



Nuits sonores Lab

DETECTING THE WORLD'S VIBRATIONS

An integral part of Nuits sonores, reflecting the commitments of the artists and collectives performing at the festival, Nuits sonores Lab presented three days of discussions, workshops, conferences and other formats blending debate and music.

The discussions were well attended throughout, attracting a constant stream of young festival-goers with a keen interest in questions such as “who influences our listening?” (the role of recommendation algorithms), “how to foster creation without exploitation?” (the risk of cultural appropriation) and «how to create a soundsystem or launch an online radio station?” (the DIY spirit).

Across its various stages and platforms, Nuits sonores Lab presented around 60 artists, activists, thinkers, journalists and actors from the independent culture sector all over Europe, who each echoed the vibrations currently being felt around the world.



PARTIES, A SIGN OF A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

In his opening remarks, historian Patrick Boucheron **questioned the meaning of partying** and its capacity to emancipate, while reminding us that parties are a sign of a healthy democracy, “[...] a dye that turns red or brown in authoritarian societies”. Picking up on that theme, Italian journalist Damir Ivic described how free parties had been banned in his country as soon as the incumbent government had been formed by Giorgia Meloni, president of the far-right and national conservative Brothers of Italy party.



He also stressed the important role played by the independent media as a “key to understanding”, insofar as they are much more closely connected to reality than the big media consortia that have continued to spread lies about free parties.

The political dimension of partying is at its strongest in those **cultural scenes marked by resistance**, above all in Eastern Europe and particularly Ukraine, a country whose presence loomed large in the panel discussions at Nuits Sonores Lab and on the festival’s stages.

Dj Nastia, an iconic figure on the Ukrainian electronic scene, reminded us that, a year on from the start of the invasion by Russia, a host of solidarity networks remain active throughout Ukraine. Young people are still dancing, clubs remain open, online radio stations carry on broadcasting Ukrainian music, and artists continue to create, laying claim to “the vital power of joy, of celebration”

The heads of Ukrainian arts label Standard Deviation warned against the “virtue signalling” in which certain Western European cultural actors cloak themselves, as they hand out one-off invitations to the Ukrainian scene, when what it really needs is long-term structural support.



The similar phenomenon of tokenism (the practice of making superficial efforts to be inclusive of minority groups in order to avoid accusations of discrimination or to ease one’s conscience) was highlighted in a debate on new post-colonial narratives.

Through the diverse range of views on offer – including those of a Ukrainian journalist, a Portuguese journalist who left Britain following Brexit and a queer activist from Guinea-Bissau – a picture emerged of the **various impacts of the decolonisation of culture**, from both North-South and East-West perspectives, with the risk of a dominant and biased Western perspective being referred to as “westsplaining”.

This round-table discussion, staged in collaboration with the Portuguese media platform Canal180, followed on from a workshop held in Porto on the issue of the decolonisation of culture, which had been organised in the context of the **Reset! network**. No fewer than 42 members of Reset!, which brings together cultural structures and independent media platforms from 25 European countries, had been present in Lyon for a meeting of the network prior to Nuits Sonores Lab. Together, these structures are making a strong statement on freedom of expression and creation, independence and youth, in the face of an increasingly menacing climate of censorship and economic concentration, just a year from the forthcoming European elections.



CREATIVE FREEDOM, NON FORMATTING OF DIVERSITY

The issues of **creative freedom and the non-formatting of creativity and diversity** were also at the heart of a discussion on cultural prescription and the influence of recommendation algorithms, held between journalist Mehdi Maïzi (Apple Music France),

entrepreneur Julie Knibbe (Music Tomorrow) and Valentin Lecomte, who spoke about the public service algorithm developed by Radio France.



Nuits Sonores Lab also offered a variety of formats beyond panel discussions, including a listening conference with Tzusing, the Malaysian-born artist and founder of the Sea Cucumber label who had been invited by Refuge Worldwide to share musical influences and anecdotes on Radio Lab. Meanwhile, feminist arts magazine Censored dreamed up a new TV show, hijacking the format of the talk show and casting an ironic eye on the world of showbusiness (and its capacity to incite hatred). On air, Marie-Julie Chalu, Douce Dibondo, Claude-Emmanuelle Gajan Maull and Lola Levent shared their experiences, hosted quizzes and recalled a succession of feminist and queer events that history has seemingly forgotten about.



NETWORKING AND CALL TO ACTION

These exchanges of ideas were often accompanied by **workshops** that allowed participants to progress from reflection to application, and even action. In the workshop led by David Townsend, who designed the Bodyheat heating and cooling system for the SWG3 concert hall in Glasgow, participants were shown how much heat their bodies produced while dancing and how that energy could be reused. The workshop was followed by a talk broadcast by the Georgian platform Mutant Radio on the ways in which cultural venues can manifest a genuine commitment to stopping climate change.



The workshop on creating an online radio station chimed neatly with the presence of four independent European online radio stations on the line-up at the Lab: 20ft Radio (Kyiv), Mutant Radio (Tbilisi), Refuge Worldwide (Berlin) and Radio béguin (Lyon). These online radio platforms attract open communities of listeners, offering them a space in which to express themselves and connect, often blending hyper-local roots with European perspectives.

The final panel discussion at Nuits Sonores Lab also illustrated this **dichotomy – local vs. international, historic vs. contemporary** – by bringing together a number of artists who are reviving ancestral sound heritages and exploring them as part of contemporary experimental scenes. They included the singer Widad Mjama and the Aïta (a traditional, poetic and predominantly female-led style of song from Morocco) and Deena Abdelwahed, the Tunisian DJ and electronic music producer who closed Night 4 at the site of Nuits Sonores Lab, which was by then fully committed to the party.



ARTY FARTY WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE TEAMS, VOLUNTEERS, ARTISTS AND PARTNERS WHO HELP MAKE THIS COLLECTIVE ADVENTURE POSSIBLE EACH YEAR.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL AGAIN
FROM 8 TO 10 MAY 2024
FOR THE NEXT EDITION
OF NUITS SONORES LAB !**

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