

everything we do falls down on one side or the other, you have to choose. We can't get away with blaming the other guy for the choices we make^{xvi}.”

Terminal Drive was not only a reflection of The Plaza but in many ways also a reflection of Cleveland in the mid-1970s, an audio document of urban decay in real time and a soundtrack to the beginning of the slow decline in the dwindling cities of industry within the Midwest American rust belt. It is dark, cold, eerie, at times industrial, and at others times ambient. It exists in the shadow of the Terminal Tower building in the center of Cleveland, the city where the river burned¹⁹, in the echoes of the Superior Viaduct, and in the non-stop mechanical sounds that continued to emanate out of The Flats. As Ravenstine stated years later: “(T)he fact that we were (all) making...music in the city... it just seemed like the city should be part of it^{xvii}.”

David Thomas described this environment in his uncredited liner notes for

the 1989 Rough Trade reissue of Pere Ubu's *390 Degrees of Simulated Stereo* (which featured a photo of the Terminal Tower on its cover) noting that the geographical influence was not only unmistakable but also inescapable:

The Flats is the river valley around which Cleveland grew. The Cuyahoga River bends wildly through it. Ore boats squeeze upriver, supplying steel mills and heavy industries. A labyrinthine and secret network of roads is woven through this wilderness of blast furnaces, railroads, bridges, machine shops, and blue collar cafes. At the mouth of the Cuyahoga, where it meets Lake Erie, the Flats narrows and the downtown complex looms overhead^{xviii}.

AR: “It was really very depressed. Nobody lived downtown. Pretty much roll up the streets after dark...it was just really was dead at night. And there wasn't anything happening so anything that was happening was interesting^{xix}.”

Cynthia Black: “I think what's so hard and what people don't understand is that this was a very painful time and a very young time... the map and the territory are not the same. Being there was one night after another of children growing up together. That's all it was... but every one of them was talented, driven, pissed off, angry, drunk, stoned, and trying to get laid... all the time, in a city that smelled like Hell because they were still making steel in it. The Flats was covered in black soot. It was the 70's: it was dark, it was cold, nobody could get a job. So while there was a lot of creativity, and some of it was brilliant, honestly, in moments, people were like paroxysms, they were like spasms, they were like death throes. It's like “I'm gonna do this right now because I can't stand it anymore!” ...and then you get drunk, or have your fight, or drive off into the night. There's nowhere to go, it's the middle of fucking Ohio, it's 12 degrees outside. It's not fun.”

AR: “(The Plaza) would get broken into almost every night. And some people got robbed at gunpoint. I was scared a lot of the time. So I'm sure that was in there. With the sounds I made, some of those sirens and things... that was the level of intensity to that place that was frightening^{xx}.”

Pere Ubu, as originally conceived by Herman, Krauss, Laughner, Ravenstine, Thomas, and Wright, was only ever meant to be a one-time recording project. After recording “30 Seconds Over Tokyo” (a remake of an older RFTT song) and “Heart of Darkness” (a new group composition) at the end of September 1975 at Audio Recording in Cleveland with Bill Cavanaugh engineering, the members felt that an actual, functioning band could happen and perform live. Ravenstine, however, became concerned about how to create his other worldly EML synthesizer sounds in a live setting and bowed out of the band around October/November 1975.

AR: “I remember everyone being very excited and wanting to continue. All I could think was I had no idea how I was gonna take what I was doing and turn it into something that could be done live. I had never had any intention of being involved in it, I was interested in something that was more arty, I was thinking more in terms of symphonic stuff...and much more abstract stuff^{xxii}...”

Ravenstine's spot was filled by Dave Taylor, a friend of Wright's who also had access to an EML synthesizer. Pere Ubu's debut single would be released on Thomas' own Hearthan Records in December 1975 followed by the group's live debut at the legendary local watering hole the Viking Saloon²⁰ on December 31st. Pere Ubu were supported that night by Frankenstein, a raucous band of post-glam proto-punks that included other RFTT alumni²¹ who would soon change their name to The Dead Boys (after a line in the RFTT song “Down In Flames”) the following year and move to New York.

Following several shows around Cleveland, a well-received performance at Max's Kansas City, NYC supporting Suicide in April of 1976, and the release of the group's second single (“Final Solution” b/w “Cloud 149”) on Hearthan that same month, Ravenstine began to have second thoughts about leaving Pere Ubu.

AR: “I went to all the shows that they did without me and I listened to Dave Taylor... and I gradually figured out and thought actually ‘well, I could do that.’ I didn't really want to. I don't think I ever really enjoyed live performance but I didn't want to get left behind. I didn't want to get left out. So, at some point I said that I wanted to try it again^{22, xxiii}.”

Ravenstine returned to the group around mid-May 1976 shortly before an increasingly out of control Laughner was fired from his own band²³. After making one further recording with the group in June 1976 with “hot shot blues guitarist^{xxiv}” Alan Greenblatt²⁴ temporarily filling in for

¹⁹The Cuyahoga River caught fire a whopping thirteen times between 1868 and 1969: “Inspired by the 1969 river fire, Congress was determined to resolve the issue of land [and water] pollution, not just in Cleveland, but throughout the United States. The legislature passed the National Environment Protection Act (NEPA) which was signed into law on January 1, 1970. This act helped establish the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which would be given the duties to manage environmental risks and regulate various sanitary-specific policies.” (http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Cuyahoga_River_Fire)

As further noted by Andrew Russ in an interview with this author: “The Clean Water Act of 1972 empowered the EPA to enforce a mandate that all rivers throughout the United States be sufficiently clean to accommodate fish and swimmers by 1983.”

²⁰The Viking Saloon—where several of Laughner's prior groups had performed extensively—was located at 2005 Chester Ave NE in the vicinity of Cleveland State University (and was most likely named for CSU's mascot) and was destroyed by fire on January 7, 1976. David Thomas worked for a time as the club doorman/bouncer.

²¹While both Cheetah Chrome (Eugene O'Connor) and Johnny Blitz (Johnny “Madman” Madansky) both joined RFTT around October/November 1974 (with Madansky leaving at the end of April 1974, replaced at first by Don Evans who was followed by Wayne Strick), the extent of Stiv Bators' (Steve Bator) participation in RFTT has been disputed. All three—along with Jimmy Zero and Jeff Magnum—formed Frankenstein around the late summer of 1975.

²²Taylor, a Vietnam Veteran, left Cleveland for Florida not long after his dismissal from Pere Ubu and

ceased playing music, pursuing his interests in photography instead.

²³Following a few more musical excursions—including the bands Friction and Wolves—Laughner would die from acute pancreatitis on June 22, 1977 aged 24.

²⁴Wright had been the soundman for Orville Normal, an innovative Cleveland group that existed 1971-1973 that had included Greenblatt (now known as Alan Greene) on guitar and Wright's childhood friend (and one time Laughner collaborator) Andrew “Saint” Baird on bass.

^{xvi}Allen Ravenstine, “The Plaza,” *Cleveland Edition*, June 30, 1988, 7.

^{xvii}Gross, Jason. “Allen Ravenstine.” *Perfect Sound Forever*, October 2010. Web. 26 Nov. 2016 <<http://www.furious.com/perfect/allenravenstine.html>>

^{xviii}Thomas, David. (uncredited) Liner Notes. Pere Ubu: *390 Degrees Of Simulated Stereo, Ubu Live Volume One*. Rough Trade, 1989. CD.

^{xix}Gross, Jason. “Allen Ravenstine.” *Perfect Sound Forever*, October 2010. Web. 26 Nov. 2016 <<http://www.furious.com/perfect/allenravenstine.html>>

^{xx}Ibid.

^{xxi}Heylin, Clinton, *From The Velvets To The Voidoids: A Pre-Punk History for a Post-Punk World* (Penguin, 1993) P: 220

^{xxii}Ibid.

^{xxiii}Gross, Jason. “Allen Ravenstine.” *Perfect Sound Forever*, October 2010. Web. 26 Nov. 2016 <<http://www.furious.com/perfect/allenravenstine.html>>

^{xxiv}Heylin, Clinton, *From The Velvets To The Voidoids: A Pre-Punk History for a Post-Punk World* (Penguin, 1993) P: 226