

Techno, Electronic Music Festivals, and the Destination Branding of Post-Fordist Detroit

D. Che - Western Michigan University

Events which are good strategic and cultural fits with their host destinations and which can be differentiated from other events can assist in increasing awareness of regions for future tourism. The Detroit Electronic Music Festival/Movement which centers on techno, a musical form born in the city and intertwined with its post-industrial cultural identity, has been used in differentiating and branding Detroit. According to its founders, techno, a hybrid of African-American funk and European electronic music, arose from the city's historical machinery, industry, and electronics-filled environment and from the changing landscape associated with its subsequent deindustrialization. While Detroit's reputation as the birthplace of techno music in the 1980s and 1990s is well-known internationally, in the U.S. and in Detroit itself, techno has largely remained underground. Detroit's electronic music festivals, along with a concurrent exhibit in the Detroit Historical Museum, help rectify techno's lack of recognition in its birthplace, attract a diverse audience of international and domestic tourists and regional residents to a city whose population is now 90% African-American, promote an image of post-Fordist Detroit as a creative force, and help brand Detroit as a unique music-oriented travel destination.