

Night Of The Unexpected

PARADISO
AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

The principal idea behind this event is that, with a virtually seamless succession of activity throughout the three levels of Amsterdam's Paradiso over four hours, the audience are less likely to fixate on their favourites than get swept along in the flow.

The night began in the main hall with three ten-minute sections in quick succession. Edgard Varèse's *Poème Électronique* was a dramatic start, with its timeless mix of electronics, concrète chunks and expressionist jumpcuts, and with accompanying visuals. As the last note died away, a spotlight fell on a pale, heavily tattooed arm and Michiyo Yagi embarked upon a dazzling set on kotos, accompanied by some hushed vocalising. After the briefest of pauses, eyes turned upwards to the balconies flanking the hall where The Dutch Chamber Choir sang György Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna*.

On CD this piece comes across as a hallucinatory wind tunnel of voices, but here, with the men and women singers physically

separated, the relatively small overlap in their parts shows the composition to be more based on a call and response between the two sections. The hushed mood at its conclusion was quickly smashed by the convulsive Norwegian drums and electronics/guitar duo, Moha!. Revving up, doing the musical equivalent of handbrake skids, then screeching to a halt, they had landed on an oddly anomalous 4/4 groove when I left to see what was happening elsewhere.

The Paradiso's Upstairs Hall is situated next to the bar and initially I felt sorry for Toshimaru Nakamura having to make his no-input mixing desk heard over the drinkers. Any such feeling evaporated when, approaching the stage, I was hit by the sonic equivalent of a blizzard of dirty snow. As a super-high frequency note suddenly emerged, people fled, grimacing, hands over ears. Soon suffering from a mixture of boredom and physical distress, I wandered down to the main hall.

With blinding spotlights, and the air heavy with stage smoke and the stench of skunk, Norse noise-merchants Jazkamer were in

apocalyptic mood. With guitars, bass, two drummers and electronics, their set sounded like the cacophonous ending of a Metal track extended for 20 minutes until falling to pieces.

Back upstairs, DJ Sniff and Keir Neuringer were concluding their impressive mash-up of turntablism and sax loops. And in the packed-out Cellar Hall, experimental films by Tony and Beverly Conrad and Paul Sharits were screened. But the imminent arrival in the main space of Pole And Band proved an irresistible attraction.

Stefan Betke's music has progressed a long way from the minimal, cerebral glitch-dub of the late 90s to the muscularity of this year's LP *Steingarten*. Joined by a bass player and a drummer, this incarnation of Pole, still based on eccentrically rotating, siren-like patterns, is funkier, almost Can-like in places, with Betke grooving around onstage as dancers took to the floor.

The highpoint of the night was a formidable improvising trio of Paal Nilssen-Love on drums, Peter Brötzmann on sax and clarinet, and Michiyo Yagi on kotos. They started off at a level of boiling intensity with Nilssen-Love

flying out of the traps with breathtaking speed and intricacy. Brötzmann, expressionless, pursed his lips over the mouthpiece of his tenor sax, and wetted the reed in the leisurely manner of a man preparing to smoke a particularly fine cigar, before barking off in hot pursuit. Given both the intensity and the velocity at which they both played, I wondered if Michiyo might be bullied off the stage. But far from it; her rhythmic playing was strongly articulated and accompanied by furious strumming and string bowing.

Dälek's peculiar take on hip-hop is charged up with an exploratory use of live sonics. MC Dälek is joined by a bass player and various other guys on electronic devices. They tap into rock dynamics, so when the beats stop and the track is left hanging in mid-air, it's just a hiatus before it slams back again with a massive tidal surge of sound which exemplified the concept of the evening. Wherever you were in the building, something was in full flight or just starting, which made for a deliciously disorienting four-hour happening.

MIKE BARNES

DJ Sniff & Keir Neuringer at Night Of The Unexpected



Moha!



Michiyo Yagi



Edgard Varèse's *Poème Électronique*

