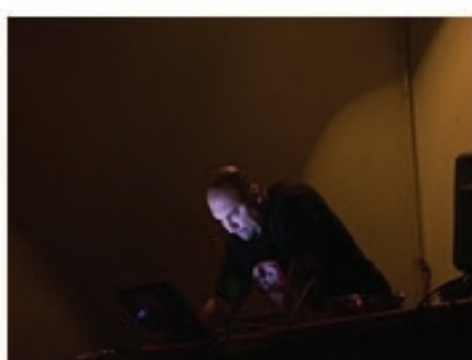




The view from a rooftop in Old San Juan during Martin Creed's three-minute performance of *All the Bells*. . . in 2006



Jorge Castro as Clon performing at Rumba in Old San Juan in March 2006



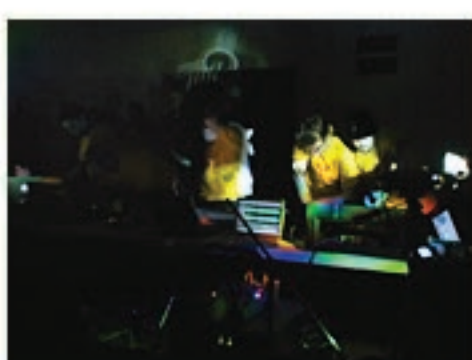
Workbench performing with Black Quarter at the Cubo club in San Juan's Santurce neighborhood



The Cubo club in San Juan's Santurce neighborhood



Jorge Castro with the Chuck Gnoider duo



Alianza Exploradora Intergalactica performing at the San Juan Noise Fest 2 in December 2006



Part of the Alianza Exploradora Intergalactica light show at the San Juan Noise Fest 2 in December 2006



Angelito Davila of Davila 666 performing at Taller C in San Juan's Rio Piedras district



Miss Davila of Davila 666 at Taller C in San Juan's Rio Piedras district

YOUNG NOISE

by Pedro Velez

The past year is going to be remembered as one of the loudest art seasons on the island, beginning last October with British artist **Martin Creed's** almost unnoticeable bell-ringing piece, *Todas las campanas* [see [Artnet News](#), Oct. 19, 2006], which left local art-and-music junkies more than a little aggravated. Keep in mind that down here in Puerto Rico, with the hot rums and the sun, pretentiously arty rock music has little durability.

More to our taste is the new Noise music composition from **Clon**, a performance by noise manipulation artist **Jorge Castro**. A four-hour-long epic titled *El Mar*, the tune is free for the taking, and can be downloaded from the Basque artist **Mattin's** online "anti-copyright" label, **Desetxea**. Be warned, it's in a file format called "ogg."

For years Castro has been one of the most active artists in Puerto Rico, not only playing his music but also putting out beautifully designed records, collaborating with musicians from around the world, and organizing events with respectable acts from the underground. In a double bill at the catacomb-like **Rumba** bar in Old San Juan in March 2006, Castro put on an especially memorable performance -- in front of an audience of eight people. Noise music, as the genre is called, is really not that popular.

First up was **Workbench**, whose front man went about his business casually, moaning into the microphone and using it to make noises with an aluminum bucket filled with tribal objects, a colorful wired console and a knife. The piece was kinetic and textured, and filled the space with a sense of mourning in a performance that was close to mystical.

Taking the stage rapidly after Workbench, with no introduction, was Castro, who stands in a spotlight on an otherwise dark stage, rigorously working his laptop computer. No light show, no dancing. He plays his composition live, as loud and bothersome as any trash-music act from the late '80s.

Keeping a steady momentum, the piece layers one textured sound over another and shifts gradually from one movement to the next, like the sound of driving over grass to gravel, up until the precise point where the music stops abruptly with no warning and no climax.

A pain to the ears of many, the noise is presented with a certain generous purity. No guitars sticking out to the crowd, no pelvic strum, no fashionable pretty people -- just plain sound and experience.

That same philosophy ruled at the second edition of the **San Juan Noise Fest 2**, celebrated at **Cubo** in San Juan's Santurce neighborhood on Dec. 30, 2006. Heavy on collaboration and improvisation, the diverse acts sprawled across the subdivisions of Noise music, from Prog, Doom and Acid Jazz to Drone and Electronica. Unsurprisingly, for afficianados the Noise Fest was cathartic and loud as hell.

At the core of the festival was an improvisational piece by Castro, performed by **Cornucopia**, a power-drone duo consisting of himself and multimedia artist **Claudio Chea**. The noise could be heard at the 7-11 down the street, blocks away from Cubo's dirty garage-like stage. Santurce's urban texture was a part of the presentation, which included the sound of traffic from a nearby highway, the resounding echo of Cubo's unfriendly acoustics, junkies and drunks asking for money, and Chea's gutted screams, where focus is given to sharpness and pitch.

Other highlights of the Noise Fest included an extensive set involving much drums and synchronization performed by the industrial collective known as **Chuck Gnoider**, featuring **Joshua Manchester**, who is based in Chicago, and **Andres Lugo**. Another great act was the "trippy" **Alianza Exploradora Intergalactica**, a friendly onstage musical match between members of two San Juan musical acts, the experimental **Matotumba** and post-modern psychedelic **Psiconautas**. The show mixed space-age Electronica with a visual series of projected images reminiscent of '50s sci-fi movies.

That same night, on the eve of the debut of their first record release, a group called **Davila 666** played at **Taller C**, a new alternative space for musicians, artists and performance art located near the **University of Puerto Rico** campus in San Juan's Rio Piedras district. Masters of postmodernist pastiche -- i.e., the band's music sounds like classic rock -- Davila 666 has a huge following that packs every show. Part of its appeal is its name, which combines references to a notorious Bayamon city slum with the number of the beast. All of the band's members are, supposedly, named Davila.

A Davila 666 show functions almost like a theatrical event, as the band presents a thematic environment in which viewers are called to interact with props and exotic dancers. With its inspiration by the cult '90s psychedelic San Francisco band the **Brian Jonestown Massacre**, Davila is living homage to the sex, drugs and the good times of rock 'n' roll we all idolize.

And in the end the band makes good music, like *Nueva Localización*, a tune that describes a slow day for an addict on the move who's reflecting on the good counseling he never followed as a young man. The song is a repetitive chorus where all the musicians take solo leads over a guitar chord with the treble sound of the ever-present tambourine.

Davila 666 is smart, sarcastic and aggressive -- as young art should be.

PEDRO VÉLEZ is an artist and writing living in Puerto Rico.