

As I navigated my uncooperative bicycle through the narrow streets of Amsterdam's Leidseplein the full extent of what I've just gotten myself into finally hit home. The anticipation, and trepidation, of spending the following 5 days in the nocturnal embrace of this debauched town, was a reality I had not yet confronted ahead of that assignment, a report on the Amsterdam Dance Event (ADE). As my broken bicycle came to halt outside the first event, I managed to settle into a controllable panic at the reality that lay before me, but as approached my seat for a seminar at ADE green, the panic morphed into a dumbfounded dread as the business side of ADE reared its head. It immediately dispelled *any* exuberance – any feeling, in fact – I might have had with a conference on the environmental impact of festivals. Events promoters and organizations weighing in on the *profitability* of sustainable festivals while unenthused businessmen and -woman pawed at goodie bags, was a scene straight from one of Dr. Hunter S Thompson's lucid dreams. It left me annoyed, tired and in need of some serious musical gratification. The music would have to wait however, because although the **Colors** event at Trouw was my next stop, I had to get there before they opened to get some interviews out of the way. I managed to sneak my way into a personal tour, guided by Olaf Boshwijk (founder of Trouw), in a group that consisted of UK DJ's **Julio Bashmore**, **Kowton** and **Funkineven**, and it soon became apparent there was more to Trouw than a disused printing press and a Funktion One sound system. It was in the way Olaf took personal pride in showing these world-class DJ's – and a suspicious looking journalist – around his creation with the same care a carpenter would his house. In all honesty it left me taken aback. Never in my years of working within various fringe aspects of the music industry has an owner shown this much personal investment in a venue and for Trouw's size and widely acknowledged dominance at the time, this was completely unique. It immediately became clear that something special was at the heart of Trouw and judging from the other faces in the group, the feeling was mutual. As Olaf stooped to greet **Mark Fell**, who was busy setting up an installation project downstairs, I was

not only assured of this idea, but also conscious that the serious, innovative side of music and art played a pivotal role in Trouw's existence too.

The tour over and the DJ's sent to their hotel, it was then time to interview the guys behind **Colors** (*a regular night that showcases the bass-heavy underbelly of dance music, but a bit more on them later*) and **Olaf**, while quenching a thirst brought on by the dry situation of the previous ADE seminar. Using some leading questions to coax a critical response out of them about ADE and the clubbing scene in Amsterdam, I was not prepared for the word 'family' to make an appearance in the context of this line of inquiry, and yet it did. At no point was I anticipating a response to that effect and I certainly wasn't expecting the promoters around **Colors** to corroborate it either. But there it was, lying in amongst the licentiousness of the music industry I'd witnessed earlier, and in the context of a fiscally responsible global event. I was sceptical and intrigued, but didn't want to dwell on it too much since my attention was required for the line-up that was about to follow. As **Funkineven** started his set, I noticed the diminutive stature of **San Proper** oozing up to the 6 foot tall Scandinavian photographer, with a line that went something like: "Hey baby, wanna have some fun?" She also happened to be my wife, but the enigmatic character of **San** fascinated me to such an extent that the amusing encounter was nothing more than just that. An invitation followed to Trouw's Concertgebouw take-over later that week, and as I sat through orchestral arrangements of **Henrik Schwarz**' creations, Trouw's reputation as a benchmark for a world-class establishment became a certainty for me. The packed gallery erupted in a boisterous applause when Schwarz took his bow and I noticed my sentiment was certainly shared by punters and journalists alike.

I kept my eye on Trouw in the weeks that followed ADE and when an opportunity to write for Trouw's blog soon arose, I jumped at the chance. I was eventually tasked to interview **DJ Hell** ahead of his appearance there. That was all it took, I was inducted as part of the team, an adopted member of

the Trouw family. A week or so later and I am standing on the stage of the main room witnessing the **Hell** spectacle unfolding before me. A bucket of champagne and a booth overflowing with attractive woman brought a bit of irony to Trouw's stage as the German native showed off the eclectic sound that established him as a world renowned DJ. Meanwhile some friends were engaged in a conversation with, from what I was able to deduce, a borderline obsessive fan. Inspired by my somewhat intoxicated state, I considered sharing the story of my small role in the event with the screaming **Hell** fan as she shouted her amorous intentions at the German DJ, but immediately reconsidered for the sake of everyone's **safety**.

Mischa Mathys 27/8/14 10:08

Comment: I left the DJ hell piece in because it is essential for the narrative, but I did change it to reflect the irony of the DJ hell 'spectacle'

That sense of personal gratification that I felt then didn't help me much the next day either when I was supposed to interview **Sadar Bahar**, a House legend that's been there since electronic dance music's inception, at another of Amsterdam's institutions and regular Trouw co-hort, **Rush Hour** – a record label and shop in the heart of Amsterdam that's acquired an international status amongst many house enthusiasts and who's artists regularly feature in Trouw's line-ups. I was fortunate enough though that the Chicago DJ only comes out after the sun goes down, and it gave me the opportunity to adjust myself accordingly. This interview still remains as one of my favourite interviews to date. Watching Sadar pick through new arrivals at **Rush Hour** (**Antal** had literally just opened a stack of newly delivered boxes from the states) while he reminisced over the early development of House will stay with me for some time to come.

Mischa Mathys 9/9/14 13:31

Deleted: (As a coincidence **DJ Hell** made an unexpected appearance with one of those pretty woman from the previous night around his arm and it gave me an opportunity to get a deeper insight into his vast musical knowledge as he dug through some of the latest releases, while I waited for Mr. Bahar).

The interviews followed on rapidly from those first two and ranged from acclaimed artists like **Jimmy Edgar** and **Daniel Avery** to rising stars like **Dense and Pika** and **Jon Hester**. It was, however always the Trouw regulars that proved to be some of the most entertaining and interesting interviews, the first of which was **Patrice Bäumel**. As a fundamental part of the Trouw family, he also personified its innovative and progressive side. Our interview had to take place at the venue, his artistic home, and when I arrived he was already

there, talking to some of the technicians with his pet dog in tow. I was completely awestruck by his performance at the Concertgebouw the previous month when he opened up for **Henrik Schwarz** with an arrangement for Marimba and Electronics and couldn't wait to get into his ideas on music. As our conversation ranged to incorporate music from disparate corners, one thing that stuck with me was his admiration for Trouw's audience. I recall his words; *"I am often amazed about how much more they know about music than many DJs."* For me, they too were the crux of what made the venue and organization's innovative side work so well. They were at the heart of the Trouw's ticking clock and it always reciprocated with bringing innovative nights like **Bäumel's** own **Black Magic** and **Yellow Lounge** – both nights re-appropriating classical and avant garde music for the night club – to the venue. But there was one event that will always encapsulate this attitude towards Trouw for me. Well actually, it was two events. One after the other in what was one hell of a heat wave. The month of May 2014 in Amsterdam was a particular bastard; bringing scorching weather to the city in what is usually a spring climate. It gave **Andy Butler** from **Hercules and Love Affair** a definitive reason to take his shirt off – not that he really needed a reason – when encouraged by the intimate crowd made up of trendy gays, and the girls that love them. They effortlessly glided on the deep vocal house that **Butler** and his band has developed over the years, but it was a small crowd and it was a complete contrast to the packed house that filled the stuffy main room of Trouw the preceding night for **Ben Frost**. Working together with the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ (another formative Dutch music venue) the experimental Australian composer showcased his newly recorded AURORA album. As an artist that epitomises the marginal aspects of electronic music his show that night, was nothing short of difficult. The abrasive sound pushed through the club's system at about 110dB even had some revellers complaining about the levels on Trouw's Facebook page. Regardless of **Ben Frost's** oratory assault the contrasting events highlighted the liberal attitude towards music and its culture that Trouw's audience value above all else, and how the marginal often supersedes the accessible. It came as no surprise

Mischa Mathys 29/8/14 12:08

Comment: Can you ask Patrice about the dogs name. It will give it a personal touch.

lucmast 9/9/14 00:26

Comment: Yes. Good point.

Mischa Mathys 29/8/14 10:25

Comment: Is this better? I can't go into much detail since I never made it out to either of these yet..

when I encountered a beaming **Patrice Bäümel** crossing the muggy room for **Ben Frost**.

The territory of the visual arts wasn't left untouched either as Trouw often featured installations in their many cavernous spaces. They were an integral part of the experience when they were around and they often worked as conversation pieces within the contrasting context of a heady club night. Whether it was **Elizabeth Price's** Turner Prize winning video art work, *Woolworths choir* 1979 or the ever-changing light display that adorned the ceiling in the main room, visual stimulants were as much of a part of Trouw as the music. At this point I should probably mention that although I had visited the venue before the chronological point at which this article begins it was not necessarily my first visit. I had been a punter on a previous visit to Amsterdam, but for the most part, the memory remains a complete blur. I've tried to piece together a sufficient soliloquy from an inebriated recollection, but one visual cue always initiates an occurrence for reminiscence, that florescent light display that adorns the ceiling in the main room. The Dutch have a natural affinity for stage and show lighting, and Trouw might the pinnacle of this talent incarnate. The minimalist approach is perfect for the environment and more than once I've found my jaw agape at the luminous spectacle that can unfold during a night. **Children of the Light** needs a special mention here. As the unofficial in-house lighting technicians of Trouw, you would often find them behind the lighting desk, setting visual cue for the musical accompaniment on many given nights. When I first encountered the duo lighting up a stage it was not at Trouw, but at their invasion of the Concertgebouw's stage for the aforementioned ADE event. Their inventive lighting display during **Darkside's** performance was something that perfectly juxtaposed the main hall of the classic institution and will remain a point of fond reminiscence for me.

They were also responsible for most of the **Audio Culture** nights, and whenever they illuminated the murky basement of De Verdieping, I enjoyed

lucmast 26/8/14 10:29

Comment: What's this?

Mischa Mathys 27/8/14 10:56

Comment: I included that it was a video art work. Is that enough?

lucmast 9/9/14 00:31

Comment: Yes

Mischa Mathys 27/8/14 11:06

Comment: Edited: I would like to keep the chronological reference, since I want to clarify a before and after experiences.

lucmast 26/8/14 10:33

Comment: + (also this of course needs a nice picture next to it, I'll make sure that happens)

just standing back and drinking in the atmosphere. On the first night I encountered DE verdieping **Audio Culture** was at the helm. The music emanating out of the darkest regions of the bass-label's catalogue stimulated my particular tastes in music while the **Children of the Light** provided the visual incentive to dwell down there. As a result of that first encounter, I've always enjoyed an affinity with De Verdieping at Trouw. It speaks to my inner goth, and you are always ensured a more diverse programming from the DJs down there as they explored the boundaries of what was possible on a dance floor. I often found myself lurking towards one of the darker corners to survey the divergent crowd, something you couldn't really do in the main room and its stage facing design. I was always looking for that bit of colour to add to a future piece or for a character I could escape into. One evening I was mesmerized by a group of trend-informed kids shuffling away in staccato lower-body movements to **Graze's** brand of bass-heavy techno in a way I've never experienced before. This was my introduction to the controversial **Rabbit Dance**. These guys and girls would be zooming in and out of break-step vernacular, as their upper body remained rigid. Often adorning woolly hats, nike trainers and layers of black, their fuck-you attitude towards confused onlookers was endearing as they gyrated to the latest tech/house craze. Some of the faces I recognized again at one of the most captivating performances I've ever experienced. **FKA twigs** was barely tall enough to stand over the dug-in crowd, but her voice floated way over the audience's heads as the minimalist accompaniment carried her through ephemeral versions of *Water Me* and *Video Girl*. It started a love affair for me with the UK artist, one that established her as one of the most groundbreaking artists I've come across in recent years. The very intimate atmosphere was a complete contrast to any night in the main room and suited **FKA twigs'** shy yet approachable demeanour.

Whether it was through experiencing interesting music in the basement or just grinding the night away to your favourite DJ on the main floor, Trouw could accommodate anybody. A conversation was never far away either and it could

lucmast 26/8/14 10:33

Comment: I like the inner-goth-reference (maybe use it elsewhere?) but next to that this part doesn't really tell anything new.

range from the odd English tourist enquiring about the proximity of some euphoria inducing narcotics to a deeply focussed analogy of how house music has established itself in the popular annals. You would always find a sympathetic ear and friendships were forged on that dance floor, some were even solidified in the toilet. One of my fondest recollections was before I even got to into the venue proper. Trouw's sound was lethal as **Mr. Frost** proved earlier, but thanks to some incredible insulation by the previous tenants it never escaped the main room. There would be a quiet before every storm as you entered past the ablutions on the lower floor except on this particular night. A couple of inferior computer speakers were being rinsed to their limit and there, just outside of the cubicles, next to the basins, a small group of young woman were having the time of their lives dancing to whatever generic Trap-infused R&B track was distorting at the time. That night, **Colors** was at helm and this little scene perfectly captured the ethos of what their night means to me today. Earlier that evening, as I was watching Yuri, Lucas and Volcmar getting stuck into some White Russians during a Ten Pin Bowling game at Trouw's temporary Lebow'ski Lanes installation, it struck me that these three friends and their shared love for music really brought something unique to Trouw. Their night spoke to my London informed taste in music with acts like **Ben UFO** and **Blawan** filling their rosters regularly. They brought a bass-focussed sound to Amsterdam that was particularly sensitive to what was going on in the UK at the time and I always made it a point to be present for **Colors**. Trouw became the place where these group of friends could be free to express themselves to the soundtrack of the latest dance innovations as supplied by **Cinnaman** and the DJs that really made an impression on them. And boy, did the crowd reciprocate. Every **Colors** night was always packed to the rafters with a crowd that invariably represented the latest generation of music enthusiasts. **Cinnaman** would often put on all-nighters going from left-field acts like **Egyptrixx** to the more approachable house tracks from friend **Breach** all in the context of having a good a time. The punters were as well informed as the DJ and any of these deviating acts could equally garner a response from the trend-informed kids that made up a

lucmast 26/8/14 10:39

Comment: Good if you get deeper into the Colors organization. Then it's also good to tell a bit more about them – their (very specific) attitude, the way they look/talk, where they come from.

lucmast 9/9/14 00:36

Deleted: u

Colors night. More than once I found myself at the edge of a group only to notice my advanced years on my younger neighbours and in awe of their musical knowledge as they moved impulsively to any **beat**.

Mischa Mathys 27/8/14 13:39

Comment: I go into a little more detail here with Colors, but let me know if you want even more.

Colors as staggering and enjoyable as it was, was merely one part of a gang of influential artists, DJs, labels and organisations that centred on Trouw. Amsterdam has definitely encouraged a vast network of people involved in music due to its size but a big portion of it has established itself around Trouw. It wasn't some impenetrable clique though and even an outsider like me, would be welcomed to discuss an artists' latest creation or a label's musical philosophy. It wasn't merely confined to Amsterdam either. In an interview with **Motor City Drum Ensemble** I was oparticularly surprised by the German DJs warm appreciation for the venue and its people, the audience and the people behind the curtain. *"(It's) great to have a playground like Trouw where you have an open-minded crowd to test your new records."* Trouw's reputation has clearly exceeded itself all over the world and after a short while it became abundantly clear why, in countless interviews with Trouw's regular contributors, someone like **MCDE** would continuously return to the venue and why a big institution like Trouw would often feature familiar faces in the crowd. These DJs, artists and organisations whom have all declared their dedication to the venue have been instrumental in shaping Trouw and Trouw has definitely had an effect on them. Together they make up what I eventually came to know as the Trouw family. It was more than just an interesting space for music and art. Trouw is more of an idea or a philosophy, a feeling that you are part for something special, even if it is just for one night. You can see it on the faces of the people in the crowd, the DJs and even the people behind the curtain pulling the strings.

So, as I transcribe my most recent interview for Trouw, I find myself in Oslo, removed from Trouw and its family, yet still very much in the thick of it all. When moving to Amsterdam, I contacted Trouw with little more than a naïve curiosity and at no point did I expect the establishment's ideologies to have

lucmast 26/8/14 10:47

Comment: + this is good, IN THE ACTION. I'd like to hear more about the situation. Where are you transcribing? Where are you looking at? This is a nice point to refer to your own life. What are you doing? Refer to moving to Amsterdam and what Trouw did.

such a big effect on me. The connections I've made with the people and the music are some that would take up a significant chapter in my own history. Yet all good things must come to an end, and it will be somewhat of a bittersweet goodbye for me when that day arrives. On the one hand I hope there would be one more memory I could share with you, the reader – one more little anecdote or musical anomaly that could sum up my experience with Trouw. But there won't be, none that would make it in time to print at least, and this is my conciliation, incorruptible memories of a time, a place, and a very extraordinary family.

Mischa Mathys 27/8/14 14:18

Comment: I adopted your requests and I've left it more open-ended here.