

Sacred Sound

Does Berlin's Techno and rave culture offer a sustainable sonic representation of the city?

Michelle O'Brien

"Berghain is the epitome of Berlin nightlife and, in my mind, a sort of rite of passage for anyone who looks forward to ever staying there to live. If you are let into the Berghain and once inside you feel like everything going on feels somehow right and reasonable, then you are ready to be a part of this city. You are open, you are free, you are Berlin."

- Gallardo, 2010

Techno music beats deep in the heart of Berlin's urban landscape. With such a political and subversive nature, the music and the rave culture that surrounds it are sonic reminders of the capital's tumultuous past, in particular the struggles of stitching together a deeply divided and ravaged city after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The nightclub *Berghain* is an institution in this scene, embodying a manifesto of social and political freedom, and infamous for its weekend-long parties, sexual liberalism and hedonism. Stories circulate around the world about what goes on inside the walls of this ex-power station and this in turn keeps the myth and legend of the club alive. *Berghain* stands at the global forefront of electronic dance music (EDM) with a burning integrity to push sonic boundaries for its audience. The club creates a truly unique listening environment where, through a custom-made sound system and carefully crafted interior, audiences are immersed in their temporal sonic environment to the point of becoming cogs in the machine of its actualisation (Holmes, 2002). Yet in our hyper-individualised and technologised society, *Berghain* conjures an alternative universe where the rave experience is a ritualistic journey of communal transcendence, catharsis and spiritual transformation (Lawrence, 2003). As physical traces of the divided city fade and Berlin regains a shaky footing in the global economic market, thousands of Techno Tourists and an 'Easyjet-set' flock to the capital each weekend on a pilgrimage for the essential rave experience, leading to fears that Berlin's sacred Techno sound, as epitomised by *Berghain* nightclub, is threatened with extinction. However this 'roots culture' is so intrinsic to both the city and its history that it continues to thrive, providing a sustainable and vibrant sonic experience and hence representation of Berlin.

Techno's historical relationship to 'place' is very much engrained, with the roots of the sound stemming from the musical cultures of Ibiza, the disco eras of New York and the acid-house of Detroit, with early 90s Detroit artists such as Carl Craig and his track *At Les* having a huge influence on Berlin's Techno sound (Craig, 1994: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUzR26NGgas>). Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Techno has come to represent the sonic ethos of the city, signifying its past and present in equal measure. However, despite Techno music lying at the heart of Berlin, it is also "cut free from any originating time and place, and rooted in the needs, movement, and imagination of the listener" (Frith 1996, as quoted in Jones, 2002:227). The actualisation of EDM at places like *Berghain* fosters the development of a 'localised' community in Berlin, yet at the same time invokes escapism from place altogether. Rapp attempts to articulate his own sense of place within the walls of *Berghain*: "You're off the map... You almost feel - well, it would be going a little too far to say you feel at home. Like a fish in water, that's more like it. After all, you're here precisely because it isn't home" (2009). The rave experience is an exploration of the psyche, or a form of 'internal tourism', that breaks through the traditional or limits of self-realisation (Alter, 2005; Kahn, 1994).

With such powerful and vulnerable experiences as transcendence and catharsis experienced by rave audiences, it is no surprise the culture can be used for political ends, either to bind and strengthen the community, for example with sexual or ethnic minority groups, or alternatively to exploit the scene for commercial purposes (St John, 2004). The increasing number of 'Easyjet-setters' flying into Berlin for rave holidays has led to the booming commercial industry of Techno Tourism. In terms of economics, this is an industry that the bankrupt German capital desperately needs, however many Berliners, protective of the subversive rave culture leftover from the fall of the Berlin Wall, view this new-found global interest and rapidly-growing commerce as 'the beginning of the end' of their sacred Techno culture.

The physical journey to *Berghain* is often framed as a spiritual 'pilgrimage' for and by foreign visitors, with descriptions of the destination as "the temple of Techno and House on planet Earth" (Mull, 2009) and "the modern world's Mecca of dance music" (Carter, 2011). D'Andrea attributes this need for both spiritual journey and destination through Techno culture to the 21st Century concept of 'nomadic spirituality', or a "post-identitarian lifestyle, a condition of reflexive experimentation geared toward an understanding of the self which attempts to keep itself in line with the shifting realities of global mobility, digitalism, and multiculturalism, while ambivalently resonating with trends toward reflexive individualism and ephemeral consumerism" (2007: 221). Destinations like *Berghain* provide 'off the map' sanction so as to make sense of a hyper-mobile and digitalised world and offer a channel for spiritual residence not confined by location or the constraints of space. But where is the destination of this rave pilgrimage beyond the *Berghain* dance floor? Lucier describes it as the essential "self-realisation of the listener" (as quoted by Holmes, 2002), but other theorists label this path as a dead end, a futility, due to the lack of cultural mechanisms to integrate transcendent rave experiences into life outside of the nightclub (St John, 2004). In this sense the journey, process and the goal of audience members to 'live the moment' of the Techno rave, as opposed to the outcomes of experience or defined spiritual destinations, are intrinsic to the culture.

Berghain takes the idea of partying to another level of stamina and endurance, with weekly Techno raves that stretch on for up to 36 hours, from Saturday night until Monday morning. The party often comes into full swing late on a Sunday morning when the international headline acts perform, and as the locals say, 'the tourists go home'. But while *Berghain* does have a reputation for hedonism and excess, the club's world-class *Funktion One* sound-system and cutting-edge EDM programming must not be overlooked. Sherburne stresses that music itself is at the very heart of the venue: "to view *Berghain* only in sensationalistic terms, as an anything-goes pleasure zone of sex and drugs, is to miss the greater significance of the operation. *Berghain*, far from being merely yet another lifestyle option, stands firmly at the vanguard of EDM" (2007). A regular weekend line-up at *Berghain* consists of many of the

world's top DJs and live EDM acts, and for them, is the equivalent of a 'gig of the season' in many other international cities; as Rapp proclaims, "*Studio 54, The Loft, The Paradise Garage, The Hacienda, Ministry of Sound, Cream, Shoom, Pacha, Twilo, Tresor, fabric*: They are among the most famous clubs in the world. Right now, though, none is more famous (and infamous) than Berlin's *Berghain*" (2009). *Berghain* also has a prestigious group of resident DJs who play weekly at the club and release their own music on the club's exclusive record label *Ostgut Ton*, examples including Shed's *Keep Time* (Pawlowitz, 2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAraLCz1K1c>), and Ben Klock's *Goodly Sin* (Klock, 2009: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0TX75q6Y1M>), tracks produced with *Berghain*'s unique sound system, acoustics and dance floor in mind (Figure i).



Figure i: *Berghain* 2004 (Source: *karhard architecture + design*, 2004)

No nightclub has come to epitomise the Berlin Techno sound as acutely as *Berghain*, yet it is important to understand *Berghain* as 'place' in order to understand its sound culture, as the former is intrinsically linked to the latter. *Berghain* is a reincarnation of the former *Ostgut* nightclub (1998 - 2003), which re-opened as *Berghain* in 2004 on the border of East and West Berlin between Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain (the final syllables of the two suburbs are where the club takes its name), in an enormous DDR-era neo-classical style power plant (*Kraftwerk*) from the 1950s. The club's internal space is mostly exposed steel and concrete, maintaining many original elements of the *Kraftwerk* and a raw industrial aesthetic, which, according to DJ Mag creates "the most pure, epic and stripped-back rave environments you ever will encounter" (2010). The capacity of the current club is over 1500, but *Berghain* actually occupies only half of the building, with the upper two levels of the rear half of the

premises as yet undeveloped. With vast internal ceilings over 18 metres high, the building, “an intimidating, post-industrial behemoth”, is overwhelming from both inside and outside, as illustrated in Figure ii (Sherburne, 2007).



Figure ii: The nightclub *Berghain* in the surroundings of Berlin East Station in Friedrichshain (Source: *Wikipedia*, 2006)

Berghain's bouncers have a reputation for being notoriously selective with those they permit entry into the club, and as Theluisgarcia notes “the precise parameters of the door policy are never divulged by the staff and can be inferred only from observing the fate of those ahead of you in line” (2010). Lucian goes on to summarise this arbitrary door policy like one would some complex mathematical equation: “Some would say that there are no rules and that it's completely random. Some say it's down to the mood the bouncer is in... The fact is that there is no definitive answer” (2010). The strict yet elusive entrance criteria is taken extremely seriously by not only the staff but the committed ravers that frequent the club on a regular basis or have flown thousands of miles and queued for hours (as illustrated in Figure iii) for the *Berghain* experience. This door policy obviously disappoints and infuriates those who are turned away, but gives an intense thrill and air of exclusivity to the 3000+ ravers who do infiltrate the *Berghain* ‘mainframe’ each weekend, further intensifying their rave experience. In

Rapp's opinion, "You don't want to party with just anyone, so no tears are shed for any of those who are turned away. But at the same time, the price you pay for exclusivity is the risk of not getting in yourself... In its implementation, this policy actually gives a faint sense of Jacobin Terror. Whether you're a queen or a farmer, it really can happen to anyone. Firstly, then, this door is radically democratic" (2009). This 'democratic' policy has a deeply judgemental base however, and while it may not discriminate on class, race, gender or sexual orientation, is still marked "strongly by the intervention of differences which fracture that unity and render unavoidable the reflexivity" (Straw, 1991: 379). The staff and audience both contribute to this ongoing process of moderation as to exactly which 'differences' are acceptable for entrance into the nightclub.



Figure iii: [Spotlight] *Berghain/Panorama Bar* Image 2 (Source: *Key West Electronic Scene*, 2010)

Upon stepping foot into *Berghain*, one experiences the sensation of leaving Berlin behind and entering a place where normal social rules and acceptable behaviours are completely reserved. The sensations of space and time are also distorted, as if one has "fallen down the rabbit hole, only to end up in an adult raver's paradise" (Host, 2006). The design of the space and carefully constructed ambience, with its shuttered windows, lack of mirrored surfaces and no indicators of the passing of time serves to intentionally disorient the clubber. Through the saturation of certain stimuli and the complete removal of others, the rave experience creates a collapse between the special effects of the nightclub and the reality of the environment (Butler, 2006; D'Andrea, 2007). In this sense *Berghain* becomes synonymous with the city of

Berlin, but also manifests a foreign territory and virtual society within the physical environment surrounding the club.

Berghain boasts a sexually uninhibited attitude towards its Techno parties. There is a basement space in the building called *The Laboratory* designed specifically for a gay fetish audience, but at the same time it remains a musically focused crowd. *The New York Times* describes *Berghain's* policy of sexual liberalism as "hardly a secret, with live sex taking place on the dance floor beneath the colossal Wolfgang Tillman photograph" (Trebay, as quoted by Sherburne, 2007). Stories and myths circulate outside *Berghain's* walls, half fact and half fiction, about witnessing or participating in sex acts within the nightclub, from recounts of certain noises emanating from toilet cubicles, to glimpses of bare bottoms in dark corners of the epic dance floor. With phrases like 'hedonists playground' and 'unchecked debauchery' commonly thrown around in descriptions of *Berghain*, it is no wonder photography is prohibited inside the building. The entrance to the club displays a sign that reads "Taking photos is not allowed!" in English, French, Russian, and German, and this warning has become synonymous with *Berghain's* policy of excessiveness and protectiveness; the idea of *what goes on inside, stays inside* (Figure iv). The font used on this infamous sign is similar to that of official government signage during the Berlin Cold War, reminiscent of the 'division of territories' between East and West Berlin and evoking a pseudo border crossing at the entrance to *Berghain*. While it is true that 'happy-snaps' cannot do this immense venue or its unique ambience justice, with no visual proof of what happens inside the club people are also left guessing through hearsay, rumours and often sensationalised stories, effectively fuelling the *Berghain* myth, legend and mystery. This rule also creates a temporal environment within the club where no moment can be captured, but instead must be experienced first-hand and remembered through recounts or flashbacks. Rapp believes that every photo would be a "a reminder that the outside exists at all" (2009) and this rule therefore helps to seal the experiences of the nightclub off from the external world, a further link back to the Cold War division of the city.



Figure iv: Taking photos is not allowed! (Source: *Resident Advisor*, 2010)

According to DJ Mag, “As far as Techno goes, there is little debate about where the centre of the universe lies at the moment - deep inside the vast vortex of 70 Am Wriezener Bahnhof, Berlin”, with its weekly rave extravaganzas “resonating out of the German capital and shaping the future of this sound like no other space on Earth” (2011). Rather than showcasing already popular commercial music, *Berghain* pushes sound boundaries and explores new musical terrains more than most nightclubs in the world, and according to Bull, maintains its reputation through a “burning integrity and a protection of a particular way of thinking about music that resists ‘selling out’ or at least seeks to be continually eclectic” (2011). For this reason the club continues to receive *Best Nightclub in the World* accolades from many renowned EDM websites and communities, including DJ Mag (2009) and Resident Advisor (2008), and attract a growing following of international EDM fans who travel far and wide for a taste of the club’s offerings.

The genres of EDM played at *Berghain*, including Techno, House, Minimal and Hyper-Dub, originate from African musical traditions where rhythm and repetition are given priority over melody and linear progression (Sherburne, 2007), as exemplified in Berlin-based producers Rhythm and Sound’s song *King in my Empire* (2003: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RskJZOoY34>). Despite the fundamental minimalism of much EDM, perceptions of music can be expanded not only through its electronic beats but also the spaces between them,

described by Holmes as “limitless and undefined sonic vistas where all sounds became equal” (2002). An example of a popular minimal Techno track is Berlin-based Plastikman’s *Spastik* (Hawtin, 1994: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nsct-e-HVE0>), the uniqueness of this production being partly due to the minimal synthetic sounds as its very building blocks. Eimert speaks of this new command of sound in which “the musical material appears for the first time as a malleable continuum of every known and unknown, every conceivable and possible sound” and when it comes to writing music, EDM producers are only limited by their imagination. Renowned Berlin producer Monolake works for *Ableton Live*, the software company he also uses to produce his own music, so EDM producers are also engineers of their own sound technology. EDM is subversive in its very nature by rejecting the traditional foundations of music, and the stigma against ‘machine-made sound’ needs to be eradicated through a “mental adjustment to the thinking proper to the materials of electronic sound” (Homes, 2002). The EDM emanating from the speakers of *Berghain* each weekend is at the very forefront of sound technology and is electronically boundary-breaking by nature, but its essential human quality cannot be dismissed; as Holmes eloquently sums up, “In a world where technology now infiltrates every nuance of our existence, one realises that the arts succeed where computers fail in elevating the human being in us all. It just could be that the current generation of composers has succeeded in doing what past generations could not: absorbing the use of technology as a means for making music rather than battling with it” (2002).

With its world-class sound system and weekly international EDM showcases, *Berghain* is most fundamentally a place of dedicated listening, offering its visitors a unique three-dimensional experience of sound (Stockhausen, 2004). It can be argued that this particular environment aims to blur the distinction between the listener’s self and the sound itself, allowing the audience to experience a sensation of oneness, or immersion into the electronic beat. Wang recounts his experience in *Berghain* as feeling “carried away, no longer human... reduced to a single mass” (2004), and Sherburne reiterates this sentiment by describing a “unique sort of corporeal experience wherein the body becomes as if inhabited by the beat” (2007: 322). Just as German band *Kraftwerk* hypnotised the world with their cyborg-like embodiment of the sound machine (as exemplified in their 1978 song *The Robots*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXa9tXcMhXQ>), the repetition of the Techno beat brings a living pulse to the *Berghain* dance floor, and as the audience loses themselves to the sound they come to embody the very sonic technology to which they are exposed. This immersion does not necessarily distance one from one’s emotions but can make one “feel more intensely, along a broader band of the emotional spectra” leading to not disembodiment but a sense of *hyper-embodiment* (Eshun, 1994:158). The EDM listener in many ways uses sound technology to gain the tools required to control their cyborg state; instead of being simply “slaves to their machines” as Eno calls them (as quoted in Alter, 2005:200), they become masters of their machines. This concept is visualised in a photograph of renowned Berlin-

based DJ and producer, and regular *Berghain* performer, Richie Hawtin (Figure v). The image presents Hawtin as self-controlled cyborg, a state driven by the buds of his iPod but the technology still being essentially under the control of the human master. A sonic example of using the sound technology to create an elegant vessel for human transcendence over technology can also be heard in Lawrence's minimal yet organic Techno production *Happy Sometimes* (Kerstens, 2003: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2tox70jLa4>).



Figure v: Richie Hawtin aka Plastikman (Source richiehawtin.net)

Pinch & Trocco coin the term 'mirror dance' to describe the relationship between humans and machines in the course of technological progression. This depiction is apt in the context of sound culture considering that dancing is the physical manifestation of sound at clubs like *Berghain*. EDM, unlike other music genres, exists primarily in a state of process and performance, so the audience's response to the music, and the movement and life that the electronic pulses create, are indeed an inherent part of its actualisation (Holmes, 2002). Each individual on the *Berghain* dance floor is very much a part of the music process within the club, and Neill articulates the idea of rave culture reversing and redefining the traditional notions of performer and audience: "the artists are not the centre of attention; instead it is the role of the artist to channel the energy of the crowd and create the proper backdrop for the social interaction. The audience truly becomes the performance" (2004: 389). Perhaps the principal experience at *Berghain*, above that of listening to the ground-breaking EDM program, is becoming a component of the 'living' dance floor. Gould proclaims that "In the best of all possible worlds ... the audience would be the artist and their lives the art (2004:126), and it is possible that *Berghain* conjures such a world.

Just like the driving rhythms of EDM, the experience within the walls of *Berghain* is a fluid one, a process in constant flux. Wang describes the club as “a living, endlessly moving panorama” (2004), which is fitting considering the top floor of the building is named *Panorama Bar*. *Berghain*'s environment creates a temporal experience that through the nature of EDM, incessantly moves forward, but at the same time is also metaphorically frozen in a vortex of repetition. This concept is a central theme to the German cult-classic film that documented the birth of post-reunification Techno culture in Berlin, *Lola rennt (Run Lola Run)* (Alter, 2005), and a sonic example of this concept can be heard on the song *Wish* from the film's soundtrack (Potente, 1998: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuUqT_xBcA8). Cage proclaims that repetition is a form of change (as quoted by Sherburne, 2007), and the relentless progression of repetitive beats combined with the never-ceasing mutability of the *Berghain* dance floor, could be seen to mirror that of never-ceasing advancement in a post-industrial, hyper-digitised and technologised society (D'Andrea, 2007). Acoustic space is made manifest through its cultural context (Nevitt, as quoted by McLuhan, 2004) and this theme of 'change through repetition' can be seen as the manifesto giving *Berghain* its deep-seeded cultural context within the international EDM community and Berlin itself.

With parties that stretch on for up to 36 hours, the use of drugs that give the sensations of increased energy, heightened emotions, euphoria and sociability, such as cocaine, ecstasy and MDMA, or disassociation and numbed emotions, such as Ketamine, are an undeniable part of *Berghain*'s culture. These drugs remove the natural element from the equation of *human versus machine*, heighten the mind of the raver to the *wavelength* of the electronic sound and offer the stamina and emotional resilience to compete with the sonic technology. Yet as Holmes reminds us, “electronic music does not breathe” (2002) and while DJs at the club are not limited by human dexterity or physicality due to the sound machines under their control, this is not the case for revellers on the dance floor. The axiom of *Berghain* is that ‘the party never ends’, but with the dancer being physically incapable of the stamina necessary to compete with the electronic sound, the notion of audiences ‘keeping up’ for the duration of these marathon parties can be seen as a fundamentally flawed one. Pushing the human body well past its natural physicality in an environment where the passing of time and even the outside world are intentionally removed from one's conscience can be viewed as a dangerous quest. There is an element of self-flagellation in this pursuit to conquer and control the human body through chemicals and physical stamina, and a piece of graffiti on the *Berghain* exterior wall ominously yet caringly warns ravers: “Don't forget to go home!” (Figure vi). Sherburne reflects on other negative consequences of these marathon raves: “I used to be enamoured of Berlin Techno's never-ending parties, but these days I wonder... Unless you're talking about a ritual music like gamelan, music isn't really intended to be consumed in 12-hour shots. A party culture (and drug culture) predicated upon parties that never end can only result in a music that thumps dully away without surprise or meaningful variation” (2007). The

concept of 'over-dosing' on *Berghain's* offerings is sonically represented with the track *Addicted* by Berlin producer Anja Schneider (2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2b3UpAtygE>), and raves of such epic durations can not only be to the physical detriment of the audience, but also diminish the quality of the music.



Figure vi: *Berghain/Panorama Bar* Image 6 (Source: *Strutt10Global*, 2011)

At *Berghain* dancing is the behaviour *de rigueur*, creating an environment of “perpetual motion... a mass of people struck with an irresistible urge to move, to shake, to touch each other's skin” (Wang, 2004). Unlike the static and passive ‘visual audience’ of a cinema, the nightclub is essentially an evolving kaleidoscope of physical responses to, and participation in, sound. In a post-iPod-generation of aural individualism and personally tailored soundscapes, many academics are in awe of the ability of Techno culture to join individuals on a dance floor into a ‘musical whole’ and a “collective desiring machine ruled by a single pulse”, as pictured in Figure vii (Alter as quoted by Reynolds, 2005:201). The rave experience is fundamentally a shared one, and many ravers speak of the non-verbal bond between and shared journey when in spaces like *Berghain's* dance floor. According to Wang, the rave “puts an end to nearly four hundred years of the great European bourgeois individual in music” (2004), and despite the concept of the individual becoming part of the communal dance floor having long since existed in rave culture, it takes on a new meaning and importance in the 21st Century - a hyper-individualised society of sonic behaviours and practices.



Figure vii: Tenori-on in *Berghain* (Source: Flickr, 2008)

Studies have shown that some of the most exalted states of the human spirit – cosmic communion, the integration of self and the other, the sense of timelessness – can all be triggered by stimulants, programmed beats and electronic effects (St John, 2004). For many, the physical response to EDM and subsequent mental shift can indeed lead to an experience of quasi-religious spirituality (Shepard, 2007). Many rave recounts use evangelical language of catharsis, transcendence and conversion: “When you scream as loud as you want to and dance for six hours and just let go of your inhibitions it’s an incredibly powerful experience” (Siano, as quoted by Lawrence, 2003:104) and this idea of transformation is exemplified with the graffiti stencil ‘Techno Changed My Life’ which graces the pavements and walls of Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain, Berlin (Figure viii). These emotions are also not limited to the audience however, with DJs declaring performing in *Berghain* “a very cathartic experience” (Bull, 2011), and claiming to be “so moved spinning there that I get tears in my eyes” (Prosumer, quoted by Shepard, 2003). Marett proclaims that religion is “not so much something that is thought as something that is danced” (as quoted by St John, 2004: 58) and for many, the *Berghain* dance floor becomes a type of post-religious nocturnal church and place of communal Techno worship. The frenetic ritual of the rave can also be compared to that of the African American church where gospel musically inspired spiritual unity comes before individual ego and physical before verbal communication (Lawrence, 2003). Yet the idea of religiosity in the context of a nightclub like *Berghain* is often frowned upon and labelled as misguided by those outside the culture. Critics claim the scene has no goal beyond its own propagation due in part to its basis on “sensations rather than truths and fascination rather than meaning” (Reynolds, 1998:243) and that it lacks long-term transformation of the psyche,

turning the Techno experience from “meta-erotic ritual of rhythmic return to a habit and jaded escape” (St John, 2004: 267). This stigma is often associated with the drug-use in Techno culture and it is important that scholars look beyond this peripheral element of the culture to analyse the claims of spirituality achieved through sound and other environmental factors in places like *Berghain* in the same way one would any other religious place or institution.



Figure viii: Techno changed my life (Source: Flickr, 2011)

The 2008 feature film *Berlin Calling* went a long way in exposing Berlin’s sacred rave scene to the world, presenting a glorified account of a DJ’s experience in Berlin resulting in his admission to a psychiatric after overdosing on drugs after his own performance (Figure ix). The film was an unprecedented commercial success and the theme song from the film, *Sky and Sand* (Kalkbrenner, 2008: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1DIHFxGVR0&feature=artist>), topped EDM charts in many countries. The wider commercial success of Berlin EDM producers, often regular *Berghain* guests, is often frowned upon by some as ‘letting the secret out’ through capitalising on and commercialising the ‘Berlin sound’. Examples include Booka Shade vs. MANDY with the song *Body Language* (Merziger & Kammermeier, 2004, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsxJzW-0mAg>), Ame’s track *Rej* (Beyer & Wiedermann, 2006: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgBLAA7eCC0>) and Samim’s *Heater* (Winiger, 2007: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le860Jd-Fql>). However claiming ownership or censoring Berlin’s Techno sound is against the principles at the very heart of this culture, and in reality these representations garnered international recognition through their fun, post-minimal and ironic take on Berlin’s Techno sound and culture, seen by many as tongue-in-cheek

responses and a necessary evolution from the colder and more 'serious' Minimal Techno fetish of the 1990s.



Figure ix: Berlin Calling (Source: *Berlin Calling* website, 2011)

Some are convinced that the mainstream exposure of Berlin's rave culture and subsequent popularity has already ruined the scene, with the crowd at *Berghain* now "90 per cent tourists still having there [sic] Lonely Planet in their back-pocket" (Matayari, 2009). However, others believe that despite an evolution in the scene over the past few years, its sacred culture and true essence still exists. As Wang describes from inside the *Berghain* walls: "I wondered to myself: didn't New York feel like this, at some point in my early youth? It certainly hasn't for years now. In other corners of the world, most nightlife is pre-packaged and over-programmed, a cheap advertisement for vodkas and hair-gel and plastic surgery and MTV. Or, if it's pleasant, then it's probably a bit polite, or caught up in a myth of its own past. Here, one forgets that those corners exist" (2004). Indeed, the commercialisation that has turned islands such as Ibiza into tacky mega-clubbing destinations over the past decade has made little to no mark on Berlin's rave scene. Perhaps clubs like *Berghain* are sheltered from such commercial onslaught due to Berlin's Techno culture being so vital to the history and fabric of the city, like a "roots-culture, in the same way that say Reggae might be in South Africa" (Bull, 2011). Techno was very much the soundtrack to the fall of the Berlin Wall, and it can be argued that the spirit of Russo & Warner's *Schmerzen Hören* (Noise is Pain, 2004) also resides in the city's nightclubs leftover from Berlin's tragic and tumultuous history over the past one hundred years. As Bowie famously stated "Berlin has the strange ability to make you write only the important things – anything else you don't mention, you remain silent, and write

nothing” (as quoted by Gibson, 2005:202) and this intrinsically sombre nature of a deeply scarred city could be a reason that superficial commercialisation of the rave scene is not able to take roots in clubs like Berlin’s *Berghain* as it has done elsewhere.

After 22 years of Reunification, many of the revellers who make the pilgrimage to Berlin each week cannot recall Berlin’s unique and fractured past that fostered the Techno scene epitomised by clubs like *Berghain*. However such Techno Tourism does not mean the end of the EDM innovation and community of ‘excessiveness and protectiveness’ that *Berghain* fosters. This form of tourism differs to others since audiences bring with them the same subversive ethos and continue the appropriation of “cracks in the urban landscape” just as the pioneers of Berlin’s Techno culture did (Gibson, 1997:2), thus continuing to live out the dream put in place before them. Rapp believes that many international ravers coming to Berlin know more about the subculture than many of the people who live in this city: “they are 'Berlin' even if they aren't Germans”. In this sense, the diverse crowd flowing in and out of *Berghain* each weekend keeps its spiritual flame alive, representing the past, present and future of both Berlin and Berlin Techno in equal measure, and providing the intrinsic strength needed for this culture’s survival and a sustainable sonic representation of the city.

Bibliography

- Alter, N. M. (2005). *Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of German Culture*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Arndt, S. (Producer) & Tykwer, T. (Writer/Director). (1998). *Run Lola Run* [Motion picture]. Germany: Studio Westdeutscher Rundfunk.
- Aurich, K. (Producer) & Stöhr, H. (Director). (2008). *Berlin Calling* [Motion picture]. Germany: Sabotage Films GmbH.
- Berghain* 2004 (2004) [Photograph]. From *karhard architecture + design*, by Janni Chavakis, 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.karhard.de/gewerbe/2004-berghain.html>
- Berghain*. (2009 & 2011) In *DJ Mag*. Retrieved from http://www.olddjmag.com/index.php?op=top100club&top100club_op=display&club_to_p_100_id=101&status=live&limit_num=100&page=1 and <http://www.djmag.com/top100clubs/?op=detail&start=&page=1&year=2011&id=306>
- Berghain/Panorama Bar* Image 2 (n.d., 2011) [Photograph]. From *Strutt10Global*, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.strutt10global.com/berlin>
- Berghain*. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berghain>
- Beyer, K. & Wiedermann, F. (Writers & Producers), (2006). *Rej* [Recorded by Ame]. On *Rej* [12" vinyl audio recording]. Berlin, Germany: Sonar Kollektiv / Innovisions Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgBLAA7eCC0>
- Bull, R. aka Deepchild (2011). Interview with Michelle O'Brien. *Sonic Media Assignment 1*, 1 March 2011.
- Butler, M. J. (2006). *Unlocking the groove: rhythm, meter, and musical design in electronic dance music*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Carter, J. (2011, March 29) *On The Ground In Berlin, Part Two: Berghain and Panorama Bar* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.mistersaturdaynight.com/2011/03/on-ground-in-berlin-part-two-berghain.html>
- Craig, C. (Writer & Producer), (1994). *At Les* [Recorded by Carl Craig]. On 12" vinyl audio recording]. Glabbeek, Belgium: Tronic Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUzR26NGgas>
- D'Andrea, A. (2007). *Global nomads: Techno and New Age as transnational countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- DJ-ONE. (2010, March 16). *Berlin, Techno and the Easyjetset* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.vkmp3.com/2010/03/berlin-Techno-and-the-easyjetset/~>
- Eshun, K. "Operating system for the redesign of sonic reality," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 157-165.
- Gallardo, A. (2010, October 15). *A night at the best club in the world (Berghain, Berlin)*. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://andaringallardo.com/2010/10/15/a-night-at-the-best-club-in-the-world-berghain-berlin/>

- Gibson, C. (2005). "Recording studios," *Built Environment*, Vol. 13, No. 3.
- Gibson, C. (1997). "Subversive sites: rave, empowerment and the Internet," paper presented at the IASPM Conference, UTS, July 21-23, 1997.
- Gould, G., "The prospects of recording," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 115-126.
- Kerstens, P. (Writer & Producer), (2003) *Happy Sometimes* [Recorded by Lawrence]. On *The Night Will Last Forever* [CD audio recording]. Hamburg, Germany: Ladomat 2000 Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2tox70jLa4>
- Hawtin, R. (Writer & Producer) (1994). *Spastik* [Recorded by Plastikman]. On *Recycled Plastik* [CD audio recording]. Windsor, Ontario: Plus8 Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nsct-e-HVE0>
- Henke, R. (Writer & Producer), (2006). *Alaska* [Recorded by Monolake]. On *Alaska Melting* [12" vinyl audio recording]. Berlin, Germany: Music Lovers Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0zNCCuru0Q&playnext=1&list=PL421BEE70AC2692E8>
- Holmes, T. (2002). *Electronic and Experimental Music*, New York: Routledge.
- Host, V. (2006). *Panoramabar: Berlin's Underworld*. Retrieved from <http://www.xlr8r.com/features/2006/10/panoramabar-berghain>
- Huetter, R., Schneider, F., Bartos, K. (Writers), Huetter, R. & Schneider, F. (Producers) (1978). *The Robots (Die Roboter)* [Recorded by Kraftwerk]. On *Die Roboter* [7" vinyl audio recording]. Germany: Kling Klang (EMI) 1C-006-32941, UK: Capitol CL15981. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXa9tXcMhXQ>
- jerk (2008). Berghain [Photograph]. From *Flickr*, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrej/2410470977/>
- jerk (2008). Tenori-on in Berghain [Photograph]. Adapted from *Flickr*, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jrej/2410474549/in/set-72157616660298523/>
- Jones, S. (2002). "Music that moves: popular music, distribution and network Technologies," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2.
- Kahn, D. (1994). *Wireless Imagination*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kalkbrenner, P. (Writer), Kalkbrenner, F. (Vocals), (2009). *Sky and Sand* [Recorded by Paul Kalkbrenner]. On *Berlin Calling* Soundtrack [CD audio recording]. Germany: BPitch Control Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1DIHFxGVR0&feature=artist>
- Karhard (Architect). (2010) *Panorama Bar relaunch: Architecture and Interior Design images*. Retrieved from <http://www.karhard.de/gewerbe/2010-panorama-bar-relaunch.html>
- Klock, B. (Writer & Producer), (2009). *Goodly Sin* [Recorded by Ben Klock]. On *One* [CD audio recording]. Berlin, Germany: Ostgut Ton Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0TX75q6Y1M>
- Lawrence, T. (2003). *Love saves the day: a history of American dance music culture*,

1970-1979. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lucian, E. (2010, October 18). *Clubbing Berlin – ‘Berghain’ Door Policy – How to get in* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.ota-berlin.de/blog/10/18/clubbing-berlin-%E2%80%93-%E2%80%98berghain%E2%80%99-door-policy-how-to-get-in-%E2%80%93-%E2%80%98ota-berlin-constituency-blog%E2%80%99-contributor-evo-lucien-tells-you-how/>

Matayari. (2009, June 21). *Door policy at the Berghain nightclub - Berlin* [Website post]. Retrieved from <http://www.toytowngermany.com/lofi/index.php/t139189.html>

McLuhan, M., "Visual and acoustic space," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 67-72.

Merziger, W. & Kammermeier, A. (Writers & Producers), (2007). *Body Language* [Recorded by Booka Shade vs M.A.N.D.Y]. On *Body Language* [12" vinyl audio recording]. Berlin, Germany: Get Physical Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsxJzW-0mAg>

Neill, B. "Breakthrough beats: rhythm and the aesthetics of contemporary electronic music," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 386-391.

Nicor (2006). The nightclub Berghain in the surroundings of Berlin East Station in Friedrichshain. (2006) [Photograph]. Adapted from *Wikipedia*, 2006. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Berghain.jpg>

O'Brien, M. (2011). Techno changed my life, (2011) [Photograph]. From *Flickr*, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.flickr.com/michobrien/>

Pawlowitz, R. (Writer & Producer), (2010). *Keep Time* [Recorded by Shed]. On *The Traveller* [CD audio recording]. Berlin, Germany: Ostgut Ton Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAraLCz1K1c>

Pinch, T. & Trocco, F. (2002). *Analog Days*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Potente, F. (Writer) & D. T. (Vocals), (1998). *Wish* (Komm Zu Mir) [Recorded by Franka Potente]. On *Run Lola Run (Lola Rennt)* Soundtrack [CD audio recording]. Stuttgart, Germany: Four Music Records. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuUqT_xBcA8

Rapp, T. (Author) & Sabin, P. (Translator). (2009). *Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno und der Easyjetset*. Berlin: Suhrkamp. Retrieved from <http://www.residentadvisor.net/feature.aspx?1117>

Rapp, T. (2009). Taking photos is not allowed [Photograph]. Adapted from *Lost and Found* book cover, 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.residentadvisor.net/feature.aspx?1117>

Reynolds, S. (1998). *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co.

Richie Hawtin aka Plastikman (2010) [Photograph]. From [richiehawtin.net](http://www.richiehawtin.net). Retrieved from http://www.richiehawtin.net/pictures/DJ_Richie_Hawtin_2.jpg

Russo, M. & Warner, D., "Rough music, futurism, and postpunk industrial noise bands," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp.47-55.

- Schneider, A. (Writer & Producer), (2006). *Addicted* [Recorded by Anja Schneider]. On *Addicted* [CD audio recording]. Berlin, Germany: Mobilee Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2b3UpAtygE>
- Sieverding, P. (2009) [Photograph]. From *Berlin Calling* website. Retrieved from <http://www.berlin-calling.de/en/press>
- [Spotlight] Berghain/Panorama Bar Image 6 (2010) [Photograph]. From *Key West Electronic Scene*, 2010. Retrieved from <http://keywestelectronicscene.wordpress.com/2010/11/21/spotlight-berghain/>
- Shepard, J. (2003). *The Cultural Study of Music*, New York: Routledge.
- Shepard, M. (2007). "Tactical sound garden [TSG] Toolkit," Retrieved from http://www.andinc.org/v2/writings/306090_09_shepard.pdf
- Sherburne, P., "Digital discipline: minimalism in house and Techno," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 319-328.
- Sherburne, P. (2007). *Techno*. Retrieved from <http://pitchfork.com/features/Techno/6604-Techno/>
- [Spotlight] Berghain/Panorama Bar Image 6 (2010) [Photograph]. From *Key West Electronic Scene*, 2010. Retrieved from <http://keywestelectronicscene.wordpress.com/2010/11/21/spotlight-berghain/>
- St John, G. (2004). *Rave culture and religion*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Stockhausen, K. "Electronic and instrumental music," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 370-380.
- Straw, W. (1991). "Systems of articulation, logics of change," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3.
- theluisgarcia (2010, July 6). *Draft Profile: Berghain / Panorama Bar* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://imgmblog.wordpress.com/2010/07/06/draft-profile-berghain-panorama-bar/>
- von Oswald, M. & Ernestum M. (Writers & Producers), Campbell, C. (Lyrics & vocals), (2003). *King in my Empire* [Recorded by Rhythm and Sound]. On *with the artists* [10" vinyl audio recording]. Berlin: Burial Mix Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RskJZOoY34>
- Wang, D. (2004). *As the morning sun shines through the windows once again* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.residentadvisor.net/forum-read.aspx?id=52993>
- Winiger, S. (Writer & Producer), (2007). *Heater* [Recorded by Samim]. On *Heater* [12" vinyl audio recording]. Berlin, Germany: Get Physical Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le860Jd-FqI>

Further readings

- Attali, J., "Noise and politics," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 7-9.
- Bendix, R. (2000). "The pleasures of the ear," *Cultural Analysis*, Vol. 1, 2000.
- Crocker, G. (Writer), Harman, C. (Lyrics, Vocals), (1996). *House Music Will Never Die* [Recorded by Glenn Underground & Cei-Bei]. On *House Music Will Never Die* [12" vinyl audio recording]. Chicago, IL: Cajual Records. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjEHSXeZQ44>
- Davis, E. (1999). *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Day, A. (2010). *The Sun Never Sets on the Techno Tourist*. Retrieved from <http://travel.nytimes.com/2010/05/21/travel/escapes/21Technotourism.html>
- Djurovic, V. (2009). "How to Build a Sound Identity," *Brand Inflection*, July 26, 2009, Retrieved from <http://www.brandinfection.com/2009/07/26/how-to-build-a-sound-identity-sound-brandingdevelopment/>
- Eisler, H. & Adorno, T., "The politics of hearing," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 73-75.
- Im Reich des Wahnsinns. (2009). In *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin*. Retrieved from <http://sz-magazin.sueddeutsche.de/texte/anzeigen/28877>.
- Jensen, K. B. (2006), "Sounding the media," *Nordicom Review*, Vol. 27, 2006.
- Lopez, F., "Profound listening and environmental sound matter," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 82-87.
- Mike & Sarah. (2011, January 15). *Welcome to The Techno Tourist* [Website post]. Retrieved from <http://www.theTechnotourist.net/?p=5>
- Pidd, H. (2008). *Last night a cellist saved my life*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2008/jan/09/classicalmusicandopera.germany>
- Richter, C. (2010). *Berlin's club scene shifts the focus of tourism to the city*. Retrieved from <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5349667,00.html>
- Russolo, L., "The art of noises," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 10-14.
- Slouka, M., "Listening for silence: notes on the aural life," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 40-46.
- Stockfelt, O., "Adequate modes of listening," in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 88-93.
- Stockhausen, K. et Al. "Stockhausen vs. The Technocrats" in Cox, C. and Warner, D. (eds.), *Audio Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 381-385.
- Tagg, P. (1994). "From Refrain to Rave: The Decline of Figure and the Rise of Ground," *Popular Music* 1: 209-22.
- Tagg, P. & Collins, K. (2001). "The sonic aesthetics of the industrial," Paper for the Soundscape Conference, Dartington College, 2001.