

New Grass  
New Flowers  
Releases!

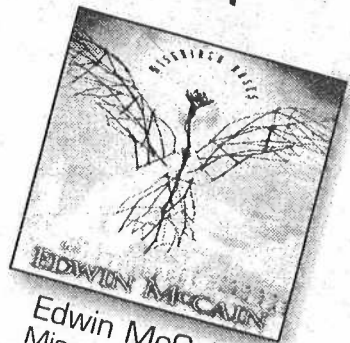


Matchbox 20  
Yourself or Someone Like You  
\$13.99 CD \$8.99 CA

**ON TOUR**  
Ivy Appearing  
Tramps 3/25



Atlantic Records  
50th Anniversary  
\$19.99 CD \$14.99 CA



Edwin McCain  
Misguided Roses  
\$12.99 CD \$8.99 CA

## KYLE GANN

# Framing Wallpaper

Bang on a Can

March 7  
Alice Tully Hall

Terre Thaemlitz

March 6  
The Kitchen

**S**omeday, after all musical boundaries are erased, after acid jazz has blurred into minimalism and roots-rock reggae into 12-tone music, there will still be two distinct musical cultures: live and recorded. Every hearing musician knows this. Every musician not spellbound by abstract categories knows that you follow one set of strategies for the concert hall, another for the living room, because people don't listen the same way in different environments. It has been the peculiar genius of certain rock stars, from the Beatles on, that they divined how to turn a record into a mystical experience. And it has been a music school-induced failure that only a handful of classical composers (notably Robert Ashley and Paul Lansky) have learned how to produce a record that transcends its status as a performance document, that doesn't point imaginatively back to the proscenium stage.

Eno's *Music for Airports*—the original 1978 LP—was one of those mystical experiences. It was mystical in its vacuousness, its Teflon surface, the fact that it successfully defied you to pay close attention to the blithely mindless repetition of its vapid melodies. In one dazzling instant it made elevator music obsolete (no matter how few ears have yet become aware of this) and opened up a vast history to come for

ambient sound. And now traipse in the Bang on a Can All-Stars, in an act either foolhardy or sublimely ironic, to perform *Music for Airports* live: to transfer that perfect vacuum back to the proscenium stage it had so brilliantly sidestepped.

To their credit, the All-Stars were sufficiently aware of their transgression to effect a complete transformation. As Lisa Moore played that deadpan piano melody over and over, Steven Schick brushed brake drums and Maya Beiser sustained quiet notes on cello. Behind them, a brass choir swelled in slow climaxes, then suddenly cut off, leaving silences of devout beauty. Suddenly, *Music for Airports* was no longer ambient, but a solemn hymn of Buddhist spirituality. Górecki and Pärt, eat your East European holy minimalist hearts out.

Only problem was, that cheery piano tune kept laughing at the weight of existential pretensions it was never meant to carry. A choir of sopranos crooned the "oohs" of part two as the instrumentalists kept time by listening to click tracks. When, by the fourth movement, clarinetist-conductor Evan Ziporyn engaged pipa player Wu Man in a New-Agey duet, Eno was left far behind.

And so the listener, just as bored as Eno intended him to be, had to decide whether to interpret this performance as (1) an ironically Dadaist gesture worthy of Duchamp, a sheet of wallpaper framed, hung in a museum, and lit dramatically, or (2) a mammoth publicity stunt meant to draw large audiences to hear

CONTINUED ON PAGE 129



# GANN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 126

the other three works on the program, which were rather astounding. Benefit of the doubt would have been easier without the All-Stars' encore, an instrumental arrangement of Eno's classic song "Burning Airlines Give You So Much More," whose last resemblances to the original had been expunged through over-intellectualization.

Best of the astounding works was Annie Gosfield's *The Manufacture of Tangled Ivory*, which Moore opened with a long, rough solo of muted and altered piano sounds on a keyboard sampler. At various points the string players rhythmically beat their instruments, in one of the most successful infusions of rock energy

into electronic chamber music I've heard. Glenn Branca had the ensemble playing keyboard and string instruments of his own invention, all of them tuned to closely squeezed overtones (more than 60 to an octave) of an inaudibly low pitch. The amplified continuum that resulted was dense, eerie, and totally unprecedented, except, in intention, by the meanderings of Branca's most recent symphonies. Germany-residing expatriate Arnold Dreyblatt made a rare appearance with *Escalator*, a well-tuned work in which the string players beat pure intervals to an energetic pulse. Nice, but it gave the impression that his music hasn't developed in the 15 years we've missed him.

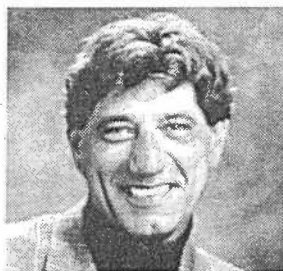
**AMBIENT ARTIST** Terre Thaemlitz, the previous evening, also crashed the concert stage from the

world of recording; but he knew it, and framed his performance in suitably self-conscious ambiguity. His *Die Roboter Rubato*, a deconstruction of technopop tunes by Kraftwerk, strung together lovely, wandering, ambient vignettes for sampled and heavily reverbed piano. Apparently—to judge from postmodern jargon-laden comments that Thaemlitz read robotically through a harmonizer—he has a problem with what he considers Kraftwerk's macho slickness and motorically phallic thrusting rhythms. Therefore, he performed in convincing drag at a synthesizer propped on the keyboard of a grand piano, in between pieces playing snippets of the Kraftwerk songs he satirized and transformed.

From where the audience sat, then, we saw a rather voluptuous woman playing a

Steinway, whereas the reality was a man triggering sequences that multiplied by dozens the notes he actually fingered. Kraftwerk's hard-edged melodies came back to us feminized, pretty (though not always consonant), and hesitantly halting—thus the "rubato" of the title. Having gotten out of college before deconstructionist fashions took over, I couldn't always follow Thaemlitz's critique of Kraftwerk's "permeability" and "referentiality." But for all I care, he can spin theoretical spirals around his music in pig-Latinized Urdu as long as the music sounds good, and *Die Roboter Rubato* was haunting, elegant, and enigmatic. No one would mistake Thaemlitz's sound for Eno's, yet Thaemlitz is the only ambient musician I've heard take up the Zen spirit of Eno's seductive sonic incense. **V**

## March of Dimes WalkAmerica®



Sunday, April 26, 1998

### Join Me...

...and help improve the health of babies. The March of Dimes has a 60-year track record of achievements, like the polio vaccine and intensive care nurseries. By participating in WalkAmerica, we can all join the March of Dimes fight to save babies' lives.

*Joe Namath*

WalkAmerica

Celebrity Spokesperson

Help fund more breakthroughs for babies. Call the March of Dimes, sign up and raise funds for WalkAmerica today!

1-800-BIG-WALK

## 1000 COLOR POSTCARDS - \$199\*

TOP QUALITY! FAST!

ALSO AVAILABLE:

- Digital Offset Printing! (24 hrs.)
- Color Stickers
- J-cards & CD covers
- Color Business Cards w/ photo repro.
- Posters
- Brochures
- Greeting Cards
- E-mail us your Files!
- Call for prices!

WE CREATE CARDS AND STICKERS USING YOUR PHOTOS OR ARTWORK!

PROMOTE YOUR MUSIC, ART OR PARTY!



\*From your digital files. \$250 for 1000 cards includes our professional scanning, design and layout.

**THE ORIGINAL CARD COMPANY**  
227 E. 45th st, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10017  
originalcards@pipeline.com  
www.originalcards.com  
(212) 687-2640

# THE BRAND NEW ALBUM FROM

# TOR



Appearing At  
The Bottom Line  
March