

CTM Festival 2016: A Sense of Hope



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From the comfortable chair of a night bus that is heading to Dortmund, an Asian young girl plays a shooting game on her smartphone. She's so attached to it. I am thinking about the crucial moment when the phone's battery would be completely gone. I can't really see her face. I walked three times to the driver and his co-pilot and each time I was trying to address a basic question to the assistant, he would pass me to the driver, a calm English speaker. Two times I asked for Snickers bars and the third time I asked for indications from the bus station to the airport of Dortmund. On the way back to my chair, I would discretely pick a fugitive eye on the girl playing on her phone.

In the back seats I could see some Italians, some Turkish lads and, unsurprisingly, two Romanian fellows. One of them was snoring loudly. The Moon was shining on my left and the window was reflecting the red lights of the German windmills, offering a hypnotic visual feast for an eye that didn't get much sleep in the past few days. Without even noticing, this bus was turning into a multicultural machine providing typical global needs to whomever found himself in that certain place, moment and context.

While trying to write something about the 17th edition

*garde multimedia festivals in Europe, **CTM** definitely acts as a landmark and after this year's edition, it is clear that their story will continue to develop in the most courageous ways in the future.*”

I can only write about things that I've seen and due to the huge amount of things happening everywhere during the CTM week, I sadly missed a few concerts (including the opening concert 'For the Red Right Hand') and panels. We arrived in the rainy Berlin on Saturday noon. Since my last visit there, around 5 years ago, I completely forgot about the madly elaborated and complex infrastructure of city transport, whether it's bus, train, metro or white horses.



Rabih Beaini

In the first night, we headed for Polynodes 1 to **Werkstatt der Kulturen**, a beautiful building located in Neukölln. The space was divided into a concert room located upstairs (where I saw a few great concerts, including **Praed** and **Maurice Louca** - one of the most exciting artists in the Arab world's alternative music scene), a foyer (where Sublime Frequencies' legendary **Alan Bishop** was playing sick music) on the ground level and a clubroom in the basement (a perfect incubator for Jersey club, grime, techno, baile, ballroom, rap and R&B mutations, played by DJ and producer **Dis Fig**, **Paul Marmota** and **Zutzut**, and lastly, the duo **Renaissance Man**, consisting in Martti Kalliala and Ville Haimala). For a night with zero expectations, this proved to be an amazing and energetic first contact with the festival. After hearing the crazy and repetitive grooves and harmonies of **Praed**, or the hypnotically vivid live show of **Maurice Louca**, or some of the most fabulous music pieces collected from the Middle East, Asia and beyond played by **Alan Bishop**. it felt kind of easy and adequate to hear a

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Jerusalem in my Heart

On Monday afternoon we headed to **Kunstquartier Studio 1** to check the panel 'Current Voices from the Middle East', with international experts **Alan Bishop, Maurice Louca, Raed Yassin** (from Praed), **Sam Shalabi** and the young and restless Tunisian girl **Deena Abdelwahed**. Even if she was kind of monopolizing the discussion now and then with frivolous topics such as mainstream versus underground versus alternative music, the overall panel surfaced some interesting ideas and subjects to think of, like musical identity and in what way this

idea concerns the actual musician, or the problematic issues of cultural curatorship in the East, or what counts as Middle Eastern music in today's scene.

Our rapid pilgrimage through the festival continued the next evening at **HAU2**, with an intriguing performance from **Jerusalem In My Heart**, a project developed 3 years ago by Lebanese-born Canadian producer and musician **Radwan Ghazi Moumneh** and filmmaker **Charles André Coderre**. With a special mention on their collaborative album with **Suuns**, it is actually their latest album 'If He Dies, If If If If If If' that really created a buzz around them and that could also be partly heard on different interpretations during their - quite short - live show. A very nice surprise

The exuberant character **Aisha Devi**, who set up an impressive show, together with the kitschy, neon grotesquerie of Chinese artist **Tianzhuo Chen** and **Beio**, engrossed the night that followed at **Berghain**. Examining identity, sexuality, spirituality and sound seemed to be the main concern of



most of the artists who performed during CTM, but **Aisha Devi** managed to take these pieces to another level. Another personal highlight was **Lena Willikens**, who transported the left overs of the audience in a magical music trip that lasted for about 4 hours. She wasn't playing on stage and, in the beginning, the vibe looked a bit like a post-concert pause of recreation, since you couldn't really see the DJ if you were not in the first line of the dance floor. Nevertheless, Lena played an amazing set. Together with **Alienata** (who played the night that followed), these two acts were some of the most coherent, serious, energetic and far out DJ sets I recently experienced. On top of that, it was happening at **Berghain**, a place known for its very powerful sound system - as they call it, one of the finest sound systems in the world.

Friday was the most massive night of the festival, as expected. On the bill was **Opium Hum**, who elegantly opened the night with slow bpm electronics, switching soon to other incomprehensible musical hybrids, followed by **T'ien Lai** (that I missed, as I was raving upstairs in **Panorama Bar**, on the enthralling heavy grooves of sister **Borusiade**). The live performance of **Esplendor Geométrico** was really something to

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