

Cadence

THE REVIEW of JAZZ & BLUES: CREATIVE IMPROVISED MUSIC

The artistic aspirations of **THE AERIAL #4** (TT = 73:14) are overall more highbrow than those of the IFCO, which makes some of the pieces here that much more prosaic – falling from greater heights generally makes a bigger mess. This is compounded by producer Steve Peters' intent to "...continue to support women artists who remain grossly neglected in experimental music/sound circles while doing most of the best work." Ah, further ironies. Matters of reverse sexism aside, 3 of the 5 women here offer little but exercises in fashionable modernism, thereby almost making the remaining 2 sound good by default. "Spiral" presents Elise Kermani's restructuring of the English language through vocal improvisation. Her nonsense words are treated via overdubbing, echo, reverb and electronic washes. A baby's chatter offers greater acumen. Anna Homler and Steve Moshier's "Sirens," with its modulating drones and grungy noises punctuated by high screams and cries, like the IFCO, has a distinct movie soundtrack quality, while Patsy Rahn's "Trojan Horse" is a simplistic interlude of quietly percolating sounds. Brenda Hutchinson's "Eeeyah!" takes its cue from a Thai pigcall (the original *not* heard at the end of the piece as indicated in the booklet) and is buoyed a bit by a sensitive use of space among the pleasantly out-of-synch overdubbed "calls," bass drum thuds, chanting, whispering and ringing bells. And Elodie Lauten's "Music For the Trine, Part IV" features her mystically conceived, home-made string instrument's ingratiating plucked (and rubbed

droning) textures, which, curiously enough, share timbral qualities and overall sensibility with guitarist Raymond Boni's 1971 debut solo LP on Futura. In an unintentional but nonetheless judicious display of gender equality, the same ratio of men fall flat on their face. The diagrammed mike-on-the-lips recitation of Erik Belgium's "Dick Tracy All Over His Body," complete with gulping and subtle slurping sounds, is utterly embarrassing. (The dictum that "art is anything you can get away with" comes to mind.) Turning to children once again, a youngster just beginning to structure sentences would invariably yield something of greater import and insight. Joseph Weber's "Transformation of the Brothers Into the Sun and Moon," supported by some specious speculation as to the roots of dance and music in the booklet, and N. Sean Williams' "Come Window Golds Coming" (performed by cellist Jeffrey Kreiger) are, in the trance/new age mode, ultimately boring. Leif Brush's blending of nature (trees, wind, etc.) and electronics on "Terrain Instruments Are Activated" sounds more interesting than it actually *sounds*. Much of what is produced has a '60s electronic music hue and appears uncannily ordered. (Certainly nature has an "order," but it contains a greater degree of what man, with his limited perceptive abilities, terms random or chaotic than is overtly represented here.) Still, it is quite appealing. Finally, Peter Van Riper's "Heart" is a lovely montage of ringing, swirling, pulsing tones and overtones elicited from a metal strip. Trance-like certainly, and not without a new age edge, but also possessing a depth of emotional commitment and creativity sorely lacking on the majority of this sampler.

The Aerial #4 [Nonsequitur] (CD 73min \$13.50ppd.)
This org. in New Mexico is quietly establishing itself as the vanguard in "new music," searching out artists working in the more established realms of highbrow music (stylistically), but are often left out of it's machinations. Like previous Aerials there is quite a bit of vocal material here; from Brenda Hutchinson's purging Thai pigcall to covergirl Ellise Kermani's playful word puzzle, "Spiral." Most of the instrumental pieces are sound environments created from homebuilt devices and instruments that are often quiet or restrained, but never timid. The number of women present on these collections is inspiring in itself, let alone the music provided. Recommended. (R.F.)

Pasatiempo

Sound art series continues experimental trend

By JAMIE ALLEN

The experimental tradition is alive in Santa Fe. Nonsequitur, a Santa Fe-based record company that produces exclusively experimental music and "sound art," has just released their fourth "journal in sound," better known as *The Aerial*.

In it, producer Steve Peters has compiled 10 compositions ranging from the relentless vocalizations of Brenda Hutchinson accompanying herself on the bass drum to the elaborately structured yet somehow primal computer music of Santa Fe resident Joseph Weber.

Weber's work, entitled *Transformation of the Brothers Into the Sun and Moon*, is the last third of a grand trilogy that has yet to be performed in its entirety (Weber hopes to do so in 1993). Choreographed by Michelle Larsson (herself a Santa Fean), *Transformation*... received its premiere in Budapest in 1991 by the Gyula Berger Dance Company.



Composer Joseph Weber

In *Transformation*, Weber uses a NEXT computer with CSOUND software to recreate a meso-American legend of the genesis of light. The result is a modern magnum opus which thankfully refrains from overwhelming the listener with a barrage of unidentifiable sounds.

Instead, Weber deliberately has chosen a palette of intriguing musical colors and employs them with an artist's sensitivity. Time being a fun-

damental dimension in music, Weber deftly places his aural brush strokes in such a way as to make the work always fluid and always fresh, without ever losing its essential rhythm.

And rhythm is crucial for this composer. In writing for dance, Weber feels that he is

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tapping into the origins of classical music's inspiration. To quote his program notes:

"The notion of subservience of music to a higher art is anathema to most musical 'purists,' but these are people who have lost contact with the true roots of classical music: ecstasy and religious experience."

"For those musicians, dancers and spectators alike, who look for the fullest experience of life, art and spirit, there is no greater source than dance-theatre."

The first cut on this CD is *EYAH!* by Brenda Hutchinson. Like Weber, Hutchinson has narrowed the scope of her musical elements to a precious few, but with them cre-

ates a mesmerizing musical experience.

EYAH! is a phonetic spelling of a Thai pig call, which Hutchinson recreates with spine-tingling intensity. Using the wonder of multi-track taping, Hutchinson creates layer upon layer of this call, often at razor-close frequencies.

Eventually, every element of this particular sound grouping is explored and contrasted, highlighted and dissected, until one is no longer listening to a human voice and a bass drum. Instead, one is listening to an exciting and well-crafted symphony on the order of Penderecki or Lutoslawski.

The third composition of exceptional merit on this recording is *Sirens* by Anna Homler and Steve Moshier. In their own words, *Sirens* is an underwater sound poem exploring the alchemy and the dissolution of language.

In the midst of this aural witches brew, Homler and Moshier manage to fuse quasi-human utterances and quasi-musical drones into something both alien and wonderful. The music's sense of rhythm is entirely internal,

but unmistakable; making *Sirens* a polished work of vocal and electronic synthesis that draws the listener in as if by a spell.

The balance of the CD is worth a listen as well. While some of the compositions are more interesting conceptually than musically, this is enough to attract many avant-garde aficionados.

Among the remaining pieces are works for "terrain activated" instruments (transducers, microprocessors, sensor amplifiers and such that interact with natural acoustic events), a 4-inch by 8-foot suspended strip of metal, an astrologically correct lyre, and an electric cello.

Also recently released by Nonsequitur is *Sounding the New Violin*, a collection of solo pieces performed by avant-garde violinist Malcolm Goldstein (hailed by *The Village Voice* as "an aesthetic unto himself").

Though not always easy to find, Nonsequitur CDs can be purchased at local stores, or by contacting the company at P. O. Box 2638, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87504.

—PASATIEMPO—7



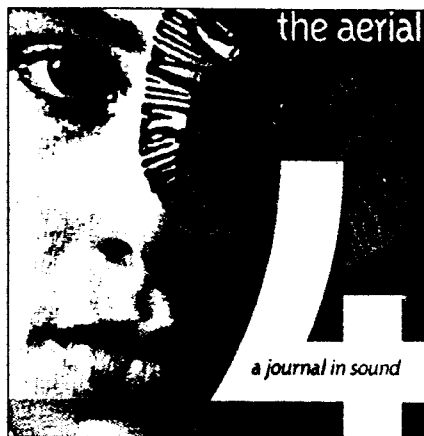
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Sound Volumes

Popular recognition of "new music" has been hampered, in part, by the umbrella term's two often irreconcilable definitions. For many whose musical tastes were forged during the '80s, new music means pop's furthest frontier, those songwriters and musicians who continue to invest the pop song with new life even when the raging trends are retrograde, derivative. Talking Heads, Peter Gabriel, the stuff on 4AD Records—they've all been labeled "new music." Since before the birth of rock'n'roll, however, new music has earned venerable status as a catchall for any inventive explorations in sound which otherwise defy categorization. John Cage, Pauline Oliveros, the "contemporary classical" stuff on the CRI, Lovely Music and Mode labels—again, they've all been labeled "new music." Not coincidentally, pop new-musicians regularly acknowledge their "classical" counterparts as inspiration.



The Aerial #4 (Aerial) is the most recent edition of the Santa Fe-based Nonsequitur Foundation's CD/cassette "journal in sound." The *Aerial* compilations have helped heal the "new music" rift by bringing experimentalists into hearing range of adventurous pop fans, and by occasionally recording songs by pop-weaned experimentalists. *Aerial* is appropriately named: The anthology has proven itself an antenna for far-flung musical toilers, few of whom could likely muster the funds and access the distribution networks essential to self-releasing full-length albums; the journal's title is also purposefully homonymous with Ariel, from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the poet's metaphor for the freed human imagination. *Aerial #4* is the most homogenous of the series, sticking primarily to ambient noise, but past *Aerialists* have included Curlew's Davey Williams, Korean string player Jin Hi Kim, ROVA sax quartet's Jon Raskin and jazz musicians Myra Melford and William Hooker, plus dozens of names as new to audiences as their sounds.

Peter Garland's *Border Music* is the eighth recording from Nonsequitur's ¿What Next? label. His works are generally percussive and quiet, including material for violin, harp and turtle shells. *Border Music's* highlight is "Apple Blossom," a haunting 1972 composition for four marimbas. Past ¿What Next? records include a compilation of tapes dating back to *Op* magazine, precursor to *Option* and *Sound Choice*, and—certainly the label's greatest triumph—*Troglodyte's Delight* by the Deep Listening Band. ■

Marc Weidenbaum

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Various Artists

The Aerial

(NONSEQUITUR FDN.)

LIKE AN ANTENNA transmitting sound waves, *The Aerial* functions like a creative radio show that's not afraid to explore new territory. An ongoing series of recordings designed to present experimental music, sound art and language art from around the world, *The Aerial* contains well-known and obscure artists as well as a variety of musical and sonic forms. Along with the recording, each issue comes with a booklet that includes notes on the works and short bios of the artist.

This issue contains 10 selections and runs for just under 75 minutes. My favorite piece is sound artist Brenda Hutchinson's "EEEYAH!," named for the phonetic spelling of a Thai pig call. By juxtaposing the shrieks of the pig call with the hushed mumblings and bell ringings of a memorial church service for the dead, Hutchinson transforms the pig call into an emotional mourning cry.

The range of work here is astounding: Quite a few cuts involve original instruments such as Peter Van Riper's percussive metal strips, Blodie Lauten's lyre-like Trine, and Leif Brush's Terrain Instruments, which amplify or electronically convert sounds from nature. There's also language artist Elise Kermani, whose intriguing "Spiral" twists and turns as she creates rhythmic patterns with words. Anna Homler and Steve Moshier use synthesizers and voice to make eerie underwater screams and grunts on "Sirens," a sound poem for the subaqueous.

Some of the selections are more interesting conceptually than musically, but *The Aerial* remains a valuable resource for everyone interested in the sonic arts. It also serves as a forum for experimental artists to present their work to an international community of aficionados. *The Aerial* is not always easy to find here; to order issues, or for submission guidelines, write to Nonsequitur Foundation at P.O. Box 2638, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87504.

LIZ SIZENSKY

contemporary

VITAL

under ground

MAGAZINE FOR
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MUSIC

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AERIAL #4 (*Compilation CD by Nonsequitur*). Nonsequitur (see labelspot VITAL#23) released their 4th compilation with yet an incredible bunch of works. The compilation gives you soundpoetry, percussion on aluminum baseball bats, electronic cello. From Anna Homler's weirdo soundpoetry to Leif Brush's "Terrain Instruments Are Activated" all is very adventurous.

I start to detect that artists who have been featured before, return. I have the idea that that is not quite their intention. The editorial to the booklet states that they are still looking for contributions. So send your material, provided that it has not yet been released, and that it does not extend 10 minutes length. (IS)