

En Pausa - Prefacio

Conexión - Rubén Coll

Do you remember last year's claustrophobic lockdown? By then, faced with the stress of not being able to leave home, my friend Ana reminded me what it meant to have a home: to have a place where one can lie down when everything is against you. In Spanish, we would call that *guarida* (a den). The rarely used verb form, *guarir*, means to take refuge, to cure, to care for, to restore one's health. To have a home is a privilege.

Today, the spaces related to what we know as electronic music are closer to study rooms than to rehearsal rooms, and many of them are located in the domestic sphere. Rooms like these are often found in territories of intimacy, and, when scarcity calls, they might be in one's very bedroom. Gone are the days when the pioneer figures in this field developed their work in sophisticated university laboratories or advanced broadcasting facilities. Nowadays, much simpler labs can be found at the same place where some of us live—the same place we sometimes use as an improvised solitary dance floor.

In the last few months, the somewhat iffy label bedroom pop has gained spread, presenting as a novelty something that has probably been the norm for a wide number of artists since the 70s, when recording at home became relatively affordable. That decade saw the consolidation of a transnational network, oblivious to the commercial circuits, built based on DIY and the postal interchange of tapes and fanzines. The 70s and 80s were a time of glory for photocopied publications like the Contact List of Electronic Music, which offered hundreds of addresses so one could write to artists all over the world. Other fanzines were, in turn, heirs of the Whole Earth Catalog, the legendary counterculture magazine that Stewart Brand released at the end of the 60s. Its goal? To share knowledge and contacts with anyone who wanted to create their own self-managed commune and detach from a Western society that was ruled by bureaucratization and the militarist paranoia of the Cold War years.

Thousands of home studios around the world would be the starting point for a community that was open to the most unusual sounds, at the intersection of categories that are maybe today somewhat vague, but were by then rather valid: industrial, minimalist or ambient. From those asynchronous listenings would emerge a fertile territory in which much of the experimental music we enjoy nowadays has its roots. That said, even if their echoes got to be heard in different parts of the globe, the majority of this "invisible generation" would never get to play in an auditorium. However, had they had access to the technologies available to us now, they would have made good use of it, going beyond the distribution between like-minded spirits of magnetic tapes recorded in their rooms.

Back to now: since the rise of the pandemic (or syndemic if you will), hosting a concert or a DJ session has become an even more complicated job than it already used to be. In a very short time, it has become clear that in this new order of things it is inevitable to rethink the concept of "live music" as we know it. Being used to a world where great lengths seemed to have little importance, at least to the most privileged, we find ourselves in a moment when even going out to the street doesn't depend on our will alone. For the audience, being part of

a crowd like the one that used to sweat tight together in festivals or dance floors has become a cherished memory, while as for the artists, the idea of touring like before is an activity with an uncertain horizon.

Bearing all of this deep in mind, the program of the third day of the En Pausa festival presents a nonstop 12-hour flow with musical proposals coming from different studios, some of them most probably home-based, from different corners of the world: the L.A. collective A Strange Isolated Place; Klara Vedis, agitator of the Macedonian scene; Chris SSG, Australian DJ based in Tokyo; the London duo formed by Jo Johnson and Hilary Robinson; Federico Durand, streaming from his Argentinian refuge of La Cumbre; Airo, an artist recently settled in Seoul; Patricia Wolf, whose operation base is in Portland; Karim, part of the Titika label from Marrakech; Albrecht La'Brooy, a tandem operating from Melbourne; and Gigi Fm, who we are unsure whether is in London or Venus, as stated in her Soundcloud account.

Putting aside frontiers and stylistic differences, the artists that participate in this day of the festival are sharing the choice of the studio-as-instrument in order to create what Brian Eno would call "fictional psycho-acoustic space[1]." This way, during 12 hours, En Pausa grants us the possibility of entering these spaces which, through sound, challenge (and reconfigure) temporality and geography. In this aspect, the streaming platform 9218, dedicated to collective listening and associated to label A Strangely Isolated Place, plays a key role in linking the different points of this decentralized constellation. A network whose nodes, besides the artists' locations mentioned above, must also include those of the audience, even if remotely, of En Pausa. It is impossible to predict what will be the short or long term effects of traversing this continuum. But it is very likely that the echoes of what happens on this day will be felt in the near future, connecting other rooms and home laboratories in different parts of the planet and, of course, spaces where the friction between bodies can once again take place without restrictions.

[1] Reynolds, Simon. "Kind to your ass: Ambient and Chill Out (1993)" Online:
<http://reynoldsretro.blogspot.com/2017/02/kind-to-your-ass-ambient-and-chill-out.html>