

Four Wheel Drift



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Team

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FWDrift [remix]

VJ Fleet [redux]

*FWDrift *glisten*

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the research, *Four Wheel Drift*, and its three productions: *Four Wheel Drift [remix]*; *VJ Fleet [redux]*; and *Four Wheel Drift *glisten*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Four Wheel Drift examines urban culture through the use of cars as interactive, experimental VJ/DJ platforms. In these projects, audio and visuals of the city are used as performance material, and that which is private—the space of the car—becomes public and a tool for commentary about the city.



Figure 1. *Four Wheel Drift [remix]*, Elektra, Montreal, 2005

2. CULTURAL CONTEXT

Audio and visuals of space and location are interwoven with aesthetics informed by car and club cultures, and tactics of interventionist art. *Four Wheel Drift* quotes a car racing strategy in which a driver puts the car into a controlled, sideways slide while accelerating forward. A popular sub-culture, called "drifting", has developed the racing manoeuvre into a competitive aesthetic form. Car cultures that use strategies, such as customization play with ideas of consumption, branding and social identification. For instance in Vancouver, Asian cars are customized to identify their 'elite' owner. This may include shaving off trim and manufacturer's logos and colonizing the car body with custom paint and decals. Neon and small LED kits are used by enthusiasts to create light reflections inside or on the pavement beneath the car. *Four Wheel Drift* uses some of these strategies to 'debrand', 'rebrand', and decorate the car bodies for performance. The cars are hybrid forms, customized with audio, visual, and interactive technologies, cruising the city for engagement as urban performance. The projects borrow technologies used in DJ and VJ (visual jockey) performances where a VJ provides projected visual imagery in response to aspects of a DJ's audio mix.

Four Wheel Drift contributes to interventionist practices by artists, such as the Situationists International (1957-1972). The

Situationists used the nautical metaphor "dérive" (drift) to imagine (as a psychogeographical sea) traffic flows and pedestrian routes that avoid the mechanistic functioning of the capitalist city. *Four Wheel Drift* maps the urban landscape using representations of the city interwoven with aspects of the cars' motion, and its private and social space.



Figure 2. *VJ Fleet [redux]*, Viper Festival, Basel, 2004

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

During a *Four Wheel Drift [remix]* or *VJ Fleet [redux]* performance, live video feeds of the driving route are manipulated by sensors and software that allow the interaction between the car and driver to create effects on the videos. During *VJ Fleet [redux]*, these visions are projected on panoramic screens in the cars visible to the street public as the cars drive by. Audio aspects of the engine and passenger areas of the cars are recorded for chosen performance locations en route. Here, the recordings are manipulated by software into a new, live video panorama and soundscape. During *Four Wheel Drift [remix]*, a single car functions as a mobile audio, video collecting device that produces material for a more formal, indoor performance. In these two projects, aspects of the city are recalled through the narrative of the videos and the expression of sound.

*Four Wheel Drift *glisten* proposes a fleet of cars fitted with sensors, software, and a custom built exterior 'skin' of LEDs (light emitting diode) covering each car's body. As an interactive performance work, *Four Wheel Drift *glisten* creates live music and light effects within the public city space. As the cars cruise the streets, sensors and software interpret each driver's interactions with the car and the environment. This data generates a soundscape for live broadcast and produces animated light patterns using the LED skins.



Figure 3. *Four Wheel Drift *glisten*, 2006

4. REFERENCES

[1] Knabb, Ken, *Situationist International Anthology*. Bureau of Public Secrets, Berkeley, 1981.