

Curatorial > PROBES

With this section, RWM continues a line of programmes devoted to exploring the complex map of sound art from different points of view organised in curatorial series.

PROBES takes Marshall McLuhan's conceptual contrapositions as a starting point to analyse and expose the search for a new sonic language made urgent after the collapse of tonality in the twentieth century. The series looks at the many probes and experiments that were launched in the last century in search of new musical resources, and a new aesthetic; for ways to make music adequate to a world transformed by disorientating technologies.

Curated by Chris Cutler

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At the start of the seventies, Chris Cutler co-founded The Ottawa Music Company – a 22-piece Rock composer's orchestra – before joining British experimental group Henry Cow with whom he toured, recorded and worked in dance and theatre projects for the next eight years. Subsequently he co-founded a series of mixed national groups: Art Bears, News from Babel, Cassiber, The (ec) Nudes, The Science Group and p53 and was a permanent member of American bands Pere Ubu, Hail and The Wooden Birds. Outside a succession of special projects for stage, theatre, film and radio he still works regularly with Fred Frith, Zeena Parkins, Jon Rose, Tim Hodgkinson, David Thomas, Peter Blegvad, Daan Vandewalle, Ikue Mori, Lotte Anker, Stevan Tickmayer, Annie Gosfield and spectralists Iancu Dumitrescu and Ana Maria Avram. He is a permanent member of The Bad Boys (Cage, Stockhausen, Fluxus...), The Artaud Beats and The Artbears Songbook. Adjacent projects include commissioned works for radio, various live movie soundtracks, *Signe de Trois* for surround-sound projection, the daily year-long soundscape project *Out of the Blue Radio* (for Resonance FM) and p53 for Orchestra and Soloists.

He founded and runs the independent label ReR Megacorp and the art distribution service Gallery and Academic, is editor of the occasional sourcebook *Unfiled*, author of the book *File Under Popular* – and many articles and papers published in 16 languages. He was on faculty for a while at the Museum School in Boston and lectures irregularly on theoretical and music related topics worldwide. He has appeared on over 160 recordings.
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PROBES #20.2

Auxiliaries

The PROBES Auxiliaries collect materials related to each episode that try to give a broader – and more immediate – impression of the field. They are a scan, not a deep listening vehicle; an indication of what further investigation might uncover and, for that reason, most are edited snapshots of longer pieces. We have tried to light the corners as well as the central arena, and to not privilege so-called serious over so-called popular genres. In this auxiliary, Indian classical instruments make the most of their access-all-areas pass to visit every genre and sprinkle kharmic dust.

01. Playlist

00:00 Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

00:06 Ravi Shankar and George Harrison

Excerpted from an unidentified newsreel clip, probably from 1967. That's George getting a lesson from Ravi in the background...

01:00 Jody Stecher and Krishna Bhatt, 'Don't Get Trouble on Your Mind' (excerpt), 1982

Stecher is an American folk musician who plays banjo, mandolin, fiddle, guitar, and sursringar (a kind of lute-derived, deeper-toned sarod). After becoming fluent in bluegrass, cajun, blues and Scottish folk music, he went on to study Hindustani classical music for 13 years with Ali Akbar Khan and Zia Mohiuddin Dagar. The two interests came together on an LP (*Rasa*) made in 1982 with the classical Hindustani sitarist and teacher Krishna Bhatt. Fred Sokolow made up the trio, playing five-string banjo and mandolin.

02:51 Ravi Shankar, 'Concerto for Sitar and Orchestra No. 1', 1971

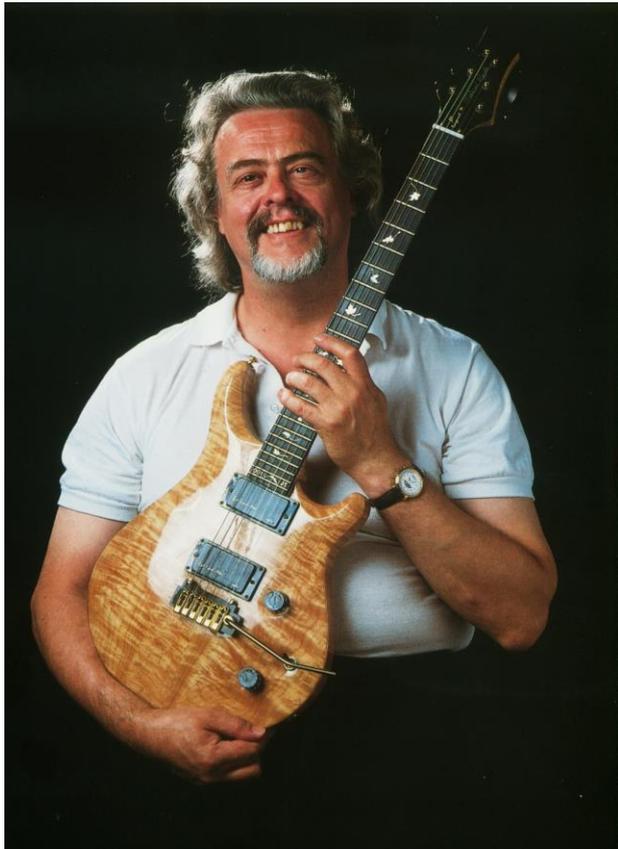
A giant of twentieth century music whose impact on Western musical thought and practice has been incalculable. More than anyone, Shankar publicly negotiated the encounter between fixed, quantitative Western compositional systems rooted in writing – and improvisational, spiritual, Eastern disciplines rooted in oral transmission; finding a ready and receptive audience not only amongst the more questing fringe of art-music composers but also across jazz and rock communities already engaged in advancing improvisational and performance-centered modes of music making. His two concertos for sitar and orchestra were partially convincing attempts to juxtapose the two conceptions.

04:34 Joe Harriot Double Quintet, 'Contrasts' (excerpts), 1967

Harriot was a Jamaican saxophonist and jazz composer who had emigrated to Britain in 1951. Initially a bebopper, he began to experiment with free-form improvisation around the mid-fifties, making it his own by the decade's end – independent of, and parallel to–, Ornette Coleman's similar American investigations. In the late sixties, Harriot joined forces with the Bengali violinist and composer John Mayer. Mayer had arrived in 1952 to study, and then stayed on to work – first as an orchestral violinist and then as a composer. The two men merged their respective quintets, to pioneer a new hybrid musical form – which may sound unremarkable now but was a breakthrough in musical thinking of its day. Altogether they made three LPs, whose originality and sophistication are still not generally appreciated.

06:38 Anoushka Shankar and Traveller (excerpt), 2011

Sitarist Anoushka Shankar, daughter of Ravi Shankar, made the connection that guitarist Derek Bailey also makes in his important book *Improvisation* between the improvisational roots of Indian classical music and flamenco. Shankar said that she believed flamenco may well have had its origins in India. This project and its musical programme came together in Spain through a process of



[Big Jim Sullivan]

conversational musical encounters, out of which a record and then a performing ensemble emerged. This is from a concert recording.

08:39 Joe Harriot and John Mayer Double Quintet, 'Mishra Blues' (excerpt), 1968

11:09 'The Reptile' (excerpt), 1966

A Hammer Films production, *The Reptile* was a pot-boiling horror movie scored by Don Banks – an Australian composer and multi-instrumentalist who had played in dance bands, at the same time winning critical praise for his more formal concertos and chamber music, on occasion merging the two interests in concert works for jazz quartet and symphony orchestra. He was also an early adopter of electronic and electro-acoustic resources – in other words he had the model biography of a film composer. He joined the Hammer studios in 1962 and over the next five years wrote a string of scores for horror films and thrillers. This clip however just exhibits the contemporary tabloid status of Indian music – and the outlandish sitar – as exotic and almost certainly sinister signs of the suspect other.

12:18 Lord Sitar, 'I Can See for Miles' (excerpt), 1968

Lord Sitar, in the flesh, was session guitarist Big Jim Sullivan – a legend amongst musicians, though hardly known to the public at large. He'd played on more than 750 British chart singles and too many albums to count, and was the first British guitarist to use a wah-wah pedal, the DeArmond Tone and Volume pedal and a fuzzbox. He'd played on records by Billy Fury, Frank Ifield, Adam Faith, Frankie Vaughan, Helen Shapiro, Johnny Halliday, Freddie and the Dreamers, Cilla Black, Tom Jones, Shirley Bassey, Dusty Springfield, The Walker Brothers, Donovan, Benny Hill, David Bowie and the Small Faces, as well as on George Harrison's *Wonderwall Music* and Frank Zappa's *200 Motels*. You get the picture. He'd studied the sitar under the guidance of Vilayat Khan, and was, apparently, the only session guitarist in the country to own one. After George Harrison's conversion, Sullivan was in even greater demand and in 1967 even released an album of sitar music under his own name (*Sitar Beat*). *Lord Sitar* was released a year later by Regal Zonophone as a cheap sitar cash-in project but thanks to the workers on the ground, it was pretty convincing.

13:26 The Legendary Vinnie Bell

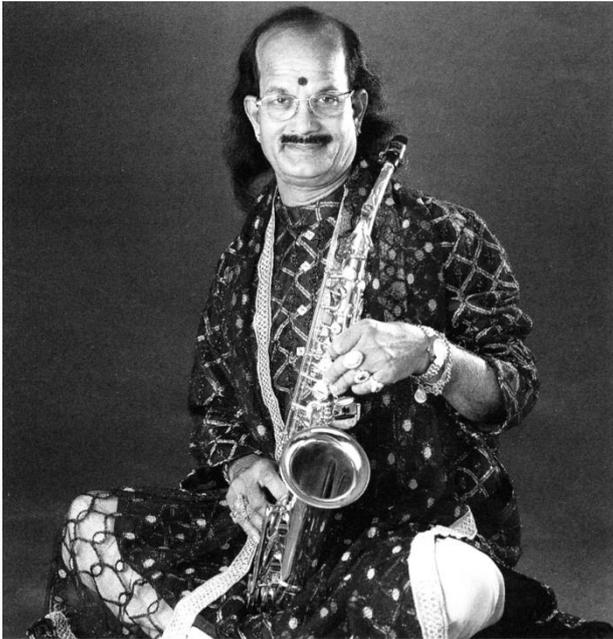
Like Big Jim Sullivan, Vinnie Bell was a session musician's session musician who, by the late sixties had played on hits too numerous to mention, as well as inventing a wide range of electronic effects – *Whistle Stop*, one of the few albums made under his own name, was also a showcase for his many invented guitar effects. Bell also designed the electric sitar featured in this news item and heard most famously on The Lemon Pipers' 'Green Tambourine' – as well as in the main title theme of the 1970 film *Airport*, the soundtrack album of which sold in excess of a million copies, and won him a Grammy.

14:20 The ID, 'Short Circuit' (excerpt), 1967

Assembled from sporadic recordings made by guitarist and session maestro Jerry Cole between 1965 and 1966 – with friends and seasoned session players Glen and Norman Cass, Don Dexter and Rich Clyburn, that were eventually released by RCA in 1967. Cole had made dozens of budget albums by then, mostly anonymously, writing and recording a release in a week or less. He had achieved early fame as a surf guitarist, going on to become a member of the ubiquitous Wrecking Crew, leading house bands for iconic TV shows like *Hullabaloo*, *Shindig* and *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-in*, and playing on – or arranging – records for the Byrds, Roy Orbison, Aretha Franklin, Merle Haggard, Ray Charles, Steely Dan, Isaac Hayes, Little Richard, The Beach Boys, Nancy and Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, Dean Martin, etc. This album, *The Inner Life of the ID*, rarely mentioned even in passing, is a very early rock example of the use of complex additive rhythms, clearly derived (like Don Ellis's) from Indian classical music. Cole also plays sitar on this record, of which he was an early but seldom credited adopter.

15:52 Ashwin Batish, 'Sitar Mania' (excerpt), 1994

Born in Bombay, Ashwin Batish first learned to play Western pop music on the guitar before taking up the tabla at the age of 10. He moved to Britain to join his father – the composer, author, Bollywood playback singer and music director – Pandit Shiv Dayal Batish, who trained him further in the North Indian classical tradition. Father and son moved to America in 1973 where, for the next 15 years,



[Kadri Gopalnath]

Ashwin played in his father's restaurant and founded the Sitar Power fusion project, which wove together a wild variety of Eastern and Western styles. He still teaches Indian music in Santa Cruz.

17:00 Ali Akhbar Khan and John Handy, 'Karuna Supreme' (excerpt), 1975

A sarod master, Khan was instrumental in popularizing Indian classical music in the West, both as a performer and as a teacher. He was closely connected to Ravi Shankar, accompanying Shankar in his debut performance in 1939, and on countless occasions thereafter. In 1941 his sister and Shankar married, and it was Kahn who substituted for Shankar at the pivotal 1965 New York concert which arguably kicked off the interest of a whole generation of Western musicians in Indian music. He went on to establish music schools in Calcutta, California and Switzerland, composed raga and film scores and was the first Indian musician to record an LP of Indian classical music. John Handy III is an American alto saxophonist who also plays tenor, baritone, saxello, clarinet, oboe – and sings. He worked with Charlie Mingus in the fifties and went on to lead several groups of his own as well as teaching music history and performance at several Californian universities. In the seventies, Handy studied with Kahn and the rapport between the two led to a series of performances and two very successful records, in which two very different musical languages blend without obvious effort or compromise.

18:45 Ravi Harris & The Prophets, 'Escapism' (excerpts), 1996

Another sitar funk classic from Phillip Lehman and Gabriel Roth, aka Bill 'Ravi' Harris, who later found fame with Amy Winehouse and Sharon Jones.

20:23 Hariprasad Chaurasia, Brij Bhushan Kabra and Shivkumar Sharma, 'Call of the Valley' (excerpt), 1967

A Hindustani classical music album released by EMI, unusually orchestrated for Western slide guitar, bansuri (a wooden transverse flute), santoor (a dulcimer/zither like instrument played with wooden mallets) and tabla, depicting, instrumentally, a day in the life of an Indian shepherd. It was extremely influential in its own time and remains, internationally, the best-selling record of Indian music. Retrospectively, it has been claimed as an early World Music milestone.

21:46 Charlie Mariano and R. A. Ramamani, 'Bangalore' (excerpt), 1998

An American alto sax player who had worked, amongst others, with Stan Kenton, Charlie Mingus, Chico Hamilton, the Modern Jazz Quartet, Eberhard Weber and the German rock band Embryo, as well as making over 40 records in his own name. In the seventies he relocated to Europe. He began to study the nadaswaram (a double reed instrument similar to the Indian shenai) during a long stay in Malaysia, playing it regularly thereafter. The CD *Bangalore* was recorded in Bangalore mostly with local musicians Mariano knew well and had worked and studied with over many years.

23:48 The Firstborn, 'Sounds Liberated as Mantra' (excerpts), 2012

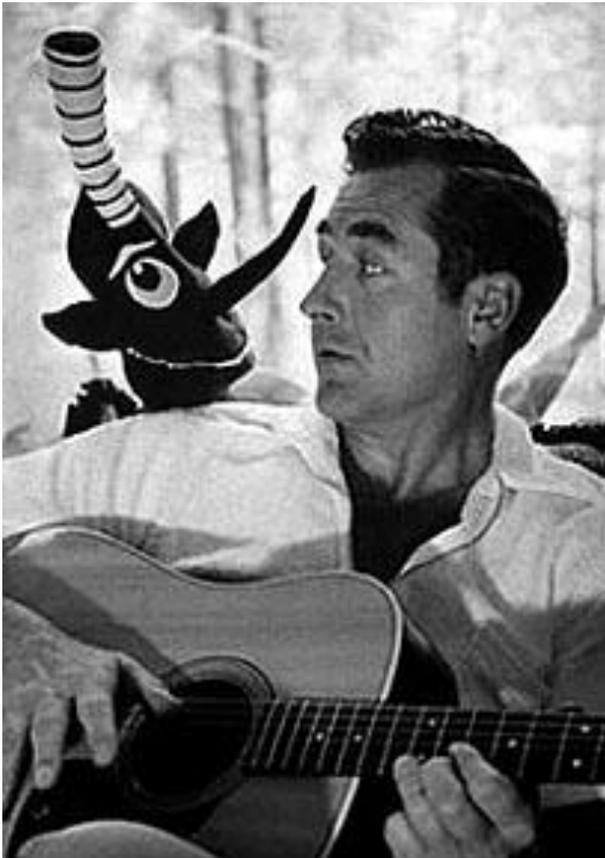
Formed in Portugal in 1995 as a good but fairly standard-issue metal band, *The Firstborn*, after dropping out of sight for some years, came back – reinvented – in 2004 with *The Unclenching of Fists*, a collection of pieces based on Tantric Buddhism and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The sitar, played by Luis Simões, is not just an exotic addition but integral to the whole mood of the music.

25:32 Kadri Gopalnath, 'Ventakatachala Nilayam' (excerpts), 2002

In contrary motion to Charlie Mariano, Dr. Kadri Gopalnath – who originally played the nadaswaram – became a pioneer saxophonist in the world of Carnatic music, modifying the alto sax in order to do so. Unlike Western sax players using Eastern modes, Gopalnath has brought a nadaswaram sensibility to the sax, using it in a way no Western player would have imagined. He is widely travelled and has also performed with Western orchestras and ensembles.

26:51 Dinuk Wijeratne, 'Concerto for Tabla and Orchestra' (excerpts), 2012

Based in Canada, born in Sri Lanka and raised in Dubai, Wijeratne studied at the Royal Northern College of Music in Britain and then with composer John Corigliano at the Juilliard School in New York. He made his Carnegie Hall debut as a conductor, composer and pianist in 2004, performing with Yo Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble. His music, unsurprisingly, contains many non-Western influences. This concerto for tabla was a finalist in the 2011 Masterworks competition.



[Sheb Wooley]

28:26 Sheb Wooley, 'The Love-In' (excerpts), 1967

Born in 1921, Sheb Wooley was a singer and character actor who appeared in dozens of westerns throughout the fifties, sixties and seventies, most notably *High Noon*. He also had a string of country and western hits, interspersed with novelty records – the most famous of which was the evergreen (everpurple) *Purple People Eater* (1958) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9H_cl_WCnE). This charming redneck, casual hippie-shootin' ditty, however, came and went without many people noticing. Wooley is also credited as the voice actor responsible for the legendary Wilhelm Scream, which has subsequently appeared in well over 500 films and is used, by a number of directors, as a kind of secret signature. (www.wilhelmscream.net)

Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

02. Notes

On length and edits.

The purpose of these programmes is to give some practical impression of the probes we discuss. This necessitates for the most part extracting short stretches of music from longer wholes, which, of course, compromises the integrity and disrupts the context inherent in the original works. I have also, on occasion, edited different sections of a longer work together, better to illustrate the points under discussion. So the examples played in the programmes should not be confused with the works themselves. Wherever the word 'excerpt' appears after a title in the programme transcript, this indicates that what follows is an illustration, not a composition as it was conceived or intended. If something catches your ear, please do go back to the source.

For your listening pleasure I have, as always, been cavalier in editing the tracks together, overlapping them, making sometimes hard-to-spot joins, etc. – so, for the sake of clarity, I have prefaced each track with its start time.

Notification

If you want to be notified when a new probe goes up, please mail termegacorp@dial.pipex.com with subject: Probe Me.

03. Links

www.vinniebell.com
batish.com/ashwin
www.anoushkashankar.com
www.kadrigopalnath.com
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thefirstborn.bandcamp.com
www.ravishankar.org
www.johnhandy.com
www.ammp.com/aak.html

04. Credits and acknowledgments

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