

# Some background

- Lisa J. Vereertbrugghen

## On being noisy

I love how sound triggers a body, how a body becomes camouflaged in soundwaves, but also how it can resist these vibrations and go against the pulse. I find hardcore to be the perfect kind of music to dive into these oppositional movements of following and resisting, simply because it is permeated by interruptions of the flow. Within club dancing I feel a certain danger in everyone dancing together to the same flow, like some kind of grand machine. In hardcore dancing, I find the individual choice to disrupt — connections to the group, to the music and to the rest of my body — as important as the choice to blend. Choosing to stop dancing, or shift gear, is necessary partially because the dance is too intense to keep doing continuously and partially in response to the interruptions and accelerations of the music. As a dancer I constantly decide my relationship to the environment and the rhythm: one moment I follow, the next I pause, alternately agreeing and disagreeing, **aiming towards a dissonant togetherness.**

The starting point for the creation of *Disquiet*, was sound. I start by creating sound experiments at home and later digging into them with my long-time collaborator Michael Langeder, who also created the club tracks you hear to-night.

## On love and methodology

I grew up knowing gabber, the Dutch hardcore techno that developed in Rotterdam in the nineties and its dance called *hakken*. This dance found its way to Belgium and my brother, who absolutely loved it, taught me in the kitchen when I was about twelve. After graduating in choreography I immediately went back to these roots and I stuck to them the following nine years (and planning a next piece)... I simply love this sound and this dance.

After doing a few pieces on the body politics of gabber, I decided for *Disquiet* to open up my movement vocabulary to include drum 'n bass and other dances that call themselves "hardstyle" and to focus on their common

ground. My method was mostly practical: I spent 2 years (I planned 1, but ended with 2 thanks to covid) dancing gabber next to drum 'n bass and hardstyle on a quasi-daily basis, while digging into their sound archives and specific contexts.

Each style had its own development and context, especially drum 'n bass in the UK where it evolved from Jungle music, and I do not claim any mastery of it. I am an amateur. I simply wanted to see how each sound and dance relates to the research I had been doing for almost a decade on "my own" hardcore. What triggers my love for gabber and do I recognize this in other hardcore techno music and dance?

Rupture and dystopia, the two main topics of *Disquiet*, are part of my answer.

## On *Disquiet*: disruptive dystopia

**Speed, intensity and disruption** are essential in hardcore techno. Next to highly intense sounds and a speed of minimum 160BPM, the flow is not continuous, but broken in both music and dance with staccato elements, pauses, bursts and breaks. In *Disquiet* I wanted to go deeper into these **sonic ruptures** and explore how **they activate and stimulate my body**. I think dancing hardcore can be a break from structure.

Often when people talk about clubbing, the emphasis is on its utopian side: the togetherness, the joy of dancing together (and I agree that is certainly part of it). But I also recognize a dystopic intention, especially in hardcore techno, in the lyrics and the sonic atmosphere. Dark tones and intense destructive sounds make me feel I am dancing to express the lack of perspective, the lack of future. *We dance hard because there is no future here.* We need to destruct our current bodies with heavy bass cannons to find other ways of being.

### **A bit of context on names, drugs and going crazy**

What is generally called hardcore techno – a term that contains many subgenres – developed in the UK and later Europe in the early nineties in response to the original Detroit techno sound of Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson. These tree men paved the way for everything we now call techno music.

In the UK and Europe techno got a specific early development, partially due to the different background of the producers, the birth of gigantic raves and the use of specific drugs. The latter were essential in the development of hardcore music and dance, particularly which kind of drugs was hot in which place. Gabber got its speed, because of the drug carrying the same name: the dancers simply wanted faster music to fit their physical state. The total paranoia resulting from the use of too much drugs, and the emphasis on “loosing control” and “going crazy” also found their way into the tracks in the lyrics and choice of samples (sirens, for example, but also a chaotic succession of several high frequency sounds). This kind of embracing of a body that is not deemed normal (**going crazy became a goal in itself**) or productive is something that I find incredibly interesting. Hardcore is not nice.

### **A bit of context on hardcore in Europe**

After hardcore techno's original explicitly apolitical success extreme right wing youngsters, who identified with the intense violent sounds for different reasons, appropriated the hardcore scene in Europe. This right-wing connotation and infiltration made apolitical and leftwing music lovers (who precisely opposed a culture of normativity and homogenization) leave the scene, which became more and more marginalized. In order to distance themselves hardcore record labels and parties desperately launched labels like *“United Gabbers Against Racism and Fascism”*. However, the right wing-connotation remained and hardcore parties became partially unsafe spaces. Luckily some years ago this shifted, when hardcore got re-validated by a more diverse group of producers who explicitly reclaimed the name “hardcore”.

Within this context I found my way back to it as well.

Thank you Elisa, Karlien, Eva, Lieve and Gino.