

## LES MATTINS DU MONDE

### Mattin

Proletarian of  
Noise  
JAPAN HIBARI MUSIC  
hibari-10 CD (2006)

On this, and other releases of his received this season, our Basque friend Mattin is making manifest his Marxist-inspired views and philosophies, especially as they obtain in the worlds of contemporary art and music. He is keenly aware of the marketplace dilemmas he faces; trying to make a living from music yet refusing to allow his work to become commodified, just like everything else from movies to TV to coffee to newspapers to computer games is becoming commodified, and has become fiercely critical of those citizens who either ignore this dilemma, or don't seem to care about it. A brisk engagement with these issues, then, is his overall game plan; even going to far as to print 'Anti-Copyright' on everything he releases on his own label, and making a point of stating that

this record was made using open-source (ie free) software.

This album comprises an hour of extremely severe sound and noise (four tracks and one very long one, occupying a good half hour). Two of them are 'instrumentals', the seven-minute 'Desecration of Silence' standing as one of the most extreme statements issued in the name of electronic music I've heard for a long time. Fans of razor-sharp sonic piercings are advised to check out this outstanding cut, if nothing else. On the other three cuts, he gets heavy politically, combining the harsh and minimal electronic noise that is one of his trademarks with some spoken-word polemic, full texts of which are supplied in the pack. On 'Attitude Fetishist', anyone who listens is lined up against the wall for an assassination. We're all taken to task in an extreme rant the like of which I haven't heard since Crass; but where Crass elected to deliver long-winded and intelligent deconstructions of capitalism, Mattin's line here is just to hurl abuse at us, shouting out slogans like 'you are a fucking passive endless consumer'. His bitter voice screams at us, blasted out over a tinny drumbeat and a harsh hissing noise. Horrific.

Little relief on 'You Are Stuck as A Free Man', where he really ups the ante on the harshness aspect, roaring like a schizophrenic through a distorted mic against vile bursts of reverbed filth. Taking no prisoners, Mattin yells at us 'Your mind is nothing but the cunt of capitalism'. This lecture, though still steeped in the hectoring tone and packed with simplistic slogans, at least has the benefit of being a coherent argument when read on the page, carefully stating the position as regards social organisation and validation of the capital structure. Blah-blah-blah. When heard as a record, it's just unlistenable shrieking; and how many listeners will stand for being personally insulted by a raving madman while he covers you

with acidic vomit?

Answer: very few, which in Mattin's eyes may count as a good result. Having encountered a good deal of politically-informed art in my time (and been bored rigid by most of it), I think the intention of many of its perpetrators is to arrive at an 'anti-product', something which by its nature is so utterly carcinogenic and toxic that it simply cannot possibly be absorbed by the system of Monopoly Capitalism. It isn't just about not selling something (any dolt with a worthless product can do that!); it's about actively producing something that attacks, poisons, and subverts the very maw which gives it birth. In this regard, Mattin succeeds perfectly here. As for shouting at his listeners, he may do this simply to wake us up, slap us in the face, and rouse us from the comfort of our bourgeois consumerist torpor. If you think I'm misrepresenting him, hear him speak for himself; grab a copy of this and see how far you get with his 'Thesis On Noise', a ten-point polemic which begins with the question 'What the fuck is noise' and ends with the conclusion that 'The process of noise making has in itself become the object of financial and symbolic market value'. As to what you will hear on the half-hour track of this title, well – why should I spoil his best joke? Unless you count the joke on the cover, which apparently uses an old record cover by Hijokaidan, the Japanese masters of shrill noise.

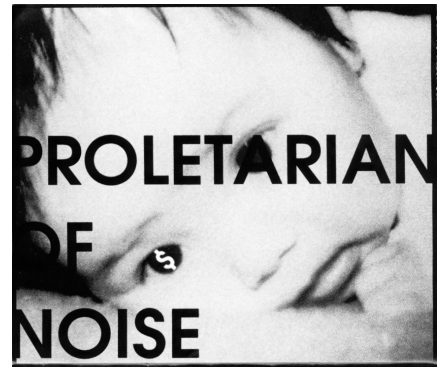
ED PINSENT 04/08/2007

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### No More Music

At The Service of Capital  
SWEDEN iDEAL RECORDINGS iDEAL  
041 / GREECE ABSURD #63 / 8mm  
012 CD (2007)

A further chapter in the Mattin manifesto and his master plan to crush monopoly capitalism through harsh noise. Here he is with Lucio Capece, the Argentinian saxophonist who has also recently made a very quiet record for L'Innomable with Axel Dörner. With his mixing desk and feedback generated from his sax, Capece is matched by the Basque Mattin producing hideous noise from computer feedback and yelling at the top of his voice from time to time. Over 37 minutes, we have four tracks of shrill and repellent sounds recorded in various locations around Europe during 2006; three of them have lyrics, and all are intended as extremely critical diatribes and attacks on



various aspects of Western capitalism. As with his *Proletarian of Noise*, Mattin directs his single-minded hurlements at the listener, with an underlying accusatory tone. 'Universal Prostitution' (surely a 2006 update on Mark Stewart's 'We Are All Prostitutes') tells us 'You get born / you get used / you get fucked / you live in / universal prostitution'. Well, there's a stark message. It's more like a slogan, and some listeners may find it doesn't really convey enough of the specifics of the problem, nor lead to any constructive suggestions for how to improve matters. However, 'Consumed' presses more sophisticated buttons about the 'alienation' of consumer society and how, in Mattin's eyes, the only belief system we have left is centred around ownership and money, and that we have all been 'decimated and betrayed' by this system. The Marxist diktat whence much of this line of thinking is derived is quoted in some seven lines on the back cover, while the front cover deploys a construct of photo-collage, typography and colour-field printing that is clearly intended to invoke the work of the Russian Konstruktivists. It's not quite as powerful in its geometric perfection as Rodchenko and lacks the design impact of the Stenberg brothers, but the point is taken.

Not every track here is as harsh as the opening salvo; 'Consumed' comprises two discrete sound events, both derived I assume from very extreme electronic processing, and both contributing heavily to the listener's malaise. It ends up with further sloganeering and screeching, but that nausea-inducing tactic is a good one, and has been used (to a lesser degree) by earlier Marxist/Socialist musicians such as Chris Cutler, Tim Hodgkinson, and This Heat. The point of it is to persuade the audience, through sound, that all is not well with the world; political statement through dissonance. Third track 'Work = Decapitated Life' is another noise fest, without any lyrical content at all, and recommended to any curious listeners as an entry route into this harsh new world of Mattin's; it's one damn good slab of tooth-rattling spiky, feedback racket. The same could be said of the ten-minute 'Blow', which features an astonishingly crude passage of inhuman gravel-voiced bluttering, which I take to be Capece's saxophone filtered through some excessive treatments. Another 'Anti-Copyright' recording, jointly released by three labels.

ED PINSENT 20/08/2007

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## Joseetxo Grieta

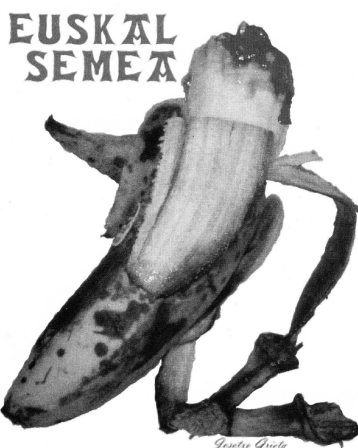
Euskal Semea

SPAIN w.m.o/r 28 CD (2007)

A very odd one indeed...Joseetxo Grieta is an ad-hoc group, comprising Joseetxo Anitua on voice and radio, Inigo Eguillor on drums, and our old Basque friend Mattin on voice and guitar. They were commissioned to record a version of 'European Son' by The Velvet Underground, as part of the project by the editor of music zine Brutus to stage an event in honour of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that famous LP. The CD contains two very long pieces of brutal noised-up versions, now retitled 'EPEEAR SEMEA I' and II, of which the second version was recorded live and the first version is a radical re-interpretation of the original, reworked for 20 guitars, watering cans, broken glasses and voice...both are simply splendid assaults of powerful avant-rock noise, compelling and remorseless in equal measure, paying particular attention to that brutalist, primitive rhythm to propel the songs; both remain totally true to the real spirit of The Velvets. On strength of what you hear alone, many progressive listeners will find this hard to resist.

But stay! Joseetxo Grieta also have an underlying concept to the release, explained in detail in the pamphlet enclosure of which the cover art is a sickening satire version of the famous banana LP cover by Andy Warhol. Joseetxo's riposte to that iconic image is his photograph of an old, browning banana of which the top has been bitten off and dipped in a vile red sauce. It looks repellent. Inside, a concise paragraph of research reminds us that the original 'European Son' was dedicated to Delmore Schwartz, who (as all VU fanatics already know) was the poet and professor at Syracuse, and Lou Reed's personal mentor. He's remembered to this day as a crazy man, an alcoholic and drug addict, and a violent enemy of rock music, especially what he regarded as the banality of its lyrics. In fact the band attempted to curry favour with him by recording 'European Son', a song that comprises only 20 seconds of lyrics, and seven minutes of noise.

Analysing the scant ten lines of the 'European Son' lyric, Joseetxo Grieta conclude from it that 'Lou Reed is attacking the established power structures of the so-called white collars, and aligns himself with the European history of rebellious poets'. Inspired with agitational zeal, the band decided to make their version of the song into a critical statement, attacking modern culture and politics. They translated the lyrics into Euserka, an archaic European language which is allegedly the oldest living tongue in the continent. In the process, the European son suddenly changed into 'Euskal Semea', meaning a Basque Son. In depicting the plight of the Basque ('an outlaw in a land occupied between two countries'), this leaves our critical trio free to explore ideas of oppressive law-makers, consumerism, globalisation, and the work of the Spanish poet Eduardo Haro Ibars, an icon of counter-culture in Spain during the Franco years. Like all good Marxist-inspired thinkers, our libertarians can't forget the weight of history, and continue to complain bitterly about 'centuries of domination by the French and the Spanish'. It's not all politics thankfully, as the trio used their anger to create new lyrics for their recordings, generated using automatic writing, and sung in Spanish; these lyrics depict a simple morality play exposing the folly of internecine



violence, and hope to expose the 'mousetrap that is carefully prepared for us'.

Accordingly, their version of 'European Son' is now dedicated to two poets, Schwartz and Ibars, and (even if you don't dig the political angles) this gives a satisfying conceptual coherence to their statement.

ED PINSENT 29/07/2007

## Michel Henritzi

Keith Rowe Serves Imperialism

SPAIN w.m.o/r 29 CD (2007)

This incendiary release could almost be the last chapter in Mattin's series of critical polemic. But it's Michel Henritzi's show. Mattin participates on one track here, and Henritzi enjoys the help of collaborations from Bruce Russell, Taku Unami, and Shin'ichi Isohata.

Henritzi used to run the label A Bruit Secret in France, and he released numerous excellent examples of improvised music, including documents of radical Japanese improvised music (and not just the onkyo players) which were always welcome in the TSP house. I am sure they will come to be seen as very important slices of musical history. The inflammatory title of this release, I need hardly tell you, refers to Cornelius Cardew's famous 1974 tract *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, written at a time when the UK composer was informed by his new-found Maoist doctrine. At one time Cardew was the UK's foremost apologist for avant-garde music; few were more active than he in promoting and exposing it to a wider audience. This changed completely when he discovered his political radicalism; his former mentor Stockhausen was his first target, whose music was rejected wholesale as its 'mysticism' apparently distracted listeners from the only important political issue of the day (ie the class struggle).

Keith Rowe was of course a founder member of AMM along with Cardew; I think at one time they may even have had political views they could comfortably share, or at least find areas of overlap. He may be surprised to find a younger generation turning on him this way and apparently accusing him of being the same sort of suspect 'establishment' figure that, in Cardew's eyes, the hated Stockhausen had become. 'Keith was little angry by the title,' Henritzi tells me. 'I could understand, but it was not a personal attack. I chose him just because

he's become a kind of Improv icon and for a joke with the Cardew book.' In fact, Henritzi's thoughtful 4-page essay which accompanies this release probes many areas, in pursuit of an argument involving the very nature of improvisation, social relationships, the commodification of improvised records, and a process which Henritzi calls the 'codification of practice'. (It seems this is something rather dreadful which we all ought to resist). Along the way, his argument takes in the work of AMM, Joseph Holbrooke, Derek Bailey, and Masayuki Takayanagi (the last two named as 'great erratics into the musical language'), and is bolstered with telling quotes about rock music and the recording process from Lester Bangs and The Cramps.

In conducting this line of enquiry, Henritzi asks many pointed questions. His questing attitude extends into the actual recorded improvisations on *Keith Rowe Serves Imperialism*, all of which are making tentative forays into what constitutes improvisation. In fact, it seems to have been the aim of all concerned to turn all the conventional ideas upside down. In the end, each contributor made their recording at home, completely ignorant of what their sparring partner might chose to do; Henritzi made the final assemblage on his home computer, matching unrelated performances. He limited the time to around ten minutes for each piece, cutting everything off abruptly so that nothing proceeds beyond that point. Stern discipline, and a technique possibly informed more by the philosophy of Debord than by the recording techniques of Bob Woolford or Martin Davidson. So much for the naked charm of music realistically documented!

You may be surprised to learn that the results are quite brilliant. Henritzi appears on all four cuts, playing guitar, a turntable, implements from a toolbox, and jack plugs; the other contributors named above also play guitars apart from Taku Unami who plays his computer on the last cut. Not only is it a very varied and exciting record, it's also a noisy one; the third cut 'Independence', named after the famous LP by Takayanagi, is a metallic rumbling fest of detailed, grumbling blackness that does full justice to the pioneering 1970s Japanese player to which it is dedicated, and I venture to say he would have approved this tribute. Bailey, to whom the release is also dedicated, is present on track one to the extent that Henritzi is playing a Bailey LP on his turntable, and in places appears to be scratching and sampling it quite violently. I'm aware that both these actions must be regarded as sheer heresy in some quarters, and Michel must know this too. 'Maybe you know some guys shot me' he reveals, 'maybe they didn't have humour sense'. Yet it's a glorious piece of work, and somehow again seems closer to the spirit of Bailey's achievement than attempting some form of lame imitation of his guitar 'style'.

A record like this raises all kinds of questions, and it probably means nothing to anyone outside a well-informed audience who would have to know something about the history of the improvised music genre to understand what Henritzi is talking about, and indeed appreciate the boldness of his statements. Even so this record is well worth hearing, and it's well worth investigating this stimulating essay to open up further avenues of discussion, thought and action.

ED PINSENT 21/08/2007

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