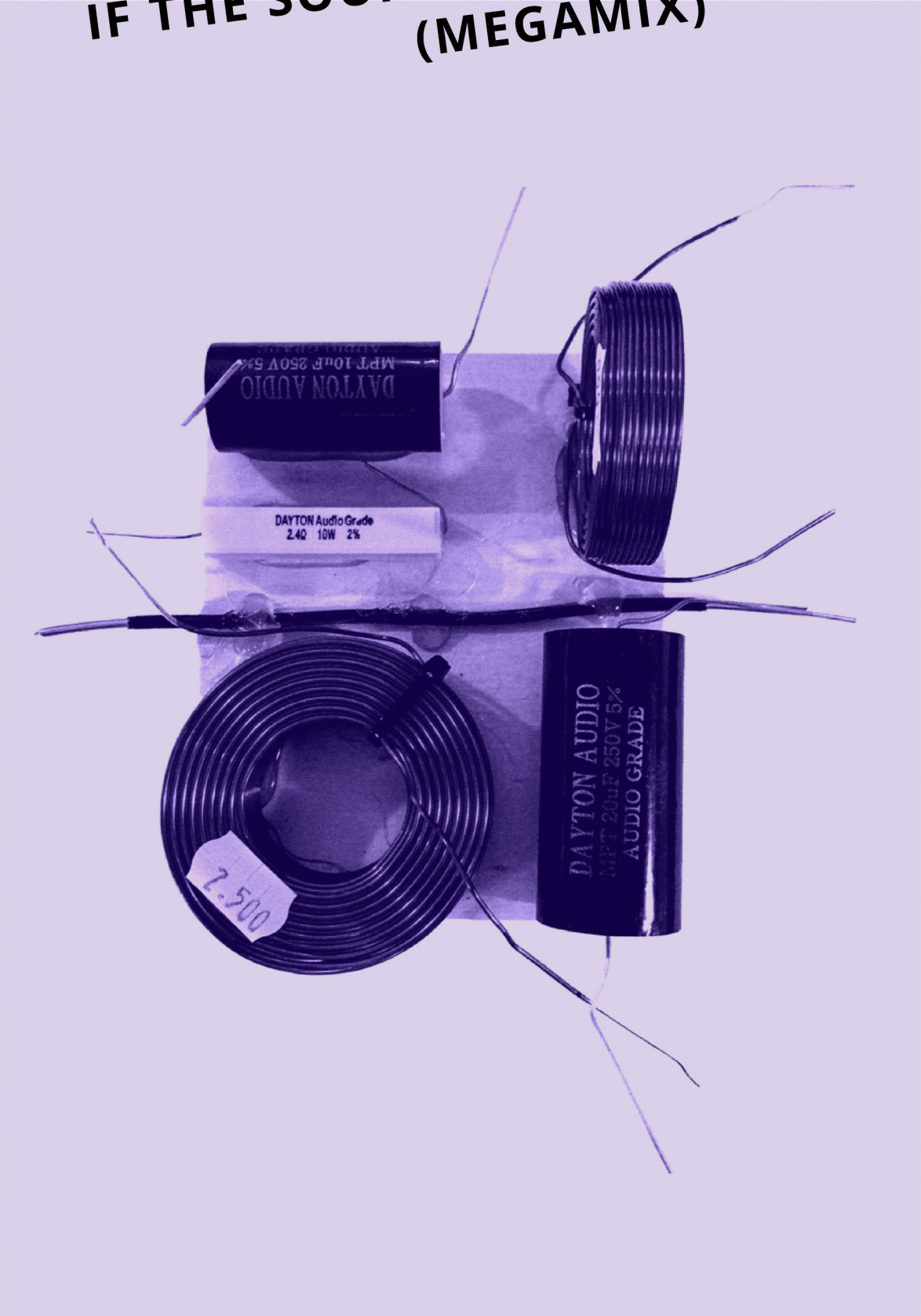


**SONIC INSURGENCY RESEARCH GROUP**

**IF THE SOURCE IS OPEN  
(MEGAMIX)**



**FEBRUARY 18 — APRIL 9, 2022**

**LOCUST PROJECTS, MIAMI FL**

## If The Source is Open (Megamix)

### Citational Script

**(00:00 — 3:00)**; A melody performed on a tlapitzalli (clay flute) hovers over pacific ocean waves from a single speaker. A helicopter passes overhead. The sound washes across all four speakers as the melody becomes polyphonic.

**(3:00)**; 808 bass frequencies spread across the sound field.

**(3:28 — 4:22)**; Jillian Hernandez in conversation with SIRG via Zoom

“You know, the way in which Miami sort of sits at the crossroads of various different kinds of geographies and racial formations as people are coming from the Caribbean, Latin America, but people are also arriving from the African continent... there’s a way in which it creates a kind of textured sonic space. It can be viewed as something radical in that, again, it resists that strategic invisibility of quiet that you mention. It resists that. But does all of this sound mask grieving or trauma?”

**(4:27)**; Latinx construction workers building large condominiums in Wynwood speak to one another over the hum of construction machinery, passing delivery trucks, drilling and hammering. The sound of multiple construction sites spreads across the speakers.

**(7:00)**; A drag performance to Jennifer Hudson’s “Dangerous” on Miami Beach.

A performer interacts with the audience:

“She does it for the thrill. Easy if you’re cute. Easy [laughter]. If y’all having a good time say hell yeah [audience responds]. Hold on, what the hell did you say? No, what happened? I didn’t catch it. Ok. Thank you baby. Alright honey. Are you trying to get a good picture sir? I see you struggling with the phone. Is that what you’re trying to do sir? I mean, it’s ok. You want a picture? You wanna take a picture? [crowd laughs and the performer sits on the man’s lap]. Yes, it’s mine, partially [laughs]. A little bit of it is not mine. But that’s for me to know and you to not find out. Cuz you ain’t getting back there. Period.”

**(9:30)**; An oscillating synthesizer enters, performing a looping motif accented by punctuations of 808 bass. Jillian Hernandez’s voice enters, excerpted from a recorded conversation with SIRG in which we ask her if she has childhood memories of Wynwood as a sonic environment.

“It was actually kind of a quiet space because it was very much... the warehouses were that, they were warehouses where people were working and they were spaces of labor. For sure in Miami, spaces of labor can be very sonically rich spaces but you know, it didn’t... it was actually quite quiet. And I remember, I must have visited there in 2018 and I was shocked by the sound of a tour bus... like a duck tour bus... a big bus that’s a boat or whatever it is. I remember someone was talking on it and I remember thinking ‘What the fuck is happening?’ At first, I didn’t even know how to register it. My immediate thought is that it wasn’t even a tour thing. I was just so confused. But then I see this tour bus and this guy go through, I thought, ‘Woah, this has really happened. This has completely changed.’ So it’s funny, to me, Wynwood was a quiet space at one point actually because it was such a space of labor and if workers were making sound it was inside for the most part. So now... you know... we have a very loud space. Visually too. And I think it also shows you the limits of celebrating particular modes of aesthetic excess too. What I consider an excess of sponsored street art there... to me... it isn’t rich. To me, it’s not generative.”

**(9:54)**; “Al would go out there for no money at all. You know. He wasn’t in it for the profit. He had love in it too.

He'd go out there for free, set up, take the harassment from the police and all that just so he could rock for the hood."

**(11:30)**; "Migration and evictions are deeply defining of the contemporary global environment. The neoliberal project is the realization of a biopolitical structuring. The basic needs of living are no longer understood as fundamental rights. Rather, they are now the sole responsibility of private individuals and occur through conditions of ownership as well as debt. The new form of governing revolves around a logic of expulsion where one is positioned on a threshold of eviction. Whether through diasporic protest, or the interlanguages of protest, new emancipatory practices emerge to confront the question of borders." – Brandon LaBelle

**(12:30)**; The bass from a car stereo overwhelms a field recorder's microphone.

**(12:50)**; The pacific ocean at South Beach at night.

**(13:29)**; Archival audio of DJ Uncle Al regulating during a live performance.

**(14:10)**; Archival audio of Sugarhill DJs pirate radio station, live on the air.

**(14:30)**; The pacific ocean merges with sounds of construction in Wynwood.

**(15:03)**; Jillian Hernandez's voice enters, excerpted from a recorded conversation with SIRG:

"Definitely, the loudness of working class femininity... and again, I'm both attributing that as a sort or racialized inscription that may or may not be real. So I'm not even saying that working class Latina women are loud. But I'm also saying they could be... they sometimes are, and I'm not interested in rejecting that inscription. I'm actually interested in what that sort of framing makes possible. Just in the way that *The Aesthetics of Excess*... there's really nothing excessive about working class Blackness and Latinidad. But, since we're there, let's see what that makes possible. Right? So the loudness certainly goes in tandem... the sonic loudness and the aesthetic loudness are viewed very much in tandem. You know, you assimilate through a very particular performance of white middle classness. And you also assimilate by assuming a sort of attitude of appreciation for your conditional inclusion into the US nation state. So by standing out, by seeming like you don't care about modes of class performance that are also gendered, racialized and sexualized... you're improper. And you need to be put in your place, right? And I think in many ways that sonic element tends to be the most agitating. You know, for a long time reggaeton was not a kind of... you couldn't consume reggaeton without assuming a kind of hypersexual inscription. A kind of association with the working class, with Blackness, several decades back. Even though dembow/reggaeton is very much a Miami sound. It's in that sonic landscape constantly. The risk that was associated with that has been eliminated at this point. So that's also something really interesting to think about. How a capitalist popular culture logic has taken it up. And it seems to be working really well in that space. It doesn't carry the same kind of threat that it used to. Although, I do think that in the protest in Puerto Rico in 2019, we did still see its potential to disrupt... but it was a very queer, trans iteration of perreo... of reggaeton that was doing that work."

**(17:45)**; 808 drum elements and modular synthesizers emerge and explore notions of being "out of time." Looping but not syncing. Rhythmic, but multitemporal. Birds at a construction site in Wynwood join the composition.

**(19:30)**; Jillian Hernandez in a recorded conversation with SIRG.

"Miami is interesting as a space though because, when I consider what would be considered a wayward sound practice in Miami, I go back to the chonga or the chusma. It tends to be very closely related to a sort of femme-phobia and misogyny where, I think the most wayward sound practice in Miami would be a Black Latina, Afro Latina, femme presenting person who is considered to be too loud in a given moment. And that's interesting

because Miami is a space where strategic invisibility is not as much at stake for inclusion. I always sort of trip out when I travel over how loud Latinx folx can be. In particular, in Miami. There's no sense of a kind of self-disciplining that might occur perhaps in a different kind of space. People are cursing really loudly, people are ordering food really loudly, people are beeping their horns really loudly. So loudness is already a part of the landscape. But strategic invisibility comes into play when you're moving into class spaces or class aspirational spaces within Black and Latinx communities where then, that loudness brings a trace of poverty or struggle. It brings a trace, perhaps, of Blackness. It brings along a kind of residue that could hinder moving up into a different class register. And I feel like that loudness could be ok for people who are acquiring mobility through entertainment or sports industry stuff, right? That might be cool. But in other forms of social mobility, yes that performance of quiet becomes really important and I think that it also sort of changes depending on how or where you're moving. For me, working at a contemporary art museum, I was the only Latina on staff at a certain time and I definitely had to perform a particular kind of sound, accent... right? All these things in that space. Even if it didn't feel imposed, I was still performing that. But then when I get into my car I can engage in a different kind of sound practice that sort of flies in the face of that. It was very much the same in the academy and continues to be the same. But I do think that the sound practices that could be considered the most wayward are ones that are read as femme. For sure. There's just a tremendous amount of femme-phobia and misogyny that's at work there."

**(22:44)**; A beat spread across the speakers emerges with construction sounds in Wynwood.

**(23:18)**; News clips discussing Miami sound ordinance emerge across the speakers.

**(23:44)**; A vocoder voice reading from the Miami Dade sound ordinance:

"It shall be unlawful for any person to make, continue, or cause to be made or continued any unreasonably loud, excessive, unnecessary or unusual noise."

**(24:34)**; A pitch-shifted voice reads from SIRG's writing on the scalar logics of sound.

"One might assume that, like me, many of those enjoying social life in public space at night do so in the few hours of the day not consumed by work. Often, the desire to extend that time, the pleasure of continuing into the night, takes priority over the consequences of tomorrow. While our sonic presence during these hours can be perceived through the windows and walls of the surrounding buildings, in what way can it be truly heard or understood as meaningful and worthy of consideration in the determination of law by the owning class inside?"

**(25:00)**; Cacophony from various construction sites in Wynwood

**(26:00)**; A pitch-shifted voice continues to read from SIRG's writing on the scalar logics of sound.

"One might argue that the actual threat we pose lies in disobeying the contemporary practices of manifest destiny surrounding us. But to sound out at night in public space is to impair the silence needed for tomorrow's productivity and someone has to pay."

"How might we see and hear sonic desire — a sort of sonic mutualism — apart from territorial logics of ownership as control? What might it look like to practice extra-legal social arrangements to mediate conflicting desires? What might the enactment of mutualism, a radically democratic sonic sociality, look and sound like? To ask these questions is to demilitate the interstitial space concealed by the scalar logics in legal space."

**(28:00)**; Construction site recordings in Wynwood. A high pitched elevator moves up and down a building, picking up workers on various floors as they leave the site.

**(28:28)**; A hand drum is played in a repetitive sequence.



**(29:02)**; A voice reads from SIRG's writing on the scalar logics of sound.

“Sound theorist Brandon Labelle describes listening as a practice that follows sound already moving elsewhere. I may hear something, but that something is never only for me. Rather, it travels, it migrates, it always leaves one in wait. Elements of the built environment not designed to distribute sound carry it all the same. A city is full of noise, unintended listeners and potential publics. Strangers among strangers in a world of ears hear all kinds of sounds simultaneously meant for everybody and nobody in particular. But listeners are far from universal. They hear through embodiments forged by history and social pressures situated within specific landscapes and contexts similarly forged. Sound not only produces a general context but specific subjects of cultural, aesthetic and political intention. After all, “Sound and music do tons of political work.” as Robin James writes. “Even as that work goes unheard as politics.” What counts as music, sound and noise is not a matter of abstract sonic fact but determined by socially attuned perceptions, tastes and cultural norms that are concretized into noise ordinances.”

**(30:40)**; Allie Martin presenting on their research around sound and gentrification.

“Throughout my work, I argue that gentrification is sonic and should be studied as such for at least two reasons. First, because we too often trust the visual and textual as the sole arbiters of knowledge, leaving sound and sensorial work as tangential experience rather than data. This happens when we refer to things as hearsay and in insistence on body cameras as a viable form of police reform. And these acts of listening and sonic work are considered subordinate to visualization because of deeply embedded cultural expectations of sound. So, as described by ethnomusicologist Ana María Ochoa Gautier, ‘In the audio visual complex of modernity, sound appears as the interior, immersive and affective other of vision’s prominent exteriorization.’ In modern formations of power, such a persistence appears as hidden behind the visual. Sound is treated as subjective and emotional where vision is external and objective. And so sound, then, is often devalued as a purveyor of information and instead considered just as a sense of emotionality and affect. In studying gentrification, vital aspects of the process are lost in this dismissal, in this devaluing. And the second reason I argue that gentrification is sonic is that gentrification is disproportionately affecting and criminalizing black people. So in taking a kind of digital black sound studies approach to the study of gentrification, I’m striving to prioritize the significance of sound in black life and black knowing, which is both a mechanism of cultural retention as well as a response to histories of enslavement and oppression. Inaccessibility to formal, Western education has led people of African descent to have a different relationship to text and textuality to many others residing in the western world. Rather, Alexander Weheliye has asserted, ‘The sonic is the principle modality in which afro diasporic cultures have been articulated.’ Likewise, Stuart Hall reminds us that, ‘displaced from a logocentric world, where the direct mastery of cultural modes meant the mastery of writing, the people of the diaspora have — in opposition to all that — found the deep form, the deep structure of their cultural life, in music.’ The work of theorizing gentrification sonically requires a reckoning with what it means to listen to black people.”

**(33:30)**; Assemblage of vanguard interludes, scratching, regulators, skits, introductions, cuts and samples from Sugarhill mixtapes and archival interviews on the proliferation and importance of South Florida underground radio stations.

**(37:37)**; Max Rameau speaking about Umoja Village.

“So it didn’t take too long before we realized that the local governments – instead of being an ally in the fight for low income affordable housing – have been one of our biggest enemies. So whatever market forces exist and whatever market forces have done, it has been augmented and exacerbated by what the county and city governments have done. And we did everything we could. We met with city officials. We created our own proposals. We submitted them. We lobbied. We protested. We talked nice. We did all that. We put together coalitions of different configurations just to maximize impact. We put together some all black groups. We formed some mixed groups. We formed some middle class groups which would appeal to the consensus of the elected officials and none of

those seemed to work. They seemed to be completely oblivious to our demands, to our wants, to our needs, etc.

**(38:12)**; A truck whirs at a construction site as builders call for an elevator to pick them up on various floors of a building they're working on at the end of the day.

**(38:50)**; Max Rameau, continued.

“Money which was supposed to be used to provide housing for very low income people – fixed income and the elderly, people on welfare, the homeless was diverted and given to millionaire developers and they had to do basically nothing for the money. So this really created a sense of public outrage which didn't exist before strictly on the arguments of public policy. The only way that we could really address this thing without going through the government would be to take direct control of the land.”

“It is not illegal to be homeless. Anyone who is homeless and engaged in illegal activity which is also life-sustaining conduct cannot be arrested for engaging in that life-sustaining conduct as long as they are on public land. Life-sustaining conduct includes changing, taking a bath, going to the bathroom – defecating or urinating in public... on public land, eating, making a fire to eat, and building temporary structures to protect one from the elements as well as congregating and a whole series of other things.

**(40:00)**; Construction hammering ricochets off multiple construction sites.

**(40:38)**; Max Rameau, continued.

“So right here, on this land on 62nd and 17th there was an apartment building that used to house low income people. They were supposed to be returned here but they were not. The city of Miami rewarded the slumlord of that property, paying him \$900,000 for the unit and then demolishing it. This place has been vacant since 1998. It has been unoccupied during an affordable housing crisis. So you think, in 1998 it's just starting to reach crisis proportions and they destroy this unit. They destroy 483 units all together. [interviewer interjects: Is that the market value of the property?"] Max continues, “No, not at all. This was way higher than market value. This is a corrupt city. It's a corrupt town and it's a politically connected developer who owned it. So they destroyed 483 units in Liberty City during an affordable housing crisis. South Florida has a booming population. Liberty City is the only part of Miami Dade County in the past 10 years that is losing population every year instead of gaining population. Obviously, they decrease the population as a way of setting the stage for gentrification. If they can decrease the population now, when they get the populations low enough, they can buy up all the land and build condos and do other kinds of things.”

**(42:13)**; “So, one of the good things about here, one of the things that is very satisfying about using this lot is that this lot used to house low income people and now, once again, houses low income people. Public land is being used for the public good. A key component of this model here is that residents must be able to run the city. I feel like we're building a city. We have a city, and the residents have to be able to run it. So the residents completely run the kitchen, almost completely run the bathrooms and most of the construction... the construction of the new units, do all the clean up and do most of the security shifts. So they cover almost all of the areas that need to be covered here. They pretty much run the city now and we're going to continue to move in that direction. Ultimately, the philosophy is unity, a real functional unity, which is why the name was unanimously selected by the residents of Umoja, which means unity. Because people are unified in the goal of working toward one community putting people, individuals, above profits and above the profit motive and financial gain. Treating each other humanely. Treating each other with care and love. And, you know, that breaks down everywhere, so there are times when people argue. That's a very human thing to do. We're not saying that we're going to create a society where no one argues or gets into arguments but where people can still treat each other fairly and not profit off each other's labor. One person doesn't get rich from a bunch of other people.”

**(43:51)**; Allie Martin, continued.

“Gentrification is not a linear, gradual process of development. Gentrification is a series of jagged interruptions, community meetings, demolitions, protests, contracts, construction projects and violence. And in carrying connotations of crime and loudness, sirens exist within a nexus of aural indicators of race, criminality and urban life. Sirens are so closely molded to black urban life because they are indicative and representative of those forces that have deemed themselves in control of black life, particularly the police. And I read this pattern of sonic traumas that come through that intersection every day. Sometimes dozens of times a day. Of policing, of terror, of health crises. And this chart fractures a normative narrative of gentrification in which neighborhoods become better and more beautiful looking over time, because it repositions gentrifying space as a cyclical process of sonic violences. An ebb and flow of sirens. Because gentrification is a process that routinely dismisses and silences black possibility through a host of interrelated tactics from legislative maneuvering to the demolition of public housing. And while I’m committed to hearing these possibilities, this is not a kind of sonic salvage ethnography. I am not collecting the sounds of black life in anticipation of a time when those sounds can no longer be heard. And to quote the artist Alisha B. Wormley, “There are black people in the future.” There is black sound in the future.

**(45:00)**; South Beach at Night near the Pacific Ocean edge.

**(46:18)**; Jillian Hernandez, continued.

“So transcoloniality can be both the circuit of oppression, but also the circuit of resistant possibility. And to me, that’s just such a great way to think about Miami as a space. Right? Particularly because Miami doesn’t fit into, I think, the way we imagine borderlands in a sort of different sense in other spaces of the US. Right? It’s still a borderland, and like the scholar I had sent to y’all, Fredo Rivera... I like the way he talks about Miami as an oceanic borderland. I just think that’s so rich. So transcoloniality sort of provides a way, I think, to trace that the discourses and the practices of it are linked to transcolonial histories. We do need to look at Haitian histories, we do need to look at the Bahamas, we do need to look at Cuba. We need to be so attuned to the transnational aspect of our histories and our cultural practices to really understand what’s at stake. Historically, politically and aesthetically as well. It’s difficult to move into a space away from pessimism when we’re thinking about this. But the transcolonial could be a site where we both understand the stakes of these histories, but we also strategize about what more autonomous formations might look like.”

[Sonic Epilogue]