

MOTIONNESS

EL TRAIN, CHICAGO, IL — 5.19.01

Riding the El train will never be the same.

With 18 DJs spinning on six different El train cars (three DJs rotating on each car), Motionness was the first legal event of its kind in the U.S. The event was organized by the Conjugate Projekt, a non-profit group of Chicago-based artists and professionals who, through their events, encourage people to think differently about the way they consume art, music and media. The group rented a six-car train from the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) for about \$2,400 and then decorated the cars, dimmed the lights and projected videos and visuals onto screens for the party.

The event aimed to promote literacy and highlight electronic music in a unique environment. DJs, organizers and video and visual artists donated their time to Motionness, and traingoes were asked to bring books to donate to the Duncan YMCA Cherrin Center for the Arts. Organizers of the event also strove to show the city and mainstream media that dance music enthusiasts can party responsibly.

The party train rode the El tracks about a year after Chicago politicians passed an anti-rave ordinance.

Before boarding the party train, tokens were traded in for blue glowstick bracelets at the Division station on the Blue line. (The departure location was announced that day and tokens were \$30-\$35 at a checkpoint.) A train horn toot-tooted, and screams instantly filled the air of the underground station. As the train rolled closer to the platform, the thump of the bass became louder. And it looked like no ordinary train: Inside the B car, the ceiling was coated with shiny foil and the windows were covered with clear and black plastic.

The 300 people who made it on board made creative use of the space. Some used the seats as platforms to dance or sit on while others danced in the aisles. When the train passed a station platform where regular passengers were waiting, partygoers screamed from inside the cars to get their attention.

The train traveled around the city, riding through the

Loop, by the Merchandise Mart, past the United Center, up through Lincoln Park and Wrigleyville and to Uptown, Little Vietnam, Edgewater and Rogers Park. The train also went through the South Side, where the tracks run parallel to the highway. At one point, a driver in a Jeep Cherokee looked to the train on his left and, apparently floored at the sight of screaming, dancing people, crashed into the car ahead of him.

Hearing **Gabriel Palomo's** funky grooves, satisfyingly hard, driving techno beats and tribal rhythms started the night off right. DJs Tommie Sunshine and Flip provided energizing electro and techno and Jes, Lady D and Ares played soulful, banging house music.

Anyone can throw a party, but few push the creative limits of music, art, public transportation and party organization like the Conjugate Projekt did. For more information about the Conjugate Projekt, go to www.conjugateprojekt.org.

■ WORDS: MARY SUSAN LITTLEPAGE /
PHOTOS: URSULA SOKOLOWSKA

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