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WAREHOUSE . SPACE :

rave culture, selling-out, and sonic revolution

I n the early-90s, warehouses were powerful microscopes, magnifying socio-sonic relations of echoed beats, catalyzing pounding grooves that raised the structure of memory from the cement and metal environs, bodies of movement always on the flight to the next dark night and industrial district search, the secret of the telephone messages and cryptic directions to be deciphered, the check-points deep in the heart of nowhere, school-buses to undisclosed locations of bohemian extropy, madness in the streets, a flash of bright clothing, movement through the bins and speakers, the DJs alive and wordless with speaking hands, the music connecting beyond language to central systems.

Tell that today to a "raver"—and confusion will arise. The memories play across dark nights as the post-generation—post-Gen-X, post-political, post-everything—meanders through its doldrums of existence, aged and wondering where it all went and how we went wrong. For at a point, several years ago, from the ashes of commercial '80s hair-metal arose a flourishing spectrum of movements and musics: hip hop, grunge, and "techno:" electronic musiks, cultures, Detroit techno, Chicago house, UK acid house, the psychedelics of trance and goa, the aggressive darkness of jungle, the mellow of ambient and the abstraction of IDM. And despite a swath of subcultures, post-cultures, and social strata, these groups gathered and gained momentum as ragged bands, perhaps already fraying at the edges, but destined to shoot—not like a gun, but as a star, too close to a rocket's trajectory as we find—to the heart of society, to shake up Western Civilization's late-80s dredge of commercialized crap that had been laid wasting, subject to two thousand years of dust, to overthrow once again the music industry despite its half-Centarian existence, a revolt that through music was political to its dirty core, comprised of cement and metal and the structure, the warehouse, empty symbol of capitalism deterritoralized through dance, leaving us here, and alone, in two-thousand-and-two.

It was the warehouse that acted as intersection—into sections, insection; the insect and the join and the cut, the intersextion of musical cultures, sonic sex for insects (remember Blow Out Comb?), the nexus of history DJ'ed as electronic music, the politics of black liberation and the pride of sexuality. Each part of "rave" a different record, a different mix at different points of the experience, that today we recombinate the final History, declare the Past, put to our hard memory what we mediatize in this present as "rave culture" is a political necessity. Not what we would call rave culture today—that which is a commercialized, consumerist apparition of its past—but what was rave culture then—and that we leave then open to recombinate and remix all over and once again sets forth the politics of the warehouse.

Breakdown
Ten years ago at 3am on a Sunday morning, standing in awe, below the sea: frenzied bodies explode, dancing, dark and cavernous the warehouse deep, in the heart of the city, like starved piranha the hungry crowd devoured beats, strip them bare with

it was beaten down by the cops at Prime Time Vancouver, at Building Blocks Toronto, at Richie Hawtin's border-bust, in court against Spiral Tribe UK and the 1994 Criminal Justice Act, with Laws and Batons, with Blood…it was slagged from the inside and used like the whore it was to sell cars and dot-bombs and pop muzak…and saying it again now is beating a dead horse not only rotting, carcass, but a horse long stripped and picked clean to the whites of its bones by the mindless, vicious piranhas—their hungry ghosts anxious again for revenge … Remix.

What is a warehouse?
A warehouse conjoins sound and architecture, people and politics. It is the location of culture. Rumble of metal roof and the echo of cement beats; dance is a necro-embodiment, a ritual of the vampiric vulture on the empty signifiers of capitalism, for the warehouse is the empty nest of surplus value. Dancing in a warehouse is a contradictory act, alive and dead, at once such a dancing de-territorializes the proper use of the physical space, at once the financial and economical backbone of the rave

RUMBLE OF METAL ROOF AND THE ECHO OF CEMENT BEATS; DANCE IS A NECRO-EMBODIMENT,

spastic, flailing movements—shark eye glint—sweat-encrusted pale bodies, sexless sexiness…madness all around the warehouse echoed sound—of revolutionary dreams…there, one of a hungry piranha, bloodthirsty and blood in my veins, again relentless pulse of the beat …

Spin This: Now, here I am, drink in hand instead of Ecstasy in my brain, up late, once & again listening to an old techno mix tape BOOM I recorded that long year ago of 1995 BOOM writing about it all and trying to explain a connection felt to that dirty and grimy warehouse BOOM the inhabitants of that city-scene that worshipped cement culture BOOM trying to explain the bigger picture felt by a few of us at that moment BOOM when the connection between the metropolis and electronic music felt beyond city-con-fine, park-ing, enclosed space BREAK for space was space for movement, not stasis-ing CRASH But here I am ten years later and all I can think about is Hunter S. Thompson in the early '60s BOOM writing another article on the long extinct beat generation, his final eulogy in Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas to the counter-culture… STOP THE RECORD: Rave Is Dead, corpse, it was beaten down in 1996 in Vancouver when Nietzsche's "God Is Dead" parable was posted to the NorthWest Raves email list,

maintains the actuality of the structure and its potential to be utilized again for the drives of capital… Unless, that is, you break-in, throw a free party, occupy land, squat. To capture the space, to gain territory at the moment it is made temporary and stolen, piece by piece, chess-like but moving faster than that, off the board even, under the table: Deleuze and Guattari call this restless nomadology the game of Go as opposed to chess. Move in lines, ravers form nomadic spaces: Temporary Autonomous Zones to organize communities that spoke the language of a musiks that existed only in the repetitious singularity of the single night once a week that Saturday which was re-named Life.

A warehouse becomes more than space as it becomes a space of becoming. Becoming-time that cannot be measured for its delimitations are echoed memories (the dance conjures every memory of the previous dance the previous rave, some say the archetypal; the musik with its beat-echoes propels this sonic memory), not physical incorporations of rote recitation and boredom of learning and education (this memory is not driven in as rote, it is echoed as physical experience): beat traces in the revolutions of wax. Nor indeed must it be simply a grey and dirty structure in the bowels of the city on the outskirts of a polluted

waterway, it becomes more than that, a "warehouse" moment, dancing moves to deconstruct codified and "proper" usage of not only actualized, physical space, but of time-sketch, movement of space to non/sense of time, psychic space, what Charity Marsh calls "mind dancing," what Bergson called duree. Ravers call it "peak time." Peak time, a time beyond time, opening portals of the recesses of the psyche, drives, a pause—Deleuzian, Bergsonian— to consider the echo of the beat/memory, that echo of reinterpretation and the remix to form, through that erotic mixture of conscious and unconscious perception, milieus, the new moment of the now and its always-already interpretation through movement.

Lo, it was the misunderstanding of peak time as transcendental, perhaps through the filters of Ecstasy, perhaps through the existing network of capitalist structures, that led to the worship of ridiculous acronyms such as PLUR—Peace Love Unity Respect. From PLUR arose an "It's All Good" philosophy that served as blinders to the reality of the scene: drug abuse, unhealthy lifestyles, destroyed minds and bodies, social distress: the ravages of capitalist entertainment taken to its destructive conclu-

trans-movements through the "subculture," fractured lines away from rave away from crap-ulture. <ST> Communications Vancouver explored the relation between rave culture and fascism; the Dolphin Intelligence Network (Ontario) brought together the rave and industrial traditions to question magickal and psychedelic experience; Toronto's Transcendance pursued the mental mindset of spatialized topographies through the advent of minimal techno (a dark warehouse, a red spotlight glowing bassbins and Plastikman). A spirit of post-anarchism, undefinable and beyond the textbook, gained movement: Spiral Tribe UK fought on the street, in the squat, and through the courts, although in the end banned from their country for their deeds of disturbance to the grey, drab palette of London rain.

The relief of tension through dance is both a response to, and a fight against, the city and its inherent structure: polis. Whether "warehouse" takes its space and time within an actual warehouse or the backcountry, a forest or a field, it acts in response, in deconstructive movement, to a modernism. A modernism, not modernity. "Modernism" in an age of post-modernity: modernism

THE RELIEF OF TENSION THROUGH DANCE IS BOTH A RESPONSE TO, AND A FIGHT AGAINST, THE CITY AND ITS INHERENT STRUCTURE: POLIS

sions. PLUR was a fascist rebound of the "warehouse" on an underage majority of rave culture quick to embrace an exit to contemporary crap-ulture, any exit, any movement away. Yet what a disaster as that one signified—consumer ideology, God, Government, parents—was replaced with another: PLUR, or rave, or DJ, Promoter. PLUR is the consumerist message of capitalism remixed to commodify what was, up to that point, untouchable by capital and therefore unprofitable. PLUR was a brand name and a jingo that sold the rave, hippy-fy: make it just like the '60s, then the business plan: the yuppies can market, sell, rape, pillage.

Scratching Peak Time
Nevertheless peak-time is a moment of power—social power and ubiquitous in its moments, uncontrollable in its final explosion at the end of rocket's trajectory. Paradoxical movements: the Temporary Autonomous Zone became re-codified, mixed with PLUR, producing advertising, not action; the end was near—for some.

Not all interpretations of peak-power hinge upon transcendental, PLUR mytho-hierarchies intent on recreating capitalist oppression. The TAZ undid its moments, gave rise to sideway constructions,

as the localized punch that capital gives to the struggles of spirit. The city calls for it, begging, for it at night, when the metropolis is all but empty, the overwhelming aesthetic desire to interact with the architecture becomes a situation of musical insurrection. It's erotic. And yet it would be presumptuous to say that the sonic love affair with the city died in the same moment as "rave culture" sold out. Did the excitement felt by so many—that dangerous energy of entering the underground and the dark when the skyscrapers were sleeping, that moment of pure sheer terror in the field at night a thousand kilometers from the nearest town—dissipate to nothingness? Decades of committed dance have left a mark, and its transmutation grows foul in the belly of the beast that arises to fight the restrictions of capital.

Drop the Needle
A freeway screams past.

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