

In bridging science and media, electronic music achieves a unique vantage point: the ability to explore complex relationships between society and engineering. Humanity since pre-history has been inseparable from its technology, and yet still today we struggle to understand the implications and consequences of our innovations. Electronic music is a platform for creative confrontation between man and his generalized tools, affording a space in which we can embrace technology while simultaneously continuing our critique of it. This critical engagement supersedes the attitudes of total rejection or blind appropriation that too often limit our understanding of applied science. Through engagement we can ask a more productive question: not whether technology itself is good or bad but rather what we ought to use it for.

As the many threads of electronic music blossomed in the late 20th century, its massive dance parties both offered an alternative to heavily commercial corporate record labels and suggested an integrated place for technology in culture. Nevertheless, as it itself became increasingly commercialized, excess and drug abuse replaced critique of science and technology. Beginning as a generative space of new ideas, electronic dance culture is known instead for its escapism - a reflection of consumer society rather than a critique of it. This is tragic. The power of electronic music lies not in running away from the world but rather in its demonstration of what we can build with mastery of all tools available to us.

In Detroit, this perspective is crucial - yet a popular critique of industrial technology has never gained mainstream traction here. Despite the auto industry's complicity in destroying community, mass transit, ecology, and the economy, the moniker of 'Motor City' remains buoyant. Electronic music, contrary to its claims of vision for the future, has in fact rarely offered comment on this situation, on the contrary appropriating the iconography and context of Detroit's now dissipated industrial economy. Like the Dream Cruise, techno in Detroit now largely supports a culture of nostalgia. The transformative potential of electronic music, valuable insight grasped through risky confrontation with technology, has been stunted here. The successes of Detroit Techno in the early 90s were a first step,

but now it must live up to its radical potential: that in Detroit our story of technology must no longer be a celebration of industrial society but rather our transcendence of it.

Today, we must engage technology to sharpen analysis, not as a brand or a way to make a quick buck. In doing so exists the opportunity to bolster understanding and good decision making. The electronic music party need not be a celebration of selling digestible concepts. Instead we should celebrate renewal and new ideas, replacing blind allegiance to a style, genre, or concept with flexibility and experimentation. For some, crafting purposeful music from machines, programs, and wires is a crucial struggle - with each performer or producer presenting not just a unique composition, but also a unique process. This improvisational technology looks far beyond the uniformity of minimal techno or General Motors, reaching for hybrid spaces with entirely different implications. Technology doesn't just mean dirty cars and poisonous factories, nor an easily consumable sound or living to party. Within technology also exist the openings for expanding freedom and supporting alternative perspectives, for pushing back against those who make us as pawns or destroy our planet. In those moments when the jubilant dance party meets with an honest exploration of ideas, we can hear electronic music's deepest message: that our engagement with technology creates the lives that we live.