

Audio Poverty – Musik und Armut

Concept: Ekkehard Ehlers & Björn Gottstein

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A paradigm shift is changing musical life at its foundation. These changes affect music's significance in public life, consumer listening behavior, the availability and ubiquity of music, and its creation of value. Or, as Jace Clayton, a.k.a. DJ Rupture put it, "Hungry musicians and pleasures gone haywire".

A decline in sales from 2.7 billion to 1.7 billion euros in Germany from 1998 to 2006, countless bankruptcies in the sectors label, distribution, and retail: that is the balance of the music market in 2006. At the same time, the number of illegal downloads marked an all-time high, reaching 484 million (all figures: German Phono Associations). 53 percent of the population has already made itself guilty of illegal downloading. For each CD purchased, three CDs are copied, which represents an estimated value of 6.8 billion euros in business volume.

The artists respond globally, but in different ways: Prince presented his new CD as a give-away of the British newspaper Mail on Sunday and then played 21 sold-out concerts in London. Madonna signed her new contract at a value of 120 million USD not with a record label, but with the world's biggest concert agency. Losses in sales of the back catalog led to a flood of band reunions, in which bands like Led Zeppelin, Genesis, and My Bloody Valentine participated. More than one million unsold Robbie Williams CDs were crushed and went to China road construction material.

Music is clearly going through a value crisis.

- Although music is as widely available and heard as never before, the leveling and interchangeability of the individual work is increasing. This is the result of an arbitrary use of repertoire, which is apparently satisfying all listener needs.
- An economically and artistically autonomous culture, having been one of the most important social correctives since the late seventies, is seriously threatened in its existence. Contrary to the hope of refinement of the stylistic palette the mainstream is broadening. Niches are disappearing. As Chris Anderson has put it in *The Long Tail*, "Value resides in the middle".
- Previously relevant reference systems suffer a significant loss of importance: music critique, journalism, and the humanities will lose their sovereignty in favor of the flat hierarchy of net culture.
- The category of musical education is undermined by the new noncommittal nature of speaking about music. The musical discourse, having been shaped by a professional critique since 1800, is now being led by music lovers and laymen. Record companies use blogs and Internet portals qua viral marketing, e. g., fake reviews, as a marketing tool.
- The opening of the archives has allowed for an omni-historical access to the musical repertoire, without demanding any historical knowledge of eras, styles or categories from the listener.

Post economic music has to face a number of questions. How are new production circumstances changing music? What new ways of distribution are open to music? What does music beyond the creation of value sound like? How does social relevance emerge? In which real and virtual venues does music take place? Audio Poverty is looking for answers to these questions. Or to put it differently: Audio Poverty is questioning the future of music.

Audio Poverty is devoted to the fields of economics, reception, and production. For each day of the conference, one of these topics will be the subject of lectures, panel discussions, artist interviews, concerts, and DJ sets. Problems of the present are analyzed, bearing in mind historical phenomena like the music of the arte povera and the American mavericks bearing in mind aesthetic practice and aesthetic theory, popular culture and serious music.

Audio Poverty wants to address helplessness, overcome alienation, and outline political solutions.

Day 1 Beyond the Long Tail

Starting point for economic considerations is the Long Tail Theory, describing the loss of significance of the hit in comparison to the economic clout of the archives, the long- and little sellers and data bases like MySpace and similar social networks. Audio Poverty confronts this theory with the economic reality of small publishers, labels and distributors, and contextualizes their crisis within the forthcoming „resurrection“ (Wirtschaftswoche) of the music industry.

Day 2 Critiquing criticism

Music and discourse are the focus of the second day. The reception within classic media is being undermined by the Internet, and deprived of their sovereignty of opinion. Journalists from different music genres and formats are confronted with the fall and the growing irrelevance of their profession. Diedrich Diederichsen reflects a musical world without agitation potential. DJ Rupture and Awesometapefromafrica present themselves as exponents of a new world music beyond ethnicity, which they communicate in an exemplary fashion in their blogs.

Day 3 Fashion and despair

The economic situation leaves traces in the music itself. Representatives of advanced pop music are invited to a panel. Up for discussion are the hubris of the net music and music blogs. Hartmut Möller illuminates the relationship between poor artists and the market from a historical point of view. The Modified Toy Orchestra introduce their visions of a new pop music in concert.

Participants
(in order of
appearance)

Heinz-Klaus Metzger, Steve Goodman, Kodwo Eshun, Mark Chung, Christian Finkbeiner, Dieter Gorny, Gudrun Gut, Joel Berger, Achim Bergmann, Jay Rutledge, DJ Rupture, Awesometapesfromafrica, Ensemble Zwischentöne, Ensemble Asamisamasa, Øyvind Torvund, Sabine Sanio, Ensemble Mosaik, Thomas Meadowcroft, Alan Hilario, Goodiepal, Christine Lemke-Matwey, Helga de la Motte-Haber, Jonathan Fischer, Olaf Karnik, Chris Bohn, Max Dax, David Keenan, Diedrich Diederichsen, Kai Fagaschinski, Werner Dafeldecker, Barbara Romén, Eva Reiter, Manon-Liu Winter, Josephine Foster, Hair Police, DJ Vamanos, Alvin Curran, Sister Fa, Golo Föllmer, John Eden, Hartmut Möller, Orm Finnendahl, Gustav, Serge Baghdassarians, Brian Duffy, Christiane Rösinger, Modified Toy Orchestra, Quarta 330.

Gefördert durch die

