

*Attend a concert, talk, AES event, or participate in research. Submit a reflection paper*

On the 21st of September 2025, a group of friends and I attended *Mister Sunday* at *Nowadays*, a club on the Queens–Brooklyn border in New York City that has become revered in the international underground club scene for its dedication to inclusivity and for platforming both legacy and emerging electronic DJs. *Mister Sunday* is a weekly summer day party held every Sunday afternoon during the summer, with music that ranges from ambient and downtempo to house and techno. Having known I was moving to New York for about six months, I had circled this event in anticipation for several reasons. Namely, I had heard about its incredible immersive sound system — eight Function-One stacks arranged in a rectangular shape, allowing dancers to be completely surrounded by sound.

In stark contrast to most of New York City, *Nowadays* enjoys an abundance of space, with a large backyard garden and a fully fitted indoor club for colder months. Upon entering, you're greeted by a sea of smiling, relaxed faces and a deep, pulsating low-end hum emanating from the dance floor a few fences away. As you work your ways toward the centre — maybe with a beer in hand — the subtle nuance of the carefully curated environment slowly envelops you. Within minutes, the mundane formalities that dominate day to day life begin to fade to black — replaced by rhythm, colour, and shared energy. This, I realised, is what makes *Nowadays* so enchanting: its immersive ethos, using technology and space to help people disconnect from everyday life and reconnect with the present moment.

The architecture of the outdoor space allows dancers to move freely in and out of the sound field. Even at the edges, the mix remains balanced and engaging — a testament to careful acoustic design. The sound system is discretely camouflaged, blending into surrounding structures, making the technology feel invisible. The clarity of the high end was bright but

never harsh, while the ‘sub’-tle bass frequencies were felt more than heard, resonating through the ground and body.

Essential to this sense of immersion was the role of the staff. The dance area operates under a strict no-phones policy: if someone is seen texting or scrolling, staff politely (sometimes un-politely) ask them to step aside or put the device away. At first, being asked to pocket my phone felt unnecessary, even trivial. Yet as I leaned further into the experience, I began to appreciate how these boundaries contributed to the overall immersive experience. The absence of screens amplifies attention of the present moment —the music, the movement, the others — transforming what would be a typical club night into a much more memorable afternoon.

By the end of the evening, I grew to appreciate how *Nowadays* utilises both music technology and community to foster connection rather than distraction. The precision of the Function-One system, the intentional design of space, and the mindful social rules all work together to create immersion that feels both physical and emotional. It reminded me that music technology isn’t just focused on precision and fidelity, but in establishing presence — in its ability to make imagined worlds feel real, and the real world feel momentarily unreal.