

# Plutopia 2010: Sensation-al

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By Derek Woodgate, April 19, 2010

For the second time in three years, the annual Plutopia extravaganza was reported as “**the best SXSWi party to date.**” In 2008, it was the *Austin Chronicle’s* columnist, Stephen Moser, who proclaimed this, and in 2010, Jean Russell, global community visionary and “thrivability” author. Plutopia 2009 was hailed as a mega success on a mega scale. While we don’t like to think of our experiential spectacle as merely a party, we are extremely happy that our audience had so much fun.



Not surprising, given that the audience was presented with a manifestation of captivating, future-forward performances, including a world-premiere from DJ Spooky – which expertly wove together science, music, film, culture, art, sensory immersion and entertainment – as well as an all-local, artisanal foodie fest from [Edible Austin](#) and cutting edge mixology from the [Tippy Texan Cocktail Bar](#).



Plutopia 2010 (an official SXSW evening event) was held on March 15th, 2010 at the [Mexican American Cultural Center](#) in Austin, a spectacular statement of modern architecture that boasts an amazing hi-tech



auditorium and a large-scale plaza overlooking Lady Bird Lake. This year’s audience numbered around 1200 people throughout the evening, made up of international entrepreneurs, the tech community, art and culture aficionados, and the general public. About 75% were between 20 and 40 years old.

This year’s theme, “[The Science of Music](#),” explored the role

of technology, sound and digital media in changing the landscape and narrative of music in the information age.

The science ranged from the **expanding of audio boundaries** and experimentation, to new forms of instrumentation, sampling and remixing and **emerging creative processes**, to **integrated multisensory systems** and interfaces with intelligent networks, to the transformations of aesthetics and the changing rhythm of nature.



The theme was aptly presented both through the **spectacular shows in the Auditorium** as well as through the exhibits and **interactive installations on the Plaza**.

If headliner, [DJ Spooky's](#) riveting world premiere of a 60-minute piece based upon **Brian Greene's *Elegant Universe*** (which he performed with a four piece woodwind orchestra), was the highlight of the Auditorium shows, there is no doubt that the simply stunning projections and spectacular lighting, especially designed for Plutopia 2010, by [Interactive Entertainment Systems](#) delivered a mixture of awe and amusement on the Plaza. The system featured the highly interactive **Synth-A-Beam**, which allows the user to interrupt light beams to trigger cool sound/music and lighting projections onto the side of the building and across the plaza.



Plutopia Productions, Inc. is about creating what we term the **Sense Event** - an intense, interactive experience through augmented ambience, multi-sensory engagement and immersive technologies, fueled by fun and all-round well-being. It is our mission to deliver sensation, an **experiential adventure**, whether it is through the performances, the **immersive installations**, the social interaction, the unusual or **experimental arts** and **cultural phenomena**, the food and beverages, or simply **exposure to the new and unexpected**. Whatever the theme, we always endeavor to create a brief encounter with the future. And once one realizes the creative potential of the combination of [unique perspectives and skills of the Plutopia core](#)

[team](#) - comprising the futurist, the cultural strategist, the technology visionary, and the theatrical producer and anthropologist, supported by 70 or so volunteers – one cannot fail to understand why Plutopia events are so spell-binding.



Plutopia 2010 had sensation in abundance. From the opening words of wisdom from world-renowned American science fiction author, [Bruce Sterling](#), to the closing rhythms of Chinese experimental electronica duo, [White](#), one of most acclaimed outfits in the Beijing new music scene, the event was a tour de force.



From our post-event research, it is easy to understand what made Plutopia 2010 a resounding success. Yes there were moments of magnificence beyond DJ Spooky's performance, none less that the finale of Chinese experimental guitarist, [Xiao He](#) and his magic sound box. Xiao was recently voted one of the **coolest rock stars in Beijing** and his mixture of Chinese folk, jazz, experimentation, improvised performances and action art was **surreal and scintillating**.



Then there was the first glimpse of those eight (seven 6 foot tall females and one 6 foot man) **futuristic-clad exotic dancers**, led by their shaman, **Maranda Pleasant**, spicing up the [Black Pig Liberation Front's](#) *Erotic Raga*. Their performance featured text, electronics, turntables, film, dance, explosive tonal attacks, and beautiful flowing erotic atmospherics, creating sacred zones and temporary communal spaces in time. White kept the auditorium buzzing until midnight, While [Dr. Strangevibe \(David Demaris\)](#) kept the juices flowing between headliner sets with **ambient sound and video works** that featured sound, words and images by **luminaries spanning the worlds of science and art**.

On the plaza, besides the amazing interactive installations by Interactive Entertainment Systems, the audience had great fun with the sound and lighting design installations from **Darkstack Media**, an electronica test area created by [Switched-On](#), a variety of AI and robotic installations from members of the [Robot Group](#), led by [Dr. Conrad \(Marvin Niebuhr\)](#) and his team with [The Giant Brain](#), as well as Plutopia regular, [John P. Funk's](#) remote art robots, as well as [Toy Joy](#) and [Bazaarvoice's](#) hipster playgrounds. We even offered **old school oil and water psychedelic projections!**

Of course, much of the activity on the Plaza was centered on exploring the **amazing food and beverage offerings**. As **Dave Dart** of [Dart Music International](#) said *"Tonight I tasted the best cocktail on earth (Treaty Oak rum with jalapeno)."*

If the individual moments were magnetic, the overall experience generated at Plutopia 2010 was not just sensation-al, provocative and inspirational. True to Plutopia Productions' vision, we also focus on ensuring that we **optimize the ecological effect of the event**, both by minimizing energy consumption by using LEDs and magnificent projections that illuminated every surface of the MACC, as well as making sure that we maximized the event's recycling potential. One of our sponsors, [Green Fern Events](#) together with **Wandering River Recycling**, made certain that we not only walked the talk, but had the metrics to prove it. Consequently, we can report the following sustainability success:

- 200 lbs of recycling
- 80 pounds of food waste to local composting facility
- a total of 400 lbs of waste, which represents a **70% diversion rate from landfill**.

That's pretty good and means well over half of all the waste for Plutopia was either recycled or composted.

Last, but definitely not least we want to thank our [sponsors](#), not just because without their generous sponsorship monies and services the event would not happen, but also because they all entered into the Plutopia experiential adventure, both by providing exciting content and **fascinating interactive experiences**. They helped give Plutopia 2010 its cutting edge.

All in all a spectacular night, an extravaganza that merited the epithet "the best SXSWi party to date." At least until Plutopia 2011!

**View an excellent photostream of the event by Menelaos Prokos Photography at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/menelaosprokos/sets/72157623509384983/>**