



Heavy Metal Detector (2015) Hamster Eve

Application for Next Helsinki

Introduction

Heavy Metal Detector is a relational public art project situated somewhere in between the sub-cultural music communities of the greater Helsinki area and sites of archaeological/historical importance in the south Harbour area, specifically its adjacent historical parks Tähtitorninvuoren Puisto with its observatory like view of the proposed Guggenheim site and Kaivopuisto which has long existed as a venue for music festivals. The project will make use of several customized metal detectors which will be altered to play pre-recorded locally sourced metal music. The project will be open to the public around the South Harbour area in the form of metal detecting group derives on historical sites in which members of the public will be allowed to wonder about while using the detectors, when they have found some form of metal (iron, steel, copper etc.) in the ground locally sourced hard rock and metal will play through their headphones. The ongoing event will act as an interface between the audiences pre-conceived notions of space and sound as well as offering local musicians a platform to disseminate their unique sounds. This is particularly important in the context of a Finnish city where there exists a rich and vibrant music scene, metal has for the past 15 years been internationally associated with Finland and by proxy its capital in Helsinki, while in part the perception of a metal mainstream is generated by foreign Medias there is also an element of truth. But this project does not seek to engage with mainstream or influential musicians, it seeks to work with local amateur and semi-professional metal bands for whom music and their sound scape for the city, is intimately linked with the architecture, landscape and materials which combined make the city of Helsinki.

Context

Helsinki hosts much in terms of music this is one side of the cities musical soundscape which is immediately apparent, music has always been important in Finnish traditions even the national epic the Kalevala as it was collated by Elias Lönnrot originally came in an ancient sung form, however Helsinki's own "official" musical infrastructure dates back to the 1860s with the foundation of theatres and venues. Helsinki Tähtitorninvuoren Puisto has a long history of importance for the city having significance stretching back to the middle ages and its neighbouring park Kaivopuisto is an important cultural location for Helsinkiläinen both young and old, playing an integral role as venue for a host of important celebrations and festivals. Tähtitorninvuoren in particular with its history as a location for an astral observatory also offer a viewpoint for the proposed Guggenheim super-project, a parallel in relation of macro vs micro perspectives. There is a rich official tapestry of Helsinki's musical culture which is indicative to a healthy and popular cultural scene but there also exists in parallel a community and culture with its own criteria of success. I am not discussing here famous and successful alternative bands such as the multi-platinum Nightwish or Eurovision competition winners Lordi, I intend to focus with this project more so on the local acts that exist in parallel, with their own communities and criteria of success within their scene. By focusing on this group I aim to frame potential alternative criteria for what is a successful and healthy city, this will be done by looking towards an existing framework which exists in parallel to mainstream culture. There is of course a rich and vibrant community of local acts who do not have the same level of exposure as Finland's many internationally recognised musical groups; this is who the project will focus on, in particular the communities who orientated themselves around genres included in the sphere of Hard Rock and Metal. These communities exist throughout the world, their preference in style and genre varies from place to place but they are united by a commonality of drive and devotion, Finland has had many generations of mainstream metal, the trend has ebbed and flowed, it manages to consistently re-emerge due to the support of a vibrant and active scene and community of adherents. Predominantly, but not exclusively, led by young people, these communities are often highly self-organized and independent. Like most subcultures, they emerge in response to the perceived overwhelming homogeneity of their environment, the perceived extremes of sound and costume that their music offers grants them a uniqueness and commonality that they can't or don't necessarily want from the more banal experience traditionally offered in popular culture. There has been many claims related to why Finland has in particular such an affinity to this genre but all are superfluous without the structure and rituals practiced by the members of its scene. Mainstream culture often views the respective genres of hard rock and metal as extreme, further bolstering its divisiveness, but these sounds have a commonality in melody and structure with more popular genres of sound and thus have a capacity for appreciation by the majority of the populace. There is in this dynamic several layers of perception, anticipation and assumption which are malleable to produce new conditions, potentially more beneficial for all.

Metal detecting is a hobby, an amateur offshoot of archaeology whose technology has origins in the Finnish lumber industry; its aficionados (detectorists) spend their time seeking hidden treasures and lost secrets. The core principal behind the use of metal detectors as a hobby is to uncover that which is just beneath the surface. Helsinki has a wealth of history, there are many places where just under the surface the evidence of ancient and everyday domestic artefacts are waiting to be discovered. Helsinki also offers an alternative metaphorical underground, waiting to be unearthed by those with a keener ear and a patient mind. By situating this activity within the context of these sounds and on this site, multiple potentials can be generated, cultural assumptions can be manipulated and legitimate alternative structures for organising Finnish based culture, pre-tested in Finland through the rigors of this scene, may be suggested.

Conceptual

By utilizing these specific locations, known for their historical and cultural significance, as the trigger for contemporary and hidden sounds of the city scape I aim to recontextualize this established archaeological method by applying it to search for secret and hidden sounds. Archaeology is as much about understanding other people as it is about understanding the past, like the thin layers of earth that separate us from our ancestors it is only thin layers of social conditions that separates us from each other. There is a potential of relationships and understandings just waiting to be discovered and unearthed.

The project title makes use of a humorous play on words (albeit in English), this makes the project accessible to those attending the event and will open the project up for the participation needed from the public. The main point of the concept behind the work is to dissolve the cultural boundaries we have built up between musical communities and the wider community, to engender a sense of appreciation for creative works outside of the usual frameworks. In the context of this event there is the potential for the city to share its hidden secrets with an even larger global community, to take elements which have been placed on the periphery into centre and create new set of relationships triggered by this re-positioning. This strategy is an alternative to the globalised nature of the Guggenheim super-project as it situates itself within globalist forms but at a grassroots level, the threat of the Guggenheim and the concerns it provokes for the arts in Finland is not being voiced due to insular concerns about specific national qualms but in recognition that it may potentially create a homogenisation of Helsinki's unique cultural products.

We tend to mistake music for the physical object. - David Byrne

While the larger community will experience new realisations the hidden soundscape of Helsinki, the community of musicians I aim to interact with will through this project be offered a new platform to disseminate their sound. It will also serve to create new understandings and realisations within the community of musicians about the wider impact of their sound on a wider audience as well as creating a common platform within that community amongst its members.

In the face of an emerging super-project in the sector of the arts in Finland we must look towards existing legitimate cultural forms to access what directions we will take in the future, the Guggenheim may irrevocably change the greater Finnish art scene altering the parameters of arts funding and culture in ways which cannot be predicted for practitioners and the cultural audience alike. By looking towards the cities healthy yet often marginalized subcultures we may find strategies for negotiating a climate where national art is subjugated with relation to a highly commercial form of artistic venue and dissemination. By considering the cities alternative sounds in the site of its significant cultural location, via the parks in the southern harbour area and the proximity to the proposed site for this super-project, we may consider how to negotiate a climate where native forms of art production may be side-lined or even replaced. The project does not provide a solution but may by proxy suggest new considerations regarding our cultural environment, the ramifications of this consideration in the context of what the Next Helsinki proposition activates a deceptively novel activity, which is in fact entrenched within cultural politics and may make this seemingly tangential issue relatable to a wider public, activating the issue in the public psyche.

By also looking towards a parallel community of cultural production, in the metal scene, and by collaborating with its members we will be bringing to the fore and association of assumptions regarding the hierarchies of cultural production. Within the community of contemporary art metal and other music may often be unconsidered and perceived as superfluous, by challenging this assumption and poeticising banality, a chain reaction of new cultural realisations and awakenings may be provoked.

Images of the "Heavy Metal Detector" in use



Figure 1 Placed over an area lacking a physical metal substance in the soil the detector is mute and plays no sound



Figure 2 once a source of metal is found the detector place high volume Heavy metal music.



Figure 3 The more metal that is detected the more music can be heard



Figure 4 Different terrains potentially yield different properties of sound. Artefacts hidden

Application of project

The project will exist for Next Helsinki as an ongoing guided group derive, this will require certain parameter to be followed. In terms of logistics, the majority of this is flexible as per the requirements of Next Helsinki.

- The duration of the project will last 2-4 weeks (Monday-Saturday), preferably with the launch of Next Helsinki's selected projects.
- The group derives (tours) will take place twice a day, before noon and after.
 - The launch, the following days of the launch and Saturdays can have extra tours depending demand.
- There will only be a restriction on upper group size, maximum participants 7 the amount of detectors available and no minimum.
- A pre-trained assistant will oversee the group derives to ensure safe interaction with equipment and the sites in use.
 - The artist can oversee this process.
 - A handbook for carrying out the project can be supplied if necessary.
- All sites in use will be public space, national parks or sites which are free to enter.
- Sites in use should be a short distance from starting point.
- All trips must be carried out in silence, upon reaching the location that is being explored.

Break down of Guided Derives

1. Start at point (A) close to historical site but also suitable for storage of equipment and charging equipment's batteries, a temporary shed or storage unit nearby may be used as a based.
2. Introduction to group regarding the project
 - a. What they should expect to hear
 - b. Where they are going
 - c. Instructions on how to use the equipment.
 - d. Instructions that upon reaching the site there will be no verbal communication
3. Group will be lead to historic site, point (B).
4. Derive on site will last a duration of approximately 1/2 hour, group will be asked to stay within viewing distance of each other but that they are free to explore as widely as they wish.
5. Volume of the device can be adjusted according to participant's request.
6. No verbal communication will be allowed at this point. (Unless it is an emergency)
- 7. No artefacts, objects or any other sources of metal underground will be unearthed or excavated.**
8. After this period the assistant will gather up the entire group and lead them back to Point (A).
9. The equipment will be placed back in storage for the next group derive
 - a. All batteries will be charged
 - b. All equipment must be handled with the upmost of care.

Accessing the music and the community that produces it

A huge component of this artwork will exist in the set of relations and dialogues that the project will create, reaching out to the specified community in Helsinki and the surrounding area.

- Upon confirmation for Next Helsinki the artist will begin to contact through social media, email and online sources the multiple members of Helsinki Heavy Metal and hard rock scene.
- Contact will be made to local labels, venue organisers and the bands themselves.
- Bands will be asked to make their music freely available for the project, either making a submission from their existing repertoire or contributing an entirely new song.
- Members from the local scene will be invited to participate in the group derives; this will serve as some of the documentation of the project.
- Ideally about a half-hour or more of local recordings will be made use of for the project.
- The entire selection of recordings will perform as a compilation, like a “best of” what Helsinki currently has to offer from that scene.
- The selection will be collaboratively selected by the groups themselves, no parameters outside of what is decided collaboratively will be used.
- The songs/compositions submitted by the groups will not be chosen by a factor of taste or any sort of curatorial decision outside of what the community decides for themselves. This is in an effort to create as honest an artefact as possible.

Technical



Figure 5 Customized metal detector – “The Heavy Metal Detector”

The customized metal detector

Using an amateur/entry level metal detector and some minor customization I have created a tool which makes use of the inherent play on words which allows the device to become a Heavy Metal Detector. The device makes use of a small circuit which works as a sound activated switch; the audio from the detector (a variation high pitch tone) is rerouted to the condenser microphone of the switch circuit. This switch circuit control a small pre-amp’s on/off state; this pre amp controls the audio between an mp3 player and a set of headphones. When the metal detector is exposed to metal of any source, the customization will out put the audio from the mp3 player to the user’s headphones.

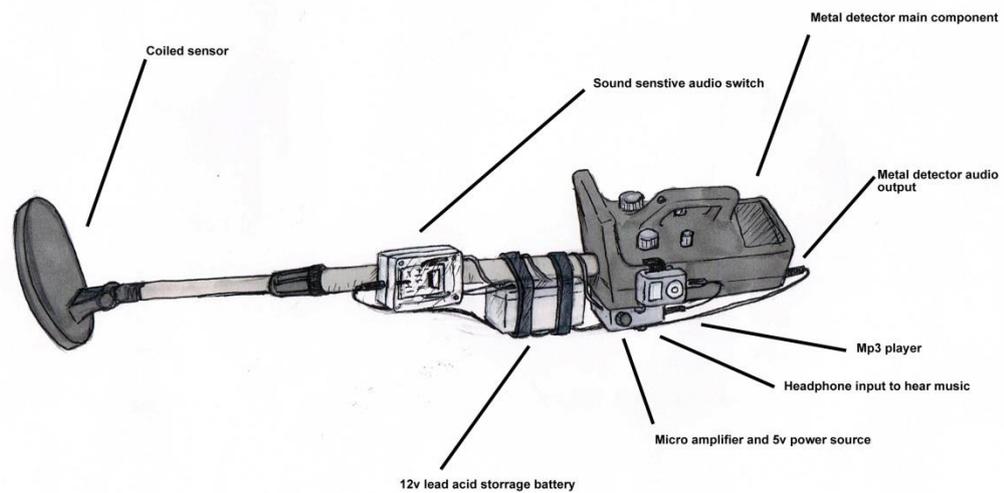


Figure 6 Labelled diagram of Detector.

6 of these detectors will be made, so that there will be enough for the public to use at any given time. The detectors will run off 12 v 1.3 Ah lead acid battery, 6 standard AA rechargeable batteries and a 9v square rechargeable battery. The batteries will need to be recharged every day before being handed and extra set should be kept charged at the depot where the detectors are stored.



Figure 7 Detail of detectors customization.

The original detector will be supplied as well as 6 others which will be custom made for the Next Helsinki project, the utmost care and safety will be put into their design allowing for zero exposed wires and full insulation of the device. It is recommended however that the devices not be used during heavy rain and

they are stored in a dry and safe environment when not in use. If devices are built on site artist should be left no more than 3 days before debut to ensure they are working in operational capacity. The customisations made to the detectors themselves are not necessarily permanent, can be undone in the case of rental metal detectors or if the intention is to resale the detectors after Next Helsinki to recoup costs of production.

Estimated Costs of Parts for Heavy Metal Detectors			
27/11/2014			
Component	Amount		Cost
Metal Detector			€55
Mp3 player			€2
2GB Micro SD Card			€4
Project Box 13x5x7cm (Battery case)			€5
Project box 5x10x7cm (Switch Case)			€3
Project box 3x8x8cm (Micro amp case)			€3
Sound Activated Switch Circuit			€14
Micro Amplifier			€1
Stereo Jack input	x3		€4
Jack to Jack Audio cable	X2		€2
Over Ear stereo Headphones			€7
Tire wraps			€4
Lead acid Battery 12v 1.2Ah			€20
9v Nimh Rechargeable battery			€2.20
AA rechargeable batteries	X6		€5
Chargers			€22
	Total		€158
	X6		€949

*Prices of components based on current listings available, may vary at time of the Next Helsinki Project. Amount of detectors is set at 6 but is flexible depending on economic constraints, logistics etc.