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Your essential daily news

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Inside the EDM scene

Mutek brings best of techno to Montreal

A Mutek set at the Musée d'art contemporain. Inset: Nortec Collective put on a show. RUNG DUNG NGUYEN/MUTEK; JESSE SHIP/FOR METRO



Jesse Ship
For Metro Life

Californian transgender techno artist Rose sits in a skin-tone bodysuit in a box while passersby gawk in Montreal's cosmopolitan Place Des Arts.

Just inside, Japanese multi-disciplinary artist and choreography Hiroaki Umeida dances wildly on stage in front of a pixelated snowstorm as part of his Holistic Strata performance.

The act is moving and surreal: The eye is drawn into the chaotic display as his body is jolted with electric stabs of a DSL modem gone haywire.

Welcome to a snapshot of the Mutek festivities, a five-day celebration of electronic music discovery and audiovisual art installations, which just wrapped its 16th year on Sunday.

While EDM has become the hottest genre in the last few years and has only begun to crack the mainstream, Mutek has been exploring the business of techno music for more

than a decade.

Techno acts like Berlin's Lucy and abstract visuals of Robin Fox and Atom™ stole last Thursday night's shows using a combination of drones, synths and moving tones to induce personal catharsis.

Friday night at the Metropolis is dominated by thundering mechanical techno with live performances from Berlin's Berghain super-club resident, Steffi.

"It's rare that something is

“My friend was complaining that there were no big names he recognized, but I told him, ‘This isn't about names, this is about discovering new music.’”

Poirier aka Boundary, Montreal DJ/producer

curated this way,” said John Tejada, L.A.-based 20-year veteran techno DJ, producer and what you call a seasoned “gear head” in music production circles.

“Mostly at festivals you get a field or sandy areas and different stages. There's not many even in Europe where things are so overhyped and you have

a mixture of different venues.”

Mutek is an unofficial kickoff to Montreal's festival season, attracting electronic music pilgrims from as far as Europe and the U.S. The on-vacation attitude dominates as fans dress to feel as comfortable and colourful as they wish.

Mutek is very much an urban festival in that attendees travel between well-kept venues like the Metropolis, a converted movie theatre

turned music venue or the two story Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC).

The neighbouring Théâtre Maisonneuve in the Place Des Arts was also integral part of this year's Mutek.

Avant-garde composer Tyondai Brazton, who collaborates with Philip Glass, unveiled his HIVE1 performance there

early Saturday evening as part of the A/VISIONS series.

“The mixture of venues makes it really interesting. You're not bouncing around stages — you have big variety and a unique look to every venue,” said DJ Tejada, who often feels the grind of the jet-set life as a touring performer.

“You're not waiting an hour for a port-a-potty or drink tickets. It's civilized. I feel like I'm on vacation.”

If you don't recognize any of the names of the artists, that's OK.

Music discovery is a part of the Mutek mission said Montreal's Juno-nominated Poirier who has performed a handful of times since 2002 under his name as well as his other project, Boundary.

“Even for me, there's always stuff I don't know,” he said. “My friend was complaining that there were no big names he recognized, but I told him, ‘This isn't about names, this is about discovering new music.’”

“People trust the festival, they are excited and understand the privilege to be able to see new acts, or ones they've never heard of.”



HOT ACTS

One to watch: Patricia

Chicago's Max Ravitz has been producing techno music under various monikers, but this current incarnation has seen his name rise in the global community, thanks in part to his debut EP Body Issues first released on analog tape cassettes.



The Local: Poirier aka Boundary

Juno-nominated Poirier is a product of Montreal, and his fascination with Caribbean and African music has seeped into his experimental reggae and dance-hall interpretations over the past decade.



Global Superstar: Kode9

Kode9's Hyperdub record label defined a whole generation of electronic and early dubstep music, building a fertile playground for bass-obsessed all-stars like Burial, Flying Lotus, Ikonika and Joker.



JESSE SHIP / FOR METRO LIFE