

# The Unsound methods of AUDINT

<http://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/interviews/the-unsound-methods-of-audint>

December 2016



Image from the inside cover of AUDINT's *Martial Hauntology*

Eleni Ikoniadou and Lendl Barcelos talk extreme frequencies, cryptic records and sonic warfare with the audiovisual research group

AUDINT, whose name is an abbreviation of Audio Intelligence – is a research cell with a double aim: to conduct theoretical and artistic experiments at the peripheral zones of sound, and to investigate their impact on psychological and physiological states. These zones are what AUDINT refer to as unsound: audio-related phenomena in the wider vibrational spectrum which, they argue, are capable of offering insights into the unknown aspects of perception. Their mission is to probe peripheral zones of sound, those frequencies, such as infrasound and ultrasound, existing at the perceptual boundaries. The group even claim there is a phantom sense that once allowed us to communicate with what exists on the edges of perception – what they term the third ear – which can connect to other times and spaces and to other forms of vibratory intelligence.

The collective, publicly active since 2008, consists of Toby Heys, a Digital Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University and previous member of Battery Operated; Steve Goodman, aka Kode9, author of *Sonic Warfare* and the head of the Hyperdub record label; and new recruits Patrick Doan, a digital artist based in Berlin, and Souzanna Zamfe, a Russian born futurity and sonology researcher. We interviewed the group a number of times via email, and they provide an insight into exploration of ultrasonic and infrasonic frequencies. “Given that all sensory information could be considered to be spectral in essence,” they argue, “those frequencies above and below the thresholds of human hearing become interfaces for understanding how perceptual mechanisms within us have

been deactivated, much like genes that have been trip-switched by extreme experiences.” The group have already produced a series of (un)sound installations, films, talks, records and book projects, with performances and exhibitions at London’s Tate Britain and New York gallery Art In General, and festivals in Montreal, Krakow and Berlin. This December saw the release of *Reel Torque Volume 32*, the second part of a projected trilogy of AUDINT cassette boxsets, this instalment titled *Archive File: Nguyễn Văn Phong*, a set of recordings from “Vietnamese bioacoustics expert, computer programmer and financial strategist” that supposedly date from 1955–79.

But AUDINT’s output hints at origins that reach even further back in time. A collection of AUDINT recordings, writings and illustrations were originally released in 2014 as *Martial Hauntology*, a boxset designed by regular Hyperdub collaborator Optigram. The project investigates frequency-related technologies and programs developed by military organisations since 1944 to orchestrate the spectral phenomena of haunting within the area of conflict. Opening track “Delusions Of The Living Dead” begins with a soft female voice – known as Ms Haptic – that begins a phantom tour of the world of AUDINT. She speaks of characters, places and schemes formed in the wake of the Second World War on the back of a tactical deception unit known as the Ghost Army. It could be a recent discovery or something that does not exist at all; therefore she is free to say everything or nothing.

Each of the six sides of vinyl is a chapter that plugs into a larger narrative outlined in the book and offers an opportunity to listen into the world of AUDINT. “The records were purposefully made to have cross-referential aspects in the sound design,” the group explain. “But the atmosphere and style of each side is purposefully very different... so whereas “Delusions Of The Living Dead” has a noirish late 1940s feel to it, “DRNE Cartography” has a much more futuristic Asian feel that often sounds like the tumult of pings, beeps and digital chatterings of Electronics Avenue in Zhongguancun, China or Akihabara Electric Town in Tokyo.”

The listening experience possibly conceals more than it reveals about AUDINT. *Martial Hauntology* seems to be purposely engineered to leave the audience partially ignorant about the collective – even after an online search of the names, places and technologies mentioned in the set, one succumbs to a certain degree of paranoia generated by the project about what is real and what is not. The Ghost Army, for example, was the unofficial name of the US 23rd Headquarters Special Troops in the Second World War. They were made up of “soldiers whose most effective weapon was artistry”, as an article in *The Atlantic* put it. Ghosters were unlikely soldiers – actors, sound technicians, artists and other creative types taken from art schools and advertising agencies, to construct fake tanks, recordings and radio transmissions to confuse the Nazis about the whereabouts of the Allied forces. There’s documentation to suggest that Ellsworth Kelly, the American abstract painter and sculptor, and one of the characters mentioned in *Martial Hauntology*, was indeed a Ghoster. But what about other characters mentioned in *Martial Hauntology* such as Hypolite Morton, Walter Slepian or Bill Arnett? And what of its mentions of unclassified government documents, shrouded PSYOPS histories and patents from weapons developers?

One of the fascinations of AUDINT is that they claim to be only the latest incarnation of a unit that dates back to 1945. By the group’s account, Heys, Goodman, Doan and Zamfe are merely agents operating under the direction of IREX2; a sonic algorithm that assumes different carriers across space and time.

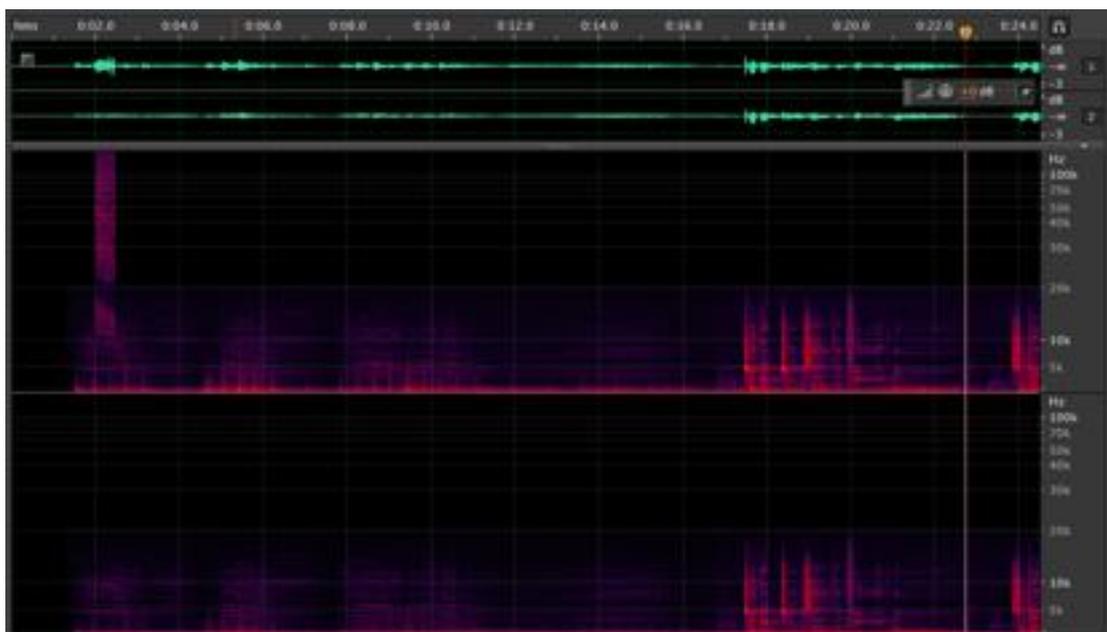
The *Martial Hauntology* boxset contains a set of annotated cards, supposedly from a collection dubbed the Dead Record Archive, featuring the likes of Alan Turing, Antonin Artaud, Theodor Reich and Thomas Edison, as well as more esoteric ‘historical figures’. *Martial Hauntology* situates these characters in an intricate puzzle of audio and military details that crosses over from vinyl to book to cards. These so-called dead records are simply pieces of disused vinyl apparently culled from “flea markets, thrift stores, and church bazaars”, and information about scientists, engineers, auditory illusions and sonic weapons are illustrated onto the grey/beige card of inside-out record sleeves. In reality, only a minority of these 256 records were actually released. But, given AUDINT members’ research specialisations in this area, it remains tantalisingly possible that some of these records might have actually existed.



AUDiNT Dead Record Archive

Back in 2011, the group began to upload music files online with encrypted messages taken from the Dead Record Archive. Using a self-produced software application named Ghostcoder, they embedded reprocessed recordings at frequency bands several octaves above the limit of human hearing into popular music from each decade. Taking the most popular music torrent downloaded for each decade (including Duke Ellington's *Jubilee Stomp*, Bob Dylan's *Highway 61*, 50 Cent's *Get Rich Or Die Tryin'* all the way through to Eminem's 2010 album *Recovery*) AUDiNT created a new torrent with message encoded in the audio.

Anyone who used these torrents to download the albums would be unable to hear the difference between the AUDiNT version and a standard one. But there are clues that hint at encrypted documents. If you downloaded files via a torrent named The Carpenters[FLAC][AUDiNT], you might notice that what purports to be audio ripped from a CD at 44.1 kilohertz turns out to be a 32 bit, 384 kHz .flac file. Putting the file into a spectrogram, you can see hypersonic information that remains inaudible.



Spectrogram of AUDiNT's ghostcoded carpenters.flac file with hidden track

Using the same Ghostcoder software to convert the hidden data back, you can hear a computer-generated voice speaking of sonic weaponry developed by the British army against protesters in Northern Ireland.

The group's ongoing research claims to "uncover links between the underground groove of the Large Hadron Collider and the vaults of the Bank of Hell; connects the Dead Record Network with the Phantom Hailer", according to a press release for an exhibition in Montreal. As the AUDINT archive develops, new chapters of missing history are promised through publications and recordings.

*Martial Hauntology* serves as a reminder that cultural artefacts like records can affect reality rather than simply represent it. In conjunction with the internet, a realm that excels in speculation, rumour and anonymity, you get an idea of how fictional tactics are well suited to the indeterminable sphere of sound.

While AUDINT have no direct associates, the group divulge that future projects have connections elsewhere: with Suzanne's Treister multimedia artwork *Hexen 2039*, featuring the fictional alter ego Rosalind Brodsky, a delusional time traveller who believes herself to be working at the Institute of Militronics and Advanced Time Interventionality; Julien Henriques and Heidi Sincuba's projected sonographic novel *Captain Eko And Her Sonic Warriors*; the Gothic futurism of the sculptures, writings, films and music of legendary New York graffiti writer and hip-hop musician Rammellzee, and Drexciya, the Detroit techno duo that set out to rewrite the ending in the history of transatlantic slavery. Like all of the above, AUDINT entwine imagined realities into conversations with history.

Perhaps AUDINT are a sign of the times: a response to the return of irrationality, bleakness and uncertainty at the heart of global politics and economics. The ending of *Martial Hauntology* references the "spectral marketing of ghost (war) money" and the "Bank of Hell... cast(ing) a curse over the global economic system (the unpredictable dimensions of which are still unfolding)". The question of whether AUDINT are a fictional or real research cell becomes redundant: the fiction is all part of the horror.

At Loop Berlin in November, AUDINT screened a trailer from a forthcoming animated film *Ghostcode*, set in 2056, when Corporations and Nation states have fused into single economic and political entities. Meanwhile, it is rumoured that IREX2 continues to recruit human agents for its propagation.