

# Cadence

**The Review of Jazz & Blues: Creative Improvised Music**

**THE AERIAL #2, SPRING 1990** is a compilation of music by mostly unknown or previously unrecorded artists. The emphasis is on unconventional sound sources (e.g. the underwater pond of David Dunn's "Chaos & the Emergent Mind of the Pond," the crickets of Hildegard Westerkamp's "Cricket Voice," etc.) Elsewhere percussion dominates. While the quality varies, there is some genuinely intriguing music here. Christopher Shultis' excellent "motion/less" is a composition for solo percussion that makes effective use of time and texture. Similarly, the aforementioned recordings by David Dunn and Hildegard Westerkamp have a certain compelling quality. As a means to expose new and previously unheard experimental music, this disc (and the earlier *The Aerial #1*) is welcome and deserving of the serious modern listener's support.

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I first encountered Hildegard Westerkamp's music on the compilation CD *Aerial #2*, where her piece *Cricket Voice* appears. This uses recordings made when on a trip to the so-called "Zone of Silence" in the Mexican desert, most prominently a cricket's night song. There are also various percussive sounds, created using desert plants such as dried up roots, dried palm leaves, and cactus spines. The cricket recording is played at various speeds, sounding like a cosmic heartbeat in places, and like peculiar birds in others. The piece has tremendous clarity of sound, and is beautiful in a very straightforward manner, but it's the context, the concern to reflect the spirit of the sources in the music that stands out.

# FURNITURES

*The Aerial: A Journal in Sound, Vol. 1*

MA# 7804) • NonSequitur Foundation (CD)

*The Aerial: A Journal in Sound, Vol. 2*

MA# 7801) • NonSequitur Foundation (CD)

Many of the works on *The Aerial #1*, the first edition of this CD-journal, are text-sound pieces, lying between the borders of music and speech. The more successful of these, like David Moss's "Language Linkage," explore the timbral, rhythmic, and harmonic possibilities of the words and sounds we employ to achieve direct communication, while developing a personal language through which word and sound can return to their more complete "meanings." Unfortunately, such works are paired here with relatively immature or poorly realized pieces. Christine Baczewski's "Day of the Dead," for example, does little more than melodically treat the language at hand, while Bern Porter's "The Last Acts of St. Fuckyou" uses (as the title suggests) the shock tactics of vulgarity—disguised, typically, as surrealism.

More balanced and satisfying, *The Aerial #2* is one of the smoothest, best organized compilations I've come across. Each track offers a different approach, but all make for *mesmerizing* listening. Bob Davis and Jon Raskin's "Poison Hotel" (sung by Aina Kemanis and Sheilah Glover) brings to mind Meredith Monk's handling of phrase and counterpoint, while LaDonna Smith and Davey Williams team up for an ultra-hip free-blues jam ("Green Song"), which is unfortunately only three and a half minutes long. Will be waiting to hear more from them, and from *The Aerial* as well.

(Nonsequitur Foundation, P.O. Box 2638, Santa Fe, NM 87504) —Mark Andrew Nowak

# HIGH PERFORMANCE

**High Performance #54**  
**Summer 1991 volume 14 number 2**

## THE AERIAL

People in search of the sonic avant-garde frequently can have a tough time going about their quest. So it came as a relief when various sonic publications on cassette or CD started coming into view. *RE Records Quarterly*, *Bad Alchemy*, *Spiral* from Europe, *Cymbiosis* and now *The Aerial* here in the U.S. allow us to actually hear the newest sounds.

*The Aerial* is a quarterly sonic publication begun by Steve Peters and Jonathan Scheuer in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In the three issues released to date, *The Aerial* resonates invitingly with many examples of electro-acoustic music by artists such as Hildegard Westerkamp, Jerry Hunt and David Dunn. Interspersed are sound collages, poetry, new music and pieces for voice by artists including David Moss, LaDonna Smith and Davey Williams, Jin Hi Kim, Lost Souls and Sue Ann Harkey.

In issue #1 Richard Kostelanetz provides a piece for multiple voices entitled *Murdoch And the Sufi*, excerpted from a larger piece called *Invocations*. It is a montage of spoken religious texts in various languages. The words are those of man's many religions, most of which are in conflict with each other. Here we can realize that they are all addressed to the same entity.

Annea Lockwood's piece in issue #2, *Nautilus*, bears many resemblances to the spiral shelled aquatic creature it is named after. One gets enveloped in successive sound patterns, which stimulate and enable one to enter a pleasant, dreamlike state. The result is magical.

Sonic publications give listeners an easy chance to tap into the diverse waters of the avant-garde using both recordings and publications ranging from the full glossy magazine of *RE Records Quarterly* to the basic descriptive booklet accompanying *The Aerial*. The newsletter that comes with *Spiral* describes sonic material tending toward unique archival recordings such as the suicide of Yukio Mishima and work smuggled out of China. *Spiral's* publishers even encourage subscribers to use the recordings for their own soundwork.

Audio publishing is a godsend to those who in the past had to rely on the sonic grapevine, rare non-commercial radio programs, or risk the considerable expense of new music recordings or concerts. Already auditory journals like *The Aerial* are putting an ample choice of music, poetry and sound within one's reach at a reasonable cost.

—Bruce Hollman

*The Aerial*, P.O. Box 2638, Santa Fe, NM 87504, (505) 988-8004. Four issues: \$40 on CD; \$30 on cassette. Single

THE CANADIAN JOURNAL OF SOUND EXPLORATION \$5

# MUSICWORKS 49

It is interesting to compare this use of a baby's voice to the sounds of a baby in Annea Lockwood's "Nautilus" on the *Aerial* #2. The tape documentation includes sounds of the audience members. The baby who attended the performance "added well-timed comments", in Lockwood's words. The baby's contribution is respected. As adults we must translate baby sounds into communication. The juxtaposition of these two works brings into relief the power issues surrounding that necessity.

The *Aerial* is a newcomer to the audio magazine scene, only two issues old and released in both CD and cassette formats. Material submitted to the *Aerial* cannot have been released previously or be expecting commercial release, and the editors encourage contributions by women and non-Anglo artists. The recorded pieces in "experimental, traditional and homegrown idioms" are accompanied by a booklet of artists' statements. The two issues I heard, *Aerial* #1 and *Aerial* #2, provided me with an invigorating mix of political consciousness, spoken work pieces, text/music collaborations and accomplished and often very moving music. What I like best about the *Aerial* compilations is that the pieces chosen balance within themselves sensual and intellectual pleasures.

*Aerial* #1 also contained some real challenges. Much to my surprise, Richard Kostelanetz does not mean to make an ironic comment when he juxtaposes the sentiment-laden voice of an American protestant preacher with the prayers of a Sufi in "Murdoch and the Sufi" from "Invocations". The vitriol poured out by Bern Porter's persona in "The Last Acts of St. Fuckyou" hit too close to home, and I couldn't give the piece a second hearing.

Submissions to *Aerial* #2 were cheerier. On this compilation Sue Ann Harkey's "In This The Year of the Snake" stood out for its original use of the most common musical combination: guitar and voice. Other standouts for me included David Dunn's "Chaos and the Emergent Mind of the Pond" ("While it can be said that other forms of life do not dance within the social web of our peculiar way of being conscious, we cannot assume that they don't have their own webs and ways of being self-aware") and Jeff Greinke's "Road to Solo" for metallophone, sampler, synthesizer and voice.

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Asmus Tietchens



**The Aerial #1 & #2 comps.** [PO Box 15118, Santa Fe, NM 87506]  
(CDs 74 & 68 minutes) A new series to focus on artists in the underground that seem to fall outside of the usual pockets of hipness, which means a lot of composer types with ideas. #1 is heavy on the spoken word and vocals featuring David Moss, Richard Kostelanetz, Floating Concrete Octopus, Jerry Hunt and eight others. #2 is heavy on long haunting instrumentals with David Dunn, Christopher Shultis, Jeff Grienke, Annea Lockwood, and a powerful Sue Ann Harkey vocal piece. Both contain world class material, but #2 gets the "highly recommended" for some truly transcendent pieces. (R.F.)

# OPTION

MUSIC ALTERNATIVES

no. 37 MAR/  
APR  
1991  
\$3.50

• **THE AERIAL #2** The second issue of this audio periodical is quite wonderful. It opens with "Poison Hotel" by Bob Davis and Jon Raskin (the latter a founding member of the ROVA Saxophone Quartet), an a cappella song for two women. It is a lovely and gentle work which has the naive quality and simplicity yet conviction and musicality of Moondog (and the lesser known Joyce Lightbody), though the sound is more restrained and lyrical. As always, J. Greinke's music is superb, and his contribution is one of the best moments on this sampler. He processes the bell and gong-like timbres of a Javanese metallophone which invokes the sonority and spirit, though not style, of the gamelan. The wonderful "Komungo Permutations," by Jin Hi Kim, features the komungo, a Korean zither rather similar to the Japanese koto, whose sound has been electronically processed. The instrument's timbre is rich, unusual, and most intriguing, and the music is deep, resonant, slow, and full of space to absorb and enjoy each sound. There is much more fine music on this CD, including works and performances by Annea Lockwood, LaDonna Smith & Davey Williams, Hildegard Westerkamp, and others. (Aerial, Box 15118, Santa Fe, NM 87506) — Dean Suzuki

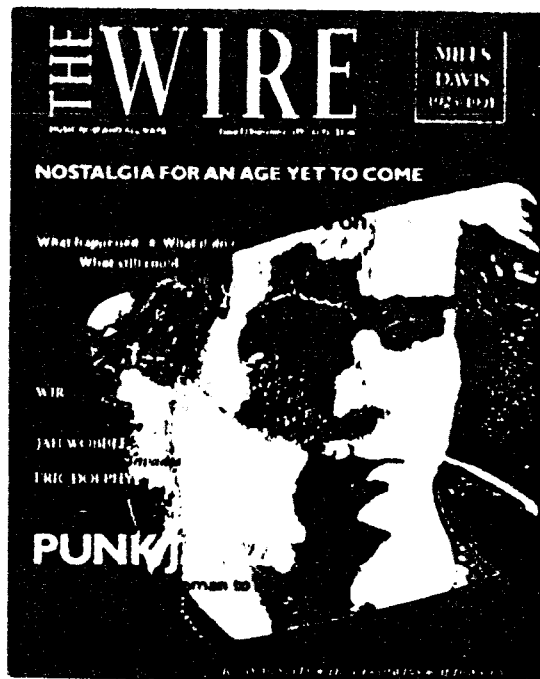
the wire

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**VARIOUS** THE AERIAL #1 & #2 (*Aerial AER* 1990/1 & 1990/2); **VARIOUS** SOUNDVIEWS: SOURCES (*What Next?*). Complementary sound journals, *Aerial* in CD form, *Soundviews* on cassette, the both of them beautifully packaged and amply annotated. Better than their good looks, they introduce three hours of intriguing electro-acoustic investigations of all manner of materials, instruments and spaces. The *Aerial* comps range across contemporary and ageless song forms, landscape percussion pieces and sonic architecture shakers that attempt to set buildings resonating with uncommon noise. Admittedly, there's only so much atmospheric recordings of striding crickets and womb-like pond sounds you can take before you stop noticing them. But part of the point of such work is re-addressing the idea of the listeners-as-composers, deep-listening their own shapes out of sounds and silences. (Both *Soundviews* and *The Aerial* c/o PO Box 15118, Santa Fe, NM 87506.)