

THE
NOISE
UPSTAIRS
WORKSHOP

FEBRUARY 28

MARCH 14

MARCH 28

COBRA



John Zorn wants you to play
COBRA!



THE NOISE UPSTAIRS presents a FREE COBRA Workshop at FUEL Cafe 448 Wilmslow Road, Withington

Have you ever wondered what this COBRA thing is that everyone's always talking about? Now you can find out and take part!

John Zorn's early major compositions included several "game pieces", which he describes as "complex systems harnessing improvisers in flexible compositional formats," the most famous and widely performed of which is "Cobra." Essentially a set of cue cards, hand signals and a load of improvising make up the bones of the piece, which we hope to delve into and understand more through this workshop.

Four different recordings exist, all sounding very different and feature a wide range of different musicians and instruments including guitars, saxophones, drums,

vocals, laptops, tape-loopers, samplers and even something called a "trombone." The beauty of "Cobra" is it can be performed by any ensemble of any size or instrumentation, so if you're curious, read on.

We're going to be learning and rehearsing the piece over three sessions under the direction of our own Rodrigo Constanzo (more on him later), all upstairs at Fuel, culminating in a performance on Sunday 28th March, also at Fuel, as part of our Noise Upstairs Records launch gig. If you want to take part, due to the complexity of the signals, we're going to make it mandatory to attend both the first and last sessions, and suggest you view the middle session as an extra chance to explore the composition/share experiences of it and so on.

For more information and to sign up, e-mail workshops@thenoiseupstairs.com and

make sure you read this leaflet. If you're still unsure, "Cobra" remains the only time Jeff Buckley and Marc Ribot have appeared on the same album. You can't argue with that...

Oh, and you'll need a headband of some description. Find out why below.

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The Noise Upstairs
WORKSHOPS



2/2010

The Noise Upstairs is an improvisation collective and label that has been bringing you some of the most exciting noisicians for the last two years. As part of The Noise Upstairs new proactive facelift, we are offering quarterly workshops, which will run on the weekends preceding the jam night, culminating in a 'featured performer(s)' spot on the night. If you are interested in taking part in the jam night, or the workshop, or for any other Noise related activities, visit the webpage at www.thenoiseupstairs.com and drop us a line, or sign up for the mailing list.

Cobra Cues

- MOUTH**
- P** POOL
 - R** RUNNER
 - S** SUBSTITUTE Δ
 - SX** SUB CROSSFADE

GUERRILLA SYSTEMS
Squad Leader + 2 Spotters

- TACTICS**
- δ 1. Imitate
 - \rightarrow 2. Trade
 - 3. Hold
 - \circ 4. Capture
 - \curvearrowright 5. Switch/crossfade
- } to next
downbeat

- NOSE**
- D** DUOS
 - T** TRADES
 - E** EVENTS 1, 2 or 3
 - B** BUDDIES

OPERATIONS (Squad Leader ONLY)


- I** DIVISI Memory drone, squad leader tactics and systems control
- II** INTERCUT Locus Unit return to same sound
- III** FENCING Unit with alternates

G. UNIT LIFE SPAN: 7 Downbeats

- EYE**
- CT** CARTOON TRADES
 - CO** ORDERED CARTOON TRADES with guests

? SPY may cut unit during OPERATIONS ONLY if unidentified.

Unit members and alternates may cut at any time.




 end of Divisi superimposition

- EAR**
- M Δ** G=G M Δ
 - G Δ** M=M G Δ
 - V** VOLUME Δ

Some Locus Hand Cues

- \circ thumb=stop
- \wedge hand=rhythm
- ρ finger=pip
- hand=drone
- \frown back and forth=trade
- \circ one=intercut
- \wedge cut=change

- HEAD**
- 1** SOUND MEMORY 1
 - 2** SOUND MEMORY 2
 - 3** SOUND MEMORY 3

- PALM**
-  CUT
 -  CODA
 -  HOLD & FADE

COBRA 101

Breakdown of the composition itself.

1. Cobra in a nutshell

Cobra is an improv Game Piece which consists of a set of cues notated on cards, and rules corresponding to the cues that direct the players what to do. The number of players, instrumentation, and length of the piece is indeterminate. Because there is no traditional musical notation and the players improvise, the piece may sound radically different from performance to performance.

2. Instructions

Zorn has never published the piece and in his own words has "deliberately chosen not to publish (or even write down) the rules". What we do have, however, are notes and instructions compiled by people who have performed the piece with Zorn.

3. Origin of the Piece

Cobra was completed in 1984 and represents the culmination of John Zorn's 'Game Pieces'. Other Game Pieces include 'Hockey', 'Lacrosse', and 'Xu Feng'.

Rodrigo Constanzo has been improvising for a long time. Before being part of The Noise Upstairs he ran an improv workshop in Miami, FL which did COBRA extensively. He can be found performing as a solo performer, or as part of Takahashi's Shellfish Concern, and Deaf To Van Gogh's Ear.

For more info please visit:

www.rodrigoconstanzo.com

www.takahashishellfishconcern.com

www.deaftovangoghsear.co.uk

Cobra Instructions

Players use hand signals to request cues from the prompter, who sits in the center of a semi-circle formed by the players.

Prompter uses cue cards to signal players. Prompter may also initiate cues.

Anybody, anytime, can call for a downbeat (cue).

Anybody, anytime, can hold (delay) a downbeat (except when guerrilla squad is in OPERATIONS – see below).

MOUTH cues – Permutations happen on downbeat

Pool – Players not playing may come in; players already playing either stop or radically change the quality of what they're playing.

Runner – Caller points to any number of players (pantomime the instruments); those pointed at come in at downbeat, others stop.

Substitute Change – Those playing must stop; those not playing may enter.

Substitute Crossfade – All must fade either in or out at rate cued by prompter.

NOSE cues – Begin at downbeat with players who made call

Duos – Make eye contact with another player and play a duo (any length; give a clear signal to end each duo). After caller starts, anyone else may initiate a duo. Play as many separate duos as you like.

Trades – Starting with caller, music is passed along a chain of players one by one; at any time anyone may start or stop a chain.

Events 1, 2, or 3 – Caller determines number (1, 2, or 3) of events; everybody plays that number of events at any time after downbeat. (Depending on when next downbeat is called, these may get cut short).

Buddies – Like duos, but cannot change partners – play only one duo, then die.

EYE cues – Begin at downbeat with caller

Cartoon Trades – Single notes/sounds/events passed extremely quickly from one player to another; use eye contact to send event; connect events to each other.

Ordered Cartoon Trades – Go in order of seating (to right or left as determined by caller). You may make duo or trio events with other (via eye contact) any time it's your turn. Each time around you must re-contact old partner(s) or contact new partners or play solo.

EAR cues – Group music'; permutations at downbeat

M^ – Group stays the same (same players continue, others do not enter), but play radically different music.

G^ – Music stays the same, but those playing stop, and those not playing take over.

Volume ^ – Cresc. or dim. as determined by caller. Prompter determined speed and intensity of change.

HEAD cues

Sound Memory 1, 2, 3 – Define a memory point of what is happening. May be recalled at any point of piece by anyone.

PALM cues – To end; can be vetoed twice only

Cut – Sudden stop.

Coda – 6 to 10sec after downbeat (only those already playing).

Hold and Fade – Whatever activity you're engaged in at downbeat.

GUERRILLA SYSTEMS

Anybody, anytime can put on a headband and become a guerrilla. To become a guerrilla, motion to the prompter with your headband. Prompter and you then both put on headbands (only one guerrilla at a time). As a guerrilla you can:

- ignore the rules (exceptions: in EYE cues you must play when so required; you must log and return to Sound Memories in HEAD cues. When not required to play, you are free to play anything at any time).
- capture (= "stop playing!") other players (see tactics)
- play anything
- make any calls (like other players)
- run tactics on other players (see below)
- choose two other players ("spotters") to form a squad; these spotters have similar guerrilla powers.

TACTICS – Can be called by guerrilla on any player (note: all tactics last to next downbeat only)

- Imitate (crook finger): Imitate the player I point to
- Trade (use arm): As in "trading fours"
- Hold (flat palm): Play drone
- Capture (thumb or 'bird'): Stop playing
- Switch/Crossfade (use two arms): Switch or crossfade with me

Interested in more?

Sign up to the Noise Upstairs mailing list to find out about future workshops, performances, and events.

Visit www.thenoiseupstairs.com to sign up.



Improvisation and Graphic Score related books

Arcana vol I, II, III & IV
John Zorn

Improvisation
Derek Bailey

Notations 21
Theresa Sauer

No Sound Is Innocent
Edwin Prevost

Search And Reflect
John Stevens

Audio Culture
Christoph Cox

Talking Music
William Duckworth

Stockhausen on Music
Robin Maconie

IMPROVISATION RELATED LINKS

Inclusive Improv

Our improv friends to the East in Huddersfield. They put on jam nights and gigs a plenty.
<http://www.inclusiveimprov.co.uk>

LIMA

Leeds Improvised Music Association. Lots of good improv, with a bit of a leaning towards Jazz.
<http://www.limaonline.org.uk>

Loop Collective

London based improvisation collective. They also run their own record label.
<http://www.loopcollective.org>

GIO

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra. Longstanding Improv Orchestra up north. Lots of gigs and festivals.
<http://www.glasgowimprovisersorchestra.com>

Fracture

Liverpool based improvisation organization. Lots of workshops and gigs.
<http://www.fracture.org>

F-IRE Collective

Fellowship for Integrated Rhythmic Expression. Another London based
<http://www.fire.com>

Golden Lab Records

Manchester based promoter and label.
<http://www.myspace.com/goldenlabrecords>

Tzadik

John Zorn's label.
<http://www.tzadik.com>

Odd-Music

Oddmusic is a great webpage, and mailing list devoted to odd, DIY, electronic instruments. and improvisation.
<http://www.oddmusic.com>

Experimental Musical Instruments

EMI has been in the experimental instruments business forever. It used to be a quarterly journal, but now they sell books, parts, and reference materials.
<http://www.windworld.com>

The Noise Upstairs

Last but certainly not least. Your Manchester one-stop-shop for all things improv.
<http://www.thenoiseupstairs.com>

How to Take Part:

John Zorn's COBRA Workshop

Interested in signing up for the workshop? Follow the instructions below and you'll be well on your way to improvisation nirvana.

Read through the piece



Look through the instructions and notes on pages 2-3 of this leaflet and try to familiarize yourself with the hand cues and related cue cards.

Book your seat



Given the limited space we have available to us we can only accommodate so many people. As

soon as you know you want to be involved, e-mail us at workshops@thenoiseupstairs.com saying that you want to take part, or speak to Anton or Rodrigo at the Noise Upstairs.

THE NOISE UPSTAIRS

EVERY MONTH ON THE SECOND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH @ FUEL CAFE, WITHINGTON.

FOR MORE INFO:

WWW.THENOISEUPSTAIRS.COM
INFO@THENOISEUPSTAIRS.COM