



Enjoy this 2 question interview (!) I did with John Maus when I was 18. Also, pussy mist.

me: Why are critics a bunch of haters when it comes to your last CD?

John Maus: We cannot rightly call unthinking commentary criticism. For if by criticism we mean a real decision or separation, then this unthinking commentary is precisely that which criticism would separate or cut (*caedere*) off (*de*) from, i.e., everything which is unfree: the situation's imperative to consume, communicate, and enjoy.

Most of what is called criticism in our situation seems a synthesis of the following:

Firstly, the so-called criticism which insists upon its object only in its similarity to another, supposedly well-known object: where this is like that, and it is valued as such. Secondly, the so-called criticism which insists upon its object only as the cause of subjective affects: where this makes me feel like that, and it is valued as such. And thirdly, the so-called criticism which insists upon its object as only an object: where this has this or that attribute, and it is valued as such.

Because the singularity of its object is lost in its identification with supposed well-known objects, the first sort of so-called criticism is not critical. Because instead of the singularity of its object it only brings-forth subjective affect, the second sort of so-called criticism is not critical. And because the singularity of its object is not in the identification of this or that identifiable attribute, the third sort of so-called criticism is not critical. Indeed, what are these so-called criticisms if not *Identitätsdenken*?

I suspect that the so-called criticism which insists upon its object only in its similarity to another, supposedly well-known object, functions as a reification and legitimation of the cultural economy: where the that which this is thought in terms of is not only supposed as such, but supposed as, and thus made over into, a staple of the cultural economy. Moreover, it is a privileged space wherein the payment of cultural capital as a means of subjectivization can be encouraged and accomplished. I suspect that the so-called criticism which insists upon its object only as the cause of subjective affects functions as a reification and legitimation of the *sujet supposé savoir*, the liberal democratic idea of the abstract equality of all human beings, and the definition of art as mere catharsis: where this makes me, and I am supposed to know, feel like that, and so will make you feel the same way, as you and I are exchangeable, and that is all it is or should be anyways, the evocation of a feeling. I suspect that the so-called criticism which

insists upon its object as only an object functions as a reification and legitimation of art as mere object: where everything can be grasped in terms of attributes with one is already familiar.

There are, of course, innumerable intersections, and mixtures between these three so-called criticisms, as well as the functions they serve, many of which can hardly be addressed here. Nevertheless, it seems the central aim of all three cover up freedom and singularity, i.e., is to arrest real criticism. And so, even if I believed these so-called critics were still capable of something as magnificent as hatred, they are not about what concerns me nor about what concerns genuine criticism, i.e., something that can interrupt the endless and meaningless regime of circulation, i.e., our situation in all its untruth.

Criticism must examine the possibility of a point of interruption – not because all this must be interrupted – but because thought at least must be able to extract itself from this circulation and take possession of itself once again as something other than an object of this circulation. It is obvious that such point of interruption can only be unconditional; i.e., something with no other condition than itself and which is neither exchangeable nor capable of being put into circulation. This does not seem to be the aim of anyone who has written, whether 'positively' or 'negatively' about my album, and so I cannot rightfully call it criticism.

me: Tell me a story that has to do with violence while touring.

John Maus: I have the perfect story, though it is long and I will surely be terrible in telling it.

I came to this place once while on tour, it could have been in New York, or Berlin, or Paris, I am not sure. Though it was definitely no place small and quiet, no place without many people.

It was a room. The earsplitting dark and neon room had more than a trillion angles, corners, curves, proportions, and so on. Each of these dimensions was hidden behind a thick cloud of drug smoke, pussy mist (menses, water, pyridine, squalene, urea, acetic acid, lactic acid, complex alcohols and glycols, ketones, aldehydes, and so on), magazine racks, and other various visual obstacles too numerous to begin pointing out.

The only source of vague light, which scattered across the enormous blackness

of the room in all directions, was the millions and millions and millions and millions of television screens – stars, winding stars, back and up like coral, arterial, going back and up, tunnels, up and back and around. The blackness underneath the electricity of these television screens was monstrous and foul, if it were not, it would have been just like the darkness in any video arcade or movie theater, but things seemed to move in this darkness, throb, only not really, rather, they seemed to anti-move and anti-throb, that is, neither remain still nor move, but something else, something wrong.

One could only enter the room through their own entrance, and at that entrance one did not really physically enter, rather, was assigned a kind of stand-in for oneself: a photograph with some information beneath it, something the room called 'the 2D-ID'. There were different themes you could chose for the photograph, to look like this or that well-known figure, you could also paste your face (but it wasn't really your face) onto one of the magazine images floating about the room, but creating your own 2D-ID was not permitted. Underneath the photo, was a space for your name, but your given name was not aloud there, rather only a list of the products you used, cultural or otherwise, this helped the room, which also had dozens of censors reading the 2D-ID's, guide you to the appropriate corner, it was hard to navigate through all the opium smoke and noise, let alone all the naked women who tapped on the air towards you.

(You quickly learned not to follow these women, for if you did they led you to spend what little money you had on this or that thing, they kept promising they would love you, but as soon as you bought whatever it was they wanted you to, they led you to buy something else).

At my entrance, I refused to put on a 2D-ID, not, because I was better than those who had, but because I was a million times worse. This cannot be stressed enough my friend, as I recount the story of violence, know that I am million times worse. I was stupid enough to hold onto the idea that this ID could not represent me, that is, that I was something more than or even other than this ID. I was stupid enough to think I was more than the pulsating flux of blind libidinal energy that was this room.

Now, you might say, 'No. In this room, where everyone is so beautiful and strong, your weakness and worseness make you singular, thus, in fact, you ARE really saying you are better to the extent that you are insisting on your singularity.' But worseness should never be confused with novelty, worser is worser not better, it

wasn't that my worseness came through as beaming radiance or humility, for would that even be worseness? No... It came through as pettiness, as fear, as stupidity. The room scared me, it made me feel sad for myself and insecure, it made me resentful and selfish. In other words, I was no Saint Francis of the room, I did not amass the others to myself and lead them away from the noise and televisions towards a simplicity and genuine happiness, or something like that, no, no, I insisted that the room should heed my presence in the most passive aggressive way, with no proof as to why it should, with no reason... It wasn't that the room was too stupid to pay attention to me, that it should have paid attention to me instead of everything else in it. It was, indeed, that I was not even worthy of its attention, I was a million times worse, a million times worse.

Now. Before I continue, allow me to explain a little bit else of what the room contained, for I saw figures in it that I for some reason recognized, though I had never met these figures before. Imagine that!

The celebrated American photographer Terry Richardson was there, his tongue hung from his open mouth and his eyes throbbed in his skull as he photographed two eleven year old girls in purple bathing suits, he bit his bottom lip and grabbed at his crotch like a maniac, his mouth, his awful mouth, which I could smell, called the little girls buttocks to attention.

The singer and songwriter (in a scene that has been described as psych folk, New Weird America, and freak folk, and other labels) Devendra Banhart, sat side-by-side with the American harpist, pianist, harpsichordist, singer and songwriter from Nevada City, Johanna Newsom. They sung quietly and weirdly about how we are all one, their audience looked up at them as children might look during story time, they seemed not to notice that the quiet piping of Dev and Jo failed in any way to drown out the incessant noise of all the televisions and magazine racks clattering, that is, though you could hear them, you really couldn't hear them.

Just then, the Italian film and television actress and director, Asia Argento entered together with the American movie actor and director Vincent Gallo, who is also a recognized painter, male fashion model, musician, motorcycle racer, and break-dancer. Their costumes were splendid and amazing, seeming, for a moment at least, though not at all, to fill the infinite blackness of the room. The costumes were made from gold and ivory, from surfaces, but also from pieces of poor people (ears, tongues, eyes, hands, and the rest). Obviously, sir Vince and

miss Asia had done these people a favor, giving them bread for a day in exchange for these parts of themselves and all to make a costume that would fill the room with splendor. Moreover, we should add, the poor people from whom these costumes were made, were not really people at all, as there are no people, but only the seething and furious sexual intensity of the room. I was amongst the only people in the room stupid enough to think otherwise. Anyways, these two came in, shuffling both quietly and loudly.

In another corner I saw Wolf Eyes, a noise rock band from Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the Black Dice, a noise rock/experimental band based in Brooklyn, New York. These, together with Christian Marclay, a visual artist and musical composer based in New York, who explores pattern languages connecting sound, photography, video, and film, as well as others, took turns crapping on musical scores by Cage, Lucier, and Wolf. One of the members of Wolf Eyes was actually masturbating on the 'Complete Recordings of Varese'. I noticed as well, though I am not sure, a tiny little tiny light, which pierced through everything if you paid attention. I thought it was ghost of Webern, but I couldn't pay attention to it because no one else was.

Sonic Youth, the seminal American alternative rock group, formed in New York City in 1981, were there too, singing music about how fascism is bad. I listened carefully and this music formed an amazing consonance with the sound of the Televisions, with their chatter, almost so consonant that it was inaudible, so that you couldn't really hear it. The American singer-songwriter, composer, and actor, Thomas Alan Waits, together with Nicholas Edward Cave, an Australian musician, songwriter, author, screenwriter and occasional actor, best known for his work in the rock band Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds and his fascination with American music and its roots, and the American singer songwriter who led the rock band Oingo Boingo from 1978 until its breakup in 1995, Danny Elfman, all sang together about pumpkin patches and ghouls coming out on Halloween night.

There were many other figures I recognized, but perhaps this is tedious, anyways, all of these figures were surrounded by anonymous shuffling people, who paid them attention with envy – this was the room, and somehow it took notice of my worseness, and in a way I could hardly explain, it ignored me as well, in the most violent and inhuman way.

It doesn't always do this, for instance, it ignored my friend Ariel Pink by paying

him attention, rather than paying him attention by ignoring him as it did me.

Granted, I deserved this, this non-attention. Or, perhaps I didn't even deserve this, but something worse, because I am a million times worse. That they could even use their strength, beauty, and importance to ignore me. That they could even use their cash, their cleverness to belittle me. That they could even be oblivious to me was an insult to them.

Yes... They ignored me, but somehow, in ignoring me, they managed to do violence, Dev ignored me by sitting on my face naked, his hippie-butt hole rocked to and fro against my nose and mouth, laughs and cheers filled the room. Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth muttered to Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth 'Yo. Yo. Yo. That is wicked! Stop the hate! Mother fuck Jesus!' His gold-teeth glittered underneath his black eyes as he said this.

The Beastie Boys, a musical group from the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Manhattan, sang 'Fight for your right to party!' while Dev continued rocking on my face, Jo, nearby clapped. 'We are all one' Dev said, now rocking in fast motion, his sweaty hairy asshole wearing away at my ugly face.

'You know you deserve this?' whispered the electronic Canadian musician, best-know for her song 'Fuck the Pain Away', Peaches.

'Yes...!' I managed underneath Dev's ass, knowing how unworthy I was to hear her speak, especially to me.

I should add that, though none of this is imaginary, they were in fact ignoring me while they paradoxically seemed to pay this attention, Dev rocked and rocked, like a horse-rider, his reeking little nut sack bouncing against my chin. I started to cry for myself, and this elicited the rightful fury of the room as it ignored me.

'You cry for yourself like a woman! You are not worthy to be in this room! You are not worthy for my strength and beauty and power! You are not worthy you monkey-nigger, to see my films or hear my music! How small and silly you appear! How jealous and bitter' cried Vince, in his beautiful costume, with Asia on one arm and American actress Chloe Seingy on another.

'I know' I cried miserably 'I know...!' And I was not being sarcastic, I really was not as strong or wealthy as him, I really did, and in the pettiest way, envy the

applause the room gave him in the smallest and most unthinking way.

As Angelica Taschen, of Taschen publishing, who has been a noteworthy force in making lesser-seen art available to mainstream bookstores, including some fetishistic imagery, queer art, historical erotica, pornography and adult magazines, squatted, in her dress made of gold and diamonds, and began peeing on my face, I thought to myself, 'Vince is right... I am just jealous and small... I am just sad that there is nothing worthy of attention in me' but my thoughts were interrupted. You see, Taschen's piss was nice at first, a lubricant against the nastiness of Dev's incessant rocking, but then it went in my mouth, and the taste of salt was sickening, rancid, awful even. Especially when mixed with the pot smell and the fumes of the Beethoven and Handel scores being burned over in another corner, next to Mozart scores, an enormous fire were the Mozart scores underneath a sign that read 'His music sounds pussy and pretty.'

I heard somebody say 'I like Satie'.

I heard another somebody say 'I don't need a God... All this is God enough for me!'

I heard another person whispering 'Gwen Stephani's new album and Destroyer's Rubies, and The Arcade Fire, and the Arab Strap, and Ghostface Killa...'

Secretly, though I hated them all in my unworthiness before them, I wished it was my name on their tongues.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Jim O'Rourke, American musician and producer long associated with the Chicago experimental and improv scene, rise from the activity of shredding the collected works of Conrad, Young, and Feldman. He quickly came over, squatted behind Dev, and began punching my scrotum as hard as he could. Everyone applauded, and Beck, the American musician, singer songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist, started break-dancing. They all ignored me, yes, and rightfully, but in some way they also took approving notice of my mockery. Sophia Coppola, for instance, the American director, actress, producer, and Academy Award-winning screenwriter, led a fecal orgy in honor of my mockery.

Swine filled the room, running off somewhere, off a cliff, squealing, they ran



passed, and just then Peaches screeched into a distorted microphone dripping with delay 'Smoke dope and make beats! Fuck the sick, the poor and the weak, let's have a party!', it made my puny ears bleed.

And so there I was, Dev rocking on my face, Jimmy punching my scrotum, Taschen pissing on my face, and I I felt, for the first time, the blackness rising inside me.

With each passing instant, a fear that I had never known strengthened itself within me. Holding my guts, I cried out at my finitude. The cries only resounded against this limit, further marking-it-out and feeding the blackness, affecting its increase.

'You are not contained in this pitiful limit' I told myself in agony, 'you always soar beyond it.'

The blackness persisted in its rise; I searched my memories as best I could for merely one example of my being outside this limit, there was none. Every time I saw something further, I understood it was not me, neither was it of me. I saw I could not give word for anything beyond this limit. I could neither say nor think it with all of my might, it was nowhere in me. What I saw then was this limit mocking me, an ugly mocking face – the dragon in a Chinese parade – twisting its gantic head from side-to-side, bawling relentlessly against what I am in showing-off what I could never be, I am precisely the inability to be that.

The thick blackness had now taken shape, it had filled my large intestine, and it was spilling its way into my stomach backwards through the sphincter. I would gnash my teeth back at the ugly gook-dragon. I would make its big stupid eyes cower as I chewed my bloody teeth. I would make the ruthless twisting of its gantic head from side-to-side pause in confusion as it watched me eat my lips. 'No' I told myself 'I will do none of this.' I heaved over in pain as I saw I could do no such thing; I lacked even the courage of a wimpling masochist. The blackness began pumping its way up my throat pipe as I saw that especially this – my grief and despair at the limit – is its most vital component. Grief and despair establish the limit once-and-for-all meaning I can never be more than what I am.

Out the blackness came, a heavy sparkling burst of rank sewage, darker than the new moon. It sprayed all over the room, gallons and gallons of it without end, spurting through my mouth with all the force and pressure of a fire hose. The

noise it made was something like an anus during a fit of diarrhea, when it is all out of feces yet insists still on pushing nothingness out of itself.

What mattered most of all was the smell, the smell of it was so horrible that it cannot be transposed into any thought or language within this limit, thus something from within me – the stink of the blackness – had moved outside the limit.

As I lay there in unspeakable shit smelling foulness, amazement came over me, a strange certainty that anatomically impossible as this experience was, it would not kill me. I had never heard of such a thing, 'who sprays black shit out of their mouth' I wondered, gently wiping the muck from my chin as I laid back.

Dev ran away from me and disgust, as did Taschen and Jimmy, the room cleared around me.

I had vomited, of course, many times before: from flu, from bad food, from dizziness, but this was not vomit, neither was it liver bile, it was more like sewage of some kind, feces-like, yet with the appearance of crude oil or fresh tar, pure shimmering blackness, pure liquid, pure rockets, without even a suggestion of clumping or chunks.