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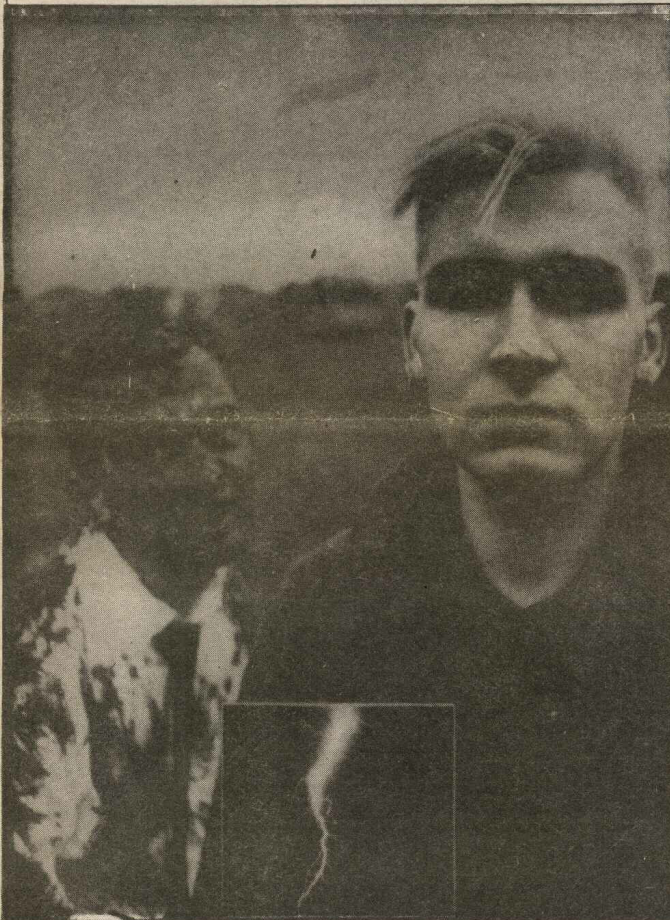
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APRIL 1985

NUMBER FIVE

COIL



Peter Christopherson & John Densmore

"The name 'Coil,' first used by John Balance in Autumn 1982 for his solo works, now represents him in collaboration with Peter Christopherson."

That is a basic definition, but there still remains the need to distinguish between the viewpoints of Coil and Psychic TV. The latter, which of course now includes Genesis P-Orridge and John Gossling, with Alex Fergusson, deals with the sources of all cults and the misuse of cult powers in order to condition and control. Coil on the other hand has come to focus its attentions upon the Qabbalah, Force and Form [as label and in practice], Chaos, and Confusion. Their 1984 release on Laylah

Records "How to Destroy Angels" bears the statement which had previously been invoked by Balance's group Zos Kia: "The Price of Existence is Eternal Warfare."

Now having apparently broken with Laylah for a deal with Stevo's new K. 422 label, Coil's new *Scatology* explains:

We are great believers in the redeeming powers of Chaos and Confusion. Out of the original, primal, chaotic state came the order of the Universe, a mass of potential and creative energy. Those that have the Will and the Strength can form things out of this state. Panic is about the deliberate nurturing of states of mind usually regarded as dangerous and insane. Using fear as a key, as a spur, as a catalyst to crystallize and inspire. It is about performing [psychic surgery] on yourself...in order to restore the whole being, complete with the aspects that sanitized society attempts to wrench from your existence.

The use of "states of mind usually regarded as dangerous and insane" is reminiscent of Rimbaud's voyant letters and his call for a "total derangement of the senses" in order to recover an essential sanity that has been lost, or the Dadaist drive towards lunatic behavior—random and unpredictable, and therefore uncontrollable.

These "states of mind" are also subject matter explored in detail by Psychic TV; but with Coil the approach is very different. Here there is less emphasis upon showmanship, and a more disturbing sense of serious conviction. P-Orridge speaks of the stupidity of the human race, about characters like those in the fiction of William Burroughs who bore holes in the life boat and shit into the water supply. Coil's conception of Man appears even more frightening: We must dig the holes: we must shit into the water supply (an apt action for an album called *Scatology*), or we will cease to be human beings.

In Coil there is a strong, Nietzschean outburst of physical pain and orgiastic frenzy. "Cathedral In Flames" and "Godhead—Deathhead" refer to mass eruptions of insanity during the Middle Ages that would send entire towns into "seizures, religious visions...and limbs that turn black, gangrenous, and eventually drop off" due to a chemical substance baked into loaves of bread. The substance, ergot alkaloids, later gave us a derivative that turned entire generations onto the "dangerous and insane" states of the chemically-altered mind: LSD 25.

"The Sewage Worker's Birthday Party" is also an insane tale, in this instance one taken from a Swedish S/M magazine about a young man being used as a human toilet. Not only is there a tremendous "insanity" (by 'normal' standards, of course) to the proceedings, but an illustration—enhanced by sound effects from Coil's "private recordings"—of a perfect control situation: a violent assault upon one's own bodily functions. Like in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò*, in which fascist libertines force their victims to devour their own excrement (an analogy for the tyranny of the fascist state in general), there is a disturbing violation of the body itself. Power is extended to the physical, that is, beyond the mere psychological.

Scatology is an elaborate album, made even more slick by the use of a twenty-four track recording machine and a Fairlight CMI (perhaps one of the most expensive music computers available). It is interesting to see such high-tech equipment in the hands of a group like Coil, when standard usage of such machines is by dance-single producers and other techno-tricksters.

It is fortunate, furthermore, that groups who once worked pretty much on a shoestring now have access to such technology. With the help of several bigger independent labels [just when does one stop being an independent?] such as Some Bizzare and Illuminated, groups like Cabaret Voltaire, Portion Control, the old Throbbing Gristle, and others have gradually built up their technology until they have been able to create music like those being done by more corporate musicians (like the rock-funk on recent SPK outings). In light of this however, it is interesting to note how Coil has developed within these parameters.

Scatology indicates that music in this 'vein' (along with alternative ideas and methods) can get the recognition it deserves while still maintaining a degree of invisibility.

This is to point out, for example, that the Catholic Church will bring down attacks upon rock-superstar Prince for "undermining Christian values." However, although many organizations have met with pointed resistance time and time again by the forces of the British government, groups like Psychic TV, Coil, and others continue to undermine these value-structures in a deliberate and elaborate manner.

Furthermore, it can be expected that the activities of these groups will continue to go unnoticed by the suspicious eyes of the Church largely because of their independent working status, that is, their ability to function clear of the machinations of the corporate media.

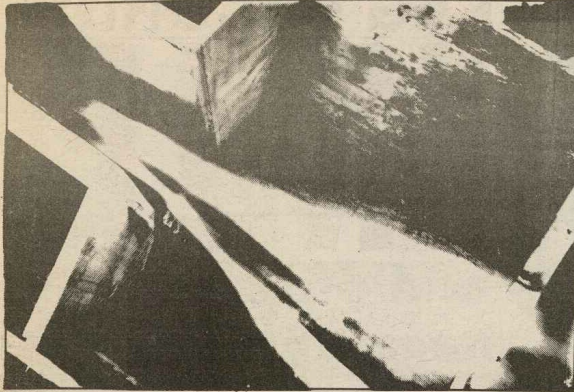
Coil Contact:
BCM/CODEX
London WC1N 3XX
ENGLAND

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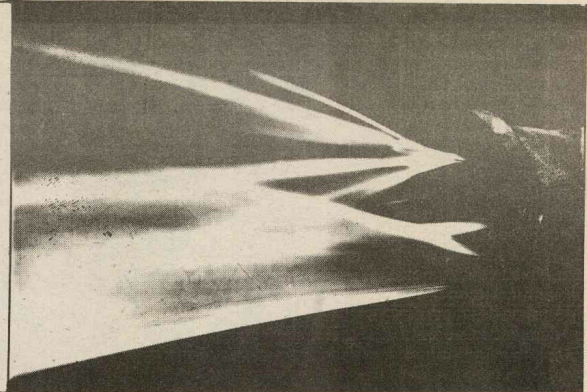
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—Richard Behrens

PROBLEMIST



Photos from Problematic Matter by Jean-Pierre Turmel



When someone possesses an awareness of international cultures, or when someone is fluent in styles and aesthetics of great diversity, we say that they are "cosmopolitan." These days it is no longer necessary to travel the world in order to have seen it; it is enough to have watched *Nova* on Public Television. And to have heard the sounds of the free world, one needs only to have listened to the PVC *Music and Rhythm* compilation of 1982.

A better way to be able to understand the sounds and visions of the world is to have personal familiarity with those who shape them. In 1984, two of the best American independent music magazines—those which demonstrated the greatest awareness and fluency in the international language of music—were the now-completed *OP* and a San Francisco 'upstart' named *Unsound*.

Unsound (a frequent source of reference for *A/a*) is the brainchild of William Davenport, who is in turn the heart and mind of Problemist. More a musical collective than a fixed group, Problemist has released several cassettes and appeared on several compilation tapes around the world; however until now vinyl has been beyond their reach. To the 'rescue' has come Jean-Pierre Turmel, *Monsieur Sordide Sentimentale* himself, who with an LP rerelease by Savage Republic and planned ones by Psychones, appears to have veered into a pure California-phase (he's released work by native Californians Monte Cazazza and Tuxedomoon, but both had left America at the time). As with Savage Republic, the Problemist LP *9 Times Sanity* contains a large and glossy booklet with text by Turmel; this will be discussed later.

returning to the idea of being cosmopolitan, Davenport's and Problemist's background in independent music is as wide as it is knowledgeable, and this rubs off on the music. One can detect in Problemist affinities with punk, European noise, and 'seventies art-rock—credentials such as these are not to be sneered at, especially given their handling by Problemist. The diversity of *9 Times Sanity* material is such that no two tracks sound alike, or even use the same musical approach.

This means that the first piece, "Next to Nothing,"—which features primarily bass, tribal-sounding percussion, tape, and voice—sounds nothing like "Overcame," which follows it. This second track is a Branca-esque wall of overlaid and largely unshifting guitar patterns. Sound manipulations point these guitars forwards, backwards, through echo delay, and into each other, while the unsettling background of Davenport's anguished vocal slowly layers and rises to the fore.

"The hand is slapping..." Like a controlled piece of thrash rock, "Slapping" features the standard guitar, bass, drums, and voice of the rock idiom; however the instrumental parts, and likewise the mix, are so fragmented as to deny the music of cohesiveness. Then "White" puts forward its hallucinatory vision ("Everything is white...all white," Davenport declares), substituting a heavily-reverbed drum machine for real percussion. Closing Side One, "Hammers Falling" treats Davenport's disturbed vocal in such a way as to give it the effect of dropping off into some bottomless pit. What these hammers are is uncertain—but uncertainty is a major theme throughout this record. One interpretation is offered about the hammers, however; as far back as in "Next to Nothing," a taped voice had instructed: "I want you to hold the hammer and the sickle" (collectively the international symbol of Communism). This phrase reappears in "Hammers Falling," by which time it has become a joke on itself. A nice touch.

But then, in Problemist it may be considered unlikely that an effect would be employed without specific reason. That is to say, Davenport's method of composition seems at least as inverted—as self-involved—as is the steadfastly neurotic style of Gerechtigkeits Liga, which was discussed earlier by this publication. There are practical reasons for such a compositional style (even in a fully improvisational form), most notably the ability to present the psychological self through music. In commercial music, and particularly in the "Adult Contemporary" format, love and love-relationships are common themes. However, as Sharon Gannon of Audio Leter points out in her text *Freedom is a Bio-Kinetic Skill*, "Love has no body... no body has love." In other words, there is something that love is, that we presume it to be (already an abstract, love, is being illogically concretized—the flaw of reasoning is inherent right here); however, it is not possessive. We assume that to love is to possess, to own, as expressed by the phrase "We belong to each other." Romantic, yes, but hardly physical fact. Love is not the passivity of ownership, but active being—re-active being. "Love is will," says Gannon. Here is the admission that love is a personal strength, a grounding in the real (or real-ization). What commercial-music love leaves out is an attention to the personal. A neurotic psychology, kept under control by the strengthened will, motivates an inward discipline, a call to rise above the murk, and the acceptance of personal responsibility.

Davenport, and the other musicians who perform in Problemist (David Lawrence—percussion; Christopher Rankin—bass; Ron MacLeod—percussion; and guest Mark Hosler of Negativland, a group which is an enigma in itself) tune their instruments to the frequency of their own wills, strike a chord, and probe the

external/mirror of the internal. Plunging into their own minds, they attempt to exorcise the waste and fecal matter introduced by enculturation. "We are tired of being frightened," declares Davenport in "Hammers Falling." With this proclamation the hammer becomes the weapon of revolt—one *not* falling, but being raised high. This is the kind of care in compositional construction that is reflected throughout the work of Problemist.

Side Two begins with the deranged, funk drumming of "Military Science." Davenport, with a voice like a cross between Arto Lindsay and Robert Plant, exclaims "You've got to fight for your acceptance. This is a military science." With a bizarre background of almost nonexistent bass and guitar looped around into God knows what, the theme of personal revolt is here continued. Now, every man is not Victim but Army—Davenport achieves this through his metaphor.

In the science of military aggression is contained not the vapid violence of rioting but the tactical "strategy" (for he uses this word) required for gaining and/or maintaining control. This control is not over material possessions (land, flesh, tools) but over the self. Now exercising the will is compared to doing battle—and self-control equals victory. In helping us to arouse the spirit of our own wills, Problemist employs an incredibly subtle didacticism: the lessons here are not for the weak of mind, for they will never pick up the clues. Analysis is necessary—the kind that turns metaphor back into an awareness of physical disorder. Proposing new metaphors (the "hammer" and the "military science"), Problemist shatters those old ones which have so permeated our culture as to become unrecognizable as the metaphors—the image-representations—that they are.

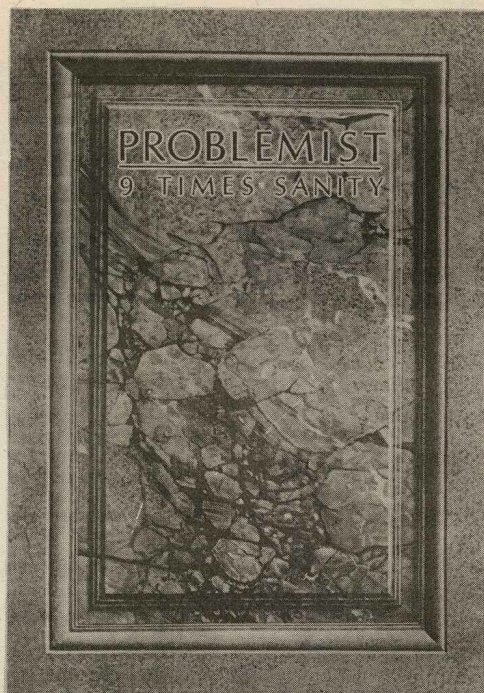
Davenport continues to attack images and stereotypes in "Love Has Resigned," which brings this article back to the argument asserted earlier. What is love that it can "resign?" Love in this instance is obviously being personified; objectified; stereotyped. Stereotypes operate on insidious frequencies of "either/or": Black OR White; Rich OR Poor. Davenport adds to this the list "Criminal OR Lawyer," two characters who by design meddle with law and *internal serenity*. Both are as concerned with disturbing this as they are with exploiting it. But, reminds Davenport, "This is not the ideal." The character separations, the specializations and categorizations into which we freely type ourselves, bring about the kind of sterilized thinking with which we consider other people, and objectify other people—thus the possessive feelings that accompany our concept of love. Says Davenport, love is that which we should also be aware of, for "It is a waste of time." He also utters here the most indicative phrase of the entire album: "How can the frail respond?" The frail cannot respond, for the same reasons that those weak of mind and will cannot interpret this record.

Next is "Platform," which with its bouncy bass and shaky voice is like something right out of David Thomas and the Pedestrians. The platform is the jumping point—the place of no return. Jump off, or ascend it and set up your political platform, but the spotlight is irreversibly ON. No turning back is possible from the platform. Importantly, the song talks about the inability to make decisions, and a backing tape of a murmuring audience confirms the horror of this public exposure. You are ON the platform.

This is followed by "Needle," which with its mix of guitar, treated voice, and bass sounds somewhat like the Lydia Lunch tracks which were released last year as *In Limbo*.

"Don't do anything foolish! Don't even dream of it!" warns "Cold Knife Science," the Side Two closer. Finally the declaration to watch yourself—to watch out. Davenport discloses the fears that come in the night ("Cold night science"). Deliberately leaving listeners with a touch of cold-steel paranoia, he clearly implies that those who fall asleep stay asleep forever. Digging into your psyche is one thing—anyone can undergo self-analysis as if it were a joke—but Problemist reminds us of the dangers of being asleep, that is, psychically. Alertness must be maintained if the strength of the will is not to weaken. Again, this message is related cleverly through *metaphor*—obviously the physical body must have sleep! But those whose minds have been dulled through years of disuse will not understand this.

Jean-Pierre Turmel picks up this thread in the beginning of his booklet essay, with his "WARNING: The Fundamental Illegitimacy of Accusations of Textual Obscurantism" (which is typical, French-intellectual humor for "People who Call Me Elitist are Assholes"). Says Turmel, "As a (provincial) conclusion, rather than questioning oneself about textual illegibility it would be more judicious to inquire into the incapacity of certain people to read certain writings...often an enlightening capacity of a refusal to understand an awkward message." What Problemist's *9 Times Sanity* has been all about is what happens when "the message" is not so much read as *identified* (which is the first step). However aside from this, and aside from the convenient Malcolm Duff translation of "*Matiere a Probleme*"—the main essay title—as "Problematic Matter," Turmel's booklet has nothing to do with what the record and band are trying to accomplish at all! Whatever the hell Turmel thought he was doing, his essay avoids Problemist's issues so entirely that he never



Cover detail: 9 x Sanity

mentions the group *at all*, in so doing he has deprived the band's audience of what could have been a valuable and depthful interpretation of their work. Turmel as a 'thinker' has now drawn so far inward, it appears, that he has to fight off an imagined enemy of attackers before he even clears his throat. So the precious insights he has given us in the past into such musicians as Joy Division, Psychic TV, Savage Republic, and Ludus are denied us with *Problemist*.

In fact, so defensive has he apparently become that even *Problemist* could not be given a description of "Problematic Matter!" A magazine learned from Davenport before the release of *9 Times Sanity* that Turmel repeatedly evaded his queries as to the essay's nature. Even for Turmel, this is taking snobbery a step too far. It is not however that he is a snob—he is a very shy writer who is simply much too paranoid about his own—and admittedly adventurous—thinking. "Problematic Matter" happens to be a very well written, speculative essay about the figurative imagery of spouting (or spurting) water. With graceful descriptions of majestic fountains and inventive photography of open water pipes, Turmel ties water and human will in a way that proves that it is unnecessary for him to insult and name-call—which is his *real* purpose in the opening "WARNING!" But with the deliberately-limited editions and selective selling of *Sordide Sentimentale* products, how many detractors could he possibly have to fend off? Facetious or not, he doesn't have to get *nasty*...

Water, says Turmel, is the very first Symbol; primal in its essence, unmatched in its urgency. Although he could have related the following statement to *Problemist*'s exploration of the psyche, he does not—apparently the value of such a connection did not interest him:

"The jet [of water] is like a desperate attempt of the liquid to conquer its own form, or more exactly, to exteriorize that which sleeps in it, which waits... This demonstrates that water spurting up is far from only being the vital, joyous symbol of the emergence of life... Being also the illustration of an eternal failure, it induces in us, unconsciously, the idea of despair, subjacent to the proper exultation of life, already reintroducing (at the very moment of birth) the idea of death. It would have to be able to stop time at the summit of its trajectory... Deep-freezing denatures water in an awkward way, making it lose its original symbolism. It would have to freeze without changing states. Imagination and autosuggestion can certainly help us to 'see' this 'miracle'...

One of the reasons that Turmel gets so defensive may be that he knows he is an imperfect thinker. For example in his essay on Psychic TV his logic contained many unjustifiable leaps and holes. He is however a fine reader and an excellent speculator. This he shares in common with *Problemist* apparently, but perhaps on this occasion his paranoia got the better of him so much that this affinity slipped by him. Well, whatever.

What is perhaps more distressing is that a record with the depth and insightfulness of *9 Times Sanity* cannot see release without the aid of a temperamental French benefactor (whom we should nevertheless be thankful for). Turmel's "promise" to release work by *Psychones* is still very much up in the air. There still exists an overpowering bias against American product (from music to automobiles); probably more than anything else the chief reason for this is the sheer size of this country, which makes it that much more difficult for any human achievement to be noticed. Things are slowly beginning to change, however, as technology makes it easier to "do it yourself," this is borne out by albums like Hunting Lodge's *Nomad Souls*. Even independent artists, however, must treat their work and output with the *professionalism* of an industry, although perhaps with a better handle on the aspect of pure, materialistic greed. But there is hope for American artists; this is the point. We can now begin to isolate solutions to the problem.

Problemist is a problem-shooter; it will be interesting to follow the path of their investigative eye.

—Carl Howard

INTERVIEW: BROKEN FLAG RECORDS

RAMLEH



Design art/ Broken Flag Records

Despite the small size of the independent, UK-based label Broken Flag records, they have been responsible for several very powerful and influential cassettes since their inception in 1982. Created by arch-anarchist Gary Mundy, Broken Flag has remained fiercely uncommercial and thus disassociated with all distributors. This aside, Broken Flag is still widely recognized throughout the European and American 'undergrounds' as one of the premiere labels for truly extreme music.

How is this possible, without major distribution? Basically the Broken Flag reputation stems from Mundy's incredibly diligent work through the mail; he maintains correspondence with listeners, mail-order houses, and creative artists throughout the world—this is to say he has networked his products to the sources that count.

Certainly most Broken Flag releases are far too uncompromising for mass acceptance; therefore in this country one must find them either through Aeon Distribution in Colorado or directly through Broken Flag itself. In a recent conversation Gary Mundy elaborated on his label, on his musical works with the brilliant Ramleh and Toll, and on his personal perspectives regarding art, music, and the world in general...

□□□□

Q: Discuss the origins of Broken Flag and the label's concept.

A: Well, Broken Flag began in May 1982 when I started it with two friends. It was an overall title for releasing tapes/records/magazines and for promoting shows and any other projects we cared to participate in. With our first cassette release a musical direction was born—one of violent and passionate electronics, which became our trademark at the time. We decided that violent music and imagery had to go hand in hand. Now however we see greater powers of harrowing through more subtle methods. The whole Broken Flag became the unacceptable face of life, taboo subjects, and deliberate contradictions. We also still believed in the Punk ethic that music and production should be in the hands of musicians, not businessmen. The original Broken Flag lasted from May to December 1982, [which is] when the actual record label began.

Q: Has the concept changed through time?

A: At first, Broken Flag was a mail-order company involved in violent imagery and sending hate mail to people who deserved it. It was a time of getting ourselves established and off the ground. At that point we were totally arrogant, and ran a very amateurish set-up. By 1983 we were joined by Jerome Clegg, who had brought in ideas of packaging and presentation, and this began our 'professional period.' I decided it was time for live appearances and we took our music to English audiences, to varying responses. We released two LP's and were slammed for our use of controversial imagery—a process which we modified on the sleeve of *Statement*. Jerome left in July 1984 and Broken Flag virtually shut down in September, but only for a couple of months. Operations resumed in December, with a new look.

(Continued on page 6)

OBSERVATION: AN AMERICAN FOLK REVIVAL

"Success and folk music are, by rights, at opposite extremes of the of the American spectrum. Folk music, after all, is the voice and expression of generations of ordinary folk who were on familiar terms with hard work, poverty, hunger, and homemade culture. They kept their art alive outside the pale of professional show business and despite the impact of successive Establishments."

Irwin Silber in 1964

If you're a part of "The Underground Generation" of the 1980's, and you turn on your radio, you'll be able to find a lot of commercially-oriented, electronic rock music on a lot of different stations—particularly in the major American cities—inbetween the commercials for home computers, video games, word-processor training schools, plastic food products, and whatever else the mass media is trying to sell us nowadays. However you will not be able to find much folk music coming out of the radio speakers.

Folk music in the 1980's is music that you must either discover on your own or put together at home—alone, or with some friends or lovers. People get into folk music not because some school teacher or old-time, 1960's 'folkie' lectures them on why folk music is more interesting than electronic rock music. There's room for all types in the 1980's "Underground Generation" cultural scene, and it's ridiculous for a folk music fan to expect to be able to rationally persuade people that they're 'missing out on something' if the folk-process is not a part of their daily lives. Being into folk music is really something that you either feel or you don't, and it's a lot different than being into religion or academics or jogging or shopping. In the 1980's, though, I have noticed that some female fans of folk have gotten into jogging in a heavy way...

The folk music that moves people the most, and which continues to interest people for generation after generation, generally expresses communal feelings. If a folk song expresses personal feelings that are also shared by many of a particular generation, that song will move the 'folk,' and endure. If on the other hand a song expresses a personal feeling that many others don't share, then that folk song probably won't gain the timelessness of permanence. The reason why someone like Phil Ochs was popular in the 1960's—despite his not receiving the mass-media buildup that Bob Dylan enjoyed from CBS—was that Ochs synthesized in human form the personal feelings which were communally shared by "The Underground Generation" of the 1960's.

"Everything I wrote was on instinct. There was some sort of psychic force at work in these songs and I didn't know what it was. It's a strange way of giving birth; ideas giving birth in song form. And when the songs came, they came fast. I don't think I ever spent more than two hours on any one song... That period in the Village was incredibly exciting; supereuphoric. There was total creativity on the part of a great number of individuals that laid the bedrock for the next ten years... To be considered a serious artist you've got to break new ground, to have people say 'he did that, she did this,' and it opens up, and you can tell when it opens up. You can just feel it happen... The 'sixties were very instinctual and untrained... I mean a lot of these people are laymen; it was basically a layman's revolution. These people don't know much more about music than the average guy on the street... For me, songwriting was easy from 1961 and 1966, and then it got more and more difficult... But getting back to music today, I consider rock music basically dead, uninteresting, boring, repetitious, too loud, ego maniacal, ludicrous, and totally beside the point, and I can't be too strong about that... If I liked a song I had total confidence in it, and it didn't matter if people said it's a great song or a lousy song. Hysterical praise or hysterical attacks didn't affect me at all. It's always been between me and my songs, not about the critics, not about the public, not about sales or anything else... I was going to military school in Virginia; I had no idea what I was going to be. I wasn't political; I wasn't musical. I was just an American nebbish, being formed by societal forces, completely captivated by movies—the whole James Dean/Marlon Brando trip."

Phil Ochs in 1974

In the 1980's as in previous decades, folk music is an important tool of the "Underground Generation." Our generational goal is absolute freedom and a leisure/love-oriented, egalitarian society where everybody can be creative artists, instead of having to work their days in skyscraper offices, factory shops, classroom cages, and plastic fast-food restaurants where electronic rock music plays in the background, and where you simultaneously serve impatient customers and domineering managers.

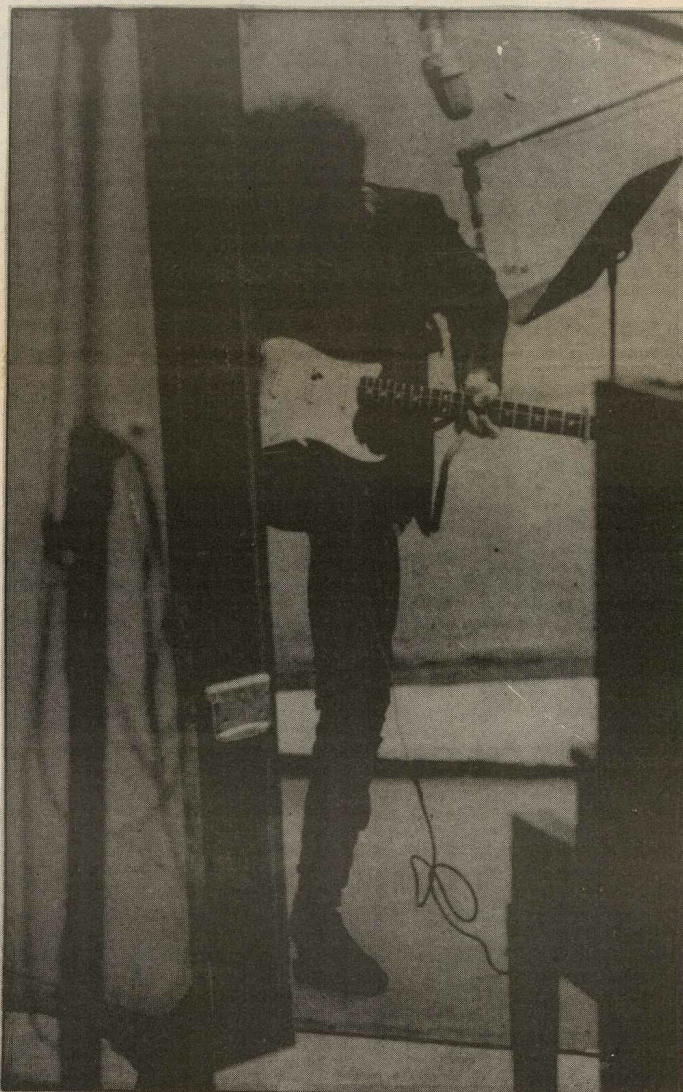
The vision of liberation is similar to what Charles Ives had many years ago, although he evidently expressed this within his own 'classical' music idiom. I haven't listened to Ives' music much, but I went for a few books about him and have also found much within his aesthetic philosophy which rings true. Here's a quotation from Sydney Finkelstein's *Composer and Nation: The Folk Heritage of Music*, which summarizes what sounds valid about Ives:

"It is through the creative use of hymn tunes that Ives became the first composer in big forms to create a musical language uniquely American, infusing it with his own warm humanity and dreamy yearning... To Ives, music was not a skill to be subject to marketplace bargaining, but a means for bringing forth what was most profound in the personality, a miracle through which human beings paralleled in their creativity an act of nature... He...had practically nothing to do with the professional music world at all, not even making efforts to have his works publicly performed [He was also notoriously neglectful of his musical manuscripts]... He drew up a constitutional amendment which would make all major issues subject to approval by majority vote at elections... His 'anti-professionalism' in music was a way of objecting to the insidious commercialism of music as a profession... He built up a remarkable vision of—and insight into—the democratic future. This was [to be] a future in which the one-sidedness of modern industrial life would be broken-through, and every man would find in himself something of the artist. Here we have another reason for [Ives'] anti-professionalism; namely a way of breaking ground for the future everyman-musician... He must become especially precious to the American people. American composers, born after Ives, have written a vast amount of music with a professional finish and craftsmanlike polish which he did not

possess... But almost none of it has that feeling of necessity about it, of having penetrated deep into American life, of having tapped a current so real and fundamental that its expression in music can become an organic part of the social consciousness of the people. And it is, the search for such a music that lives represented in every work he conceived and every phrase he wrote down. He did not ask himself whether it was 'proper' to raise in music such questions as the nature of American democracy, the relationships between politicians and people, the New England intellectual and critical heritage, the Civil War, and the brotherhood of peoples. If music could not deal in some way with these matters, he would have no respect for it as an art. And so he represents a colossal change to the American composers who follow him, and an 'unfinished business' which somebody must take up."

The cheapest way to begin an investigation of folk musics is to get a library card and start taking out the Folkways recordings, and other such records, in a library such as NYC's Donnell Library and Lincoln Center Library. For the folk music addict, the next step is to start reading a few of the less academically jargon-plagued books on folk music.

Once you learn three chords on your cheap acoustic guitar [or like instrument of your own choosing] and have listened to enough old Pete Seeger or old Woody Guthrie, or old Ewan MacColl/Peggy Seeger or old Joan Baez, or old Afro-American rural blues Library of Congress recordings, or old discs from used-record shops, you'll probably want to find some folk-song books from the library and begin singing out from the heart. Singing from enough different songbooks and listening to enough recorded folk music, you may find yourself itching to compose your own music, and full of valid ideas as to how to go about it. There are other ways in, of course, which are also illuminating. What is important is that the means and the music reflect your own communal scene and/or personal (love) feelings. Love is that which needs not be defined by this article.



Bob Dylan

There are advantages to the folk-approach to music; the first of these is that you don't have to lock yourself in a practice room at some musicology school for ten hours of every day in order to prepare for an audition [although real musical training is a discipline which can not be duplicated]. In a genuine folk scene, there are no auditions, because people are not immediately judged upon their ability to conform in technique; people can be themselves without trying to be artificial and polished, or whatever some audition-judge expects them to be like.

The second visible advantage to being involved with folk methods is that even if you aren't able to pick up the three basic guitar chords, you can still participate singing a cappella.

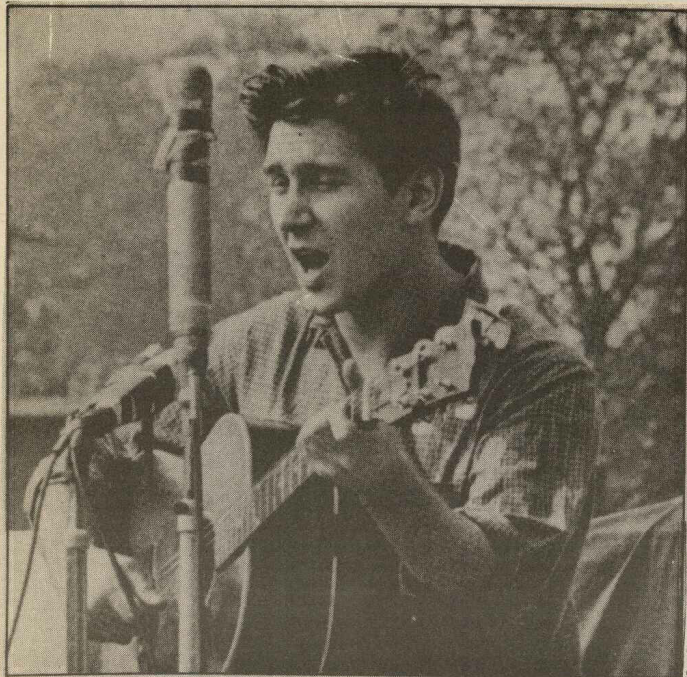


Photo © Getty Images by Dave Gault

A third advantage is that it is not necessarily essential to carry around a lot of electronic equipment when you wish to perform outdoors —on a beach, or in a forest around some campfire, or before a companion, or even alone. A fourth advantage would be that you don't have to fit yourself into some contrived, commercially-motivated band in order to participate in a "scene." As a fifth advantage, the people one can meet are those who aren't into totally self-centered and money-making mentalities. This is not to suggest that one doesn't occasionally come across people who are commercial-minded *prima donnas*, or people merely trapped in egocentric orientations. However in the 1980's most folk-music enthusiasts have come to realize that the US school system is a waste of time once one learns how to read and write, and that the 9 to 5 jobs that parents commute to and get stuck in for years are emotionally empty coffins, to be avoided whenever possible.

A recurrent issue in folk music is that of commercialization versus the non-commercial. Twenty years ago, when Bob Dylan switched to electric music, a big outcry arose among the 'faithful,' this surfaced dramatically during a performance in Forest Hills, NY. In the words of Jacques Vassal, who has written *Electric Children: Roots and Branches of Modern Folkrock*,

Bringing It All Back Home was naturally slammed by all the usual folksy types, critics, and fans: Dylan had betrayed the cause, politically and artistically. Not content with having given up writing political and sociological songs, look at the way he was corrupting the pure stream of folk with vulgar pollutions of rock n roll, backings that had —horror of horrors— a commercial sound.. Among American musicians, Joan Baez, Odetta, and Phil Ochs understood his evolution and attempted to defend it from attack.

"Despite all this oil on troubled waters, a storm broke out again in July 1965 at the Newport Folk Festival. Dylan was top of the bill at the closing concert, and large numbers of folk purists [who had] come to Newport with the [expectation] of seeing him return to the straight and narrow of his 'honesty' of 1963, packed the place... He...wandered onto the Newport stage clutching an electric guitar... During the third song, booed and hissed, Dylan stopped...

"A few minutes later Dylan returned to the stage, tears in his eyes, carrying his battered old acoustic guitar, to give a dramatic rendition of 'It's All Over Now, Baby Blue.'

"But it was the end, for a long while, of the old-style Dylan. Several other turbulent concerts confirmed it, notably one at New York's Forest Hills [Tennis] Stadium where the spectators, divided into two armies —the 'old' and the 'new'— had a grand brawl while Dylan, without batting an eyelid, continued his recital."

Twenty years later, this commercialization versus non-commercial controversy continues to rage among musicians, critics, and fans. And if the current "Underground Generation" revival of interest in the folk music process should be noticed, as is being done, by the corporate mass-media, it will be interesting to see if folk-music fans and singers are able to resist an inevitable commercial temptation during the late 1980's.

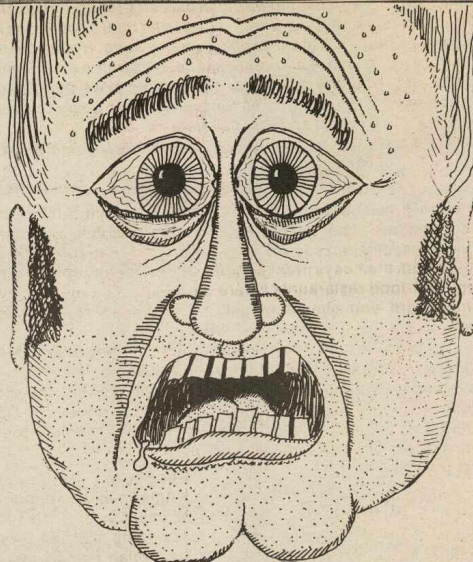
So good luck to those feeling the lure of the folk voice. I won't bother listing all of those record companies, magazines, and clubs in which contact with folk musicians can be made. Part of the phenomenon of folk music is both finding one's own unique road to "underground scenes" and people, as well as doing it yourself for yourself and for those you love, in order to express the reality of our generational captivity within the 1980's high-technology society.

"The songs [of the 1960's movement] were not your typical Tin Pan Alley Slush, not even the still-stylish rock n roll. These were fierce tirades, long painful personal statements, ballads in direct language concerning relevant topics of the day... The folksingers seemed to be the exciting minds of the generation, living out the fantasies of escape and commitment the rest of us provided them... Rock n roll ceased being relevant; it became part of the problem... Finally the words, the songs, the messages all began to sink in and create a consciousness; a group feeling headed by the folksingers against the pagan world outside. This consciousness... forged into something solid at Newport and Philadelphia in folk festivals where people, camped out on the beaches, united by common values and the dope-sweet night, drew strength from each other; strength to be tested back home among the unenlightened... The folk songs of the day outlined what seemed to be a new way of living —unprogrammed, undefined, revolutionary, expanding the mind and body, liberated from old-fashioned morality."

—Bob Feldman

Bruce Pollack in 1974

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The new look includes new helpers, new ideas, new packaging. Certainly BF followers of old will probably dislike parts of the new one, which is more music-related. Seemingly less electronic violence characterizes the new music. We are also considering the video market soon, and our main aim now is to widen the potential audience for original music in an even more predictable world.

Q: Many of the graphics and titles are very violent in nature. Why do you use such imagery, and what has public reaction been?

A: As I stated, it did seem that violent music demanded violent imagery to complete the concept, which related to our main interests and fascinations at the time. For the most part public reaction was good, although distributors did not accept the product packaging, and a couple of items were banned.

Q: Generally, Broken Flag seems to be a one-man operation; how many copies of LP's are made per master?

A: All records are usually limited to 500 copies. This is sufficient to regain initial costs. Broken Flag is non-profit making, overall. We are now a two- or three-man operation, although I still carry out the largest part myself.

Q: Do you make a living solely from the label, or do you have other work?

A: As I say, BF makes no profit really, and I have to work for a living. I work for the government as a legal aid officer, which is dull, uninspiring, and frustrating, but it's easy and it pays the bills, which allows BF to survive.

Q: You personally were involved with the group Ramleh. How would you describe that music, and what was the purpose behind the group?

A: The actual sound of Ramleh came about when a friend and I were mucking about in a bedroom with a Casio keyboard, a synth, two microphones, and some effects. Suddenly we hit this amazing sound and taped it, overdubbed more vocal, realized the potential, and proceeded to record more and more. A style developed quickly, and lyrics were altered to suit the tracks better. Ramleh was a sparse-sounding group, but incredibly violent-sounding; initially mesmeric and aggressive. Later it became desperate and manic. We strived for original vocal effects and sounds which are best heard on "A Return to Slavery." Many called this revolutionary vocal sound.

The rawness and simplicity is the beauty of this and all good music. Our aim was to open ears and minds to the possibility that normality was only traditional—who decides what is right and what is wrong. We constantly ask people to define morality in the hope that we may get a conclusive answer. So the graphics, music, and images were deliberately ambiguous, so as to say "Here we are. Decide what we are doing for yourself; then decide why you love it or hate it! Think about it and always reserve the right to change your mind."

Q: Why did you break up, and what new projects are in the works?

A: Ramleh broke up for two reasons. We wanted to work in vastly different areas, and thus changed personnel and the band name. Basically we had achieved as much of what we set out to do as we were ever likely to. The attitude towards electronic music in London has turned from anger to trendiness. Live performances were too hard to find, and recording was leading in new directions. It was overplayed, and time for change.

The new group, Toll, is drastically different, mixing harsh soundscapes with musical flavoring. Each track on the debut LP is vastly different from either of its neighbors, and the overall effect is crushing. The variety is the main thing here. Myself and Tim Soar are the nucleus of Toll with various helpers, mainly Matthew Frith, UN Kommunity, VP231, and Controlled Bleeding. The main reason for Toll is to prove that great LP's are still easy and cheap to make, and that spontaneity is the answer. All tracks were written and recorded in the studio, with no pre-planning at all.

Q: Many people lump Ramleh into the Sutcliffe Jugend/Whitehouse school of noise. How was Ramleh different, and how do you feel about the Whitehouse comparison?

A: Initially, Ramleh played live with Whitehouse, and in fact Broken Flag released material by both bands—hence the comparisons. Musically however Ramleh was never very similar to the Come Organization bands, and each Ramleh record is totally removed from [theirs]. And now with Toll, there is absolutely no similarity at all.

Q: Although Broken Flag is a small English label, it is known throughout Europe and many areas of the US. Where is support greatest?

A: The USA has been the biggest market for BF. It seems as adventurous today as England was until the British bands discovered the cancer of white funk in 1981-82. England is dying musically. Italy seems to have a good market and some very talented artists, like Giancarlo Toniutti; but for the most part Europe is unadventurous.

Q: Do you plan to venture into the US to perform or to promote Broken Flag? Also, what are your perceptions of America?

A: We have no plans to come to America. No live performances or promotion is planned for this year, but this may change if opportunities arise. I would like to visit and perform in the US, despite finding most Americans I've met impossible to communicate with. Although my correspondence is very good, the actual personal contact seems to fail somewhat, and I think I need to see Americans on their home turf.

Q: Where do you see BF going? Will you try to tap into the commercial marketplace eventually? Has 'difficult music' a future in the marketplace?

A: We will continue to release products whenever we see fit. If commercial success comes, I will be pleased; but I don't strive for this and will not compromise for it! 'Difficult Music' does not really exist: once people accept it, it is no longer difficult, but commercial.

Q: There were rumors that Broken Flag was out of business. Can you clarify; set the record straight? Also, please give some details of new Broken Flag artists and releases.

A: BF ceased trading, as I mentioned, only for a few months, from September 1984 to January 1985. We are definitely back. At present we are promoting the Ramleh EP *Hand of Glory*, a twenty-minute seven-inch. Also strong is the *Statement* LP featuring the last works of Ramleh and music from the now-defunct PURE.

The newest BF LP is by Toniutti, called *La Mutazione*. He is a highly original Italian soundworker who creates layers of music/sound which builds to almost trance-like climaxes. The Toll LP will appear in April, although details are still sketchy as of now. Broken Flag will also work with New York's Controlled Bleeding. Their *Distress Signals* cassette was released recently to healthy reception, and with an elaborate package. They are the most violent-sounding band on BF at this point. All Ramleh material is out as a six-tape package, featuring everything we recorded.

Our most immediate project is the *Morality* tape (BF 41), a final word on the Everyone is invited to define Morality in sounds of up to six minutes in duration. The most interesting results will be released in April. We also still distribute work by Pacific 231, New Blockaders, Organum, and P 16 D4, and hope to expand our services throughout 1985. This will be a very good year if plans become actions!

□□□□

Contact:
Gary Mundy
59 Chapelview
South Croydon
Surrey, CR2 7LJ
ENGLAND

□□□□

—Questions/Commentary: Paul Lemos

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REPORT FROM SLEEP CHAMBER



Sleep Chamber

Sleep Chamber. The name conveys an image: Dreams. The subconscious. A room where unreality lives; where ancient, primitive desires still reign over the veneer of Civilization.

Expressing honest feelings is important to John ZeWizz, the creator of Sleep Chamber: "I named the band Sleep Chamber because of the lyrics. Most of the songs are based on dreams that I've had. When you write from your dreams, you know you're writing what you feel, not just what you think you're supposed to feel.

"Clubs are just not open to 'different' music," ZeWizz asserts. "If it isn't 'sixties revival, pop, or metal, they don't like it. We had an opportunity to play with Hunting Lodge when they came out east last fall. The show went over great; we drew a big crowd, and we still haven't been asked back."

Sleep Chamber is very rhythmic, but instead of falling into the disco trap their rhythms are much more on the tribal order—stark and powerful. A difficult effect to achieve considering the fact that they only use drum machines, a technique that lends itself all too easily to the standard dance format. And aside from synthesizer, bass, and guitar instrumentation, accents are added with ritualistic horns and bells which give some songs a very mystical feel. Too mystical at times, it seems.

The lyrics to the songs speak for themselves and need no comment:

*Flesh on flesh, Sweat on sweat, and Piss on piss
Your Life will never be missed*

—"Flesh on Flesh"

*I don't want to see no more, no more
If I can't see in my Dream*

—"Vivisection"

*You're so young, You're so sweet, I'm gonna take you home
and make you my Treat; You're my Victim*

—"Victimm"

*I've been summoned to a Dream Distillate; My Time has come
Everything is too late*

—"Dream Distillate"

As was said, no comment. Sleep Chamber's album sets a cold mood. Images of magick and ritual sadism, sex, and violence in a soft but effective way (Lonely).

Sleep Chamber the concept...culture or advancement into oblique ideas?

Beginning as a solo project in 1982, Sleep Chamber has undergone many changes for different reasons. Personnel changes have at times resembled the wanderings of nomadic tribes, with musicians and jugglers appearing, disappearing, and appearing again. This has resulted in a wide variety of styles and moods in Sleep Chamber recordings.

One of the first Sleep Chamber pieces to receive airplay was a cut from the *Oblique Collection* of XXX Records. This was a quirky and oddly appealing little piece of bizarreness entitled "Freak Accident." The song consists of an erratic, synthesized background, over which runs that great childhood invention of the twentieth century, the prank phone call. This is not, of course, your basic Prince-Albert-in-the-can number; the phone call involves the innocent victim on the other end of the line in the story of some drunk who has run over some children. The drunk, played by Sleep Chamber, manages to elicit that most human of all reactions, the urge to help. The effect on the listener is one of being pulled in two directions at once, where one is laughing at and pitying the victim in alternate thoughts.

This is a very different concept from *Weapons of Magick*, a sixty-minute cassette containing thirteen songs recorded live at various clubs in and around Boston. This being the largest lineup of musicians so far for the band, the sound produced here is by far the fullest, if not always the clearest. Synthesizers, guitar, bass, percussion, and vocals crash, clash, and even blend. The sound quality varies from show to show, as does the number of participating musicians, but through it all there is a quality of strength.

Sleep Chamber is currently in the studio working on a new LP to be produced and released by mid-August. The entire LP focuses on the ideas and thoughts of fetishes and eroticism. The band's use of exotic visuals carries over and into their videos. Put together by ZeWizz and guitarist Rich Geller at a local studio, they feature multi-camera angles, special effects, and quality production.

"I've seen other 'alternative' videos, and it's always annoyed me that the picture quality is usually so poor," ZeWizz explains. "If I'm going to take the time to put images on tape I want people to be able to see them when I'm through, not just sit there in front of some lousy picture thinking, 'Well, it was done by Sleep Chamber, so I guess it must be good.'"

The images are striking. "Uniform" features the shadowy face of ZeWizz filling the screen, and—through the use of special effects—a writhing, dancing woman appears where the shadows are deepest. With red waves of energy emanating from her body, she appears as the female incarnation of Mars himself, driving with lust the machines of war. Fading into the picture almost imperceptibly is the image of another female, a kind of sci-fi warrior, as ZeWizz sings on about his Uniform. In "Vivisection," which is comprised of excerpts from *The Animal Film* (an anti-animal experimentation film), one is at first lured into watching by high-fashion models parading seductively in furs. Suddenly the visual pleasure turns to horror as the scenes change to animals caught in traps, laboratory experiments, and other wonderful inventions of man in his dealings with the 'lesser creatures.' The result is that in two and a half minutes one is left with the same feeling that it takes the movie two hours to achieve. Powerful.

Where then is all this leading? John ZeWizz knows where he would like it to lead.

—Simon Davis



SLEEP CHAMBER discography

- *Dream Distillate*— C-50 cassette
- "Speak in Tongues"— 7" EP
- *Musick for Mannequins*— C-60 cassette
- *Sigil 23*— C-60 cassette
- *Sleep Chamber*— LP
- *Weapons of Magick*— C-60 cassette & booklet

Compilations

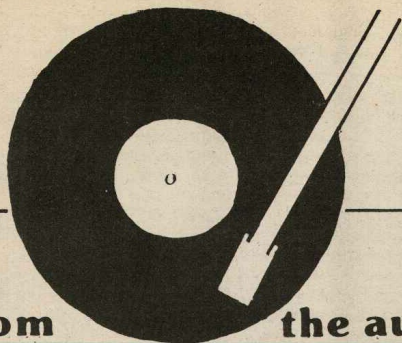
- *The Oblique Collection*— LP (3 tracks)
- *Drastic Perversions*— LP (1 track)
- *Perfected Perversions*— C-60 (1 track)
- *Taste of Tongues*— C-60 (1 track)
- *Onslaught #4*— C-90 (1 track)
- *Sexorama Vol. 1*— (1 track)
- *Ways of the Sacred*— (1 track)
- *A Taste of the Bizarre*— C-60 (1 track)
- *The Final Daze*— (1 live track)
- *Hear the Roar of Mountains*— (1 track/upcoming)

Many of the above products are available through Innersleeve-XXX (PO Box 1060/Allston MA 02134-1060). An upcoming issue of *A/a* will feature a combined review of *Drastic Perversions* and *Perfected Perversions*, both Innersleeve releases.

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from the audiofile

CLASSICAL RECORDINGS



Harmony & Charles Ives / photo by Halley Erasme

OBSERVATION: MUSIC BY CHARLES IVES

The name of Charles Edward Ives finds itself ever more present in discussions of twentieth century music; and for good reason. Ives was the progenitor of American style taken to it's summit. When we enumerate this century's tonal innovators, we will be able to draw a straight line to it's fountainhead—Ives. While Stravinsky's Petrushka was dancing to a hurdy-gurdy Russian solo trumpet melody, Ives executed massive barrages of cascading brass with rhythmic complexity that makes "Le Sacre du Printemps" seem like a Straussian waltz.

The fourth symphony is one of Ives' greatest works and it represents the use of many devices Ives inherited from his father (George Ives, who at times was a bandleader). In subsequent works as well as in the fourth symphony, Ives used quarter tones, polychords, controlled serialism, superimposition of rhythms, tonal clusters, layered harmony, spatial arrangement, and other techniques all at a time when Debussy's non-resolutions began to wash upon American shores (circa 1895-1905). A very clear example of this "strata harmony" technique is the composition "Central Park In The Dark." A repeated melodic line begins in the strings which establishes one layer. While this is going on, other instruments make their entrances—the woodwinds, a momentary quote from the piano; and then they all enter. A number of layers are established when the horns enter with a Forte melody followed by an entrance of percussion instruments all bringing the section to a Tutti "climax" and then only a moment later the same melodic layer in the strings is left to fade out. This same technique can also be noticed to some degree in the first movement of Bartok's "Music For Strings, Percussion And Celesta" (1936).

In October 1984, the fourth symphony was conducted under the knowing baton of Jose Serebrier with the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. I was lucky enough to be in the fifth row; and watching the orchestra become a giant mass of organized chaos was really the high point of October for me. Serebrier was by then used to this, having been acquainted with the symphony since the early 1960's. At that time, Leopold Stokowski would premiere the work after a reconstruction of it from manuscripts. It became clear that at least two conductors would be necessary because of the rhythmic difficulties of the piece (Ives had intended the work for four conductors). At the October performance, the first

violinist co-conducted at certain points during the work.

It would be hard to describe how Ives manages to create a "Doppler Effect" at times, and why he leaves the second string section "hanging" at the end of the second movement. Ives first and foremost was a great conceptualist—in his mind he gathered and experimented with the form and substance of music. Examples such as "The Unanswered Question," "Decoration Day," and "The Cage" illustrate the ability of one man to secure a style that Bernard Hermann called "snapshots of American life." Ives was able to take a simple folk song like "Dixieland" and modernize it to the point of sophisticated composition. Other composers (notably Bartok) took their native folk material and accomplished similar results—but Ives may stand as the most inventive.

The second string quartet contains elements of the fourth symphony, and it is in this quartet that Ives again conceptualizes and invents the "Arguments," "Discussions," and "Call Of The Mountains" sections. Here we meet the imaginary character "Rollo," the Romanticist who believes in a sweet, "Haydnish" melody. The most moving section comes at the end of the last movement when Rollo and his companions "go out to view the firmament," where a melody is played over a sustained D major chord. This was partly re-assembled and used as the climax of the fourth symphony—what Copland calls "an extraordinary work in every way."

At the center of the Ivesian mind was his "Transcendentalist" belief which he shared with Hawthorne—that Man and God are one; that the human consciousness is immutable. It takes a bit of reading and listening to understand the syntax of Ives; what he is trying to communicate. Yet composing was not a full time activity for Ives when he was at the height of his powers. He was heading a very successful insurance company (Ives & Myrick). He didn't want his family to "starve on his dissonances."

Arnold Schoenberg was noted as saying "There is a great man living in this country—a composer. He has solved the problem of how to preserve oneself and to learn. He responds to negligence by contempt. He is not forced to accept praise or blame. His name is Ives." The more strung-out contemporary composers such as Cage, Stockhausen, Glass, and Husa become, the more that those who are informed will come to appreciate the genius from Danbury and his momentous fourth symphony.

Suggested listenings:

- Symphonies 1-4:
- "The Concord Sonata"
- "Central Park In The Dark"
- "The Unanswered Question"
- "Decoration Day"
- "String Quartet 1 & 2"

□ Suggested Readings:

Charles Ives by Henry and Sidney Cowell
An Ives Celebration ed. Hitchcock, Perlis

The New Music by Aaron Copland

These and many other selections can be found in any competent Library of Music.

—Glen Flax

Expanding the Mind Through Music

In this century, a new field of treatment for disabled or mentally impaired persons has arisen: music therapy, or using the actual power of music to obtain some kind of medicinal effect. Exposure to fine music, just as to fine food, fine wine, and fine theater, can have a super-uplifting effect upon the mind. Experiments conducted on plants and animals yield a similar result—increased growth, greater stability, and greater capacity to survive.

Music can then be the only "drug" that is non-addictive, one which helps to calm and inspire (recharging) your mind. No matter how rich or poor you may be, a few moments of listening to, say, Wagnerian grand opera can immediately uproot your mind and carry it into an entirely different sphere.

There is firm evidence to suggest that regular listening and appreciation of "finer musics" can increase mental output: Einstein himself was a Mozart freak, and many of our greatest accomplisheers also possess a formidable background of our classical and jazz giants. One complaint that a listener may have however is that "the stuff is boring; it all sounds the same to me." Such remarks probably stem from an ignorance due to lack of exposure—particularly to twentieth century music. I therefore propose an introduction to modern music, which would be followed by working our way backwards in time to more "traditional" musics. At this point I will therefore suggest some twentieth-century listenings (this list is by no means exhaustive):

Igor Stravinsky: "Le Sacre du Printemps" ("The Rite of Spring")
"The Firebird Suite"

Bela Bartok: "Concerto for Orchestra"
"Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta"

Arnold Schoenberg: "Verklarte Nacht" ("Transfigured Night")

Edgar Varese: "Ionisation"
"Le Poeme Electronique"

Charles Ives: "The Unanswered Question"
"Central Park in the Dark"

—Glen Flax