

## SOLIPSISTIC COLLOQUIALISMS OF THE HYPERVOID

*record reviews by Michael Bloom*

### • **TENKO & IKUE MORI: Death Praxis (What Next?)**

Mori, primitivist drummer for DNA a decade ago, subsequently started using drum machines in collaborations with downtown improvisers. The machines are here deployed as larger scale samplers, not only reproducing the idealized sounds of cool percussion (usually the canned kit drums and Latin instruments, but lovely bell sounds too), but pre-programmed rudiments or chunks of generic rhythm, various species of rock'n'roll or world beat. These readymades get dropped in and out whimsically, switched around abruptly, or (since Mori uses three machines at once) superimposed. Vocalist Tenko's chants and glossalalia may also be multiplied, by overdubbing or harmonizer, as likely to yield weird liturgical effects as jungle cacaphony—"Where's Missing" is both at once. Then there's the simple integrity of hymn-like melodies such as "I Know You." Substantive as well as great fun. (PO Box 344, Albuquerque NM 87103)

## **FACE OF THE YEAR: BOSTON ROCK TOP TENS FOR 1993**

### **✓MICHAEL BLOOM**

1. **CURLEW: A Beautiful Western Saddle** (Cuneiform). Generous, skewed jazz-pop songwriting like you haven't heard since *Escalator Over the Hill*. Luscious vocals by Amy Denio. Simply gorgeous.

2. **SPLATTER 3 + 2: Flatful of Dewey** (Racer). The best kind of tribute to Miles Davis, an understated sinuous funk jam with occasional tunes.

3. **MUSCIVENOSTI: A Noise, a Sound** (ReR Megacorp). Samplermeisters rearrange all of world music to their own intriguing specifications.

4. **MIKE KENEALLY: hat.** (Guitar/Immune). This is the record Frank Zappa and Andy Partridge would've made together, if they didn't kill each other first.

5. **VARTTINA: Seleniko** (Green Linnet Xenophile). This is like meeting adorable little sisters of the *Mysteres des Voix Bulgares* at a barn dance.

6. **PHISH: Rmt** (Elektra). Laugh if you must, but I like bands that can play their instruments, and the songs are both catchy and substantial. (Honorable mention: Aquarium Rescue Unit)

7. **DEBRIS: Terre Haute** (Rastascan). Wiry local jazz-rock that Berklee doesn't want you to hear. Go see them live, with their new/old bass player.

8. **WATER SHED: Duck Bill Hammer** (Popbus). Blustery jazz-rock from Pittsburgh that Ryles doesn't want you to hear. Inspired by psychotronic film and power tools.

9. **CHAINSAW JAZZ: Disconcerto** (Cuneiform). Maniacal jazz-rock from Washington that your parents really don't want you to hear. Unbelievable bass and drums, and electric mandolin.

10. **TENKO & KUE MORI: Death Praxls** (What Next?). Haunting improvisations for voice and drum machine, and a couple charming Japanese folk songs.

→  
• *Let us not forget:* FRANK ZAPPA's *The Yellow Shark*, chamber music by rock's best composer, recorded live last year in Germany and Austria by the Ensemble Moderne, and RICHARD THOMPSON's *Watching the Dark*, an intelligent overview (perhaps overly morose) of the last 25

# BUTT RAG <sup>\$3</sup> NO. 9

## TENKO & IKUE MORI: *Death Praxis* (What Next? CD)

A gorgeous, compelling dose of New York via Japan postmod austerity, these studio-tempered duets with between Tenko's freedom-seeking vocals and the mind-blowing drum machine programs of Ikue Mori pulse with hidden layers of meaning and music (y'know, melody, harmony, etc.) like the gates of heaven opening in small crack-like increments. The 17 pieces vary widely in thrust and attack, from structure-suggestive (e.g., the closing "I Know You," which is a kind of melodramatic torch song for the impending ice age) to somnambular instinctive (the zombie incantations on "Hearse," which suggests that Bulgarian Women's Choir picking lice out of each other's hair in a nuthouse). There's plenty of multi-tracking which allows the already substantial breadth of Tenko's voice to unfold with an even greater expansiveness, from cooed, gentle wisps to wiggly, bracing caterwauling (to say nothing of the full range that exists between these extremes); she sings mostly in Japanese, but her hammer-heavy expressiveness renders mere language barriers irrelevant. Mori's transformation over the years from clunk-master (?) of acoustic percussion spasms in DNA to these current heights (also check into her work, with Tenko, on Jim Staley's *Don Giovanni*), in which she has convincingly harnessed drum machines (she simultaneously manipulates three of them) to produce a thoroughly human (hence idiosyncratic) sound system that adds to the obvious rhythmic function a surprising and somewhat staggering scape of color and texture. First listeners will perhaps focus on Tenko, but repeated encounters shift toward Mori's contributions, which become equally or even more evocative than the vocals; the variation of attack and density certainly establishes specific tones or feels, but more resonant is the underlying interaction between Mori's non-obvious sonic ripples (sounds heard bubbling under several layers of more apparent plinks, bangs, and booms) and the non-linear residue of Tenko's muse (e.g. the atmosphere underfoot) which work together in a more insidious, brilliant method. It's unusual not only for this "spare" format, but this type of harmonic-like undercurrent is rarely present in much improv-derived music (although this CD doesn't appear to be the product of blatant free improvisation, I'm certain it's largely responsible for much of its inspiration). It's a fascinating merger of softness (the beauty of Tenko's voice and the general inclusion of lyrical fragments) and hardness (the machine sounds). Highly recommended, pal.

# CROSSWINDS

NEW MEXICO'S NEWSMONTHLY NOVEMBER 1993 VOL. 6 NO. 1 COMPLIMENTARY

## **Tenko & Ikue Mori**

### *Death Praxis*

Ikue Mori is one of very few people who can make something out of electronic drums, programming them for interesting sounds and triggering them manually. Tenko is an avant-garde vocalist, moving from Meredith Monk ululations, to conversational & pop modes to toe-curling shamanic invocations. Like traditional Japanese music, Death Praxis is simultaneously abstract and earthy. Highly recommended. Available from What Next? PO Box 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103. (R. W.)

# **DEAD EYES MAGAZINE seven**

**TENKO and IKUE MORI: DEATH PRAXIS (what next)**

This is one of the best releases we got for this issue. Japanese vocal over improvised percussion of all sorts. This c.d. goes from high energy rants to mello to insane off rhythm bursts, I love it. I highly recommend this to anyone looking for something interesting and new for the ears. I spent the whole 52 mins. plus of this c.d. trying to figure out how these women got these amazing sounds. Get this one.

# D E N E U V E

THE LESBIAN MAGAZINE

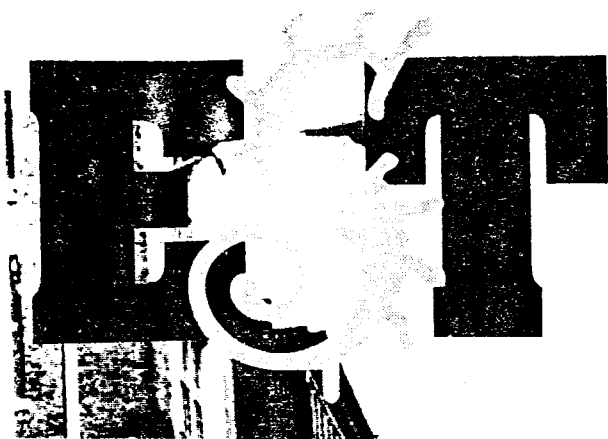


OCTOBER 1993  
\$4.00 US

## ***Death Praxis*** **Ikue Mori & Tenko** **What Next Recordings** **CD only**

Being the child of two classical musician parents, I grew up regarding the strict musical structure of composers like Mozart as the law of the land. Rock music was blasphemy and anything experimental even worse. Don't blame me, then, for being slow to appreciate the particular charm that some types of modern music may have for listeners.

Still, when I received a copy of Ikue Mori and Tenko's new CD, *Death Praxis*, from their well-meaning publicist, there was something about the album that caught my eye. I took up their publicist's challenge and played it, wondering whether, as he said, it would "grab me." And guess what? It did. Describing it to you, however, is altogether another thing. While the album's press release hints that the roots of *Death Praxis* lie in something called "Japanese noise music," most of this semi-improvised collaborative collage is actually quite tribal sounding, with alternately piercing then soothing women's vocals chanting along to electric percussion. Both Ikue Mori and Tenko seem to have individually performed extensively in Tokyo, Korea, Europe and North America, with Mori currently working in the New York improvisation scene and Tenko involved with a Butoh dance company. With its percussion rips and vocal roars *Death Praxis* may not be the album to play during a quiet visit with Mom. But if you like women's drum jams of the music or Edwina Lee Tyler, pop this in your CD player on the next full moon. Write Nonsequitur at P.O. Box 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103.



**Ikue Mori / Robert Quine / Marc**

**Ribot *Painted Desert*** (Avant  
AVAN030) CD 45 minutes

**Ikue Mori / Tenko *Death Praxis***

(What Next? WN0011) CD 53 minutes

*Painted Desert* is one to file next to the previous year's *Slim Westerns* by A Small Good Thing. The presence of Ribot and Quine is another good thing, since Mori would have had difficulty carrying this album of Western soundtracks alone. For all that she remains one of the world's foremost drum machine experimenters, it's the pastoral, infectious guitar that makes this album so enjoyable in a way that her rhythmic patterns could never have done alone. This music is also far better suited to Ribot's skills than the last album I heard featuring him. Like *Slim Westerns*, the airy sundown atmospheres on *Painted Desert* are predictable, but nonetheless enjoyable. If you tire of the soft-hued, dusty ambience, the propulsive vitality of *Desperado* will quench your thirst; it's anthemic enough to be the easy highlight. Ultimately, it's more enjoyable kitsch than post-modernism: I'm still waiting for the avant-Western album that could soundtrack a truly radical piece of Western mythopoeia such as Burroughs' *The Place of Dead Roads*.

*Death Praxis* is a less enticing prospect, Mori joined by compatriot Tenko, who sings on seventeen duet pieces. Mori's ability to make her drum machine sound like raindrops is impressive (if unaffecting), but there's a level of detachment to the whole thing that leaves me cold. Tenko's singing is versatile and varied, but ultimately artifice lets things down. Compare and contrast with another Japanese musician who has found attention in the West; Keiji Haino, whose supernatural ability to chill the spine makes this album sound extremely uninviting. [Avant dist. Harmonia Mundi; What Next?, PO Box 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103, USA] **BD**

# ЭКЗОТИКА

МОСКВА №2

\* **EXOTICA DIGEST** is illustrated compilation of articles about modern music in all styles. The edition is of 10 000 copies, with volume about 90 pages. Distributed on the former USSR territory.

## Tenko & Ikue Mori «Death Praxis»

1993 *Nonsequitur/What Next? WN 0011 52' 55"*

Ikue Mori (drum mashine) — переехала из Токио в NYC еще в 1977 году. Вскоре Arto Lindsay, Tim Wright и Ikue Mori сформировали DNA — одну из известнейших noise/no-wave групп. С 1983 года Mori активно участвует в процессах, происходящих на free improvise сцене даунтауна. Она часто выступает и записывается вместе с различными артистами из США, Европы, Канады и Японии. Основной инструмент Ikue Mori разнообразные драммины. Ее подход уникален. Одновременное применение трех самопрограммируемых ритмкомпьютеров позволяет Ikue Mori, используя очень индивидуальный выразительный язык, плести кружева ритмов и создавать сложнейшие звуковые структуры. Tenko (vocal) собрала свою первую группу Mizutama-Shobodan еще в 1978 году. Этот коллектив из пяти японских девушек играл динамичную музыку на стыке пост-панка и авангардного рока. В восьмидесятом появился еще один параллельный проект. Tenko и басистка Mizutama-Shobodan Kamura образовали импровизационный дуэт Honeymooners. С 1984 года Tenko активно гастролитрует в Америке, Европе, Корее и Японии, записывает при поддержке Фреда Фрита сольный альбом, работает с различными звездами авангарда и японской танцевальной труппой Nohobo, исповедующей эстетику Butoh.

Духовное единство, общий фундамент философских и музыкальных традиций, отсутствие языковых и культурных барьеров, содействие Джона Зорна и Дуга Хендерсона в студийной работе, помогли японкам создать «Death Praxis» — мистическое произведение, сочетающее этнику и noise, ритуальные ритмы и free improvise. Загадочная красота альбома наверняка очарует европейских и американских слушателей, но до конца понять эстетику и философию «смертельной практики» — задача непосильная для большинства неапонцев. Тот же случай, что и с садом камней, икебаной или романами Юкио Мисима.



# Fall 1993 High Performance

## ***Death Praxis***



**Ikue Mori & Tenko**

Downtown New York City meets downtown Tokyo in this poignant mixture of electronic percussion and voice. Free improv noise vocalist Tenko (Fred Frith, The Honey-moons) has joined forces with post-free improv percussionist favorite Ikue Mori (DNA, John Zorn's Locus Solus) to forge new dimensions in song and improvisation. Set against Ikue's percussive backdrop of rhythm and chaos, Tenko uses chants and lullabies commingled with cathartic wailing and sporadic babble to create something that is well grounded and manic all in the same breath. Given the recent interest in Japanese noise music (Hanatarash, Boredoms, Merzbow, etc.), *Death Praxis* is a provocative inquiry into the roots of that scene. JP

What Next? Recordings/The Nonsequitur Foundation,  
PO Box 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103. Phone 505/254-  
9145. Fax 505/268-0044.

TENKO & IKUE MORI

*Death Praxis*

(What Next?) CD

Tenko sings and Ikue Mori plays three drum machines, both manually and self-programmed. Layers of varied Japanese vocals, sampled ethnic and percussions and other effects weave together into an unlikely blend that is often engrossing, showing how much can be done with two people, a studio and multiple audio channels. From the rocking, Latin-tinged elements of "Magic" to the intriguing, drizzling percussives of "Rain" and the driving ethno-industrialism of "Where's Missing," this female duo create sound paintings that are highly diverse in texture and rhythm. "Glow Worm" radiates otherworldly vistas, meshing third and fourth-world drum styles with Tenko's ghostly, moaning vocals. While the sound of their collaboration is not overwhelming, this duo uses the studio quite effectively, stirring up complex structures and audio overlays (wonderfully displayed on "Economic Noise"). *Death Praxis* shows a lot of creative spirit and a willingness to experiment, an unusual album that one cannot easily compare to any other. (What Next?/Non-Sequitir, P.O. Box 344, Albuquerque, NM 87103)

-BRYAN REESMAN-

intake

Issue # 5 Absolutely Free

# MANIFOLD

Tenko/Ikue Mori - Death Praxis  
cd - Nonsequitur

Two names that many people may not be familiar with - Tenko, a traditional sounding Japanese vocalist worked with the likes of Fred Frith and Zeena Parkins. Ikue Mori was once a member of John Zorns Locus Solus group and before that, DNA. Mori is a percussionist who uses multiple drum machines in her work, punctuating and sometimes laying the groundwork for Tenkos free-form vocals...chants and wails and lullabys in Japanese. Things get strange and thus more interesting around the fifth track, layers of vocals with separate emotional stances fence and hide from almost ambient drumming. "Rain", somewhere in the middle of this disc creates a deliberately over-electronic sounding rain setting with chanting wails over it. Death Praxis is an experiment with traditional Japanese sounds and modern electronics that starts to "make sense" for me somewhere around the middle of the disc, where the frenetic improv sounding pieces start to give way to crafted studio work.

## Tenko & Ikue Mori

### Death Praxis

Tenko: voc / Ikue Mori: drum machines  
 Magic / Bad Seed / Hearse / Metal Dream /  
 Death Mask / Economic Noise / Fortune  
 Cookie / Rain / Glow Worm / Where's  
 Missing / Confession / Lullaby / She / Death /  
 Enticement / When the Sun Shines I Can See  
 Your Mind / I Know You  
 Aufnahme: 1992, Dessau Studio, New York /  
 Produziert von Tenko & Ikue Mori /  
 Klangqualität: gut / Spieldauer: 52:53  
 CD: What Next?

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## Tenko

### At The Top of Mt. Brocken

Tenko: voc, g / Yukihiko Issou: Nho-kan /  
 Tsuneo Imahori g / Soowoon Lim: Spring  
 Noise / Kazutoki Umez: sax, cl / Wataru  
 Ohokuma: p, voc, cl / Yoshitake Ohtomou:  
 turntables, g, tapes, voc / Hideki Kato: cl,  
 fretless b, ac b / Kyoko Kuroda: p / Kenichi  
 Takeda: taisho-koto / Motoharu Yoshizawa:  
 homemade electric vertical bass / Tatsuya  
 Yoshida: dr, voc  
 Blue Heat / Moonlight Waltz / If I ... / A Piece  
 of Silence / Dressed in Memories / Bolero  
 Hyperbolic / Dodo / Water Hours / The Sands  
 Just Sigh / Cardiogram / There Play children  
 in the Flowering Meadow / Interwoven /  
 Temptation / At the Top of Mt. Brocken / A  
 Crack in a Lie / An Irregular Attack / Drifting  
 / The Last Angel  
 Aufnahme: 1990-91, GOK SOUND, Tokyo /  
 Produziert von: Tenko / Klangqualität: gut /  
 Spieldauer: 62:18  
 CD: RecRec / EFA

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Gegen die zwitschernde, wispernde, schreiende, sägende, mal mädchenhaft, mal diabolisch, oft asiatisch wirkende Stimme von Catherine Jauniaux setzt die Japanerin Ikue Mori auf *Vibra Slaps* ihre perkussive Soundspur. Die *Ex-DNA*- und *Worlds of Love*-Musikerin klingt bei weitem nicht so statisch, wie sie auf der Bühne wirkt. Zuschlagende Türen, wegspringende Gummispiralen, schabende, schleifende Gegenstände, elektronische Tropfsteinhöhlen, Horrorgurgeln und vieles mehr entlockt sie ihren perkussiven Tönen. Catherine Jauniaux bleibt – unabhängig von ihren Projekten – stets die etwas altmodische, überstimmte Chansonette, die wie eine Mischung aus vorlautem Kind und internationaler Hexenmeisterin wirkt. Diesmal hat sie sich eben in ein Hightech-Studio verirrt und ist zuerst eingeschüchtert vom chaotischen Brodeln der fremden Klänge, bevor sie beginnt, dagegen anzusingen und -sagen.

*Death Praxis* fasziniert vor allem durch die zugrunde liegende Monotonie. Ikue Mori macht, was sie immer macht, sie schafft die passende Umgebung, das perkussiv-lauernde Ambiente, die unterkühlte Szenerie. Tenko hingegen versucht den in Frauen lebenden Geistern ihre Stimme zu leihen. Mönchhaft, tranceartig, hypnotisch und rituell wirkt diese musikalische Seance und eignet sich bestens für geheimnisumwobene Nächte im Schattenreich der Phantasie.

*At the Top of Mt. Brocken* erinnert wieder mehr an Tenkos erste Solo-

## Catherine Jauniaux & Ikue Mori

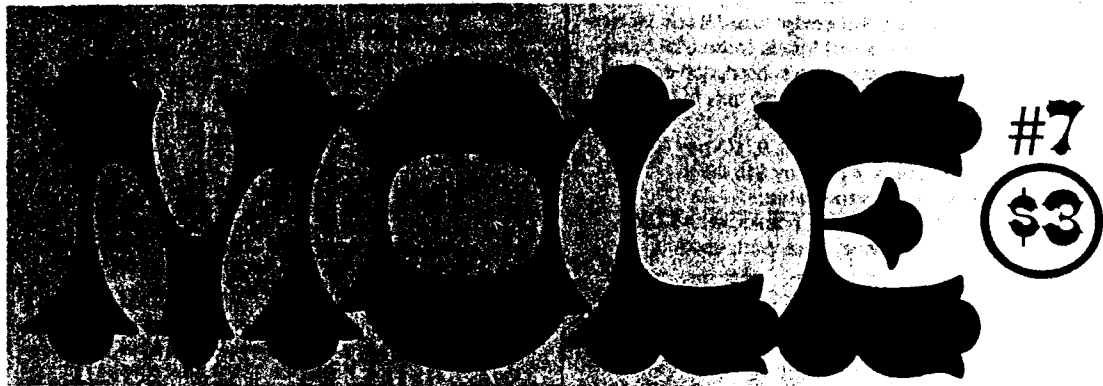
### Vibra Slaps

Catherine Jauniaux: voc / Ikue Mori: drum machines  
 Shiver / Missing / Courageous Little Ant /  
 Fischtank / Ich bin alleine / Ce grand neant /  
 Betty Boop / Mentira / Important Things Are  
 whispered / Dejeuner du matin / Witches Brew  
 / Faint Clue / Song from before My Life /  
 Smell / I Fall in Love too Easily  
 Aufnahme: Juni 1992, Dessau Studio, New  
 York / Produziert von: Tom Cora, Catherine  
 Jauniaux / Ikue Mori / Klangqualität: gut /  
 Spieldauer: 40:57  
 CD: RecRec / EFA

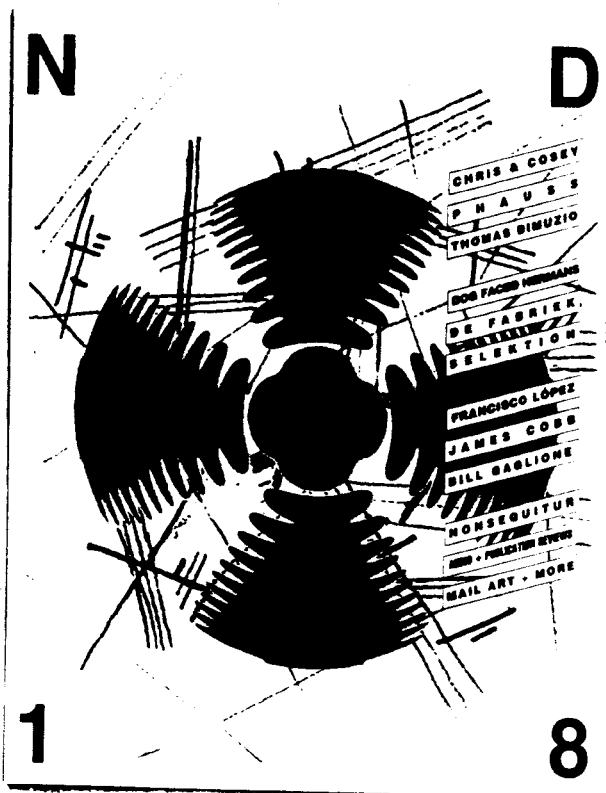
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LP *Slopet Gradual Disappearance* und an deren heftige Vokalattacken. Mit der Unterstützung von zehn japanischen Musikern entstand die CD, deren Titel Tenkos gesellschaftspolitischen Standpunkt definiert. Hoch oben auf dem Brocken sitzt sie, laut lachend und braut Rock, Jazz, Noise, Marschmusik, Folk und andere Stilzutaten zusammen, um die Männermusikwelt damit in tiefe Verwirrung zu stürzen. Ein gediegenes Salonpiano und vorbeiwahende Chansonböden gehen immer wieder unter in hereinbrechenden Klängen und Geräuschen, die Struktur der Songs wird jedoch nie wirklich zerstört. Insgesamt großartig, aber nichts für weiche Hirne



TENKO & IKUE MORI: Death Praxis (What Next?) Unexpectedly spacious mix of vocals and unpercussion-like percussion. From Ikue's DNA work I expected dense, busy sound but this stuff wanders all over, forming a drifting backdrop more like water flowing than percussion. Tenko's chanting, moaning, & hymning is equally fluid. Ikue's playing drum machines—setting several off at a time—rather than acoustic kit and while I'd love to hear more of her pummeling, this stuff is intriguingly blissful—beautiful, organic & quiet enough even for the non-garde to try.



**Tenka/Ikue Mori "Death Praxis" (Nonsequitur) 17 2-4**  
minute pieces by these two legendary artists Mori  
programs rather hyperactive drum rhythms while Tenko  
chants and sings weaving melodies around and  
throughout. Sometimes playful, often quite intuitive, this  
disc travels the high road of collaborative possibilities (RF)

# Revue de Cronique

N°17, trimestriel, septembre 93 20 F

**VIBRASLAPS** (CATHERINE JAUNIAUX & IKUE MORI) ReCDec 52. Dist. Sémantic, AYAA.

**TENKO & IKUE MORI** "Death Praxis" ¿What Next? WN0011. Dist. Metamkine. Ces deux CDs ont plus d'un point en commun d'où leur regroupement. Une formation identique: voix + boîtes à rythmes, et Ikue MORI, la magicienne de la drum machine, celle qui nous a prouvé que cette boîte à boutons pouvait également chanter, devenant autre chose qu'une pâle copie de la batterie, et ne pas se contenter, surtout pas, de mettre sur la touche nos batteurs préférés. A l'occasion de l'achat de ces deux CDs, faites donc l'acquisition d'un second lecteur et écoutez les ensemble. On comprendra mieux la dextérité, le langage unique, cette façon magique de poser des sons là, comme ça, avec la douceur d'une caresse, ou la hargne d'un bûcheron, face à deux chanteuses/vocalistes très différentes. Catherine JAUNIAUX mélange différentes langues et vocalise avec douceur; cela reste chanson, voire même une certaine conception du cabaret. Chez TENKO, c'est plus musclé, plus dur, voire même tribal à certains moments accompagnés de rythmes plus tranchants. Il y a également dans ce second disque, plus de studio (multi-recording).

Jérôme NOETINGER



Sun Ra  
John Russell  
Pat Thomas  
Simon H Fell  
Clive Bell

free issue

Tenko/Ikue Mori  
Death Praxis  
What Next? WN0011 CD

If, like me, you don't associate the drum machine with much expressive and rhythmic subtlety, then these two albums (in some respects companion pieces) featuring Japanese drum machinist Ikue Mori, now a stalwart of the New York improv scene, should cause you to revise that preconception. Mori's approach to this instrument is by far the most sensitive I've heard. Crisp and decisive, her ideas unfold swiftly from tiny Oriental repetitions to sudden, dramatic timpani crescendos. Although she uses three self-programmed machines simultaneously the sounds are structured with a remarkable clarity and sense of space, providing a stimulating counterpoint to two very different and distinctive vocalists.

Tenko, another Japanese improviser based in New York, draws on Japanese song and an almost childlike simplicity of phrasing to give *Death Praxis* a sometimes eerie, ethereal quality. Her vocals are mostly multitracked and nowhere more atmospherically arranged than the brooding, chiaroscuro interiors of 'Glow Worm'. 'I Know You', a delightful, romantic-sounding song is guaranteed to have you humming long after the amp cools.



# SF WEEKLY

SEPTEMBER 1, 1993 ■ VOL. XII, NO. 27 ■ FREE

## Ikue Mori & Tenko

Death Praxis

(NONSEQUITUR/WHAT NEXT?)

SOME PEOPLE TAKE THEIR DEATH MUSIC seriously. The name of this disc, as well as some of the song titles — "Death Mask," "Hearse" and "Bad Seed," for example — might make you think of formulaic hardcore heavy metal. But the music, a mixture of Ikue Mori's inventive drum-machine sounds and Tenko's often eerie vocals, is actually born out of the punk and improv scenes of Tokyo and downtown NYC.

Mori plays three drum machines simultaneously, creating intricate rhythms and polyrhythms. Occasionally, she lets loose with wild bursts of noise. She programs her own sounds, including whirs, pops, thumps, chimes, woodblocks and hand drums, into the machines. She shifts beats and sounds to get amazingly varied music out of instruments that are usually considered robotically predictable and precise. It's no wonder that Fred Frith said that Mori was the only person he ever heard who could make a drum machine sound interesting. On the song "Rain," Mori successfully imitates nature as electronic raindrops patter, bead up and stream away, plop in puddles and pour down in hard-driving sheets.

Tenko uses her voice improvisationally to create texture, rhythm and atmosphere, filling the disc with evocative cries, chants and moans. Her work is mostly effective, but the vocalist sometimes hovers dangerously close to self-parody, especially during her angrier moments. When it works, though, it takes your breath away to hear her mutable voice soaring and swooping through all kinds of moods and expressions. On "Lullaby," Tenko's vocals soothe and comfort as Mori's drum machines noisily rip through wild, tumbling-down effects. On other songs, the two women create the kind of intense pandemonium you'd expect to hear emanating from the Tower of Babel. Anyone interested in the roots of Japanese noise music would do well to give *Death Praxis* a listen.

Liz Sizenky

# sonic



# striations

issue #2

\$1.50

Tenko & Ikue Mori-Death  
Praxis (What Next) (CD, cs) 17  
mostly short selections arranged into  
more or less traditional song  
structures from ex-DNA and all  
around NY scenester Mori and  
Tenko, who started with The  
Honeymoos and has worked with  
many others in the underground.  
Though the recording is very sparse,  
featuring only Tenko's voice and  
Mori's electronic percussion, it  
doesn't feel as though anything is  
lacking. The duo wring out a  
surprisingly diverse array of styles  
and intensity levels ranging from  
gentle and tuneful to manic and  
disturbing. As for the words I can't  
help you there as my Japanese is a  
little (?) weak.

# the Stranger

Free Weekly

12 thru 18 July 1994

Volume 3 Number 42

Just as the modern saxophone is the perfect site for a musical "internationale" in the so-called post-modern era, so do the vocal musics of Sainkho Namtchylak (who, for a time, was a touring Tuva throat singer) at once signal the modern and its wake. Long tones are perforated with leaps of an octave or more without any rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic sign that this may occur. So do Japanese vocalist **Tenko's** riveting song-chants interact with the electronic drumming of Japanese percussionist **Ikuo Mori** on the duo's *Death Praxis* (¿What Next?).

With extensive ties to New York's post-punk "No Wave" scene (which coincides with the downtown improvisers' scene at spots like the Knitting Factory), this duo is continually surprising. My dislike for electronic drumming was never even raised here because Mori's machine work sounds so un-machinelike. In the way that Threadgill, Tae Hwan, and Umezu thoroughly update the saxophone, Mori *backdates* the electronic drum machine, showing, in effect, the flux of our hyped-media era not just in terms of its resacing everything (now the unwieldy LP fits in your back pocket and is mirrored), but also in terms of the re-timing always at hand (think of the *Chant* CD's popularity and remember it was recorded in 1968 or so). For the percussion-happy, this is a dream come true.

T

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O

*naujoji muzika*

5/1994

TENKO &amp; IKUE MORI

*Death Praxis*

WHAT NEXT? WN 0011 CD

Jau pirmas sąlytis su šiuo darbu pabrėžia labai specifišką jo pobūdį: dvi japonės moterys žanriškai labai siauroje balso ir elektroninių perkusinių garsų erdvėje kuria aštrų, bekompromisišką, atšiaurų, tačiau emocingą ir gestais vizualų muzikinį pasaulį. Detaliau susipažįstant su šiuo leidiniu sparčiai ima ryškėti sudedamosios kultūrinio pjūvio dalys, apnuoginančios kažką tokio, kas tikriausiai slūgso kiekviename iš mūsų, vangiai beįskaitomuose archetipų šifruose, gal tik meno ar dramatinuose momentuose bundančiuose ir primenančiuose mums kilmę ir evoliucijos naštą.

Nors ir atstovaudamos visiškai kitai kultūrai, Tenko ir Ikue Mori nutiesia universalų komunikabilumo tiltą, kiekvieno suvokiamą individualiai, tačiau nusidriekiantį plačia civilizacijos trajektorija nuo matriarchalinės sandoklos laikų motinų rankose, dainose lopšinėse ar raudose, pieno ir mirties skonyje... iki elektroninio ritmo pulso.

# tip

BERLINMAGAZIN

## Tonabnehmer

Die Winterreise auf der Tonspur beginnt im „Trance Europe Express“ und führt nach Japan zu Tenkos Vokalattacken. Mit im Reisegepäck: jede Menge Sampler

Seit Jahren machen in innovativen Musikkreisen einige Japanerinnen von sich reden, die so gar nicht dem traditionellen Bild der scheuen japanischen Frau entsprechen. Die Gitarristin und Sängerin Tenko ist eine dieser Künstlerinnen. Sie ist lautstark, heftig und zerbricht auch mit ihren Texten, klischeehafte Erwartungen. Bereits 1975 gründete sie eine Frauenband, die zehn Jahre lang wütende Rockmusik in exotischen Kostümen verbreitete, und noch heute Vorbild vieler Musikerinnen ist. 1987 erschien ihr erstes Album in Europa und sprengte auch hier sogleich Hörgewohnheiten in die Luft. **Slope** (RecRec) hat Songanteile und Improvi-



sationsparts und vereint Zeena Parkins, David Moss, Tom Cora, Wayne Horwitz, Fred Frith und viele andere. Nach einer Schaffenspause und der Umsiedlung

nach London sind nun gleich mehrere CDs erschienen, denen Tenko ihren musikalischen Stempel aufgedrückt hat. Auf **At the Top of Mt. Brocken** (RecRec/EFA) arbeitet sie mit zehn japanischen Musikern. Die brachialen Vokalattacken Tenkos erinnern an ihre erste LP und definieren auch ihren gesellschaftspolitischen Standpunkt. Sie sitzt laut lachend auf dem Gipfel des Hexenberges und braut Rock, Jazz, Noise, Marschmusik

und Folk zusammen, um die Männermusikwelt damit zu verwirren. Chansonhaftes geht immer wieder unter im hereinbrechenden Geräuschklang, die Struktur der Songs wird jedoch nie wirklich zerstört. **Death Praxis** (?What Next?) bringt eine zweite Japanerin, die elektronische Perkussionistin und Ex-DNA-Musikerin Ikue Mori ins Spiel. Hier fasziniert vor allem die tranceartige Monotonie, Ikue Mori fabriziert das perkussiv lauernde, unterkühlt bedrohliche Ambiente. Tenko verhilft weiblichen Geistern zu einer Stimme. Zusammen mit der belgischen Sängerin Catherine Jauniaux hat auch

Ikue Mori eine zweite CD mit dem Titel **Vibra Slaps** (RecRec/EFA) veröffentlicht. Catherine Jauniaux, die sagt: „Wichtige Sachen werden geflüstert“, zwitschert, sägt, schreit, wispert, wirkt mal diabolisch, dann wieder wie ein vorlautes Kind. Ikue Mori setzt ihre perkussive Soundspur dagegen: zuschlagende Türen, wegspringende Gummispiralen, elektronisches Gurgeln und Tropfen. Und zwischen Moris chaotischem Brodeln und Jauniauxs vielsprachigen Texten entwickeln sich wunderbar schräge kleine Chansons.

Anna-Bianca Krauss

# WIRE

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## Tenko/Ikue Mori

Death Praxis

WHAT NEXT? WN0011 CD

Tenko once sang in a band called The Honeymoons, now collaborates with a Butoh dance company called Hakuthubho, while Ikue Mori played drums in DNA and has since worked with John Zorn, *shamisen* player Michihiro Sato and vocalist Catherine Jauniaux.

That's biography, which may or may not be significant. But "strip search all planets... Death Praxis, ghosts of the living," writes Davey Williams in his enchanting surrealist sleeve note to this 17 track album. As it transpires, the music is enchanting also, not only by being charming but in the sense of casting spells, drawing up magic, through song, chant and rhythm.

Tenko gabbles in tongues, recites trance monologues and death songs, whispers from the dark space of a house in windblown long reeds, captures strange transmissions and wistful, ancient folk memories from Okinawa, Seoul, old Tokyo, Arctic Asia, the streets of New York, channelling them over the organic electronic rattle and doom of Ikue Mori's three drum machines.

Those drum machines, rhythms dislocated by echo delays, fried into shrimp choruses, purring, chiming, ringing in defiance of timelocked beats and factory sound, switching direction at the contact or abrupt severance of a stream of current.

As a taboo of our (mine and perhaps yours) culture, death is fairly ubiquitous as the subject matter of non-mainstream songs. I can't tell you what "Bad Seed", "Hearse", "Death Mask" or "Death" are all about. I only speak about four Japanese words, but the lightness of this accessible music has more to do with spirits, maybe "voices of spirits inside women" as Davey Williams writes, than the banal terror and decay of specialist genres such as death metal. You could approach death with courage, armed with the life essence of these songs.

DAVID TOOP

# YOUR FLESH #29

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## IKUE MORI AND TENKO *Death Praxis* CD

*Death Praxis* is a collaboration between Ikue Mori (drummer with DNA, the influential NYC No-Wave trio) and Tenko (vocalist with Fred Frith, Tom Cora, etc.). Vocals and percussion are all that're provided (and all that're needed) and even they can't really be differentiated from each other; the voices often provide the beat while the percussion carries the melody. Mori uses three electronic samplers that are stacked with a variety of percussive noises. Tenko sometimes wails and sometimes sputters but always sounds exotically soulful. Each song has an English title but nary a word of English is discernible. One never would have anticipated the need of a "world-beat" record for the NYC improv crowd but anyone goofing around with Hanatarash and Boredoms should hear their flipside. After fifty beautiful minutes a gorgeous folk song, "I Know You," ends the recording on a sincere note. [What Next] *Jeffrey Herrmann*