

Improvised Music Association

N E W S L E T T E R

December 1991-February 1992

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Hard Core Improv

by 99 Hooker

"Once you start playing something you've learned, you've lost it."
(To paraphrase Elliot Sharp on his mini tour of Northern California)

Improvisation gets to the edge of the learned and risks temperament and instinct to the moment. Hardcore improv is insistent, curious and delightful. Exploration is more likely to be rhythmic than melodic. The results can be sudden invention or aimless doodling. Ideally, there are times where the pressure of the music demands something extra from its players and they deliver. The fact of live performance puts everyone in the moment - a hard place to be. Much music looks backward or forward. Improv lives by the seat of its collective pants. While nothing is wholly new, the Bay Area has recently had many opportunities to check out a variety of sonic improv that demands that the audience and musicians take in and process the unusual, the cacophonous, the dissonant, and the intense. Some was quite beautiful.

Elliot Sharp was in the area bending and stretching the ears of those fortunate to have heard him. Between his electronically enhanced bass clarinet and his homemade double-necked guitar/bass he managed

to rip through a wide spectrum of sound. Patterns might recede into the background as a kind of Hendrix clarinet might erupt and then turn into its own pattern. Triggered samples - "Welcome To The Human Obedience School" - were bent over his strings. Sharp's urban clawing might turn meditative. While his vocabulary is certainly unique, Sharp's syntax - a sudden turn of a phrase or an interweaving of many sources - subverted the known. At each gig Sharp made it new.

Fellow member of Carbon and New York cohort Zeena Parkins banged, plucked, rubbed, drummed, sawed and even caressed her homemade pick-up-laden harp into new realms. Parkins used more "song structure" than Sharp. One intense moody piece, a kind of Ry Cooder slash and burn, droned and sung an avant-blues. Other pieces made use of prerecorded tapes, drum machine samples, loops and delays. Occasionally drifting for too long a time between one place and another, Parkins was at her best when she locked down on a rhythmic fragment and gave a stronger context to her fascinating cache of sounds.

The Bay Area also has its own thriving scene. The Molecules have been tearing through tight sets around town. Ideas lasting between 1 and 3 minutes come thrashing forward like some hardcore haiku. The improvisation here is in execution, seizing the moment

(see IMPROV on page 2)

HIGH-TECH LIPSYNCH

by Tom Djll 11/11/91

Woman's voice. Man's voice. The two, speaking to each other for thousands of years, seem to have lost the thread of the conversation. Lately, with the noise out of our fair capitol city from the Hill/Thomas hearings, one might now call it "the threat of the conversation". I know - you're all sick of hearing about this stuff, right? (You men are, I bet.)

As improvisors, I believe it is vital for us to address this issue now. We're supposed to be in the front lines - the avant-garde they call it on the Left Bank - of human consciousness. A great part of our project is to discover and illuminate possible interactions, social weavings, liaisons, conversations, battles, weddings, births and deaths. We reveal new ways of being, and along the way refurbish some of the old ones. But right now, in the very center of our supposedly hip community, there's a very old problem that, when it is

being addressed at all, is being done so in a very old-fashioned, un-hip way. NewAgespeak calls this a "wound" that requires a "healing process".

I think it's fair to say that most of the women musicians out there feel a fundamental difference in the way they make music, as individuals and as groups of women, in contrast to the way men do it. I think it's also fair to say that a common reaction among men when they hear women speak of this difference is disbelief and disregard. At least, this was my approach for many years. "Oh, come on. I don't feel a difference. It's all the same notes. Music is the universal language." And so on. Along the way, I met a few women who agreed. A few. The rest, generally, I didn't play with twice. However, I believe my sensitivity was honed, as a natural part of the process of gaining experience, and I began to feel that there was a difference, and that I had to adapt to it in some fashion.

(see LIPSYNCH on page 2)

I M P R O V

(continued from page 1)

and shaking it by the scruff of its neck.

After a rabble rousing death/jazz set by the possessed Fracture, Buckethead gave a curious drama at Olive's. Buckethead, acting like some robotic amalgamation of guitar attitudes and antics, stomped and beat and ground a collection of noises out of his instrument. Mock manoeuvres, such as playing with his teeth, dropping Eddie Van Halen licks, and using a cement column against his strings, seemed to leave many confused as to whether or not their guitar hero was goofing.

One of the most inspiring shows recently was the Glenn Spearman group. While everyone was excellent, the stand-up bass player was on fire. Spearman himself took the band through 2 long post-Coltrane pieces. Unbelievably, the tenor of the compositions kept getting more and more intense. The sheer endurance was mind boggling. It was music that created its own world and took the listener in. The dense sounds became more distinct as the ear adjusted to the full throttle groove. This was a soulful improv full of driving bass, percussion, moaning and screaming sax. Spearman showed ways people might start putting together all the new sounds without losing any immediacy or verve. The music was full of emotion, daring and invention.

IMA Newsletter

Editor: Myles Boisen

Contributing Writers: 99 Hooker, Tom Djill, Dan Plonsey, Gino Robair

Design/Production: Michael Macrone

Improvised Music Association

General Correspondence:

2940-C Folsom St., San Francisco CA 94110

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Band/club listings—\$10 for each 25 words; this listing also entitles you to post weekly event listings on the phone hotline.

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To subscribe, change address, or get more information, call:

Myles Boisen (Newsletter)—(510) 548-3765

Mantra Ben-Ya'akova (Editor)—(510) 548-1095

Rick Rees (Hotline/Mailing)—(415) 550-8209

Lipsynch

(continued from page 1)

Our history is against us. Our culture has been dictated by the man's voice for a long time. There is no escape from this ground. It is beyond my scope here to address the whole dang culture and what needs to be done to make it truly kinder and gentler (among other things). What can we do in the arena of music, as equals gathered together in a common project?

I think the fundamental question is still one of sensitivity. I'm not just talking about the kind of sensitivity that's required in turning an amplifier down, although that's an important one. I believe that there's a sensitivity required towards the music as if it were a person. This point cannot be overemphasized.

How often do we find ourselves in an improvisation that seems more like an autopsy? Maybe it was alive once, but now it isn't and we must cut into the corpse to find out why. This kind of objectification has traditionally been assigned to men's psyche. Then, on the other hand, there are those sessions that seem to smother in their own sensitivity and preciousness, turning inward and dying; thereafter follows a mourning. These are the kinds of traits traditionally associated with women.

Both of these examples arise from a lack of sensitivity to the best interests of the music, and an unbending will to create a "beautiful musical object". This cannot be our fundamental reason for making music, in my opinion. Such a music invariably suffers the fate of becoming "classical". We've seen it happen to jazz, in the last fifteen years.

I believe Eric Dolphy's words (the same ones I parodied a couple of issues ago): "When you hear music, after it's over, it's gone in the air. You can never recapture it again". I know this may all sound obvious to most of you, but, again, I don't think these things can be over-emphasized, or are any less true for being obvious. Our responsibility is towards letting the music live its own life and not the one we think is best for it, according to our sex or taste or how much coffee we've had.

I fervently hope my little discourse here has upset many of you, and not answered any of your questions. I've been working on these issues in workshops over the last three years, and they can't be resolved with words alone. It takes hard, dedicated practice. But I've found the rewards to be deep and long-lived. If you're interested in attending a future workshop, please contact me at (510) 527-4283.

IMA CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

Fri 29/ Sat 30 CLUBFOOT ORCHESTRA Original film music and large group improvisations in a nightclub setting at Kimball's, 300 Grove St., S.F. (415) 861-5555 for info.

DECEMBER

- Tues 3 ALDOUSH & THE HUMAN EXCHANGE Modern Persian folk music at Berkeley Store Gallery, 2230 Shattuck in downtown Berkeley (next to Shattuck Theater). 8:00, \$5.00, (510) 444-8606 for info.
- Wed 4 THIRD PLANE at Heinz Afterworld Lounge, 59 Grand Ave. (at Webster) in downtown Oakland. 9:30, (510) 834-8048 for info.
- Tues 10 ED HERMANN & ANDREW VOIGT DUO/ 1000 NAMES FOR BABY/ ULTRASONIC DATA GLOVES Last show of 1991 at Olive's, Pier 50 in China Basin, S.F. 9:00 P.M. \$5.00, call (415) 550-8209 for info.
- Tues 10 NORBERT STACHEL/ U.M.I. New world funk featuring local heavies at Berkeley Store Gallery, as above.
- Wed 11 A TRIBUTE TO THE MUSIC OF ANTHONY BRAXTON by former students Gino Robair, Randy McKean and more at Heinz, as above.
- Thurs 12 SOTO/ CIRCLE 7 at Heinz, as above.
- Fri 13 SQUID/ OVARIAN TROLLEY at Heinz, as above.
- Sun 15 THE UNSANE Industrial music at Heinz, as above.
- Mon 16 GLENN SPEARMAN DOUBLE TRIO featuring ROOM (Spearman, Donald Robinson, Ben Lindgren + Larry Ochs, Willie Winant, Chris Brown) at The Great American Music Hall, S.F. 8:00, \$10.00, 2 sets.
- Tues 17 VINNY GOLIA Multi-woodwinds from L.A. at Berkeley Store Gallery, as above.
- Thurs 19 MX-80 at Heinz, as above.
- Mon 23 VISITORS FROM PLANET ZETA Jazz quartet from outer space with Ben Goldberg at Berkeley Store Gallery, as above.
- Mon 30 SHELDON BROWN GROUP Local reedsman (Clubfoot Orch., Papa's Midnight Hop) at Berkeley Store Gallery, as above.

JANUARY

- Tues 7 KEN DURLING Saxophonist at Berkeley Store Gallery, as above.
- Mon 13 GENERAL IMA MEETING at Rick Rees' house - 2940-C Folsom St., S.F., (415) 550-8209 for info.

FEBRUARY

- Mon 3 NEWSLETTER MEETING Bring articles, ads, listings etc. to Rick Rees', as above.
- Sat 8 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE All submissions must be in Mantra's hands by this date - mail to 2149 Curtis St., Berkeley, CA. 94702 if you can't make the meeting on Monday the 3rd.
- Mon 24 NEWSLETTER MAILING PARTY (tentative)

CALL THE 24-HOUR IMPROV HOTLINE

(415) 550-8180

Due to communication and other problems with the newsletter calendar listing, we have established a telephone "Improv Hotline" for IMA event information. The hotline will be updated every Monday, and will announce gigs taking place that week through Sunday. A \$10 fee allows you to list any 25-word announcement in the newsletter, plus get unlimited listings on the hotline for the three month newsletter period. A single hotline listing is \$3, or you can just pay \$10 for unlimited hotline listings even if you don't put anything in the newsletter.

The hotline is working now—please help us keep it going by listing often, paying the fees AND putting the hotline number on all your posters, postcards, etc. Send payment along with your listings (make checks payable to Myles Boisen) to Rick Rees at 2940-C Folsom, San Francisco 94110. And remember, anyone can call the hotline 24 hours a day to find out about that week's improvised music events, and there is no charge to callers!

CLASSIFIEDS

STUDIOS/ REHEARSAL SPACE/ SERVICES

IMPROVE - IMPROV Tenor saxophonist Glenn Spearman (recently with Cecil Taylor and others) is offering instructional sessions in group improvising. Informal and affordable - call Glenn at 658-9937.

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I am interested in starting a meeting place for ongoing improvised music jams, and would like to get in touch with others who have similar ideas. Please call Diana Wayburn (flute, percussion and keyboards) at (415) 563-0406.

IMPROVISING DRUMMER/ PERCUSSIONIST wanted for recording projects with guitarist and bass player. Ron Kukan (415) 648-6602, Craig 885-4720.

KUSFIMPROV SHOWS Kathy Ketman is producing a series of improvised music shows on KUSF, to air on the first Saturday of every month from 8-11 P.M. She is counting on IMA members (that's you) to supply recordings and ideas for these shows. Live radio broadcasts are also a possibility. Send recordings to P.O. Box 210031, S.F., CA. 94121, or call her at 221-0584.

CASIO SHACK seeks 2 rhythmic improvisers with samplers (Radio Shack brands/styles encouraged) committed to live performances and recording. Call John 292-5813

RECORDINGS

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THE MANUFACTURING OF HUMIDIFIERS' first CD, *Dire Images Of Beauty*, is weird, communicative, honest, and very good. Check out this debut of the group, or ask forever. "Who defines psycho-chamber jazz?" Send your check for \$11 (\$10 for cassette) to Randy Porter at 2149 Curtis St., Berkeley, CA. 94702; or call (510) 548-1095. Price includes postage.

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REVIEWS

RECORDINGS

Gino Robair

Other Destinations (Rastascan 004)

Bill Horvitz

(Ear-Rational Records)

The Molecules

Steel Toe (Tragic Mule)

The New Klezmer Trio

Masks & Faces (Nine Winds CD 144)

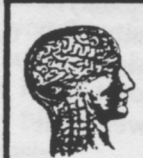
I'll admit it - I'm a sucker for slick packaging in general, but the new GINOROB AIR solo CD is really something to rave about. It's attractive, practical, and even biodegradable, enclosed in a tasteful gray paper mini-folio with elements of Japanese design - and no longbox or plastic case! On the outside, this disc sets a new standard for creativity, and the music inside confirms the exterior promise. These 8 pieces from '88/89 feature great ethnic and western percussion throughout (usually on the busy side), tossed with sampled and "pure" electronics and some texts, combined through scores and improvisation into a non-dissectable whole with a sometimes industrial flavor. His allegiances are clearly with the Hafler Trio / Pierre Henry schools of musical alchemy, grounded in powerfully real sonic imagery made new through manipulation. And, thankfully, he distances himself from the Mills College computer mindset, rarely setting foot in the gooky tar pits of academic abstractionism. An excellent recording in a beautiful wrapper - they just don't get any better than this, friends.

BILL HORVITZ is a versatile guitarist, whose straight-forward use of basic prepared guitar textures made a lasting impression on me during the Butch Morris / ROVA collaboration. Now he has stepped forward with a disc compiling two lengthy compositions for 11-piece ensemble, and seven solo recordings. The large ensemble pieces were done live in N.Y.C. ('86) with a stellar cast including Elliott Sharp, Bobby Previte and Curlew's George Cartwright. Far from being the downtown din we might expect, these are chamber-esque beat arrangements which rely on riff and hocket repetition, different shades of minimalism and colorful free soloing. Unfortunately, distant miking dilutes the impact of these cuts, but Bill's lone guitar pieces (some truly solo, some layered) save the day. From sparse industrial ("The Kitchen Noises," "Archetypal Industry") to soothing austerity ("The Lost Child," "Coyote Man," "The Mirrored Heart"), he avoids overkill and the sensational, favoring

simple musicality and a beginner's mind approach to guitar exploration. Put this one in your Sunday listening stack. Available from Bill at P.O. Box 1192, Pt. Reyes, CA. 94956.

It's almost 1992, fer chrissakes - that schizophrenic Hydra monster called "Rock" has been hyphenated, hyped, hypothesized and corporate sponsored into near oblivion. That's why we need THE MOLECULES. This is guitar bass drums vocal music of pure uncivilized release - raw, cathartic, an exorcism of demons that is by its nature most terrifying when it is the most successful. 22 songs, structures and improves blur together like a supermarket shelf falling in on you...doesn't matter what the label sez when the can hits you on the head. Yes, it is violent, like football, Stravinsky, the meat industry, Iggy, N.W.A., government, and society in general, for which none of us can make excuses. Also well organized, dangerously skillful, and thought-provoking - therefore sure to excite and/or offend. A swift kick to the seat of the local scene by Ron Anderson, Chris Millner and Tom Scandura - give me more!

(continued on page 6)



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REVIEWS

(continued from page 5)

Here's a boundary-stretcher for you. The NEW KLEZMER TRIO is a heavy group on the local scene, blending equal parts of Eric Dolphy-flavored free jazz, non-idiomatic improv and the "old school" of Eastern European klezmer music. Sounds unlikely, but it works, thanks to clarinet mastermind Ben Goldberg (a former member of The Klezmorim), Dan Seamans (bass) and Kenny Wolleson (drums). Before you spin *Masks & Faces* for your Jewish grandma, be warned that Ben has put his revivalist days behind him, taking the tradition of Yiddish masters like Dave Tarras and Itzikl Kramtweiss to the most creative (and sometimes unrecognizable) extremes on the E-flat and bass clarinet. The disc opens and closes with the most out statements ("Cardboard Factory," "The Gate"), using these as bookends for more accessible material - the pastoral feel of "Hot And Cold," traditional nods like the title track and "Rebbe's Meal" with its funky backbeat, and even deconstructed versions of Kramtweiss classics, weaving it all together with serious jazz communication. These 10 tracks will certainly reward world fusionists and adventurers alike - if that's you, then give it a try. (This review is reprinted by permission of the Down Home Music Mail Order catalog.)

—Myles Boisen

The Manufacturing of Humidifiers

Dire Images of Beauty (yes.no.lp/retro.P • 02)

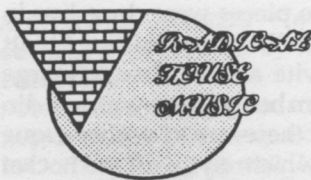
THE MANUFACTURING OF HUMIDIFIERS may be a "rocky asteroid hurtling through the solar system" (*New York Times*, 15 November 1991, National Edition, A9), at times butting randomly against gravitational curves, but perhaps it would be truer, or at least more marketable, to say that they make music of and for the environment. Not necessarily the capital-E "Environment," but all kinds of natural and human environments, of which yours is sadly lacking if you do not own their new CD, *Dire Images of Beauty*.

The planet wobbles, and the Men of Hu introduce themselves on the first of thirteen tracks which alternately swing, twitch, explode, sigh, ripple, shatter, and coalesce. (For the rest of the story, see "Flap Residuals.") Whether this quintet is looping in or looping out, they're always listening to one another, alert to shifts in mood and atmosphere, never content to stay put but never indulging in senseless perversity. Well, maybe occasionally indulging in senseless perversity. But they're perverse as an ensemble, which, besides wit and virtuosity, is the CD/cassette's selling point. (It's available at Amoeba Records in Berkeley as well as at various improv events.)

Let me just mention a few more reasons for owning this plastic circlet of happiness, in order of weirdness. (1) "Along these Lines." Over Porter's melancholic melody and Horowitz's jittery bass, Mehta wails plaintively into a shenai, before the bass and clarinet lead the band into a surreal play of lights and shadows. Eventually, the quintet coalesces in staccato, as Plonsey mumbles lines overheard in a dream (ending "nevermind, nevermind"—perhaps Man of Hu played this piece into Nirvana lyricist Kurt Cobain's sleeping brain). Then Porter goes ballistic, crashing and burning after the rest of the band sweeps in behind him, conjuring up memories of the legendary Composers' Cafeteria. (2) "Scalar Residuals." These scales were unknown to Bach. Raj Mehta makes his trumpet do its bittersweet thing, as saxophonist Dan Plonsey conjures up a film-noir ambience. At this point the CD moves indoors, into a room with many corners, unevenly lit, in which conversations fracture and recombine, all coming together in a smoky buzz. (3) Percussionist Ward Spangler. (4) "The Existing Fur of Visorless Dreams Waltz." The band follows Randy Porter's loopy chromatic explorations for four expansive minutes, before bassist Steve Horowitz kicks in to a funky groove, leading the band through an Ornettish five minutes of fun, which peaks with Porter's screaming guitar solo before screeching to a halt.

Are The Manufacturing of Humidifiers, as Dr. Joseph Veveska of Cornell University has said, "the surviving chunk of a larger body that had suffered numerous collisions since the birth of the solar system 4.6 billion years ago"? Perhaps. What is certain is that they are, if not the conscience of the Improvcore scene, then its skull cavity. They can make amplifier hum sound musical. They can shimmer and quibble through a mouthpiece. They can make a guy write a string of absurd metaphors. They will reduce you to *begging* to buy their CD.

—Michael Macrone



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LIVE REVIEWS

Sun Ra and the Inter-Galactic Arkestra
Koncepts Cultural Gallery, 11/1/91

"We met before, you and I
at the crossroads of destiny
I tell you now and I told you then:
You're on the right road —
but you're going in the wrong direction"

— Sun Ra

It would be an insult to Sun Ra to say that he and the Inter-Galactic Arkestra were "as good as ever" last night (Friday, November 11, 1991). Sun Ra is still recovering from a stroke he suffered less than a year ago. He played from a wheelchair, looking more like a cross between Ray Charles and Ironsides than his usual flamboyant and entirely angelic self. Sun Ra is the greatest composer alive.

The Koncepts Krowd is almost always attentive, appreciative, respectful, and for Sun Ra (as for David Murray last month), they were appropriately worshipful, but I couldn't help wishing that the concert could have taken place in Davies Hall or some place where there could have been serious amounts of cash for the performers. I also found myself hoping that Sun Ra was not playing only because he couldn't afford not to. In the most recent copy of "The Immeasurable Equation," Sun Ra writes, "If someone comes here spiritual, they should have as much money to work with as those who are destroyers." Sun Ra has written over 2000 compositions, and many have never been performed, mainly because they demand more musicians and more rehearsal time than anyone could afford touring the country with a group of sixteen musicians playing mostly in clubs. To believe that Sun Ra "wants" it this way is ridiculous. Look: he should be given millions of dollars, and we should all get together and appropriate all the funds going to such useless institutions as the SF Symphony Orchestra (a.k.a. house band for J.P. Chevron). And I say this not just because I want to hear Sun Ra's music played well and often, but because he maybe *could* save the planet.

The fact that Sun Ra was not able to play for extended periods or to do any of his rap tunes saddened me, but I came alive for every note played by tenor giant John Gilmore, and the incredible Michael Ray. Ray is possibly the greatest trumpet player alive; he is at least the greatest lead trumpet player I have ever heard. His sound is a searing space-age Louis Armstrong, buckets of molten gold cast recklessly across a black canvas. He has been with Sun Ra since at least 1978; you can easily recognize him from the strength and suddenness of his upper register flights, and from his imitation of digital delay. Gilmore displayed only his post-bop "inside" side, in which short deliberate phrases

of varying length build upon one another like a sculptor chipping away at marble with strong, decisive strokes. No one else plays like that, or sings like that (Gilmore sang "East of the Sun"), but it struck me that Sun Ra sometimes *arranges* like that — his versions of Ellington tunes often break the melodies into oddly unpredictable fragments (e.g., "Sophisticated Lady" and "A Train"). Other impressive solos came from several locals: violinist India Cooke (including a wonderful duet with Michael Ray), trumpeter Eddie Gale, and cellist Kash Killion. Even tenor/bari man Ronald Wilson, whose playing is often a little too good-natured and inside for my taste pushed past his usual boundaries on occasion.

As has been common in recent years, there were approximately the same number of Sun Ra tunes (I recognized "Images," "Mayan Temples" (a.k.a. "Sound Mirror"?), "Love in Outer Space," "Interplanetary Music," "Space is the Place/We Travel the Spaceways") as covers ("A Train," "Sophisticated Lady," "The Joint is Jumping," and "S'Wonderful" among others).

Isabelle wasn't there, but Gina's brother was, as were John and Peter Hinds who helped me identify the remaining members of the Arkestra: Marshall Allen (alto, flute) who only got two short solos, alas; James Jackson (bassoon, flute, A.E.I. drum), Fred Adams and Chris Capers (trumpet), Tyrone Hill (trombone), June Tyson (voice, violin), Bruce Edwards (guitar), Buster Smith (drums), and Elson Nascimento (percussion).

—Dan Plonsey

Billy Harper
Koncepts Cultural Gallery, 11/7/91

Billy Harper has a small number of incredibly fanatical fans. The rest of the world either hasn't heard him or doesn't like post-Coltrane jazz. Harper's tenor sound is like those metal handrails on the seat-backs of an AC transit bus: silver, black, round, solid. Harper's music is the ultimate in focused modal hard-bop. Over the years, his playing has become increasingly responsive to the harmonic world; his sense of harmony has now sharpened to the point where he can cut through to the core of "wild and peaceful" without needing the frantic cycles which used to typify his playing. The music has moved in closer to the frame, right up to the glass. Indeed, a number of Harper's album jackets show his face in extreme close-up: the music shies away from nothing.

Harper's bands always play hard, wringing every last drop of sound from their instruments. So it was at Koncepts. I was particularly impressed by drummer Newman Baker, who I believe actually propelled

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LIVE REVIEWS

(continued from page 7)

trumpeter Eddie Henderson two feet into the air at one point. The first set consisted of a question and answer period while Harper assembled his saxophone, followed by several tunes from Harper's most recent recording, *Destiny is Yours* (SteepleChase, SCS 1260), starting with pianist Francesca Tanksley's "Dance in the Question" (on the CD only), "Countdown to Destiny," "Destiny is Yours," "My Funny Valentine," and "Call of the Wild and Peaceful Heart." The first three pieces were played with incredible energy, matching anything I've heard from Harper. The last two were a little anti-climactic, especially "Wild and Peaceful Heart," which was considerably slower than the version on *Black Saint* (BSR 0001), and which lacked the concluding drum/sax duet — perhaps because "Countdown to Destiny" was almost exclusively a blistering duet, Harper and Baker building a rocket ship out of curved sheets of space-age silver alloy and strings of eighth-note rivets.

—Dan Plonsey

Sound Of One Person Playing Series Bates Motel, 9/16-10/7/91

By all accounts the "Sound Of One Person Playing" series was a successful foray into the nerve-wracking art of solo improvising. Reedman Ralph Carney did his cork-popping thing on opening night, boldly bridging the gap between showman and shaman on all manner of blown, struck and vocable instruments. The IMA ethics committee won't let me comment on the reason for my sweaty palms that evening; I just tried to be myself, for a change. Is there anything more difficult than doing honest-to-goodness solo improv in front of a couple dozen local scenesters? Not on a Monday night, by god. Sources tell me that Joseph Sabella played a fluid set of ethnic drumming styles on the second Monday, paired with clarinetist Ben Goldberg's introspective program of self-imposed structures and Monk tunes.

At the top of the third installment, Gino Robair did everything but play the Inna Gadda Da Vida drum solo, adding a gas station sign, thumb piano, metal rods, bare hands, prepared and bowed strings, space voice mask and more to his kit. Sure, less is more, but Gino gave us both, and that's a tough act to follow. In response, Steve Adams provided a lofty set of loft jazz - a festive procession of sculpted sax notes, sounds, knots, and not-sounds. I forgave his use of a music stand as soon as he launched into a diverse series of celebrity portraits in music. The portrait idea resurfaced as a happy ending duet, with audience members doing a lot of People mag-style name dropping. The fourth and final show found the bi-coastal J.A. Deane in an all-electronic mode, with series producer Dave Barrett

getting the last word and honk in. I'm told that Dave, long an admirer of the Burma-Shave poetry school, performed his sax acts among handmade placards which voiced some of the thorny issues raised during the course of this well-received series. Good turnouts and enthusiastic responses from all sides make a 1992 version look very likely, hopefully to include more diversity and a longer list of playing persons.

—Myles Boisen

LETTERS

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen: OFF THE WALL is a small organization dedicated to providing a wide variety of challenging listening opportunities usually unavailable in the Eugene/ Springfield area. We work with several very different venues - from a sticky smoky bar, to a church, an art gallery to a 400 person capacity music hall. Some of the past performances have included Evan Parker, Greg Goodman, Jin Hi Kim, Elliott Sharp, Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, Splatter Trio, Willem Breuker Kollektief, Barre Phillips, Vinny Golia 4-tet, Tom Cora, Sonny Sharrock, Ikue Mori, Jim Staley - you get the idea.

Off The Wall would like to extend a warm invitation to improvisors in the Bay Area (and to improvisors everywhere) to consider including a performance in Eugene on their itinerary whenever they plan a tour of the Pacific Northwest. Off The Wall, c/o Bil King, 82190 Weiss Rd., Creswell, OR. 97426. Telephone # (503) 895-2965. You're the first group to get this letter and your response is important to me. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

—Bil King

(Bil goes on to propose the creation of a "tour railroad" between Vancouver B.C. and Los Angeles, with coordinated booking along the entire west coast. My fingers are tired, but we're all familiar with the concept, so rather than running it all down, I urge you to write Bil, and also this newsletter, with your ideas. - MB)

This is the second newsletter I've assembled, and I'd like to thank the IMA for the opportunity to serve in this capacity. For the next issue, editorship will be passed on to Mantra. As much as possible, I have encouraged other people to write (with varying success), done a lot of writing myself (since others didn't), and printed all the contributions I've received with an absolute minimum of editing. My hope is that this newsletter will continue to expand in all directions, always respecting and reflecting the uniquely non-conformable expressions of the improvising community. Thanks to Rick R., Tom D., Steve H., Dan P., Randy P., Ron K., Mantra B., Bruce B., Gino R., John C., Marc W. and Amoeba, Michael M., and Kristina for making it all happen. Love, Myles.

Words about making your own CD's tips from a pessimistic optimist

by Gino Robair

Part 1 of a two-part series

If you've gotten to the point that you want to move away from the cassette underground and spend some real dough like the big guys, congratulations. You can now take a larger part in the music biz. In that world, having CD "product" (get used to that word) gives one's music greater credibility. I believe the logic is something to the effect that you must really believe in this Thing, or else you wouldn't be spending so much money on it.

The following are some ideas, problems, solutions and words of caution about releasing one's own work on CD. This is not intended to be a how-to, and I don't profess to know all the answers. Rather, this is stuff to consider, and information I've found useful (usually the hard way) in starting my own label, Rastascan Records. When I asked myself, "What would I do differently next time?", these are the things that came to mind.

There are several inter-related steps that need attention, including recording, artwork, printing, assembling, mastering, manufacturing and marketing. Here's an example of how these may overlap. Some manufacturing plants have a machine that puts the booklet and tray card into the jewel box. The size of the book and card have to be exact (there is usually only a 32nd or 16th of an inch leeway!) so that the machine doesn't have to be recalibrated, costing you extra money. In order for the book and card to be the right size, the printer must have the manufacturers specs. The original artwork must also fit these specs, or else the printer will have to resize, once again costing you more money.

Assume that things will go wrong, and plan for it. For example, plan time to see the blue line of the booklet before giving the go-ahead for printing. Include a couple of days time for express shipping service or UPS (avoid the US post). You might want to make sure you see the printed books before they are put into the jewel cases, just in case the colors are wrong, or the printing is messed up. These things happen, and if caught in time, one is permitted to gripe until they're corrected. Let's briefly run through the steps, keeping in mind that anything can and will happen.

RECORDING AND MASTERING: Lots of people still hate CD's, but to hell with 'em - this format will be obsolete before you know it. Until then, you can put out 76 minutes of quiet, uninterrupted droning, and not have to turn the disc over.

You can expect the quality of the CD to resemble the quality of your master tape. If your master is on cas-

sette, your CD will sound very much like a cassette. If you care about fidelity, you might want to record everything to one professional format, so that all of the cuts sound similar (this may also save you some money down the line). Some of us aren't overly concerned with fidelity, and may have some live cassette and DAT masters, a couple of studio PCM's, and an analog 15 ips tape. In either case, all of this will need to be assembled onto one format for mastering purposes. Remember that for each different format you use, there is a machine you need to use, which will cost you studio time. Likewise, try to keep the sampling rates of your DAT tapes the same, or expect to pay extra for conversion.

Assembling can be done manually onto digital or analog tape, or can be done on computer. If you can afford to do it this way, it may make the job easier (if the operator knows the program well). You may also be able to combine some editing into this time. It is in your best interest to have everything on one format before the assembly stage, and to know the exact order of cuts. Expect this process to take at least four times the length of your project; one time for assembling onto computer, one for playback, one for checking little details, and one for downloading to the master tape (this is a good time to get the timings of the pieces). Take all the time you even suspect you'll need, because you don't want to have to come back later and remove some little artifact you didn't catch the first time.

Next, you will probably master to a 3/4" U-matic video tape, using the Sony 1610 or 1630 formats. The engineer that does this for you will also prepare a SMPTE time code log for use by the manufacturer, who inserts the PQ subcode that your CD player reads. Again, listen carefully to the final product, because once this step is over, you're going to have to live with it for quite a while.

NEXT ISSUE: Part 2—*Designing, printing, manufacturing, and marketing your CD.*

WRITE FOR THE IMA NEWSLETTER!

We always need new viewpoints, ideas, funny stories, opinions, out-of-town scene reports, concert and recording reviews etc. to keep the IMA newsletter alive. What do you want to write about? Put it down on paper, or preferably as a text file on a Macintosh computer disc (Microsoft Word 4.0, or other ASCII text) and bring it to the IMA newsletter meeting at 8:00 P.M. on Monday, Feb. 3rd at Rick Rees' place - 2940-C Folsom in San Francisco. The newsletter deadline is Saturday, Feb. 8th. Submissions may be mailed in to Mantra at 2149 Curtis St., Berkeley CA. 94702. All submissions become property of the IMA, and are subject to editing. For more information, call Rick at (415) 550-8209, or Mantra (editor) at (510) 548-1095.

WE NEED YOUR MONEY!

As if you don't, right? But seriously, without money for computer time, xeroxing, postage etc, this all-volunteer newsletter cannot continue to exist. Many of you still owe money for old listings, and/or use of the improv telephone hotline. In addition, hundreds of readers have received free subscriptions so far, with no requests or pressure to donate time or money to the IMA in return. Well, now's the time, folks. Call it what you want - a past-due debt, subscription fee, or just a donation - but please contribute what you can to keep this one-of-a-kind publication thriving to serve YOU, the improv listeners and music makers of the Bay Area. To subscribe, or submit a change of address, write to Rick Rees at 2940-C Folsom St., San Francisco, CA. 94110. Please make all checks payable to Myles Boisen (NOT Composers Cafeteria), and get them either to Rick, or to Myles at 904-A Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA. 94710 until further notice. Thanks!

Please contribute writings to the *IMA Newsletter*. News items will be printed for free. Event listings will be charged \$10 for the first listing and \$5 for each additional listing. (For additional rates, see p. 2.) Proceeds will cover the costs of this newsletter.

Your news item or listing:

And get on the mailing list!!!

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Eric S.
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