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Some Co-ops outside London

This article is designed chiefly to indicate how some musicians and listeners are tackling the problem of creating employment for the exponents of contemporary music. Most of the material used was written by those actively involved in the organisations concerned.

YORK MUSICIANS' CO-OP

Formed Autumn 1974 with the intention of promoting concerts of improvised music in York, originally along the lines of the London Musicians' Co-op.

There had been many previous attempts in York to establish a regular venue for improvised music. Many had periods of reasonable success. For instance, the Aduki Quintet and F & W Hat (under the auspices of the York Bureau of Inquiries – now defunct) had a series of weekly concerts in an upstairs room at the Lowther Hotel in the spring and summer of 1971. These concerts were run along the lines of a jazz club, and for about eight weeks had fairly full and regular audiences. There was a small admission charge of 10p. Publicity was fairly well organised with stencilled posters and handouts.

In the autumn of 1971 and winter of 1972, the Bureau again attempted to hold weekly concerts in the Drama Barn at York University, featuring the improvisation group F & W Hat, but also including one concert by a local baroque ensemble and one by Salt Water, a rock-jazz group. Admission was free.

The problem with both these series of concerts was that it was difficult to sustain impetus beyond the first four weeks, because of the encroachment of jobs and university studies upon the time available for organising publicity, and because of the small number of groups available.

In Spring 1974 a late night concert, in the vicinity of a bar and of a student-run snack bar, was presented at the university. The concert ran for about 1¼ hours without a break, and presented several short sets by many different groups of varying styles, including F & W Hat, Clap, Maserati Consort (spurious medieval music), folk songs, compositions by Christian Wolff and John Cage, and so on. There was a small admission charge. The concert was an undoubted success, both in attracting an audience, including many people who did not normally attend concerts of so-called 'avantgarde' music in the university, and musically and socially, because there was a good informal atmosphere, encouraging interaction between musicians and audience. This concert provided the model for the formation of the York Musicians' Co-op in the autumn of 1974.

It was decided that, instead of attempting to present one concert a week, using a nucleus of a resident group with the same repertoire, we would present approximately four concerts a quarter. Again, instead of having one or two people responsible for *all* publicity continually, one or two people would agree to handle the organisation for a concert in which they had an interest as performers. We agreed:

1) that primarily we were interested in establishing a regular venue or venues for improvised music, where musicians always knew that they could play regularly, rather than providing any kind of regular income. We decided to use the Lowther Hotel, King's Staithe, because the landlord, himself a musician, is sympathetic and charges only a nominal rent for the use of his room, and the pub is well known in the area for presentations of folk music and meetings of trades-unions and local left organisations.

2. we were treating each presentation as an individual event, with a different content from other events, rather than attempting to establish a regular series of concerts by one or two groups.

In the first quarter we presented only one concert, but there was a large communal effort to establish our presence. Publicity consisted of stencilled and hand-written posters, advertisements in the local press, an advertisement in the local *What's on...*, a mention on BBC Radio Leeds's 'What's on...' and stencilled handouts. Posters were erected in public libraries, museums, the art college, university

buildings, teacher training colleges and some shops. Admission was 25p. Our costs were kept fairly low by the use of stencilled and handwritten information.

Since this first concert we have had four concerts per quarter in the first half of 1975 which meet with increasing success. For three concerts we have turned people away fifteen minutes after the start, and have been able to pay musicians up to £2 each. This success we attribute to:

1. low costs and effective publicity. We have further reduced our costs since the first concert by abandoning advertisements in the local press and in the local *What's on* . . . (though I should add that the editor of the latter graciously prints some information about our concerts free of charge without any prompting from us), which were our two most expensive items. In the quarter January-March, we printed a poster with dates of the four concerts. However, there was much criticism of this, and after experimenting with lino-printed headings it was decided to print blank posters with the heading YORK MUSICIANS' CO-OP. This means, of course, that after the initial expenses the original plate is still in existence and does not date. For advance publicity, giving future dates, we used a stencilled information sheet with a general résumé of the Co-op's activities.
2. the fact that York is a small city. This means, of course, that dissemination of information is relatively easy. Two people can cover most of the places that will accept posters in an afternoon.
3. low admission. We believe, in opposition to Richard Marsh and the Post Office Corporation, that low prices *encourage* custom. Despite the fact that admission will certainly have to increase this autumn, we reckon that anything under 50p is a very good bargain nowadays for almost 3 hours of continuous good music.
4. the fact that the organisation of individual concerts is largely dependent on the musicians involved in it. Hence the burden of organisation is evenly distributed, and only lasts for each person for about ten days.
5. varied and mixed programmes. From the beginning a very wide definition of improvised music was taken, and it is likely that there will not be any restriction on types of music in future. Mixing has produced excellent results. For instance, the rock-jazz trio U.M.G. probably attracts a more conventional audience, but at one concert this was presented with music by Trevor Wishart (the tape-music composer) and Simon Woolf, who made various noises with their mouths, scraped balloons, broke glass, etc, etc. In a normal so-called 'avantgarde' concert the duo would probably have been accepted with starchy respect, but here, in a pub room, with the performers and audience in close proximity (two feet) and with a genial atmosphere, there was a close interaction. Those who would normally appreciate this music were able to do so without the accompanying tensions of the concert situation. Those who would not normally appreciate this music were able to accept noise events *at their face value*, and laugh or jeer as they felt appropriate, without malice on their part and without fear of censure. This kind of situation is normal at the York Musicians' Co-op, *not* exceptional.

Other artists who have appeared and been well received include: the John Lewis/Dave Smith Duo playing the music of Philip Glass; Warm 'n' Wet; a York rock group; Fred Frith, the guitarist from Henry Cow, who gave a solo concert; the Jan Steele/Phil Buckle Duo (saxophone/flute and drums); Beatroot, the percussion ensemble; a bebop group led by Piers Spencer; F & W Hat; Steve Beresford; Stuart Jones. For one concert involving the Birmingham drummer Phil Buckle, we received the assistance of the Yorkshire Arts Association. Despite the appearance of musicians from outside York, the emphasis is still on creating a scene for local musicians.

The programmes for this autumn are as follows (all programmes at the Lowther Hotel, starting at 8.0 p.m.):

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|-------------|--|
| 1 November | Warm 'n' Wet and a Lancaster band. |
| 15 November | Spontaneous Music Ensemble and Fateful Heart (traditional folk group). |
| 29 November | John Lewis/Dave Smith Duo and Trevor Wishart. |
| 13 December | Clive Bell and a York bebop band. |

Details of the York Musicians' Co-op can be obtained from:

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| Will Bradford | White House View, Elvington, near YORK. |
| Keith Potter | 17 Turners Croft, Heslington, YORK. |
| Simon Woolf | 48 East Mount Road, YORK. |

NEW MUSIC CO-OPERATIVE — SHEFFIELD

Manifesto:

1. Aims:

- a) To gather together all musicians within and outside the university to form a co-operative for the promotion of new music in Sheffield and South Yorkshire.
- b) To build up an educated audience who come, not just for the sake of attending, but because of a genuine interest in the field.
- c) To present at least four concerts every year.
- d) To invite guest performers in the field of new music to give concerts.
- e) To produce a pamphlet prior to each concert, outlining the music to be played.
- f) To exchange ideas with other similar Co-ops.
- g) To give concerts in a variety of environments: art galleries, schools, public places, concert halls etc.

2. Administration:

The NMCO would be run by a committee which would decide the selection of artists, programmes and venues. A sub-committee would edit the pamphlet. Financial support would come from grants etc.

3. Summary:

The NMCO would therefore

- a) be a flexible organisation.
- b) involve musicians from inside and outside Sheffield.
- c) present regular concerts.
- d) and a regular pamphlet.

The Sheffield Co-op's programmes this season are as follows (all programmes begin at 7.30 p.m.):

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|-------------|--|
| 24 November | An evening of music by Gavin Bryars including <i>The Sinking of the Titanic</i> , performed by Sheffield University students.
University Arts Tower, Lecture Theatre 4. |
| 25 January | Nucleus Ensemble: Kagel, Stockhausen, David H. Cox, etc.
University Drama Studio in conjunction with the University Music Department. |
| 14 February | John Lewis/Dave Smith Duo: Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley.
University Music Department, Taptonville Road. |
| 5 March | David Jones/Keith Potter Duo: music for percussion and bells by Harold Budd, David Jones, Tom Phillips, Keith Potter and James Tenney.
Same venue. |
| 27 June | Satie's <i>Vexations</i> , performed by Robert Dickinson and Christopher Thornton.
Same venue. |

The pamphlet to be produced is to be called *Musicom*. The first issue, available in December, includes articles on Stockhausen and Kagel and details of future events. It will have a local distribution around Sheffield.

The Co-op is willing to give electronic music workshops to local schools. It has applied for a grant from the Yorkshire Arts Association and is receiving some assistance from the University Music Department.

The Co-op seeks to dispel the elitist notions that surround much new music; it believes that new music can be enjoyed by the many and not only by the few, and that the few who do perform new music will reach the many. New and experimental music has to outgrow the Purcell Room/Music in our Time - once a week stage and spread itself farther afield.

Details of the Sheffield New Music Co-operative can be obtained from:

Robert Dickinson 20 Kenmor Avenue, Elton, BURY, Lancashire
Tel. 061-761 3127.

BRISTOL MUSICIANS' CO-OPERATIVE

The Bristol Musicians' Co-operative is a recently initiated institution. It is an informal organisation without any fixed constitution or declared aims, and so what follows is an indication of possibilities and suggestions from some of the people already involved rather than any kind of fixed policy.

The Co-op is visualised as a loose network of musicians enabling them to contact other musicians. The specific need, in response to which it has arisen, is the difficult situation of musicians who are experimenting with new forms and styles, and whose work thus lies on the fringe of what is defined as music.

There is very little opportunity in Bristol for such fringe musicians to play to an audience. There is very little encouragement of artistic innovation on the part of the official bodies with responsibilities for the fostering of the arts in the region. Such bodies seem content to support more conventional forms of art. Even the student bodies in Bristol, wherein a large potential audience lies, restrict their support to the big names; in fact to the people who no longer need the support.

Therefore this organisation seeks not only to present concerts, but also to be a focus for bringing pressure to bear where it is needed. It can further be a means of communication for more enlightened promoters/organisers to get in touch with experimental musicians.

1. The network can also create a dialogue within the musical community of Bristol concerning the music itself and perhaps be able to create new opportunities.
2. There is no intention to exclude performers or composers of any type of music from the B.M.C. Indeed there is no reason why non-musicians should not take part. Perhaps events can be organised where non-musicians create music.
3. In the future it would be nice to run musical workshops for kids in which their improvised offerings are taken seriously.
4. We also plan to make contact with musicians in other towns and organise exchanges of musicians.

The current series of Thursday Lunchtime Concerts at the Arnolfini Gallery have provided the opportunity for the B.M.C. to become active. A different group is playing on each occasion, and in some cases the bands are making their first appearance although they have existed in some form for some time. Money raised by these concerts will be put aside for expenditure on Co-op business.

Details of the Bristol Musicians' Co-operative can be obtained from:

Bob Holson	Bristol 658795.
Steve Mulligan	18 Church Lane, Clifton Wood, BRISTOL.
Ian Menter	Bristol 658271.

BIRMINGHAM ALTERNATIVE ARTS CO-OPERATIVE

The Birmingham Co-operative has a broadly based membership of individuals and independent organisations (operationally based in different areas: Stoke, Birmingham, London) involved in various uncompromising, uncommercial, unsophisticated forms of creativity. Labelled avantgarde/experimental and intent on providing or agitating for a 'stage' (outlet) for their work.

How? By mutually agreeing to:

1. help organise regular exchange visits to participate in discussion, workshops, happenings, concerts etc.
2. a) pay personal expenses to and from meetings.
b) share costs of hall hire where necessary.

3. help organise tours for artists on NONDO discs around the circuit of members' operational centres. Projected tour for October/November 1975: Roy Ashbury Band, One Music Ensemble.

4. help organise publicity: posters, press, radio as appropriate.

Any cash from events is to be divided equally among members as a token gesture. . . In some cases fees/expenses may be available through arts associations/students' unions etc. and could enable gigs to be offered to other people; but this will be the exception rather than the rule.

Individual members/groups, as well as the full A.A.C. complement, will be available (and willing) to accept paid bookings from colleges, arts centres, festivals etc. in the normal way.

NONDO RECORDINGS/EVENTS

D. and E.D. Panton (Music)

9 The Hawthorns, Woodbridge Road, BIRMINGHAM B13 9DY.

NONDO, although a registered firm for recordings and events (one of many independent outlets for avantgarde/experimental composers/musicians), avoids trappings of commercialism. Reasons: a tight budget and nature of 'product'. Uncommercial, unsophisticated, uncompromising music is 'packaged' likewise. Labels, sleeves etc. are hand printed or duplicated. However, editing, processings, pressings and some recordings are done 'professionally'. Primary concern is the music's exposure via recorded/live events and composers'/musicians' royalty/fee rights from such events. Time may judge music's right to a place in mainstream of development; meanwhile, practitioners sincerely attend to artistic business and, if unhindered by premature obituaries, fulfil their social function.

NONDO HT LP 1370 (MONO) One Music - Dave Panton: alto sax, percussion,
Retail price £2.50 (To retailers, friends etc. £1.78) tapes, friends etc. 1970-71.

NONDO DP EP 001 (MONO) Roy Ashbury Band (Side 1) 1973.
Retail price £0.70 (To retailers, friends etc. £0.50) One Music Ensemble (Side 2) 1974.

NONDO DP 002 (in preparation) Derek Bailey plus One Music Ensemble 1973-74.
Registered in England No. 1943875

It is evident that the Musicians' Co-op movement is growing, not diminishing. All of the organisations publicised here have sprung up within the past 18 months. What must be understood above all is that the idea of contemporary music as something special, something only educated people can understand, and something confined to a few organisations in London, must be broken down. In addition, the attempt to set one type of music against another is shown to be a spurious division. Different musics can fulfil different needs in the same individuals.