

SOUND IN IFI. ARTIST-SCIENCE BINOMIAL.

SUBVERSIVE MATTER /CREATOR OF UNCONTROLLABLE SPACES.

Every invention or implementation of a new technology involves a new theology. In these first years of the 21st century we have witnessed a new revolution in the field of digital creation, both in music/video and in art. The so called "LapTop" (portable computer) has achieved a privileged position, becoming a tool through which artists can convey their messages, the only necessary, sufficient, and autonomous tool that is able to conduct their ideas. The power and possibilities of these machines has tripled in the last few years and, according to what cybergurus say, every 18 months they will double their power and reduce their size and weight to a half – we are speaking about 150 gram CPUs with rolling screens. Therefore, electronic artists have become scientists and part of their work consists in software research and development to create their works. This fact means that they are slave of or dependent on this medium to a certain extent, because when they have a good command of a tool, a more powerful new version or different software that can facilitate processes and improve performance appears. Almost any genre/style that appears in the world of art has a lot to do with advances in the field of software and with production methods. For that reason, digital artists must pay attention to technological advances, researching and updating their equipment at the pace established by this development. The Artist-Scientist Binomial is already inseparable.

On the other hand, in the world of computers innovations and advances point at speed or volume of data to be processed instead of developing new concepts of "man-computer" relationship. There are hardly any new ways of man-machine interaction and the race is aimed at improving and refining the assumed concepts. Innovations in software presentations also have this conservative dynamics, conditioned by hardware, a fact that suggests a logical conclusion: the audio tools interface must be improved so as to connect the artist's emotions with the machine potential, connecting with the recipient of the work as well [it is true that the proposal of tools like MAX/MSP, initially developed by Puckette at the IRCAM, and the ability to convert movements and images into midi messages directed to sound and image modules has opened up new possibilities].

Although technical work methods and electronic machines are an integral part of the artist's discourse (now a scientist as well), a conceptual 'desciencification' is urgent so as to leave the way clear to direct communication of artists with their audience: human – human, in the case of musicians/sound artists.

Audio, one of the key elements IFI, fills the whole possible space and uses the spectator as a mere conductor of its purpose: to fill this space. It expresses itself in the three dimensions, taking this concept to the limit, even further than sculpture. Its only enemy (or prison) is the Anechoic chamber. But in this hostile space the physical silence, the pure zero decibels, is not possible either; no one who is alive can feel it, because in one of these chambers the sounds of the circulatory and nervous systems are present (1*). Then, absolute silence does not exist for man, and this reality provides evidence of the importance of sound for human life, its power and inherence; the strength of its presence and its subversive capacity.

The sonic wave that generates a Sound System, the only protagonist in the audio action, suspends the ego of the open-minded spectators who let themselves be carried by it so as to lead them to an oceanic connection and show them the power of the senses, the only channels that connect the unconscious (personal history) with the outside, with a tangible reality. Minimizing the visual makes sound more vivid. This is the reason why we present the CDAA (Auditory Attention Chamber), where several sound artists will show their works.

"Audition/concert chamber or room" is the opposite of Anechoic Chamber. The Auditory Attention Chamber is the new space for concerts presented by IFI in this edition. There will only be an usher (like the usher in a cinema) with a torch, and the spectator will be able to enjoy the sonic flow as a functional apparatus, as a decorative object (2*) "Music that is generated and developed in a studio and it is projected in a room". The "Sound System" will be the indisputable

protagonist in the pieces; it will be responsible for the piece functionality. We will invite artists and musicians to play their works live but they will be merged with the audience and in darkness so that the spectators cannot see the artist and the artist cannot see them. Only a pale light will lit the "Sound system", highlighting its important role in a poetic way. This room will be our particular ESPRO (Espace de Projection, a concert room with variable acoustics created it the French Institute IRCAM in 1977. P. Boulez)".

AUDIO AND MUSIC AS ARTISTIC TOOLS. LIMITATIONS. THE PRINCIPLE OF PLEASURE.

« I have sometimes observed that the content of a work of art attracts me more powerfully than its technical and formal qualities, although many artists give them a great value. I would say that, in spite of all the means and effects used by art, I cannot understand it properly» (3*). He is even more precise in a letter: «those people are not worried about sense; they are only worried about the line, the form, the harmony of design. They abandon themselves to the principle of pleasure» (4*). With these words Sigmund Freud justified his rejection of music as "work of art": «it is necessary that the sense and the content of what is represented in the work of art can be extracted and, therefore, can be interpreted» (5*). The absence of what he calls "sense", the lack of content in terms of "representations", and the inability to "translate into words" or into any known language what is "experienced" on hearing sound separate Freud from music and its capacity to transmit ideas. He thought that there is something beautiful, heartbreaking, painful, free, terrible, or sweet in it, but this "something" cannot be named or represented. Although the interpretations of the father of psychoanalysis are now old-fashioned, they are useful to show the enigmatic quality of "Audio".

[...] To start with, I will say that music is enigma, evanescent enigma, and speaking about that «foreign country» that all the music is may be irrelevant but it is also, and we will make an effort for it, illuminating. Music, which is pleasure (sometimes entertainment and sometimes passion) and concertus (that is, conflict, a combat that is ceremonial but dramatic), always consists of an ambiguous and dark walk. [...]

Barber, Llorenç: "Los dioses muertos", in Revista de Occidente, Nº 151 (Madrid, December 1993). Pp. 27-46

Then, audio and music are a response to the "principle of pleasure", so it is difficult to use this means to transmit political or social ideas, negative or death feelings. Audio is a tool (always enigmatic) that by nature is restricted to transmitting pleasure (negative or positive), and can hardly reach the narrative level of image (is that so?). That is why I ask these questions: Can singularly ordered audio be considered as art? Can political and social messages be transmitted with audio as only tool? Does a piece of audio with no specific function make sense? (dance music). Can a work of art live on in time when it is not associated to a political or social idea? Is audio a "minor" tool? Can pure pleasure be considered as "Art"? And if audio was a valid tool, what then? Is it possible to use synthesized sounds which the audience does not recognize and are not related to a concrete fact and can not be used as "memory triggers"? In IFI, of course, we believe in the strength and validity of sound in the artistic field and we commit ourselves to it, but we ask these questions to propose a rich and illuminating but controversial debate.

FUNDAMENTALS. LAPTOP MUSIC. INTRO

What is the real artistic discourse of laptop-musicians? Are they concerned about the music they are creating or are they more worried and fascinated about the transformation of the "audio" mass in their portable computer in real time?

Many musicians who use the portable computer as only instrument love and admire the processing power of its circuits, they like the image of a musician surrounded by cables on a steel platform. Melody, noise, technical faults, digital error, repeated loops, program presets, "appropriated" sounds stolen from the web, someone else's programs, "cracks", free code,

software terrorism, and, in general, all the elements of "virtual space", are part of the internal language of digital artists. Emotional formalism.

Yasunao Tone, a member of Fluxus, was applauded by John Cage. This artist worked with digital errors from the first CD players. This was the starting signal.

MANIFESTOS, POSTULATES. PERCEPTIVE FREEDOM. PHONIC ESSENCES. AUDIO PLASTICITY AND SPATIALITY. LAPTOPS/PDAS/CELULARS/MICROWORKSTATIONS/SUBNOTEBOOKS/"ALL IN ONE" NOTEBOOKS

After this introduction, and without intention, analysis, or reflection, laptop-music is signifier, it lacks meaning. It is self-managed and self-explained; it is not supported by external events, it does not need them; it is self-sufficient. It is a historical, popular conclusion. As popular as portable computers and electric guitars, it dialogues intimately and contractually with the hearing of living beings and its environment is the portable device, the "Sound System". It is a result of technological advances, which is not a determining factor but an inherent one. It is created and consumed in silence. It avoids the language traps because it flows freely and spontaneously, it narrates the present, gets around the perversions of cultural discourse, and does not triumph because it is constantly seeking encounters. It does not depend on the sense of harmony; it does not really need it because it runs away from academicism and music laws. It invents tones and modes, creating new discourses and languages by manipulating audio as plastic, tangible matter. Sound sculpture or auditory plasticity. It does not listen; it filters, regenerates, re-conducts, appropriates. It shares Cage's postulate: "music is Sound Organization" (introduced by Edgar Varèse); but, expanding and updating this definition, laptop music assumes the intellectuality of listening and its grammatization. It is contradictory, because in spite of wishing the listening ear to be absolutely free, it does not matter if it is conditioned by personal history and intellect, it does not matter if it is listened to with words, although it prefers the ear. It wants to circulate, to run through space so as to fill everything, to appropriate everything. Laptop-musicians are musicians and scientists, they love cracks and the pleasure they get with free exchange of information. They are obsessed with software and hardware and pay attention to all the programs they can get, sharing techniques and participating in forums and associations that support free software (Radium, Zenith, Paradox, Zone, Artik), downloading/uploading programs from and to the web and changing software monthly. Many of them program and commercialize tools based on sound software classics (CSound, Max, MatLab, Pd, SuperCollider), producing enjoyable programs with easy and intuitive interfaces (Ableton!, Reaktor, CrusherX Live...). Others work on open source code operative systems (Open Source) and experiment on software developed by governmental institutions (IRCAM, MIT). They use a method and, although they can release records and participate in the pop business, their attitude is scientific and methodical, far from social detritus and audiovisual culture.

END. OTHER PIECES. COUPLETS.

From SUNRISE (1st RAVE) to IFI/from LONGWICK (25 thousand people 88) to FRECUENCIAS HZ/from FLYER to SMS/from M.A.R.R.S "PUMP UP THE VOLUME" (SAMPLEDELIA 1) to AKUFEN/from M.A.R.R.S to ABLETON LIVE!/from AMNESIA to ZEPPELIN/from BALEARIC BEATS to BOOTGLESS/from FAIRLIGHT to HALION/from A GUY CALLED GERALD to VLADISLAV DELAY/from RHYTHM KING to MILLE PLATEAUX/from NEW AGE TRAVELLERS-CRUSTIES to FREELANDS DESIGNERS/from CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL to BSA/from EMPATIA to ESQUIZOFRENIA/from CHARLY (PRODIGY) to MISS KYTIN/.

Chiu Longina (SINSALaudio, Vigo)

(1*) "Composition as Process, III", Silence, op. cit., p.51; For the Birds, op. cit., p. 115; "How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run", A Year from Monday, op. cit., p. 134.

(2*) Michael Chion (1947). "Loops, una historia de la música electrónica". Javier Blaquez. Omar Morera. Reservoir Books. Mondadori. 2002.

(3*) Sigmund Freud, «El "Moisés" de Miguel Ángel», Obras completas de Sigmund Freud,

Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 1997.

(4*) Sigmund Freud, carta a Ernest Jones, fechada el 8 de febrero de 1914, citada en Peter Gay, op. cit., pág. 769.

(5*) Sigmund Freud, «Le Moïse de Michel-Ange», op. cit., pág. 89.

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