

Conscious Turntablism: Background and History

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The Frequency Mutineers work in a field of study we call “Conscious Turntablism”. We define “Turntablism” as “postmodern performance art involving the physical manipulation of a sound medium altering the time structure of the original source thus creating a unique piece as if playing a conventional music instrument”. Extending the legacy of Grand Wizard Theodore (1), Grandmaster Flash (2), Kool Herc (3), and DJ Francis (4) back through Pierre Schaeffer (5), Luigi Russolo (6), and Thomas Edison (7), we’ve speculated that Swiss watchmakers who built music boxes in the early 1800s were the first “Turntablists” (8). We then merge the Turntablism subculture with the Activist subculture by drawing on an amorphous genre of music we call “Conscious” or “Noises of the Revolution”. That is, sounds that inspire people to make a difference—to leave the world a better place than they found it. This “mash up” is created by expanding our definition of Turntablism to include “done to produce a premeditated physiological and/or psychological effect on the listener”. And in our case, that effect is educating and motivating people to foster positive social change.

Notes

- (1) A pioneer of turntable “scratching” circa. 1980
- (2) A pioneer of mixer “cutting” circa. 1976
- (3) A pioneer of “breakbeat” turntablism circa. 1969
- (4) A pioneer of “beat matching” circa. 1968
- (5) A pioneer of “musique concrete” circa. 1951
- (6) A pioneer of “futurist” art circa. 1913
- (7) An inventor of “cylinder turntables” circa. 1878
- (8) See “Using Children’s Toys to Become a Turntablist” elsewhere on this website