

NON-MEMBERS NIGHT OUT

A number of years ago I suffered from a bout of prolonged back pain. Bad reactions to the high doses of pain killers meant social drinking was out of the question and combined with the inability to stand for longer than 10 minutes without excruciating pain this began to seriously curtail my social life. On the odd occasion I did go to the pub I would invariably leave after an hour or so. The pubs, karaoke bars and clubs became symbols of my exclusion. It was around this time that I began making recordings of the outdoor night life on my weekly shadowy walks. I was drawn to the back doors of clubs, deserted alleys behind bars, non-places where the filtered bass of the discotheque made the sense of isolation more palpable.

This soundscape, created with sounds familiar to anyone used to prowling the streets of a big city late at night, features surreptitious recordings made outside Glasgow nightclubs, skulking around back doors and fire exits in the early hours of the morning. Despite the obvious presence of others these sounds are strangely isolating. They document only the exterior, the periphery. The listener is excluded from the exciting and lively atmospheres that can be heard at a distance through the barriers of closed doors, brick walls and back alleys. You can hear the party but you haven't been invited.

These recordings also document the effects that high volumes of music and the city's club culture have on the surrounding architecture and acoustic environment. A door frame rattles in time, but at a slight delay, to the music within. A closely miked recording of a broken but intact windowpane at the rear of one club makes the grinding together of the shards of glass audible as they vibrate in time to the bass. Microphones inserted into drainpipes amplify the audible white noise content creating warm drones; filtered higher frequencies from the music and sounds from outside are still just audible. Windows rattle in their frames under an assault of bass heavy music.

All of the acoustic effects in this piece are natural; this is a simple edit and arrangement of the untreated field recordings.

Mark Vernon is a sound artist, musician and radio producer based in Glasgow.

Non-Members Night Out is now playing on the AA Radio, with thanks to Mark Vernon.

Listen: www.aair.fm

Next week: Vernon & Burns – *No Such Thing as a Quiet Hammer*