

CD-Romp

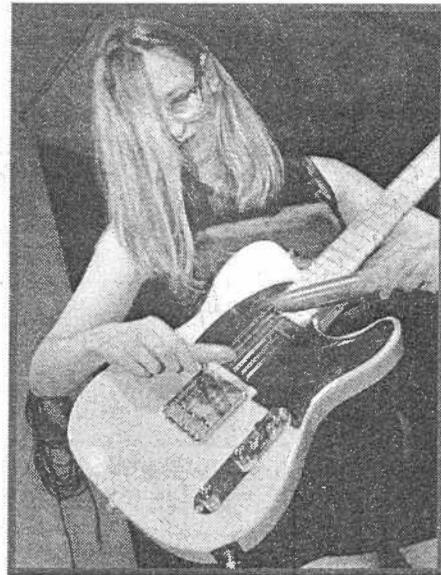
Within one month I got my first CD-ROM-equipped computer, received my first music CD-ROM in the mail, and read my first article stating that CD-ROMs will soon be obsolete. Ain't the computer industry a laff riot? The disc was *Telecommunication Breakdown* by Emergency Broadcast Network, a video-intensive rock band. A chaotic main menu offers 16 video walls from which you choose images that trigger the song tracks, three of which give you access to five-minute videos. EBN's strength is in the clever coordination of video and audio loops. They weave clips of Clinton, Perot, Ted Koppel, and other talking heads saying certain words into their songs with split-second timing and wry humor. "Super Zen State" overlays Tibetan chanting, the Balinese Monkey Chant, and African drumming as images flash between an angry black man and a stiff white soldier. Not great art, but a solid hour's entertainment, and the potential is amazing.

—K.G.

Getting Physical

New York Guitars
CB's 313 Gallery
September 26

BY KYLE GANN



Good vibrations: Judy Dunaway in action

zaCane Connors plinked with uniform softness, his mournful appoggiaturas rarely moving him beyond his home key. Brandon Ross's textures were mostly delicate chords rippled by use of the whammy bar, with occasional outbursts melting quickly into the calm. Both, however, served to illustrate one of the electric guitar's strengths, which is that its carrying power isn't mitigated by delicate strumming. As every Robert Ashley fan knows, a quiet sound heavily amplified is different from a loud sound, and has its own persuasive energy.

No one else was so restrained. I can't imagine a guitar fan remaining unimpressed by Nick Didkovsky's wild yet precisely counterintuitive playing style, his asymmetrical Stravinskian rhythms and motivic obsessions interrupted by virtuoso register sweeps. At the other extreme, David First has now learned how to make his solo work as compelling as his ensemble pieces. Setting drones in motion, he incited a forest of acoustic beats by sliding past their overtones, finally moving to jagged riffs that suggested a bizarre

cross between Hendrix and La Monte Young. Both he and Phil Kline, who MC'd the evening, transcended guitar playing into a less instrument-specific soundworld. Kline, exhibiting the same kind of Brucknerian, large-scale textural imagination that marks his sound sculptures for orchestras of cassette players, took an e-bow to elicit chords that shimmered and glissanded to big climaxes thickened by digital delay.

It was remarkable how structured most of the music was, how little of it came from the kind of improvisational thinking common only a few years ago. More representative of that scene, John King's stream-of-consciousness doodling showed he could play his instrument, but since he chose not to sustain any of his ideas, they vanished without a trace. And Judy Dunaway responded to my recent comment that she doesn't sufficiently acknowledge her music's patent sexuality by attacking her guitar with an assortment of different-sized and -colored vibrating dildos. The effect, totally deadpan in execution, sounded like someone shaving with a 50-foot-tall electric razor. Oh well, mea maxima culpa. From now on I'm sticking to harmonic analysis.

A few weeks ago Allan Kozinn caused some buzz by lamenting, in the *Times*, the bloodlessness of classical writing for electric guitar. He scored some real points, but fell on the old critical device of preemptively admitting the evidence against his argument and arbitrarily disallowing it. Glenn Branca and Rhys Chatham, he conceded, have written well for massed electric guitars, but they've "hit a creative wall." Since Branca and Chatham have been merrily making their best music ever these last few years, it seems to me any wall they've hit has been institutional, not creative. Aficionados might have drawn the more obvious conclusion, that Downtown composers who use electric guitar, brushed off by Kozinn, use it with sophistication; Uptown composers (including the Juilliard-trained Steve Reich in this one context), due to their schooling and attitudes, can't approach a vernacular resource without becoming dilettantes.

What made Kozinn's piece more surprising is that he already had in hand the new CRI disc *New York Guitars*, a sampling of Downtown's leading soloists on the instrument in question, several of whom played

September 26. No two guitarists were similar in style, but while some failed to wow me, their faults never included lack of physicality. True, Loren Maz-

BlahBlah

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