

**Amy X. Neuburg: Vocals from Renaissance to noise band**



Photograph by Rob Thomas

**LET X NOT EQUAL X**

BY KYLE GANN

Like Loudon Wainwright III, Amy X. Neuburg is tired of having her name misspelled. "I've been thinking," she mused at her March 7 CD release party, "of dropping the last name altogether and just going by Amy X.

But then, even more people would ask me whether I . . ." A sampler snapped up her next two words and looped them, "practice Islam, practice Islam, practice Islam, practice Islam," signaling the end of a Renaissance song and the abrupt segue into a raucous noise collage.

Neuburg, with two u's please, is a San Francisco songstress surrounded by electronics, and she's going major with a new disc called *Residue* on the Other Minds label. She sings, she cracks jokes, she triggers her own voice samples by rapping on pads with drumsticks, she loops her voice and sings over her alter egos until she's a whole chorus, an opera, a circus act. That raspy sound at the beginning of "Every Little Stain"? Live performance reveals that it's her brushing her teeth close to the microphone. And somewhere along the way, she's been mightily impressed by Laurie Anderson, her homage apparent even in her thoughtfully drawn-out vocal inflections.

But I hope Neuburg realizes that her strengths lie elsewhere. Her lyrics and one-liners don't have the enigmatic zing of Anderson's, so that you're still getting the joke 30 seconds or maybe even a week later. What she's got instead is that she's far more musical, with a voice that can be lovely-sultry or operatic as well as deranged-performance-art, along with a flair for playing her electronic equipment choreographically and a talent for rock-electronic textures and DJ-like intercutting. That "practice Islam" song starts with her building up a Renaissance song, "O Lord Turne Not Away Thy Face," in a four-part vocal texture, but at the repeated flick of a switch

**Her voice can be lovely-sultry or deranged-performance-art.**

it gets interrupted by her own heavily amplified bitter observations about God. The ideas are nice, but it's the interface between such strong textures that's stunning.

That's not to say she doesn't also have a handle on the tropes of modern life. "Life Stepped In" is a phone conversation with herself made up of excuses for why she can't talk right now: "I'm directing 32 plays simultaneously." "I'm redecorating the insides of my eyelids." "I'm getting a divorce." "I have forgotten who you are." And when this last forces the question, "What went wrong?" she responds calmly: "Nothing. It's perfect now." More compositional than Laurie Anderson and a hell of a lot cheerier than Diamanda Galas, Neuburg has scoped out her own territory in the gulf between pop and classical.

Electronic violinist Todd Reynolds played warm-up for Neuburg's release party; he's long been known for playing in other people's music (the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the string quartet Ethel), but his new solo career shows that he has tricks of his own. Playing violin into a computer and flicking the occasional foot switch, he set ethereal textures in motion, each line added to the last by digital looping. A lot of people use such loops these days, but Reynolds avoided the clichés and drew only the subtlest gestures to create a seamless ambient texture that was perfectly gauged to the venue. He had only to pluck a note or slide through a glissando occasionally to keep the sonic fabric lively.

**A talent for rock-electronic textures and DJ-like intercutting**

And as an encore, Reynolds had boomboxes passed out to audience members for a performance of Phil Kline's *Grande Etude Symphonique*. Everyone clicked Play on the count of four, and as Reynolds fiddled, the house burned with the simmering chant of bells slowly crescendoing from dozens of tape players all around us. His subtle violin line provided an edge to the ecstatic noise growing around us: a true violin concerto for the post-classical age.

*Other Minds, 333 Valencia Street #303, San Francisco, CA 94103-3552, otherminds.org*

Call clubs for times and cover charges. For shows playing one to two times during the week see that particular day. For shows playing three or more times in one week, see the Long Runs section listed at the end of music.

**Pick** Voice Pick

\$ \$8 and under  
\$\$ \$20 and over

**WEDNESDAY**  
MARCH 24

**Pick 'AFRICA MONDO FESTIVAL': MAJEK FASHEK & KOLANUT+BABA OLA JAGUN+FEMM NAMELESS**  
Satalla, 37 W 26th, 212.576.1155  
See the Long Runs. At 8. OUMANO

**BLUES TRAVELER**

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl, 212.777.6800  
Even that VH1 show about Blues Traveler's food and heroin addictions couldn't shake my impression that the band's only gimmick is a fat man playing "Flight of the Bumblebee" on the harmonica. Their new record, *Truth Be Told*, delivers variations on the Traveler theme, and their live shows, heavy on improvisation and patchouli oil, make them a faux-Phish. At 8. \$\$ SCHWEBER

**MARCO CAPPELLI/MARC RIBOT**

Barbès, 376 9th St, Bklyn, 718.965.9177  
At 7. \$

**THE CHANTEUSE CLUB**

Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette, 212.539.8770  
Maggie Moore, of Off-Broadway's best musical ever about a semi-transsexual rock star, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, hosts this ongoing gathering of joyous entertainment, which last time out was one of my favorite evenings of the past year. Often joined by B-52 Kate Pierson, and a rotating third performer, the night promises a giddy range of both original and cover tunes, performed solo and collectively. Pounce, you'll be pumping all night! At 9:30. \$\$ ABER

**GREG DAVIS BAND+MARUMARI**

Barnard College, Barnard Hall, 3009 Bway at 117th, 212.854.2067  
Laptop jocks Davis and Josh Presseisen (a/k/a Marumari) go uptown for a night of woozy head music. Marumari is the more dancefloor-friendly of the two; his glitchy, ambient IDM is usually anchored by propulsive beats. Davis's wanderings in the hippie folktronica woods are beautiful but ignorable; maybe his four-piece live band will change that. With Jacob Danziger. At 8. \$ PHILLIPS

**JIMMY GREENE QUARTET**

Jazz Standard, 116 E 27th, 212.576.2232  
There are a few tenor players in town—I'm thinking Ron Blake, Jay Collins, Chris Potter—who do a little bulldozing while sculpting their thoughtful solos. Greene does too, and the extra oomph helps define his sound. At 7:30 & 9:30. MACNIE

**Pick KOOL G RAP+BLACK ROB**

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick, 212.243.4940  
Kool G Rap is the rapper all rappers want to be, from Jay-Z to Eminem and back again. Sadly, vintage G Rap is who current G Rap would like to be, but the benefit of the doubt is always a wise gift in his case. And God bless Black Rob, back from the lost (and hopefully nay-saying all those terrible rumors). With Loon facing charges, is Black Rob, like, the only rapper left on Bad Boy who didn't win a contest? At 8. \$\$ CARAMANICA

**FRANK LACY'S VIBE TRIBE**

Jazz Gallery, 290 Hudson, 212.242.1063  
Trombones are meant to burr, bustle, and bellow, and Lacy's a guy who accomplishes all that while offering a bit of grace. His tribe is a large ensemble that has a knack for riding riff tunes to parts unknown. At 9 & 10:30. MACNIE

**LAST DAYS**

Pianos, 158 Ludlow, 212.420.1466  
Not half as strange as Brooklyn's awesome Lycaon Pictus, who share a bassist, these locals seem to draw on Wire and Joy Division for an icy tight-wired streamlineness recalling Breaking Circus in 1987. With Subway Sun, Rosa Chance Well, and the Big Sleep. At 7:30. \$ EDDY

**Pick LAST TOWN CHORUS+SONS & DAUGHTERS+PG SIX+JAMES ORR COMPLEX**

Northsix, 66 N 6th, Bklyn, 718.599.5103  
NY-vs.-Glasgow folk-rock cage match! Who will triumph, sounding the most authentically downtrodden? Local duo LTC have the high-lonesome advantage, while upstate picker PG Six's got the free-psych contingent on lockdown. But don't count out the Scots: Arab Strap side project S&D get old-timey

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