

# WXYC

SIGNAL TO NOISE  
VOL. 2 NO. 1  
APRIL 1998

## Welcome to Our Nightma... Uh... Newsletter!

For those who don't know, WXYC 89.3 FM is UNC-Chapel Hill's student-run radio station. Its eclectic format is dedicated to exploring the connections between different varieties of 20th century music. This is WXYC's first newsletter of 1998; hopefully, more newsletters will be forthcoming, as we've decided that this handy one-page format is the way to keep you, the listeners, involved in our audio tomfoolery.

Within this issue you will find information about our twentieth anniversary, our adventures with new radio technology, and our Top 100 of 1997, culled from thousands of hours of DJ music logs. In other news, we have added some new programs to our Sunday roster, including the Southern Folklife Show (in conjunction with Wilson Library's Southern Folklife Collection) and a combination power-punch of Broken Music and the new and improved Sunday Surprise. We did unfortunately lose the

widely popular "Secret Museum of the Airwaves" (originally from WFMU in northern New Jersey) due to that program's internal difficulties. Our other specialty shows are all thriving and working hard to incorporate the WXYC mission into their weekly programs.

As you will see upon further perusal, 1997 was an exciting year for us here at 'XYC, and 1998 will probably be better. You can share in the excitement by purchasing one of our famous "alphabet" tees in brand new colors or by picking up one of our fashionable "alphabet" bumper stickers. Don't forget that any donation you make to WXYC is tax-deductible! Keep an eye out for more dances and station-supported events, more on-campus involvement, live music simulcasts from local venues via the Internet, and other earth-shattering displays of radio power!

—Claire Jarvis

## WXYC's Top 100 of 1997

- Yo La Tengo -- I Can Hear the Heart Beating As One (MATADOR)
- V/A -- Beg, Scream, and Shout (RHINO)
- Portishead -- self-titled (LONDON)
- V/A -- Return of the DJ Volume 2 (BOMB HIP-HOP)
- Rampage -- Scouts Honor By Way of Blood (ELEKTRA) / 6. Busta Rhymes -- When Disaster Strikes... (ELEKTRA)
- Squarepusher -- Hard Normal Daddy (WARP)
- V/A -- Gravigkords, Whirlies, & Pyrophones (ELLIPSIS ARTS)
- V/A -- White Elephants and Golden Ducks (SHANACHIE)
- Ghost -- Lama Rabi Rabi (DRAG CITY)
- Red Krayola -- Hazel (DRAG CITY)
- Irving Klaw Trio -- Utek Pahtoo Mogo (ROAD CONE)
- Stereolab -- Dots and Loops (ELEKTRA)
- V/A -- Cuban Gold 3 (QBADISC)
- Gravediggaz -- The Pick, The Sickle and the Shovel (GEE STREET/V2)
- DJ Krush -- Millight (MO WAX)
- The Ondekoza -- self-titled (JVC MUSIC INDUSTRIES)
- Jelly Roll Kings -- Off Yonder Wall (FAT POSSUM)
- Ashley Sove -- Into the Sun (JESUS CHRIST)
- Superchunk -- Indoor Living (MERGE)
- Mouse on Mars -- Audiodiatacker (THRILL JOCKEY)
- Lonesome Organist -- Collector of Cactus Echo Bags (THRILL JOCKEY)
- Dr. Octagon -- Instrumentalyst: Octagon Beats (MO WAX)
- Meringue -- Music From the Mint Green Nest (CHERRY SMASH)
- Wu-Tang Clan -- Wu-Tang Forever (LOUD/ROCA)
- Tha Alkaholiks -- Likwidation (LOUD/ROCA)
- V/A -- Phantom Breaks (self-released)
- Musicians of the Nile -- Charcoal Gypsies (REAL WORLD)
- Khac Chi Ensemble -- Moonlight in Vietnam (HENRY STREET)
- V/A -- Deep Concentration (OM)
- Lud -- Sparkling Rope (self-released)
- V/A -- Murder is My Beat - Classic Film Noir Themes and Scenes (RHINO)
- Lambchop -- Thriller (MERGE)
- V/A -- Growin' Up Too Fast (MERCURY)
- V/A -- When I Was a Cowboy (YAZOO)
- Barbara Manning -- 1212 (MATADOR)
- Margaret Leng Tan -- The Art of the Toy Piano (POINT)
- V/A -- A Heavy Dose of Lyte Psych; An Overdose of Heavy Psych (ARFIARFI)
- Monks -- Black Monk Time (INFINITE ZERO)
- Stock, Hausen, and Walkman -- Organ Transplants, Vol. 1 (HOT AIR)
- Negativland -- Dispepsi (SEELAND/NEGATIVLAND)
- V/A -- Prison Worksongs (ARHOOLE); Prison Songs Vol. 1: Murderous Home (ROUNDER)
- Mary Lou Williams -- Zoning; Zodiac Suite (SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS)
- Jade Bridge -- Ambush on All Sides (HENRY STREET)
- V/A -- Edge of the Forest - Romanian Music from Transylvania (MUSIC OF THE WORLD)
- William Hooker -- Great Sunset (WARM-O-BRISK); Mindfulness (KNITTING FACTORY WORKS)
- Ziryab Trio -- Mashreo Classics (CRAMMED DISKS)
- Kodo -- Ibuki (TRISTAR)
- Sea and Cake -- The Fawn (THRILL JOCKEY)
- Marc Ribot -- Shoe String Symphonettes (TZADIK)
- Christian Marclay -- Records (ATAVISTIC)
- V/A -- I Can't Be Satisfied - Early American Women Blues Singers Piano (POINT)
- Trans Am -- Surrender to the Night (THRILL JOCKEY)
- V/A -- Crime Jazz, Vols. 1 & 2 (RHINO)
- Ah Club -- Kiss the Sky Goodbye (SHRIMP)
- Portastatic -- The Nature of Sap (MERGE)
- V/A -- Black and White Hillbilly Music (TRIKONT)
- V/A -- Soul Patrol Vol. 5 (RIPETE)
- Killarmy -- Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars (WU-TANG/PRIORITY)
- Poivo -- Shapes (TOUCH AND GO)
- V/A -- Dutch Harbor: Where the Sea Breaks its Back (ATAVISTIC)
- V/A -- Secret Museum of Mankind, Vol. 4 & North Africa (YAZOO)
- Pierre Henry/Michel Colombier -- Metamorphose (remixes) (FFRR)
- Pram -- Gash (AE); Music for Your Minds (DUOPHONIC super 45)
- Starry Wisdom Band -- self-titled (self-released)
- Shark Quest -- "Blontzo's Revenge" 7-inch (MERGE)
- Harvey Milk -- Courtesy and Good Will Toward Men (REPRODUCTIVE)
- V/A -- Ngoma - Music from Uganda (MUSIC OF THE WORLD)
- Topsy -- "Trip Tease" - The Seductive Sounds of... "Grossenhosen" 12-inch (remixed by We) (ASPHODEL)
- Toru Takemitsu -- The Film Music of... (NONESUCH)
- V/A -- The Anthology of American Folk Music (SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS)
- V/A -- Louisiana Swamp Blues (CAPITOL)
- Freakwater -- Dancing Under Water (THRILL JOCKEY)
- Kismet -- Curious Yellow (DAISY LANE)
- V/A -- Music of Arab Americans (ROUNDER)
- V/A -- Macro Dub Infection, Volume II (GYROSCOPE)
- V/A -- Women in Electronic Music - 1977 (CRI)
- John Fahey -- City of Refuge (TIM/KERR)
- DJ Wally -- DJ Wally's Genetic Flaw (LIQUID SKY)
- Fred Ho and the Afro Asian Music Ensemble -- Turn Pain into Power (OODiscs)
- Kletka Red -- Hijacking (TZADIK)
- Electric Company -- Electric Company Plays Amnesia (SUPREME)
- Storm and Stress -- self-titled (TOUCH AND GO)
- Bugskull -- presents "Snakland" (SCRATCH)
- Orb -- "Toxygene" 12-inch / Orblivion (ISLAND)
- R.L. Burnside -- Mr. Wizard (FAT POSSUM)
- "Harmonica" Frank Floyd -- The Great Medical Menagerist (ADELPHI)
- Bruno Coulais -- Microcosmos soundtrack (AUVIDIS)
- V/A -- 804 Flava sampler 12-inches (804 FLAVA)
- V/A -- In the Beginning... There Was Rap (PRIORITY)
- V/A -- The Corners of the Mouth (BUBBLECORE)
- Alice Coltrane -- Pthah, the El Daoud (IMPULSE)
- V/A -- KAOS Theory (COTTLESTON PIE/MAYONNAISE)
- Peechees -- Games People Play (KILL ROCK STARS)
- Ann-Margret -- Let Me Entertain You (ROCA)
- Mike Patton -- Pranzo Oltranzista (TZADIK)
- Broadcast -- Work and Non Work (DRAG CITY)
- U-ziq -- Lunatic Harness (ASTRALWERKS)
- Skatalites -- Foundation Ska (HEARTBEAT)
100. Aphex Twin -- Richard D. James Album (SIRE)

## WXYC Past and Present: A Roundtable Discussion

In March and April 1997, WXYC marked its 20th anniversary with a number of off-air and on-air events.

Two fundraising concerts at the Cat's Cradle (featuring Family Dollar Pharaohs, Spatula, Kismet, Archers of Loaf, Trans Am and Friend Side Monkey) provided much-needed revenue for equipment upgrades and continued the long tradition of support between live local music and FM 89.3.

Among the on-air activities, WXYC celebrated the anniversary over a three-week period by featuring the music of a particular year between 1977 and 1997 on each consecutive day. A number of special guests also dropped by the studio for on-air visits and WXYC's call-in talk show Northern Hemisphere Live devoted two shows to station-related topics (see excerpts below).

The staff at WXYC wishes to thank a variety of folks for helping to make our 20th celebration a truly grand time, in particular: Frank Heath and the Cat's Cradle, all the bands that performed, 1977 alumnus Mike Hyman who drove long-distance to appear on our talk show, and all the listeners that responded to our listener survey and/or helped out with much-needed donations.

### WXYC History

participants: Mike Hyman (1977), Bill Burton (1978), Ken Friedman (1978), Keith Weston (1980), Nate Florin (1990), Ethan Clauset (1994)

**ETHAN:** What were the people like here at WXYC 20 years ago?

**MIKE:** Twenty years ago WXYC was very much a "progressive" station. You have to remember what music was like back in 1977. We were right on the edge of the disco era and other horrible music types we were all destined to stop. As far as the people that were on the station then, we wanted the station to be identified more as what it was not than what it was. We wanted to go one step beyond and play a lot of the music that people didn't hear from popular bands.

**BILL:** I guess I got here in spring of '78, and what was going on at that time is that we were finding what [commercial rock station] WQDR was playing, getting those albums, then playing the songs on those same albums that weren't getting played

# Yo la Tengo Rocks Cat's Cradle – And the World

On the night of October 12th, the Cat's Cradle was packed with a crowd of hundreds of sweaty fans eager for a heaping helping of Yo la Tengo. Several hundred more were huddled around computers worldwide. Music over the Internet is nothing new, but this time WXYC added a twist - using the Internet as a live link between the Cat's Cradle and

our studio in order to broadcast the show to our FM audience throughout the Triangle. It wasn't in stereo and the sound quality fell somewhere between a cassette tape and a telephone, but it was live rock, dammit!

Yo la Tengo's sound was mixed separately for the Cat's Cradle PA and for the WXYC linkup. Fred Brockman's soundboard plugged into a computer that processed the audio with a RealAudio encoder. At WXYC we used the free Realplayer 4.0 to decode the 20kHz signal. From there we connected the Performa's headphone jack to our production room mixing board and EQed the signal again before sending it on to the control room and the

transmitter. The show was also available to listeners over the Internet - we recorded more than 350 hits to our audio servers during the show (we usually get 100 or so every day). The total cost of all this probably was in the tens of thousands of dollars, if you count all the computers and Internet connectivity and time it took to set it up - but most of that was free because we're at a university or donated because people love music.

Big thanks to Chuck Crewes at Catalogue.com, Fred Brockman, Donovan Finn at Matador, Donald Ball and webslingerZ and especially Yo La Tengo for making it happen.

-Ethan Clauset

## HISTORY FROM PAGE 1

on QDR. So, it wasn't like we were so totally different.

KEITH: It's hard to remember that the Cars were "alternative" once upon a time.

BILL: Yeah, they were "new wave."

KEN: They were a very cool band. And we were one of the very first stations to play the second album. That and Cheap Trick's *Live at Budokan* got its first domestic play on XYC. So we had our share of firsts.

BILL: Yeah, and to expand on what we were talking about earlier, not only did we play alternative cuts off the same albums WQDR was playing, but we prided ourselves on being a year ahead of QDR and other stations by finding things and then later saying "Yeah, well we were playing that a year ago!"

## XYC at 20

participants: Ethan Clauset (1994), Nate Florin (1990), Jeff Robins (1984), Tim Ross (1990), Floyd Utschig (1993), Bo Williams (1995)

ETHAN: How has WXYC changed in the past 20 years? It started out as more or less the equivalent to what would now be called a "commercial alternative" station. And since then it has become more of a polyglot.

NATE: The agenda has always basically been to play obscure music that is good and wouldn't get played otherwise. But in the beginning that meant a B-side by Jackson Browne and now it means something very different..

JEFF: In the late 80s people in station management first started talking about all genres of music being "equal." As we moved into the 90s we started to see more attention given to that rhetoric. In the last few years in particular we have seen a marked shift in the sound of the station.

NATE: In reality the station still is, if not ideologically, [then] musically, [mostly] based on rock and pop. For 90 percent of the DJs here their fallback is some kind of rock-derived music. And it does get a fair amount of play on the radio. In my time here there has been a move away from that and there continues to be a move away from that but it is not complete, and I don't think it will ever be complete.

ETHAN: Now part of the stated mission of the station is an educational one, and I think that is true at least as much for the DJs as for the listeners. I know that I have been exposed to things I would never have heard... In listening to the station, it often takes a stream-of-consciousness approach and that is something that definitely attracted me to the station.

CALLER: I think it is an honorable mission to try to educate the listeners and the DJs, I think the question is how listenable is it?

TIM: It is definitely a tricky thing. There are certain DJs at this station who do it amazingly well, who guide you through ten different things in an hour and have it make a whole lot of sense. But, at the same time, it is not a natural intuitive skill and it is a skill that probably only a small percentage of the people we hire have when they first join the station. During our DJ training process we try to communicate that it isn't just what you play, but how you play it.

CALLER: I like XYC sometimes but I just think you're purposefully obscure. It's as if there's "alternative" and you're trying to be the "alternative to the alternative" and it's just too difficult to listen to sometimes.

TIM: I don't see it as us trying to be obscure to people, but college radio has traditionally gone after types of music or bands that are underexposed or are the "new, exciting thing" that we all just found out about and went crazy over. Before about six years ago, most of that was underground rock. And as a lot of that rock went mainstream or died out, a lot of that which is new and exciting has become noise, jazz, techno, or avant-garde stuff. I don't think it should be seen as us trying to be obscure, it's more of matter of us trying to go out and bring new stuff into the fold.

-Jeff Robins

# buyWXYCstuff

Below is the "alphabet" design of our perennially stylish WXYC t-shirt, now available in orange, lilac, maroon, navy and forest green with white letters and gray with black letters.

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wxyz fm 89.3

Send a check or money order for \$10 to WXYC, Box 51 Carolina Union, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599 Our infamous 'alphabet' bumper stickers are \$1.

## WXYC's TOP 10 ALBUMS of 1997

as determined by a survey of WXYC DJs

- ① YO LA TENGO  
*I Can Feel the Heart Beating as One*
- ② KHAC CHI ENSEMBLE  
*Moonlight in Vietnam*
- ③ PAVEMENT  
*Brighten the Corners*
- ④ VARIOUS ARTISTS  
*Beg, Scream and Shout*
- ⑤ THE CHAMPS  
*III*
- ⑥ SLEATER-KINNEY  
*Dig Me Out*
- ⑦ STEREO LAB  
*Dots and Loops*
- ⑧ AFRO-CUBAN ALL-STARS  
*A Toda Cuba le Gusta*
- ⑨ BILLY BANG  
*Commandment*
- ⑩ IRVING KLAW TRIO  
*Utek Pahto Mogoi*