

The ambiguity of the rule made it impossible to follow..

Ambiguity of sound source is practically the norm in modern improvisation and composition today. The standard in instrumental and electronic processing techniques continues to rise, the lexicon of sound constantly expanding. It is not unusual to hear a recent recording of an improviser and be completely baffled regarding what the performer is using to create and manipulate the sound; if they are processing it or not, whether it is live or has been worked over in post-production, edited in real time or pastiched together from a multitude of small bits and thousands of splices. All of these techniques, used so creatively, have made for some phenomenally forward looking music.

Enter [The ambiguity of the rule made it impossible to follow..] - 3 acoustic instrumentalists with an eye toward extreme extended techniques and ambiguity of sound and 1 electronicist who, instead of creating a composition from the composite parts, has the technique and creativity to become a real time fourth member. Much more than a trio with electronics, this is a true and democratic quartet in process and result. Audrey Chen plays three roles on this recording, those of the voice, the cello, and homemade analog electronics. Seamus Cater performs on the unlikeliest of experimental instruments, the chromatic and bass harmonicas. Nate Wooley simply or not, plays the trumpet. Robert Van Heumen processes all of these sounds, alternately creating insidious shadows of the acoustic musicians, or adding his own material, always independent.

The ambiguity comes into play, not only with the use of electronics, but with the acoustic players themselves. Audrey's cello becomes oscillator tones and her voice can take on the intensity of amplifier feedback or the malleability of a filtered sound. Seamus' low bass harmonica sounds like Audrey's low cello oscillator and the high overtones like a no-input mixing board. Nate's trumpet moves from low pitches, emulating Seamus' version of Audrey's oscillator tones to high "no-input" squeals to discrete pitches in harmon mute that blends flawlessly with Seamus' harmonica. Add the displacement and processing of all this, handled so masterfully by Robert and you begin to see how easy it is to get lost in the "who did what" game.

Luckily, that's not the point. The group deals in ambiguity as a language, not as pure phonemes. More precisely... the idea of instant composition is the point here, and to be even more clear the emphasis should be on the word composition. Every piece on this disc is an improvisation based on a compositional or formal idea as opposed to a mere abstract dictionary of extended technique.

The quartet came together in the fall of 2007 at the STEIM studios in Amsterdam to work specifically on a group concept. While the four of them had worked together in purely improvised settings in the past, the idea for this project was to create compositions through the improvisational process. The four musicians had a week to hash out ideas from the very basic "sound worlds" that make up some of the shorter works on this disc to highly complex formal arrangements found in the longer tracks (especially the piece opening this disc). This was not to be another improv "blowing session", but four musicians using the incredible amount of sonic creative material they had at their collective disposal to create focused music that ranges from bloody, noisy bursts of screaming and shattering sound to sublime, quiet whispering and singing of long harmonic drones.

Individual websites:

Audrey Chen: <http://www.myspace.com/audreychen>

Nate Wooley: <http://www.natewooley.com/>

Seamus Cater: <http://www.seacater.com/>

Robert van Heumen: <http://hardhatarea.com>

Sound clip at <http://hardhatarea.com/sounds.php>

For more information, please contact: robert@hardhatarea.com

