

Touching Extremes.

Things that should be heard*, in the words of a Purple Prose Peddler.

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Linking www.touchingextremes.org is appreciated.

Touching Extremes is dedicated to the ever-underrated vision and music of [Roland Kayn](http://www.kayn.nl). Visit www.kayn.nl for more information. Also, check [Memories of Mr.23 \(The Alfred Harth chronicles\)](#) at the end of the page.

THE FASCINATION OF POSTAL (AND MENTAL) DELAY.

It's not automatic that a new album gets an immediate review, although this lone yodeler will always attempt to keep the pace with all these releases while trying to lead a normal (?) life. Deserving records that somehow arrived here late or slipped under the radar (...or under a pile of CDs waiting for their turn...) are reviewed - sometimes with a little sense of guilt - in the [Forget-Me-Not](#) section, previously known as "Did you miss these?". This will also include works released years ago, if you decide to send them anyway (someone did). That's right, I

discover a lot of good things late, so sue me. This is also a sadistic way to whine about stuff that is overlooked at first (... "Yeah, I will buy it later...") and now tickles hardcore eBay desires. But, as Petey and Katey say, don't give up. And have a credit card handy.

Touching Extremes Archives:

[from A to D](#) [from E to K](#) [from L to P](#) [from Q to Z](#)

Lots of past and recent reviews, mostly still usable (the oldish-shortish ones probably not). Some are just made of a few comments (actually, the whole thing started - in 2001 - as an irregular gathering of brief descriptions of records that I liked. Ah, the good times...). The most vintage ones are corrected, updated or even deleted as I spot them. Hey, if a composer can disown a piece, a writer can do the same. I do both.

This month:

AB DUO - Everyone is happy ([Scrapple](#))

AB Duo comprises drummer Brendan Dougherty and trumpeter Aaron Meicht, who are also part of the electronic trio Feigner reviewed elsewhere in this issue. The motivity of "Everyone is happy" is proportional to its reclusive appearance, the music offering nocturnal qualities that never transcend the limit of licentiousness. Meicht tends to break silence with gentle intracutaneous fragments and introverted spirals whose range is usually limited to predetermined melodic areas, "melody" in this case not to be intended as a lyrical expression, rather as a sheer succession of notes. On his side, Dougherty is even more restrained, moving small gestural bursts and succinct hints around ample spaces and intense taciturnities, often leaving us completely alone and naked in front of unexpected whiffles of nothingness. The final - and longest - track is a 32-minute live improvisation showing AB's total dynamic control: gleams of instrumental prowess define a discoloured poetic that whispers at our untold desires with the same conviction of a silent persuader. Difficult yet substantial matter, certainly worthy of repeated visits with concentration working at full steam.

OREN AMBARCHI / KEITH ROWE - Squire ([For 4 Ears](#))

Recorded live in Cologne in 2002, "Squire" possesses attributes and stamina to spare, revealing itself in all its staying power. The set starts with a hoard of subsonic rumbles which instantly caused my woofers to try and come out

running away. About seven minutes into the piece, earth loop and radio voices have already established a reign of terror, different hues of natural earmuffing that could have an explosion near your house going almost unnoticed. The huge wall of low frequencies encroaches our mental control but leaves a few doors ajar for penetrating shortwave calls that better define the frame of questionable lethargy that this music causes. Inexorably, new emissions start giving the picture a more abstract quality and it's right there that a higher percentage of distortion is delivered, together with additional radiophonic intrusions, in a section of economical lucid surrealism that identifies the territory around the halfway mark. By now we've been inducted in "Roweland" and there's no way out in sight, as crackling discharges, scraped nonentities and semi-paralyzed cybernetic birds would all love to be portrayed in the family album photo, cell phone interference and electrostatic pulse riding the crest of a mercurial wave of uneasiness. At the half-hour point, the catharsis is fully operational and the ground-shaking vibrations are felt through the spine up to the skull (and down to the kitchen, my wife calling me with impressed excitement after feeling the floor quivering under her feet). A black cat is also attracted; he comes, peeps and goes - and I believe he heard things that I missed. I finally surrender to Ambarchi and Rowe's authority: do what you want of me.

ASHER - The anguish is not the same ([Homophoni](#))

Available for downloading at the Homophoni website, this splendidly titled composition is a synthetic, deeply involving representation of the many reasons for my growing interest in Asher's production. Reportedly conceived through "samplers and effects", the track - about 33 minutes, a perfect length - starts with a series of virtual in-and-out camera zooms that go from a distant perspective (silence) to close ups of scarcely distinguishable activity. The moments in which the sonic mass gets louder are characterized by a background disturbance, like a cross of modulated white noise and shortwaves, the whole creating a sense of being massaged by interacting physical energies. The real beauty of this composition comes forth after a while, when the ongoing forward-and-backward shift keeps growing in intensity, until we begin to hear the grain of the matter while the music keeps flowing; the most detectable derivations are human voices and, soon becoming a constant presence, leaking water drops. This creates the biotic quality that I've grown accustomed to by listening to most of Asher's recordings, that sense of organic life, even in apparently next-to-dead structures, which moves his creations through a chain of distinct phases. Time is framed in a way that forces the listener to freeze and be completely subjugated by something that remains undisclosed, but is felt as a depurating radiance. I'm looking forward to this man getting famous.

MARC BEHRENS / PAULO RAPOSO - Hades ([And/OAR](#))

The sea is an obvious source of fascination; innumerable artists have tried to come to terms with its sonic power in the past. Marc Behrens and Paulo Raposo added a "mechanical" nuance to their interests by recording the noise of ferry boats and quays in various Portuguese marine locations, placing them amidst other local environmental recordings to generate this beautiful artifact. "Itinerantly" composed between 2003 and 2006, "Hades" stimulates and wakes up the nervous centres, but even more often it leaves a lot of mental room for concentration and reflection. The raw materials chosen by Behrens and Raposo allow for an intriguing deployment of gradations that might sound indelicately harsh in tracks like "Gate 1" but, when sapiently treated, become mutations of angelic choirs looking for a sky to dissipate in, ruptured by faraway thuds and bumps, or even studies in dreams elicited by adjacent pseudo-tones, finally directed to complete oblivion ("Crossing into"). "Gate 4" is an enthralling, obscure drone in a reverberant virtual cathedral of noise, exquisitely sober and impressively layered, later morphing into a siren's lament lowered three octaves, wind and seagulls barely perceived in this profound context; it's a masterpiece of the untold, one of the overall best compositions I've enjoyed in at least a decade. Every sonic object manipulated by the couple is translated into something utterly meaningful, and the silences they leave for the sounds to breathe in are nicely filled by extraneous elements (a faraway belltower entered my room at noon this Sunday during this listening session, and it was wonderful). "Hades" is brilliant, just like everything in the And/OAR catalogue.

BIRDSONGS OF THE MESOZOIC with ORAL MOSES - Extreme spirituals ([Cuneiform](#))

Bass baritone Oral Moses is one of the most renowned singers of operas, oratorios and spirituals. Birdsongs are one of my all-time favourite new progressive-chamber rock ensembles. And - get this - I prevalently HATE opera, especially when it's sung in Italian (but, while we're at it, I also consider John Adams' "Nixon in China" one of the most horrible records that I've ever heard). So I was prepared for the worst, but...how can one doubt artists at this level of heart, intelligence and technique? Moses' voice is imposing and always perfect, and Ken Field, Michael Bierylo, Erik Lindgren and Rick Scott managed to father a series of arrangements for twelve famous (or less) spirituals that, at times, left my mouth agape. Try to get the correct picture here: we're talking about songs like "Joshua fit the Battle of Jericho" and "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child" played by a quartet that morphed them into their technologically advanced versions by cross-pollinating Igor Stravinsky and Univers Zero, yet sounding unquestionably Mesozoic. On top of all this, a gorgeous lyrical singer lays

powerfully articulate lines, which at a first try might sound slightly strange but after a while you really need them - and how. "Extreme spirituals" is one of those records that take about ten minutes before you completely fall into their arms; it is a splendid rendition of music that is already ageless and - after the "Birdsongs extreme makeover" - is likely to become even more valued, maybe also by those who don't like spirituals. I call it a perfectly accomplished experiment, and you'd better give it a very attentive listen.

FRANCOIS CARRIER / DEWEY REDMAN / MICHEL DONATO / RON SEGUIN / MICHEL LAMBERT - Open spaces ([Spool](#))

In loving memory of the late Dewey Redman, here featured on tenor sax, Spool releases a 1999 live set by a peculiar "double reed-double contrabass-drums" quintet. Redman is flanked by François Carrier on alto sax, and throughout the album this couple of forwards plays inspired lines moving from post-Coltranian recollections and invocations to a non-structural, fast-paced quality of atonal phrasing which travels in and around different jazz meanings, but always remains wholly comprehensible. Bassists Donato and Seguin perform their duties maintaining a firm grip on the lyrical aspect, keeping a steady pulse while observing the contrapuntal directions with concentrated serenity and resourceful instrumental command. The excellent Lambert glues the overall keenness of the musicians into a series of percussive frames where both swing and freeform switch-hitting articulations sound like a totally conscious and utterly intelligent decision. Overall, "Open spaces" is an album made of cohesion and passion, full of elegance and freedom, luckily devoid of clichés and formulaic posing by the artists. A worthy homage to a great saxophonist.

TOM CHANT / SHARIF SEHNAOUI - Cloister ([Al Maslakh](#))

This is a soprano sax/acoustic guitar session recorded at Sehnaoui's apartment in Paris, which is near an old cloister. The record comprises three long improvisations whose grammar derives from an obstinate research for uncharted areas of intelligent needlework, thus fertilizing the ground for new contiguities between the percussive resonance of instruments. The results achieved by this duo through the application of extended techniques bring the whole thing to shine, and quite often. Chant's saxophone creates its illusoriness through reversible hoarseness and chirping tremolos, yet at the same time his playing is radiosopic, bringing out all the multiphonic sensibility at the right moments while eradicating any immunity from its almost probabilistic aesthetic. Sehnaoui's technical clothing exploits every particle of his guitar; he fills gaps with wooden friction, string detuning and relaxed responsiveness. Gentle bumps and muffled roars respond to Chant's calls without hurry, and listening to the Lebanese artist hit the strings with

random jauntiness in the third section, with the saxophonist bouncing around those semi-chords like an excited peeping bird, adds a pinch of salt to an already appetizing recipe.

GENE COLEMAN / RAED YASSIN - The adventures of Nabil Fawzi ([Al Maslakh](#))

In this era of global extermination and progressive incapacity for a direct communication of our mutual feelings - which is absurd considering how powerful the means at our disposal are - a label like Al Maslakh shares an important role with other fundamental discographic realities (such as, for example, Creative Sources), namely the development of a pancultural improvisation lexicon that should always be a necessity, not a coincidence. The meeting between Coleman's bass clarinet and Yassin's double bass is a fulgid example of achievement of an excellent result in that sense. Comprising five accomplished duets, this record immediately determines its appeal through its intimate yet enthusiastic character, which gives this music an immediate spotlight for its inherent standards. The struggle for freedom is often defined by the quality of the energies that are put into it; in this occasion, Coleman and Yassin articulate their exchanges with serene consciousness, avoiding generic perceptions to deliver themselves from their own skills, which are enormous but get hold in the background, as opposed to the bright effervescence of a never aggressive communication between the parts. The perfect match between the frequencies of the two instruments is the icing on the cake, with the musicians applying a level-headed control on the percussive clatter and the harmonious buzzes they elicit at various times, yet not once they reiterate fixed patterns or manifest rigidity in their marvellous expression. It's a splendid album, a worthy representer of the high level of Mazen Kerbaj's label.

TAYLOR DEUPREE / KENNETH KIRSCHNER / TOMAS KORBER / STEINBRUCHEL / AARON XIMM - May 6, 2001 ([And/OAR](#))

The strange coincidence between the intentions of Kenneth Kirschner, who on May 6, 2001 recorded sounds from the Financial District of Manhattan to start a new documentary work about New York, and the disguised organizations that decided that this particular area would become a symbol of destructive political greed masked as "war of religions", is what gives this work its ominous complexion. All the involved composers designed their tracks by working on the same sources, most of them with stunningly engrossing results and - above all - keeping their own artistic personality intact and recognizable. Kirschner's field recordings - here presented in an abridged version, the full one being available for downloading at the label's website - privilege obscure imagery of pulsating nocturnal energies, whirring loops of distant noise,

traffic and subterranean hiss as disquieting presences scrutinizing us from behind. Steinbrüchel and Ximm are at the extreme opposites of the sonic range: the Swiss artist offers an almost immutable, low-frequency electronic drone while Ximm seems to depict the movement of inhuman entities from the underground in what's the most active track in terms of scansion. Taylor Deupree's is probably the most "musical" contribution, his short track mixing interlocking circular patterns of harmonic semi-degradation with what sounds like heavily processed "concrete" sounds. Finally, total silence and, possibly, solitude are necessary to appreciate the dynamic range of Tomas Korber's piece, clocking at 22'04" and, for this reason, the one track that touches all the different sensations - silence, menace, human and urban activity - that the whole record means to let us experience, and that become reasons for more and more anxiousness with each new listening, thus determining the complete success of this conceptual, yet emotional project.

EKG & GIUSEPPE IELASI - Group ([Formed](#))

Mostly made of quietly unobtrusive concoctions of electronica and acoustic improvisation, "Group" sees Ernst Karel (trumpet, analog electronics), Kyle Bruckmann (oboe, English horn, analog electronics) and Giuseppe Ielasi (electric guitar, piano etc.) trying to locate invisible niches, in order to hide their timid inspections of vibration and hum right there, all the while working "in between" those zones where electroacoustic manipulation and quasi-biotic tranquillity are integrated in a coherent context. The qualities of the "regular" instruments are carefully put in reciprocal contact during short static contrapuntal segments, seemingly to represent a series of "stations" where the musicians gather to regroup and plan new theories for the exploitation of the concealed qualities of their sources. Yet it takes only a raise of the volume to bring out unexpected facets of deep resonance, riveting pulse and educated noise peeping at us behind an ever-lurking calmness. The "Providence-Middletown" track is my own highlight, with a splendid deformed cycle - about 2'30" into the piece - opening the heart and preparing the expectancy to being brutalized by distorted overacute frequencies and slightly unsettling vignettes meshing earthquake and contemplation; one detects an AMM-like spirit, also enhanced by a discreet radiophonic presence. Taken in the right frame of mind, this is a gorgeous release.

FAST COLOUR - Antwerp 1988 ([Loose Torque](#))

Great stuff came out, on an August evening in 1988, by this septet including Pinise Saul (voice), Dudu Pukwana (alto and soprano saxes), Evan Parker (tenor sax), Harry Beckett (trumpet), Annie Whitehead (trombone, voice), Nick Stephens (double bass) and John Stevens (drums). Subtitled "Suite for Johnny Mbizo Dyani", this concert is a mixture of invocations, African