The History of Detroit Techno and its growing influence on American and European culture and philosophy

Thesis · May 2019

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.14429.15848

1 author:

Arthur Gamberini
HEC Paris
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Introduction

Rarely has a genre of music been so misinterpreted as techno. Contrary to the rest of Detroit's musical past (Motown, modern Jazz, gangsta rap), its history is often misunderstood. To describe techno, many refer to pioneer Derrick May's quote: "The music [techno] is just like Detroit – a complete mistake. It's like George Clinton and Kraftwerk[1] stuck in a elevator". But this simplification ignores techno's complex range of influences, many of which came not from Germany but from the industrial city of Detroit. Its spaces, its old structures, its car factories, even its decay: whether they loved it or hated it, Detroit undoubtedly inspired techno artists to produce this unique kind of electronic music. All of them tried to encapsulate the heart of the city, and firmly believed in producing a music that had a soul.

While techno's roots are firmly in Detroit, it had to travel to UK, Germany and the rest of eastern Europe to make the impact its innovation surely deserved, and greatly benefited from the Berlin's wall crumbling into dust. Nonetheless, some purists would argue that this trip to Europe marked the point where the soul of techno was lost. Indeed, during the 1990s, techno spread to more cultures faster than any type of music in recent history. Then the movement came back to Detroit and the United States, but it would never be the same as in the beginnings.

As the movement rose, many experts tried to label it as just another music genre, following the looming end of the rock 'n' roll era. But unlike rock 'n' roll, techno at its beginnings directed attention only to its music – putting live performance challenges, DJ groupies and the star-system aside. The fans don't have lyrics to memorize or personalities to follow. "This is not music for the masses", Peter Wohelski explained (former director of the A&R[2] department of Astralwerk). Techno music is, by essence, underground. Its spread rested upon small independent labels and its pioneers always avoided the mainstream record labels. Lacking the ability to garner massive attention and success, techno has had to find other ways to develop. Some even speak of an invisible industry, composed by raves, almost-illegal clubs, and alternative promoters.

On the other hand, techno is also very much an industry. Its diverse influences include links to Motown soul, Italian disco, or R&B – which were all popular music genre at one time. Besides, many famous techno tracks made it to the top *Billboards* charts, which is evidence of mainstream success. Therefore, small independent labels competed with big ones, partly thanks to the proliferation of digital music. Digital music retailers such as iTunes and Beatport have created an environment where music genres like techno could spread to every music listener, allowing techno to become mainstream. Ironically, a Juan Atkins[3] song was used in the 2000s for a Ford Focus commercial[4], which is evidence of the music appeal to the masses.

How did Techno travel from Detroit to Europe and back again to Detroit? From the underground scene to the masses? How did it change America and Europe? Which lessons can be drawn from this particular musical movement?

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[1] Kraftwerk is a German pioneer group of electronic music
[2] Artist & Repertoire

I- The growing popularity of Techno since its creation

A) The origins of Detroit Techno

Detroit: from Motor City to Techno city

"Detroit is a decay. We got inspiration from that decay", Carl Craig[5].

Detroit's post-industrial condition was how and where techno's nuances developed exponentially, rather than with a linear, limiting progression. As Juan Atkins relates, most of the parents of techno DJs in the making were working with robots in car factories, as the car industry was booming in the United States during the 1960s and as Detroit was the heart of that industrial boom (earning the nickname "Motor City"). For the first time, people were working alongside sophisticated machines and robots. This is where the term "techno" appeared; encompassing this new technological era the city was transitioning into. The young techno artists used samples from the car factories their parents would go to work at, and combined them to make music alongside new technological instruments (drum machines, synthesizers, etc.). This is the reason why the very first techno songs – like Cybotron's "Techno City" – sound very robotic. Thus the technological revolution happening in Detroit lies at the core of its music.

Then, Detroit architectural originalities were a source of inspiration for these artists. Detroit is a weird city: it is really big, horribly designed, but it is suffused with a small community mentality. There is a heart to this city. All the beautiful structures from the 1970s (for instance great decorated churches) fell into decay because the city didn't have the funds required to take care of them. But all these abandoned buildings remained a source of hope and inspiration for future artists and producers, who seemed to connect on a more personal level with Detroit's buildings. Take how Juan Atkins passionately describes the curves or the columns of an abandoned church in many interviews[6]. As far as he is concerned, curves remind him of bass lines, columns of drum beats, etc. He then explains he has already composed music solely by observing the original architecture of an abandoned building and by transposing what he felt when he looked at it into techno music. This is where the spirit joins the machine. Indeed every music conceived in Detroit has a spirit, which humanizes the mechanical sound produced by techno artists' machines.

Finally, techno could happen in Detroit due to a simple notion: space. In 1967, a long pattern of exclusionary practices and segregation erupted into violence; the city (notorious as the "murder capital" back then) was depopulated. Ever since this period (and even more since the 1970s), people migrating away transformed Detroit into a "ghost city". During the 1980s, once the commuters cleared out from the downtown in the evening, one could walk several blocks without encountering another person. Nobody walks in the street, nobody talks … thus techno appeared as a response to the need to bring people together in this "ghost city". Besides, Detroit has space, which provided food for artists' imagination. Starting from virtually nothing, it was almost like techno artists had a whiteboard for them to build something new that would bring the people of Motor City together again. This is the true meaning of the expression "Techno City".

[5] In documentary *Techno City: What is Detroit techno?* (2014)
[6] In documentary *The Creation of Techno Music* (2016)

The soul of techno

Dan Sicko sums up: *"It was in the midst of this continuum that techno came to life, a music that echoes the ups, downs, and uncertain times of urban America".*[7]

As techno pioneer Derrick May repeated over and over in his interviews[8], the secret of Detroit techno is its soul. It lies at the core of the rhythm, of the basses, of the voices used by techno artists to compose. It is also the reason why everybody could make techno, according to Derrick May. This is why the emphasis is put only on the music, not on the DJs producing it.

This primary aspect of Detroit techno finds its roots in Detroit romance with soul music. During the 1960's, the city hosted *Motown Record* (whose name is a direct reference to "Motor City", Detroit), the most successful record label of soul music, with artists like The Supremes or The Jackson Five. In the same interview, Derrick May explains that during their youth, every Detroit techno artists would at one time have listened to a lot of soul music. This *Motown* influence can be encountered in several vocal samples used in techno tracks, like "Never Grow Old*"* by Robert Hood[9].

The Kraftwerk input

As May's introduction quote illustrated, Kraftwerk is referred to as the most prominent influence of techno music. Kraftwerk, a German electronic music group, emerged to prominence with its single *Autobahn* in 1974. This unique track reflects a seamless machine-perfect sound, using clean and syncopated rhythms. They are often considered as the first group producing electronic music.

When they first came to Detroit, Kraftwerk got stuck in an elevator on the 99th floor with psychedelic funk artist George Clinton. They made music with a calculator, the floor buttons and percussions with walls and door of the elevator. They made music with the resources they had. This scene has ever since fueled techno artists' imagination and is used as the best example of the spirit of techno.

While it is true Kraftwerk had a far-reaching effect on electronic music as a whole, reducing techno to its German influence would be undermining a whole other spectrum of influence coming from Europe.

The forgotten ancestor: Italo-disco

During the 1970's, there is no denying that disco died commercially. Its followers, however, were determined to at least keep the music's creative energies alive. Thus disco went underground to survive, resulting in the creation of a new subgenre in the late seventies: "Italo-disco". Embodied by Giorgio Moroder, it encompassed a wide spectrum of electronic sounds and rejected traditional instrumentation. Italo-disco artists used new electronic instruments (such as the Roland TB-303 synthesizer) to produce this experimental new genre of music. Italo-disco acted as a transition between "new wave" (with famous artists such as Depeche Mode or New Order) and techno music.

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[7] *Techno Rebels: the Renegades of Electronic Funk* (1999)

[8] *Techno City: What is Detroit Techno?*

[9] See page 18 for a playlist of songs related to each section of the essay

But Italo-disco artists were themselves trying to capture the spirit of black American R&B, which Detroit teenagers rejected at first. Here Jon Savage's notion of *"double refraction"* becomes relevant. In his book *England's dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond*, he argues that music is passed and copied back and forth between cultures. In this case, Detroit's African-American teenagers were listening to the angular robotic disco from Italy, but these European groups they listened to were themselves reflections of American music. That is why techno is sometimes thought of as reaction of black American R&B while in fact it is deeply rooted in this legacy.

B) The Birth of Techno

By 1983, Detroit was ready for a new beginning. Its cultural regeneration would begin with a group of high school kids who would become techno's first artists, and with innovative radio programs and the birth of a groundbreaking dance club that would help these pioneers connect with the audience.

The Belleville Three

"The Belleville Three" is a nickname given to the first three masterminds of techno music, all coming from the same high school in Belleville: Juan Atkins ("the originator"), Derrick May ("the innovator") and Kevin Saunderson ("the elevator").

Juan Atkins grew up with a healthy and early interest in music. In school, he was very interested in futurist theories and these ideas stuck with him. He says "I was never really good at sports … so I just made music". He gradually turned from traditional instruments to electronic music, and started with his friend Vietnam War veteran Richard Davis under the alias "Cybotron" (a mix of cyborg and cyclotron, illustrating the influence of futurist theories in his work). In the beginning, they decided to operate independently from the bar and nightclub scene and considered themselves as recording artists only. During this period, hip-hop (with Run DMC for instance) became the new music, obscuring techno or any other innovative sounds – it was hard for them to make it in the music business. Finally in 1985, Juan Atkins departed from Cybotron and launched his label, Metroplex Records, which would be in the future an example for the other techno artists. Juan Atkins would eventually become techno's spiritual leader and earned the nickname "Obi Juan" – as a reflection of his contribution to the genre.

If Atkins was the prophet, Derrick May can be considered as the "high priest" of techno music, as he brought up the artistic development to the genre. May was more of an alchemist, adding new dimensions and colors to techno thanks to the use of piano licks, sampled strings and vocals. He was playing and testing his productions whenever he could, as illustrated by his late nights "danceathon" at clubs like the Lidernacht. He always wanted to be part of something that you could go by in a store, to make his music part of the mainstream; not only for his own economic elevation, but for the elevation of the music. His most famous work is his 1987 record "Strings of Life" (under the alias Rhythm is Rhythm), a song that remains among techno's most dramatic even today.

Born in Brooklyn, Kevin Saunderson became friends with May and Atkins when he met them at Belleville High School. As an anecdote, he became close to May after beating him up at a football game the first time they met each other. Kevin Saunderson is the guy that made techno reaches the masses. His group Inner City sold more than 6 million records and hit UK Top 40 eight times – with singles like "Good Life" or "Big Fun". He was definitely the most

commercially successful "Belleville Three" artist. As KMS (Kevin Saunderson's label) promoter Payne summed it up: "Kevin had a knack for pulling the right people together to get the job done"[10]

Connecting with the Audience

Even before the opening of record stores in Detroit, techno's development could be traced on the airwaves. Radio served as a great medium for these artists to get some recognition from the population of Detroit. Charles Johnson, aka "the Electrifying Mojo", held the first popular techno radio in Detroit. He wanted to connect all techno music fans through his radio station: "I would go and bridge the gap that separated young from old, rich from poor, black from white, and informed from uninformed"[11]. He didn't play commercial music because the money was less important to him than the development of a community around techno music. He is the one who discovered current techno demigod Jeff Mills, who was at the time going under the alias "The Wizard". During The Mojo's shows, Mills became the Wizard and never spoke a world. Instead he used his time to play more records. He was then given his own radio show on Detroit's WDRQ, competing with the Mojo's radio show[12]. This healthy competition is the first main reason why techno became popular around the city of Detroit.

Secondly, the creation of the Music Industry was largely responsible for solidifying Detroit's techno scene of the time, as this legendary club gave artists a place to exercise their DJ skills and play their records without having to travel to the UK to have a gig. Located in hometown Detroit, the Music Industry opened in 1988 and directly appeared as a blessing for all techno artists. For a short time, divisions of class and sexual preference vanished, letting Detroit's techno community express itself the way it wanted, whether you were black or white, male or female. There were no drugs or alcohol in there, only water and orange juice. Kids drank before going there. It was the first real underground techno club in the world: just a dark hole with strobe lights. Unfortunately, Detroit was still not ready, and the Music Industry closed one year later in 1989. But it will forever remain a mythical part of techno history, due to the way it functioned as a "home" for the music, transforming one of the city's old structures and putting it to work.

C) Finding a Home in the UK's rave culture

Surprisingly, before spreading across the rest of the United States, techno became popular across the Atlantic in the United Kingdom. Even more surprisingly, its success there would only last three years (between 1988 and 1990), three years that would change techno forever.

Neil Rushton and "Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit"

Techno success in the UK is first due to Birmingham fanatical record collector Neil Rushton who took interest in Detroit's "new" sound during an excursion to Motor City. After he made contact with the "Belleville Three", Neil Rushton invited them to the UK to play in British clubs and more importantly to do a compilation (which was undoubtedly unconsciously connected to Motown compilation back in the 1960's). Detroit's artists went on with the

[10] In *Techno Rebels: the Renegades of Electronic Funk,* Dan Sicko
[11] *Ibid*.
[12] In podcast *The Birth And Growth Of Detroit Techno* (2018)

project and the compilation was published under the title "Techno! The New Dance sound of Detroit" in 1988. The song that carried the compilation to its initial prominence was Inner City's "Big Fun", a late add-on that became a huge commercial success in the UK. Therefore the compilation logically hit number 1 in the UK.

Rave parties and acid house

Though Londoners had accepted techno in the form of club entertainment, they soon became tired of it and felt they needed something else. Witness how the commercial failure of the second techno compilation "Techno 2: The Next Generation" released in 1990. At this moment, a different type of dance music took the place that techno had earned two years earlier: *acid house*. Named for its psychedelic sounds, "acid" developed with the advent of the Roland TB-303 synthesizer that emitted aural equivalent of liquid mercury – the sound of psychedelic hallucination. By 1990, acid house had become the most popular electronic music in London. The drug connotation of the term "acid" was perfect complement for the increasingly popular "rave" movement. Though it was not categorically their style of music, Detroit techno DJs got involved with this new scene and mixed at raves with acid house DJs.

Raves had a radical effect on techno and acid house music, which were exposed to larger and larger crowds. Adapting to these audiences was a new challenge for DJs, who then needed to alter their sets to match the "heightened" states of the people on ecstasy – as heightened serotonin levels called for more dramatic and energetic songs. But these "rave" records were still few among Detroit's techno DJs at the time, and they were sometimes criticized for taking too long to get to the point where people could lash out on the dance-floor[13].

All in all, though acid house enormous transformative effect on British culture had nudged techno into the background, the "idea" of techno survived. The United Kingdom had experienced Detroit techno and was coming to accept its talents, even if much of Detroit's musical innovation at the time went undetected.

D) Return to Detroit, expansion through the US and Germany

The rave movement' economies of scale had completely changed techno, undermining its complexity, intimacy and soul. By 1991, the techno movement appeared to Detroit and the US with a new face.

The development of America's rave landscape

In 1991, the rave movement started to take its marks on American soil. The techno scene expanded to New York, Dallas, Los Angeles and San Francisco. But in these cities, techno was considered as an import from the UK, a country where techno had been imported from the US in the first place. Here, Jon Savage's concept of "double refraction" appears even more relevant.

A schism formed between new American audiences and former techno fans in Detroit. The aging African American audience of techno's past had gone back underground to local small house parties, while the rave culture became a youth-oriented movement centered on teenage white kids. Therefore when Detroit techno DJs came back to their country at the beginning of the 1990's, they faced significant generation and culture gaps.

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[13] *See more about rave culture in the second part of the essay, page 10*

There is no denying that the emergence of American rave emphasized the drug problem in the US especially among teenagers. As every cloud has a silver lining, it has nonetheless had some positive aspects on the development of techno music. First, the "ravers" enthusiasm for techno during their high school years persisted after they graduated and they became a solid fan base with a more disposable income. Second, along with advances in digital mixing capabilities, raves allowed the advent of a whole new generation of DJs across the country. Rave soon fell with new laws passed in 2003 that prohibited them in the name of the War on Drugs[14].

Techno outlasted the rise and fall of rave, to the surprise of some critics who could not conceive the existence of one without the other. But after many years of exposure to rave culture, it appeared impossible to get back to the original Detroit techno of the 1980's. What happened was that "Detroit's artists decided to change the rules a second time. The answers did finally come – in a fierce musical reassertion and a new generation of world beaters"[15].

Redefining underground techno

"In this country it's very hard for creative thought to escape capitalism", Juan Atkins[16]

While the expansion of the rave movement to America allowed techno to become increasingly popular around the country and around the globe, its pioneers in Detroit had to adapt to try and come back to the essence of their genre. In the wake of the Belleville Three's success spawned several new labels, clubs and artists with distinct and established identities, who would pave the way and established a distinctive structure for years to come. Among them, it is important to mention Richie Hawtin (resident DJ of the Shelter) or Blake Baxter (resident DJ of the Majestic). Thanks to a real network of promoters, these less famous DJs had the opportunity to really build a solid fan-base at their respective clubs.

This was Detroit underground's major renewal: this movement was suffused with a close-knit identity that still exists somewhere in the heart of the scene. Though it was a small scene, the community grew strongly. According to Dick Huvaere[17], the period between 1993 and 1995 is really when Detroit became popular regionally. People from all over the United States would start coming and experiencing techno events.

Techno had the greatest impact among the worldwide "underground" community. In the past, this term has been used to describe music that simply wasn't popular enough to be played on the radio or into retail chains. By the early 1990's, "underground" had taken another meaning: it had become a *purpose*. It was the purpose of restoring techno's original soul, of putting the focus back on Detroit and on the fundamentals of its music. This idea was perfectly embodied by one group and one label, still famous to this day: Underground Resistance (UR).

Dismayed by the influence that the commercial record industry was having on techno's first-wave artists, UR's image rested upon the fight against the Majors. The more they stripped away their identity and focused on a simple message, the more popular they became. They

[14] *See more on drugs page 11-12*
[15] In *Techno Rebels: the Renegades of Electronic Funk,* Dan Sicko
[16] "Roots of techno" interview of Juan Atkins (1994) by Dan Sicko
[17] Longtime trustee and former chairman of the Michigan Auto Dealers Self-Insured Fund

didn't do interviews and let they music speak for them. During venues, they were dressed in black, wore combat boots and black jackets adorned with US army patches. UR's low visibility created a real cult around themselves in the minds of the fans. Some now suggests that all of UR's stances and mandates were part of a larger "anti-marketing" marketing scheme, and should therefore be questioned. Anyway, UR marked the period as the symbol of the resistance of the underground against the mainstream embodied by the Majors. As Richie Hawtin explained: "Everyone had that kind of mentality and philosophy about going against the industry"[18]

Moving to Germany: the beginning of techno's decentralization

As Europe began redefining itself in 1989 and 1990 with the looming end of the Cold War, its youth initiated a new underground dance music scene under the influence of Detroit techno. In the UK, the rave scene was at its peak. In Germany, the collapse of the Berlin wall in November 1989 gave techno an opportunity to develop. This opportunity seemed even better that the ones Detroit's youth benefited from in the early 1980's.

The area between East and West Berlin was always considered as sort of a "no-man's land" full of abandoned buildings. The space remained unoccupied during the reunification, so that German techno originators could start their first techno club there. And that is how Tresor was born. Its founder, Dimitri Hegemann, recalls: "We were the place where East and West kids came together, musically. We found our style – it was definitely oriented toward minimal Detroit sounds, and a year after we had our own crowd"[19]. Many Detroit artists were coming then to Berlin to play at Tresor and therefore built a connection between Detroit and Berlin.

During the 1990's, Germany gradually shaped its own style of techno. Still greatly influenced by Detroit techno's artists such as Underground Resistance (whose labels were sold massively in Berlin's record stores), German "Tekkno" – as Berliners liked to call it – had the particularity of being more minimal and harsher, incorporating fewer vocals and more basslines than Detroit's techno. Germany's growing scene was without a doubt the beginning of techno's decentralization. Berlin became Germany's music capital and techno's second logical center after Detroit. It would soon be followed by the appearance of other European centers, especially in Belgium or in the Netherlands. The term "Techno Tourists" was coined in the Netherlands to encapsulate all these new techno fans travelling to these cities to see their favorite DJs play "live" in techno clubs; a website called "technotourist.org" was even created to compile techno events around the world and to allow fans to regroup at these events.

At this point, the techno movement had undeniably lost some of the mystery revolving around it at its beginnings. There were no more secret identities or clubs left to reveal and the movement had been well documented - it was starting to become mainstream. At least one thing was certain: the legacy of Detroit was living on and thriving at home and abroad.

[18] *The Creation of Detroit Techno*
[19] *The Day We Lost the Beat: Techno's journey from Detroit to Berlin*, James Constant

E) Techno today

As Dan Sicko puts it "Techno has made the journey from Detroit neighborhoods to all seven continents, from the underground to the mainstream, and from high school party politics to the 'peace, love, unity, respect' mottoes of rave culture. Will it continue fighting its way through the mass media and the lowest common denominator?"[20].

It is now known for a fact that techno will not have the same fate in the United States as rock or jazz. Techno represents a completely different marketing approach and has departed from the common star-system once promoted by rock 'n' roll. The movement will only grow if it is allowed space to grow and if there is a global will to educate audience and the music industry. And, since major labels never try to take techno's future into their own hands, the responsibility falls to the underground and smaller labels to cultivate an every bigger techno audience. This task is currently performed by word of mouth like before, but also by taking advantage of large-scale social networks such as Facebook. But most of all, techno should always be considered as a gift: it echoes emotions, it is music inspired by your environment, its paramount aim is to make people dance to a music they wouldn't normally dance to in the first place. As Richie Hawtin explains in an interview[21], the original concept of techno is anti-rave; it was all about the music, and not the drugs, not politics: "when you go to a techno club, you forget where you are, what time it is, who you are … and then you come home".

A lot of subgenres emerged during the 2000's, all of which are more or less related to techno music: minimal, drum & bass, dubstep, etc. One must take this diversity into account and must not try to regroup all these subgenres under the same banner. That is why to watch techno progress one must keep paying attention to details, and should not focus on the big picture. One needs to follow the optimists: artists who free themselves of the constraints of the record business and who keep searching for new ways to connect to other human beings. With the advent of new technologies every day, some artists like Jeff Mills deeply think we have only heard a very small fraction of what's possible to experiment in electronic music. Because so far, creative ideas are found across the spectrum of techno – whether produced in Detroit, Germany, or somewhere else – but they are not redefining the style.

All in all, techno has evolved from the underground basement of Detroit to the mainstream audiences of the whole world. In 2013, the *Wall Street Journal* estimated that techno tourism brought close to one billion euros in revenue to Berlin. Another example of this mainstream success is the continued success of the 16-year-old *Detroit Electronic Music Festival*, which attracts tens of thousands of people to downtown Detroit's Hart Plaza every Memorial Day weekend to listen to techno. Even the events claiming to be the most "underground" – like Nevada's *Burning Man* festival every year financed by non-profit organizations and creating communities relying on barter – have become really expensive due to their growing popularity. Following the new trend of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) in the USA, more and more people now consider that underground German-style techno could be the savior of American dance music culture.

[20] *Techno Rebels: The Renegades of Electronic Funk*
[21] *The Creation of Detroit Techno*

II- Influence on English-speaking countries society, culture and philosophy: debunking myths

A) The life and death of Rave culture

As described in part "I/C)", Rave culture began in Britain between 1988 and 1990, and quickly spread across the continent before affecting North America. Rave was, like so many great subcultures, really difficult to decipher for people exterior to it. As explained earlier, its connection to the drug ecstasy (which will be specified below) – a drug that was not used by early techno fans in Detroit – exacerbated the media's focus on the movement.

This connection was born at a time when British people would travel to Ibiza during holidays. As using drugs was common among Ibiza's nightclubs, Britons would come back to the UK and try to recreate the experience they had in their favorite local clubs. As techno and acid house were the perfect music to match their "state" under the influence, rave parties (or "free parties") gathered more and more people every year during the 1990's. They attracted people who would never have set foot in a techno club if not for the drug. America would then know the same phenomenon, as ever-larger crowds of white suburban teenagers would attend American raves mostly in the Midwest.

The problem is that ever since this period, techno music became inseparable from a chemically altered consciousness experienced under drugs. This led to the media overreacting. For instance, the British TV show Top of the Pops banned any song or band with the word "acid" in its name. The press was missing the point, focusing on the music's superficial novelty rather than its more interesting aspects.

As soon as the media put the phenomenon under the spotlights, American and British politicians tried and stopped rave in their respective countries, in the name of the fight against the abuse of ecstasy. In the US, then Senator Joe Biden sponsored the project RAVE (Reducing Americans Vulnerability to Ecstasy) Act in 2002, making it a crime for an owner of a venue to knowingly open it up to events where illegal drugs are used. Even if the original bill did not pass, a similar one (the Illicit Drug Anti-Proliferation Act) made it through in 2003. This act destroyed and put an end to the entire rave scene, in the name of the War on Drugs. Likewise, the British government, quicker, prohibited mass gatherings with the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 – making outdoor raves impossible to stage[22].

It is important to note that artists in Detroit were completely at odds with that image of going to a techno club as a drug-related experience. Indeed, following the surge in crack and cocaine sales in Detroit during the 1980's, techno producers took the drug issue very seriously The *Music Institute* (Detroit's most famous club at the end of the 1980's) only served water and juices. For them, drugs carried deadly connotations. Thus they hated the fact that their music would be associated with a hard drug-related experience.

[22] *Rave Scene As a Specific Part of Youth Culture in Britain*, Roman Kuběna

B) A drug-related music?

The use of illegal drugs is undoubtedly more widespread among techno clubbers than among the general population of the corresponding age. But the correlation is less obvious than people and politics often think.

In a study conducted in Austria during the end of the 1990's[23], Tossmann comes up with the idea that not every techno clubber consumes drugs. The most-consumed drug at the time was cannabis, followed by ecstasy and MDMA (15% takes it around 1-4 times a month). One should note that cannabis use is not really related to the techno scene, while the use of ecstasy appeared to be strictly linked to it. Take the name for instance of HEC electronic music association, "HECSTASY", which a direct reference to the drug and to the states it puts you into.

The results of his research (carried out in 1999) show that techno fans can be divided tino three specific categories regarding their use of drugs:

- The drug-abstinent clubber (for their lifetime), which makes for 20% of the people.
- The cannabis user who never use any other drugs, accounting for 17% of all people on average.
- The "polydrug" user, who is used to mixing drugs during techno venues (for most of them ecstasy and weed, but some also experience more original mixtures), which accounts for the rest of the people. It should be pointed out that the greater majority of this group only has occasional use and usually stops when getting older (understand here after reaching the age of 25 years old).

Meanwhile, 2018 statistics highlighted the fact that in metropolitan cities big clubs, on a regular night, only 15% of people dancing were taking hard drugs. Furthermore, a majority of ecstasy and MDMA users (65%) attested they use it less than 3 times a year.

It is also interesting to note that the prevalence of illegal drug use stands in a reciprocal relationship to the size of the event. This can be explained by the fact that small venues attract moistly techno purists while large events also attract people from the periphery of the techno scene. There is a connection between drug consumption and involvement in the techno party scene. The hardcore techno fans are the most prone to be using drugs. Also the more friends you have using, the most probable is it for you to take drugs. Social pressure and involvement in the scene are two factors that helped understand why someone would be more prone to using.

Finally, the most important point Tossman is trying to make is that the correlation between taking drugs and going to techno venues should not be interpreted as a causal explanation. Neither listening to techno music nor going to techno clubs can be used as a causal explanation for drug use. Drug use is correlated to the now predominant phase of adolescence marked by the experimentation of different lifestyles. "Drug use is, therefore, not a result of visits to techno parties, but rather a possible concomitant phenomenon", Tossman explains.

[23] *Drogenaffinität Jugendlicher in der Techno-Party-Szene*, Tossman (1999)

How can we prevent the use of drugs regarding this study and the 2018 statistics? By closing techno clubs and rendering these venues illegal like the governments tried to do?

First, school drug prevention should be emphasized and be more realistic, more adapted to what teenagers are living through during their high school and college years. I, for one, had to attend one intervention against the use of drugs at my school: the only thing I remember now from it was that if I took too many drugs I would want to peel myself like a carrot or jump from a cliff like a "Chocapic" … That is why I think, as experts like Tossman criticize, that exacerbating surreal effects of particular drugs is not really helpful for teenagers because it differs too much away from their reality – and may not be enough to counteract the effects of social pressure.

Furthermore, drug prevention should be more focused on specific target groups. Some people – depending on their age, their social background, the place they live, etc. – are more likely to use than their peers. Some sort of profiling could then help drug prevention target the ones that need it the most.

That was the aim of research conducted by Margaret Breuner[24] that showed that only by looking at your Facebook profile, it can be determined whether you take drugs or not. From a sample of more that 300 college students, this research exposed that most-probable drug users had more reference on their profile and wall to electronic music, indicating they are "interested" or "participating" in music events more frequently and have more Facebook friends. On the one hand this study sounds frightening, as it is further evidence that our Facebook page reveals a lot more about ourselves than we think it does. On the other hand, if this kind of profiling can be done with a Facebook profile, it could be done in real life and allow drug prevention authorities to intensify their help to teenagers who are the most prone to fall into the dark path of drug abuse.

C) A story of generation

At the origins of techno music lies a simple idea: the will for a new generation of teenagers to find escape and release in music. A new generation was looking to escape the inheritance of Motown and Funk artists like George Clinton through their own particular style of music. Thus when the time came for these kids' inevitable rebellion at adolescence, they turned their back to R&B and got interested in Kraftwerk and other European artists. These young "techno rebels", as Alvin Toffler calls them[25], thought they had found R&B's polar opposite, when in fact they were hearing a music which took its roots in this very same soul influence. Through their interest in techno music, the young experience their first real sense of empowerment. In Detroit, the African American youth took that notion to a whole new level. Techno will then help these young generations overcoming cultural and geographical isolation.

The blueprint for Detroit's techno subculture ended up being as inclusive as the sound itself. As the high school kids grew up into adults, techno's full potential would be gradually realized: DJs became recognized more for their art than for their technical skills, and began to draw crowds, independent of whatever club or sponsor was organizing the party. One of the

[24] *Music to my Ears: Connections Between Club Drugs and Electronica Viewed Through Facebook,* Margaret Breuner (2014)
[25] *The Third Wave*, Alvin Toffler

most interesting phenomena around the rise of Detroit techno is how quickly an interest in music grew into a new philosophy that encompassed the aspirations and ambitions of a generation. As they grew up, this generation became the core of the techno fan-base during the 2000's. This is part of the reason why techno should not be considered as a music genre for the young only.

Nowadays, techno clubbing is a phenomenon usually associated with youth culture. As Christian Goulding advocated in his first research study in 2002[26], there is a hidden category of techno consumers, whose age varies between 30 and 40 years old, which is as important as the young to the techno scene. His study first focuses on "cognitive age", referring not to the age you are in fact but to the age you feel you are – which is also often based on the age you looks, your source of interests, etc. "Cognitive age" provides a better understanding of underlying consumer motivations. And even more interesting is the study of age perceptions led by Underhill and Cadwell in 1984, who found that more than 70% of adults between the ages 30 and 40 felt on average nine years younger that their actual years. It confirms that, contrary to what is often believed, rave culture relies also on many mature over-30 clubbers. Furthermore, these older clubbers can be divided into two distinct categories.

First, those who witnessed the birth of the rave scene during the end of the 1980's, who remained nostalgic and who kept a strong interest for the development of the genre. According to Mr. Goulding, those adults are generally single professionals with few family responsibilities.

Second, the other category describes adults who discovered the scene when they were already adults, and had already work and family responsibilities before going to techno clubs. Such people feel they found themselves in the rave and clubbing culture, as they are reluctant to conform to the thirty-forty routine of married life. Their new leisure is usually more oriented towards escapism and adrenaline driven activities, than towards what they consider as the "boring" activities of the other people of their age group.

Once again in contrast to popular belief, adults aged between 30 and 40 who still enjoy listening to techno music or going to raves will not necessary "fail" in their professional life and end up as hobos wearing parachute pants and protesting against capitalism. Most of the professionals interviewed for the study carried high professional responsibilities and didn't have low-paid low-prestige no-future jobs, pretty much the opposite actually. The best example of this is the new president of Goldman Sachs, David Solomon, whose favorite leisure is to go "djing" electronic music in clubs around the world.

D) A way out of racial and class segregation?

In Detroit, everything is about boundaries[27]. "8 Mile Road" – nickname of the Michigan highway M-102 – divides the city in two between the North and the South. Ever since the second part of the 20th century, 8 Mile Road has been a boundary between rich and mostly white neighborhoods of the north of the city and the poor and predominantly black south. Even if some black population of the middle-class have migrated to the north, rendering the cultural divide less obvious, the socio-economic gap remains relevant nowadays.

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[26] *Age is just a number: Rave culture and the cognitively young thirty something.* Christian Goulding (2002)

[27] *The Creation of Techno Music*

As explained earlier, techno music has always tried and pushed the limits of class. If some groups like Underground Resistance were really influenced by post-Panther black militancy, most of the techno scene in Detroit had the ambition to transcend socio-economic and cultural differences with their music. That's the reason why, according to Alexander Weheliye[28], techno music appealed to Berliners: it was primarily through their harsh, industrial sound, which stripped out vocals and any remnant of funk and disco's orchestrated legacy.

In her earlier work[29], Beatrice Aaronson deals with class and race segregation among techno clubs. It advocates that, in contrast with commercial and mainstream nightclubs – which are elitist institutions – techno clubs are "open" as they remove any class and racial difference between clubbers. As opposed to mainstream nightclubs, which are often centered on expressing your social status, techno clubs are only focusing on creating a space where you can dance – free of social and cultural pressure. This is the common point between Funk, Techno and Rave: the rhythm that gives you a sense of freedom. The underlying question is the following: how do these three musical genres united by rhythm and dance succeeded in breaking down the barriers of identity and in facilitating the elimination of social, cultural and gender boundaries?

"These [techno clubs] dancefloors have become a secular ritualistic locus of emancipation and liberation from society's ever growing stranglehold. […] The dancefloor generates a sentiment of community that virtually satisfies the sensation of isolation and constraint engendered by society due to its percussive and repetitive nature that recalls the frenetic drums of African tribal dances. Due to the out-of-body experience dance can generate, it is suggested that someone who dances to techno, moving to percussive and repetitive music 'is freed from society's rules'", would answer Beatrice Anderson[30]

Thus the techno dancefloor leads to the dissolution of particular identities into heterogeneous multitude. Class, sexuality or gender loses its clearly defined margins contrasting with social movements based on identity politics. Even the most hardcore and militant-sounding techno groups – like Underground Resistance – have ideals scenarios at heart, scenarios where race is no longer an issue. This accounts for the particular atmosphere of techno clubs, where the sense of community is more significant than in any other clubs.

E) Rethinking our individuality and our life in community through techno

As Barry Watten claims[31], techno is utopian and transformative. It lies at the core of a new community that then creates value for this same group of people. The clubber experience at a club is deeply linked to a series of behaviors related to fragmentation and identity. From these behavior will depend the satisfaction the consumer gets from his experience. The most-common behaviors found at techno clubs include narcissistic identity, the creation of new communities, and the need for escape, engagement and prolonged hedonism. This behavior also highlights core cultural values, including also child-like innocence and refusal to grow up.

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[28] *The Day We Lost the Beat: Techno's journey from Detroit to Berlin*, James Constant (2016)
[29] *Dancing our way out of class through Funk, Techno or Rave,* Beatrice Aaronson (1999)
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Techno City: What is Detroit Techno?*

In another study[32], Christina Goulding focused on the nature of the techno clubbing experience, from the perspective of techno fans themselves. "The club is a hyperreal environment where individuals can escape and get high on dancing" she says. According to techno fans, raving helps them to create meaning, to "find themselves", by offering an alternative way of being which allows for a better construction and management of the self. Before entering, the clubber is an outsider. But then he becomes a member of an exclusive community, which makes him feel special and worthy of notice. Techno's recent success is then deeply linked to the growing need of being part of a community in our modern and ever individualizing society.

This can be seen as a return to ancient tribal groups, where there was a deep sense of community among the members. Before they were related by blood or tribal affiliation usually linked to their geographic habitats. Nowadays, these techno community members are all linked to each other in clubs by their shared emotions, styles of life, moral beliefs, senses of injustice and consumption practices. On weekends, they reunite to engage in a collective experience, thus forming a temporary community, which disperses straight after the experience is over (often resulting in depression from members whose life now relies on these communities). Going to a techno club is an activity of sharing an experience thanks to sensorial and sensitive perceptions, allowing any clubber to belong to a group, to a community. This will create an aesthetic integrative aggregation between the people present. Ultimately, people feel safe.

[32] *Working Weeks, Rave Weekends: Identity Fragmentation and the Emergence of New Communities.* Christina Goulding

Conclusion: techno, the music of our time

Techno music is always at the middle of a debate. Is it the most impersonal dangerous violent and isolating music, like people are used to thinking? Or is it a new form of socializing with one another, without talking, through dance and body language in general? In an ever-individualizing world, it is possible that techno could be at the core of new forms of community, sending us back to the way of functioning of tribal communities. Here, techno is the music of the present. It acts as a laboratory for all the possibilities to fight against over-individualized and modern alienating society.

On the one hand, techno sound reminds us of capitalism and Taylorism with its mechanical sounds. On the other, techno venues are symbols of a new dialog inside the techno community and outside it. It helps us understand the construction of collective identities.

What characterizes the modern raver is that he is trying to escape his day-to-day routine. But it is not the right way to conceive techno music either. Facing the dissolution of social relationships and the failure of traditional vectors of socializations (school, family, political parties), does techno music act as a reproduction of this "age of emptiness"[33] or could it entail a new and alternative dynamic of socialization in our modern society?

[33] *La musique techno: art du vide ou socialité alternative,* Beatrice Mabillon-Bonfils (2002)

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I/A)

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- Motown and soul influence in techno: Robert Hood - Never Grow Old
- German influence: Autobahn – Krafwerk
- Italo-Disco influence: Giorgio Moroder - Chase

I/ B)

- Techno anthem still popular today: May - Strings of Life
- Most prominent commercial success: Inner City - Big fun

I/ C)

- UK Rave anthem n°1: Jaydee – Plastic Dreams
- UK Rave anthem n°2: Bass Selective – Blow Out Part 2
- UK Rave anthem n°3: The Moog – Rush Hour

I/ D)

- Techno back to its roots: Underground Resistance – Jupiter Jazz
- The second wave of Detroit: Octave One – Blackwater (featuring Ann Saunderson)
- Berlin “Tekkno” classic: Basic Channel - Octagon

I/ E)

- German techno: Ben Klock – Subzero
- French touch: Laurent Garnier – The Sound of the Big Babou
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