

About the Artists

Brian Comerford

Alias DJ E23, first got turned on to electronic music in 1976 when his brother brought home a “futuristic” cassette of Synergy’s Sequencer. Growing up with Wendy Carlos, Jean-Michel Jarre and Tangerine Dream primed him for the MDMA and Acid House explosion of 1987-1989 in Deep Ellum and Dallas. He began college radio DJ’ing in 1989, moved into public radio from 1990-91 (best announcer, KACU-FM, 1991), and then simultaneously began nightclub DJ’ing and whoring in Top 40 commercial radio from 1991-93. During this period he also published a local zine under the moniker Doghead Cola, and conceptualized and operated Texas’ first smart bar inside the nightclub where also a weekly DJ. This lead to a partnership smart bar based in Boulder (Nootrophia), which catered Boulder-Denver area raves, as well as touring across multiple cities across the nation. During this time, also partnered in a Virtual Reality arcade (Parallel Universe) and DJ’d dance and ambient at local nightclubs and raves, also co-designing and constructing the area’s premiere chill room (Slow), hosting regular mixed and live Ambient/IDM sessions. In 1994 acted as PR Director and Co-coordinator for Apogee, the Rocky Mt. Snowboard & Skateboard Jamboree, which became the prototype for the Warped Festival. 1995: Organized numerous legal club nights and electronic music events, as well as throwing a series of illegal squatter-style after-hours. Doghead Cola became an active writer for Iron Feather Journal, and E23 allied with free and bust-proof Pirate Sound System events. Bought a couple of drum machines and a distortion pedal and began making simple trax. Along with most of the participants of Pirate Sound, including devslashnull, formed the Electronic Air collective and began community radio broadcasts (and Colorado’s first webcasts) on KGNU-FM, the state’s first all-electronic radio weekly. Played numerous events throughout ’95 slowing down in ’96 to focus working on a weekly club night, working on trax, and doing radio production. Began music and production collaborations with devslashnull, as well as preliminary work on a partner-driven Internet radio station (RadioValve) which officially launched in February 1998 and runs through the present. E23 is cofounder, a featured host and abundant program producer, and presently holds the Program Director position for the station. In 2000 was invited as a guest speaker at a number of international conferences and local universities, discussing specifically the intricacies and possibilities of iRadio, and generally what digital distribution of information means to business and culture. Penned an as-yet unpublished anthology of experimental writing (“Smith’s Each Of Illusion”), which he hopes to launch as an interactive e-book. Worked as a script consultant for the iTV pilot of PLUR, and also began collaboration with lyricist/musician Chris Mosdell and devslashnull, interpreting Mosdell’s “songlines” from his publication Splatterhead into multi-media phantasmagora. Did remixes with devslashnull for Mosdell’s sonic setting of author Graham Hancock’s Fingerprints of the Gods. Circa 2001 began to focus once more on the devslashnull/E23 collaborative musical project, Ovni, with high expectations of an odyssey through the monolith in the near future. He has been written about in Wired Online, Playboy and the Associated Press.

David Fodel

A multimedia artist and collaborative event organizer, David Fodel spent most of the ’80s working as an electronic media designer, technician and artist for traditional and avant garde theater and musical events in the Baltimore, USA area. In 1984 he founded Artlab, a non-profit organization dedicated to exploring the creative potentials of electronic media.

From 1984 to 1987 Fodel produced multiple multi-media arts events, including the “Event” series (anarchic proto-raves) at HourHaus, an artists’ collaborative living/working space in Baltimore. He also produced an underground cable TV program (DeviantTV) and was a member of the Baltimore Cable Access Commission.

In 1988 Fodel co-founded a fringe culture arts magazine (Texture Magazine) which published quarterly for 3 years. These early forays into the world of traditional and digital multimedia lead Fodel to help create a prototype interactive CD-ROM magazine (HyperTexture) in 1991-92, for which he received multiple grants and industry alliance support.

In 1992-1993, working with school-aged kids, he co-produced an acclaimed “Virtual Classroom” which investigated the creative and educational possibilities of emerging technologies, including networked collaborative digital painting, a virtual puppet theater, thought-driven MIDI music, and on-line communities.

In 1995, he co-founded (with the Pirate Sound Kollektiv), “Electronic Air” on KGNU FM in Boulder, Colorado and acted as Program Manager and Streaming Media Director for the 2-hour show, one of the first and longest running webcast electronic music programs.

In 1997 Fodel co-founded RadioValve, an all-electronic music Internet Radio Station and in February of 1998 began continuous 24 hour webcasting. RadioValve continues to webcast an extremely diverse and high-quality schedule of electronic music to thousands of listeners worldwide.

Fodel’s multimedia work has been featured in the International Symposium on Electronic Arts and the 911 Media Arts Center in Seattle, his original electronic music has been released on several independent compilations (most notably Obliqu Recordings and the “Spaced Out” DVD from the UK’s Addictive Television, to be released by Moonshine in the US in Feb of 2002), and he has been written about in numerous publications, including Wired magazine.



OVNI:UNKNOWN

An Excursion into Anomalous Media

Presented by Brian Comerford and David Fodel

*Presented as part of the Open Late Series by
The Museum of Contemporary Art/ Denver on
October 18th 2001, and on the campus of
Denver University on November 8th, 2001.*

OVNI:UNKNOWN'S

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About the work:

Much of our current praxis revolves around the idea that in this “post-digital” moment, the earlier conception of “digital art” as pure, elite, and very expensive to produce (and the associated constant pursuit and desire for the latest, most advanced software and hardware) has been replaced by what could be termed a “digital art-brut”, a new form of “folk art” utilizing materials and or “instruments” that for many are very commonplace... a laptop, shareware or freeware software, and techniques that while informed by history and contemporary academia, are free from the constraints of those self-referential arenas.

The latest incarnation of this approach is a project that we call “OVNI”, which is the term used in many latin and south american locales to name what we call “UFO’s”. The word works on many levels for us. It can loosely translate into “things unknown”, “unidentifiable”, and much of the source material that is used to create the work is culled from existing sources, and manipulated into unidentifiable snippets that are reconstituted into structured motifs. The structures themselves are typically extracted from anomalous responses from within the software or hardware tools we utilize. In our current performance, all the track titles are taken from the various and myriad terms documented by Jacques Vallee in his book “*Dimensions*” which are used to name the “UFO” in various cultures, both contemporary and historical. Another aspect of the word relates directly to our personages —“unknowns”. As for the visual materials used, we took a similar approach. The material is extracted from cultural icons that pervade our mediasphere... namely MTV and NFL fooball; superstar athletes and rockstars who attain almost mythological status... in much the same way as the UFO occupies the position of mythological cultural icon. The sourced material is then looked at from an objective view, from behind a camera, and an attempt is made to extract detail from it, to zoom in on it, similar to the process that UFOlogists will use to painstakingly analyze film footage to verify the existence of these near mythical phenomenon. The resulting material resembles much of the “best” UFO footage... shifting, grainy and difficult to ascertain the subject matter. Further processing of the color spectrum by syncing software algorithyms to specific frequency ranges in the performed audio result in seemingly “alien” landscapes, but are in fact composed of touchdowns and guitar solos. Thus we reduce the mythical to the mundane, and subsequently re-elevate it via a re-contextualized and re-generative process to the status of “unknown”, via “UFO”... and hence enter the realm of the mythical once again.

The Musical Selections:

1 The Gentry **02:48**

Thanked Harmonic Choir. Sampled and constructed during a maddened session of production between the Ovni duo. With sights set on atmospheric bed material, this piece revealed itself as a sonic stripper-gradually peeling away layers of recognizable substance until it stood naked before us, g-string extended for a twenty spot.

2 Lapanach **4:07**

This track was written by excerpting microsound slivers from an overworked sample and sequenced in a drum machine in Reason.

3 Ikal **01:11**

It’s hard to recall the origins of this piece. On a night in devslashnull’s studio, laden with collateral intoxicants, The Gyuto Monks appeared and prayed to be processed through Thank. The result, one could say, was auspicious.

4 Nix **7:29**

Violently re-ordered version of Korrigans.

5 Na h-Amhuisgean **13:32**

Excerpted from a live distributed 'net audio project choreographed by Brian Kane (founding member of EBN). From his apartment in Boston BK sent out a click track and participants tuned it in via Real Audio, and processed it in real time, re-encoding the output back out as Real Audio, which was streamed back to BK’s place. He subsequently mixed the returning streams in real-time and streamed the mix back out to the 'net for any who wanted to listen. This particular excerpt was generated by devslashnull using the click track as the key signal gating the audio from a Japanese language tutorial. The project was realized as part of the 2001 Boston CyberArts Festival.

6 The Aerial Races

Coupled with some dreamy chord arpeggiations on a Juno 6, this track marks the re-introduction of the “Gristle-Box” (which provides the under-stated beat), the first electronic music instrument ever devised by devslashnull in 1979 or so. By taking the line-outs of a cassette deck (specifically one with an “output” gain control) and cross patching them into the mic inputs of the same cassette deck, putting the deck into record mode, and coaxing the little self-referential system into massive feedback distortion, he found that subtle manipulations could generate an incredible array of sounds... So dev recently found one of these rather unique varieties of cassette deck for \$6.99 at an antique shop and figured the universe was trying to tell him to like, “get back to his roots” or something, so he listened.

7 The Fions **02:06**

There have been innumerable renditions of "America the Beautiful" performed in the weeks since the terrorist attacks. Somehow it doesn't seem like a fitting musical eulogy for the nightmarish tragedy. One piece of music which tends to scare children to death is Gyrgy Ligeti’s "Requiem for Soprano, Mezzo Soprano, Two Mixed Choirs & Orchestra," which is simultaneously chilling and mournful. The piece was granulated and waveform manipulated.

8 Igneous **06:31**

What electronic musician doesn't fantasize about doing a Tangerine Dream cover? So a desire which has been brewing since about 1981 was finally realized-sort of. A two minute sample of "Igneous" from the Thief soundtrack was processed and played between two computers with real-time effects and processes. Echoes of the original track occasionally arise through the general sonic morass.

9 Tempestarii

A simple G chord, arpeggiating down an octave on the Juno 6, run through the Pong reverb on the EFX box. It seemed to created the perfect warm analog outro from the Tangerine Dream synths.

10 The Secret Commonwealth **04:07**

Clark ov Saturn made a prank phone call to our RadioValve 800 number voice mail. He doesn't think we knew it was him. He is wrong. He wanted to hear some "house music". Sometimes you get what you deserve. Granulated like the sugary-sweet guy he is.

11 Good Neighbors

A duet for naïve Juno and Gristle Box, which led us to give this track the working title “Canadian Bacon” (giving the nod to those melodious Scottish naïfs, Boards Of Canada, as well as the punky noise-pulsing quartet, Throbbing Gristle, after whom the Gristle Box was affectionately named)

12 Fadets **2:10**

Granular synthesis on a vocal sample.

13 The White Ladies **03:21**

4th in a series produced on September 11th. Not that we got together to like mourn or celebrate or anything. We had planned on getting together for dinner and working in the studio that night anyway. It just so happens that given the circumstances it seemed appropriate to linger longer at the dinner table, drink more wine, and open our hearts to one another for just a bit longer than usual. By the time we got into the studio we were drunk and acting stupid. Laughter reigned as king again.

14 Jim **02:27**

Some of the earliest pioneers in high audio production dramatic performance were the quartet of the Firesign Theater. Long-time faves of the hip intelligentsia, these production fanatics attempted every trick of the mixer this side of Marshall McLuhan’s The Medium is the Massage. E23 has long considered them gurus, and had a fixation to lift a classic sample from their album All Hail Marx & Lennon: How Can You Be In Two Places At Once When You're Not Anywhere At All. The selection is an advertisement for an illicit drug salesman, peddling drugs like used cars, and upon sampling his goods, he trails off into a stream-of-consciousness rant-which is actually the final paragraph from James Joyce’s Ulysses.

15 The Sidhe **04:29**

Giddy laughter. Moronic noodling. Guzzling of hard liquor. Butt-slapping, American football style. Tech wankery. Eyes rolling. More laughter. Moog pulse, Harmonic Choir, record skips, Cubase.

16 Friday Demons **07:08**

From a Scar-inspired period of bowel-churning beats. Chunky 909 bass kick driven through a distortion pedal with flaring toms, hi-hats and congas, reprocessed in Sound Edit where the darkness was maximized. This era of beat-oriented experimentation also yielded similar trax which were digitally deconstructed and repurposed for some of the September 11th sessions.

17 Tamhaisg **04:53**

E23’s laptop crashed while I was fondling the monks. Somehow it just kept playing - repeating the same motif but with slight variations. We did not dare touch it... we just pushed record on the DAT.

18 Korrigans **4:55**

An E23 noodle, remixed by dev using Cubase and sex-magick.

19 Sleagh Maith

Thelema made a guest studio appearance, showing us the Middle Pillar between Mercy and Severity. Here the disciplined wrist tweaked the Gristle Box in devotion, generating a myriad of percussive changes, while varied chord arpeggiations on the Juno cried out “Io, Pan!”

20 Domovosy **00:37**

An interesting slice of a granulated Gyuto Monks sample, further seasoned with Peak and Cubase filters. They say that you can never get too much of a good thing, but on this morsel, the idea was to give a taste of something that would leave one hungering for more.

21 Good Neighbors (reprise)

A return encounter, slowed solo keys caught in a tractor beam.

22 The Sith **03:53**

An accidental moment of brilliance. Culled from the last snippet of a Harmonic Choir sample captured and manipulated thru Cubase, this track escalated devslashnull & E23 into quiet, joyful hysteria. Accomplishing what is basically a digital version of opening a filter on a very simple sample, "The Sith" emerged as one of those defining moments of heroic simplicity. Whether anyone likes it or not is another question.

23 outro **00:12**

The Firesign Theater returns, reprocessed through a Vocoder set in Cubase. When listened to closely, it is a message which espouses the true meaning of human existence. When not listened to closely, it appears as a harmonic array of banal infinitude. See "Jinn".