

Projections - One

INDEPENDENT RECORD LABELS

Having in mind the crucial necessity for independent record labels and the contributions they enable vis-à-vis creative freedom of speech, I wrote the following thoughts which were posted on Simon Barker's KIMNARA site. They have been amended for inclusion here.

People need access to creative endeavor in order that they are in a position to decide for themselves how they feel and think about creative pursuit and its manifestation in the public domain. From almost the beginning of recording technology people interested in creative sound-making have, for the most part, had exposure determined for them. Furthermore, people involved in the hands-on pursuit of creative sound-making have, to a large extent, been at the beck and call of entrepreneurs, A & R people, and those more concerned with industrial economics than with creative integrity. Digital technology and the internet are making possible positive changes to this state of affairs. The scales do need to balance.

This need no doubt lay at the heart of creative individuals like Bill Dixon, Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, Max Roach & Charles Mingus, and collectives like AACM, Jazz Composers Guild, Collective Black Artists, JCOA Records, just to name a few, when, during the 1950s through 1970s, various attempts were made to establish artist-controlled documentation and publishing. Distribution proved a stumbling block. For those who are interested and have a wish to engage, musicians and listeners alike can now share a space for creative exchange that isn't mediated through, and motivated by, other-than creative intent. The web of the net, while in its expanding of the marketplace, has concurrently, perhaps ironically, furnished a place for independent creative people; a place where relatively unmediated communication can be sought and woven in accord with individual predilections. Although the World Wide Web is loaded with manipulative information, a direct relationship between those holding the sound-making instruments and the ears/hearts & minds of those who wish to listen – making for a particular kind of dialogue not possible otherwise – is accessible for those who wish to search.

Crucial in this fairly complex equation is the passage of time between the event-as-recorded and its availability as document. In an ideal world creative acts are ongoing. Arguably they are anyway. But while two months or a year might be considered reasonably current and therefore bearing potential, through dialogue, for ongoing development, twenty years renders the event a historical discussion. In this case the listener has no choice but be an interested on-looker rather than a potential participant in the shaping of a creative ethos.

Although, to be sure, recorded documentation of spontaneously created music transforms the original event, this transformation is not necessarily negative; though granted, it does make for a different experience to that as witnessed at first-hand. One of the advantages gained from the event-as-document is its transformation to document-as-reference. Especially in cases of interwoven complex structures, of

emotional depth with intellectual rigor – particularly enigmatic in the field of creative improvisation – document-as-reference opens the door onto dialogue aimed at deeper understanding; not only for the listener qua listener but, significantly, for the performer qua listener/interlocutor. This makes for real-time engagement between these parties rather than a historical on-looking, though I hasten to add here, historical on-looking does bear positive potential. But alas, this is another discussion.

Feeling to Thought seeks a field of exchange where questions pertaining to creative endeavor might be broached. Through ongoing dialogue enabled by this more direct mode of contact – artist \rightleftharpoons recipient – terms that apply to both sides of this equation become shared and of equal value, embracing a pro-active view of the creative ethos applicable in the here-and-now.

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