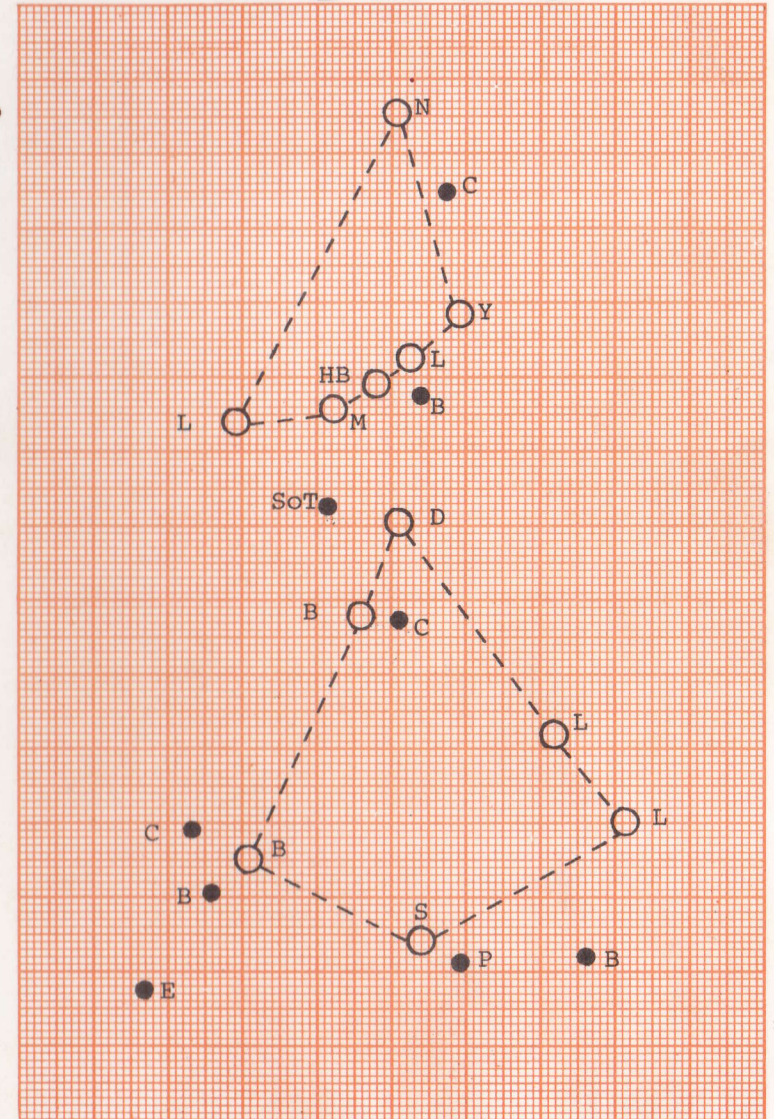


# CO-OPERATIVE MUSIC



BRISTOL MUSICIANS' CO-OPERATIVE



# CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction . . . . .	2
This Music . . . . . Peter Riley . . . . .	3
These Co-ops . . . . . Ian Menter . . . . .	4
Music, Politics and the Co-op . . . . . John Boulding . . . . .	15
Grow Your Own . . . . . Ron Caines . . . . .	18
The Case Against Creativity . . . . . Freddie Hill . . . . .	22
Cultural Aspects of Free Improvisation . . . . . Davey Williams . . . . .	24
A Musical Coach Trip . . . . . Willy Guy . . . . .	25
The Telephone Call . . . . . Ron Caines . . . . .	31
The Recent Music of Derek Bailey . . . . . Peter Riley . . . . .	32
Two Things about 'Both Hands Free' . . . . . Peter Riley . . . . .	36
William Embling . . . . . Anthony Barnett . . . . .	38
Evan Parker plays the Saxophone . . . . . Peter Riley . . . . .	38
Notes on Leo Smith and Bob Helson arising from a concert . . . . . Will Menter . . . . .	39
A Test for Music Critics, Music Directors, Musicians, Collectors, Record Dealers . . . . . Ron Caines . . . . .	44
Landscape is the main starting point/ motivation . . . . . John Eaves . . . . .	46
A Sense of Adventure . . . . . Martin Mayes . . . . .	48
Bristol Musicians' Co-operative Crossword . . . . . Ron Caines . . . . .	50
Larry Stabbins Solo . . . . . Freddie Hill . . . . .	51
Some Press Reviews . . . . .	52
Notes towards a Political Definition of Improvised Music . . . . . Adge E Tater . . . . .	57
Notes towards a Political Definition of Meetings . . . . . Ron Caines . . . . .	58
How This Magazine was Produced . . . . .	59

All photos by Willy Guy unless otherwise stated

Poems by Barry Edgar Pilcher and John Boulding

Published in May 1979 by Bristol Musicians' Co-operative, 36 York Road, Montpelier,  
Bristol 6



## INTRODUCTION

The "Co-operative Music" magazine is being published to coincide with the "Co-operative Music" festival. Both ventures aim to show (among other things) the breadth and strength of musicians' co-operatives and collectives.

Bristol Musicians' Co-op has existed for nearly five years. Over that time certain issues have emerged and re-emerged time and again. We feel that these questions may be common ones within most co-ops.

First, what is the position of the individual in the co-op? How much should his/her work be seen as representing the co-op and what exactly is the nature of the responsibility of belonging to the co-op?

Second, should co-ops have an "open musical policy"? If members are involved in "semi-Commercial music" (eg modern jazz) as well as "non-commercial music", should the co-op promote all kinds of music its members play?

Third, there is the whole question of financial policy. Assuming the co-op has some money should it spend it on performances, administration, publicity or what? Or what proportion should be spent in each area? If the co-op is to fund performances, then who is going to be paid for which performances, what proportion (if any) should go to "outside" musicians (ie, non-members), should there be a flat rate fee, if so, what should it be?

Fourth, if the co-op is applying for grant aid how can one convince arts administrators and advisors that, in spite of the co-op's criteria for judging music being rather different from their own, the music is nevertheless worthy of a high level of support? And can one do this without compromise?

Fifth, how formally and centrally should the co-op be administered? What form of constitution, should "officers" be elected and so on?

Sixth, how can the co-op attract bigger audiences to its events? Does this involve more sophisticated "marketing techniques"? Or are such techniques inimical to the spirit of the co-op and the music? (Are they moral?)

Seventh, and finally, is the co-op sectarian? Are it and the music it promotes in any way sexist, racist or elitist? Further than this, should the co-op itself have an explicit political ideology?

As might be expected, each musicians' co-op has its own way of dealing with each question. And, in Bristol at any rate, our position on each question is not static, debates occur regularly on all of them.

The contents of "Co-operative Music" cover the co-ops and the music. Our contributors write from many different standpoints and deal with many different aspects. We hope you enjoy most of it.

## THIS MUSIC . . .

by PETER RILEY

This music has nothing to do with Stoke-on-Trent. It has nothing to do with London either, or Sidburani or anywhere else in particular. This music is not pop, nor is it jazz (probably), or any other kind of music you care to think of which isn't this music. Mostly it is very quiet. Capitol Records are not interested in this music. It was never entered for a competition. It never won a prize. It was not on the radio. It is not on a record. This music is not for sale (only the documentation of this music is for sale). You cannot sway rhythmically to this music, you cannot sing along with it or pretend you are a hero in front of several thousand people who think you're wonderful. You can't even pretend you're a hero in front of six people who think you are passable. You cannot have a gay Saturday night on this music. This music does not contribute to your intoxication. It will not help you to become rich and it will not make a beautiful girl fall in love with you. This music leaves you as it found you. The time you spend listening to it belongs entirely to the music; the only thing you can do is to give yourself alertly into the music as it occurs, and participate in its tensions. It is not for you. In fact this music resists you: it offers a resistance to the world (by which perhaps we recognise, in giving ourselves to the music as a kind of work, the world's resistance to us). This music is not experimental; it is not traditional; it is not familiar; it is not weird. It is not political or apolitical; it is not music for the people at a vast profit. This music is not sad or happy; it is not fast or slow; it is not any particular colour; it is calm except when it is excited. It does not divide sensation. This music returns you to the world you live in as it is - labyrinths of crumbling brick rectangles or avenues of cypresses swept with watery sunlight . . . whatever it is, you must, after this music, recognise the human presence in it as another, parallel world, and accept its challenge, get out of your syrupy hole and be a self, as whole and distinct and precise as the music is. This music is rewarding.

(First published in "Start")



## A survey of musicians' co-operatives and collectives in Britain

- |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Introduction                | 5) Inter co-op groupings |
| 2) What is a musicians' co-op? | 6) Recordings            |
| 3) The co-ops and collectives  | 7) Writings              |
| 4) Other centres of activity   | 8) In conclusion         |

1) INTRODUCTION: This survey is principally based on the replies to a questionnaire which I sent to about fifteen organisations in February this year. Ten positive replies were received, a further couple indicated that activity had ceased or that the organisation had merged with another group. Only three questionnaires were not replied to at all.

The later sections of the article are based more on my own knowledge, built up over several years of active involvement with Bristol Musicians' Co-op.

2) WHAT IS A MUSICIANS' CO-OP?: There are now, in 1979, at least eleven musicians' co-ops and collectives in Britain\*. Only five or six years ago none of the organisations described below existed, at least not in their present form. There had been various predecessors both in the USA (eg, AACM, Jazz Composers' Guild) and in Europe (eg, London Musicians' Co-op).

A glance at the locations of the 11 organisations and other centres shows an absence of any mention of Scotland or Ireland. Scotland does have the jazz promotion body "Platform" but to the best of my knowledge neither this nor any other group in either country could be called a co-op-type organisation.

What then is "co-op-type organisation"? One thing that emerges from the survey is that there are many differences in emphasis between the various co-ops, but what are the similarities that enable them to be grouped together?

I would suggest the following points are true for most co-ops and collectives:

- the members are primarily musicians (not promoters, "fans", "aficionados", etc.)
- the music the members play is in some way "non-commercial" or "unpopular" (however most co-ops have been formed in an attempt to change this)
- the co-ops are basically self-help organisations
- the members seek full control of the context, presentation and reproduction of their work
- the co-ops stand against categorisation of music in general and of their own work in particular
- the co-ops stand against the metropolitan centralisation of music; they are indeed regional bases (centres) for creative music.

Although most of the members work in areas of improvised, new or experimental musics, in few instances does a co-op have a clearly stated musical policy in terms of style, idiom, form or content (in any case such a policy would tend to contradict the fifth point above).

It should not be assumed either that all new, improvised or experimental music takes place within and around co-op-type organisations (see examples in Section 4, below), nor that all centres of such musical activity are covered in this article.

\*My apologies to any group that should have been included in this survey but are not. Please let me know of any such omissions.

3) THE CO-OPS AND COLLECTIVES: Birmingham Musicians' Co-op

Birmingham Musicians' Co-op (Secretary: Mark Rowson, 72 Salisbury Road, Moseley, Birmingham 13. Tel: 021 449 1711)

Formed in early 1978, BiMC now has 23 members (22 male, 1 female) who pay a subscription of £1.20 pa.

"The purpose of the Co-op is to enable musicians (including the audience, who are

after all "listening musicians") to have more control over all aspects of their music. It seems to us that the only way to do this is to organise co-operatively."

"Our broad aims are:

1. To organise musicians and audiences to get music which is not normally catered for by the normal channels heard. We include in this New Wave and experimental rock, improvised music, "ethnic" music, contemporary "classical" music, jazz and so on.
2. To gradually build up a fund of information about our activities, so that the experience of organising can be drawn on.
3. To organise regular workshops of the music we are interested in, eg women's workshop, ethnic music workshop, composition workshop and improvisation workshops.
4. To publish articles and booklets about music in Birmingham." (From a 1978 publicity leaflet)

In 1978 they received funding from West Midland Arts: £250 setting-up grant and £250 guarantees against loss on concerts. They had applied for £1,160. Their comprehensive application to WMA was published in Musics 17 and Anthems 1 (see section 7).

They have an elected committee of four with a rotating chairman, and a brief constitution which stresses openness, responsibility and answerability.

Through 1978/79, they put on weekly workshops at Birmingham Arts Lab and 14 concert events for which they "tried and tried" to pay the performers the Musicians' Union minimum wage. Very little in the way of fees went to their own members.

Currently they hope to start a weekly series of concerts and plan to put out a couple of cassettes on their own label. In addition they are discussing seeking a grant in order to purchase a PA system.

Bretton Musicians' Collective (Ross Moore, 11 Thornhill Drive, Walton, Wakefield West Yorks. Tel: Wakefield 257641  
or  
Jazz Society/Bretton Collective, c/o Bretton Hall College, West Bretton, Nr. Wakefield, West Yorks)

One of two college-based collectives covered here, it was formed in October 1977 "because of a lack of musical outlets." Several of the 12 members (2 women, 10 men) have connections with other collectives.

Ross Moore writes in a letter: "In a place like Bretton, anything other than the history of Western Classical music or disco/rock music is unheard of (apart from us) so we have adopted a musical policy of any new form of music/any form of music not usually given an airing, ie, experimental western "classical", jazz, improvised music and hopefully, in the future, ethnic musics of various sorts."



Martin, Nick, Dave and Ross of the Bretton Collective



The collective receives a small amount of money from their Students' Union, through the college Jazz Society and are able to mount concerts every 1½ to 2 months. These usually take place in the college.

Their current concern is to play and to recruit members from outside the college. They are planning a music and performance magazine "for the near future".

Bristol Musicians' Co-op (Secretary: Ian Menter, 36 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6. Tel: 0272 559226)

"Unpopular Music", published last year by BriMC, contained a history of this Co-op written by Will Menter, and also a "documents" section reprinting most of our manifestoes. Thus the purpose here is merely to update.

There are now 32 members (22 full members paying £1.00 pa, 10 associate members paying 50p); only 2 of the members are women.

Our aim remains simply to promote non-commercial musics in the Bristol area and our musical policy is determined by our current membership.

Over the year 1978/79 we put on about 24 concert-type events, mainly at Bristol Arts Centre, but also in the University Union and "outside". We have received a grant from Southwest Arts for four years now. This year we applied for a substantially increased sum, on the basis that our usual concert fee of £11 per musician greatly undervalued the nature of the work. Our proposed budget was drawn up on the basis of a £25 fee (as an interim to the £40 which we feel appropriate). We were, therefore, disappointed to receive only £800 - exactly the same as last year.

We have monthly open meetings where all decisions are taken. There are only two regular "officers", a secretary and a treasurer, but other members take responsibility for such things as publicity, our weekly improvisation workshops and the co-ordination of our festival.

The "Co-operative Music" festival follows "Unpopular Music" last year and for both of these, the Arts Council has given funding up to £1,000.

During the past year, our own record label "Zyzzle" has come into operation and has issued one record and one cassette.

Coventry Musicians' Collective (c/o Max Eastley, 40 Charlton Road, London N11 3EX Tel: 01 368 1760)

Paul Jackson of CMC, writes: "CMC was founded in 1978 within the Faculty of Art and Design, Lanchester Poly, Coventry, as the result of an enthusiastic response to improvised music workshops begun by Max Eastley (improvisor/performer/sound sculptor) when he joined the part-time lecturing staff. He suggested we name ourselves a Collective to put us in line with other centres of improvised music and thereby make ourselves known, establish contacts, etc."

"Our main activities are workshops . . . we have no committee . . . we are dependent on how much money we can persuade various departments within the Faculty of the Students' Union to contribute towards the cost of concerts to pay for outside musicians. In the first twelve months, we invited nine musicians, totalling £180+ in fees to play for us, give seminars, etc."

"Many of the students with an interest in improvised music also have an interest in other areas of "alternative media" such as performance or video. There has been a strong trend away from the Stand-There-And-Play convention of straight improvised music to more visual uses of it in combination with, for example, performance. This has proven a very stimulating and exciting area in which to work and there are the beginnings of a company who pool their ideas for the group to perform/play."

"We are anxious to contact either art schools with a view to exchanging students to give concerts and construct meaningful ongoing dialogue situations. To date we have exchanged with Leeds and Portsmouth Polys, where there are activities similar to our own taking place."

"We would strongly advise any intending Fine Art student with an interest in improvised music/music performance/performance/sound to apply to the Lanchester (shortly to be renamed Coventry Poly, we understand) where they will find other

students with similar interests and where they can use the extensive resources of the Faculty."

East Midlands Musicians' Collective (c/o John Sanderson, 38 Belper Street, Ilkeston, Derbys. Tel: 0602 302015)

John Sanderson writes: The EMMC was formed last September ('78), but did not undertake any gigs until January 1979; as yet we have only done two gigs - one for the ANL, the other for the local Women's Group. Depending on financial aid, we hope to start weekly workshops and bi-monthly concerts, plus issue a quarterly newsletter, in addition, we aim to distribute a leaflet/statement of aims at every gig."

"At present we have a core of nine members, with a dozen or so other musicians expressing interest in the venture. We do not have a committee, but envisage a time when this will be necessary due to increased numbers/activities . . ."

"As for a constitution, we are agreed on the following points:

1. Equal billing at all performances
2. To work towards a system of gig reciprocation with other collectives
3. Democratic decision making on all matters
4. No presentation of racist or sexist material
5. A commitment to forge a revolutionary culture, recognising that this entails active involvement in political struggles."

"With regard to musical policy, we do not exclude anyone for purely musical reasons, but most of the present members are involved in Free Jazz. "

"As already stated, most of our proposed activities will depend on financial assistance; we hope to receive a grant from East Midlands Arts and/or Midlands Jazz Centre Society."

"The organisation was formed with the intention of providing a platform for those musicians who cannot or do not wish to operate through commercial channels. Our main objective at the moment is to expand our activities; we do not have a record label, but hope to produce tapes."

Leeds Musicians' Collective (c/o Paul Buckton, 35 Richmond Mount, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 1DF)

Paul Buckton writes: "LeMC was formed in July 1977 because of an interest in improvisation by one or two musicians living and working around the Leeds/Bradford area. Having realised that there was little improvised music being organised in this area, it was decided to put on our own concerts and try to receive financial backing from Yorkshire Arts Association and the Northern Jazz Centre Society."

"There is no committee as such, but decisions are taken informally at meetings."

"Our main activities are concerts and, when a space is available, workshops. In addition, a festival of Improvised Music was staged from 25-28 August 1978."

"Concerts are one per fortnight ideally, but vary greatly - we tend to have a series of three or four and then a break."

"Aims and objectives:

1. To provide a platform for all areas of New/Improvised/Spontaneous musics in the West Yorks region.
2. To provide a regular venue in which the members of the Collective may perform.
3. To seek to represent the wishes of the members of the Collective.
4. To provide an information service/exchange for any interested parties, incorporating all relevant information on related organisations in all fields of the arts.
5. To foster the understanding and increase the interest from the public and to seek adequate funding from public bodies.
6. To promote reciprocal arrangements with Musicians' Collectives/Co-operatives and other groups and organisations in other parts of the country.
7. To provide documentation of individual and group activities within the Collective.
8. To encourage meetings of artists from similar, related fields.



9. To encourage the mixing of all musicians interested in the above areas of artistic activity, irrespective of the level of recognition.

"Finance: Last year (Feb-Dec 1978) LeMC received about £550 from the NJCS in Manchester. The bulk of this money was in the form of a grant/guarantee for the festival, the remainder being LeMC's share of the budget for the first two concerts of the Northern Improvisation Circuit Association (see section 7 below). The music panel of YAA granted us £100 - £75 for the first concert of NICA and £25 for four concerts in July. (At the moment [mid-March] we are waiting to hear the outcome of a meeting with the Music Officer of YAA, where we discussed the financing of concerts in Yorkshire for 1979/1980. Also present at this meeting were representatives from Yorkshire Musicians' Collective and Hebden Bridge New Arts Association. We are in the unfortunate position in Yorkshire, of having three venues interested in Improvised Music, hence, any money allocated is split three ways.)."

"At the moment the standard minimum fee for concerts subsidised by YAA/NJCS, is £25 per head plus expenses. Applications submitted to these organisations are based on this figure, although now we are thinking in terms of applying for £40. This fee is payable to all the performers participating on the particular night, irrespective of level of recognition. In such cases, we try to avoid making exceptions to the rule."

"As yet we have had such an inconsistent subsidised income that we have not been able to set money aside for fees for our own members. We tend to apply for grants for musicians who are "passing through" the area. If it is a solo performer then we try to arrange that he plays with a local group, but the subsidy granted never equals the amount asked for, ie, the proportion of the funds which goes to our members is zero (omitting the non-subsidised concerts where the performers play for the door receipts). Once publicity, hire of venue and advertising have been removed from the subsidies, then all the funds have gone to people outside our organisation."

"The main objectives now are to establish regular concerts and workshops. Ideally, we would like to arrange concerts every fortnight and have enough money to pay the £25 fee, both to local musicians (who have been somewhat overlooked) and to others we attract from elsewhere in the country. Unfortunately, there seems to be little support forthcoming from YAA and we are unsure as to our position regarding the JCS."

"What we hope to do is to have enough money available to cover (possibly on a one concert per month basis) all expenses and then be able to give 100% of the door receipts to the performers. At least in this way, even though no fee is paid, the visiting musicians will not be out of pocket as is happening continually. We hope that Leeds can be looked on as another place where Improvised Music concerts by all committed players, recognised or not, from all over the country, are a regular occurrence."

London Musicians' Collective (42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1. Tel: 01 722 0456)

LoMC differs from other collectives in several fundamental ways:

1. They have their own premises where they hold concerts (3 or 4 a week), seminars, open sessions, bookfairs, rehearsals and meetings.
2. They have many more members - about 150.
3. The grant they receive is spent totally on administration and running costs. In 1977 they received £1,500 from the Arts Council, in 1978, £2,500. None of their grant is spent on performance fees. (However, the LoMC does recommend a minimum fee of £25 plus expenses per musician for all grant aided/subsidised performances).

The Collective was formed in 1976 and is now in the process of becoming a registered charity. They do have a constitution (I don't know the details), but not a committee.

Most of their members are concerned with "new sound work and related areas", although they do not have a musical policy as such.

Their original and current sole objective is: "To further the interests of the



Bristol City Docks, Summer 1979: Top - Richard Coldman, Martin Mayes, Bob Helson, Anthony Barnett, Carlos Trinidad. Bottom - Will Menter, Bob Helson, Eugene Chadbourne, Biddy and Bumble (photo: Annie Menter)



members."

At the time of writing, the forthcoming edition of Musics (22) is due to feature LOMC (contributions by its members were requested in the last issue).

Manchester Musicians' Collective (c/o Dick Witts, Top Flat, 6 Kingston Road, East Didsbury, Manchester)

No reply was received to the questionnaire, but as far as I know this collective still exists. It is different from others in that most of its members work in new wave rock. (This information was received in Autumn 1978)

MMC is involved in the Northern Improvisors' Circuit Association (see below, Section 5).

North Eastern Musicians' Collective (c/o Spectro Arts Workshop, Bells Court, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Tel: 0632 22410)

NEMC is closely connected with Spectro where most of its activities, including concerts and weekly workshops, take place.

It was formed in October 1978, they write "so that people from varying musical backgrounds could meet together and talk about their interests. It also provides opportunities for members to play together on a regular basis."

"Our main objectives now are to pursue several lines of music in order to produce material of a performable standard. We also hope to perform pieces which include members from all of the various fields of music involved in the Collective."

"We wish to stimulate the interest of the general public in our area in the types of music which we play . . . We are mainly concerned with (free) improvisation and (free) jazz. Other interests include electronics, classical and folk music."

NEMC now has about 20 members. They have not yet sought grant aid. At the time they replied, they were preparing a free news sheet to be distributed in the Newcastle area.

Southampton Musicians' Co-op (c/o Ray d'Inverno, 114 Mousehole Lane, Bitterne, Southampton 2. Tel: 0703 554621)

Officially formed on 1 January 1979, SMC already has 30 members. Their constitution is (relatively) very formal and includes as the object of the organisation:

"To provide a centre in Southampton where all those with an interest in contemporary improvised music may meet to further their appreciation and understanding of this music by means of live performances by musicians; record recitals; talks given by experts in various aspects of this art and its presentation, and general exchange of information. By these means also the Co-operative hopes to promote greater interest in contemporary improvised music in the City and to offer encouragement and playing opportunity for those interested in the music."

In a letter, SMC secretary Gary Bayley writes that they are very hopeful of securing premises and that the building they are after "really could not be better."

Their committee consists of President, Secretary and Treasurer. They hold monthly meetings prior to public concerts and weekly "blow-ins." They are currently applying for a grant from Southern Arts.

Gary Bayley also writes of the interest of part of the local musical establishment: ". . . we have the nice situation of middle-aged guys who have always played four-to-the-bar earning bread and butter, but maintaining their interest in music through improvisation and experimentation. The formation of the Co-op was favourably received by most local musicians because it provides a focal point where people can discuss the music before they attempt to play it . . . So, to summarise, jazz is well-established in Southampton as is classical music and rock. We like to think that players from all these fields will consider joining the Co-op for the mutual benefit of musics and, just as important, the understanding of music by performers outside of their own sphere."

An SMC publicity sheet stating their aims is based largely on the Birmingham Co-op's one (see above) with the main addition: "To promote activities which involve other art forms in addition to music, ie mixed media activities, including for example the visual arts, poetry, film, dance and so on."

York Musicians' Collective (c/o Colin Potter, "Cintra", Main Street, Sutton-on-the Forest, York. Tel: Easingwold 810188)

Formed in early 1978 (although another collective existed some years before), "to encourage interaction between various kinds of musicians and non-musicians in York and surrounding area and to promote and encourage experiments in music, and hopefully, performance, poetry, theatre, etc." (from original handout)

YMC is loosely organised around a core of about 6 people. Colin Peter writes: "There is an 'event' every week at the moment. On weeks when we do not put on a specific concert, a group improvisation is held."

They have received one grant of £25 from Yorkshire Arts for a Northern Circuit tour concert (see section 5, below) and intend to apply for further aid. "Our main problem is funding a regular suitable venue . . . We are a new Collective and are still finding our feet and fighting apathy . . ."

- 4) OTHER CENTRES OF ACTIVITY: There are still several other places where co-op-type music is happening but where it is not currently organised formally by a co-op or collective.

Bridgwater: There is a regular workshop at the Technical College and some concerts take place at Bridgwater Arts Centre, 11 Castle Street (contact Bob Ormrod, Tel: Bridgwater 2700).

Brighton: Activities (concerts at least) take place at the Poly and at the Public House Bookshop, 21 Little Preston Street.

Bury: A questionnaire sent to "Bury Union of Musicians" (mentioned in Musics 19) did not bring a reply.

Cardiff: In the summer of 1977, two musicians' co-ops formed simultaneously. One was more jazz-orientated, the other more experimental rock orientated. I have no up-to-date information on either, although I know members of the latter are still living and working in Cardiff.

Exeter: There is a strong possibility that a musicians' co-op will be forming here. Contact William Pryor, Waye Cottage, Chagford, Newton Abbot, Devon.

Cleveland: Musicians' Co-op folded up at the end of 1978 due to "total lack of public interest". Stu Johnson (18 Emerald Street, Middlesbrough, Cleveland) says grants are still available but are not taken up, because "in our view subsidies [are] unjustifiable under these circumstances. All contacts remain open-interested musicians now working within North Eastern Musicians' Collective" (see above).

Leeds Poly: Paul Jackson (of Coventry MC) mentions that there is activity here.

Luton: Members of Evans All Weather Orchestra help to run and promote new music in the 33 Guildford Street Arts Centre (contact Tim Powell, 31 Ridgeway Road, Luton, Beds. Tel: 0382 419584)

Portsmouth Poly: Again, Paul Jackson (Coventry MC) mentions activity here.

Stoke-on-Trent: Although there is no co-operative organisation as such, Ascension 7 (Ye Min and Niall Ross) run weekly workshops at 4 Mollart Street, Hanley. In addition, Patrick Regan of Burslem Leisure Centre (Market Place, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, Tel: 813363) in replying to the questionnaire mentions another couple of groups working in the area.

- 5) INTER-CO-OP GROUPINGS: Two or three years ago an abortive attempt was made to form a National Musicians' Collective. More recently attempts have been made to organise collectives in a limited geographical area into touring circuits (a much more singular objective than the National Collective had).

In Autumn 1978, the Northern Improvisors' Circuit Association was formed and since



then has attempted to promote a monthly series of tours by improvising musicians (mostly based in the South of England). The tours have gone to some of these venues: Liverpool Academy of Arts, Manchester Musicians' Collective, New Arts Association at Hebden Bridge, York Musicians' Collective and Spectro at Newcastle.

There have been some difficulties in the organisation of the Circuit, which it would not be appropriate to discuss here. However, the Leeds Collective has now withdrawn from the Association.

The Convenor of NICA is Dick Witts, Music Officer, Merseyside Arts, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool. Tel: 051 709 0671

Currently plans are being laid for a southern counterpart to NICA, the Southern Improvisers' Circuit Association. The member organisations are all co-ops, collectives or similar groups. The probable venues are Birmingham, Derby (E Midlands Collective), Luton, London, Southampton and Bristol. Contact can be made through any of the co-ops based at these locations (addresses in sections 3 and 4 above) or through Ian Menter, 36 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6, Tel: 0272 559226).

- 6) RECORDINGS: One aspect of musicians taking more control of their music is the formation of their own record labels.

The oldest such company in Britain is Incus (87 Third Cross Road, Twickenham, Middlesex), run by Evan Parker and Derek Bailey. Incus records are now fairly widely distributed and about 30 issues have now been released.

Bead (1 Chesholm Road, London N16) is somewhat newer and run by the people who have made records for the label. There are now about 10 albums in their catalogue. There is an article about Bead in Impetus.

Both Incus and Bead are more or less London-based.

Nondo (63 Fountain Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham) is run single-handedly by Dave Panton, a Birmingham-based improviser and composer. The catalogue (5 or 6 records and tapes) includes work by musicians based in Birmingham and elsewhere.

Zyzzle (36 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6) is the only one of these labels which exists specifically to serve a musicians' co-op. To date Zyzzle has issued only two recordings.

- 7) WRITINGS: The questionnaire to co-ops included a question about support or interest shown by local or national press and "media". Almost without exception, replies were negative. Most of the coverage given to co-op-type music is in publications produced by the musicians themselves (again giving them more control).

Musics (42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1, tel 01 722 0456) is published bi-monthly and is now in its fourth year. It is the creation of a fluid pool of several deeply committed musicians, most of whom are members of LOMC.

Impetus (68 Hillfield Avenue, London N8 7DN). This covers a broader spectrum of music but regularly carries relevant articles.

Anthems (c/o Burslem Leisure Centre, Market Place, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent) was envisaged as a non-metropolitan quarterly alternative to Musics. One full issue was published in 1978 and an "obituary issue" (Number 1A) was appended to Stoke's general arts magazine "Start", which continues to give some coverage to improvised music.

Unpopular Music/Co-operative Music Bristol Musicians' Co-op seem to be able to manage about one magazine/booklet a year. This is the second. We also prepared a 12 page supplement for Musics 18 covering the Unpopular Music Festival.

Several poets are also musicians (or vice versa) or at least listeners to free music - for example, Anthony Barnett of Essex, Peter Riley of Derbyshire, Barry Pilcher of Wiltshire and William Pryor of Devon.

Finally, Ross Moore of Bretton MC is preparing a study of musicians' co-ops which may or not be similar to this one.

- 8) IN CONCLUSION: Having described the co-ops and their support system of written words and recorded sounds, I wish to emphasise one or two things.

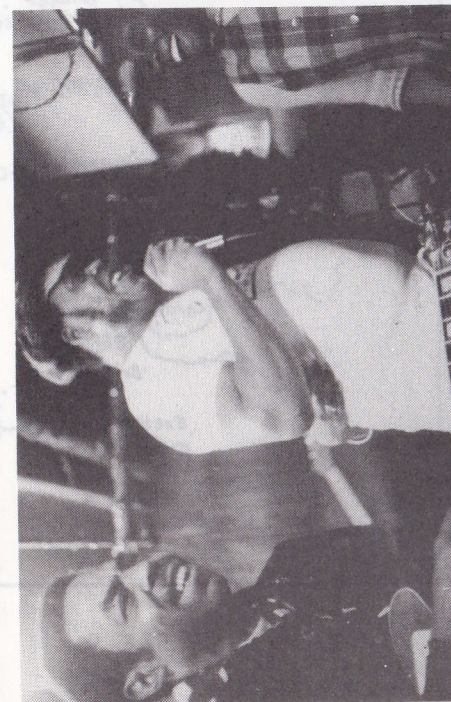
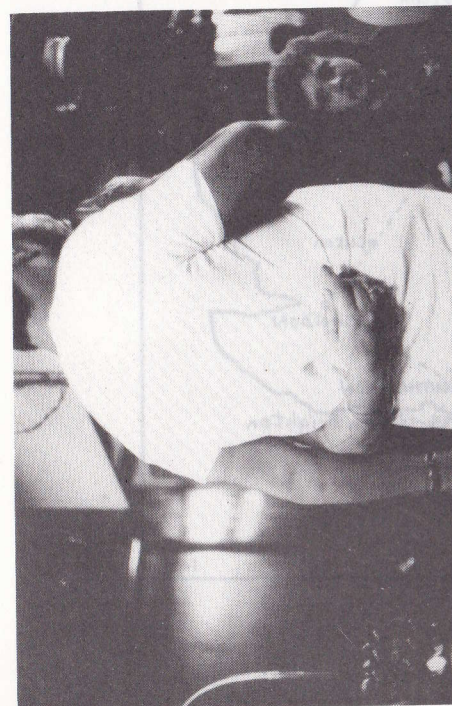
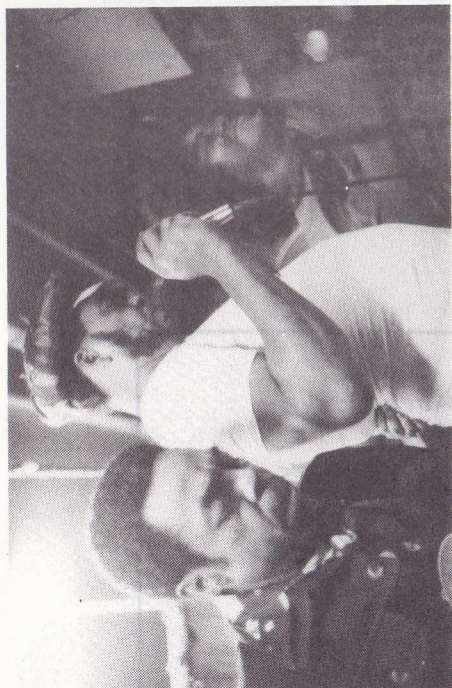
This survey has aimed only to describe British Musicians' Co-ops and collectives as they are now. New ones are emerging and the old ones are changing.

I have not discussed the music itself nor attempted a proper survey of activities outside the co-ops.

I have only been able to compile the information presented with the co-operation of many comrades around the country. For this co-operation I appropriately thank them.







James Cotton and friends playing 'Co-operative' music at Teresa's bar, Southside, Chicago. (photo: Will Menter)

# MUSIC, POLITICS AND THE CO-OP

by JOHN BOULDING

I was intrigued on re-reading "Unpopular Music" to find the extent to which I agreed with the article by Robert Hunter ("Improvised Music - The Retreat of the Avant Garde?"). This, the tone of the magazine in general and two recently attended Co-op gigs have led me to wade into Co-op discussion. I hope that the following may spark off a little further thought on various levels relating to politics, music and their inter-relationships (if any), also the the directions(s) Co-op music is taking.

1) First, the extreme leftist bias exhibited in part by the magazine is not, I think, in any real musical sense manifest in the playing of its instigators, though obviously the music and political obsessions are products of the same characters and the same rebellious personality traits. The music is challenging to the existing artistic aesthetic, but then so is that of such establishment composers as Stockhausen, Berio, Cage, Ligeti et al. It may do much to influence the future artistic establishment (particularly in relation to the nature of form in music and possibly in art generally), but is already being absorbed into the great bourgeois cultural hierarchy.

I agree with Robert Hunter's point: the grant from South-West Arts shows that patronage of those "letting off steam" is a safety valve for the Establishment, which over the centuries has shown the common sense to nullify revolutionary behaviour of all shades (not just artistic) with state patronage and consequent absorption. The only effective revolutionary cultural behaviour of any kind has been that which, having the backing of the people en masse, has consistently refused to be thus nullified by state patronage and absorption.

The Co-op, as befits a very small organisation, representing very little artistic and almost no social threat, is awarded a small grant accordingly. "The People" just could not care less. They do consider it their music. They find it difficult to follow, not in the least enjoyable, and "turn away in their thousands", alienated as they are by their conditioning (which the education system and media determine, here as elsewhere in the world at large). They like "tunes" and discernible rhythms - they always have.

2) Now, perhaps contentiously, to consider the discernible results of an adherence to Marxism/Leninism in both general and artistic senses, with a look at the USSR and briefly, also at China. (This section I make deliberately provocative - I await replies).

With the State Capitalism of the dictatorship of the proletariat there still exist class divisions, primarily between the few rulers and the many ruled. The bosses change, and ultimately the State may be the only boss (is a monopoly situation an advantage?), but class- and income/power/status-divisions in the USSR have become more, rather than less severe than our own. The educational system is elitist (those most able are those who best succeed), and the State operates as a Capitalistic, thoroughly materialistic organisation. As the Chinese government has realised, the USSR is also an imperialistic power with apparently unlimited expansionist aims and with an economy totally dominated by expenditure on "defence". Marxism/Leninism is as much an anachronistic materialistic relic of the 19th Century as laissez-faire capitalism.

Cultural deviance in the USSR of today is thought so threatening to the State that only such art as directly or implicitly supports the status quo survives and is tolerated (ie, only that which functions as propaganda). Despite the difference of the category of person assuming positions of power (eg, the previously would-be proletarian rebels of the former Middle Class), the cultural perspective in the USSR is almost extravagantly bourgeois - neither revolutionary nor radical. Avantist art is not tolerated: there is in fact more cultural hegemony than in our mixed capitalist/socialist society.

The People's Republic of China affords more hope for Marxism and for humanity, though the high ideals of Mao appear to have been eroded by his passing and by the growth of China's economy towards a situation of excess, and its consequent recognition as a "World Power" (ie, economically significant). However, the situation for the artist in China can hardly be said to be encouraging, even though the example set on a general and a human level, certainly is, to many of us in the West. Perhaps the Chinese conformist and co-operative temperament itself negates the need for other than functional art (art as propaganda). I hope that will not continue to be the case . . .

3) A personal view on the nature of political art and political behaviour in general:



Expressly political art is merely a comment on the minute and regular fluctuations in the current of human aggressive/submissive, yang/yin, ragas/tamas, behaviour patterns, and is merely a tiny superimposed wave (or "decoration") on these small, repeated and cyclical disturbances. Political behaviour and change is little more significant, as in fact, despite the seemingly large nature of changes apparent to the consciousness in one's so short lifetime, our behaviour has, overall, changed little more than that of say, the ant species over the period of recorded history. Our grand notions of progress and history, are merely the seemingly endless, but always repeating, artefacts of instinct made conscious . . .

4) I am not a Neo-Platonist as regards aesthetics and do believe in "art for art's sake". Art is, I think in any era, a vague but profound image of future definite knowledge. It says things beyond the tautologies of reason, or the muddle and degradedness of everyday practical communication.

Art need not be in the marketplace. If one has an audience, so well and good - though why should we demand they pay? If not, then one plays to and for oneself. Indeed, if the artistic impulse alone is not sufficient to make one create then has one the right to consider oneself as a creator rather than as a merchant?

Art is, I think, ideally a statement of some existent philosophical - natural or meta-physical - principle or law. It should lead people from the known to at least a glimpse at most a cognizance, of the (previously) unknown. Hopefully, it should always give some new perspective on life and/or on itself. In other words, it should transcend and, with some luck, educate. (If this makes me, in Robert Hunter's terms, a liberal-left bourgeois idealist I am happy to comply.) It can serve other, more practically functional purposes, but is invariably debased in so doing. Its worth and function are synonymous, and its highest function is to further reveal Beauty/Truth (ie, "Isness") . . .

I happen to think that much Co-op music is less than revelatory at the present stage of the game, for various reasons. Of course most of us suffer from a failure to maintain a growth of vision (myself included) and have become repetitive, or at least predictably unpredictable (not that a point once made necessarily becomes redundant; certainly it doesn't until it is widely cognized and accepted, and to write music or any art work off once it has ceased to utterly surprise would be to write off the vast bulk of art and artists unnecessarily).

There is, however, a particular area of disquiet for me in current Co-op developments which relates to the employment of sound as sound, ie noises per se. I feel a lot of endeavours in this direction are failing, and in doing so, lowering the standard of the music, for reasons which, I think, home in pretty acutely on the musical philosophy of John Cage.

Cage is, more even than Stockhausen, the definitively rewarding explicator, on paper, of contemporary music theory, but to me he is largely in error in the way he interprets music in relation to the sounds of the natural world. Thus I find most of his actual music dull and for reasons which I shall attempt to elaborate in as far as they relate to Co-op music also. At the present state of musical/artistic evolution we cannot "read" natural sound patterns nearly as comprehensively as we can architectonically ordered sound, still less order it as musicians with that subtlety. Even where we can, many natural noises are seemingly banal, while others are vastly complex to study, and offer no guarantees of "readability" by other than a virtually infinite musical intelligence. Man-made noises are also usually only crudely relatable, often unaesthetic and, possibly also at odds with the rest of creation (like man himself), anyway.

Like Stockhausen I believe that music should be created at the very limits of conscious understanding, but not altogether beyond it. What I am getting at is that Co-op sound effects are, like Cage's, often not using either the listener's or the musician's understanding or skill and intelligence in any consistent or uniformly rewarding manner. Some effects seem both random and uninteresting, others one almost gets more than a glimmer from until one sees that the pattern is lost, through lack of understanding or perception on the part of one or other of the musicians. There is frequently no consistency of motive apparent. An interesting sound effect is followed by a dull one, a rhythmically relating few beats by an obvious miscalculation, and one wonders just how much the musicians realise the general simplistic level of the texture and rhythm cue relationships they are employing.

If one throws off most of the basic building materials of music, ie, formal relationships, other than those of timbre, amplitude, duration and proximity, one must make these elements compensatorily more interesting. It seems to me that this is not being achieved in most such experiments within the Co-op (and almost as rarely outside).

I should point out that I still enjoy and respect the music of many Co-op musicians, particularly when considering their work on the "real" instruments. Individually and collectively the musicians of Both Hands Free, for example, have given me much enjoyment with their original interpretation of contemporary musical vocabulary. As a group, their work has seemed ambitious, judicious in the selective use of purely textural elements, and rarely hackneyed.

Sound per se is - don't get me wrong - an area into which I think we have to expand our activities as creative musicians. I think we should, however, do so selectively, to maintain the music at - not inside or outside - the threshold of our musical understandings; without managing this the intricate and revelatory relationships which are apparent in the music of, say Stockhausen, Xenakis, Ligeti, Berio, and also in much free improvisation, the music can become alternately naive and indigestible, non-functional and dull . . .

#### Recitation:

(Note: no, please don't consult your Freud or Jung on this one! . . . It's not about music but works well in conjunction with it.)

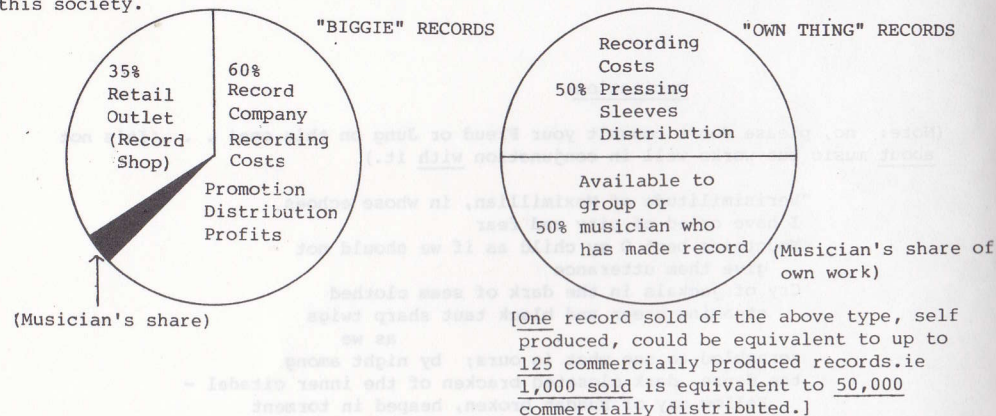
"Verisimilitude of Maximillian, in whose echoes  
I have cried of pity and fear  
Mountains bent O my child as if we should not  
give them utterance  
Cry of jackals in the dark of seam clothed  
steaming green and black taut sharp twigs  
as we  
scrambled to see what is ours; by night among  
the dense dark closeted bracken of the inner citadel -  
Fellow cry of Buddah broken, heaped in torment  
and living Old Cracked-Death in these mountains  
faun and ox have laid their privilege driven drive drown-  
ing for further reaches caught parting with depths of  
fungi as gangrene in the Makers discarded tomb  
Cry, descend as grey pales cut quick out stream  
slave circumstance placed in pain  
crack blind of crucial ceremony; poor posed  
plaintiff in cunning crazed flower of folded  
flesh cover quick smother tear-racked  
idle chivalry the / Existential Humus . . . "

John Boulding



The alternative culture movement of the late 60's seemed in those far off heady days to be the first real crisis of the producer society. But in the end it failed. It never became a real confrontation and certainly in the field of arts and especially music, it can be seen to have been a moral protest. Most of the musicians involved either sold out or dropped out. During the 70's the reaction set in and the huge entertainment conglomerates such as EMI are now more all powerful than ever before. As well as all the other forms of mass entertainment, EMI for example control musicians and their product, music, owning both the means of production (factories) and distribution outlets. It is from their own High Street retail shops that information is sent back to the central control about the success of their own products (Top Twenty). Through their own promotion system (TV, Radio, Newspapers, Concerts, Clubs, Cinema, more records, etc), the whole circuit is kept moving in a constant, never ending money spinning cycle. Any music which threatens this investment is effectively kept out. Music which might be considered "difficult" or "unfamiliar" (or "original") is forced to seek alternative outlets.

In the commercial music system, the musician ("Star") is the product. As he can never have control of this product he can only be sterile. Although he may appear to have freedom, he actually has a good deal less freedom than the artist outside the system. For the musician who has not been bought lies the consolation of controlling his own creative force. In the commercial system, the "Star" will always find himself exploited eventually, because he is being used to exploit others and cannot remain above this condition for long. In any case a system which demands that 99% fail in order that 1% succeed is madness. But many are still willing to join the rat race on any terms. These terms are worse for the creative musician than almost any other kind of creative person in this society.



A group or band can expect to receive less than 5% of the price of a commercial record. 30% of the relatively small amount they do receive is paid over to their management. This means the individual musician will receive less than one penny per record. Unless he can sell consistently in millions, or work as a solo star paying backing musicians a small "session" fee the usual recording musician is working for far less than he could reasonably expect. A successful "hit" record brings income from increased concert fees, but the record companies themselves reward musicians very poorly.

Hotel, transportation, equipment, wages for helpers (roadies, PR, etc), percentage of fees to management and agents, etc: all these factors mean that most commercial musicians actually working in the system rarely become wealthy. Their product is relatively poorly rewarded. At best, the system allows a musician the conditions in which to become "famous", but very rarely will he attain the financial returns anything like comparable to the profits of his record company. He is a commodity and one which is always shortlived and expendable. But his product sustains an army of affluent middlemen, promoters, agents, managers, fixers, pushers, journalists, wholesalers, retailers, producers and disc jockeys and every hustler and con man you can imagine exists.

In England, the musician has been ill-served by the BBC, the willing whore of commercial music. It is not so much a broadcasting company (broadcasting what? . . . who chooses?) but a "barrier" company. Another hour of Cilla Black (another?) represents the erasing of that hour for any other music and the potential audience it could reach. She is maintained as a manifestation of the establishment's idea of popular entertainment by a coterie of self-interested fixers, to the exclusion of "unfamiliar" faces, protecting their investment and cynically debasing popular culture in the process. Being seen on television is an end in itself and is accepted as automatically justifying itself. This is the only "product" of the media of television, which except on the rare occasions when performers of real ability are allowed access, functions as a kind of boring testcard featuring more or less recognisable human images.

In the 1950's in Britain, there flourished an anglicised jazz music, based on the folk-jazz style of New Orleans, which effectively became an alternative to establishment music. It was a participant thing and most schools, colleges and universities had their own bands. It was a music which was comparatively easy to play and the instruments required relatively cheap to acquire. The ability to read music was not necessary and in some cases was considered a hindrance, the aim of the musicians being to re-interpret the spirit and rawness of the original model - early American classic jazz of the 1920's. Benny Green, the musician and critic, has written that when he visited a Soho club in the company of Joe Harriot and saw George Melly singing for the first time, they couldn't believe he was "serious" about what he was doing. This attitude was typical of "establishment" musicians of the period, especially danceband musicians. Most of the young players of this music were students who went on to careers as doctors, architects, teachers, artists, engineers, etc, and the movement in any case was superseded by Rock'n'Roll at the end of the decade.

The Rhythm and Blues boom of the 60's was an essentially similar process in the beginning although in this case the American model chosen was that of the blues guitarists, especially those of the Chicago School. It was raw, simple, primitive music of high energy. Reading music was again unimportant as this was felt to present a barrier to identifying with the authentic expression of the music. Again the music was created by students, etc, of which there were probably a higher proportion from "working class" backgrounds than before, due to the feed through of the effects of the 1944 Butler Education Act. Many who were in higher education, especially art schools, "dropped out" sometimes to re-surface later as rock stars.

Through the Beatles, Stones, etc, popular music was revolutionised and the whole movement exported to America. In America, new groups developed and the scene was set for the media explosion of the late 60's, psychedelia, drugs, hippies, etc al. The songs of the folksinger and poet Bob Dylan were an overwhelming influence. It is from this period that popular music became intellectually respectable, with the new rock music separating from "pop" and assuming high snob value, becoming chic and taken up by trendy poseurs, who made new careers in journalism, broadcasting and record production. (Old Grey Whistle Test . . . etc).

Unfortunately, having plagiarised the music of Black America to achieve international fame and middle class respectability the musical inspiration of this movement is still unrecognised, largely. In other words black music (soul/Reggae/whatever) is even now merely providing the launching pad and blue-print for people like Elton John to use in their own careers (the Average White Band's first hit, "Pick Up the Pieces" was based on a James Brown riff. The music of James Brown is ignored by the BBC). Strangely, enough music which is white in origin, eg "Country and Western", Rock'n'Roll, and it's derivations always receives good coverage. Is this a conscious decision "from the top"? At any rate, the Top of the Pops Xmas TV edition, in two hourly parts, only featured the music of one black artist (Rose Royce). By such means, the British monopoly broadcasting system presents a deliberately distorted mirror view of popular music. It sets out to level standards to the lowest common denominator it can reach, debasing and insulting both the musicians and their audience in the process. Complacency and arrogance is the distinguishing hallmark of the attitude of the BBC towards what it considers to be minority forces in popular music. And don't be fooled by the blacks who have made it . . . they have had to go through many musical compromises before the BBC would play their records (Ms Diana Ross having to wait for her 8th release, and Barry White having had his own record company liquidated). I mention all this because one cannot discuss



musical developments in our society without considering the other conditions (socio-economic, financial, political, etc) which help it flourish or destroy it.

In musical terms 1969 was a watershed year. After that, fusion became possible. Miles Davis attended the funeral of Jimi Hendrix, in Seattle, endorsing the guitarist's status as a great black musician. Miles is reported to have become interested in the new possibilities of rock, on hearing the work of the Santana, a guitarist whose own improvising style was based on the modal majesty of John Coltrane (who had developed his style when with Miles in the late 50's). Incidentally, Coltrane has never been given credit for his influence on rock (Doors, Byrds, etc.). It is basically a modal approach to playing. Since this era the work of fine artists, such as James Brown, is felt to be somehow narrow in range, and does not offer "enough".

Jerry Liebmman has stated that for a while, around 1969, the ascendancy of Hendrix and the Cream obliterated Bop. But now the heavy rock cycle is coming to an end, and those musicians themselves realise their music will no longer be in the foreground. There is emerging a new interest in jazz because jazz communicates; it is a highly personal music; auto-biographical. In the new jazz you cannot easily replace a single member; groups are much more individual and personal. They are distinguished by a certain depth of approach. There is the idea of needing to "know" a person as a person to fully be able to play music with him. It is a music of great "density".

Improvised music relates to the jazz tradition if only because it was black American music which gave back to the European music the idea of improvisation which had been lost for more than a century. There is now a questioning of the role of the individual in society in contrast to the assembly line of the Swing era bands, we find in jazz a very personal grouping of individuals. It is no longer the soloist backed by the rhythm section either. All instruments have stepped forward. Any instrument or player is taken on merit, on the basis of what he feels he can do.

Audiences unfamiliar with these new developments find the hardest thing to accept is the lack of a simple, obvious, repeated rhythmic pulse. But jazz detached itself from the role of providing simply dance music a long time ago. In any case what can you dance to? Not just 4/4. This may be the disco staple diet, but as a rhythm, it is unknown in India and Africa. Turkish people dance quite naturally to 7/8, 9/4, 9/8, 11/8, etc. Bartok's research into Hungarian folk music also revealed unusual rhythms far removed from 4/4.

The jazz listener no longer has a familiar body of harmonic and melodic material to relate to . . . (hey, can you play . . .). For the bebop musician, this was How High the Moon . . . which was accepted, unquestioned and worked with. As personal as the musician might be, what he did was always incorporated into the fabric of the accepted style, within very fixed conventions . . . the modern improvising musician is using material which is as personal as his technique. Of course it is possible to argue that there are conventions and limitations upon the player, even in modern improvised music, and this is clearly becoming the case. But there is the conscious attempt to avoid cliché, formulae, pigeon-holing, perhaps to be astylistic.

The improvising musician attempts to create coherence and order in his work without dependence upon standardised formulae handed down, second-hand from previous music styles. The music is presented in a pure form with no attempt to embroider the results or to stitch along the seams or to gloss over the implications. There seems above all to be a new structuring order at work. It can be seen at work most clearly in modern sculpture (eg. Carl Plackmann) - it is the idea of space itself as a structuring factor. This is revolutionary as applied to visual art, and can be compared in importance with the early renaissance art and the invention of perspective, as seen in the work of Giotto, Uccello, Piero della Francesca, etc.

But this is not to state that improvised music is merely avant garde. True there are very sophisticated players with a high degree of knowledge, and instrumentalists of virtuoso ability. But there are other notions around; that all can play or should be allowed the opportunity to play, this contains new implications about music as a human and social activity. Importantly there are considered to be no superstars . . . at least not in the economic sense.

The leaders of the 1968 revolution were recently interviewed, Alain Geismar, Danny Cohn-Bendit, and others gave their views about that period and about what is happening now.

All are still deeply opposed to the way society is organised; all appear to believe an alternative is not only possible but on the way. Alain Geismar stated that in 1968 the movement was there but the mentalities were not ready. Today it is the other way around. Much has remained from 1968. It is still very much alive. Look at the movements today, the women's movements, ecologists . . . Cohn-Bendit stated . . . Nowadays you have to conduct politics in the first person: you start with yourself: how can I opt out of the things I don't like and opt into the new ones? There are a thousand communes which refuse in a quiet and individual way, what the producer society has to offer. We had the "Tunnix" ("Do nothing") meeting in Berlin. Next Summer there will be a gigantic get-together of friends of every kind. The invitation goes out to workers, dissidents, women, homosexuals, musicians, militants, urban freaks, lesbians, communists, health food eaters, ecologists, artists, visionaries and hash smokers.

All these separate groups are gradually becoming the dominant force in society. At this stage they should stay separate: but they are beginning to find their common denominator. People are against organisation, things that end up producing the opposite of what they set out to do. What we need today is a travel agency instead of a party: so that people can see what is happening elsewhere. Even the leftist groups are losing appeal and so in France you get the growth of autonomes . . . leftists who won't join any group.

There is no one centre of the world (cultural, economic, political, religious): there are as many centres as there are people. There are as many ways of making music as there are composers, players.

Atonality has happened, the disintegration of harmonic structure: cadence and modality have lost their edge. There is a denial of harmony as a structural means: the problem is to look for another structural means. (Harmonic structure is a recent phenomenon in western music in any case.)

Contemporary art and music do not communicate an individual's conception in ordered structures, but they implement processes which are, in our daily lives, opportunities for perception. The creative musician discovers means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or the expression of human sentiments.

Music is in transition from the key based music of the past to the all sound music of the future. (Musical habits include scales, modes, theories of counterpoint and harmony . . . walking on stepping stones . . . twelve in the case of the tone row.)

The new music is not the music of the future: but the new music of this moment now, and that itself is continually changing.

Audiences must entertain no preconceptions, no predictions. There is no easily read beginning, middle and end as in the music of the past.

There is a theory of inclusion: all audible sounds are available for inclusion in new music. You don't separate music from life to get art.



Art and artists are under attack, or at least suspicion, from many different groups of people of diverse and even incompatible dispositions. The most deadening opposition is the stifling weight of indifference from the wide public (condescendingly termed "the masses" by those who feel themselves set apart from it). Every serious artist today knows that, whatever heights he reaches in his particular mode of expression, his work will be completely ignored by the great majority of his contemporaries and not fully understood even by those who set themselves up as his champions and patrons. To coin a paraphrase: You can be sure of pleasing none of the people most of the time. As a result many socially conscious artists, riddled with guilt that they are part of a small, ready-made elite comprising the few who have the necessary training, leisure, and patience to be aware of cultural affairs (quite apart from their economic difficulty in relying on such an elite for sustenance), go out of their way to compromise themselves in various degrees in order both to fulfil what they see as their social commitments and to indulge in the bliss of a steady income, and not only commit creative suicide by unpicking the threads of their self-expression by a conscious process, but miss their mark with the wider public whose favourite forms they have mastered.

A more violent form of hostility comes from the "Babbitts" of our society, those sober, conforming, rate-paying citizens with just enough social standing to worry about losing it through allying themselves with unpopular movements. Few of these worthies will applaud if an art-gallery or concert hall is mooted in a borough where there is no multi-storey car-park; they regard public money spent on the arts as a shameful waste, and their picture of the artist himself, unless long dead and institutionalized, displays the venomous ridicule reserved for hippies, student radicals, homosexuals, and almost all foreigners. They do not, or will not see that a share of that money spent on the arts will at least relieve a few artists from that bohemian stance which for most is neither easy nor rewarding to maintain. Least of all do they wish to give quarter to a class of persons who might, if their activities are allowed to continue, demonstrate the lives of the Babbitts to be somehow incomplete.

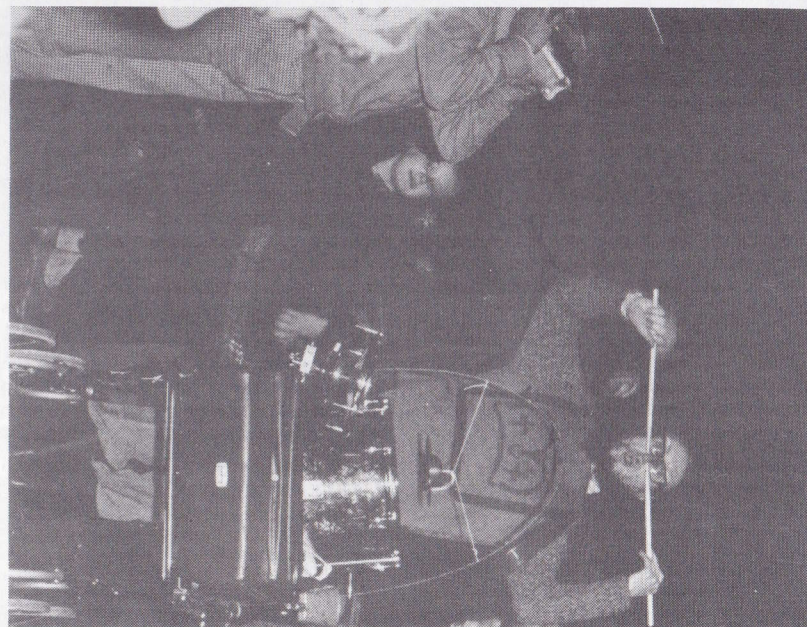
Additionally resentful are the self-styled spokesmen of, or more commonly for, the working-classes, who see in the institutions of art yet another means to mystify and manipulate the masses, the implication being that the latter can neither understand it, nor would they approve if they could. Coupled with this view, is the notion that awareness of cultural tradition is a token only of those who have attained to "higher" education, and therefore is yet another item of currency in the bourgeois purse and emphasises further the comparative poverty of the proletariat.

With all this in mind, is there any counter to the view, seemingly ingrained in this and other English-speaking countries, that the arts are merely a layer of marmalade grudgingly added to the communal slice, to be foregone during years of economic austerity (as ours are, we are continually told)? For it to seem otherwise, the artists alone can demonstrate their indispensability more effectively than any well-meaning, but involved, propagandist. We are after all specialists in expression; the fundamental message that is ours to express is: I am here, you need me.

Long before he attains maturity, a professional artist, in order to flourish, must have a routine of working which is like no-one else's, not even that of a fellow artist. This routine is personal and cannot be imposed from outside. If his phases of activity are ordered by an outside agency, he becomes a mere functionary, and indeed there is a case for saying that this functionary phase is important in that it helps him shape his own cycle of activity by resistance. At its highest level, it is perhaps the only form or work which is also play, and one who has attained this level is, in relation to society, a free human being. Freedom is the attribute most envied by those who do not have it, and those who aspire to it often have to pay a very high price indeed.



Freddie Hill & Bob Helson, Street Theatre Performance -  
'The Pursuit & Capture of Guy Fawkes', Montpellier, Bristol  
(Nov '78)





"improvisors writing about improvisation very quickly leads to delusions of grandeur . . . and galloping aesthetic debility." (Derek Bailey)

Foreword: I hereby apologise to DB for further involving him in something which he himself might choose to avoid, and I do so only to avoid plagiarizing his remark; and further I apologise for quoting only part of his original statement. Hopefully my reason for doing so is at least implied in the following.

It is perhaps harmful to the all-important musician's attitude to induce a cultural or political myopia in relation to improvisation; to become vain as it were about a natural beauty; to find this and that use for improvising and insist that everyone be motivated in the same way, for the same reason.

The very idea and act of playing music (or writing words, or drawing or talking) without rules is of great import to the healing of diseased Western thought. To me improvisation is so important because it has its origin in the human subconscious; and is not particularly important because "anyone can do it" (which they sort of can do; any expression-form - for example, talking - demands a command of the elements of expression so that ideas can be expressed fully enough to justify spending a lifetime with them).

To me, "anybody can do it", is a misleading concept because it implies that: "music improvisation is only a hobby or entertainment" or that "virtuosity, even instant virtuosity, is no more appreciable than mediocrity." Though it is true (and importantly so) that notions of 'professionalism' are perhaps outmoded in the theory (curseword) of improvisation; it seems to me that something so incredible as a key to the subconscious should be treated with at least the seriousness of obsession; at least a lifetime should be devoted to working on it (not only on the cultivation of response-abilities such as instrumental proficiency, but in terms of cultivating an attitude of oracle). To me having people use and trust their subconscious would be in itself a great revolution.

Improvisation for me is neither simply a tool whereby the economic 'Beaste of Capitalism can be toppled'. It will be fatal to the sincerity of improvisation if it becomes absorbed in the rhetoric of any given interest group, for in that case an essentially honest expression is called a lie to improvisors of other interests, in which case the first interest group has committed an authoritarian act, has tried to steal something everyone possesses.

The real enemy of improvisation or automatism is possibly populism, because populism encourages adherence to jingoisms and rhetoric instead of individual thought; the long range strength of improvisation as an expressive medium can easily be damaged by those who would even accidentally alienate or ostracize those outside their own interest group by defining improvisation in too limited terms; making it too easily passed off as "what some people I don't like are into".

Free music is a new kind of folk music, based on a shared mentality or spirit rather than racial or geographical concentrations. The "folks" of this new folk music are of many (and increasingly) different persuasions, but we are all just people after all.

Therefore, for me to try to talk about the cultural aspects of improvisation is rather presumptuous, because our cultures are so huge and varied, and people are so diverse that I could at best even herein be talking about my own interest groups' interests. (The surreal and the liberating).

So for me, the Spirit; for others, their own search; for us all: that which is finer than oppression, indifference, or myopia.

After last year's festival - when so many musicians came to Bristol from all over the country - it seemed like a good idea to visit some of the more isolated improvisors near us and play together with them. So that was how a coach-load of us set out for Wiltshire one summer Sunday to make music at the spiritual centre of Neolithic England.

The bare chalk uplands around the great sun temple of Avebury have their own music and in the heat of the day buzzing, rustling pipes and whistles blended with grasses and insects. Others picked up more powerful vibrations - perhaps from the nearby Blowing Stone, a boulder riddled with holes through which King Alfred is reputed to have blown a trumpet call to rally his troops before defeating the invading Danes. It could be that we were repeating tradition as an angry group of German tourists repacked their folding picnic table and decamped from the lay-by below Silbury Hill.

Much of the music related not to natural sounds but to contemporary man - as when it was discovered that the overhead airblowers in the coach provided a constant airflow for whistles - or when a combine harvester was incorporated in a duet. But no-one suggested we move a few miles southwards to Salisbury Plain to sample the rich percussion of Chieftain tanks being tested (in vain) for Iran.

"130 feet high, covering an area of 5½ acres, and with a diameter of just over 100 feet across its flat top, Silbury Hill is the largest prehistoric man-made mound in Europe . . . Many clues suggest to us that the ancient men built upon the hills, not for reasons of war, but because the remoulding of the countryside was an integral part of their way of life; that by sculpturing the forms of the hills and downs, they could enhance and magnify those currents of natural energies that flowed, and still do flow, through the body of the earth, and by the use of sound, movement, and above all thought, in the form of solemn and joyful ceremonies they could manipulate the vibrations in order to bring the bountiful and vital life force flowing through the land and the people."

Janet and Colin Bord "Mysterious Britain" P76 (Paladin 1974)

"I can't see the point in disturbing pre-historic spiritual centres with man-made music."

(Co-op musician's reason for not coming on the trip)

- 
- "Let's go and play at West Kennet Long Barrow."
  - "Aw, no - I've already done it."
  - "What? - In this kind of music, that's like saying you've already played the Albert Hall."





Top: The Summit of Silbury Hill



Bottom: Will Menter



Bob Helson



To be drawn between trees by music, a labyrinth of standing trees, a pattern drawn by sound, assymetric, almost tentative, a path hung with changed sound, tangles of music, bells of wind, percussion of leaves, song of birds with no source, clash of sun on bark and leaf, fragments of pale sky, clatter of dust - discovery - dancing - uncovering (of dust).

The change - (in the time - held - ) - irregular pulse, mystery of unexplained movement, fractured flickering, apparently aimless - figures in bright colours - hard yellow - clear green - red and dark red - thick black - blue that is all the blues you can remember and many that you have never seen, nor will perhaps. The quality of strange. This shall appear when it is least present, as if this were seen whilst out walking. The quality of unreal - as if it were not taking place nor will - nor has been - has happened for that moment only - seen only at the edges - the act of focus causes the image to disappear as pale stars on hazy nights.

Martin Mayes - Richard Coldman



Carlos Trinidad from Portugal



it will pass

outside the cobwebs

of the universe

spin patterns in the sky

a battery of images and sound

my feelings are magnetic

i draw you close to me

it sounds like the martians are landing

we float away among the clouds

minute figures in a dream like landscape

below us play chess and put make up on

reality a prepared piano for those

who glimpse this nightmare world never forget

barry edgar pilcher



THE TELEPHONE CALL

by RON CAINES

The following 'phone call took place late one night, earlier this year:

The 'phone rings in the house of Steve Skinner. Steve is a part-time lecturer and also plays alto sax from time to time, with friends . . . He is just going to bed.

Trring, Trringg, trring . . . Steve picks up the 'phone . . .

STEVE: "Hullo?"

VOICE: "Hello."

STEVE: "Who's calling?"

VOICE: "Is that Steve Skinner?"

STEVE: "Yes, this is Steve. Who's that?"

VOICE: "Steve Skinner, the alto player?"

STEVE: "Yes. Who's speaking?"

VOICE: "Derek."

STEVE: "Oh" (thinks . . . "CHRIST . . . HE'S CALLED . . .")

DEREK: "Look, I was . . ." (interference from bad line loses rest of sentence)

STEVE: "How are you? I expect you're busy . . . I still play a bit, you know, the alto and that"

DEREK: "What are you doing on the 12th?"

STEVE: "Not a lot I shouldn't think. Uhh, what day would that be?"

DEREK: "It's a Saturday."

STEVE: "Hang on. I'll get me diary. Stay there." (Looks for diary. Most of the pages are blank, and in fact he has nothing fixed for the rest of the year.)

STEVE: "Hey. Are you there?"

DEREK: "Yes"

STEVE: "I'm definitely free on the 12th."

DEREK: "Good."

STEVE: "In fact I'm free all the previous week, and the rest of the month as well."

DEREK: "You are?"

STEVE: "Yeah. I'm definitely available. I'm free on the 12th certainly."

DEREK: "You were planning on being in that day?"

STEVE: "Yes. Yes. Nothing planned. No."

DEREK: "Good. I was going to ask you . . ."

STEVE: "Yeah. Go on. Fire away. What is it?"

DEREK: "Would it be all right if I came round to your place with my mate and watched the Cup Final on your telly? . . . Hullo . . . Are you there Steve . . .?"

STEVE: (Long pause) "Ah. Yeah. I'm here. Ah. Sure . . . that'll be fine."

DEREK: "Good. So it'll be all right if I come round, say about half past two?"

STEVE: "Certainly. Look forward to seeing you. We can have a chat about things."

DEREK: "Well. Goodbye. See you on the 12th."

STEVE: "Bye, Derek."

Steve puts down the 'phone and climbs the stairs to bed. Suddenly he's very tired.

When he gets to the bedroom, his wife asks him who was calling. "Oh, that was Derek."

"Funny, he's never rung you before," said his wife, in reply. "No," said Steve, "That's what I was thinking."



But when was the recent music of Derek Bailey? Surely it was improvised music, which only occurs now. It is played, and then it stops, and what's left of it? As far as our ears are concerned, nothing. And since there's nothing left, what difference does it make how "recently" it stopped? It isn't something left behind by the musician like a book or a carved stone, in fact it isn't an object he creates at all, which we could see set in its place in the past like a milestone. What sense does it make, then, to talk about its development in the past, as if it were something we still had before us to study? Once it has stopped it has completely stopped, and our memory is of nothing but its general effect, whether it stopped yesterday or ten years ago. The actual details of the music, which are where its real quality resides, are available to us only at the moment of listening. The entire past of improvised music is one past.

These are simple and obvious things to say about music such as Bailey's. But I think it is important to realise the disruptions improvisation causes in our received conceptions of music, which are of music as an object. Improvisation, by eliminating repeatability, forces the art of music into its own proper condition, as the art which occurs within time, and the listener has to accept that. He hates it. He wants something left behind, to keep. He thinks the music is "gone" or even "lost" if it can't re-occur. But it isn't either of those things - it is simply stopped. If it were a problem, recording would solve it, but instead recording creates a problem by disrupting the disruption of improvisation - by destroying its uniqueness. I think that improvisation, by forcing the return of music as actual performance within time and nowhere else, has the possibility of relating directly to personal time-perception, and of resisting the neurotic monumentalism of personal time which we see at its grossest in such products as "This is Your Life", but which informs the entire politics and public spectacle of this society. But it won't do this simply by being improvised - music as beauty and force transcends the terms of its production, and uses them as a leverage onto a reality which it serves by its intrinsic qualities. Improvisation is, actually, the music's form.

Another disruption: where is Derek Bailey's recent music if (as it happens in my recent listening experience of him for 6 months) he is playing in group improvised music? Whose music is an improvised duo or sextet? A composer can claim "his" music as the fathering figure over and above any number of performers, but in group improvisation, not only is each person's music donated into a social conditions where it disappears (eg, there is no sense in talking of Derek Bailey's music when what he does might be entirely a matter of who he is playing with at the time and what they are doing), but more than that, the group context places no limits on the individual's potential or responsibility as a musician. Everything he does is still entirely "his" even as it disappears into the ensemble. But "his music" becomes a matter of the kind of pressure he puts on the group - the level of attainment the others are forced to live up to, or the nature of his response against theirs. Here again, only the music's intrinsic qualities, not its freedom and not its style, will make the group work.

These disruptions are essentially disruptions of assumption, obfuscation and distortion. Their function is that of recovery and return: to re-discover the primal condition of instrumental music as an occurrence within time and place. If in doing this, the music is to act positively upon the world, it is important that its disruptiveness doesn't over balance its staying power; it must retain its inner core, which is what I keep referring to as its "intrinsic qualities" - that which vanishes as soon as the music stops. The recent music of Derek Bailey seems to me to prove this necessity, as against superficially more radical forms of disruption which seek to eliminate musical quality as an end. A music without technique or personal vocabulary is one in which the musical event is defined by the context of performance alone, and this is surely in the end formalistic, and cannot but become rigid and predictable, since context cannot supply any workable materials of change. You are forced back on the cultural condition (artistic expectancy) under attack as your source of supply if you refuse self-generated energy, and then the performance can only endorse what it resents. It is an act of more negation, and being void of content is incapable of radical disruption.

But what is it, then, this inner core or intrinsic quality of the music, and what has it been up to recently in the music of Derek Bailey? Can this be said at all? The moment of listening is our only experience of it. Our memories are of the music's sur-

face, its general effect and its style. The documentation (recording) may preserve most of the detail, but does it render the music's final quality available for re-inspection? I doubt it, because the music's intrinsic nature is there isolated from its occasion (its improvisation - its form) and so is stripped of its disruptiveness. And the disruptiveness is in some way integral to the music's quality, for without it the music is "fixed", and no longer a volatile, improvisatory, act. And if writing could define or describe the music's intrinsic quality, wouldn't that amount to another form of documentation of the music, and so equally destroy it? Even as I mention the necessity of an "inner core" of intrinsically musical quality, I see in my mind's eye several hundred professional nostalgists and sly imitators nodding their heads in approval. The draught they make is awful. For since the music's innate quality cannot be experienced away from the music's moment of occurrence, it can only be conceived at any other time as a hypothetical, static and surrogate entity - isolated from disruption, it can only be a weapon of conservatism. For this, really, is the music's permanence.

The music's what? So something is left behind? No. Nothing is left behind. What is its permanence then? I don't know.

What we do "still have" of past music is its result, which is, as regards Derek Bailey's recent music: (a) its result in the music - what he is playing at this moment [8.05pm 15 March 1979: he's playing with COMPANY in Bristol] or will play, or what anyone else will or does play which would have been different if Derek Bailey's recent music hadn't occurred; (b) its result on those who hear it - on their lives.

Via disruptive paradoxes of the listening experience.

Appendix A: EFFECT The recent music of Derek Bailey has developed further than anyone could have predicted the hard-edge anti-sentimentality which was a vital factor from the start. For some time now, the rich and fast moving linear/contrapuntal construct which might be thought of as his "normal" playing, has been liable to punctuation and interruption by episodes of sheer bareness and harshness: dry and almost toneless points of attack, minimal content, renunciation of rhythmic irregularity and all factors of a rich texture. I remember such things years and years ago, but probably not with the emphatic austerity by which unreverberating tones may scrape and crack out of the guitar sometimes now. It is perhaps especially in group playing with strings on acoustic (where the bowed instruments tend to mask what guitar resonance there might be) that Bailey's music seems characterised in a Beckett-like bleakness, as there it pushes a linear player like Honsinger deeper and deeper into his own intensity. There are a mass of reasons why I find this quality a vitally important one in his recent playing, and why I think it is in fact partly to a fullness and richness which it seems to negate. But it can be brought to two factors: detail and continuity. The detail depends on how hard you listen, and is too close for analysis - but it would be a matter of perceiving a reverberatory richness of guitar tone in a completely hidden state, closed and encapsulated within the bleakness, or occurring at such speed that it is reduced to a harsh snap. The continuity would be a matter of the careful release of breadth of tone from that encapsulation, without it ever being allowed independence from the hard, material sounds which indicate its physical origin. This means that the bleakness is there all the time, right through the "normal" rich or full playing, and is not a minimalist or cynical form of austerity, but rather an anchorage on reality. The musical world created completes itself into a whole and makes sense, just as at the opposite end of the scale from this bleakness we can locate the episodes of parody and satire, which are the only occasion when the harsh, physical sounds are abandoned. This balance re-emphasises the central area - between these two outer bounds of "nothing" the fastest and fullest playing stands all the firmer on its own ground.

No writing can say exactly "how" this is done. I can only assert that within these fields of action Bailey's music is now marked by a justness and realism in the slightest act, as a matter almost of habit from the years of improvising, whatever failures and passage-work are passed through. By "justness" I mean that is has to be as it is - there are not alternatives. By "realism" I mean that the music as a whole refers us to a sense of the world, as a whole and as it is, met head-on without any comforting lenses or screens of pathos - a difficulty and resistance, to which this music is also the reward. I think it gets there because it doesn't need to refer us to any elsewhere. So much music, of all kinds, is in effect a variation on some other, pre-existing music



which we recognise subconsciously while listening, and the music we hear bases itself on manipulating and foiling the expectations of this other, hypothetical music. Bailey's music doesn't do that. It isn't striving to get away from some other music - it got away ages ago; it is now here. It strives only to be itself, to be true.

PS The above is inevitably based largely on recent recordings of Bailey's music, treated, I hope, as a harmless aid to memory. These consist of: his part in the magnificent record of the group K'ploeng (Claxon 78.2), his "Duets and Trios" album with five masterly Japanese improvisors on Kitty 1034, and all the Company records on Incus, plus a BBC solo broadcast in August 1978. There is also implicit reference to COMPANY in Derby two days ago, and a concert with Beresford, Day, Toop and Cusack in London some time last year.

Appendix B: RESULT In the television programme "This is Your Life", every week someone going about his business of a Wednesday evening is waylaid by an Irish version of Death and dragged into a morgue-cum-torture-chamber decked out in artificial modern furniture and coloured photographs of walls. The Irish death-sphinx reads out to him from a book the catalogue of miserable failures and deceits and paltry excuses which constitute his life. He is pinned in a chair by bright lights and two million half-closed eyes focused through a laser tube. A series of ghosts is brought in, one by one, to pronounce on him. Each ghost is heralded by its disembodied voice through a concealed megaphone system, saying a short sentence which lays its claim on the victim, sets its hook on him - "I knew you - Remember?" Then the ghost appears, to ghost music and the victim has to embrace it. There is no alternative to this. The ghost has to be embraced, decayed or soft or hard as it may be, so many years older now, so much the knowledge of time, it has to be kissed. By this ritual the victim owns the ghost as his past, and has to listen to its speech. Death draws it aside and coaxes it into its party piece - meticulously rehearsed and timed, carefully selected, learned by heart. The ghost, it is evident, also hates to be there, and speaks under heavy duress, but has to speak: it is essential to the ritual. So it speaks as an actor, professionally insincere, or it does its best as an ordinary person, utter stranger in the death-world of television struggling against millions of half-eyes to exist at all. One anecdote is permitted. That is the torture. It hurts, not because it is revealing or aggressive, but because it is concealing and comforting - because it is next to nothing and nothing else is permitted. Out of the entire life-knowledge, history of response or actual love of two people, one silly story, one mean piece of fortuitous coyness is permitted - to last between 30 seconds and two minutes. An amusing and entertaining instance. His life is reduced before his eyes to about ten of these, plus the careers-department card-file, and his is forbidden to be, or ever to have been, anything more than this. His history is fed back to him in microscopic splinters of mirror all showing him as the same thing - a combination of efficient machine and cuddly toy, that is all anyone is allowed to be. The machine works and the toy is cuddled until it all stops. As ghost follows ghost they assemble round the victim, slowly building up a family group plus class photograph which is to be his visual epitaph, stuck in the middle surrounded by ghosts. There is a screen, showing distant ghosts, too far away or busy to materialise, sending purposive spirit-messages. 1-minute film clips, family snaps, crumbs of past meals, stone-dust of his tombstone. The victim at the centre of this is always, and essentially, "wonderful": that is his crime and his sentence to torture and death - wonderful, efficient and cuddly. Watch his eyes on the close-up, see them frantically blinking and shifting, glancing for a lost hope of escape; his eyes show the torture on him as he knows, or we know through him, what he really is, and the pretences and evils and losses and screaming voids in his intimacies with all these ghosts. And the audience - a whole theatre full of people (blocking his exit) completely unknown to him, representatives of the laser-half-eyes, who have come here specifically to witness this destruction of his life and to applaud it. "Yes", they say, "This is your life. And ours. We are all bits of nothing in a wilderness. We are bewitched into nonentity. This is all our lives." They applaud when they should, and laugh strictly on cue, throughout. Half an hour and it is over. The ghosts throng, the ghost music resounds. He is now officially dead, and buried as he vanishes from the screen. He enters his grave clutching the book, so generously donated to him at the climax of the wake. The book is his life as another, as it is allowed in the society posited by the ritual - it is what he had made, what he has left behind. Something to be proud of. Grave-goods, his for ever. The programme is very popular and has been running for some twenty years. It must have killed off

something in the area of a thousand people by now. A thousand dead books.

All this has nothing to do with the recent music of Derek Bailey. Except that Derek Bailey has never been asked to be on the programme, and neither has his music. Except that there is something in his music which comprehends, without speaking, what it is in human beings that makes "This is Your Life" possible. A bleakness. There is also, the music, or something else, seems to say, a catch, which is, that in order to be on this programme you have to be someone who, in some way, does not really exist in the first place. Never having lived is the qualification for this death. Only the professional, the artist, so expert at shamming death, can survive it.

Derek . . .





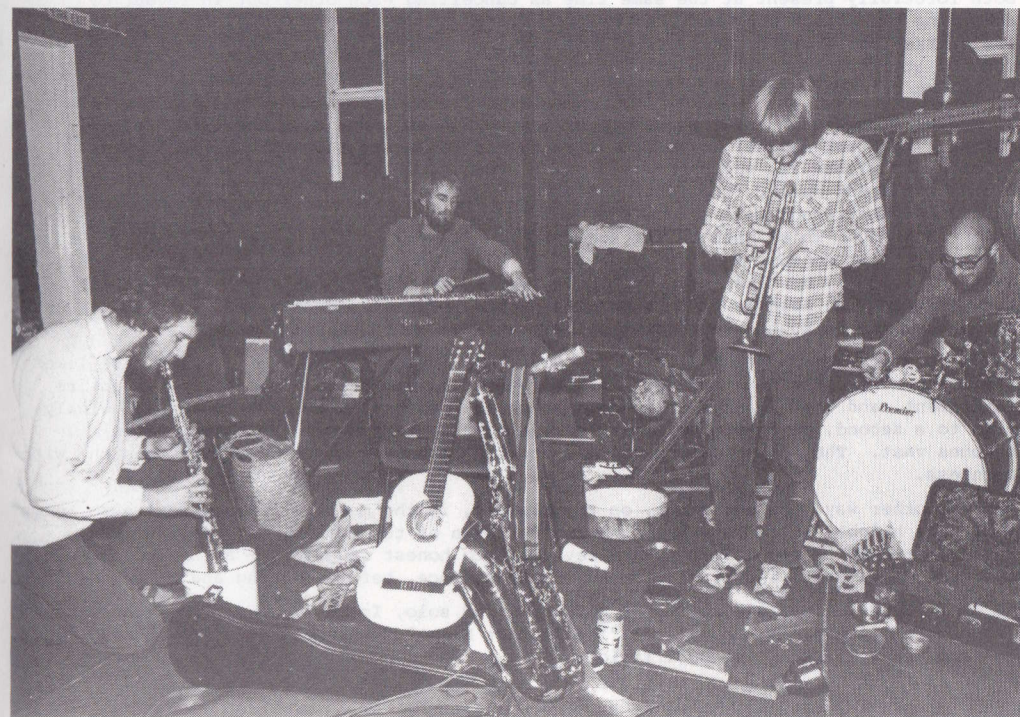
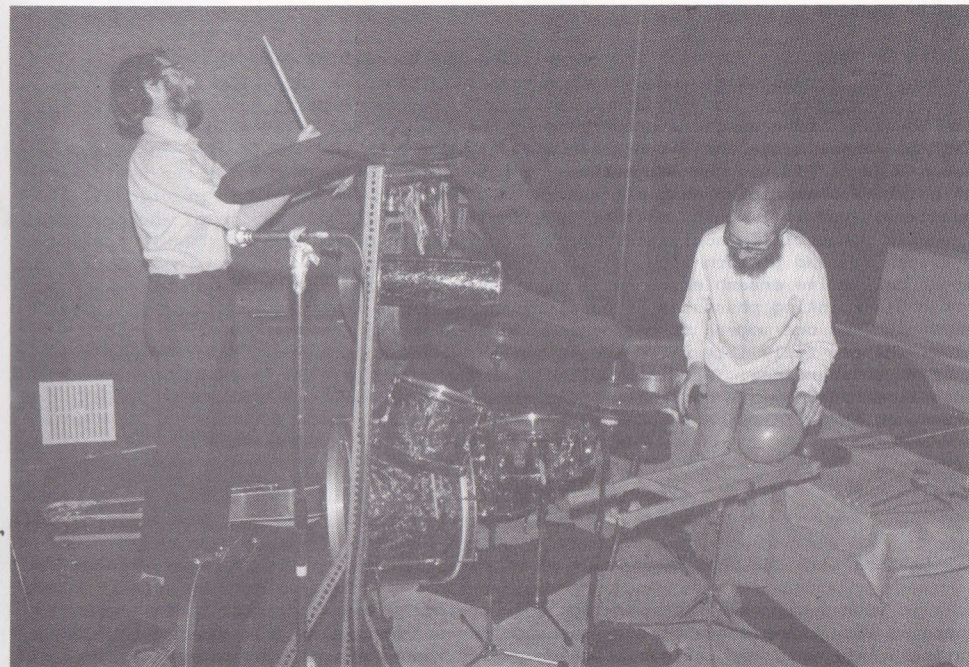
## TWO THINGS ABOUT 'BOTH HANDS FREE'

by PETER RILEY

- 1) Tough Quietness: Many young (-er, -ish) improvisation groups go in for this predominantly quiet, spaced-out playing, but BHF is marked by a toughness in its quietness, as by a speed in its sparseness. It doesn't, even when it most seems to, court the sentimentality of pastoral calm: drowsy tinklings faint oriental twinges, presexual flutters. There are also important exceptions to BHF's quietness - important because they maintain the same kind of playing and thus help to define the kind of quietness it is. The quietness is a group ambience; the toughness is donated separately by each player: by Menter's linear persistence, by Langford's brittle tension, and by Helson's sharp and unpredictable virtuosity.
- 2) Quiet Toughness: There's a great distance between the players, most apparent when Langford plays tenor. Menter's playing is lithe and sinuous; unhurried, often melismatic, and stretched-out; this contrasts sharply with Langford's sax playing: sharp and brief, spluttering or grating (plus some "soft" sax, which is also very distinct from Menter's straight attack). Menter favours the middle of the instrument, Langford the edge. Langford's playing on electric piano is a masterpiece of concealment, for it almost never sounds like an electric piano, but like an amplified guitar, a saxophone, or something undefined. Those who turn green when the el.pf. is announced need have no fears - here it becomes an improvisational instrument. It's a tentative, but distinct playing. On both instruments Langford's predilection for concealment (outer edge playing) stands sharply against Menter's direct approach. Helson is the referee of this match; his percussion, which is remarkably swift and pointed, is the cohesive factor of the group, while itself being a third term, different from either of the others. It's interesting how much of the trio playing is, in fact or in effect, duo playing, as the group's tripartite contrast tends to sort itself out into a polarity. Given these wide distances separating the players, they play very much together, listening and responding, and the tension thus formed is an important location of the toughness they all put into the group-work. Playing closely together at such a distance, requires a constant alertness, as a kind of safeguard of the individual player's musical distinctness, which is put into action in a field of risk against potentially alien friends.

"Tough quietness" means they make sure it is tough because it is quiet, and would otherwise lapse into dreaminess. "Quiet toughness" means they keep it quiet because it is tough, and could easily lapse into aggression.

NOTE: This is based on (a) BHF's record "Use from the Pocket", Zyzzyx 1.  
(b) Their broadcast in February 1979.



Concerts at Bristol Arts Centre: Top, Ian Menter/Bob Helson Duo  
Bottom: Both Hands Free with William Embling (Saxoviotrump)



William Embling is a musician who exemplifies the beneficial aspects of a particular development of collective improvisation that also contains the authority of the individually approached and maintained technique. William Embling is a true researcher into the range of acoustical properties of the trumpet and related instruments; his essential experiments and discoveries lead his music to the emotionally-intellectually linked objectifying of the subjective: a test of achievement outside the sentiment of manipulative romanticism that defines the abuse of art and people in practically all industrial (popular) music, whether tagged with the political device of the progressive or openly commercially motivated. Many opportunities over the past roughly two years to listen to, and perform with, William Embling, in contexts ranging from solo/duo to larger collective ensembles, make it clear that he is an ideal musician with whom to work. His thinking possesses an equality and strength that responds, and initiates response, from one moment of performance to another, so that he and his musical colleagues are fully integrated into discoveries and resolution of performance and yet maintain independence. William Embling's selfless application to the situation of the music is matched by his generosity of musical feeling for, and interest in, his colleagues in performance.

## EVAN PARKER PLAYS THE SAXOPHONE . . .

by PETER RILEY

. . . in such a way that fragmentation and continuity are: not merely coincident (there is some coincidence of fragmentation and continuity in just about everybody's playing); the word for it is coadjutant, which means "mutually helping or assisting." Another way of expressing the paradox is to say that fragmentation and continuity are both forcefully present at the same time as cancelling each other out in favour of something else which they mutually help to bring into existence. They are coaxial. The centre (axle) which the edges of his playing subserve is, I think specified by his mode of attack as the attainment of musical plateaux - areas of raised ground separated by cracks or abysses or vast plains.

It starts from his intense awareness of the saxophone body, as a tube of potential matter (vibratable space) to be activated by the reed, and that this air-column has departments within it, which the reed can contact separately, and move from one to another at great speed. The instrumental body is felt as a solid and explosive multi-substance penetrated via the reed, thus not as a self-extension at all, but as something quite dangerous, which gathers its excitement when handled like a red-hot poker. It is handled by fast contact and resilience. Its resistance to the player is immense. It wants to lead him down the oily smooth centre of its tonal range, and he absolutely refuses this. He attacks it in short sharp thrusts which reduce its fullness to cracks and snaps, and he bounces off these earthy strikes up to his plateaux.

There is a percussionist or a guitarist somewhere inside Evan Parker's beard. He likes his notes to start with a bang or a pluck, which the momentary presence of the entire instrument, and then leap up from there to the purer tone. It can happen very quickly - 10 to a second, or through circular breathing an extended plateau (with cracks) becomes vast. The course of the music is continual ascent crossed (in the tension) with evenness.

And the other way this works out, on the plateau, is the machine-like motion which keeps it at its height, which is a bright simplification of the musical materials - vast ranges narrowed to essentials, vast cleverness to honest stupidity - at the approach of the music's zenith. The final plateau is the silence, before, during and after the music.

NB This is principally a review of *Monoceros*, EP solo, Incus 27, but also, ignoring other participants, draws from "The Longest Night" 2 volumes, Ogun 120 and 420 (duo), and "Real Time", Ictus 0006 (trio).

NOTES ON LEO SMITH AND BOB HELSON  
ARISING FROM A CONCERT

by WILL MENTER

The concert takes place on 28 May 1979, in Bristol. It starts with three solo improvisations by Leo Smith using trumpet, flugelhorn, thumb piano and flute. Even before he plays, it is clear that he is going to confront the problem boldly. He stands near the audience facing them squarely; feet slightly apart and the trumpet pointing directly towards the back of the concert hall.

During the first few minutes, we learn much:

Two staccato notes with space between them - middle C# up to G# - and then a long high F breaking into a complex multiphonic with spit and vibration combining. A short, low E answering the first note and then a flowing chromatic phrase in the middle register hinting at a triplet rhythm. Down, then up, then down again. Silence.

The extremes have already been defined within the first half minute of the piece. Short notes, long notes, fast notes, silence, high, low. It is effectively a gathering together of materials and we infer that the improvisation will consist of a development and elaboration of these materials.

The same multiphonic based on high F, soon resolving to E then D and Eb. A split note staccato on middle Eb, a long round tone on D, slurred to a shorter C. Short silence. Staccato low F#, D, middle F#. Another chromatic phrase, longer this time, and in a lower, richer area of the horn. Starts on middle A, down to the lowest register and ending again on middle F#.

All the sounds to be made during this improvisation will be purposefully beautiful.

New melodic material is now introduced. Top A slurred to Bb, breath, A (D) G G# - played very definitely, on beat and with no particular rhythmic inflection. D# (cracked), C#; C, A#. Then, surprisingly, the first quiet notes - low A#, A, C#. Upbeat to Eb, D, C, Bb, A--, G--, C#--. Middle Bb to A with grace notes and alternation then Bb, C--. Cadential silence. End of first section.

The introduction of quiet notes and song-like, lyrical melodies makes an unexpected contrast to the other material and suggests a wider emotional span.

A series of 9 staccato notes in two similarly shaped groups, but with a light moving rhythm to them, not yet heard. A long, high G#. Descending chromatic phrase of about 16 notes to low E. (D) Eb, D. Staccato F#, then another chromatic phrase . . .

The notes are gradually given a more subtle rhythmic inflection, the runs become more devious and several new elements are introduced. A rapid slurring from high notes to low notes. A fluttering sort of movement on some shorter phrases. The music moves in sections of one to two minutes, each section ending and beginning with a cadential silence. The basic elements are given a different emphasis in each section.

There is no overall linear development in the piece, no climax (no meaning in the sense of European classical music) and no continuing swing or pulse (no meaning in the sense of African-American classical music).

The meaning actually comes from the way the different melodic and rhythmic ideas are juxtaposed; sometimes flowing into each other, sometimes making abrupt contrasts on either side of a silence. Certain elements, such as the long flowing chromatic phrases and the asymmetrical groups of 4 staccato notes form linking structures in the piece and serve as a sort of reassurance to the listener, a reference point for the fresh ideas that are introduced throughout the piece. And yet they are actually more than this, because the way in which they are combined, increasingly closely as the piece progresses is often the seed for new material to emerge. Towards the end of the piece (it lasts for 13 minutes), there is an increasing feeling of resolution in the melodic phrases; movement towards a place of rest is implied. But before this place is reached, there is an acceleration in the flow of ideas - short two note phrases are followed by very fast runs and the piece finishes before the idea of resolution can be developed.



William Embling is a musician who exemplifies the beneficial aspects of a particular development of collective improvisation that also contains the authority of the individually approached and maintained technique. William Embling is a true researcher into the range of acoustical properties of the trumpet and related instruments; his essential experiments and discoveries lead his music to the emotionally-intellectually linked objectifying of the subjective: a test of achievement outside the sentiment of manipulative romanticism that defines the abuse of art and people in practically all industrial (popular) music, whether tagged with the political device of the progressive or openly commercially motivated. Many opportunities over the past roughly two years to listen to, and perform with, William Embling, in contexts ranging from solo/duo to larger collective ensembles, make it clear that he is an ideal musician with whom to work. His thinking possesses an equality and strength that responds, and initiates response, from one moment of performance to another, so that he and his musical colleagues are fully integrated into discoveries and resolution of performance and yet maintain independence. William Embling's selfless application to the situation of the music is matched by his generosity of musical feeling for, and interest in, his colleagues in performance.

## EVAN PARKER PLAYS THE SAXOPHONE . . .

by PETER RILEY

. . . in such a way that fragmentation and continuity are: not merely coincident (there is some coincidence of fragmentation and continuity in just about everybody's playing); the word for it is coadjutant, which means "mutually helping or assisting." Another way of expressing the paradox is to say that fragmentation and continuity are both forcefully present at the same time as cancelling each other out in favour of something else which they mutually help to bring into existence. They are coaxial. The centre (axle) which the edges of his playing subserve is, I think specified by his mode of attack as the attainment of musical plateaux - areas of raised ground separated by cracks or abysses or vast plains.

It starts from his intense awareness of the saxophone body, as a tube of potential matter (vibratable space) to be activated by the reed, and that this air-column has departments within it, which the reed can contact separately, and move from one to another at great speed. The instrumental body is felt as a solid and explosive multi-substance penetrated via the reed, thus not as a self-extension at all, but as something quite dangerous, which gathers its excitement when handled like a red-hot poker. It is handled by fast contact and resilience. Its resistance to the player is immense. It wants to lead him down the oily smooth centre of its tonal range, and he absolutely refuses this. He attacks it in short sharp thrusts which reduce its fullness to cracks and snaps, and he bounces off these earthly strikes up to his plateaux.

There is a percussionist or a guitarist somewhere inside Evan Parker's beard. He likes his notes to start with a bang or a pluck, which the momentary presence of the entire instrument, and then leap up from there to the purer tone. It can happen very quickly - 10 to a second, or through circular breathing an extended plateau (with cracks) becomes vast. The course of the music is continual ascent crossed (in the tension) with evenness.

And the other way this works out, on the plateau, is the machine-like motion which keeps it at its height, which is a bright simplification of the musical materials - vast ranges narrowed to essentials, vast cleverness to honest stupidity - at the approach of the music's zenith. The final plateau is the silence, before, during and after the music.

NB This is principally a review of *Monoceros*, EP solo, Incus 27, but also, ignoring other participants, draws from "The Longest Night" 2 volumes, Ogun 120 and 420 (duo), and "Real Time", Ictus 0006 (trio).

Bob's says: "I am what I am".

Leo Smith: "the concept that I employ in my music is to consider each performer as a complete unit with each having his or her own centre from which each performs independently of any other, and with this respect of autonomy, the independent centre of the improvisation is continuously changing depending on the force created by individual centres at any instance from any of the units. the idea is that each improviser creates as an element of the whole, only responding to that which is creating within himself instead of responding to the total creative energy of the different units. this attitude frees the sound-rhythm elements in an improvisation from being realised through dependent re-action."

Bob Helson: "I feel happiest when things just seem to happen without being thought about; when they just seem to grow."

To say "I AM THIS" also implies the question "What are you?" This is exactly what Bob's music doesn't answer and was the source of the uneasiness at the beginning of the duet. These differences in concepts of identity and self relate to differences in culture and personal history and thus have strong social-political implications. Consider the two men's life histories:

LEO SMITH: African-American. Born in Leland, Mississippi in 1941. Travelled with blues bands and then spent 5 years in the US Army in the USA and Europe. Spent the late 60's in Chicago as part of the Black Musicians' collective, the AACM. Went to live in Paris to spread the music and find audiences. Two residences in Europe and then settled in West Haven, Connecticut. Has published his own books and records. His life has been one of constant choice and positive action. He settled in West Haven because "the metropolis is not necessary for this music."

BOB HELSON: Working class, English. Born in Bristol in 1949 and has lived there all his life. After leaving school he worked as a photographer's assistant, then a claimant, then a technician in a school, all the time pursuing music as a part-time activity. He has been involved with the Bristol Musicians' Co-op since 1975 when it started, and has published one record with his regular group. Until recently, when he gave up his day job he had made no major decisions because it was part of his philosophy that he thought he shouldn't have to make decisions. His anti-metropolitan beliefs prevent him from going to London.

So their cultural situations are very different. As a Black American, one assumes that Leo has been surrounded by other people's definitions of himself and so to survive, it has been imperative for him to stand up and say "I AM NOT THAT. I AM THIS." But Bob has had no direct experience of racial or class struggle; his experience of the world has been of bureaucracy, stupidity, ignorance, but not deliberate and malicious hostility. No-one has said to him "YOU ARE THAT" and so he has had no need to respond in that way.

And so it comes about that Bob's understanding of group improvisation becomes a microcosm of what he thinks an ideal society would be, based on his experience within the present society. For Bob, this would be an anarchistic society where there are no power relationships and no-one's definitions would carry more weight than anyone else's. Consequently, it would not be necessary to say who you are because no-one else is telling you you aren't. Music is the one area of Bob's life where he can act as if this situation already existed and he is only really happy with the music if the other musicians are operating with a similar definition. So if some members of the group seem to be defining themselves as individuals first and as group members second, Bob considers it a limiting factor on the music and he can't play at his best. He understands a strong statement of personal identity as implying a power-relationship which he thinks shouldn't exist. (Whereas for Leo, it would be more a case of accepting the existence of power relationships and trying to redress the balance. Only ultimately to transcend them). Bob actually has very little concept of his own identity except as part of the group. Of course, in our present society, this course of action is defined as weak and naive since it doesn't provide any means to achieve the desired society. Similarly, Bob's playing at the concert could be defined as weak and naive since we normally expect a very strong statement of identity from a concert performance. (One could even imagine the question: "Why bother to do a concert if you don't want to



project a strong identity?"). Given the dominance of the accepted modes of individualism at present, it certainly is naive of Bob to expect to establish this kind of relationship instantly since it is one where a high degree of mutual trust and understanding is required.

But perhaps in the world community of improvising musicians, something like this trust has begun to develop.

Leo's music also implies an opposition to the way our society is organised, but it speaks of an honourable way of acting within the society rather than of acting as one would in an ideal society. Because of this, it is concerned with beauty, with extracting the beauty from the society and displaying it, to indicate the possibilities for change. In Bob's music, the concept of beauty is irrelevant. It is not just a matter of making a new standard of beauty (as in some artistic innovations) but of doing away with the concept altogether. Everything is equally beautiful or un-beautiful. In Leo's music beauty is essential, and he is able to construct beauty even in a setting which is not ideal. It thus has more potential to provide a meaningful and fulfilled life for the musician, whereas Bob's music ultimately implies frustration.

But only ultimately. It is here that we come to a discussion about how men and women ought to live, about the value of an individual's life. Should one act purely and wait for the society to change, or should one engage in a direct dialogue with the society in order to make it change? The choice is a political one and can only be made in specific situations. It's meaning has no universal significance outside specific situations.

(So far there is no answer)

Consider the two cultures of Britain and the USA. In the USA, it has been one of the characteristics of the entire jazz tradition that players should work at producing a highly personal, instantly recognisable style. In a music to which collective creation has been essential at all times, a particularly American form of individualism has also been important. Dave Holland, an English musician who now lives in New York and plays with Americans, had this to say about his first gig with Miles Davis:

"The intensity of the music I'd never experienced. I felt that almost American violence in the music which was something I'd never experienced in Europe. At first I felt it in a negative way; I felt that the musicians were attacking each other in a sense. But I realised it was just another way of people relating musically. Each person having their own role and stating it independently of the others and clearly. Although each was working towards a whole or totality, there was much individuality happening. It wasn't so much reliant on the next person and the next person. There wasn't the waiting for somebody to do something. Everybody was much more sure of their part. They were doing what they were doing. You'd better listen! You'd better take! It was that kind of attitude. At first I said "Well, this is strange you know," but then I started to see it really added a dimension to the music that was incredibly strong and vital."

For Americans, White and Black, the 60's were a time when major choices were made over Vietnam and civil rights. People were able to make their own characters by making these choices. In Britain there has been no choice such as these for many years.

John Berger wrote in 1967: 'Since the war, during the last twenty years, we have lived through a period which must be reckoned as an exact and prolonged antithesis to a moment of truth. We have exercised no choice at all. Certain fundamental political decisions have been taken in our name - without ever being presented to us as a matter of choice.'

Of course, individual people have made choices, but there has been no issue so important that everyone must take sides. Several times in the last few years, it has seemed that such an issue was emerging; for instance the "Who rules?" crisis of Heath's government, but none has come to this. For Black Americans, civil rights has always been an issue of this nature.

Dave Holland: It's what it is originally - it's a statement of freedom, expression of: "Look, whatever you do to us, you can't take this away, this is what I

feel, my music." And that's felt, no matter in what way, that spirit comes across.

This leads to a belief in the power of music to communicate a human essence across cultural barriers.

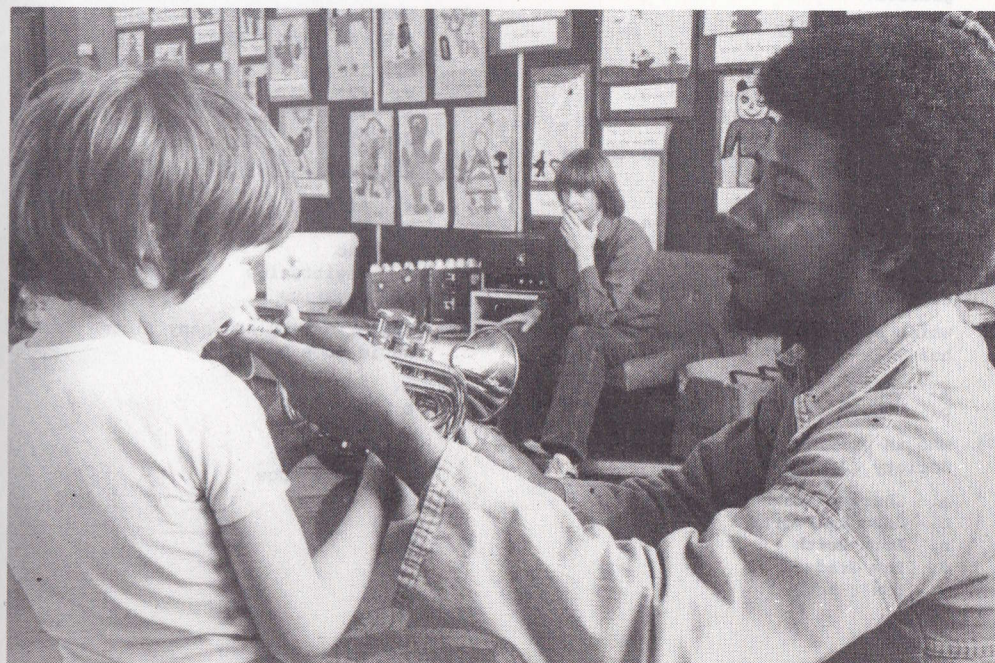
I think the music's message is a universal one really - that's why it transcends national barriers and boundaries. It communicates to everybody - it's an international language.

That this music can transcend national barriers is undeniable. How else would it have drawn Dave Holland the 3000 miles from Wolverhampton to New York? But given the cultural differences that I have described, it is difficult to see how it could ever become the mainstream of music in England since although it has the means to communicate internationally, the actual message as described by Dave Holland is a specific one.

However, the potential for a very complex communication is present in the form as I have tried to show in discussing this concert. There is the possibility of widely different worldviews to be presented side by side without being compromised or weakened. For the listener there is the chance of allowing the music to enrich and elaborate our world view rather than simply confirm beliefs.

I make no special claims for these particular musicians - I believe any music could be discussed in a similar way and more importantly that ideas such as these are actually communicated by a sensitive listening to any music, whether they be explicitly analysed or not.

NOTE: The quote from Leo Smith is from his book "Notes (8 pieces) source a new world music: creative music" (1973). The quote from John Berger is from "A Fortunate Man" (1967). The quotes from Bob Helson and Dave Holland are from private conversations in 1976 and 1978 respectively.



Leo Smith during a workshop at Baptist Mills Infant School, Bristol (May '78) - a part of last year's festival (photo: Will Menter)



TEST FOR MUSIC CRITICS, MUSIC DIRECTORS,  
MUSICIANS, COLLECTORS, RECORD DEALERS

by RON CAINES

(Check the correct answers on page 59 )

- 1) Who is considered the most significant trumpeter in the history of jazz?
  - a. Miles David
  - b. Louis Armstrong
  - c. Bunk Johnson
  - d. Leo Smith
  - e. Don't know
- 2) Who is featured most in Leonard Feather's Book of Jazz?
  - a. Duke Ellington
  - b. Louis Armstrong
  - c. Ornette Coleman
  - d. Leonard Feather
- 3) How many violins were used on "Bird with Strings" (Just Friends, etc) LP, 30 Nov '49?
  - a. 88
  - b. 14
  - c. 10
  - d. 7
  - e. 4
  - f. 3
- 4) Which of the following does not wear glasses?
  - a. Derek Bailey
  - b. Evan Parker
  - c. Anthony Braxton
  - d. Tristan Honsinger
  - e. They all wear glasses
- 5) What was the turnover of EMI in the last financial year?
  - a. £ 29,000,000
  - b. £100,000,000
  - c. £239,000,000
  - d. £695,000,000
  - e. £873,000,000
- 6) Which side does Derek Bailey part his hair?
  - a. Left
  - b. Right
- 7) Who is president of the Jazz Centre Society (JCS)?
  - a. Charles Alexander
  - b. John Dankworth
  - c. Lord Reith
  - d. Lew Grade
  - e. Don't know.
- 8) Which three among the following are not on the board of the JCS?
  - a. Spike Milligan
  - b. Harry Secombe
  - c. Humphrey Lyttleton
  - d. Benny Hill
  - e. Andre Previn
  - f. Harry Stoneman
- 9) In which provincial city was Evan Parker born, and grew up?
  - a. Bristol
  - b. Birmingham
  - c. Leicester
  - d. Newcastle
  - e. Southampton
  - f. Oxford
- 10) Which type of reed does Anthony Braxton use (on alto sax)?
  - a. Rico
  - b. Rico royale
  - c. La voz
  - d. Brillhart
  - e. Selmer
- 11) What angle does Steve Lacy hold his soprano when playing?
  - a. 35°
  - b. 45°
  - c. 75°
  - d. 15°
- 12) What is Leo Smith's zodiacal sign?
  - a. Aries
  - b. Gemini
  - c. Leo
  - d. Sagittarius
  - e. Aquarius
- 13) Approximately how many flutes does David Toop possess?
  - a. 100
  - b. 200
  - c. 400
  - d. 1,000
  - e. Don't know

Keith Tippett & Ron Caines at Bristol Arts Centre (Nov '78)



Don Moye & Malachi Favors of the Art Ensemble of Chicago (Roundhouse, March '79)





Landscape is the main starting point/motivation and therefore I frequently feel compelled to return to these roots, particularly with drawing. Excursions or flights of fancy take one into other areas (e.g. score/drawings, photographs, stripe paintings etc) but I take these to be necessary detours, a stretching out.....

Dartington 1977.

My drawings, particularly the ones illustrated, are about black and white, rhythms and improvisations on a theme. I have no desire to 'record', that is for photography, but to paraphrase the event, to twist the vision, to involve the white areas implying containment in some way. If the end product results in a basic + simple distillation, imbued with the energy of drawing, then it is possible to have achieved what I take to be a visual improvisation.

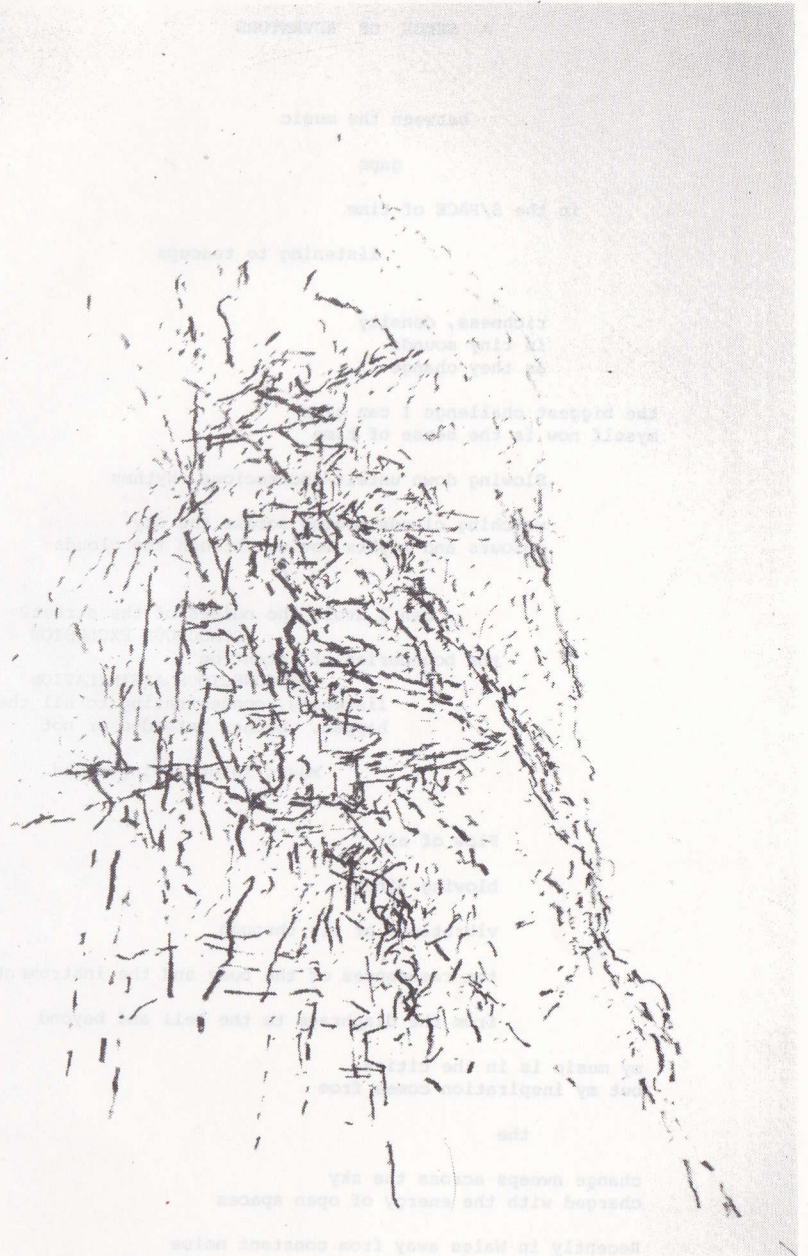
Bath 1979.

As far as music/sounds are concerned I am probably classifiable as a naive musician. Through a series of events I found myself involved with the making and playing of a series of wooden and ceramic flutes finally graduating to the proper thing. The one wind instrument played horizontally gives the flute its undeniable landscape feel in appearance, mood and sound.

That apart, the thrill of music making, unlike painting, is that one engages collectively and the responsibility is in the plural. I find that valuable complement to the isolated position one naturally has as a painter.

Dartington 1977.

John Eaves.



Porthaven, Somerset. 78.

John Eaves  
Porthaven, Somerset



A SENSE OF ADVENTURE

between the music  
gaps  
in the S/PACE of time  
listening to teacups

richness, density  
in tiny sounds  
as they change

the biggest challenge I can give  
myself now is the sense of time

Slowing down unfelt/unconscious rhythms

watching clouds moving across the sky  
colours and lights moving through the clouds

can I avoid the noises of the street?  
CONSCIOUS EXCLUSION  
the boundaries of intention  
SUBCONSCIOUS ASSIMILATION  
listening, concentrating to all the sounds that  
happen, whether intended or not

music interrupting sound

Flow of air

blowing (free)

vibrations of air through

the resonances of the body and the instrument

from the diaphragm to the bell and beyond

my music is in the cities  
but my inspiration comes from

the

change sweeps across the sky  
charged with the energy of open spaces

Recently in Wales away from constant noise  
I begin to hear sounds I have never heard before

We talked of environments, the rhythms in environments, and basic  
elements. The road to the house is a long walk bending through  
hills and hedges. The wind in the trees was full of powerful low  
notes. I have often enjoyed watching the power of the sea, but this  
wind was the first time I have been awed by sound

(On Reading station I felt fear from the noise and speed of  
the high speed passenger trains)

Raw weather  
cold wind across muddy fields  
the sky is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of one's world - hardly glimpsed in London  
Rich sleep  
dreams of strange deaths  
The room I slept in is small and bare -  
beautiful walls - delicate flesh coloured plaster -  
wobbly walls and ceiling  
The light outside is bright but grey -

Later in the day we walked up the side of one of the Brecon Beacons,  
watching the changes in the sky and the mountains, through snow, to  
the stillness on the other side. Back through a biting cold wind and  
dark heavy clouds to tea and a fish supper

Martin Mayes  
Spring 79

before it all goes

the penarth fog horn  
fades into the darkness  
of yet another day  
the wind shakes the bamboo  
everything falls into a pattern  
familiar places and faces things  
just don't ever seem to move  
but disappear like stars at dawn

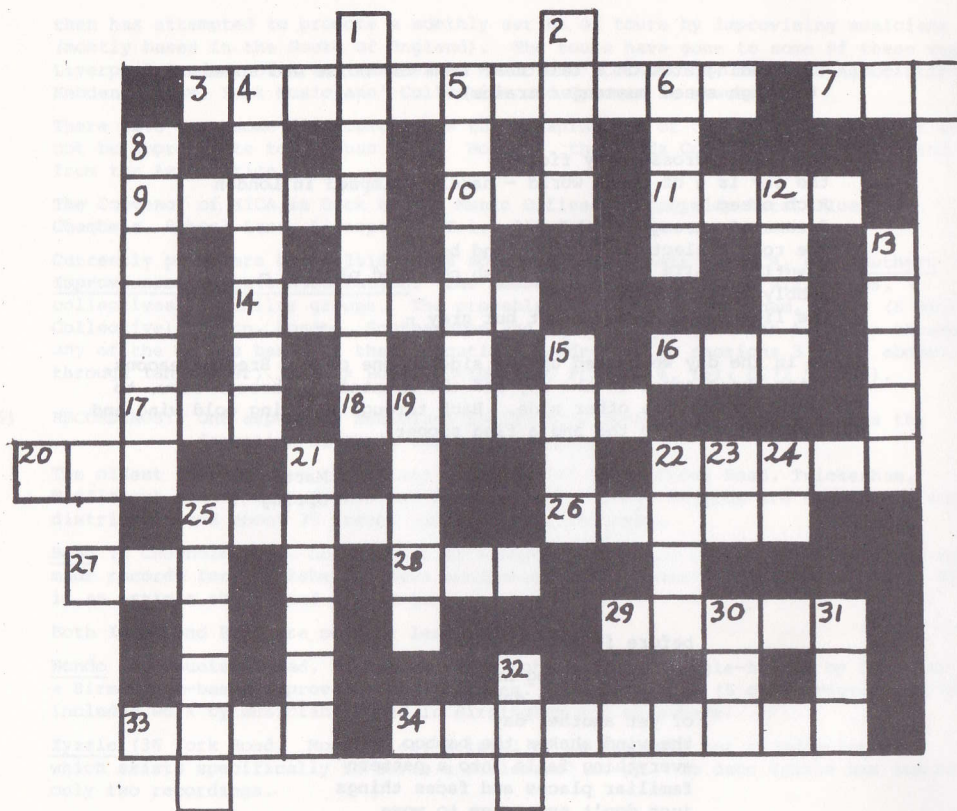
barry edgar pilcher

comic book mantra

zowie  
bam  
socko  
grup  
plop  
wow  
glug  
oof  
ulk  
whap  
bing  
flooie  
and grrr

barry edgar pilcher





# Across

3. Once backed Gracie Fields (5,6)
7. Feminist group (3)
9. Long established label (5)
10. Cultural Institution (3)
11. Forerunner of musicians' collectives (4)
14. Records Braxton (6)
16. Big \_\_\_\_\_ (3)
17. International data processing company (3)
18. English percussionist (6)
20. Promotes jazz, funded body (3)
22. Soprano saxophonist with frills? (5)
25. German town which holds annual festival (5)
26. Plays tuba (5)
27. Regional arts association which funds Bristol Musicians' Co-op (3)
28. Fashionable German label (3)
29. Heavily subsidised (5)
33. French 19th C inventor (5)
34. Plays cello (9)

# Down

1. Played in Bristol 3 times (3,5)
2. Planned circuit for improvisers in southern England (4)
4. Vehement cry (7)
5. English provincial city (7)
6. Not Charlie (4)
8. Presents music in Amsterdam (7)
12. Sometimes gilded (4)
13. Not Terry, not Howard (5)
15. Plays flutes (4)
19. German city (5)
21. Minority music (6)
22. Way of using tape (4)
23. Title of recording company man (2)
24. Religious denomination of most English improvisers (2)
25. Dadaist photographer (3,3)
30. Frequently laid by 23. above (3)
31. American improvising group (3)
32. Singular musician (3)

Solution to crossword on page 59

LARRY STABBINS SOLO  
Arts Centre . 21 April 1979

by FREDDIE HILL

Free improvisation with no guidelines other than those pre-existent in the minds of musicians at the start of the performance, is a young art. A solo improvisation where a performer has to sustain an entire evening on his imagination and intuition alone, is a daunting challenge.

On the surface, one might envy such a musician the opportunity to function in an environment where he did not have to interact with others in a prepared structure. Still not many feel qualified to work in total "freedom", though they may desire it. A given performance is shaped by its limits, and it is only those unfamiliar with agreed style that find its limits irksome.

Few musicians, excepting pianists and guitarists, embark on a completely unaccompanied solo for even one number, let alone a whole evening. Wind-instrumentalists who can sustain such a performance are particularly hard-pressed. This is largely due to the imposition of playing by breath control alone, where any sign of fatigue will be noticed and contribute to a sense of anti-climax. For this reason, it is necessary to pace oneself for physical as well as artistic reasons.

Larry Stabbins, on soprano and tenor saxes and clarinet, produced half-a-dozen items which each displayed a different side of his prodigious technique, and proved both exciting and entertaining. He includes several unorthodox resources such as circular breathing, whereby a note or phrase may be sustained for an almost indefinite duration, blowing inside a grand piano to produce Aeolian-harp effects and maintaining a bizarre dialogue between his own voice and the tenor sax. All these widened his palette of tone colours, even if they seemed sometimes to be used as an end in themselves. In between he was able to intersperse such glimpses from his fundamental experience as "Sophisticated Lady" with the true, cloudy Ben Webster-like inflection. Whether this far-reaching range of musical approaches added up to a total statement of his aims is open to argument. My view is that this is less important than the fact that all of these approaches had something in them of interest and were open to further development. The general effect was that of an orator, who, even if the thread of his logic was sometimes abstruse, unfailingly made witty and entertaining statements. Larry Stabbins' brand of musical humour, is particularly welcome in a field whose participants have been prone in the past to treat themselves either with poker-faced solemnity or blithe non-commitment.

# special moments

what to say when you can't think  
of anything cause your doing it  
sax sling strewn across the blue cushion

drawing the alphabet  
in the air  
it almost worked backwards

if you look at the tree  
you'll see it dancing with the music

altar of benkei  
yoshitsune's saxophone ! ... oh, woofer  
lots of good grass in december

barry edgar pilcher



**The Critics**  
An inside look at music

Good to keep Bad Company

Yes, it was unique — thank goodness!

From the Stalls

BRIS MUS. CO. O. Bristol Arts Centre

BRISTOL EVENING POST . REVIEWS

16 March 1979 . An Inside Look at Music . David Harrison (Arnolfini, Bristol. Company)

The Company in Bristol last night is not the same group that you might see in London tonight. For membership is fluid, with players drawn from a pool of musicians.

It's an intriguing idea and one that could only work with free-form improvised music such as this, the complete antithesis of the well-drilled ensemble playing of Basie or Goodman.

But unlike the more formal music, the squeaks, grunts and howls offered by Company seem to me to be moving away from what I have always felt is the object of music - enlightenment, enrichment or simply entertainment.

This instead is essentially introvert, a group of musicians playing among themselves for themselves, and with listeners often excluded from the action.

Certainly there was much of merit, particularly the Miles Davies-influenced trumpet of Leo Smith, the corrosive guitar style of Derek Bailey or the manic percussion of Han Bennink.

But the music started nowhere and ended in limbo, with not even a collective riff or common theme workout to link the whole thing together.

And while such experimentation must be encouraged, I cannot help feel it leads to a sterile alienation from all but the most cerebral of listeners.

19 March 1979 . Good to Keep Bad Company . James Belsey (Colston Hall, Bristol. Bad Co.)

Bad Company, doyens of the no-nonsense, punchy British school of rock, returned from a lengthy absence with a deafening blockbuster of a show last night.

While they have been away in the self-imposed exile, new wave has come and stayed, but Bad Company carry on regardless.

Cornerstone of the band is Paul Rodgers, a singer of such strength that even Bad Company's greatest detractors - and I'm not one of them - must admit that he is one of our greatest prizes.

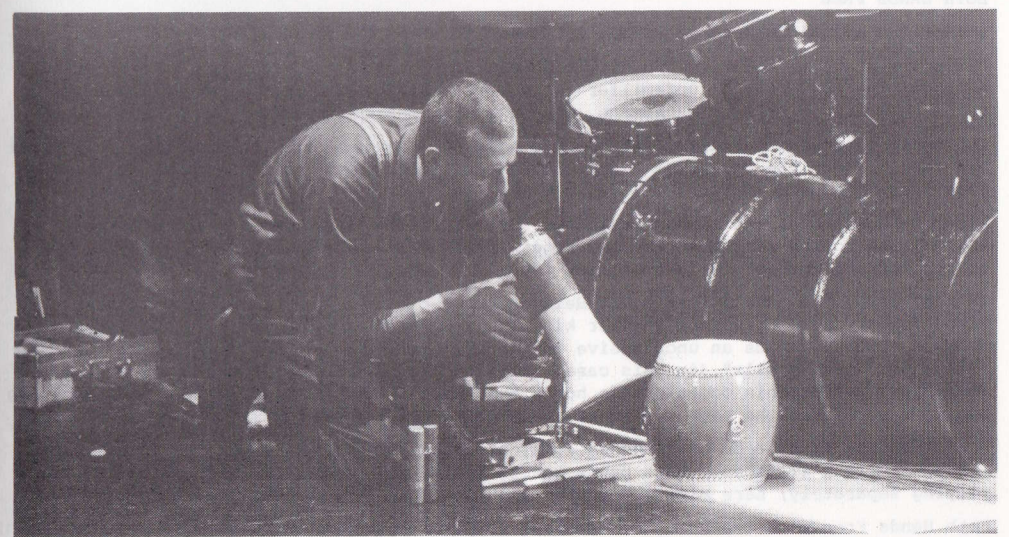
He has a cutting edge, an unfussy delivery and a directness which makes musical fashion seem quite irrelevant.

It's a pity he seems to sing almost identical material to the songs he was delivering heaven only knows how many years ago with Free and later with the early Bad Company, but you can't have everything.

Guitarist Mick Ralphs, drummer Simon Kirke and bassist Boz Burrell emphasised Rodger's acute vocal angles with slicing back-ups, though I really do wish that the band had turned the volume down. It was ear-splitting.

Bad Company sold out the Colston Hall within a couple of hours of their box office opening a few weeks back, and that's the proof of their selling power.

To cap it all they had their audience on their feet throughout much of the show. Styles may change, but the Bad Company success story has not altered yet.



Company at Arnolfini, Bristol (March '79)  
Top:Tristan Honsinger Bottom: Han Bennink



#### FROM THE STALLS

Bristol Musicians' Co-op . Bristol Arts Centre . from Bath Evening Chronicle, Oct 1978

It's a good thing a crowded hall has never been the most important requisite to good music. This satellite venture of the Musicians' Co-op was kept so nearly a secret that there was but a handful of spectators.

The Co-op was originally directed towards the more esoteric end of free and improvised jazz. But the main idea behind this event was to extend their interests beyond those fairly constricting boundaries.

The primary performers of the evening were Bath flautist John Eaves and an American folk singer studying up the road at the university, Chuck Becker. An unlikely duo: Yet it was this apparent incompatibility that set the mood as each tried to step outside his individual boundaries.

Their brief set included a surprising collection of songs and instruments. The opener, called Spaces (their best number) was marked by some adept playing from Eaves, particularly on his perspex flute, setting a shimmering and faintly oriental mood. They then pedalled their way through a fairly inconsequential folk song, People's Lives, rather overloaded with earnest lyricism. Next up was a slice of thumping blues, and they concluded with a rather unfortunate choice of an ELP song, From the Beginning.

The most impressive parts of their set (I gather they're planning to extend it) involved some surprisingly polished and accomplished playing by Eaves. I say surprising, simply because every time I've discussed with him his musicianship, he has dismissed it casually.

The rest of the evening was made up with more traditional improvisational fayre. An impressive soprano sax solo by Bob Downing was followed by a far less captivating performance by percussionist Bob Helson and Mark Langford.

The latter, I suspect, can do better. Helson, meanwhile should explore the more simple possibilities of his kit, rather than running riot for the first five minutes and looking lost for the remainder of the performance.

Not perhaps the most stunning of shows put together by the co-op; but then it was never intended to be. They're due at Walcot Village Hall in Bath soon, so keep an eye out.

#### BOTH HANDS FREE

London Musicians' Collective . "Melody Maker" (Maureen Paton) November 1978

"It's a mistake to polarise the situation at the moment. The situation is changing. Although the music may be unfamiliar to audiences at the moment, keep doing it as you believe in it." - Philipp Wachsmann, The Unpopular Music Supplement, Musics 18.

The music is improvisation and the debate goes on. Performance art continues to attract and repel; hence the equivocal title of Bristol's improvised music festival earlier this year: Unpopular Music . . .

A recent concert at the London Musicians' Collective by Both Hands Free and Saxviotrup - who pooled resources to play together in various combinations - amply illustrated the strength of the improvising ideal.

In many ways, the indefatigable Bob Helson proved the co-ordinating factor in several situations; drumming with a Premier kit plus a few bits of industrial archeology bobbing around, he was an unobtrusive initiator, ever ready to amend and absorb. I enjoyed his drum "rolls" (in this case, allowing the drum sticks to roll freely over the skins) but on this occasion the horns took care of the exotic . . . such as stepping behind a screen at the back to give a stereophonic effect to the music.

Sometimes the small room was flooded with colour, other time cries and whispers interacted with long silences. Both bands seemed rooted in the contemplative mode when playing separately; here mixing together, caution seemed best thrown to the winds.

Both Hands Free are ex-Plasma Will Menter (soprano, percussion), Bob Helson (percussion) and Mark Langford (tenor, electric piano). Approximately two years old, the band was formed as a direct offshoot of Will Menter's Wind and Fingers and has produced one

album, "Use From The Pocket", which is available at £3.00 from The Secretary, Bristol Musicians' Co-operative, 36 York Road, Montpelier, Bristol 6. Saxviotrup comprises Philip Durrant (violin) who has played with Company, Brett Hornby (tenor) and William Embling (trumpet, sousaphone and french horn) is one year old and specialises in playing unusual venues such as a Welsh valley and a Wiltshire barrow.

#### YES, IT WAS UNIQUE - THANK GOODNESS!

Colchester Evening Gazette (Liz Mullen) 24 January 1979

They called it a unique concert of extraordinary music and literature and it was certainly both extraordinary and - thank goodness - unique.

This generally yawn-inducing event was held at Essex University Theatre last night on a stage colourfully crowded with an abundance of percussion instruments and others, strung up and layed about like a scene from an Eastern bazaar.

The performers got under way, tapping and bashing at everything in sight in an improvised extravaganza using everything from a whistling kettle to a child's hammer to a broom knocking against the wall.

There were two long sessions of this and the novelty soon wore off. Rarely did Will Menter, William Embling, Roy Ashbury and Anthony Barnett relate to each other in their insular experiments, even when occasional chances occurred to create a whole out of their individual noises.

Douglas Oliver's perplexing poetry and diagrams made a refreshing if incomprehensible interlude in the middle of the evening.

Roy Ashbury and Anthony Barnett showed a great deal of flair on percussion - and the former added a comic touch which almost saved the proceedings - but it was hard to enjoy what was going on for more than a minute at a time.

I'm thankful my ticket was complimentary, for I would not have considered it 50p well spent to sit watching something akin to a jamming session in a children's playroom.





## Music

All these still sine waves I have seen,  
All the cold cloud clusters I have mirrored in sheets  
Are only that through which I see you  
Long distant, within and beyond me . . .

John Boulding

## White

When you cry,  
Do not cry away from here  
For we are here as away  
For your cry is of us, as we are of this cry  
And is us, the scream of all the Silent Harmonies  
Still heard / and hearing

John Boulding

## Poem

Those who have lived before, who have the need of dreams  
Come into aspect come closer that the Light hidden  
In unknown cadences, the stillness singing in forgotten voices  
Incantations of the silent still spirits, the  
forever echoing Pentecostal Host  
May draw from you the power to move . . .  
Those who sense the further light, come  
So: Let Freedom Ring.

John Boulding

## Question

Whose Great Albatross hung heavy-pinned to  
split soul and soul  
Wedging us apart that only the Serpent  
Could give us back / the Garden??

John Boulding

## NOTES TOWARDS A POLITICAL DEFINITION OF IMPROVISING MUSIC - A DISCUSSION PAPER

by ADGE E TATER

### PART A: TENDENCIES

- A1 Groups exhibit non-competitive relationships between members - "restored communality"
- A2 Musicians are self-organised. Activity takes place in a loose framework of co-ops/collectives which are non-hierarchical and, on a national scale, non-centralised. Musicians become their own promoters, managers, critics, agents, etc.
- A3 The (contemporary) music is a product of contemporary society - it is radical creative activity (either "reflection"/"interpretation" of society of "response"/"reaction" to the society).
- A4 The music cannot be categorised as a thing, ie, reified - an object being (in economic terms a commodity), but only as an activity - a subject doing (in economic terms a production.)
- A5 The music is demystified/accessible/open - "anyone can do it" . . . it is a community activity.
- A6 The music is non-ideological. It transmits no received political notions.
- A7 The music is unpredictable - rules or laws can only be drawn up afterwards.
- A8 The music is in some sense a world music, Improvising is both more and less than a particular "technique" - it is the creative essence of music.

### PART B: CONTRADICTIONS, PROBLEMATICS, DICHOTOMIES

- B1 Performer/Audience - Under normal conventions this relationship is oppressive and imperialist.
- B2 Individual (personality)/Group - "strong personalities" within a group may appear to dominate (and hence contradict A1 above). Sometimes this is the audience's problem rather than the performers'.
- B3 Popular/Unpopular - How can the activity of improvising music be more widely understood and practised without invoking the high degree of alienation involved in "Popular" music?
- B4 "Music" as a (received) category - Why not abandon this label too? Or do we want to preserve "music"? - if so, why?
- B5 Form v Formlessness - "the aesthetic contradiction". Why should an audience wish to hear a performance?
- B6 Technical virtuosity - How can virtuosi avoid being tainted with "star" status? (Leaders rather than stars?)
- B7 Enclaves - Community-based enclaves are desirable but those based not on geographical community but on ethnic, sexual or class distinctions (ie, elites) are not. (Musicians are often very anxious about the size of their audience).
- B8 Improvised music is available in commodity form: records, journals, etc. (However, they are usually controlled by the musicians themselves). What is the purpose of recording, let alone writing about the music?
- B9 Therapy v Art or "Self-expression" v "Communication" (A dubious distinction - "therapy" is often used as a derogatory term in music criticism, but why?)
- B10 The financial structure - several questions here: If musicians wish to be considered "artists" how can they get grants from bodies whose criteria for the judgement of standards are certainly not their own? In any case, surely the process of selection itself, in grant-giving, is antipathetic to the "principles" of improvised music. When is a musician (/artist) "professional" and when is he/she "amateur". In fact at the extreme of this line of thought, do we really think that certain people should be called musicians, and everyone else, by implication, non-musicians.



PART A: TENDENCIES

- A1 Meetings exhibit non-competitive relationship between members - "restored communality" (eg, see C Small)
- A2 Musicians are self-organised. Activities take place in a loose framework of a grouping or meeting which is non-hierarchical, and non-centralised to any single individual or single group of individuals.
- A3 Musicians become their own promoters, managers, critics, agents, etc.
- A4 The music cannot be categorised as a thing (ie, in economic terms a commodity), but only as an activity. A subject doing.
- A5 The meetings are demystified/accessible/open - "anyone can do it" . . . (eg, jobs/tasks/roles . . . secretary/treasurer/promoter/public relations/management/pundit) . . . it is a community activity.
- A6 The music is non-ideological. It transmits no received political notions (of whose music). Of who is in charge (eg, decisions . . . in control . . . yes and no . . . consensus, etc).
- A7 The meeting is unpredictable - rules or laws can only be drawn up afterwards.

PART B: CONTRADICTIONS, PROBLEMATICS, DICHOTOMIES

- B1 Performer/audience - Under normal conventions this relationship is oppressive and imperialist (see Wishart on Stockhausen and Cage) (eg, party secretary/rank and file).
- B2 Individual (personality/status)/Group - "Strong personalities" within a group may appear to dominate (and hence contradict A1 above). (Sometimes a problem for the group rather than the individual).
- B3 Popular/unpopular: Important/unimportant: Central/marginal: How can the specialist activity of organising improvising music be more widely practised (and understood without invoking degree of alienation of members)?
- B4 "Meetings" as a (received) category - Why not abandon this label too? Or do we want to preserve "meetings"? - if so, why?
- B5 Form v formlessness "the aesthetic contradiction". Why should an audience wish to hear a performance. Preformed v evolving: Structure/constraint v Spontaneity, expression.
- B6 Virtuosity (intellectual/verbal/sophistry/sarcasm/DEPORTMENT/any usable personal quality. How can virtuosos avoid being tainted with star status? Leader status? (leaders/stars? Rather than . . . either or . . . )
- B7 Elites are not desirable. Whether based on ethnic, sexual, class or other distinctions.
- B8 Meetings as "therapy" . . as "communication" . . . as "self expression" . . .
- B9 At the extreme of one line of thought, do we really think that certain people should be called organisers, and everyone else, by implication, non-organisers.

SEVEN QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERS

- 1. Where does a meeting (general) start and where does it end?
- 2. When will it start and when will it end?
- 3. How far are you influenced by conditions of "meeting"?
- 4. Do you sometimes think meetings stand in contradiction to anything, meetings or otherwise?
- 5. To what extent do "statements" in meetings involve you in drama?
- 6. How much importance do you attach to agenda (someone's memory/prediction)?
- 7. Is it desirable there should be wider meetings? Don't you think you have been passive?

[Based on a paper originally written by Ian Menter "Political definition of improvising music". With acknowledgement to Ian. 5 March 1979]

HOW THIS MAGAZINE WAS PRODUCED

Last year's BMC magazine was sold at 50 pence, although it cost about 60 pence per copy to produce. Thus BMC diverted some of its funds towards the venture.

For this year's magazine, it was decided to determine the price at a level such that the costs could be recovered within a reasonable length of time. Also it was agreed that it should be possible for retail outlets to sell it at a profit. (We would like to thank the following outlets for selling "Unpopular Music" without taking a cut: Atone Music, Arnolfini, Chapter and Verse, Revolver and Full Marks). The contributors have not been paid anything.

The selling price has been fixed accordingly, so that all contributors can receive complimentary copies and so that retailers can make a profit.

None of the articles received for publication in "Co-operative Music" have been cut and almost everything received has been published (the exception being one or two poems).

Looking forward to next year, it seems probable that BMC will publish another issue in conjunction with another festival. The emphasis may be on music and mixed media and we will welcome articles, graphics, photos, etc.

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD

Across	Down
3. Derek Bailey	1. Leo Smith
7. FIG	2. SICA
9. Incus	4. Exclaim
10. ICA	5. Bristol
11. AACM	6. Evan
14. Arista	8. Bimhuis
16. Toe	12. Cage
17. IBM	13. Riley
18. Helson	15. Toop
20. JCS	19. Essen
22. Lacey	21. Reggae
25. Moers	22. Loop
26. Poore	23. AR
27. SWA	24. CE
28. ECM	25. Man Ray
29. Opera	30. Egg
33. Saxe	31. Air
34. Honsinger	32. One

SOLUTION TO TEST

Test for Music Critics, Music Directors, Musicians, Collectors, Record Dealers on page

ANSWERS	1) e.
	2) d.
	3) f.
	4) e or d.
	5) e.
	6) b.
	7) b.
	8) b, d, f
	9) a.
	10) c.
	11) a.
	12) d.
	13) e.



Magazine Working Group: Ron Caines, Willy Guy, Linda Martin, Ian Menter

#### Contributors:

ANTHONY BARNETT, percussionist/poet, lives in Essex.  
Member of London Musicians' Co-operative

JOHN BOULDING, (LMC), plays saxophone, trumpet, violin and  
guitar. Lives in Wiltshire

RON CAINES, artist/musician, co-ordinator of the "Co-operative  
Music" Festival, chairman of Bristol branch of Artists' Union

JOHN EAVES, artist/flautist/teacher from Bath

WILLY GUY, photographer/sociologist

FREDDIE HILL, trumpeter/composer/arranger

LINDA MARTIN, saxophonist/architect

MARTIN MAYES, french horn player, based in London

IAN MENTER, saxophonist/junk player/teacher

WILL MENTER, saxophonist/clutterist/sociologist

BARRY EDGAR PILCHER, saxophonist/poet, living in Wiltshire

PETER RILEY, Derbyshire poet

ADGE E TATER is thought to be a pseudo-intellectual, empire  
building, pundit and would-be bureaucrat of improvised music

DAVEY WILLIAMS, guitarist from Birmingham, Alabama

Many thanks to Lorraine Butchart for typing

#### CO-OPERATION

I'll do my own thing  
and you do my own thing.

Anon