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# Parallel Sound Universes (Electronic Festival, Barbican Hall, London 13 - 18 October 2001)

By Anne Hilde Neset and Lina Dzuverovic-Russell

After Karlheinz Stockhausen's controversial outpouring post 9/11, it was a surprise to find the Barbican's Electronic festival - which showcased his greatest works - completely sold out. Anne Hilde Neset and Lina Dzuverovic-Russell learn what sounds to listen out for in Stockhausen's work and sample the club of the future with Aphex Twin, October 01

[IMAGE]

>>Electronic Festival, Barbican Hall, London 13 - 18 October 2001

After Karlheinz Stockhausen's controversial outpouring that the attacks on America were 'Lucifer's greatest work of art', confusion reigned as to whether the Electronic festival (based around the works of Stockhausen) at London's Barbican Centre would indeed go ahead. Whether it was the excess publicity caused by the controversy that sold out the show, or whether Stocky just is really pop is for anyone to know.

The 73 year old German electronic music pioneer believes he was educated on Sirius. He beamed in from space especially for this festival in order to present six of his major works played back to the 1500 strong audience. Reminiscent of a wacky grandpa, he ran back and forth between the stage and the mixing desk to introduce each piece for the audience. The presentations were curiously balanced between technical information and spiritual meanderings. The night began to feel like a school class as the father of electronica instructed us to close our eyes and pointed out which sounds we were to listen out for. In the same breath he disclosed intricate detail about the type of glue used to make tape-loops in the sixties and asked us priestly to concentrate on the sounds 'from above'. The strangest part of the evening was not listening to Stockhausen's tales but the fact that we sat for two hours facing an empty stage. The live performance of music assembled in laboratories and radio studios by one man and large machines is problematic, but Stockhausen's whimsical presence gave the concerts a personal edge.

Aphex Twin's set in the Barbican's warm plant-filled conservatory brought a new twist to the concept of clubbing. As a visitor enthusiastically exclaimed, 'if this is the discotheque of the future, then I like where we're heading'. Could this be the solution to the problem of communicating in clubs without ripping open one's vocal chords? Could it be this simple? Why had no one thought of this before?

As we entered the space we were handed a pair of wireless headphones and unlike that well known feeling of walking into a club and instantly being engulfed in a cloud of smoke, we were hit by the kind of air that most Londoners had forgot they ever knew. Dotted around and poking out of beautifully lit trees and glass reflections, a crowd of people wandered around listening to the Twins' (tonight playing as 'DJ Prichard D Jams') soundscape consisting of twisted children's songs, Musique Concrete interspersed with his trademark drill'n'bass.

[IMAGE] Balancing between total silence with the headphones off and full immersion in sound with them on, the audience found themselves inhabiting a peculiar space filled with intimate quiet conversations intercepted by occasional shrieks by those trying to talk while wearing headphones. Occasionally, the crowd would cheer in obvious support of a particular track, leaving you perplexed as you reached out to put the headphones back on. The dual sound space generated a strange choreography of those engaged in deep conversation next to a group of energetic dancers to a soundtrack nobody could hear. Those hoping to catch a glimpse of the Twin found him buried like a

rare bird among the tree tops on a balcony with a couple decks and a laptop.

If this is the future of clubbing, we're all for it.

Anne Hilde Neset and Lina Dzuverovic-Russell went to:

Karlheinz Stockhausen (Electronic Studies I & II, Gesang Der Junglinge, Telemusik, Kontakte)

JD Prichard G Jams pka Aphex Twin

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