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Breakcore: Blurring the Lines

**Cultural Analysis of Urban Electronic Genre Breakcore and
Ethnographic Case Study of Cuban Magic Santería in Music of**

Otto Von Schirach

Diploma thesis

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Anotace

Diplomová práce Breakcore: Blurring the Lines. Cultural Analysis of Urban Electronic Genre Breakcore and Ethnographic Case Study of Cuban Magic Santería se zabývá urbánním elektronickým žánrem breakcore. Úvodní část rozebírá kulturně teoretické znaky žánru jako je rychlost, technologie, performance, konotace hudebních samplů a politický aspekt breakcoreu. Druhá část je etnografickou případovou studií breakcoreového hudebníka Otta Von Schiracha. Odráží se od semiologické analýzy jeho propagačních materiálů a zaměřuje se zejména na způsob komunikace kubánské magie Santería a dalších spirituálních obsahů v elektronické hudbě a performanci Otta Von Schiracha. Představuje jej jako zástupce první generace kubánských imigrantů v Miami, jemuž spirituální zázemí a rituální charakter jeho koncertů slouží jako asimilační strategie a navázání pouta s rodinným a translokálním kubánským odkazem.

Annotation

Diploma thesis „Breakcore: Blurring the Lines. Cultural Analysis of Urban Electronic Genre Breakcore and Ethnographic Case Study of Cuban Magic Santería“ deals with urban electronic genre breakcore. First part concerns cultural theoretical signs of genre such as speed, technology, performance, connotation of music samples and political aspect of breakcore. Second part presents an ethnographic case study of breakcore musician Otto Von Schirach. Founded on a semiologic analysis of promotional materials it deals with communication of Cuban magic Santería and other spiritual contents involved in electronic music and performance of Otto Von Schirach. It situates the artist as a first generation Cuban immigrant in Miami, to whom spiritual background and ritual

character of live concerts serves as an instrument of an assimilation strategy and bounds him with family and translocal Cuban culture heritage.

Klíčová slova

Breakcore, pknografie, dromologie, konotace, technologie, rychlost, perfomance, elektronická hudba, Miami, kubánství, identita, Otto Von Schirach, Jason Forrest, Captain Ahab, immigration, etnografická studie, kulturně–teoretická analýza, semiologická analýza, magie, Santería, rituál, liminalita

Keywords

Breakcore, pknography, dromology, connotation, technology, speed, performance, electronic music, Miami, Cubanness, identity, Otto Von Schirach, Jason Forrest, Captain Ahab, immigration, ethnographic study, cultural-theoretical anylis, semiological analysis, magic, Santería, ritual, liminality

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedené prameny a literaturu. Současně dávám svolení k tomu, aby tato práce byla zpřístupněna v příslušné knihovně UK a prostřednictvím elektronické databáze vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací v repozitáři Univerzity Karlovy a používána ke studijním účelům v souladu s autorským právem.

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Introduction

This thesis is about a musical genre called '*breakcore*', which is an underground electronic dance genre culminating in recent years. This genre is attached to urban underground culture and is performed mainly in western and Central Europe (UK, France, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Czech and Slovak Republic, Poland), Japan, USA, partly in Canada and Australia, with some local exceptions such as the artificial artistic platform of breakcore scene in Indonesia.

To set up the theme I must explain that my interest in this experimental electronic scene operates on three different levels – as a music critic, active electronic musician¹ and also as an ordinary young party-goer, who doesn't enjoy mainstream music and keeps on searching for outstanding artistic approaches. Since 2000 I have been writing about experimental electronic scene for such magazines as Rock and Pop², had a radio show, and worked as a reporter and dramaturge for the Czech TV shows Paskvil and Musicblock. I am presently mostly writing for Respekt magazine and cooperating with Czech Radio 3 – Čajovna.

During my last two years of studies of semiotics, electronic culture and partially anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities of Prague Charles University, I have realised how many extended researches and media philosophy analysis are done in the cultural theory field about visual art, movie and photography, and how few researches are done about music and sound. As I have detected some straight parallels in the works of media philosophers such as Mark Hansen, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio or Steven Johnson to the musical genre breakcore, I have decided to concern my final thesis with this special musical field. Another reason to consider breakcore as a appropriate theme for the thesis was that even though all previous electronic dance genres were more or less covered by some theoretical works, as far as I know there is not any academic work focused on the breakcore genre as yet. So my aim is also to fill this gap in music

1 Grrrlz electro glitch core project My Name Is Ann!, www.mynameisann.com, www.myspace.com/mniann

2 Own rubric about experimental electronic music called Xeletronic.

research. The theme of breakcore also represents for me a reflection of the actual situation in the music and art scenes, where technological progress clashes with a heading for primal, traditional manners of expression.

I take interest in breakcore genre from the time when I first saw live performances at the new media festival Transmediale in Berlin in february 2005. Since then I have been sometimes writing about breakcore artists³, but mainly going to events in the Czech Republic or abroad for pleasure. During those years, I have targeted the most interesting artists on the breakcore scene from my point of view – Jason Forrest, Otto Von Schirach and Captain Ahab which are the main artistic subjects of the thesis.

Jason Forrest⁴ is an American artist living in Berlin, whose primary artistic field was a photography. He started to make music as a free time activity, and suddenly it turned into his main artistic production. He moved to Berlin and started a label called Cockrockdisco, where he releases breakcore music, and based his famous Wasted events on the Transmediale festival. His attitude to music was always very conceptual and “arty”.

Otto Von Schirach⁵ is a Miami-based electronic musician with Cuban origins, whose music career is reaching its highest peak so far this year. He was already special and outstanding when I saw him first time play at Transmediale 2006. Since that time he has achieved worldwide success and is touring America and Europe. He is known for his powerful and crazy performances, where he is accompanied by some performers cheering the crowd, wearing extravagant masks and costumes.

Captain Ahab are relative newcomers on the breakcore scene and they are also the youngest, at the age of 29. The band consists of Jonathan Snipes⁶ and Jim Merson. Even though they are two on the stage, only Jonathan produces music while Jim dances in the crowd and on the stage in a swimsuit. Besides the special performance and music, they also attract the audience with amusing story-telling visuals.

³ Interview with Jason Forrest for Živel magazine (spring 2009), reportages from every year of Transmediale breakcore party Wasted to Rock&Pop magazine or A2 magazine.

⁴ Abbreviation in quotations: JF

⁵ Abbreviation in quotations: OVS

⁶ Abbreviation in quotations: JS

Methodology

Regarding the methods of the thesis I was always aware of a tension from the side of my teachers and colleagues in between semiotics - abstracting the signs from reality to a structured world - and anthropology, chasing the informants to get a subjective approach. In semiotics I felt a lack of living, breathing people in fieldwork, while in the anthropology I felt a lack of philosophical outlook in the story telling. Still, I was persuaded that this rivalry is in vain, and have considered both attitudes as relevant tools that could reach the same goal from different perspectives. Therefore I have decided to use and combine these two methods.

Since the beginning I have decided to have two parts to the thesis – a cultural-theoretical one and an ethnographic one. Regarding the semiotic studies, part one should have been set up of theoretical signs of breakcore genre and a semiological analysis of the promotional materials of the two artists – Jason Forrest and Otto von Schirach. The fieldwork part should have been about responding to the question what relevance have those signs to the artist everyday life. This was the point when my thesis turned into something of a detective plot. During the semiological analysis of the Otto von Schirach materials, I mentioned a lot of magic signs, and I became really interested in their connection with his life. When I came to Miami to do the part of the fieldwork about Otto von Schirach, suddenly it turned out that spirituality is the main theme of his musical, a private message hidden from audience and shaping his artistic approach. The concept of Cuban magic Santería involved in the electronic music of breakcore became such an interesting issue for me and exceptional concept in the electronic dance scene, that I decided to dedicate whole the ethnographic part of the thesis to it.

Conducting fieldwork took me a half a year (January 2010- July 2010): I spent two weeks in Berlin to do in-depth interviews with Jason Forrest and the people from the breakcore scene in Berlin; I

did a month intensive fieldwork in Miami about Otto Von Schirach; and went to see Captain Ahab again at a Czech festival and interviewed them. During this period I also attended a lot of breakcore events, where I observed the performances and the audiences, and talked to the participants and musicians.

The final structure of the thesis has three parts: part one is a culture theory concerning signs of breakcore considered as the most relevant for the genre - concept of technology, speed, sample connotation, performance and politic approach. The second part is a semiological analysis which reveals and summarizes specific signs of media promotional materials of Otto on Schirach. The third part is an ethnographic part presenting a case study about Cuban magic Santería involved in concept of electronic dance music of breakcore. All the parts lean on theoretic framework, fieldwork experience and artist's and informant's comments on the given themes.

At the end of the introduction, I can't forget to express my thanks to Faculty of Humanities, who supported my thesis by a grant for specific research. Without that support, this work could never been realised in such an extended and complex form.

Chapter 1: Historic background of breakcore

A history of breakcore is tracing a history of an electronic sample-based music produced and performed by an artist via electronic devices and instruments. There is a lot of influence from whole music history of popular and conceptual music, especially since 1950 which had an impact on breakcore genre. As Jason Forest describes one of his songs, “There is like heavy metal, spacey electro bits, some country songs, some like 70s swing tunes, the ideas of those dance genres like IDM, gabber, like everything, and all cut up and collapsed in a new song. Just whole world shrunken into this one piece.” However the most significant genres for breakcore music background were rave, IDM and jungle. Therefore I will briefly present them on next pages.

Rave: joy and colours in electronic dance scenes

Rave is a subculture phenomenon which combines music, visual aesthetics, material culture, art, technology and spirituality. The word rave was adopted in the late 1980's to describe the subculture that grew out of the acid house movement in Britain: parties in clubs, warehouses and open free parties around Manchester and London where electronic dance music was presented, notably acid house and techno.

“Rave, generally defined, is a particular kind of urban underground all-night dance party, usually held in a secret location, characterized by an aesthetic based on ecstatic experience and a heightened feeling of *communitas*. This idealized state of being is accomplished primarily through sensory overload—extremely loud electronically-produced dance music, a proliferation of psychedelic and other technologically produced visual images, and use of chemical enhancers including Ecstasy, known to produce a feeling of profound empathy in its users. But beyond this general definition, rave culture is far from homogenous. Stylistically fragmented by numerous and constantly reformulating musical subgenres which fall under the catch-all term "techno," rave exhibits regional differences, and an event can range in size from fifty to tens of thousands of participants. However, the core values of communal ecstatic dancing, altered states of consciousness, and "the cult of the DJ" have been retained from rave's early roots in New York's gay disco culture of the 1970s.” (Fatone, p.1)

Open air secret dance events were fundamental for development of underground electronic music genres which sprang from 80's rave parties – genres such as breakbeat, jungle or IDM (more bellow) that settled the background for breakcore. Due to high attendance, a rave⁷ became a place

⁷ In 00s' those events became called in Europe rather '*free-techno party*' or '*freetech*', music on such events was more

for cultural, social, music and aesthetic interchange: e.g. on such festival as Czechtechh or Bulgariatech, there were present soundsystems⁸ from France, Belgium, United Kingdom, Holland, Czech, Hungary, ... That led to exchanges of information about delocated music scenes and intensive social and music interaction within different people and genres. Thus spontaneous mixture of ideas conducted to easier translocal music influence and evolution of following electronic genres.

Regarding rave culture from 90s, there is certain connection about which the people around the current breakcore scene are not much aware of: the first breakcore parties organised by movements as Breakcore Gives Me Wood in Belgium (2002) were also held in natural or industrial places free of charge, whose secret addresses could have been attended only by people making part of the music cohorta⁹ of breakcore or related genres. As the sound was not yet accepted by any media or music industry, those off-places were only spots to enjoy and present this kind of music. There is also a similar aspect of instant hedonism and escapism, related to dancing, drinking alcohol and music overload.

A specific feature of costumes, lights, decorations and the visual surrounding involved in rave culture in breakcore is delegated from audience to the music performer as a designer of his own audio-visual world, as explained in chapter Performance.

In contrast to the colourful, reflexive, inventive theatrical dress code of the rave listeners, the dress code of breakcore is more raw. Even though it quite differs from place to place in whole Europe, mostly is non-inventive; in clubs or open spaces parties in Czech Republic you would feel socially and aesthetically excluded and marginalised wearing other colours than dark and having some expensive or extraordinary outfit, because that makes reference to mainstream electronic dance club culture in 90s. Being dressed in some typical clothes or decorative effects of rave culture as colourful boa or light-stick in the hair is considered to be a provocation with an instant response of disgust from the audience. While in Berlin (Germany), Barcelona (Spain) and Miami (USA) the

jungle, breakbeat and techno oriented.

⁸ A group of DJs contributing and working together as one.

⁹ A term used by Thomas Turino which signify a group of people related by shared passion for a certain music style, adapting the same values and indentifying themselves through the music style.

audience is a bit more open to experiment with colours and design and the atmosphere is more playful. The open air places or clubs are usually raw, simple, dark, dirty and not decorated. However that there exist non-declarative assumptions about the rigidity of dress code of the audience: there are no rules for the artist and every fashion extremity is accepted.

There is also an evident difference in the role of the artist comparing the passive DJ tradition of rave. The breakcore artist is a dynamic, active performer, the one who is coming with a childish joy to amuse the audience, having no shame and no respect for conformist musical events boundaries.

IDM: a prohibited intellectual dance attitude

IDM is a genre which emerged in early 90s at the end of British rave era in reference with Detroit techno, art techno and industrial echoes of grey basements of British cities as Liverpool and Leeds. This term originally referred to a set of artists who appeared on the compilation called Artificial Intelligence by Warp records in 1992. Artists such as Autechre, B12, The Black Dog, Aphex Twin and The Orb who became significant authors for the emerging period of urban electronic music of the 90s, some of them with a production overlap to the actual electronic scene. In the mid 90s, a lot of important IDM labels were found across the USA, such as Drop Beat, Isophlux, Suction, Cytra and Schematic records.¹⁰

This genre has been described as more individualistic in a manner of personal experimentation without strict musical characteristics. Only vague descriptions appeared, capturing more a production attitude than a sound itself.

The emphasis was laid on a more conceptual approach to the musical composition, which is not made only for dancing; but for stimulating physically as well as intellectually. An artist under the nickname Biosphere explains the attitude: “To think about music in a manner of successive

¹⁰ Schematic is a Miami based label, where Otto von Schirach releases his first albums (2001 – 2004).

images, to produce a CD as something active like going to the cinema or to an art exhibition. If the music doesn't invoke any interesting images to me, I quit.” (Blánquez and Morera 2002: 335)

This background provoked serious debates, in which a lot of artist would be offended by the elitism in reference to intellectual attitude. That is the reason why Aphex Twin would never use the word IDM on his label Rephlex; rather, he preferred to talk about “braindance”. As Javier Blánquez states in a chapter of “Aventuras en el ultramundo. Ambient, IDM y electrónica post-rave”, regarding the proper evolution of IDM, it put in doubt the a word “intelligent”; it annulated the presumption of an intellectual intention, which was considered as academic and serious, “producing its own form of cannibal organism which devours and recycles styles, pushes forward and never forget its noxious sense of humour.” (Blánquez and Morera 2002: 320)

Regardless of the debates, those characteristics such as sick humour, deliberate yet libertine attitude and cannibal devouring of other style became significant aspects for the genre of breakcore.

Jungle: an inner city ghetto music of broken beats

In a time of culmination of the hardcore rave scene in mid 90s, a new genre was emerging; as described by Blánquez, a genre with “demonic speed and conscious focus on escapist sound wave for the youth with no horizons, in which they deposit their hope.” (Blánquez and Morera 2002: 407) ¹¹

Jungle is generally considered as a first truly British electronic genre, which occurred in the suburbs of Bristol, where a mash up of black people, Jamaican, “lumpenproletariat”, immigrants and drug dealers were living in low social conditions.

“It's our urban experience, our ghetto culture, an inner city ghetto music,“ declared Goldie, the first superstar produced by the DJ culture of the breakbeat and jungle movement, and the main

¹¹ Goldie in Breakbeat Science, 1996, Blánquez and Morera 2002: 407.

feature of the London jungle scene for this period.¹²

According to Javier Blázquez in an article “Progresión Lógica: Jungle, Drum 'n 'Bass y 2Step” there are two main elements to the basics of jungle: very fast rhythms - a hip hop beat doubled in speed to around 160 to 180 BPM¹³ - and a massive bass sound, a heritage of black ghetto subcultures of London suburbs who listen to reggae and dub, lines of Jamaican bass, very low and very loud. Those two elements create a unique rhythm, tremendously syncopated and dynamic. Over this rhythmical level, there is also an influence of musical manifestations of the last century such as jazz, ambient, rap and contemporary music. All these are to escape from the ghetto to a future life (Blázquez and Morera 2002: 409).

“When I came to the drum 'n 'bass scene in 95, I was surprised by its freshness, but in a short time I became frustrated, because it was not advancing anymore,” Luke Vibert¹⁴ explains, in became finally one of the reasons of moving forward from jungle to breakcore. With the artist Squarepusher and his LP “Hard Normal Daddy” (1997), and British label Warp Records, jungle moved into other areas. The final step was when the artist Aphex Twin came out with a single “Come to Daddy”¹⁵

In both cases, the strict grids of jungle was turned down in favor of chaotic, aggressive, intellectually and physically challenging rhythmical structures based on increased speeds of up to 200 BPM, at the beginning labeled as drill'n'bass or hard step.¹⁶

12 music sample: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxBLIqft_I

13 Beats per minute (BPM) is a unit typically used as a measure of tempo in music.

14 Blázquez and Morera 2002: 422.

15 Come To Daddy on internet, www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6RK3ERLsPY

16 music sample: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yA8MRphI8w

CHAPTER 2: Omnipresent signs of breakcore

Breakcore genre recognition

Even though some internet sources cite that breakcore emerged around 1994, according to my observation nobody really covered it in international music servers or magazines (Pitchforkmedia.com, The Wire, etc.) or on the Czech scene, before Transmediale festival in Berlin 2005, where the first breakcore party called Wasted¹⁷ presented around twenty international artists in two days.

Obviously there were more locally isolated acts and parties in earlier years organised by small groups with interest in the sound, such as Breakcore gives me wood¹⁸, Breakcore A Go Go in the Netherlands, Anticartel in Rennes, the home of PeaceOff, Ambush, Praxis, DHR and early efforts by the Bloody Fist camp in Australia and Addict, Drop Bass, History of the Future and Low Res in the Midwestern US.

Those events, however important for forthcoming breakcore scene, were facing a lack of media promotion and a media-related wider audience, thus it was not possible for them to reach the global musical and media market. The early promotion was mostly based on internet communication, which formed *clusters*¹⁹ of breakcore fans and musicians.²⁰

Transmediale festival is considered as the most important new media festival in Europe,

17 WASTED were series of mini-festivals to celebrate loud, fast, radical and mostly electronic new musics unified by a bold spirit of disrespectful dissent, unruly enthusiasm and a mountain of positive energy, that are generally summed up under the loose terms of Breakcore, Mash-Up or Raggacore (www.clubtransmediale.de).

18 Breakcore Gives Me Wood is a Belgian breakcore party crew, operating from Ghent, Belgium. Since 2002 they have thrown over 30 parties in Belgium, often in squats or abandoned buildings. Half a dozen of these have seen attendances of over 1000 people. The average being about 500, the largest being 1600. They try to let touring international breakcore artists play in Belgium for an entrance fee no bigger than 5 or 6 Euro, without making a loss. Currently they organise events in legal venues for slightly higher entrance fees. Original members were Sickboy, Droon, Terror, Blunted Beats and later Val (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breakcore_Gives_Me_Wood).

19 A theme used by Steve Johnson defines virtual social groups based on shared interests – hobbies, professional activities or recommendations - created by software. Detailed in a chapter Technology/Technology as a breakcore network.

20 One of this virtual communication channels was f. e. mailing lists called *c8*.

covered by prestigious international media and having an aesthetic authority as trendsetter for upcoming hyped music and art. Presenting the sound to wider audience with different music taste at Wasted events helped breakcore artists to make the first important step to becoming a regular part of music and media industry. Thus Wasted events at Transmediale festival turned out to be a very important kick off, which led to global recognition and distribution of breakcore music, and loosened it from the firm boundaries of internet community fans.

General description

To start discussion about breakcore signs, I would like to present the average dictionary description of the breakcore genre: “Breakcore is a loosely defined electronic music style that brings together elements of jungle, hardcore techno and IDM into a breakbeat - oriented sound that encourages speed, complexity, impact and maximum sonic density. Similar to Punk or Jazz music; Breakcore does not adhere to a predefined set of stylistic 'rules', instead following a looser set of musical ideals. The very nature of breakcore is anti-establishment, often using production techniques or sounds to intentionally alienate the non-breakcore listener. Musically, breakcore is centered around the deconstruction and creative reassembly of common breakbeats from other electronic genre.²¹

“Some musicians and DJs like Electric Kettle, Drop the lime, Christoph Fringeli and DJ Balli have argued that breakcore is a catch-all term that encompasses various related, though different styles of electronic music that are related through mindset or aesthetics rather than sound. Regardless, there seems to be a common element of aggression or chaos, unconventional song structures and sudden shifts of rhythm in breakcore music.”²²

²¹ www.experiencefestival.com/a/Breakcore

²² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breakcore>

This description and a lot of others partially reflect the breakcore genre, but during my research I have noted some particularities regarding generalised characteristics. The fieldwork, observations and in-depth interviews revealed that some of the descriptive signs cited above showed themselves to be stereotypes; some of them were not valid anymore in the period of the research in 2010; while some were valid only on local scenes or in certain cultural backgrounds.

Breakcore is definitely far from being homogenous and one can find a lot of modalities in sound: just to name few there is the 8 bit Gameboy sound with distorted voice by DJ Scotch Egg, the conceptual deconstructive attitude of Jason Forrest/Donna Summer, the pop hardcore mash-up of Shitmat, the dubstep oriented Otto Von Schirach or the electro trash provocative gay show of Captain Ahab.

However my aim is not to present the breakcore scene by listing the artists, nor to analyse what breakcore means in different cultural environments. The first, theoretic part of the thesis is focused on the omnipresent signs of the genre, culture - theory and philosophic background in an academic discourse of media theory and electronic culture, sustained by arguments of the artists themselves.

Omnipresent signs

For the culture theoretic part of my thesis, I have chosen those signs of the genre, which were the most intensively and persistently manifested in every moment of the research and thus proving its importance for a general approach to comprehension of such a mutable music genre as breakcore. I have grouped them into four main themes which partly organically permeate through each other – technology, speed, sample and performance and a short about political attitude.

I. TECHNOLOGY: a natural tool for music expression

“Science and technology offer us opposite things: a denial of this world in a certain way and the creation of an illusory one or a confrontation with this world. This means that even if we tend toward unlimited means of social communication and expressiveness or the creation of cultural landscapes, partially or totally denying our world, we cannot forget two questions, similar to those that Paul Gauguin confronted in his art: From where are we coming? And who are we?” (Lentini 1991: 338)

The quotation refers to several important sociocultural aspects which have an effect on artistic expression of breakcore artists: a physical alienation of technologic instruments bound up with actual and specific social-historic background of musical representatives. According to Lentini, the answer to those questions is not a romantic matter but an ecologic, economical and cultural one focusing on our body and environment.

The specifics of historic background in breakcore genre means the artists living in an era with a long previous period of technological progress. This technological progress is a very important feature in development of electronic music in the 20th and 21st century; from the first electro-acoustic experiments in early 50s produced by Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Boulez or Iannis Xenakis and *musique concrète*, through analogue and digital synthesizers to electronic dance genres of the last decades of 20th century.

The social environment of breakcore artists is formed by living in the “information age”²³ or ‘information society’²⁴ where technology became a common tool for everyday professional and free time activities. Availability and low cost of technologies, software and digital devices motivate non-acoustic music expressions. Breakcore music is attached to an actual period when downloading a

²³ Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*.

²⁴ Bourdieu, *Sociology of Symbolic Power*.

brand new music programme from internet²⁵ is much more simple, faster and cheaper than buying a guitar in a music store.

Another important social aspect of using technology as a music tool is that a lot of breakcore artists come from middle class families, where it was not common to take such care of children's free time activities. Kids would be growing in the street, hanging around with friends, playing games on computer; simply managing their everyday activities with a lack of pressure from adult authorities. Coming from rich, intellectual or artistic family background would be a real exception.²⁶ Therefore the major part of the artists were not classically trained in playing instruments and solfège during the childhood. In teenage age, some of my informants entered art schools or simply wanted to produce music. In that time, it was already too late to develop such a basic music knowledge and follow the courses for children, so the technology became a paradoxically much more natural and intuitive source for their artistic expression. Through the course of music career, some of my informants learned to play instruments but the core of their music production was still in technology. For those people, who are not older than 35 years now²⁷, technology is able to represent what they wish and express it even more amply. Jason Forrest states: “Basically I believed the music I was making was a new version of progressive rock, because it was very technical and implied the virtuosity that I wouldn't have any.” (JF 5. 2. 2010)

Breakcore artists as technology experts

Due to everyday computer activity, breakcore artists are usually skilled in managing their computers, software, electronic devices and gadgets which ability facilitates their music production.

²⁵ Downloading the programme as a trial version for free, as a illegal crack version for free or a low cost legal version.

Downloading and installing the programme practically never last more than 30 minutes.

²⁶ Jonathan Snipes from Captain Ahab comes from an intellectual, artistic family, where his father was a director of an opera house ,and so Jonathan got quite extended theoretical music knowledge during his childhood. But he didn't get any practical music training.

²⁷ Artists such as Jason Forrest (*1972) or Venetian Snares is (*1975) represent the oldest generation

To learn new software doesn't require the physical presence of a teacher and frequent lessons in music school. It only requires downloading a tutorial, which basically explains all the possibilities of the software.

Through the process of production, they are getting specific knowledge about the technologies involved in music production (such as different operation systems, self-designed programmes, VST plug-ins, effect groups, midi instruments, virtual synthesizers, sound equalization, mastering, mixing,..). Step by step they are all becoming experts in controlling and organising the digital sound.

During the research I have noticed that this technological knowledge becomes a common point in conversation between different artists, who barely know each other. As they are coming through similar difficulties, this theme develops a sense of community.

From a semiotic point of view, they use a specific expert language²⁸ in such a manner that non-experts are immediately excluded from the conversation. As a researcher and active music producer, I was accepted into these 'expert conversations' as soon I had proved myself as using respected music programme Ableton Live and mentioning some technological keywords and problematic issues such as 'looper, sampler, subbass equalisations, ...' Those discussions were often held in backstages, after the performance or in home studios; the artists could speak hours about different programmes, advantages and disadvantages, problems with crashing of the system or joking around about catastrophic scenarios which happened because of technology failure.

This conversation is basically focused on an information exchange about personal experiences. It has also a symbolic character in confirmation of the expert status by comparing the levels of knowledge, showing up and settling the positions and a level of respect and authority within non-experts and the artists as well. There is also a shared common sense of enthusiasm for technology progress - new technologies and new uploads for software require updating of music production and sound as well. According to the research, this technology enthusiasm is bound up to

²⁸ Tyler Burge, Individualism and the Mental.

a hidden fear of 'not to sound contemporary', which would mean shame for a electronic music producer.²⁹

Low cost technology and materiality

An important aspect of technology is that prices of technological equipment and electronics for users are really low. For last ten years, tools for music production such as computers, programmes, soundcards, mixes, speakers or headphones rapidly decreased in price³⁰ and are lowering constantly every year. As a result, starting a career as an electronic musician does not demand a lot of initial investment. This proliferation of low cost and quality electronics which causes possibilities for expression through electronic music production have multiplied tremendously. On the other hand such a technological availability and general ability to deal with technological devices has resulted in a decline of the artist's status of exclusivity, because almost anybody can become a musician.

As Lentini states: “We are no longer in an exclusively mechanical world, but rather in an electronic one. We are faced with immateriality.” (Lentini 1991: 338)

This facet of material independence is also significant for breakcore artists. Almost all of them need for the performance only a mini laptop, a mixer and a microphone, which could be all packed up into a small suitcase, about four kilos in total. All the music files they need, all the instruments they use are digital data and thus do not weigh anything. This immateriality gives to breakcore artists freedom and ability to easily travel from one place to another, fly for tours from

²⁹ Of course there are also tendencies to sound “old school” or “lo-fi” in breakcore. DJ Scotch Egg's production is based on children's' Gameboys and Nintendos or Captain Ahab' on old school rave synthetic sine waves. However generally is considered that the professionalism in the sound and production comes first and then you can play around. If this level of professionalism is not reached, the artist would not be taken seriously in the discussions.

³⁰ ten years ago, an ordinary PC table computer cost 2 000 US dollars, now we can buy a new Macintosh laptop in Europe for around 1 000 US dollars, in USA for 500 US dollars

United States to Europe, riding the tour in Europe or US by one car with a manager who is mostly a driver and a small company of friends or other musicians. They are not bound up to heavy instrumental equipment (such as drums, keyboards, guitars, ..) which cause an uneasy transportation and increase of the expenses for the concerts.

Technology as a breakcore network

Beyond music production, technology also influences the network of breakcore artists. According to Manuel Castell, technology as a possibility to realise a virtual environment produces a network society whose active participants communicate via communication nodes. This was a significant factor for breakcore genre: as the breakcore music was an underground and the fans and artists of breakcore were locally separated, these network nodes represented a key role in the establishment and emergence of the genre; it simply enabled the communication. If you were not a member of the breakcore local community, there was not any other possibility and space for information exchange than the virtual net world. This effect of technology is described by the theme of 'convergence' by Steven Johnson. In his point of view, increase of new technology which would apparently lead to separation of communication channels results paradoxically in their convergence. This has a consequence in forming of 'clusters' – a virtual social groups based on shared interests – hobbies, professional activities or recommendations - created by software.

Those clusters are communication nodes within breakcore net community – websites as 'ihatebreakcore.com, www.breakcore-addicts.org, www.breakcore.com.au' - join artists and listeners together due to shared music taste, dealing with the same music software or electronic devices difficulties and benefiting from no space barriers which enable the translocal discussions. The technologic discussions as described above are according to my opinion a physical representation of extension of the virtual clusters.

Since the beginning, breakcore had never really relied on the concept of classical (in meaning of physical) record labels. Most breakcore artists release their albums on the internet as MP3 downloads and use the network for any kind of promotion (myspace, youtube, facebook, last.fm). Even though the situation has slightly changed during past few years and breakcore artists are getting contracts with regular record label companies targeted on experimental dance electronics (such as Planet Mu, Ipecac, Wrong Music, Tigerbeat6, Schematics, Cockrockdisco,..), the internet network is still the most dynamic platform for the breakcore music production, distribution and promotion.

II. SPEED: implication for breakcore aesthetics

“Technology has freed us from the bounds of immobility and bound us instead by a dictatorship of movement.”³¹

This quotation refers to the aspect of acceleration as an imperative of postmodern society reflected in the works of culture theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, Paul Virilio and others. In this chapter I will focus the work on the concept of speed, which is one of the main themes of Paul Virilio, a significant French cultural theorist and media critic. He is renowned for his declaration that the logic of acceleration lies at the core of the organization and transformation of the modern world. In his later books, mainly *Aesthetic of Disappearance and Information Bomb*, he develops the concept of *dromology* which is being discussed, adapted and also criticized. The speed in this chapter will be seen as an aesthetic consequence, a mirror of technology and media reality communicated through canal of music production.

The concept of dromology is based on the theory that we are living in an era where only

31 Virilio, *Speed and politics*, Essay about Dromology

speed matters – speed in different representations, as in information delivery or in physical or virtual transportation from place to place – and uses an argument of increasing speed, which is in Virilio's view an aftereffect of technological evolution, as a vehicle of social and cultural changes in society.

The theme of dromology is not strictly defined therefore is being criticized by other academic scholars. As Virilio states in a lecture held in The European Graduate School in January 2007: “Dromology is not more than approximation, an open discipline, offered and opened to other interpretation. The acceleration of history and acceleration of reality through new technology.”

Dromology and effect on aesthetics

“Speed is not a phenomenon, speed is relation within the phenomena.”³²

Virilio applies the concept of dromology merely to war technology and strategy, the media industry and the development of urban structures. During the research, I have realised how significant is the concept of acceleration due to technological progress for an aesthetic of current art. This is evident in the visual art³³ and also in the music. From the dromologic point of view, the breakcore genre, its origin and evolution highly related to technology, represents an explicit case of overexposed speed in artistic expression. Following Virilio's statement about openness of the theme to other interpretations, I consider his dromology theory as a useful tool in discussing the theme of speed involved in breakcore music. In such a point of view, breakcore could be targeted a sound response to the acceleration in the information era.

This extract below is from a report of the concert of breakcore duo Captain Ahab, held at the Wasted event during Transmediale festival in 2008, and published in Czech cultural magazine A2.

³² Same as 25

³³ visual artists /Vs./ use so many cuts and layers at the same time, that is hard follow the visual content.

The article illustrates how the factor of a speed manifests itself in breakcore music.

“Ahab are assaulting the audience, changing within their metal roar, a essianic noise apocalypse which is suddenly interrupted by bittersweet gay passages from a Californian beach of 70s. But you are already sure that this never-ending story has no happy ending. Moreover, before you even manage to think about this , Ahab are jumping to new themes as fast as you can put words into Google, as fast as information grows in Wikipedia, or as fast as you rush by Pendolino train from Prague to Vienna.“

'Amen break' as a rhythmical factor of overexposed speed in breakcore

The central theme of overloaded breakcore rhythm is a rhythmic figure called an *Amen break*. This *Amen break* is a fast, distorted and complex particular instrumental drum beat, rather called a 'break beat' or more simply a 'break' which was originally a small piece of a song called Amen, Brother released in 1969 by a funk soul band The Winstons. Even though the song Amen Brother was released on a b – side of a single Color Him Father, it was one of the hits of 1969 on Grammy Awards and turn out to be the song for which the band was the best known. The drum solo in a middle of the song – a break – is a piece pickled from pop music and adapted by contemporary music. An *Amen break* became a famous rhythmic backdrop which was sampled and integrated into later musical genres such as 80's hip hop, rap, jungle and breakcore. ³⁴

A break is a short rhythmic or melodic structure which aim is to attach two different parts of the song and thus emphasis the upcoming music theme. It has a function of a bridge or a space “in between” which is on a one hand firmly bound to the song structure and on another hand

34 Music example:

Amen Brother song www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rIb1-EEWt0

Amen break www.freesound.org/samplesViewSingle.php?id=24940

independent. This position “in between” enables it to be cut up and pasted and used in different connotations.

Amen break was a significant rhythmic pattern in the beginning of breakcore for artists such as Squarepusher or Venetian Snares. Through the course of time, this complex break beat recognised some modification via technology of programming and effecting, being recorded live or manipulated digitally in according to specific artistic expression and music intention. Even though being modified, *Amen break* remain a model for breakcore rhythms and it is still an identification and key rhythmic structure in contemporary breakcore, preserving the original aesthetics.

Speed and changes as a social subversion

Another aspect of dromology in breakcore is an overexposure of speed in the song up to 200 BPM and sudden melodic, harmonic and genre ruptures and changes in the structure of a song. These changes are involved on a harmonic level, a rhythmic basis, and also in genre shifts. A listener must face a high number of different musics within one track whether sampled or authentic - e.g. heavy metal, reggae, pop, 80's electro, rave, gabba, jungle all of which are basically turning down and followed by another one every 10 or 20 seconds. That illustrates an aspect of temporality in dromology where no sound has a constant duration.

The concept of speed in breakcore has more cultural and social connotations. A lot of breakcore artists would refer to the speed as to an expression of politic attitude performed in the aesthetics. Literally it means that the disturbing sound, challenging aural difficulty and complex beat structures refers to a rejection of pop music, generally considered by breakcore artists as dulcet, conventional and primitive. This “unpleasantness” manifests an aesthetic subversion, personal sound slap to mainstream culture. It also represent an attitude “do whatever I want to do”,

a music production and performance with no barriers.

At this point, I must mention how many images and sound connotation mocking bourgeois morals, ethics and everyday life I have heard and seen during my fieldwork , f. e. Captain Ahab visuals which accompanied their concert at festival Creepy Teepee in Kutna Hora, Czech republic in July 2010: pictures of ordinary, common, “happy” everyday life in Los Angeles – eating ice cream and walking the beach, playing in the waves cut - up to crazy shootings of the artists pissing in one another's mouths, revoltingly eating hamburgers and vomiting on a car strip.

As per Virilio, speed as a vehicle of changes enables social ruptures, which leads to revolution. This political aspect of the concept of dromology is emphasising a subversive character of breakcore music which will be developed in upcoming chapters. Virilio concludes that “in this precarious fiction speed would suddenly become a destiny, a force of progress, in other words a "civilization" in which each speed would be something of a "religion" in time.“ (Virilio 1991: 141)

***'Picnolepsy'* in breakcore expression**

The extremely high BPM and constant sound changes turn into a state of mind which Virilio calls *picnolepsy*. This theme describes an information overload managed by technology resulting into an audience or viewer apathy to the content. It means a state of absence, a momentary lapse in consciousness with an aim to escape from time, to balance the sensory world experienced.

“Epilepsy is little death and *picnolepsy*, tiny death. What is living, present, conscious, here, is only so because there's an infinity of little deaths, little accidents, little breaks, little cuts in the soundtrack, as William Burroughs would say, in the sound track and the visual track of what's lived. [...] Our vision is a montage, a montage of temporalities which are the product not only of the powers that be, but of the technologies that organise time.“(Virilio and Lotringer 1998: 40)

In the case of breakcore music, the recipients are so tired by intellectually following the rhythm changes and different genre allusions, that after a certain time they are not able to pay attention to it anymore and absorb the music as a one coherent wave of sound. The concept of *picnolepsy* also has an effect on the physical expression of the audience: in breakcore it is not possible to stay anymore in borders of conventional dance movement, such as is usual for jungle music, because there is no stable beat structure. Those fast and unpredictable changes avoid producing a constant flow of dance movements, thus the individuals whether don't dance at all or explore a original physical expression of the deconstructed rhythms. This liberalised dance is an individual challenge to dance imagination, which overpass the general convention of dance to electronic music. In a manner of a physical looseness I would find more similarities to hippie attitude than to electronic dance culture. Breakcore dance is thus on one hand very individual, on the other hand there is common sense of breaking down any conformal rules of dancing. The informants consequently describe it as a experiencing an absolute freedom of physical expression.

III. SAMPLES: Art as a meeting point

“to use an object means necessarily to interpret it”³⁵

In this chapter, I would like to develop another important issue, which is the organisation of samples in breakcore music and its internal structure. The aim is to present different uses and diverse connotations of music samples in a concept of breakcore; notably what is the artistic attitude to the samples, what meaning it has for them personally, and in a reference to what is accepted by the audience. The chapter should simply explain what are those different genre allusions and fast changes mentioned in previous chapter are about.

35 Bourriaud, Postproduction, p. 18

According to Nicholas Bourriaud, a process of *'postproduction'* as manipulation of another material is a sort of attitude which spread through the whole art scene during 90s. The material the artists deal with is not necessarily “ first” ³⁶ anymore - artists do interpret, recycle, reproduce, re-expose, briefly immerse in the art of the others. The goal is not to produce a *raw* material, a *tabula rasa*, but to work with other materials which make a part of a culture market; **with materials already *informed* by other ones.**

“ Art is losing the status of a unique object tied to a single time and space (“aura”), “ states Hansen, “ but gaining in return a new found flexibility“ (Hansen 2004: 43). This mutation overrides a traditional role of an art, the one of gathering artistic visions, with an interesting result - the piece of art is not passive anymore. According to the research, it functions as an active agent, as a communication link within time and space, a secret messenger within different artists alive or dead. An art itself is in a new role of medium representing a certain social – aesthetic approach.

This situation changed the attitude and position of artists to the art as well as of the audience to the art piece and artist. In 2010, Bourriaud's statement that the art is not more than “a interplay within all the people in all the epochs“ ³⁷ is not shocking neither provocative any longer. It is more a common part of our everyday artistic experience. A universal resignation on criteria of originality is emerging from a general conviction that it is not simply possible to produce anything original anymore. That establishes one point of departure for breakcore music. Despite this, the second point of departure is an appeal for individual artistic originality, which issue apparently never definitely disappeared. A claim to be original in limits of postproduction era, where the theme of 'aura' by Walter Benjamin appears to be unsatisfactory and not reflecting the actual reality anymore, represents a source of motivation. Achieving this aim is considered as a bigger intellectual and artistic challenge than ever before. There is not only a question 'what to do with it', but a question 'what to do new' is still very relevant in an artistic approach to breakcore music.

36 In French origin “premier” – in a meaning of original, virgin

37 Bourriaud, Postproduction, p. 11.

Relational Art

“...where everything had some reason for existing” JF 6.2.2010

As described in previous chapters, one of the coherent aspects of breakcore music is a fast change of musical samples from different genres. As Bourriaud (2001:48) explains: “The final form that every artist gives to this relational production is not determinate: these artists apprehend their work from a triple point of view, in one time esthetic (how to “translate” it materially?), historic (how to enroll for the game of artistic references?) and social (how to find a position which is coherent according to the actual state of production and social relation?)

The choice and position of the samples represent a personal actualisation of an artistic experience here and now. Even though it seems chaotic, there is a pursuable conceptual attitude and an internal coherence in sample organisation. The arbitrary is only illusive – the artists base the sample structure on a tight relation on level of harmony and level of intentional significance as well. This intentional significance denotes a meaning of each sample which reflects and covers a specific period of time – and its cultural, aesthetic, social background for the artist to which he refer his actual music production.

“ (...) At the same time I was really interested in sampling these complex structures and reuse them in different, new, complex structures. I became interested in what kind of power sample has. By that I mean if I play you a little tiny bit of a heavy metal song, it gives a one set of associations and picture and this extends in many directions. And if I play you a little bit of classical, it has a whole different set of meanings. Ultimately it is just a digital file and it could be anything, but it is not. It has these really important meanings. So I became interested in clashing all of this information together.“ JF 30.1.2010

Attitudes to the samples differ individually from one artist to another. Otto Von Schirach, Shitmat, DJ Scotch Egg approach sample organisation mainly by an intuitive manner, which is hardly describable by artists themselves. Mainly they refer to vague aesthetic and harmonic development of music structure that sounds “good for me”.

There are also artists who have more conceptual reasons for the sample organisation. As American Jason Forrest, who studied photography at art school before his art career turned into music production. As he states, he channeled his knowledge, ideas of an art work and training from an art school into electronic music. Forrest has a abstract concept for most of his albums and in each of them explores the limits of a certain theme, e.g. a concept of *media*³⁸ or *genre*³⁹ Besides abstract structure, he points out an emotional context, often related to his teenage age.

You have series of associations based on samples and then you have series of associations how you understand the sample. So what I have realised is there was the music and then there was my opinion of the music based on where I was at the time. War Photographer⁴⁰ is a great example. It is all sampled from a band called Blood, Sweat and Tears, three of their songs clashed together. (...) I think my dad only had a few records and that was one he played a lot. And there is a lot of power and those are really great songs but for me I would always associate it with my father and with kind of enjoying it as a kid and kind of hating it as a kid. (JF 6.2.2010)

Captain Ahab, the band made up of Jonathan Snipes (music producer) and Jim Merson (performer) from Los Angeles, are not reusing someone' s samples, but producing their own ones while preserving the breakcore structural attitude in sample organisation.

I don't think my music is a music, but more a critical theory about music, like making music

38 album This Needs To Be Your Style, Irritant, 2003.

39 album Shamelessly Exciting, Sonig, 2005.

40 single with a outstanding video appears on the album Shamelessly Exciting.

about music. I like a lot of very different styles of music for very different reasons. I also have a short attention span so when I am writing music I like to change styles frequently to keep myself interested.(...) It used to be that I would hear a really good mash-up, like this rap a capella over this metal track and I would say - man, this is great, but why don' t bands sound like this? Why does this have to be a mash-up, a remix? So what if you just write something like this? So I started to do this. I would put this kind of vocal over this kind of music and let see what happens. First it was more just cutting between the styles as quickly as possible, to see how radical the changes could be, and now it is about taking all these different things and pointing out what is similar to create a new unified sound instead of a cut-up sound. (JS 18.7.2010)

Reflexivity of meaning - the end of irony and bad taste

“It's all about blurring the line, you can never know, if it's ironic or not” (JS 18.7.2010)

During the fieldwork, I asked a lot of people on the breakcore parties what they think about this sample organisation and its meaning. Most of them admit that it represents fun and irony bound to a disrespect and personal criticism of music aesthetics of different genres. Irony was also often mentioned as a significant sign of breakcore. It is very interesting, that this ironic aspect of the meaning and disrespect is not generally recognised by the artists themselves. Primarily it seems that the communication of the meaning within artist and its audience in breakcore is quite clear, but while coming deeper to discourse of reflexivity, several communication lacks are emerging. According to the research, the aesthetic intention sent from the artist/emitter is not usually connoted in the same way by the audience/receiver. The aspect of irony is a one example.

Jason Forrest' s first artistic pseudonym was Donna Summer, a name of a black German disco

queen from 70s. As nobody in that time (2005) would think he means seriously to mix digital hardcore with such a “ cliché mainstream music”, all the samples he used from 70s had finally the same ironic connotation for the audience. While Forrest proclaims liking the 70s disco, and considering music of Donna Summer as a important part of music history of electronic music. Captain Ahab even called their latest album 'The End of Irony'⁴¹ as a explicit statement not to be ashamed of the things they like anymore.

When I started to make music I tried to make very serious music, very academic and respectable music. But I would more often find those supposedly bad records and listen to them more, and get more enjoyment out of listening to bad music then to good music. Like listening to disco more than contemporary classic music. I was listening to trash and laughing, but getting more enjoyment out of it. And then as soon as you realise, that - I like things I think are bad more than I like the things I think are good, then you have to say – are those things actually bad anymore? It is not about laughing to bad, it is about changing the idea of what is good and what is bad? And that's really liberating, not to like anything ironically, to say I just like this - this is good. It' s not so bad that is good. It's just good. And that' s really free and exciting. (JS 18.7. 2010)

It indicates how the traditional Greek aesthetic discourse separating high and low art is not valid in breakcore genre and therefore the aspect of irony is misunderstood. For the artists this concept is out of date and they try to find an own aesthetic conviction which satisfy their music taste. A lot of listeners don't differentiate between fun and irony and they mix it together, however the artists don't. According to the research most breakcore artists would agree with Jonathan Snipes who stated that their concert is not necessarily a comedy act or ironic joke about somebody or something, but it's definitely fun.

As evident, the sample organisation is not arbitrary, but motivated. Sample organisation is a

41 label Deathbomb Arc., 2010.

sort of interpretation of old times in a actual social-artistic reference frame, turned into a personal manifesto which expresses several themes: strength to reject common aesthetic rules, respect for music history, and a freedom to loosely manipulate it. By manipulating so many genres with no predictions, breakcore artists also create a new reference to marginalised genres (disco, pop, beach music, country) and raise the status of disrespected and ignored music. In line with Marxist philosophy, they thus proclaim an anti-elitist attitude, demanding equality of music.

IV. PERFORMANCE: body involvement and stage aesthetic accompaniment on breakcore events

“The measure of a work of art is whether one can sense in it the presence of the artist' body.

If so, then it is a success, and if not, it's a failure.“⁴²

As Frederickson describes in a article Technology and Music Performance in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, technology is radically changing the types of social relations between the artist and the audience. “Traditionally, music and the relationship involved with its performance were inextricably intertwined. But through technology these aspects are separated” argues Hosokawa (Frederickson 1989: 213). Performance is a fundamental platform for live communication between the artist, which was a traditional role of music. It is also an act which differs it from a listening an album at distance of live concert.

The discourse about the performative character of breakcore events starts once again with the technology involved in music production. To set up the problem I should outline how the performative character developed in the 20th century, and how technology influenced the music performance.

As Ostertag explains (2001: 11-14), before electronic music and digital sound manipulation, there was no music without the physical performance of the artist. The body was held to the music

42 Ostertag 2002: 11

instrument, it was an active participant in generating the tones, in a manner that every single movement of a physical body, from a toe to hair, was captured by the instrument and influenced the final sound of each instrument, which was unique in every time and place. Physical action was bound up to certain artistic virtuosity, which was usually one of the most valuable aspects of music production.

This concept radically changed during 1970s with the appearance of computer music and the first electronic instruments, such as synthesizers and midi controllers. The instrumental virtuosity which demanded performative body involvement became irrelevant for the reason that the electronic instruments could generate the sound by itself. The core of music production became sound design – analogue synthesizers generated a voltages that oscillated in audio frequencies and thus could be heard as sound when amplified and sent to speakers. Artists would impact their ideas into a more abstract form as to control the shape, amplitude and frequencies of the signals. “Composing” in this situation meant setting up the connections and parameters of the synthesizer so as to set in motion the processes one had designed, and “playing” composition involved listening to the output and intervening of the evolution of the process one had set up by fine-tuning the parameters and connections as the things progressed“ (Ostertag 2002: 12). That was the point when the body became absent on the stage, because the performance shrank to pitching the knobs with several parameters on the synthesizers during the show. According to Ostertag, the only electronic instrument on which an artist could develop certain virtuosity was Theremin (1919), electric guitar⁴³ and later turntables⁴⁴ while the main part of live electronic acts suffered from a lack of bodily involvement of the artist. In breakcore genre, the only instrument virtuosity I have mentioned was a Gameboy performance by DJ Scotch Egg.

Through the course of time which goes together with technology progress, sound programmes and electronic instruments designed for live concerts are becoming more user-friendly.

43 Ostertag states that the first musician using electronic instrument and involving his body during the performance was Jimmy Hendrix, who controlled and manipulated the amplified guitar feedback sound through the position of his fingers on the guitar and body situated close to the speakers.

44 turntables were used for music production since 70s in the streets of Bronx.

They don't demand such fixation and attention of the artist as the analog synthesizers demanded in the archaic age of electronic music. Nowadays a lot of processes are automated and don't require sophisticated manipulation, so finally each artist can decide how much he wants to deal with the technologies live during the show and how much he will use a home-prepared production. The technology finally opens a new space for bodily involvement and liberates the artists, while enabling them to develop a sort of physical performance on stage again.

DJ act vs. Breakcore act

In the field of DJ culture, there were people who would always ask – was that really a performance? The question is appropriate to the situation. The ordinary role of DJ in electronic dance music, which is still vivid on a music scene today, is the role of passive robotic slave who produces the sound. The DJ does not usually disturb the audience by any embodied activities⁴⁵ or interaction, and people do not pay any special attention to him – they dance, talk, drink, take drugs, hang around, flirt, ... Nobody is really focused on a DJ as a musical performer⁴⁶. His presence is a secondary aspect – the main aspect is the sound of music.

For the most the breakcore events, people usually don't ask this question anymore. With the breakcore genre, the status of the DJ/producer has changed. The artist is physically and actively present on the stage again. and usually produces highly performative action whose description would be more appropriate to what one expect from a rock'n'roll/ punk concert or alternative theatre show. The most common activity for breakcore artists. apart from computer manipulation, is to dance and jump around all the stage and electronics, scream, shout, don't respect the limits of the podium and climb up the stage constructions or any other equipment. There is also a strong emphasis on material and visual culture presented on the stage - they usually get dressed in diverse

⁴⁵ Besides cheering, the crowd claps hands as is usual in mainstream dance music culture.

⁴⁶ with an exception of some special virtuosity such as DJ freestyle or scratching.

costumes, use material objects and decorations for the stage or electronics; some even have special performers on stage⁴⁷, The difference from DJ culture is also in that breakcore artists often sing⁴⁸ or play weird electronic instruments⁴⁹; rarely there is some “normal” acoustic instrument involved.

Performance as a channel of communication

Now there is an obvious question: why are they doing that? For the introduction to an extended answer I would like to use a phrase by John Cale (Velvet Underground) published in a book by Czech journalist Alex Švamberk: “You have only a restricted control of an influence you have. Language is like a secret post where one is whispering to someone's ears and you can only hope, that at the end you get the same you have said at the beginning. But this usually never happen“ (Švamberk 2006: 29).

Cale's statement about difficulties of maintenance the initial information could be seen as a valid parallel valid for the whole discourse of artistic meaning.

At breakcore events, musical acts are related to the use of technology, which affects the relation between artist, sound, performance and audience. Certainly it limits the possibilities of subjective interpretation of the music – an artist must give up certain aspect of intimacy with the audience and respect the technological restriction: he can never have a original 'tone' (as saxophone or any acoustic instrument has) where the audience could feel his breath, where the tone can be balanced according to the artist's mood or the atmosphere of a concert. The sound of electronic music is more or less the same on every concert. He must rely on the mechanical tempo generated by computer and maintain the structure of abstract grid, so he cannot dynamically change the character of time as the conductor of an orchestra would do. Thus, the technology partly

47 e.g. Captain Ahab, Otto von Schirach.

48 As per Otto Von Schirach, Jonathan Snipes from Captain Ahab, DJ Scotch Egg. The vocal performance is usually heavily distorted and effected.

49 DJ Scotch Egg plays on Gameboys and Nintendos, Japanese artist Ove Naxx on UV light - bass guitar.

mechanizes the music, restricts the manner of expression of the music performance, and increases the distance between artist and audience.

On the other hand, at the same time, today's user-friendly technologies enables concentrating on non-musical performance which represent another source of approach. If the artist cannot really truly the music to the audience, he can adjust his physical and visual involvement.

When it's about our interaction (with Jim) on stage, that means the audience doesn't wanna be really engaged, they wanna watch something instead of being involved in something. That's also a reason why we added the video. We want to give them something to watch without sacrificing the engagement element, which is Jim and also translating the gig into different sizes of spaces, whether small clubs or big festivals. Over the years I have given myself certainly more to do on the stage with computer, so it is not actually only playing the tracks - I like manipulating them, changing things and stuff. I don' t really pay attention to the audience and that's why having Jim is great. He became kind of my safety net. Because sometimes I realise I have been ignoring the crowd for a long time, but that' s ok, because Jim has not. (JS 18.7. 2010)

The performance element is just as important, maybe more, than the music. When I play live, it's supposed to be a live concert; I'm performing for my audience. The goal is that audience feels they witnessed something, not that they have seen somebody produced music. This came out when I was a kid in the punk scene of South Carolina, knowing that every show was your last show. You only have one time to make it happen right. Just give it all you got because you never know if you could do it again. (JF 6.2. 2010)

A rock'n'roll show, dancing like a lunatic, wearing a Superman costume, shaking fake breasts and a shower cap, making feedback with pizza, cheering the crowd in a swimsuit, screening pervert

funny visuals, beating a ballet dancers with a giant rubber penis, shooting the audience with a light/children's toy piano, wearing an alligator mask, making a symbol of a magic triangle... all of these physical performances, decorations and costumes create an artificial artistic world on stage which engages the public with the musical act and mediate the artistic meaning. And through the stage performance, an artist can reach a better identification of the listeners with the music, or can offer them the possibility of experiencing the meaning as a participant of the show⁵⁰, symbolically sharing the intermediated energy.

I think we would agree that every artist wishes to be “understood”, in a manner that makes his artistic approach reachable by his listeners. In our time, where hundreds of connotation for one signs are possible, that is not an easy goal. The more signs the artist distributes, the more clues the audience gets as to his meaning. As Hubik states (2006: 4): “images and texts are mediators, and enables mediation of meaning. Mediation of reality on certain – and different – level of abstraction.” So this performative character of breakcore music is also used for the sake of channeling the communication between the artist and its audience. When Jonathan Snipes describes the visuals on their concert as “an idea to take ridiculous or stupid activities and amplify them by taking them very seriously”, he involuntarily abstracts and summarizes their whole musical appearance.

Conclusion:

As musical virtuosity is not a central target anymore, it is substituted by virtuosity of performance. Through the corporeal presence of the artist, emanating the work via his own physical activity and visual accompaniment, he creates a significant construction of subjective artistic meaning. In this process, technology plays a double role - it alienates the performative interaction

⁵⁰ As in a case of Otto Von Schirach's show, where his two main performers grab the people to dance on the stage with them.

and enables it in the same time.

In contrast with many futuristic, mechanistic and subversive signs as explained in previous chapters, the breakcore live act re-establishes traditional aesthetic values of live performance, and focuses on an interactive crowd amusement. After a long period of DJ culture and estrangement due to technology involved in music production and live interaction, the bodily involvement in breakcore redefines what is a live musical performance on today's electronic dance scene. Contrary to Frederickson's statement about electronic music, the audience at a breakcore event does not relate to the machines any more, but to the performer again, and the language is no longer either verbal or technical, but performative.

V. Political aspect:

During the fieldwork, I was reminded by some breakcore fans and informants not to forget about breakcore's political aspect. Besides a few breakcore artists who use explicitly political lyrics and visuals, I have not really mentioned much manifestation of politics in breakcore events I have seen. Proper political content was more an exception rather than a general rule.

The more I have been studying the theme, the more I have become persuaded that the idea of an explicit political message in breakcore music is merely a stereotype today – it could have been present in breakcore in the beginning, but it is not present there anymore. Such an evolution of the situation is nothing extraordinary or rare, as similar process of vanishing political messages took place in the freetechno movement and in rave culture.

However, I would admit that in breakcore there is present a certain political attitude, which does not necessarily target a political situation or global problems, but is more manifested on a level of personal liberty – a power or right to act without any restraints.

This attitude appears in several aspects of the artistic expression analysed in the previous

chapters. In most of those signs, there is a perceivable aversion to follow common norms of aesthetics both music and visual, tendencies to surpass any given and prevalent limits (such as of stage behavior; speed, volume and cut-up overexposure in music), corruption of individual music property by sampling process, claim to an equality of musical values and an anti-elitist attitude. “Breakcore means for me a freedom to do whatever I want to do,” states Otto Von Schirach (itv 16.4. 2010)

This makes reference to the Dadaist movement, which mocked to middle class values, where noise, destruction and cacophonous sounds were sources of new category of beauty and art “turns into a projectile which hammers at the perceiver.” A source of alienation for a non-breakcore audience is that they could certainly consider the event and the music to be a shocking and provocative act of doubting traditional socio-aesthetic values. This could be seen both as an act of socio-political subversion, undermining of mainstream culture, and also at the same time as a manifestation of subjective aesthetic taste and freedom of expression.

Chapter 3: Semiologic analysis of promotional materials of Otto Von Schirach

Introduction

This part of the thesis is based on Pierce's theory of signs, which I briefly describe below. The goal is to trace out relevant signs, whose connotation I will explore in the actual context of the promotional materials of breakcore artist Otto Von Schirach. Those signs will be considered as a point of departure for a realization of the ethnographic fieldwork. As the most appropriate methodic tool I chose a method called **CIMA – Cross - Impact Analysis**, developed by Czech media analyst Mgr. Ivan Vágner, my teacher on Private Faculty Of Journalism in Prague (Vyšší odborná škola publicistiky). We have been practicing this method for three years of studies and it appears to be a very effective system for media analysis. As a second method, which was more an intellectual inspiration for me, was a semiological analysis of Roland Barthes as described in his book *Mythology*.

The result of the analysis should be generation of actual signs in a work of Otto Von Schirach. Therefore I do not take a comparative attitude, comparing the changes of the signs over a long time period, but I have focused the field of the research on actual representation. Thus the semiologic analysis is based on visual and textual materials available in February 2010 for the new album of Otto Von Schirach, *Magic Triangle*.⁵¹ At the time of finalization of the thesis, Otto issued new photos, which are more focused on the performative side of his live concert.⁵² Still, the photos demonstrate very similar signs, as a it is concluded in this analysis.

⁵¹ Released in November 2009 on Subconscious records.

⁵² Those photos are on a DVD added to the thesis and besides Otto's photos as a warrior include profile photos of Otto's performers – Thug Jesus and Mr. Feathers

I. Methodology

At the beginning, I would like to explain several criteria which I will use as a framework in analysis. Those criteria will differ in the case of visual and textual analysis. Primarily I want to expose a denotative meaning of the sign and then focus on connotation in an actual context.

1. Pierce's theory of signs

In the analysis I assume that every sign has a meaning. According to Pierce's theory of sign, sign is “something, which represents something else in a relation to other thing. So *a* represents *b* in reference to *c*. “ (Palek 1997: 8)

In the course of the analysis I will use Pierce' s sign classification based on three triads. The most relevant for the work is the second triad, whose first correlate is *ICON*, second *INDEX* and third *SYMBOL*. Pierce characterizes those correlates in this way:

“ Icon has no dynamic junction with the object, which it represents; its qualities remind the qualities of object and evokes analogue sensations in the mind. But in reality it is not connected. Index is physically joined to its object; index and object make an organic pair, but the interpretative mind is not involved. (...) Symbol is connected to its object due to idea in the mind using the symbols, without that there would never be any connection” (Palek 1997: 68).

- *ICON*: a sign, which relates to object, founded on the relation of semblance with a significant object. Icon comprises attributes of the object, by an icon we mean everything, which is semblable to the object or used as its sign (e.g. A map, a photography,...). Icons are divided by Pierce on images, diagrams and metaphors.

- *INDEX*: a sign, which is in a direct relation with the denotative object, relates to the object and is influenced by it; modification of sign by object is fundamental, refers to particular object, event or phenomenon (e.g. a foot print in a sand)
- *SYMBOL*: a sign determined by quality, which establishes a generic theme; a specific rule indicates that this symbol is interpreted as a symbol referring to the object; represent a generic type, as well as the object which is related to it, symbol has a conventional character (e.g. word Prague, state flag)

2. CIMA - Cross-Impact Analysis

For the semiologic analysis it is important to set the relevant contents which would be practical to work with. For detecting those crucial materials, I used an analogy to the method of CIMA.

First I have to find out '*key spots*' – the most important, expressive and representative parts of particular medium, which will be later analyzed. Those 'key points' are speaking through the language of graphics and text to its recipients and therefore they are characterized by high level of control from responsible authorities (f. e. redactor-in-chief in magazine or graphic editor). The content of those materials represents a purpose issued by particular authority; this purpose could be then interpreted.

For an example:

In a case of media analysis of Czech printed magazines⁵³, we used these *key spots*, which became criteria for evaluation of each magazine.

- *COVER* of a magazine – analysis comprehend photos, texts, titles, styles and formats
- *EDITORIAL* – an article written by redactor-in- chief; analysis considers the content of the text and a photography of the editor, which is usually added (colors, shape, cloth, face expression, ...)
- *CONTENT* - a page describing the structure of magazine; analysis comprehend visual and textual adjustment

As Schirach's promotional materials also represent media content with an aim to mediate a communication within the author and the listener, I consider a CIMA method as an appropriate method to be applied. Analogically to CIMA, I set the *key spots* for a case of visual and textual analysis of music promotional materials.

2.a. Key spots in visual materials

1. PROMOTION PHOTOS

According to my opinion, one of the most relevant media content of visual part are '*promotion photos*' – *promophotos*. These photos represent mostly stylized photography, which should aptly reflect the artist and his musical world. It is very common to issue a new set of promophotos for each album and tour, because they hold a mirror to the artist 's actual intention. Promophotos are usually distributed by the manager of the artist, by the artist himself or by his alternative communication interfaces – websites, Facebook, MySpace, ... There is a primary

⁵³ Magazines Týden, Žena a život, Time In.

supervision by artist or his management spread over the creation and distribution of those photographs. This character of the photos also answers a question, why photos from live concerts are not considered as a authentic information source. The reason is that the original source of such photos is vague and author and management has zero control over the content. Copyright of the photos belongs to the photographer and the author of the music does not interfere with the content. He can only distribute it through his communication channels. Thus photos from live concerts usually don't manifest the primary intention of the artist's world – they only capture a stage representation of this world via lenses of photographer's camera and present a photographer ' s opinion of the artist's world, which is irrelevant information for this media analysis.

2. COVER

Next *key spot* in a visual layer is a ***cover of an album***, which signifies a main visual representation of the particular art work. This spot is also under a supervision of an artist and management. Usually there are long debates regarding the cover design, texts and graphics in several communication channels – in between graphic designer, artist and label. Intensity of this communication differs from case to case, regarding the energy of every communication subjects. How much refers a final cover to reflexion of an artist itself, label marketing intentions and graphic artistic imprint could be a wider discussion. The important fact is that final design of the cover is always confirmed by the artist, who symbolically claims by his agreement the music intention is appropriately assigned to the actual visual representation of the cover.

2. b. Key spots in textual materials

1. BIOGRAPHY

I would consider an artist biography as one of the most important *key spots* in textual analysis of artistic media materials. A biography presents both historic anchorage of the author and manifestation of his actual state, often it explains how and where he grew up, give details about his albums and non - music activities, describes his future plans, tours, ... Biography creates a fictive rational and logic line in between the author, his private and professional development and the music. The main message of the biography is *contextualization* of the author and his work. This contextualization should enable to place the author to the "appropriate aesthetic box" within its limits would be possible to discuss his work – whether on a journalistic level in critical articles or public level in club with friends.

In consequence, biography causes a new coding of information, it represents an explicit clue, how to read the art work. Because the official biography is considered as an authentic source of information, it does not usually request verifying of the data. Thus if the recipient himself doesn't critically investigate the credibility of the content, these biographic information could be used as a communication channel for spreading the author's fictive facts, creative images about his "authentic" world, personal ideologies, ... On a one hand, biography is coming forward to the music journalism and on the other hand it is an effective tool for manipulation of the recipient's knowledge.

2. AN ALBUM PRESS INFO

The very similar is valid in a case of the second textual *key spot* describing an particular album – **an album press info**. The content of the text is usually more imaginative in contrary to biography text, which is mostly more formal. This loosen attitude is based on a reason, that actually

there is not a lot of factographic information regarding the album (besides a recording studio name, place and dates, names of cooperators and producers). The rest of the information is related to the artist's meaning of the music and a process of work is often based on metaphors, which relation to the artist's reality is more or less symbolic.

Criteria for evaluation of semiologic analysis

- visual analysis will be focused on these criteria:
 - form of image – photographic work, graphic work or combination of both
 - measure of stylization – arrangement of the image, postproduction, graphic manipulation
 - analysis of the background
 - representation of the artist – pose, face expression, clothes, ...
 - presence of other attributes and its symbolic connotation
 - presence of a text (on cover of album) – font, color, size

This visual analysis will reveal specific signs, which are manifested on particular photographs. However the interpretation of those signs might seem quite open, I would use knowledge about the breakcore scene I got during several years of participated observation for framing an actual connotation of the image representation. By this manner I achieve a range of meanings of the signs, which are the most frequently manifested on the images.

- textual analysis will be focused on verification of the signs manifested in visuals with a goal to amplify or reduce its relevance. It is very possible that textual analysis also reveals some new signs, which would be considered as sustainable. An evaluation considers such criteria:

- character of information (factographic of imaginative)
- the amount of represents of the relevant signs

II. SEMILOGIC ANALYSIS

i. ANALYSIS OF VISUAL MATERIALS

a. PROMOPHOTOS

This photographic material is available on Schirach's website and was sent to me by the tour manager during preparing for the concert of Otto Von Schirach in Prague⁵⁴

For the purpose of the analysis I have chosen three promophotos. Wider range of analysis proved to be useless due to repetition of the signs on each photo.

54 Cross Club, 17. 3. 2010

PROMOPHOTO N.1



According to my opinion, this photo is a collage of two photographic layers. First one is a background photo with naked dolls and the second one is a portrait photo of Otto Von Schirach. Both photos are captured in a very professional quality with an accent on brightness of the colors.

A level of stylization is high; the structure of the doll's shape is not random, but it has a specific target with a strong aesthetic effect. There is also an empty space left in the center for the portrait of the musician.

The portrait photography captures the author in a very upright pose in the front panel of the photo; Schirach's gaze is fixed, he is almost staring at the viewer. This picture reminds me portraits of the rulers, who had such paintings in the saloons of the castles that every newcomer had an impression the ruler's gaze is following him everywhere he moves.

Schirach's face expression is very persistent and determined, which together with his pose could be considered as a symbol of **power, self-confidence** and certain **domination of the situation**; means situation at his back side and also – that 's even more important – in front of him. This evokes an

inner view to the privacy of the recipient, a certain control over his life. Schirach wears a white vest on the naked, slightly hairy chest. The white color is a conventional symbol of an **innocence**.

Similar denotation is possible in a case of the most expressive attributes of the photography - naked dolls. In our cultural environment, dolls are usually denoted as a symbol of a childhood and period of **innocence and naivety**. These specific dolls are naked – which emphasizes an aspect of vulnerability. Regarding the critical reflexion of conformal society by breakcore artists, the naked dolls could connote an act of consumerism, material overflow and strategies to commercialize childhood by marketing manipulation. A junction of the innocence, naked vulnerability and commercial manipulation of children world make from the dolls a sign of violence over unprotected subjects – a possible **masochism**, but mainly **sadism and perversion**.

The dolls are shaped into a circle. Considering the other signs of magic and eastern spirituality in the work of Otto Von Schirach I would interpret this shape as an iconic sign of mandala. Mandala is a magic symbol, which is in its original context a spiritual tool for creating a sacred space, a tool enabling meditation and trance exaltation. According to David Fontana this magic character of mandala could help to access the deeper levels of unconsciousness, where an aspirant can achieve a mystic experience of unity with a cosmos. Psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung says that “mandala is a representation of the unconsciousness itself”. In the period of 60s of 20th century the eastern spirituality passed through new connotations to reinterpretation, which lead to current emptying of these magic symbols. For the moment, I will consider mandala as a symbol of **magic representation**, eventually a symbol of **criticism of today's spirituality**.
(www.wikipedia.com/mandala)

PROMOPHOTO N. 2



In a case of the second promophoto, there is not traceable such a clear method of collage. However there is a possibility the photography consist of two layers again (red background and the author in front), it could be also a stylized photography in atelier.

This image appeals less manipulated; it captures the author in a movement and communication, his face expression is more natural and spontaneous.

The dominated colors are white (again) and red. Red is basic color of the background, which reminds an abstract painting. A red color is conventionally considered as a symbol of provocation and excitation, erotic stimulation. The background is harmonized with the clothes of Schirach, who wears white clothes with red strips.

Photography captures Schirach in a moment of communication with a third person, who is not evidently a photographer, but somebody unpresent for the viewer, to who Schirach turns his face with a vulpine and naughty gaze. This time the photo does not represent a straight communication with a viewer, but an indirect communication due to the action on the photography.

Schirach holds a giant screw heading to his mouth, where a wisp of the blood is dropping down. The screw is an indexal sign of a violence. As it is targeted against the author itself, it again represents a sign of certain masochism. The author expresses the action which should be presumed by the viewer; the blood is running because he harmed himself.

Schirach's clothes are white again, this time in a suit with red braces, whose shape indicates an aristocrat dress or officer's uniform. Uniform is generally considered as a sign of **authority, power, domination and manipulation**. In the same time, this uniform is open and shows a piece of Schirach's naked chest – this detail applies salacity which together with a authority of uniform is kind of inappropriate, a bit perverted or ironic. I would conclude that those signs of innocence, masochism and authority mixed with erotic provocation leads to aspect of **perversion**.

PROMOPHOTO N. 3



Regarding previous analysis, we can easily detect the common signs with previous pictures. Third photo captures Schirach in front of the cosmic space, which is an icon representing of the

cosmic views. In the background, there are glitters of distant stars and specific light shining through space aerosol. This type of an iconic representation of the space is often used in popular spiritual pictures to motivate the thoughts about human relation to universe. Again we find a sign of magic representation or criticism of esoterics. I have revealed an eventual ironic connotation regarding the overuse of spiritual and psychedelic symbols by 90s rave culture which turned to commercialization of such material and spiritual objects.

Schirach is dressed again in white color. In his palm a white flock is floating, a subtle substance which reminds wool or a smoke. It could also symbolize a “Bib Boom” in his hand.

Again, Schirach is in straight communication with the viewer from the intern space of the photo to outer space of viewer's reality. His gaze is firm, a bit wondered and captivating, eyes wide open. This type of gaze is an indexal sign of spiritual revelation or providence mediated by the eye connection. Schirach is being present as Messiah, which communicates “the revealed truth”. By junction of the cosmic background, white smoke and his face expression, he attains an effect of omniscient Demiurge, as a symbol of unity, power and resolvedness. The one who rules all this universe and the private life of the view as well.

Even though this photos uses a pleasant aesthetics, it provoke a nervous impression of paranoia, where Schirach represent a higher power, which rules and dominates. One of my informants called this view: “I see through you” as others would only call it “insane”.

b. COVER

According to *key spots* of analysis, the next fundamental material is a cover of an music album. I would like to focus on the most recent album, Magic Triangle.



The album is called Magic Triangle, which manipulates already a connotation of some signs present on the picture. The same importance has also a form of the cover.

The cover was made by a graphic designer of the label Subconscious records and it is drawn in a comix style, fully based on graphic manipulation. It is reflected in colors, texture of the drawing and visual content, which refers to genre sci-fi. This type of visual work could be another indicator of the picture meaning.

Commix is primarily a form of “low literature”, which does not a priori deal with serious themes or at least treat them in a parodic or ironic manner. This formal frame of the cover of the album implicates an amusing and relieve atmosphere, possibly also an ironic connotation. This should be regarded in analysis of the final sign set. Also a font of title of the album is dynamic, written to make allusion to thrillers or vampire stories.

The image captures Schirach in a pose of superhero, who is going to drop off frame. The author is a central point of an attenuation: he holds a sword in a hand, which is usually considered as a sign of boldness and fight, dressed up in a coat, which reminds a superman dress – he uses the same coat and a band over the eyes during his live performances. A superman represents an aspect of **braveness and advocate of marginalized people, fighter for good and justice**, all signs of **HEROISM**.

The decorations on the chest indicate by the structure and colors some Indian decorations on the clothes – that could have a connotation of esoteric character or global kitschy approach and profanation of an eastern spirituality.

The most dynamic and most important element is according to my opinion Schirach's hand heading towards the viewer as giving him to read from it. Open palm functions as a indexal sign of open book with a text, which is in this case represented by a picture of huge eye. Regarding previous analysis and detected signs of spirituality, I would say that it is an iconic representation of magic **third eye**.



“ Third eye is a mystic and esoteric concept referring so sixth chakra in eastern and western spiritual tradition. It is called as gate to the intern world and layers of higher conscience. In a context of New Age movement, third eye symbolize a state of enlightenment or evocation of mental images having a deep spiritual and psychological meaning. Third eye is often associated with visions, providence and out-of- body experience. People able to develop a capacity of a third eye are known as prophets. (Wikipedia).” Third eye is related to indigo color and his representative shape is a triangle – which shows up as an important element in Otto Von Schirach's show.

- **Conclusion of the visual material**

As the name of the album – Magic Triangle – supports magic coding of connotated meanings present on the cover, primarily we would say, that this cover issues a clear representation of HEROISM and MAGIC POWER. On the other hand, the aspect of comix form put these signs to quotations. As I got to know later on, this comix style is used for all the albums of the label as a generic graphic design. So finally this visual humor is more a designer's aesthetics than a proper artistic purpose. Thus the attitude of IRONY to profound human values as private bravery, superman heroism and spiritual leading has actually a small relevance to the final meaning of the cover.

In general it could be said, that the promophotos of Otto Von Schirach are very professional, from the aesthetic and conceptual view and technical part as well. There are no qualitative defects, every picture is bright, sharp, colorfully and compositionally balanced.

Those photos are also precisely stylized. According to the analysis, I would conclude that Otto Von Schirach's promophotos are an elaborated manipulation with a visual material, which represents a mediator within him and the listener.

The most dominant signs are signs of PERVERSION, MASOCHISM, POWER over the world of the listener, SPIRITUALITY, MYSTICISM and MAGIC, with eventual sign of IRONY.

ii. ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL MATERIAL

A. BIOGRAPHY

For a better understanding I present a press material of Otto Von Schirach as it was delivered to me by his manager for the purpose of promotion of Schirach's concert in Prague. I have indicated

words which are related to the final set of signs of visual analysis.

A biography:

Take Electro Bass Noise, Gore Grind, IDM Glitch, Calliope, Breakcore Gabber Jungle, Gangsta Rap, mix them all together and what you get? Otto Von Schirach's Maxipad Detention of course!

Otto Von Schirach (half Cuban / half German) was born in 1978 in the swamp infested refugee world of Little Havana Miami. As a child his grandmother practiced Santería and White Magic, which opened his eyes to the strange and bizarre. Otto grew up listening to Miami Bass, Gore Grind, Gangsta Rap and Afro Cuban Noise. In 1995 Otto bought his first drum machine from a crack-head just 2 blocks from his mom's house. Right away he recognized his passion for grimy diamond soaked kick drums through distorted fuzz muck.

In 1998 Otto released his first demo, which got him signed to a 4 album deal with Miami's electronic gangsters Schematic Records. Later he released another 3 records on Beta Bodega with La Mano Fria under his alias El Santo. In 2003 Otto worked on the Skinny Puppy album "The Greater Wrong of the Right" which scored him a 57 show tour opening for them across the USA. He scared the living shit out of all the Skinny Puppy fans night after night with his 35 minute, 3 costume change, ear punishing dance party. In 2004 Miss Kitten had Otto do a Gangsta Bass Sci-Fi remix of her "Professional Distortion" track, released on Nova Mute UK. Most recently Otto finished a Sound Library for Fixed Noise and Native Instruments entitled "OTTO" which offers over 4 GB of instruments that include construction, loops, sequences, surround, random and much more.

In Early 2005 Otto sent Mike Patton (co owner of Ipecac Recordings) a 38 song CDR, Mike hand-picked and sequenced in his own mix, which is now "Maxipad Detention". On July 25th, 2006 Otto and Ipecac will release "Maxipad Detention" an 18 song journey into gore filled Gabber Bass Drums from beyond.

After 8 albums, 10,000 shows, a 4 Gigabyte Sound Library and 7 computers, what else do you want? Otto is currently working on a bunch of new collaborations with Venetian Snares, Doormouse, Gut, Ebola, Gouch and is also in the studio working on new ideas for the next Skinny Puppy record.

Otto is a true Gang Banger. A true slave to the sound wave, he will always make love to speakers worldwide.

The press info about Otto Von Schirach is on a first glimpse very rich on information, but it is easy to find out that all the data don't overpass a year 2006, when he has released an album Maxipad Detention. Since 2006 there is no factographic information. This information gap is very interesting regarding the precise visual conduction of the photos and cover. Could be a sign of negligence or self-confidence of the author in a manner that he need not to be contextualized anymore, which is not really the case of Schirach according to the research. More it refers to alienation of the author and the music label, who should be responsible for actual information in

promotional materials or a lack of interest in promotion by Schirach.

Besides the factographic information gap I consider a mention about Schirach's grandmother who practiced white magic as really important, because it makes some reference to signs of magic and mysticism in the photos. Even though it could be all imaginary, as the whole language of the text is, it might be a certain clue. I want to also mention the emphasis on the masquerade aspect and sound challenge of the live performance, which was also theme of my fieldwork.

B. PROMOTEXT FOR THE ALBUM MAGIC TRIANGLE

This text is from the website ottovonshirach.com, where its appears with a image of cover of an album. Again I present the whole text with indicated pieces of reference to the previous signs.

“Otto von schirach has recently returned to present day earth after having Traveled thru out time and the universe to create his latest work Magic triangle . Miami's musical missionary has toiled diligently for over a decade exposing this planet to the effects of his alien aided audio creation's on his continued Quest of musical Mysticism and the quest continues . Otto Von Schirach has introduced Earth to many memorable symphonies in the past and Magical Triangle is no exception . This Latest album delivered to us courtesy of his 8th eye Features 15 songs including The Title Track to the film deathprint . Conceived during the great space battle and shrouded in mystery other tracks on the album where created by Otto as he fought so bravely alongside the banana sloth armed with synths , swords and the magic of the triangle . Travel deeper into the nucleus of Otto's creation and its sound becomes more and more unfamiliar to the ear. less like traditional earth music of the past , Otto's latest offering to the alien angels of the planet audio has succeeded in channeling those saints of sound to father an album more accurately described as a collection of ritualistic extraterrestrial chants . Magic Triangle is unique to anything Otto has produced in the past and is not likely to recreated again . Let this serve as warning to the world "Magical Triangle" has arrived and is available thru skinny puppies co founder Kevin Keys label SubConscious records.

The language style of the piece is quite crazy and informal. The text is not very informative, but more metaphoric and imaginative. This textual image presents Otto Von Schirach as a space knight (“missionary”), armed with weapons in a form of music instruments (synthesizers), magic objects (magic triangle) passing through dangerous adventures and battles. The purpose of his

personal space Odyssey is to acquire new musical materials and songs. The musical instrument is a source of the artist's power, and ensures a victory in every battle. The concept of a music instrument as a weapon, which guides the musician and enables him to become an audacious hero, is very interesting and appears also in other artistic worlds of breakcore musicians.

The whole the text is more than mere informative material: it is a fundamental guide for understanding of artist's mission. The acts of the artist get a form of Barthes's mythology, where “mythic utterance is created from materia, which is already crafted with a regard to certain communication” (Barthes 2004: 108) and in the same time it results in an “undiscussible image” (Barthes 2004: 117)

In the textual material, the signs of SCI-FI are strongly manifested, and again we can see representation of HEROISM, MESSIAHSHIP, POWER and MYSTICISM.

III. CONCLUSION OF SEMIOLOGIC ANALYSIS

The quality of the materials accords to a bright artistic vision, strong conceptualization and manipulation of the artistic world. I consider as the most significant signs for the work of Otto Von Schirach a sign of **POWER** in several different connotations – power over his own world and power over the recipient's world, power in a heroic, masochist and sadistic manner. Then I would name the signs of **MAGIC**, **EROTICISM** and **IRONY**. Manifestation of those signs in his non-artistic world will be a part of the upcoming fieldwork.

The most important result of the analysis is a strong mythological aspect of the promotional materials – it uses a connotated symbols with historic anchorage and reveal them in a new context. This in fact is the basis of a new type of mythology, which Schirach develops in fabulous stories covering his personality and grounding a certain *cult of personality*.

According to Roland Barthes, mythus is an utterance, which implements some specific conditions. One of them is a historical fundament of the myth, “because myth is an utterance chose by history: it can't be emerge from a “ nature” of the objects.” (Barthes 2004: 75). Myth is not bound by any particular materia, object or medium, mythic utterance could be a theatre, film, reportage, advertisement, photography, music... because “every materia could be arbitrary able of a significance” (Barthes 2004: 63)

By this significance Barthes means a concept, where a concrete representation is assigned to an arbitrary materia, as in a case of the third eye in a comix frame. **Mythic utterance is produced by materia, which is not already crafted in regard to certain communication.** Materia is represented by historical anchorage of signs (magic triangle, third eye, mandala) and the appropriate communication frame is their new connotation in the media materials of the artist.

As Barthes states, a form of a myth is not a symbol; it exposes itself as a wealthy, experienced, spontaneous, innocent, non-undiscussible image, which in this case creates a specific artistic world. This mythological attitude, manifested in promotional materials, live concerts and music itself, constitutes an essential artistic approach of Otto Von Schirach (Barthes 2004: 117).

Chapter 4: Santería as a subliminal power for music production of

Otto Von Schirach

Introduction

Concept of spirituality in electronic music

This part of the thesis is ethnographic research presenting a case study of specific type of urban electronic avant-garde music, the genre of breakcore, produced by Miami-based musician Otto Von Schirach, as a guide for his his spiritual practice of the Cuban religion Santería.

A concept of spirituality involved in electronic music was mainly acquired during the rave movement in USA and Europe in early 90s. Gina Fatone describes the rave parties as “a technologically mediated ritual process” based on psychedelic, New age-y conviction manifested as a all-night party escapism from everyday urban reality (Fatone 2003: 1).

As far as I know, after that there was such music movements, who would explicitly claim a spiritual message of the music. On the other hand, there are certainly single individuals, who involve particular spirituality to the artistic approach, such as haitian musician Erol Josué, who as a voodoo priest in New York involves a Haitian voodoo religious tradition to his music or Anthony Joseph and Spams bang, who mix Caribbean voodoo with hiphop.

However, a concept of spirituality in today urban electronic avant-garde music is still quite exceptional. In a way it resettles a discourse of ritual character of music as a spiritual channel, which was common in indigenous societies (f. e. shamanic drumming rituals) or folklore music, but is not as common in a high- technology based electronic culture. Therefore I have chosen this specific artist Otto Von Schirach to find out how the spiritual context enables a connection of artistic approach between the “digital - information era” and traditional music and ritual values.

Methodology

I have grounded this research on participant observation of Otto Von Schirach's music career since 2006, analyzing of his shows⁵⁵, one month of intensive fieldwork in his hometown Miami, and non-directed in-depth interviews with him, his performers (David Tamargo, aka Thug Jesus and Armando A. Santelices aka Mr. Feathers/Peasants with Feathers), friends and fans.

The proper fieldwork about Otto Von Schirach was not as easy as I supposed. He seemed unreachable - I wrote him several emails before I have decided for the theme of breakcore and the only answer I got was “I am abducted to jupiter. Sorry. I be back on earth on Tuesday.”⁵⁶ That motivated me even more. When I became sure about possibility of fieldwork in Miami, I contacted Otto again with no response, so I turned my attention for his tour manager. As Schirach planned to tour for whole the month of March 2010 in Europe for the new album *Magic Triangle*, I decided to promote a concert for him in Prague; I thought I would take a chance to get closer with the artist before I went to bother him for whole the month in Miami, and I would get a chance to have more information from his management and also to see the difference in reaction of Czech audience compared American ones. This was a good strategy, which enabled me to set the plan of fieldwork in Miami more precisely.

Proper fieldwork in Miami, which I began a few days after Otto finished the European tour, had three different parts. Our contact was more easy then via email, but still a bit chaotic. Otto, as do a lot of other music producers, works through night until the morning, and goes to sleep around dawn. There was no point calling him before noon. All our interviews and meetings were held in

⁵⁵ Concert on Wasted festival, Transmediale (Berlin 2006), Sonar (Barcelona 2007), Cross club Prague (2010) and several concerts in Miami (april 2010).

⁵⁶ Actually even after the fieldwork he doesn 't respond to the emails anymore and all the communication and information needed goes through David Tamargo

the evening or at night, never before 8 p.m. Even though he changed the dates and time of our meetings quite often, every time we met he was concentrated and focused on our discussion. Those discussions were only interrupted by passing of his close friend and performer Mr. Feathers who was coming to do music with him ⁵⁷or Thug Jesus, another performer, who was so nice as to drive me there and back home at night since public transport was not available in Miami. Mostly they both sat and carefully listened to Otto's words. Sometimes we were discussing the themes all together.

The second part of the fieldwork was participant observation of his concerts in Miami. During one month, I have seen three of his shows on different location – in Art District Area, in White Room during Miami Winter Music Conference and in the luxury club Mecca. At those events I chose some audience informants who were coming every time to see Otto's show.

The third part of fieldwork was participant observation of personal free time activities. Otto and his friends were organizing some party at least once a week with a special dress code. They would also go to some opening of exhibitions, birthday parties, music contests organized by his friends, etc. We also celebrated Easter together, colored our faces with reflexive signs as warriors and hunting the eggs for several hours in a park at the ocean. At those events, I met most of his and his girlfriend's friends, who were either internationally or locally known emerging artists, musicians and performers on an art avant-garde scene. Some of them had Cuban origin, some of them were “white Americans.” With those people I was also discussing Otto's music, visual and performative aesthetics. I must notably mention my main informant, David Tamargo, who was always open to talk about my research themes, because he had a wide overview about local culture, music, art, and historic background.

⁵⁷ When I have asked Otto how is he helping him in producing music, he told me, that he just sits by him and it helps. They do discusse the music a lot and talk about some changes...

Situation of Otto Von Schirach on the global breakcore scene

Otto Von Schirach, a 32 year old Miami artist with Cuban origins, is active on a music scene since 2000. He became known in Europe as a part of the breakcore movement, which was presented on Transmediale festival in Berlin (2004 – 2007), during special events called Wasted, which were organized by another breakcore artist, Jason Forrest/Donna Summer. Thanks to those events, he attracted a European audience who were tired of the grid of jungle and drum and bass music and impersonal, indifferent vibe of laptop-mix-turntables performances. Compared to well-designed, posh mainstream electronic scene and grey and dirty European underground rave parties - this guy was a total freak with a woman's shower cap on his head, wearing a superman costume, and beating his ballet dancers/performers with a giant silver gum penis, singing with a distorted vocal to crazy, hard, fun and fast music mix, which had an original sound growing from IDM, dub step, glitch, electro, rave, and field samples.

His appearance on Sonar music festival in Barcelona 2007 was more than misfit for the posh minimal techno music surrounding, but still Otto Von Schirach made a mark on the global music market. Touring with Skinny Puppy, based his fan's platform around the world and with his latest album, *Magic Triangle* (2009), he could afford an European tour on his own. I have observing his career for several years, and this spring seemed to be a culmination of all his hopes and ambitions.

On his shows, there was always something really seductive for me, which I couldn't understand. As a lot of people around, I was confused, I was disgusted, I was amused, yet hypnotized – is it fun, is it ironic, is it a gender provocation, is it a sadistic fetishism, is it an approach to something – to what then? That was the point of departure of a research – to find out what is so extraordinary about this guy, his music, and his performance.

I remember a phrase of David Byrne from the movie *Beyond Ipanema* (dir. Guto Barra, 2010), which was stated about Tropicalia movement in Brazil and reflects a beginning of this

fieldwork: “I even didn't know what was the question, but there was the answer. Now I had to find the question.” This particular phrase link up an actual subjective artistic approach to a socio-historic contextualization. Even though these themes were already developed in culture theoretical part of the thesis (Omnipresent signs), with a case study about Otto Von Schirach this question is raised again on another level – the level channelling personal spiritual beliefs through music.

I. Miami as new home for Cuban immigrants

This chapter situates Otto Von Schirach as member of hispanic community and a first generation descendent of Cuban immigrants in 2010 in Florida's capital city Miami, the most hispanic city of USA.

In general knowledge a Cuban immigration to the United States is connected to Castro's dictatorship regime. Despite this there were several waves in history when Cubans were settling in North America. ⁵⁸The first wave was at the end of 19th century, when a lot of Cuban musicians moved to New Orleans, which had a heavy effect on development of jazz music.

The first wave of mass immigration under Castro, which followed, was formed mostly from “golden generation” - rich Cuban people, thought they would return in a short period, after falling of Castro's regime. Although Castro didn't interdict to leave the country explicitly, he made several restrictions, which made it as uneasy and complicated as possible – f. e. once you leave the country, all the personal and familiar material property left⁵⁹ (the biggest part had been already confiscated

⁵⁸ The official number of Cuban people in USA from the beginning of 20th century (1910) was 15 000. This number increased in late 50s, when almost 210 000 Cuban people immigrated during first years of Castro's regime, who came to the power in january 1959 by conquisting of the Cuban capital Havana and chasing the former leader, Batista, out of the country.

⁵⁹ Strict limits were also applied for luggage content of immigrants - according to a governmental rule, the immigrants, called “gusanos” (worms of revolution) were not allowed to take more then a small suitcase with two trousers, two pieces of underwear and one book (www.urnich. edu).

by the government) belongs to the state, and an immigration clause was made for children who would have to flee alone with a hope to get together with a rest of family in few months⁶⁰.

As a result of these directive regulations, the Cuban social hierarchy disappeared once the immigrant have reached the “free world” of America. Regardless to the former social status, Cuban immigrants faced a lack of material and financial background, relying on a good will of friends, friends of friends and hospitality of Americans, who would for example adopt the children for a period till parents could join them in US. After a while realizing their return to the homeland wouldn't be so soon, they had to start from beginning - struggling also with language difficulties and religious intolerance.

Otto Von Schirach's family came to America on a boat in early 60s. Otto's maternal grandmother was married to a Cuban movie star, Ernesto de Gali, who helped her to get out of the country with his money and political connections. She left on the boat with a four-year-old daughter, Otto's mother. She got married again to a “*vajiro, type of gipsy by nature*”⁶¹ and traveled the whole of the States, living wherever they found a temporary job. They were also coming to the city of Miami several times, which finally became their new home place.

Otto's father landed in Miami at the age of 19. His family was already in New York City, but he left Cuba later and went to New York to get a job. “My dad came like ghetto style, he just hustled. He is kind of loner, the type of dude who rides the motocyrcles and shoot guns. He would rather kill somebody then talk to him, that' s at least what it seems like “ OTS 10. 4. 2010.

⁶⁰ That could have been lenghtended up to 40 years, as in case of famous Cuban writer Carlos Eire, the author of autobiographical book *Waiting for the snow in Havana*.

⁶¹ Itv OTS, march 2010.

Miami: We speak English

Miami, the closest American metropolis to Cuba, was the initial place and prior destination for a lot of Cuban immigrants, whether they came as children, passing from refugee camps⁶² to distinctive foster care or as teenage/adults starting their private battle for reaching the American dream. The vast majority of Cuban immigrants settled there. Today most Cubans in Florida call Miami-Dade County their new home.⁶³

That' s the reason why a lot of local people emphasize the distinction between Miami and average American city, which would be also agreed and confirmed by the travelers, who would only point out the similar specificity rate to San Francisco or Los Angeles. As a newcomer from Europe, I was often welcomed to places and events by the words: “Miami, that' s not America.”

Special status of Miami is based on its high number of hispanic immigrants from different places, not only Cuba, but South American and Caribbean countries such as Puerto Rico, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Columbia, Argentina, .. who all together color the core of the local atmosphere. This multi-ethnic, hispanic aspect is becomes clear as soon as you land in the inner - city airport and stop at first open cafe at the highway to eat some snack - you get “empanadas,” strong Cuban coffee, and a shop assistant who fluently switches from Spanish to English, as soon she realizes your non – hispanic origin.

The most hispanic part always was and still is Little Havana, situated in the central western side of downtown. The beating heart of the “hispanic neighborhood Calle Ocho (8th Street) has a

62 f.e. in Homestead, 80 km south of Miami

63 In 1960, the Hispanic population of Miami was 50,000; in 1980, it was 580,000; in 2000 it was approximately 800,000. By 1970, 50% of Miami hotel staff members were Cuban American, and in 1980 half of all Miami-area construction companies were Cuban-owned (www.urnich. Edu).

different flow than the rest of the city showing its temperament: vivid live in the street, a lot of Cuban small restaurant, amazing Cuban coffee “cocaine shot” for its strength, old men playing petang in the park, teenagers dealing drugs, stealing cars and bikes, small shops called Botánicas with spiritual objects as a meeting point for religious people. Even though Otto proudly states that he comes from a ghetto, it is more like hyperbole - Little Havana does not really correspond to an image of an American ghetto. However certain carefulness was appropriate; the streets were pretty safe even for driving bike in the night, while leaving a bike outside of the building would be a foolish idea.

In Otto's case, being a guy from a hispanic ghetto refers more to his experience as a wild childhood and teenage, of having intensive contacts with Cuban spirituality, and of partying with friends from a white neighborhood⁶⁴, then an explicit social stigma and marginalization. He has been living in the area since he was born, surrounded by his family members⁶⁵ who later moved a few blocks away. That was a reason he always stayed here, but after his grandmother died in autumn 2009, he talked about moving out to a “hipster area” in the north part of Miami.

II. The sound of streets of Miami

Miami has a rich multi-ethnic musical heritage that has developed outside the traditional music business metropolises of NYC, LA, and Nashville into its own locus as the center of Latin music in the U.S. This chapter explains the shift of a local hip-hop sub genre called Miami bass to the US mainstream music industry and how this genre influenced the local music scene. Notably I will outline how this pattern of specific local music authenticity is bound up with a music expression of Otto Von Schirach.

Compared to the music scenes in other American metropolises (New York, Los Angeles, San

64 “ (...) because they had money”, laughs Otto.

65 Mother, grandmother, brother, cousins, uncles, ...

Francisco, Denver, Chicago,...) , the music scene of Miami was always a bit peripheral, which was partly caused by a physical isolation of this southern tail of US. ⁶⁶ However, Miami music scene had a strong influence on northern American music market in several aspects.

One is a presence of a hispanic minority from South and Central America, whose language and musical heritage such as merengueee, bachata, salsa, mambo, and rumba was mixed with a lot of music genres from mainstream (r'n'b, hip hop, hustle, pop music) to experimental electronics (electroclash, reggeaton, IDM, ...). This distribution is also encouraged by MTV Latin America, which has been based in Miami since 1993.

The second aspect is an emergence of two specific local genres in 80's, which reached transnational acclaim: *Southern rap*, taking influence from San Francisco and New York hiphop, in 90s with the names as Trick Daddy, Rick Ross and Jacki-O, and especially the genre *Miami bass*.

Miami bass music heritage

Miami bass, also called booty bass, hit the local music charts in 80's and 90's is considered by the informants from Miami art scene to be the most original and famous genre with global effects on music industry.

Miami bass was an 1980s and early 1990s urban “metropolitan” genre of hip hop with locally famous performers - rappers and djs - in the city of Miami, West Palm Beach, and Fort Lauderdale. The main representative of this genre was the group 2 Live Crew who are still respected by a young generation of local music artist as godfathers of the genre and the setters of the sound.

Miami bass sound comes from 70s electro funk. The beat is based on 909/808 kicks from a Roland drum machine, which is half analog and half a sample machine, and the speed is around 80

⁶⁶ Whereas musicians from northwest cities can easily tour from one big city to another, and artist must drive about 11 hours from Miami to get to Atlanta, the closest big city.

BPM⁶⁷. A significant role has an overloaded, pumping bass line, and one or several leading rap vocals performing sexually explicit lyrics.

2 Live Crew and “nastiness” as a vernacular tradition

As mentioned above, the textual content of Miami bass was mostly explicit sexual lyrics with streetwise attitude. Those lyrics, a trademark of Miami bass, became problematic in the point when the genre shifted from local to national, with the success of 2 Live Crew album *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*, which came out in 1989. Single “Me so Horny” reached number 1 on the U.S. Billboard Hot Rap Tracks even though the song faced a lack of airplay due to ‘obscenity’ in its lyrics⁶⁸. There were even two videoclips for the single – an uncensored version⁶⁹ and the official one for MTV⁷⁰. This end up by banning the album from sale in Florida and became the subject of a debate in a juridic environment about limits of obscenity in music expression. Literary critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who was an expert witness on behalf of the defendants at Supreme Court Of United States, argued that the material that the county alleged was profane actually had important roots in African-American vernacular language, games, and literary traditions, and should therefore be protected.

As a reaction, the group made a new song called “Banned in the U.S.A.” using samples from

⁶⁷ This was most likely the first rap record from Miami to sustain the 808 kick drum, which was a pure accident. Amos (Amos Larkins, a producer, who formed group Heavy Dose with a rapper Mighty Rock) intended to fix his error after his test copy was presented to a select few, but the response was overwhelming and Amos was convinced to leave it as is. This became the prototype for Miami street music after the decline of up-tempo robotic Electro. “ (Stylus magazine)

⁶⁸ A sample of the lyrics, second verse: “Girls always asking for a fuck so what what's wrong dingy dog with the queen mutt? Cause you're the one and you shouldn't be mad. I won't tell your momma if you don't tell your dad. I know he'll be disgusted when he sees your pussy busted. Won't your momma be so mad if she knew I got that ass. I'm a freak in heat, a dog without warning. My appetite's for sex, 'cause me so horny.”

⁶⁹ featured the dancing women in G-string bikini bottoms with rotoscoped black squares placed over the women's buttocks

⁷⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6VTj7LhCtE>

the court case, and using lyrics that blamed American society for hypocrisy, upholding their civil rights in front of the jury. In the song they sampled the Bruce Springsteen's anthem "Born in the USA" in a manner it sounds like "Banned in the USA." Bringing into play generally known samples from other artists in a different connotation became one of trademarks of 2 Live Crew, which was disposed as a vehicle for ironic reflection of everyday man-women erotic relationships. The explicit sexuality in music could have also represent certain act of subversion against rigid conservative tradition of Protestant religion in Florida, a disgust for middle-class values, and hypocritical morals and request on freedom of expression and speech in music.

Recently Miami bass reached an over border success due to large promotion by Florida local radioshow put it to the regular air plays and by local djs, playing Miami bass on outdoor events such as beach parties, fairs, or parks. A link which connected local scene with US music industry was also a movie called Knights of the City by director Dominic Orlando, which came out in 1991, telling the story of a gang life in the streets of Miami while talented gangbangers sang their way off the ghetto streets. In mid 90s, Miami bass spread over the borders of Florida due to such artists as 95 South, Tag Team, 69 Boyz, Dj Magic Mike, Quad City Dj's, and Freak Nasty who pushed the sound in a more accessible way and reached the U.S. Pop charts.

Miami bass as a vivid local inspiration

Otto got his start in Miami bass, which was considered the local music for any emerging DJ in the 1990s. He remembers his first steps in a music career as DJ for girl school parties in at the age of fourteen:

The main thing I DJed was Miami bass and hiphop, more the Miami bass side, like 2 Live Crew, Uncle Al, old Dynamics and all those records. So it was heavy Miami bass stuff. And then I've started buying sampled records, children records. We would be buying records and we started doing that (the parties) almost every saturday (OTV, 15. 4. 2010)

There are several impacts of Miami bass which can be heard in Schirach's music. A strong emphasis on massive, overloaded bass lines, use of old school drum machines, and digitally distorted, sexual content of his lyrics and notably in visual accompaniment.⁷¹ However the “nastiness” is present in his artistic approach, doesn't represent a grounding concept. Otto's personal empowerment is not primarily reached by gender provocation as explained in the next chapters. Besides Otto Von Schirach, there are a lot of references to this genre in an actual Miami scene, as production of Cuban–American rapper Pitbull, or a two-girl group Avenue D who recall Miami bass in their hard core sexual lyrics and also explicitly in the promo text.⁷²

As the Southern rap is taken by local artists more as an old school rap background for current hiphop production, a bit ridiculous, embarrassing with no connection to up-to-date sound, Miami bass is still a vivid source of inspiration and motivation for today's art scene. A lot of young artist in their 30s would make allusions to it in their music, dance style, or fashion, pointing out their personal connections, which counts also for Otto Von Schirach and his hipster art friends.

David Tamargo, a photographer who performs with Otto Von Schirach, explains the meaning of 2 Live Crew and Miami bass for the scene:

They are being honest about who they are, and what they want from women. It is that blatant disrespect and attitude that Americans did not want to see spread to the rest of the country which is why their music was banned. For better or for worse, I love it because it was their honest voices you can here in the music that made it personal and told the story of who they were and how they make up what Miami is all about. We are Miami bass and the genre has always been about being true to yourself by showing the world/telling the world what makes you a part of Miami (facebook conversation, july 2010).

As evident, Tamargo does not consider 2 Live Crew to be a parodic act or gender provocation, but as an authentic expression of local culture. There are several hypotheses possible regarding the recognition of the genre. For Otto's generation of artists, Miami bass was a soundtrack of their adolescence, so they express personal and nostalgic attachment to the sound. As Miami bass

⁷¹ As described in a semiologic analysis

⁷² “ Then you must fuse these musical influences (from 2 Live Crew to Cyndi Lauper, from Jem and the Holograms to CRASS) together to produce an awesome array of songs with all the style and fun of 80's camp, mixed with hard-hitting beats, and a little "Girls Gone Wild" thrown in for good measure.“ (by Deidra Garcia), band website

is being quoted in my research interviews as a piece of evidence of coherence and historic continuity for the local music scene, the popularity could be a possible response to general marginalizing of the isolated Florida music scene facing giant North American market. And besides that, there is a global music hype of popularity of 80s sound present on US and Europe music scene since few last years. According to the investigation, Miami bass seems to be a treasure of local music history, that you could be proud of and not ashamed to be connected to – a controversial yet sincere approach. A representative of language of Miami street shouted with open mouth, which could be as liberate and nasty as far it is true.

III. Santería as a translocal spiritual heritage

This chapter explains how Santería, as a syncretic⁷³ religion, is a background spiritual concept for an individual practice of Otto Von Schirach as channeled by music production and music performance.

Santería⁷⁴ literally means “the way of saints” and it is today's the most practiced religion on Cuba. Although it was seen throughout history as a religion for marginalized people and is still considered to be an underground religion in Cuba and USA, Cuban immigrants made a lot of effort to establish a serious spiritual platform of Santería in Florida. After several attempts to organize, the Church of Lucumi Babalú Ayé was founded in Hialeah in 1987 and became a spiritual center for

73 Syncretism is the attempt to reconcile disparate or contrary beliefs, often while melding practices of various schools of thought. The term means "combining." Syncretism may involve attempts to merge and analogise several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, and thus assert an underlying unity allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.

74 The word Santería was originally a pejorative term of the Christian priests used for heretics, who practiced the mixture of African religion with the veneration of the Catholic saints. Several scholars rejected this term in favor of “Lucumí,” *Regla de Ocha* or *Ayoba*, but everyday people are familiar with the term Santería.

Cubans in Miami. Recently Santería was recognized as a legitimate religion in USA and since 1993 according to U.S. Supreme Court, Santería believers has a right to sacrifice animals for their rituals.

According to de la Torre, Santería is originated from Yoruba religion of African slaves, who had been brought to Cuba to work on sugar plantations mostly in the 18th century. Under the pressure of colonialists, a secularism of the religion was the only strategy to preserve native spiritual heritage. The practitioners of Yoruba religion immediately recognized the parallels with Christianity, and adapted their beliefs.

Both had a “god” who had settled the existence of all the world and both had a intermediaries, in Christianity called saints, in Yoruba were called “orishas.” In order to continue their own spirituality under the Christian religious pressure, African slaves identified specific orishas with specific saints. Those saints/orishas were mediators of god power with a competency to threat the humans bad or good. The priests will be named as Santeros or Santeras by regular believers, also as “oloshas” or “babaloshas” for men and “iyaloshas” for women.

Practice as a prove of good believer

As there is not any central dogma (as Bible) that would make restrictions in religious and ritual practice, Santería is very hard to describe. There is no sacred text or procedures as a central point of universal agreement of believers. Thus all the believers and priests feel free to interpret their belief in their own way, finding new parallels to the modern world and new variations for old myths. Therefore all worship is individualised and community based.

Santería is established more on ritual practices, then on prayer and good heart intentions. To be a good believer means to fulfill the prescription of rituals or sacrificial procedure.

Basically, modern believer of Santería worship these African gods, masked as Catholic

saints, by observing their “feast days”, “feeding” and caring for them, carefully following their commands (as sacrificing of animals) and faithfully obeying their mandates. Complete submission, without question, is required of devotees, who are usually motivated by a mixture of fear and awe of the gods. Believers are not to question or argue with the gods or with priest of the faith. The only response is obedience. Disobedience implies a lack of the respect that can lead to a total loss of guidance and protection. For return to obedience, believers learn the secrets by which the natural and supra natural can be influenced and manipulated for their benefit (de la Torre 2004: 20).

Santería in Otto Von Schirach everyday life

The first step to Otto's personal universe, his apartment, is a tough slap. It is a bed on the floor, clothes everywhere on the seats and furniture, smell of three cats (the fattest of them, Sparks, has a strange face reflex while caressing her, which is a constant source of amusement for people around) and the mess of somebody who's priority is not to have a clean coffee cup for an incoming guest. The small studio next door gathers ordinary electronic equipment (laptop, moogs, synthetizers, guitar effects, microphone, ...), none of musical instruments, ashtray below the chair for Mr. Feathers (his cooperator and only friend who smokes) and few cans of beer on the floor. On the left side above the window, you would be stucked on a couple of strange, “non – musical“ material objects, small colorful statues, among them recognizable St. Lazar, St. Maria, mother of Jesus, and other objects such as crystals and small dolls. Otto's “Santeros”.

Otto: This is all my grandma's stuff, she gave me all this stuff. Well she did not give it to me, she told me, when she would die it should be all mine. When my grandma died, my cousin did a ceremony – he is a santero, a babalao – so he threw the coconuts to choose, where the saints go. When somebody is a santero and he dies, they would give all the things back to the nature, that's the save way of letting go, respectful way, respecting the things. You just don' t throw it to trash - you throw it to trash, that's bad karma, because you worshipped those things for years, pray to it and did things around your life for it, and then suddenly you throw it away – what will happen? No, you gotta respect it and give back to nature, so we gave most of the stuff back to the nature. My cousin threw the coconuts and those things didn' t want to go back to nature, it wanted to stay with me. It asked me to do bunch of things which I still have to do.

Lenka: Like what?

Otto: There are many things i do – like bath, showers, water, cups to the gods, food for the gods, sacrifices, ...

Lenka: For example?

Otto: You would do the offerings - fruits and vegetables and coffee, ... Giving the gods the things they like. Do prayers, being conscious, have blessings, I do lot of talkings to the gods and universe and asking to open my mind, open the door and giving me the power that I won't use it for wrong.

Lenka: Does the presence of those object somehow helps you when you are producing music?

Otto: Yeah, for sure, in many ways. Coz it's magic, and it's magic of the ocean, also it's beautiful, it's positive and it's fantasy and reality mixed together. Because most humans don't believe in this stuff - like this crystal, this is magic, it helps me. Coz my whole being is like ... il feel like I'm living in a fantasy life in a sense that I do believe in those powers that the most people don't. (OVS, april 2010)

Otto's grandmother involved him in Santería religion and strongly influenced his life attitude.

She is a person to whom he feels a deep respect and from who he acquires spiritual knowledge and inspiration. According to our long discussions, those material objects mean a physical representation of magic in his life also as symbolic representation of magic power of his grandmother herself, whose magic force is being still present due to those objects and Otto's continual ritual practices.

Otto: I think she was born into it. In Cuba they practice a lot of spiritist stuff, “espírito”, kind of gathering of spiritual beings and people like doing stuff for god and opening the minds of other people. You know that everybody is metaphysically speaking of third eye, everybody has one, but some people are born with it really open already, some people are born with it closed, some people are born with it halfway. And we all have a power to open it or close it. And i think she was born with it really open already, coz she was like a fortune teller, people would visit her, pay her the money and she would not accept the money. She would just do it. She would do it for the people she loved for free, after getting old she wouldn' t do it anymore, only for people she loved. I think she just got involved when she was young, I think it' s really beautiful, you know. She was really spiritual. Besides the fact, she was studying bunch of different other religions, she also liked doing the ceremonies – you know a lot of people mock them, I know the catholic church and christian church they don' t dig it, the jewish people, they don' t dig it and she was part of all of that, she was part of christian church and shit, but she wouldn' t tell them, you know, that she did all those things.

Lenka: Was she telling you would become a musician?

Otto: Yeah. She read my future when I was a kid for many times. Well, she did not tell me, you gonna become a musician, there were not djs really then and when she told me I was 12

years old. She told me that I was gonna do things that I would travel a lot, that I would become really famous, I would never stop and that it would be a slow process, but that eventually, I would be really happy to do what I love. That god will be in my music and shit like that. You know it's hard to believe, but she did do that, it was a crazy. In a way like did she tell me or did she like put me on that path? But I don't know. She was very in tune with live. And the way, she told me, was like really weird. It was not as you gonna be a dj. She said: you gonna be something to do with music, it gonna be your music but it was not gonna be as you play an instrument. I see you singing, i see you touching things and i see a lot of people. My grandma was just like a witch, let me say wizard, white wizard (OVS, march 2010)

Otto Von Schirach identifies himself with a destiny outlined by his grandmother. He is convinced about inheriting a part of her spiritual power which helps him in everyday life also as in producing and performing music.

Santería as a part of social identity for Cuban immigrants

This chapter outlines Santería as a subversive spiritual knowledge of a marginalized ethnic minority of Cubans in a white Protestant religious environment and sets Otto as a lonesome follower of the practice in a socio-cultural background of first generation Cuban immigrants.

After several waves of emigration, there was raised the question of who is more authentically Cuban – Cubans in Cuba or Cubans residing abroad. In this context Miami, as city with the highest number of Cuban immigrants in USA, became a key place to settle the frame of definitions for what is “Cuban” beyond the island borders.

In the context of preserving Cuban identity, religion showed up as dominant immigrant strategy:

Cubans in Miami have reconstructed traditions, customs, and other aspects of national culture to generate a sense of continuity and of belonging to a community that, consciously or unconsciously, has decided not to lose its roots. In the interplay between rupture and preservation, and between incorporation and separation, religion has offered spiritual support to Cubans in Miami, helping them to make sense of the challenge of migration (Pintado 2005: 162).

During the second half of the 20th century Cuban immigrants founded several religious places in Miami as educational environments - Hialeah, market-oriented places such as “botanicas” (shops with Santería's goods) or community religious feasts and celebrations (St. Lazaro, 16th of December,), that were helping to preserve their values and traditions, facing anxiety, chaos and anomie.

To set the discourse about the religion of Cubans in Florida, it is important to mention that in Miami there is a long tradition of conservative Protestant religion. From this point of view, Santería seemed to clash with the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture in United States.

According to Pintera, both Cuban and Anglo elites tended to see a close relationship between Santería and blackness, stereotyped as lower classes and marginal. No wonder that many people in the Cuban establishment believed that Santería was connected to organized crime and associated to satanic cults (Pintera 2005: 150). As the most of Santería practices were distorted by the media, followers were mistreated by the emerging Cuban elite at moments considered politically sensitive. Santería represented a threat to the Miami establishment because it challenged stereotypical image fusing Catholicism, Cubanness and opposition.

Santería and Cubanness of the 1st generation of immigrants

As the most of the first generation Cubans, Otto Von Schirach was educated in a Catholic school, going regularly to catechism and mass. Catholicism was his official religious status. While at home, his family members practiced Santería.

So in the night I would go to those ceremonies and my grandmother and my parents were like don' t tell people in school about this, you cant talk about it. That' s our secret. Next day I go to church in school, do communion and in the night I watch those people drinking bottle of aguardiente, channel the spirits, do these weird rituals, where they bless everybody, clean everybody's aura and next day to go to school. And it changed my life forever. (OVS, april 2010)

That quotation reflects Santería as reaffirmation of secularized alternatives and resistant expressions to institutionalized ways (Pintera 2005: 150). On the other hand, from Otto's point of view, there is nothing really contradictory about Santería and Christian beliefs, nor with any other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Shamanism, Hinduism, Judaism - the spiritual content, prays, respect to the god/saints/orishas corresponds with his conviction, coming from holistic and platonic philosophy, that doesn't matter what religion you are involved in, all reaches the same goals, you only use different names.

Otto is barely talking about Santería by himself, at least seems he would never start this kind of conversation. But when I started to ask, this theme revealed to present an indeterminate spring of inspiration: he was open to talk about it widely, have discussions, make comparison to other religions, telling stories from the childhood or nowadays. As a researcher, I had impression to touch a coherent and consistent part of his personal identity, which connects him notably with an universal spiritual system and remotely with a concept of “Cubanness” as well.

The most of Miami citizens – black, white or hispanic, recognize Catholic Christians as their formal religion. As soon as I began talking about Santería in front of young Cuban people, it was obvious, that almost everybody is somehow involved in it – by family roots, friends, neighbors, or at least they know some basic information. But not a single one is affirming practice of Santería. Some informants have responded that Santería is for them “a Cuban thing, mostly practiced back in Cuba,” which doesn't seem to have more meaning for their everyday life than a cultural background of their remoted ancestors.

Despite Pintera's quotes that there is strong transnational connection to the island, African-based religion and Miami immigrants to keep in touch with spiritual brothers and sisters, for the sake of authenticity. This transnational contact of family of Otto Von Schirach was handled by his

grandmother – she was in touch with Cuban friends and family her whole life in Miami, especially since she was also the only member of the family living a big part of her life in Cuba. Otto's grandmother was also a central spiritual person of Cuban religious environment in his Miami neighborhood. Due to her contacts, Otto doesn't seem to suffer from a lack of an authenticity of Santería religion, even though he was never been to Cuba.

According to my research, not a lot of first generation of Cubans are interested in transnational relations with their relatives in Cuba. According to the research, those spiritual and family contacts could have been important for older generations of Cuban immigrants, but it does not seem to be important for young generation anymore. Therefore the case of Otto's spiritual involvement in Santería revealed to be quite exceptional.

Cuba is a lost land to many of us in Miami, we know nothing about it except what we see on TV and hear from Cubans in Miami. Many of the older Cubans in Miami have a very negative image of Cuba due to the political situation over there. I know only one guy, who went there and he was quickly sent back because he was being too curious.
(David Tamargo, april 2010)

As most of their relatives lives already in USA, the first generation of Cuban immigrants use an origin label of “Cubanness” mostly for stretching distinction among them and the “average” American. They don't express any signs to feel marginalized – more they consider Miami as a home place which belongs to them (in a meaning of all “Latino” immigrants). As one of my respondents, Liz Ferrer, a make-up designer, claims “everybody in Miami has kind of Cuban origins”, which gives Cuban immigrants a shared community feeling. That affirms Pintera's and Torre's observation of Cuban extremely positive self-image, exaggeratedly so in comparison to what others think of them.⁷⁵

⁷⁵“They even acclaim that Miami would be a countryside, if they wouldn't come.” (Torre 2001: 164)

IV. Santería in Schirach 's music world

“I want the people to experience my force, in a very positive way but very powerful way.”
(OVS, march 2010)

This chapter explains how the religious concept of Santería is reflected in lyrics and performance of Otto Von Schirach and how he communicates spirituality with an audience.

Otto's “magic”

References to Santería as a spiritual dimension of breakcore music of Otto Von Schirach is involved in promotional materials (as previously analyzed), but also in lyrics and visual and performative accompaniment. In connotation of iconic representation there it is important to quote that according to the research and analysis, “magic” for Otto doesn't mean only Santería, but any powerful symbols and practices connected to empowerment and targeting of one's consciousness.

He uses a random mixture of Santería references also as symbols from Hindu or Buddhist spiritual tradition which he mixes with extraterrestrial “alien” worshipping and trust – that he shares with Aaron Spectre (Venetian Snares) and both call it “Ocho ojos/ The Eye of Eight

Just over the years you perfected it and you know what you need to do. And through Santería, Voodoo and all the magics, you pick little pieces and it's like new age kind of like beings. Not glue to one religion, not glue to one God. Coz it' s energy, it's huge and it's everything.
(OVS march 2010)

As he explains, this “magic” crystallized in the course of the past few years, and is now more remarkable than ever before. As an explicit example he points out the last album *Magic Triangle*.

The most significant and the clearest clue to his magic background is a title of the new album, *Magic Triangle*, which is also a title and lyrics for his new song, which is usually the initial song of the live shows. “I live in a magic triangle – the Bermuda Triangle goes through Miami. And I really feel there is something special here on this place. “ (OVS, april, 2010).

In lyrics there are only some words used in Santería, which often interplay with the themes of death and the after life – such titles as “The End of the World”, “March of The Death”, “Zombies”, “Death Print” and “Eye of Eight”. (“I hold the Eye of Eight, you can't run from me, I hold the Eye of Eight, with my sword and magic”).

In a time of the research in Miami, Otto released a new song, called “Chango” song, through the internet. There was an immediate reaction of a lot of people, who would react on the word “Chango” - God of Thunder, decoding the relation to Santería and were enthusiastic about the fact that this spirituality is involved in music.

Schirach's textual presentation in materials for promotion is an example of postmodern mixture of spiritual believes, which have still do a lot with his Cuban Santería tradition, but also goes on its own journey to any other “magic” beliefs, which has some connection to New Age or cyber spirituality. This mixture doesn't follow any prescription, but all those spiritual elements are ruled by personal integrity.

Organized chaos: Santería as an intern coherence of performance

This chapter explains how the spiritual believes of Otto Von Schirach influence his live music performance. It is also focused on channeling of the meaning by the role of Otto and performers on stage.

One of the most posh clubs in Miami, Mecca, with several rooms and different styles of music as drum' n' bass, minimal electro, dub step during the famous American music festival – Miami Winter Music Conference. All the people are dressed in a beach model style, really sexy and short skirts, glitter, a lot of naked tended skin and sophisticated make-up. This kind of clothing would be used in Prague to go for a discotheque, not for party of breakcore, dub step or drum 'n bass... Entering a room, where Otto Von Schirach is performing opens up a bizarre scene – 15 colorful weird dancers on the stage, everybody is moving in their own way, but all giving a feeling of being in postapocalyptic heart attack. Dressed up in a crazy home made masks, from time to time few of them making a gesture with both hands in a shape of triangle. Above them, over the mixes and laptop, there is a Otto Von Schirach, dressed up in a white warrior costume and Zorro 's band on his eyes, manipulating the mix and laptop, singing with after death effects on his voice. At his side, there is another performer, Thug Jesus who is wearing an alligator mask and throwing a huge, 10 meter long black tube to the crowd, which connects the stage with the audience. Some people avoid

interacting with it, prefer only observing the performance, and some of the people start playing with it as with a balloon.
(field notes, 28th of march 2010, Miami)

This extract picture of Otto Von Schirach' s shows in spring 2010, is an example of what Turner calls “cultural” performances, which include aesthetic or stage dramas. Turner's theory of cultural performance include several key concepts as ritual, liminality, and rite of passage, which can be found in Schirach' s live performance in a behavior of himself as also his performers.

For the first view there is not much difference within the recent shows I have seen in 2010 and the older ones in Barcelona 2006 or Berlin 2005. There were always some costumes and some performers involved. And if Schirach couldn' t afford to pay the performers, he did a weird show alone. Neither there are not a lot of signs guiding the connection to “magic”. In today's performance there is only one explicit relation to spiritual background - a physical symbol of the “magic triangle”⁷⁶. It is important to mention a lack of any material symbols or artifacts of Santería or any other spiritual tradition on the stage.

Yet there is a difference comparing the older live acts. The difference is not visible and rationally tenable, it is more present as unconscious feeling shared by respondents, who would agree on a certain intern coherence of the performance and music.

Even though the acceptance and reactions on the performance could differ from place to place – the most of the respondents do agree on a “special power, experience of strength and force”, which is coming from the stage. Several respondents told me there where a bit scared, having goosebumps from experiencing something weird, some of them told me they were being “hypnotized”, often they were mentioning Schirach's eyes and firm gaze which is performed in a same way on live concerts as captured on promo photos. A lot of people was describing the show as

76 “I live in a magic triangle – bermuda triangle goes through Miami. And I really feel there is something special here on this place.” OVS, april 2010

“crazy” or “organized chaos” which I consider as fundamental element of Otto's live performance.

77

The border distinction – “crazy” and “organized chaos” is essential for this field, because both mention the two contradictory aspects of discourse of performance itself, which according to Victor Turner includes a repetition, fixed acts, and continuity and on the other side mutability, rupture, and breaches of normative social relations. Sally Moore quotes that “ritual, rigid procedures, regular formalities, symbolic repetitions of all kinds, as well as explicit laws, principles, rules, symbols, and categories are cultural representations of fixed social reality, and continuity”. She also points out, however tight the rules, in their application there is always “a certain range of maneuver, of openness, of choice, of interpretation, of alternation, of tampering, of reversing, of transforming.” In brief, “within the cultural and social order there is a pervasive quality of partial indeterminacy (Turner 1986: 79)

Both aspects are considered in responses of the respondents - expression of presentation of some rules and formal structures (“organized chaos”) and libertine arbitrariness (“craziness”). The presence of both at one time seemed to be hard to articulate for most of them.

For example when I was asking about the effects of the performance for the listener, none was really able to answer clearly. Some people didn't physically react on the performance, they were just staring at the show as external observers of carnival of freaks, but those who were dancing and enjoying the performance would refer to presence of certain unconscious structure which is communicated from the stage. Trying to express that there is something rational and irrational in the same point, but still bound up with a mental connection. That ambiguity was obviously uneasy for them to be explained by language and seemed a lot of people just couldn't find the words for it.

Performers as mediators of the artistic approach

According to my research, an evident difference of coherency mentioned at the beginning of the chapter is primarily based on a presence and acting of two performers, David Tamargo aka Thug Jesus⁷⁸ and Armando A. Salices aka Mr. Feathers/Feathers with Peasants, who have started to join Otto for his shows, notably after releasing Magic Triangle. Those two guys are Otto's friends, who have a tremendous respect for his music and they consider the acting as a manner to make the live performance better and more interactive. Mr. Feathers explicitly talks about: “adapting the crowd for him.” At the same time, there are almost the only ones who are aware about the spiritual background of Otto's music. They really enjoyed the long interviews we held with Otto about spiritual themes, admitting that he does not speak to them as much about the subject as they would wish.

At the small stage next to Otto there is a guy with a wig of long white hair holding a huge gun with children Casio keyboard and shining LED controls on it, pointing the light on the people in front of the stage – Mr. Feathers. On his other side there is a guy in a alligator mask, sneaking in the crowd, biting the people on the legs, dancing with them, taking them on stage and cheering up. Suddenly he throws a huge, 7-meter-long plastic tube filled with foam to the crowd, who grabs it and plays with it. Primarily it seemed that their action does not have any sense, but still it was fascinating. After a while I was getting a feeling that it somehow underlined the music, but yet was not sure how.

(field notes, March 24, 2010, club in Art District, Miami)

Those two guys wear special costumes and masks, perform physical acts and use some specific material attributes. None of it is explicitly attached to Santería's material or gesture tradition. While it mostly seems as an extravagant manner of amusing the crowd, they both have a concept of the stage behavior. In a discourse of performance theory of Victor Turner, this behavior can represent a “rite of passage.” As Van Gennep quotes, a tri -partite processual model of rite of passage⁷⁹ could

⁷⁸ “I was admiring Otto's music and was going to his concerts a lot. Once I jumped on a stage, took some girls with me, we were dancing and the crowd went nuts. He liked and offered me to come again so I started to perform with him regularly” (Tamargo, April 2010).

⁷⁹ According to Van Gennep, the 'rite of passage' has three parts: *separation*, *transition* and *incorporation*. “*Separation* demarcates a sacred space and time, includes symbolic behaviour which represents the detachment of the ritual objects from their previous social statuses. In *transition*, ritual object pass through social limbo which has few of attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses. *Incorporation* includes symbolic phenomena

be used both for accompanying an individual's or cohort of individual's change in social status. In a case of Schirach's performers, this is displayed by a change of status from music fans to mediators of spiritual and artistic message.

Otto has his own voice that is unique, layered, and a product of being raised in Miami. I marvel at his ability to get paid to do shows being a lunatic on stage. People continue to come to see his spectacle show after show and I am sure it is because some of them wish they could be themselves like him and us: dancing on stage. I feel like I am myself, and can do whatever I want on stage with him because his music is connected with this idea.
(David Tamargo, april 2010)

Tamargo describes third phase of rite of passage, “incorporation”, which represent a turn of the person to “new, relatively stable, well defined position”.⁸⁰ By the words “connected with this idea” Tamargo refers to Schirach's spiritual conviction that he shares with the performers, and thus framing a feeling of safeties in a new statuses of his prior fans as artistic performers on stage. However the audience is not aware about this “magic” channeling of music act, Thug Jesus and Mr. Feathers put all the energy into this mind-set that it looks finally as performance of a specific ritual⁸¹ of some weird, neo-tribal freaks. A concept of tribal society was present also in a rave culture, where the sense of 'communitas'⁸² was shared by the audience. In Schirach's performance this concept is involved in another way—Schirach and his performers present by their stage behavior a sample of imaginary neo-tribal society, to which the audience want to belong at least for the time of the concert. As the informants from audience claim, once they enter the stage, they feel free to do whatever they want. They experience a state of 'liminality', which is defined by Turner as a complex sequence of episodes in sacred-space time with subversive and ludic (or playful) events, a state where “profane social relations may be discontinued, former rights and obligations are suspended, the social order may seem to have turned upside down ...”(1982: 27). This state is fundamental in

and actions which represent the return of the subjects to their new, relatively stable, well-defined position in the total society. “ (Turner 1982: 24)

80 As n. 25

81 Turner defines ritual as “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings and powers.” (1967: 19)

82 Communitas is an examples of unstructured community experience in which all members have the same social status (Turner 1982).

ritual practice for novices, who get particular spiritual knowledge from the elders by various non-verbal and symbolic instructions which should be comprehended whether implicitly or explicitly.⁸³

Lenka: Do you think this magic gives you a special power when you are on the stage?

Otto: Yeah.

Lenka: In what manner?

Otto: Coz it's like a paganism. Like there are these gods – like Chango, that's the god of thunder, he is the fire, you hear his roar, you don't mess with Chango. When I'm on stage, I feel like a force to that is really powerful and strong, and through my music and throughout people, I want them to experience my force in a very positive way, but very powerful way and I think all the magic I've known helps me bring this force. As Mr. Feathers, when we play sometimes, there is this energy, (showing the higher level with the hands) and when we go off and it goes down, like back to reality. And while we play, there is this force, this wind, this energy, that was just massive. And I feel like all the magic I've learnt and all the prayers, all the spells, my chance, my rituals, that I've learnt have helped me to get the point of cross in my music when I play live.

(OVS, March 2010)

As quoted above, Otto uses the spiritual background of Santería to empower his consciousness. This empowerment is channeled through music production and live performance as a spiritual message transferred to the listener with a goal to improve his life. However he looks on stage as a Pied Piper or the head of the marching band of creatures. According to the research, Otto Von Schirach considers his position to be that of an elder, as a spiritual leader of this imaginary neo-tribal society and whose job it is to guide the novices through the rite of passage of “opening the third eye”.

This aim is also emphasized by manifestation of his “warrior” attitude based on power and supernatural forces, which is involved in promotion materials also as in his live performance. On concert in Prague in 2007 (Roxy), he was making a symbolic battle with a gum sword against a huge beats (a friend in a mask) on stage, now he usually wears a superman's band over eyes at least.

⁸³ This knowledge could be expressed “by rite, myth, song, instruction in a secret language, and various non-verbal symbolic genres, such as dancing, painting, clay–molding, wood-carving, masking, etc.” (Turner 1982: 27)

This “warrior” attitude is exposed in a way of a personal sacrifice to get the sound for the listeners, a sacrifice as a basic practice of Santería believer. This fact could be seen as an example of “Pastoral power” described by Michel Foucault in the book *Power and Resistance*. According to Foucault, Pastoral power is a kind of power that aims to provide salvation of the person in the “other” world. A pastor must be prepared to sacrifice himself for the life and salvation of his crowd and this specific power can't be provided without the Pastor's awareness about what is happening inside of the mind of his people. It is a form of power, which demand a knowledge of consciousness and an ability to manage it.

V. Conclusion - Santería in music as a dimension of spiritual growth and social-historic continuity

“His (humanity's) performances are, in a way, *reflexive*, in performing he reveals himself to himself” (Turner 1982: 95).

The Cuban religion Santería and personal “magic” and spiritual beliefs incorporated into the electronic music of Otto Von Schirach is a concept that is hidden to most of the audience. However, on a intuitive level the audience is aware about some special and outstanding energy coming from stage. This internal coherence and power described by the informants is, according to my research, an after-effect of the complex mind-set of Otto Von Schirach and his performers. Otto’s shaped communication of his spiritual energy while being on the stage comes from the rules and normative mind sets mediated by loosen physical performance and material culture. This produces a state of liminality which can be experienced while being on the stage.

The presence of the performers (Thug Jesus and Mr. Feathers) who are the only ones involved in knowledge of the “magic” background of Schirach' s music, strengthens the internal connection to this spiritual theme and mediate the communication of the intention within the

stage/artist and recipients/ listeners.

As Torre says, all worship in Santería is individualized and connected to rituals. “Their reality is not accepted by faith, but based on how they have manifested themselves, spiritually and physically, to their followers“ (Torre 2004: 45). From this point of view, the music of Otto Von Schirach is a manifestation of his faith, spirituality and a big shout out to the Gods and the universal system. Schirach's music production and notably music performance is a personal practice of worshipping his saints, an individual ritual of proving his respect to the Gods, who gives him back the “special power”, which he can use while being on the stage or while producing music at home. He considers his music as a sensory tool to channel this knowledge with an ability to open “ third eye” of his listeners, to indicate the direction and guide them on a divine path to higher level of consciousness. However, his artistic status involves also a role of spiritual leader - a Pastor, a wizard - who is using and passing his spiritual knowledge. Parallel to his grandmother, who was practicing Santería spiritual rituals as a prove of being a “good believer”, one of Otto's ritual practices is a live performance.

Besides that, involvement of Santería in Schirach's music represents a preservation of family religious heritage as a part of transnational Cuban cultural tradition, an approach to personal socio-historic discontinuity of Cubans in Miami and an individual struggle for salvation for himself and for his listeners.

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