

IN PURSUIT OF REPETITIVE BEATS AT THE BARBICAN
ACCESS PACK & DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT (Updated Mar 2025)



A short description of the VR experience.

In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats is a Virtual Reality experience set in the West Midlands in 1989. It is a creative non-fiction experience that takes audience members on a journey to find an illegal Acid House warehouse party somewhere in Coventry, UK. To find the party and dance/rave, audience members can interact with objects, and traverse the various environments to recreate moments that contributors remember from that time. During the experience audience members will hear and see archive recordings from TV and radio, and interviews recorded with contributors that remember the Acid House rave scene from that period.

When you get here:

Access

In Pursuit Of Repetitive Beats is in The Pit theatre. The Pit floor (level minus 2) can be reached via the main lifts – please note that only two of the four lifts go to this floor. Access Step-free access from the Pit floor foyer to any front-row seat. All other seats lead off stepped aisles.

Mobility

In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats was designed so audiences could move around a physical play-space that is mapped to the virtual environment in VR. This is what we term a free-roaming experience, and it can include wheelchair users who are able to operate their chairs within that play-space.

There are provisions for those that cannot move around the playspace, in the form of a stationary/seated version. Please see the accessibility requirements section below for more details.

Assistance dogs

Because space in the auditorium is limited, we recommend that you leave your dog to be cared for by a member of the foyer staff during the performance.

Amplified sound

Amplified sound is provided through Headphones. In addition to this captions are also available in English, French, Spanish and Chinese. This document also contains a description of the experience, scene by scene.

For more access information, please visit the Barbican [Accessibility](#) section.

Virtual Reality terms specific to this experience

- **Attractor State** – Within the experience audience members will see/hear a coloured audio waveform around objects that they can interact with or to indicate a location they should move to. This is called an ‘Attractor State’. This attractor state also has a corresponding audio sound, which is spatially positioned to emanate from the corresponding position of the object in VR. The sound of the attractor state is a repeated synthesizer sound that will last for 8 secs.

As well as indicating when something that can be picked up or interacted with, the attractor state will also sometimes indicate where an object can be placed in the space or identify a location for the audience member to move to.

- **Controllers** - As part of the technical set up audience members will have controllers that you hold with your hands. These are like traditional gaming controllers with various buttons and triggers that allow you to complete various actions in the VR experience. For our experience, only the triggers on the

controllers will do anything. The triggers will let you pick up and drop objects.

- **Haptics** – This is a term in VR to mean the sensation of touch and vibration. In this experience the controllers will vibrate when you need to use them, or when you are interacting with something. You will also be provided with a haptic vest in the experience, which turns sound frequencies into vibrations. When music is playing you will be able to feel the bass frequencies as well.
- **Headset or HMD** – this is the general term for a VR headset, that you wear in order to experience Virtual Reality.
- **Multisensory** – In VR and immersive experiences this usually means the introduction of smell, touch and possibly taste into an experience. Haptics is a type of multi-sensory. In this experience we also have a fan that blows air on you during certain scenes, to simulate travelling and to heighten the immersive experience.
- **Play Space** – The play space is the term to describe the physical space in which you can experience the VR. Our play space for this experience is 4m x 6m. As an audience member you may find you are in environments that either look or sound bigger than the play space, such as a motorway service station. However, the VR experience is designed in such a way that everything you need to do is within our physical play space.
- **Spatial Sound** – Spatial sound describes a type of sound design that simulates positional sounds in a virtual space. In this experience certain sounds will be spatialised. For instance, the phone ringing will emanate from the position of the phone box in the virtual scene.

How the VR experience works for different accessibility requirements:

For Visually impaired audience members - an access companion can act as a guide, leading you around guiding you in the VR. This means the companion will wear the VR headset and do the 'seeing' and interacting with virtual objects, whilst the audience member who is visually impaired hears and feels the experience through headphones and haptic vest.

For audience members who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing - in the VR experience we can activate subtitles so that the story is explained in text as well as dialogue. The Haptic vest also means that the audience member can feel the music.

For audience members who cannot move around and would need to be stationary/sit - If there is a need to remain stationary in a wheelchair or if anyone needs to sit for the duration of the experience, then a seated/stationary version is available. The seated/stationary version of the experience is adjacent to the playspace, where you can sit and rave while you use handheld controllers to move within the larger virtual environments.

Whether you are moving or stationary, everyone has access to the same virtual reality experience, and shares the virtual space with fellow audience members.

The team in the installation can activate a version of the experience that allows the audience member to traverse the virtual environments using a 'teleport' function. Using a simple joystick style controller, the audience member will be able to move around the spaces and rotate their point of view, interacting and experiencing the film without having to be on their feet. Seats will be available.

A Scene-by-Scene Breakdown (Descriptions)

Onboarding

The first section of the VR experience allows audiences to familiarise themselves with the controls that allow interaction within the experience. Audience members have controllers, and by pressing triggers on the controllers they can pick up and grip certain objects in VR. We also explain that the space they can see can be traversed.

This onboarding is set in our first environment which is a large dimly lit abandoned warehouse. In the gloom at the edges of our play space you can make out rubble, and disused industrial crates. The environment feels damp, and drips of water can be heard coming from holes in the roof. Under a light in the background of the scene is a trestle table. On the table is a record deck, and around the table there are vinyl record sleeves, and old record boxes. Cigarette butts can be seen on the floor.

As part of the onboarding, you are asked to pick up a record floating in space at chest height and take it over to the record deck and place it on the turntable. When you do this the button on the record deck will become active with the attractor state. To begin the story and start the rest of the experience you need to press the button on the record deck.

Opening Scene.

The record starts to play, and slowly you feel like you are physically entering the spinning record itself. The ridges of the record get larger, and finally you enter into one of the record grooves as if flying into a trench. As you approach the needle of the record you see waveforms that represent the music you can hear. As you pass the needle of the record the scene dissolves and you are now travelling along a UK motorway at night. In front of you is a red Peugeot 205 car. You approach the back of the car and float effortlessly through the back window. In the car are 3 young people: a black male in the back seat, a white female in the passenger seat and a white male driving. You cannot hear them talking, but they look excited and relaxed. The girl in the passenger seat consults a road map with a torch to check they are heading in the right direction. The audience member that has been floating through the car now starts to rise up and through the sunroof. You now are outside the car, and you can see bridges passing above you, the signs on the bridges introduce the title of the film and the names of the organisations that have made it.

Scene 2 – The Bedroom

You are now in a young person's suburban bedroom in 1989. As the environment forms you can hear a TV news report playing on the TV by the window. The room is 4m x 6m like the play space. There is a bed in one corner, with a bedside table next to it. A clock on the bedside table reads 18:14pm. Just to the right of the bedside table is a window that looks out onto the back gardens of a row of terraced houses. At the foot of the bed is a desk and a seat. Opposite the window on the other side of the room, along the back wall is a beaten-up old sofa, in front of which is a coffee table. To the right of the window on a small table is a TV, and next to the TV in the corner is a bean bag. There is a stereo hi fi system sitting on top of a chest of drawers on the right-hand side of the room. The walls are plastered with old rave flyers, and posters. They are colourful and the artwork is an eclectic mix of science fiction imagery and fantasy scenes. Around the rooms are beer bottles, cigarettes, and some drug paraphernalia. The 3 young ravers that were in the car are also in this space, caught in freeze frame tableaux that change as the scene progresses.

After the TV news finishes, the stereo comes on, and then the audience can pick up flyers that are positioned around the room. There are 4 flyers, and within each of them are interviews from our contributors as they describe different elements of getting ready for a night out in 1989.

In addition there are 4 other interactive objects in the room that you can pick up and study. These objects are things you might take in a car if you were going to find a rave. The objects are: A 1980s pager, a road map, a cassette tape, and a tube of Polo mints.

Eventually the stereo will turn to static, and you move to the next scene.

Scene 3 – The Radio Tuner

You are now in an abstract environment that visually represents the world of radio. Along the floor is a tuner band that lists different frequencies on the FM frequency. Around the horizon of the space, you can see waveforms that represent the audio that you can hear. When you step onto the tuner band you are able to tune in different radio stations as you move along it. The stations are from 1989, and are a mix of news, music and current affairs. The goal of the scene is to find the pirate radio station playing acid house music, on which the DJ will be giving out information about a big warehouse party happening that night.

Scene 4 – The police station

You now find yourself in a police station, in the room that is used by Coventry's Acid House Squad, a specialist unit that was set up to monitor, track and disrupt the illegal party scene. There are 5 police officers in the room also, frozen in time. One of them is also listening to the pirate radio station you had found previously and is making notes. Another officer is on his shoulder also trying to listen in. A young police officer sits on one side of the room drinking a cup of tea, its steam rising into the room. A senior officer is frozen in serious conversation with a female officer who is holding a map and pointing at a position on it, a stern expression on her face.

Around the room are desks, chairs, filing cabinets and office equipment of the time; old phones, in trays, old computers. On the far back wall is a “intel board” on which is a map of Coventry, and around which the police are gathering photos and clues as they try to piece together the people and organisations that are putting on these illegal parties. Red strings connect areas of the city and photos to other areas of the city.

Around the room are pictures of people originally involved in the acid house scene, and when you pick the pictures up you hear what they have to say. When you are holding a picture you will hear a corresponding attractor state on the intel board, and you can place the picture on the board to fill in the gaps in the police’s knowledge of the Acid House party scene.

Scene 5 – Motorway Services

You are now at the motorway services at night. The young ravers have stopped off to use the pay phone to find out where the next “meeting point” is. The car is parked with its engine running, its door open, music blaring from inside. Our young ravers are once again caught in a freeze frame. One of the ravers sits inside the car waiting, whilst the driver leans on the bonnet of the car, his arms crossed. The female raver sits on a bench on the other side of the play space smoking a cigarette. Next to the bench is a public pay phone. Inside the pay phone are cards advertising sex, the services of local tradesmen and some rave flyers. As you approach the pay phone one of the cards that contains interview content starts to play and explains what a ‘Meeting Point’ was. When that interview finishes the phone rings, and the audience member can pick it up to hear the message about where the Meet Point is for tonight’s rave.

Scene 6 – The Convoy

This scene is set to a music soundtrack and is about people’s memories of travelling to raves and not knowing where they were going. Visually the experience is a mix of 360 video and animation. The first 90secs of the experience is video, alongside some contributor interview sounds bites. The scene is set at night time and the audience experiences the following imagery: white lines illuminated by the headlights of a car on a dark country road, the flickering of a street light on an abandoned street, the underpass of a bridge, the red Peugeot car in an empty supermarket car park, the same car in an empty petrol station, a pay phone on a dimly lit pavement, time-lapse photography of the M6 motorway as car lights streak by.

After 90 secs the visuals change and instead of video it becomes animation. The animated world is inspired by the same rave flyers that were on the walls of the bedrooms. There is a bright green grid all around you as far as the distance horizon, and above you are stars, as if you are travelling through space and time. You again see the red Peugeot car, and this time it is travelling along the grid into the distance with other fellow ravers in a convoy of cars following it. Police cars are in pursuit of the convoy, and a police helicopter passes you by also in pursuit of the ravers. As they fade into the distance an orange grid forms around you, and a white star grows brighter as its light takes over the screen. As the light dissipates you can see huge human figures flowing towards you in space. You pass through these figures one by one as the music reaches a climax, until you see a giant cosmic eye form on the

horizon. An energy orb is created in front of you and electricity/energy beams emit from your hands feeding the orb with energy. As you move your hands the energy beams pulse and move and you can squeeze the triggers on the controllers to increase its intensity. Eventually the orb becomes a pulsar star and sends its collected energy into the eye with a beam of light. Eventually the eye closes and reopens, a smiley face now formed within the iris. The eye passes through you, and you move to the next scene.

Scene 7 – Outside the warehouse

We have made it to the warehouse where the rave is being held, but you are still outside. You can hear the thumping beat of the rave nearby. Above you is a police helicopter. In front of you on the wall are bill posters plastered across the surface, advertising other rave nights as well as this one. Some of the posters contain video of our contributors and they start to tell you about arriving at a rave in 1989. When one poster finishes the helicopter light guides audience members around the outside of the building. On each side a new set of posters on the wall comes alive with video and gives the audience more information about getting into the rave. As you get closer to the entrance of the rave the sound of the bass gets louder. Eventually you are at the metal door of the warehouse which slowly rolls open and you step through to the rave itself.

Scene 8 – The rave

The audience member is now in the rave and surround by hundreds of other ravers all dancing. The warehouse has coloured lights pulsing in time with the music, but even so it is hard to make out everybody in the crowd. You can see the raver friends who have featured throughout this VR experience, and they dance and hug and jump around near you. Eventually in the rave you discover you have virtual glow sticks in both of your hands. If you move the glow stick up and down it will manipulate the music track.

Eventually the music dissipates and is replaced by a beautiful ambient track, as this happens the warehouse is bathed in orange light, and the people around you dance in slow motion, then finally raise their hands to the sky in a euphoria.

Scene 9 – Sunrise

You hear bird song and transition out of the warehouse to experience a 360-video sequence which starts with the audience flying across a field on the outskirts of Coventry at sunrise. Familiar voices from the VR experience sum up what the Acid House scene meant to them, over a music soundtrack. The next 360 video shot is of a real warehouse in Coventry that was used for an early rave. You then find yourself travelling inside an old sports hall, another real-life venue for a Coventry rave. On the walls of the sports hall is projected archive of people dancing at real raves from the past. The next shot is of a forest path at sunrise. During this shot we hear the last soundbite of our contributors before the music gets louder and the audience finds themselves back in the car with the raver friends, driving into the sunrise as they head home. The credits of the experience can be seen on the windscreen.

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