Gray and Barteaux's new music packs them in

by Kenneth Newman

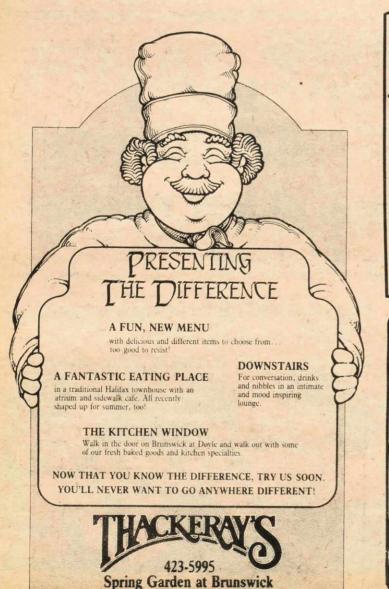
As I promised last week, John Gray and David Barteaux played a concert on Thursday at SMU's Art Gallery. However, I was not, as promised, sitting front row center because I only showed up fifteen minutes before show-time. By then the best seats had been taken.

By show time all the seats had been taken and there still weren't enough. More chairs had to be

found and they still weren't enough so some people sat on tables or stood. In all, an amazing feat - 150 people at a "new music" concert in Halifax? Now either Gray has a lot of fans in Halifax or a lot of people trust my writing and I'm more inclined to believe the former than the latter.

Barteaux opened the night with a structured improvisation called "(SUB) SET". The piece was

played on a series of analog sequencers through ring modulation and possibly other devices which this punter's ears couldn't identify. The piece was conceptual and virtually played itself, Barteaux being somewhat tentative (perhaps that's his style?) at the controls. I found the music to be predictable in progression and flat in tone but this could be said for most conceptual music. I guess I'm saying I



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"merely curious" departed for less high-minded pursuits, the two musicians returned. They played a long improvisation which was rather superfluously titled, NOW OPEN TRACKS AND PAPERBACKS

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"UNTITLED (IMPROVISA-TION)". After a short bit of atonal (or is it dissonant or non-tonal?) electronic interplay, a few sequencer patterns were layered together and a very sophisticated electronic drum set placed beneath.

Arts

Barteaux played some very interesting and unidentifiable weird sounds on top of the mix while Gray seemed somewhat inhibited by the sheer electricity of it all and by Barteaux's obvious command of the situation. Gray was at his best when he was mimicing the sequencers on the piano. The piece, aside from being slightly over-long, suffered from unevenness. When it clicked, which was about half the time, it clicked very well, but the rest of the time the music seemed bogged down in indecision. What bothered me was that the piece had a lot of potential and could have been vastly improved by a few weeks of rehearsal or perhaps by lapsing a bit from the improvisatory ethos and adding a bit of composition. If they were in a recording studio I'd say they need a good producer to push them when they need it and to restrain them when they need it.

On the whole, the performance was well worth my and anyone else's while. The audience, which came out in droves on a rainy night, was diverse, attentive and appreciative. I shall await the next appearance of these two.



don't much like conceptual music.

But there were people there who

do, and, judging from the applause,

Gray followed with an improvi-

sation called "Nine Year Obses-

sion", a title which refers to an

incident which occurred nine years

ago when the SMU Art Gallery's

chording. He was virtually punning

his way through nineteenth-century

piano music. His style is such that

if he runs an arpeggio up the key-

board he runs one back down

again - he leaves no chord unre-

solved. The result is slightly predic-

table if you-listen very closely, but

if you just sit back and shut your

eyes the music flows and flows on

After a fifteen minute intermission, during which some of the

yeyes the music flows and flow an extremely pleasant journey.

they liked it.