

## **FOREWORD**

**John Richards (Dirty Electronics) selected writings 'cut-up' 2012 – 2017.  
Quotes are left unreferenced.**

I didn't have to labour over every recording and oversee each performance, when in the creation of a sound-generating device the seeds of a composition were there for anyone to realise. It was a bit like a cuckoo laying an egg in a nest for another bird to hatch and nurture.

Dirty Electronics ... made me aware of a potential alternative to the artistic and economic models ... a model that is neither dependent on recorded media or the live performance, but based on a wider social network of participation.

Cage also discusses being introduced to the filmmaker Oscar Fischinger: ' ... he began to talk with me about the spirit which is inside each of the objects of this world. So, he told me, all we need to do to liberate that spirit is to brush past the object, and to draw forth its sound'.

Such objects can be considered to have their own will and 'fight back', or act as microcosms for sound exploration and composition. In many instances, repertoire is 'found' in the object rather than played on the instrument ...

The instrumental and compositional boundaries are potentially set by the same person who assumes a new role of maker and composer.

John Bowers ... referred to the DIY musician's instrument as a 'table full of shit' ... This type of 'messy' table puts forward a music-making environment of 'things'. ... An 'instrument of electronics' therefore implies a disposition towards processes, connectivity, and relationships - how things may or may not interact with each other.

The fact that the technology is more affordable and readily available, a preoccupation of many DIYers, does not necessarily mean the technology is 'low'. ... 'low' forms of technology are often yesterday's high-tech.

A square wave generator produces a square wave. It is one-hundred-percent faithful in the representation of itself and thereby 'high-fidelity'. What is perceived, therefore, as lo-fi sound is bound to both technological and phenomenological issues.

Ron Kuivila has discussed how [David] Tudor developed the idea of patch diagrams and that 'electronic configurations ... produce their own temporal behaviour'.

Gijs Gieskes uses the Dutch phrase 'houtje touwtje' (small sticks and string) to describe some of his work and a particular approach to DIY music making. This

approach is summarised by a fascination with absurd machines, novel and implausible technological marriages, convoluted designs, 'humble' materials and a shunning of high-tech.

Boundaries between theory and practice and the idea of mind and body as separate entities still need to be broken down. 'I make, therefore I think' and vice versa.

The material world will become ever precious, edifying and, conversely, dangerous. I am drawn to materials. I am of material. I like to play with and mix materials.

I've never set out for Dirty Electronics to be educational, but more experiential. ... Many artists could be considered as educators as their work often asks us to listen or look again at what is in front of us or to confront certain issues within society. Both art and education can be transformative for people.

There will be many new tools to supposedly make music or life easier. I'm not interested in making things easier, but more meaningful. My job as an artist is to make problems or pose difficult questions and not always provide solutions. I work within the realm of critiquing technology. This is true of the technology that I use to make music.

Making becomes a processual part of performance or broadcast.

Score is extended to the idea of other schema: circuit diagrams, graphic notations, text, dramaturgy, parts list, etc.

Musical interludes.

The guy in charge of the video editing suite, who was teaching communication studies, came in and said: 'What you doing? You've made a mess!', which was a fair point. But then he said: 'If you don't have an idea, you're just doing what the technology determines.' And for me, as a seventeen year old, at that moment, I really rejected that assertion, but didn't have the means to challenge it. I actually spent the best part of twenty years, trying to read and think about why this guy was wrong. [Mark Fell]

I think human action and human creativity only happens within the context of systems and structures. For me, there's no such thing as imagination that exists outside those things. [Mark Fell]

In many ways, I'm hugely influenced by the culture of mobility.

... I've got some kind of ownership of what I'm trying to do with the technology. Of course these components still could exist in some terrible weapon or in

another context, but I can somehow reshape this stuff in a different way, or use this technology for my ends rather than be dominated by it.

'OK come over here,' [called the engineers]. So I put the paper tape into the machine. They started it. It started to move, it put the pen down, it did a little thing, and then it got stuck. [Frieder Nake]

The lesson I learned here ... be modest with programs. You are always doing things wrong. And the testing is what you have to learn. How to test it. [Frieder Nake]

A floor or table strewn with beer cans, toys, bits of scrap metal, ceramic bowls, miscellaneous electronics and wires: a collection of 'things' to make sound. Instrument and sound object have been sacrificed for a music of things.

Proximity becomes key. Distance between instruments or objects has to be carefully calculated, as well as gauging where a stride, shuffle, body twist or bend will be required during performance.

The 'Anordnung' (placing) figure in the score of [Stockhausen's] *Zyklus* is like looking at a circuit board and its component layout.

... mixing desk as 'instrument' presents a conundrum. In most cases, musical instruments are played upon, whilst a desk infers something to work at. So is electronic music worked upon?

I have also looked back on my performances and the relationships with sound objects and stuff laid before me as implying a choreography of sorts.

The nature of this music revolves around the notion of instrumental flux, modularity and 'versioning'; and with this comes an emphasis on interconnections and relationships. The relationship between the things - including the organiser (the player) - potentially becomes of greater importance than the things themselves. The very nature of making stuff opens up possibilities for making music in a new way.

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There is a fundamental alignment between the practice of improvisation and DIY electronic music in that both have the capacity to occupy the realm of the unknown and require things - both abstract (musical) ideas and physical artefacts - to be built.