

The Playlist From a 1984 New York City Dance Party, Recreated for One Day at MoMA



An installation view of Martin Beck's "Last Night" (2016) at the Kitchen in New York in 2017. The film will be shown at MoMA on June 2. Photo by Joerg Lohse, courtesy of Martin Beck and 47 Canal, New York

By Jamie Sims

On Valentine's Day in 1970, a young D.J. named David Mancuso threw the first of what became known as the Loft parties in his downtown Manhattan apartment. He needed to make rent and, for around \$2.50, guests could enjoy food, drinks and dancing while Mancuso played records from his collection of deep cuts on carefully calibrated Klipschorn speakers. He conceived of these gatherings as a more inclusive, intimate alternative to the nightclub culture of the time, and they drew a diverse, largely queer crowd unified by a love of dancing. The Loft, which is still held quarterly, has bounced around to different spaces over the years, but the 10-year run at its second location, 99 Prince Street in SoHo, is considered to be its heyday. One of the last parties there was on June 2, 1984. Exactly 40 years later, visitors at MoMA can experience the music of that singular night. For his immersive installation "Last Night," the artist Martin Beck reconstructed Mancuso's set list and filmed the records playing in full, just as Mancuso had D.J.ed them, for 13½ hours straight. Though it will run into the night, the work is meant for close listening more than dancing. (The museum will provide seating in the exhibition space.) "Collecting the songs and listening to them in sequence late at night felt like moonlighting as a pleasure detective," Beck says of his research. Although he began sleuthing for Loft music online in the late 2000s, Beck didn't attend the party himself until 2014. "I was overwhelmed with excitement," he remembers, "and I tried to absorb whatever I could about the party." *"Martin Beck: Last Night" will be on view in the Kravis Studio at the Museum of Modern Art on Sunday, June 2, from 10:30 a.m. to 12 a.m., moma.org.*