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“A City of Sin No More”: Sanitizing Montreal in Print Culture, 1964–71

Abstract

It is well known that periodicals of low esteem, both Canadian and non-Canadian, regularly covered Montreal during the immediate post–Second World War period in ways that emphasized the city’s allegedly corrupt and vice-ridden character. In the 1960s, this discourse shifted, as periodicals of all levels of prestige came to offer more appealing images of Montreal’s cosmopolitanism and quality attractions. Magazines aimed at tourists emphasized Montreal’s cosmopolitanism and modernity, highlighting the availability of up-to-date consumer goods influenced by European style and the technological marvels being constructed for the 1967 World’s Fair, Expo ’67. Guides to entertainment in Montreal offered inventories of sophisticated, “European” dining experiences and chic nightlife venues. Through an examination of a variety of periodicals aimed at visitors to Montreal or inhabitants of the city anxious to discover its new attractions, this article traces Montreal’s reinvention of itself as a cosmopolitan, forward-looking metropolis.

Résumé

Il est bien connu que des périodiques moins sophistiqués, tant canadiens que non canadiens, assuraient régulièrement la couverture de Montréal au cours de la période qui a immédiatement suivi la Seconde Guerre mondiale et insistaient alors sur le caractère supposément corrompu et la mauvaise réputation de la ville. Ce discours s’est déplacé au cours des années 1960, à mesure que les périodiques de tous les niveaux de prestige commencèrent à offrir des images plus attrayantes du cosmopolitisme et des attractions de qualité. Les revues destinées aux touristes mettaient l’accent sur le cosmopolitisme et la modernité de Montréal, en soulignant la disponibilité des produits de consommation récents de style européen et les merveilles technologiques en construction à l’Exposition universelle de 1967. Les guides des spectacles de Montréal proposaient des listes de restaurants de style européen et de lieux sophistiqués de la vie nocturne. En procédant à l’examen de divers périodiques à l’intention des visiteurs de Montréal ou des habitants de la ville qui désirent découvrir ses nouvelles attractions, le présent article trace l’auto-réinvention de Montréal à titre de métropole cosmopolite et tournée vers l’avenir.

On 27 April 1967, the *New York Times* published an article entitled “A ‘Sin City’ No More.” Heralding the attractions of the city then hosting Expo ’67, the World’s Fair, the article enumerated the ways in which the Canadian city of Montreal had changed in just a few years. Montreal’s mayor, Jean Drapeau,

told the article's author that Montreal had become, at last, "a great respectable city" (Walz). A world's fair in Montreal would have been unthinkable 25 years ago, Drapeau suggested, when the city had been known "more for its bank robberies than for its culture." While, as the *Times* noted, a new wave of spectacular bank robberies was unfolding all through the summer of 1967, Montreal had at least partially broken with its long-standing image as corrupt and vice-ridden.

Elsewhere, I have traced the characterization of post-Second World War Montreal as a "city of sin" through a heterogeneous corpus of texts, from early 1950s English-Canadian pulp novels through to the sensational Quebec press (the *journaux jaunes*) which flourished in the mid-1950s, and from there to later television programs, set during the period 1945-60, which have painstakingly recreated its lurid atmosphere (Straw, "Montreal Confidential," "Montreal and the Captive City"). In this article, I am concerned with a transformation of Montreal's image which occurred throughout the 1960s, as the image of a dark city controlled by secret, corrupt forces was at least partially displaced by a sense of Montreal as a bright, "respectable," and outward-looking city. A key index in this displacement, as we shall see, was the Montreal nightclub, once the very embodiment of the city's lurid amorality but increasingly, as the 1960s unfolded, emblematic of its above-the-board sophistication.

The key to Montreal's newly noted respectability was not a rigorous morality, of the sort which the reformist municipal politician Jean Drapeau might well have embraced. Rather, the image which attached itself to Montreal in the mid-1960s involved a revised view of the city's pleasures which cast them now as sophisticated and European. This new image was interwoven with that transnational cultural sensibility of the 1960s which emphasized tastefulness, cosmopolitanism, and technological progress (values which had relatively little to do with the political upheavals and countercultural impulses for which the decade is better remembered). This new image was sophisticated in that middlebrow sense of a circumscribed worldliness and refinement whose parameters Faye Hammill has usefully traced in her recent book on sophistication.

Between 1964 and 1971, an image of Montreal's refined cosmopolitanism would be prominent in various forms of locally produced print culture, from official magazines promoting the city to outsiders in advance of "Expo '67" to entertainment guides published for tourists coming to the city. Within this print culture, the city was now seen as modern and trans-Atlantic in orientation. It was a key debarkation point for the latest trends from Paris and other European capitals, and no longer—as the journalistic imagination had suggested in the 1950s—a quintessentially "wide-open" North American city whose "Frenchness" was little more than a quick signifier of moral laxity. The

sense of a corrupt entrepreneurial and political culture which dominated press representations of Montreal in the 1950s would be displaced, in the following decade, by the image of an activist, progressive administration. Likewise, the allure of tawdry secrets lurking in hidden corners, to be revealed in novels and periodical articles full of seductive coyness, would give way to a print culture which, across almost all levels of prestige, was marked by a bright openness.

This shift was overdetermined, of course. The election in 1960 of a provincial government led by the Liberal Party and its leader, Premier Jean Lesage, is widely understood as the formal beginning of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, in which a technocratic middle class and an interventionist state swept away the *Grand Noirceur*—the Great Darkness of repression and corruption—which had endured during the multiple terms of Premier Maurice Duplessis (1936–39, 1944–59). Duplessis's rule, particularly in the years following the Second World War, was interwoven in fact and popular understanding with the political and judicial corruption characteristic of Montreal during the same period. As the post-Duplessis Quiet Revolution unfolded, Montreal's postwar corruption and culture of vice would come to be seen retrospectively as signs of Quebec's economic and social underdevelopment, to be overcome by the modernizing impulses of the 1960s.

The transitions marking the Quiet Revolution manifest themselves in both the style and substance of magazines and newspapers covering Montreal. In the first half of the 1960s, magazine and newspaper layouts became less cluttered, more drawn to the use of white space, refined black typography, and other signifiers of modernist restraint (Meggs and Purvis). These changes signalled not only a new sophistication but also the passing of the lurid obscurity which marked so many representations of Montreal in the previous decade. At the low ends of Montreal's print culture, the *journaux jaunes* of the 1950s—sensational, small, and cheaply produced weekly newspapers covering sexual scandals and political corruption—began to decline precipitously in the early 1960s. In their place came a wave of large show business tabloids and sensation sheets (like *Echos vedettes* and *Flirt et potins*) whose boldly modernizing engagement with the social and sexual revolutions of the time manifested a new sensibility. In daily newspapers, Montreal's nightlife and public culture were covered more and more in language that treated these as exciting worlds meriting discovery rather than symptoms of a corrupt and degraded civic life.

I will trace the image of this new cosmopolitan sophistication through three sorts of print culture produced in Montreal from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s. One of these is the magazine which, in successive years, bore the titles *Montreal 64*, *Montreal 65*, *Montreal 66*, and *Montreal 67*. Launched to attract international visitors to Montreal, *Montreal* constructed a coherent

image of a newly modernizing metropolis. A second category of periodical is the long-running Montreal magazine *Current Events*, distributed in hotels and other tourist sites as a guide to local leisure and entertainment. Even as its coverage of restaurants and other attractions invoked long-standing criteria of luxury and “class,” *Current Events*’ significant attention to Montreal’s newly vital discothèque scene, in the late 1960s, signalled shifts by which a youthful European sophistication emerged as a key source of valorization. Finally, I will look at a selected corpus of newspapers which, during and after Expo ’67, offered cartographies of Montreal nightlife and, in particular, of the new dance clubs which had emerged on the western edges of Montreal’s downtown. If there is a logic to the selection of these three categories of periodical, it is that each elaborated a distinctively located gaze upon Montreal and its public culture: of outsiders being enticed to the city (*Montreal*), of tourists within the city setting out to discover its attractions (*Current Events*), and of residents of the city or region for whom emergent forms of leisure required new cartographies and explanations to be intelligible.

Montreal Magazine

Figure 1 shows the cover of the September 1964 issue of *Montreal 64*. Published by the City of Montreal, the magazine was launched that year to publicize the city to the world in the lead-up to Expo ’67. Clearly intended to challenge any image of Montreal as a stagnant city, the cover eschews the picturesque in favour of the image of a rough construction site on which portions of Montreal’s new metro system (which opened in 1967) were being built. An editorial in the December issue of the same year makes explicit reference to the magazine’s mission, that of casting Montreal as a forward-looking city “rapidly moving toward international status through its unprecedented expansion.” The magazine brags of the ways in which its treatment of the city is “simultaneously alive and in good taste, efficient and simple,” and in this phrase we may glimpse the judicious restraint which is one index of the magazine’s middlebrow sensibility. *Montreal* magazine produces a tightly controlled and calibrated image of Montreal organized around a number of expansive and outward-looking themes: sophistication, internationalism, humanism, and technological progress. These would be the themes of Expo ’67, as well, but *Montreal* magazine had first to construct these as features of the city itself. (For discussion of the multiple elements of Expo ’67’s modernity, see Kenneally and Sloan.)

If *Montreal* magazine is middlebrow, it is so in several ways. Formally and stylistically, it is middlebrow in its commitment to a design practice that flirts with the contemporary while not investing excessively in its outer reaches. The covers of two issues from 1967 (Figure 2) manifest this sense of the contemporary at different levels. The titles are in fashionable lower case, and layouts are balanced. Photographic illustrations are quintessentially middlebrow in their retention of the figurative and in a penchant for light abstraction. As with

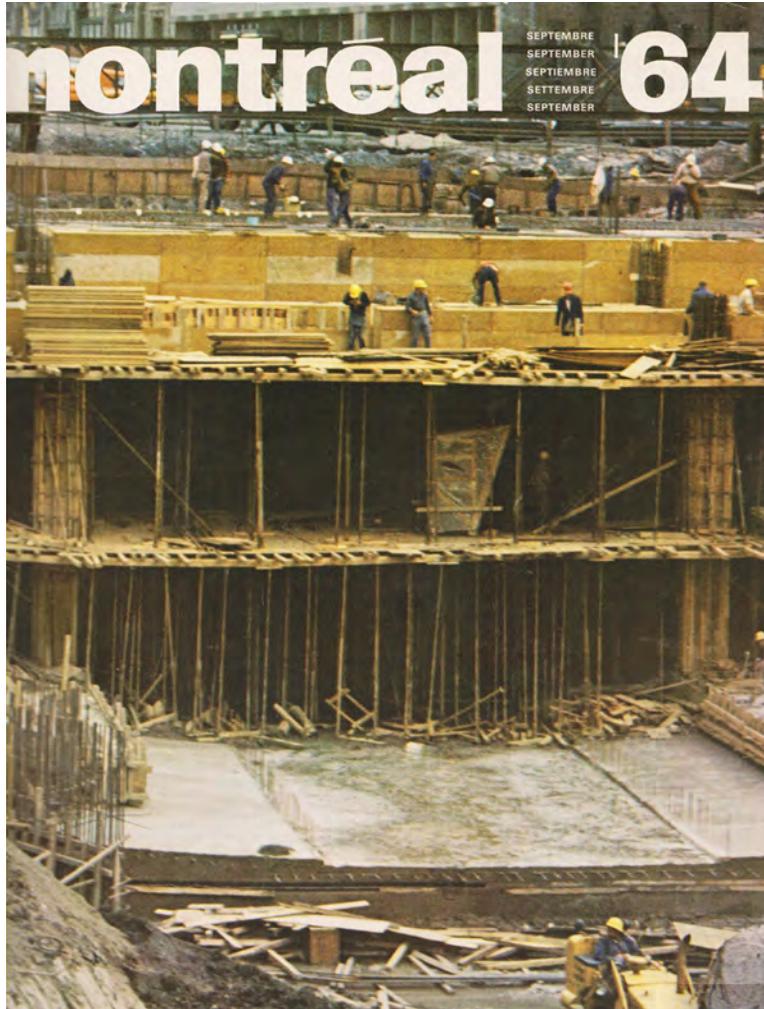


Figure 1 : *Montreal 64* September 1964. Source: Archives de Montréal.

many of the architectural motifs of Expo '67 itself, the forms on these covers suggest the universalism of large structures made from modern materials like cement.

Other articles published throughout *Montreal's* four-year run deal with elements of Montreal's modernizing transportation system: Dorval airport, the *métro* (subway) being constructed for a 1967 opening, and the city's new bus terminal. This coverage offered reassuring images of the city's functionality as a destination for the travellers expected for the World's Fair. Articles on shopping, such as "Shops for the Sophisticated," in the December 1964 issue,



Figure 2 : Two issues of *Montreal 67* (February and April). Source: Archives de Montréal.

participate in what I see as one of the key discursive operations of *Montreal* magazine and other Montreal periodicals of the 1960s. This operation is that of reinterpreting what it means for Montreal to be French. “Showcase for Canada’s Haute Couture” (September 1964), for example, ties Montreal’s new sartorial sophistication to an emergent culture of travel and to a trans-Atlantic traffic in influences and personnel: “Credit for this [the liveliness of Montreal’s fashion scene] is due to the Paris training of a number of its designers; the physical growth of Montreal since the Second World War; a more demanding taste stemming from travel, and the arrival of large numbers of Europeans and the pioneering efforts of the Association of Canadian Couturiers” (Meehan 13).

As I have already suggested, the “Frenchness” attached to Montreal’s image in the 1950s (and, indeed, in earlier decades) was largely detached from notions of a continental or European sophistication. This was the much older “Frenchness” of a seamy, commercialized sexuality through which Montreal joined a series of sinful “French” cities that included New Orleans or Marseille. Vanessa R. Schwartz has explored in detail the shifting images of France within the entertainment culture of the US, noting, in particular, the seemingly unending centrality of the *belle époque* to American imaginings of France (Schwartz 18–53). These imaginings are able to hold together both the highly sexualized “France” of can-can dancing or libertine bohemia and the aesthetically respectable France of impressionism and art nouveau. In similar fashion, the dominant North American imaginings of French life from the late 1950s onward could encompass both its racy sexual openness and the formal innovation of its films or music, combinations offered up in films of the *nouvelle vague* or in the music of performer/composers like Serge Gainsbourg.

In the decade after the Second World War, with little in its culture that might be deemed innovative, Montreal could be seen as "French" only in a reduced way: as a sleazy alternative to North American Puritanism. In the more respectable print culture of the 1960s, in contrast, "Frenchness" would be reworked as a commitment to elegance, as the signifier of a surplus of taste lacking elsewhere in North America. Montreal's "Frenchness," in these periodicals, would elevate the city and not simply distinguish it. The European qualities to which Montreal aspired in the elaboration of its new image were those of a Europe which had completed its postwar recovery and renewal—the Europe of *auteur cinema*, adult sophistication, and a newly vital youth culture.

Current Events

That new vision of Montreal was expressed consistently, if less grandiosely, in *Current Events*, the magazine to which I now turn. According to the catalogue of the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec, *Current Events* had been started by the Greater Montreal Publishing Company circa 1922 as a guide to entertainment and other activities in Montreal. Issues of *Current Events* carried on their covers the names of the hotels in which they were distributed, and while the magazine had obvious usefulness for resident Montrealers, the instructive character of its writing suggests it was destined principally for tourists. Perhaps no page in *Current Events* better captures both the variety of the magazine's contents and Montreal's own notorious duality than a page from the April, 1970 issue, on which a list of discothèques sits alongside a guide to the city's churches.

A central feature of *Current Events* in the 1960s and early 1970s was its descriptive lists of restaurants and lounges. While these descriptions are clearly promotional rather than evaluative, their consistency of style suggests that they were written by the magazine's staffers (rather than, as was common in other magazines of the same type, submitted by the restaurants themselves). In the economy of that writing one sees the set of fluctuations through which the middlebrow reveals itself. These fluctuations move between an emphasis on the food itself and succinct summaries of a restaurant's overall atmosphere. Descriptions of food regularly mobilize the capacity of specific food items to convey a sense of the conventionally cosmopolitan: restaurants are singled out for their offerings of "Camembert" or "bread sticks" or such old-school staples of French cuisine as "paper-thin 'crepes'" and onion soup. A restaurant's overall style is captured in transnationally circulating and thus comfortably familiar signifiers of canonical periods and styles, like "Tudor panelling," "medieval Burgundy," and "Candlelight and Wine." In the restaurant advertisements on the sides of the pages, we see the promises of "classiness" and atmosphere so central to the middle-class tourist's idea of a full and quality-filled night out.

"Europe," in these restaurant listings, is the old Europe of hearty national cuisines and traditions of quality. I am more interested, however, in *Current*

Events' coverage, from the mid-1960s onward, of Montreal's nightclubs and discothèques. In this coverage, *Current Events* captures the discothèque at a particular moment in its history as a cultural space. This moment falls between two periods within this history: that phase, in the early 1960s, in which the discothèque represented a transformation of the supper club, a much older social space marked by sophisticated adulthood, and that later period, from the mid-1970s onward, in which the discothèque would become almost exclusively a youth-oriented and subcultural space. (For further treatments of this history, see Thornton and Shapiro.) In the transitional period of the mid-to-late 1960s, the discothèque attracted adults approaching early middle age who sought contact with a vibrant youth culture bound up in the new cultures of sophisticated style and design.

In its coverage of discothèques, *Current Events* pushes toward the outer limits of the middlebrow. Confronted with spaces both experimental in design and seemingly unfamiliar to its presumed readership, *Current Events'* treatments of the Montreal discothèque narrate journeys into unknown worlds. At the same time, the magazine's descriptions of discothèques are highly pedagogical in tone, intended to manage the anxieties and insecurities of the tourist or local citizen unsure about the proper modes of dress or behaviour entailed in visiting a discothèque.

Striking features of *Current Events'* coverage of discothèques include a preoccupation with elements of decor and material construction. These are discussed with far more frequency than musical style, and tie the world of the discothèque to the more obviously adult world of design and furnishings. In a set of listings in its April 1970 issue, *Current Events* describes some of Montreal's most popular discothèques in the following terms:

A mélange of colored lights curves over leopard skin walls and bounces off mirrored tables. French waiters in turtlenecks angle through the sophisticated crowd; Marble-white mannequins gaze down on them all, their cool, arty stillness contrasting with the warm, moving dancers. [*Mousse Spachèque*]

A whole world in itself, relaxed and European. Roman arches cut through century-old cellar walls, antique bricks and beams emerge into a mirror-like discothèque to give you an Alice in Wonderland adventure in the many rooms of what was once a millionaire's residence. [*The Annex*]

La Licorne is a series of stucco archways and small, intimate rooms, elbow-to-elbow dancers and old English pub scenes in glowing stained glass. [*La Licorne*]

Downstairs from La Seigneurie Restaurant is a small, shimmering lounge with Paco Raban-style metallic partitions, stainless steel crystal balls attached to clear-plexi tables and soft black rug walls. [*Disco-Club Epoca*] (“Montreal Discothèques”)

These descriptions typically freeze within a single view of assemblages of forms and styles, many of whose elements are familiar but whose exotic interconnection casts the discothèque as a space of marvellous invention. At the same time, *Current Events*’ advice to would-be patrons as to dress, itinerary, and choice of drinks works, in a gently instructive fashion, to prepare these patrons for entry into these spaces. It does so, in part, by reassuring readers about the extent to which the discothèque experience might be a disorienting one:

No psychedelia here—soft red lighting and friendly waiters add to the cozy atmosphere, and everyone claps to the beat. [*La Licorne*]

Since the place is small it’s best to reserve a table; singles are always welcome at the bar. Ici, les français sont vraiment chez eux. [*Mousse Spacethèque*]

Try the Cocktail Plexi, specialty of the house—a tall elixir of rum, tia maria, vanilla and orange juice—and you’ll soon be in the swing. [*Plexi-Disco Club*]

A jacket and tie or turtleneck for men and a pantsuit or shift for women is the usual attire. Most of the places mentioned have a minimum of one drink per person, but no cover charge. (“Montreal Discothèques”)

An advertisement for two of Montreal’s most widely covered discothèques of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the *Mousse Spacethèque* and *La Licorne*, sets in place two of the associations central to the discothèque’s status within young, middle-class adult culture during this period. One, captured in the photo publicizing *La Licorne*, reasserts the discothèque’s lineage with the postwar supper club, at which patrons sat leisurely and consumed food while intermittently getting up to dance. (This feature of discothèques would disappear by the mid-1970s.) The other, expressed in the reference to the Parisian “grotto” or cave, highlights the European genealogy and atmosphere of the discothèque, a recurrent theme in press treatment of these establishments from the late 1960s through the early 1970s.

The risks of Montreal nightlife, by the late 1960s, were more commonly those of the fashion *faux pas* or the unavailable table—not, as in the previous decade, the presence of criminality and illicit temptation. The textual form of

the city visitor's guide has traditionally served to orient the middle-class tourist in his or her journey into worlds of nighttime entertainment. For that tourist, the late 1960s discothèque was likely to represent a destination both tempting and intimidating, central to gauging the furthest advances of a city's "up-to-dateness" but marked by implicit and rapidly changing protocols of behaviour which risked leaving the novice uncomfortable and embarrassed. *Current Events* magazine wrote about discothèques as if most of its readers had never been to one, but in its implicit assumption that they *should* it marked one point in the ongoing reordering of the middlebrow touristic experience.

La Patrie and Echo Vedettes

The European derivation of Montreal's discothèques was a prominent theme in the coverage of these establishments within Montreal's French-language press. Assertions of this derivation helped to cast the discothèque as exotic and as a welcome departure from the city's long-standing (and increasingly disparaged) tradition of cabarets and burlesque houses. Indeed, the discothèque was the focus of a double exoticization within the Montreal press in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While English language coverage, as in *Current Affairs*, warned visitors to the city that some discothèques were predominantly French, French-language publications noted that most of the leading clubs were to the west of downtown Montreal (around the current site of Concordia University) and thus in parts of the city that were disproportionately anglophone. The sense of the discothèque as a space of cultural tourism was not limited, therefore, to the presence of genuine tourists, nor was it merely a function of these establishments' exoticism at the level of design and decor. It was built into that complex overlaying of moral and linguistic geographies which Sherry Simon has expertly diagnosed, wherein anglophone Montrealers live their proximity to French as the sign of their greater proximity to Europe (and as an antidote to Americanism) (Simon 205). At the same time, we would suggest, francophones could find, in their mingling with anglophone Montrealers or tourists, confirmation of their ascendant internationalism.

In this brief section, I will examine coverage of Montreal discothèques as it appeared in the mid-1960s in two French-language publications of newspaper format. One of these was *La Patrie*, which published extensive coverage of Montreal's discothèque scene in the years 1967–68. *La Patrie* was one of Montreal's prominent daily newspapers from 1879 until 1957, when it became a weekly. (It ceased publication in 1978.) The other is *Echo Vedettes*, a weekly tabloid-sized newspaper covering Quebec show business and nightlife. *Echo Vedettes* had begun publication in 1963, clearly modelled on the supermarket tabloids (like the *National Inquirer*) which had shot to prominence in the US after 1960, but highly distinctive in its focus on the celebrity and media culture of Quebec. (The title is still published today, albeit in more conventional magazine format.) Throughout this period, it endeavoured to explain

Montreal’s discothèque scene to readers scattered across the province, cloaking this coverage in terms that ranged from the sociological to the sensational.

In its edition of 8 October 1966, *Echos Vedettes* published a comprehensive guide to Montreal’s discothèques, locating them on a large map of the city’s downtown area, offering capsule descriptions of each of the area’s clubs, and explaining the broader phenomenon of the discothèque to its readers. At once consumer guide and anthropological report, the guide captures the sensibility of a decade in which journalists were regularly compelled to report on new, hitherto unfamiliar styles and trends. The word “discothèque” is of Greek derivation, the introduction to the guide tells us, but the concept was born in Paris, with the opening of the “Whisky à gogo” in 1948. *Echos Vedettes* further claimed that “La Licorne,” which had opened in Montreal in 1963, was the first discothèque in North America (“Le Guide Des Discothèques De Montréal”). *La Patrie*, in one of its own lengthy features on discothèques, in 1968, lightly revised and expanded this original story, suggesting that the original “Whisky à gogo” had opened in 1945, when a shortage of musicians in postwar Paris led club owners to play records to which patrons could dance (“Les discothèques sont nées en France en 1945? Pourquoi? Comment?”). While the quick spread of discothèques in Montreal was attributed in both newspapers to entrepreneurial savvy on the part of the city’s business class, it was seen to be nourished, as well, by an ongoing traffic in ideas and influences between Montreal and Paris.

Among the elements in this traffic were well-entrenched stereotypes about national character. In 1968, *La Patrie* noted that large numbers of those who owned or worked in Montreal’s discothèques were of French origin, and that this was a key reason for the success of these establishments: “French men, as is well known, are masters at the difficult art of chatting up [*baratiner*] young girls. They have an ease which makes the shy person jealous and they know how to heat up a mood. It’s no accident that 90% of the waiters are French: unanimously, customers claim that their patter and speed in serving clients amidst all the brouhaha accounts for half of a club’s success” (“Et c’est ainsi que les jeunes passent leurs nuits folles”).

Coverage in both *La Patrie* and *Echo Vedettes* emphasized the extent to which the new wave of Paris-inspired discothèques in Montreal had cast aside longer traditions of Montreal nightlife, rendering them quickly obsolete. Residual concerns over Montreal’s reputation as a “city of sin” had hovered in the background of Expo ’67, fueled by alarm over the large number of “go-go” bars featuring topless dancers which had opened to cater to tourists. The discothèque, however, with its sophisticated attention to style and demonstrated capacity to attract a well-behaved clientele, was seen to represent an almost definitive break with these vestiges of the morally “wide-open” city. The shift from live musicians to recorded music came to stand as one of the clearest

symptoms of this break. The same shift was seen to both enact and enable a relationship to music which was European in both form and substance.

In its 1966 feature on discothèques, *Echos Vedettes* exposed those establishments which, while calling themselves discothèques, were, in fact, “cabarets in the purest Montreal tradition of St. Catherine Street and even of ‘The Main,’” their only difference being the absence of live musicians (“Le Guide Des Discothèques De Montréal 15). (“The Main” refers to Montreal’s St. Laurent Boulevard, long the location for cabarets, burlesque houses, and other nighttime entertainment venues.) *La Patrie* went further, painting the discothèque as a space in which young people were no longer subject to the tedious, unchanging rhythms of a live orchestra. In this passage, worth quoting at length, the Parisian ambiance of the Montreal discothèque is tied closely to the disappearance of live music, which itself has made possible the exposure by young Montrealers to new sounds arriving on record from the other side of the Atlantic:

Montreal, just like New York, now dances to Paris time. Gone, now, are those clubs where you lived out your boredom in front of a deadbeat orchestra with mechanical fingers!

Nightlifers in the know, with their 20-year old hearts and legs, go to discothèques. Over the last two years, and in two successive waves, that recognition has turned to gold.

For owners, this has meant a golden opportunity—or, more accurately, cold cash—which shows no signs of drying up. Regulars are letting themselves get carried away in the frenzy of a trend that is reviving Montreal’s wild nightlife and creating, in the city’s western downtown district, hitherto the fiefdom of the Anglophone population, a little Saint-Germain-de-Près.

In discothèques, you will find neither orchestras nor music-hall acts. Boys and girls, alone or with others, crowd around a dance floor the size of a handkerchief to chat and dance and breathe in the latest hits by the stars of the moment: the Beatles, Richard Anthony, Petula Clark, Alain Barrière, Johnny Hallyday, France Gall, the Rolling Stones and the rest. This is the triumph of records (imported directly from France) over orchestras unable to renew their repertory fast enough. The result is a greater freedom; in any case, originals are now preferred over bad imitations.

This is also the victory of a décor reduced to its simplest elements, one that is cleverly restrained, intimate and picturesque in its rejection of the false palm trees, gilding, arabesques and other baroque decorations typical of certain cabarets. (“La ‘dolce vita’ dans le vent établit ses quartiers dans les discothèques” 6)

Montreal’s discothèques of the late 1960s were thus the source of multiple displacements—of styles and sounds coming from Europe, of populations moving across the east-west axis so central to the city’s linguistic geographies. Key among the displacements described here was the passage from one way of consuming music to another, as local musicians ceased being the vehicle through which sounds from elsewhere found their place within Montreal’s nightlife. The quick success of the discothèque had revealed the extent to which Montreal’s older cabaret scene was musty and provincial, unable to meet the tastes of a younger generation for sounds that were carried by mass-produced media from somewhere else and voices that were original rather than mimicked. As I have noted elsewhere, this reading of discothèque music would be revised in the 1970s, when the foreign origin of so much of the music played in nightclubs would be one basis of their condemnation by nationalist commentators (Straw, “Music from the Wrong Place”). In the 1960s, in contrast, the foreign, “European” character of the discothèque made it a symptom of new cultural openings intimately interwoven with the broader sense of change that marked Quebec’s Quiet Revolution.

Conclusion

Montreal magazine, from 1964 to 1968, and *Current Events*, published throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, each occupy specific points within the universe of city-based periodicals. The first was official, published by the city itself, while the second represents the well-established genre of the city guide for tourists. Each, in distinct ways and for divergent reasons, produced a tightly controlled image of the city and of its attractions, and each distinguished itself from the lurid, lowbrow guides to nocturnal pleasure which have been another staple of city-focused periodical publishing. (*Midnight*, one of Montreal’s longest-lasting English language tabloids, began as an example of the latter.) Neither of these magazines ventured far into the avant-gardist or disorienting reaches of what Montreal had to offer. In their coverage of Montreal’s new attractions (the stylishness of its shopping destinations and up-to-date character of its nightlife), they registered the city’s ongoing transformation while carefully softening any sense that these changes might render Montreal disorienting or illegible.

The newspaper coverage from *La Patrie* and *Echos Vedettes*, in contrast, captured the growth and expansion of the city’s nightlife sector in an ongoing fashion, regularly pausing to offer new cartographies of that sector and registering even minor shifts in style and public taste. Read primarily by residents of the city, these papers explained the institutions and practices of nightlife as if participation within them was an activity of self-improvement. The discothèque, as a symbol of Montreal’s new cosmopolitanism and sophistication, was partially normalized through the voluminous coverage it received and the multiple levels of exposition brought to bear upon it. At the

same time, as suggested, Montreal's discothèque boom of the mid-to-late 1960s condensed forms of cultural change and mobility so numerous and complex that they resisted a full unravelling.

In its 16 April 1970 issue, *La Presse*, Montreal's most widely read daily newspaper, offered another cartography of the city's nightlife. A reporter was sent into downtown Montreal in search of any remaining traces of the "sin city" of the 1950s ("Spec by Night: Une soirée dans le Montréal d'avant Drapeau"). The article listed several clubs lingering from the post-Second World War period (like the Casa Loma and the Faisan doré), but noted that they catered to a dwindling number of customers who danced or drank listlessly amidst decaying decor. These institutions of Montreal night life, the reporter suggested, stood as "souvenirs of a Montreal before Jean Drapeau . . . of Montreal the capital of nightlife (and of vice) in North America."

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