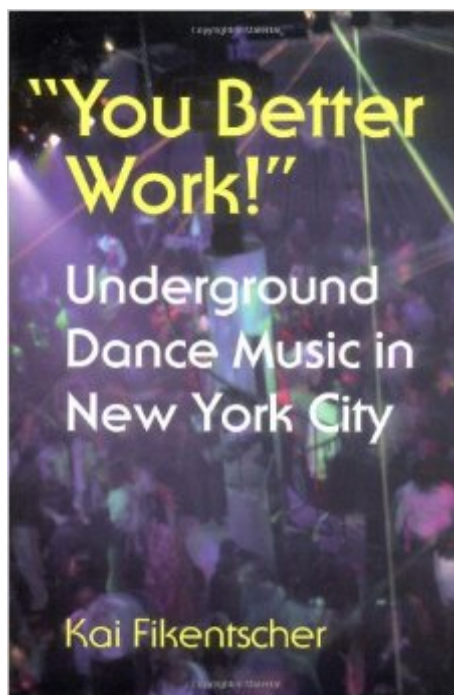


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"You Better Work!" Underground Dance Music In New York City



Synopsis

"You Better Work!" is the first detailed study of underground dance music or UDM, a phenomenon that has its roots in the overlap and cross-fertilization of African American and gay cultural sensibilities that have occurred since the 1970s. UDM not only predates and includes disco, but also constitutes a unique performance practice in the history of American social dance. Taking New York City as its geographic focus, "You Better Work!" shows how UDM functions in the lives of its DJs and dancers, and how it is used as the primary identifier of an urban subculture shaped essentially by the relationships between music, dance, and marginality. Kai Fikentscher goes beyond stereotypical images of club and disco to explore the cult and culture of the DJ, the turntable and vinyl recordings as musical instruments, and the vital relationship between music and dance at underground clubs. Including interviews, photographs, and an extensive discography, this ethnographic account tells the story of a celebration of collective marginality through music and dance

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

You Better Work! Underground Dance Music in New York City, by Kai Fikentscher
Of the recent works of word or image dedicated to the spirit of the New York Underground, You Better Work! stands alone, in my opinion, as the first to conduct a thorough, scientifically sustainable analysis of a subcultural phenomenon whose rarified nature made it heretofore nearly impossible to grasp, save

from within. Other works can speak of history and its major players with unquestionable authenticity, as does Mel Cheren's *Keep On Dancin'*. Fikentscher's offering, however, proposes an exacting dissection of Underground Dance Music (UDM) properly placed in the sociocultural time-space continuum and described with academic accuracy, all the while remaining reverently connected to the magic of the specific dancefloor experience that gives UDM its singularity. UDM, and the invisible universe it materializes around itself and its devotees, present a unique quandary to the academically-inclined thinker. UDM is at once quite quantifiably tangible in its elements and techniques, yet undeniably metaphysical in its manifestation and effect. The scientist's dilemma, then, is to draw the black-and-white line of academic discipline around the grey frontiers of a shadow world. Without an initiate's third eye, the accomplishment of writing this seminal work for the students of a nascent discipline would have been unattainable. The advantage of being both an academic pioneer and a subcultural insider allows Fikentscher to paint his complicated picture within the perfect frame of reference—namely the sociocultural and (importantly) religious experience of gay African- and Hispanic-American men—as can only one who knows the subject matter firsthand.

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