

Speaker Park: An Intersection of loudspeaker design and post-acousmatic composition.

Presented at Innovation in Music Conference. West London University December 2019

<https://www.inmusicconference.com>

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Abstract:

Speaker Park was an internationally curated project which brought together a custom installation of 24 hand built, sculptural loudspeakers made by Roar Sletteland and Jon Pigott, with two composers, Antti Sakari Saario and Mari Kvien Brunvoll, who took up residencies working with the system. The project was conceived as a critique of standardised commercial high-end loudspeaker systems of the type typically used for the electronic production and reproduction of sound. Setting up a conversation between composer and speaker designer / maker the project served as an investigation into unusual resonant and diverse approaches to loudspeaker design and how they affect the compositional and production processes. The project was premiered at Borealis international festival of Sound Art and Experimental Music which took place between 6th – 10th March 2019 in Bergen, Norway.

This paper is a first-hand reflection and exposition of *Speaker Park* by composer Antti Saario and speaker designer / maker Jon Pigott. It will detail the individual approach of each author in developing their part of the project (composition and speaker design) as well as the collaborative insights from the overall process.

Pigott will describe the inspiration for his speaker designs as emerging from an investigation into the physical and formal characteristics of resonant objects such as organ pipes, sound systems and architectural environments where spaces, enclosures, ports and materials all serve to develop unique resonant behaviours. The use of coneless moving coil exciters to maximise the physical and material elements of the sculptural loudspeakers will also be explained. The historical and cultural context for the custom and sculptural loudspeaker will be presented with examples including David Tudor's *Rainforest* (1968), Francois Bayle's *Acousmonium* (1974) and The Ondes Martenot among others.

Saario will discuss the commission and production of the fixed media composition A†BSB†R (*'Above the Blackened Skies. Beneath the Remains.'*) (2019) for the *Speaker Park* project and the associated conceptual framework ('network'). Here, concepts are read as 'active' forces of creativity (Colebrook, 2002) and the discussion will map a Deleuzian enterprise; an emergent set of connections pertaining to the production and the sonic-affective intent of the *Speaker Park-A†BSB†R assemblage*. Key concepts are *affect hit* (Massumi, 2015), *spectromorphology* (Smalley, 1997), composition as collaboration (Harrison, 1996) and *ecosophy* (Guattari, 1989). The work is nomadic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) in relation to the 'state' apparatus of mainstream loudspeaker design, spatial configurations and formats and its approach to spatial strategies *afforded* by *Speaker Park's* 'anti-configuration' and spectral *constraints* (Magnusson, 2006).

These various themes will underpin discussion around predictability within technological design and how this serves to support the model of the technological 'black box'. It will also explore notions of a hierarchical chain of technological concerns extending from endlessly soft and malleable digital tools through to hard material technologies.

Key Themes / terms

Composition as collaboration
Assemblage
Loudspeaker design
Fixed Media
Post-Acoustic
Sound Art
Experimental Music

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