

OF YOU

Virgin astore

MUSIC MOVIES BOOKS SOFTWARE

Dope

Felons And Revolutionaries
\$9.99 CD

Dangerous, compelling, heady dark, addictive. It's Dope, and after one listen, you'll be hooked. *Felons and Revolutionaries*, Dope's Flip/Epic Records debut, is much like its creators: smart in-your-face, raw and innovative.

Incubus

Make Yourself
\$13.99 CD

The long-awaited new album by Incubus was produced by Scott Litt (R.E.M., Nirvana, Days Of The New). *Make Yourself* contains 13 brand-new Incubus songs including *Privilege*, *Nowhere Fast*, *When It Comes*, *Out From Under*, and the premier radio track *Pardon Me* as head on K Rock.

Save Ferris

Modified
\$13.99

Brimming with kinetic guitar, funky bass, tuneful keyboards, and an endlessly amazing yet always tasteful array of sounds such as vibes, strings and various percussion instruments. Featuring the lead single *Mistaken*.

Deep Forest

Made in Japan
\$13.99 CD

A collection of 12 of Deep Forest's most popular songs recorded live at Tokyo's Koseinenkin Hall on July 9th, 1998 during the groups successful tour of Japan.



MEGA STORE
MUSIC MOVIES BOOKS SOFTWARE

VIRGINMEGA.COM

MUSIC

Niblock's Austerity

MASTER OF THE SLOW SURPRISE

BY KYLE GANN

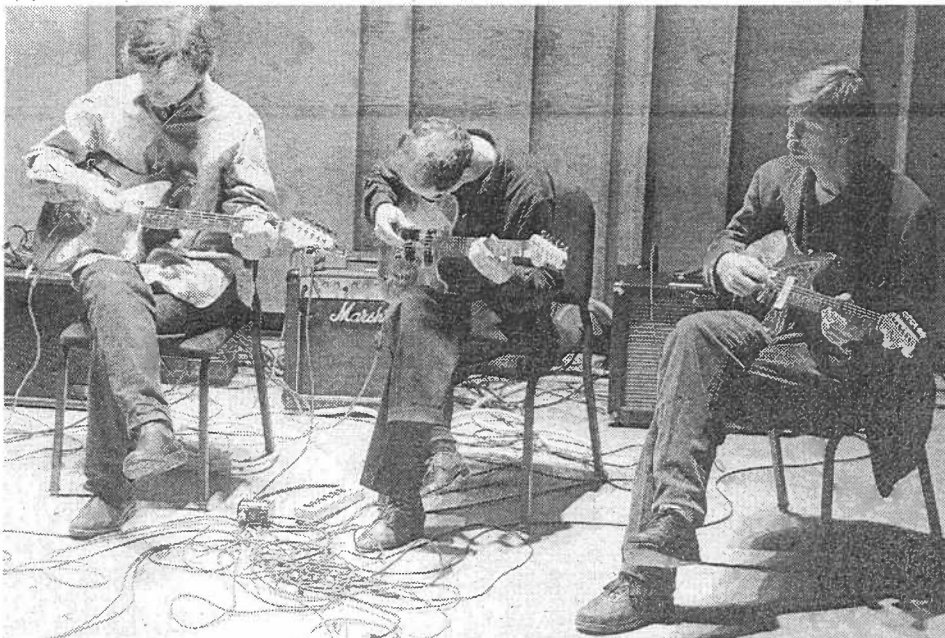
PHILL NIBLOCK, ULRICH KRIEGER

Merkin Hall October 14

In the history books, Phill Niblock is the forgotten minimalist. K. Robert Schwarz's *Minimalism* doesn't mention him, while Edward Strickland's *Minimalism: Origins* alludes to him only in lists of Downtown composers. Shame on both books, for Niblock has had more impact on younger composers than many better-known figures. Among others, Susan Stenger (of Band of Susans), Lois V. Vierk, David First, and Glenn Branca have all acknowledged a debt to him, and a devoted crowd of younger artists turned out for his "Interpretations" series concert with German saxophonist Ulrich Krieger. Because he doesn't look it, it's difficult to remember that Niblock, who just turned 66, is two years older than minimalist guru La Monte Young, and his music has been changing lives for about as long.

Chicago's famous omnimusician Jim O'Rourke playing hurdy-gurdy on tape—how did the opening, tentative chord (what musicians call a first-inversion triad) stabilize into a big root-position chord and then gradually thicken into a rich and glittering overtone series without us noticing until it was almost over? In a brand-new untitled work, baritone Tom Buckner sang octaves in and out of tune with himself an octave lower on tape. Was he also singing overtone-sweeps up and down as Tibetan monks do, or was that illusion caused by something done on the background tape? And how, in *Ten Auras Live* with Krieger on saxophone with background tape, did Niblock create the bitonal effect of a consonant foreground chord fading in and out of a quite dissonant chord in another key?

Ear-confounding as these were, the real stunner, though, was *Guitar two, for four* (played nevertheless by five guitarists, including Krieger, Seth Josel, Robert Poss, and believe it



PLAYING PHILL NIBLOCK: FROM LEFT, LEE RANALDO, SETH JOSEL, THURSTON MOORE

His music is also just as austere, though in different ways. While Young defines the tunings of his long-held drones by ratios to a fundamental pitch, Niblock—who originally trained as a filmmaker, not a musician—deals in exact frequencies, working almost like a mathematician, or perhaps with an affinity to visual conceptual art. More significantly, Young works within a static, unchanging tone configuration, while Niblock's drones change, glissando, slide in or out of tune so that each piece subtly journeys somewhere, in transformations that are sometimes breathtaking even if so gradual a change is difficult to track as it happens. Come to think of it, no wonder Niblock has remained behind the scene even more than Young; his tuning metamorphoses may astound the ear, but their slowness is a perceptual challenge that only the most patient listeners can follow. He always, however, includes a visual component; here, a film screen on which images of buildings, ships, and other structures morphed into each other pixel by pixel through the entire concert.

The four pieces Niblock unveiled, meanwhile, were superficially describable as being like all the music he's done for 30 years, but I've never heard him use the same strategy twice, and the new works revealed an impressive new depth. How, for example, in *Hurdy Hurry*—with

or not, Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo). Somehow, the opening drone of e-bows thickened into a mass of beating overtones that slowly fell into tune over 15 minutes, crescendoing into a glorious sonority whose harmonics suffused the space and seemed to come from all around us. The last time I heard overtones induce such ecstasy was (in the same hall) a work by David First called *Jade Screen Test Dreams of Renting Wings*, but Niblock managed to produce the effect more simply and purely, without obvious structure or effort.

Niblock's works on the program alternated with those of Krieger, who is much younger and a protégé. Obviously indebted to Niblock as well, Krieger's pieces had a similar kind of interest in sonic illusions. They were less pure in conception, though, often running whimsically through a succession of textures. In the world premiere of *Multiverse (#1)*, he started with the Soldier String Quartet personnel, each bowing open strings with two bows at once, and in *Book of Sins*, guitarist Seth Josel struck amplified sonorities that sounded like gongs. The resulting sonorities and textures were intriguing, but formally, his music remains a little arbitrary and complicated—a fact that might not have been so noticeable had he not been paired with the master of the extremely gradual surprise. **V**

T

vember 30th

1020
4666
5400