

INDUSTRIAL MUSIC IN GENERAL

Musicology has not given the term 'industrial music' a precise definition or any definition at all, for that matter. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians does not contain an entry as such. Let us, therefore, assume that industrial music came into being during the period of the first industrial revolution. James Watt invented the steam engine in 1865. The Wright brothers' first flight took place in 1903. In between Edison invented the phonograph in 1877.

It appears fair to say that industrial music needed not only an apparatus for making the heavenly noise; it also needed an apparatus to record it lest one would have had to move the steam engine into Carnegie Hall. Having noise-making machines and having recording devices making the noise portable were the very basics on which the fledgling and imprecise movement had to be based.

The first intellectually and artistically valid statements came around 1909 from the Italian futurists. The name was coined by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Although the movement as such was centered in Italy, there was strong connection to the Russian futurist/suprematist movement. They all advocated a *modern machine culture*. They truly deserved the name; in the eyes and ears of most their theories are indeed still futurist today, almost a century later. They actually didn't even need a recording or a concert hall at first. They said the city is the stage: It's the sound of the trains and trucks, the excitement of the industrial revolution that's the music, and it's right there wherever you happen to be.

Once there was a beginning though, one had not to worry about the continuation. In the 1930s Edgar Varèse (1883-1965) introduced sirens into contemporary music (*Ionisation*, 1931).

Of course, one might think that Tschaikovsky's '1812' overture was early industrial music as the cannons represent a vital part of the score - actually it was that part which made the piece famous to begin with.

It was in the nineteen-sixties when the concept of industrial music, music made by machines, recorded by machines and processed by machines came into its own. The French/Belgian movement of *musique concrète* represented the first musical stream which as a matter of fact rather than as matter of theory relied exclusively on mechanical sounds. What separated *musique concrète* from electronic music was that its sounds came from physical sources; they were not generated in early version of computers or sine wave generators, but they were rather recorded on magnetic tape being existing sounds from the human environment. Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry were the dominant figures in the *musique concrète* movement.

Then Rock'n'Roll took over. And it can be reasonably argued that from Jimi Hendrix to The Who, much of it contained and made good use of industrial sounds generated in

manifold ways and using equipment which was often-times designed for entirely different purposes.

Art rock, of course, ensued. Mostly inspired by European and specifically German musicians and producers, much industrial sound can be heard in the music of Kraftwerk, Can, Amon Düül and a plethora of others.

PACHINKO IN YOUR HEAD IN PARTICULAR

I heard the sound of pachinko first when I visited Tokyo for the first time in the spring of 1991. I stayed at the Keio Plaza Hotel at the time. The great amateur philosopher Yogi Berra once supposedly had said: "When you come to a fork in the road, take it". Well, the fork from the Keio Plaza Hotel in Shinjuku led to the old and the new Japan alike. In one direction one arrived at the Shinjuku Goien Park where the cherry blossoms could be admired at their peak. The other direction led to a new and less poetic Japan, the Aladdin Pachinko Parlor. In the years to come the sound never quite let go of me; and ultimately, I had no choice but to follow the call and return to Japan to record the sound which had infiltrated my life so persuasively and penetratingly.

The procedure was easy: A Sony electret stereo microphone powered by a watch battery was attached to the back of my jacket collar, almost in a *dummy head* kind of way. All else on the DAT recorder in my shoulder bag was flat. I sat down in order to begin but what was I to do? All the signage was in Japanese, and I did not even know how to make the thing go off. A player at the neighbouring machine, obviously a seasoned individual in such tasks, came to my rescue and showed me what to do. Astonishingly enough, he kept losing while I kept winning. The game went on for some time until he left (not without insisting on taking my picture) having gone broke during his losing streak. I meanwhile accumulated a large number of steel balls which were captured by very helpful staff in large plastic tubs. I finally thought I had enough for the time being. I was shown the way to an electronic scale which according to the weight of the captured balls calculated my bonanza; a sharp-looking magnetically encoded certificate was generated on an equally sharp-looking machine. I did not cash in my certificate though as I had made up my mind to reproduce it in the CD booklet. To this day, I cannot say how much if anything I had won. Anyway, by now I was on my way back to my hotel room.

There I listened to the recording on my headphones. I had been trying to monitor what I was recording while I was recording. However, the noise level was such that my headphones were simply drowned out entirely. If the level meters had not moved, it would have been difficult to say whether anything was actually recorded or not. The noise in a pachinko parlor is intense; nevertheless it occupies only a fairly narrow audio spectrum. Therefore, the recording on my Sony DAT Walkman sounded fairly accurate. But somehow it did not seem to capture the intensity of the aural experience to any reasonable degree.

So I went back the next night. This time I lost everything and I gave up after an hour.

The tape sounded identical if it had not been for the random variances indigenous to the environment. The experience of a third night was no different; I lost and the tape seemed to lack something. But I did not know what it was that was missing.

I decided that this was enough in any event and I left Japan the next day. Once I got to Germany, I dropped the tapes off at Sonopress in Güterloh where the engineer Christoph Süsser was assigned the arduous task to master the project and to make some sense of it, if at all possible. What emerged after a number of experiments was that all three tapes sandwiched, so to speak, conveyed a fairly accurate sense of the disturbing sound of a busy pachinko parlor after all. It turned out that the missing intensity of the actual environment could be replaced by simply tripling the number of machines, steel balls and electronic sounds. So he mixed the thing down from six-track leaving it pretty much alone save for a trifle enhancement in the upper mid-range which again only made up for what was lost by not being there by adding a bit to the metallic bite. It seemed to restore the intensity lost when one listened to the recording outside of the acoustic chaos of the parlor.

So far, so good. I had never really made up my mind whether this whole thing was supposed to be funny or serious. I still haven't. It's simply been funny and serious at the same time all along. It fits into a Dada/Fluxus space; and both Dada and Fluxus were as serious as they were amusing. Listening to *Pachinko in your head* can induce a trance-like state of mind over time (if one has the patience to wait for such things to happen). I guess, it's a bit of a Zen thing where one cannot answer the koan represented in the question of whether this is a sincere/serious attempt at composing/recording music or just a gimmick, a joke, a bit of fun. Or maybe it's all of the above in a tin box with a spiral on it.

Much later, it turned out that it was generally received in this way. Ralf Dombrowski, the music critic of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Munich, a thoroughly knowledgeable individual writing for one of the most influential papers in Germany, compared it to Ligeti's *100 Metronomes* from 1961 which kind of puts it into a serious space. At the same time he picked up on the whimsical nature of the project which could only take itself seriously in a John Cage-kind of way by saying *concert music? (E-Musik?)*, having added the question mark in a light-hearted and yet not entirely funny manner.

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