

Bio information: **RADIO MASSACRE INTERNATIONAL**

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FILE UNDER: **ELECTRONIC / ROCK / SPACE MUSIC**

As a musical genre, electronic music – music created by, and specifically for, electronic instruments - is now over three decades old, as old as electronic instruments themselves. The mysterious dials, knobs and antennae on the electrically-charged inventions of **Robert Moog**, **Theremin**, and others, enticed musicians to explore a universe of sounds radically different from those produced by traditional instruments. American musicians like **Terry Riley**, **Walter Carlos** and **Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Co.** began writing a new, avant-classical music to exploit synthesized sonics. Overseas, such artists as **Tangerine Dream**, **Cluster** and **Klaus Schulze** in Germany, **Heldon** in France, and **Fripp & Eno** in England, created new rock-based electronic musics. The explorations of these electronic pioneers spawned numerous sub-genres of electronic music, with names such as **space music**, **electronic soundscapes**, **ambient music**, **new age**, **space rock**, **techno**, and **industrial music**. Today, a new generation of visionary musicians continues to explore the frontiers of electronic sound through composition, improvisation, and mixtures thereof. They are expanding the boundaries of electronic music's interrelated and often overlapping sub-genres, refining and redefining their sound, and creating some of the best instrumental music of the present day.

Radio Massacre International (RMI) is a British electronic music trio who is carving out new ground in the genre of **space music**. Composed of **Steve Dinsdale** (keyboards, electronics, drums), **Duncan Goddard** (keyboards, electronics, bass) and **Gary Houghton** (keyboards, guitar), the trio improvises with a mixture of vintage and modern analogue and digital equipment, and on occasion, a spattering of acoustic sound (percussion and guitar), to create massive, shifting electronic soundscapes. Instantly recognizable, RMI's organic, visceral, and at times rough-edged explorations in space music transport the genre popularized by **Tangerine Dream**, **Ash Ra Tempel/Manuel Gottsching**, **Hawkwind** and **Pink Floyd** in the 1970s into the 21st Century. The world's best current exponents of epic electronic space improvisations, Radio Massacre International expose the genre to be as vital and vibrant today as it was in its infancy, and more accessible to a mainstream audience than ever before.

Dinsdale, Goddard and Houghton began playing together when they were 16-year-old students. In 1979, Dinsdale and Goddard formed a band with **Mark Spybey (Soforkontakt)** and a Roland synthesizer, which Houghton soon joined. The group called itself **DAS**, and recorded 12 albums of material between 1980-87, before disbanding when Dinsdale moved to London in 1988.

Radio Massacre International was born in late 1993/early 1994, when former DAS bandmates Dinsdale, Goddard and Houghton reunited to play music. They named their new band Radio Massacre International – a name originating in their DAS days. Says Dinsdale:

“Duncan and I used to record horrendously overloaded Casio sonatas directly in the mic sockets of my cassette deck...quite horrible...One day I was listening to this racket (this was 1983) and the name just came into my head as a description of these intermittent ‘broadcasts’ from our peculiar little planet. We then decided...much later...it would make a good name for a band.”

RMI immediately began to record its epic electronic improvisations; by 1995, when its first official release, *Frozen North*, came out on the UK electronic label **Centaur**, the band had an archive of 30 recordings. RMI continued its highly prolific output, releasing 7 more CDs on **Centaur** (*Republic*, 1996; *Knutsford in May & Organ Harvest*, 1997; *Borrowed Atoms*, 1998; and *Upstairs Downstairs, The God of Electricity, & Zabriskie Point*, 2000) and appearing on 6 compilations. To further accelerate its release schedule, in 1997 RMI started its own label, **Northern Echo**, which has released 14 recordings (11 CDRs and 3 CDs).

RMI's live improvised performances are legendary, leaving audiences enthralled with their atmospheric journeys and awed with the trio's near-telepathic communication. In the words of Chuck Van Zyl, “Through improvisation, RMI chart new territory each time they play, the best part being that they take the audience with them.” They have appeared at numerous high-profile electronic music festivals in Europe, including 1995's **EMMA** (UK), 1997's **KLEM Dag** (Holland); 2000's **Alpha Centauri Festival 300** (Holland), 2003's **E-Live Festival** (Holland) and 2004's **Virtaa Arts Festival** (Finland). RMI was the 1st group to perform at Britain's **Jodrell Bank Observatory**, playing in 1996 in the shadow of the radio dish, and remained a fixture in the electronic music series subsequently associated with Jodrell Bank. In 2004, RMI performed at another venue with space associations: the **National Space Centre** in Leicester. RMI has also performed on European television and radio. The trio appeared on **BBC TV's “Don't Look Down”** special on Jodrell Bank, and in 1996 RMI co-hosted and performed on European **MTV's “Chill Out Zone”**. RMI was influential in founding the **Hampshire Jam** concert series in southern England. In a one-off deviation from its electronic work, in 2004 RMI improvised on guitar/bass/drums with **Damo Suzuki** (Can) on vocals in Manchester, UK.

Radio Massacre International's US debut came in 2002, when it headlined night one of **Progwest**, a progressive music festival in Claremont, CA, and appeared live on L.A.'s Radio **KXLU**. On the East coast, it performed for **The Gatherings**, a well-established electronic music concert series held at **St. Mary's Church** in Philadelphia, PA. On the same night, following its St. Mary's performance, RMI improvised a marathon two and a half hour piece live on “**Star's End**” on Radio **WXPB**. The shows were so well-received that The Gatherings and WXPB invited RMI to return.

In May 2004, RMI returned to Philadelphia to perform another concert at St. Mary's for The Gatherings, followed by a new live radio session for **Chuck Van Zyl's** ‘Star's End’ show on WXPB. Drawn by reports of RMI's 2002 appearance, the May 8th St. Mary's show attracted an audience from throughout the East Coast, including the head of Cuneiform. The concert surpassed all audience expectations, and Cuneiform invited RMI to do a recording. When RMI gave a live concert at WXPB later that evening, listeners claimed that the performance rivaled the St. Mary's show.

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Radio Massacre International's new, first release on Cuneiform, called *Emissaries*, is the result of the group's 2004 Philadelphia appearance. A double CD, it features a CD of studio material created by RMI for Cuneiform, and a CD of live recordings made of RMI's legendary late-night May 9th performance on WXPN's "Star's End". But *Emissaries* is more than two-CDs worth of some of RMI's best epic improvisations: it also functions as a multi-media work, a graphic novel accompanied by a soundtrack of dream-like, multi-layered electronic space music.

Emissaries was created as a unique collaborative venture between Washington DC-based Cuneiform, UK-based RMI, and Philadelphia-based **Matt Howarth**, an alternative comic book artist/writer as well as a music journalist. For the project, Howarth created a 16-page color comic/graphic novel, which Radio Massacre International then used as inspiration for the studio improvisations it recorded for Cuneiform. Disc 1 contains Howarth's 16-page *Emissaries* story (as a .pdf file readable on computers using Adobe Acrobat 5 and higher), and RMI's soundtrack. Disc 2 features RMI's May 9th performance on Chuck Van Zyl's radio show, "Star's End," broadcast live. This radio performance had served as inspiration to Howarth when he was creating his *Emissaries* comic strip. In Howarth's words, "this collaboration superbly exemplifies a two-way feedback between the creative spirits of all involved. The music is more than just a soundtrack for the comic strip; both the music and the comic fulfill the dual roles of father and son for the entire project."

Best known for his multi-reality-level fantasy stories about Bugtown and its inhabitants, featured in his comic books series **Those Annoying Post Bros.** and **Savage Henry**, Howarth has created several graphic novels published by AEON and produced a large body of graphic work in which music plays multiple roles. Howarth published music reviews in comic-book form in *Heavy Metal* magazine in the 1980s, and included alternative artists such as **The Residents**, **Hawkwind**, **Ash Ra Temple**, **David Borden**, **Klaus Schulze**, **Richard Pinhas**, and **Wire**, as characters in many of his comic projects. Howarth has longed designed advertisements for the Cuneiform label, and has designed CD covers for numerous musicians, including **The Muffins** (on Cuneiform), **Conrad Schnitzler**, and **Klaus Schulze's** new 5-CD set. Recently, Howarth has collaborated with musicians such as **Hugh Hopper** and **Quarkspace** on projects that fuse graphic art and music in a unique fashion: the music doubles as a soundtrack to Howarth's comic strip, which accompanies the CD. For *Emissaries*, Howarth's and RMI's collaboration forms an endless creative electronic loop, with both music and graphics serving as mutual inspiration.

The city of Philadelphia played a central role in *Emissaries's* genesis. The stained-glass windows of St. Mary's Church, WXPN's studios in the dead of night, and the graphic novel of Philadelphia artist Matt Howarth all helped fuel the musician's imagination. In a 1997 interview with Graham Getty, Dinsdale stated that "...yes, there is something that the venue brings to an improvised performance. That's part of the beauty of improvising in that you are influenced to a degree by the setting, and the mood that you're in on a particularly day." For *Emissaries*, the city of **Philadelphia** - home planet to such eminent space emissaries as **Sun Ra** - served as the creative launchpad from which Radio Massacre International commenced its journeys into sonic space.

**RADIO MASSACRE INTERNATIONAL
LIVE ON "STAR'S END," CHUCK VAN ZYL'S SHOW ON WXPN
MAY 9TH, 2004 PHILADELPHIA, PA**

"...I had the incredible opportunity to witness in person this amazing event...a truly magical and once in a lifetime experience.

After walking the short distance from St. Mary's with the band, we lugged and heaved what seemed to me mounds and mounds of equipment up 3 flights of stairs to the WXPN studio...at midnight...

At 2AM RMI went live. The lights were dimmed. As one would expect of a Star's End set at 2AM, the band's performance was initially subdued and atmospheric. Each creating their own quiet sonic passages. At times it seemed like they were totally immersed in their own performance, unaware of anyone else playing in the room, but that's when you notice the genius of their plying. Watching an improv performance is like nothing I've ever witnessed. Each member was along in his own little space but always aware of his sonic surroundings and the path the music was creating. Playing on the radio gave the band the luxury of being able to talk to each other though... there wasn't...much dialogue...

For 90 minutes the band's playing was subdued and beautiful, with colorful sonic passages alternately drifting back and forth between Steve and Duncan's multi-layered synths and Gary's exquisite guitar playing. But then something happened around the 90 minute mark. Little by little the band started to come alive with a frenetic energy that seemed to be building in strength over the last 90 minutes and was just now struggling to be let out. As one mind, the band mates all seemed to sense this and the band came alive. Multilayered sequencer rhythms started issuing forth, building upon each other, getting louder and faster. For the next 30 minutes the music rose to a dynamic intensity. ...

At approximately 3:55, the band yelled over the music that they'd be stopping in 5 minutes at 4AM. ...With the music playing probably some of the wildest and fastest sequencer rhythms I've ever heard live, Steve [Dinsdale] literally yelled out the count down...5..4..3..2..1.. STOP! And suddenly, it was quiet. Chuck Van Zyl's familiar voice came on the airwaves and the show was over. The band members stood up and looked over and just smiled. They knew they had done something magical. An improv performance that was one for the books. ...it was an experience I'll remember for a long time."

- John Garaguso, posted to Spacemusic list (#8644) Tue 25 May 2004

"A 3.50 am yawn of mine stuck. RMI was wrapping up its second consecutive hour of its WXPN radio concert, and its evening, too, for that. My nose was pressed against the studio's window... Exhaled steam, forming on the window, was starting to obstruct my view, but I wasn't moving, and my jaw wasn't retracting, either. Was anyone else up at the crazy hour listening to the magic taking place? On an already phenomenal night, Radio Massacre International had saved its best for last.... "

- Soma611, "RMI invades Philly; treats, re-treats, retreats," posted to Spacemusic list (#8614) May 15, 2004

RADIO MASSACRE INTERNATIONAL
LIVE AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PA, MAY 8TH, 2004
THE GATHERINGS CONCERT SERIES

"Speaking of impressed, I'd find it hard to believe that anyone leaving St. Mary's last Saturday was "not so" in regard to the performance of Radio Massacre International.RMI walked onto the stage... and the sound filling the cathedral slowly...shifted... to the mediations of Dinsdale and Goddard resonating from two mellotrons. ...The mood of the initial set remained dark throughout, nebulous, forlorn; quite uncharacteristic to what I've heard from RMI in the past... Guitarist Houghton... used his just-purchased lap steel guitar to add to the obscure somberness. Dinsdale... faced the audience all night, spoke for the band, and seemed to spend a lot of time looking at a most spectacular stained-glass window at the rear of the church, maybe using it as a focal point in which to filter the wonderful happening throughout.

Ah, the tone of the evening...certainly changed during RMI's high-potency sequence-charged second set. Dinsdale came out in a different t-shirt, this one literally flashed to the beat...Houghton stood and ravaged us with some wonderfully mean guitar riffs. Goddard retreated often to the synth...and created squelches and distorted sounds that even Saul Stokes would have been proud of..."

- Soma611, "RMI invades Philly; treats, re-treats, retreats," posted to *Spacemusic* list (#8614) May 15, 2004

"There did not seem to be any structure to this first set, but there were perhaps three or four distinct segments – ranging from drifting space music to a jazz-like jam – played with no breaks. Even though this music was being played live right in front of us, it had an older vintage sound (not a bad thing) with the roughness RMI is known for.

After a brief interval...Chuck Van Zyl introduced the band and we were treated to a long 'stonking' sequencer piece – a highly energetic and motivational number. Boggles the mind to think that this was perhaps a fortunate accident, the band not really knowing where inspiration will take them while performing. ...our shared appreciation of this driving, penetrating music and the impressive smoke and laser-light shows was noted... It would be a shame if this never appears on a future release from the band and fades from memory. They continued the second set and performed another sequencer piece that also deserves to be shared by those who could not make it out this night."

-Carlo, "Late posting my review again: RMI in Philly," as posted to *Spacemusic* list (#8614) May 24, 2004

"As the audience was being seated before the show, the church organist was filling in with some background music. With the lights low, RMI took the stage, and Steve and Duncan quietly joined the organist on the Mellotrons and continued with those machines for about 15 minutes. For a Mellotronist, hearing the Ian M. flute and 'tron flute in a church's acoustical space was sheer delight. Eventually Gary came in very quietly with his guitar (which more often than not sounds very much like a synthesizer and not a guitar), and RMI rounded out the set with more improvisation but no sequencers. ...It was pretty nice to hear RMI's performance of an electronic music set without sequencers fired on all cylinders. The guitar, Mellotron, and synthesizer combination works well, and it's obvious these guys have a been a team for years.

The second and third sonic outings for the evening would be sequencer based. Steve revved up the Doepfer MAQs and off they went, complete with a light show courtesy of Chuck van Zyl's team...

There were a few thoughts in my head as I watched the RMI performance. The first was patience. These guys take their time to develop their performance....One expects typical Berlin school improvisers to rush right into sequencer land and follow a certain formula, but this really didn't. I also perceived a great deal of communication and teamwork. RMI is a team, and that comes across when you're talking with them and when you're watching them perform. They keep in touch while improvising, through voice, looks, or through what they are playing. And they have fun!

The resulting music was largely Berlin school sequencer based improvisations with a good dose of Mellotron. ...many of the other live recordings I've heard by them are a bit different from what I heard at The Gathering that evening...drama and a bit of rawness is what sets RMI aside from others who dabble in the genre. For this evening, though, it was more reined in....

Oh, how did the Mellotrons do, you were wondering? Flawless performance, nary a wobbly!"

- K. Leonard, "The Gathering – May 8, 2004", ...*kl...s Info about Electronic Music and Reviews*, www.kleonard.com