



URBAN PROJECTS

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SAY, 2000 SPEAKERS

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Take twenty people and a car with a decent sound system. Open the doors. Turn the volume up all the way. You've got your own little party. What about, say, five hundred people and twenty-five cars? Simply by multiplying what everybody knows, a bunch of people in Amsterdam who call themselves "Traffic Jam" have invented a new kind of party - and a new style of DJ-ing along with it.

It was one o'clock in the morning and we were on a vast pier way out in the docklands. It had rained not long ago and the wet asphalt gleamed under the floods of a nearby refinery. The luminescent strip of the highway was flickering in the distance. Cars were regularly distributed over the pier with open doors, islands of light in the blackness. People were hanging out in small groups between them, chatting, waiting for something to happen.

At first it was barely audible, a subsonic vibration, more of a feeling in your intestines than a sound. It was slowly swelling towards a low, throbbing humming, like the sound of a badly grounded hi-fi system on standby. It came out of the cars. All the cars. The whole pier was becoming a quivering field of sound waves, a single, huge bass woofer. The crowd turned silent, slightly disturbed. Still very slowly, a steady pulse started to emerge from the monotonous hum, a massive, pounding heartbeat.

At once, a wholly different sonic landscape unfolded from the far corner of the pier. A hectic staccato rattled across the pumping bass waves. It raced towards us like a train, vanished in the distance, only to reappear in yet another corner. The party was underway. DJs were mixing their tracks not only in time, but also in space. The sound system in every single car had its own frequency and was operated individually by the DJs through low-range FM transmitters. A new track would start in a few cars only, gradually take over more, finally replacing the old one. There were tidal movements, sounds floating slowly back and forth over the pier. There were breaks, moments of absolute silence, followed by solos blasting from a few chosen cars.

Later on, the cars started to roll randomly through the crowd. Doppler effects and interferences were playing havoc with the structure of the music. The sound of engines blended in. As if to make things worse, the DJs were weaving frenetic counterrhythms through the beat. The result bordered on chaos. Then, one by one, the cars found their way to the edge of the crowd and started circling slowly. Now we were in the eye of the storm. The beats came rolling in from all sides. And there was no escape, not any more.

Where do you go from there? That's what we asked ourselves when we were finally cycling back to town in the early morning. Will there be speed parties, racing over the highways at 120 km/h? What about tunnels? Fact is, Traffic Jam is moving on. People say their goal is to turn the daily rush hour on the ring road into a rave: "There is 6 kilometers of party on the A 10. No alternative route suggested".