



ANTENNA

Debris Facility & Bridget Chappell
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OUTER
SPACE

You wouldn't steal a radio station, but would you commandeer a frequency?

As you explore ANTENNA, question everything, including this text.

The formulaic structure of an exhibition text - where advertising art meets critique, sensory details blend imperceptibly with academic theorists and the light touch of personal anecdotes - is at odds with the punk spirit of pirate radio. Pristine white walls contrast sharply with grungy pirate radio stations on boats or secret raves in forsaken warehouses. Any discerning observer will spot the incongruity of blending institutional conventions with a raw disruptive counterculture. Instead of deflecting this irony, let's revel in the contradiction.

Let's play.

Using short throw domestic radio transmitters, with a larger 15W/1 km radius transmitter as the beefy infrastructure of the project, ANTENNA inhabits the silent gaps of the FM bandwidth. Every 0.5FM of bandwidth to be precise. Each transmitter broadcasts a unique break-beat, samples, invited mixes, individual tracks from an artist, or bootleg mixes, waiting for their moment with the simple turn of a dial on a portable radio. In the age of digital streams and algorithm-driven playlists, ANTENNA's technical ingenuity empowers you to steer pirate frequencies. You're not just listening - you're curating, assembling a mutant mix. This is not the passive consumption of music capitalism; the very notion of 'pressing play' is transformed.

I often quip, "If you can count to 4 and press play, you can DJ". Periodt. Historically, underground communities have thrived by challenging the status quo, utilising a marginal position as a unique vantage point to set forth fresh, experimental, radical trajectories. 'Play' was not just "playing a song", but a profound medium of reimagining, reinvention, and resistance. This duality of play - as an act of listening and broader philosophical stance - is embedded in Johan Huizinga's idea of the "magic circle" - a space delineated by play and distinct from the mundane. ANTENNA encourages you to dive in and tinker within this sphere, to probe boundaries and contest conventions, a nod to the audacity intrinsic to underground movements.

"Diving in" and "tinkering" can be interpreted as tactics when we think about how individuals navigate, manipulate, or adapt to established systems. Michel de Certeau, in "The Practice of Everyday Life", differentiates between "strategies" used by those in power and "tactics" employed by individuals to navigate the strategies imposed upon. Pirate radio stations are the epitome of tactical resistance in sound media, whose broadcasts emerged as counterpoints to the mainstream wireless, radiating voices that were absent from traditional channels. Leveraging the gaps and oversights in regulatory systems, these stations operated with agility, always ready to move or shift in response to the encroachments of authority, capturing the essence of de Certeau's transient tactics within dominant structures.

Monumental pirate radio stations like Radio Caroline, Radio Luxembourg, and Kool FM originated as grassroots initiatives, providing unfiltered content to disaffected youth and challenging consolidated media giants. However, their aspiration to become commercial entities complicates this narrative, as it aligns with the entrepreneurial spirit of Thatcherite neoliberalism. This contradiction-wanting to be both anti-establishment and commercial-underscores the complexity of pirate radio stations' evolution and questions their ability to maintain a countercultural ethos while navigating the commercial world. For instance, although not a pirate radio station, the independent punk 4ZZZ station in Meanjin emerged in response to the conservative Bjelke-Petersen government. Yet, when I suggested a "Booty Show" in 2014 to represent Women of Colour and the queer community, I was flatly rejected and told, "We can't even begin to tell you the problems with that." Although I eventually secured my own show with a bit of charm and hard work, this reaction underscores the difficulties even alternative media outlets may encounter in fully representing marginalised voices.

With near-obsolete tech evoking the golden era of pirate radio, ANTENNA is undeniably imbued with a sense of "hauntology" that reflects the lost futures of audio culture. Extrapolated by Mark Fisher from Derrida's term, ANTENNA conjures a hauntological aura, pulsating with echoes of underground beats, the melancholy of soon-to-be decommissioned FM radio towers, and rogue transmissions reminiscent of Thatcher-era rave tracks.

The eerie luminescence of ANTENNA's UV circuits lays bare the paradox embedded in technological advancement, unmasking the hidden complexities of our digital era and artificial intelligence, which suck us into a vortex of yearning for the past and unmet expectations. This serves as an allegory for the present-day predicament, where progress in technology and culture, though offering new horizons, also exposes the ghostly vestiges of missed opportunities. We have acquiesced to the relentless onslaught of infinite feedback loops recycling past creativity, a form of collective, hypernormalised mental dissonance. It is the persistent sense of déjà vu experienced when watching algorithmically generated Netflix shows that reassemble familiar fragments from our youth, all acting as stark reminders of the haunting loop of progress.

Indeed, the present-day dance scene is drenched in hauntology, reverberating with the 'lost futures' and unrealised aspirations of yesteryears. Club aficionados long for the genuineness, revolutionary zeal, and camaraderie of bygone times, reminiscent of the '90s raves in London, techno's inception in Detroit, or the underground ballroom scene of New York. Yet, in endeavouring to resurrect or reimagine these eras, the club kids find themselves caught in the web of modern-day capitalism. The subversive ethos of the underground is commodified and peddled back to its creators, exemplifying the prowess of capitalism to assimilate and commercialise subcultures. As DJs and promoters pursue acclaim and financial security, they frequently dilute their foundational principles for sustenance, resulting in a dance culture that occasionally verges on being a simulacrum, repeating a Berlin zeitgeist, obfuscating the boundary between sincere tribute and derivative mimicry.

As Wāhine Māori and former underground DJ in Meanjin, I was drawn to write for Bridget and Debris because ANTENNA echoes the spiritual re-attunement and rejection of capitalist narratives that I resonate with. This mirrors the act of tuning into pirate radios and spiritual attunement, both rejecting consumerism and seeking deeper connections, akin to insects attuned to Papatūānuku/Mother Earth via their antennae. It reflects 'whakapapa,' the Māori concept of interconnectedness with everything - earth, sea, air, and all creatures, the past and present, contrasting Western narratives of 'loss' and nostalgia. It urges ANTENNA attendees to rethink 'loss' in Western narratives, question society's history, and highlights the importance of preservation, lived histories, club elders revealing the hidden frequencies and tuning into a ~different~ wavelength.

- Sezzo, 2023

Sezzo is a Ngāpuhi DJ, curator, writer and irrepressible force of energy from Aotearoa via Naarm and Meanjin. Her passion lies in investigating modern Indigenous identity and being captivated by the magic of club culture, underpinned by an extensive academic background in both philosophy and psychology. Sezzo's work on Club Theory has propelled her onto stages at esteemed venues and events worldwide, including the Palais de Tokyo Galerie, Dark Mofo, MONA FOMA, Pitch Music Festival, World Pride, Next Wave Festival, GoMA, Mardi Gras, MCA, IMA, Firstdraft, Falls Festival, and performances alongside artists such as Moor Mother & Black Quantum Futurism, Mechatok, Klein, Cher, Coolio, and Charli XCX. Currently, Sezzo is pursuing a medical degree at the University of Auckland to give back to her iwi and has a forthcoming scientific publication in the field of neuropsychiatry and artificial intelligence. Amidst all of these pursuits, she still finds time to explore Club Theory as one-half of the DJ duo Ngāsti, and masochistically stays in the art world.

Debris Facility is a para-corporate entity founded in 2015 from the rubble of a single artist's practice. The Facility's operations parasite onto processes between commodity and embodiments. Their cultural labour is engaged in queering hierarchies of value through producing artworks, installations, events, administrative interventions, discourse and design.

Bridget Chappell is a reformed artist still making art. She enjoys tinkering with sound technology; writing essays, poems, and particular letters; putting on raves. She produces and DJs as Hextape, founded and ran Sound School in Naarm, and maintains a good network of borrowed cellos around Oceania for classical shows.