

TURA NEW MUSIC PRESENTS THE 9TH

TOTALLY HUGE

MUSIC FESTIVAL

**10-20
SEP
2009**

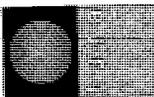
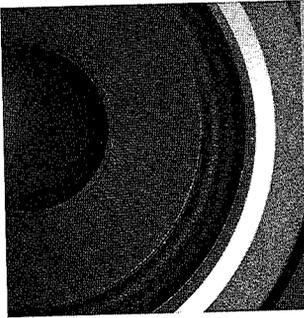
PERTH, AUSTRALIA
TURA.COM.AU

Venue
Music Auditorium,
WAAPA@ECU

7.30pm Thurs
10 September

Tickets
\$20/\$15

Bookings
WAAPA
9370 6636
[www.waapa.ecu.edu.au/
events.php](http://www.waapa.ecu.edu.au/events.php)



Tura New Music and WAAPA@ECU present
**TAPE IT
DECIBEL
(Perth)**

Decibel is Perth's freshest new music ensemble devoted to the nexus of acoustic and electronic instruments. The group was formed out of a desire to perform a range of music where electronic and acoustic instruments feature side by side and is dedicated to Australian music and emerging Western Australian composers.

This concert focuses on works that involve acoustic instruments playing with the 'tape' as another instrument. The group works on this concept in a number of ways: literally on tape, CD, with sampler, turntable or computer. The performance features works written for Decibel by Warren Burt and a commission, from emerging Western Australian composer, Dan Thorne.

Cat Hope (musical director, flute and electronics), Lindsay Vickery (reeds and electronics), Stuart James (piano and electronics), Malcolm Riddoch (guitar and electronics), Rob Muir (sound design), Tristen Parr (cello) and Dan Russell (violin).

Program

Michel van der Aa **Oog for cello and interactive CD**
Warren Burt **Letters** (world premiere)

Ernie Althoff **Front Row**

William Burroughs **Electronic Revolution**

Brian Eno **Music for Airports**

Lindsay Vickery **Transit of Venus**

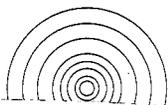
Cat Hope **In the Cut** (world premiere)

Mauricio Kagel **Prima Vista**

Dan Thorne **We'll Never Know** (world premiere)

Decibel is supported by the State Government of Western Australia through the Department of Culture and the Arts.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS



TAPE IT

Decibel

Premiere performance of Perth's newest new music ensemble.

An electro acoustic adventure.

Including works by WA composers Vickery, Thorne, Mustard and Hope.

Decibel

Venue

Music Auditorium,
WAAPA@ECU

7.30pm Thurs
10 September

More information p6



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Issue 1177

WA ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS: WHAT'S ON

DECIBEL - Tape It!

The 9th Totally Huge New Music Festival presents an electro-acoustic adventure featuring works by Eno, Kagel, Van De Aa, Burroughs, Burroughs, Burt, Althoff, Hope, Vickery and Thorne.

Thurs 10 Sep

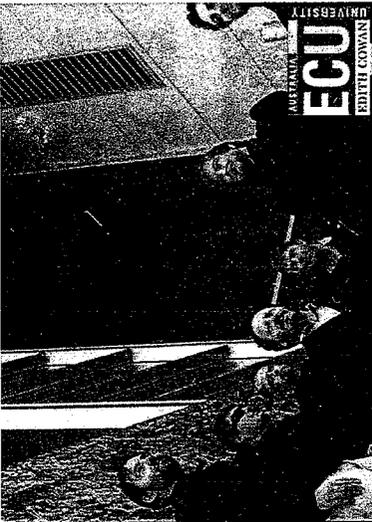
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Choreographed by Craig Bary and Michael Whaites

25 & 26 Sep

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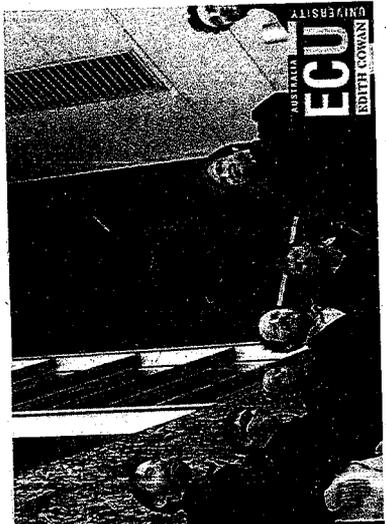
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X-PRESS MAGAZINE 24TH BIRTHDAY ISSUE

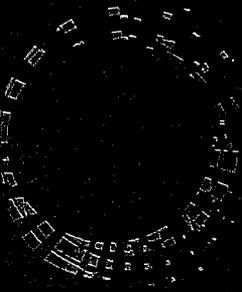


Issue 1176 27.08.09



ABSTRACTS
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WA ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS: WHAT'S ON



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STREET PRESS AUSTRALIA: THE LARGEST STREET PRESS NETWORK • THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2009 •

DECIBEL

WAAPA Main Auditorium,
Mount Lawley

10/09/09

The TURA Totally Huge New Music Festival has built a reputation over the last decade for delivering some truly unique events. This year one of the highlights early on in the program was the **Decibel** debut performance. *Tape*

It, centred around the idea of using tape and other pre-recorded elements as an instrument.

The performance began with a working of a William Burroughs piece. The old beat writer had a penchant for chopping up his own words and rearranging them, delighting in the results of the reinterpreted meaning. Indeed, the chapters of his *Naked Lunch* masterpiece are only in that particular order because that's how it was handed to the publisher. It was a fitting opening.

The inclusion of computer programs projecting instructions to the musicians raises a whole series of interesting ideas. Cat Hope's *In The Cut* was the first instance of the performance being dictated by a random computer generated projection. Different coloured lines were projected onto the screen with each colour indicating a particular instrument. As the lines steadily scrolled along, the musicians interpreted the descending or intermittent lines on their instruments. Other pieces used arrows and icons to tell the musicians what to play. Watching these classically trained musicians taking their cues from the screen is possibly, and hopefully, the closest our culture will get to *RockBand: Mozart*, raising a lot more interesting ideas and music than that game ever could.

After the intermission, the room had changed around with three long tape loops now spanning the entire stage area. They were synchronically set off and the four musicians began at interpreting Brian Eno's *Music For Airports (1/1)*. It was only the second time the seminal tape piece has ever been performed and while the tape loop carried the main piano motif, Cat Hope's flute and Tristan Parr's cello went far in creating the right atmospherics around it.

The night featured pieces composed by the musicians themselves and closed with the premier performance of a new piece. Daniel Thorne's *We'll Never Know* was a piece as opposed to the improvised or computer generated experiments performed earlier. The musicians were linked with earphones and the delicate atmosphere of the piece closed the night perfectly. The pieces were sometimes challenging but raised a lot of interesting points about composition and the use of pre-recorded pieces as a medium, something ABC Classic FM clearly agreed with, recording the whole night for a broadcast in a classical version of the j's *Live At The Wireless* to air down the track.

JASON KENNY

Electronic playback brings a charge to Decibel

CONCERT

Decibel
WA Academy of Performing Arts
Auditorium
Review: William Yeoman



Decibel's musical director and flautist, Cat Hope.

In this opening concert of the 9th Totally Huge New Music Festival, new music ensemble Decibel presented *Tape It*, an intriguing program of works that according to the group's musical director and flautist Cat Hope demonstrate the many ways in which electronic playback can be incorporated into musical composition.

But *Tape It* wasn't just a feast for the ears. Decibel's seven members, for the most part dressed in black suits and ties, were manipulating a curious mixture of acoustic and electronic instruments and devices, including violin, cello, flute, reel-to-reel tape machines, portable cassette players, tape decks, turntables and laptops.

The result was a melange of retro fashion and cutting-edge technology, sound and visuals, combining to take the audience to a very strange place indeed.

The music itself ranged from the fragmented soundscape of William Burroughs' 1970's aural cut-up piece *Electronic Revolution* and the melting intensity of Cat Hope's "study in decline" *It the Cut for turntable*, bass guitar and acoustic instruments to the anodyne ambience of Brian Eno's *Music For Airports* and the madcap humour of Ernie Altoff's humorous *Front Row*, in which Dan Russell and Tristan Parr fought it out with toy instruments such as plastic trumpets and whistles in response to "aural scores" on cassette players.

Surprisingly, one of the most beautiful and traditional-sounding works was also one of the newest, Daniel Thorne's elegiac *We'll Never Know*, which was especially commissioned by Decibel for this concert.

Decibel wants to treat electronic playback mechanisms as instruments in their own right and to explore repertoire by using original technologies while extending the repertoire for such works in WA.

This was its first performance, let's hope there are many more to follow.

The Totally Huge New Music Festival continues until September 20. Tonight at 7pm you can hear the works of the best of WA's young composers performed at the *Breaking Out Young Composers' Night*, at the Western Australian Museum Exhibitions Gallery.

the west **\$1.30**

Geelong, Sharn Day \$1.35; Perth, Kimberley \$2.15. GST INC.

Monday, September 14, 2009

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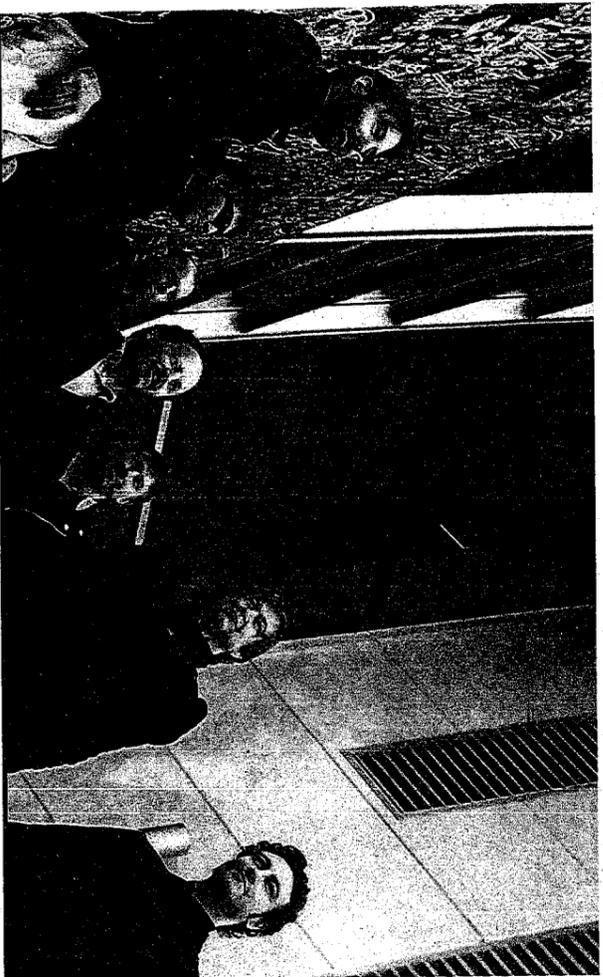
The West Australian



Music

DECIBEL New Musical Expression

The ninth *Totally Huge New Music Festival* will open at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) tonight, September 10, with the debut performance of a new music ensemble, Decibel, in an electro-acoustic adventure featuring the world premieres of three new music compositions. BOB GORDON reports.



Decibel

The intent behind new music protagonists Decibel's approach to the exploration of new - or unfound - music is neatly laid out in a manifesto that appears on their website at decibel.waapamusic.com ...

Decibel is a group of Western Australian musicians, composers, improvisers and sound artists who are devoted to the realisation of music where acoustic and electronic instruments are represented in musical works. In each Decibel performance, electronic instruments are treated as just that: performed instruments in their own right with their own sound quality and presence. There is no traditional PA at a Decibel concert since placement of performers and instruments in the space is an integral element in the sonic design of every Decibel concert. Decibel encourages the creation of new works for this genre, and the representation of works by Australian and Western Australian artists, established and emerging.

Serious folks, these new music types. The people involved are all highly qualified musicians but one wonders if this is requisite, or is there also a punk element in new music where qualification may come second to instinct?

"Yes, it is a definitely requisite," says Decibel's Cat Hope. "There are two rumours that go around about new western art music. (1) It is difficult to play and (2) you just make it up as you go along. Both these have an element of truth in them. New music is often technically challenging for an instrumentalist or laptop performer, and improvising is a learned skill both these types of musicians employ that requires considerable experience and style to pull off.

"Decibel needs both these qualities as well as another skill set: acoustic and electronic music skills. Being a modern musician of any kind is more than reading notes: Rob Muir and Malcolm Riddoch don't have any classic music training in the conventional sense, but they have other skills around sound art that are very valuable. So this makes the Decibel lineup quite unique."

These skill set will be on display at the opening of the *Totally Huge New Music Festival* tonight at WAAPA, at an event titled *Tape It*, which focusses on works that involve acoustic instruments playing with the 'tape' as another instrument.

"*Tape It* investigates how electronic playback mechanisms can be treated as their own instruments, with their own unique playback mechanisms. It's about having their own acoustic colour, presence and balance terms that are often only applied to acoustic instruments. Sometimes this means using the technology the composers had at their disposal at the time of writing, cassette and reel-to-reel tape, for example.

"Other times we update it to what they would have used if it were available. And then other works use the latest in playback devices that even generate the score to play from. Older technologies don't necessarily sound worse than new ones, just different. We celebrate this difference in *Tape It*."

Tape It includes three new compositions, including Hope's own, *In The Cut*. While Hope is more formally involved in the world of new music as Coordinator, Composition, Music Technology and Post Graduate Music Studies at WAAPA, she has long been a musical adventurer, in outfits such as Gata Negra and Abe Sada.

"My own piece includes a piece of not so new technology - the record player - and I have had cut a one-off 10" record that is used in the piece, and the needle dropping on and off the record are part of its soundworld. In keeping with my interest in low frequency explored in projects such as Abe Sada, the work is a study in 'decline' - the decline of pitch (downward to nothing) structure (decline of control) and melody (none). The work begins in the high range of the instruments and journeys constantly downward in pitch until the instruments have no tuning left at all, just a loose string or open embouchure (the manner in which brass and wind instrument players set their lips to the mouthpiece of their instrument).

"This piece is inspired by the film, *In the Cut*, directed by Jane Campion, based on a book by Susanne Moore - and the way the worst events can have surprising moments of passion, clarity and pleasure. It is scored, and like many pieces in the *Tape It* program, the score is read from a projection that all will see."

Also featured is Brian Eno's 1978 composition, *Music For Airports*, for what is the pieces first live performance in Australia. It's an important piece of music and its inclusion seems just as unlikely as its origins.

"As you may know *Music For Airports* was not intended as a live piece as such," Hope explains. "The score provided for the

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THINK LOCAL



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SCENE STEALER: CAT HOPE

One of the pioneers of Perth's now-flourishing new music scene, Cat Hope, divides her time between teaching as head of composition and music technology at WAAPA and performing in various bands. Most known for her work in bass-only noise group Abe Sada, she is artistic director of, and a performer in, Decibel, a group that combine electronic and acoustic instruments. Decibel play their second-ever concert at the UWA's Callarway Auditorium on November 18, which will feature an interpretation of The Gift by the Velvet Underground as well as works by John Cage, Laurie Anderson and others.

1. Low: Secret Name
2. Ennio Morricone: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly (04)
3. Scott Walker: Scott 3
4. The Butthole Surfers: Another Man's Sac
5. Roland S. Howard: Teenage Snuff Film



THE DRUM MEDIA

SPLICE OF LIFE

BY UTILISING TAPE AND PRE-RECORDED TRACKS AS AN INSTRUMENT, DECIBEL EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC. JASON KENNY DUSTS OFF HIS TAPE RECORDER.



“In some ways,” explains Decibel artistic director Cat Hope, “tape was what made electronic music interesting. Before people got into tape looping and splicing and playing with tape, it was pretty much about making machine instruments, like electronic organs. Apart from the theremin, electronic instruments are about reproducing instruments, whereas tape really turned composition into something quite malleable where you could make it long or short, play it slow or fast, and started this whole idea that music isn’t necessarily about instruments any more. That’s been a big influence on me and my own interest in music.”

In this new project, Decibel explore a theme with each performance. In this debut performance as part of Tura’s Totally Huge New Music Festival, the group look at tape as an instrument in their own compositions and also in recreating some of the more important tape music projects of the past.

“So we’ve got a William Burroughs piece on there because he was someone who looked at cutting up words as well as recordings. We’ve got Brian Eno and we’re doing *Music For Airports*, which I think is only the second time it’s been performed live in the world. We’re using some tape components and some live components as well, so some things are on laptop or on turntable and we’re looking at different ways of working with playback as instrument in its own right rather than something that produces an entire piece of music.”

A true pioneer in discovering just what tape could achieve as a medium, Eno is almost necessary when looking at the history of tape as a compositional medium. “Brian Eno is someone interesting because he was someone who started making a mass number of

loops, and it’s been interesting trying to negotiate his piece in particular because there are so many different ways you could do it. He did it with lots of different loops and the process of scoring it for the instruments and, having some parts of it on a loop and some parts of it played live, we’ve really learned a lot about the process that he used which I think it’s never been particularly clear. He’s never said much about it. There’s more to it than it seems. He pulls loops in and out of it in the middle of the mix and there’s quite a lot of post-production on that record. We’re sort of making it our own where we put part on a loop and part with live instruments.”

Anyone who’s familiar with Eno’s ambient projects knows it wouldn’t be an easy task to score that piece, working out what to put on tape and what to play live. The group have scored the various loops and found ways at reproducing them. “It’s not going to be a literal translation of it, it’s more like an interpretation of it in a way like how Eno would have created it because he would have recorded it and played all the instruments into it and made the loops. So it’s almost like half way through Eno’s process is where we’re presenting it, rather than the finished produced product that you listen to on that record.”

Their own compositions also push what machines can bring to music with Hope’s own piece incorporating a record player and another piece using an interactive program that throws up pieces for the musicians to play. The staging of the show even stresses the machines as instruments. “I always knew that [staging it] would be one of the biggest challenges, and realising that if you’ve got a turntable or a computer then that’s an instrument and you’ve got a speaker and that’s its sound and it’s over there on the left, next to the cello player. Nothing’s coming through the PA in a mix, we’re not mic-ing up the instruments. Each instrument has its own voice whether that be a turntable, a laptop or a cassette player.”

WHO: Decibel

WHAT: *Tape It*

WHEN & WHERE: Totally Huge New Music Festival showcase – Thursday 10 September, WAAPA Music Auditorium, Mount Lawley

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Tape It (10 September 2009)

By Ben Hamblin

There was something alluring about sitting in a classical music auditorium scattered with amplifiers, studio monitors, leads, projectors, cables, and, best of all, reel-to-reel tape players; it gave that feeling of anticipation about what the newly formed ensemble, Decibel would produce. Composer Cat Hope directs and performs in the ensemble that is made up of a great range of Perth talent, including Dr

Malcolm Riddoch, Lindsay Vickery, Stuart James, Tristen Parr, Rob Muir and Dan Russell; a combination of great instrumental performers and intuitive electronic musicians.

The Ensemble's inaugural performance also corresponded with the opening night of the Totally Huge New Music Festival, run by Tura New Music - a ten-day new music festival featuring works of various artists from around the world. Decibel seemed to sum up the festival, with an auspicious mix of music from new music pioneers, through to local works, including a commissioned work by WAAPA composer in residence, Daniel Thorne.

The concert kicked off with a modern interpretation of William Burroughs, *Electronic Revolution*. Following the idea by Burroughs, Decibel cut up TV news reports from a current affairs program. With the video of the news report playing on a small TV without any visual manipulation, the accompanying audio gradually degraded, from audible news reports about the swine flu epidemic into a dense layering of conventional electronic manipulation.

Spatial aesthetic was tested in Warren Burt's *Another Noisy Lullaby*, a work written especially for Decibel. With Tristan Parr on cello positioned to the side of the audience, and Lindsay Vickery perched up behind the audience on bass clarinet, the performance also included Cat Hope (flute) and Dan Russell (violin), with no one as the central focus of the work in spatial performance array. Each player was equipped with a tape player, playing faint electronic sounds on cassette tapes. The minimal lighting of the music stand lights alone aided the audience's attention to sound, which heightened the delicate piece. The timbral qualities of the four instruments at extremely quiet dynamics made for a really alternate atmosphere. Often new music falls into a situation of loudness, whereas in this case, Burt has used restrained dynamics to create a wonderful sensation of spatial delicacy.

A recurring theme of the night, possibly not intended as a focal theme, was the projection of scores onto a screen. Often acting as a master score for the players to follow, the projections allowed the audience to (attempt to) follow the players. However, in many cases, graphic scores proved difficult to follow from an audience perspective and seemed to deter from the incredible improvising from the ensemble. The first piece to benefit from the projected score was ensemble director, Cat Hope's new work *In The Cut*. With a score that outlined a steady decline as its macro-structure, microstructurally it included some wonderfully subtle interaction between performers. With a variety of acoustic instruments, as well as a bass guitar, and turntable, the piece successfully narrates a seemingly basic structure that is transformed into the piece's conceptual idea, degradation.

Mauricio Kagel's piece *Prima Vista* was another projected score piece, with the ensemble split into two groups of three. Perhaps the most complex score of the night to follow, the piece featured two separate scores for each ensemble, with numerous instructions sprawled across the scores. The piece was written for 'slide pictures and undefined sound sources' and Decibel modernised it into a self-automated score projection. Sonically, the piece was intriguing, with a seemingly indeterminate structure making for an ever-progressing, shifting structure.

I'm not sure how many exact interpretations of Brian Eno's music for airports have been attempted since tape machines have slowly been phased out, but Decibel not only attempted it, they pulled it off marvellously. Returning from the interval to see three tape loops stretched across the entire stage gave a sense of nostalgia, and for those who knew the piece, a sense of interest to see how Decibel could perform a live interpretation of a studio project by Eno. *Music for Airports* was composed as a piece of unobtrusive music, designed as a soothing, low-volume work. Decibel transformed the work into a live scenario, and added a live trio to the tape loop recordings of that same group. As the tape machines cranked into action, the warm, gentle sounds of the tape reels washed through the auditorium, as the three tapes rustled their way around the reels. The trio were careful not to overpower the loops as they subtly interacted with they're own tape loop recordings. The ensemble

performance was as 'tape-esque' as it could be, and created a beautiful melding of tape and instruments that sent the audience into a meditative state, only broken with the clunk of the stop button to halt the tape reels at the conclusion of the performance

Transit of Venus, a new work by Lindsay Vickery, composed for three acoustic instruments and electronics was another excursion into the world of indeterminacy; a piece with a self-automated score and a click track. For the night, it was for alto flute, violin and cello. With the players having to follow exact instructions on a projected score, being chosen at random by the laptop, the piece formed its own performance-unique structure. As John Cage insisted, nothing is silence, and (even if unexpectedly) Vickery's piece briefly passed through passages of silence that acted as subtle additions to overall structure. Cat Hope, Tristen Parr and Dan Russell performed this piece with amazing detail, adhering to the projected instructions with such passion that gave the piece a fascinating shape.

The penultimate piece almost turned into a bit of a comedy routine between Dan Russell and Tristen Parr. The piece by Ernie Althoff, *Front Row* is an interesting investigation into alternate methods of 'scoring' a piece. The performance saw Cat Hope, Malcolm Riddoch and Stuart James sitting in the audience with individual tape players that acted as audio-cues for the performers on stage. Dan and Tristen were equipped with a series of musical toys and percussion instruments that were to be played upon cue from the tape players. The interaction reached two levels, the interaction between tape and performance, and the interaction between the two performers.

Dan Thorne's new work *We'll Never Know* was an exploratory look into the combination of live performance with pre-manipulated recordings. With the live trio receiving input through headphones to stay in time, Dan managed to juxtapose processed samples of instruments against a live version of themselves. The work digressed beautifully into a wash of complex timbre between the live ensemble and the backing track. With auditory similarities to the works of Steve Reich and Michael Nyman, Thorne created a wonderfully crafted electro-acoustic work that capped off a delightful night, exploring the possibilities of acoustic instruments and electronics.

Event details

Decibel: SomAcoustica

Works by Vickery, Bandt, Hope, Linz, Lucier, Anderson, Cage, Oliveiros, The Velvet Underground presented by Tura New Music

Callaway Music Auditorium, Crawley, WA

18 November 2009

[More details](#) in the AMC Calendar

Decibel: Tape It

Works by Vickery, Althoff, Burt, Hope, Thorne

presented by Totally Huge New Music Festival & Tura New Music

WAAPA Music Auditorium, Perth, WA

10 September 2009

[More details](#) in the AMC Calendar

Further links

Decibel (<http://decibel.waapamusic.com/>)

Tura New Music (www.tura.com.au/)

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Subjects discussed by this article:

- [Decibel](#)
 - [Walk on parts](#) by [Rainer Linz](#)
 - [Four + Five](#) by [Ros Bandt](#)
 - [Another noisy lullaby](#) by [Warren Burt](#)
 - [Front row](#) by [Ernie Althoff](#)
 - [Antibody](#) by [Lindsay Vickery](#)
-

Kelly Curran has recently completed her Bachelor of Music (Hons) at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, majoring in composition. Several of her chamber works have been performed around Perth, and she has also composed for dance and film. She was recently nominated for a West Australian Screen Award for best score for the short film *Silent Beauty*. She is currently researching postmodern approaches to chamber music.

Ben Hamblin is an electronic musician and composer from Perth, WA. He is currently in his last year of the Bachelor Of Music (Music Technology) course at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. He composes spatial, atmospheric, electroacoustic music, either in live performance or non-realtime production. Ben is interested in the idea of using limited sound sources to create pieces of vast depth and obscurity; testing the inaudible structure of a sound.

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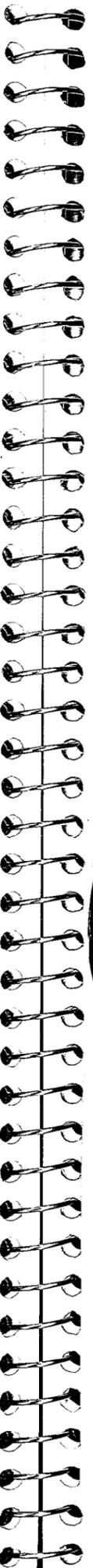
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Score



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Jonathan Marshall: decibel, tape it!, totally huge

I'M SITTING AT A DESK, SYNCING MY COMPUTER'S CD PLAYBACK INTO A PAIR OF STUDIO REFERENCE SPEAKERS WITH A GLOWING, INDISTINCT IMAGE OF A TV MONITOR PLAYING BACK A SEPARATE DVD OF THE SAME LIVE PERFORMANCE. NEARLY TWO MONTHS AFTER DECIBEL PREMIERED AT PERTH-STOLTALY HUGE FESTIVAL THIS SEEMS A PERVERSELY APPROPRIATE MANNER IN WHICH TO REVIEW A NEW ENSEMBLE DEVOTED TO EXPLORING MEDIATED MUSICS AND PLAYBACK DEVICES AS INSTRUMENTS. ALVIN LUCIER WOULD BE PROUD ("I'M SITTING IN A ROOM...").

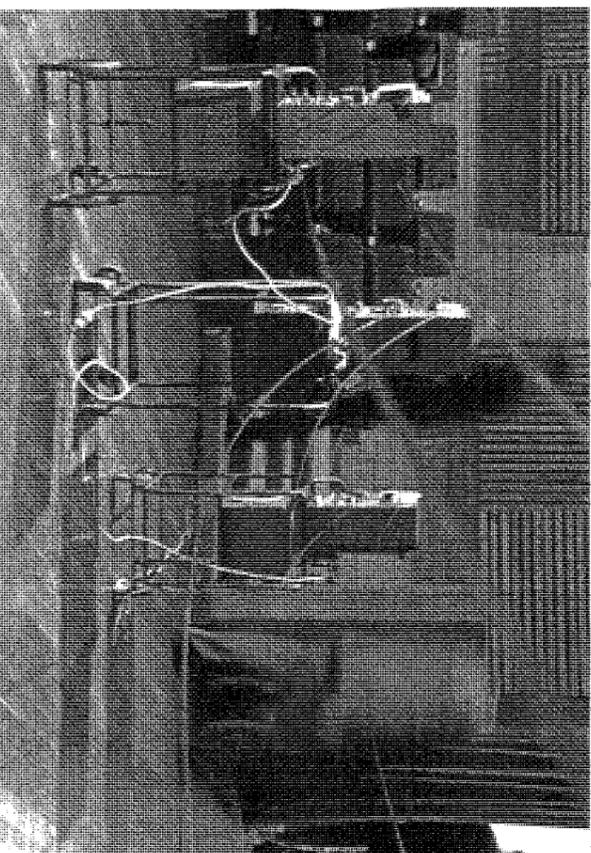
Decibel is the brainchild of Cat Hope, and the first performance, *Tape It!*, offered a veritable hit parade of the Perth sound scene: reed-instrumentalist and MAX-patch master Lindsay Vickery, sound designing legend Rob Muir, art-and-rock-crossover cellist Tristan Parr, as well as Malcolm Riddoch, Stuart James and Dan Russell. A diversity of acoustic instruments combined with—or in some instances vied for attention with—assorted electromagnetic and digital sound reproduction technologies (laptops, reel-to-reel tape-players, guitar amplifiers, speakers, portable cassette-players, turntables etc.).

The devices and the performers were variously positioned about the auditorium in order to install the works in various ways, and even in the stereo format in which I accessed this performance after the event, the complexity of spatial effects was impressive. Effects of proximity and distance (William Burroughs' viral radio montages), focussed presence (especially in Mauricio Kagel's *Prima Vista*) and ambiguous distance, all enlivened the performance. Broadly, the program tended to shimmer and shift, to grow but rarely arrest or conclude, producing a wonderfully affective series of effects in which musical resolution was alluded to but deliberately avoided.

Hope's choice of materials, varying from new works of her own and those of Vickery, Warren Burt and Daniel Thorne, through to adaptations of extant pieces, by Kagel, Burroughs and Brian Eno, highlighted composers who exploited elements of indeterminacy, collaborative composition, open works and imprecision, impressionist effects. Far from the rigorous precision of post-Serialist composition by the likes of Brian Ferneyhough, Hope's contention would seem to be that playback devices are best utilised within more rules-based compositions and performative models.

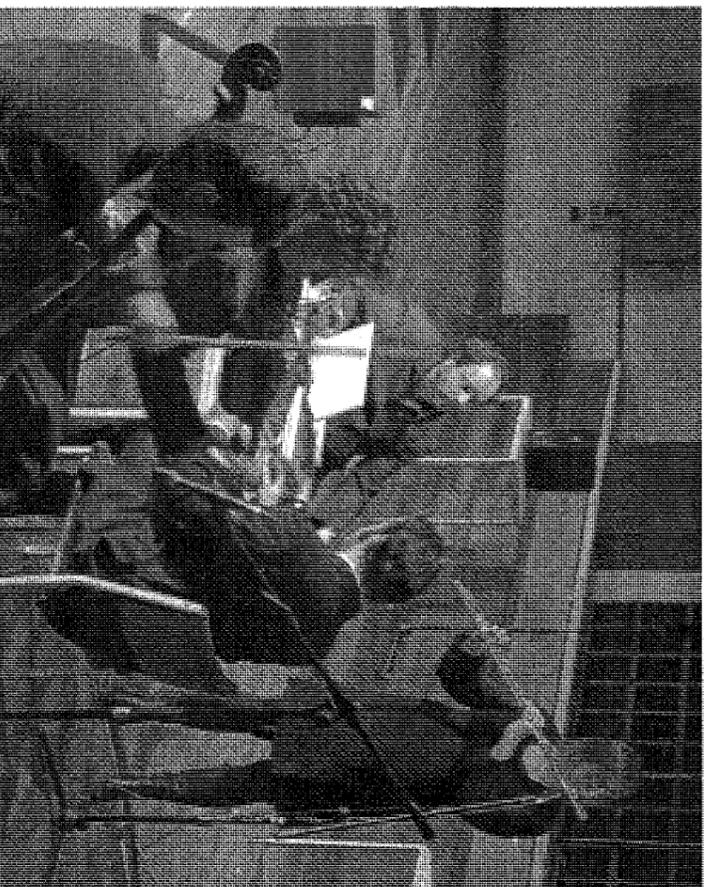
Indeed, several of the pieces featured live projection of graphic or rules-based scores, suggesting an equivalence between this mode of notation and the tape loops employed elsewhere. This was most evident in Althoff's *Front Row*, where the looped sounds on cassette are, as the program note explains, intended to act "as a kind of notation"—here scoring a duel of toys and their sounds. Thorne's contribution was the odd one out in this sense with his tendency to employ urgent string refrains suggesting a quasi-Romantic set of emotional tensions and attempted musical resolutions which other artists eschewed.

Tape It! represented not just an argument in favour of playback machines as instruments—a contentious if not altogether novel concept—but also a coupling of this idea with a specific



in this sense, counter-intuitive but persuasive: that the use of recorded or programmed material produces a greater diversity of only partially predictable outcomes, rather than necessarily supporting closed-off, formal processes of scoring like dots and lines, which have largely tended towards the construction of ever more predetermined outcomes.

Whilst the sonic palette on offer was unambiguously contemporary—the bursts of ringing noise which characterised Decibel's interpretation of Burroughs, the rapid attacks and micro-gestural acoustic instrumental flourishes of Kagel and Vickery, Hope's own acoustic drones, the fragmentation of conventional tonality without the imposition of a new over-arching logic



In enacting this acoustic, electromechanical cyberneticisation of player and machine, Decibel's program effected a curious kind of displacement. Despite the spatialisations of Hope, Muir and their collaborators, the sounds seemed strangely unfixed and placeless. Instruments seemed to echo and scratch (notably Kagel), but not sing or voice. There was a kind of materialism to these compositions which simultaneously rendered them as effervescent or impossible to locate metaphorically. Burroughs' citation of the ever-mobile mediascape and Eno's *Music For Airports* were paradigmatic here in their articulation of a metaphoric, global or alien non-place.

One cannot and indeed should not reduce Decibel's multifarious program or explorations to a single effect of what I will here call "aetherisation." Kagel's more emphatically theatrical use of the instruments, or Burt's totally beguiling idea of something which is both "wise" and lulling, suggest a range of processes and moods which are not easily amalgamated under a single affective model or critical paradigm. Decibel's, at least at this point, not about defining or demagogically fixing a unified approach to sound, music, playback and performance. It remains an open project, an exploration.

Nevertheless these trends and arguments over what happened after Serialism, following Cage's celebration of chance, or what should be occurring in the wake of the rise of electronic composition and noise art as legitimate forms—all of these much debated controversies interact here to produce a number of tensions which Hope's programming effectively

exploits. It was therefore not only musical irresolution which acted as the concert's dominant motif, but of musical history itself. Indeed, Althoff went so far as to quote the same trains sampled in Pierre Schaeffer's landmark *Etude Aux Chemins De Fer* (1948) within his own contribution, driving home the historicist nature of a project such as this. Hope and her peers (and here I would include Anthony Paterras as striving towards a similar model in his compositions and in his collaborations with Robin Fox) continue to argue that noise art, concrete approaches to sound and to the sample, together with instrumental composition, graphic scores and rules-based ideas, are not incompatible. Whilst there is no doubt that all of these methods productively animated Decibel's performance, it remains to be seen if they are truly compatible, or should rather be seen as parallel trends which may be employed in conflicted tandem. Just as Cat Hope's own approach favours the unresolved, so the combination of ideas and processes here might favour an endless, irresolvable dialogue, rather than a new condition of musical interpretation.

Decibel, *Tape It!*, director, performer Cat Hope, performers, collaborators Lindsay Vickery, Stuart James, Malcolm Riddoch, Rob Muir, Tristan Parr, Dan Russell; West Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Music Auditorium, Totally Huge New Music Festival, Sept 10, [http://www.tura.com.au/](http://decibel.waapamu-sic.com/)
Images: Decibel, *Tape It!*, photos Ian Henderson

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ARTS

Edited by Stephen Bevis



TEN TOTALLY HUGE DAYS

Karlheinz Stockhausen's work will be at the heart of a contemporary fine music festival in Perth. **Rosalind Appleby** reports.

Karlheinz Stockhausen's revolutionary music from the 1960s seems to be taking hold in Perth. The composer's electro-acoustic work *Kontakte* is the centrepiece of the Totally Huge New Music Festival which opens on September 10.

The performance of *Kontakte* by Sydney new music pioneers Ensemble Offspring will follow hot on the heels of the surprising success of Stockhausen's *Stimmung* at the Perth International Arts Festival. The performance will be part of 10 days of concerts, exhibitions and installations including a special student symposium and a festival conference.

Totally Huge is one of the biggest contemporary fine music festivals in the southern hemisphere, though the global financial crisis has meant it has finetuned its focus to predominantly Australian artists. Festival director Tos Mahoney, of Tura New Music, says the social conservatism as a result of the economic downturn has made the role of the festival even more crucial.

"As always, I am amazed that (even in times of contraction) these brilliant musicians, composers, innovators and performers continue to push the boundaries of the known and the unknown," he says. "Offering an escape in the extraordinary, the festival is a journey into a fantastic world that is expansive, ear-opening and enriching."

The festival will open with the debut performance of Perth's freshest new music group Decibel. Under the direction of Cat Hope, the ensemble will present a mini history of electro-acoustic music ranging from works by Stockhausen's contemporary Mauricio Kagel and Brian Eno's ambient music to three world premieres written for the group by Australian composers Hope, Warren Burt and Dan Thorne.

After this introduction to the world of electronic music, Ensemble Offspring will collaborate with electronic artist Pimmon to present the much anticipated Perth premiere of *Kontakte*, a work that 50 years later is still groundbreaking in its synthesis of electronic and acoustic music. The high-profile Ensemble Offspring, directed by Claire Edwards and Damien Ricketson, will also present a concert of works by Cage, Reich, Glass and Zorn and a special schools concert.

Electronic music will be updated to the



Making *Kontakte*: The high-profile Ensemble Offspring.



Jazzy: Swiss sound artist Giles Aubry.

sound artists who will use field recordings collected from a national tour to build their *Artefact Installation* at Tura's William Street office in Northbridge. They will also present workshops and a Club *Zho* performance as part of their festival residency.



For openers: Perth's freshest new music group Decibel.

presents a set of Perth-inspired improvisations alongside Swiss sound artist Giles Aubry and Taiwanese experimental pianist Keniju Lin.

The focus on local music has resulted in a feast of world premieres by Perth composers. David Pye's *Cicadan Rhythms* will be performed by the Fremantle

percussion players, 11 angklung players and tape. The WA Symphony Orchestra under chief conductor Paul Daniel will premiere James Ledger's new orchestral work *Chronicles* in one of its edgiest programs for the year. The *Breaking Out* concert at the WA Museum will feature the best of the new breed of WA



New music: Ross Bolleter's *Ruined Piano Sanctuary* in York.

DON'T MISS THESE HUGE HIGHLIGHTS

Ensemble Offspring, *Kontakte*: After the success of Stockhausen's *Stimmung* at PIAF, this performance of *Kontakte* in the intimacy of the WA Museum will be sure to sell out. (WA Museum, September 16)

Decibel, *Tape It*: The cream of Perth's new-music scene unites as Decibel, using old reel-to-reel tape players with acoustic and electronic instruments to perform music from the 1960s alongside three world premieres. (WAAPA Music Auditorium, September 10)

Gabriella Smart, *Chinese Whispers*: Recently returned from a tour of China, this hot pianist and director of Adelaide's Soundstream Festival has prepared a sensational program from Chinese and Australian composers. (WA Museum, September 13)

Come Hither Noise: Thomas Meadowcroft's Monaro V8 roar and Mark Brown's haunting response to the South Fremantle Power Station feature in this exhibition of sound. (Fremantle Arts Centre until September 20)

Fremantle Symphony Orchestra, *The Warriors*: David Pye's *Cicadan Rhythms* synthesises Australian and Indonesian sounds and shares the bill with Percy Grainger's extravagant tone poem *The Warriors*. ((WAAPA Music Auditorium, September 13)

A Sound Outing: Improvised music and sound art from Swiss composer Giles Aubry, Taiwan's Keniju Lin and festival artist Pimmon. (Ellington Jazz Club, September 17)

Ruined Piano Sanctuary Tour: Composer Ross Bolleter conducts a tour of Wambyn Olive Grove, the final resting place of his beloved ruined pianos. (York, September 20)

work by Chris de Groot, winner of the Tura New Music/WAAPA Commissioning Prize.

A host of events including a piano recital by Helpmann Award-winning Gabriella Smart, the *Come Hither Noise* exhibit at Fremantle Arts Centre, sound installations by Keniju Lin and Chris

Ruined Piano Sanctuary in York will reflect new music in all its diversity.

The festival will culminate in a concert broadcast live with video feed from Perth's ABC studio as part of Classic FM's New Music Up Late show.

Festival details: tura.com.au