



The Revolution will be Sonic

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OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF “CASSEROLES”

textes qui bougent au rythme du carré rouge

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The Revolution will be Sonic

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On May 16th I decided to join the protest march downtown. This was the 94th consecutive day of protest, but the first night march I had attended. I had also marched on April 22nd for Earth Day (infused for me, as for many others, with the specter of the ongoing student strike situation) and the 200 000 strong March 22nd "manif". On May 16th, "negotiations" between the student representatives and the government had broken down, with rhetoric-laced statements coming from the government's newly (re)minted minister of education, Michelle Courchesne, denouncing the students as intractable. Bill 78 was introduced for "debate" in the Quebec legislature on the 17th and voted into law on Friday the 18th – a night which saw a larger, more diverse group in the nightly protest than ever before.

The CLASSE website – bloquonslahausse.com – told me to head to Place Émilie-Gamelin at 8:30 to assemble. We began moving around 9pm with the arrival of a large group that seemed to have been marching throughout the evening. By the time things got really rolling, heading up under the Sherbrooke overpass over Berri street, I realized this was going to be a big event – with many thousands in the street.

The spirit of the march was carnivalesque. Many were marching in their underwear (or less: one person I saw wore only a strategically-placed small red box) – a tactic adopted to garner media interest, pulling the journalistic cameras away from their nightly search for vandalism. But what really got our spirits moving was the music – it was everywhere. Snare drums, trombones – a full band played upbeat marching music. One person I saw cradled a boom box covered with revolutionary emblems. The music kept us walking in sync, laughing and smiling at each other throughout the initial two hours through downtown Montreal.

We meandered our way through the streets and eventually back to Place Émilie-Gamelin. Upon our return it was clear that the march was not over, and that we were merely gathering more people to start up again. What I didn't know was that a call had gone out over Facebook and Twitter for protestors to show up at 11 pm for a second march, in response to the intransigence displayed by the government. The new crowd that gathered was palpably more frustrated. As we began marching again through the streets, it appeared that the musicians had all gone home. We marched, chanted, stomped and cheered, but the vibe was different. Riot police were following us more closely, received by much jeering and catcalling. At one point a volley of



plastic water bottles was thrown at the riot police, and a showdown appeared imminent. But with chants of "On avance, on avance, on ne recule pas!" the crowd cajoled itself onward and the march resumed, but more quiet and anxious than before.

Not long after this point I witnessed what I can only assume was coordinated vandalism. A few young people marching near me started donning black clothes and facial coverings from out of their backpacks, speaking on cell phones. Walking up Peel towards Sherbrooke, the march was interrupted with the sounds of windows being shattered. I watched as those who had thrown garbage cans and cue balls through bank windows melted back into the crowd, removed their black garb and starting conversations with their neighbours. I looked into the eyes of one girl who ten seconds before had thrown a projectile through a Royal Bank window. She looked about 17 years old. A profound sadness started to emerge for me as we marched on, more and more in silence – as it dawned on me how things were bound to end on this night. We veered onto Crescent Street, marched past the numerous bars, calling back and forth to the patrons. Then, turning the corner onto St. Catherine, the riot squads were waiting.

The march was declared illegal over booming police loudspeakers. The voice of authority was completely unintelligible as it reverberated and ricocheted off the downtown buildings. I was near the front of the march, so had about three minutes to figure out what to do. Those behind me had no idea what was waiting for them as they marched forward. The riot police started to rush the crowd, which quickly splintered into different fleeing groups, with people screaming, yelling to stay calm, to slow down, not to run, not to be afraid. But we were all very afraid – it was hard to know where to go, and for many of us who had been marching for the past four hours, it was hard to stop. Our solidarity had been abruptly interrupted – first by the acts of a very few who were obviously organized and intent on wreaking discord, then by the police. This night was not the first to end with a show of police force, but it was one of the first in what have now become nightly occurrences, with many hundreds arrested. Those who I spoke with afterwards reiterated that this was the first time they had observed police rushing the crowd, chasing after protestors. As I myself fled, I saw a protester get hit by a tear gas canister. The sounds of panic filled the air.

I had my bike with me, so I hopped on and rode home, passing the remnants of our march – at least three different groups, fragmented and traumatised, frustrated, scared and humiliated.

As I rode home, I thought about how the night had begun with music and laughter, and ended with tear gas.

As Bill 78 became law, I have continued attending nightly marches, which became more and more the target of coordinated efforts by riot police. I watched with others on CUTVmontreal.ca as their reporters joined the throngs and were witness to the strategies and disturbing brutality of the riot police. But the marches didn't stop, as we have all observed.

May 22nd loomed – a day discussed by many others in this special issue as an exuberant experience, overwhelmingly demonstrating the resolve of the students, and also how their movement has become a province-wide initiative, with people from many different walks of life joining the protests, chanting "la loi speciale, on s'en câlisse" in opposition to Loi 78's flagrant disregard for rights guaranteed by both the Canadian and Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Initially I think many of us were nervous coming to the march. No one knew how this protest would go. We all feared the specter of Loi 78. But by sheer numbers alone, we proved we had nothing to fear. Would they arrest all 300 000 of us? Not only that, the protest transpired utterly peacefully. And there was music in the air everywhere!



Photographer: Magda Olszanowski

Remembering my experience the week before, I had vowed to arrive with music to share. As a DJ and electronic musician, I realized that what I wanted to bring required a special rig. I transformed the bike trailer usually reserved for towing two children to and from daycare into a mobile "Boogie Buggy". I used a car stereo system, with four speakers and a subwoofer, stuffing them all into the buggy, with a 12 volt marine battery for power. My colleague Kim Sawchuk built a red flag for the buggy. Her partner Robert Prenovault helped modify the bike trailer so that I could push it by hand while marching. I collected suggestions for a playlist for the afternoon, and filled my iPad with revolutionary music.

I have to admit as I biked down to the starting point, I worried my trailer would be noticed by the police and I would be blocked. But as I arrived I realized we were so many people that I and the Boogie Buggy weren't even on the radar.

It was a rainy day, but as we waited for the march to start, the sun came out and it was quite hot and sticky in the throng. But spirits were high. There were so many people in front of us that it took over an hour to start moving. Throughout that time I played music with the buggy – revolutionary tunes, and also lots of driving, electro-dance beats. People were dancing all around me, singing along with all the songs they knew. Loco Lacass's 2003 anthem, "Libérez-nous des libéraux" was a crowd favorite, obviously. I must have been asked if I had this song about two dozen times. Near the



end of the march I put it on repeat. Every time it played all the francophones around me sang along. They knew EVERY word. They danced and karaoked in front of their friends' cameras. Edith Piaf's "Je ne regrette rien" came out of the speakers, and suddenly dozens of us were singing along at the top of our lungs.

Everywhere I went with the Boogie Buggy people smiled, sang, danced and watched each other. The rain began again about halfway through the march. Prepared, I pulled a tarp over the buggy, and continue bumping beats. Public Enemy's infamous "Fight the Power" bounced and reverberated through the streets of downtown.

Intelligible or not, this time everyone knew what they were hearing. The soundscape of the street was filled and morphed by the buggy, the music, the chanting. The noise became tactile and tactical – a call to solidarity, resistance, and collective action. By the end I remounted the trailer onto my bike and cruised up and down the march with "Libérez-nous des libéraux" on repeat.

The revolution will be sonic.

The "manifs casseroles" that have been spontaneously occurring and gathering strength throughout Quebec since May 21st have demonstrated this to me more than

ever. And as with the boogie buggy, the music these events bring has unleashed the most remarkable form of community solidarity that I have ever witnessed.

While my children can't fit into the boogie buggy, stuffed as it is with speakers and deafening decibel levels, they look forward every night to the pot banging. At 8pm we join the tide that quickly assembles around the busiest street corner near our home – Beaubien and Christophe-Colombe – and bang away. As the nights progress I'm continually astonished at the consistency of the crowd – people who live on my street, in my quartier, that I might see at the grocery store, but with which I have never shared so much as a "Bonjour" – we are now making music together, laughing, smiling and occasionally covering our ears from the noise.

Hundreds of people banging on pots together makes an incredible racket! When these hundreds start marching and joining up with other spontaneous assemblies, the sum total is unbelievably loud.

Saturday May 26th as I was biking through the Plateau to my home in Rosemont-Petite-Patrie at precisely 8pm, I remarked at the incredible reverberations throughout the neighbourhoods. Not a single block in my 5 km journey was silent: "badang, badang" rang throughout the streets. I altered my trajectory, seeking out the sources of the most noise. I ran into my colleague (Jeremy Stolow, also a contributor to this special issue) at the corner of St. Hubert and Marie-Anne, out banging pots with his partner and child. I joined in for a short moment, then

continued cruising northward.



Photographer: Virginie Demers-Pelletier

These old Montreal neighbourhoods are filled with the most magnificent churches, all with incredible bell towers in their steeples. These bells are falling into disrepair as congregations have shrank to the point where basic maintenance to the buildings has become increasingly impossible.

A friend of mine posted

on Facebook that her local church (Église St. Esprit) hadn't seen so many people gathered in front of it since the 1950s.

Churches in Montreal are in close proximity to one another compared to elsewhere. But what defines their "paroisses", from what I understand, is the radius around which one can hear their bell towers.

The manifs casseroles have demonstrated this power of sound – clanging, noisy, percussive sound – to bring people together, to call them to congregate and to meet each other in public places. Quebec's Quiet Revolution may have resulted in its churches falling into disrepair, being turned into condos, etc. But whatever other lasting effects it had, the manifs casseroles, the nightly tintamarres, have proved, to me at least, that sound is at the core of what is transpiring right now in Quebec. This revolution is far from quiet. Not just the badang, badang, badang, the chanting, the music, etc. But the conversations, the joyful noise, the laughter, the sound of children. People sharing in the exuberance of coming together, publicly, freely and noisily. No matter what the outcome, entire generations have been introduced to the power of civil disobedience through sound of their own making, the noisy voice of a people that will not be told to return to business as usual, to resist asking questions and to do what they are told.

Is it a revolution? Tonight, as the rest of Canada is invited to participate in the nightly casseroles event – "Casseroles Canada" – this question looms for many. Are we at the beginning of a realignment of our national priorities, a move away from the neoliberal paradigms that have attempted to "manage" this joyful, peace-filled, noisy uprising?

While "revolution" might seem like an overstatement, if we think of the contemporary and historical examples of bloody revolutions the world over, I'm drawn to thinking about other definitions of the term.

Revolution. A turning. Like a record on
A wheel on a bike trailer. Crowds of



Photographer: Kendra Besanger

a turntable.
p e o p l e

circling around an intersection, banging and spinning their pots, coordinated into rhythms that radiate out around the city, echoing into the future.

Badang, badang, badang.

The revolution will be sonic.

Appendix: The Boogie Buggy playlist

▲	✓	Name	Time	Artist	Album
1	✓	Fight The Power (Extended Version)	6:49	Public Enemy	Fight The Power
2	✓	Incredible Bongo Band - Bongo Rock	2:39		
3	✓	Bamboo Banga	4:58	M.I.A.	Kala
4	✓	ariane_moffatt_jeudi_17_mai_2012	3:02		
5	✓	Television Drug Of A Nation	6:29	Disposable Heroes...	
6	✓	Beastie Boys - Sabotage	2:58		
7	✓	Ministere Amer - Sacrifice de poulet	3:27		
8	✓	Harder Better Faster Stronger (Deadmau5 Edit)	6:16	Daft Punk	Unofficial Release
9	✓	pussy_riot_punk_prayer	1:52		
10	✓	Libérez-nous des Libéraux	6:06	Loco Lacass	
11	✓	Runnin' [bizarre ride to the pharcyde 1993][newmaidumosa]mQ	4:56	The Pharcyde	Cydeways: the Best...
12	✓	révoltez_vous_tabula_raza	2:34		
13	✓	TRIBAL JUSTICE	3:28	CLICHÉ	
14	✓	Edith Piaf - Non, je ne regrette rien (Officiel) [Live Version]	2:30		
15	✓	Rebel Girl	2:43	Bikini Kill	Pussy Whipped
16	✓	Wade In The Water	3:13	Ramsey Lewis	Greatest Hits
17	✓	Comme des Pirates	5:11	Le Matos	Coming Soon
18	✓	Master Blaster (Jammin')	4:49	Stevie Wonder	Song Review: A Gre...
19	✓	A New Error	6:07	Moderat	Moderat (Basic Vers...
20	✓	Bonkers [With Armand Van Helden]	2:58	Dizzee Rascal	Tounge N' Cheek
21	✓	Can I Kick It?	4:05	A Tribe Called Quest	?
22	✓	Oh Shit	4:29	The Pharcyde	Bizarre Ride II The...
23	✓	Fight The Power (Extended Version)	6:49	Public Enemy	Fight The Power
24	✓	Brurier Noir - Vive le Feu	4:24		
25	✓	Wu Tang Cream Team Line Up	3:28	Wu Tang Vs The Be...	Enter The Magical...
26	✓	I Am a Cliche	1:56	X-Ray Spex	The Anthology (1 o...
27	✓	Killing In The Name	5:16	Rage Against The...	Killing In The Name...
28	✓	Help I'm Alive	6:11	Krusha	Help I'm Alive
29	✓	The Suzanne Accord	4:20	SouthWest & Oposi...	
30	✓	School's Out	3:29	Alice Cooper	School's Out
31	✓	ariane_moffatt_jeudi_17_mai_2012	3:02		
32	✓	Libérez-nous des Libéraux	6:06	Loco Lacass	
33	✓	Beastie Boys - Sabotage	2:58		
34	✓	2-01 Ohio	2:58	Neil Young	Decade
35	✓	04 The Morning	5:14	The Weeknd	House of Balloons
36	✓	delta 5 - mind your own business	3:10		
37	✓	Boris Vian- Le déserteur	3:30		
38	✓	Let's Go [Andrew Simpson Remix]	5:38	Calvin Harris Feat....	Let's Go
39	✓	Redemption Song	3:48	Bob Marley & The...	Legend
40	✓	Killing In The Name Of (Davr Remix)	3:26	Rage Against The...	www.thethunderdo...

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41	✓	Beau Temps Mauvais Temps	2:51	Tricot Machine	Tricot Machine	
42	✓	Like Perfume on a Pig	5:32	Le Matos	Coming Soon	
43	✓	The Breaks	6:30	Kurtis Blow		
44	✓	Fancy Footwork	3:18	Chromeo	Fancy Footwork	
45	✓	Bring the Noise	3:46	Public Enemy	It Takes a Nation of...	
46	✓	Cargué Dans Ma Chaise	3:49	Radio Radio	Belmundo Regal	
47	✓	Don't Stop The Party	6:07	The Black Eyed Peas	Black.Eyed.Peas-Th...	
48	✓	How You Like Me Now? (Joker Remix Radio Edit)	3:58	The Heavy	Ninja Tune XX Pro...	
49	✓	I Come in Peace	4:19	Le Matos	Coming Soon	
50	✓	Let The Spirit (Hot Chip Remix)	6:54	Roots Manuva	Ninja Tune XX Pro...	
51	✓	No Pause	3:12	Girl Talk	Feed The Animals	
52	✓	No More Mr.Nice Guy	EXPLICIT	4:17	The Narcicyst	The Narcicyst
53	✓	Paper Planes	3:25	M.I.A.	Kala	
54	✓	Bye Bye Bye	3:38	Plants And Animals	Parc Avenue	