

# I SWEAR I HEARD THIS... “*BLOW, MOTHERFUCKER, BLOW!*”

Nicholas Gebhardt

I swear I heard this. Or at least, I thought I did. There was so much noise in the club. More people than I'd ever seen before, all perched on chairs, tables, hanging off the window ledges; crammed in wherever they could find a space, some of them hanging on right up the stairs and squeezed out onto the street. And the musicians were jammed in too, pushed to the back of the makeshift corner of the venue, the five of them in the band along with the three others. They'd shown up unannounced, the other three. Well not entirely unannounced! We'd been told to expect them, but not exactly when, or in what state or even anything about what they might want to do. The word had gotten around, though, up and down the strip, and now the place was at capacity; actually, it was well beyond capacity. The crowd was pressing in, straining to catch a first sight of them, trying to see what they looked like up close, whether they had the same intensity they were known for. They arrived sometime after midnight, long after their main performance was finished, driven over in a black SUV with some heavy-looking security guys, their black berets pushed low over their foreheads, adding to the intensity. It was hot inside; it always was. No windows and no sign of working aircon, which is funny for a club they called "The Freezer!" The walls were a stained yellow brown. And the floors, they were wooden and polished once; but now, after years of dancers and drinkers, pretty worn out. Everyone was sweating, and everyone was talking and trying to get to the bar and at the same time they were trying to get closer to the stage, hovering at that invisible line between band and audience. And there WE were, playing our usual set; a mix of classic old school raps, a few well-known funk numbers like "Brick House" and "Funky Stuff," and a couple of originals. Usually, it was two sets, starting at midnight, going through to 4am or so, then everyone pushed out into the dawn for lack of air and the demands of another day. It was different that night, though; or so it seems anyway. And there THEY were, too, on the stage, just us and them; and there THEY were as well, that crowd, surrounding us, barely contained by the booming sound and the speakers and the two pillars blocking the way. One of them was suddenly on the drums, another one using the extra mic – "Caught you lookin"... – and that other one – the one with the big clock around this neck who knows what time it is – he was standing right next to me, one arm over my shoulder, shouting in my ear, "Blow motherfucker, blow!" I swear.



**Nicholas Gebhardt** is Professor of Jazz and Popular Music Studies at Birmingham City University. His research focuses on the histories, theories, cultures and practices of jazz and popular music, with particular emphasis on themes of the everyday, improvisation, collective practice, sonic experience, experimental writing and modernity.

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