

---

Project-Module  
Sound Studies – UdK Berlin

---

Project by Julio Lugon (# 366256)

Project size: S

Title: Aldi Love Song

Genre: Sound performance

Materials: Audio recorder, supermarket cashier sound-beeps, audio editor, laptop, audio interface, 8 loudspeakers, amplifiers, cables.

Semester: WiSe 2015/16

Tutor: Daisuke Ishida

## **Aldi Love Song**

By Julio Lugon

---

### **Project description**

This sonic intervention wants to constitute a body of work as an analysis device that opens questions about the lack of control one has over the sounds in commercial or semi-public places, or, quoting Marc Augé, “non-places”.

The main object of analysis in this exercise is the characteristics of the ‘beep’ sounds made by cashier machines, exhaustively projected into the public space of shopping centers and supermarket payment areas, among other commercial environments.

The project’s first aim is to collect and analyze the sound-beeps and determine the influence that they could have on our experience in “non-places”. Also, to examine the particularities of these kind of micro-sounds and the effect/affect that they may have on individuals through long time exposure. In some cases the characteristics of those beep sounds may resemble well-known musical intervals and could even trigger tedious "earworms" for the innocent consumer. In this sense, the project rises questions on whether there is truly a constant surveillance, or, the politics of control have already successfully established a perennial feeling of paranoia, one that could be another kind of subliminal surveillance in nowadays societies of control. One that is more intangible.

Lastly, the presentation of this experience is thought as a sound intervention, via the installation of a set of loudspeakers, transmitting the process of destruction and re- construction of these common sonic places a.k.a. ‘beep’ sounds.

---

## The Worm

The title, Aldi Love Song, suggests a romantic encounter of two persons in a European “savers” super-market. Or, at least, that is what I heard from an individual trying to understand the reason of using such a suggestive name for a project. This could not be more far from the real reason for choosing that title.

The story goes like this. Supermarket cashier machines utilize a sound beep that is referential for the customer and the supermarket worker to make clear that a product has been detected, scanned and charged to the ticket that would be paid by the buyer. Seems to be a very simple transaction. And in Germany, this transaction is very fast (sometimes almost aggressive). But that is not a problem.

In this specific supermarket, Aldi, they use two different sound beeps to make the users have an auditory reference, one when they scan the product, and another slightly different when they have to manually write the code of the product. And is exactly in this small slight difference of sound pitches from the two beeps where we are going to depart on this love song.

The tonal difference of this two sound-beeps result on a musical interval that, as the musicians and theorists refer, as a musical minor interval, which also appear to be in many dramatic pop love songs.

A couple of years before developing Aldi Love Song I lived near by an Aldi supermarket, so I used to buy there quite a lot. And every time I was waiting in line to pay my grocery shopping I had to listen repeatedly to the beep-sounds produced by the cashier-machines, then, after a couple of times on this experience, I noticed that every time I went out of the Aldi supermarket, I recalled “(Where Do I Begin?) Love Story” by Francis Lai. And that was only happening in Aldi, not in Kaisers, not in Netto, not in Karlstad, not in Edeka. I figured out that was because in other supermarkets

they use only one kind of beep-sound, and so using two different beep-sounds could pave the way for a kind of musicality to emerge.

But that was not the mere observational and listening discovery that I made; I also beguine to grow a massive earworm that was little by little trying to unease my weekly grocery shopping visits. Had to do something about the whole thing. I obviously could have gone shopping to another supermarket; also Aldi does not have all the good quality products, although one can save a bit of money buying there.

Thought about this only for a little bit when I was still living near by the Aldi of Leinestrasse in Neukölln. Then I moved out and my nearest supermarket was a Lidl, they only use one beep-tone sound.

---

### **The Framework / Workshop “Intangible Threat”**

Later on, living near by that Lidl, I got on a collective project called “Intangible Threat” discussing on surveillance and the overall subtleties of being watched, observed and control politics of living on a developed city like Berlin. Video cameras, audio espionage, face recognition technologies, ways of encrypting your daily interactions with the internet, and several other very delicate notions were approached on that weekly workshop firstly lead by Jasmine Guffond, taking care of the theoretical part, where she incite us, participators from different backgrounds, to read interesting papers on the subject followed by a group theme presentation and discussion in class. I read and presented the chapter on Steve Goodman’s Sonic Warfare book called “1971: The Earworm”. This theoretical framework helped me a lot to shape the way I wanted to kill that worm that sang the love song.

Then, the second part of the workshop was taken care by Daisuke Ishida who took over for the part where we would develop our ideas on the notion

of surveillance. We continued working with the proposed themes, and each of the participants of the group went on to develop sound works related to surveillance and the crack in the cities.

We were looking for places to present our showcase, and we arrived at the space dedicated to present projects of experimental art called Spektrum, located in Neukölln. The exhibition we presented there was called “Intangible Threat” a showcase by class Sound, Art and Technology-poiesis, UdK Berlin.

This framework made me think about the capacity of a simple beep-tone to control your subconscious. I did not want to talk about the “bad-guys” making all this fuss on checking you out the whole time, like video-cameras in subway stations, but more I wanted to feel that there is also a self-made control machinery, and try and test some kind of a way to destroy this notion of unwanted control. Something like: choosing a battle with a worm I can kill.

---

### **Preparations on ways to kill the worm**

The first thing I thought was to check if those two different tones played by Aldi cashier-machines were also played the same in other Aldis around Berlin. So I went to record the Aldi beep-sounds from 10 different Aldis. I found they were all the same, they played two different tones that resembled the musical interval used in Francis Lai’s very famous song. My idea then was to destroy this sad affective resonance with a musical composition. Make these beeps sound “happy” instead of “sad”. So then, I planned a composition in which the first part would use the Aldi tones and in the second part the tones of the other supermarkets that I recorded. They were Edeka, Lidl, Eurogida, Netto, and a couple of others.

The building where the classes of the workshop were held is named Edvard Grieg, so I thought appropriate to use the famous piece by the compositor,

called Morning Mood, for the second part of the piece using the non-aldi beep tones.

So the final composition to present in public was a slowly in-crescendo sequence of low frequencies, caricature of the love song, to then come to a space of chaotic noise with very eerie beep sounds until then little by little a new melody could arise, cleaning the bad vibes with a metaphorical dawn. Till today, I could not really say if the worm is completely killed for me, or is just tamed. But what I really know is that I can deal better with these unwanted sounds that are all around us in urban spaces.

---

### **Final thoughts**

The overall balance of the entire project process within the theoretical and practical framework of the workshop with Ishida and Guffond is very positive. Gave me, to a large extent, a solid experience in group-work related to creation, addressing sonic and auditory questions as much as political ones. Many times, one has to get carried away to some extent, when working as a team. Personal ideas sometimes do not translate well into the general language. Fortunately, I had very good experience with some of the team, of which I learned a lot, both technically and theoretically.

The presentation at Spektrum was also a very good experience in which we all had to agree on schedules and accessible spaces so that the whole project landed in the best way.

One of the things that were also very important was to receive the economic assistance of Asta, with which each of the members of the team could pay the expenses related to the realization of the different projects.

## Documentation

- Audio (performance recording and clean track):

<https://piralemu.bandcamp.com/album/aldi-love-song-from-intangible-threat-exhibition-at-spektrum-berlin>

- Visual and text:



### **ALDI LOVE SONG**

Julio Lugon

*(Sonic performance and installation project)*

This auditive intervention wants to constitute a body of work as an analysis device that opens questions about the lack of control one has over the sounds in commercial or semi-public places, or, quoting Marc Augé, "non-places". The main object of analysis in this exercise is the characteristic of the 'beep' sounds made by cashier machines, exhaustively projected into the public space of shopping centers and supermarket payment areas.

The project's first aim is to collect and analyze the sound-beeps and determine the influence that they could have on our experience in "non-places". Also, to examine the particularities of these kind of micro-sounds and the effect/affect that they may have on individuals through long time exposure. In some cases the characteristics of those beep sounds may resemble well-known musical intervals and could even trigger tedious "earworms" for the innocent consumer.

In this sense, the project questions whether there is truly a constant surveillance, or, the politics of control have already successfully established a perennial feeling of paranoia, that could be another kind of subliminal surveillance in nowadays societies of control.

Lastly, the presentation of this experience is thought as a sound intervention, via the installation of a set of loudspeakers, transmitting the process of destruction and re-construction of these common sonic places a.k.a. 'beep' sounds.

---

#### *Technical requirements:*

*Laptop, audio interface, 8 Loudspeakers, amplifiers, long cables.*

---

Julio Lugon is a Peruvian artist based in Berlin since 2010. His work deals with the aesthetics of "the worst", also questioning the similarities between high and low technologies in a contemporary environment.