

## Home Cookin'

**T**he March 22-24 concerts of Music for Homemade Instruments, which took place at Skip La Plante's loft, were certainly a homey affair; attending as a critic was a little like trying to evaluate some unsuspecting family's dinner conversation. One could easily be condescending about the '70s flower-child attitudes, the loose-knit performances, and the instruments made from cardboard tubes, jelly jars, and detuned zithers. Overall, though, it was refreshing to see a group so dedicated to spirited music-making outside the profit-oriented confines of the music industry. I especially enjoyed La Plante's expert mallet chops, which transcended his homespun instruments, and also admired Lisa Karrer's emotively quick-silver vocal techniques in an arrangement of Estonian folk songs. Guest violinist Jason Hwang drew a fine chaos from the group, and in *Critical Mass*, John Bertles elicited almost poetic noises from electronic components that had, for all practical purposes, long ago bit the dust.

—K.G.

# Good Twin, Evil Twin

*Reich and Glass:  
Versus or Equals?*

BY KYLE GANN

**A**sk anyone who can stand minimalism at all whether they prefer Steve Reich or Philip Glass, and the answer, I've found, comes quickly. Though the two started out as the Tweedledee and Tweedledum of the avant-garde, their reputations have diverged sharply, even while their careers remain oddly parallel. My classical-music friends are quick to praise Reich and dismiss Glass as a sellout. Glass's fans seem to come from rock, or at least from among those for whom quiet concert listening is not a habit. And with Glass and Reich each making something of a comeback in recent years—with Glass's *The Voyage* revived by the Met this season and Reich at Alice Tully Hall—the differences in their public reception have been available for renewed scrutiny.

As someone who occasionally scours through the scores of both composers with a fine-tooth comb, I find the distinction curious, and not reflected in the notes on the page. It's true that Reich gilds his music with a greater intricacy of surface detail. The unpredictability on a measure-to-measure level makes his repetitions seem less obvious and gives his pieces the patina of classical chamber music. Glass's style is more bare-bones, his motives often

pared down to a single interval, and he does repeat a lot, not only within a work but from piece to piece. It may be a moot point that he usually writes for theater, which requires music that gives out information more sparsely. Furthermore, in interviews Reich connects himself entirely to classical sources like 12th-century organum and Debussy, while some of Glass's most musically embarrassing moments have stemmed from his forays into self-conscious pop.

In terms of compositional strategy, however, I don't find the two far apart. Reich now uses additively expanding rhythmic structures, just as Glass did in his early process pieces like *Music in Fifths*; meanwhile, Glass now tends to add notes within a stable, repeating time frame, much as Reich once did in *Drumming*. And the important differences do not point to Reich as the more highbrow figure. At any given moment, Reich's music tends to articulate a fairly bland, white-note, diatonic scale. From *Music in 12 Parts* and *Einstein on the Beach* on, Glass has always been interested in more complex pitch structures



MICHEL DELSOL



YANNIS SAMPRAS

All signs indicate Reich (left) and Glass are still neck and neck.

than Reich. *Akhnaten* crashes an A-flat major triad into A minor over and over, like watching a wave hit a wall in slow motion. *The Voyage* uses similarly harsh bitonalities, laced into complex rhythmic cycles of 49 or 52 beats. Admittedly, Glass tiptoes into his complexities so gradually that the most timid dissonance hater is inured to them by the time they arrive, but when musicians dismiss an entire scene, it's often on the basis of the humdrum opening measures.

Seems to me, Reich and Glass are still neck and neck. Each has written pieces I like better than most of the oth-

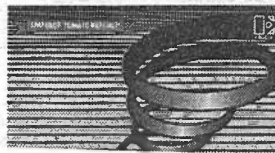
er's, and both have been doing more interesting work lately after a creative slump in the '80s (possibly brought on by economic necessity in both cases). They still provide models for how to present bizarre sonic phenomena at an audience-friendly pace. I think intellectuals have written off Glass too quickly, considering Reich's music more "classical" for features that are ultimately superficial. And I find psychologically intriguing the vehemence with which they make a distinction that, under close examination, melts like an April snowflake. ♦

# SPARKleHORSE

Captain Howdy's here but we can't see him.

# MOOG-TASTIC

STEREOLAB



BEASTIE BOYS

