish-themed flyers have also been produced in Dublin, with the H.O.T. having been a particular exponent. We have seen their 'Sheela-na-Gig' flyer (fig. 3.0) which hijacked a specifically Irish image, as did their 'Colleen Deluxe' flyer (fig. 4.76), which was based on old-fashioned Irish sweets. The H.O.T. have also run many *nights* with Irish themes, for example celebrations of the ancient pagan festivals of 'Tionscnamh' (fig. 4.77), Daghda (fig. 4.78), and Imbolc (fig. 4.79). They also ran a series of nights titled 'Elevator', which not only celebrated such festivals, but also had installations in the venue by contemporary Irish artists, which were then featured on their flyers, e.g. a video installation of a Japanese doll's head shown on the 'Elevator 3' flyer (fig. 4.80). "You hope that if you throw out something like this, a spark will be lit somewhere,", says Walsh, who hopes that Irish club culture, instead of aping Britain, could become a means of resurrecting forgotten national characteristics (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 2).

Another way for a flyer to have a uniquely Irish identity is when a designer has his own particular style or look. Although I suggested earlier that flyer design can gen-

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Fig. 4.71: Flyer for 'Shoom'
at Busbys in London
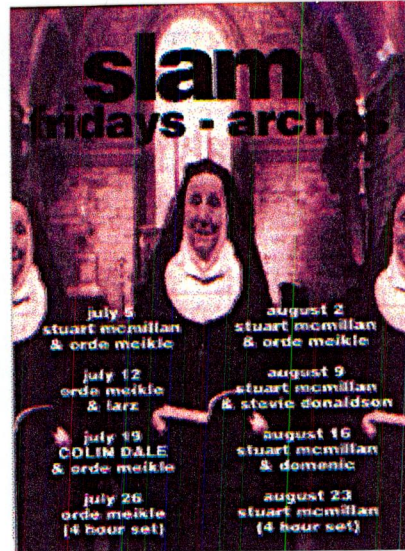
Fig. 4.72: Flyer for 'Slam'
at the Arches (in England)
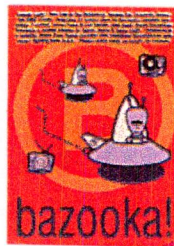
Fig. 4.73: Flyer for 'Bazooka'
at Stage 2 in Chesham (England)

Fig. 4.74: Flyer for 'Glitterati'
at the Cross in York (England)

Fig. 4.75: Flyer for the Strutt club in London

Fig. 4.76: Flyer for
'Colleen Deluxe' at the
Ormond Multimedia Centre

Fig. 4.77: Flyer for 'Tionscnamh' at the Rock Garden

Fig. 4.79: Flyer for
'Imbolc' at the
Ormond Multimedia Centre

Fig. 4.78: Flyer for 'Daghda'
at Thompson's Garage

Fig. 4.80: Flyer for 'Elevator 3'
at the Ormond Multimedia Centre

erally be produced by designers and non-designers alike, we have seen that certain designers' names do repeatedly crop up. This is also related to more moneyed clubs seeking out professional designers which we will discuss later. Examples of these would be Sweeney (H.O.T. and 'Gag' flyers), Grennell (H.O.T. again and 'UFO'), Nolan ('Strictly Handbag' and 'Strictly Fish') and Begley ('Willpower' flyers). A combination, for example, of Sweeney's sparse, linear style, and the Irish themes of a night such as 'Elevator' (fig. 4.80) then creates a flyer which I feel is specifically *Dublin* and does not have a British counterpart. Equally, Begley's individualistic paintings (figs. 3.1 and 3.2) are in no danger of being mistaken for any English flyers.

This chapter has looked at what I consider to be the main strands of imagery featured on flyers and discussed their possible meanings. We have seen how flyers span from simply representing the music, type of music, or party-vibe of clubland to more arbitrary imagery such as that of science-fiction and children. Equally, this chapter has considered the subliminal messages on flyers in relation to sexuality and drug use. Finally, it has examined flyers which feature 'big names' and flyers which do and do not have a specifically 'Irish' feel. I conclude that there is an enormous variety in Dublin flyer imagery; from the relatively straightforward to the seemingly bizarre to the worrying. I consider that these flyers in general can at least be commended for the wide variety of sources from which they draw reference and in doing this, they have an enduring ability to surprise, entertain, and provoke discussion.

Chapter 5. A Consideration of Particularly Experimental Flyer Design

We have looked then at the techniques that are used in designing flyers and at the imagery which appears on them. Our discussion has so far been mainly confined to flyers of fairly standard format, e.g. A6 pieces of card. Flyer design however goes beyond this, with some flyers exploring their actual format. I propose to look at such flyers and their implications under the following headings:

- Flyers with 'Gimmicks'
- Unusually-Shaped Flyers
- Flyers which make use of Tactile Papers
- Flyers produced as 'Panels'
- 'Interactive' Flyers
- 'Open-up' Flyers

Flyers with 'gimmicks'

While gimmicks on flyers have grown with the need to grab attention in a competitive club environment, some pre-1993 flyers show early moves in this direction, such as a 'Sale' tag for Spectrum (fig. 5.0) which was a 'real' shop tag complete with string, and a sticker affixed to the back of a playing-card for 'Funk Off' (fig. 5.1) demonstrating, I think, Rose's comments about club design's "irrepressible urge to find a new use for the Same Old Things" (Rose, 1992, p. 24). Equally, the 'Love Train' flyers for the Mean Fiddler (fig. 5.2) use cheap plastic gold rings to new and engaging effect. Gimmicks in the last year or two however have become more luxurious and costly. The POD is a big exponent of such flyers, with examples including 'chocolate bar' flyers replete with tinfoil and barcode (fig. 5.3), and even a little flickbook with a cartoon (fig. 5.4). Flyers such as these reinforce the idea of a club's exclusivity, being produced in very limited amounts and so only available to a lucky few. They are also rather curious in that they are by no means speedily-produced, but require careful assembly, and so move a step away from the original fast-photocopy idea of flyers.

28
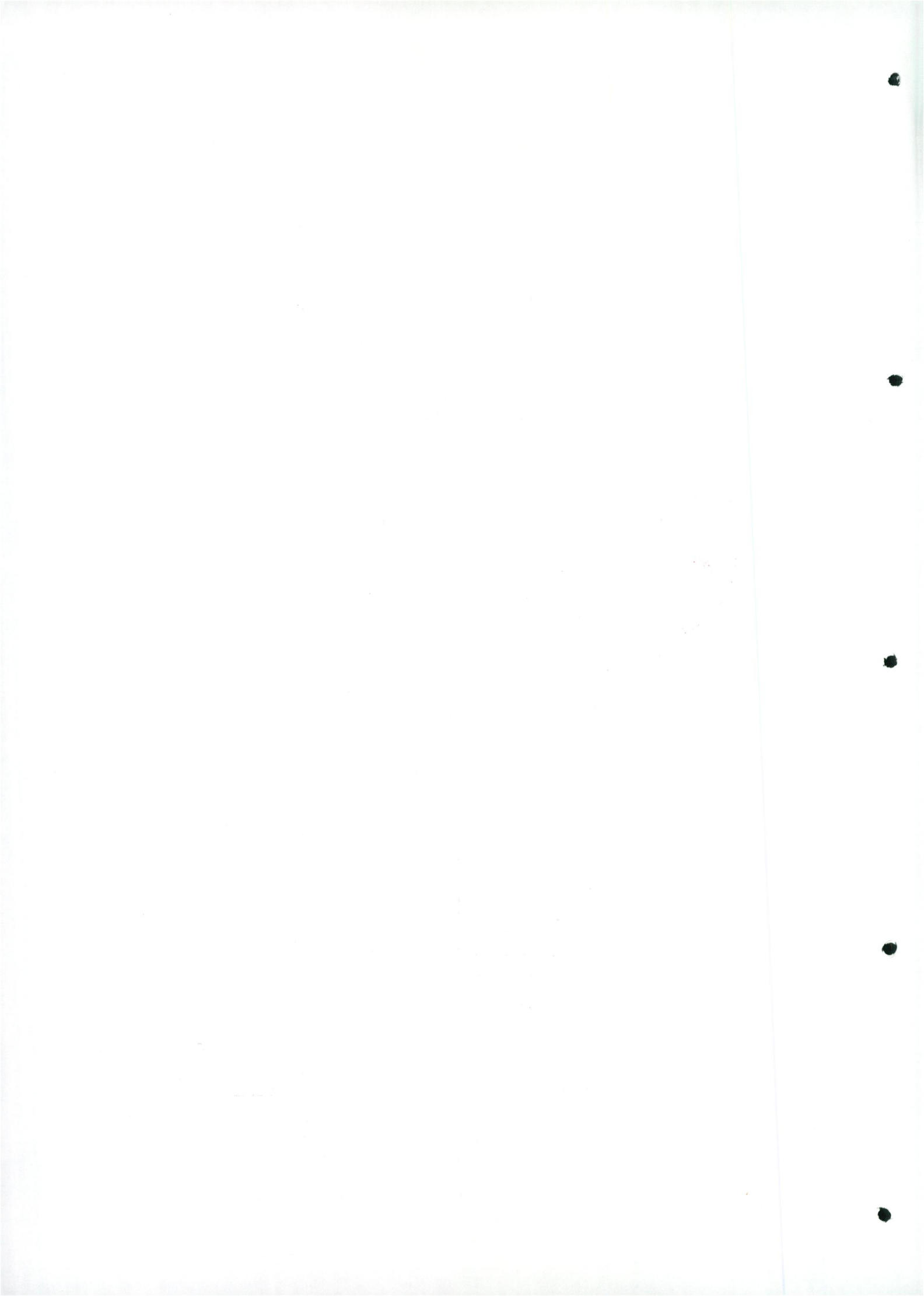
Flyers with 'Gimmicks'

Fig. 5.0: Flyer for 'Sale'
at Spectrum

Fig. 5.1: Flyer for 'Funk Off' at Ri-Ra
(front and back)

Fig. 5.2: Flyer for 'Love Train'
at the Mean Fiddler
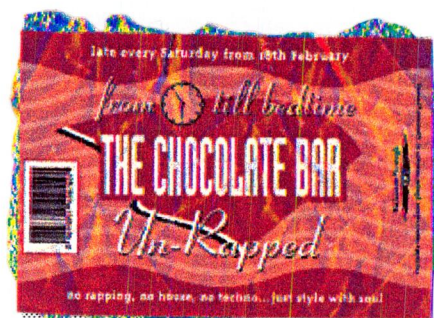
Fig. 5.3: Flyer for the Chocolate Bar
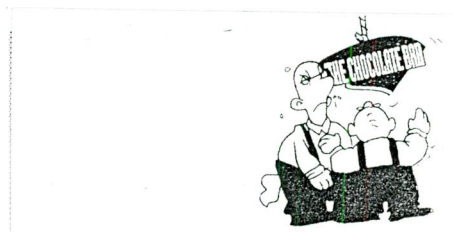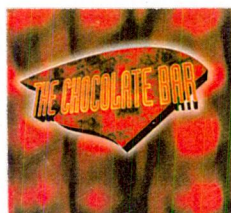
Fig. 5.4: Flickbook flyer for the Chocolate Bar:
front, back, and two sample pages
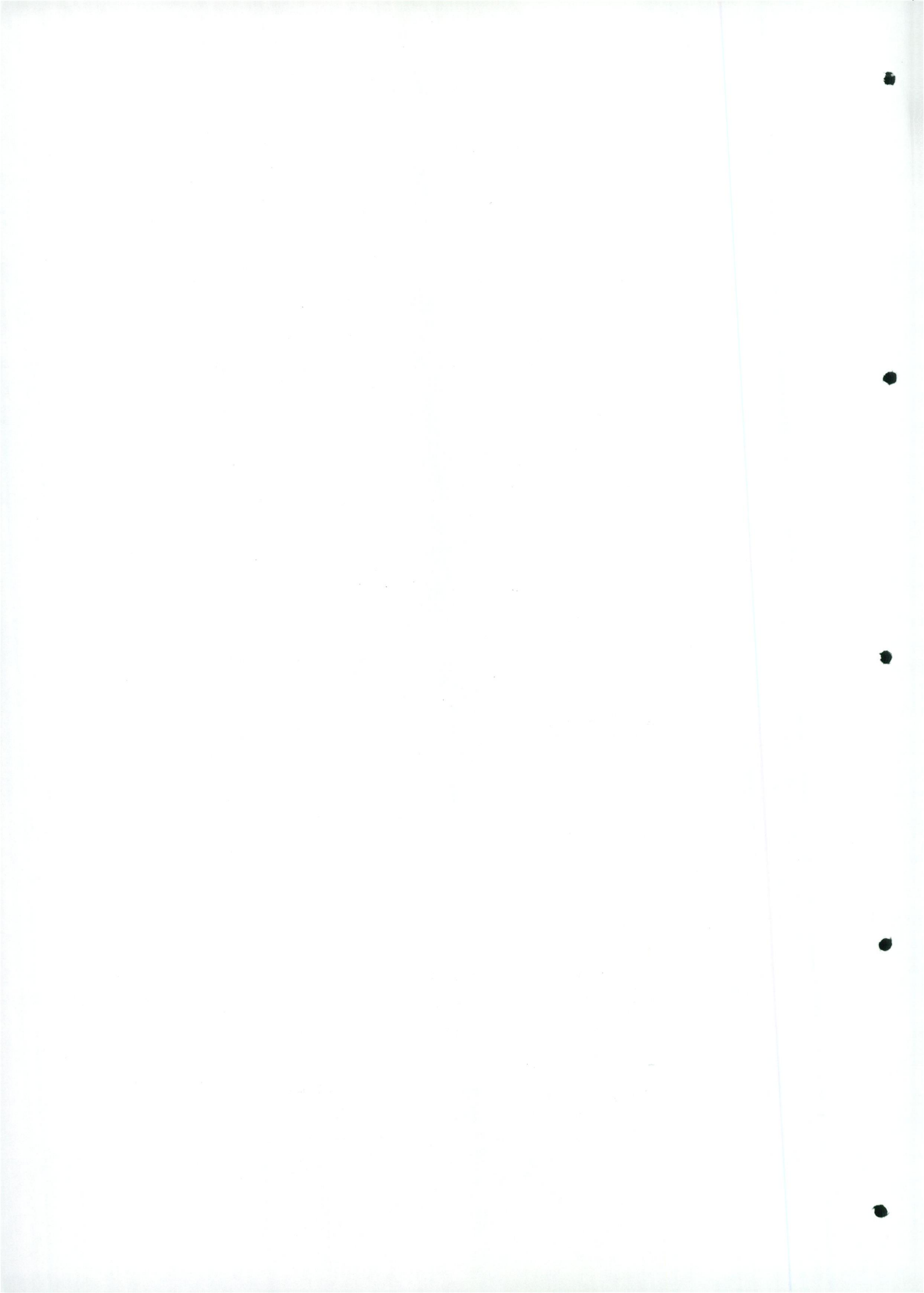
Unusually-Shaped Flyers

In size alone, flyers can fluctuate from full A4 (the 'Faceless' flyer, for example, fig. 4.66) to very tiny (fig. 5.5), again in various attempts to attract attention. Furthermore, flyer design sometimes employs circular shapes (fig. 5.6), triangular shapes (fig. 5.7), and even heart-shapes (fig. 5.8), which I find fun compared to the more standard rectangle. The height of such experimentation must be a very amusing chicken-leg-shaped flyer for the 'Holy Roast' at the Kitchen (fig. 5.9). Flyers such as these, I think, show that plenty can still be done in terms of shape and size, even if a club cannot afford costly gimmicks, and so still manage to boast "freedom of visual expression" (Blink, 1996, Introduction).

Flyers which make use of Tactile Paper

Certain flyers also make use of different textures of paper. One very popular approach, and almost standard in England, is the use of gloss paper. A Dublin example of this would be the POD's 'Art' flyer which is heavily glossed all over (fig. 5.10). I personally find this flyer a little slippery and repulsive to the touch. An approach I would prefer is that of the Kitchen's flyers of the past winter (fig. 5.11). These flyers use spot-gloss applied only to the image on otherwise matt paper. I feel that the flyers benefit from this contrast and are enjoyable to run one's finger across, feeling the difference. A new club , 'Powderbubble' which is an extension of 'Gag', even makes use of wrinkle-surfaced paper (fig. 5.12). This, to my mind, suggests the texture of skin and is very appropriate for the fetish theme of the night. As we see, flyers which employ special paper appeal as much to the fingers as to the eye, and I consider that this is very clever design, as, after all, the nature of a flyer is that it is handled and turned over, unlike a poster or advertisement.

Flyers produced as 'Panels'

Flyers have occasionally been produced as several matching panels. Examples of this include the flyers for 'Peg Woffington's' (fig. 5.13) which feature Dietrich's image divided into strips and also both Sweeney (fig. 5.14) and Grennell's (fig. 5.15) flyers for 'Elevator' which came in matching groups of four. Flyers such as these encourage their recipient to seek out the remaining panels, and in this way I consider them to be interesting, for rather than being throwaway, they actively encourage collection.

29
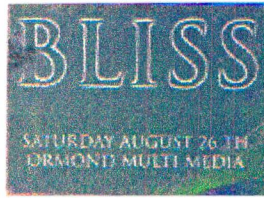
Fig. 5.5: Flyer for 'Bliss'
at the Columbia Mills

Fig. 5.6: Flyer for 'Funk Off' at Ri-Ra

Fig. 5.7: Flyer for 'Tongue 'n' Groove'
at Ri-Ra

Fig. 5.8: Flyer for 'Love It' at the System
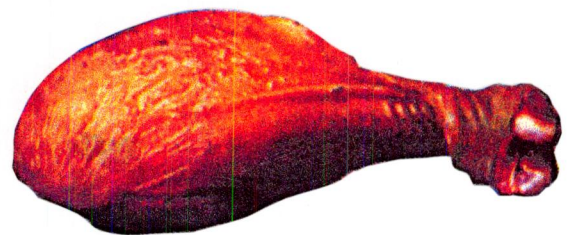
Fig. 5.9: Flyer for the 'Holy Roast'
at the Kitchen

Flyers which make use of Tactile Paper

Fig. 5.10: Flyer for 'A.R.T.'
at the POD

Fig. 5.11: Flyer for 'Influx' at the Kitchen
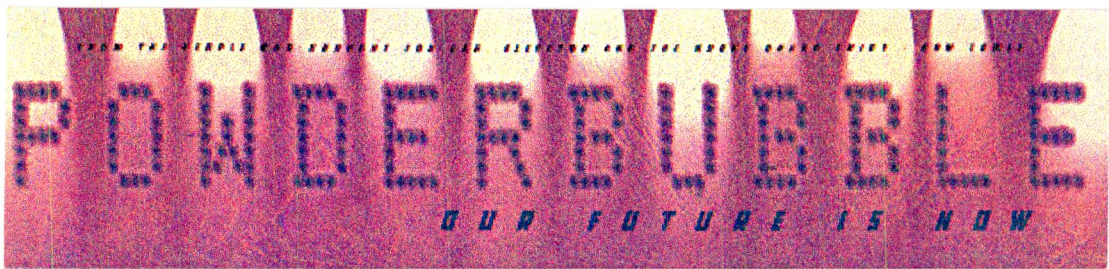
Fig. 5.12: Flyer for 'Powderbubble' at the Red Box

Flyers produced as 'Panels'

Fig. 5.13: Panel flyers for 'Peg Woffington's..'
at Powers Hotel
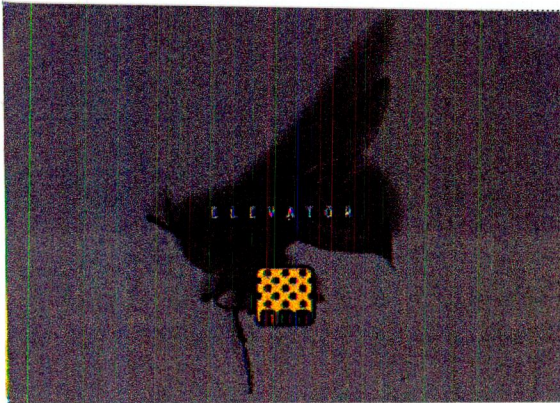
Fig. 5.14: Flyers for 'Elevator 3' at the Ormond Multimedia Centre
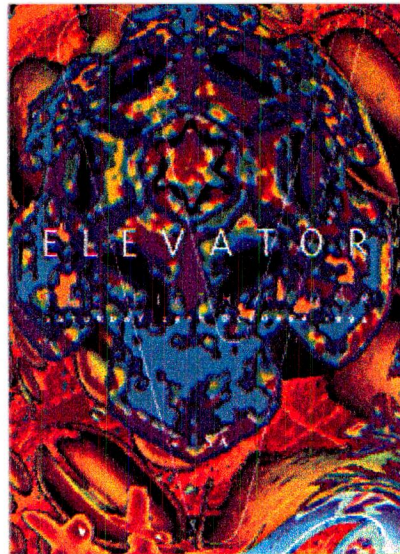
Fig. 5,15: Flyers for 'Elevator 5' at the Ormond Multimedia Centre

'Interactive' Flyers

Further levels of interactivity are asked of the recipient by flyers such as 'Strictly Handbag' (fig. 4.10). The handbag image on these flyers is detachable from its card, and features simple instructions for assembly into a three-dimensional object (fig. 5.16). Roche cites these flyers as being the only true claimants to the term "interactive", however I disagree (Roche, 1996, p. 34). 'Strictly Fish' have produced little packages called 'Fortune-Teller Fish' (fig. 5.17), where the recipient is told to place the contained plastic fish cutout onto their palm and see which way it turns in order to discern their fate for the evening. I consider that these flyers are even more 'interactive' than 'Handbag'; not only do they ask the recipient to do something to *them*, they also claim to hold an individual message, *particular to each person*. I think then that these flyers meet Walsh's criteria for design success: "If you've got a flyer, it has to speak to you, to tell you something" (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1).

'Open-up' Flyers

Another type of interactivity is present in flyers which come enclosed in a covering of their own. The Kitchen's 'Christmas Party' flyer (fig. 5.18) is an example: printed in a suitably festive green and red, it could be compared to a Christmas present being opened up, and thus cleverly presents the club as a precious gift being offered to the clubber. An 'Alex Reece' flyer (fig. 5.19) features a more complicated origami device to open before being able to see the flyer. I consider that closed-in flyers such as these promote clubland's sense of exclusivity and reinforce the idea of a club being like a well-kept secret.

This chapter has examined flyers which employ experimental design and which then explore their actual format. We have seen how flyers can feature extra, non-flat features such as string and gold rings, and how such flyers are no longer speedily-produced as was traditional. We have also seen how a simpler option can be to vary the format, or even the texture of flyer paper and thus capitalise on the pick-up appeal of flyers. Finally, we have seen how mid-1990s flyers produced in panels or playing 'games' encourage a level of interactivity never before demanded of the recipient. I conclude in relation to all such flyers that they are interesting and inventive in their design, but that in terms of the sheer time, money and effort that goes into their creation, that they challenge the very notion of the 'flyer'.
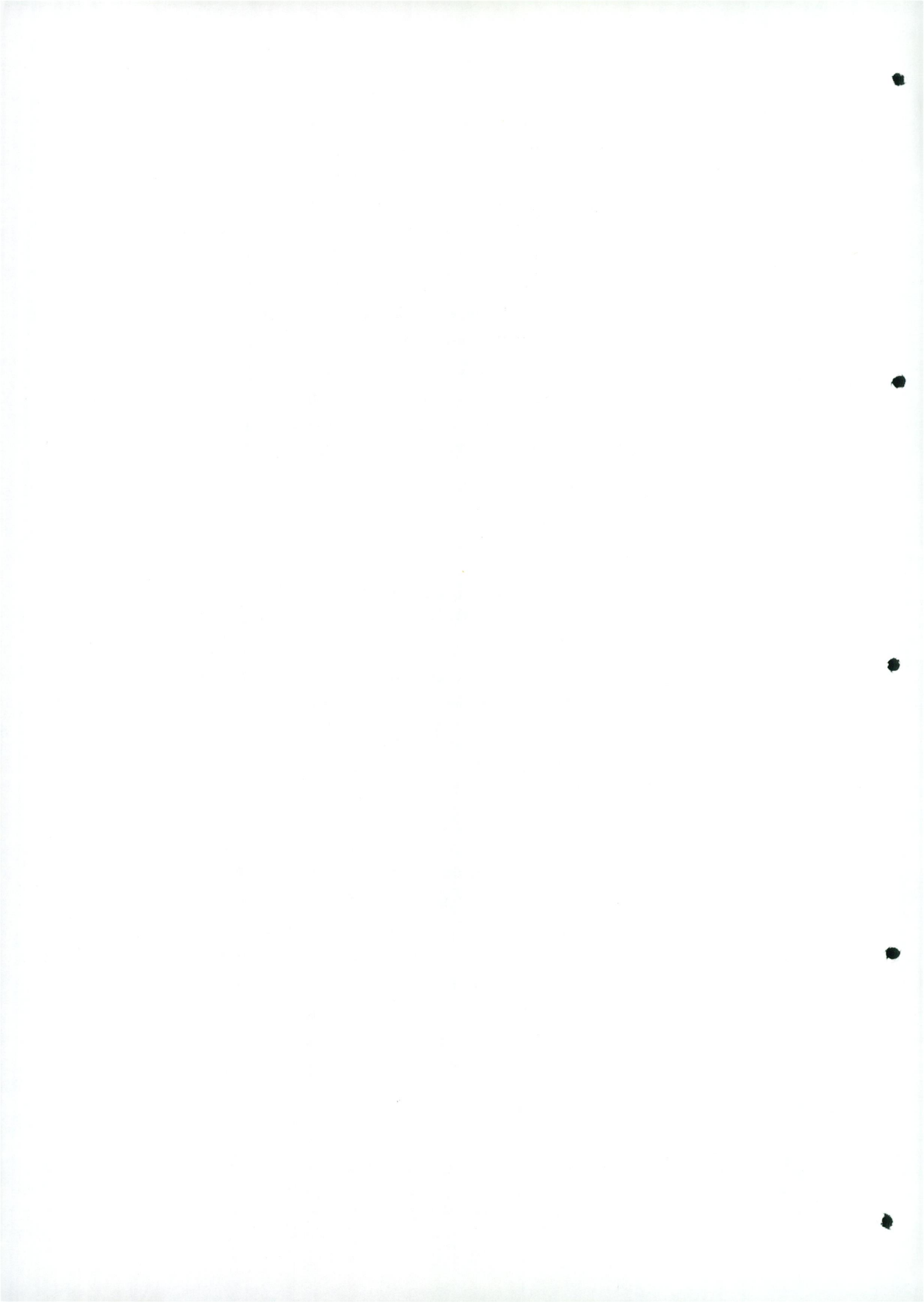
Fig. 5.16: An assembled 'Strictly Handbag' flyer
for Ri-Ra
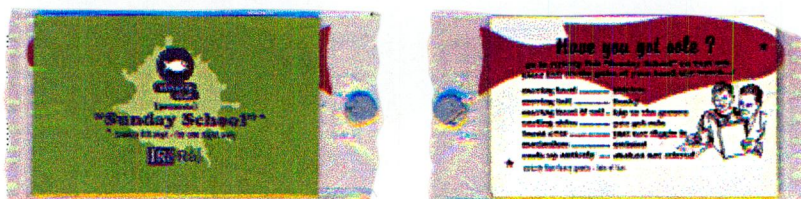
Fig. 5.17: 'Fortune-Teller Fish' flyer for
'Strictly Fish' at the POD (front and back)
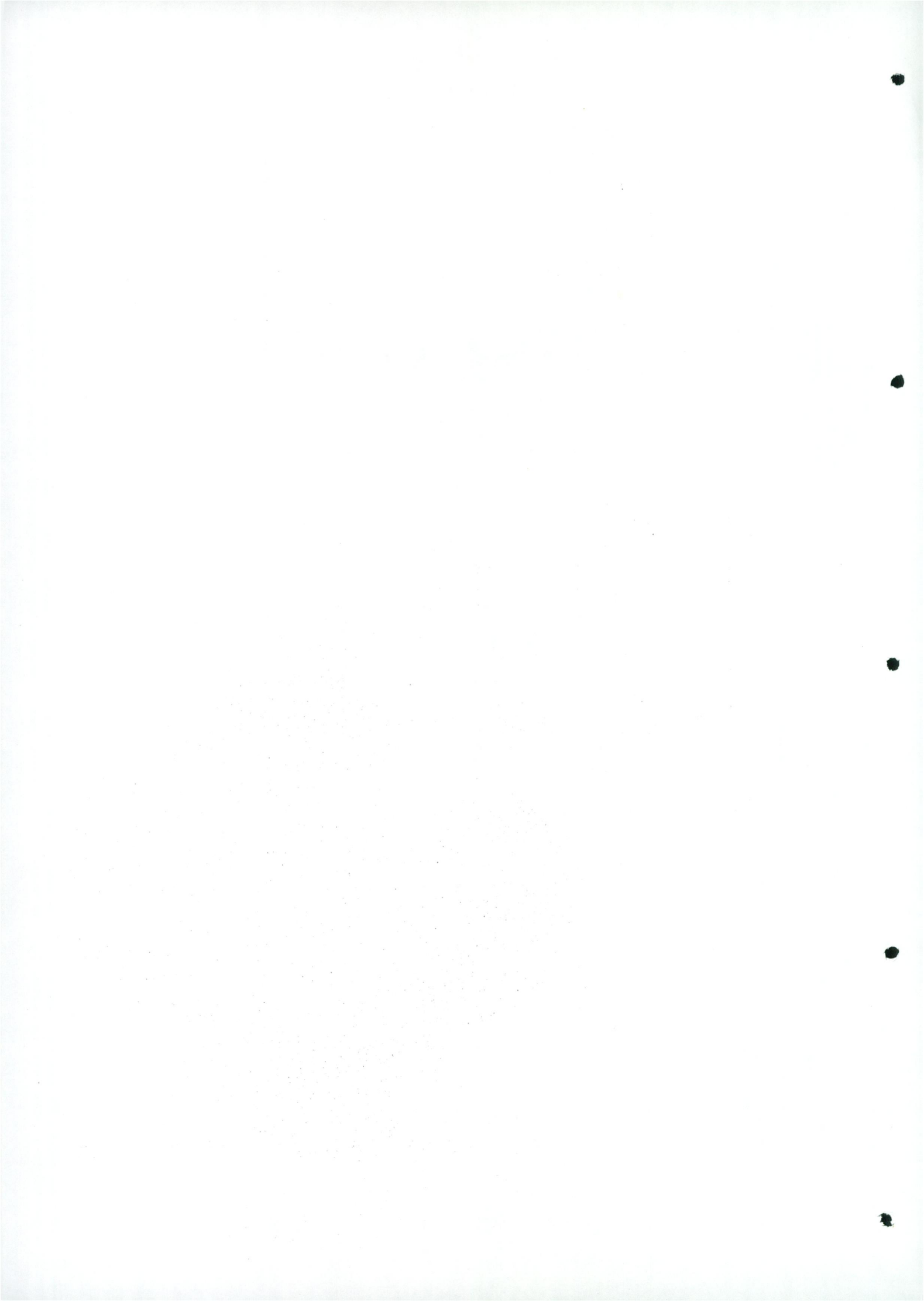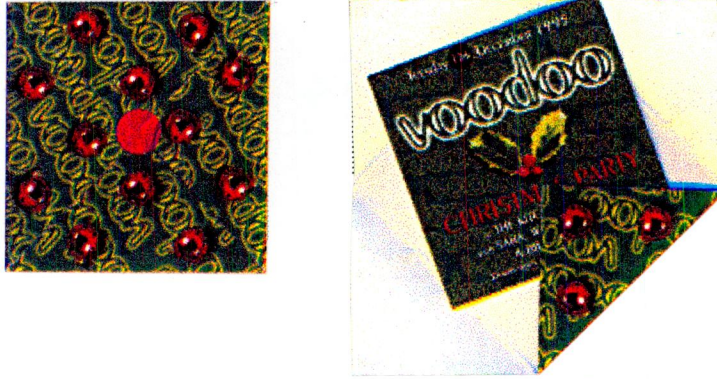
Fig. 5.18: Flyer for 'Voodoo Christmas Party'
at the Kitchen (closed and opened)
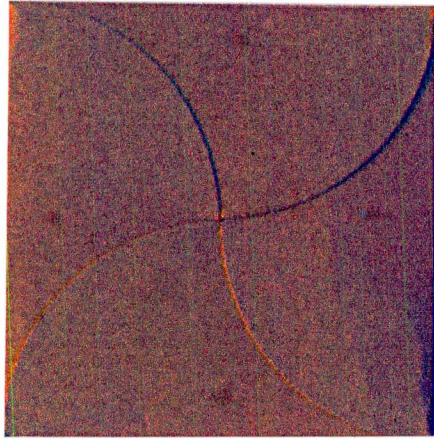
Fig. 5.19: Flyer for 'Alex Reece' at the Tivoli (closed and opened)
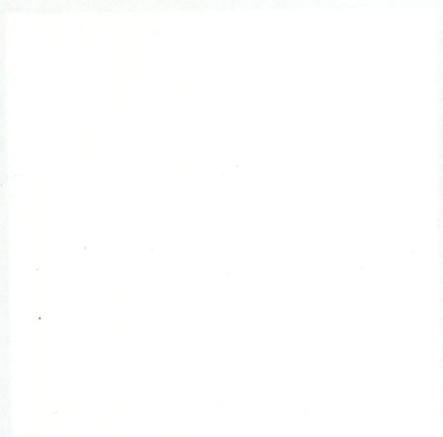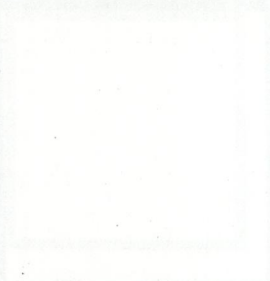
Chapter 6. A Discussion of the Links Between Clubs, their Flyers, and the Corporate Environment

The flyers which we have viewed so far have almost all been underground, i.e. purely concerned with advertising club nights. In the last two or three years, however, a new genre of flyer has begun to emerge, with links to the corporate environment. I hope now to discuss this under the following headings, and to assess some of the effects of this crossover on club culture in general:

- The Emergence of Corporate Logos on Club Flyers
- Certain Clubs employing Corporate Strategies,
- Corporations issuing 'Flyers' of their own.

The Emergence of Corporate Logos on Club Flyers

Flyers for clubs have recently begun to feature corporate logos. These are usually companies targeting the leisure market such as beer and clothing manufacturers (e.g. Heineken, fig 6.0, Budweiser, fig. 6.1, and Levi's, fig. 6.2). Professional advertisers have not failed to notice the growth and expansion of 1990s clubland both here and abroad, and see the attendant flyers as potential advertising space. Such behaviour is questioned however on many sides with Clancy, Walsh, Kingston, and many others all voicing their disapproval. While it must be appreciated that such advertising gains financial profit for clubs, corporate logos to my mind sit uneasily with flyers. Such logos provide unwelcome reminders of the 'nine-to-five' world by night, and simply begin to look very ugly when the logos become too numerous. A flyer for the 'Wrangler Dance Universe' (fig. 6.3) is a case in point. It is too busy boasting of all its different sponsors to be able to make any independent visual statement of its own. With regard to the previous three flyers (figs. 6.0, 6.1, 6.2), I would consider all three to be at the duller end of the flyer design spectrum. It seems that once a 'proper' company is attached to a flyer, many design restrictions suddenly apply, and the features which originally characterised flyer design (e.g. stolen imagery, and witty irreverent ideas) are lost.

Fig. 6.0: Flyer for 'The Green Room'
at the Ormond Multimedia Centre

Fig. 6.1: Flyer for 'Birthday'
at the POD
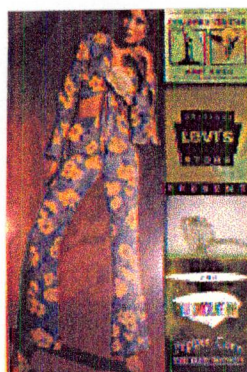
Fig. 6.2: Flyer for
'Priscilla Queen
of the POD' at the
POD
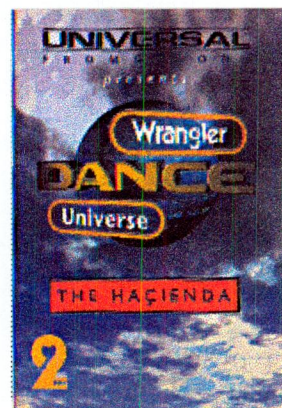
Fig. 6.3: Flyer for the
'Wrangler Dance
Universe' at the
Temple Theatre

Certain Clubs Employing Corporate Strategies

If professional advertisers are now looking at clubland, clubland is also looking back at them and is beginning to borrow a few ideas. At present this is more apparent in Britain than in Ireland, where very successful clubs, called 'superclubs' such as 'Cream' and the 'Ministry of Sound' are adopting certain corporate strategies. Such clubs now employ full-time in-house designers to create an "entire corporate identity" for them (figs. 6.4 and 6.5) (Garratt, 1996, p. 117). This identity is not only used on all flyers and put in magazine advertisements, but it is also branded on spin-off merchandise such as jackets and cassettes. While nothing as pronounced as this currently exists in Dublin, at a fairly basic level, most clubs do have carefully-designed logos, which they did not have in the early days of 'rave', e.g. the POD (fig. 6.6), Ri-Ra (fig. 6.7), and the System (fig. 6.8). More noticeable however, is the 'all-over identity' of a club such as 'Strictly Fish' (figs. 6.9, 6.10, 6.11). "The 'Strictly Fish' logo has been as carefully branded as any...Telecom Eireann...logo," note Carroll & McKervey (Carroll & McKervey, 1996, p. 1). Further than this, all 'Strictly Fish' flyers have a very particular 'look', using imagery and typefaces that have remained unchanged even as the club has moved from venue to venue (Powers Hotel, 6.9, to the POD, 6.10, to Ri-Ra, 6.11). "Fish are positioning themselves in line for superclub status", agrees Walsh, who says that he feels "browned-off" by such behaviour (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1). Is it not natural however, for a club to want to capitalise of its success? Clancy argues that such a club then becomes predictable and boring, saying "It's a corporate entertainment-providing industry [and] it's very hard to have fun in that environment" (Ni R., 1996, Clancy interview). Kingston puts the case that the flyers for such clubs look equally dull, and I feel that he has a point: "We're no longer talking 'attitude', 'subversive imagery', 'danger'," he writes, "We're talking big merchandising operations" (Kingston, 1995, pp. 180-1).

Corporations issuing 'Flyers' of their own

Some companies now even issue 'flyers' or "promotional postcards" of their own, purely to advertise their products (Kingston, 1995, p. 178). This is generally in the leisure industry, with flyers being produced for such products as alcoholic lemonade (fig. 6.12), soft drinks (fig. 6.13) and clothing (fig. 6.14). Mimicking clubland's publicity methods, such flyers are to be found on shop and pub counters. The reason corporations have adopted such strategies as these appear to be twofold: Firstly, flyers are a proven way to reach a young and fashionable market as clubland has shown, and secondly, although clubbers are a relatively small sector of the population, they are
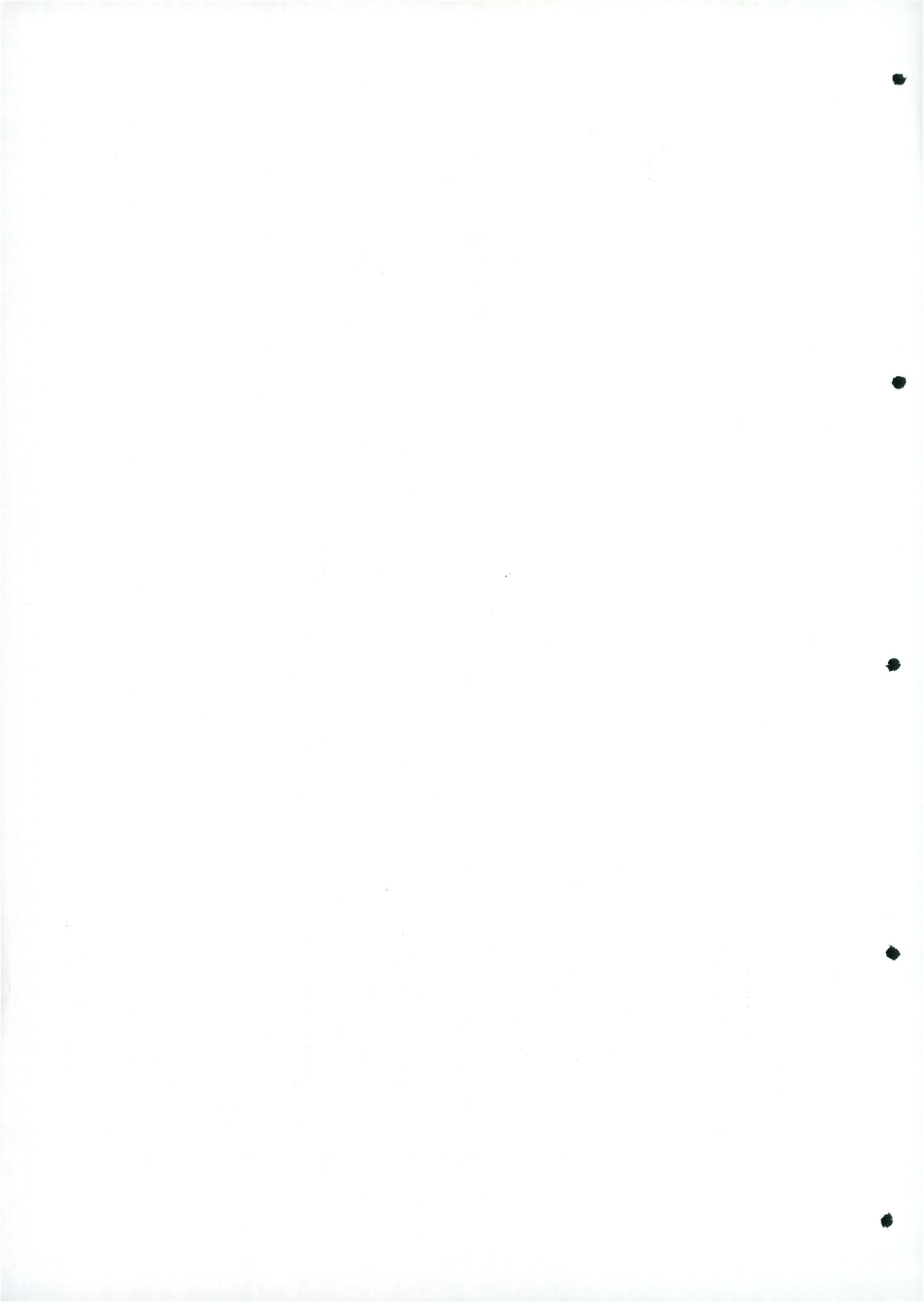
Clubs with Corporate Identities

Fig. 6.4: An example of
the 'identity' of 'Cream'

Fig. 6.5: An example of the 'identity'
of the 'Ministry of Sound'

Fig. 6.6: An example of the POD's logo

Fig. 6.7: An example of Ri-Ra's logo

Fig. 6.8: An example of
the System's logo

Fig. 6.10: Flyer for 'Strictly Fish'
at the POD
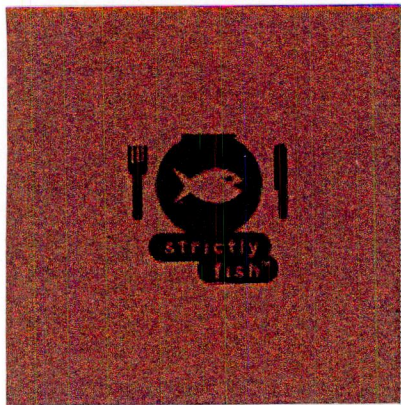
Fig. 6.9: Flyer for 'Strictly Fish'
at Powers Hotel

Fig. 6.11: Flyer for
'Strictly Fish' at Ri-Ra
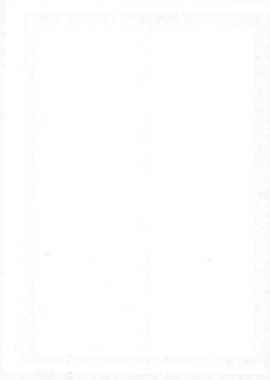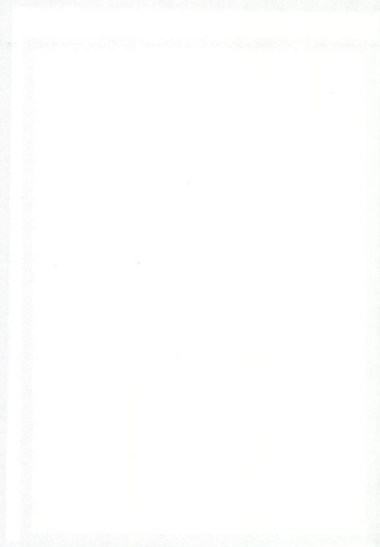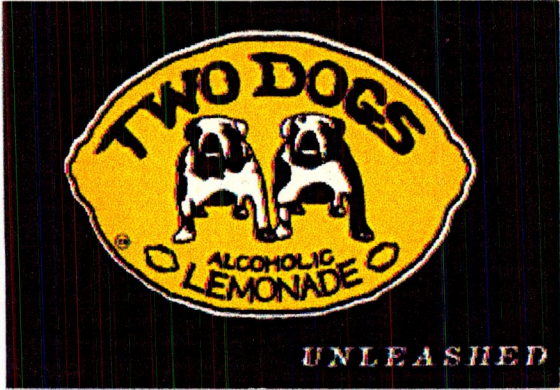
Fig. 6.12: Flyer for 'Two Dogs' alcoholic lemonade
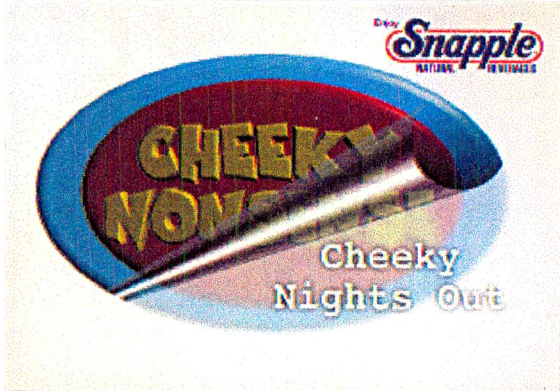
Fig. 6.13: Flyer for 'Snapple' lemonade
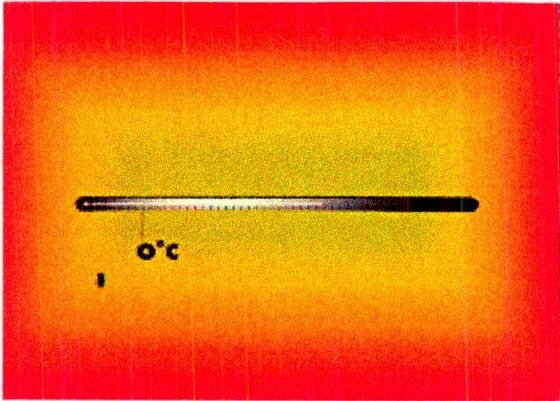
Fig. 6.14: Flyer for 'O' Connor's' jeans shop

apparently a vital target group. Kingston explains of clubbers: "[They] are influential style leaders [and] trends established at party night soon find their way into the mainstream" (Kingston, 1995, p. 179). The imagery on such flyers again, to my mind, ranges from the boring to the ugly and I cannot help but wonder if such pseudo-flyers would provoke more of a negative reaction among clubbers. Recipients might after all feel disappointment on turning over a flyer to discover that it is not for a party night but a brand of lemonade. Equally, scorn could be felt for a brand which so 'apes' the tactics of clubland. Perhaps the creators of such flyers also deserve contempt, for having prostituted clubland's flyer to the corporate world it originally sought to escape. As Kingston writes sadly: "The subversive joke [of] reinventing the logos of big brand names to promote nights has now come full circle with a vengeance" (Kingston, 1995, p. 178).

This chapter discussed then the burgeoning crossover between clubland and the corporate environment. We have looked at the emergence of corporate logos on flyers, the use of corporate strategies by some clubs, and the recent phenomenon of corporate 'flyers'. I conclude that such behaviour, while understandable in view of the success and growth of 1990s clubland, presents many dangers. "The beauty of [flyers]," Hingston has remarked, "is that you are completely free of any corporate constraint" (Blink, 1996, Org. Section). Flyers indeed appear to suffer greatly when subjected to everyday design restrictions, and their most basic tenet of original and exciting design is threatened.

Chapter 7. An Examination of the Precise Relationship between Flyers, Clubbers, and Clubs

We are beginning then to see how flyers signal the changing attitudes within clubland. I would like to now further explore the relationship between flyers and clubs and hope to do so under the following headings:

- The Relationship between Flyers and Clubbers
- The Importance of the Flyer to a Club Night
- Do Flyers sometimes Promise More Than They Can Deliver?

The Relationship between Flyers and Clubbers

Flyers have on occasion been suggested to be the "purest" form of advertising (Hourihane, 1996, p. 3). One wonders what this could mean, and Clancy offers the following explanation:

"Those doing the selling knew how to sell, not because their advertisements had been scientifically tested to work with the key 16-24 age group, but because they hadn't. They were a jazzy shot in the dark, and all the better for that. This was advertising in some kind of pure state" (Clancy [2], 1996, p. 1).

I agree with this idea. I consider that flyers such as the 'Bliss' flyer (fig. 4.30) or 'Mars Needs Women' (fig. 4.36) are indeed 'shots in the dark', produced in the hope that the recipient will share the designer's sense of humour, and I think that such flyers are successful. One wonders how the designer comes to share such an instinctive bond with his audience however. This is probably because, as we saw, the designer frequently *is* part of the audience, and therefore: "What [the designers] say, we say, what they hear, we hear" (Blink, 1996, Introduction). The gap between designer and audience is then considerably narrower than in more mainstream design; Sweeney for example regularly attends the 'Gag' nights for which he designs flyers, according to Walsh (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 2).

If a flyer designer wishes to consider his target audience as friends, however, they need also to feel as though they know *him*. There is a need then for a certain continuity in a club's flyers - that they are not simply "someone who made *a* flyer *one* night" (Ni R., 1996, Clancy interview). Clancy maintains that such consistency helps the audience to imagine the "personality" of a flyer and, by proxy, that of its club, and
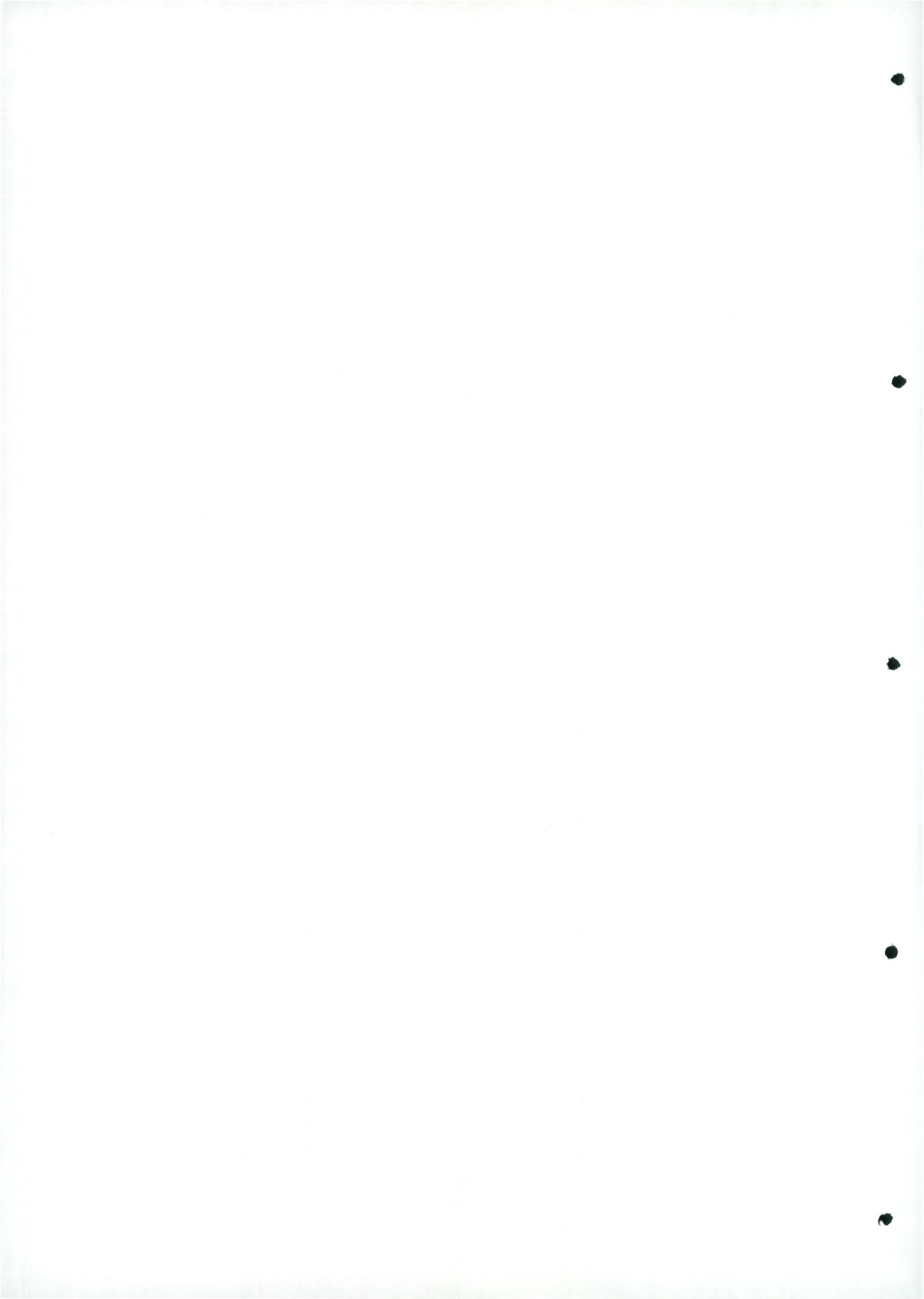
that this could even make one decide to support the event by going along (Clancy[2], 1996, p. 1). Finally, he remarks interestingly, that "this was how consumerism was meant to be. It didn't hurt a bit" (Clancy[2], 1996, p. 1).

The Importance of the Flyer to a Club Night

One wonders if such a remark as above is really possible. Could a beautiful, original or humourous flyer really make one run to the club, money in hand? In the mid 1990s, I consider that the importance of a flyer to club night is somewhat less clear than this. Initially of course, flyers were absolutely essential to even know about club nights, and many of my written sources continue to use such words as 'absolutely vital' and 'crucial' about flyers. Clancy, however, makes the sensible point that a club-ber's decision to attend the POD instead of Ri-Ra in the mid 1990s, is more a combi-nation of factors, *including* the pretty flyer, but also a good DJ line-up, word of mouth, and so on (Ni R., 1996, Clancy interview). Indeed, flyers cannot particularly be trusted to tell the truth about clubs, as we will soon discuss.

Flyers have a certain clear importance to the *club-runner* at least, providing "built-in market research" with the number of concession prices granted on a night (Roche, 1996, p. 32). As regards the aesthetic value of flyers, Walsh considers that this depends on "the literacy of people running a club" (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 1). This may in part explain the varying emphasis placed by different clubs on flyers e.g. 'Strictly Fish' (fig. 7.0) who are obviously very design-conscious, and 'Soundclash' (fig. 7.1) who only feel the need to communicate the most basic informa-tion with a rudimentary illustration. I consider then that while the importance of flyers themselves has dwindled in a more 'established' clubland, whatever emphasis that remains is now focused on their *design* in order to compete in a busy and competitive 1990s club scene.

Do Flyers sometimes Promise More Than They Can Deliver?

As flyers have become increasingly colourful and magnificent, their clubs are finding it difficult to offer equivalent nights. Such flyers effectively promise the impos-sible. After all, as Garratt notes: "Stripped of their logos, these flyers are in many cases offering exactly the same thing again and again" (Garratt, 1996, p. 117). How much difference indeed is there between a DJ playing records in the Kitchen on Monday night, and the DJ on Tuesday? The music and crowd might vary, but the venue, dance-floor, and bar all remain the same, and the two clubs could scarcely be said to be the
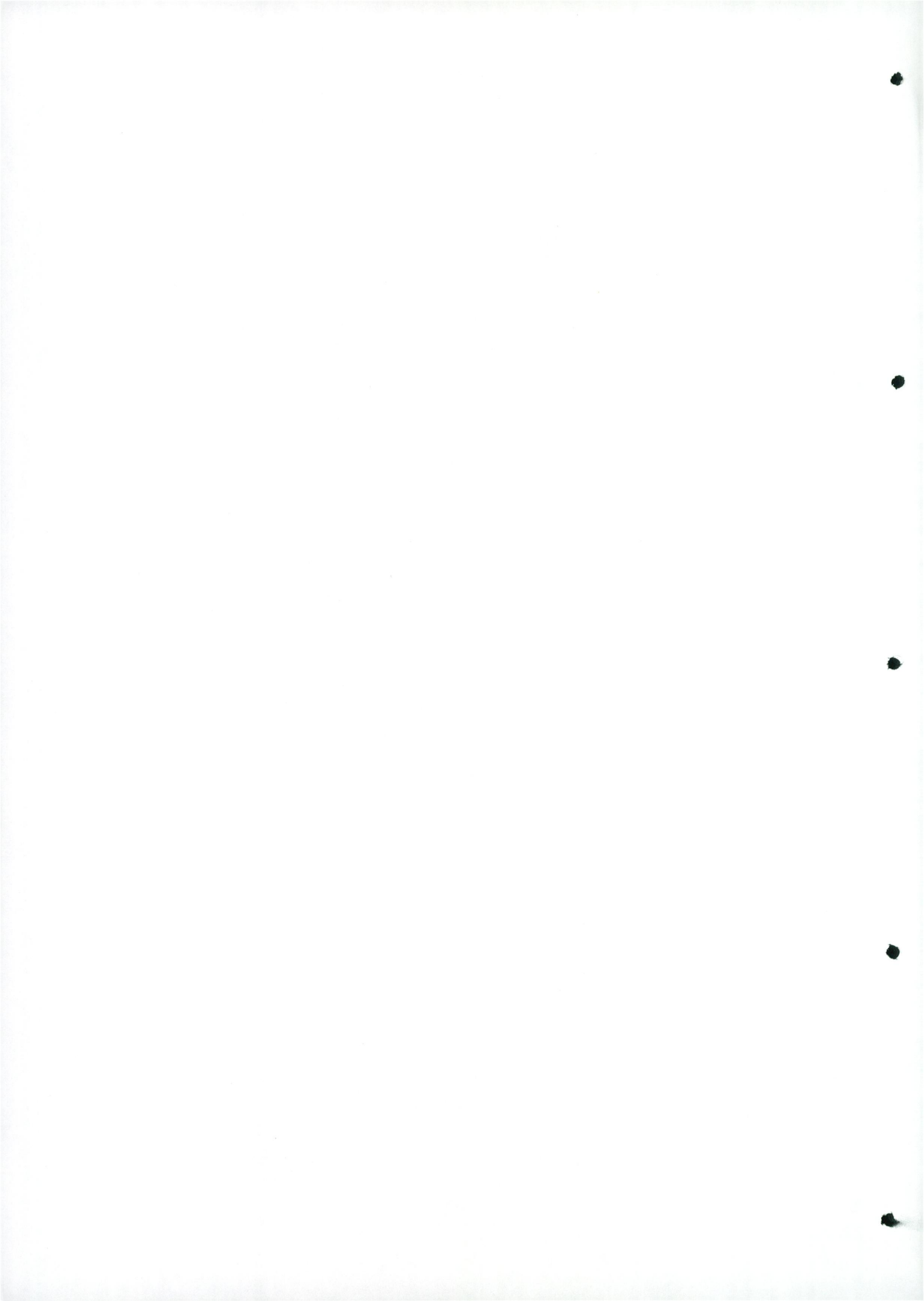
entirely different universes portrayed on their flyers (e.g. figs. 7.2 and 7.3).

Clancy sharply notes flyers' frequent use of the e-mail '@' symbol and observes that "@ is not a place, it's a virtual place" (Clancy[1], 1995, p.3). He says of flyers such as the two above, that their @ symbol then "throws the emphasis away from the all-too-revealing similarities [of the clubs] and onto their differences", and I agree (Clancy[1], 1995, p. 3). Further than this, as lavish flyers move a generation away from the truth - actual representation of the night - they begin to form a private language of their own, what Sweeney calls "a closed system of referring...a kind of communication between designers" (Clancy[1], 1995, p. 3). One symptom of this could be said to be the emergence of 'design' jokes and comments on flyers. A flyer for the POD, for example, features the fax received to commission it - being then a kind of 'flyer about flyers' (fig. 7.4). Another flyer features slightly uneven hand-rendered lettering (fig. 7.5), perhaps as a reference to pre-Mac days, only who would understand this but another designer? One wonders what the effect of all such flyers is on the ordinary clubber. It seems that flyers which 'cry wolf' too often may ultimately get themselves into trouble: "If the flyer is slinky, but the night is a flop, don't you get a little more cynical every time you see a flyer?" wonders Walsh (Ni R., 1996, Walsh interview, part 2). Equally, a clubber is quoted by Kingston as saying disgustedly "I don't even look [at flyers] any more" (Kingston, 1995, p.181). I consider then, that when flyers begin to overreach themselves, they place the whole genre in danger of cancelling itself out, reaching "[their] glossy end" (Kingston, 1995, p. 181).

This chapter has attempted to explore then the relationship between flyers, clubbers and clubs. We have seen how flyers could be said to be a very 'pure' form of advertising as the gap between the flyer designer and his audience is relatively narrow. We have also seen that although flyers were initially crucial to the success of clubs, they are now only one of a number of factors. We have noted however that greater emphasis has however been placed on the *design* of flyers, and that this can sometimes result in promises too overblown for a club to live up to. I conclude then, that while flyers are arguably important to clubs, this relationship has become rather fractured in mid-1990s clubland.
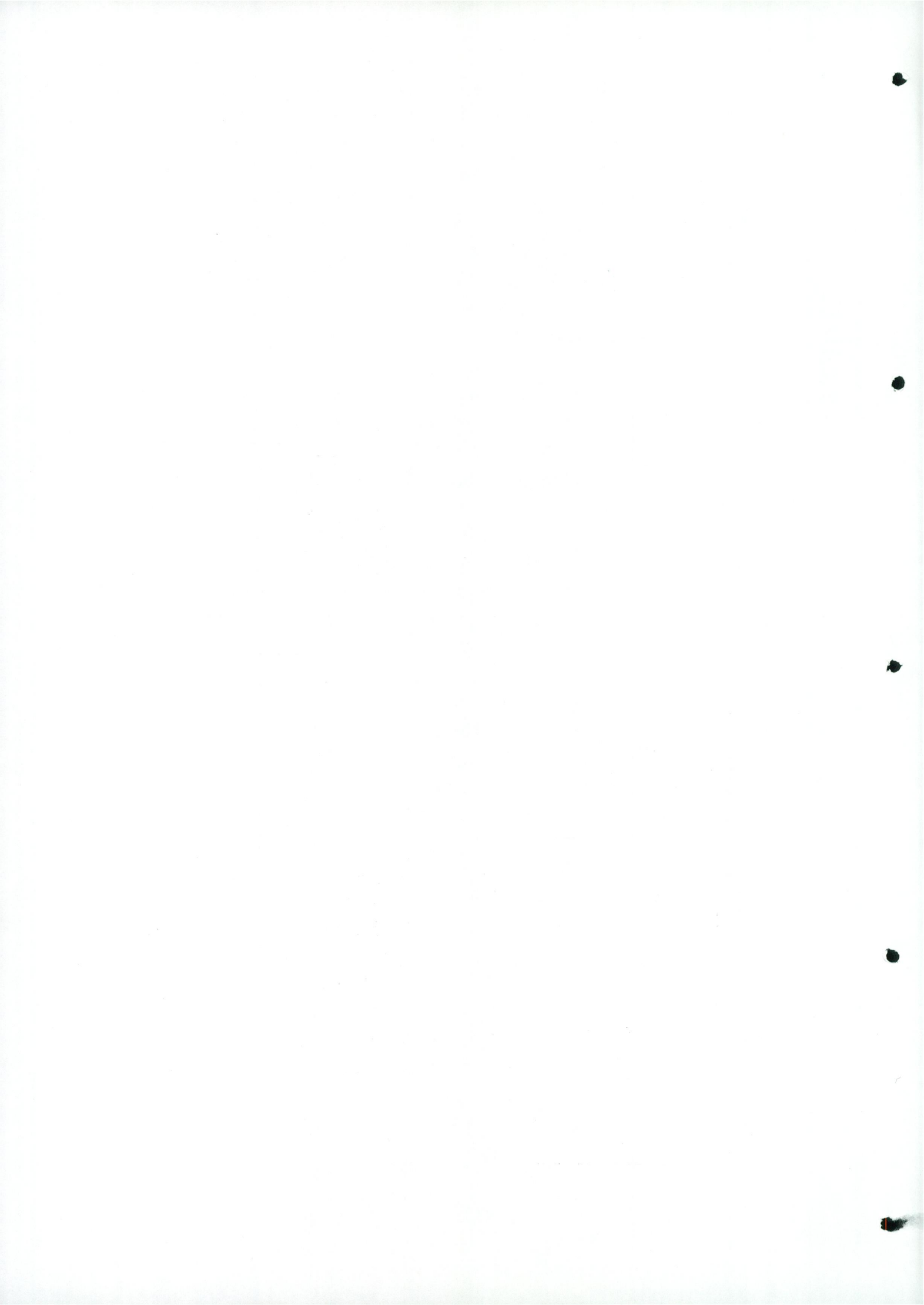
Fig. 7.0: Flyer for 'Strictly Fish'
at the POD

Fig. 7.1: Flyer for 'Soundclash'
at the 13th Floor
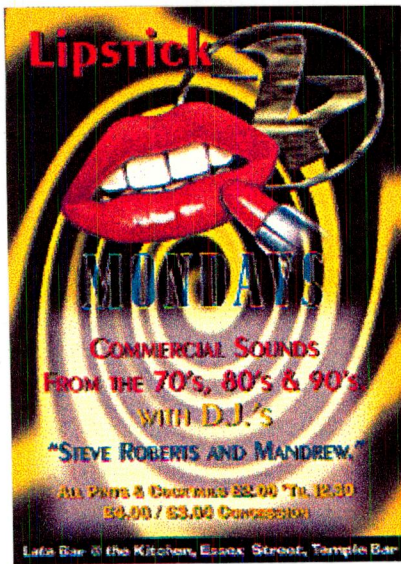
Fig. 7.2: Flyer for 'Lipstick'
at the Kitchen

Fig. 7.3: Flyer for 'Tuesday 31st'
at the Kitchen
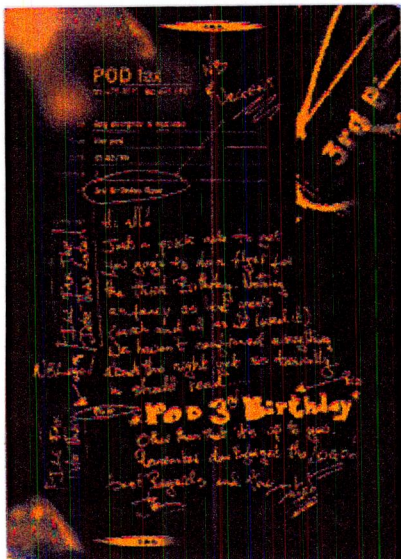
Fig. 7.4: Flyer for the '3rd Birthday'
at the POD
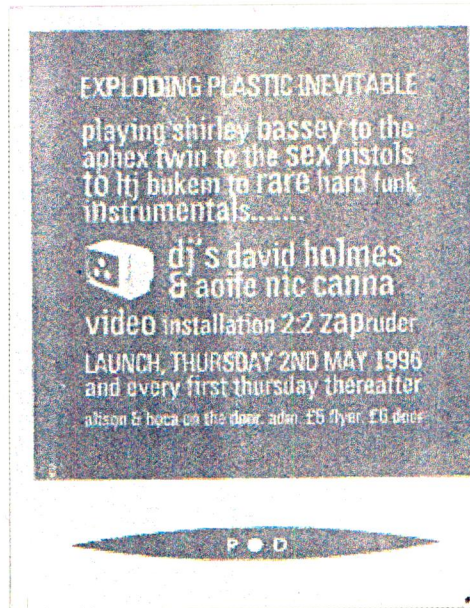
Fig. 7.5: Flyer for the 'Exploding Plastic
Inevitable' at the POD
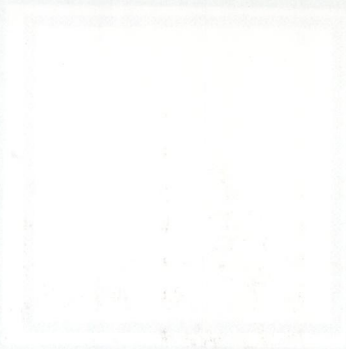
Chapter 8. A Look at Recent Trends of Collecting and Documenting Flyers

We have seen that flyers have a debatable importance to clubs. In the mid 1990s, however, flyers have begun to assume a certain importance in *themselves*. I propose to discuss this under the following headings:

- The Aesthetic Value of Flyers
- The Collection of Flyers
- What such Collection Means and its Possible Effects on Flyer Design

The Aesthetic Value of Flyers

On having looked through an extensive collection of flyers for this thesis, I would consider that flyers do have a certain aesthetic value in themselves. Many flyers are printed on quality paper or card and feature bold and colourful designs and yet, as Polhemus notes happily, they are handed out at no cost (Polhemus, 1996, p. 75). Flyers have also become simply another facet of 1990s design alongside the more traditional genres of posters, book covers, and so forth. As we have seen, flyers often indeed 'showcase' young and aspiring designers, and bandy various themes and ideas about, thus making themselves what Savage calls a "visual call and response for a whole generation" (Savage, 1995, p. 6).

The Collection of Flyers

"In a culture that desperately seeks to martyr itself during the lunchtime of its own legend", observes Kingston, "old flyers are already being avidly collected, exhibited and eulogised" (Kingston, 1995, p. 18). It does indeed seem early days for club culture to be thus commemorating itself, with 1996 having witnessed the publication of various books and the staging of exhibitions of flyers. Dissenting voices can be heard to this recent development, complaining that flyers are "intrinsically of the moment" and so should not be thus frozen in time (Polhemus, 1996, p. 75). "Use them, abuse them, throw them away" urge Carroll & McKervey. The flyer, after all, lives only until Saturday night and should perhaps then be valued purely within its lifespan as being "disposable and proud of it" (Carroll & McKervey, 1996, p. 1).

Some also despairingly consider the collection of flyers as endemic of a wilting club scene, to quote Kingston's clubber: "The fact that you can now do a book on flyers is like the whole scene anyway" (Kingston, 1996, p. 181). Others however defend collecting as merely the first generation of clubbers growing old, "like me and other ex-clubbers," confesses Polhemus, "spending [our] nights at home sorting through an ever-growing flyer collection" (Polhemus, 1996, p. 76). This being the case, perhaps flyer books and exhibitions are excusable after all: "We need something by which to remember the early days" suggest Carroll & McKervey, and indeed the flyer does serve in part to document the history of dance music (Carroll & McKervey, 1996, p. 1). A collection of flyers moreover can recount a more personal history, as Garratt notes of "veteran" clubbers and their "pile[s] of tatty flyers" (Garratt, 1996, p. 117).

Justifiable or not however, who is choosing which flyers to exhibit and on what grounds? Kingston suggests that the best exhibitions of flyers are those "nostalgically...pinned to old kitchen noticeboards" (Kingston, 1995, p. 180). But what of the larger scale, 'official' exhibitions? Herein lies a danger. "I can't help wondering", writes Polhemus, "if all this new preciousness surrounding flyers won't ultimately bite the hand that feeds it," meaning that the original short-term ethos of flyers could be lost as designers would attempt to produce 'good' or 'timeless' flyers (Polhemus, 1995, p. 75). When I put this to Clancy however, he is confident, saying "I think the culture is very resistant to that kind of thing. Anybody with any kind of attitude will sidestep it" (Ni R., 1996, Clancy interview). It is even possible that a complete dovetailing of flyer design could result, for as Kingston notes in relation to the general upscaling of flyers "On the underground, the seriously kicking clubs have gone back to scruffy black and white flyers, reflecting a rejection of all that club culture has become" (Kingston, 1996, p. 183).

Having looked then at the recent trends of collecting and documenting flyer culture, we have noted that flyers do possess a certain innate aesthetic value, and have seen that for this they have begun to be collected and analysed. Although some worry that this is the signal of a dying club scene, I would consider that it appears to be merely the first generation of clubbers growing old and wishing to retrace their club history, both generally and personally. Such 'eulogising' of flyers however presents a danger to their originally spontaneous and short term design. In spite of this, I think that we may have every reason to hope that club- and flyer-culture will not be unduly overwhelmed by any such 'preciousness'.

Summary and Conclusion

This research has revealed that flyers as a genre *can* be organised and correlated to build up some sort of coherent picture of their general design. We have seen how club culture in general grew up in the mid- to late 1980s. It was an underground movement, many of its early events were illegal, and some of its secretive attitude still remains today. Club culture did not really 'take off' in Dublin until the beginning of the 1990s, but it has grown enormously since then. I found that club flyers originated as a cheap and and quick way to broadcast the early, secret events. A flyer's basic function then is to advertise a club night, although this can now vary from merely hinting at the event to publicising a venue's line-up for a month. Flyers are selectively distributed, placed only in certain locations, thus preserving clubland's 'underground' feel. Flyers can be designed from many sources. Initially, they were hastily made by an event's organiser or DJ. Today, while designers are often employed, computer technology allows both amateurs and professionals to produce flyers. This is is indeed endemic of the 'D.I.Y.' creativity of club culture, which has blurred boundaries between performer, audience, organiser, and designer.

I looked at the techniques of flyer design and found that flyers consist of image and type. The imagery is produced in the main by one of three methods: hand-created artwork, computer-generated artwork, or sampled imagery. While hand-created artwork was more common on early flyers, it continues to be used today by some clubs as a stylish option. Computer-generated imagery is more common on flyers in general. At best this can be colourful, surreal, and exciting, however, when badly designed, it can look dull and ugly. The sampling of images is a further facet of computer-generated design. This corresponds with the sampled sounds of dance music, and it divides into several interesting categories. There is the blatant stealing of logos and symbols, but also the more subtle idea of of stealing an image and then manipulating it. Many flyers also sample images particularly from the past, and there are several possible explanations for this. Such flyers might be simply 'updating' an image, or using it for fun. They could also be said to demonstrate an end-of-millenium panic, or to comment on the information overload of our time. The typography on flyers is also frequently manipulated by computer. Such typography can be very inventive, as it twists words into shape or makes 3-D objects out of letters. Such adventurous typography can be difficult to read however, and I consider that this is another method of restricting flyers' information to those 'in the know'.

An examination of flyer imagery revealed that while the imagery on flyers
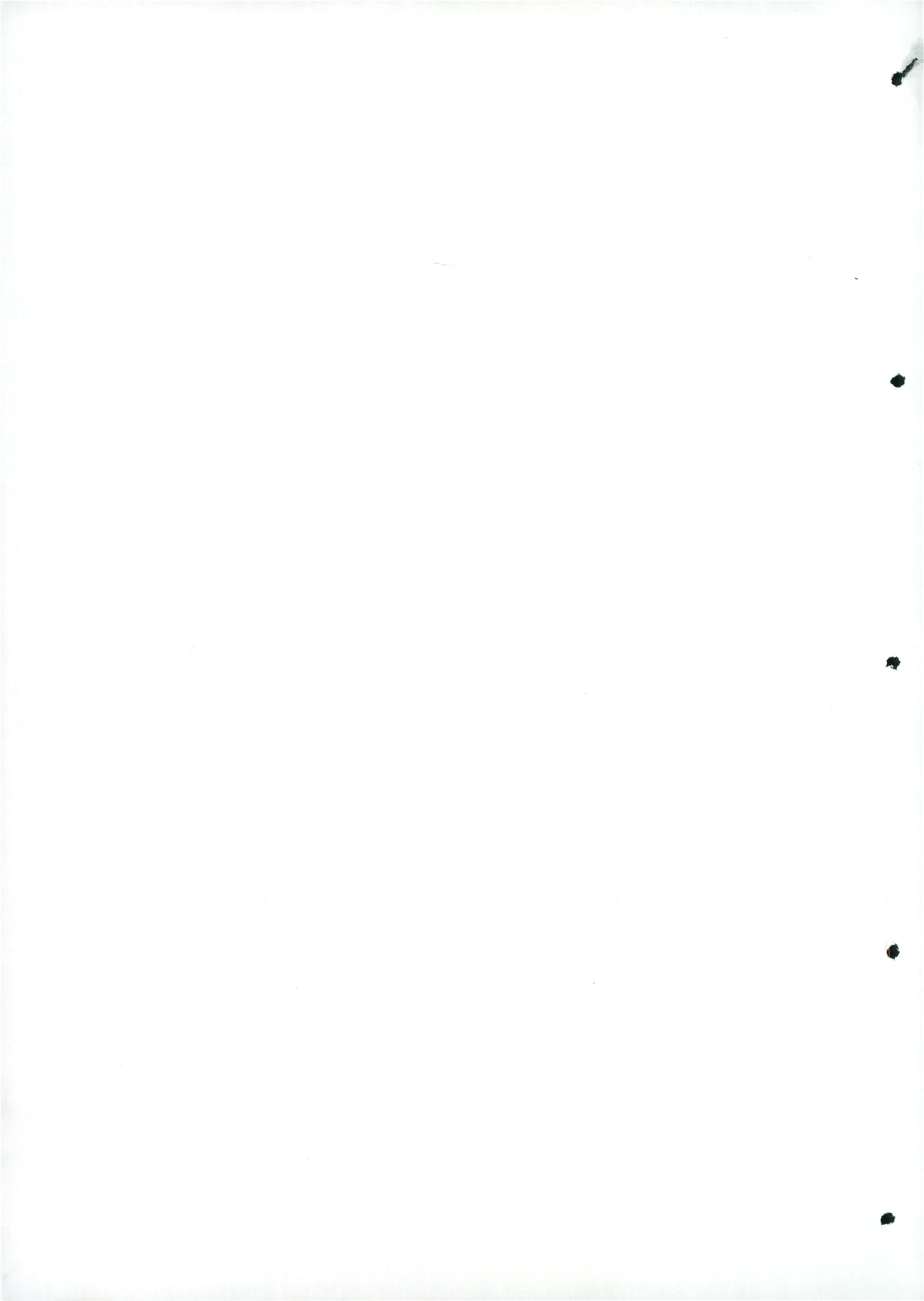
varies considerably, certain common themes do emerge. At the most basic level, flyers communicate that clubs play music, with images of record-players, music-speakers, and so forth. Further than this, a number of flyers endeavour to communicate the type of music being played, by illustrating dance music terms such as 'handbag' or 'hard-core'. I found imagery on flyers which communicated 'partying' such as love-hearts, lipstick, chocolate, fruit, and 'blissful' images. More arbitrarily, some flyers featured science and science-fiction themes, which could mirror dance music being electronical-ly-generated, or perhaps suggest the 'experimentation' of unliscensed drug use. Flyers also featured imagery of women, most of which was tasteless and sexist, although the exception proved that such imagery, when used appropriately, can be successful. Sexually-related imagery on flyers fell into two distinct categories, either being very explicit or subtle, depending on the club in question. Childrens' imagery e.g. fairytales, toys etc. also appeared on flyers. While such images might simply communicate 'play' and 'fun', they could also communicate a gaiety which is drug-induced. Certain flyers related more overtly to drug use, and again this ranged from the obvious to the subtle, depending on the club. I found flyers for visiting club acts mostly very boring. Such flyers featured little or no imagery, and merely printed the performers' names boldly. Generally, I found Dublin flyer imagery to strongly resemble British flyers. There were however a few notable exceptions, such as the club Ri-Ra, and the H.O.T., who pro-duced flyers which made use of both ancient and contemporary Irish imagery.

I looked then at flyers which explored their own format, using non-flat features or being unusually-shaped to attract attention. The use of paper was also considered in some cases, which I found a very good idea. Other flyers were produced in matching panels, thus encouraging collection, and flyers such as those for 'Strictly Fish' demanded a certain participation from their recipient. I also found that some flyers came encased in coverings, and these reminded me of clubland's secretive attitude. I found all such flyers as above interesting in their design, although their workmanship challenged the original idea of a 'flyer' as being a quick and cheap handout.

Flyers have recently begun to feature corporate logos, and some clubs are for-mulating 'corporate' identities of their own. I found corporate logos to look obtrusive and ugly on flyers, and that such flyers were also unnaturally restrained in their general design. The 'corporate' identities of clubs proved also problematic, as the flyers again-looked more 'staid' than those of the original 'rave' movement. Further than this, I saw that certain corporations have begun producing 'flyers' of their own. Again, I found these flyers' design rather unexciting, and such pseudo-flyers in danger of provoking a negative reaction among clubbers. While all of the above phenomenon is understand-able in view of the growth and success of 1990s clubland, I feel that any corporate restrictions present a danger to the basic originality and excitement of flyer design.

I looked then at the relationship between flyers, clubbers, and clubs. I found

that the gap between flyer designer and audience was unusually narrow, and that the flyers spoke very directly to their recipient. The importance of a flyer to the success of its club appears to have dwindled with the increasing legitimacy of clubland, but whatever emphasis that remains is now focused on the flyer's *design* in order to distinguish a club from its competitors. Such visual overload has led to flyers which make promises too magnificent for clubs to live up to, and clubbers have become cynical about flyers. I conclude that while flyers have an arguable importance to clubs and clubbers, that this relationship has become rather fractured in recent years.

Research into the collection of flyers revealed that flyers do have an innate aesthetic value. They are colourful, printed in good card, and yet handed out at no cost. Flyers also often feature cutting-edge design and contemporary themes. The collection of flyers appears premature to some, who worry that this signals the end of club culture. I consider, however, that such collection is merely a symptom of the first generation of clubbers growing older, and wishing to retrace club history. The emergence of flyer books and exhibitions does however pose a danger to flyer design, as people might endeavour to produce 'good' or 'timeless' flyers, which would be less exciting. But club culture's ability to constantly reinvent itself gives us hope that it will sidestep any such 'preciousness'.

I conclude that flyers present a modern and very exciting genre of late 20th century design. Club culture, both generally and in Dublin, wants to convey a sense of vibrancy and change, and its flyers have reflected this as they have grown in number and quality in the past decade. Flyers have quite an informal approach to design, being relatively easy for anyone to produce, and paying little heed to the restraints of copyright or 'good design' They are part of the creative free-for-all which characterises club culture. Produced with modern technology, flyers sample and manipulate both image and type, and draw references from many different aspects of culture. They come in many different formats, and can provoke much discussion and many different reactions. In short, I consider that flyers have great freedom of design. The success of 1990s club culture, however, has led to problems in flyer design. Overly magnificent flyers can no longer be read as true statements of a club's excellence. The increasing amounts of attention and money being paid to clubland have resulted in the approach of corporations, and the formalising of flyers into official exhibitions and books, both of which threaten to stifle the creative freedom of flyers. I hope that the original spirit of 'rave', which celebrated the underground and freedom from corporate restraint will not be lost, and that flyers will continue to reflect such a club culture as magnificently as they have up until today.

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