

Cyber-Fem on the edge of Geo-Ambient (sailing over soundscape)



Kaffetronics: loop on loop

In a time of continuing Post-Feminist divergencies, where are women and music going? Or to rephrase the question: are women musicians connecting into the technological zeitgeist of the moment and turning it around to access and explore possible new musical universes?

By dint of this technological dimension in music a link here to the Feminist cyber-philosophers of Science might be sensed. Be it Sherry Turkle and her 'Life on the Screen' resumé of internet living rooms, MUDs, etc; Sadie Plant's reinvention of sixties militancies for female cyberians; or Philosopher of Science, Donna Haraway's infamous pronouncement that she'd rather be a cyborg than a 'nature girl', there seems room to see how such sentiments rebound and play within the current female musical scene.

Meantime it's long been the assumption that music is yet another world where women are a scarce active minority. And that although women have always created (as well as played) music down through the ages, the difficulties and barriers, to this day, preclude opportunities which the male musical world takes pretty much for granted.

For all its self image of mutant radicalism, the febrile world of music and technology (be it Techno, Electronica or Ambient) is a playstation for the males. Imagine for a moment a world in reverse: a thousand female electronic bands webbing an ambient firmament of soundscapes - a male minority making its sounds to a hostile and indifferent music business. How different the sound universes would be, and how different the technology and its evolution. Unlikely maybe, still, a leaping-off point for this issue's Margins of Music. In segment 1 Birmingham analogue miniaturists Pram, Margaret Fiedler's Laika, and impro Midi-Violinist Kaffe Matthews ruminate and reflect upon where both electronic music and its technology could go given exponential influence to female energy. And in Segment 2 Iris Garrelf and Salome Vogelín look at women in electronic music, today and yesterday.

It's also an assumption that women are less into technology, as it is constituted, than their gender relatives; that is, technology is basically a boy's town thing. So with the emergence of a field of related clusters of technological music, from pop margins to avant-academic - where do women figure in this? Certainly, it seems if you look at Ambient; Drum'n'Bass; Electro-Acoustic; Electronica, in all these genres, the girls are thin on the ground. If you accept this last sentence, any consideration of next questions surely begins with 'why?' Is it because women actually aren't into the technology, or only not into it in the same way? Or is it how the technology presently is, and if it were different, and female-friendly, how would that change matter? And would technology (including musical technology) evolve in fundamentally and radically